

Navigating narratives: A framing analysis of AUKUS in Chinese state media

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the framing of AUKUS, a trilateral security and defense collaboration consisting of Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States, is portrayed by Chinese state media. AUKUS, established on September 15, 2021, is mainly focusing on providing Australia with nuclear-powered submarine technology. This turn of event has attracted a lot of attention and enquiry from China, nations around the South China Sea and the rest of the world.

The study implements media framing analysis, utilizing Boydstun's Policy Frames Codebook to analyze articles from three Chinese state media outlets. Through this methodological approach a thorough understanding of the official Chinese viewpoint on AUKUS is provided. The aim of the study is to illuminate these official viewpoints on AUKUS by exploring the overriding narratives presented in Chinese state media outlets.

The findings showed that the most dominant frame present in Chinese state media is the security and defense frame followed by the external regulation and reputation frame. This suggests a focus on framing AUKUS in the context of regional security dynamics and international relations.

The study contributes to a greater insight of the utilization of media framing in state-controlled media, especially in regard to geopolitical developments, such as AUKUS.

Key words: AUKUS, Trilateral security collaboration, Chinese state media, Media framing

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1. Introduction

The news of the establishment of AUKUS, a new trilateral security partnership, between Australia (A), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) was announced on the 15th of September 2021. The aim of this partnership was to “cultivate peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region” (Swanström and Panda 2021). The announcement was unexpected by most, with all the preparation going under the radar. It rendered extensive coverage in Chinese state media, especially from the 15th of September 2021 until the 22nd of November 2021, when the *Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement* (ENNPIA) was signed, which was the first of several planned steps of the establishment of AUKUS (Lee and Nason 2022).

The newly established trilateral partnership and its potential consequences for China, the region and especially Southeast Asia was highlighted in several Chinese news articles. China has over an extended period of time strived towards the establishment of dominance and control in the region and over the contested South China Sea by playing cat and mouse games with the other claimants in the region, as well as with the United States (Lowy Institute 2016). China has gradually upped its defense capabilities and is as of today having the largest naval fleet in the world, which includes more ships than all the ships of the countries in the region combined (Lee 2020). There has long been a growing fear that China is trying to establish itself as a new world hegemon and thereby shift the status quo in the region. Up until the announcement of AUKUS, minor actions have been taken to challenge the Chinese ambitions and to demonstrate that there is no acceptance of what China is striving for. For example, the *Freedom of Navigation Operations* (FONOPs) conducted by the US and other foreign powers as well as public statements that are in support of the other claimants in the region. These operations have so far not been able to create the intended effect against Chinese claims in the region (Shen et al. 2017).

The AUKUS agreement has had varied responses from the different claimants in the region. From a Chinese perspective AUKUS is presented as another military alliance or “mini Asian NATO” that is aimed at containing the growth of China (Bolton 2023). This is a common message that was repeated in the three Chinese state-owned newspapers that this thesis focused on; China’s Daily, People’s Daily and Global Times.

1.1 Background of AUKUS

The central part in the AUKUS agreement concerns how Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States will initiate joint dialogues with the purpose of assisting Australia accessing nuclear-powered submarines.

As stated by the parties, the agreement is only about naval nuclear propulsion, and not about the transfer of any nuclear weapons to Australia. Thereby, the agreement is deemed to be fully in line with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Brooke-Holland et al. 2021).

Other parts of the agreement include cooperation in enhancing joint capabilities and interoperability. More specifically, "cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence (AI), quantum technologies and additional undersea capabilities". In the agreement the countries also state that it will "help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific" (Brooke-Holland et al. 2021).

When talking about the alliance, the US President Joe Biden expressed that AUKUS "is about investing in our greatest source of strength, our alliances and updating them to better meet the threats of today and tomorrow" (Garcia 2021). Keeping the power balance in the Indo-Pacific region is one of the main reasons for the US to work with this new alliance, especially considering China's aggressive strategies in the South China Sea and how it is behaving towards Taiwan (Pant and Kamath 2021).

According to another one of the signatories, the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, joining AUKUS is about preserving regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region and tilting the British focus towards the region, since the region is seen as critical to the British economy, security, and global ambition to support open societies (Brooke-Holland et al. 2021).

As a reply to Chinese reactions to the announcement of AUKUS, Johnson stated that AUKUS has no ambitions of "being adversarial towards any other power". The Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison declared that a clear incentive for AUKUS was growing challenges in the region, when it comes to security issues (Brooke-Holland et al. 2021).

Indeed, maintaining the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific is of utmost priority for Washington especially at a time of China's belligerence, including actions towards Taiwan (Horton 2021). Therefore, the US is willing to work with its allies in the region to enhance their defense potential through sharing of sensitive defense technology. Similarly, for Britain, strengthening its traditional ties with Australia and the US is an effective way of gaining a greater voice in the region. British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace declared that with China "embarking on one of the biggest military spends in history" and "engaged in some disputed areas", the UK's regional partners "want to be able to stand their own ground" (Pant and Kamath 2021).

So, even though the agreement hasn't officially stated that it is aimed at countering China, many scholars and critics have interpreted that this is one of the messages that can be read between the lines. Not least by Beijing, who is deeply offended by this new alliance (Engman and Stünkel 2021).

The PRC's Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian has been rather vocal when it comes to the agreement, stating that, "The nuclear submarine cooperation between the US, the UK and Australia has seriously undermined regional peace and stability, intensified the arms race and undermined international non-proliferation efforts" (Brooke-Holland et al. 2021, p.6). Lijian has also accused the three nations of having a "Cold War zero-sum mentality and narrow geopolitical perspective" (Ibid.).

The Global Times, a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) owned newspaper even went so far as to threaten Canberra saying that it has "turned itself into an adversary of China" (Davidson & Blair 2021). It also threatened Australian soldiers, stating that, "Australian troops are also most likely to be the first batch of western soldiers to waste their lives in the South China Sea" (Ibid).

The development of AUKUS is still in the initial phases, it is important to remember that this is a long-term cooperation and will impact the region in several ways. There will be quite some time before Australia will even see a nuclear-powered submarine enter the waters, it is estimated that this will take about 18 years, as shown in Figure 1 (Lee and Nason 2022).

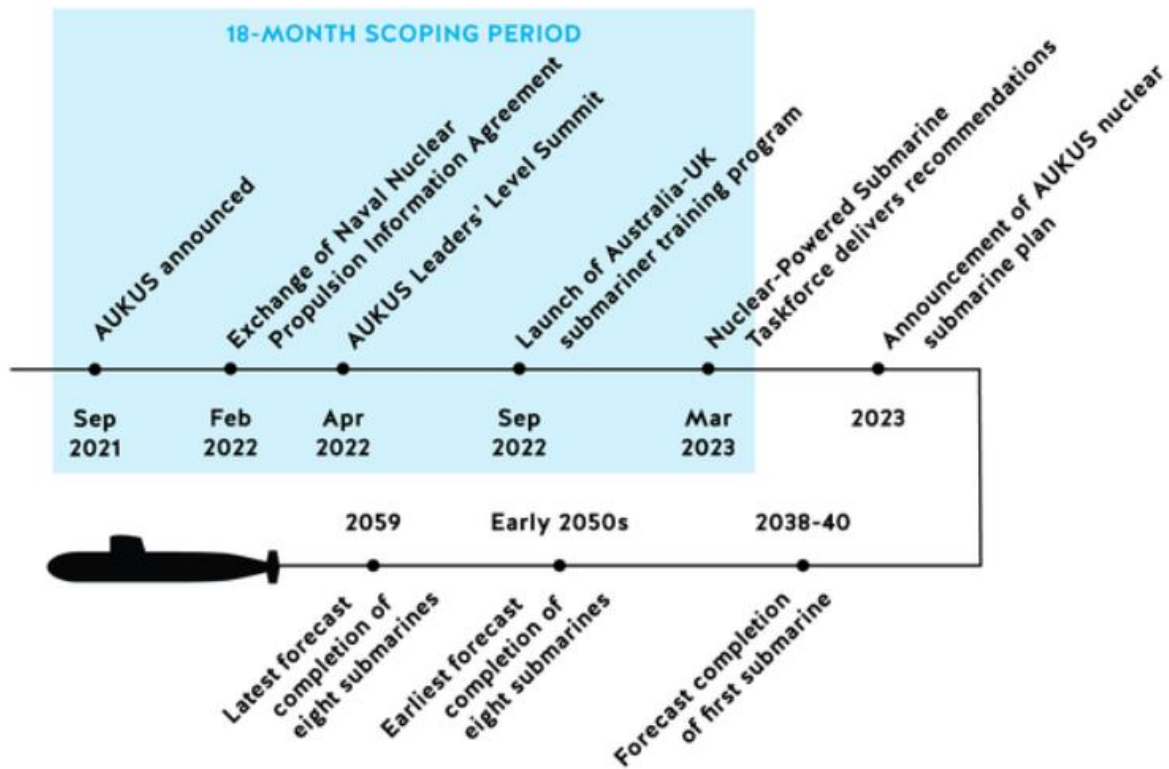


Figure 1. AUKUS timeline

(Lee and Nason 2022)

1.2 Aim and Research questions

AUKUS has been thoroughly discussed in international media after its official announcement. It is no doubt that the announcement came as a surprise especially for France, with media attention that mostly focused on the suffering US-France relations as a result of the AUKUS alliance. Both media and academia have focused on this relationship and how this betrayal has been framed in French-, American-, British- and Australian media outlets. However, limited academic research has been conducted on how AUKUS has been framed in the media within the Asia-pacific region, more specifically within China.

Hence, the aim of this thesis is to shed light on official Chinese reactions to AUKUS by investigating how AUKUS is being framed in Chinese state media, through the use of media framing analysis. This will be accomplished by applying Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook to three English language Chinese state newspapers. Through this process the following research questions will be addressed:

Research question:

How is AUKUS framed by Chinese state media?

Sub-questions:

Which frames are used in the Chinese state media's coverage of AUKUS?

What are the differences between People's Daily's, China Daily's, and the Global Times' reporting on AUKUS? How does the narrative differ?

1.3 Academic contribution

To the best of my knowledge, no studies have examined the framing of AUKUS in English-speaking Chinese state media outlets, therefore I believe it will be of great interest to highlight this narrative in regard to the geopolitical context of AUKUS. The findings of this study provide insight into how Chinese state media frames AUKUS, and by extension how the CCP seeks to portray their narrative on AUKUS therefore instrumental insights are provided into China's positioning when it encounters developing global power dynamics and shifts in global defense strategies. Thereby, this thesis will contribute to the academic discourse on AUKUS while also highlighting the complexity in this current geopolitical context between media, politics, and international relations.

1.4 Disposition of the thesis

Following this introduction, a chapter encompassing the literature review is presented which sets out the context of the study as well as identifies the contribution that this study could have in the current research fields. Chapter three introduces the theoretical framework, which was applied throughout the study. The methodology used to gather data and conduct this study is then presented in chapter four. In chapter five, the data will be presented and analyzed in the respective frames from Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook. Chapter six will discuss the findings and share implications for further research that were identified. In the concluding chapter the thesis will be wrapped up by re-addressing the aim, the thesis contribution and providing answers to the research questions.

2. Literature Review

This chapter focuses on providing the context in which this study situates itself and begins with an introduction to previous research that has been conducted on AUKUS. The chapter then goes on to describe the development of China's news media environment and provides a background of the different newspapers that the articles for the data analysis have been collected from. After having been introduced to the media environment that the study is situated in, this area is expanded as the study is put in the context of Xi Jinping's new era of digital authoritarian persuasion. The chapter then concludes by presenting other cases as well as studies that have been focusing on the framing mechanisms used in Chinese media to present how China tends to frame geopolitical developments.

