Democracy in the news: A comparative analysis of newspaper reporting in Hong Kong and mainland China from 2014 to 2019

Department of Communication and Journalism

Faculty of Media and Communication

Bournemouth University

Hua Li

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Bournemouth University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December. 2024

"Victory belongs to the most tenacious"

Abstract

This PhD thesis investigates the representation of the 2014 and 2019 Hong Kong protests in print media through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative thematic analysis. Grounded in the "protest paradigm" framework and its mechanisms, the study provides a comparative analysis of mainstream newspapers in Hong Kong and mainland China. The protest paradigm, long studied as a framework for understanding biases and templates in traditional protest reporting, serves as the foundation for this research.

The findings suggest that both Hong Kong and mainland media exhibit common characteristics of the protest paradigm. However, Hong Kong media demonstrate a noticeable deviation from the protest paradigm by incorporating protesters' voices, highlighting the critical role of the relationship between protesters and the media in shaping reporting paradigms. By contrast, elite-driven narrative dominates mainland media, reflecting how reporting is influenced by elite perspectives that reinforce their interests and strategies. This insight contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between political elites, media, and social movements as an interconnected system in the Chinese context.

An analysis of the 2019 protest coverage suggests that Hong Kong media adopted a more positive tone, amplifying individual protester voices and focusing on the movements' goals and actions. However, most reports framed the protests as expressions of dissatisfaction with the status quo, offering little in terms of actionable political alternatives. Meanwhile, the emergence of "terrorism-related" language in mainland coverage indicates heightened sensitivity to dissent. By portraying protests as threats to national security and delegitimizing protesters, this discourse enhances the protest paradigm as a social control mechanism that diminishes minority influence and challenges entrenched meanings within the framework.

In conclusion, this research argues that ideological alignment with authority, rather than ideology alone, is a critical factor in determining adherence to the protest paradigm. Factors such as the nature, location, and type of protests significantly shape whether news coverage conforms to the protest paradigm (Harlow et al., 2020). Journalistic norms, perceptions of their roles as objective observers, and the influence of political agendas and openness also play a role in shaping protest reporting patterns in both contexts. Furthermore, external factors, such as the legitimacy of protesters, tolerance for protests at national or local levels, and attention from foreign entities (particularly Western forces), further influence how paradigmatic are applied in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Acknowledgement

I owe my deepest gratitude to several individuals who have made this journey possible. First and foremost, I am profoundly grateful to my lead supervisor, Professor Einar Thorsen, for his critical insights, thoughtful discussions, and patient guidance throughout my PhD during these many years. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors Dr Salvatore Scifo and Dr Anastasia Veneti, whose timely feedback and genuine warmth provided a solid foundation for my work. To my supervisory team, their encouragement and support have given me both confidence and comfort.

I am also very thankful to my examiners, Professor John Downey and Professor Anna Feigenbaum, for taking the time to read my writing, and offering suggestions for improvement.

I am forever indebted to my parents, whose unwavering faith in me, generous financial support, and boundless love have sustained me though this journey. Their sacrifices are beyond repayment, and I want to say "love you" to my dad and mom, rather than just "thanks" – forever and ever and always.

I also wish to thank my fellow journalists. Although I am no longer in this job, their passion for journalism and commitment to the truth continually remind me of why I chose this field in the first place. To my friends who have been a source of strength, and to my tennis coach Carla, cello tutor Nana, and teammates from my shooting sports, I am equally grateful. Each of them has helped me find balance and self-believes, keeping me grounded and motivated even during challenging times.

Copyright

I, Hua Li, hereby declare that this PhD thesis is the result of my own original work and research, conducted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and due acknowledgement must always be mode of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter One. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The dynamic interplay between media and protest has long been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, given the pivotal role that media plays in shaping public perception and discourse. In contemporary societies, media functions not only as a conduit of information but also as a battleground where various narratives and ideologies contest for dominance (Zylinska 2022, Weinberger 2008, Storyful 2010). This dual role of media is particularly salient in the context of political protests, where the portrayal of dissent can significantly influence the trajectory and outcomes of social movements.

In 2014 and 2019, Hong Kong experienced two large-scale demonstrations and protests driven by social change and political demands. These protests attracted international attention and brought the Chinese government's approach to managing protest back into focus. The study of the media-protest dynamic in Hong Kong and mainland China provides a unique opportunity to understand how different media systems, operating under distinct political and cultural frameworks, shape the representation and perception of protests. Hong Kong, with its relatively liberal media landscape, contrasts sharply with the tightly controlled media environment of mainland China (Huang 2008, Volland 2003). These differences offer a compelling case for examining how media systems can lead to divergent outcomes in terms of protest visibility, public support, and governmental response.

In the Introductory chapter, I first draw the background, process, and outcomes of these two protests, establishing the context of the research project. Following this, the concept of the protest paradigm and the theory of media systems are discussed, leading to three research questions. Meanwhile, this chapter briefly outlines the research methods employed in the study (i.e., quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis). This chapter concludes by summarizing the significant contributions of the research and providing outlines of each following chapter of the thesis.

1.2 **Why Hong Kong protests?**

The People's Republic of China officially took control of Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, ending almost a century of colonial rule by the British. According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed by the Chinese government and the UK in 1984, upon its return to China Hong Kong was to be governed according to the principle of "one country, two systems," afforded a high degree of autonomy, its own legislature, administration, and independent judiciary, as well as authority for final adjudication, with the exception of matters of defence and foreign policy. According to the territory's Basic Law, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was required to embrace universal suffrage. Since 1997, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has been elected by the Election Committee.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), however, according to several reports has allegedly meddled in the general election for the position of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's top executive. These allegations contend that individuals from outside of Hong Kong selected the majority of candidates for election committee members, who are considered part of the ruling class. (*SCMP.* 2014).

A schedule for implementing universal suffrage in Hong Kong has been established by central government and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, with the election of its chief executive taking place in 2017 and the election of all Legislative Council members taking place in 2020. Li Fei, deputy secretary-general of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, emphasised once again that leaders should be people who 'love the country and love Hong Kong' when speaking about the draft decision regarding political reform on August 27, 2014. (reference South China Morning Post). The phrase 'love the country and love Hong Kong' set the Occupy Central movement ablaze. A criteria the central government is said to have established for Hong

Kong's pan-democrats, "The selection" process was alleged to be "False universal suffrage," according to several members of political parties in Hong Kong.

According to Chan, a law lecturer at the University of Hong Kong, "Loving the country and Hong Kong" is a political rather than a legal concept. He also argued that the universal suffrage system in Hong Kong should be based on rules and regulations. On September 28, 2014, a group of professors from the law department at the University of Hong Kong, and professors from the sociology department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Protestant Christian ministers launched a political movement calling for genuine choice in universal suffrage. They emphasised use of restrained, nonviolent civil disobedience and the took over lanes of traffic on the Central Ring Road in Hong Kong's financial sector in the early months of 2013. Hong Kong society and its residents were split into two factions at this time. One segment actively participated in the demonstrations on the streets, calling for universal suffrage. The opposition were concerned that such events would be tainted by individuals acting irrationally, potentially sparking violent disputes that would damage Hong Kong's economy and its citizens' daily lives.

Consequently, work remains to be done by the people of Hong Kong to realise the goal of universal suffrage, according to Joseph Tai Yiu-ting, an associate professor of law at the University of Hong Kong. In a piece he self-penned on January 16 2014, he advised Hong Kong residents and civic leaders to exercise their right to self-determination via moderation and nonviolent civil disobedience. He proposed civil disobedience as the strategy most likely to deliver democracy to Hong Kong, urging locals to occupy Central.

Faculty and students from eight institutions in Hong Kong participated in class strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. On September 26, 2014, a student and teacher strike led to Civic Square being retaken, representing a precursor to restrained

nonviolent civil disobedience. The protestors demanded that the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress retract the 'August 31 Resolution on Political Reform,' stating that the Hong Kong government must carry out further consultations on political reform, so that the report on political reform can be submitted again. They also voiced a strident protest against the Hong Kong SAR government's nomination plan for the 2017 election of the region's top executive to the NPC Standing Committee. Hong Kong police ringed government buildings early in the morning to prevent people from going to the Admiralty, Mong Kok, and Central districts to join the protesters. Numerous people were harmed when riot police used coercive weapons and tear gas in a series of violent altercations with the crowd. When riot police dispersed the protests in the evening, they were forced to move to the crowded areas of Mong Kok and Causeway Bay until they eventually settled in Tsim Sha Tsui. The police removed Mong Kok and seized the area from November 25 to November 27 clearing the Tamar, Admiralty, Central, and Wan Chai occupied districts on December 11 following multiple altercations between police and demonstrators on the front line. After December 11, the OCLP protest officially ended and the Occupy Central protesters' demonstration was deemed unsuccessful by demonstrators in Hong Kong (*SCMP*, 2014). The 79-day protest took place in Hong Kong from early on September 28 to late on December 11, 2014, is known as the Occupy Central event.

According to the mainland government's description in the *People's Daily* (2014), the protest constituted an "illegal gathering" and "illegal conduct undermining the rule of law and social tranquillity". The Occupy Central movement was characterised by the Chinese central government as an effort by Hong Kong residents, instigated by a small number of individuals, to usurp the institutional framework of the central government to pursue what is referred to as "true democracy" and "true universal suffrage" through violence and other illegal means. According to Liu (2014) and other Chinese political scientists, Hong Kong residents had developed illogical and immature political engagement in the

territory's unique history and development process. The growth of "one country, two systems" also confronted several challenges in light of this unique political engagement. According to Liu and Qian (2014), maintaining, healthy and steady growth within Hong Kong society would require coordinated efforts from all facets of the community over time. These efforts were expected to focus on the economy, education, and policy, among other areas.

Five years after the protests of 2014 tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong participated in political demonstrations triggered by a murder in 2019. In February 2018, a young man from Hong Kong named Chan Tong-kai killed his girlfriend Poon Hsiao-ying in Taiwan and dumped her body in a suitcase in New Taipei City. Online debate was sparked when Hong Kong police decided not to charge the man with murder. Although Hong Kong has long-term extradition agreements with 20 countries, there is no reciprocal legal agreement between Hong Kong and Taiwan. The One-China principle led the Hong Kong SAR administration to include mainland China in the amendment, which may result in some Hong Kong residents having to move to the mainland if it is implemented. The murder prompted the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to campaign for changes to the Fugitives Ordinance, stating that to do so would close legal gaps and prevent Hong Kong from becoming a 'haven for fugitives' (Lee and Cheung 2019).

There have been several political deadlocks and huge rallies in Hong Kong as a consequence of Democrats' widespread scepticism regarding the legal system on the Chinese mainland. The Hong Kong SAR government was pressed to make an adjustment in February 2019 at the request of the Beijing administration and on the initiative of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, according to Beijing-based sources reported in different media. Beijing was also extraditing Chinese and foreigners who have "violated Chinese law" in Hong Kong to the mainland for punishment, in an effort to establish its equal legal authority in Hong

Kong. Beijing was also damaged by Ms. Meng's detention at a Canadian airport, which suggested Beijing was lower in the chain of command. However, the Hong Kong administration has consistently denied this (Yang 2019).

Suspects from Hong Kong may currently be extradited to courts on the Chinese mainland for trial under proposed changes. The Taiwanese have claimed that Hong Kong has repeatedly refused its requests for reciprocal legal help when gathering evidence and conducting investigations in several criminal cases. It has attempted to establish a mutual legal assistance agreement between Taiwan and Hong Kong, but were refused due to concerns that doing so would undermine Hong Kong's status as an independent jurisdiction under the "one country, two systems" principle, and then be used to suppress political dissent (18 October 2019, South China Morning Post). Two Bills committees in the Legislative Council were established to handle modified draughts as a result of failure to choose a chairman who would be respected by both the establishment and the Democrats. The two committees, which have the support of both the establishment- and democracy-supporting MPs, are at an impasse, and parliamentary brawls have led to numerous injuries among members. In a survey conducted by the Hong Kong newspaper Ming Pao in late May and early June, 47.2% of participants stated that they opposed the proposed revision to the Fugitives Ordinance.

On March 15, professors from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong's law and media programmes encouraged resistance to the proposed extradition bill. On June 9, almost 10,000 people were jailed, and about a million people in Hong Kong entered the streets to protest. Supporters of the movement disrupted traffic, blocked roads, created walls of non-cooperation, attacked and damaged HSBC, buildings, educational facilities, and other public infrastructure. They also marched, protested, rallied, staged sit-ins, sang, and yelled (10 June, 2019, South China Morning Post).

On June 12, 2019, when the Legislative Council began its second discussion of the measure, some 40,000 protesters gathered in front of the building (12 June, 2019, South China Morning Post). Police and demonstrators subsequently got into a fight aiming to stop the law from passing the Legislative Council. Later, protesters stated that the police had attacked them and abused their authority. After which, the demonstrators made five demands: total repeal of the updated Fugitive Bill; removal of the definition of a riot; dismissal of all charges brought against the demonstrators; prosecution of the police for their abuse of power; and resignation of the CEO and Carrie Lam. After the Civil Human Rights Front arranged a larger protest on June 16, a substantial audience turned out for the march. Organisers claim the march, which drew more than 2 million participants, was the largest protest in Hong Kong's history. Numerous scholars in Hong Kong have since characterized the outbreak as a continuation of the Occupy Central Movement from 2014 (Chan 2020, Luo 2020, Qian and Tsea 2019). At a news conference on July 9, 2019, SAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam reported that the proposal had been abandoned. The bulk of the protesters, continued to express their resistance by holding weekly demonstrations. Demonstrators also forced the closure of Hong Kong International Airport twice in mid-August. The number of participants was over 1.7 million at this time, according to data from Hong Kong. On August 13, 2019, Global Times (mainland media) reporter Fu forgot to provide his press credentials when covering the "Police return Eyeballs" campaign at Hong Kong International Airport. He was beaten, restrained, and tortured by protesters who had come to find out who he was (sources: 14, 2019, South China Morning Post, 14, 2019, *People's Daily*, and 15, 2019, South Weekly). Following a joint statement from the People's Republic of China government, the China Journalists Association, and 2,160 Chinese media organizations, including 816 daily newspapers and 1344 non-newspapering, calling for the Hong Kong police and the Special Administrative Region government to take legal action against the offenders, the three attackers were sentenced (see School of Journalism and

Communication at Peking University Research Centre 2019 Book).

