

Frames, Discursive Practices, and Bilateral Relations: The Gui Minhai Case in Chinese and Swedish Media

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Abstract

As one of the most important sites in which and through which discourse is articulated and disseminated, newspapers play particularly extensive roles in furthering understandings of human rights cases involving citizens of dual nationality and foreign policy. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and the practice of journalistic framing, this study examined the effects of intertextuality on the depiction of the Gui Minhai case in Swedish and Chinese daily news. It did so by comparing how four daily newspapers employed specific discursive strategies in their depiction of the case, and how larger political frameworks, in which media operates, explain these strategies and in particular the impact of foreign policy institutions. The Sweden-China bilateral relationship and human rights discourse in the countries of origin of the newspapers were important factors in explaining the selective nature of the reporting. The frequency of political journalistic frames was about the same in all newspapers, and the comparative analysis of government statements show that they echoed elite consensus. The analysis about the intertextual properties in the discourses of conflicts between Sweden and China over Gui Minhai show the meanings about human rights, foreign policy and morality, especially those about Sweden, are related to the particular events and the interactions between rhetoric, discourse and voices circulating in the texts. For instance, Sweden is constructed as an actor with different, even conflicting, identities in both newspaper discourses.

Key words: Gui Minhai, Journalism, Foreign Policy, Human Rights, Sweden, China, EU

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Abbreviations

AB Aftonbladet

CCP the Chinese Communist Party

CD China Daily

CMoFA the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CN Emb the Chinese Embassy in Sweden

CPCPD Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China

DN Dagens Nyheter

EU the European Union

EXP Expressen

GAPP General Administration of Press and Publication (China)

GMH Gui Minhai

GT Global Times

SMoFA the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SFM the Swedish Foreign Minister

TT Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå

XN Xinhua News Agency

Chapter 1: Introduction

In October 2015, the Swedish publisher Gui Minhai disappeared. Allegedly he was kidnapped from his vacation home in Thailand, and arrested by Chinese authorities in light of what has become known as the ‘Causeway Books Disappearances’. Gui was the second Causeway Bay Books publisher to disappear. Between October to December 2015, all five staff members of the Hong Kong based bookstore disappeared, and in early 2016 it was confirmed that they had been detained by Chinese authorities. Mainland authorities claimed that Gui had previously been sentenced for a fatal traffic accident in 2003, and had violated his probation terms by leaving China in October 2004. In a review of the case in August 2006, this two-year suspended jail term became a two-year jail sentence. However upon his arrest in 2015, suspicion remained that the jail sentence was due to his publishing of books which openly critiqued the Beijing government and President Xi Jinping. In January 2016, Gui appeared in an allegedly ‘forced confession’ which was broadcast on Chinese state television whereby he claimed that he had voluntarily returned to China. Shortly after, his appearance was condemned by the international community. In February 2016, charges were clarified against Gui over the allegation that he had knowingly distributed banned books, and subsequently he appeared in another broadcasted ‘confession’. In October 2017, Gui was reported to have been released although his whereabouts remained unknown for some time, and rumors suggested that he had been placed under house arrest. In January 2018, he resurfaced in the company of Swedish diplomats, and while travelling to Beijing to seek medical assistance, he was again arrested and detained by Chinese authorities. In February 2018, Gui once more appeared in a ‘confession’ whereby he again confessed to wrongdoing and condemned Sweden for taking advantage of him. In summer 2018, Gui was seen by Swedish diplomats and Swedish medical staff. Until this day, Gui is the only one of the booksellers to remain in Chinese custody (Alfredsson Malmros, 2019: 4-6).

In the ongoing debate concerning the future of Gui Minhai, tones have hardened. In 2018, the Chinese Ambassador to Sweden presented comments in several Swedish media outlets, but rather than gaining support for the Chinese perspective, confrontational rebuttals appear to have provoked negative reactions (Bohman & Michalski, 2018: 83-86). China has generally been of little interest to Swedish public opinion but the Gui case has put spotlight on human rights abuses, and Sweden has emerged as one of the European countries most critical towards China

(Bohman & Michalski, 2018: 83). A 2017 Eurobarometer survey found that 64% of Swedish people have ‘total negative’ views of China (Rühlig et al, 2018: 19). In a 2018 Pew Research Center survey on international publics’ perceptions of China, 52% of Swedes were found to hold an unfavorable view of China. Overall, about 93% of Swedes surveyed did not think that China respects the personal freedoms of its population (Wike et al, 2018: 56).

Sweden has generally been given little attention in the Chinese media, except for favoring of Sweden’s international role and the fact that it was the first western country to recognize the PRC (Regeringskansliet, 2005). Later studies found that positive images of Sweden were connected to wealth and success, beautiful nature, transparency, equality and low corruption. Negative images presented Sweden as expensive and a place where it is difficult to find work (SI, 2016). Especially critical depictions of Sweden have emerged on themes relating to crime and immigration (SI, 2018:1). The 2018 incident involving Chinese tourists in Sweden and the resultant sketch on the satirical show Svenska Nyheter stirred up severe criticism of Sweden’s human rights record in China (Bohman & Michalski, 2018: 85).

Against the backdrop of this intensified debate, there are some that position media to have an essential role in the setting, spreading and construction of social knowledge (Richardsson, 2007). In contemporary society, where media is all encompassing, the study of media is significant in order to analyze and understand power, people and knowledge. Media is an integral part of international politics, arguably in many ways constituting one communication dimension. In this aspect, contemporary politics and social values can be referenced to the formative significance of journalism. Journalism is thus a powerful tool of communication through which the employing of rhetorical argumentation in a normative framework of objective reporting help people to organize their understanding of the world (Richardson, 2007: 7-181). This thesis investigates the role of Swedish and Chinese media in establishing, sending and setting frames around the Gui case. It is concerned with how foreign policy is formulated and perceived in news on cases of detained citizens with dual nationality, and how political norms and values are carried forward through journalistic frames in different political systems. For instance, in China, the overlap between media reporting and official foreign policy is stronger. Meanwhile, Swedish media often criticize Sweden’s foreign policy and have the ability to take on a broader and more complex picture.

1.1 Research focus

This thesis is concerned with text, and it seeks to investigate the potential role and power of daily news in relation to foreign policy and journalistic narratives on human rights. It has the intention of discovering how the Gui Minhai case is framed by each side and how each side challenge the other side's arguments. The assumption is that the journalistic practice of sending and setting frames differ in practice depending on the context. Rather than making universal claims on journalistic practices and a homogenous journalistic tendency towards frame setting or frame sending, this thesis aspires to make claims about journalistic practices in specific contexts. How the Gui case is portrayed should be able to say something about how Swedish (western) media discourse and Chinese media discourse both conflict with and impact on each other. While, only looking at journalistic practices would have shown how rhetoric might have changed throughout the case, it would not have explained the larger political framework in which media operates. In order to explain this, and in particular the impact of foreign policy institutions, selected government statements were also included in the data collection. The overall research question is 'How is the Gui Minhai case depicted in Swedish and Chinese daily news?'

1.4 Theoretical approach

This thesis draws on an interdisciplinary theoretical approach combining social constructivist theory, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the practice of journalistic framing that will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

1.5 Method and data collection

The CDA analysis was carried out using Fairclough's three dimensional model, supplemented with the construction of journalistic frames. Data was collected from four newspapers in total: two prominent English language online newspapers published in China and also two prominent Swedish online newspapers. The newspapers with the highest circulation in both countries were chosen. The complete data set contain online news published between 2015 and 2018. Data and methods are further discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

1.6 Research delimitations

Additional data such as interviews or written pieces by social commentators, images or articles from other sources, chats, blogs, videos and radio were not collected. This material was

disregarded firstly because of the size of the study, and secondly because of the focus on media rhetoric and foreign policy, as opposed to the broader public debate. In addition, as the space for debate on social media blogs in China is somewhat limited, it would have skewed the comparison unevenly. Due to the limited time frame of the study and the difficulties getting access, neither journalists nor government officials were interviewed. If this had been possible, it could have contributed to a deeper understanding of how journalistic framing practices are carried out.

1.7 Ethical considerations and positionality

All the data analyzed is published material. This posed few ethical problems. Notwithstanding, the researcher, as a Swedish citizen, is undoubtedly influenced by Swedish (western) media discourse and Swedish (western) liberal norms and values. She has however lived in China for a certain time period. Although complete objectivity can be perceived to always be somewhat of a struggle, it is hoped both sides were given equal attention. The Gui Minhai case is a current and ongoing sensitive case, looked upon by many as a human rights case. Although the research per se does not deal directly with human rights law, it still addresses issues related to making human suffering visible in the media.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Cultural politics of news

Studies of news have had the tendency to prioritize the examination of a media-society dichotomously relationship, in which respective sides have been treated as exclusive. That is to say, studies have either focused on media itself, and how media affects wider society, or on society itself and how wider society affects the media (Allan, 2010: 3). This media-society dichotomy has proven problematic as it places a limit on the type of research questions that can be asked (Allan, 2010, Achetti, 2010). If news is removed from its political, economic and cultural context, its ability to influence is often overstated. According to Allan (2010: 4), there is a continued need to break down this media-society dichotomy. In other words, it is necessary to look at both how relations of power and control are embedded in news content, and at the same time to acknowledge and recognize the way in which discourse transforms, redefines and challenges those relations, as they are reinforced by social actors over time (Achetti, 2010: 3; Allan, 2010: 4). The study of news therefore needs to be understood as an interdisciplinary research field (Häger 2009, Allan, 2010, Achetti, 2010) and in this study will from this point be considered as such.

“Journalists are among the pre-eminent storytellers of modern society” (Allan, 2010: 9). This entails that news can be analytically understood as an ideological construction. For example, myths, discourse and ideology permeate propaganda and journalistic practices. Myths depoliticize and neutralize concepts and beliefs engraved in news and further stereotypes (Barthes, 1972), while hidden propaganda in news works to impact the values, opinions and behaviors of readers (Chomsky, 1997; Edelstein, 1997; Hartley, 1996; 2002). Media coverage is always selective. In reports on foreign countries, dominant stereotypes and discourses tend to take precedence. Influential social actors, together with the media, influence and/or restrict accounts of reality. Even in democratic societies, the media is not independent of political and economic power, as journalists continuously need to access political actors for information. Commercialization has also made news media outlets increasingly financially dependent on advertising revenues, while another dominant trend has been to see news media outlets taken over by conglomerates ((Schulz, 1976: 26; Habermas, 1992: 454; Chomsky, 1997; Allan, 2010: 64; Achetti, 2010: 1; Krumbein, 2015).

2.2 News values

In most media systems, news stories are evaluated based on how interesting or important they are. That does not entail that importance and interest always necessarily coincide. Conflict can arise over whether content should be steered by market forces or social norms. However, when an issue is considered to be of public interest, most editors deem that there is a public need to generate reporting on it (Häger, 2009: 80; Huan, 2016: 1). In Sweden, this notion is commonly applied to issues where the media functions as a watchdog (Häger, 2009: 81). News stories are given more priority if many people are affected, but the editorial content should also be comprehensible. That can entail that important issues are sometimes disregarded because they are deemed too complicated to report on (Häger, 2009: 81, 270). Meanwhile, in the Chinese context news stories might be disregarded because they are considered too sensitive (Huan, 2016: 1-3). In China, news stories should follow political and ideological guidelines (Huan, 2016: 3). Reports on people foster identification, and the personification of news increases its understanding and value. This is why human harm has a tendency to be prioritized (Häger, 2009: 80, 90; Huan, 2016: 5, 7).

Furthermore, topics which are about the country's geographic and cultural vicinity have a greater value, so the reported issue should be as recent and as close as possible. In addition, it is easier for readers to identify with those with who they experience a cultural, political, economic and pious identification. News stories about conflicts are therefore given higher priority when they represent a divergence between different parties. The probability of a story being covered by the media also increases if elite individuals, such as celebrities or politicians, are involved. This might be due to the fact that they are considered to have both the power and ability to affect many people (Häger, 2009: 83, 86-89). Personification and elite focus are particular important to the selection of Chinese news coverage (Huan, 2016: 1). Furthermore, negative news tend to be prioritized over positive news, and greater attention tends to be paid to elite nations (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965). The elite focus is often directed toward important political events or powerful organizations (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge 1965: 68, Brighton & Foy 2007: 7, Huan 2016: 3-5). News stories are sometimes reported on from a certain angle. The clearer the editorial consensus is on who is good and who is bad, the higher the probability there is for subjective reporting (Häger, 2009: 94, 101).

