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MASTERPROEF

CHINA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION WITH THE US AS THE 'OTHER' IN THE TAIWAN CONFLICT: A STORY OF CHANGE OR CONTINUITY?

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Abstract

China is niet uit het nieuws te slaan en bijgevolg geen ver-van-mijn-bed-show meer, daar lijkt iedereen het over eens te zijn. Maar wat weten we eigenlijk over het land en de bril waardoor het de wereld aanschouwt? Belangrijker nog, door welke bril wil de Chinese Communistische Partij (CCP) dat hun bevolking én de internationale gemeenschap China aanschouwen? Volgens het constructivisme is identiteit, net als de werkelijkheid in het algemeen, een sociale constructie die voortvloeit uit de interactie tussen de actoren en hun omgeving. Deze thesis onderzoekt de factoren die aan de basis liggen van nationale identiteitsconstructie, en besluit dat de CCP nationalisme en patriotisme gebruikt als instrument, op basis van en in combinatie met een door de staat geconstrueerde geschiedenis, om zo haar legitimiteit te verzekeren. Dit nationalisme wordt versterkt door een onderscheid te maken tussen China ('*Self*') en de ander ('*Other*'), een rol die eerst Japan en nu de Verenigde Staten (VS) wordt toebedeeld. Doorheen de jaren nam China's identiteit drie verschillende rollen aan: die van slachtoffer, die van ontwikkelingsland, en die van grootmacht. Echter, voordat China een grootmacht kan worden en de *China Dream* in vervulling kan gaan, moet China terug één worden, Taiwan inbegrepen. Maar Taiwan staat niet alleen en wordt ondersteund door die 'ander', de VS, wat de al aanwezige spanning tussen China en de VS nog doet toenemen. Om de evolutie van China's nationale identiteit beter te begrijpen, wordt China's officiële discours onder Xi Jinping [2013-2021], ten opzichte van de VS als de 'ander' en in het kader van het Taiwanconflict, geanalyseerd. Hieruit volgt het besluit dat China's nationale identiteit niet fundamenteel verandert, maar er wel een evolutie te bemerken valt, van een constructief naar een defensief taalgebruik.

Trefwoorden: China, Verenigde Staten, Taiwan, nationale identiteit, "Other", nationalisme, buitenlands beleid, Constructivisme.

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This work represents the end of a very meaningful and transformative adventure I started two years ago. It was challenging and a lot of hard work, but I got a backpack full of knowledge, memories, and new friends in return.

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Finally, I'm proud of this work and proud of myself for never shying away from challenging paths and bumpy roads, for trusting the destination. I enjoyed writing this thesis and hope the reader will enjoy it as much.

Aveline Gram

Introduction

After the Kuomintang Party (hereafter 'KMT') lost the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter 'CCP') in 1949, it settled itself on the island of Taiwan. The United States (hereafter 'US'), preoccupied with combatting communism in the Cold War, chose the KMT's anti-communist side and has been Taiwan's main international ally ever since (Zuo, 2018). However, the People's Republic of China's (hereafter 'PRC' or 'China') rise as a great power has proven to be undeniable and is followed with great suspicion by the rest of the world, even more so in the US (Rudolf, 2021). Not collaborating with China was no longer an option (Lee, 2017), so the US started establishing closer relations with the country. However, to the CCP, the US relations with Taiwan were considered incompatible with the Sino-US rapprochement. This resulted in decadelong, complex, and changing triangular relations between the two, now, world powers, and the small island of Taiwan.

However, regardless of the island's size, the Taiwan issue[1] became arguably one of the most enduring and dangerous conflicts in East Asia (Bush, 2005; Roy, 2000). So much so, that it might bring China and the US into war, potentially disrupting Sino-US relations, and consequently impacting international peace and stability (Roy, 2000). Considering that both countries are nuclear powers, the threat to Taiwan couldn't be overstated. A telling argument is that Taiwan is the only country where China will not adhere to the 'No First Use' (NFU) policy of nuclear weapons: a commitment to only use nuclear weapons after being attacked by an opponent using nuclear weapons (Dittmer 2006). Moreover, a cross-Strait conflict would impact the whole region and force the Asian countries to take sides (Copper, 1997; Roy, 2000). Indeed, the Taiwan issue, which Zhang (2004) describes as "the single most sensitive matter in Chinese security concern of recent years" (p. 287), represents a threat to China's core interests.

The current academic debate mostly talks about external perceptions of the consequences of a rising China without including the underlying ideational factors of China's national identity and its influence on China's foreign policy and its perceptions of other actors (Li, 2008). At its core, however, the Taiwan problem represents a threat to the legitimacy of the CCP, and therefore a

[1] Also referred to as the 'cross-Strait' or 'Taiwan Strait' conflict.

threat to its survival (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Callahan, 2006; Downs & Saunders, 1998). The Taiwan issue is, in essence, an issue of nationalism (Yi, 2005), which is a source of national identity and has increasingly become one of the main driving factors of the CCP's foreign policy (Brittingham, 2007; Chu, 2000; Duggan, 2020; Zhao, 2009).

The distinction between us v. them, or 'Self' v. 'Other', and its role in national identity construction, has been researched by many scholars, such as Atanassova-Cornelis (2012); Hansen (2013); Hunt (1993); Neumann (1996); and Suzuki (2007), to name a few. The foreign Other, whether positive or negative, plays a fundamental role in China's identity construction (Callahan, 2015; Suzuki, 2007), and this process of 'Othering' has a very powerful influence on the identity construction of the Self (Li, 2008). Overall, there is a consensus in the academic debate that Japan and the US are China's most significant Others (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Callahan, 2015; Lams, 2017; Li, 2008; Suzuki, 2007).

Moreover, national identity, perceived through a constructivist lens, is socially constructed (Chen, 2013; Dittmer, 2006; Li, 2008; Watson, 1993) and thus, "not a fixed attribute but the result of a process of identification" (Dittmer, 2006, p. 675). According to Atanassova-Cornelis (2012), China's national identity construction is marked by an evolution of three distinct identities: "as a victim (past), as a developing country (present) and as a great power (future)" (p. 95). Japan plays a key role in China's victim identity (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Carlson, 2009; Roy, 2009), whereas the US is mainly influencing China's present and future identity as a great power (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012).

The 'one China' framework that has been acknowledged by the US in the 'three China-US joint Communiqués' (hereafter 'Communiqués') since 1972, has produced a relatively stable security environment and allowed the US to establish economic and security relations with China, without bearing the cost, internationally or domestically, of abandoning Taiwan. However, the stability of the status quo is gradually eroding and the US is increasingly more involved (Saunders, 2005).

The topic, however, is mostly discussed from a realist perspective (Alysa, 2020; Copper, 2014; Lee, 2017), focusing on security and arms sales (Chen et al., 2017; Roy, 2000), and thus, without any regard to identity. Whenever studies would include identity in their research, it would often be a study on Taiwanese identity (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021; Bush, 2005; Saunders, 2005), focused on US-Taiwan relations (Bush, 2016, 2017; deLisle, 2010); or on Chinese identity but

not including the Taiwan conflict as a subject of analysis (Gries et al., 2011; Saunders, 2005). Other scholarly works would depict an in-depth analysis of Chinese identity construction, including Taiwan, but Sino-US relations and their influence on the conflict would be mostly disregarded (Dittmer & Kim, 1993a; Hughes, 2013). When, finally, China's US policy, or China's foreign policy and discourse under Xi Jinping more broadly, would be studied, the Taiwan conflict would not receive much attention (Chang-Liao, 2016; Gries et al., 2011; Lams, 2017, 2018; Poh & Li, 2017; Zhang, 2015).

In conclusion, after an extensive and systematic literature review, how Chinese national identity construction has evolved in Sino-US relations against the backdrop of the Taiwan conflict, remained unclear to me. As demonstrated in the literature review above, these topics have been studied extensively before, however, how they are interrelated was left without conclusion.

This leads me to the examination of the following research question:

How has China's national identity construction evolved under Xi Jinping [2013-2021] in relation to the US (as the 'Other') and in the context of the Taiwan conflict?

I believe my research could be of added value to the academic debate, attempting to fill the gap illustrated above, by studying this triangular relationship of China's national identity construction as my main point of focus (1), studied by analysing Sino-US narrative constructions in the process of Othering (2), and set in the framework of the Taiwan issue (3). This issue (3), in turn, is influencing China's national identity construction (1), thereby closing the triangle. Moreover, a substantial part of the relevant sources is outdated. Atanassova-Cornelis' (2012) and Li's (2008) works came closest to answering the above question and, subsequently, became fundamental resources of thought throughout my research. However, in my view, it seemed useful to apply their perspectives to current times, with different leaders in power. To provide an up-to-date framework for my research, I will focus on the time that Xi Jinping's presidency coincides with President Obama's [2013-2016] and President Trump's [2017-2021].

As well as to be academically relevant, research needs to be relevant for society. Up until today, the Taiwan conflict makes the news on regular basis. It is a complex and multi-layered conflict: understanding more about each layer, and the greater framework that surrounds it, might bring us closer to a peaceful resolution. My research strives to contribute to this goal by entangling the

conflict. By focusing on Chinese identity construction and studying China's perspective of the US, we might better understand the reasons behind China's foreign policies and actions, because: "as China's identity changes, its interests will change accordingly" (Li, 2008, p. 227). With more understanding, we might be able to better encourage China to adopt multilateralism as an inherent part of its identity, supporting its ambition to become a responsible great power (Li, 2008).

Additionally, until recently, China was kept relatively closed and isolated internationally. Since then, however, it has become increasingly vocal and present on the international scene. Given the increasing globalization and presence of the Chinese society around the world, knowing more about their identity, how it is constructed, and how they view the world, will help to contribute positively to more openness, transparency, and, ultimately, tolerance.

In the first chapter, I will go deeper into the theory as well as into different key concepts that constitute the building blocks underlying this work. After that, I will provide a detailed account of the methodology, research design, and primary sources supporting my data analysis, as well as a critical reflection on the limitations of my work. In Chapter Three, a brief historical overview will be given that will facilitate the understanding of the following chapters. Then, I will dive deeper into the concepts that were outlined in the theoretical framework, applied to the Chinese case: Chinese national identity in Chapter Four, and Chinese nationalism and foreign policy in Chapter Five. In the final chapter, I will present the results of the discourse analysis and critically assess its added value to the existing academic debate. I will conclude my thesis with a broad reflection on the topic by circling back to the initial research question, assess the overall value of this work, while, ultimately, providing possible avenues for future research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Perspectives

We live in a complex world where it can be overwhelming, even impossible, to look at everything at once. That is why researchers try to gain clarity by only focusing on key factors and by looking for patterns. Theorizing, then, allows to fit these individual cases into larger patterns and, thus, "simplifies the messy complexity of global reality by pointing *only* to factors that theorists believe are important" (Mansbach & Taylor, 2018, p. 3). In this chapter, I will outline what those key factors are, namely national identity, nationalism, and foreign policy, and how they are defined in my research. But first, I will describe the lens that I used throughout this study.

A Constructivist Lens

Constructivism is a major theoretical perspective, rather than one coherent theory, that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a reaction to realism and liberalism (Mansbach & Taylor, 2018). Although often criticized and looked at with scepticism from within the field, constructivism offers interesting perspectives to study international relations (Flockhart, 2016) and has significantly added to the scholarly debate of a rising China (Li, 2008). Houghton (2007) describes constructivism as "an umbrella of perspectives" (p. 26), where we can differentiate some general premises. First, constructivists believe that our understanding and perception of the world around us is "historically and socially constructed" (Li, 2008, p. 17): a continuous process of interaction between the actors and their environment (Flockhart, 2016). Constructivists, thus, consider national interest and international politics as a social construct, evolving with its context (Morin & Paquin, 2018; Wendt, 1999).

In addition, rather than focusing on material aspects of international politics, as is the case in realism and liberalism, constructivism emphasizes ideational variables such as identity, values, and norms. Interests are learned through experience, identity is constructed and shapes perceptions of reality, and both change over time through interaction and evolving beliefs and norms. Realists and liberalists, however, claim that identities and interests are givens and remain unchanged (Mansbach & Taylor, 2018). Constructivism offers various perspectives on how and why identity

shifts. Chen (2013) describes the interactive, contextual, and rational choice perspective. For this research, I will use the interactive perspective that sees identity formation as "an interactive social process, an interaction between self and other, inside and outside" (p. 231).

