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3 **Does China's Outward Focused Journalism Engage a Constructive**
4 **Approach? A Qualitative Content Analysis of Xinhua News Agency's**
5 **English News**
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3 Abstract: This study examines the rationalisation of the news frames of currency-
4 related international economic interaction by analysing news articles from the
5 “China Focus” column in China’s state-run Xinhua News Agency. Thematic
6 analysis of the main themes in the news articles shows dominant positive
7 coverage of China’s economic development. Using qualitative content analysis, it
8 also investigates the breeding of the “emergence” of constructive journalism
9 practices in China. It finds that Xinhua prioritises the frames of referring to
10 solutions to the conflict and problem and mentioning the social and economic
11 stability, sustainability, and prosperous development. The frames of moral
12 judgement, conflict and its formation, and human interest are less applied in news
13 articles. It bears elements of constructive journalism, but still needs efforts to
14 make a clear division from positive journalism and Party journalism.
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24 Keywords: China; currency; constructive journalism; framing; qualitative content
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Introduction

The global expansion of China-based outward focused media institutions, which is known as the media “going-global” project (Hu & Ji, 2012), has evoked the curiosity of international scholars about the journalistic approach deployed by Chinese outward focused state-run media organisations. Media platforms such as the Xinhua News Agency (XNA), *China Daily*, and China Central Television (CCTV) are usually acknowledged to be government sponsored – and monitored vehicles – whose role is largely to represent and disseminate the ideological agenda of Beijing. A few scholars have argued that the identifiable journalistic practices of these state media platforms can be regarded as providing an alternative journalistic approach to report international news (e.g. Zhang, 2014; Wekesa & Zhang, 2014).

The official rhetoric of these state media organisations has shown a trend towards further localisation. The president of XNA, Cai Mingzhao, stated in 2018 ‘on reporting for an international audience’: ‘We uphold the journalistic principles of being true and comprehensive ... putting people first and cherishing a global vision’ (Peng, 2018). As Zhang and Matingwina wrote in “Constructive Journalism: A New Journalistic Paradigm of Chinese Media in Africa”: ‘rather than simply rebutting the Western media’s overly critical and biased reporting ... China’s state-led media are making efforts to produce their own content’ (2016, p. 93). This paper, therefore, aims to contribute to the emerging discussions on the alternative approach of China’s outward focused journalistic practices by concentrating on XNA and examining its English news articles on the currency-related international interaction from 2009 to 2016.

This article is composed of five main parts. First, it introduces the historic background of XNA as an outward looking state media organisation and the debates

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3 China's currency-related issues. Second, it contextualises the discussions on China's
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5 soft power initiatives through its outward focused state media and reviews the existing
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7 studies on constructive journalism with a focus on China. Then, it details the sampling
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9 procedures, the research method of qualitative content analysis, and the news framing
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11 typology, as well as thematic categorisation. Fourth, it unfolds the empirical findings of
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13 the journalistic practices featured by the constructive journalism of XNA's English
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15 news. Finally, it concludes that the constructive approach of XNA's English economic
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17 news on the topic of currency-related international relationships is applying a different
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19 reporting style than it employs in the more general news services, although such
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21 practices are, of course, relevant to the diplomatic and political agenda as designated by
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23 the government authorities in Beijing.
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30 **XNA and currency-related international output**

31 *XNA and "China Focus"*

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36 XNA is the official - and largest - state news agency in China and has long served as 'a
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38 government political and ideological apparatus for the ruling Chinese Communist Party
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40 (CCP)' (Hong, 2011, p. 377). The year 2009 witnessed the launch of the important and
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42 comprehensive "going-global" project of the Chinese media directed by the central
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44 government. Authoritative state-run media organisations such as XNA received a huge
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46 investment from the government for the global outreach (Hu & Ji, 2012). According to
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48 an informant from XNA, the news agency has now covered over 180 nations worldwide
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50 (personal communication, 2019, March 11). China's outward focused news departments
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52 are also charged with the mission to "de-monopolise" the dominant discourse of
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54 Western media on global affairs, to promote the perspectives of China and strengthen its
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56 soft power (Hayden, 2012).
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3 In 2002, XNA launched the “China Focus” column, its first and most prominent
4 service dedicated to introducing China’s current affairs to overseas audiences and
5 building a positive image of China in the global arena (China Press and Publishing
6 Website, 2008).
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12 To investigate the implementation of the agenda of promoting Chinese
13 perspectives in the global sphere, it is important to examine the journalistic approach of
14 China’s state-run media in reporting controversial global issues. Therefore, this research
15 chose to focus on the currency-related issues because of their significance to China as it
16 undergoes a rapidly accelerating economy within the global system.
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25 ***China’s currency-related economic interaction with others in the global sphere***

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28 China’s involvement in global currency-related issues (such as currency manipulation
29 and devaluation, market-oriented exchange-rate reform, foreign currency reserves,
30 currency law, and digital currency) arouses fierce discussions amongst global political,
31 academic, and public circles, especially in the United States. In 2005, former US deputy
32 secretary of state Robert Zoellick said: ‘We need to urge China to become a *responsible*
33 *stakeholder* in that system’, and he specified that currency manipulation deterred the
34 economic collaboration between China and the United States (2005, paragraph 9,
35 emphasis in original). The American leadership also exhorted the Chinese government
36 to implement a market-oriented exchange rate reform (e.g. Kerry et al., 2015; Kerry &
37 Lew, 2014).
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51 The US foreign policy on China’s currency was consistent for a decade until
52 2017 when Donald Trump said that he would not label China as a currency manipulator
53 (Baker, Lee, & Bender, 2017; Tang, 2018). This research focuses on the currency-
54 related reports of “China Focus” between 2009 and 2016 to examine the journalistic
55 approach of XNA in response to the relatively stable economic interaction between
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3 China and US, as well as other countries, during this period and whether such an
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5 approach can be identified with specific features. Therefore, the first research question
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7 this study aims to answer is:

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11 *RQ1*: How did China's Xinhua News Agency rationalise the news frames of
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13 currency-related international economic interaction through its international
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15 English economic news?
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17 **Soft power and constructive journalism**

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20 "Soft Power", which is acknowledged as the ability of a nation 'to get what a country
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22 wants through attraction rather than coercion or payments', is regarded by the Chinese
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24 government as an important strategy to enhance its 'charm offensive' to either improve
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26 its continuing image as a somewhat isolated or detached communist country or
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28 challenge the dominant discourse of Western superpowers (Glaser & Murphy, 2009, pp.
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30 10-11; Nye, 1990). Accordingly, the outward focused communication of China's state-
31
32 run media promoted by the "going-global" initiative has become a vital component of
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34 China's integral macro project for soft power augmentation (e.g. Hu & Ji, 2012; Sun,
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36 2010). The outward focused state-run media is entrusted with the mission of becoming
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38 'genuine global players' and to compete 'for influence and credibility' in the field of
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40 international news reporting while establishing the national image that China aspires
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42 (Sun, 2015, pp. 400-406).
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48 However, there appears to be a lack of consensus on the nature of the outward
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50 focused journalistic practices of China's state-run media. One group of scholars found
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52 that the reporting style aimed at enhancing the charm offensive of China (Grassi, 2014)
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54 is inheriting the domestic mainstream journalistic tradition of creating and presenting a
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56 harmonious picture of Chinese governance to its global readers and audiences (Zhang,
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58 2013). For example, Sun (2010) found that China's media coverage on the natural
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3 disaster of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake forged a unified national image by using the
4 tactics of media transparency, looking at the human-interest angles, and reporting on the
5 organisation of the national mourning events. Similarly, Han, Sun, and Lu (2017) found
6 that China's official newspapers constructed a collaborative image of China as an entity
7 that proactively engaged in global efforts on climate change from 2005 to 2015. This is
8 congruent with Zhao's (2017) findings that XNA depicted China as being sincere and
9 resolute in supporting global environmental protection, maintaining currency stability,
10 and seeking more opportunities of international trade. Additionally, the news coverage
11 of 25 domestic Chinese media websites about the "New Style of Great Power Relations"
12 depicted a positive and cooperative U.S.-China relationship (Hinck, Manly, Kluver, &
13 Norris, 2016). This indicates that the media policy, which aims to generate a positive
14 tone with reference to China's state-run media, is directly responding to the ideological
15 agenda of the central government and has remained consistent with the Party line.

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33 The 'highly positive, didactic, and openly value-oriented' news format and
34 journalistic narrative observed in the news coverage of China's outward focused state-
35 run media (Zhao, 1998, p. 27) is provoking more debates on the disputed propagandistic
36 nature of China's global publicity policy. Chang and Ren (2018) argued that Party
37 control of the innovative visual elements of photojournalism, TV news, animated
38 cartoons, and online videos marks a new stage of the discursive legitimisation strategies
39 deployed by the CCP. Others are concerned with the credibility and acceptance of
40 China's media presence in the developing world (Xin, 2009) and suspicious about the
41 objectivity of news reporting on the matters of human interests and social
42 conflicts/crises because of the intervention of the government's ideological directives
43 (Sun, 2010). Usually seen as propaganda (Edney, 2012) and the mouthpiece of CCP
44 (Chang, 1989), the positive journalism displayed by the Chinese state-run media is
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3 questioned for being constrained by the central government whose aim is to indoctrinate
4 and mobilise the public for power legitimisation. Instead of ‘mak[ing] power
5 accountable’ (Entman, 2005, p. 48), the pro-China tone of its international news media
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7 is applied as a pivotal strategy to facilitate China’s soft power projection (Edney, 2012).
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12 It is especially evident in Africa where the news produced by Chinese state-run
13 media such as CCTV-Africa is aimed at providing its readers and audiences a
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15 constructive narrative regarding the conflicts and crises in the local societies from a
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17 solution-oriented perspective (Greenslade, 2015). Local presenter of CCTV-Africa,
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19 Beatrice Marshall, said: “When you look at Western media, a lot of the time their
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21 strategy is to be combative. But what we want to do is say ‘this is the issue, this is the
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23 challenge, and this is how it’s being solved’ rather than getting people to argue”
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25 (Greenslade, 2015, paragraph 15). Scholars such as Wekesa and Zhang (2014),
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27 therefore, argued that the journalism of China’s outward focused state-run media is
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29 beyond just positive reporting but rather has drawn up an alternative journalistic
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31 framework that they called “constructive journalism”. It hopes to construct China’s own
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33 interpretations and narratives towards global issues (Boc, 2015; Zhang & Mathingwina,
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35 2016) and tries to win the hearts and minds of the audiences in the receiving countries,
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37 which is the very definition of soft power (Nye, 1990).
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45 Discussions on the topic of constructive journalism are usually related to
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47 development journalism and peace journalism, which focus on the positive
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49 representation and the stimulation for solutions in the news content (Galtung, 2003;
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51 McIntyre, 2015; Wimmer & Wolf, 2005; Zhang, 2014). Positive emotions in the news
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53 stories can develop readers’ positive feelings, attitudes, and behavioural intentions, and
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55 effective solutions to a social problem in the news stories (McIntyre, 2015). Scholars
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57 interpret the “solutions” in the news articles differently. For McIntyre (2015), the
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3 solutions mentioned in the news articles are pre-existent and the news reporters serve as
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5 organisers and deliverymen of these solutions. Nevertheless, Zhang (2014) proposed a
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7 “solution-focused” perspective, which prefers to stimulate readers’ reaction to the
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9 reported problems by providing informational news content instead of providing
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11 solutions, either pre-existing or potential, by journalists themselves. But Galtung argues
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13 that the academic focus on solutions in the news article should be expanded because the
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15 intention of the journalistic framework for peace (or development) subjects is to ‘focus
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17 on conflict transformation’ (2003, p. 177). Truthfulness is the baseline of honest
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19 journalism, but how to present the truth is the key to developing a peace approach for
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21 news reporting. As indicated in Table 1, Galtung suggested going deeper into the story
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23 not only by ferreting out the solutions but also the cause and development of the conflict.
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29 [Table 1 near here]