Government policies on human rights are both sources for news coverage and things that shape news (Zhang & Brown, 2009). How media report on human rights is important for several reasons. Firstly, media coverage feeds into the work of NGOs and governments. For example

stories of human rights abuses provide chances to illustrate NGO reports on human rights. Secondly, media coverage of human rights makes these human rights important for foreign policy making. Thirdly, media reports often provide information needed to convey more academic arguments to the public (Zhang & Brown, 2009). Correspondents report on human rights abuses according to their understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Their reporting also depends on, whether they, from a journalistic viewpoint consider the human rights violation to be newsworthy (Häger, 2009; Zhang & Brown, 2009).

2.3 China in the news

Isaacs (1958: 71) argued that the evolution of China's image in Western media could be chronicled accordingly: (1) the Age of Respect (18th century); (2) the Age of Contempt (1840-1905); (3) the Age of Benevolence (1905-1937); (4) the Age of Admiration (1937-1944); (5) the Age of Disenchantment (1944-1949) and (6) the Age of Hostility (1949-1957). Mosher (1990: 20-1) later came to extend the sixth phase to include the U.S President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972. He further categorized the oscillations of the post-1949 period to supplement Isaacs's model: (7) the Second Age of Admiration (1972-1977); (8) the Second Age of Disenchantment (1977-1980); and (9) the Second Age of Benevolence (1980-1989). Based on contemporary portrayals of China in Western media, Cao (2014) has argued that two more stages can be included: (9) the Third Age of Disenchantment (1989-2001) and (10) the Age of Uncertainty (2001 - present). The assumption is that China's image in the West changes with each alteration in the international relationship, which corresponds with shifts in the geopolitical order and shifts in the China-western relationship (Cao, 2014: 3). Other scholars claim that there was a western centric image of China in place post 1949 but that the contemporary China which most westerners perceive today was essentially constructed by mainstream western media in the 21st century (Cohen 1985, Mackerras 2013, Tsai 2017).

Scholarly interest in media coverage of China greatly increased after the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The majority of this research looked at daily news coverage. Most studies examined coverage of China in only one country (Mokry, 2017). There are some studies which show that, while the critical image of China changed after the Beijing Olympics (Guo et al 2009) the 'rise of China', as well as negative and fearful projections such as 'the China threat' and 'China's wealth and power domination' have increasingly dominated (Qiang & Ye, 2013). Likewise, negative images prevail on heated topics such as climate change, human rights, trade and urban development (Sun, 2009, Shi, 2014). As noted by Cao (2014) the representation of China in western media has thus entered an "Age of Uncertainty", in which the description of China is

neither specifically negative nor positive but rather mixed and based on editors' experience and knowledge of China.

The ongoing expansion of Chinese media has been somewhat driven by this realization that international perceptions of China are largely shaped by the West, and that western media coverage is often unfavorable. On the other hand, the challenge for China's international media has been its inability to understand habits and mindsets of international audiences (Sun, 2010; Huan, 2016). The appeal of Chinese media has been improved by professionalism, innovation and technology. However, Chinese media's efforts to produce good impressions of China sometimes backfire. Soft power efforts are jeopardized by official hard-line approaches to sensitive issues on the international stage. Those actions make it impossible for Chinese media to even assume the appearance of objective reporting (Sun, 2010). Other scholars have argued that the globalization strategy of Chinese media is facing a crisis of credibility. However attempts to resolve this crisis by wielding political and economic power results in China being associated more with coercive power than ever before (Primiano, 2015; Tsai, 2017; Bohman & Michalski, 2018).

Managing a balance between allowing expression and maintaining the limits of expression has been an ongoing task of the PRC government, particularly since the 1989 Tiananmen protests. This management is characterized by oscillating cycles of relaxation and contraction. Intertwined with the dynamics of a knowledge economy and information society is the internal power-struggles that take place within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These struggles have historically has played out in sectors within the propaganda system, for example Chinese media. Such internal struggles gave license to brief periods of relaxation and openness in the public sphere in 1988-1989, 1997-1998 and 2003-2004 (Brady, 2017: 138). The marketization of Chinese media launched under Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) and Hu Jintao (2002-2012) sustained authoritarian rule, but it also created the conditions for political forces to seek to undermine the authority of CCP central leadership. These conditions were, something present when Xi Jinping became president in 2012. Tightening control under the Xi administration could therefore be an indication that China is going through another cycle of contraction (Brady, 2017).

2.4 The State and the media

Sweden's media system has been characterized as having a 'social responsibility' ideology which entails that the role of media is to contribute to society. A certain degree of interference from the Swedish state is considered positive, as it guarantees public interest (Siebert et al, 1965: 2, 5-7). This is distinguished by Sweden's public service media among which the Swedish state maintains some influence (Weibull & Wadbring, 2014: 3). On the other hand, China's media system (post 1949) has been characterized by a Soviet-Marxist media ideology which entails that media should contribute to the furthering of the state (Siebert et al, 1965: 2, 5-7, 121, 131).

While the state may be seen as the prime definer of national interests, media may be seen as the next most important definer of these interests. The ability of the nation-state to create a feeling of belonging that codifies its interests, visions and myths on foreign policy issues are integrated in media texts as contrasts of "us" and "them". When media "rally" to defend national interests, ideological narratives are more likely to be supported than challenged, and cultural and national symbols incite a sense of common sentiments and imagined grandeur (Lee, 2010). News thus make it possible for people to engage in discourse and imagine themselves as part of a national community (Anderson, 1991; Hall, 2013). Media influence perceptions of foreign policy issues, and contribute to an understanding and judgement of other nations and international actors (Chaban & Elgström, 2014).

2.5 The State and human rights

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted 1948 by the UN General Assembly, political and civil rights as well as economic and social rights are all considered human rights (Freeman, 2017: 3). The concept of universal human rights is essentially derived from the UDHR. Although there have been several debates over the years questioning and criticizing the universality of human rights, the concept of universality continues to permeate UN doctrine and work (Freeman, 2017: 3-17). But on a global scale the conception of human rights is viewed differently, and certain rights preside over others. Human rights are therefore not given equal importance everywhere in the world, and media in different countries reflects the dominant rights of each cultural discourse (Krumbein, 2015).

In Sweden, human rights are considered to be closely intertwined with democratic rule and the separation of political and judicial power. The Swedish conception of human rights protects the individual against the state. As in most liberal democracies, this human rights discourse is consensual in Sweden (Dahl, 2006). According to its latest foreign policy statement, Sweden promotes human rights, Swedish democracy should permeate all areas of foreign policy and the

Swedish government considers itself to have a responsibility to promote human rights and protest when freedom of expression is violated (Government of Sweden, 2019: 2). A significant feature of post-Cold War Swedish foreign policy has been a profound emphasis on human rights alongside a more universal interpretation of rights compared to a few decades ago, when socio-economic rights were regularly emphasized as primary rights. Sweden remains largely attached to its nonaligned doctrine in a unipolar world, and the idea that only nonaligned actors can pursue foreign policy activism still holds an important place. Sweden's international image has been largely centered on its activist foreign policy, with it sometimes being praised as 'a moral superpower'. A moral-activist state sees itself as a role model in the international community and regularly takes it upon itself to act as a guide for other actors, using international law as a key tool (Dahl, 2006). A softer tone and quiet diplomacy have also distinguished Swedish post-Cold War diplomacy. The notion of the 'Swedish model' and the idea, that Sweden has much to teach the world, is a vital part of Sweden's self-image and neutrality is deeply associated with national identity (Dahl, 2006).

China's human rights policy saw a strategic shift after 1989: from ignoring the topic by referring to Chinese sovereignty, to a more active role in human rights forums. While western liberal conceptions of human rights are largely focused on political-civil rights, the Chinese conception is rather focused on collective rights of development and subsistence. Human rights are seen as a state objective as opposed to individual rights. The main objective of Chinese human rights policy is improvement of socio-economic conditions for the Chinese people (Krumbein, 2015).

2.5.1 Chinese nationalism and human rights

According to Jia (2005) and Krumbein (2015), human rights cases can be associated with outbursts of Chinese nationalism at certain times. However, if nationalism is looked at from a longer term historical perspective, then the argument that Chinese nationalism is stronger than in that in other countries is doubtful. This means that, the arguments that there has been a rise of Chinese nationalism is flawed. If Chinese nationalism attracts more international attention now it is because, as a result of China's uninterrupted and rapid development over the last decades, the international community has become more sensitive to Chinese nationalism now than in the past (Jia, 2005; Primiano, 2015). A more balanced view is that China's international integration has in some respects led to stronger Chinese nationalism in some areas but weaker nationalism in other areas. For example, China is more nationalistic in its reaction to foreign criticism and condemnations of China than before. China is also more nationalistic today in the

sense that it takes greater pride in China's achievements, and China is more nationalistic in the ways which it approaches foreign affairs than before (Jia, 2005). Contemporary Chinese nationalism should be understood as a product of the interactions between China and the rest of the world. In the eyes of the Chinese, Western condemnation of China on political issues and its effort to push for changes in China according to Western values and priorities undermine the authority of the Chinese government and threatens its political stability and territorial sovereignty (Jia, 2005; Primiano, 2015).

It has been theorized that the Chinese government is aware that it will incur damage to its international image but still does not adhere to international calls for change; as such adherence would be more costly than beneficial (Primiano, 2015). Western apathy to what China deems as its core national interests has been a major source of contemporary Chinese nationalism. What many westerners believe to be well-intended efforts to help China develop have on the contrary become an important source of Chinese resentment against the West (Jia, 2005). (Jia, 2005; Primiano, 2015).

2.6 Reporting Chinese human rights

Zhang & Brown (2009) explored how the European reporting on the human rights situation in China changed from 1989-2005. Their study found that there was a shift in reporting on Chinese human rights from 1993 onwards. This shift was, mostly due to the growing importance placed on covering the economic rise of China. News values, agenda setting and the relationship between western governments' policies towards China indicated that although negative coverage of China could affect the short-term image of China in western media, economic policy and foreign governments' activity towards China were factors which ultimately shaped media coverage long term. Political conflicts and diplomatic fights were taken to be considerably more powerful drivers for news coverage than human rights violations (Zhang & Brown, 2009).

Krumbein (2015) sought to identify decisive factors explaining the news coverage of human rights in China. He found that whether a human rights violation is reported in western media or not depended on the following criteria: (1) whether the violation fits into an already existing narrative about human rights violations, (2) whether violation of a political-civil rights take place, (3) whether the violation occurs in the media's home country or in a country that has important ties with the media's home country, or whether the violation constitutes a significant event, (4) whether actors with a high position in society and/or government speak on behalf of

the victims, and (5) whether freedom of the press exists and the media are independent (Krumbein, 2015).

2.7 Reporting on other detained Swedish citizens

A study by Lind & Jönsson (2012) on Swedish reporting about detained Swedish journalist Dawit Isaak revealed that Isaac's case was largely ignored during his first years in Eritrean detention. In the early reporting, the newspapers used names and pointers to reduce the cultural and geographical distance. A turning point in the reporting took place in 2009, seven years after imprisonment, when Sweden's largest newspapers, Expressen (EXP) and Dagens Nyheter (DN) conducted a joint campaign for Isaak. In addition to a change in the number of articles, significant changes were seen in the page references, the size of images, the length of articles and the context. The study did not include Aftonbladet, however the analysis of EXP and DN revealed that the newspapers regularly referred to Isaak as 'the Swede', 'the father' or 'the Gothenburgian'. DN was conservative in its reporting on Isaak, and was the newspaper that varied the least in how Isaak was named. However, the study's qualitative analysis also showed that a change in tone took place over time. When DN joined the campaign for Isaak the coverage changed drastically. For example, DN was critical of the Swedish government's efforts and also argued against Eritrea's foreign policy actions. Lind & Jönsson (2012) concluded that the lack of reporting on Isaak was due to the fact that newspapers did not judge that a person with dual citizenship and foreign name in an African country to be sufficiently high news value.

On the case of detained Swedish researcher Ahmadreza Djalali, detained since 2016 in Iran, no academic study on media reporting could be retrieved.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This thesis draws on an interdisciplinary framework based on social constructivist theory, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and journalistic framing. Social constructivism, CDA and framing share basic ontological and epistemological assumptions in the sense that they all see social phenomena as constructions, created through social interactions and continuously revised (Bryman, 2012: 33). The research question “*How is the Gui Minhai case depicted in the daily news in Sweden and China?*” has an emphasis on social involvement in the construction of reality. The social world therefore needs to be seen as an ongoing accomplishment of actors rather than of external forces (Bryman, 2012: 34). In simple words, research looks at understandings of human behavior. Constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology fit well with each other in the sense that they both spring from neutralism; the notion that people are authors of their world and it is people who attribute meaning to behavior (Bryman, 2012: 49). Furthermore, all theories share the interest in the importance of language.