2.1 Previous research on AUKUS

After AUKUS was announced a multitude of articles covering the topic have been published in newspapers and social media. While the recency of the announcement of AUKUS limits the number of studies addressing the security alliance, it has still been studied through different disciplines and narratives. AUKUS is a long-term project, still in its early stages of development, there is more to be uncovered and planned in the years to come, which will cover future research in many different academic disciplines.

Increased instability of the international order has resulted in new alliances and agreements such as AUKUS. From an international relations perspective researchers explain that these alliances are mostly temporary, and issue focused. As such, they conclude that the AUKUS alliance does not have clear goals or ambitions (Samaan 2021). To test this hypothesis and to understand the nature of the AUKUS alliance in the Indo-Pacific region, an empirical case study was conducted. Through qualitative discourse analysis of different opinions and arguments, found in government issued documents, policy papers, and interviews, coupled with journal articles and reports published by respective countries' State Departments, the study claims that even though AUKUS started with high ambitions and potential, with the purpose to counter the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific region, it will be proven impractical in achieving its purpose (Zaman and Yasmin 2022). According to researchers AUKUS might go one of two different ways, either it will survive in the long run, or it will be turned into yet another alliance with an unclear purpose, resulting in an increase in both vulnerability and conflict in the Indo-Pacific region.

AUKUS affects central parts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is a political and economic union of ten states in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar), and is by some believed to create an imbalance in this military neutral part of the world (Samaan 2021). Some research concludes that several ASEAN countries have provided different opinions on the topic AUKUS, reflecting a divide of interests in the trilateral defense pact (Ibid.). A brief academic debate of whether or not ASEAN would be weakened by AUKUS follows, where some experts claim that ASEAN is struggling to maintain its unity and "centrality" in regional security affairs (Ibid.). However, other researchers argue that ASEAN will remain the primary guardian of regional peace and security and forever remain at the "driving seat" of regional security management (Prayitno 2021). A year after the establishment of AUKUS, a majority of the ASEAN-countries have expressed their understanding to the establishment of the AUKUS alliance (Storey and Choong 2023). Some concerns have been raised about how AUKUS may contribute negatively to the stability in the region, especially since several ASEAN countries use strategic approaches to strike a balance in their relations with both the US and China (Ibid.). Many argue that AUKUS could even stimulate an arms race in the region (Li 2022). However, Australia claims that China has already started an arms race and that this alliance is merely a reaction to counteract China's rapid military modernization (Storey and Choong 2023). There are several uncertainties related to the US, which has resulted in doubts regarding the balance of power and on what deterrence effect AUKUS may have and if there is a risk it could lead to nuclear weapons being used in a potential arms conflict (Ibid.).

Hopefully, this is not the case. The South East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) mechanism, a treaty signed at the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in 1995, aims to create a Southeast Asia region free from nuclear weapons (Li 2022). Even though ASEAN countries have welcomed the AUKUS, they will engage themselves with extra-regional powers and not allow external powers such as AUKUS to push their agendas. Yet in order for ASEAN to maintain its centrality in the region, and not be replaced by AUKUS, ASEAN needs to address regional issues with a unified voice (Prayitno, 2021).

There is research that focuses on how three economic blocks, namely AUKUS, the evolving Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the cooperation between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) could contribute to providing universal health coverage. Lack of

access to healthcare is a global problem and the need to provide universal healthcare is essential. The objectives of the study were to explore whether health expenditure indicators drive the universal health coverage index and to determine the importance of impact that health expenditure indicators have on universal health coverage in emerging GCC, and BRICS compared to the developed AUKUS economic bloc (Kumar et al. 2022). Employing machine learning models, the authors found that domestic private health expenditure, out-of-pocket expenditure per Capita in US dollars, and voluntary health insurance as a percentage of current health expenditure are the key factors influencing universal health coverage across the three economic blocs. The research aimed to assist policymakers in actions for achieving universal health coverage and reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (Ibid).

AUKUS is still a relatively new alliance as well as a new area of study within academia, consequently most research that has been conducted about AUKUS have focused on the nations directly involved with AUKUS, nations indirectly involved with AUKUS or looking at AUKUS in relation to other major alliances. I believe that my research will be able to fill a void by providing insight into how Chinese state media views the impact of AUKUS in the region and worldwide.

2.2 Development of China's news media environment

There are almost 2,000 newspapers in China and in the beginning of the millennium around 400 million Chinese read newspapers (Hays, 2010). Chinese media are in general propaganda vehicles of the Chinese Communist party (CCP), viewed as a party-state political apparatus, faced with an increasingly tight monitoring and censorship (Fish, 2017).

Traditionally, since Chinese media has been fully funded by the government from 1949 until the 1980's, they have to a large extent just reprinted articles handed over to them by the Chinese propaganda department, covering topics such as harvest or factory reports, information about new government policy, and long analysis about Socialist philosophy and Western decadence (Hays, 2010). While Chinese media historically has been seen as affiliate organizations of the government, with the purpose of spreading the Chinese government's basic ideology, the development of the economy as well as the commercialization of the media in the 1990's resulted in greater media freedom (Duan and Takahashi 2017). The

expectations on national media to expand its global presence has increased under President Xi Jinping and his call to “tell China’s story well” (Shih 2016).

Historically, local newspapers have basically copied the news articles from central core newspapers, like the People’s Daily (Hays 2010). Focus has been on sharing good news rather than bad, and several topics have been off limits to write about, especially if there was no mention of it in the central media (Brady 2006). In the 1980’s attempts were made to open up the media sector, but at the end of the decade focus was again on only sharing positive propaganda and acting in accordance with the Party spirit and instructions (Hays 2010). From 1992 and onwards media was given more and more space in which to operate. The idea of using the media in a monitoring function, like a watchdog or agent of public opinion, exposing inequalities in the society and government, came into place (Ibid.). After the turn of the millennium and the SARS outbreak (2003), focus was again on being more open in the reporting and on having the public accessing credible information where it would be basically impossible to cover up any national disaster, be it natural or man-made alike (Shih 2016). During this period China also saw the emergence of relatively objective investigative reporting. Since 2012 and onward there has once again been a shift towards stricter control by the State. It is fair to say that the period from 2012 until today has been a relatively limiting period for the media (Duan 2017).

Nowadays, focus is on not having any news classified as *negative* produced nor reported by the media. Negative news, comments and commentaries are clearly to be restrained. Media channels in China are strictly controlled by the Central Propaganda department, and local propaganda offices, issuing instructions or informing about the news first (Brady 2006). To be reported, news should be positive and should portray a positive picture of the CCP and the government, especially about how they care for the people in different types of crises (Ibid). No matter if the news channel is a traditional party organ, a market-oriented media outlet or we-media outlet, they have to abide by the instructions from the Communist party (Hays 2010). It could be argued that the Central Propaganda Department, and local propaganda offices, to a great extent have become media themselves and that existing media channels only are conveyors of their messages. The propaganda departments have become a consistent source of releases of official news and information (Ibid).

Today the Chinese media environment is one of the most restrictive media environments in the world. Censorship is commonly used to control information in the news and the government is using libel lawsuits, arrests, and different means of squeezing journalists and media organizations to censor themselves (Duan 2017). In 2021 fifty journalists were imprisoned in China for not doing their job “correctly” (Gladstone 2021).

From being welcomed by the Chinese leaders to China more than 10 years ago, more and more foreign media has today left the country. In 2020, 18 foreign journalists were expelled from the country, and several had their visas frozen (Chen 2021). More and more foreign journalists have been viewed as anti-Chinese and accused of blackening China’s image (Kumar 2021).

In recent years the CCP has increased its engagement in shaping the news content around the world by promoting Chinese propaganda, forcibly putting an end to critical viewpoints, and securing control over key content-delivery systems (Cook 2020). Since 2009 until 2021 China has spent approximately USD 6.6 billion in increasing China’s media presence globally (Kumar 2021). The Chinese approach is not only about telling China’s story well, but some also argue critically that these investments contribute to undermining democratic norms, eroding national sovereignty, and weakening the economic stability of independent media (Ibid.).

By focusing my research on online news articles published by Chinese state media on how AUKUS has been framed, I aim to contribute to the interpretation of the development of the current news media environment in China.

2.3 Xi Jinping’s era of digital authoritarian persuasion

Through the development and use of digital media, governments have found new ways of sharing information and raising awareness among citizens, as well as impacting their perception of events. At the same time the boundaries between propaganda, entertainment and news have become more obscure (Durant and Lambrou 2009).

Statistics show that today a large part of the Chinese population is accessing news online. In December 2020, the number was 743 million or 75,1% of Chinese netizens (CNNIC 2021). As a response to the public’s increased access to information via internet and social media,

rather than from the traditional state-owned media outlets, the latter have been forced to change their approaches. The motives for leading state-owned media to make its news reporting more attractive to its audience online, has not only been driven by business or journalistic ambitions, but by political perspectives, namely, to win the “hearts and minds” of the people (Xin 2018).

In 2013, just after taking power, President Xi Jinping declared that getting the public opinion on their side would be a major priority for the CCP (Huang and Zhai 2013).

At a meeting in 2014 on internet security and information, he announced that it was a long-term objective to capture the public opinion online and that such a task would require the “bringing forth of new ideas to improve online propaganda...stimulating the right energy, vigorously cultivating socialist values” (Repnikova and Fang 2019).

Since President Xi came into power, experts claim that there has been an increased centralized control in all areas, but this has been more evident in the field of media (Ibid.). For example, the Internet in China has been regulated and centralized through the establishment of the Cyberspace Administration and its Central leading Group, headed by President Xi himself (Cairns 2016).

There has also been an increase in media crackdown and indirectly on online public opinion leaders, affecting investigative journalism negatively in China (Wang 2016). While control of the media is one side of the coin for President Xi to handle, the other side is the “challenge of persuasion”, or ways to shape the public opinion by the use of different media channels (Repnikova and Fang 2019).

A major concern for the CCP is not to lose the attention of younger citizens in the new digital environment. For this reason, to convey messages from and about the party in ways that attract the younger generation is central (Xin 2006).

Changes have taken place and today several state-owned news media outlets use social media platforms to increase their influence, for example through WeChat, Weibo (Micro Blog), and different mobile phone applications (Huang and Lu 2017). With fierce competition over the attention of the online audience, Chinese state media has adapted to the use of an easier language on the digital platforms (Ibid). While prior having been the “mouthpiece” of the CCP, the official media have changed towards a more user-oriented approach, with a more

informal rather than a formal language being used (Shao and Wang 2017). The previous one-way communication method has changed to the use of more interaction with the audience (Huang and Lu 2017, p.3). The media landscape in China has changed over the last years and today, social media accounts by state-owned media outlets, has a complexity of roles to balance, including being an active social media actor that fights for its survival in a competitive environment, being a CCP propaganda apparatus, and a “gatekeeping news organisation” (Thussu 2018).

Since President Xi came into power, the media landscape in China has transformed, both through a rapid development of online media and changed policies. The current media would shortly be described as more controlled and nationalistic, and through this thesis I will provide evidence of this from the perspective of how AUKUS is framed.

2.4 Media framing on geopolitical issues from a Chinese perspective

Looking at Chinese media framing of three geopolitical conflicts; the Ukraine-Russia war, the Kashmir conflict and the Arab uprising, the following can be noted.