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32 The constructive or positive reporting style of China’s outward focused media
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34 has been criticised for failing to ‘deliver on one of the main mandates of journalism:
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36 acting as a watchdog and keeping those in power in check, rather than praising them for
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38 their success’ (Verhoeven & Gagliardone, 2012, paragraph 10). As Gagliardone and his
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40 colleagues (2010, p. 13) noted, although the media plays an indispensably crucial role in
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42 ensuring the successful involvement of China in foreign affairs, ‘the idea of soft power
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44 initiative’ does not easily translate into ‘practical implementation’. But without doubt
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46 the diplomacy-oriented nature is blurring with the substance of the emerging
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48 “constructive journalism” elements observed in the practices of China’s outward
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50 focused media. Based on the above review and discussion, this research attempts to
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52 examine the second research question:
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58 **RQ2:** Is the journalistic practice of Xinhua News Agency on covering the
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60 currency-related international economic interaction pursuing an authentic

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3 constructive approach or following the agenda of the central government to
4 enhance soft power?
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8 **Research methods**

9 10 *Locating news articles*

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13 News articles from XNA's "China Focus" from 2009 to 2016 are retrieved from Nexis
14 UK (source: Xinhua General News Service¹) based on the key words
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16 "HEADLINE(China Focus) and BODY(currency)". A total of 282 news articles are
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18 located. Excluding duplicates and non-relevant ones, a total of 274 news articles are
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20 selected. Table 2 shows the number of the selected news articles per year from 2009 to
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22 2016.
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27 [Table 2 near here]
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30 *Qualitative content analysis*

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33 A qualitative content analysis method is deployed by this research to find out how the
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35 journalistic practice of "China Focus" is responding to the "constructive journalism"
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37 discussion on China's outward focused media. The qualitative content analysis, rooted
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39 in 'literary theory, the social sciences and critical scholarship', refers to the
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41 'rearticulation (interpretation) of given texts into new (analytical, deconstructive,
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43 emancipatory, or critical) narratives that are accepted within particularly scholarly
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45 communities' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17). Specifically, this research applies the
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47 approach of directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) by 1) referring to
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49 established generic news frames and being open to new frames and 2) defining the
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51 operational definition for each frame in the framing typology (see next section for a
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53 detailed explanation). To complement the descriptive interpretation of the news framing
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55 patterns in "China Focus", this study also illustrates the 'rank order comparisons of
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3 frequency of codes' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1, 283).
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6 Although it counts the frequencies of the application of news frames in the
7 articles, this study sticks to the qualitative research scholarship in the following ways.
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9 First, the generation of the frames considers the specific data (Morgan, 1993). The texts
10 of the news are rearticulated into frames in a hermeneutic approach. The identification
11 of the frames is based not only on the existing generic news frames but also generated
12 from the selected data through careful and thorough readings. This procedure
13 differentiates this study from the quantitative content analysis, which often neglects the
14 speciality of datasets. Second, the numerical comparisons of the application frequencies
15 of the news frames complements the interpretation of the patterns of news coverage in
16 "China Focus" by relating the ranks to the Chinese socio-political background where
17 China's journalism is grounded (Morgan, 1993). This is unlike the quantitative content
18 analysis, which focuses on the data exclusively and thereby sets apart the data from the
19 context. Previous studies have shown the feasibility of qualitative content analysis,
20 especially the strategy of rank order comparisons, in answering questions such as the
21 main attributes of innovations influencing educators' use of research (Neal, Neal,
22 Lawlor, Mills, & McAlindon, 2018) and the division of labour in wedding planning for
23 remarrying individuals (Humble, 2009).
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47 *News framing typology*