Ultimately, there is the idea of reciprocity. Social structures influence the actors, but the actors, by their beliefs and actions, influence social structures in turn (Flockhart, 2016). States' identities and interests are contingent on how social structures, like shared knowledge and social norms, constitute states (Brittingham, 2007). These structures construct ideas that ultimately define who and what states are, and it is through those ideas that states ultimately relate (Wendt, 1999). Li (2008) argues that "ideational factors such as history, identity, actor interests and intersubjective understandings among states are just as important as, if not more than, material capabilities in shaping responses to the China challenge" (p. 17). Li (2008) more specifically argues that realist and liberal theories are insufficiently able to explain the complex Sino-Taiwanese relationship, as at the root of the conflict lies a clash of identities and nationalisms, requiring a constructivist perspective.

One way in which this intersubjective reality is taking place is through language. Studying language allows us to observe how meanings condition identities and actions. It is not only about an actor's behaviour or actions, but about how they justify these actions. Language is a tool of power, as exercising power can be conceptualized as "the ability to reconstruct discourses and shape practices" (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p. 11). Language is, accordingly, given great importance in the interpretative variants of constructivism, more popular in Europe. Interpretative constructivists focus on the reconstruction of state identity while using a variety of discourse-theoretic techniques as a methodology (Checkel, 2004). It is this theoretical perspective that constitutes the basis of my research.

National Identity: An Ever-Changing Story

Identity could be generally defined as "the state of being similar to some actors and different from others in a particular circumstance" (Chafetz et al., 1998, p. viii). Individuals identify with each other as a group through social interaction and, by doing so, establish a collective identity.

Collective identities imply boundaries between different groups that separate Self and Other: who is and who is not a member. They exist in many forms, one of them is national identity. National identity is thus "a collective identity based on some set of ethnic (i.e., assumed kinship), linguistic, religious, or cultural similarities" (Brittingham, 2007, pp. 149-150). Important to note when defining individual or collective identity versus national identity, however, is that within the nation, inclusion is not entirely voluntary (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). It is, usually, mediated, if not dictated, by the elite (Ng-Quinn, 1993). From a more political perspective then, national identity could also be defined as "the way in which a people, and especially a policy-making elite, perceive the essence of their nation in relation to others. It thus influences attitudes and policies alike, being the psychological foundation for the roles and behaviour patterns of a country in the international arena" (Scalapino, 1993, p. 215).

Constructivists contend, whether viewed from a more sociological or political angle, that national identity "does not emerge naturally" (Li, 2008, p. 32). It must be nurtured and constructed through education and social interactions and is influenced both by external and domestic dimensions (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Li, 2008; Watson, 1993). Identity confusion or even crisis can occur when discrepancies between these external and domestic dimensions are too high (Ng-Quinn, 1993). One can discern two interdependent dimensions of national identity: the identification, and the content with which this identification takes place. The identification can range from strong to weak and can be directly related to the degree of legitimacy. The substantive content that people identify with is defined by what the state does and what it is (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b).

As national identity is not fixed, it is in constant evolution (White & Cheng, 1993). This evolution is a result of:

> "(1) the projected aspirations and demands of the citizenry (both masses and elites); (2) domestic political history, particularly those epoch-making events (like Tiananmen) whose reverberations are felt by the population at large; and (3) foreign policy experience, as the ship of state navigates unpredictable international waters" (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b, p. 30).

Determining a country's national identity at any given time is, therefore, often problematic for two reasons: first, multiple dimensions need to be taken into consideration, and second, the answer affects everyone (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). Due to its multidimensionality, it is, in practice, quasi impossible to know *all* conditions that contributed to its change (Goldman et al., 1993).

Why, then, is understanding national identity so important? In an increasingly globalized world, one might be led to believe that the importance of the nation-state, and hence its national identity, would decrease accordingly. Paradoxically, however, this is not entirely the case. A trade-off takes place between the nation-state as the centre of power (declines) and as a point of orientation of identity and interest (increases) (Herrmann, 2020). We use the concept of identity for the same reasons we name and categorize things and ideas: it allows us to designate ourselves (and thereby differentiate with others), to put a name to what we are (as opposed to others), and occupy a unique place in this world (Chu, 2000).

However, in the case of a turbulent domestic or international environment, it might be difficult to establish a full and unified national identity (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). Divergent claims over social or group identities can lead to contest and conflict, which takes place in the framework of 'identity politics' (Chu, 2000, p. 305). As a result, security is highly related to identity too. To fully understand one, you need to understand the other (Callahan, 2006), as "'security' is not about defending us so much as 'tell[ing] us who we must be'" (Walker (1997, pp. 71-72) in Callahan (2006, p. 181)). When who we must be is unclear, and boundaries are blur or challenged, an identity crisis can follow. This is common among countries that have large diaspora living in adjoining territories, which explains the many territorial disputes of China with its adjacent neighbours (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). An identity crisis, in turn, can lead directly to a legitimacy crisis (Habermas, 1992).

Identity is constructed through interactive social processes where interactions between Self and Others take place (Chen, 2013). The identity of Self can only get true meaning and be constructed through the existence and socially constructed positive or negative Other (Hansen, 2013; Li, 2008). This theory of Self v. Other is derived from Social (Identity) Theory and is increasingly researched within IR theory (Suzuki, 2007). Mercer (1995) argues that, because of our universal desire for self-esteem and need for a positive social identity, we categorize, and thus compare, between 'out-groups' and 'in-groups'. This intergroup comparison is not neutral, we accentuate and maximize differences whereby we highlight negative qualities to the Other ('out-group') and enhance the positive identity of the Self ('in-group'). This delineation between both groups is an active and continuous process (Neumann, 1996) and plays a key role in understanding the intersubjective nature of national identity and how it is formed.

In the construction of the Other, external factors significantly influence the process. Power and authority play a crucial role in identity formation, and so, identity formation always takes place in a context of power relationships (Chen, 2013). Li (2008) argues that "the Chinese state has been playing an instrumental role in constructing an identity that reflects its domestic priorities and external interests" (p. 33). History, too, plays a big role and is more than just a tool of the political elite. It deeply affects the states and their peoples as moral agents in identity construction (Suzuki, 2007). The Other is invariably involved in the process of securing a nation's identity when searching for ontological security. Ontological security is "the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time – as being rather than constantly changing – in order to realize a sense of agency" (Giddens, 1991; Laing, 1970; Mitzen, 2006, p. 342). This is an intersubjective process as well, both structurally and psychologically. The presence and delineation of the Other allow for the development of a narrative of the Self and a consistent feeling of biographical continuity (Kinnvall, 2004).

National integration necessitates, primarily, this distinction between the national Self and the Other. Then, the creation of the Self will generate national unity and loyalty by a feeling of mutual belonging and common fate (Yinan, 2014). The Self and the Other, however, are not exclusive, but rather mutually constitutive and merging into each other (Neumann, 1996). Also, it should be noted that the national Self and Other can interact in more than one way: confrontational, but also competitive, collaborative, or even harmonious (Yinan, 2014). With this perspective in mind, one could consider arguably all inter-state relations as one type of Self-Other delineation (Tilly, 2015).

Nationalism, Foreign Policy, National Identity: An Interplay of Co-Constitutive Ideational Factors

"Nations are in part made by nationalism and exist only when their members make sense of themselves through the discursive framework of national identity" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 758). Nationalism can thus be seen as the political expression of national identity. A group relating to such identity is often called a nation. However, mere collective identification is a necessary but insufficient condition to establish a nation. The members must also see the group as the highest object of political loyalty that should be politically autonomous, whose interests must be defended,

and that has the sovereign authority to which the members are subordinated (Brittingham, 2007; Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). Nationalism is, then, what transforms identity into a nation (Brittingham, 2007). A solid national identity, in turn, allows the elite to mediate and manipulate nationalism in a way that secures domestic support for their policies and national roles (Ng-Quinn, 1993).

Gries et al. (2011) define nationalism as "the belief in the superiority of one's country over other countries" (p. 2). Nationalism is an ideology of the nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) and exerts power over identity politics in two ways: as a political doctrine and as an ideology of inclusion and exclusion. As a political doctrine, nationalism is used by political entities seeking legitimacy, but for this to be effective, nationalism should be complemented by a clear ideology of the social, political, and economic aspirations of the concerned state. Nationalism as an ideology of inclusion, then, aims to generate a sense of coherence and solidarity between the state and the nation. As to exclusion, nationalism demarcates the boundaries of a group and hereby differentiates insiders from outsiders, or 'us' from 'them' (Chu, 2000).

Nationalism, from a constructivist point of view, is constituted by the interaction of states (Brittingham, 2007) and could be understood as a collective identity and social role because it involves the mobilization of national identity. Nationalism gives a nation a framework, helping to understand the world and to know how to act within it. By assuming this role, states seek to achieve ontological security by defending their national identity, which, in turn, will influence their foreign policy decisions (Brittingham, 2007; Duggan, 2020; Kinnvall, 2004). Since a state might take actions to secure its identity, this, in consequence, might make the Other's identity less secure; thereby triggering the Other to take actions to solidify its identity and potentially undermine that first state's identity construction as a result. This could lead to a spiral of conflict which is known in realist terms as the 'security dilemma' and that, applied to a constructivist approach of identity formation, could be termed as an 'ideational security dilemma'. This could explain how nationalism can lead to a more aggressive foreign policy, even when the state's principal nationalist goals are achieved (Brittingham, 2007, pp. 153-154).

Chapter 2: Methodology

Conducting Discourse Analysis

As theory and method cannot be separated (Gee, 2011), I chose a methodology of research that is closely related to the constructivist perspective from which I conducted this research: discourse analysis. Simply put, discourse analysis is "the study of language-in-use" (Gee, 2011, p. 8), or more broadly, it denotes "methodologies that capture the creation of meanings and accompanying processes of communication" (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p. 19). Indeed, its goal is not limited to the study of the language itself: a nation's discourse allows us to see beyond its ideas and policies, providing "a reflection of deliberation and contention" (Li, 2008, p. 38). Discourse analysis, hereby, "provides evidence about subjectivity" (Halperin & Heath, 2017b, p. 177). The analyst seeks to understand the significance of the used language (Brown & Yule, 1983) and questions which identity or identities are being attributed, not only to the Self but also to the Other, influencing the Self's identity in turn (Gee, 2011). Moreover, discourse analysis allows the researcher to access data that would be difficult to obtain through direct, personal contact (interviews with president Xi Jinping for instance) and allows for a sample size and framework of time that are significantly greater than would have been possible to collect by yourself (Halperin & Heath, 2017b).

The main goal of discourse analysis is to show how so-called 'facts' are influenced by discursive framing with different political effects as a result. As described earlier, policy and identity are ontologically interlinked, and language is the tool through which that interaction takes place. It is through foreign policy discourse that identity is constructed, but this identity, in turn, serves as legitimization for that same foreign policy (Hansen, 2013). Why, then, study foreign policy discourse specifically? It is important to distinguish the official national identity that is collectively determined and articulated by the regime as part of their foreign policy, from how the Chinese see China's national identity and global role in the world. It is, therefore, necessary to not only analyse the proclaimed national identity but also the foreign policy discourse and actions that were undertaken under this role, and how this, consequently, can reshape China's official national identity (Van Ness, 1993).

National identity theory posits that for national identity construction, domestic societal factors are usually most important (although certainly not exclusively); whereas external systemic factors – like the actions and discourse of the Other, the US – have more importance in its outcome, namely in determining foreign policy (Kim & Dittmer, 1993). This implies that foreign policy could be seen as "a form of national identity implementation, that is, a specification of roles for the People's Republic based on a given Chinese self-image" (Van Ness, 1993, p. 200). Language plays a key role in the expression of those roles: language, according to Hansen (2013), is "social and political, an inherently unstable system of signs that generate meaning through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference" (p. 15).

Research Design

Yin (2009a) describes a research design as "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions" (p. 26). With this research, my goal is to study a *qualitative* phenomenon, using a constructivist lens with an *interpretative* approach. It consists of a *single, non-experimental, case* study of the *holistic* type, as the focus is on only one unit of analysis, namely Chinese identity construction (Yin, 2009a). *Longitudinal analysis* and the analytic technique of *simple time series analysis* are used, tracing changes over time of a single case and dependent variable (Yin, 2009a, 2009b).

As implied by the research question, I aim to *describe* the evolution of China's identity construction under Xi Jinping, rather than explain a causal relationship (Halperin & Heath, 2017a). Moreover, in a constructivist framework, formulating (causal) hypotheses wouldn't be suitable as it is quite impossible to frame representations of identity and foreign policy in simple cause-effect terms. Identity and policy are co-constitutive ideational factors, intertwined through discourse, but there is no causal relationship between both as "representations of identity are simultaneously the precondition for and (re)produced through articulations of policy" (Hansen, 2013, p. 9).

In addition, setting a timeframe that was both feasible, yet useful, was challenging. Ultimately, I decided to concentrate on one Chinese president, President Xi Jinping, but during two different American presidential terms, one under President Obama, the other one under President Trump.