The demonstrations intensified after the incident at Prince Edward Station on August 31. Meanwhile, on the afternoon of September 4, Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor announced four actions, with the effect of annulling the amendments to the Fugitives Ordinance, but refused to create an independent commission inquiry to investigate the claims of police violence. Nationwide protests then became violent on October 1. When a new strike began in November 2019, there were violent altercations between the police and students on the campuses of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Baptist University. The students blocked the entrance to the school, refused to speak to the police, and confronted them with homemade weapons. Police then forcefully invaded the Hong Kong Polytechnic Institution after a fruitless conversation between the president of the university and students, resulting in several injuries. More riots broke out in the Legislative Council on April 4, 2020, when Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor put the Ban on Masking Ordinance into effect under the Emergency Law. In this massive protest, the men arrested ranged in age from 11 to 84. Of those, more than 2,800 were charged with crimes, and 2,100 cases were brought against them (750 of were charged with rioting and more than 1,170 convicted). The movement is considered to be the most serious political, democracy and human rights dilemma the Chinese government has faced since the handover, and many scholars believe the 2019 Hong Kong movement represented a more serious challenge than the political crises of 2003, 2012, 2014 and 2016 (*SCMP* 2019).

In December 2019, Wuhan witnessed the outbreak of the global pandemic COVID-19. The virus reached Hong Kong in late January 2020, which led to the anti-amendment campaign diminishment. Several event planners cancelled a number of significant parties that had been scheduled for the Lunar New Year holiday. Even while many demonstrations were still being held, the war against

the virus was progressively taking centre stage. The NPC Standing Committee elected to forego the legislative process in Hong Kong and swiftly enact the PRC's National Security Law after the National Anthem Bill was approved by the Hong Kong Legislative Council on June 4, 2020, at the Third session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing. A National Security Law for Port Areas was approved by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on March 30, 2022 and enshrined without its contents being made public. In February 2022, the police had arrested more than 10,000 people in separate protests, the largest number of arrests for a social movement in Hong Kong.

Against this background, this study views media production in Hong Kong and mainland Chinese society as a dynamic social process. It attempts to discuss the logic behind protest representations within the geopolitical context from a comparative perspective. By doing so, this study enriches the understanding of the political strategies employed in constructing political reality through the media lens. The overarching aim of this study is to examine the characteristics of the protest paradigm as employed within Chinese contexts, rooted in the unique Chinese perspective on democracy issues within contentious politics.

 Accordingly, three specific research objectives are raised as follows:
1) Observe the respective characteristics of the protest paradigm used by Hong Kong and mainland media in shaping the 2014 OCLP and 2019 anti-government protests; and identify differences or similarities in usage through comparison.
2) Analyse the source selection patterns of Hong Kong and mainland media, determine the contribution of sources to the narrative of the story; and analyse policing issues to shed light on the flow of protest paradigms within media coverage.
3) Based on the background of the media system and the broader social and

political context, distinguish the specific descriptions of "Democracy"[1] in discourse of Hong Kong and mainland media, and analyse how media hold the language ability to shape the dynamics of state power and legitimacy in news.

1.3 **The Definition of Key Terms, and Theories Grounding**

1.3.1 **What is the *Protest Paradigm*?**

Political scholars often conceptualize protests, particularly large-scale demonstrations, as a "mode of social performance" (Cammaerts 2012, p. 121), a way to make "dissent visible" (Mitchell and Staehli 2005.p. 798), and "a social process in which collective actors, by participating in various forms of collective action, articulate their interests, express grievances and criticisms, and propose solutions to perceived problems" (Cammaerts 2015, p. 2). The study of protests and social movements is deeply connected to human rights, as the way these events are reported by journalists often reinforces "existing racial and class hierarchies that characterize Western societies" (Brown and Harlow, 2019, p. 17), particularly for marginalized groups. Media representations frequently transmit stereotypical depictions of these movements to the public (Brown 2019, Welborn 2020, Olier 2022).

Scholars have concluded that journalists often challenge the legitimacy of protests, using paradigms that marginalize the movements and their roles (McLeod 2007, Lee 2014, Harlow 2011). This phenomenon, known as the "protest paradigm" (Chan and

---

[1] Examining "Democracy" through the lens of protest converge is essential because protests are direct expression of political and social demands, making them a unique and revealing space for studying discourse around democratic values. In Political Science, protests highlight the dynamics of state power, civil rights, and governance, illustrating how authorities respond to challenges against the political status quo (Shadmehr 2014, Tarrow 1994, 1998). From a Social Science perspective, protests bring societal issues to the forefront, reflecting public sentiment and collective identity formation, often around calls for democratic reform (Polletta 2001). In Cultural Studies, protests are moments when national identity and ideological differences are openly contested, with democracy often positioned as a symbol of modernity or resistance to authoritarian norms (Ortmann 2009, Edelman 2001). In Media Studies, protest coverage provides insight into the media's role in framing democratic aspirations and legitimising or delegitimizing dissent (McLeod 2007). Thus, protest events are uniquely powerful for examining how "Democracy" is represented, challenged, and negotiated in Chinese society.

Lee 1984, McLeod and Hertog 1992, 1999), describes the media's tendency to focus on the more radical aspects of protesters' actions, resulting in coverage that frequently adopts a negative or critical tone. This pattern is especially evident when the goals, claims, or ideologies of the protests diverge from dominant societal and political norms (Brown 2019, Meyer 2016).

With respect to protest paradigm associated with *framing*, Entman (1993) notes that the framing of event coverage often reflects "the presence or absence of specific keywords, commonly used phrases, stereotyped imagery, sources of information, and sentences that create thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (p. 52). Expanding on this, McLeod and Hertog (1999) identified various key elements of this paradigm, such as narrative structure and the selection of specific topics in protest reporting. Followed researchers have synthesized these findings, outlining the defining features of the protest paradigm commonly employed in media coverage:

a) Delegitimization: openly portraying protesters as deviant, irrational, or violent undermining the legitimacy of their cause (Lee 2014)

b) Highlighting conflict and violence: particularly focusing on clashes between police and protesters, property damage, and other forms of disruption (Peeters 2021, Edward and Megan 2020)

c) Focusing on individual protesters' stories: highlighting their sentiments and deviant actions (van Sickle 2009)

d) Reliance on official sources: frequently citing statements from police, government officials, and other authoritative sources, which can skew the narrative towards the perspective of those in power (Wahl-Jorgensen 2017, Graves 2013)

e) Marginalizing protesters' voices: shedding them in a negative light (Dumitrica 2020, Lee 2014)

Scholars have advanced the development of the protest paradigm through extensive empirical research, for example, in the U.S., the protest paradigm has been widely studied, particularly in the context of civil rights movements, anti-war protests, and more recently, movements like Black Lives Matter. Studies has shown that U.S. media often depict protests through a lens of conflict and disruption, focusing on violent incidents and arrests rather than the underlying issues of racial injustice and police brutality (Kilgo et al., 2019). Scholars from the UK have similarly found that media coverage of protests tends to follow the protest paradigm. For example, the coverage of anti-austerity protests and environmental demonstrations often emphasizes the disruptive actions of protesters and the response of police while neglecting the protesters' demands for economic justice and environmental sustainability (Jackson and Foucault Welles 2016). In the Middle East, studies on media coverage of the Arab Spring protests have highlighted how the protest paradigm operates in contexts of intense political repression and state control over media. For example, in Egypt, state media coverage of the 2011 protests frequently depicted protesters as foreign agents and criminals, aiming to delegitimize the uprising and maintain the regime's grip on power (Harlow and Johnson 2011).

Abraham and Appiah (2006) argue that this mode of reporting reflects a hegemonic approach to journalism that perpetuates dominant power structures. It achieves this by providing superficial coverage of marginalized groups, ignoring their perspectives, or portraying them in stereotypical ways (Richardson, 2020). This tendency is further shaped by journalists' individual biases, as well as by entrenched norms and professional practices within the field (Boyle 2021, Detenber et al., 2007). While many scholars have identified the protest paradigm as a prevalent framework within mainstream media (Harlow and Brown 2022), emerging research has highlighted the potential of social media to disrupt these narratives. In today's hybrid media landscape, platforms like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Weibo (in China) allow audiences to access real-time coverage of protests directly from participants and activists, bypassing the traditional power structures and framing mechanisms of

mainstream media (Chadwick 2017). Nevertheless, other researchers argue that advancements in digital and social media technologies have not fully diminished the mainstream media's reliance on the protest paradigm. Even in the digital era, traditional outlets continue to portray protests in a negative light, often framing them as sources of personal threat or societal disruption (McLeod 2007, Gil-Lopez 2021).

A review of the literature suggests that while the protest paradigm remains a useful framework for understanding media coverage of protests, recent scholarship calls for a more nuanced analysis of its limitations. For example, some researchers argue that the paradigm does not fully account for the role of social media and alternative media in shaping protest narratives (Cammaerts 2015, Brown 2019). Social media platforms amplify protesters' voices and provide narratives that often contradict mainstream media coverage, potentially challenging the dominance of the protest paradigm (Tufekci 2017). Furthermore, the protest paradigm is not static and can vary significantly across different media systems and political contexts. In democratic societies with a free press, there may be greater opportunities for balanced and diverse coverage of protest events (Shahin, 2016). In contrast, in authoritarian regimes, media are more likely to adhere strictly to paradigms that align with national interests (Chan and Lee 1984). Milne (2005) suggests that media agendas are not fixed and can shift under varying circumstances, emphasizing the protest paradigm, primarily rooted in media practices in Western countries – may not fully account for how protests are marginalized in other socio-political contexts. The evolving relationship between media and the status quo shows the idea that media organizations may adjust their positions based on the prevailing political context, occasionally legitimizing specific protests (Cote 2008, Xu 2022).

The structural characteristics of the communities where news organizations operate (Maares 2023) and the unique socio-political contexts of individual countries (Shahin et al., 2016, Itani 2024) significantly influence the extent to which the protest paradigm is applied. Numerous factors, including the characteristics of the protest

(Harlow et al., 2020), its location and context (Oliver 2000), the tactics employed by protest groups (Boyle et al., 2012), the protest's target, ideological framing, social demands, and its challenge to existing status quo (e.g., Shahin et al., 2016), as well as the perceived newsworthiness of the issue (Susánszky 2022, Oliver 2000), all contribute to differences in how protests are reported. Furthermore, journalistic norms and professional practices (Panievsky 2021, Hartley 2021), the ideological leanings of media organizations (González-Bailón 2022), the type of media outlet involved (Schleffer and Miller 2021), and the physical or cultural proximity to news organizations (Boukes 2022) also shape the degree to which protest coverage aligns with the protest paradigm. These considerations suggest that limits of the protest paradigm are less rigid and more adaptable than traditionally believed, as Harlow and Kilgo (2020) note, "the boundaries of the paradigm… are less rigid than described before" (p. 3). These observations highlight the importance of examining contextual, structural, and ideological variables in understanding protest narratives, questioning the universality of traditional protest paradigm.

In China, scholars have primarily studied the characteristics and differences in the use of protest paradigms from a comparative perspective, focusing on comparisons between China and the West, as well as between China and Hong Kong/Taiwan (e.g., Lin and Lee 2017, Chu 2018, Hsia-Huang 2015). However, research in this field within mainland China remains limited. Currently, only two studies have introduced the origins and concept of the protest paradigm through case studies of mainland protests, but no systematic theoretical development has been achieved. Therefore, this project aims to address this gap by presenting the characteristics of the protest paradigm in the Chinese context. Through a comparative analysis of two major protest events in Hong Kong, this study strives to carefully examine the differences, similarities, and evolution of how Hong Kong and mainland media construct narratives about protest events. A large body of English-language literature has highlighted that the use of political discourse to achieve specific functions is not new

in authoritarian regimes, including China (Enikolopov et al., 2011). Studies on Chinese media suggest that during periods of political crisis, such as anti-government protests, authoritarian regimes often employ discursive framing strategies through traditional and social media to undermine and delegitimize protest narratives (Gunitsky 2015). These tactics include diverting public focus away from protests by emphasizing alternative issues, discrediting and vilifying protesters, and portraying uprisings in a punitive manner that highlights negative consequences. Such approaches have been observed not only in China (Jones 2022, Gobel 2012, Lee and Chau 2018) but also in other authoritarian contexts, such as Russia (Koesel and Bunce 2013). Scholars further note that authoritarian regimes globally have increasingly relied on nationalism and anti-Western rhetoric to resist opposition to authoritarianism, a pattern particularly evident in Xi Jinping's China (Weiss 2019a, 2019b, Chen 2024). Specifically, Chinese authorities often organize public discussions among pro-government citizens and elites to shift attention away from sensitive topics, emphasizing threats such as "betraying Communist Party ideology" (King et al., 2017, Han 2015). These strategies aim to reinforce public belief in the regime's legitimacy (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017).

In modern authoritarian regimes, explicit threats have largely been supplanted by more nuanced approaches, such as using state-controlled propaganda to shape public opinion through information dissemination (Al-Esia 2024, Lucas 2016, Vilmer 2018). These propaganda strategies often include anti-American narratives (Zhao 2024, Chin 2023), appeals to nationalism (Zhang 2023, Arsène 2020), hostility directed at dissidents (Fu 2023), or portrayals of the ruling party's competence and effectiveness (Wu 2023, Shih, et al., 2012). Additionally, Carter and Carter (2020) suggest that such political propaganda measures can serve to dissuade the emergence of social movements. Within this context, the occurrence of two large-scale protests in Hong Kong over a five-year period not only tested the local governance capabilities ("Party's ability to govern" as noted by Wong 2020) but also provided a critical lens

through which to analyze the media's influence in shaping political narratives and public sentiment.

As is well known, protests[2] have always been a politically sensitive topic in China, with authorities using their power to either "selectively" disclose information (Wang et al., 2001) or suppress it altogether (Chen and Wang 2011). "when minority groups threaten the social order established by the dominant majorities, the power authorities can use the stabilizing functions to ideological mechanisms," (Gramsci 1975, Althusser 1971, cited by Vlazakis 2022), thus, these mechanisms prevent minority groups from influencing the public (Gramsci 1975, Althusser 1971, O'Rourke and Ramallo 2015). In this context, the media's alignment with the "protest paradigm" can be understood as a mechanism that "helps to maintain the status quo by disparaging threatening ideas" (Boyle, 2021. p. 4). Comparative research, therefore, provides valuable insights into how Chinese (including Hong Kong) media delegitimize protests and reinforce existing power structures, particularly within the framework of China's broader "de-Westernization" strategy.

Media Systems Dependency (MSD) theory (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur 1976) provides a useful lens to explore the interdependence between media, audiences, and sociopolitical environments. In the context of protest research, MSD theory helps to understand how the media system functions both as a source of information and as a mechanism of social control during periods of sociopolitical unrest (Andrew and

---

[2] In Chinese academia, the study of "protest" is often examined within the realm of jurisprudence, particularly in the context of Administrative Law. These studies typically focus on theoretical perspectives to understand how the Party has historically utilized protests to achieve success. Consequently, there is a notable scarcity of empirical studies on recent protests from a media perspective. This lack of research can be attributed to the sensitivity of the topic and the potential for these studies to exceed the accepted narrative framework, or the significant presupposed could go beyond the metatext, thereby discouraging scholars from delving deeper into this area.