Framing works as a complement to CDA. It looks at which metaphorical framing of political issues and how metaphorical frames are used to affect how people reason on issues, by emphasizing under which conditions journalists are likely to pursue frame sending (where they passively disclose interpretations that have been made by others) or frame setting (where they provide the readers with their own individual interpretation). Journalism in a sense is about interpreting the world (Hartley, 1996) and that is why framing is useful for analyzing journalistic practices (Brüggemann, 2014). While theories about news values and gatekeeping mainly see journalism as the process of selecting news for publication based on their criteria for newsworthiness, the concept of ‘framing’ integrates the interpretative role of journalism. In other words, journalists do to some degree engage in both frame sending and frame setting while at the same time evaluating what events to write about and acting as gatekeepers (Brüggemann, 2014).

3.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory which is used in many disciplines. Constructivists believe that the social world is constructed and obtains meaning through beliefs, actions and interactions. Thus,

reality is essentially a social product of interactions, and reality is understood differently depending on an individual's way of perceiving it. State identity is not exogenously given by the international system but is shaped and constructed endogenously through culture, values and norms. Constructivists view the international system as a place where nations interact as social beings (Burchill, 2005: 202-203). The constructivist interest in identity, culture, interest and experience creates space for history and cultural distinctiveness in the study of media texts and foreign affairs (Burchill, 2005: 206).

The focus of social constructivist theory lies on the individual and society. The theory's aim is to understand how actors construct, interpret and understand knowledge from the type of ideology or belief system that they themselves are formed within (Delanty, 1997: 112) When looking at news reports, social constructivists therefore want to understand how ideas and understandings of reported issues are conceived, organized and used in society.

3.2 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis argues that textual meaning is actually constructed through an interaction between the producer, the text and its consumer (Richardson, 2007: 15). The aim of CDA is to reveal the role of discursive practices in the social world and in social relations which involve unequal relations of power. Power is created and reproduced through discourse and its effect is interpreted as ideology. The social world is in a sense created by power and power in turn generates the way in which the social world is perceived and talked about. Some discourses have stronger impact on mass media than others, but a society in general tends to be dominated by one discourse. The power relations between different discourses are often understood through the ideological and hegemonic backgrounds of the discourse. (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2006: 63). The "critical" in Critical Discourse Analysis inherently has two meanings; it refers to social inequality and/or the investigation of how texts are generated and shaped by ideology and relations of power (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2006: 70). Discourse analysis is useful when aiming to understand why certain things feel easier to say, think and assimilate. It opens up for the understanding how things are linked together because it places importance on the context. By applying CDA the analysis becomes intertextual, and that makes it possible to look at text in relation to other social dimensions (Fairclough, 2001: 126).

3.3 Framing

It is a common practice among journalists to quote sources in articles, and sources are often used to present opportune witnesses representing their world view. According to Brüggemann (2014), the key question is whether or not the frames in these quotes conflict with or are in line with, the journalist's interpretation. Empirically, it is plausible that a mix of frame sending and frame setting occur; as journalists need to shorten statements and thereby, to a certain degree, engage in constructing 'reality'. On one hand, journalistic products will always reflect frames set by an author. On the other hand, journalism is a result of negotiation between journalists and their sources, and of collective sense-making within the editorial room. With this in mind, journalistic products only partly reflect frames of the individual author, and instead when assembling information journalists practice frame sending and frame setting. Frame sending and frame setting can be seen as two ends of a continuum. In the middle, the practice of sending frames by actors and conceptualizing their frames provides readers with 'hints' about which frames are more appropriate (Brüggemann, 2014).

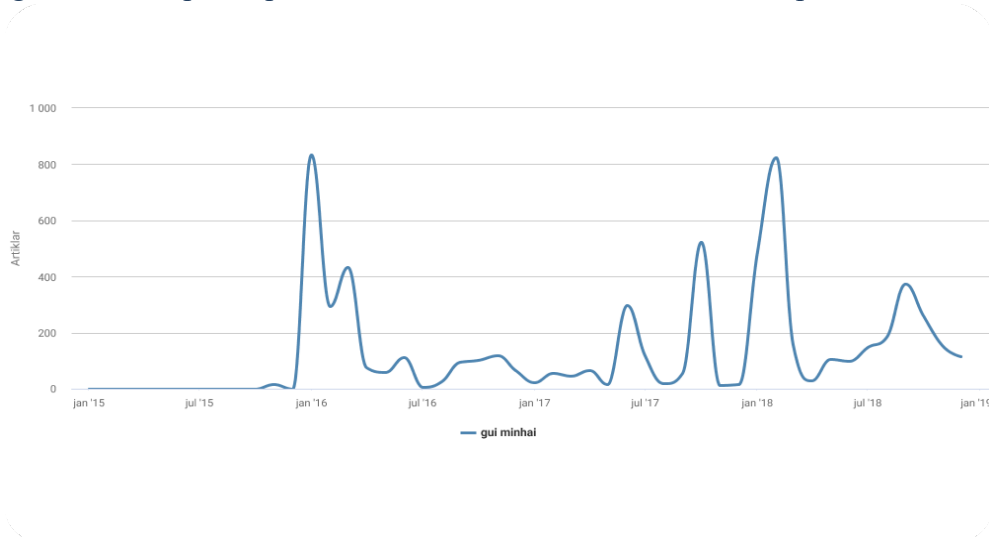
This middle path is an interpretive account whereby journalists present different frames of an issue, some in conflict and some in line with their own world views. Journalists *frame frames* presented by external actors (Brüggemann, 2014). To take an example from the human rights debate: journalists may quote actors who frame human rights as non-universal rights. If the journalist adheres to the Western-liberal view, he or she may emphasize that the actor who argues for non-universal human rights is from a country ruled by an authoritarian government or a country which has yet to ratify UN covenants. Labels also suffice to contextualize frames in a way that indicates the preferred reading of a debate and evaluation of respective actors, making these actors warrant the trust of the reader. What looks like 'neutral reporting' does contain frames. When the journalist does not agree with a presented perspective but still provides an account of the issue without evaluation, this is a clear-cut instance of frame sending. However if the journalist does agree with the perspective, this is also an instance of frame setting. To publish quotations by actors without further contextualization and evaluation has the effect of legitimizing quotations as contributions to public debate (Brüggemann, 2014).

Chapter 4: Empirical Material

4.1 Data collection

Data was collected from two prominent Chinese-English language online newspapers (China Daily and Global Times) and from two prominent Swedish online newspapers (Dagens Nyheter and Aftonbladet). Chinese newspapers published in English were chosen because of their intended international audience. The newspapers with the highest online circulation in both countries were chosen (China Daily, 2019; Global Times, 2019; TU Media, 2018a). The data set are online reports published between 2015 to 2018. The time period was selected because Gui's first arrest occurred in October 2015. Only online reports written by the newspapers own journalists and from the news agencies TT and Xinhua were collected. Data was also collected from these news agencies because the media context is very different in Sweden and China. Chinese journalists need to rely on information from Xinhua to produce articles for stories on sensitive issues and international affairs. The aim was to collect and analyze corresponding data on both sides. Duplicated reports with identical titles were filtered, and recorded only once in the collection. Keywords and search strings can be found in Appendix A. Articles were collected from peak times in the case; this means reports published during weeks when specific events took place. In addition, the first report published was collected. In total 28 articles were collected (see Appendix B). Peak times were defined as 1) January 2016, first confession, 2) February 2016, second confession, 3) October 2017, reported to have been released, 4) January 2018, arrested while travelling to Beijing, 5) February 2018, third confession and 6) August 2018, meets with Swedish diplomatic envoy and medical staff.

Figure 1: Example of peak times in the case: Swedish media exposure over time



4.2 Newspapers

China Daily (CD)

Established in 1981 and owned by the China Daily Group. With an average daily circulation of over 200 000, it is the largest English language publication in China (China Daily, 2019). It is known to provide political, economic, cultural and social information on China to the world. It is considered an important channel for China to communicate internationally, as it is the most authoritative national English language newspaper with access to the mainstream international press community. This is seen in the fact that CD reports are more frequently reprinted by foreign press than any other Chinese media outlet (Liu, 2006: 74).

Global Times (GT)

A profit-oriented branch of the state owned newspaper People's Daily, it was founded in 1993, with an international edition established in 2009. Some consider it as one of the most prominent English voices of the CCP and it is especially known for its rather aggressive stance on foreign policy issues (Lee, 2003: 4). On this note, it cannot be considered solely as a mouthpiece of the party because it relies just as much on commercialization as other prominent Chinese newspapers (Huan, 2018). It has been suggested that GT's tradition of reporting news in a sensational manner is its way of thriving in China's growing competitive media landscape (Lee, 2003: 4). Regardless, GT reports tend to closely reflect official Chinese views on foreign policy and uphold national interests. It is a highly profitable marketed party newspaper that caters to elite readers, and thus a major venue for elite party discourse (Lee, 2007; Huan, 2018).

Dagens Nyheter (DN)

Sweden's largest subscribed daily newspaper with a country-wide readership, especially around the Stockholm area, and a wide target audience. It is therefore considered to be a newspaper of national importance and reach (Hadenius 2011, Weibull & Walbring, 2014: 133). According to its website it positions itself as "Oberoende liberal (Independent liberal)" and standalone from political and economic power spheres and organizations (DN, 2019). It was founded in 1864 and in 2017 it had a net range of 1095 000 readers daily (TU Media, 2018b). It is owned by the Bonnier Group, a Swedish media group which has several publishing, TV and newspaper outlets (Bonnier, 2019).

Aftonbladet (AB)

A Swedish evening newspaper which positions itself as "unbound social democratic" (Aftonbladet, 2018). Since the launch of its news site in 1994, it has held an unprecedented number-one position regarding the publication of online news. It is owned by the Norwegian media group Schibsted Media Group (91 per cent) and the National Organization in Sweden, LO (9 per cent). In 2017 it had a net range of 3 312 000 readers daily (TU Media, 2018b).

4.3 News Agencies

Xinhua (XN)

Founded in 1931 by the CCP, Xinhua is tasked with conveying official positions and is one of the most effective tools used by the party to reach citizens. Xinhua's minutes from official Party meetings are the only reports of these meetings that may be published in Chinese newspapers. Xinhua also edits and censors texts from foreign news agencies (Gruvö, u.å.). With more than 10,000 employees, present in 120 countries, it is one of the world's foremost news agencies, as well as a publisher and owner of both newspapers and magazines. Apart from Chinese and English, Xinhua publishes in several languages (Gruvö, u.å.). Other Chinese news media has to rely on Xinhua reports to cover sensitive issues. This means that the function of Xinhua is very different from the Swedish news agency TT, which is used more by newspapers to find reports when they lack time or funding to do their own reporting.

Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT)

TT was established in 1921 by a group of Swedish metropolitan newspapers. Until 1999, it was a cooperative where Swedish media were both owners and customers. In 1999, TT Spektra became part of the TT Group, which is the name the agency operates under today. They provide news, information and other material. TT-Gruppen has in recent years also started working with news graphics. Today it functions similar to a newspaper in the sense that reporters and photographers gather information that is edited into articles. This material is then distributed to TT's subscribers within the Swedish press, radio and television as well as to other customers. Articles from TT constitute an important source of coverage of many Swedish news editors (TT, 2019).

4.5 National context

4.5.1 China

Media context: The Reform area (1978-1989) saw the marketization of China's media, and commercialization followed in the 1990s. Ownership has since been consolidated to form media groups that retain affiliations at provincial and municipal levels. Notable examples are the People's Daily Group, the China Daily Group, and the Xinhua News Agency (Hang, 2016: 742). The government administers and regulates media industries through several supervisory bodies. For news media, regulation is carried out by the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) which reports to the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (CPCPD). The CPCPD oversees media content and editors-in-chiefs and the directors of media groups are required to report to the CPCPD on a weekly basis for instructions on how, and to what extent, certain stories should be covered. It was previously announced that the GAPP and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television would merge into a new body called SAPPRT (Hang, 2016. 741), but after a massive institutional reform in 2018, SAPPRT's functions were assumed by the State Administration of Radio and Television (SART) and the CPCPD (Thomson Reuters, 2019).

Political context: The extent to which the state considers itself to have the right to interfere in media content is high (Weibull & Wadbring, 2014:29). There is strong consensus over the support of media to advance national development and government policy (Zhou & Zhou, 2016). China ranked 176 out of 180 countries according to the 2018 World Press Freedom index (RSF, 2018). According to the NGO Freedom House, China is considered "Not Free" in terms of media freedom (ranking 87 out of 100 scores) (Freedom House 2016, 2017).