This allows for both consistency on the Chinese side and diversity on the side of the US as the Other, with first a democratic and then a republican president in power.

I based the methodological part of my research on Lene Hansen's (2013) guidelines, outlined in her book: "*Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*". In her work, Hansen offers a full and detailed account of the methodology of discourse analysis and explains how to build discourse analytical research designs in international relations and foreign policy study, focusing on the analysis of the Self versus the Other. She lists four dimensions to be considered when establishing your research design: the number of Selves, the intertextual model, the temporal perspective, and the number of events.

Although my research is focusing on the Chinese Self solely, I am comparing the Chinese Self during Obama's term with the one under Trump. Therefore, I consider my research a multiple-Self study where two Selves are compared and analysed. It does not constitute a *discursive encounter,* however, as this would entail that also the Other's (US) discourse would be analysed (Hansen, 2013). Even though this would have been a very interesting addition to my research, timing- and other constraints limited the scope of this thesis.

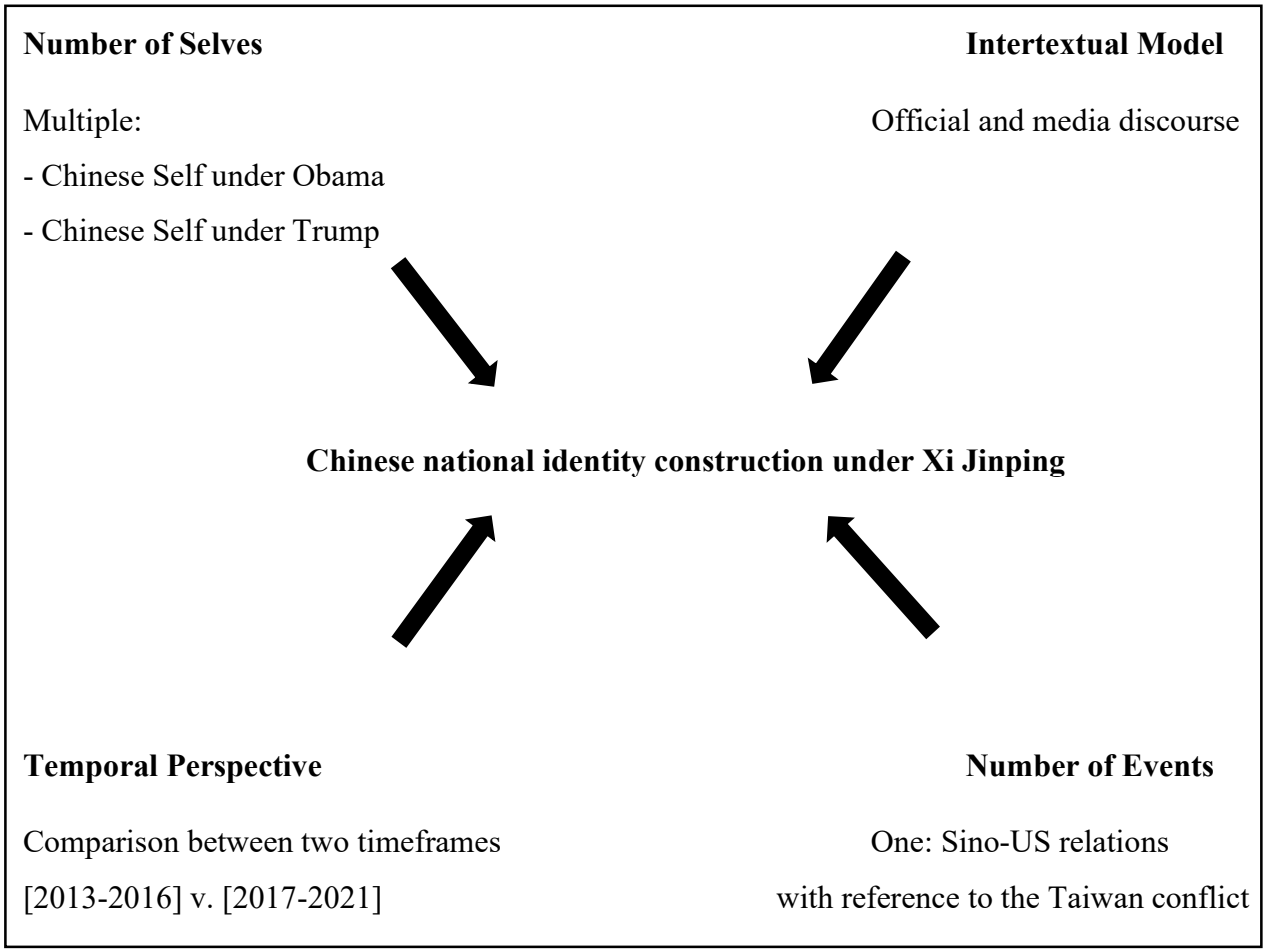
Secondly, I based my research on Hansen's (2013) first intertextual research model (p. 57):

Intertextual research model	
Analytical focus	- Official discourse (state representatives and President Xi Jinping) - Media sources[2] (directly quoting or referring to official discourse)
Object of analysis	Official documents: press conferences, speeches and interviews, government reports, news reports, and presidential meeting statements
Goal of analysis	Investigate how narratives are used to not only construct but also legitimize national identity, and how a change in discourse influences those same two facets

[2] Not part of Hansen's (2013) original model. I added media sources to circumvent my lack of knowledge of the Chinese language, which limited the amount of government sources available for my research. Nevertheless, as for the Chinese media sources at least, this should still reflect the Chinese government's position quite accurately, as those media channels are controlled and managed by the state.

Thirdly, my research's temporal perspective consists of a comparison between two timeframes: [2013-2016] under Obama v. [2017-2021] under Trump. And finally, the number of events is limited to one, as I am researching one topic only: the Sino-US relations on the subject of the Taiwan conflict.

Based on Hansen's (2013) work, my research design can thus be summarized as follow:



Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis

In a first phase, all relevant websites were listed and a selection of texts was made, based on three criteria laid out by Hansen (2013): "they are characterized by the clear articulation of identities and policies; they are widely read and attended to; and they have the formal authority to define a political position[3]" (p. 76). This resulted in a mix of Foreign Ministry (FM) press conferences; speeches and interviews by state officials and President Xi Jinping; reports by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) – China's military apparatus; statements on presidential meetings; and media reports.

Even with the best intentions, however, the selection of sources will always be subject to potential unwarranted selectivity and investigator bias, which is unavoidable in qualitative research (Thies, 2002). Selection bias occurs, according to Collier and Mahoney (1996), "when some form of selection process in either the design of the study or the real-world phenomena under investigation results in inferences that suffer from systematic error" (p. 59). We must, therefore, always remember that facts never speak for themselves: they are all filtered through our pre-set conceptual frameworks, and the conclusions we draw from them are, in consequence, automatically based on underlying theoretical assumptions (Levy, 1997). With this in mind, I applied Scott's (1990) four criteria to ensure the quality of the documents: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. These different measures intended to strengthen the internal validity of my research and resulted in a selection of a total of 378 relevant texts.

[3] The media reports do not adhere to the third criterium. Again, this was partly compensated using state-controlled Chinese media channels. (See 2).

Here below is an exact count and overview of all the scrutinized sources:

	2013[4]	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021[5]	TOTAL
FM Regular Press Conferences	4	6	5	8	12	11	17	30	9	**102**
FM Spokesperson's Remarks	1			2	2	1	2	1		**9**
Mainland Affairs Council Taiwan	1		1	10	20	38	32	34	3	**139**
Speeches/Interviews										
- President Xi Jinping		1			1		2			**4**
- Foreign Minister Wang Yi	1						4	2		**7**
- State Councillor Yang Jiechi		1		1				1		**3**
- Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin				1						**1**
- Ambassador to the US, Cui Tiankai					2	4	6	2	1	**15**
- Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng								1		**1**
Media	3	11	9	9	7	6	19	16	11	**91**
Presidential meeting Xi - Obama	1	1		1						**3**
Presidential meeting Xi - Trump						1				**1**
Report - Conference							1			**1**
White Paper (Chinese Military)							1			**1**
TOTAL	**11**	**20**	**15**	**32**	**44**	**61**	**84**	**87**	**24**	**378[6]**

To ensure the rigorous analysis of all the sources, I used the qualitative data analysis software program NVivo. It helped me organize and get a clearer overview of my data to, ultimately, provide in-depth insight on this large volume of sources. My main aim was to look for words, concepts, or narratives, that were either repeated or changed over time. More specifically, I investigated how Chinese discourse about, or directed towards, the US, with reference to the Taiwan issue, evolved. I used both the 'Word Frequency'- and the 'Text Search' tool. First, the 'Word Frequency' tool allowed me to have an overview of the most frequently used words per examined year, including 'exact matches', 'stemmed words', and 'synonyms'.

[4] starting 14th of March onwards, Xi Jinping's presidential election date
[5] until 20th of January, President Trump's end of term
[6] consisting of 84 sources under President Obama and 294 under President Trump

Then, I investigated the relevancy and context of each word by performing a 'Text Search'. Words such as 'China', 'Taiwan', 'ministry' or 'spokesperson', were deemed irrelevant and removed from the list as they would figure high on the word frequency list without, however, providing any further insight on their function or meaning in the narrative. I studied the 'Word Tree' of the remaining relevant words, which allowed for more understanding of how they are interrelated throughout the discourse, resulting in the construction of concepts.

Finally, I created a coding system in which I organized the most occurring words and concepts. The parental nodes, grouping all child nodes together, were categorized as 'concepts', 'nouns', 'verbs', 'year', and 'the Other', regrouping a total of 79 codes for the entire data set. Following this work, I made an overview of the ten most frequently used words and concepts per year [7]. Next, I did the same exercise for the code of 'the Other' in specific, allowing me to get a better understanding of how the US as the Other is constructed in China's discourse[8]. Both overviews constitute the foundation of my comparative and interpretative analysis in Chapter Six.

Critical Reflections

Every research has its limitations and even more important is the awareness of those by the author. The primary limitation that I encountered in my research is the lack of knowledge of the Chinese language. This limited the available primary and secondary sources and also influenced my perspective. Dunn and Neumann (2016) argue that, when conducting discourse analysis, "a researcher needs a basic level of cultural competence to recognize the shared understandings that create a common frame of reference" (p. 85). Nevertheless, I have chosen my research question and the scope of my research so, that most of the primary sources are originally intended for an international public, therefore remaining true to their initial purpose.

Further, on the availability of sources: first, the overview of primary sources shows an imbalance between the number of sources found during Obama's presidential term (84) and Trump's (294). Two possible explanations come to mind: first, archives are harder to find. Second - and in my

[7] A1
[8] A2

opinion most importantly - is the difference in nature of the Sino-US relation under Obama compared to Trump. Sino-US relations under Obama seemed more based on mutual recognition and trust, and certainly less eventful, than under Trump. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Six. The apparent imbalance in sources between the two timeframes might, therefore, become a meaningful element in the analysis.

Second, apart from the general issue of representativeness (not all relevant sources might be published or available, nor are all available sources relevant (Thies, 2002)), free speech and freedom of the press are heavily curtailed in an authoritarian country like China. In fact, the official discursive codes have often been vigorously enforced (Hansen, 2013). Yet, I believe this merely intensifies the justification and need for more research as this is an important way to increase our understanding of such nation's identities, expressed through foreign policies that are impacting all parts of the world. As for the secondary sources, then, it was noticeable how most of the academic literature is quite outdated, and recent literature was hard to find. I found this to be another argument for the academic relevance of my research. More generally, due to the global pandemic that took place during the entire time of this research, I was mostly limited to sources that were available online.

Concluding with some last remarks on the methodology and the validity of my work: as much as the practice of coding is helpful in structuring and expressing the essence of the studied discourse, it can have a reductionist effect and lead to a fragmentation of the data and loss of the narrative flow (Atkinson & Coffey, 1996). By coding, you remove the data from its context and risk limiting your work to description rather than theory building (Bryman, 2012). However, awareness of these possible implications represents an important step towards limiting them, next to those implications being outweighed by the array of possibilities coding offers. Finally, the problem of validity with single case studies is not so much a problem of internal validity as it is one of external validity (Yin, 2009a). It is quite impossible to generalize the results; however, this is not the aim of this research. I aim to offer a better understanding of this specific case study and for my research to be an added value to the academic debate on this topic.

Chapter 3: Relationship Status: It's Complicated

China and Taiwan: A Contentious Past with Divergent Dreams?

The year 1949 represents a landmark year in the history of the conflict. The KMT party, then ruling over mainland China, was defeated by the CCP in the civil war, after which the KMT government withdrew to the island of Taiwan. The PRC was established in mainland China, and Beijing became its capital. Since then, the PRC pledged to reunite with Taiwan and, thereby, unify the whole of China (Wong, 2019). Up to today, however, this remains an unfulfilled dream.