Deanna 2003). MSD emphasizes that media reliance intensifies during moments of social unrest, as audiences seek information to comprehend unfolding events. Protest studies apply MSD to examine how media reliance on institutional sources and "protest paradigm" mechanisms shapes the portrayal and understanding of protests. Therefore, by analyzing the media's control of the "protest paradigm" and variables, the selection of information sources, and the presenting of "democracy" related issues, this study seeks not only to summarize the characteristics of protests as presented by the mainland and Hong Kong media systems at this stage but also to understand how MSD reflects public interests in both "Party-State" (called as authoritarian by Western scholars) and semi-autonomous media systems. Ultimately, this research aims to improve the understanding of the Chinese media system, particularly in terms of the interplay between media and power dependencies.

1.3.2 **Towards a De-Westernised understanding: Comparing media systems beyond Western models**

The concept of a media system refers to the entirety of media operations with a particular social and political framework and how these media entities are organised. In general, media systems function within the confines of the nation-state, reflecting and influencing the socio-political dynamics of their respective countries. The seminal work by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956), Four Theories of the Press, initiated a foundational inquiry into media systems by posing the critical questions: "Why is the media as it is, why does it serve different purposes, and why do its forms of expression vary greatly in different countries?" (p.1). This comparative study of media systems has since spanned more than half a century, evolving to address the complexities of global communication in diverse political and cultural context (e.g., Esarey and Qiang 2008, Castells 2009, Curran and Park 2000).

Throughout its development, comparative research in media systems has made significant progress. Comparative studies have evolved "from mere description to

more sophisticated explanations, moving from simplistic models to embracing complexity, from random to systematic case selection, and from superficial evidence to methodological rigour." (Esser and Hanitzsch 2012.p.6, Hallin and Mancini 2004). It is anticipated that research in comparative media systems will continue to mature. However, despite the advancements, this field still faces numerous challenges and opportunities for expansion.

Scholars have developed various models and conducted extensive comparative studies to understand the complexities of media systems worldwide[3]. Norris (2006) examined the impact of media freedom on democratic processes and governance in developing countries. Her work utilised a comparative approach to analyse how different media systems contribute to or hinder democratic development. Voltmer's (2003) work extended the comparative analysis of media systems to include countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Castells (2009) examined the transformative impact of digital communication technologies on global media systems, focusing on how the internet and social media have reshaped the power dynamics between media, state, and society, Chadwick (2013) explored the concept of the hybrid media system, which integrates traditional and new media. Thus, we can see that the study of media systems across diverse countries has evolved from foundational theories to sophisticated comparative analyses that consider the unique cultural, political, and technological contexts of different regions.

---

[3] After immersing myself in extensive literature on media system theory, I find myself puzzled. We no longer live in an era dominated by teleological concepts of history or unified global values. Yet, when rethinking the modes of information transmission, styles of news texts, and channels of information circulation, the perspectives we adopt remain deeply entrenched in familiar paradigms—power dynamics, ethnocentrism, linguistic heterogeneity, contingency, networked structures, neoliberalism, and performativity, to name a few popular terms. Although it is widely accepted that these categories influence the contemporary self-image, there is limited in-depth discussion regarding the implications of this self-perception for the institutions and ethics involved in the production of textual knowledge. In other words, do the classifications and concepts of media systems we currently use truly reflect the reality of the media landscape we examine? Therefore, this study aims to reconceptualize the Chinese media system through the lens of the protest paradigm, as observed in the specific practices of Hong Kong and mainland media.

In recent times, some scholars have begun to call for the importance of de-Westernising perspectives in theoretical understanding. In media studies, de-westernisation refers to the effort to move beyond Western-centric frameworks and theories that have traditionally dominated the field. Curran and Park (2000) noted it involves recognising and integrating the diverse media practices and systems that exist outside the Western context. This concept challenges the assumption that Western media models are universally applicable and seeks to highlight the unique characteristics of media systems in non-Western societies (e.g., Geoffrey 2012, Shi 2010, Kaarle 2000). For example, in Mancini and Hallin's (2012) co-work, they highlight the importance of context-specific analysis and the need to adapt comparative media system theories to diverse political and cultural environments. Chuan-Lee (2003), who has discussed the media systems in China and the broader Chinese-speaking world, suggested it is necessary to abandon the Western-centric approach to critically understand how China's media operates and features. Thussu (2018), who held the same opinion, emphasised the need to understand international communication from a non-Western perspective. Shi (2010) conducted comparative studies of media systems in the Global South, providing valuable insights into the unique characteristics and challenges of these systems. In his study, he argues for greater recognition of non-Western media practices and theories.

Based on the above discussion, this study argues that the relationship between traditional media system theories and the concept of de-westernisation is rooted in the need for a more inclusive and representative understanding of global media practices. Taking China as an example[4], one of the central themes in the analysis of China's

---

[4] While both political science and media studies have roots in understanding Chinese media, their disciplinary origins lead to differing approaches and focuses. Political science, particularly shaped by its development in the United States during the late 19th century, emerged from a context that prioritised measuring social change and sought "universal laws" for understanding societies. This methodology became even more pronounced during the Cold War when "area studies" were employed to study non-Western nations, including China, though a framework that saw it primarily as a communist and authoritarian regime. Consequently, China studies, even today, tends to approach Chinese media with an interest in evaluating the potential for democratization, civil society, and the

media system is the extend of state control over media operations (e.g., Kuang 2018, Ernst 2022, Repnikova 2017, MK Dimitroy 2017, Fan et al., 2019). Unlike Western models that often emphasise media autonomy and freedom of the press, China's media system is characterised by significant state intervention and control (Sparks 2010, Zhao 2004, Jin 2022, Cric 2018, Schleffer 2021, Lowe 2008). Zhao (2008) notes that Chinese media serves as an instrument of the state, sued to propagate government policies, and maintain social stability. This relationship reflects the broader political context in China, where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exerts considerable influence over all aspects of society, including the media. Despite the strong presence of state control, China's media system has also indicated significant commercialisation since the economic reforms of the late 20th century. Zhao (2000) found this as a dual role where media entities operate within the media market while remaining subject to state directives. Ren (2015) suggests this is a hybrid model, where market forces coexist with state control, differing from the liberal media model in the West that prioritises market-driven operations and minimal state intervention. In doing so, some scholars point out that the concept of a hybrid media model is central to the de-westernisation analysis of China's media system and suggest that authoritarian categories and outdated ideas should be abandoned in understanding the contemporary Chinese media system (e.g., Hu et al., 2016, Wang 2016).

Hong and Sun (2000) argue that China's media landscape cannot be fully understood through Western frameworks of either state-controlled or fully commercialised media. Instead, China's media system represents a unique blend of both, where media organisations navigate the pressures of market competition while adhering to state-imposed regulations and censorship. Some scholars suggest the Marxist News Theory

---

public sphere – central to Western political science discourse. However, as media scholars point out, this perspective remains narrow, often missing crucial transformations within China's media landscape. Media studies, particularly in the de-westersization lens, critique the dominant Western paradigms that attempt to fit Chinese media systems into preconceived models of political communication and democratization. Researchers advocating for de-westerniszation argue that imposing Western frameworks onto Chinese empirical realities forces China's complex media system into a theoretical mold that doesn't fully capture its unique characteristics (Wang 2010).

and Ideology has profoundly influenced the development of China's media system (Luo 2014, Zhang 2023). According to Marx and Engels, the media serve as a tool for disseminating the ideology of the ruling class, thereby reinforcing existing power structures and social relations (Marx and Engels 1845). In China, in line with Marxist principles, Chinese media emphasise the promotion of socialist values and the collective good (Chan 2015, Guo 2007), align with the broader politics – media relationship in authoritarian regimes, which is often characterized by "parallelism" (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Pan and Chan 2003). This means that political parties, particularly the Communist Party in China, own and control news organisation, determining their content in alignment with state ideologies (Hu 2011). In this context, the "Collective good" is indeed closely tied to the reinforcement of existing power relations, as the media primarily serve to promote political stability, social cohesion, and the legitimacy of the ruling party. However, it is important to note that the landscape of Chinese media has evolved in recent decades due to media commercialisation driven by economic reforms (Kuang et al., 2020), they argue this shift has introduced some degree of media autonomy, particularly in pursuit of market-driven content, which has led to a diversification of narratives and formats (Kuang et al., 2020). Fang (2021) also notes as China's media landscape continues to evolve, it has developed new features, including commercialisation, digital innovation, and a hybrid model that combines state oversight with market-driven practices. These characteristics are the key to understanding the theory of de-westernisation from the Chinese perspectives. To the end, while my argument highlights the role of Chinese media in promoting socialist values, it is not to suggest that this role is monolithic or static. The interplay between commercialisation and political control has created a nuanced media environment where the collective good, as defined by the state, coexists with market-driven dynamics.

The choice of protest reports as the main focus of this study was based on their multifaceted relevance to media systems analysis. Protesters are an important enabler of social transformation, reflecting the complex social and political phenomena

emerging in the post-nation-state era. Protests provide a platform for individuals and groups to voice grievances and seek change through collective, non-institutional action. While marginalized groups – those with limited access to political, economic, or social power – often use protests as a means to challenge systematic inequities and demand recognition, the scope of protest participation extends beyond these communities. Protests frequently include allies, activists, and individuals from diverse social backgrounds who share common goals or are motivated by broader principles of justice and equality. By creating a public space for dialogue and dissent, protests enable both marginalized voices and broader coalitions to advocate for systemic change, highlighting the inclusive and dynamic nature of collective action. This is particularly relevant in China, where the historical and political significance of protests varies widely under different regimes. This change in regime has influenced how the media engage with and portray these protests, making them a rich subject for studying the interplay between the media system and political dynamics.

1.4 **Research Questions, Methodologies, and Contributions**

  Inspired by previous studies, this thesis has proposed three research questions:

    1) What are the characteristics of mainland China and Hong Kong newspaper reporting on protests in 2014 and 2019?

    2) What are the differences and similarities in the sourcing practices and news narrative of protest and policing with People's Daily, South China Morning Post (SCMP), Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily?

    3) How did the discourse relating to "democracy" compare between mainland China and Hong Kong newspapers during protests in 2014 and 2019?

Methodologically, this study employs a mixed-method approach to examine media performance in protest reporting in Hong Kong and mainland China. Quantitative content analysis will be utilized to investigate the extent to which Hong Kong and

mainland media rely on the protest paradigm, allowing for a comparative analysis of the characteristics of protest pattern in newspaper coverage. Complementing this, qualitative thematic analysis will be employed to identify and analyse "paradigm" in media coverage of protests. This flexible approach is crucial for uncovering nuanced insights and providing a deeper understanding of the subtleties in media narratives.

This doctoral thesis, through a comparative approach, can help to refine the protest paradigm by empirical studies, and expand the theoretical frameworks of the protest paradigm through the Chinese lens. This thesis provides a critical response to the prevailing model of media systems – my study shows that the current concept of media systems is not enough to explain the evidence, encouraging scholars to move beyond static models, and there is a need to develop a more porous and flexible concept of media systems. Furthermore, my thesis has mode methodological contributions to the field of content analysis. Important is, my thesis highlights the protest paradigm as analytical approach that advance the precision of coding in media analysis while also providing a more understanding of how paradigm been applied by distinct media systems for portrayal of protests. Specifically, these characterized of paradigm influence how protests are portrayed, including the selection of narratives, tone, sourcing, and focus, as well as the depiction of protesters and their actions. By examining these aspects in tandem, my study demonstrates how the Hong Kong and mainland media's portrayal of 2014 and 2019 protests reflects broader ideological and structural influences, offering deeper insight into the dynamics of media practices, and discourse. This systematic enhancement facilitates deeper insights into the dynamics of protest coverage, promoting a more rigorous and detailed examination of media narratives in contentious contexts.

1.5 Scope the Thesis

In Introductory chapter, I examine the significant social protests that occurred in Hong Kong in 2014 and 2019, establishing the contextual foundation of this study. My primary aim is to investigate how news media within mainland China and Hong

Kong portray the protests. This chapter outlines fundamental theories of media systems and discuss the concept of de-westernisation, seeking to explore media practices within a distinctly Chinese context. By analysing the Hong Kong protests, this study aims to illuminate the unique features of Chinese political communication, moving beyond the often fragmented and Western-centric perspectives that have previously characterized discussions on the Chinese media system.

The second chapter begins with a review of the media system systems in mainland China and Hong Kong, providing a theoretical backdrop for the project. This study is inspired by de-westernising theoretical research, which challenges the predominant views on identity, communication, and culture. This chapter critically engages with mainstream debates about China's authoritarian media model, challenging reductive, Western-centric concepts of Chinese media as solely propagandistic. By highlighting the distinct historical, cultural, and economic trajectories that have shaped Chinese journalism, this chapter shows that the evolution of China's media system cannot be fully understood through the lens of Western capitalist models. While acknowledging the propagandistic functions of Chinese media within a state-controlled framework, the chapter also explores the role of media commercialisation, market reforms, and regulation in creating a more dynamic and multifaceted media landscape. Originating in an era focused on state survival, Chinese journalism is marked by a preference for stability and aggressive propaganda in political news coverage. The media system in China inherits the Soviet Communist Legacy and adheres to the "Party Principle," where the Communist Party of China aims to "secure the regime's foundations through the centralization of power and the establishment of public ownership over the principal means of production," (Strivastav 2015, cited by Mandla 2023). This chapter moves beyond simplistic binaries to provide a nuanced understanding of Chinese journalism as a complex and evolving system that reflects the interplay between state authority, economic priorities, and societal change.

The second section of this chapter will delineate the characteristics of the Hong Kong

media system post-1997, emphasising how, after the handover, the Hong Kong media system coped with the dynamics of marketization, regulatory changes, and cultural integration. By examining the changes in the internal norms of Hong Kong's journalism industry, this study highlights that while Hong Kong continues to maintain elements of press freedom and market-driven, but it also facing the pressure comes from the mainland China towards the media's autonomy.

The subsequent chapter (the method chapter) outlines the methodology employed in this study. Quantitative content analysis is central to the research design, supported by innovative coding schemes. In this chapter, I introduce the use of thematic analysis as a methodological tool to identify "paradigmatic" in newspaper coverage of protests. The philosophy behind thematic analysis extends beyond simple categorization; it involves a deeper exploration of how individuals interpret and make sense of the world around them. This process reflects a fundamental aspect of human cognition – our ability to process complex information through patterns and themes, which helps to simplify and make sense of world. Such an understanding is essential for grasping how media shapes societal views during critical events like protests, potentially guiding public discourse and influencing social and political outcomes.

The first analytical chapter (case study one) explores the performance of Hong Kong and mainland newspapers during the Occupy Central Love and Peace (OCLP) movement in 2014. It examines the significant characteristics of the protest paradigm adopted by four newspapers, alongside descriptions and dominant reactions that reinforced the protest narratives. A systematic comparative analysis of policing issues, central to the protest reports, is conducted to observe how newspapers in both regions constructed this issue and its impact on the protest paradigm. The sourcing analysis seeks to determine who was quoted in the protest coverage by newspapers from Hong Kong and mainland, examining the reliance on and citation of various sources. This chapter contends that democratic discourse is a central theme in Hong Kong 2014 protests and their newspaper representations, analysing how news media address

discourse and hegemony in Chinese political communication in response to the democratic issues of the Hong Kong demonstrations.