Journalistic context: According to a *Worlds of Journalism study* (2016), in China it is considered the most important aspect of the journalistic role 'to report things as they are, to provide analysis of current affairs, to support national development, to provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life, and to be a detached observer' (Zhou & Zhou, 2016). Chinese journalists experience a limited degree of professional autonomy but a certain degree of freedom in the selection of news stories. However their autonomy with regards to for sensitive news or news about international issues is very limited (Zhou & Zhou, 2016).

4.5.2 Sweden

Media context: Print media have seen a steady decline but circulation still remain quite high compared to other countries. The online subscriptions market is dominated by Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet. Today there are almost no ownership ties between the press and political parties, but the tradition of a politically orientated press continues in some respects (Wadbring & Ohlsson 2019).

Political context: Is shaped by a consensus in that all major political parties recognize that the role of media in a democratic society is to objectively report on facts and keep those in power accountable to the public. Sweden is generally regarded as proactive on freedom of expression and freedom of the press, both in terms of domestic actions as well as the promotion/encouragement of initiatives abroad (Wadbring & Ohlsson 2019). Sweden ranked second out of 180 countries according to the 2018 World Press Freedom index (RSF, 2018). According to Freedom House, it is considered “Free” in terms of media freedom (ranking 11 out of 100 scores) Freedom House 2016, 2017).

Journalistic context: The idea that media is a watchdog and a third estate in society is strong. According to a *Worlds of Journalism study* (2016), Swedish journalists found the most important aspect of their journalistic role to be ‘to report things the way they are, to be a detached observer and to let people express their views’ (Löfgren Nilsson, 2016). Journalists furthermore experienced a high degree of professional autonomy and a majority expressed a high confidence in public institutions (Löfgren Nilsson, 2016).

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

5.1 Research design

Within CDA there are several methods. Fairclough's three dimensional model is commonly used to describe discourse in empirical research on society and communication. Another scholar is Van Dijk. Methodologically, Van Dijk's three dimensional ideology analysis is similar to Fairclough's three dimensional model. Van Dijk's model assumes that mental models and social recognition is what mediate between social practice and discourse practice. In contrast, Fairclough's model assumes that this is achieved by discursive practice alone (van Dijk, 1993; 2004). Van Dijk's model could have been used for this research, but because of the researcher's familiarity with Fairclough's model, this was chosen. Fairclough's model assumes that text is simultaneously constituted of (social) identities, (social) relations, belief and knowledge. Each component is approached through three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. Text examines how language is used as a social practice. Discursive practice examines how language is used within a specific discourse, and social practice examines how a particular perspective gains meaning from talking about it in a certain way (Fairclough, 2001: 126, Philips & Jorgensen, 2006: 67).

5.2 Research question

How are the Gui Minhai case depicted in Swedish and Chinese daily news?

Sub-questions

How is Gui, Sweden, and China described?

What discursive frames are found and why?

How are human rights and foreign policy frames presented in support of these frames?

Who is given a voice and for what purpose?

5.3 Fairclough's three dimensional model

5.3.1 Text

This linguistic analysis concentrates on the characteristics and structure of the text. Characteristics include grammar, wording, modality, and metaphors. Media works to represent interpretations of events as if they were facts. This is done partly through modalities and metaphors. Modality emphasizes the speaker's relationship to, or similarity with, the written

text. In newspaper articles modality appears as what the author considers to be facts (Philips & Jorgensen, 2006). Metaphorical speech serves to convert the characteristics of one thing into another (Deacon et al, 2010: 147). Structure involve looking at how sentences are connected, the use of headlines and the acts of persuasion.

5.3.2 Discursive practice

Discursive analysis is concerned with what has happened with the text before it has been published. What kind of processes and changes has it gone through? And why is it that the same text can be seen in different versions? (Richardson, 2007: 40). Intertextuality involves looking at how language is used within a specific discourse, and Fairclough (1995: 61) explains it as a bridge between text and discourse. Rather than reflect events, news are essentially interpretations of events. Much of the distribution of power and influence in modern society can be derived from cultural politics and is largely neutralized by news discourses. The extent to which news discourses have the ability to depoliticize dominant meanings, values and beliefs associated with inequalities or social divisions, continuously contribute to their perpetuation (Allan, 2010: 1-95). This dynamic process of mediation is constant, and rooted in ideological conditions of how news should be produced and consumed (Allan, 2010: 5).

5.3.3 Social practice

By looking at social practice the analysis can come to an understanding of how the text has been influenced by, or might influence wider society. (Richardson, 2007: 45). Social actors are often represented in news content with implications on power relations between different groups (Van Dijk 1993), and quotation patterns shed light on perspectives and the ways in which actors are interpreted and represented by each newspaper. Fairclough (2003: 145-6) discusses several extracts that English language propose for referring to people; inclusion/exclusion of social actors; activated/passivated (whether a social actor is represented as a patient or an agent); named/classified (is referred to by name or as a category); personal/impersonal (is represented personally or impersonally); grammatical role (is realized in a subject position, as a possessive pronoun or as a prepositional object) and specific/generic.

Chapter 6: Analysis

CDA assumes that all textual content is a direct choice by the journalist. With this in mind, the first part of the analysis is a linguistic analysis that focuses on characteristics and structure. It looks at how Gui, Sweden and China are described in news content and in government statements. The second part is a discourse analysis that is concerned with intertextuality and news as interpretations of events. The final part of the analysis looks at those who are heard and quoted on the case, and how they are central to understanding the role of media in different societies. This section particularly examines how perspectives on the case gain meaning from talking about it in a certain way.

6.1 Headlines in Swedish and Chinese news

Headlines describe the theme and convey the gist of a news story (Fairclough, 2015: 152). They serve as initial indicators of news values and, also work to attract attention, which is important for the way the newspaper appeals to its readers (Conboy, 2007).

6.1.1 Swedish headlines

Gui is not named in headlines from the Swedish articles until the autumn of 2017. From there on, there is a steady increase in the number of articles with headlines that name Gui, showing the way a case that is separate from the HK booksellers is being built up around him. This corresponds to the arguments made by Häger (2009) reflections, who states that headlines reflect Swedish news values in the sense that they give priority to one of several conflicting accounts of the case. Reports on people foster identification. In this instance, Gui's Swedish citizenship would make his story more important for Swedish media. Readers can identify with those with whom they experience a cultural and political identification.

The headlines of the Swedish articles have both negative and uncertain valence. These headlines are eye-catching and forceful; they portray an assertive China and a cynical Sweden. The negative portrayal of China in the headlines corresponds to what surveys (Eurobarometer, 2017 & Pew, 2018) ¹ have found to be the on Swedish public's perception of China. This supports the findings of Bohman & Michalski (2018), and assuming that there is a dialectical

¹ Described in Chapter 1 Introduction, and in Rühling et al, 2018 and Wike et al, 2018 respectively

relationship between journalism and society means that journalists act on the social world and the social world in turn acts on journalism (Richardson, 2007: 7). In this sense, both AB and DN seek to appeal to their reader's opinions by presenting headlines which reflect what appears to be a strong consensus on China. The following are some examples, with phrased add emphasis italicized (original Swedish in Appendix B):

- “Swedish publicist *disappeared* in Hong Kong” (November 11, 2015)
- “*The hunt* for dissidents *knows no boundaries*” (February 7, 2016)
- “*Censorship hit* the Swedish Ambassador” (April 7, 2016)
- “*Many questions* about imprisoned publicist” (February 28, 2017)
- “Gui Minhai *arrested* by Chinese police *again*” (January 22, 2018)
- “Gui Minhai *arrested in front of the eyes* of Swedish diplomats” (January 22, 2018)
- “Gui Minhai: Sweden is using me to *cause problems* for China” (February 9, 2018)
- “Gui Minhai *forced* to appear on Chinese tv” (February 9, 2018)
- “Wallström: *Don't know* about Gui Minhai” (July 3, 2018)
- “China is *testing the boundaries* for what can be done” (September 17, 2018)
- “Relations with China have *never been worse*” (October 17, 2018)

6.1.2 Chinese headlines

The headlines of the Chinese articles also revealed negative valence. These headlines often present what could be interpreted as attempts to explain and justify China's position. According to Huan (2016), headlines reflect Chinese news values in the sense that they contain political and ideological content which works to promote official held positions. Jia (2005) and Primiano (2015), state that this ideological content is frequently of the form of which could be condemnation of 'the West' and 'Western media's' efforts to push for changes in China according to its own values and priorities. Similar to Swedish headlines, the headlines of Chinese articles are eye-catching and negative elements prevail. The headlines depict China as a victim and present Sweden (or the West), as seeking to undermine the judicial authority of the Chinese government. In addition, Gui is barely mentioned by name. The following are some examples, with phrases adding emphasis italicized added:

- “‘Missing’ HK bookseller *turns himself in* to mainland police for *drunk driving killing* of a college girl in 2003” (January 17, 2016)
- “Don't *distort* publisher case into mainland-HK *dispute*” (January 19, 2016)

“Public confession *needs to be viewed within context*” (January 27, 2016)

“Western media has *no right to interfere* in China's judicial process” (January 23, 2018)

“China’s law *not under thumb of West*” (February 8, 2018)

“HK bookseller *confesses to truth* about *so-called ‘disappearance,’* says Sweden *‘manipulated’ him*” (February 10, 2018)

“Is Sweden making *‘Saving Gui Minhai’* movie?” (February 10, 2018)

“*Attack* on China’s judicial system *driven by bigotry*” (February 22, 2018)

6.2 General descriptions

6.2.1 Persuasion

Besides the particular news value of an article and the features it employs to attract attention (such as an eye-catching headlines), ethos, logos, and pathos also help make readers feel connected to a particular news item. As rhetorical tools, these things work to persuade the audience to accept the presented journalistic frame and in turn support this frame. It is therefore necessary to analyze the use of ethos, logos, and pathos by news stories in the Swedish and Chinese media in order to see how these articles employ persuasive power to influence their readers.

Ethos, Logos and Pathos in the Swedish articles:

The DN article “Uppgift: Gui Minhai har släppts fri” (Lindkvist et al, 2017) serves as an example of the Swedish approach to persuasion. The *ethos* (or character of the reporter), which establishes the credibility of the journalist and the newspaper, is produced by using quotes from several important social actors connected to the case. The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SMoFA) is quoted: ‘we have received news from the Chinese authorities that he has been released’. Gui’s daughter Angela Gui, is also quoted saying that she ‘doesn’t know where (her) father is’. Another quote, from ‘Patrick Poon an Amnesty International researcher in China’ also helps support the credibility of the journalist writing the article: ‘the Chinese authorities have ignored a fair judicial process’ and ‘the system is designed to break people and force them to agree to the Chinese government’s version of events’.

Logos, or appeals to logic and reason, are also presented in the article, through quoting from the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs (SMF) Margot Wallström’s Twitter account: ‘still

occupied with the matter and seeking further clarification’. Logos is also presented by quoting from Angela Gui’s tweet: ‘while we have been told that #GuiMinhai has been released he is NOT free’ and ‘#GuiMinhai has disappeared again, likely by the Chinese government’. The article also employs logos in its statement that ‘none of the diplomats at the Swedish Embassy in Beijing wants to talk about the case’ and ‘the Ambassador was not at the Embassy, neither (did she) answer her phone’. Logos is presented in a quotation from ‘another of the five (booksellers) Lam Wing-kee’: ‘I was forced to act in front of the camera’.

Pathos, or appeals to emotion, is generated in the article’s statement ‘when the Ambassador visited Gui a few months ago, she spent most of the time reassuring Gui that his daughter was ok’. The statement that ‘there was no sign of physical abuse’ also creates a strong sense of pathos, making the readers feel concerned about Gui’s wellbeing. A strong sense of pathos is produced by the description of how ‘Angela sleeps with her phone on her pillow awaiting his call, and will continue to do so until he calls’.

Ethos, Logos and Pathos in the Chinese articles:

The GT article “Missing’ HK bookseller turns himself in to mainland police for drunk driving killing of a college girl in 2003” (GT, 2016b) also features use of ethos, logos and pathos. Ethos is established in the article by way it lets readers hear directly from the source, namely Gui himself. In the last paragraph of the article, a statement speaks about the ‘mystery (that) has been surrounding the whereabouts of Gui and four other booksellers’. This strengthens the sense of ethos as the readers of the article obtain the impression that, because of this accurate report, the ‘mystery’ has now been solved.