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49 To reduce the subjective interference of the researchers, a framing typology is clearly
50 defined before the analysis of the news texts (see Table 3). It is based on the definitions
51 provided by Galtung for peace journalism as shown in Table 1 and Marsh's (2016, p.
52 180) framing categories used in her empirical study of China's constructive journalism
53 (an extension and customisation of Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000, p. 100)
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3 framework). As indicated in Table 3, an additional frame looking at the “economic
4 growth of China” is added to the frame typology to better rationalise the news discourse
5 of “China Focus”.
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11 [Table 3 near here]
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14 The frames of “conflict”, “responsibility”, and “solution” are intended to
15 examine XNA’s journalistic focus on solutions, a vital element of constructive
16 journalism. As elaborated by Galtung (2003), McIntyre (2015), and Zhang (2014), the
17 focus on solutions to the conflict, problem, and/or concern covered by the news stories
18 is a key feature of the practice of constructive journalism. As stressed by Galtung
19 (2003), being constructive in this strand of the journalistic profession also means that
20 journalism should not give up its core functions of exposing the causes of the conflict
21 and holding governments and officials accountable. This feature of constructive or
22 peace journalism differentiates itself from positive journalism, which only covers happy
23 and upbeat stories but lacks a commitment to journalism’s core functions (McIntyre,
24 2015). For example, one news article from “China Focus” released on 23 November
25 2016 mentioned not only the ‘depreciation pressure on yuan’ because of ‘a strong dollar
26 backed by heightened expectations of an interest rate hike’, but also the Chinese
27 authorities’ solutions for ‘currency management’ (“China Focus: Chinese yuan,” 2016).
28 Therefore, the deployment of the frames of “conflict”, “responsibility”, and “solution”
29 are of vital importance to this research to investigate the arguable constructive nature of
30 XNA’s English economic news.
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53 Additionally, the frames of “moral judgement”, “stability”, and “economic
54 growth of China” are deployed to explore XNA’s strategies to boost the positive
55 emotions and reactions of readers. This is another important element for practicing
56 constructive journalism. In McIntyre’s (2015) study, the positive emotional conditions
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3 in news stories, expressed through discrete emotional words or described as an integral
4 feeling of the message, are supposed to ‘evoke elevation, hope, happiness, joy, pride,
5 and excitement’ in readers; negative emotional conditions are meant to ‘evoke disgust,
6 despair, sadness, guilt, worry, and anger’. The frame of “moral judgement” involves
7 both agreement and disagreement with certain stances and/or activities, which may
8 generate positive or negative emotions among the message receivers. For instance, the
9 phrase ‘The new U.S. monetary move has been widely criticised at home and abroad’
10 (“China Focus: U.S. told,” 2010) contains negative judgement of U.S.’s policies on
11 currency issues, which may negatively influence readers’ emotions. Moreover, Marsh
12 (2016) found that the frame of “stability” is among the top five frames used by CCTV-
13 Africa in covering African issues, which is consistent with the priorities of the official
14 Chinese domestic policy. The report by “China Focus” on, for example, enhancing
15 liquidity risk management for ‘the safety and stability of China’s banking system’
16 (“China Focus: Banking regulator,” 2011) also reveals XNA’s application of the
17 “stability” frame. In addition to the element of “stability”, the frame referring to the
18 prosperous development of China’s economy – “economic growth of China” is also
19 included in the news framing typology as a unique component to investigate the
20 Chinese state media. China’s media discourse is found to be upbeat on representing U.S.-
21 China economic cooperation (Hinck et al., 2016) and on China’s economic
22 responsibilities in trade and currency (Zhao, 2017). We thus assume that XNA’s
23 English news articles tend to have a positive tone regarding China’s overall economic
24 situation when reporting the interrelated currency issues to alleviate the concerns and
25 suspicions of readers and to generate positive emotions and reactions. News content
26 introducing ‘the Chinese economy firms with recent upbeat data’ (“China Focus:
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3 China's reform," 2013) is regarded as positively applying the frame of "economic
4 growth of China".
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8 Finally, the "human interest" frame is also a significant element in the
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10 implementation of constructive and development journalism. As stated by McIntyre
11 (2015, p. 78), the purpose of constructive journalism is to 'create more engaging and
12 productive stories that improve individual and societal well-being'. Similarly, Zhang
13 (2014) argued that constructive journalism should 'watch the society and government
14 for the interest of the public' (p. 7) and 'empower the people' (p. 8). Their opinions are
15 consistent with what Galtung (2003) explained as the people-oriented nature of this
16 strand of journalism. Although the topic of currency-related international economic
17 interaction seems to be globally oriented, it is closely related to the domestic economy
18 of China because currency - both the value of the Chinese currency and its foreign
19 reserves - influences many economic aspects such as consumption, inflation,
20 international trade, and real estate prices (Zhao, 2017). Therefore, this study also
21 investigates the application of the "human interest" frame in XNA's news stories to see
22 if they linked the currency issues with the public's concerns and/or demands.
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40 Based on the seven framing categories as shown in Table 3, the deductive
41 approach of this research distils the interpretive schema or the narrative structure
42 concerning the currency-related international economic interaction in the news articles
43 issued by XNA's "China Focus". The unit of observation is the pertinent content of the
44 news that complies with the definitions of the framing categories in Table 3. It is
45 expected that through the qualitative content analysis of the news frames of "China
46 Focus" represented in the 274 selected articles, the overall perspectives of XNA's
47 journalistic approach on the topic of currency-related international interaction can be
48 illustrated and studied.
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Thematic categorisation

To complement the qualitative content analysis, this study also deploys the thematic categorisation for ‘identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes)’ across the news reports from “China Focus” in reporting China’s currency-related international interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). As indicated in Table 5 in Appendix 2, four major types of themes were observed in the currency-related news of “China Focus”: “positive reports on China’s economy”, “negative reports on China’s economy”, “China-U.S. economic interaction”, and “others”. Each type is composed of a few different themes.

Findings and Discussion

Focusing more on “solution”, less on “reason”

The “solution” frame has been chosen as the principal approach used by “China Focus” in comparison with other frames such as “conflict”, “responsibility”, “moral judgement”, and “human interest” especially from 2009 to 2014 (see Figure 1 which shows the trends of news framing in “China Focus” from 2009 to 2016).

[Figure 1 near here]

At 83.04%, the “solution” frame towers above the others (see Figure 2 which shows the average percentage of the seven framing categories applied in the news in the eight years; more information is recorded in Table 4 in Appendix 1).

[Figure 2 near here]

The solutions provided in the news from “China Focus” are diverse, including:

- Applying a floating exchange rate mechanism (“China Focus: Chinese yuan,” 2016);

- Building China's cross-border yuan payment system and pushing yuan's internationalisation ("China Focus: CIPS seeks," 2016);
- Establishing credibility for consistent and transparent financial policymaking ("China Focus: China's forex," 2016);
- Supporting small and medium-sized companies (Lin & Gao, 2009);
- Sustaining transformation of companies (Liu, 2009);
- Countries cooperating with each other in the global financial system reformation, regulation, and innovation ("China Focus: Boao annual," 2009);
- Urging other countries to regulate their macroeconomic policies ("China Focus: Yuan's role," 2009).