When it comes to the study of the Ukraine-Russia war, initially the government took no stand in the conflict, but rather focused on framing the government’s humanitarian assistance to Ukraine (Sun 2022). With a change in the Chinese government’s stance towards the conflict this in hand also resulted in a change in how the conflict was framed in Chinese state media. Now instead of focusing on the government’s humanitarian efforts, the focus had shifted to standing up against the US, who had slandered China for not taking a stance in the conflict. The political sphere is clearly defined in the media by being selective when emphasizing and de-emphasizing issues that are either favorable or unfavorable to the state (Elias et al. 2015).

Additional ways of taking a stand against the Western side in the conflict, has been to put effort into reporting about the profits made by the US military equipment manufacturers, because of the conflict, furthermore the expansion of NATO, and the unverified rumor about Biolabs being set up in Ukraine (Sun 2022).

According to Chinese social media, the Russian military action in Ukraine has by time been justified, due to its political and economic pros and cons, where the purpose has been to

reveal the responsibility of the US in the conflict and to gather support for the Russian government (Sun 2022). The media is of the opinion that the US is trying to suppress Russia, in the same way as the US is trying to suppress China – if anything, in both cases it is a question about geopolitical rivalry.

In a study related to the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan, the framing used by China Daily and Global Times was to recognize Beijing's official perspective to the conflict, as a third key stakeholder of the valley having interest in it (Malik 2020). The content analysis provided findings suggesting that both newspapers used nearly identical frames to cover the Kashmir conflict, yet there was quite a difference in the amount of coverage from the respective news outlets. Another finding in the study was how both papers portrayed Kashmir and the Indo-Pak conflict fully in line with the Chinese government's political stand, also strongly reflecting the official policy line and evolving views on the issue (Ibid).

In comparison to China Daily, Global Times reported more aggressively and forcefully about the conditions for the inhabitants in the Indian held Kashmir and about the Indo-Pak dispute (Malik 2020). The interest of Global Times on the issue was also reflected by the number of articles it published, compared to China Daily. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of articles, especially the ones published in Global Times, continuously expressed the views of Chinese and Pakistani government and leaders over the Kashmir conflict (Ibid.).

Another study looked at how frames, in Chinese media, were constructed concerning the Arab Uprisings and how they developed between 2011-2021 through the use of content analysis. Comparisons were made of articles published in *People's Daily* and *Caixin Net*, as well as statements from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hu and Xu 2021). Over time, less attention was given to the Arab uprisings in the *People's Daily* and *Caixin Net*, and at the same time the framing topic and conflicts as well as the positions shifted (Ibid.). While *People's Daily* began to describe the uprising as a disaster, it moved over to criticize it and became generally negative towards it, *Caixin Net* began by also describing it as a disaster and then moved to frame events in a contextual way, generally in a neutral way (Ibid.) The study pointed at how different Chinese media's description of the West Asia North Africa region is dynamic and depends on where China stands diplomatically as well as what political image China wants to portray internationally, and to a certain extent what the international sentiment

is. Chinese media has proven to be more pragmatic in the time of the post-Arab uprising and have focused increasingly on items such as “reconstruction, political stability, social security, and to the recovery of people’s livelihoods” (Ibid).

Through the framing of AUKUS further insight will be provided into China’s interests in the Indo-Pacific region as the Chinese media’s framing of geopolitical conflicts may depend on China’s diplomatic stance and international political image.

2.5 Research positioning

There are limited studies addressing AUKUS due to the recency of the trilateral defense partnership. Building on existing literature, this thesis will provide additional perspectives on how Chinese state media views AUKUS. This will be done by, first, providing insight into the impact of AUKUS in the regions and worldwide from the lens of Chinese state media. Secondly, by providing comprehension on how AUKUS is being framed in the current news media environment in China.

The research conducted in this thesis will also provide another insight into the increased authoritarianism in media publication through the framing of AUKUS. This thesis also applied a specific set of predefined frames, created by Boydston, whilst framing AUKUS. To my knowledge there hasn’t been any study such as this conducted. Therefore, the thesis will hopefully provide a nuanced view of Chinese state media’s framing of geopolitical topics, such as AUKUS.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter begins with an introduction to framing theory and presents an understanding of what framing theory entails, specifically focusing on media framing. This is then followed by a brief overview of the critiques of framing theory and then a section that describes the suitability of framing in regard to the research.

3.1 Framing theory

The theory of framing is believed to have been used already in the early 1930's but was officially introduced by Ervin Goffman in 1974 and then used in communication studies. According to Goffman a frame is a "schema of interpretation" which provides a context while striving to interpret the presented information through "the methods of locating, perceiving, identifying, and labelling" (Goffman 1986, p21). At the beginning framing became popular in linguistics and communication research, where the Bateson and Goffman's model of frame analysis was used to analyze "discourse, language, and literary storytelling" (Hallahan 1999).

Besides in communications, framing has later on been used to help researchers understand and investigate related behaviors in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, economics, media studies, political studies and so on. Framing helps us form the perspectives through which we see the world and is thereby essential in helping us construct our social reality. It is also believed that frames are "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese 2001, p.119).

Central for framing are the processes of *inclusion*, *exclusion*, and *emphasis*. Entman, another well-known framing scholar, declared that the basic elements of framing are "selection and salience" (Entman 1993). He believes that framing is done by selecting several aspects of a perceived reality and making them more prominent in a specific text or article, as a way to emphasize a specific solution to a problem, provide interpretation and moral evaluation or recommend treatment for the discussed subject. Therefore, framing could be seen as rather subjective.

Framing is sometimes discussed in relation to agenda-setting. There is even a debate whether or not framing should be seen as a second level agenda-setting (Entman 2010). Those against, argue that the two perspectives describe different theoretical boundaries, operate by distinct

cognitive processes, and are related to different outcomes (Scheufele 2000). In fact, framing directs our thoughts on a specific interpretation of a situation, while agenda-setting focuses on why issues vary in how they are prioritised in different societal cultures (Marais 2012, p.22).

Entman adds that framing, second level agenda setting, is telling people “what to think about” and this will of course influence “what people think” (2010, p.336) The latter focuses on what people decide, prefer, and accept while the former deals with the thinking process which leads to that conclusion (Ibid. p.337).

A *frame* acts by limiting and defining the meaning behind the message by forming the conclusions that people make about it, as well as the opinion of the creator of the message (Hallahan 1999, p.207). To a large extent the creator of the message, even called *framers*, usually refers to opinions of journalists, politicians, governments, multinational corporations and so on (Ibid.). There are different kinds of frames that have been identified, including *valence framing*, which refers to frames that present messages either positively or negatively (Ibid.). *Semantic framing* is when frames are used to elaborate different phrasing of terms (Ibid). Additionally, a rather complex and common use of framing is *story framing* which consists of two main components (Ibid., p.208). First the identification of the message based on a choice of main ideas or themes, secondly, developing a variation of narratives and formulating a storytelling that justifies and incorporates the identified message.

Pan and Kosicki (1993), propose that framing can be viewed in a sequence of structures within a message, commonly found in discourse analysis. These are composed of different structures, these being; *syntactical*, *script*, *thematic* and *rhetorical*. *Syntactical structures* are where words and phrases are arranged in a consistent pattern (Pan and Kosicki 1993, p.59). *Script structures* are when events are organized in a specific order of anticipated patterns (Ibid., p.60). *Thematic structures* where propositions or hypotheses clearly provide a view of the correlation between the themes in the written text - these structures tend to focus on phrases that include “because,” “since,” and “so” (Ibid., 60-61). *Rhetorical structures* that discreetly indicate how a text should be understood (Ibid., p.61-62). Rhetorical tools used in this context may be metaphors and similes, illustrations and well-known examples, catchphrases, a provocative language, visual imagery, and descriptors (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Reese also highlights the importance of the rhetorical aspects of framing and is of the opinion that the identification of framing devices related to linguistic structures,

such as visual icons and metaphors, are the most important segments within framing (Reese 2010, p.19).

While Entman believes that framing is a selection process of issues that are created in order to form reality (Entman 2007, p.4), Reese however argues that frames are already embedded in our culture. He believes that frames are part of a fundamental structure which are set in a cultural context that is both dynamic and historical. In the words of Reese, “frames don’t just arise as free-standing entities” (2010, p.18). A frame is an abstraction and is envisioned as a multisited structure which moves from textual structures to mental structures, thereby causing a shift in the recipient. Journalists therefore strive to establish comprehension of the social world by packaging frames in an interpretive manner (Ibid, p.19-22).

3.2 Media framing theory

The definition of a media frame is “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events . . . The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p.143). Central to the analysis of news framing is the way it is open to different theoretical perspectives and thereby makes it possible to comprehend and study the effects of framing and frame building (D’Angelo and Kuypers 2010, p.9).

Tuchman (1978) also elaborated on this and concluded that media or news frames are necessary to turn a series of futile and hardly recognizable happenings into obvious events: “The news frame organizes everyday reality, and the news frame is part of everyday reality... [it] is an essential feature of news” (Tuchman 1978, p.193).

Journalists are working with media frames on a day-to-day basis where they use a routine to instantly identify and classify information and “to package it for efficient relay to their audiences” (Scheufele 2000). They add another layer of interpretation of events in the form of a news story. It is thereby fair to say that the media is not entirely objective. As Entman (1993) describes it, the framing is to a high degree influenced by the agenda of the author.

Paul Brewer and Kimberly Gross (2005) elaborate on a significant field of *issue framing*. They conclude that when political issues are presented in the news it doesn’t only present facts but include frames that direct the audience towards a certain interpretation of political controversies (D’Angelo and Kuypers 2010, p.8). They also argue that the media promote the

development of frames by politicians and activists based on their specific standpoints, depending on how the media choose to frame debates on particular issues. This has also triggered discussions about what actually prompts different news frames and to what extent journalists are independent in relation to high government officials and other politicians, as they are framing their news stories (D'Angelo and Kuypers 2010, p.9). Some journalists are keen on not falling into this trap and see it as their responsibility to reframe the frames passed on to them by different actors. Several editors demand that their journalists present a wide spectrum of quotations from politicians of different political backgrounds, in order to guarantee objectivity, a news norm verified by Tuchman (Lawrence 2010, p.265).

Entman argues that framing has a big implication on political power and democracy (Entman 2007). For this reason, the objectivity of media becomes extra sensitive since media can be very powerful in the ways it impacts the society, including by persuading in matters of opinion and belief, attracting, and directing public attention, influencing behaviour, structuring definitions of reality, conferring status and legitimacy, and informing speedily and broadly (Marais 2012, p.69).

Another way journalists use media framing in the news is through visual framing, such as the use of photographs, drawings, cartoons etc. Images, unlike words are used as direct pointers as they allow journalists to convey meanings without explicitly phrasing their messages in the written text or article (Coleman 2010, p.234). Many images and photos are placed in written texts and articles to affect the recipients in an emotional manner. Entman's definition of framing is also applicable in visual framing as it is able to draw out certain perspectives of the perceived reality in order to make the frame more salient, hence pictures tend to convey more than words (Ibid, p.238).

3.3 Critiques of framing

There are of course critiques of framing, one of the biggest ones being that it is lacking a coherent definition and is dependent on context-specific operationalizations rather than being generally applicable (Entman 1993). Others argue that framing is not fully explained or a generally applicable concept. Instead, it can be seen as a metaphor that is hard to translate into relevant research questions. Matthes (2011) also claims that a more integrated approach is needed, which would clarify the use of framing in different academic areas. Van Dijk argues that the main problem with framing is that it tends to misinterpret different notions that would

need to be analyzed by themselves instead of being defined as something vaguely as frames (2016, p.155).