The second analytical chapter (case study two) focuses on the news coverage by three Hong Kong newspapers and one from mainland following the 2019 anti-government protests. It assesses the media's reliance on the protest paradigm and explores the differences in its application by Hong Kong and mainland media. Special attention is given to how newspapers from both regions portrayed the conflict between protesters and police – a key theme of the 2019 protests. This portrayal influences readers' perceptions, often polarizing theme between supporting the protesters or the police. This chapter also reviews the use of sources and the similarities and differences in source selection, quotation, and citation between mainland and Hong Kong. Furthermore, the construction and presentation of democratic discourse in the newspapers are analysed, highlighting the interplay between discursive dominance, hegemony, and resistance in geopolitical context across China.

The conclusion discusses the findings and reflects on the implications of this PhD research project. It acknowledges the study's limitations and offers insights intended to inform future study in the field.

Chapter Two. Revisiting Media System: Contemporary Media Landscapes in China and Hong Kong

> "The class which has the means of material production at its
> disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental
> production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of
> mental production are on the whole subject to it." – Karl Marx
> and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology (1845-1846)

2.1 Introduction

The existing literatures suggests that most media scholars categorise China's media system within an authoritarian model, emphasising its propagandistic and mouthpiece function in transmitting information (e.g., Chen 2014, Sparks 2010), while highlighting the Chinese government's significant intervention in media operations and freedom of speech (e.g., Wang 1996, Elswah 2020, Shih 2012). However, this study seeks to challenge these opinions by exploring the strategic use of media by the Chinese government as a tool to publicise CCP policies, guide public opinion, unite the populace, and mobilise the Chinese from a political party perspective, specifically, the Chinese Communist Party (Bishop 1989). Huang (2001) contends that media development encompasses both the evolution of media attributes and the expansion of media functions. In my thesis, this argument is particularly relevant when examining the development of Chinese media, which is intrinsically linked to the country's specific political, economic, cultural, and social contexts. This chapter will explore the dual aspects of media system development – attributes and functions, and how these manifests within the Chinese media landscape. Thus, the second section will focus on discussing how Chinese media, under the leadership of the Chinese government, have transitioned from mere propaganda tools into commercial enterprises. A minority of Chinese scholars suggested that a transition from "two steps" to "three steps" characterises China's media industry reform (Pan 2008, Wang

2006). In my thesis, I aim to critically evaluate the reform China's media system as a whole after years of exploration, that is, how to transcend the dogmatic and rigid understanding of Marx's news theory with Chinese characteristics and the essence of socialism.

Another research subject, Hong Kong, is a Special Administrative Region of China with a unique media landscape that blends Western and Chinese influences. Therefore, it is crucial to review the historical development of Hong Kong's media system and landscape from the colonial period to the present, especially after the handover in 1997. This chapter begins by discussing the theory of the Hong Kong media system based on previous studies and discoveries. It then reviews the current state of the media industry, including the media ownership structure in Hong Kong, changes, and the regulatory framework for print, television, and broadcasting. These discussions will illuminate the potential future development of Hong Kong media under the "one country, two systems" principle, highlighting the role of Hong Kong media in reflecting and influencing the socio-political landscape of the region, specifically media government management.

2.2 The CCP's Influence: Party Propaganda Inc. and Clientelism in China

Most scholars tend to describe China's media system as authoritarian, tightly controlled by the government, and characterised by limited freedom of speech (e.g., Chan 2014, Schein 2018, Tushnet 2015, Huang 2009). Previous studies often focus on how the Chinese government exerts pressure on the media to control the editing and transmission of information (Liu 2007, Chan 2014). However, there is less literature exploring the formation and transformation of China' contemporary media system from the perspective of the ruling Party, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For the CCP, unlike bourgeois parties, the dissemination of ideas occupies a crucial position (Yu 2002, Lin 2022, Maurice 1967). Liu (2004) argues that in the context of "one Earth, two Rules," capitalism is generally in the

ascendancy, while the communist movement is experiencing a low tide. Thus, the Chinese Communist Party recognised how to use the medium to carry out revolution, reform, and ideologies dissemination is not just a daily activity but a strategic priority.

In the early days of its founding, the Communist Party of China placed significant emphasis on political communication, carefully considering its purpose and direction (Hu 2006). During the period of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, Mao published "An Analysis of the Various Classes of Chinese Society" on December 1, 1925. This article directly addressed the crucial question of "who are our enemies and who are friends," (p.1), and he stresses the importance of using the media to fight.

During the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), a media reported Japanese atrocities and framed the conflict as a patriotic struggle for national survival (Wang 2008), and the CCP utilized grassroots communication strategies, including wall posters, pamphlets, and local meetings, a support traditional media ensures their message reached the rural population (Chen 2012). The media system during this period was characterized by its focus on unity, anti-imperialist sentiment, and the promotion of socialist ideology.

During the War of Liberation, newspaper propaganda played a pivotal role in the Chinese Communist Party's dissemination efforts. Sullivan (2013) discusses during this period, propaganda materials often used emotional appeals to foster a sense of injustice and urgency among the populace, by highlighting the suffering of the Chinese people under Kuomintang rule, the CCP sought to evoke strong emotional reactions that would translate into support for their cause. Meanwhile, the CCP drew narratives that portrayed its leaders and soldiers as heroic figures fighting for the liberation of the Chinese, this contrasted sharply with the depiction of Kuomintang leaders

as corrupt (Zhou 2014). Lansberger (2008) found in this period, propaganda messages were simplified and repeated in media coverage to ensure they were easily understood and retained by the general population. This period saw the strategic use of media to shape public opinion and consolidate support for the CCP's cause. For example, in 1946, Hu Qiaomu, an influential journalist, wrote 23 hard news articles for the Jiefang Daily (PLA Daily), aiming to expose the Chinese people to what he called the true face of Chiang Kai-shek's "fake democracy" and the realities of the civil war waged by the Kuomintang (Wang 1999). Thus, we could see, the CCP's strategic use of newspaper propaganda during the War of Liberation was a critical factor in their success – by effectively utilizing media to expose the flaws of their opponents and promote their own ideological vision.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the CCP adopted the Soviet model[5] to enhance "Propaganda" and "Mouthpiece" roles, achieving direct and comprehensive control over the state's power system across society. This led to the creation of top-down power network system extending from state leaders to ordinary workers and peasants. China's political communication system was thoroughly integrated into this strict organisational network. Feng (2001) observed that the structure and operational system of this political framework achieved a high degree of isomorphism with the state machinery, forming a nationwide news network with agencies like Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, and China National Radio at its core. Concurrently, provinces and municipalities across China established Party newspapers and radio broadcasts aligned

---

[5] Following Mao's death in 1976, and the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, the Party's strict ideological control over the media was notably loosened, allowing commercial influences to re-enter the news industry (Chua 2013). In 1979, newspapers were permitted to advertise consumer goods. By 1983, they were allowed to retain and reinvest after-tax profits instead of forwarding them to higher-level government agencies. In 1985, newspapers gained the ability to manage their own distribution services, reducing their reliance on the national postal service. This reform enabled them to compete not only in terms of news content but also in the speed of delivery. I will elaborate on this in the second section.

with administrative regions. This network encompassed a series of national propaganda initiatives covering the entire society, such as the propagandist system, collective newspaper reading system, radio station system, and film screening system, all supported by political power at various levels. This media landscape structure remained in place until the period of economic reforms began (Liu 1999, Zhang and Li 2006).

Some scholars argue that one of the most visible characteristics of China's media system is the unified management of political information (e.g., Li 2002, Wang and Zhang 2001). In December 1949, the Central Government Administration Council issued the People's Government and its Subordinate Organs policy. This policy effectively abolished the right of non- -- Communist media to publish news differing from official narratives. It also imposed strict regulations on the reporting of international current affairs, prohibiting other newspapers from publishing any reports or commentary without central government approval. Following the outbreak of the Korean War, the CCP employed various forms of propaganda to mobilise and rally the entire nation in support of resisting the United States and aiding North Korea. This period illustrates the Party's capability to use media as a tool for political mobilisation and control (Brady 2016, Tang 2016, Vilmer 2018).

Throughout of era of socialist transformation and the ensuing decade of development, the CCP achieved significant developments in the realm of political communication, notably the symbolisation of political communication (Esarey 2011, Wang 2017, Chang 2009). This period is notable for the effective use of symbols and imagery by the CCP to convey political messages and foster a cohesive national identity. Some scholars have noted that the media skilfully transformed the discourse of Party leaders into the official voice of the central government in their

dissemination of information (Fang 2004). The media used political rhetoric to elevate these communications to a significant political level and structure. Importantly, this approach includes a clear value judgement system, marked with distinct political labels. Zeng (2001f) describes this approach as "mouthpiece," noting that this framework was subsequently reinforced through repeated media constructions, ultimately leading the formation of a political surge (Zeng 2001f.p.89).

Additionally, "meetings" are the most common form of communication within the organisation of the CCP and serve as a crucial means of unifying ideas, addressing problems, and advancing initiatives. The culture of "meeting" and conference press reinforces the media's role as a mouthpiece for the Party, providing new impetus to its characteristics (Zhao 1998, Liebman 2005). Stockmann (2013) suggests that in these meetings, the role of the media is crucial in controlling the narrative and minimising dissent by presenting a cohesive and unified front. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China's media system was transformed into an instrument of state propaganda, tightly controlled by the CCP to disseminate its ideologies and policies (Chang 1989). The characteristics of the media system during this period are defined by several features. Lynch (2004) analyses how the media played a crucial role in cultivating the personality cult of Mao. During this period, media outlets were purged of individuals who did not align with the Party's revolutionary line, and content that deviated from approved narratives was censored (Schoenhals 1996). The media was also used to mobilise the masses for various political campaigns, for example, the Red Guard movement and the campaigns against the Four Olds (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, Luo 1999, Wang 2005). Another significant feature of the media system in this period was the content of media was heavily focused on revolutionary themes. Chang and Feng (2000) found that literature, art, and entertainment were all produced to

reflect revolutionary values and to promote the ideals of socialism and communism. Cheek (1997) claims the dissemination of Maoist thought was a central function of the media. Overall, these characteristics highlight the role of media as a powerful tool for political control and ideological indoctrination during one of China's most tumultuous periods. Also, Chang (1989), and Zhao (2005) suggest the rhetorical movement within texts during that period not only deeply affected the linguistic structure of Chinese society, but also intensified political fanaticism and dishonesty in the function of the media. Thus, it is evident that throughout various periods, the CCP has consistently been the primary agent of political communication, directing the construction and formation of the media system.

Recently, the term "Clientelism"[6] has been adopted by Chinese scholars to replace the word "mouthpiece," previously used to describe the media's loyalty to the CCP in China (e.g., Wu and He 2019, Yu 2006, Huang 2015). According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), clientelism is characterised as a social organisation pattern where patrons control access to social resources, which are provided to clients in return for deference and various forms of support (p.58), and they suggest that "clientelism could be considered as a critical aspect of characterising China's media – politics" (Wu and He 2019.p.5). Lee, He, and Huang (2007) analysed the development of major media organisations in Shanghai, highlighting how clientelism shapes media practices. Their study emphasises that clientelism limits horizontal ties and enforces vertical loyalty to Party authority, affecting editorial

---

[6] In media studies, the concept of clientelism is often discussed in the context of political communication and the relationship between media, politics, and public resources. For example, Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson have extensively studied clientelism, defining it as a network of patron-client relationships where patrons provide material goods or access to resources in exchange for political support. This relationship is not just limited to direct exchanges between individuals but can be understood as a broader system where political parties, media organisations, and various intermediaries, or "brokers," facilitate these exchanges within a complex, often hierarchical structure (Allen 2011).

independence and journalistic integrity. Hassid (2008) found that
clientelism affects the daily practices of journalists, who must navigate a
landscape where personal relationships and political loyalty often determine
career advancement and access to resources.

Yang (2008) argues that the Chinese system compromises journalistic
independence, leading to self-censorship among reporters[7]. Journalists in
China face ethical challenges as they attempt to uphold professional
standards while conforming to Party guidelines. This balancing act often
results in a cautious reporting style, where sensitive subjects are either
sidestepped or presented in a way that aligns with official government
perspectives[8] (Stockmann 2013). Lee et al., (2007) identify clientelism as a
key aspect of the Party-Market Corporatism model with Chinese media
organizations. Consequently, the following section will examine the

---

[7] Chua (2013) in a study of Chinese journalists and ethnographic methods, discovered a consensus
among Chinese journalists that their primary role is to unravel the chain of interests underlying each
story. According to Chua (2013), journalists believe that by neutrally presenting who benefits and who
loses at each stage, the facts will naturally speak for themselves, thereby minimizing the risk of
censorship. Chua (2013) concludes that this approach represents a form of journalistic professionalism
specific to China. However, it also has its drawbacks, particularly under the existing conditions of the
Chinese news industry, where it fails to protect journalists who perceive their work as increasingly
mercenary and manipulative (Sun 2010). Similarly, Lin (2011) found that it is not solely censorship that
constrains Chinse journalists, but rather the complex web of interpersonal networks, vested interests,
and varying levels of personal influence that pose significant challenges to their practice.

[8] In my thesis, I will examine the Chinese news censorship system through the lenses of class and
power dynamics. Feng (2006, 2009) highlights that despite an increasing recognition among Chinese
news producers that the media's role should be to inform rather than to propagate, there remains a
strong interest among powerful individuals in maintaining the status quo. For example, government
departments that retain executive power are unlikely to relinquish favourable coverage willingly.
Likewise, newspaper executives, who now hold financial stakes in their publications, may prefer to
self-censor rather than risk sanctions from government authorities (Feng 2009.p.189). Regarding this,
Feng (2009) argues that this presents a form of structural inertia that must be addressed. When the news
system fails to operate equitably and does not serve the broader interests of society, "objectivity" alone
cannot be seen as embodying a liberal news value. Furthermore, there is a nothing inherently beneficial
in "objective" reporting unless it aligns with the social function of representation. In this context,
Chinese journalists and censorship practices have made objectivity a symbol of good journalism,
focusing on appearances rather than questioning the actual impact (Chua 2013). As Feng (2009) notes,
"[Chinese journalists] settle for a standard that symbolises good journalism, rather than asking what
really good journalism is." (p.87).

government's market-oriented reform in the media sector and the injection
of capital into media companies.