Figure 1, however, shows that there was a drastic decline in the frequency of the "solution" frame to 55.56% in 2016 from the peak of 93.55% in 2009. The fluctuation may have resulted from the shifts of China's macroeconomic policies or the changes in XNA's international communication strategies in response to Western political and media discourses. Nevertheless, even though the "solution" frame received less attention over the two years, it was still generally more prominent than the other frames.

Overall, the solution-oriented frame is an important characteristic of XNA's "China Focus". This finding is consistent with that of Marsh (2016) in that the "solution" frame is prioritised when reporting domestic issues in Africa. It also corresponds with Zhang's (2014) illustration on the deployment of constructive patterns of China's outward focused media activities. From the theoretical perspective, this finding resonates with the arguments of many scholars that the "solution approach" is necessary and key to the practice of constructive journalism (e.g. Galtung, 2003; McIntyre, 2015). However, such an emphasis by "China Focus" on providing solutions for the currency-related issues involving China is interpreted by others to be the result of XNA playing its role in China's state-run media as the government mouthpiece (Zhao, 2017).

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3 In contrast, the minimal percentage of the “responsibility” frame of “China
4 Focus” shows that the solution-oriented approach of XNA is not as ideal as the theorists
5 expect. The 36.37% of the “responsibility” frame as shown in Figure 2 is the lowest
6 among all frames. The 52.27% of the “conflict” frame ranks fifth of the seven identified.
7 Both figures indicate that compared with depicting a solvable situation for the readers,
8 “China Focus” was reluctant to dig into the cause and development of the conflict.
9 Figure 1 also shows that the two years of 2012 and 2013 witnessed a neglect of the
10 “conflict” and “responsibility” frames in news stories. For example, in the 3 December
11 2013 news there was no explanation for the problems which motivated the government
12 to introduce plans for the internationalisation of the Chinese yuan (“China Focus:
13 Mightier yuan,” 2013). Similarly, in the coverage of multi-lateral talks to establish a
14 free trade agreement between China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, the focus was
15 exclusively on the movement of expanding trade settlements in local currencies without
16 pointing out the conflict in currencies or the formation of the conflict (“China Focus:
17 China, Japan,” 2012). This finding also echoes Marsh’s (2016) observation that less
18 concentration is put on the deeper reasons for conflicts. It would appear that the pursuit
19 of Galtung for ‘conflict transformation’ (2003, p. 177) was not being thoroughly
20 adopted in the news issued by “China Focus”.

Emphasising stability and China’s economic growth

21 In Figure 2, the average percentages of the frames of “stability and sustainability” and
22 “economic growth of China” are 65.01% and 56.11% respectively, second and third
23 amongst the seven frames. These two frames represent the journalistic elements that
24 may provoke emotional responses amongst the readers.

25 More specifically, Figure 1 shows that the percentage of the “stability and
26 sustainability” frame reached its peak in 2011 (81.25%) while that of China’s
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3 prosperous economic development was achieved in 2013 (70%). Although both
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5 elements declined in 2014 to 44.12% and 35.29% respectively, the consistency in
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7 delivering positive and promising messages mostly about the development in China, as
8
9 well as the world, was not interrupted.
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12 Consistently, China's economic development received a commandingly positive
13
14 coverage in "China Focus" as shown in the thematic analysis (see Figure 3 which shows
15
16 the application frequencies of the news themes referring to China's currency-related
17
18 international interaction from 2009 to 2016; more information is recorded in Table 5 in
19
20 Appendix 2). The themes ranged from the domestic development of the Chinese
21
22 markets to the increasingly important role of China in the global sphere.
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26 [Figure 3 near here]
27

28 To convey the messages of stability and sustainability, "China Focus" reported:
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- 30
31 • Detailed macroeconomic policies, such as China's prudent monetary policies
32 ("China Focus: China to," 2011), the stability of China's banking system
33 ("China Focus: Banking regulator," 2011), and the stable exchange rate ("China
34 Focus: Shanghai-HK stock," 2014);
35
36 • China's overall economic stability ("China Focus: China confident," 2014;
37 "China Focus: China's yuan," 2011);
38
39 • The urges for collaboration in maintaining the stability of the global monetary
40
41 environment ("China Focus: BRICS nations," 2011).
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43
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45 The prosperous and hopeful development of China's economy in an overall
46
47 sense was depicted when covering:
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- 49
50 • The trade and economic exchanges among countries along the Silk Road
51 economic belt ("China Focus: Cities ink," 2013) and between China and Africa
52 ("China Focus: China-Africa," 2014);
53
54 • The outstanding performance and reform in the Shanghai free trade area ("China
55 Focus: Shanghai FTZ," 2014);
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- The upbeat trend of the economic growth (“China Focus: China’s reform,” 2013).

Moreover, this study found that the negative evaluations of the U.S.’s quantitative easing policy and the positive evaluations of China’s market-oriented exchange reform were frequently deployed to highlight a principled and upstanding image of China to the international readers. The percentage of the “moral judgement” frame at 55.49% ranks fourth among the seven frames (see Figure 2). It was most frequently applied in 2010 (81.40%) (see Figure 1). The thematic analysis shows a consistency that the year 2010 witnessed the most journalistic attention on the negative influence of American economic policies on China and the contradictory interests between the two biggest economies in the world (see Figure 3; refer to Table 5 for more information). In that year, “China Focus” openly criticised the U.S.’s quantitative easing monetary policy through a series of news articles. They attributed the trade imbalance to the ‘excessive consumption’ in the U.S. (“China Focus: Economists say,” 2010), blamed the ‘rising U.S. trade protectionism’ and described the ‘inappropriate and untenable’ currency policies (“China Focus: China says,” 2010) as a ‘dangerous gamble’ (“China Focus: U.S. told,” 2010), and urged it to ‘take a responsible attitude as a major reserve currency issuing country’ (“China Focus: U.S. told,” 2010) (see also Jiang & Guo, 2010; Liu, 2010; Liu, Ma, & Jiang, 2010).