Many have pointed at the resemblance between framing and agenda setting theories and several are of the opinion that framing doesn't shed any light in the academic sphere as it doesn't provide any new theoretical contribution that agenda setting has already provided (McCombs and Shaw 1972).

3.4 Suitability of framing theory

Framing analysis has a few similarities with discourse analysis, such as in the way that both methods strive to determine what is being said in the sample texts. However, discourse analysis tends to focus more directly on what linguistic devices have been used, as well as which emphasis has been put on the text's meaning and interpretation. Framing analysis is far more relevant for the study as it focuses on how the messages are being constructed by the media, as well as how journalists construct the frames for the reading public.

As framing tends to be rooted in ideology, cultural values, norms, and society, it provides deeper insights for analysis than that of which agenda setting theory would provide (Van Gorp 2010, p.92). Thus, framing is relevant for the study as it is operationalized in detecting hidden messages. This is why it is a good theory and method to conduct this study and answer the research questions. Framing theory enables one to examine how the narrative of AUKUS is presented by Chinese state media.

4. Methodology

This chapter begins with the thesis's ontological and epistemological positionality. It then provides an overview of the research design, including a subsection on how the online newspapers as well as the articles were selected in the data collection process. The reader is then introduced to Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook and is provided an explanation of the coding process that was used throughout this research process. The chapter concludes by mentioning the different limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

4.1 Ontological and Epistemological positioning

The study was conducted using a deductive approach as a pre-determined theoretical framework and codebook was applied in order to produce the findings and thereafter conduct the analysis that would in turn answer the research questions. As the study analyses news articles that journalists have constructed through their own social reality, it is evident that the positioning of the thesis was from an ontological constructivist perspective. From an epistemological perspective the thesis utilized interpretivism in order to comprehend the social actions rather than examining external forces in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects. All in all, the research has been devised in a qualitative manner through the epistemological and ontological positioning.

4.2 Research Design

This study used a deductive strategy where predefined frames developed by Boydston were used in order to empirically analyze how applicable they were throughout the data and which effect they were able to produce. Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook consists of 15 frames, where the last frame is considered a disposable frame, as that which doesn't fit in among the other frames is coded there.

4.3 Boydston's Policy Frames Code book

Framing is central to political communications as it involves presenting a policy issue from one perspective while excluding alternative perspectives (Boydston et al. 2013, p.1).

Boydston contends that understanding the frames that 'define' policy issues is a 'crucial task for advancing our understanding of politics'(Ibid., p.1-2). In order to provide 'a common framework for cross-project comparison and replication' Boydston et al. developed a Policy

Frames Codebook; ‘a system for categorizing framing cues across policy issues.’ The Codebook was tested thoroughly on several random samples of media stories in order to ‘identify and assess empirical patterns’ that framed policy discussions in the United States. The findings indicated the ‘cross-issue applicability and comprehensiveness’ of the Codebook (Ibid, p.20). The analysis that was conducted on the gathered news articles followed Boydston’s *Policy Frames Codebook* and the coding resulted in 5 frames that were present in the gathered articles. These frames were the following; *Economic frames*, *Morality frames*, *Security and defense frames*, *political frames* and *external regulation and reputation frames*.

“**Economic frames** - The cost, benefits, or monetary/financial implications of the issue (to an individual, family, community, or to the economy as a whole).”

(Boydston et al. 2013, p.6)

“**Morality frames** - Any perspective - or policy objective or action (including proposed action) - that is compelled by religious doctrine or interpretation, duty, honor, righteousness or any other sense of ethics or social responsibility.”

(Ibid.)

“**Security and defense frames** - Security, threats to security, and protection of one's person, family, in-group, nation, etc. Generally, an action or a call to action that can be taken to protect the welfare of a person, group, nation sometimes from a not yet manifested threat.”

(Boydston et al. 2013, p.7)

“**Political frames** - Any political considerations surrounding an issue. Issue actions or efforts or stances that are political, such as partisan filibusters, lobbyist involvement, bipartisan efforts, deal-making, and vote trading, appealing to one's base, mentions of political maneuvering. Explicit statements that a policy issue is good or bad for a particular political party.”

(Ibid.)

“**External regulation and reputation frames** - The United States' external relations with another nation: the external relations of one state with another; or relations between groups. This includes trade agreements and outcomes, comparisons of policy outcomes or desired policy outcomes.”

(Ibid.)

In addition to tracking the frame cues in each text, Boydston coded for tone and suggested scholars who use the framework to do so as well. When coding for tone we differentiate

among positive, negative, and neutral tones, where the precise definition varies according to the issue being studied and the partition according to these designations will depend on the researcher's operationalization choices (Boydston et al. 2012, p.9-10). Whilst conducting the research I started coding for tone in the collected articles from the different state media newspapers. However, I noticed rather quickly that the tone of the articles was rather negatively biased and therefore decided to exclude the analysis of tones in my research as I felt that the insights did not provide my research with any new value. Since, AUKUS is already negatively viewed in Chinese state media, hence a negative result would be evident.

4.4 Data Collection and limitations

The data collected for this thesis consisted of English online news articles published from September 15, 2021, until November 22, 2021. The articles all mentioned the topic of AUKUS either in the title or in the text and were provided from the following news outlets; China Daily, People's Daily and Global Times. These media outlets were chosen because they published news articles in English whilst also having shown a major interest in reporting on AUKUS during the chosen time frame.

Founded in 1981, **China Daily** is the major official state-run English-language newspaper in China, actively involved in Chinese global media campaigns. China Daily is owned by the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The paper targets foreign readers and its articles often cover delicate topics which hardly or not at all are covered in domestic media (Hays 2010). With its close links to the People's Daily, it often draws on the same sources of information and adopts the same line on major news items (Chen 2004). While China Daily is seen by many as slightly more liberal than Chinese language newspapers (Hartig 2020), it is often referred to as being the "mouthpiece for the Party in its efforts to communicate with the wider world" (Chen 2012).

The **People's Daily** is one of the major Communist party newspapers in China which legitimately could claim the title of being the "Communist Party mouthpiece". It is said to date back to the time after the long March (1934-1935) and became the main Communist party newspaper after the move of the party to Beijing in 1949 (Hays 2010). As an official Chinese state media, its editorials include reflections of government policy. Its articles seem to be written and carefully screened by a committee and packed with dry official language

(Fish 2017). It is quite hard to assess how many read it, since its articles are being read over loudspeakers, and being broadcasted on trains and radio stations, and put up in glass cabinets for pedestrians to read (Cheng 2019).

The **Global Times**, an English-language newspaper under the People's Daily (Fish 2017). At its outset in 1993 it was a Chinese-speaking tabloid, claiming to have several millions of Chinese readers. In April 2009, the English-language version was printed, partly to compete with the China Daily. The Global Times has been characterized by its high pitch when it comes to defending the interests of China and is by several Western observers labelled as "China's Fox News" (Ibid.). While the Global Times and the Chinese government share interest, they are expressing them differently. When it comes to the Global Times, it is stated by both current and former editors that the paper is driven by business incentives, which makes it overly antagonistic and provocative when possible (Hays 2010). Being this provocative is partly possible because the Global Times being a part of the People's Daily group. The purpose of its antagonistic positions and provoking language is to get foreign media attention (Fish 2017).

When it comes to the target audiences of the above news media outlets there are some differences. China Daily, being a mainly English written paper, targets mostly foreign readers, but also reaches domestic readers with Chinese language editions. The target audience of People's Daily is mostly domestic readers; however, they do also reach international readers with publications in more than 15 languages. The Global Times target audience is generally foreign media, yet with international editions in the US, South Africa, and Europe, they are also able to reach foreign readers (Fish 2017).

Other news and social media platforms were investigated but were unable to provide sufficient articles or social media posts on AUKUS. This study focuses on articles that were published on the different news outlets online platforms between September 15, 2021 – November 22, 2021. The reason for this time limitation is because on September 15th in 2021 the leaders of Australia, the UK and the United States announced the creation of AUKUS and November 22nd was the date of when all involved parties signed the *Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement*, which was part of the first steps in the new partnership (Lee and Nason 2022).

I started gathering the articles by using the search function on each of the Chinese state media's websites for the word *AUKUS* and selected all the articles that contained the word *AUKUS* in the article title, subheading or included in the article text. The search yielded a total of 376 articles from the different newspapers. In order to find relevant articles for the coding process, I went through several rounds of selection processes where I discarded articles. Some news articles only had the word *AUKUS* in the written text, whilst the title of the article didn't mention *AUKUS*. After thorough reading of the articles, it was clear that the message was not related to *AUKUS*, therefore the articles were discarded from my analysis. The articles that had been discarded were either incorrectly sorted for including the word *AUKUS* in the article when this was not the case, or the articles referenced *AUKUS* in the related stories section of the article, but not in the actual text body. Through this process I ended up with 38 articles that were used in the coding process; 16 articles were collected from Global Times, 11 articles were chosen from People's Daily, and another 11 articles were selected from China Daily.

4.5 Coding process

I started off the coding process by briefly reading through the 376 articles that I had collected in order to grasp an overview of the texts that had been selected within the given timeframe. When doing so I noticed that several articles had been republished amongst the different Chinese state media outlets, therefore I discarded the articles that were duplicates. As previously mentioned in section 4.2, I also discarded articles that had been originally included in the selection but had later neglected to mention *AUKUS* in the text body.

When reading the articles, I discovered relevant phrases or patterns in the text, and I started assigning these to one of Boydston's policy frames, as shown in Figure 2. I made sure to add comments about what I had read and selected, in order to operationalize the frames that were defined. Some articles included more than one frame. This meant that I had both a primary frame and subframes for the majority of articles. I repeated the process of reading the selected articles and redefined which primary and subframes were present in the articles and then discarded the articles that were irrelevant to the research.

Article #	Newspaper	Date	Article Title	Text Citation	Frame	Comment
6	China Daily	2021-09-24	Quad will only destabilize Asia-Pacific	Despite the Sino-US disputes have intensified, countries in the region are reluctant to take sides between China, a trade partner, and the US, a security patron.	Economic	Choosing sides on AUKUS has underlying economic consequences. Trade and/or support from China could be threatened.
25	People's Daily	2021-09-18	Why the AUKUS nuclear deal is irresponsible and dangerous	United States has been turning a blind eye as some of its allies pursue nuclear technologies and weapons.	Security and defense	AUKUS is promoting the use nuclear technology
27	Global Times	2021-11-21	The US has fewer cards to stir up trouble for China in ASEAN	As the saying goes, when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.	Political	AUKUS will lead to splits in the region --> disastrous impact on Southeast Asian countries. Risk that it will lead to major power competitions.

Figure 2. Sample of Coding process

4.6 Validity, reliability, and ethical considerations

While conducting the research I was aware of my own bias, in knowing that it is difficult to be objective in interpreting the data and categorizing the articles in different frames. How I interpret them and the insights I discover may depend on my own cultural background and influence of having lived in China for 6 years as well as in Malaysia and Singapore for a total of 2 years. Conducting the interpretation of news articles demands an understanding of the links between concrete parts of the news text and the chosen frames, which is very much affected by a wider cultural context. As a researcher one should be aware of the cultural aspects of society in order to interpret what is being said in between the lines and thereby being conveyed within the news articles (Van Gorp 2010, p.90).