2.2.1. Leveraging Market Dynamics: Reforming the Media Industry under Socialist Principles

In the 1980s profoundly influenced by economic globalisation, China embarked on a path of reform and Opening-up. The economic reforms established a socialist market economy and facilitated China's integration with the global community. This opening up significantly transformed China's economic mechanisms, leading to a marked differentiation in social structure and classes[9] (Chuang 2000). This period saw the rise of new forms of social organisation, new social classes, and individual identities. As reforms deepened, China underwent a profound social transformation (Lin 1999, Chuang 2000). In this stage of rapid societal change, there emerged a crisis of belief in Marxism and a recognition crisis regarding socialist core values. The transformation of media organisations has been accompanied by the strategic installation of CCP Party Branches within newsrooms by the CCP. This integration serves multiple purposes and has significant implications for media practices and the broader political landscape.

In 2005, China's media embarked on its initial phase of reform and development by transitioning from a purely nationalised enterprise system model. Leading the charge were eight party newspapers and institutions, spearheaded by the People's Daily. These entities aimed to alleviate the economic challenges faced by state-owned media

---

[9] Numerous Chinese scholars have grappled with understanding why the country's economic liberalisation has not spurred a grassroots movement toward democracy. For example, Guo (2000) suggests that the long history of Confucianism has ingrained a deep-seated deference to political authority among the population. This Confucian political culture, according to Guo (2000), has led to a populace that is generally compliant and passive in matters of state governance. Lacking a tradition of self-governance, the Chinese masses are accustomed to accepting the leadership provided by the existing political system without a strong inclination towards seeking democratic reforms.

institutions and enhance employee welfare by aligning with the ongoing planned economic system reforms and the foundational requirements of constructing a socialist market economy (Zhao, Hugo, and Hu 2008). The initiative, titled "The New Path of Treatment," was a joint report submitted to the National Ministry of Finance. It advocated for the implementation of enterprise management to an appropriate extent. The primary objectives were to secure government and policy support for expansion, commercial advertising, and appropriate self-management. In 1980, the annual advertising income of the Chinese media surpassed 100 million yuan. After the Luoyang Daily set a benchmark in 1985, newspapers across the country began using self-distribution. Post-1992, certain media organisations with final approval rights and a market-oriented focus subcontracted part of their pages or programming slots to advertising agencies and other businesses (Sun 2020). The newspaper business was formally included in the resolution on accelerating the development of the tertiary sector released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in June 1993. By 1996, the majority of newspapers that had previously relied on state support became self-sufficient, with some becoming significant sources of profit. Furthermore, early in 1996, China's first newspaper conglomerate, the Guangzhou Daily Newspaper Group, was founded (Mok 1997, Xu 2011).

Hallin and Mancini (2004), McChesney (2000), and Curran (1991) have suggested that when the media's main income source shifts from the government to the market, the media system as we know it is fundamentally altered. The media must not only develop their own channels for recouping production expenses but must also expand these channels regularly in order to provide value (Hanna 2011). This means that media organisations are no longer simply the mouthpiece for journalism, as advocated by the ruling party, but are fundamentally responsible for their own survival and development. Circulation and audience ratings, for example, are no longer merely general indicators enabling them to claim credit from superiors or to boast to the outside world; rather, they are required to attract investment from advertisers, increase

market share, and improve the competitiveness of the media market (He et al. 2013, 2015).

With the reform of the media market and the increasingly fierce competition, the media began to encounter deeper institutional obstacles. Among these, the contradiction and conflict between "editing" and "sale" is a significant issue that affects and restricts media development. Therefore, the separation of the two functions marks the second reform of Chinese media. The initial separation referred to the distinction between the news business and gradually developed into the separation of media coverage and the media outlet's management system.

On the basis of separating "editing" and "sale", Chinese media continue to innovate their management systems under the premise of adhering to the leadership of the Party and public ownership. The most typical example of this is the shareholding reform of media organisations. One of the models is to realise the separation of the media editorial department from advertising, distribution, printing, and diversified management and other business departments. The editorial department is responsible for media content collection, interviewing, reporting, and editing, maintaining the attributes of public institutions. The separated operating departments, i.e., sale department, on the other hand, form a company under the modern enterprise system (Tang 2003.pp. 259-261, Li 1993, cited by Ran and Mei 2005).

As for the original motives for re-establishing newspaper groups, Li (2009) summarised several motives: firstly, strengthening the management of newspaper groups; secondly, enhancing the power of Party newspapers to become the main force in guiding public opinion; and thirdly, transforming the growth of the newspaper industry (Nie 1999). Huang and Zhang (2006) analysed the process of reform of Chinese newspaper groups by taking the Sichuan Newspaper Group and Zhejiang Newspaper Group as examples. They argued that this method of divestiture aimed to separate the business culture part of the enterprise media group in accordance with the

overall requirements of cultural system reform, transforming the original enterprise legal person system into an enterprise legal person. Under the guidance of government policies, diversification of investment entities should be realised, and a modern enterprise system[10] should be gradually introduced (Huang and Zhang 2006).

The cultural reform of the media industry constitutes the third institutional reform of the Chinese media system, spanning from 1978 to the present. One of the most distinctive features of China is that the political party authorities regard ideological attributes as the fundamental, or even the sole, attributes of culture (Wang 2007). They consider all cultural production and activities as purely "public goods," implementing a management mode characterised by government-run culture and government-controlled cultural activities.

On the other side, the most notable aspect of China's shifting media, namely the shift towards a people-oriented model, was summarized by Luo (2009, cited in Fu and Tsui 2003, p. 15) as follows: "By people-oriented change, we mean that the media's function is evolving from being merely the mouthpiece of the party and the government to becoming an instrument of national information distribution." First, although continuing to be influenced by the ideology of the governing party (government), the Chinese media also places a strong emphasis on the idea of "audience-oriented news reporting" (Luo 2009, p. 7). Secondly, the overall structure of the media is no longer dominated by the Party media, but by a combination of

---

[10] Some scholars argue that the widespread support for market-oriented reforms in China reflects the dominance of a "neoliberal ideology" that the Chinese government has actively promoted through various methods of persuasion and, at times, coercion, particularly since the late 1980s (e.g., Wang 2006, Chua 2013). Chua (2013) contends that despite the vibrant appearance of news content, the broader impact of commercialisation has been the promotion of ideological homogenisation and political conservatism. However, reducing the issue merely to "ideology" may oversimplify the matter. This echoes a critique by Clifford Geertz (1973), who warned against reducing the concept of "ideology" to a vague term that does little to advance our understanding of the underlying social phenomena. In his work, namely Ideology as a Cultural System", he argued that ideologies should not be dismissed as false or overly simplistic, but rather understood as "interacting systems of signs, interacting modes of meaning" that serve to "translate emotions into meaning and make them socially acceptable in some way" (p.207, cited by Chua 2013).

different types of media, including the Party media, the market media, and the public media, which has become an important public power in the form of a soft power that can influence society. Thirdly, the fulfilment of the public's right to information has begun to take precedence in how news communication is run; particularly regarding current major developments, media coverage has been increasingly transparent and sincere. These indicate the beginning of journalism professionalism, with examples of this recent transparency including the Sun Zhigang affair in Guangzhou, the Shenyang triad affair, the nail households affair in Chongqing, the cyanobacteria at Taihu Lake in Jiangsu, the black brick kiln affair in Shaanxi, the "tiger photos" conflict in Shaanxi, the Hanchuan earthquake in Sichuan, and the Sanlu milk powder affair (Wang 2011, Cheng 2019, Zhang 2008, Huang and Wu 2005, Li 2013, Wu and Long 2017, Zhao 2017). Such examples demonstrate how the macro-value emphasis of the Chinese news media is shifting rapidly to an approach that maximises the fulfilment of the public's right to express their views in social life, and to fulfil the public's right to knowledge (Zhu and Zhang 2020).

However, it must be acknowledged that the level of marketisation of the Chinese media remains relatively low. Despite the fact that capital, as a new social force, has disrupted the pattern of traditional social power, interpreted new social structures and social relations through its own logic, and played an increasingly significant role in news production (Dwivedi 2021, Taylor 2015), the marketisation process is still in its nascent stages. In many senses, capital must be packaged with conventional ideas and even realise itself by leveraging traditional social power (Zhao 1998, Curran and Park 2000). Thus, rather than being a connection of choice and decision, the relationship between the power of capital and traditional social power is an intricate game in the contemporary sphere of news generation (Wang and Chan 2003, Huang 2009, Sun 2003, Lu and Pan 2006). So far, the primary conflicts with which the Chinese media currently contends, as well as the unique structure of the contemporary Chinese media system, are arguably the monolithic character of political interests and the plurality of economic interests. This tension is well-documented in the literature, where scholars

argue that the media's role as both a tool for state propaganda and an economic entity creates a complex and often contradictory media landscape (Happer 2013, Cric 2018, Meng 2015).

2.3 Post-Handover Dynamics: Evaluation and Characteristics of Hong Kong's Media System and Landscape

Despite its small size, Hong Kong holds significant strategic importance for mainland China. In Hong Kong and Chinese Culture, Jin (2000) claims, "Hong Kong's actual value to the Chinese, particularly to the mainland, rests in its accumulation of exemplary successes on the route to modernity, not in its limited economic impact," (p.4). Any examination of Hong Kong's media culture must consider its colonial past. However, colonialism in Hong Kong possesses unique historical factors – it is distinctive in that it culturally and politically differentiates the region from mainland China (Ruhlig 2016). In this sense, post-colonialism in Hong Kong emerged before decolonisation; the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China was not merely a straightforward process of returning Chinese territory to the Chinese (Abbas 1997).

Today, the coexistence of Chinese and Western cultures in the city reflects a blend of traditional values and modern aspirations. This fusion has given rise to a new civilizational order, linking modernity inextricably to Chinese tradition. For Chinese people, Hong Kong epitomises a modern, civilised society. However, Jin (2000) points out that Hong Kong's true value and importance can only be fully realised if it remains distinct from mainland Chinese society (p.189). Economically, Hong Kong serves as an important conduit for Chinese commerce, finance, and trade, acting as a window for China to engage with the global cultural environment and as a bridge between Western and Eastern civilisations. Indeed, it is a focal point where political and economic forces converge.

Scobell (1988) argues that Hong Kong represents a unique sociological experiment due to its political system of "one country, two systems," which significantly influences the growth and unification of China. Many scholars contend that prior to the transfer of sovereignty to China, Hong Kong had already developed a highly market-oriented and oligopolistic media system unique to the region. This system, initially promoted by the British colonial government, was further intensified under the Chinese government (Lee 2010, Ma 2012, Cheung 2004). By 1997, the media system had become highly susceptible to state intervention and structurally unfavourable to dissident and marginalised groups (Feng 2007). In recent years, censorship has eroded editorial independence in Hong Kong, forcing media outlets to align their content with the expectations of authorities or influential economic entities (Ma 2012). Hong Kong remains a more open and free society compared to mainland China, with less direct government intervention over media organisations. In contrast, mainland Chinese media has traditionally been viewed as the CCP's eyes and ears, operating within a more restricted societal framework. The inevitable collision between the media systems of these distinct cultures, each with its own traditions and characteristics, is evident. The following sections delve deeper into empirical research and arguments regarding the media landscape in Hong Kong.

2.3.1 Administrative and Legal Frameworks: Evolution of Hong Kong's Media Post-Handover

In his book, Administrative Control and Legal Control of the News Media in Hong Kong, Tong (2010) examined the administrative and legal framework of Hong Kong's news media oversight. Chinese communication specialists are especially interested in the regulation of the news media when studying the media environment in Hong Kong, and Tong (2010) explained that Hong Kong society, which has evolved over many centuries, is permeated by a history of upholding the rule of law and the ethos of preserving free speech. He quoted the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government's statement that "We are delighted that the people of Hong Kong

are able to use their rights and freedoms in a fundamentally logical and responsible way" (Tong 2010, p.18) in reference to a section of the Consultation Paper on Civil Liberties and Social Order, continuing, "Different points of view are respected in our culture. We also make an effort to overlook rare departures from the norm that may be intolerable to regular people" (Article 8). In a piece concerning contempt of court published in the Oriental Daily, Sun (2011) quoted Chief Justice Chan Siu-kai of the High Court of Hong Kong, who said, "Judicial independence and freedom of the press are the two cornerstones of a successful and stable society." The judicial system is therefore subject to fair and unbiased criticism. This incident demonstrated how press freedom has been abused, despite the fact that Sun (2011) claimed that Hong Kong's media system is based on freedom and the rule of law.

Meanwhile, the article, In Watching the Chinese and Foreign Media Talk about Hong Kong's Handover, Gan (1995) highlighted the varied coverage of the momentous event of Hong Kong's handover by different countries, groups, and political forces, capturing several of the issues aired, including "Whose responsibility is Hong Kong's prosperity," "Hong Kong optimism and pessimism," and "The world's worries, joys, and anxieties" (pp. 17, 20, 29). In addition, the article Hong Kong's Handover and the State of Media Operations, Tse (1999) examined the phenomena of the Hong Kong news media's alternating renewal, closure, and change throughout the transition. The article suggested that the 1997 repatriation of Hong Kong was a substantial external political and economic factor that interacted with the regulations governing the growth of the media business, and fundamentally altered the initial media ecology.

Furthermore, Zhang (1999) contended, through a comparative examination of Hong Kong's handover coverage, that the mainland media's "extensive promotion and education placed a lot of pressure on journalists and curtailed their freedom of speech in order to compete with the foreign media" (p. 80). He also argued that "It should be impossible for journalists to perform the aforementioned four tasks while providing coverage, and it is challenging to find the time and mental energy to explore aesthetic

novelties" (p. 56). In her study of how the economic media covers non-economic events, Nan (2000) compared the news coverage of Hong Kong's handover in the Shanghai Business Daily and the Asian Wall Street Journal, observing that the publicity in the Shanghai Business Daily regarding Hong Kong's return was unrivalled in extent, diversified in style, and patriotic in emphasis.

The return of Hong Kong to China as a major world event sparked a media news war and presented a wealth of research opportunities. In their comparative study of foreign media coverage, Li et al. (1999) examined the identities and effects of the naturalisation processes of Hong Kong journalists' coverage of breaking news, concluding, "Our comparative study suggests that differences in media ideology between countries are usually more significant than differences within countries" (p. 178). How the mainland and Hong Kong interact face-to-face is most striking at this important historical moment of expectation and uncertainty.

After the handover, Liu (2000) authored a book titled "One Country, Two Systems" that addressed the news ecology of Hong Kong, describing it as being "… in the swirl of river well water" (p. 1). In his book, A Study of the Current Situation of the Newspaper Industry in Hong Kong, Shi (2001) studied in-depth the recent events that impacted the newspaper industry in Hong Kong since the handover. Understanding the professional philosophy and administration of the media in Hong Kong is facilitated by the reading list "Media Style: The Value and Operation of the Media" (Zhang 2003). The aforementioned studies provide a more complete overview of Hong Kong's post-handover media environment than that discussed herein.