These messages depicted a stable and promising status quo and future for China that is proactive in implementing suitably designed policies and cooperating with other countries and regions. These elements, however, blur the nature of XNA’s journalistic practice as it is difficult to define it as constructive journalism or positive journalism.

A lack of focus on human interest

Figure 2 shows that the average percentage of the “human interest” frame (41.13%) ranks sixth among the seven categories, indicating the lack of attention on the humanistic perspective in framing the currency-related international interaction by “China Focus”. The “human interest” frame was mostly applied in 2010 with 72.09% of news articles being identified with this frame (see Figure 1). This news frame was applied to represent the mutual impact between the currency-related international economic interaction and the ordinary public: for example, China’s medium-sized companies (“China Focus: China’s largest,” 2010) and employment and consumption in a general sense (“China Focus: China’s central,” 2010). Nevertheless, no journalistic focus was placed on the individual opinions as that there was a lack of interviews with or quotations from consumers or job applicants. Relevant content was only represented as, for example, by observations that the Chinese authorities should ‘better reflect the market’s opinion on the currency’ (“China Focus: China seeks,” 2015) and a firm yuan ‘will further hamper employment’ (“China Focus: Yuan sees,” 2015). It indicates that the issues of the currency-related international economic interaction were politicised by XNA in a rather abstract way instead of relating it closely with people’s daily lives through a humanistic angle. Therefore, it may not effectively ‘capture and retain audience interest’ (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 96) as popular journalism is supposed to do.

Conclusion

In summary, based on the customised news framing categories, this research finds that XNA’s “China Focus” column prioritises the “solution” frame, among all the seven frames, when reporting the subject of currency-related international economic

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3 interaction. In contrast, it pays much less attention to the frames of “conflict” and
4
5 “responsibility”. The frames of “stability and sustainability” and “economic growth of
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7 China” rank second and third, slightly outnumbering the frame of “moral judgement”.
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9
10 XNA seldom used the “human interest” frame in its news output and tended to only
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12 focus on the general groups if it was applied. The thematic categorisation also finds the
13
14 coverage of China’s economy to be predominantly positive.
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17 This study finds that XNA’s journalistic practice does include some elements of
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19 constructive journalism, but it does not distinguish itself entirely and clearly from
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21 positive journalism (McIntyre, 2015) or Party journalism (Chang, 1989). It emphasises
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23 the “solution” frame, which is constructive in nature but does not sufficiently explain
24
25 the cause and development of conflict and problem. It jumps to conclusions about what
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27 is legitimate and what is irresponsible without adequately illustrating the substance of
28
29 legitimacy and responsibility. Such a reporting style can indeed provoke emotional
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31 reactions amongst readers but not necessarily provide constructive access for them to
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33 rationally understand the truthfulness of news. The lack of human interest in XNA’s
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35 news agenda once again points back to the inherent logic of XNA as a government
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37 directed institution that is structurally instructed to promote the ideology of the
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39 government instead of the ordinary public, which is contradictory to the pursuit of
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41 constructive journalism as a means of empowering ordinary people.
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47 Therefore, this study suggests that China’s state-run outward focused media, as
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49 shown in the case of XNA, is following a different journalistic practice, which
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51 distinguishes itself from the mainstream journalistic practices of Western international
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53 media. It features a mixed result promoted by outward focused publicity and the politic-
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55 economic agenda of the Chinese government. As indicated in the news agenda of
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57 “China Focus”, the diplomatic/political emphasis is constraining the development of ‘a
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3 consistent strategy or a fully distinctive way of reporting the news' (Marsh, 2016, p. 12).
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5 Currency-related topics regarding "who should shoulder the responsibilities", "what is
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7 just and legitimate" and so on were represented by "China Focus" in a solution-oriented
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9 and positive way which is, to some extent, still following the basic logic of a realistic
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11 international relationship.
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15 The epistemological divergence between the theoretical paradigms of soft power
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17 and constructive journalism is perceived in the case study of XNA in this research. State
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19 media such as XNA inevitably acts as the 'agent' of the Chinese government in the
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21 construction and dissemination of official interpretations of major global affairs, which
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23 rather collides with the goal of constructive journalism in terms of being independent
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25 and objective. Nevertheless, as that media industry has never existed in isolation from
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27 human society but is rather an extension of it, the journalistic professionalism should
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29 not be merely about the media industry but the grander background arena that
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31 encompasses societies and nations.
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35 On the one hand, the salient preference of XNA for depicting China as a
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37 growing, and invincible, economic power is due to the political and economic agenda of
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39 China to promote its own discourse in the world. On the other hand, such an agenda to
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41 some extent also implies a potential alternative for developing countries to participate
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43 politically and economically in creating a de-westernised global order. Therefore, more
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45 studies are welcome to contribute to this subject by bringing in inter-disciplinary
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47 knowledge and analysis to further explore the establishment of Chinese outward
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49 focused media and constructive journalistic practices. An analysis of China's
50
51 journalistic practices in international communication during the current, and escalating,
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53 trade war, particularly with the U.S., and especially after 2018, could be a good start.
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3 **Notes**
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- 5 1. Xinhua General News Service is an authoritative English-language source for
6 information on Chinese government affairs, economic performance, and Chinese views
7 on world affairs (LexisNexis, 2018).
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Table 1. Peace/Conflict journalism by Johan Galtung (2003, p. 178).

Peace/ Conflict- oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore conflict formation; x parties, y goals, z issues; general “win-win” orientation; • Open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture • Making conflicts transparent; • Giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding; • See conflict/war as problem, focus on conflict creativity; • Humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapons; • Proactive: prevention before any violence/war occurs; • Focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture).
Truth- Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expose untruths on all sides; • Uncover all cover-ups.
People- Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless; • Give name to all evil-doers; • Focus on people peacemakers.
Solution- Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace=non-violence +creativity; • Highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war; • Focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society; • Aftermath: resolution, re-construction, reconciliation.