There is limited reliability in recreating the exact results from the coding that was performed on the selected articles in this study as framing is an interpretive method of conducting research, due to the author's personal bias. However, there is great reliability in coding the articles by using Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook, as it has been well tested over a long period of time both by her as well as by other scholars (Boydston 2012, p.10). There is also reliability in being able to use the same data that was collected in this research, as it is readily available online at the time of writing.

The thesis has high ethical considerations as the collected data was openly published on the internet and readily available for anyone to access and interpret. The articles collected have been available for almost more than two years, so it is assumed that those being interviewed

would have had plenty of time to recant what was written, should the newspaper have misrepresented their views. Another high ethical consideration is that the thesis does not focus on the comments that netizens have posted under the articles, but the focus has been on the main articles themselves. Finally, the thesis is my own work and I have not intentionally made any claims to research results produced by other researchers, without providing reference to their work.

5. Findings & Analysis

This chapter begins by providing an insight of the distribution of primary frames and subframes in the data set of articles. This is then followed by an in-depth presentation of how the articles have been categorized into the five different frames: economic frames, morality frames, security and defense frame, political frame, and external regulation and reputation frame.

5.1 Frames

After having conducted the coding process of the collected articles, the following frames were established; economic frame, morality frame, security and defense frame, political frame, and external regulation and reputation frame. The distribution of the primary frames is shown in Figure 3 and the majority of the articles were coded in the security and defense frame, 16 articles, followed by the external regulation and reputation frame with nine articles. Five of the articles were coded in the morality frame and the two remaining frames ended up with four articles that were coded in each respective frame.

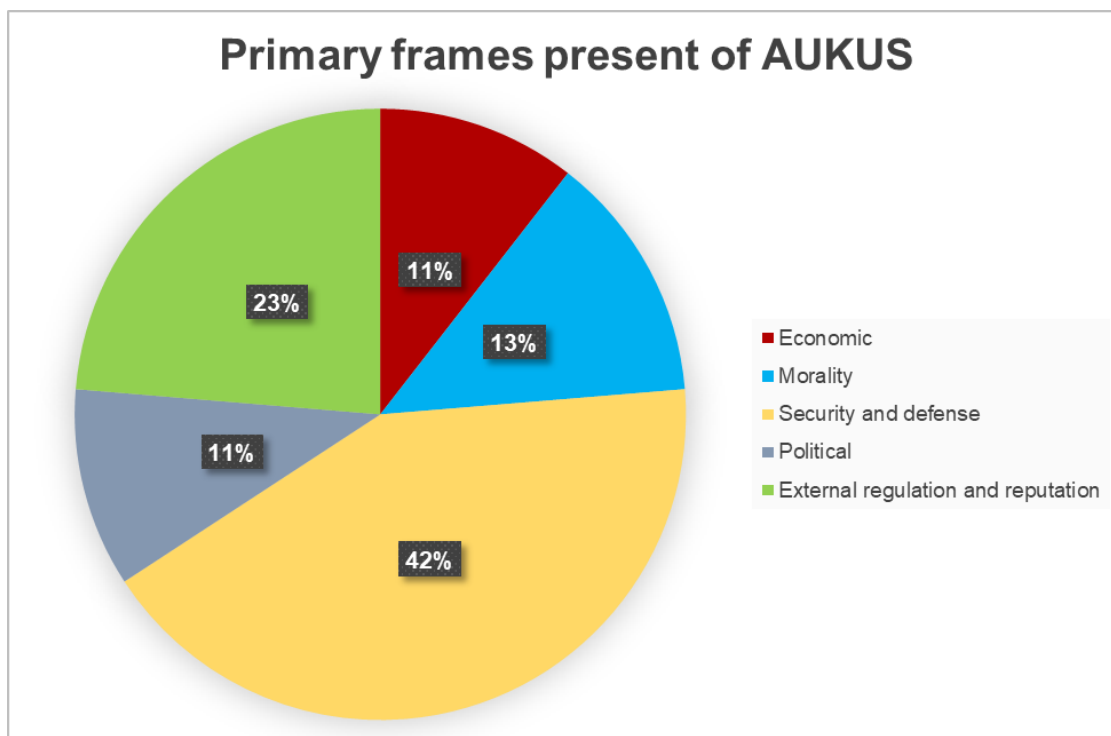


Figure 3. The uncovered primary frames of AUKUS

The distribution of the subframes found in the articles are shown in Figure 4 below. The marginally largest subframe with a total of 11 articles was the political frame, closely followed by the economic frame which was represented in 10 articles. A total of eight articles didn't have any of the other frames represented as subframes, therefore they were specified in the "none" category. Five of the articles clearly had security and defense as their subframe. Two articles were coded in the morality frame and another two were coded in the external regulation and reputation frame.

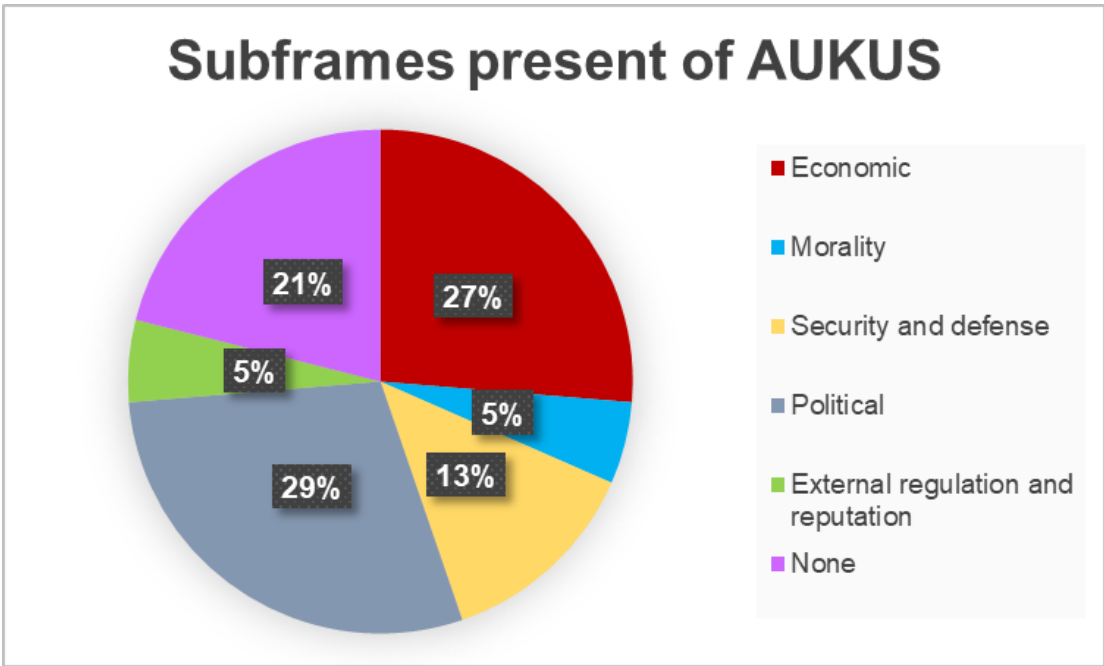


Figure 4. The uncovered subframes of AUKUS

The distribution of the frames in the three Chinese state media outlets show that the security and defense frame is the most dominant frame followed by external regulation and reputation as the second most common frame, as shown in Figure 5. Even though Global Times had a third more articles (16) compared with China Daily (11 articles) and People's Daily (11 articles), it has the lowest coverage (6%) of articles framed as economy whereas People's Daily had 9% coverage and China Daily had 18% coverage. A somewhat similar pattern goes for the security and defense frame where Global Times had 38% coverage vis-a-vis People's Daily with 55% coverage. It is also interesting to note that the political frame was not represented in any of the articles selected from People's Daily.

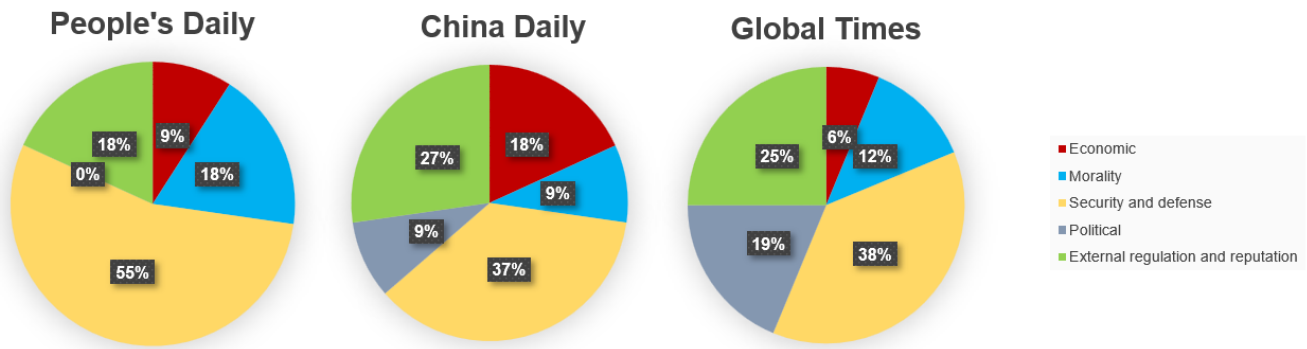


Figure 5. The distribution of primary frames in Chinese state media

When looking at the subframes of AUKUS in Figure 6, almost half of the articles (46%) from People’s Daily only had a primary frame and no subframe, in regard to the subframes it was also noted that the articles from People’s Daily lacked both the morality frame as well as the external regulation and reputation frame.

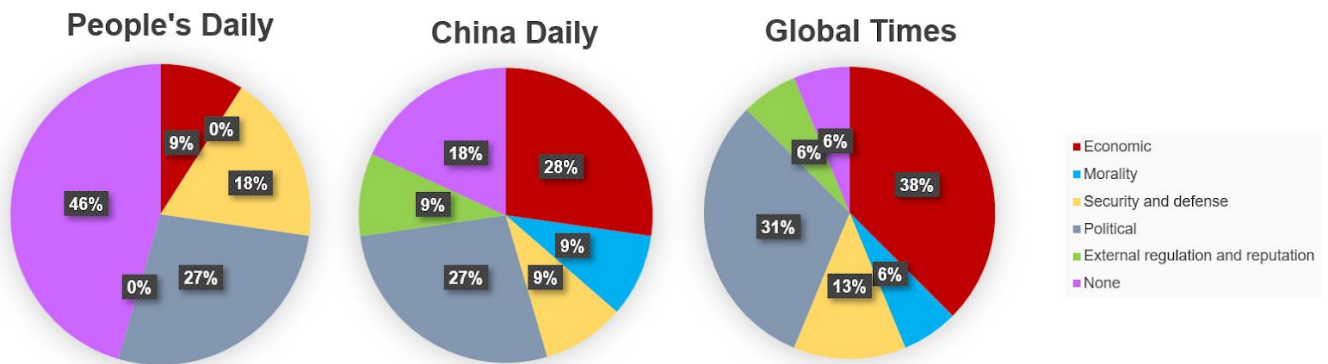


Figure 6. The distribution of subframes in Chinese state media

In Appendix 2 there is a table of the full list of the articles that were collected and selected for the framing analysis. The table also identifies the respective primary frames and subframes that were present in each of the articles.

5.1.1 Economic frame

The economic frame is highlighting the costs, benefits, or monetary and financial effects to individuals, societies, and nations (Boydston 2012, p.6). To the newspapers it is very much a matter of benefits for countries engaged in cooperation with China, or costs for not being a friendly nation in the eyes of China. The articles often refer to China's rise and rapid economic development, and the newspapers further argue that China has developed into a hub of economic and trade activities and has become the most powerful engine of global growth and development.