According to Professionalization of the Media and the Political Transformation of Hong Kong by Li (2008), journalists in Hong Kong "generally adhere to professionalism, including adherence to the objectivity, impartiality, and ethics of journalism" (pp. 105-124). The credibility of the Hong Kong media is positively connected with professionalism, while it is adversely correlated with party

identification or loyalty. Li (2008) states that Hong Kong journalists give high priority to press freedom. Moreover, in order to achieve "one country, two systems", the news media must exert considerable effort to encourage the transparency of social decision-making (Lee 2008).

In his book, The Division and Integration of Political Economy in Hong Kong's Media Structure, Press Freedom and the Change of Political Power, Lee (2009) divided the evolution of media ideology into three stages, examining the state of press freedom at each stage using the theory of political economy in a broad sense. According to this theory, the new political economy "has had an unequal and conflicting influence on the form and content of the media…" (Lee 2009, p. 13). Moreover, the economic concerns of the media give politics room to breathe, and the value of journalistic professionalism preserves the independence and authority of the media in Hong Kong (Chan 2007, Lee 2018, Fung 2007, Price 2002).

This issue was raised by Li (1999), who contended, for instance, that the Hong Kong media constantly reflects power structures and responds to shifts in power relations, but that this process is not a mechanical or fixed one-to-one link. Typically, the media reinforces and promotes the perspective of the establishment held by the mainstream elite. The media's viewpoint can no longer be characterised as universal; rather, it must create a range of diverse realities if the elite consensus disintegrates, or the power structure has an identity crisis. The media's political composition changes as a result of the shifting of power structures, which will also alter the media's internal operating standards and cultural output. The media will resume its previous course once the political landscape returns to normal (Lee 1991).

When examining Hong Kong's media ecosystem, it is difficult to ignore the impact of the precept of "one country, two systems" (Jiang 2017). First, Hong Kong's media and journalists are structurally impacted by the "one country, two systems" doctrine (Qian and Chen 2005). Second, public concerns provide a clear distinction for media

organisations between the state and the nation. For instance, the phrase "one country" has gradually come to define the media discourse, although cultural co-direction has developed over time and is not apparent simply in the people of Hong Kong's shared cultural identity with China (Chen 2009, Saraisky 2015). The closer contact of journalists with Chinese officials when evaluating news also reflects this (Liu 2011, Purvis 2019). Thirdly, the competition between active media organisations provided momentum to this process. Market forces and journalists' perceptions of professionalism served as the endpoint of the balance of political power, while initiatives to promote civic engagement and public discourse, and the implementation of media literacy campaigns, for instance, aided the further growth and maturation of civil society, and the preservation of a specific public space for the media (Chen 2009).

In addition, Hong Kong people's own identity will also affect the Hong Kong media landscape (Kam 2020, Lee 2018, Lo and Wong 2021). Following Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997, academic studies of the media environment and political discourse in Hong Kong have given considerable attention to the topic of residents' cultural identities (for instance, Gao 2020, Liu et al. 2020, Zhou 2017, Zhang and Yu 2015, Zhong 2007, Xie 1996). Chinese identity is currently expanding, and some studies claimed that Hong Kong identity and Chinese identity do not necessarily conflict with one another (Fung 2017, Ortmann 2021, Veg 2017, Chung 2014). According to Laung et al. (2017), in the first in-depth study of Hong Kong since the handover, the identification of the city's teens with Chinese identity increased by 40% in the 10 years following 1997, and they prioritised their Chinese identity over their Hong Kong identity. While the number of people who hold several identities increased between 1997 and 2000 (LaGrotteria 2021, Lee 2022), the percentage of young people who identify simply as 'Hong Kong citizens' has drastically decreased by 28.7% annually, a statistic that demonstrates how Hong Kong residents often participate in political discourse in favour of the mainland (Laung et al. 2009).

A significant research study concerning the journalistic ethics of journalists from the mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan was conducted on a large scale in 2000 by mainland academics working with academics from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Li et al. 2000). It concluded that journalists from the mainland and Taiwan had fairly high ethical values, but that these were difficult to achieve in their daily journalistic work. Indeed, "Hong Kong journalists' attitudes or perceptions [of the mainland] were more consistent" (Li et al. pp. 29-44).

According to a recent study by Zeng (2020), although media workers in Hong Kong maintain high standards of personal professionalism, the city's media as a whole is losing trust. There is an apparent connection between these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects. This situation may have been caused by Hong Kong's distinctive political, economic, and cultural elements, as well as the tension inherent in the market mechanism itself in action.

In order to claim a share of the profits in a fiercely competitive market, Ma (2019) explained that the media's total market domination relies on popular and emotive techniques. By combining media populism with the complex emotions triggered by the change in power, a political element has been added to the otherwise unpoliticised characteristic of Hong Kong culture. This characteristic is seen as the essence of what Hong Kong people have always represented. On one hand, this adds a political component to the otherwise depoliticized aspect of modern media values, such as freedom of expression and government oversight, while on the other, the media populism that now dominates the city has undermined the standard rules of journalistic ethics (Ho 2022). Moreover, the principles of media choice are heavily influenced by entertainment standards. Rule and headline trivialization in entertainment sometimes simplifies and confronts problems to heighten tension, and readers utilise the media to express their dissatisfaction with the government, and to advance a Hong Kong cultural discourse that blends civil rights and populism. This

can lead to dissatisfaction with media exaggeration and declining trust in the media (Ma 2019).

Freedom and accountability are seen as traditional ideas in news reporting (Freiberga 2013); however, the concepts have diverse meanings and ways of being understood in Hong Kong and mainland China. Hong Kong society and media are suspicious of government involvement because they are influenced by liberal philosophy and cultural ideas. Despite the fact that Hong Kong's media ethics have recently been severely damaged, the Hong Kong SAR government has maintained vigilance in this area (Huang 2005). Meanwhile, others are concerned that the government's new regulations might restrict journalistic freedom; the SAR government has attempted to exercise restraint and neutrality as a consequence (He 2011). Since the introduction of mainland self-censorship in Hong Kong, media organisations and several communication experts in Hong Kong have expressed concern that the Hong Kong community is sensitive to changes in speech norms (for instance, Leung 2011). In contrast, mainland researchers have made extensive use of discursive resources, such as public opinion monitoring, journalistic professionalism, membership, citizens' right to know, and social stability, to gain space for discourse on the one hand, whilst placing excessive emphasis on media responsibility on the other. At a cross-strait, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan journalism conference in 1998, Lu Yong, then editor-in-chief of the People's Daily News Front, contended that press freedom for the news media in any social system is connected to the social duty of the news media. The right to enjoy and exercise press freedom can only exist when the news media views it as its duty to promote social progress "and protect the interests of the absolute majority of people" (Arthur 1951, p. 26).

According to Li (2009), Hong Kong, which serves as a meeting point for Eastern and Western civilizations, has genuinely assimilated many Western management ideas and creatively tailored them to fit Chinese culture, such as the diffusion and commercialization of popular culture, and the appropriation and exportation of

Western television entertainment programmes. The study of Hong Kong is arguably more in line with Chinese culture than with the adopted American and European experiences. This is another reason why the present doctoral study chose Hong Kong as a sample to compare with the media system in mainland China, in the situation when newspapers cover the same protests. Arguably, the Hong Kong study of political communication overcomes the limitations of regional studies of media systems, and its important theoretical contribution to the field is its revelation of the importance of the power perspective in political communication (Luo 2017, Xu 2011).

The distinctiveness of Hong Kong's news communication context, in contrast to the relatively stable political communication context in Western nations, especially the U.S., lies in the fact that the social, political, and economic environments in Hong Kong have undergone enormous changes at a very rapid pace since the transfer of sovereignty. This is true despite the fact that Hong Kong's media landscape has largely adopted a liberal media paradigm in recent years (Wan 2013, Stone 1998, Hook 2002, Kam 2020). Determining how the shift in political power affects news reporting is, therefore, one of the goals of the present study. The challenges of press freedom and the evolving role of the media can be understood as a consequence of, or a response to, the shifting power structure when assessing the Hong Kong media system from a power viewpoint. Press freedom relies largely on the distribution of social and political power; it decreases when power is centralised, and increases when it is decentralised (Lee 2009). In order to understand how Hong Kong's media system came to be, the following sections examine how certain media businesses, such as newspapers, radio, and television, developed before and after the 1997 handover. In a constrained democratic place, media representation and media self-censorship are two phenomena that are linked to this power viewpoint in Hong Kong.

2.3.2 The Evolution and Current Landscape of Hong Kong's Media Industry

Hong Kong serves as a vital information hub in the Asia-Pacific region, thanks with a total area of 1,103 square kilometres and a population of approximately 7.41 million as of the end of 2021, Hong Kong boasts a robust media presence. According to the latest statistics from the Newspaper Society of Hong Kong, there are around 300 daily publications for every 1,000 people. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's Annual Report 2021 indicates that by the end of 2021, there were 94 daily newspapers and 451 electronic newspapers published in Hong Kong.

Additionally, Hong Kong's broadcast media landscape includes two government radio stations, two private radio stations, two domestic pay television services, three domestic free television services, and one domestic television service, all of which have been granted licenses. While the number of newspapers and periodicals has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years, the television industry has undergone significant transformation. Lin (1997) and Tsang (1969) categorise the press in Hong Kong into two main types: political press and commercial press. This section provides an in-depth exploration of the three primary media forms in Hong Kong—newspapers, television, and radio—to understand their evolution and current status - to its advanced information and technology infrastructure and its thriving media industry.

1) Newspapers

Before 1997, Hong Kong newspapers were often divided into the left, centre, and right partisan factions, according to their political views (Ngok 2007). According to Wong (2005), these publications can roughly be divided into five groups: the first category includes the well-known daily newspapers, such as *The Sun, Sing Pao, Apple Daily,* and *Oriental Daily,* which account for the bulk of newspaper sales in Hong Kong. The second category is the elite publications of the middle class, including *Sing Tao Daily, Ming Pao Daily News, Sing Pao Daily News*, and *Hong Kong Economic Times*. The third category consists of newspapers with Chinese ownership, the three most significant of which are *Ta Kung Pao, Wen Wei Po,* and *Hong Kong*

Commercial Daily. The fourth category consists of Hong Kong's English-language newspapers, while the fifth group consists of the latest free daily publications, such as *Metropolis Daily News* and *Headline Daily News*.

The rapid emergence of free newspapers in Hong Kong is a sign of the increasing realization of the city's media industry that advertising is the only source of revenue available to them. Traditional newspapers have simultaneously been forced to innovate in a variety of areas, including content extraction, distribution strategies, and advertising management. With the demise of the *Apple Daily* in 1995, newspaper rates became "cut-throat", and a second wave of price reductions followed the publication by the Eastern Press of *the Sun* in March 1999. Some newspapers were eliminated as a consequence of these two rounds of competition. In addition, the totally market-oriented publications of *Apple Daily* had an impact on how Hong Kong's surviving newspapers were run. The layout, style, and writing style of Hong Kong newspapers, such as *Ming Pao* and *Sing Pao*, including "[the] shock-seeking of exposés, the paparazzi approach to interviews, the paradigm and exaggerated simplicity of the content, the image of characters on the page, the colloquial Cantonese of the text, and the vulgarity of the style," were all successively reported to varying degrees (Leung 2000, p. 12).

Meanwhile, according to Hong Kong researchers, the Internet and online information have had less of an influence on Hong Kong newspapers and other conventional consumption habits of Hong Kong residents than they had a decade ago (Lee 2010. p. 18). According to Lee (2010), this may be because Hong Kong's newspaper business is sophisticated and their publications simple to read. Moreover, due to the availability of free publications, the daily circulation of newspapers that continue to be read regularly has increased, rather than decreased (Scollon 1997, Chan 1994). The newspapers in Hong Kong can provide news quickly, and heed a range of viewpoints. For instance, a survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong (UHK) found that 33% of the respondents said they obtained their news from newspapers in 2005, up

from 29% in 2004. According to a survey conducted in May 2020, 22%, 29%, 14%, and 35% of respondents said they got their news from the four major media sources (University of Hong Kong Reports and Hong Kong SAR government Yearbook, 2004, 2005, and 2020, partly data 2004 and 2005 cited in Jiang 2017, p.7). This implied that there is little distinction between television and newspapers.

Over the last 20 years, the Hong Kong newspaper business has shifted progressively towards a modern, corporatized economic model. The bulk of Hong Kong's newspapers were initially run by families, and modelled after literary journals (Lee 2018). Since the 1980s and 1990s, they have been managed by business people in the newspaper industry, and there has been a constant effort to reorganize the sector via listing, commercial competition, and changes in ownership. The creation of a newspaper group, or publicly traded corporation was based on the merging of private assets, and was conducted in order to respond to market competition. Consequently, its organizational structure is required to serve the needs of readers and the advertising market on the one hand, and the needs of capital seeking, in order to earn a profit on the other (Hu 1999, Chang 2010). Simply put, Hong Kong newspaper firms are driven by profit, and have transformed into information providers, offering a variety of information about life, the economy, consumerism, culture, fashion, entertainment, among other subjects. Profit has become both the goal and the means of operating newspapers in Hong Kong, and they are no longer considered to be news sources in the conventional sense. The local newspaper sector also currently supplies information in this area via digitization and through numerous channels, in response to the challenge posed by new media (Lee 2018). For example, the *Hong Kong Economic Times*, which was listed in 2005, is a diversified media company that publishes the *Hong Kong Economic Times* as its core business, although it has always positioned itself as a professional financial broadsheet. However, trends in media consumption, and the evolution of audience markets, necessitated the launch of a clearly prioritized, segmented, and specialized media product (Nie 2006). In addition to publishing newspapers, it has therefore developed a number of other businesses,

such as publishing magazines and books, placing recruitment advertisements, and training executives (Nie 2006). In addition, the Hong Kong newspaper industry is corporatized, which helps to control costs, increase strength, and adapt to market demand. Management is also more standardized and pragmatic. Inevitably, however, this excessive commercialization has caused certain problems for the Hong Kong newspaper industry (Gang and Bandurski 2011).

There is a contradiction between market norms and traditional journalistic norms. The former emphasizes profit, while the latter stresses the role and responsibility of the media as an instrument of society. Marketization itself is beneficial to the operation and development of newspaper enterprises, but it has also engendered certain changes and distortions to traditional journalistic values and norms. For example, the way in which the content of the *Apple Daily* was collected and edited was described as completely market-oriented, in terms of its journalistic reporting style, and some, otherwise serious, newspapers were subsequently "apple-ified", due to the enormous competitive market pressure that resulted (Yu 2006, Zhang 2007, Fu 2007).