Table 2. Coverage of the currency-related international economic interaction in “China Focus”, 2009-2016.

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of articles	31	43	48	34	30	34	36	18

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Table 3. News framing typology.

Conflict	The news story mentions disagreement, problem, and/or concern.
Responsibility	The news story mentions the party who is the cause of the conflict.
Solution	The news story mentions action and/or stance to solve and/or ease the conflict.
Morality	The news story bears moral judgement which indicates just and legitimate stance and/or behaviour.
Human Interest	The news story applies a human angle by showing how individuals and/or common groups are affected.
Stability and Sustainability	The news story mentions the maintenance and/or establishment of stability and sustainability of the parties related.
Economic Growth of China	The news story mentions the prosperous past, present, and/or the promising future of China's economic development.

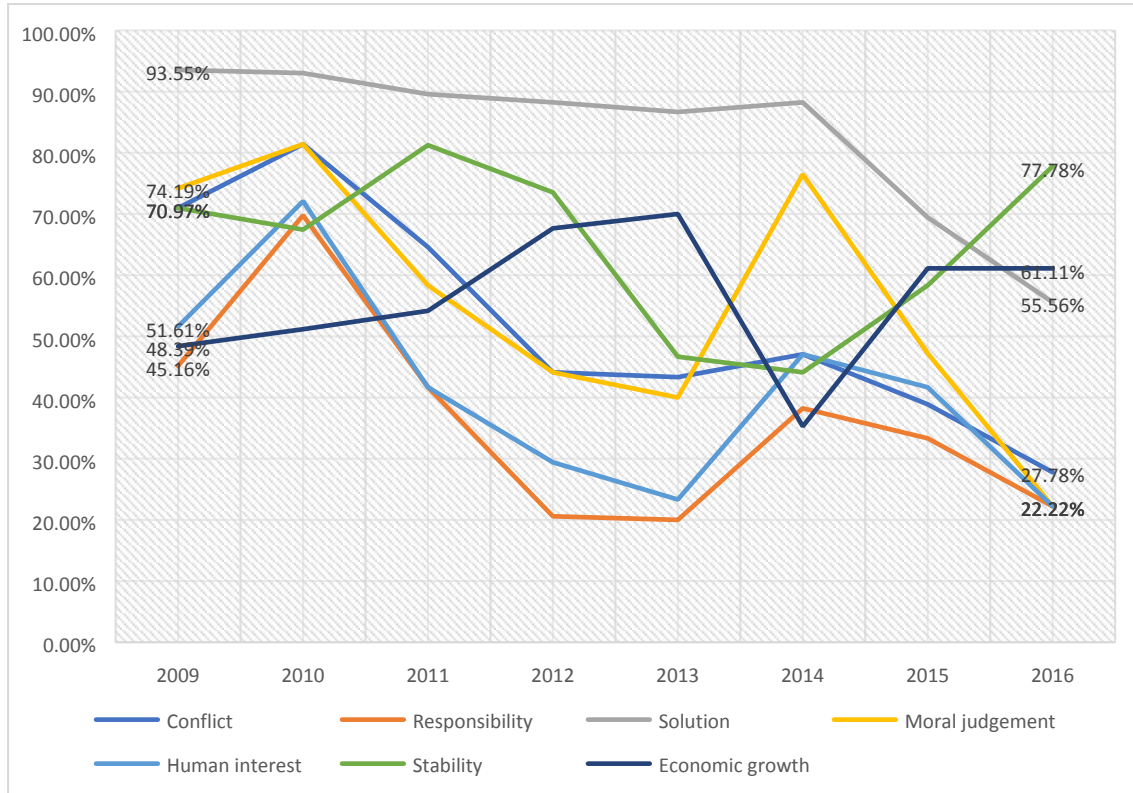


Figure 1. Trends of news framing from 2009 to 2016.