The prosperous development potential has been clouded by a widening gap between economic and security clout in Asia. Several articles point to the dilemma, where countries in the region as a result of AUKUS, have been forced to choose either between continuing trading with China or having the US as their security patron. It is quite clear that many countries don't want to create disputes or conflicts, as they are dependent on trade with China. Chinese state media also notes that the economic and trade cooperation between China and Australia has been greatly affected by the decision of Australia to join AUKUS and openly take a stand against China.

In additional articles, Chinese state media points at how the country's tremendous economic development has benefitted several countries. They also refer to how the nation, over the last half century, has helped raise the living standard, not only of the Chinese population but also for many other people in the world. China's direct investments in individual countries in the region and elsewhere is highlighted. In some articles, it is referred to how China has made major food production and crops investments in countries in Africa and Latin America, as well as huge investments in infrastructure in Africa, way surpassing those investments by the US and other major European countries. According to the Chinese state media, even the US has been helped to ease its inflation through the export of huge quantities of goods to the country. Despite all of this, the main message from the newspaper articles is that the US tries to hinder the development and contain China through AUKUS and isolate it from the cooperation with countries in the region.

Furthermore, Chinese state media accuses the US of trying to mobilize some of the countries that China have friction with, in assisting with this mission. They also state that it will not be

beneficial for anyone, and points at verbal opposition from many countries against AUKUS. Countries that have realized that the continued development of AUKUS and increased re-armament will result in detrimental effects for the economic development in the region, where countries instead of focusing on the prosperity for themselves and their citizens, will put a lot of effort into their own security affairs. Instead, Chinese state media argues that the AUKUS countries should step back and let China have its development, and thereby also share the benefits with the countries in the region that wants to work with China in a peaceful and equally beneficial way. The newspaper articles warn that the US is laying an economic foundation for a new cold war through its escalation of decoupling from China when it comes to cooperation in technology, pivotal industriousness and the promotion of supply chains that exclude China. Chinese state media argues that the prosperity in the region is risked by the US behaviour and AUKUS, since it may intrude on the smooth trade flow and compromise the ASEAN stability and economic prosperity.

5.1.2 Morality frame

Moral framing is to make an explicit distinction between good and evil, and to justify a moral way of action. In a conflict situation, the morality language defines how one party is an aggressor, while the other one is filled with all good virtues and is being victimized (Boydston 2012, p.6).

A repeated message in several articles points at how the US is both unreliable, and will only adhere to its own interests, especially when facing critical moments. Examples that Chinese state media loves to highlight, is how the US sacrificed Europe's interest, both as it hastily pulled out of Afghanistan and then later on formed the AUKUS. Multiple newspaper articles argue that President Biden has just continued with President Trump's America First policy. When it comes to AUKUS, Chinese state media tends to put light on the harsh reactions and how the EU has questioned the US and President Biden for mismanaging the situation, when selling US nuclear submarines to Australia behind the back of France, who already were in negotiations with Australia regarding the sale of French vessels. This is also shown rather vividly in a cartoon that shows a two-faced President Biden smiling towards the camera while at the same time stabbing President Macron in the shadows (Appendix 2a). Chinese state media also points at how the US misled other European partners as it through AUKUS forged a new strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific, and how the other two members of QUAD;

India and Japan, were excluded to join AUKUS, which must have had some spillover effects on the US – QUAD relations.

Chinese state media points at how the US has been using double standards when it comes to nuclear exports and utilization. Previously, the US has consequently denied allies to acquire nuclear technology and instead been criticizing civilian nuclear projects of other countries. Today, it itself is increasing the utilization of nuclear technology through AUKUS in a dangerous geopolitical game.

Chinese state media uses harsh expressions and is of the opinion that both presidents Biden and Trump should be held accountable for the establishment of a new cold war. When the US replies that it doesn't seek a new cold war with China, the reply in Chinese state media is that there is no credibility to such a statement, nor that the US, despite all its efforts, will be able to keep the China-US competition at an appropriate level (Daddis 2022). Chinese state media further argues that presidents Trump and Biden have promoted conflicts between the US and China and have destroyed the China-US cooperation through their different measures. In recent times president Biden has tried to reverse the rhetoric and opened for cooperation again (Ibid.), but Chinese state media argues that it is impossible to trust someone that obviously only is doing this to manage its own interests. It is a deception that Chinese state media urges the American people to oppose. Unlike the US administration and some political elites in the US, Chinese state media is of the opinion that both Chinese and American societies and people don't want a new cold war. The newspaper articles describe AUKUS as an Indo-pacific version of NATO, as a means to contain Chinese development.

The report by the US of an accident or collision by a US nuclear submarine in the South China Sea in 2021 led to aggressive rhetoric from China state media about how the US could have caused a nuclear leak, leading to severe consequences for the people in the region and their food supply, and a severely damaged local marine environment. The US Navy is described as unprofessional and incapable of operating in these waters, let alone the UK or Australia, since it is not their natural waters either, and definitely not with nuclear-powered submarines.

5.1.3 Security and defense frame

Issues under security and defense frames cover such things as threats to security, and protection of one's person, family, nation, etc. and actions or call to action to be taken in order to protect the welfare of a person, group, nation (Boydston 2012, p.7).

Chinese state media points at how the US already in 2007 established the so-called QUAD (Quadrilateral security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, and the US), as an informal coordination platform during the tsunami relief and rescue operations, and how the US later on has intensified its alliance policy against China through the recent establishment of AUKUS. The QUAD was dormant during many years but was revitalized in 2017 and has been upgraded from meetings for ministerial-level officials to summits between heads of state or government.

Since the revitalization of the QUAD, Chinese state media claims that the US has been utterly engaged in conveying to the QUAD, as well as to European partners, that military cooperation necessarily should be aimed at China, and that the allies need to project power around China. The tension was further intensified by the establishment of the trilateral security partnership AUKUS, including Australia, UK, and the US. Chinese state media highlights that the main purpose of AUKUS is to assist Australia building nuclear-powered submarine capability, all while neglecting the rising military tensions that this stimulates in the Western Pacific.

Chinese state media stresses that the US through its initiatives has been adding to the conflicts over Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea. While China repeatedly has encouraged the Taiwan authorities not to take a confrontative path towards the Chinese mainland, the US has consequently sent warships to patrol the waters close to China's islands and reefs, as a way to provoke China. These moves have been extremely dangerous, it has created tensions and instilled fear in the international community, as well as an anticipation of a possible final confrontation between China and the US, according to Chinese state media.

Chinese state media declares that the US, through AUKUS, will never manage to divide the world into those that are “pro-China” versus those that are “anti-China,” no matter how hard they try. Chinese state media note that several non-aligned ASEAN-countries have called for de-escalation and denuclearization ever since the pact was made public. The newspaper

articles highlight that just days after the announcement of AUKUS, Malaysia and Indonesia jointly expressed concern over the fact that the pact would trigger an arms race in the region. They also raise the fact that Singapore, a close ally to Australia, also raised concerns over Australia's ambitions of acquiring nuclear-powered submarines.

Chinese reporters agree that nuclear-powered submarines may strengthen Australia's regional position and prestige but are convinced that they mainly will provoke Beijing and worsen the relations between the countries. Through AUKUS, Chinese state media claims that Australia has become an adversary of China, since it will be patrolling with nuclear-powered submarines in waters in the Indo-Pacific region, clearly targeting China. The newspaper articles also claim that the future development of nuclear weapons programs definitely will be part of Australia's purchase of nuclear-powered submarines, which will not be in line with neither the Non-Proliferation Treaty, nor the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Chinese state media recognizes in several articles the fact that the ASEAN member states as a whole don't welcome nuclear weapons and nuclear-driven vessels in the region, and that Australia's purchase of the nuclear submarines might create tensions between Australia and several of the ASEAN member states. Regarding the ASEAN countries, Chinese state media claim that ASEAN member states always have strived for maintaining Southeast Asia as a "zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality (ZOPFAN), free from the interference from any power", something that might affect ASEAN member states view on AUKUS (Xu 2021). Besides that, the journalists also refer to the good relations between China and the ASEAN-members and their agreement to jointly develop the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea by 2022, in which dialogues non-ASEAN countries are not welcome to join. They are clear on the fact that issues regarding the South China Sea should be solved between the countries in the region and not involving the US, the UK or Australia.

Chinese state media has been quick to note that the anti-China hysteria that they claim the US is pushing through in the Asia-Pacific could trigger leaders of those countries to endanger their people in order to receive their US allies approval.

Chinese state media have also noted how Britain's labor leader expressed that AUKUS was a dangerous move that will undermine world peace. Also, how the International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA), raised its concerns over how the trilateral deal would proliferate nuclear materials and technologies (Lü 2021).

When president Putin expressed that AUKUS undoubtedly undermines regional stability, it was immediately cited in the Chinese press.

Chinese state media reports that Australia, through the AUKUS deal, will be isolated in Asia and Europe, seen as unreliable, with only the US as its friend. They further argue that it might not be of much comfort, considering the withdrawal by the US from Afghanistan, and how that revealed that the US is not a reliable partner when the crisis comes. Chinese state media is clear that through AUKUS Australia will be forced to deploy its future nuclear-powered submarines in the South China Sea, as a way to support the strategic needs of the US.

Furthermore, Chinese state media reports about the China-Russia naval coordination, which would be activated in case the US and its allies should carry out a strategic blockade or a military encirclement of China.

5.1.4 Political frame

The political frame focuses on power dynamics such as deal-making, political maneuvering as well as actions and stances that are political (Boydston 2012, p.7). It is about any political consideration surrounding an issue. The assumption is that decisions and change doesn't happen unless central stakeholders and interest groups will be engaged in the decision-making process. Leaders that use the Political Frame will focus on negotiation in order to secure key resources, and in winning people's support for certain projects.

Chinese state media argues that the whole AUKUS project aims at strengthening the US military control around China, and that the major aim of the US is to suppress the Chinese economy, trade, and technological achievements, securing the US a leading role in the world. According to Chinese state media President Joe Biden declared, just prior to the formation of AUKUS, that a reason why the US withdrew from Afghanistan was to be able to focus US resources on competing against China (Xu 2021).

Chinese state media emphasizes that there is a need to help, rather than to fight each other. Talking about political conflicts, Chinese state media cites a famous statement about the importance of cooling down the conflict between China and the US. It reads: “When elephants fight, it’s the grass that suffers...” Southeast Asia will further become “the grass” and bear the brunt of intensifying competition among major powers (Li 2021). This imagery is also portrayed, in the form of a cartoon, in another article, to emphasize the pain and suffering that ASEAN countries will experience due to the AUKUS pact (Appendix 2b). Indirectly it is about influencing ASEAN countries to put pressure on the US to avoid confrontation. China has been playing up the importance of ASEAN as an organisation by having president Xi participating at the ASEAN summits.

The US efforts to try to win over ASEAN on its side, against China, is also a topic that is raised by Chinese state media, and that is doomed to fail. Especially, since several of the ASEAN-countries already have strong, friendly economic and constructive ties to China.

Chinese state media are critical towards collaborations like AUKUS, which in the name of ensuring peace and stability in a region, is not much different compared with other forms of small alliances like the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance (the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) and the QUAD. They are of the opinion that the QUAD only represents the interest of a handful of countries, and in applying international rule of law in a selective way, have distanced itself from true multilateralism and have become a grave threat to both regional and global stability. Chinese state media claims that the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance, AUKUS and the QUAD countries have become central in helping the US intervene in the South China Sea. This is also depicted in images where animals representing the QUAD nations are purposefully excluding the Panda, representing China, from participating in these different alliances (Appendix 2c).