In a way that employs logos, the article quotes Gui as saying his situation is ‘My personal choice’ and ‘I should shoulder my responsibility’. The reader is meant to feel that it is logical that Gui returned to China out of remorse to turn himself in after 11 years on the run for killing a young woman while driving drunk. Detailed descriptions of the fatal accident ‘police confirmed that he was driving while intoxicated’ strengthens this sense of logos. Logos is again seen in the description of how ‘Gui is suspected of committing other crimes and investigations are underway’. The reader is meant to understand that these procedures are logical and necessary.

The article establishes pathos in its descriptions of the girl who Gui allegedly killed: ‘the girl, surnamed Shen, who was around 20 at the time of her death, her father already over 70’. It describes how the Girl’s ‘parents had protested about the sentence requesting that Gui receive a harsher punishment but Gui had fled overseas using a fake ID’.

6.2.2 Descriptions on human rights, justice and rule of law

The Swedish articles:

The framing of the arrest of Gui as part of a ‘hidden political agenda’ appear early in Swedish reports, and it is found in almost all articles. Such framing is present in, among others, the articles “Svensk förläggare försvunnen i Hongkong” (Pettersson, 2015); “Svenska förläggaren i häkte - uppvisad i kinesisk tv” (Holmberg, 2016); “Många frågor kring fängslad förläggare” (AB, 2017) and “Gui Minhai gripen av kinesisk polis igen” (Nordström, 2018). In the articles, statements making hints point readers to preferred readings of the situation. For example, one statement describes how ‘the same week Gui went missing, three of his employees were kidnapped’. Another statement asserts that ‘out of the booksellers, Gui remains the only one who is still detained’. The framing of Gui’s appearance on television as a ‘forced confession’ was also presented in many of the articles. These articles similarly used hints to indicate which reading the article’s readers should take. For example, a statement describes how Gui was ‘sitting with guards standing on each side of him’ (AB, 2018b; Pettersson & Kullving, 2018). Another statement, describes how it is a ‘known strategy to present this kind of forced confessions’ (AB, 2018c).

In the articles, metaphors and modalities were used to explain, to reason, and draw attention to presented frames. This can be seen, for example in the statements that ‘(the Chinese) have a variety of tools at hand’, ‘(they) have expanded the fight against dissidents’, ‘(they) silence critics’, and the description of the ‘the long arm of Beijing’ (Pettersson, 2015; 2016). Another statement using a metaphor is that which describes how ‘(Gui’s publishing activities have been) a constant nail in the eyes of the communist power holders’ (AB, 2017). The description of how Gui was ‘arrested in front of the eyes of Swedish diplomats’ often recurred. In addition, the articles sometimes used the labels ‘the dictatorship’ and ‘the regime’ to refer to China’s government (Pettersson & Kullving, 2018; Pettersson, 2018; Nordström, 2018).

The Chinese articles:

The Chinese articles also frame Sweden's actions as a 'hidden political agenda'. Among others, this framing is present in articles: "Is Sweden making 'Save Gui Minhai movie?'" (GT, 2018c) and "Attack on China's judicial system driven by bigotry" (GT, 2018d). Hints and labels were less common as preferred readings were often stated point blank. For example, one article states that 'the Swedish foreign ministry seems to want to demonstrate its diplomatic heroism by "saving" the bookseller Gui Minhai' (GT, 2018c). Another article state that, 'Gui said the Swedish government's attention may be politically motivated' (Bai, 2018). Meanwhile, another said of the Swedish government that 'its role as the "special task forces" of western human rights diplomacy is presumptuous' (GT, 2018c).

Likewise, the Chinese articles make frequent use of metaphors and modalities. One article, for example, accused Sweden of seeking to 'muddy the waters of Gui's case by using so-called human rights logic'. Another article states that international criticism of the case places 'China as a victim of Western imperialism'. As has already been discussed in the analysis of the articles' headlines, ideas about rule of law and justice are particular important elements of these articles. The articles contain statements which assert that the international portrait of the Gui case as a human rights case is seen as an 'assault on China's rule of law and human rights conditions' (GT, 2018c). An indication how deep these frames are embedded is seen in the statement 'western elites obstinately view China's legal differences with their own countries as political differences, with the West representing the world's only source of political correctness, rule of law has been regarded by Westerners as their advantage. China, defying Western accusations, develops well and is more confident in its national path' (GT, 2018c).

6.2.3 Descriptions of foreign policy

Swedish articles:

The article "Experter: Guis tv-charad visar irriterat Kina" (AB, 2018c), provides a new framing of the situation. This framing asserts that Sweden has managed to annoy China with its activist foreign policy. After this, AB, DN and TT journalists adopted a more interpretative role. These journalists moved from simply reporting on the events in the case, or the abundant lack of events, to reporting more on what the case meant for Sweden and China's bilateral relationship. They now reported more on why China kept pursuing Gui despite the fact that the case had attracted

‘intense international criticism’ (AB, 2018a). At this point in the coverage of the case, the number of expert voices substantially increased. Often two or three different experts would be quoted in one article. At the same time, quotes from Gui’s daughter Angela became less frequently. The articles "Kina testar gränserna för vad som kan göras" and “Relationerna till Kina har aldrig varit sämre” present interpretations of the situation. A statement described how ‘Sweden is criticized because Sweden is a strong advocate of respect for human rights’ (AB, 2018f). Another statement said that ‘China is upset by the Swedish requirement to release Gui Minhai’ (Björklund, 2018). Yet another statement described how ‘there is an ongoing irritated debate (in China) about Sweden knocking on its chest about ethics, moral and human rights’ (Björklund, 2018).

These articles repeatedly gave the impression that China was standing and stomping at imagined boundaries, or had appeared to cross them. The SMoFA was repeatedly portrayed to be slow and unaccommodating. In association with almost every event, the SMoFA was quoted as saying it was awaiting further information or unable to provide information to journalists. As neither newspaper probed more into this, it might be assumed that these are common occurrences in the relationship between the Ministry and the Swedish press. Articles presented the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CMoFA) as evasive and ill-disposed: ‘Hua Chunying, spokesperson at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, stated that she does not know any details as it is not within the capacity of the ministry to handle this case’ (AB, 2018a).

Chinese articles:

Based on the timings of published material, the framing of the situation as one where China was upset by ‘annoying Sweden’ might have originated in the Chinese reports. The article “Western media has no right to interfere in China's judicial process” (GT, 2018a), was published one month before the AB report referred to above. This framing was also present in the CD articles: ‘it was just after his surrender and release that the ‘Swedish government began to pay special attention to him’ (CD, 2018b). However, further data would be needed to confirm whether the framing really moved from the Chinese articles to the Swedish ones.

The Chinese reports were more openly critical in their descriptions and their tone varied more frequently. Similarities are however found in the Swedish and Chinese articles’ portraits of the SMoFA, as being slow and unresponsive. One Chinese article, for example, states that the

Ministry ‘fell silent at first and then accused China’ (GT, 2018c). Another statement describes how ‘Stockholm remained silent for a few days, they probably began to cry out loud after feeling they had lost face’ (GT, 2018c).

Something noticeable is that early reports did portray Sweden as being friendly towards China. One article, for examples, describes how Sweden ‘responded in a milder way, and showed willingness to cooperate’ (Shan, 2016). In comparison with the Swedish reports, in which China and the Chinese authorities are always portrayed as being somewhat mischievous, the reports in CD and GT varied to a greater extent in their descriptions of the Swedish authorities. Sometimes Sweden is portrayed as the author of Gui’s predicament and sometimes Sweden is praised for its commitment to maintaining diplomatic dialogues. In these articles, as expected, the Chinese authorities are depicted as being rational and upholding up law and justice. The articles also note time and again that China had fulfilled its diplomatic obligations. The following are some examples:

- ‘under Sweden's continual instigation Gui broke the law again’ (GT, 2018c)
- ‘police repeatedly contacted him and asked him to return for questioning but the accompanying Swedish diplomats asked Gui to refuse to cooperate’ (GT, 2018c)
- ‘after his release the Swedish began contacting Gui frequently and attempted to get him to leave China (GT, 2018c)
- ‘they tricked Gui into cooperating with their plan’ (GT, 2018c)
- ‘Gui has the Swedish government and you (ambassador) to thank for again assuming an inmate’s life’ (CD, 2018b)
- ‘China and Sweden should reach a solution through consultations’ (GT, 2018b)
- ‘Sweden is noted to be in touch with Chinese authorities but has neither revealed anything to the media’ (GT, 2018a).

6.2.4 Descriptions on the EU and other international actors

In 2018, both the Swedish newspapers (AB and DN) increased their calls for Sweden to align with other European actors in its critique of China, to take a harder stance against China and to retire from its quiet diplomacy efforts. Both newspapers effectively used expert voices to exaggerate these points. For example, an AB article quotes researcher Johan Lagerkvist: ‘the

EU must take a stand, unless it does the chances of a release looks dark' (AB, 2018c).² Following the second SMOFA statement on Gui, GT reported that the EU and other Western countries had 'chimed in on the critique' (GT, 2018b), and the German Ambassador to China had condemned China's treatment of Gui.³ It appears that both CD and GT became increasingly more critical in their descriptions from here on. Among others Germany was accused of 'rudely provoking China's judicial sovereignty' (GT, 2018b). GT spoke of 'the extraterritorial mentality that was commonly seen in imperialist powers, of which Swedish and German diplomats should be ashamed' (GT, 2018b). The EU was depicted as being two-faced, on one hand criticizing China while on the other hand shielding its own judicial predicaments. A statement describes how, 'EU countries have jailed foreign citizens before, the European countries should educate their newly naturalized citizens that the new passport cannot be their amulet in China' (GT, 2018b). That the case had attracted immense international attention was emphasized in both Swedish and Chinese reports on a regular basis. However, the Chinese and the Swedish media give different explanations of this attention. The Swedish media states that 'the Swedish government, the EU and a majority human rights organizations have protested against China on the treatment of Gui Minhai' (Darab, 2018), while the Chinese media states that 'some European countries, such as Sweden have pointed fingers at China' (CD, 2018b).

6.3 Descriptions of Gui Minhai

Along similar lines, divergent opinions about Gui's disappearance, his alleged crimes and his persona are found in the two sets of articles. While the Swedish reports emphasized 'kidnapping' and the Chinese reports emphasized the way he had 'voluntarily turned himself in'. While the Swedish accounts portrayed Gui as a symbol for the free word, the Chinese reports portrayed him as a conman.

² It should be noted that on sensitive issues and human rights in particular, it is widely acknowledged in the Swedish parliament and government that the EU constitutes a central platform for managing Sweden's relations with China (Bohman & Michalski, 2018: 83).

³ The European External Action Service also subsequently released one statement on Gui Minhai in 2018: 'Statement by High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini on the continued detention of Gui Minhai in China' (15 Feb 2018). It was not included in the data collection for this thesis, but duly noted.

6.3.1 The Swedish side

The most common recurring word to describe Gui's whereabouts was 'missing', sometimes preceded by an adverb as in 'mysteriously missing' or figuratively as in 'put behind bars' and 'gick upp i rök' ('went up in smoke' e.g. suddenly disappeared). 'Arrested', 'kidnapped', 'abducted' and 'detained' were also common. The tendency to describe the sequence of events in the case as being Gui 'disappearing' and 'popping up' indicates that this is how Swedish journalists understood the Chinese side to deal with dissidents.

In a way similar to articles which reported on the journalist Dawit Isaak, who was imprisoned in Eritrea (Lind & Jönsson, 2012), early Swedish reports also referred to Gui simply as 'a man with a Swedish passport born in China', 'the Swedish publicist' or 'the detained Swedish publicist'. Although journalists on several occasions noted that Gui refused Swedish consular support, they described him to be 'seemingly upset when doing so' (Holmberg, 2016). Moreover, descriptions were always juxtaposed with discrepant quotations from SMOFA, which stated that Gui's refusal 'does not really have any consequence on the diplomatic mission' (AB, 2017) and 'it changes nothing, our demands persist' (Petersson & Kullving, 2018). In later reporting, Gui was increasingly portrayed as a human rights activist, and a martyr for freedom of speech: 'he became a symbol of how the Chinese government goes about to silence critics' (Petersson, 2018).