Over the last half-century, the Taiwan Strait has been an area of tension and military conflict. During the 1950s and the two decades that followed, the Taiwanese-controlled islands of Quemoy and Matsu, for example, were the site of a tense Cold War standoff and unannounced attacks by the PRC. After a calmer period in the 1980s and 1990s, military tensions rose again after the sale of F-16 fighter aircraft by the US to Taiwan in 1992 (Campbell & Mitchell, 2001). Then, the so-called '1992 Consensus' emerged, a term coined in 2000 by Su Chi (KMT) (Chen & Cohen, 2019) and causing controversy up to this day. The concept is used by pan-KMT actors, referring to the spirit of cross-Strait détente during 1992-1995. At that time, the KMT administration adopted a 'one China, respective interpretations' policy, leaving the definition of 'one China' open. Beijing did not challenge, nor explicitly accept this principle. However, after Taiwan rejected one China, the PRC launched the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis (Wei, 2015), where China threatened to invade but backed down after US military interference (Roy, 2000).

After the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took power in the mid-2000s, China, encouraged by pan-KMT actors, adopted a more conciliatory policy that was based on the 1992 Consensus (Wei, 2015). For the PRC, the Consensus became a necessary condition for any further cross-Strait negotiations. As Guotaiban pointed out: "Without the 'Consensus', adverse changes in cross-strait relations would be inevitable" (Chen & Cohen, 2019, p. 24). After 2008, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou's term was described as a "honeymoon" period for cross-Strait relations (Chen & Cohen, 2019, p. 24), as the 1992 consensus was a core operating principle of his administration (Whelan-Wuest, 2017). The current period of Tsai Ing-wen's presidency, however, is often described as an era of "cold peace" (Chen & Cohen, 2019, p. 25; Lin, 2016),

with Tsai Ing-wen refusing to endorse the Consensus and President Xi Jinping proclaiming the "Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation" and, in consequence, the unification of Taiwan as a priority (Chen & Cohen, 2019, p. 24).

Then, how can we make sense of this long-lasting conflict and enduring rivalry? Mitzen (2006) argues that all states need ontological security, links this to physical security-seeking, and explains how conflict – even when threatening – may, in fact, benefit a state's identity. With fear of chaos as their starting point, states might prefer the certainty of an ongoing conflict to the uncertainty of what the alternative might mean to their identity. Mitzen concludes that "because even dangerous routines provide ontological security, rational security-seekers could become attached to conflict" (p341). This perspective might shed a different light on the cross-Strait conflict. From Taiwan's point of view, one could understand why Taiwan would fear to leave the current status quo as it is uncertain how the future will unfold in alternative scenarios. Similarly, even China might find itself in an ontological security dilemma, unsure to which extend the US will interfere if the conflict would escalate.

The US as Third Wheel, Ally, or Enemy?

Even after losing its official recognition in 1972, the US remains Taiwan's main international ally. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the US will support Taiwan's independence in case of attack by the PRC. As Chu (2000) says: "even though the answer is not a definite no, at least it is not an absolute yes" (p. 318).

Taiwan is a unique case in American diplomacy whereby its policy is characterized by 'strategic ambiguity': although the US promises to react to each threat to Taiwan, they are not legally bound to do so (Maizland, 2019; Rudolf, 2021). As recounted in the introduction, their history goes back to the time the KMT settled in Taiwan in 1949 (Zuo, 2018). In 1972, when visiting China, American President Nixon showed opening gestures towards China again (Zuo, 2018). This resulted in the first joint 'Communiqué' between the US and China, where the US recognized China's position concerning Taiwan and where it stressed the importance of a peaceful solution in

cross-Strait relations. Moreover, the US pledged to decrease its military activities in Taiwan (American Institute in Taiwan, n.d.-a).

Seven years later, in 1979, a second joint 'Communiqué' was agreed to, in which, in sum: "Washington cut official ties with Taipei to establish relations with Beijing" (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021, p. 15). China and the US established diplomatic relations and the US declared the PRC to be the sole legal government of China. They, thereby, acknowledged China's position that there is one China only, known as the 'One China Policy', and that it included Taiwan (American Institute in Taiwan, n.d.-b; Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021). The American embassy in Taiwan got replaced by the American Institute in Taiwan ('AIT'), but as a reaction to what most of the American Congress perceived as an abandonment of Taiwan by the US, the 1979 'Taiwan Relations Act' was passed. This law describes US foreign policy towards Taiwan, requiring the US to maintain unofficial relations and help Taiwan defend itself, explicitly referring to continued US arms sales to Taiwan (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021; Chen et al., 2017; Saunders, 2005). It is the only American law that prescribes US foreign policy towards a foreign government (Kim & Miller, 2019).

In 1982, the third and final of the 'Three Joint Communiqués' was issued. It was written that the Taiwan issue was China's domestic affair, the US reaffirmed its commitment to the One China Policy, and the US assured China it would gradually reduce its arms sales to Taiwan (American Institute in Taiwan, n.d.-c; Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021; Chen et al., 2017). These Communiqués constitute the core base of China's relations with the US about Taiwan.

Significant Others

As "Chinese identity is constructed with and against the foreign Other" (Callahan, 2015, p. 224), this results in tension between, on the one hand, using nationalism to further the goal of strengthening domestic legitimacy, and avoiding conflict on the international scene, on the other. The relationship with a major power, such as the US, has influenced Chinese domestic and foreign policy discourse as well as the CCP's strategy on nation-building, which, in turn, influences Chinese national identity formation (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012).

The US's role, from the US's perspective, is characterized by the idea of 'American exceptionalism' – the US as "the ultimate repository for, and transmitter of, liberal democracy and free-market capitalism to the rest of the world" (Brittingham, 2007, p. 157). In the last quarter-century, the US had two different counter-roles for China in mind: China as a 'troubled modernizer', which Madsen (1995) refers to as the 'liberal China myth'; and later, as a 'failed modernizer' and potential rogue (Brittingham, 2007). The perception of China as a troubled modernizer originated from the US's interpretation that China was on its way to (Western) modernization, meaning it accepted Western economic and political norms and would eventually completely abolish the communist system. This led to the belief that this process should be supported through economic, political, and cultural mutual engagement. However, the liberal China myth reflected primarily the American confidence in its role and place in the world, rather than the Chinese reality. The turning point of this belief in China as a liberalizing state came in the spring of 1989 with the crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. The liberal China myth appeared to actually *be* a myth (Brittingham, 2007).

This led to a new counter-role that the US constructed to make sense of China's actions: a role as failed modernizer which resulted in a full reorientation of US-China policy. Since then, the relation has been characterized by economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and occasional military powerplay. This shift in perspective felt increasingly threatening to China in its own role as a great power as well as to its ideational security. As a result, the US wound up "on the wrong side of Chinese history" (Peng, 2003, p. 109). This offers not only an explanation of the Othering of the US by China; it also helps to explain the remarkable resurgence of nationalism in China after Tiananmen (Zhao, 2006) which seemed to be a direct reaction to the above described Sino-US role conflict. This suggests that nationalism cannot be seen as a purely political instrument, influenced by domestic political factors, but that it should also be understood as a reaction to international events (Brittingham, 2007), as will be explained in Chapter Five.

The anti-American nationalism grew stronger over the years, not only within the CCP but also among the people. This was provoked by several events such as the US intervention during the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996, which was perceived as a containment policy, and the attempt by the US Congress to prevent China from hosting the 2000 Summer Olympics, which was seen as an attempt to humiliate China. This led to the rise of a 'new' Chinese and anti-American nationalism

in the 1990s and China portraying the US as a hegemonic Other that seeks to stop China from obtaining its position as a great power on the international stage (Brittingham, 2007). After sparking and fuelling those anti-American sentiments, China's political elites, now, have to be 'tough' if they want to maintain their legitimacy (Wang, 2008).

Another element contributing to anti-American sentiments is what Callahan (2015) calls: Xi Jinping's 'negative soft power strategy', where soft power is - just as identity and security - socially constructed and defining the symbolic borders between Self and Other. Through his China Dream discourse, Xi Jinping aims to build a positive Chinese Self, excluding the negative Otherness. The discourse entails anti-Japanese, anti-American, and anti-Western themes, where the Chinese Self is identified as 'civilized' and the Others as 'barbaric'.

But what, then, are China's motivations for national Othering? Yinan (2014) defines two broad reasons. First, to oppose perceived threats to the population's physical or spiritual integrity: for example, the Othering of the US to oppose the Taiwan issue, as Taiwan's independence would endanger the China Dream, which, in turn, could lead to decreasing unity among the people and loyalty to the state, threatening the *raison d'être* of the CCP. And second, as a tool to legitimize certain policies or political ideologies: China's depicting of the US as the Other serves to justify and legitimize the Party's foreign policies towards America while creating increasingly strong anti-American sentiments among its population.

Chapter 4: China's Search for National Identity

Pursuing the China Dream, leaving the Century of National Humiliation behind

The nation is not only about people or territory but also about time: the *national* time. The importance of national time is reflected by the custom of 'National Humiliation Day', which followed the 'Century of National Humiliation'. It goes back to the time of the late Qing dynasty and the Opium War in 1840, during which China experienced a traumatic identity crisis because of the Japanese and Western powers, and ends with the communist revolution in 1949 (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Callahan, 2006; Cohen, 2002; Li, 2008). The discourse of national humiliation "recounts how at the hands of foreign invaders and corrupt Chinese regimes, sovereignty was lost, territory dismembered, and the Chinese people thus humiliated" (Callahan, 2006, p. 180). Indeed, reunification by defending China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity has become one of the core objectives of the PRC since its foundation (Li, 2008).

Popular traditions such as the National Humiliation Day and its narrative, are instrumentally constructed by state-directed propaganda. The PRC is very attentive to history education: it uses a 'Patriotic Education Policy' to control and (re)construct a unified national memory to achieve its present-day goals (Callahan, 2006; Duggan, 2020) and renew domestic pride to overcome this Century (Duggan, 2020). The campaign was launched by Jiang Zemin in the early 1990s and was based on China's victimization narrative. The CCP was glorified as the nation's saviour from foreign invaders, as opposed to the weakness of earlier Chinese leaders, and Japan's past aggression became central to Chinese historical memory (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Carlson, 2009; Roy, 2009). New history textbooks were published, museums built, and academic research on Japan's atrocities encouraged (Shirk, 2007).

The patriotic education campaign was focused on constructing a unified Chinese identity of victimhood and promoting state nationalism, with Japan as the "Other" at its centre (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012). The power of institutionalized historical memory and history education solidifies cultural narratives and nationalism, used by the CCP regime as tools for China's national identity construction. This strengthens and supports their domestic priorities and political legitimacy, their discourse, and their foreign relations and interests, producing identity as 'national'. By doing so,

it perpetuates ideas and beliefs in present-day society without anyone knowing or believing the reasoning behind them (Callahan, 2006; Li, 2008; Wang, 2008).

It is particularly in times of conflict and confrontation that Chinese historical consciousness and collective memory over their glorified past and the subsequent traumatic Century are not only influencing China's national identity and nationalism construction, they are also defining through which lenses many Chinese interpret the world (Wang, 2008). The carefully crafting of historical symbols, myths, and chosen traumas (or chosen glories as their opposites), provide alternatives for, and supply powerful narratives and beliefs to, ontological insecurity and existential anxiety (Kinnvall, 2004). The use of constructed historical consciousness and control over history education does not mean, however, that there is an internal consensus over how this construction should take place and which historical facts the younger generation should learn. Some critical scholars, such as Weishi Yuan, believe the current Chinese history education is "fostering blind nationalism and closed-minded anti-foreign sentiment" (Yuan in Wang, 2008, p. 801). Wang (2008) blames this on uncompleted nation-building and search for identity, claiming that this ambiguousness has become one of the major security uncertainties in East Asia.

The Century of National Humiliation is connected to the 'China Dream' narrative which became an official slogan, launched by Xi Jinping in 2012 (Callahan, 2015), and the dominant domestic theme of his administration (Ferdinand, 2016). According to Xi, China's history, next to its glorious past, also includes 170 years of humiliation where China was dominated by 'capitalist-imperialist powers'. He declared that his China Dream is for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", meaning: "achieving a rich and powerful country, the revitalization of the nation, and the people's happiness" (Callahan, 2015, p. 221).