Chinese state media states that while AUKUS is a trilateral decision, it will most likely have a direct impact on the Southeast Asian countries. Whereas it's believed that Australia's nuclear-powered submarines will mainly be used to strengthen confrontation or rivalry with China in the Southeast Asian region, there are worries that the region will potentially become a battlefield for a new round of major power competition. Hereby, AUKUS risks pushing Southeast Asian countries into great power rivalry. Strong sentiments from Chinese state media are that in order to change divergence to convergence, the US and China should make

efforts to reduce their disputes and work together to meet the common challenges the countries in this dynamic region are facing.

5.1.5 External regulation and reputation frame

This frame portrays external relations among nations or relations between groups (Boydston 2012, p.7). The Chinese state media sends messages in the media to Vietnam, asking them to remember the great relations between the countries, urging them not to be deceived by the USA. Clearly stating that the people and leaders of Vietnam are too smart to be fooled. Chinese state media addresses the challenges among several of the ASEAN-countries, sublimely expressing that they, in some way or another, will be punished if they just do as the US demand them to do.

There are also newspaper articles where it is stated that the promises by the US should be proven credible and backed by action. Unlike the US, Chinese state media proclaims that Chinese promises always are backed by deeds and remarkable achievements, something that China has proven in relations with several countries and regions around the world. Contrary to the ideologically driven bombings, invasions and military operations carried out by the US and NATO, journalists state that China through its activities in the developing world has both helped and set a good example for many developing countries. This selfless behaviour of good deeds is also emphasized in the images that were used in the articles, such as large cargo boxes of donations from China Aid (Appendix 2d).

Chinese state media argues that it is remarkable what bad leadership the US, the UK and Australia are showing. The whole idea with AUKUS is for the US and the UK, both depositary states to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to share nuclear technology with Australia, a non-nuclear-weapon state. Chinese state media means that this behaviour will legalize the purchase of nuclear-powered submarines by all countries, as well as international exports of nuclear technology. Once again Chinese state media is of the opinion that the US is using double standards in order to profit its own interests.

Some journalists argue that an honest release of the tensions between the US and Beijing, with the start of serious and constructive dialogues, recognizing the reality of China's astonishing achievements and peaceful rise are well within reach and could easily be initiated.

The settlement of long-term conflicts or deep differences will not come quickly or easily but they are achievable and long overdue.

Talks between presidents Biden and Xi are welcomed and should be seen as a modest but positive start for a new era where differences between the US and China will be acknowledged and resolved in peace, in the spirit of true diplomacy. There are billions of people that depend on this. Some reporters are of the opinion that the US should improve the relations between the US and China instead of just developing and defending AUKUS. Having said this, Chinese state media are clear that if the US crosses the red line of China's central interests, China will consider its relationship with the US, and will not hesitate to punish the US.

6. Discussion

This chapter begins with returning to the research problem and main research question to interpret the findings in regard to the literature review and theoretical framework. I will share my interpretations and further discuss the implications while also acknowledging steps for future research.

Since the announcement of AUKUS, it has been thoroughly discussed in Chinese state media. To answer the main research question of how AUKUS is framed by Chinese state media. I have analyzed 38 online articles from China Daily, People's Daily and the Global Times to determine which frames from Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook were applicable. It is clear that there are arguments in each article that correlate with at least one, but usually multiple frames, hence it was also necessary to classify subframes.

Looking at all the articles, four were coded within the economic frame and another four were coded in the political frame, while five articles were coded in the morality frame.

The frames that stood out the most were the security and defense frame with 16 articles, as well as the external regulation and reputation frame with a total of nine articles. It did not come as a surprise that it was these two frames that were referenced the most, in each respective news outlet, as AUKUS focused on defense alliances and relations among the nations involved both directly and indirectly. What did surprise me was that the political frame was not represented as a primary frame amongst the articles selected from People's Daily. Especially when considering that the People's Daily is often regarded as the mouthpiece of the CCP.

Since all three Chinese state media outlets have the security and defense frame as the most common primary frame, followed by the external regulation and reputation frame, it is clear what message the CCP wants to send to the world. As the Chinese state media portrays AUKUS fully in line with the CCP's political stance, on the South China Sea. Hays (2010) argued that "the media are only conveyers of the Central Propaganda Department messages" so this could be why the three state media outlets all had security and defense, as well as external regulation and reputation, as the most common primary frames. Interestingly enough the findings in Figure 5 highlight that China Daily and Global Times have used nearly identical frames with a similar amount of coverage, just as what was discovered in Malik's

(2020) reporting of the Kashmir conflict. This is of interest because of the differences in the news outlets' standpoints, China Daily being more liberal and Global Times being more nationalistic. Since Global Times is a news outlet under the People's Daily, I assumed that they would have framed AUKUS similarly, but to my surprise this was not the case.

Looking at the articles in the context of the subframes it is noticeable that 46 % of the articles in People's Daily didn't have a subframe. This could be a strategic tactic to bring forth the central message that is highlighted in the primary frame by downplaying the influence of other frames. China's Daily and Global Times both utilize subframes more, especially when it comes to the economic and political frame. This could be because these papers have more international readers, and they want to portray an image of a "strong China" in all aspects.

Studying how AUKUS has been framed in different news outlets will provide insight into the political ideology of the CCP, as news state media are under the supervision of the CCP. It is very noticeable when looking at the political space as it is determined by what the CCP wants to de-emphasize when unfavorable to them and what should be emphasized when favorable to them, this has as well been noted in previous research (Elias et al. 2015). As an example, to counteract the US attempts to create alliances in the region, China portrays itself as a good and reliable partner that unlike the US, already is and will continue to do a lot of good things for the economies in the region, without mentioning anything about how China itself is benefitting from these economic exchanges. Another example is how China is presenting itself as a keeper of promises, as opposed to how the US is being portrayed by China. A third example is how China is pointing at the US as a nation that strives for dominion in all the world, but they say nothing about its own ambitions to gain control over the South China Sea.

These examples are also intensified with the help of cartoons that are included in the articles. As Coleman (2010) stated, cartoons and images help to convey and simplify subtle messages from the text body by pushing on emotions. Global Times was the news outlet that mostly used cartoons, having six articles out of 16 with cartoons, while China Daily had three articles out of 11 and People's Daily only had one article out of 11.

China Daily and Global Times both accuse the US and continuously describe the nation as untrustworthy. This is also depicted through the use of images and cartoons that showcase behaviour of back-stabbing, exclusion, and pain from causing instability in the region.

People's Daily on the other hand focuses more on creating the image that China is a great super power. To support this claim, images displaying how China takes responsibility by supporting and helping their neighbors and less economically developed countries both financially and with humanitarian efforts.

From a Chinese state media perspective, the whole idea of AUKUS is contrary to everything that China has profited from and developed on, namely globalization, industrialization, and international cooperation. The Chinese state media is repeatedly and aggressively arguing that the main reasons why the US has introduced AUKUS, and other similar alliances, has been to secure its own hegemony, while containing China and suppressing its growth.

The set of articles gathered under the external regulation and reputation frame, were very much related to the difference between China and the US when it came to reliability, trustworthiness, and high morale. Chinese state media were repeatedly portraying how the US failed all its allies, while pulling out of Afghanistan. The same when the US struck a deal with Australia right in front of the eyes of France. Chinese state media also expressed that in the same way, the US will also in the future abandon Australia. This is then repeatedly compared with China that is presented as a nation that stands its ground, walks the talk, keeps its promises, and brings development and prosperity to its allies.

Some additional observations that could be discussed is how Chinese state media, to a great extent, manages to recruit foreign scholars and experts to present articles with negative views about AUKUS and to smear the US and its allies, as well as glorifying China and its actions. It is also interesting to discuss how Chinese state media may be presenting an article about a totally different subject, but still manages to include some critical bullets about AUKUS, almost no matter what the subject is about. Finally, it can be noted that the UK most often is mentioned in relation to being allied to the US and Australia but is seldom the target for a direct attack from Chinese state media.

This thesis has only examined how the framing of AUKUS has been covered in English speaking Chinese state media, so it would be of great interest to conduct a comparison study of mandarin-speaking state media outlets to find out how the CCP frames AUKUS domestically and see if there is a wide difference in the results.

7. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to identify official Chinese reactions to AUKUS by investigating how AUKUS is being framed in Chinese state media, through the use of media framing analysis. All 38 articles, selected in Chinese state media (China's Daily, People's Daily and Global Times) during the 15th of September 2021 until the 22nd of November 2021, were coded manually using Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook.

AUKUS is clearly portrayed as a nuisance that aims to contain China and suppress its growth. AUKUS is also seen as a Mini Asian NATO that is mostly focused on running the US agenda and less so focused on AUS and the UK. Another way of clearly showing how Chinese state media frames AUKUS is to look at the cartoons and images, they convey multiple underlying messages that showcase the relationship between China and AUKUS in black and white.

The results indicated that the following five frames were found; economic, morality, security and defense, political, and lastly external regulation, and reputation. The most common primary frame among the three Chinese state media outlets was the security and defense frame (16 articles), followed by the external regulation and reputation frame (9 articles). In regard to the subframes the findings indicated that the largest subframe was the political frame(11 articles), closely followed by the economic frame (10 articles).

Surprisingly, People's Daily, often considered the mouthpiece of the CCP, was found to have no articles with the political frame as a primary frame. This unpredicted finding helped highlight that China Daily and Global Times had nearly identical frames of the coverage of AUKUS, which was not originally anticipated. Looking at the articles in the context of the subframes it is noticeable that 46 % of the articles in People's Daily didn't have a subframe. This could be a strategic tactic to bring forth the central message that is highlighted in the primary frame by downplaying the influence of other frames. Global Times was the news outlet that mostly used cartoons, having six articles, while China Daily had three articles and People's Daily only had one article.

Overall, this research shows that there are multiple similarities but also slight differences in the coverage of AUKUS among the Chinese state media outlets, yet they are all still able to convey the CCP's stance on AUKUS.

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Appendix 1 – Boydston’s Policy Frames Codebook

Frame	Description
1. Economic frames	The costs, benefits, or monetary/financial implications of the issue (to an individual, family, community, or to the economy as a whole).
2. Capacity and resources frames	The lack of or availability of physical, geographical, spatial, human, and financial resources, or the capacity of existing systems and resources to implement or carry out policy goals.
3. Morality frames	Any perspective– or policy objective or action (including proposed action)–that is compelled by religious doctrine or interpretation, duty, honour, righteousness or any other sense of ethics or social responsibility
4. Fairness and equality frames	Equality or inequality with which laws, punishment, rewards, and resources are applied or distributed among individuals or groups. Also, the balance between the rights or interests of one individual or group compared to another individual or group.
5. Constitutionality and jurisprudence frames	The constraints imposed on or freedoms granted to individuals, government, and corporations via the Constitution, Bill of Rights and other amendments, or judicial interpretation. This deals specifically with the authority of government to regulate, and the authority of individuals/corporations to act independently of government.
6. Policy prescription and evaluation	Particular policies proposed for addressing an identified problem, and figuring out if certain policies will work, or if existing policies are effective.
7. Law and order, crime and justice frames	Specific policies in practice and their enforcement, incentives, and implications. Includes stories about enforcement and interpretation of laws by individuals and law enforcement, breaking laws, loopholes, fines, sentencing and punishment. Increases or reductions in crime.
8. Security and defence frames:	Security, threats to security, and protection of one's person, family, in-group, nation, etc. Generally, an action or a call to action that can be taken to protect the welfare of a person, group, nation sometimes from a not yet manifested threat.
9. Health and safety frames	Healthcare access and effectiveness, illness, disease, sanitation, obesity, mental health effects, prevention of or perpetuation of gun violence, infrastructure and building safety.
10. Quality of life frames	The effects of a policy on individuals' wealth, mobility, access to resources, happiness, social structures, ease of day-to-day routines, quality of community life etc.
11. Cultural identity frames	The social norms, trends, values and customs constituting culture(s), as they relate to a specific policy issue.
12. Public opinion frames:	References to general social attitudes, polling and demographic information, as well as implied or actual consequences of diverging from or "getting ahead of" public opinion or polls.
13. Political frames	Any political considerations surrounding an issue. Issue actions or efforts or stances that are political, such as partisan filibusters, lobbyist involvement, bipartisan efforts, deal-making and vote trading, appealing to one's base, mentions of political manoeuvring. Explicit statements that a policy issue is good or bad for a particular political party.
14. External regulation and reputation frames	The United States' external relations with another nation; the external relations of one state with another; or relations between groups. This includes trade agreements and outcomes, comparisons of policy outcomes or desired policy outcomes.
15. Other frames	Any frames that do not fit into the above categories.