6.3.2 The Chinese side

In the Chinese articles from 2016, Gui was referred to as the 'China-born Swedish national' or the 'China-born Swedish bookseller' (Shan, 2016; Chan, 2016). No reports could be found during 2017, but the 2018 reports revealed that the label of 'China-born' had fallen away. He was from there on referred to as 'Gui - a Swedish national in custody on the mainland for breaking the law' (CD, 2018a) and 'Gui Minhai, a Hong Kong bookseller of Swedish citizenship' (GT, 2018a). Coinciding with Swedish reports, GT in early January 2016 did initially describe Gui to be 'missing' and stated that 'his whereabouts had been surrounded by "mystery"' (GT, 2016b). However the fact that it stands out in italics could indicate a preferred sarcastic reading. Regardless, later in the same month, a change in rhetoric was noticeable and the Chinese portrait of Gui deviated from that in the Swedish media. Reports in Chinese media also frequently called on Gui to succumb to his senses: 'it is time for him to face the law' (Shan, 2016).

6.4 Descriptions in government statements

Within the selected time period, the SMOFA has made three official statements on Gui (released over the course of three consecutive months in 2018). In these statements, their Chinese counterparts are barely mentioned, except when it was stressed that they had received assurances (Regeringskansliet, 2018a). Considering the fact that Gui's first arrest occurred in 2015, this could be an indication that it had taken in the critique from Swedish media and its function as a watchdog. Likewise, SMOFA statements also referred to Gui as either 'the Swedish citizen' or 'our detained citizen'. The latter appellation allowed for readers to imagine Gui as part of a national community which stands for certain values and beliefs, in this case the Swedish perception of democratic human rights. It could fit into what Anderson (1991) and Lee (2010) described as the rhetorical sinister technique of othering.

Similar to descriptions found in CD and GT, the Chinese Embassy (CN Emb) often endorsed their Swedish counterparts for 'maintaining close communication on the case of Gui Minhai' (CN Emb, 2018a). Likewise, they described themselves as friendly towards their Swedish counterparts: 'at the request of the Swedish side, the Chinese side agreed to a visit by a Swedish doctor to see Gui Minhai, which fully demonstrates the goodwill of the Chinese side' (CN Emb, 2018d). However, the Chinese Embassy from 2018 onwards made it a routine to comment on Swedish media reports on the case. In these comments, Swedish media outlets and social actors were repeatedly accused of 'fabricating facts' and 'attempting to maliciously smear China' (CN Emb, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2018d; 2018e). On one occasion, it even appeared that GT was surprised: 'the Chinese Embassy in Sweden in a rare move slammed a Swedish media outlet for publishing an "untrue" story about China' (GT, 2018e). In contrast with the media reports, in Chinese embassy statements Gui is frequently referred to as either 'a criminal' or 'the criminal Gui'. Considering that neither CD nor GT has ever explicitly labeled as a Gui a criminal, this is somewhat remarkable. Nevertheless, newspaper reports did on several occasions make it abundantly clear that Gui had broken Chinese law.

6.5 Discourses

This part of the analysis looks at what discursive frames can be found in the reporting on Gui and why these frames might be present. It addresses how journalistic frames are presented in support of these discourses.

6.5.1 Morality and justice

Morality and justice have similarities in the sense that they both can feel like external standards that should carry more weight than individual preferences. The idea that there is an objective moral truth is central to assumptions and beliefs about the nature of morality and the role of justice (Skitka, Bauman & Mullen, 2016). In the Gui case there are aspects of morality that have less to do with justice (family separation, lack of transparency and the emotional suffering that entails), and aspects of justice that have less to do with morality (law frameworks, consular affairs and juridical sovereignty). Based on Krumbein's reflections (2015), the textual analysis suggests that the liberal democratic understanding of justice (the separation of sovereign and juridical power) is closely linked to the moral perception of universal human rights (the UDHR) among Swedish journalists. The fact that a violation of a political-civil right took place and the fact that government officials, as well as experts and society commentators, regularly spoke on behalf of Gui indicates that the Gui case fits well into an already existing Swedish narrative about human rights violations in China. The Gui case has become an expression of fundamental underlying ideas and values about morality and justice. For example, the reporting on the case suggests that for Gui to be penalized on the basis of manslaughter is a form of justice, but to do so without a fair trial is unjust. Likewise, it suggests that to kidnap someone and keep them from their family is immoral.

Although national narratives over Gui contest each other, they also contain similarities. The most obvious similarity is that the accounts of the Gui case in both sets of articles employed rhetorical techniques which aimed to humanize the case by making young female victims visible. This is expressed in a daughter's right to her father (Angela Gui's right to contact with Gui Minhai), and in parents' right to their daughter (the girl that Gui allegedly killed in a hit and run accident). Based on Lee (2010), Anderson (1991) and Hall (2013), it is also expressed in the media prism constructed around Gui as a symbol for the right to freedom of speech, a understanding of which is strongly rooted in Swedish society. The fact is that, readers can never fully know or understand what has happened in the case. Instead the interpretation that appeals more a particular readers' common sense, morality and justice will be their preferred reading. This reading is integrated in the reporting on Gui as contrasts of othering.

6.5. Condemnation

What brings the discourse of morality and the discourse of justice together is a discourse of condemnation of Sweden's quiet diplomacy. As can be recalled from the analysis of the

morality-justice discourse in the previous section, both the Swedish and the Chinese newspaper discourses of human rights center around a condemnation of injustice and hidden political agendas.

On arrest-events, Chinese newspapers construct an image of Sweden caught up in idealism with its absurd, obsessive and essentially ineffective protests over Gui's detention. In contrast, Swedish newspapers develop a discourse that projects Sweden as an actor that promotes human rights protection and adherence to the UDHR through condemnation of the Chinese government's aggression and a heroization of Gui as a Swedish citizen engaged in a fight for freedom of speech. In appearance-events, Chinese newspapers construct Sweden as a morality rival, which is a potential threat to Chinese juridical and territorial sovereignty. In contrast, Swedish newspapers represent Sweden as an actor which respects juridical sovereignty in its consular affairs. Thus, Sweden is constructed as an actor with different, even competing, identities in both media discourses.

Invariably, all the quotes from the Swedish side express their condemnation of the treatment of Gui Minhai and their support of the Swedish government's position. While highlighting the perspectives and responses of the Swedish and the Chinese governments, the inclusion of quotes from a wide array of social actors from both inside and outside of Sweden presents a world in which the whole of Sweden is unified in its response to Gui Minhai, and the Swedish response is supported by the wider international community. In doing so, the Swedish newspapers and government statements create an ideological binary world between 'us' (people in Sweden and in the world who support universal human rights and justice) and 'them' (communist perpetrators who seek to silence dissidents). A similar strategy is employed in the Chinese newspapers and government statements.

Based on Jia (2005) and Primiano (2015), the projection of China as a victim could in itself be viewed as a nationalistic reaction to foreign criticism, but in the Chinese articles this discourse was used in a wide range of ways. A weak China was sometimes presented, while at other times the articles presented a strong China. In contrast, the Swedish reporting never depicted a weak China, however a weak and a strong Sweden was depicted. Therefore, the discourse of condemnation becomes a recontextualizing principle that reorganizes other discourses.

The Chinese articles repeatedly stressed ‘the law’, ‘in accordance with the law’, ‘respect for the law’ and ‘equal before the law, no exceptions’. This emphasis on the law in the Chinese articles indicates that there is a paradoxical claim wherein it is suggested that those who respect the law are subjected to an obligation from which others are exempt (Skitka et al, 2016). It also indicates that Swedish journalists largely failed to take into account the implications and presuppositions of moral attitudes to law, and how China operates on what it deems as its core leading interests. Likewise, Chinese journalists (and officials) might have failed to realize the extent to which emphasis is placed on human rights in Sweden’s modern activist foreign policy compared to a few decades ago. Moreover, when China’s judicial and territorial integrity is presented as evidence of the fact that China has the right (moral and juridical) to detain Gui, then it appears counterintuitive to, in early reports, refer to Gui as China-born national, and in later reports as a Swedish citizen and a Hong Kong publicist. Based on Primiano (2015), the frequency of this discourse in Chinese reports and statements furthermore suggest that there is an awareness that China will incur damage to its international image but still does not adhere to calls. For example, ‘Western media tend to associate cases occurring in China with Beijing's bad human rights record’ (CD, 2018b) indicated that there was an awareness about its human rights situation, yet a desire to counteract this discourse.

6.6 Society voices

As several scholars suggested, news are essentially interpretations of events, and accounts of reality are reinforced by social actors quoted in news articles. This last part of the analysis will shed light on how the Gui case obtain its meaning from the ways in which actors are interpreted and represented by each newspaper.

6.6.1 Quotation patterns

The first thing to notice in Table 1 is that in the Swedish newspapers social actors are overall more frequently quoted. Different voices are quoted to show how the journalist supposedly took a neutral position, but both the textual and the discourse analysis reveal that this was not often the case. According to Zhang & Brown (2009); Achetti (2010); Brüggemann (2014) and Krumbein (2015), expert and government voices give legitimacy to the journalist, and experts are often more able to construct casual narratives. Table 1 shows that by including positions of various social actors, Swedish newspapers construct the Gui case as an incident that has affected many individuals and organizations in Sweden, and evoked wide political and emotional

responses from Swedish society and the international community alike. The representation of social actors through quotation pattern in Swedish newspapers therefore serves to empower and justify what Sweden does and says, and to ignore or exoticize what China does. It constructs an ideological framework within the reader is encouraged to interpret the significance and role of the news participants accordingly. A similar strategy is in operation in Chinese newspapers.

The second thing to notice is that the Chinese representation of social actors there is hardly any quote attributed to Chinese officials throughout the reporting on the Gui case. Instead, most of the quotes are given to Gui Minhai as well as western figures from the international community. The extensive inclusion of the speech of Gui, however, is motivated by a different reason and achieve a different effect in comparison to inclusions of speech from MFA officials. Gui is used to forward Chinese narratives. His voice is put against foreign governments.

Furthermore, the abundant inclusion of domestic voices is in contrast with the systematic exclusion of voices on the other side. Across the articles collected from CD and GT, Swedish officials are quoted only four times to report their reactions, one being a generic and impersonal reference to 'Sweden' and the other three from SMOFA officials. Likewise in AB and DN reports, Chinese officials were only heard twice.⁴ The representations of social actors in the four newspapers and in government statements thus create different understandings of the case that are related to the varying images constructed by social actors.

This is seen in the example of news participant Fredrik Fällman, a lecturer at Gothenburg University. In association with the visit by a Swedish doctor to Gui in August 2018, he was consulted by TT to comment on the breakthrough in the case:

- 'They have previously said that Gui Minhai is not ill, and you do not know what they are investigating now' (AB, 2018e; Darab, 2018).
- 'the Chinese side has never said that Gui Minhai is not ill, Mr. Fällman's remarks are recurrent sheer speculation which misleads and cheats the Swedish public' (CN Emb, 2018)

⁴ The Chinese Ambassador to Sweden, Gui Congyou, was quoted on Gui Minhai in conjunction with interviews on other incidents (Chinese tourists, Svenska Nyheter) that occurred in autumn 2018. Seeing that the Gui Minhai case was not the main topic, those articles were not collected for this thesis.

Table 1: Quotation patterns ⁵

| Voices quoted | News participants in Swedish press | News participants in Chinese press |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Government voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Minister Margot Wallström (14/1/16; 24/10/17; 23/1/18; 2, 9/2/18; 10/2/18; 2, 3/7/18; 2, 13/8/18) • Foreign Ministry Press agent Lilian Willix Schwirtz (2, 17/1/16) • Foreign ministry spokesperson (5/2/18) • Swedish Embassy Counselor Gabriella Augustsson (2, 2/4/16) • Swedish Ambassador Lars Fréden (2/4/16) • Prosecutor Kristina Lindhoff Carleson (28/2/16) • Foreign Ministry press agent Linn Duvhammar (27/10/17) • Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying (23/1/18) • Swedish Foreign Ministry (23/1/18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström (27/1/16; 10/2/18) • Hong Kong's Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying (5/1/16) • Security Secretary Lai Tung-kwok (2/3/16; 3/3/16) • National People's Congress deputy Maria Tam Wai-chu (3/3/16) • Karin Nylund, Officer for the Communication Department of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (27/1/16) • Swedish Foreign Ministry (8/2/18) • German Ambassador to China Michael Clauss (8/2/18) • The Chinese Embassy in Sweden (3, 9/7/18) |

⁵ The numbers before the commas within the parenthesis refer to the number of times a news actor is quoted by a newspaper on the given date. The dates after the commas refer to the dates on which a news actor is quoted in a newspaper.