The China Dream is, thus, part of China's identity dilemma in search of its aspirations for success and serves Xi as an institutional framework, building and fuelling China's victimized form of nationalism and national identity by using its past of humiliation (Callahan, 2015). It focuses on making China strong and powerful again and aims to restore the regime's ideological legitimacy, enhancing its self-confidence (Ferdinand, 2016). Xi Jinping's goal is to achieve the China Dream by 2049, when celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the PRC. However, a crucial condition in achieving this dream is reunification with Taiwan (Wong, 2019). In addition, it is important to note that when talking about the China Dream, the regime implicitly also decides what people

cannot dream about, such as individual dreams, or the American dream (Callahan, 2015; Ferdinand, 2016).

Chinese National Identity in Transition: Victim – Developing Country – Great Power

National identity can assume various national roles on the international stage for which the elite seeks to secure domestic support. Those roles can change over time (Dittmer & Kim, 1993b). We can observe three major variants of Chinese national identity (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012): China as a victim, as a developing country, and as a great power. These identity forms represent respectively the past, the present, and the future. Where Japan played a key role in China's past identity construction, it is the US taking over for its present and, especially, its future identity. However, these forms should not be seen as mutually exclusive but as co-existing and even reinforcing one another. They are state-led constructed and contribute to the attempt of the CCP elites to "foster[ing] a sense of national unity and loyalty to the state, as well as to the Party" (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012, p. 95-96).

The national identity construction as a victim originates from the Century of Humiliation (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012), Western colonialism, and its turbulent interactions with the International Society after 1949. From the 1990s onwards, in a time following the Tiananmen incident, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the worldwide weakening of communism, the CCP's legitimacy was in crisis (Shi, 2001). To regain popular support, the regime focused on the historical victimization narrative in China's national identity construction, reinforced by official patriotism, top-down nationalism (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012), and soft power discourse. It did so by founding a 'New China': actively constructing a 'China' on the one hand, and a 'world' on the other hand (Callahan, 2006, p. 185). This is related to the regime's concern with identity and security in an attempt to sustain its domestic legitimacy (Callahan, 2015): as national identity is not fixed but a process of identification, the elite sought to construct and nourish a national identity. This was meant to insure the people's support for the regime and help them to keep stability at

home while portraying an image as a reliable and coherent international actor abroad (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Dittmer, 2006).

In this sense of 'victimhood', enhanced by the Self/Other nexus (Suzuki, 2007), Japan became the 'victimizing Other' (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012). Each new act of possible humiliation, revealing yet again China's vulnerability, results in alarmed patriots and is followed by strong reactions and the increasing radicalization of the Chinese "Self" in relation with the foreign "Other" (Hunt, 1993). Therefore, the Taiwan issue is such a core and sensitive issue for China, for "as long as China remains divided, it will not be able to completely overcome its victim mentality and reclaim its international status" (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012, p. 97). Moreover, Taiwan was under Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945 (Shirk, 2007), reinforcing Japan's role in preserving China's past of humiliation. Finally, the US interference in the Taiwan issue, the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance since the 1990s, and Japan's alleged non-support of China's reunification, extend China's victim identity into the future and are directly linked to China's traumatic past of foreign intervention in Chinese domestic affairs (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012).

China, often purposefully, uses different faces and misleading official statements to manipulate the world by creating a certain image or impression. China's identity as a developing country served the country's interests well, as this allowed them, domestically, to enhance and secure the political legitimacy of the regime (Van Ness, 1993), and internationally, to be part of an international unity with other developing countries as well as by being granted special treatments on the international scene and in international organizations (Zhang, 2004). To China, to be part of the 'third world' means "to share a common sense of deprivation and exploitation at the hands of the rich and powerful" (Van Ness, 1993, p. 197). In referring to the developing identity, the regime focuses on fears of renewed foreign domination, following the narrative of victimhood. But did party leaders truly identify China so? It could be argued that this was probably not the case and was rather used as a political instrument for Chinese nationalist sentiment as well as to keep options for coalitions with other Third World countries open (Van Ness, 1993).

Comparing itself to other major powers, the Chinese political elite now sees China as a rising **g**reat power through which the third variant of China's national identity is constructed (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Li, 2008). This is made clear, for example, by statements where ministers compare China's military capacity to others. Next to creating a powerful image abroad, this conduct is used

to strengthen the domestic perception of China as a strong and powerful nation (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012). After decades of domination and containment by other great powers (Li, 2008), China should be a great power in and of itself. When PRC leaders and policy elites refer to China's great power status, they believe China must possess economic and military power as well as have political influence on global and regional affairs, like the other major powers. They call this "comprehensive national strength" (Li, 2008, p. 37). However, how China is viewed by the rest of the world is important to the political elite; their search for great power identity should, therefore, be supported by widespread international respect. America's quest for hegemony, as perceived by China, poses a threat to China's great power identity construction and, as a result, hampers China's desire to "shake off the shadow of the 'century of shame and humiliation'" (Li, 2008, p. 200).

Zhang (2004) adds two other dimensions to this state-led construction of national identity: he defines the 'basic' identity as China being a "socialist country with Chinese characteristics" (p. 295), clarifying the exclusive political power of the Party as well as their chosen policies on the road to modernization. The second dimension, overarching the others, is China's identity construction as a sovereign country in the strict Westphalian sense. China's past of humiliation contributes to how this dimension plays out, namely, making the Chinese elites extremely sensitive on sovereignty issues like Taiwan. The Taiwan issue sustains the national identity of China as a victim. Indeed, Zhu De, founder of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), stated: *"As long as Taiwan is not liberated, the Chinese people's historical humiliation is not washed away; as long as the motherland is not reunited, our people's armed forces' responsibility is not fulfilled"* (Roy, 2000, p. 79). But the status of Taiwan and other 'lost' territories also plays a key role in China's great power identity: as long as China is not reunited, it cannot fully assume its role as a great power and achieve the China Dream. As a result, creating and sustaining a strong centralized state has become a core national interest and dominant feature of Chinese nationality (Hunt, 1993). The Taiwan issue embodies, thus, both China's victim and great power identities (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012).

One could wonder to what degree the Taiwan conflict might, in fact, benefit the CCP, as the regime uses national humiliation-themed patriotic education to redirect protests towards 'the foreigner' as the key enemy. Taiwan, and its support by the US, is then used to sustain the image of the US as this 'foreigner' that does not allow China's rightful rise, thereby fuelling domestic unity against

the ‘Other’ and distracting its people from legitimacy questions at home (Callahan, 2015). At the core, the deepest fear of the CCP over Chinese national identity might well be the awareness that “China has been inferior to the Western powers in the very domain of normative politics and the very principles of proper behaviour which Confucianism has held to be the hallmark of China’s civilizational greatness” (Kim & Dittmer, 1993, p. 281).

Chapter 5: Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy: A Quest for Legitimacy

Instrumentalizing Chinese Nationalism

Chinese nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century when extensive contacts with the West challenged both China's traditional Confucian beliefs and its territorial and national integrity. This development has led to an increasingly intense symbolic value to concepts of Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity (Downs & Saunders, 1998). During the CCP's legitimacy crisis in the early 1990s, nationalism and patriotism played an important role as tools for the CCP. Chinese nationalism was, like its victim identity, based on a consciously and carefully constructed interpretation of Chinese history and a sense of injustice following the Century of Humiliation narrative (Carlson, 2009). By sustaining Chinese nationalism, the CCP seeks to create a new ideology to justify its rule and enhance its nationalist credentials (Gilley & Holbig, 2009). In doing so, they establish a form of ideological hegemony that authoritarian systems use as an alternative to normative pluralism (Holbig & Gilley, 2010). Patriotism, which became an official discourse of nationalism, supported the regime in strengthening national identity by calling for unconditional loyalty from its people. In fact, official patriotism became a legitimacy tool, gradually replacing communist ideology (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012).

However, not only nationalist historical beliefs but also cultural governance structure Chinese nationalism, as we can see how the Chinese state is involving itself in determining the cultural, moral, and historical standards. These narratives, in turn, generated the dream of a strong China, shared by the Chinese people (Zhao, 2009, p. 2). In fact, Watson (1993) argues that a shared sense of cultural identity predated nationalism and, with it, national identity in China. National identity is thus contingent on cultural identity (Wilson, 1993), in which, according to Watson (1993), the ordinary people (and not only the elite) played a central role in its promotion and perpetuation. Ultimately, cultural governance and the discourses of humiliation and the China Dream (with their negative portrayals of foreign countries) are instrumentalized by the Chinese elite to evoke and shape a form of nationalism that matches their own political and strategic goals, safeguards their

legitimacy, and mobilizes the people (Callahan, 2006, 2015; Downs & Saunders, 1998; Gries et al., 2011). In sum, two core facets can be distinguished in contemporary Chinese nationalism: its constructed historical foundation and the instrumentalization of nationalist sentiment by the CCP (Carlson, 2009).

The Taiwan issue and China's divided identity, for instance, are stimulating Chinese nationalism and have become a symbol for the Chinese regime's legitimacy (Hughes, 2013). Any sign by the Party losing its firm position and compromising with Taiwan over sovereignty and national division could result in a potential disruption of the PRC's revitalization, a backlash of the Chinese people, and therewith, threaten the regime's legitimacy (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Dittmer, 2006). Formal Taiwanese independence would directly challenge their legitimacy, where even economic interdependence wouldn't suffice to temper their response (Downs & Saunders, 1998). Accordingly, Gilley (2008) cites two ways in which legitimacy can decline: by a crisis in government performance or by a change of values in society. Taiwan's independence would endanger both dimensions: as previously argued, losing Taiwan would result in an existential crisis of the CCP's performance. Moreover, since Taiwan is increasingly democratizing, its independence would not only set a dangerous precedent, causing a domino effect of independence movements with other independence-seeking regions, but possibly also create confusion among the Chinese people about the CCP's propagated and constructed ideas and values (Dittmer, 2006; Gilley, 2008; White & Cheng, 1993).

However, as insinuated before, one could argue that nationalism is more than, solely, a political instrument of the elites. It constitutes a critical component of Chinese national identity construction and might be better understood as a reaction to an international context (Brittingham, 2007). The concept of nationalism is, thus, not straightforward and can take up different forms. Yi (2005) describes two of them: 'rational' nationalism, as opposed to 'popular' nationalism. In the former, the people are proud of their nations and traditions and share them with others abroad. The latter could potentially undermine the CCP's political discourse, pressurize them into other, often tougher, foreign policies, and hence threaten the Party's stability. Therefore, the political elites are trying to use rational nationalism as a 'soft power' tool to promote their image as a peaceful rising power, and both constrain and respond to popular nationalism, as it can both challenge and solidify their legitimacy (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Gries, 2004; Gries et al., 2011).

Bottom-up popular pressures have, in fact, become such a key factor in nationalist legitimation today, that "Chinese nationalism can [therefore] no longer be described as a purely 'state' or 'official' top-down affair" (Deng & Wang, 2005, p. 112). Zhao (2009), too, characterizes China's outburst of nationalism as driven by both top-down and bottom-up forces. Nationalism is thus a two-edged sword: it could help the political elites to solidify and legitimize their power by generating national unity among the Chinese people and directing their focus towards a shared external opponent and threat, such as the US. Yet, rising nationalism may, simultaneously, pressure the CCP's policymaking, where the state needs to negotiate not only with foreign governments but also with its increasingly nationalistic domestic audiences. (Wang, 2008; Zhao, 2009).

(Chinese) nationalism is, thus, a complex and multifaceted concept, which deserves extensive research that would take me beyond the boundaries of this work. Nonetheless, as nationalism is inseparable from national identity (Suzuki, 2007), and studying national identity requires a 'multiperspectival' lens (Ruggie, 1998), clearly defining nationalism was essential for a good understanding of this work.

Chinese Foreign Policy: A Blend of Ingredients

China's national identity is an important domestic determinant and a key factor that significantly shapes and constrains foreign policy, as it determines national interests, which, in turn, are defining state policy and action (Callahan, 2006; Yinan, 2014). Chinese nationalism has become an important domestic force behind Chinese foreign policy too, as it both encourages and limits China's international cooperation (Zhao, 2009). Moreover, when studying Chinese foreign policy, it is important to also take factors of dignity, humiliation, and desire for recognition, into account. The US, for example, does not only represent a military threat to China but also a possible source for renewed humiliation (Gries et al., 2011).

When researching motives behind Chinese foreign policy, Wang (2005) identified three primary – stable but overlapping – motivations: "political preservation of the CCP regime, China's economic prosperity, and Beijing's pursuit of power and prestige" (p. 669). Moreover, the author

regards Taiwan's and China's relationship with the United States as the key issues. Atanassova-Cornelis (2012) recognizes and links those same motives as underlying factors for the construction of China's, previously discussed, three identities. The political legitimacy, and thus preservation of the CCP regime, is underpinned by the construction of a unified national identity by the Party, instrumentalized with narratives of patriotism and victimization. Second, China's identity as a developing country strengthens the first goal and supports the motivation of China's economic prosperity. Third and finally, Beijing's pursuit of power and prestige, Atanassova-Cornelis argues, is necessary for China's rise to great power status.