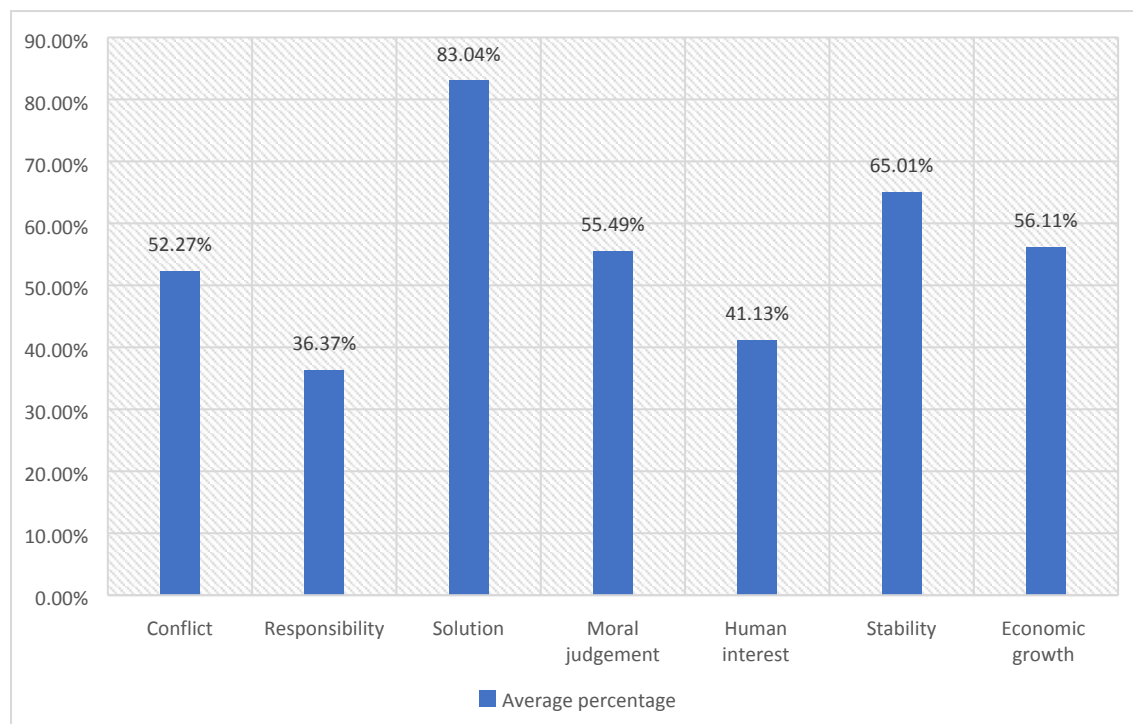


Figure 2. Average percentage of framing categories from 2009 to 2016.

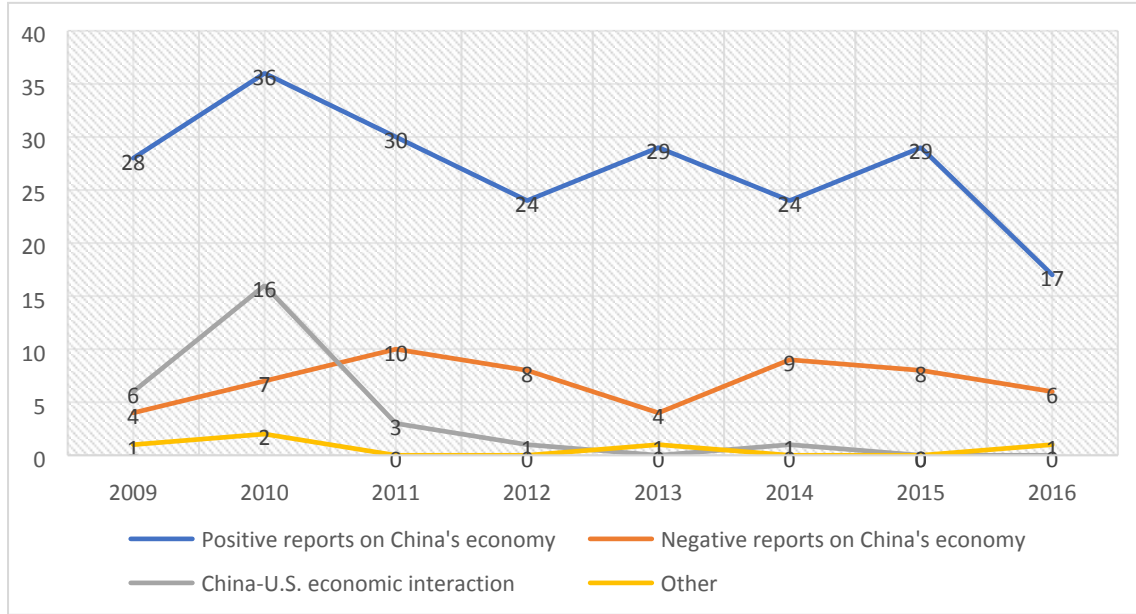


Figure 3. Frequencies of application of thematic categories from 2009 to 2016.

Appendix 1

Table 4. Distribution of news framing categories.

Category	Conflict (%)	Responsibility (%)	Solution (%)	Morality (%)	Human (%)	Stability (%)	Economy (%)
2009	22 (70.97)	14 (45.16)	29 (93.55)	23 (74.19)	16 (51.61)	22 (70.97)	15 (48.39)
2010	35 (81.40)	30 (69.77)	40 (93.02)	35 (81.40)	31 (72.09)	29 (67.44)	22 (51.16)
2011	31 (64.58)	20 (41.67)	43 (89.58)	28 (58.33)	20 (41.67)	39 (81.25)	26 (54.17)
2012	15 (44.12)	7 (20.59)	30 (88.24)	15 (44.12)	10 (29.41)	25 (73.53)	23 (67.65)
2013	13 (43.33)	6 (20.00)	26 (86.67)	12 (40.00)	7 (23.33)	14 (46.67)	21 (70.00)
2014	16 (47.06)	13 (38.24)	30 (88.24)	26 (76.47)	16 (47.06)	15 (44.12)	12 (35.29)
2015	14 (38.89)	12 (33.33)	25 (69.44)	17 (47.22)	15 (41.67)	21 (58.33)	22 (61.11)
2016	5 (27.78)	4 (22.22)	10 (55.56)	4 (22.22)	4 (22.22)	14 (77.78)	11 (61.11)

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4 **Appendix 2**
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7 Table 5. Thematic categorisation and frequencies of application.
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Types	Themes	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Positive reports on China's economy	Ascent of China-related economic index	2	6	12	6	4	3	1	1
	Correction of inaccurate report on China's economy	3	3	0	0	3	1	3	1
	Growth of China's economic markets	5	6	4	7	8	7	7	7
	China's growing multi-lateral economic relation with foreign countries (U.S. excluded)	7	4	6	5	7	6	6	5
	Growing importance of China's economy in the global sphere	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	China's strategies to cope with financial dilemmas and to boost the economic development	9	15	6	5	6	6	11	2
Negative reports on China's economy	Downturn of China-related economic index	3	2	5	4	3	2	6	3
	Economic disputes related to China	0	1	0	2	1	3	0	1
	Difficulties faced by China's economy	1	4	5	2	1	4	2	2
China-U.S. economic interaction	Bilateral economic interaction between China and the United States	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Negative influence of the economic policies of the United States	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Contradicted interest between the economies of China and the United States	4	7	3	0	0	1	0	0
Others	International economic events	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1

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Appendix 3

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