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swedish Government (23/1/18) • Foreign Ministry press manager Patric Nilsson (24/10/17; 28/2/17; 3, 9/2/18) • Chinese Ambassador Gui Congyou (17/9/18) | |
| Expert voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amnesty International researcher Patrick Poon (3, 24/10/17) • Uppsala University researcher Oscar Almén (10/2/18) • Stockholm University researcher Johan Lagerkvist (10/2/18) • Göteborgs Universitet researcher Fredrik Fällman (2, 13/8/18) • Swedish Defence researcher Jerker Hellström (4, 17/9/18) • Sinologen Torbjörn Lodén (17/10/18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another lawmaker Ip Kwok-him (2/3/16) • Solicitor and legislator James To Kun-sun (2/3/16) • Chinese Academy of Social Sciences research fellow in law Chen Xinxin (27/1/16) • Ruan Qilin, a professor at the China University of Political Science and Law (27/1/16) • Chen Zhonglin, Dean of the Law School at Chongqing University (27/1/16) |
| Society voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Gui (17/1/16; 3, 24/10/17; 2, 22/1/18) • Gui Minhai (17/1/16; 3, 9/2/18) • Journalist Jojje Olsson (2, 27/10/17; 9/2/18) • ‘Another of the five’ Lam Wing-kee (24/10/17) • Human rights activist John Kamm (23/1/18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gui Minhai (2, 17/1/16); (19/1/16); (7, 11/2/18); (4, 12/2/18); (5,10/2/18) • Angela Gui (10/2/18) • Gui Minfen (10/2/18) • Jojje Olsson a 35-year old journalist (9/7/18) • The illegal organization Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China (9/7/18) |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swedish PEN Elisabeth Åsbrink (3, 10/2/18) | |
| International voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bookstore publicist Mr. Li (2, 11/11/15) • Amnesty International (1, 14/1/18) • Human Rights Watch China Manager Sophie Richardson (22/1/18) • Amnesty International China analyst William Nee (23/1/18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Swedish newspaper Expressen (2, 9/7/18) • The Guardian (22/2/18) • Financial Times (22/8/18) |

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Concluding remarks

This thesis sought to answer the research question: how is the Gui Minhai case depicted in Swedish and Chinese daily news? Although framings of the case metamorphosed, the framing of Gui Minhai, Sweden and China was coherent in Swedish reports. On Gui, *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* perused a ‘release Gui Minhai’ agenda that embraced human rights and depicted Gui as a symbol for the free word. On Sweden, the advocacy and protection of human rights was depicted as vital parts of self-identity but articles also expressed skepticism towards Sweden’s quiet diplomacy efforts as being insufficient, too slow and too weak. On China the focus was, unsurprisingly, the tightening of control and crackdown on dissidents under President Xi Jinping. Meanwhile, there was increased interest of the effects of Chinese foreign policy and viability of the EU to take a harder stance against China. In the Chinese articles, rule of law was privileged in *China Daily* and the *Global Times*. This was consistent with a higher prevalence of sovereignty claims in general. The framing of Gui was given greater focus but there were conflicting ‘divergent frames’ in that some articles criticized Sweden for instigating Gui to commit more crimes, some praised Sweden for its commitments to maintain dialogues, and some simply blamed Swedish and western media for hyping up the case due to China’s ‘bad human rights record’.

The frequency of political journalistic frames was about the same in all newspapers, and the comparative analysis of government statements show that they echoed elite consensus. When human rights were represented with a political frame in Swedish reports, there was a clear dominance of seeing the world from the perspective of institutionalized politics. This is seen in the representation of standpoints and quotations by established government actors and other organized social actors putting forward their objections to China’s treatment of Gui Minhai. It also indicates that the Gui case fit into an already existing narrative about human rights violations in China. When human rights were represented with a political frame in Chinese reports, the world was seen from a perspective where western countries are threatened by the rise of China, and they therefore use the case of Gui Minhai to try to undermine Chinese authorities from within. This is seen in the exclusion of domestic government actors and the use of Gui Minhai’s voice to forward Chinese narratives against foreign governments.

The analysis about the intertextual properties in the conflicting discourses over Gui Minhai show the meanings about human rights, foreign policy and morality, especially those about Sweden, are related to the particular events and the interactions between rhetoric, discourse and voices circulating in the texts. On arrest-events, Chinese newspapers construct an image of Sweden caught up in idealism with its absurd, obsessive and essentially ineffective protests over Gui's detention. In contrast, Swedish newspapers develop a discourse that projects Sweden as an actor that promotes human rights protection and adherence to the UDHR through condemnation of the Chinese government's aggression and a heroization of Gui as a citizen engaged in a fight for freedom of speech. In appearance-events, Chinese newspapers construct Sweden as a morality rival, which is a potential threat to Chinese judicial and territorial sovereignty. In contrast, Swedish newspapers represent Sweden as an actor which respects judicial sovereignty in its consular affairs. Thus, Sweden is constructed as an actor with different, even competing, identities in both media discourses. On the one hand, Sweden is imagined as a big actor bound up with its puritan ideal values, which are characterized by an extreme human rights advocacy mania in Chinese newspapers, and by heroic struggle against oppression by an activist, human rights emphasized foreign policy in Swedish newspapers. On the other hand, Sweden is imagined as a small actor that seeks political influence in the case by taking advantage of other western countries' prejudices and hostilities against China in Chinese newspapers, and by moral and just grounds in Swedish newspapers. These alternative constructions of national images and national discourses emerge in relation to specific historical and political understandings of human rights, informed by larger nationalist discourses and social practices.

Differences in media systems and in individual newspapers also influence the way the specific newspapers addresses the sequence of events involving Gui Minhai. In the case of China Daily and Global Times, there is the obligation to rely on Xinhua reports to cover sensitive issues, the influence of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China and the strong journalistic consensus over the support of media to advance national development and foreign policy. In the case of Aftonbladet and Dagens Nyheter, reporting is influenced by the generally proactive foreign policy coverage, the western-liberal human rights consensus and the overall negative national public perception of China. Also, the clear separation of the state and the media in Sweden combined with a much higher freedom for individual reporters, is an important explanation to the critical depiction of the Sweden's quiet diplomacy efforts.

In contrast to the Dawit Isaak case, the Gui case attracted almost immediate attention among Swedish journalists, as both newspapers maintained a steady amount on reports throughout 2015 to 2018. While the study on Isaak (Lind & Jönsson, 2012) argued that the lack of reporting was due to the fact that newspapers did not judge a person with dual citizenship and foreign name in an African country to have sufficiently high news value, this study might find the opposite to be true. It could be that, in contrast to Eritrea, China could be considered an elite nation due to the enlarged global role in the 21st century. As a consequence there is a probability that the Gui case might have generated more headlines in the Swedish press than both the Isaak and the Djalali cases. Likewise, the strong consensus among Swedish journalists over the role of the media as a watchdog against powerful political organizations, even foreign organizations such as the Chinese Communist Party, could have brought on more coverage. The fact that Gui himself could also on several occasions be both seen and heard on TV furthermore increased his visibility and geographic and cultural proximity, and this might have made the Gui case remain more in the headlines. However these argument would need to be established by further studies that would include interviews and image-based analysis.

7.2 Research value

This study has explored discursive constructions and journalistic frames during moments of bilateral conflict over human rights and foreign policy by examining intertextuality in Swedish and Chinese newspaper reports and government statements on Gui Minhai. The three analytical focuses adopted in this study attend to different aspects of the texts and treat news text with regards to its textual, representational and actional meanings realized in various textual features. Analyzing the connections and distinctions between meanings in news text enriched the understanding of the news and placed meanings of news into specific socio-cultural contexts. This kind of textual study gives insights into the role of the media in both Swedish and Chinese society, how human rights issues affect bilateral relationships in a more complex way, how personification is crucial for journalism today, and how concerns about China's growing role have become stronger and impacts media coverage.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

As selected newspapers only represent one small segment of a diverse media landscape, a larger study would be needed in order to confirm some of the preliminary findings. It would be especially interesting to examine Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet, who have also published

extensively on Gui Minhai. Due to the case's international attraction, it would also be interesting to analyze material from international newspapers. Furthermore, statements by the European Union and other international authorities as well as reports by press organizations would be interesting to examine.

In regards to the Gui case, a number of research questions can be asked within the disciplines of humanities, foreign policy, human rights and law. In regards to other incidents in 2018 and 2019, which have impacted the Sweden-China bilateral relationship, some questions on media's role in society can be asked. For example, the question of how the Gui Minhai case and strong media interest affected the conflicts over the tourists incident in Stockholm, or whether the Chinese Embassy's public diplomacy campaign in Swedish media has changed or altered the image of China in Sweden. Other questions that can be asked include China's more active global media push to take back discursive power and Sweden's quiet diplomacy efforts on furthering the release of other detained Swedish citizens in Eritrea and Iran.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Data set

Online Newspaper website

| Newspaper | Search string | Hits | Relevant (within the time period) | Retrieved |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--|------------------|
| Aftonbladet | Gui minhai | 126 | 117 | 10 |
| | AND UD | 48 | 27 | |
| | AND Kina | 105 | 85 | |
| | AND Rättigheter | 35 | 29 | |
| | AND Utrikespolitik | 1 | 1 | |
| China Daily | Gui minhai | 8 | 8 | 6 |
| | AND Human rights | 1 | 1 | |
| | AND Foreign policy | 0 | 0 | |
| | AND Sweden | 3 | 3 | |
| Dagens Nyheter | Gui minhai | 200 | 200 | 10 |
| | AND UD | 1 | 1 | |
| | AND Utrikespolitik | 1 | 1 | |
| | AND Kina | 8 | 8 | |
| | AND Rättigheter | 6 | 6 | |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Global Times | Gui minhai | 23 | 22 | 12 |
| | AND Human rights | 0 | | |
| | AND Foreign policy | 0 | | |
| | AND Sweden | 23 | | |
| Totalt | | | | 38 |

Date of first article published online

| Newspaper | Year | Month |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Aftonbladet | 2016 | January |
| China Daily | 2016 | January |
| Dagens Nyheter | 2015 | November 11 |
| Global Times | 2016 | January 5 |

Distribution of published articles online

| Newspaper | Year | Published articles |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Aftonbladet | 2015 | 0 |
| China Daily | | 0 |
| Dagens Nyheter | | 3 |
| Global Times | | 0 |
| | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Aftonbladet | 2016 | 37 |
| China Daily | | 4 |
| Dagens Nyheter | | 66 |
| Global Times | | 13 |
| | | |
| Aftonbladet | 2017 | 10 |
| China Daily | | 0 |
| Dagens Nyheter | | 48 |
| Global Times | | 0 |
| | | |
| Aftonbladet | 2018 | 41 |
| China Daily | | 4 |
| Dagens Nyheter | | 65 |
| Global Times | | 8 |
| | | |
| Aftonbladet | 2019 (March) | 26 |
| China Daily | | 0 |
| Dagens Nyheter | | 39 |
| Global Times | | 1 |

Distribution of additional online newspapers (Not included in collected data set)

| Newspaper | Published articles |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| South China Morning Post | 100 |
| People's Daily | 5 |
| Xinhua News | 1 |
| Svenska Dagbladet | 137 |
| Expressen | 97 |
| Kvällsposten | 110 |