It is noteworthy, however, that there is not always an absolute consensus within Chinese policy circles on China's foreign policy. China's foreign policy slogan 'peaceful rise', for example, makes some fear that the word 'rise' might lead to neighbouring countries feeling threatened. Others believe China's great power is being constrained by the word 'peaceful' and that this, in turn, has not put off independence voices in Taiwan as hoped. Ultimately, the official elite changed 'peaceful rise' to 'peaceful development' in their speeches and statements from April 2004 (Li, 2008, pp. 197-198).

Neither do they agree on how to respond to the Sino-US security challenges. Some do not believe that economic development and globalization could secure China's position as a powerful nation. As Professor Zhang Wenmu (2004) argues: "China's prosperity cannot guarantee its survival" (Li, 2008, p. 197). Professor Yang Fan (2004) joins his argument by putting a realist stance forward, in that China's national security strategy should first and foremost aim at the safeguarding of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. China, according to Yang, should follow an uncompromising policy, thus not compromising on the Taiwan issue, and even be prepared to confront America if necessary. This strong stance, he believes, would make it difficult for the US to contain China as China's neighbouring countries will be discouraged from partnering up with them (Fan, 2004; Li, 2008).

However, the core of China's foreign policy discourse is not about a security dilemma, as realist scholars would like us to believe, it is about values and identity. Who is China? Who is it not? What does it stand for? Which role does it see for itself? This identity dilemma is following after three decades of economic reform and opening up, sparking an ongoing debate among the Chinese elite deciding how to fill this "moral vacuum" (Callahan, 2015, p. 219).

China's foreign policies have become more active (Ferdinand, 2016) while, simultaneously, struggling with its place and identity in a changing international system (Carlson, 2009). Under President Xi Jinping, China has proven to be more proactive and decisive on the world stage (Lams, 2017) than under any other leader since the early 1980s at the beginning of the reform period (Chang-Liao, 2016; Duggan, 2020; Poh & Li, 2017; Zhang, 2015). The tougher and more decisive language can be illustrated with a quote from one of Xi Jinping's (2017) most remarkable speeches thus far (Gao, 2017), held at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party:

> "We stand firm in safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will never allow the historical tragedy of national division to repeat itself. Any separatist activity is certain to meet with the resolute opposition of the Chinese people. We have the resolve, the confidence, and the ability to defeat separatist attempts for "Taiwan independence" in any form. We will never allow anyone, any organization, or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China!" (Xi, 2017, p. 51)

According to Duggan (2020), this can be assigned to a more nationalist and hawkish public opinion and emerging new Chinese nationalism that followed the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. This new Chinese nationalism has both a reactive and a proactive effect on current Chinese foreign policy. The effect is reactive during national crises where China would take a more confrontational and aggressive role. To Brittingham (2007), nationalism, in general, is inherently reactive since it is a way for a state to defend its national identity against foreign threats. He, then, considers Chinese nationalism to be a reaction to the identity dilemma that China faces in relation to its significant Others. The internationally perceived 'China threat' should, therefore, according to the author, not be overstated.

A proactive effect, in contrast, occurs when assuming the role of a responsible great power, where action is undertaken without a prior threat to its security. Understanding more about these effects on Chinese foreign policy will allow us to better explain the contradictive nature of, on the one hand, the promotion of China as a responsible great power by the CCP, and the perceived image of China as a threat by the international community, on the other (Duggan, 2020).

Chapter 6: A Discourse Analysis of China's Foreign Policy: Change or Continuity?

In this last chapter, I will discuss the results of my discourse analysis[9] and which conclusions can be drawn from them. While doing so, I will refer to the literature review in the introductory chapter as well as to other ideas and perspectives presented throughout my work. I will immediately compare both timeframes, under Obama and Trump, as a separate analysis would not give much insight into the evolution of China's national identity throughout those years. I will end the discussion by shortly focusing on the results of China's Othering of the US.

Overall, there was a remarkable consistency in discourse. As Lams (2017) concluded in her work: when sensitive matters, such as sovereignty (or in this case the Taiwan issue), are concerned, Chinese official discourse has been continuous and consistent over the last decade (p. 1). Concepts like the 'One China Policy/Principle' (hereafter 'OCP') or the 'Three China-US joint Communiqués' (hereafter 'Communiqués), systematically made it to each year's top 10 of the most frequently used words/concepts. More so, the OCP was the number 1 narrative in each year, apart from the beginning years of 2013 and 2014. In 2013, there was more focus on cooperation; and in 2014, the focus was on the "Taiwan Relations Act Affirmation and Naval Vessel Transfer Act", in the framework of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act and allowing the US to sell naval vessels to Taiwan, causing political upheaval between both countries.

The focus on the OCP shows three characteristics of China's discourse: first, China is very clear and consistent about its position; second, the OCP constitutes the absolute core foundation of China's foreign policy discourse; and third, it implies that China is using recurrent references to the OCP and the Communiqués, both – according to China – 'internationally agreed principles'[10], to justify and legitimize their policies and actions. This seems to support China's goal to avoid conflict on the international scene (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012), China's preoccupation with how they are viewed internationally, and their aspiration for international respect (Li, 2008).

[9] Appendices A (A1, A2) & B

[10] In its discourse, China often made the comparison of the OCP being acknowledged and followed by most of the international community, pointing the finger at the US for not doing so.

Furthermore, the realist stance and, consequently, the focus on arms sales in much of the literature (Alysa, 2020; Chen et al., 2017; Copper, 2014; Roy, 2000), is demonstrated in the results by 'arms sales' being in the top 5 in six out of nine studied years. Warning or threatening language was present throughout both timeframes, too. This was illustrated by words like 'urge', 'firmly/resolutely opposes', 'abide', or 'handle cautiously/properly/carefully/…'. However, this need not imply that a constructivist approach is not suitable. On the contrary, as Callahan (2006) explains, the CCP at the beginning of the twenty-first century still uses a traditional vocabulary of war and foreign relations to address not traditional so much as non-traditional security: "the ideological, regime, and cultural security of the CCP" (p. 186). The purpose of this discourse analysis is, therefore, to go beyond the discourse in a literal sense, reflecting rather on the ideational factors and given meanings underlying it (Li, 2008).

Having discussed the main similarities that were consistent throughout both timeframes, I now turn to the observed differences. During Obama's term, the narratives had a more positive connotation. The number 1 word in 2013 was 'cooperation'. Yet, over the years, its position decreased in importance: lowering down to position 6 in 2016 and only figuring once in Trump's term, on position 10 in his first year as president (2017). In Trump's years thereafter, 'cooperation' was mentioned negatively, combined with words such as 'obstructing' or 'affecting'. 'Commitment' appeared in Obama's top 10 in 2014 and 2016; and it was found in 43% of the files, as opposed to only 27% under Trump. Still in the spirit of cooperation, word combinations like 'world and international community' and 'work together' were often used under Obama, describing the US's and China's role and responsibility in the international community, *together*, as great powers. Additionally, 'strengthen[ing] ties', figured high on the list in 2014 (n8) and 2015 (n2). 'Common' interests took a prominent place in 2013 under Obama, whereas 'core' interests figured in Obama's top 10 only in 2015 (or in 19% of Obama's files), as opposed to Trump's years in 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021 (or in 29% of Trump's files).

This implies that under Obama, China's discourse was more constructive and focused on common interests; whereas, under Trump, a more defensive discourse was used, underlining that the Taiwan issue is part of China's core interests and domestic affairs, and that any foreign interference is to be found unacceptable. Accordingly, 'China's internal/domestic affairs' figured only once in Obama's top 10, in his last year, whereas it appeared yearly and in an increasingly prominent place

in Trump's term: n9 in 2017, n3 in 2018, n4 in 2019, and n2 in 2020. This insinuates an increasingly provoked China, feeling the need to defend its boundaries and fend off US interference. The words 'stop' and 'sovereignty' reflect the same message: the usage of 'stop' increased at the end of Trump's term, going from n10 in 2014 and 2020 to n4 in 2021; whereas 'sovereignty' was n10 under Obama only once (2015), as opposed to n8 under Trump in both 2020 and 2021. Finally, the word 'interferes' was referred to 18 times under Obama (on a total of 84 files); under Trump, however, 103 references were found (on a total of 294 files).

Some words were commonly used under both presidents, yet, in different contexts. The words 'peace' or 'peaceful' were present in all years (except 2017), and even twice in 2015. Under Obama they were combined with positive words such as 'promote' or 'maintain'; under Trump, in contrast, 'peace' was accompanied by negative connotations such as 'jeopardize' or 'undermine', evolving from a more careful discourse with verbs such as 'prevent' or 'avoid' in his beginning years, to more destructive verbs like 'harm' and 'damage' in his last. 'Military relations', too, were present in the discourse throughout both timeframes. However, under Obama, this included military relations between China and the US; whereas, under Trump, it was focused on condemning US-Taiwan military relations and was present in Trump's top 10 every single year.

Finally, two elements were relatively unique to Trump. The concept of 'official relations/contacts' was highly present under Trump (143 references) and much less under Obama (12 references). These narratives reflect China's disapproval of official US-Taiwan relations, of which the incidental rate increased under Trump. The second element is the personification of the discourse under Trump. The name 'Trump' appears twice in the top 10: in 2016, insinuating the importance of the presidential elections at that time, and in 2017, Trump's first year in office. Afterwards, the focus switched to Mike Pompeo at the beginning of 2021.

The personification of the discourse seems to imply the following: not only is the Other a fundamental factor in identity construction as referred to in the literature review (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Hansen, 2013; Hunt, 1993; Neumann, 1996; Suzuki, 2007), and not only is the US a significant Other (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Callahan, 2015; Lams, 2017; Li, 2008; Suzuki, 2007), also *who* represents the Other matters. This strengthens the belief that identity is influenced not only by domestic but also external dimensions (such as foreign politics) (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012; Li, 2008; Watson, 1993). Those external factors are embedded in a context of power and

authority (Chen, 2013): the power of the presidents and their administrations in this case. I would, in consequence, argue that external systemic factors – like the actions of the Other – do have an influence on national identity outcome (determining foreign policy), as put forward by national identity theory (Kim & Dittmer, 1993), but certainly also play an important role in its construction.

How, then, can we describe China's national identity's evolution over the studied timeframe? As the results show some differences between both examined timeframes, they seem to support the constructivist idea of the identity's changing nature and it being a "process" of identification (Dittmer, 2006, p. 675). However, this process is slow, and a longer timeframe of study is necessary to observe any substantial changes. As Lams (2018) depicts metaphorically when examining strategic narratives in Chinese official discourse under Xi Jinping:

> "[N]o paradigmatic ideological change emerges from the narratives. Yet, the strategies utilised to spread 'the China story' are more diverse, the conductor's baton is held more tightly, the main melody is chanted more loudly and the echoes are carried further abroad over the mountains and seas via the new Silk Road initiatives to present an alternative world order of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics'." (p. 387)

When analysing which of the, previously elaborated, identity types (victim, development country, or great power) was most present in the discourse, I found most elements pointing towards the great power identity. This interpretation is based on China's clear and consistent position in its discourse, the emphasis on sovereignty by condemning any foreign interference in China's domestic affairs, as well as the direct ('firmly' opposes) and warning ("China will never back down on its core interests, and the attempt to split up China will never succeed" (Cui, 2021, para. 9)) language that was used.