Moreover, in recent years, some of the most popular newspapers with high sales volumes have experienced the following phenomena, in terms of content: 1) the number of pages has increased exponentially, and are moving towards visualization. Sometimes more than 150 to 200 pages account for about half of the advertisements included (Sun 2007); 2) concurrently, there is a tendency towards tabloidization, with a focus on imagery for headlines, larger images, and multi-coloured visual impact (Sun 2007); 3) there has been a shift towards newspapers and magazines, primarily certain lifestyle supplements, increasing the amount of information and number of pages, and providing a wealth of information on life and services. Moreover, pornography has become rampant in Hong Kong, with some newspapers even featuring "pornographic types" (Sun 2007, p. 235); and 4) there has been an increase in entertainment news. Meanwhile, in terms of otherwise serious political or public issues, journalists strive to find entertainment elements (Sun 2007, Tong 2009). This

means that some popular newspapers have been drawn into fierce commercial competition. In addition, journalists have become more willing to produce stories containing pornography and titillating content to attract readers, such as the nude photo story of the *Oriental Weekly*. Hong Kong newspapers also place an emphasis on crime and suicide (Feng 2011).

It is logical that as long as there is a market for pornographic, violent, and other extreme material, it will be published by Hong Kong publications (Hargrave 2009, Li 2008). Nevertheless, due to the widespread disapproval of the Hong Kong people and certain organizations, the tendency for obscene content to appear in Hong Kong media has shown indications of waning in recent years. Nevertheless, Hong Kong readers, are apparently accustomed to extreme content. For instance, Zhu (2009) reported that residents of Hong Kong "chastise yet love reading the negative news material in newspaper stories" (p. 6). In 2006, Cheung, the vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Press Critics Association, explained that organizations, the public, and groups representing the media, have joined to create a synergy wherein restrictions will constitute a check on certain media abuses of press freedom. Although these restrictions are unable to eliminate the problem entirely, they may nevertheless effectively establish a social equilibrium by reducing misunderstanding.

2) Television

For many years, TVB and ATV controlled the Hong Kong television market. However, in the 20 years following the handover of Hong Kong to China, the range of television services has grown rapidly. The Hong Kong government created a competitive, technology-neutral regulatory framework to govern television transmission, which is changing continually in response to social and technical advancements. The goal of the policy was to "Encourage competition to expand programme choice and diversity, support industry efforts to provide fresh, cutting-edge broadcasting services, and strengthen Hong Kong's position as a regional centre

for broadcasting" (Hong Kong Information Authority Regulations and HKSAR Government Year Book, 2003). The Hong Kong SAR Government divides its licensing and regulatory operations into two areas, namely the transmission and supply of television programme services. Television show producers have the option of renting networks from other operators, such as cable or internet, or can employ satellites to create their own transmission infrastructure (Yardley 2014).

Thanks to this specific regulatory framework, it is now simpler the previously for new companies to join the market of television programme services, and they are able to provide new convergent services in response to technological improvements (Hills 1997). In 2006, the Hong Kong SAR government proposed to combine the Broadcasting Authority and the Telecommunications Authority into a single body, in order to address the challenges of technological convergence in response to the growing convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications, and information technology, such as the emergence of Internet TV (Peter 2009).

According to Lee (2004), Hong Kong residents adore television, which is seen as a cornerstone of the city's local culture. Hong Kong residents enjoy watching TVB and ATV, and local popular culture has been shaped by television organizations' beauty pageants, song contests, and numerous other events (Chan and Lee 2005, Wu 2018). The mechanics underlying the creation and evolution of celebrity stars are thus well understood. This cultural landscape is regarded as one of the distinguishing features of Hong Kong's local media culture (Dao et al. 2000, Shi 2006, Wu et al. 2005, Li 2020, Frisch 2018). In a comparative research study conducted by Nielsen (2017 cited in Wu 2018, p.19), Hong Kong residents were found to watch more television than the inhabitants of the other six cities Asian cities assessed, namely Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Singapore, Taipei, and Bangkok.

In 2007, ATV Hong Kong was restructured, and the primary investor is now the CITIC Guoan Group from the mainland, which controls 14.81% of ATV's shares.

The move sparked concern among many academics, who believed that China sought to employ capital investment as a pretext to interfering in Hong Kong's media operations. However, CITIC Guoan stated that its stake in ATV would comply with the relevant regulatory requirements in Hong Kong, and that it would not be involved in imposing guidelines, or otherwise interfering in the operation of news programmes.

Fung (2007) argues that PRC does not directly control the Hong Kong press, however, indirect interference has been increasing, primarily through the acquisition of media organisations by businessmen with substantial interests in mainland China. Instead of managing daily newsroom operations, these media owners exert influence by making personal decisions and allocating resources (Lee 2018).

3) Radio

The three most important radio stations in Hong Kong are Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), Commercial Radio (Commercial Radio Limited), and Metro Radio (Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited) (So 2002, Chan 2006, Chung 2003). The first radio station in Hong Kong was Radio Television Hong Kong, which began broadcasting on June 30th, 1982. Among the extant services in Hong Kong, namely radio, television, educational television, and new media, radio is the only publicly-funded broadcaster with editorial independence (Clayton 2004, Hampton 2011, Lee 2006).

Since its inception, RTHK has demonstrated its influence by ranking top in a number of surveys, including reputation surveys, service performance surveys, radio listening surveys, and television programme appreciation index surveys (Ku 2001). However, it has always been trapped by its own image. As early as the middle of the last century, RTHK proposed corporatization reforms. From the late 1980s onwards, Zhang Zhijun, then director of RTHK, emphasized the importance of editorial autonomy, and downplayed official overtones. In the Sino-British negotiations, China was asked to take a position of balance in the transition of the political system and explicitly

opposed to the corporatization of RTHK. As Deng (1997 cited in Feng 1998. p. 108) noted, "[We believe] that the emergence of editorial autonomy was a tactic of the British government before the retreat from Hong Kong, designed to create problems for the future government...". Hence, the debate concerning RTHK in the context of Hong Kong's identity has progressively adopted a political slant.

The reunion of Hong Kong with China worsened the issues of RTHK's identity dilemma. On the one hand, since it is Hong Kong's public broadcaster and has editorial freedom, it cannot be forced to say or do anything by governmental organizations (Keung 2016). Similarly to the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in the UK, the staff at RTHK consider editorial autonomy to be key to public trust. However, on the other hand, RTHK is also a government department, with many of its existing staff being civil servants, and most of its operating costs provided by the government. For example, the Hong Kong government has allocated approximately $100 million a year to the project over the past five years. In contrast, unlike the BBC, RTHK is financed by license fees.

Almost every year since 1997 has witnessed an incident or storming of RTHK, with protestors criticizing the SAR government, or causing trouble for the authorities in Beijing, which are seen as contradicting the positioning and function of RTHK. For example, since November 1997, the Provisional Legislative Council of Hong Kong has repeatedly criticized RTHK for being unregulated and using public funds to produce programmes that satirize patriots (Wong 1999). In response, Cheung, the then Director of RTHK, emphasized the station's editorial autonomy; Cheung was interviewed by Tong (1999), who discussed the issue in his research, explaining that Cheung argued that RTHK did use government subsidies, but that these were not government subsidies per se, rather the funds were taxpayers' money, and consequently that RTHK should ultimately be accountable to the public. Nevertheless, in May 2001, RTHK's current affairs programme, *Watch the World*, explored the sensitive issue of Tibet. The presenter called Tibet 'a country', which drew strong

criticism from Beijing, and the Central Government announced that the SAR would temporarily shut down RTHK (Fung 2000).

The growth of public broadcasting is supported by the majority of Hong Kong residents, however views regarding RTHK's suitability for the role of public broadcaster have varied. For example, some scholars of media studies in Hong Kong supported the idea of separating RTHK from the government, and operating it as an independent body, in order that it can perform the function of public broadcasting more effectively (Chan et al. 2005). Meanwhile, others claimed that the HKSAR government's task force should take the lead, claiming that doing so would hasten the growth of public broadcasting in Hong Kong, but that it should fall under the remit of a brand-new independent public broadcaster. Moreover, Chan et al. (2005) argued that RTHK has been a government department for many years, lacking an independent image, with an entrenched structure, and a strong organizational culture. They claimed that it will therefore be challenging for RTHK to change, and that the professional training of its staff may be complicated. Consequently, they were not in favour of transforming RTHK into a new publicly-funded broadcaster. Moreover, other scholars proposed that RTHK should resume its role as a government department as soon as possible, and that it should be overseen by the regional government. A final view of the situation argued that the Hong Kong community should be involved by engaging professional journalists who are interested in, or capable of, running RTHK independently.

The current state of Hong Kong's journalism today is therefore complex. Indeed, Han (2020), Dai (2021), and Li (2019) noted that fresh study of Hong Kong's journalism is required, due to the ongoing political and cultural fusion with mainland China, and the rapid social changes in Hong Kong society. Due to the ongoing changes, the central government introduced the National Security Law and the Greater Bay Area political concept in Hong Kong in 2019, and my research considered this is time to re-examine the Hong Kong media system in theories or practices in an on-going reform.

2.4 Conclusion

The first section of this chapter explores the characteristics of the media system in mainland China rooted in the essential ideologies of the CCP. This chapter argues that, to thoroughly understand the Chinese media system, it is essential to first examine the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the media from the Party's founding to its current governance. China, having undergone reform and economic opening up, and multiple structural adjustments, categorises its media industry into three segments: commercial news, professional news, and propaganda news. In addition, the incorporation of capital operations to stimulate competition in the media market and increase economic revenue is a notable feature of the Chinese media system, demonstrating that it is not solely a mouthpiece for propaganda. This chapter also challenges the western scholarly perspective that universally categorises China's media system as an authoritarian model. Instead, it posits that traditional Confucian political culture, the rapid emergence of a modern political structure post-war, and the moral and ethical order of Chinese society and its people significantly contribute to the current media system.

The second section in this chapter examines the evolution and status of mainstream media in Hong Kong post-handover. It highlights how the rise of free newspapers and their rapid growth in circulation have impacted traditional media within the newspaper industry. Regarding television, Hong Kong has liberalised the market to foster competition with local pay TV and strongly supports digital terrestrial television. For radio, RTHK has been embroiled in an identity dispute, grappling with whether it serves as a public institution, a business entity, or the government's voice. Many local Hong Kong scholars argue that the frequent publication of inflammatory news by the Hong Kong media, coupled with self-censorship by practitioners, has led to a decline in media credibility and a deterioration of the news environment. With the sovereignty transition, the media and Hong Kong society must navigate the pressures of transformation amid globalisation and information technology, adapt to a new

power centre, and confront the challenges and pressures of "re-nationalisation" under "one country, two systems."

In summary, the political communication role of mass media in China's social structure possesses unique "Chinese characteristics" (Huang 2021, Cric 2018). The mass media's role in China's social and political life is to promote social participation while maintaining state control. In discussing the social functions of mass media, the concept of the media's role in social democracy is critical. Democratisation, or the division and growth of civil society and the political state, is a pivotal stage in the history of Western mass communication systems. Originating in the West in the late 17th century, the opposition between civil society and the political state led to the separation of their respective powers and established checks and balances on the government. Consequently, traditional theories of social modernisation and democratic propositions are based on this state-society opposition (Somers 1995, Cooper 2018, cited in Anja 2014, p.33). Currently, Hong Kong media and society are ensnared in these contradictions and conflicts, as incorporating "Chinese characteristics" presents a complex proposition. The politically dominated social stability structure necessitates that many political, sociological, and economic theories will be redefined, along with discussions on democratic propositions. As outlined in the first chapter, within the context of Chinese social and political culture, deliberative democracy differs from the Western conception and application, with protest being one of the most prevalent expressions of divisive politics.

Chapter Three. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, specifically utilising content analysis and thematic analysis to conduct comparative case studies. My selection of methods in quantitative and qualitative research has several reasons. Quantitative methods are grounded in the positivist paradigm, which aims to measure and quantify social phenomena (Hammersley 2013). As Bryman (2016) further defines, by using statistical tools and standardised measures, scholars can produce findings that are less susceptible to personal bias and can be consistently replicated by other researchers. Babbie (1995) described quantitative methods as employing a "variable language," which involves studying variations of attributes among people and their artefacts (Babbie 1995, cited by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2005). Additionally, quantitative methods can be applied to longitudinal studies to examine data at a single point in time (cross-sectional) and over an extended period, helping researchers identify trends and changes in media use and effects (Fowler 2009). Based on this, the quantitative methodology will provide an objective and reliable approach to understanding the dynamics of media systems between Hong Kong and mainland China and exploring the differences in protest coverage and their characteristics in the protest paradigm used.

In this study, I also selected a qualitative methodology to richly understand the context of media characteristics in protest coverage (Geertz 1973). Unlike quantitative methods, the qualitative methodology prioritises understanding over measurement, allowing the capture of the complexity of social phenomena and the context in which they occur (Finlay 2002), which are rooted in Interpretivism (Geertz 1973). In this sense, qualitative methodology will help explore media practices in protest coverage on media content and the processes underlying Hong

Kong and mainland media news production, which quantitative results cannot provide.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the concept and logic of content analysis as an approach, drawing on previous scholarship and detailing the procedural steps undertaken in this study. The rationale for thematic analysis will also be outlined, covering both theoretical and practical aspects, and discussing the strategies used to apply thematic analysis to identify the protest paradigm. The benefits and shortcomings of both methods will be addressed. It should be highlighted that one of the contributions of this PhD study lies in the methodological aspect of news content coding in terms of operation and measurement. Consequently, the researcher provides a detailed discussion on this, along with suggestions for overcoming limitations. This study also suggests that capturing the nuances of protest reporting in different social contexts requires a new method that meets the overall research requirements and adopts appropriate techniques for particular case studies.

3.2 Content Analysis

Jim (2005) has defined content analysis as "the primary message-centred methodology" (p.1). Content analysis as a method was first proposed by Lasswell (1927) during the Second World War, who used it to analyse media propaganda. Weber (1990) said: "content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from texts," (cited by Wu 2013). Shoemaker and Reese (2016) define content analysis as operating in two traditions: one is behaviourist, and the other is humanist. They claim the former focuses on the effects of content, while the latter is used for confirming that content may impact society and cultures (Jim 2005, p.3). Krippendorff (2004) conceptualised content analysis as a technique that allows researchers to examine text systematically through a coding schema, categorising media content. He emphasised the

importance of clear measurement to ensure the reliability and validity of quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2004, p.105).

For researchers, Wimmer and Dominick's (2014) co-work provides useful guidelines to coders conducting a quantitative study, from describing media content to examining how media influence public perceptions and society in five stages. This study is inspired by their approach as follows: first, describe the content by quantifying aspects of the theme, topic, and characteristic, allowing coders to analyse the frequencies and distributions of specific content within media messages to provide insights into patterns or trends; second, infer the context. This stage suggests that coders can infer the meaning by analysing the characteristics of content and uncover the means of texts. By examining themes or narratives, researchers can assume how these influence public perception, attitude, and behaviour regarding the protest; third, content analysis can be applied to comparative media studies, enabling coders to compare content across different media organisations, time periods, and cultural contexts. Researchers can identify reporting, framing, and performance by similarities and differences that impact readers' thoughts. Fourth, content analysis is useful for exploring journalism routines, formats, and presentations of reporting. Wimmer and Dominick (2014) suggested that researchers examine language use, framing devices, or photographs to understand how media deliver messages to readers by constructing issues dynamically. Finally, content analysis helps researchers observe and analyse potential effects of content on public perceptions and evaluations.