Appendix B: Summary of collected articles

| | Newspaper | Headline | Date | Author |
|----------|------------------|---|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Dagens Nyheter | Svensk förläggare försvunnen i Hong Kong | 2015-11-11 | Torbjörn Petersson |
| 2 | Global Times | Case of HK bookseller dropped | 2016-01-05 | Global Times |
| 3 | Dagens Nyheter | Svensk förläggare i häkte - uppvisad i kinesisk tv | 2016-01-17 | Kalle Holmberg |
| 4 | Global Times | 'Missing' HK bookseller turns himself in to mainland police for drunk driving killing of a college girl in 2003 | 2016-01-17 | Global Times |
| 5 | China Daily | Missing HK bookstore owner turned himself in to the police | 2016-01-19 | Xinhua |
| 6 | Global Times | Don't distort publisher case into mainland-HK dispute | 2016-01-19 | Shan Renping |
| 7 | Global Times | Swedish man expelled from China: FM | 2016-01-27 | Chen Heying and Kou Jie |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------|---|------------|--|
| 8 | Global Times | Public confession needs to be viewed within context | 2016-01-27 | Liu Zhun |
| 9 | Aftonbladet | Polis bekräftar: Förläggare gripna | 2016-02-05 | TT-AFP |
| 10 | Dagens Nyheter | Jakt på oliktankande vet inte några gränser | 2016-02-07 | Torbjörn Petersson |
| 11 | China Daily | Bail for three booksellers 'imminent' | 2016-03-03 | Kahon Chan |
| 12 | China Daily | Police probe into bookseller's border crossing 'will continue' | 2016-03-20 | Luis Liu |
| 13 | Dagens Nyheter | Censuren slog till mot den svenske ambassadören | 2016-04-02 | Torbjörn Petersson |
| 14 | Aftonbladet | Många frågor kring fängslad förläggare | 2017-02-08 | TT |
| 15 | Dagens Nyheter | Uppgift: Gui Minhai har släppts fri | 2017-10-24 | Hugo Lindkvist, Ossi Carp and Torbjörn Petersson |
| 16 | Aftonbladet | Förläggaren Gui Minhai uppges ha kontaktat sin familj | 2017-10-27 | Gustaf Tronarp |
| 17 | Aftonbladet | Ambassad får träffa fängslad svensk i Kina | 2018-01-14 | TT |
| 18 | Aftonbladet | Gui Minhai gripen av kinesisk polis igen | 2018-01-22 | Isabelle Nordström, TT |
| 19 | Dagens Nyheter | Gui Minhai gripen inför ögonen på svenska diplomater | 2018-01-22 | Torbjörn Petersson |
| 20 | Aftonbladet | Sverige: Gui Minhai bör släppas omedelbart | 2018-01-23 | TT |
| 21 | Global Times | Western media has no right to interfere in China's judicial process | 2018-01-23 | Global Times |
| 22 | Global Times | China's law not under thumb of West | 2018-02-08 | Global Times |
| 23 | Aftonbladet | Gui Minhai framtvungad i kinesisk tv | 2018-02-09 | TT |
| 24 | Dagens Nyheter | Gui Minhai: Sverige använder mig för att ge | 2018-02-09 | Torbjörn Petersson and Carl-Johan Kullving |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------|---|------------|-----------------------|
| | | Kina problem | | |
| 25 | Global Times | HK bookseller confesses to truth about so-called 'disappearance,' says Sweden 'manipulated' him | 2018-02-10 | Bai Yunyi |
| 26 | Aftonbladet | Experter: Guis tv-charad visar irriterat Kina | 2018-02-10 | TT |
| 27 | China Daily | Gui Minhai detained over allegedly endangering state security | 2018-02-11 | Xinhua |
| 28 | Global Times | Is Sweden making 'Saving Gui Minhai' movie? | 2018-02-11 | Global Times |
| 29 | China Daily | Bookseller held on suspicion of endangering national security | 2018-02-12 | Xinhua |
| 30 | Global Times | Attack on China's judicial system driven by bigotry | 2018-02-22 | Global Times |
| 31 | China Daily | Dubious foreign-controlled groups need watching | 2018-04-11 | Staff writer |
| 32 | Aftonbladet | Wallström: Vet inte hur Gui Minhai mår | 2018-07-03 | TT |
| 33 | Global Times | Chinese embassy slams Swedish newspaper for calling China's press freedom 'completely dark' | 2018-07-09 | Global Times |
| 34 | Aftonbladet | UD: Svensk läkare har besökt Gui Minhai | 2018-08-13 | TT |
| 35 | Dagens Nyheter | UD: Svensk läkare har besökt Gui Minhai | 2018-08-13 | Adam Darab |
| 36 | Global Times | China urges Sweden probe into Chinese tourists' incident | 2018-09-18 | Yin Han and Xu Hailin |
| 37 | Dagens Nyheter | Stödmanifestation för Gui Minhai vid Kinas ambassad | 2018-10-16 | Lucas Dahlström |
| 38 | Dagens Nyheter | Relationerna till Kina har aldrig varit sämre | 2018-10-17 | Marianne Björklund |

Appendix C: Government statements

| Government Office | Remark | Date |
|---------------------------|---|------------|
| Swedish Foreign Ministry | Uttalande med anledning av gripandet av den svenske medborgaren Gui Minhai | 2018-01-23 |
| Swedish Foreign Ministry | Uttalande av utrikesminister Wallström med anledning av gripandet av den svenske medborgaren Gui Minhai | 2018-02-05 |
| Chinese Foreign Ministry | Unable to retrieve | 2018-02-09 |
| Swedish Foreign Ministry | Uttalande av utrikesminister Margot Wallström om svenske medborgaren Gui Minhai | 2018-03-08 |
| Swedish Embassy in China | Uttalande av utrikesminister Margot Wallström om svenske medborgaren Gui Minhai *identical to the Swedish Foreign Ministry statement | 2018-03-08 |
| Chinese Foreign Ministry | Unable to retrieve | 2018-03-09 |
| Chinese Embassy in Sweden | Chinese Embassy spokesperson's remarks on the case of Gui Minhai | 2018-06-08 |
| Chinese Embassy in Sweden | Chinese Embassy spokesperson's remarks on Angela Gui's article published by Dagens Nyheter | 2018-07-12 |
| Chinese Embassy in Sweden | Chinese Embassy spokesperson's remarks on the case of Gui Minhai | 2018-08-14 |
| Chinese Embassy in Sweden | An absurd anti-China political farce and gross violation of the Spirit of the rule of law | 2018-08-16 |
| Chinese Embassy in Sweden | Chinese Embassy spokesperson's comments on "Bokmässan bjuder in fånglade Gui Minhai" | 2018-08-23 |

Appendix D: Translated examples of Swedish articles

a.) Examples from AB (translated with emphasis added)

"He is *missing*"; "The Foreign Minister also commented on the Swedish citizen in Hong Kong who has *gone missing*" ; "*forcefully abducted* from Thailand to China" (January 14, 2016)

"He *went missing* and *popped up* on state controlled Chinese tv were he confessed to a hit-and-run accident *over ten years ago*"; "China has received comprehensive *international critique*" (February 5, 2016)

"Swedish publicist Gui Minhai was *detained*"; "The Foreign ministry is trying to *straighten out the many questions marks* that surrounds the case"; "It was in October that Gui Minhai *under*

unclear circumstances went missing”; “China has received comprehensive *international critique*” (February 28, 2017)

“However it remains *unclear* whether he is allowed to leave the country”; “Since then the publicist has not been heard from and the case is *surrounded by uncertainties*”; “The Foreign Ministry *is trying to get clarity*” (October 27, 2017)

“The *arrest* supposedly took place *in front of the eyes of two Swedish diplomats*”; “In October 2015 Gui *went missing*, around the same time four of his colleagues *went missing*”; “Neither Chinese nor Swedish authorities want to comment”; “The Foreign Ministry press does not want to comment at the moment” (January 22, 2018)

“Chinese authorities are *refusing to answer questions* about the *kidnapping* of Gui Minhai”; “Something closer to *an explanation* as to why Gui Minhai was *arrested* has not been given”; “Gui was *arrested and abducted in front of the eyes of Swedish diplomats*”; Not until Saturday and also on Monday did the Foreign Minister summon the Chinese ambassador, and she states that the Foreign Ministry is *working around the clock* with the case” (January 23, 2018)

“Gui Minhai *forced* to appear on Chinese tv”; Gui Minhai was arrested on 20 January after civilian clothed police *abducted him in front of the eyes of Swedish diplomats*”; “Sweden and China have over the last days been involved in an altercation where foreign minister Margot Wallström has *called the arrest a brutal act*” (January 9, 2018)

“Sweden has managed to *irritate China*”; the move by China is difficult to interpret but at the same time it is a common strategy”; “the Foreign Minister has called it a *brutal act*” (February 10, 2018)

“The Foreign Ministry *don't know* how Gui Minhai is feeling”; “The *arrest happened in front of the eyes of Swedish diplomats*”; “Wallström said it was *completely unacceptable*”; “Gui Minhai has *popped up* on Chinese tv many times and said that he does not want any Swedish help, something that Wallström *does not believe*” (July 3, 2018)

“It is *very unclear* what the examination will lead to”; “it is *difficult to say what it means*”; “Wallström *doesn't go into details* about the visit and says that the ongoing work is covered by *secrecy*” (August 13, 2018)

“The question about the Swedish-Chinese publicist Gui Minhai, who is *detained* in China, has since a while back *strained relations* between Sweden and China”; “In this case it is interesting to criticise Sweden as Sweden is a strong advocate of respect for human rights. It is being used rhetorically and the argument that Sweden is violating human rights of Chinese citizens is completely *taken out of thin air*”; “In Sweden the embassy increasingly contacts Swedish media and *loudly criticizing* reports on sensitive questions”; “The ambassador Gui Congyou has *denied* that China's actions have anything to do with the Gui Minhai-question, according to him some Swedes are *using guesses and fiction to criticize China*” (September 17, 2018)

b.) Examples from DN (translated with emphasis added)

“A Swedish citizen, publicist in Hong Kong, has *been missing* since the middle of October”; “*Gui Minhai, a man with a Swedish passport, born in China* travelled to his summer residence in Thailand a couple of weeks ago. Since then he is *missing*. The same applies to two colleagues who *went up in smoke* when visiting relatives” (November 11, 2015).

“Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen and publicist in Hong Kong and mysteriously missing since last autumn is reported to be in custody in China”; “The same week as Gui Minhai went missing, three of his employees were *kidnapped*. Around New Year the husband of the publishing house’s second partner went missing” (January 17, 2016).

“They were not afraid *go missing*”; “The first and most noticeable *missing person* last autumn is the 51-year old Swedish publicist Gui Minhai”; “Despite that they went missing and the next time their relatives saw them they were *put behind bars*”; “Since previously the Chinese government has a *variety of tools at hand* to deal with opposition at home”; “The sequence of events last months indicates that Beijing has *extended the fight* to include also political antagonists abroad” (February 7, 2016)

“Almost six months ago the Swedish publicist Gui Minhai went missing in Thailand. He *popped up* in police custody in China and *has been forced* to make two completely different confessions on Chinese tv. The authorities is *silencing the critics* against the obvious lack of judicial security which surrounds the case” (April 2, 2016)

“So far the information give to UD regarding the release of Gui Minhai is *scanty*. It was in October 2015 that Gui Minhai went missing under *unclear circumstances*.”; “It is still *very unclear* where he is”; *few credible explanations* have been given as to how he went missing or why he was *detained*” (October 24, 2017).

“Gui Minhai *arrested in front of the eyes of Swedish diplomats*”; The *abduction* is the latest in a long sequence where Chinese authorities *show total lack of respect for normal international law*”; Autumn 2015 Gui was *kidnapped and forced* to confess”; “He became a *symbol* of how the Chinese government goes about *to silence critics* and gossip” (January 22, 2018)

“After being *kidnapped* and went missing for three months he *popped up* in the Chinese evening news.”; “a *bizarre* continuation of events surrounding the Swedish publicist”; “Gui Minhai’s news statements raises *many questions*” (February 9, 2018)

“For three years, the Swedish citizen Gui Minhai has been *detained* in China. At lunchtime on Wednesday, *representatives of the free word* gather outside Chinese embassy for a *manifestation*” (October 16, 2018)

“The relations with China has *never been worse*”; “The relations with China is at *bottom low*”; “Angry stranded tourists, a humor show interpreted as an insult and a detained Swedish publicist has *greatly cooled the mood* between Sweden and China”; “the *bad mood* is a scene change, before the image of Sweden in China was positive”; “in Chinese social media there is an ongoing irritated debate about *Sweden knocking on its chest about ethics, moral and human rights*”; “China is mostly *upset about the Swedish demand to release Gui Minhai* and that induces strong reactions on the other incidents” (October 17, 2018)

Appendix E: Biography of Gui Minhai

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1964 | Born in Ningbo, China |
| 1985 | Graduates from Peking University |
| 1985-1988 | Serves as editor to the People's Education Press |
| 1988 | Enrolls for a PHD position at Gothenburg University, Sweden |
| 1989 | Obtains Swedish residency, and later citizenship |
| 1996 | Obtains PHD degree |
| 1999 | Returns to China, founds a company selling air purification products |
| 2003 | Involved in a fatal car accident, 23-year old girl dies |
| August 2004 | Sentenced to two-year suspended jail |
| October 2004 | Breaks parole and leaves China for Germany |
| 2004-2006 | Works for a German affiliation of a Nordic consulting firm |
| 2006 | Sets up publishing company, joins Chinese chapter of PEN International |
| August 2006 | Two-year suspended jail sentence is turned into a two-year jail sentence |
| 2013 | Sets up Mighty Current Media |
| 2014 | Mighty Current Media acquires Causeway Bay Books |
| October 2015 | Is abducted from Pattaya, Thailand |
| January 2016 | 1st confession on Chinese state media |
| February 2016 | Charged with the distribution of banned books into Mainland China |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| October 2016 | Has been detained by Chinese authorities for one year |
| October 2017 | Reported to have been released, unknown whereabouts |
| January 2018 | Arrested while travelling to Beijing |
| February 2018 | 2nd confession on Chinese state media |
| August 2018 | Gets to meet with Swedish diplomatic envoy and medical staff |