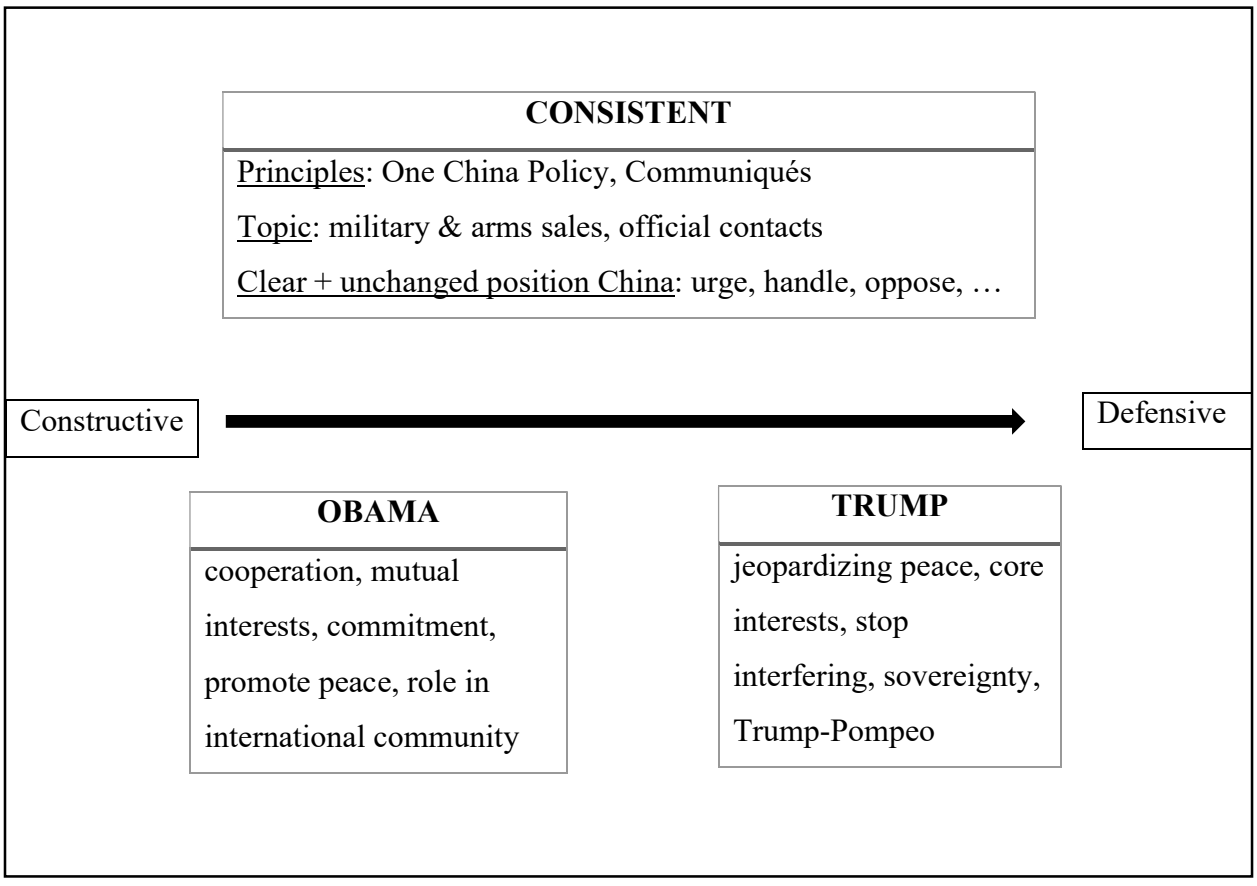
Finally, I would like to end with some comments on the top 10 most frequently used words in the process of Othering of the US[11]. 'Trump' and 'Pompeo' occupy, respectively, the first and third place. However, important to keep in mind is the imbalance in sources between the period under Obama and under Trump. Yet, it shows the overall importance of personification in the Sino-US discourse. Further, we see a mixed picture: on the one hand, I observed rather positive words like 'hope' and 'common interests', nevertheless, there was also more '*realist*' language with words

[11] A2

such as ‘urge’, ‘stop’ and ‘security interests’. This mixed picture might indicate that the discourse is strongly influenced by the president representing the US, with a more constructive approach under Obama, as opposed to a more defensive approach under Trump. The narrative seems, thus, more focused on *re*-acting to the Other’s discourse and actions, rather than acting. Ultimately, the official relations between the US and Taiwan became a significant factor in the increasingly tense Sino-US relations.

In conclusion, I would argue that, rather than a clear break between both presidential terms, it is more useful to imagine a continuum from a ‘constructive discourse’ to a ‘defensive discourse’, with Obama’s term more leaning to the left and Trump more to the right. The multiple Self-study, mentioned in the methodology, is, therefore, better described as one single Self that evolved over time.

Here follows a schematic overview of the continuum with illustrative keywords:



Conclusion

The Taiwan conflict is one of the longest-lasting and most contentious issues today. It involves two of the world's greatest powers, the US and China, and is of fundamental importance to China, affecting its national identity as a result. National identity is, thus, not a given: it is socially constructed. Therefore, it is subject to change and influenced by the interaction between the actors and their environment. This is the constructivist train of thought that guided my work.

My first aim was to understand more about the conflict, its background, and why this is such a sensitive issue for China. The conflict originated during a period of important change for China. After suffering through the Century of Humiliation – a century of foreign occupation and domination, a century that (in China) is characterized by shame and weakness of its leaders – the CCP heroically liberated China and founded the People's Republic of China. This historical narrative, which is constructed by the CCP to strengthen its legitimacy, is sustained over generations by a state-controlled 'Patriotic Education Campaign' and forms the foundation of China's national identity construction as a 'victim'. The island of Taiwan became the home of the KMT after their defeat in the civil war in 1949, was separated from the mainland, and became, officially, the Republic of China (ROC). This loss of territory, as perceived by the PRC, touched upon the core wound of China's past of humiliation. It became, in consequence, the last remaining obstacle holding China back from unification, being liberated from its victim identity, achieving its status and identity of great power, and ultimately, fulfilling the China Dream.

Chinese nationalism and patriotism are key components of China's national identity construction; they too are based on China's historical victim narrative; and they form foundational building blocks to the CCP's search for legitimacy. The Taiwan issue that is entangled in all this, has, consequently, become an existential threat to the CCP: a threat to its legitimacy and survival. The involvement of the US, being China's greatest competitor and Taiwan's main international ally, increases not only the complexity of the conflict but also the risks of its outcome. Since the start in 1949, against the backdrop of the Cold War, this triangular relationship is characterized by an uneasy search for stability and a fragile status quo, with Communiqués governing the Sino-US side, and the Taiwan Relations Act defining the US-Taiwan alliance.

After examining this historical background, a second objective was to study the importance of the Other in China's national identity construction and, here specifically, of the US as the significant Other in the context of the Taiwan conflict. The process of national identity construction is marked by differentiating the Self from the Other: Japan constituted the main Other in China's victim identity construction, a role that has now been taken over by the US in constructing its great power identity. In doing so, the CCP seeks to legitimize its US foreign policy while solidifying Chinese nationalism and nourishing anti-American beliefs among its population.

The third purpose of this thesis was to analyse how these different dimensions are related. My research has shown that Chinese national identity construction constitutes the central concept that connects the other elements: whether it is the US as the Other or the significance of the Taiwan issue to the CCP, they both lead back to national identity. This dynamic happens in both directions: originating from national identity or feeding back into it.

These three building blocks allowed me to build a solid foundation for the answer to my research question: *How has China's national identity construction evolved under Xi Jinping [2013-2021] in relation to the US (as the 'Other') and in the context of the Taiwan conflict?*

The discourse analysis of the 378 collected sources helped me to support an updated and empirically-based argument. My main conclusion from the analysis is that despite observing a changing trend in word choice and repetition of certain words between 2013 and 2021, there was a remarkable consistency in discourse. The changing trend was characterized by a rather constructive discourse at the beginning under Obama, towards a more defensive one in the later years under Trump. The combination of the consistency, on the one hand, and the continuum of change, on the other hand, provides my answer to the research question: it suggests that Chinese national identity, under Xi Jinping, did not change fundamentally. It was the official discourse that was influenced by the Other, with the US president and his administration in specific. That discourse constituted more of a re-action to the US discourse and actions, rather than a change of national identity at its core. However, some elements point out the possibility that it is, ultimately, a combination of both: the discourse as a reaction to the Other, and a changing national identity that corresponds with the internationally perceived 'rise of China'. Yet, to establish a fundamental change in national identity, a longer timeframe of study is required.

Although I have reflected on the limitations of my work in detail in Chapter Two, I would like to highlight the three main stumbling blocks that I encountered: first, in an authoritarian country like China, the availability of sources is often already limited. My lack of knowledge of the language exacerbated this problem. Second, the great imbalance of sources between Obama's and Trump's term reduced the number of conclusions that I could reach, based on the data analysis, significantly, and made others less strong empirically. Third, despite NVivo helping me to conduct an objective and systematic discourse analysis, a great deal of the work and choices to be made was based on my interpretation and perspective, which made me more vulnerable to selection bias.

Despite these limitations, I strongly believe that this research was useful and achieved the goal it was set to achieve. Likewise, I believe this work could provide interesting elements for further research. It would, for example, be interesting to conduct the same exercise on President Biden's and his successors' terms. This would solidify the hypothetical conclusion of the US president's influence on Chinese official discourse, where also the difference between democrat and republican administrations could be studied in more detail. Moreover, with a longer timeframe to study, and more distance from the events, the evolution of Chinese national identity will get more pronounced and potential differences more accurate. Furthermore, this work could also benefit policymakers, since understanding more about China's identity could lead to a better understanding of their policies and actions and, ultimately, provide the ability to exert influence on them. Finally, how the Taiwan issue will evolve and what will happen in case of a possible escalation, is for the future to decide, but that its outcome will influence the international system fundamentally and, therefore, affect us all, is a fact.

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Appendix A

A1: Top 10 most frequently used words, classified per year[12]

2013	2014	2015
1. Cooperation	1. Taiwan relations Act/bill	1. One China Policy
2. New Model of Major-Country Relations China-US	2. Peaceful development	2. Strengthen ties
3. Arms sales US-Taiwan	3. Three China-US joint communiques	3. Arms sales US-Taiwan
4. Peaceful development	4. Military relations China-US & US-Taiwan	4. Peaceful development
5. One China policy	5. Arms sales US-Taiwan	5. Firmly opposes
6. Common interests	6. Urge	6. Three China-US joint communiques
7. Three China-US joint communiques	7. Commitment	7. Urges to abide
8. Mutual respect	8. Firmly opposes	8. China's core interests
9. World and international community	9. Strengthen ties	9. Maintaining peace and stability
10. Work together	10. Stop	10. Sovereignty and security

2016	2017	2018
1. One China Policy	1. One China Policy	1. One China Policy/Principle
2. China's internal/domestic affairs	2. Arms sales	2. Three China-US joint communiques
3. Three China-US joint communiques	3. Three China-US joint communiques	3. China's internal affairs
4. Promoting/maintaining peace and stability	4. Firmly opposes	4. Urge
5. Urge	5. Official contacts w Taiwan	5. Military relations w Taiwan
6. Cooperation	6. Trump	6. Official contacts w Taiwan
7. Trump	7. Military relations w Taiwan	7. Firmly/resolutely opposes
8. Taiwan relations act	8. China's core interests	8. Avoid/prevent harming/undermining peace and stability
9. Handle cautiously/properly/carefully/…	9. China's internal affairs	9. Abide
10. Commitment	10. Cooperation	10. Handle properly/prudently/carefully/…

[12] Blue = Obama; Red = Trump

2019	2020	2021
1. One China Policy/Principle	1. One China Policy/Principle	1. One China Policy
2. Undermining/jeopardizing/damaging peace	2. China's internal affairs	2. Official relations w Taiwan
3. Arms sales	3. Three China-US joint communiques	3. China's core interests
4. China's internal affairs	4. Arms sales	4. Stop
5. Military relations w Taiwan	5. Undermining/jeopardizing/damaging peace	5. Three China-US joint communiques
6. China's core interests	6. China's core interests	6. Firmly oppose
7. Three China-US joint communiques	7. Military relations w Taiwan	7. Undermining/jeopardizing/damaging peace
8. Urge	8. Sovereignty	8. Sovereignty
9. Firmly opposes	9. Firmly opposes	9. Military relations w Taiwan
10. Interferes	10. Stop	10. Pompeo

A2: Top 10 most frequently used words, on the subject of 'US as the Other'

US as the "Other"
1. Trump
2. Urged
3. Pompeo
4. One China Policy
5. Common/shared + sovereignty/security interests
6. The UN
7. Stop
8. Hope
9. Official relations w Taiwan
10. Recognizes the government of Taiwan