Appendix 2 – Tables of collected articles

Article #	Newspaper	Date	Article Title	Primary Frame	Subframes
1	Global Times	2021-09-23	Will France play 'Nato withdrawal' card after being stabbed in the back by US?	Morality	Security and defense
2	Global Times	2021-09-27	AUKUS threatens ASEAN, not just China	Security and defense	Economic
3	Global Times	2021-09-28	Aussies going shallow with wrong headed submarine deal: former diplomat	Security and defense	Political
4	China Daily	2021-09-28	Biden's 'Pivot to Asia' at a dead end	Political	Economic
5	China Daily	2021-11-22	Plenary session shows importance of diplomacy	External regulation and reputation	Political
6	China Daily	2021-09-24	Quad will only destabilize Asia-Pacific	Security and defense	Economic
7	China Daily	2021-09-28	US nuclear proliferation top threat to the Asia-Pacific	Security and defense	External regulation and reputation
8	China Daily	2021-09-28	Three challenges AUKUS poses to ASEAN	Security and defense	None
9	China Daily	2021-10-09	The US' nuclear sub accident in the South China Sea is significant	Morality	Economic
10	China Daily	2021-09-24	AUKUS gaining universal acceptance in Indo-Pacific simply delusional	Security and defense	Political

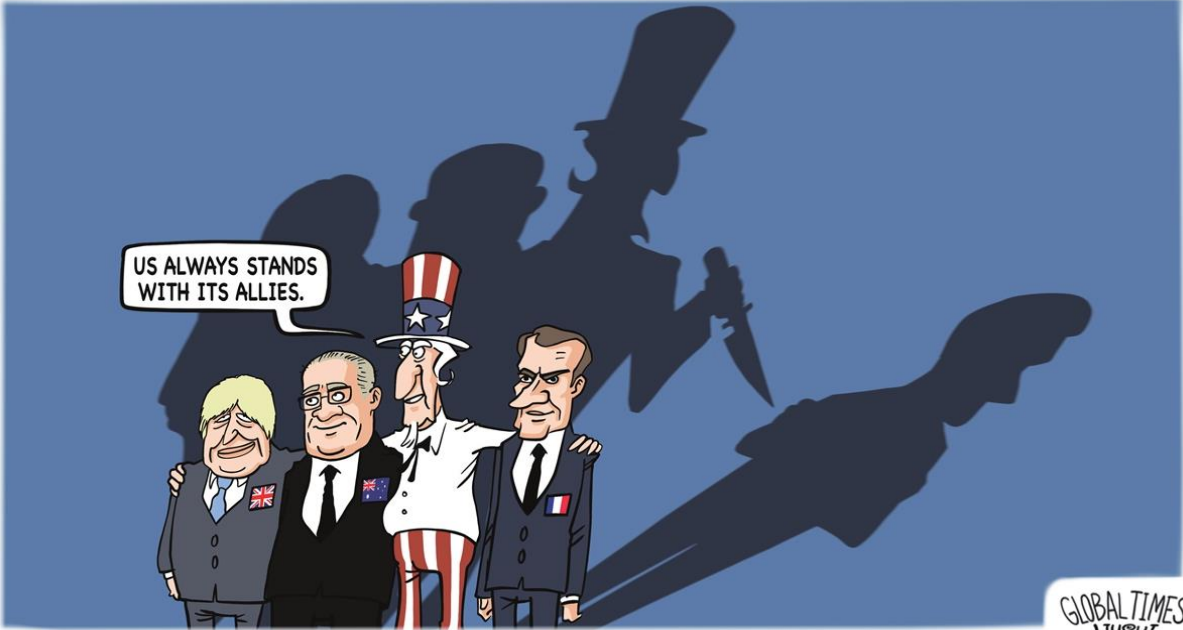
Article #	Newspaper	Date	Article Title	Primary Frame	Subframes
11	People's Daily	2021-10-01	AUKUS likely to harm regional stability, raise tensions, say analysts	Security and defense	None
12	People's Daily	2021-09-24	AUKUS security partnership undermines regional stability -- military analyst	Security and defense	None
13	People's Daily	2021-09-23	Biden, Macron hold phone call over submarine deal rift	Morality	None
14	People's Daily	2021-09-23	Macron, Biden to meet in Europe in October over submarine row	Morality	Political
15	Global Times	2021-09-23	AUKUS drives a wedge in ASEAN, pushing bloc to a cold war	Security and defense	Economic
16	Global Times	2021-09-24	AUKUS an ineffective 'NATO' against China: Malaysian scholar	Security and defense	Political
17	People's Daily	2021-09-28	UK's Labour Party members declare AUKUS deal "dangerous" to world peace	Security and defense	None
18	People's Daily	2021-10-14	Chinese ambassador slams AUKUS pact as "textbook case" of nuclear proliferation	External regulation and reputation	Political
19	Global Times	2021-09-16	AUKUS to bring 'nuclear-powered submarine fever' across globe	External regulation and reputation	Security and defense
20	Global Times	2021-10-19	Unity is the cornerstone of ASEAN centrality	External regulation and reputation	Economic
21	People's Daily	2021-09-17	U.S., UK aid to Australia's acquisition of nuclear submarines "sheer act of nuclear proliferation"	External regulation and reputation	Security and defense

Article #	Newspaper	Date	Article Title	Primary Frame	Subframes
22	People's Daily	2021-09-17	U.S., Britain exporting nuclear submarine technology to Australia "extremely irresponsible": FM spokesperson	Security and defense	Political
23	Global Times	2021-09-18	With AUKUS, US picks up stone to smash its own feet	External regulation and reputation	Morality
24	Global Times	2021-09-18	AUKUS gives Canberra special treatment, a psychological blow for Japan, India as Quad members	Morality	Political
25	People's Daily	2021-09-18	Why the AUKUS nuclear deal is irresponsible and dangerous	Security and defense	None
26	Global Times	2021-11-17	Morrison's bellicose foreign policy faces declining approval rate	External regulation and reputation	Economic
27	Global Times	2021-11-21	The US has fewer cards to stir up trouble for China in ASEAN	Economic	Morality; Political
28	China Daily	2021-11-03	China faces four challenges on South China Sea, says expert	Economic	None
29	People's Daily	2021-10-30	Chinese, Indonesia FMs voice serious concerns over AUKUS nuclear submarine deal	Security and defense	Economic
30	Global Times	2021-09-16	AUKUS to bring 'nuclear-powered submarine fever' across globe	External regulation and reputation	Security and defense

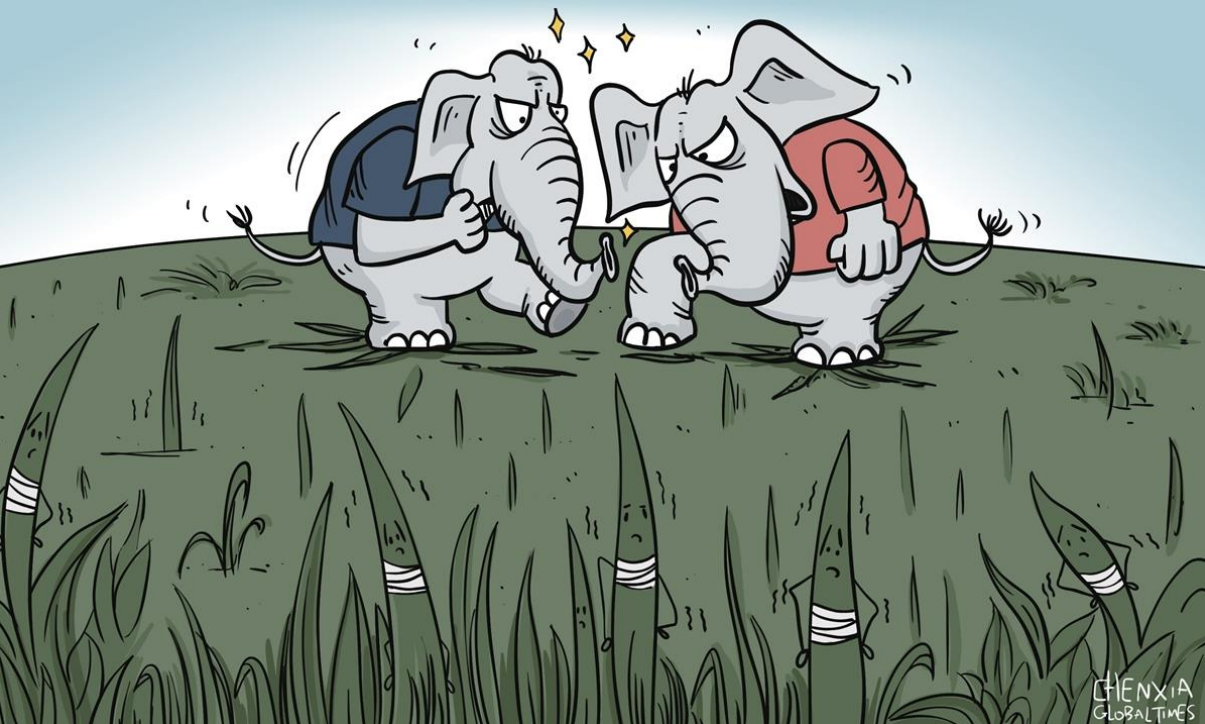
Article #	Newspaper	Date	Article Title	Primary Frame	Subframes
31	China Daily	2021-11-10	CPC governance a boon for China	Economic	Morality
32	Global Times	2021-10-21	West would sacrifice rest of world for its own interests, AUKUS sets precedent	Security and defense	None
33	China Daily	2021-11-11	What ails it?	External regulation and reputation	Political
34	Global Times	2021-10-19	China-Russia coordination helps break AUKUS encirclement	Security and defense	Political
35	People's Daily	2021-10-25	Interview: China-ASEAN relations expect another exciting 30 years, says Chinese envoy	Economic	Security and defense
36	Global Times	2021-11-07	World should oppose US global maritime hegemonism	Political	External regulation and reputation
37	Global Times	2021-10-27	ASEAN summit underscores call for stability against external meddling	Political	Economic
38	Global Times	2021-11-10	Multilateralism only way out for global ocean governance	Political	Economic

Appendix 3 – Images found in articles

3a)



3b)



3c)



3d)