Appendix B

Occurrence of codes, in order of appearance

Word/Concept (= code)	Found in…
"Cooperation"	(Global Times, 2014a, 2016a, 2016b, 2016f; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016i, 2016k, 2016l; Wang, 2013; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2014, 2016)
"New Model of Major-Country Relations China-US"	(Global Times, 2013b; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013b; Wang, 2013)
"Arms sales US-Taiwan"	(Blanchard, 2019b; Brunnstrom & Mohammed, 2017; Brunnstrom & Zengerle, 2015; Brunnstrom et al., 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2017b; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013, 2020b; Global Times, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2015g; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Martina & Yu, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2017e, 2017g, 2017h, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2020b, 2020d, 2020h; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018b, 2019a, 2020; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a, 2019b; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2017a, 2017b, 2018b, 2019b, 2019e, 2020d, 2020e; Stone & Zengerle, 2019; Taipei Times, 2013; Than, 2019; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019c; Xinhua, 2017; Yang, 2020; Young, 2019)
"Peaceful development"	(Global Times, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014d, 2014j, 2015b, 2015e, 2015g, 2016c, 2016d, 2016f; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016d, 2016h, 2016l; Wang, 2013; Xi, 2014; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2013)
"One China Policy"	(Ali & Wu, 2019; BBC, 2020; Blanchard, 2019a; Bohan & Brunnstrom, 2016; Brunnstrom, 2018; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Cui, 2017a, 2017b, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e, 2020a; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of

	the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Liberia, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Seychelles, 2015; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013, 2018, 2019, 2020b; Global Times, 2013b, 2014j, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2016a, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f, 2021; Goh & Wu, 2017; Huaxia, 2020; Landler, 2016; Li, 2019, 2020b; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Martina & Yu, 2017; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2015c, 2016c, 2016d, 2016f, 2016h, 2016i, 2016l, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g, 2017h, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2019a, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019i, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j, 2020k, 2020n, 2020p, 2020q, 2020r, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021f, 2021g, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b; Mu, 2019; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2013, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019c, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2017b, 2017c, 2018b, 2019b, 2019f; Shelbourne, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019b, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020b; Xi, 2019b; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2013, 2016, 2020; Young, 2019)
"Common interests"	(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a; Wang, 2013)
"Three China-US joint communiques"	(Ali & Wu, 2019; L. Chen, 2020; Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Cui, 2020a; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Liberia, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Seychelles, 2015; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Global Times, 2015a, 2015c, 2015e, 2016a, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland

	Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016c, 2016d, 2016f, 2016g, 2016h, 2016j, 2016l, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g, 2017h, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2019a, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019i, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j, 2020k, 2020n, 2020p, 2020q, 2020r, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021f, 2021g, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b; Mu, 2019; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019c, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Shelbourne, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019b, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020a; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2016, 2020; Young, 2019)
"Mutual respect"	(Wang, 2013)
"World and international community"	(China Military Online, 2019; Cui, 2018b, 2019d; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Qatar, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2019; Global Times, 2015e, 2016e, 2016f; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016g, 2016i, 2018a, 2018b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019g; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018b, 2019b; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2013, 2018a, 2019a, 2019b; Reuters Staff, 2019e; Wang, 2013, 2019a; Xi, 2019b; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2016)
"Work together"	(Global Times, 2013a; Wang, 2013)
"Taiwan Relations Act/bill"	(Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Global Times, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014i; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014a, 2014d, 2016f)
"Military relations with Taiwan"	(Idrees Ali, 2019; Ali & Wu, 2019; Blanchard, 2019a; Brunnstrom & Mohammed, 2017; L. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Cui, 2017a, 2017b; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2020b; Financial Times, 2020, 2021; Global Times, 2014e, 2016e; Huaxia, 2020; Li, 2020b; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Martina, 2019; Martina & Yu, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016g, 2016j, 2016k, 2017a, 2017e, 2017h, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019f, 2019i, 2020b, 2020d, 2020g, 2020h, 2020j, 2020k, 2020r, 2021a, 2021b, 2021e, 2021f, 2021h;

	Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2019c, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021b; Shelbourne, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Xinhua, 2016, 2017; Yang, 2014, 2016)
"Urge"	(Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013; Global Times, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014h; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014c; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a; Reuters Staff, 2014, 2018b; Taipei Times, 2013; Yang, 2014)
"Commitment"	(Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Global Times, 2014b, 2014c, 2014f, 2014j, 2016c, 2016e; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014d, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016f, 2016g, 2016h, 2016j; Yang, 2014, 2016)
"Firmly/resolutely opposes"	(Ali & Wu, 2019; Brunnstrom, 2018; Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Cui, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Liberia, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013, 2020a, 2020b; Financial Times, 2019; Global Times, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014e, 2014i, 2015a, 2015b, 2015g; Goh & Wu, 2017; Huaxia, 2020; Le, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Martina, 2019; Martina & Yu, 2017; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015c, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g, 2017h, 2018c, 2019b, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020h, 2020k, 2020l, 2020m, 2020n, 2020q, 2020r, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021e, 2021f, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Mu, 2019; Nichols & Pamuk, 2021; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2014,

	2019e, 2021b; Stone & Zengerle, 2019; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2013; Y. Wang, 2020b; Yang, 2014, 2020)
"Strengthen ties"	(Brunnstrom, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Seychelles, 2015; Global Times, 2014c, 2014e, 2014f, 2014h, 2014i, 2014j, 2015a, 2015b, 2015e, 2015f, 2015g; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015a, 2015b, 2018b, 2018d, 2018e; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018a; Xi, 2014; Yang, 2014)
"Stop"	(Blanchard, 2019a; Blanchard, 2021; Ben Blanchard & Yew Lun Tian, 2020; Brunnstrom, 2018; Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2019e, 2020a; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013, 2020a, 2020b; Financial Times, 2021; Global Times, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014c, 2018c, 2018d, 2019b, 2019d, 2019f, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j, 2020k, 2020l, 2020m, 2020p, 2020r, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021f, 2021g, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b, 2019b; Mu, 2019; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2018b, 2019b, 2019c, 2020a, 2020c, 2020f, 2021b; Shelbourne, 2021; Stone & Zengerle, 2019; Taipei Times, 2013; Than, 2019; Tian & Lee, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2013, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020b; Yang, 2013, 2020)
"(Urges to) Abide"	(Brunnstrom, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Seychelles, 2015; Global Times, 2015a, 2015c, 2015d, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015c, 2016d, 2016i, 2016l, 2018b, 2018c;

	Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018b; Reuters Staff, 2015; Xinhua, 2016; Yu, 2018)
"China's core interests"	(Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Brunnstrom & Zengerle, 2015; Brunnstrom et al., 2020; L. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2019a, 2019c, 2019d, 2020b, 2021; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Qatar, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2020b; Financial Times, 2021; Global Times, 2014e, 2015c, 2015f, 2021; Li, 2019; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2017h, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019g, 2019h, 2019i, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020f, 2020h, 2020j, 2020k, 2020l, 2020m, 2020p, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e, 2021f, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019a, 2019b; Nichols & Pamuk, 2021; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2019b, 2019e, 2020e, 2020g; Shelbourne, 2021; Tian & Lee, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019a, 2019b; Y. Wang, 2020a; Xi, 2019a, 2019b; Yang, 2020; Young, 2019)
"Peace and stability"	(Idrees Ali, 2019b; Ali & Wu, 2019; L. Chen, 2020; Z. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2017a, 2019d, 2020a, 2020b; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2019, 2020b; Global Times, 2016f; Huaxia, 2020; Lee, 2019; Li, 2019; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Martina, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016a, 2016g, 2016j, 2017b, 2017e, 2017g, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2019d, 2019f, 2019h, 2019i, 2020b, 2020e, 2020g, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j, 2020k, 2020m, 2020n, 2020o, 2020p, 2020q, 2020r, 2020s; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b, 2019b, 2020; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2017, 2018a, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2018a, 2018b, 2019d, 2019e, 2020b, 2020c; Stone & Zengerle, 2019; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019c; Yang, 2016; Yu, 2018)

"Sovereignty"	(Ali & Wu, 2019; Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Brunnstrom & Zengerle, 2015; Brunnstrom et al., 2020; L. Chen, 2020; Z. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2019a, 2019c, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Qatar, 2019; Global Times, 2015e, 2016a, 2016e, 2016f, 2021; Huaxia, 2020; Le, 2020; Li, 2019, 2020b; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Martina, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015b, 2016a, 2016g, 2016j, 2016k, 2016l, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019g, 2019h, 2020b, 2020c, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h, 2020k, 2020m, 2020p, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021d, 2021e, 2021f, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b, 2019b, 2020; Nichols & Pamuk, 2021; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a; People's Daily, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2019e, 2020g; Shelbourne, 2021; Tian & Lee, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020a; Xinhua, 2016; Yang, 2016, 2020)
"Security"	(Brunnstrom & Zengerle, 2015; China Military Online, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Qatar, 2019; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015b, 2015c, 2019b, 2019d, 2019e, 2019g, 2019h; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019b; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019b, 2019c; Reuters Staff, 2019a, 2019e; Young, 2019)
"China's internal/domestic affairs"	(Ben Blanchard & Yew Lun Tian, 2020; Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; L. Chen, 2020; Z. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2020a; Drillsma, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2019; Financial Times, 2019, 2021; Global Times, 2015g; Huaxia, 2020; Le, 2020; Li, 2020a, 2020b; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013c, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a, 2019b, 2019d, 2019h, 2019i, 2020b, 2020d, 2020f, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j, 2020k, 2020m, 2020p, 2020s, 2021a, 2021b, 2021e, 2021f, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019b; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018a, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2019d, 2019e, 2020g;

	X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020a, 2020b; Xi, 2019a; Yang, 2020; Young, 2019)
'Trump"	(Bohan & Brunnstrom, 2016; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, 2017; Global Times, 2016a; Goh & Wu, 2017; Landler, 2016; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2017; Mason et al., 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016g, 2017d, 2017h; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2017; Reuters Staff, 2017b, 2017c)
"Handle"	(Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2018; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018b; Reuters Staff, 2018a)
"Official contacts with Taiwan"	(Brunnstrom, 2018; Brunnstrom & Mohammed, 2017; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver, 2017; Cui, 2017b, 2018c; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand, 2017; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Finland, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mozambique, 2018; Global Times, 2021; Goh & Wu, 2017; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2017, 2018, 2021; Martina & Yu, 2017; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Mason et al., 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017a, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g, 2018a, 2018c, 2018d, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021f, 2021g, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, 2018b; Nichols & Pamuk, 2021; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018b; Reuters Staff, 2017b, 2017c, 2018b, 2021b; Shelbourne, 2021; Tian & Lee, 2021; Xinhua, 2017; Yu, 2018)
"Avoid"	(Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Global Times, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014a; Reuters Staff, 2014)
"Harm"	(Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018a; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2018a; Reuters Staff, 2018b; Zengerle, 2018)

“Undermine”	(L. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver, 2017; Cui, 2017a, 2020a; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Cyprus, 2020; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Qatar, 2019; Global Times, 2014a, 2016a; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Martina, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2016g, 2016j, 2017d, 2017f, 2018b, 2019b, 2019e, 2019g, 2019h, 2020a, 2020b, 2020d, 2020h, 2020j, 2020k, 2020m, 2020n, 2020p, 2021b, 2021c, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019b, 2020; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018a, 2019b, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2017a, 2020c; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2013; Yang, 2020)
“Jeopardize”	(Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Global Times, 2021; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2017, 2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017h, 2020g)
“Damage”	(BBC, 2020; Brunnstrom et al., 2020; Consulate-General of the People's Repubic of China in Toronto, 2014; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2019b; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Iceland, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2020b; Global Times, 2014d, 2014e, 2015g, 2016a, 2021; Goh & Wu, 2017; Huaxia, 2020; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Martina & Zengerle, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016a, 2017h, 2018c, 2018d, 2019d, 2020b, 2020e, 2020f, 2020h, 2020i, 2020n, 2020r, 2021a, 2021b, 2021e; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2019a, 2019c; People's Daily, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2014, 2017b, 2018a, 2019e, 2021b; Yang, 2014; Yu, 2018)
“Interfere”	(Ben Blanchard & Yew Lun Tian, 2020; Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Z. Chen, 2020; China Military Online, 2019; Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai, 2020; Crossley & Blanchard, 2020; Cui, 2017b, 2019d; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Montenegro, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Turkey, 2014; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2019; Global Times, 2014c, 2014d, 2015f, 2015g, 2016b; Goh & Wu, 2017; Le, 2020; Li, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Martina & Yu, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013c, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b,

	2016g, 2016j, 2017f, 2017h, 2019b, 2019d, 2019h, 2019i, 2020b, 2020d, 2020f, 2020h, 2020j, 2020k, 2020m, 2020p, 2020s, 2021b, 2021e, 2021h, 2021i; Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2019b, 2020; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2018a, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2017b, 2019d, 2019e, 2020g; Shelbourne, 2021; X. Wang, 2020; Wang, 2019b, 2019c; Y. Wang, 2020a; Xi, 2019a, 2019b)
"Pompeo"	(Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Financial Times, 2021; Global Times, 2021; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021b, 2021c, 2021f, 2021g, 2021i; Tian & Lee, 2021)
"United Nations/UN"	(Blanchard, 2021; Brunnstrom & Crossley, 2021; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius, 2018; Global Times, 2015c; Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020j, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021h, 2021i; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, 2020; Y. Wang, 2020a; Yang, 2014, 2016)
"Hope"	(Mainland Affairs Council - Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2013; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013a; Taipei Times, 2013; Wang, 2013; Yang, 2013)
"Recognizes the government of Taiwan"	(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020j, 2020p, 2021f, 2021g; Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2020; People's Daily, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2019b)