Thus, quantitative content analysis is an effective approach, providing researchers with systematic insights into patterns, trends, and comparisons embedded in media content (Riffe, Lacy and Fico 2005, Jessica 2013). Therefore, quantitative content analysis is a backbone for my study design to examine protest coverage and compare media performance within the substantial dataset between Hong

Kong and mainland China. In summary, by employing statistical operations and measures, this thesis aims to identify patterns of the protest paradigm and variations in terms of sources and story narratives over time, as well as shedding light on the overarching trends of protest framing usage in both Hong Kong and mainland Chinese newspapers.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

Complementing the quantitative analysis, this study applies qualitative thematic analysis to explore the construction of "democracy" and the representation of protests in Hong Kong and mainland China. I adopt comparative thematic analysis to understand the recurrent patterns in the selected data, indicating how taken-for-granted characteristics of protests are portrayed in Hong Kong and mainland newspapers.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.79, cited by Gerard 2016). In their study, Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate for a flexible approach that includes two ways for identifying themes from texts: inductive or theoretical. Inductive thematic analysis allows themes to emerge naturally from the data without being influenced by preconceived theories or assumption. In contrast, theoretical thematic analysis relies on " pre-existing theoretical frameworks or concepts to guide the identification and interpretation of themes within the data." (Tobiloba 2024.p.19). The latter is particularly useful for testing theories through a more structured process (Braun and Clarke 2006). Every news report has a central organizing idea, the theme (Camson and Modigliani 1989). However, as Pan (1993) points out, a theme is distinct from a topic, as it serves as a summarized label representing the broader areas of social experience addressed within the report, "A theme is an idea that connects different semantic elements of a story (e.g., descriptions of an action or an actor, quotes of sources, and background

information) into a coherent whole." (Pan and Kosicki 1993.p.59).

Furthermore, themes can be identified at two levels in thematic analysis: semantic and latent. This study focuses on the latent level, which requires deeper analysis and interpretation to uncover implicit messages, values, or beliefs embedded within the data (Riessman 2008). As Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight, latent thematic analysis "starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p. 84, cited by Hugh 2020). It is important to note that while thematic analysis allows researchers to understand and interpret patterns within narratives (Riessman 2008), some scholars have expressed concerns about its practical application. For example, Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013) discuss the subjectivity of data interpretation and potential bias. They suggest a systematic and transparent approach to analysis, emphasising the importance of rigour in coding and theme development. Creswell and Creswell (2007) note the potential for researcher bias in the identification and interpretation of themes and recommend using multiple coders to enhance reliability and conducting member checks to validate findings with participants. Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2014) acknowledge that thematic analysis might be seen as less structured compared to other qualitative methods. However, they argue for its adaptability and flexibility, suggesting that its openness allows for rich insights into complex phenomena.

Several scholars discuss that thematic analysis is particularly suited to media studies as it allows researchers to explore how media texts construct meaning and represent social issues (Byrne 2022, Roberts 2019, Braun 2006). For instance, in their study of protest coverage, McLeod and Hertog (1999) used thematic analysis to identify how media narratives described protest events – often highlighting violence and disruption while downplaying protesters' grievances. On the other hand, thematic analysis can also be used to examine the portrayal of social groups,

such as the representation of gender in advertisements or the depiction of minorities in news media (e.g., Nowell 2017, O'Barr 2006, Olier 2022, Beazer 2023). Thus, this method provides a systematic yet flexible approach to analysing media content, making it possible to uncover both explicit and implicit messages from the media.

3.4 Unit of Analysis, Operationalize and Measurement

This section is fully inspired by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico's book (2014) *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. In quantitative content analysis, the unit of analysis refers to the specific item or entity being examined and measured within the content – this could be words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, entire articles, or even visual elements, depending on the research objectives and the nature of the content being analysed (Krippendorff 2004). Neuendorf (2007) highlights the importance of a well-defined coding protocol that shows clear definitions of study units, and Riffe et al. (2014) state: "Operational definitions and clear coding instructions are critical for the successful identification and analysis of units in content analysis. This process helps in achieving reliable and replicable results" (p.56). To clarify this process, I will detail the step-by-step procedure used to operationalise and measure each variable in the coding protocol.

3.4.1 Codebook Inspiration, and Design

In the introductory chapter, the researcher systematically reviewed the theoretical framework of the protest paradigm, which is described as a set of predictable patterns in the coverage of social protests (e.g., McLeod and Armstrong 2005, Chan and Lee 1984, McLeod and Detenber 1999). Here, the codebook in this study has been created based on the inspiration from previous empirical studies on the protest paradigm. In doing so, the protest paradigm can be used as a methodological framework to examine protest coverage by systematically analysing how these features manifest in media reports. In this study, the researcher typically uses content analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, to identify and measure the presence of these characteristics in news

articles. Once the variables are confirmed, I develop a codebook that outlines these definitions, along with coding principles and guidelines.

Table 1. Inspiration by existing literature on the characteristics of protest paradigm (see Mariana Aldrete 2023).

Protest Paradigm Characteristics		
1.Focus on the format of demonstrations on the streets	Paradigm – adherent devices (negative light)	- Focus on spectacle and sensationalism - Lack of issue explanation - Emphasizing police force abuse (as noted by Chan and Lee 1984, Dardis 2006, McLeod 1995, Boyle et al., 2012, Mariana 2023)
	Positive light	− Emphasis on the core issues (McLeod 2007)
2. Dominance of Official Discourse	Paradigm – adherent devices (negative light)	− Authorities as the primary source − Silencing dissenting voices (Herman and Chomsky 1998, Alessandra 2018)
	Positive light	− Inclusion of

		alternative voices (Herman and Chomsky 1988, Mourao 2019)
3. Delegitimization of the protests and claims	Paradigm – adherent devices (negative light)	– Describing protesters as self – interested and not representative of societal majority – Highlighting a lack of credibility – Portraying a lack of unity, focus, or organisation (Tufekci 2014)
	Positive light	– Aligning with societal norms, and values (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990, Arias 2016) – Showcasing stability and organization (Yoon 2005)
4. Demonization of the protest and protesters	Paradigm – adherent devices (negative light)	– References to protester violence – Disruption of institutional processes

		– Justification of police actions to restore order (Reul et al., 2018)
		– Highlighting freakish or eccentric tactics, deviant appearances (McLeod and Hertog 1992, Di Cicco 2010, della Porta 1999)
		– Negative consequences such as property damage, traffic congestion, and community resource expenditure (McLeod 2007)
	Positive light	– Describing the protest's actions and claims as justifiable, morally sound, accurate, and consistent with societal norms

		(McLeod 2007, Snow 2019)

3.4.2 Coding Scheme, Counting, and the Pilot Study

The coding scheme in this study is heavily influenced by empirical studies on the protest paradigm by scholars such as Shain, Zheng, Strum, and Fadnis (2016), Dardis (2006), and McLeod and Hertog (1999). These studies have provided a strong framework for understanding how media coverage can systematically describe protests within Chinese contexts. However, it is essential to adapt this theoretical framework to suit the specific cultural and political contexts of China and Hong Kong.

Firstly, in this study, the nationalism variable has been adjusted to capture how Chinese state-controlled media might describe protests as threats to national unity and stability. For this theme, the researcher included the patriotic discourse within the nationalism theme as an element. To clearly differentiate similar themes, I have delineated the direction of emphasis for various themes. For example, in the coding scheme, the type of crimes under the themes of marginalisation and violence are distinguished: the former highlights broad violent behaviours and disruptions by protesters, while the latter emphasises specific types of crimes, such as criminal offences, civil crimes, and administrative violations. In the delegitimisation categories, I refer to the common practices among Chinese journalists of assessing the scale of adverse impacts that protests have on society by emphasising the term "unity," thus contributing to the delegitimisation of protests. The assumption of the "consequences" is also a feature of Chinese media coverage, so this aspect is extended within the conflict theme as c). It also needs to be highlighted that Chinese media frequently cite legal regulations directly, necessitating the researcher to be well-versed in Chinese law to accurately interpret these references.

Additionally, the coding scheme in this study remains open to account for deviations specific to Hong Kong or mainland Chinese standards. For example, the portrayal of police actions during protests might differ, with Hong Kong media potentially offering more critical perspectives compared to the typically state-aligned narrative in mainland media. This flexibility ensures that the coding scheme can accurately reflect the nuances in media coverage across different regions within China.

For each identified theme, several questions need to be answered with 'Yes' or 'No.' For example, regarding the violence theme, the questions are as follows:

> a) Did the article mention any attacks on persons during the protest? (This includes any situations where an individual, group, or organisation experiences harm, injury, or fatality due to a crime, accident or other incidents or actions.)

> b) Did the article highlight spectacle and sensationalism?

> c) Did the story emphasise the negative impacts of the protests, such as damage to property, traffic disruptions, interference with institutional functions, or the use of community resources?

> d) Does the article emphasize the abuse of the police force (McLeod 2007), including the weapons, strategies, and tactics they may use?

The Appendix A Codebook and Appendix B Coding Sheet provide the definitions for all variables. In this stage, researchers often encounter the challenge of coding multiple variables. As Riffe et al. (2014) suggest, "with the multivariable approach, each subcategory becomes a variable with one number for having the variable characteristic and one for not having that characteristic." (p.87). They also advise that "the multivariable approach allows the same article to be placed into more than one

classification. It is particularly useful if a unit needs to be classified into more than one subcategory of a nominal variable" (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2014, p.87). For example, in studying media coverage of protests, this approach allows researchers to capture multiple variables ("the characteristic") across different media systems. Although this study does not allow multiple themes to be present within a single article, to minimise potential bias, each theme category comprises several detailed questions. A theme is only identified as primary or secondary once these questions are answered. This study only focuses on examining the primary theme which dominates the news article.

Counting, Article Classification, and Principles

It should be noted that this study only examines the primary theme that dominates an article. Article classification involves a two-step counting process: First, the researchers recorded a 'Yes' or 'No' response for each question listed within each theme category.   For example, within the Violence category, questions a), b), c), and d) all need to be marked as 'Yes' or 'No.' Once all questions within a theme category had been answered, the researchers counted the responses. If 'Yes' answers outnumbered 'No,' the theme was considered dominant.

In cases where the questions in the theme category resulted in an even number of responses (for example, four questions in the violence category were answered 'Yes' twice and 'No' twice), this study adopts Tankard's (2001) strategy of avoiding conflicts between variables. This involves using hierarchical coding or decision rules when developing categories to help coders decide which category takes precedence when there is overlap. In this study, if four questions on a violence theme are answered with even numbers, the coder may be instructed to prioritise the first element that is most important. It is up to the researcher to decide which of these four elements is the most important (or the feature that best represents the theme category), as Riffe, Lacy, and Fico's (2014) work, in their book Analyzing Media Message: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research. They discuss various aspects of

quantitative content analysis, particularly the control of variables and determining which variables or themes hold more significance in the analysis. Thus, I will take the "top-down" approach to establish a hierarchical order of importance and define a priority system. For example, in the violence category, priority 1 is a) physical attacks on persons, and priority 2 is highlighting spectacle and sensationalism. Then, if the coder faces an even number of 'Yes' and 'No' responses, the element with the highest priority (e.g., physical attacks on persons) is checked first. If the highest priority is 'No,' this theme will be considered absent.

Next, after counting all the categories, the researchers examined the total number of occurrences for each topic. For example, if "violence" gets more 'Yes' answers than "conflict," then the story is classified as having a violent theme. If more than one theme is marked as 'Yes,' further steps are taken to identify the primary theme. For example, if an equal number of 'Yes' responses appeared in the categories "violence" and "marginalisation," the researchers went back and looked at the news headline and the lead sentences in the first paragraph of the article. In news discourse, a single-level story structure that fully conveys the entire story is almost impossible (McIntyre 1991). Instead, most news reports are characterized by the inverted pyramid structure (Harrower 2010) and source attribution rules. This structure involves the sequential organization of key elements in news writing, "i.e., headline, lead, episodes, background, and closure", where the symbolic significance of each element decreases in descending order of importance (Mclntyre 1991.p.59). According to Pan and Kosicki (1993), the headline acts as a highly prominent cue, triggering semantically related ideas in the reader's mind. Consequently, it serves as the most influential framing tool with the synaptic framework.The lead is the second most significant element (Mencher 2006), a point widely recognized by journalists (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007, Rich 2010). Given this, my study adopts this writing structure to identify the primary and secondary themes in the selected articles. While secondary themes will be recorded for reference, they will not be used to classify the reports.

Here, I must highlight two other principles that should be followed when sorting items:

1. "News" and "facts" can be distinguished by the focus of the journalist and the information itself. For example, a piece of information in the news may be beneficial to a protester; however, the reporter may frame it in a negative (or unfavourable) way. Therefore, I care more about the reporter's description than the message itself. If several topics cross over in a reporting article, I pay more attention to how the reporter presents it.

2. It must be admitted that it is sometimes difficult to determine the subject that the reporter wants to emphasise if only by reading. In this case, the connotation of the words used is mainly implied. For example, in the Chinese language and context, "protest" has a negative connotation, while "demonstration" is more neutral; "revolution" has a negative connotation, while "mass rally" is more neutral.

Although this process takes twice as long to encode and examine all the data, it improves coding rigour, reduces controversy when classifying articles, and ultimately guarantees the study's reliability and validity (Wu 2013).

After designing the coding scheme, codebook, and coding sheet, I conducted a pilot study on a small sample to primarily examine the effectiveness of controversial variables. I coded and analysed the coverage of the two protests by randomly selecting five articles from each of the four newspapers' data. Coding sheets are utilised both digitally on laptops and in printed form for recording in this study, particularly when the variables "are complex and the uninterrupted application of coding instructions can improve reliability," (Riffe, Lacy and Fico 2014.pp.89-90). Additionally, printed coding sheets are beneficial when coders need to verify physically large content, such as newspapers.

During the pilot study, I recognised common problems that researchers may face. Neuendorf (2017) suggests that when coding newspaper content with large physical quantities, it is beneficial to have multiple coders work together. This approach not only enhances the speed of the coding process but also helps resolve ambiguities in variable definitions. Unfortunately, this approach could not be applied in this PhD project. As Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014) highlight, researchers may carry psychological biases that can "influences their perception and interpretation of communication content," (p.101), for instance, a single coder might miss certain aspects of a concept or interpret a protocol as clear, which could be confusing to others. Thus, having multiple coders can lead to the development of clearer and more explicit definitions of concepts and operations. On the other hand, Riffe et al. (2014) emphasise that multiple coders in content analysis bring several potential disadvantages: "agreement on concepts may be more difficult, or their ap-plication may reveal problems that would not occur with fewer or with only one coder. At some point, a concept or its measure may just not be worth further expenditure of time or effort, and recognizing that point may not be easy either" (p.142).

The most difficult aspect is how to sort disagreements on article classification between coders in the coding process due to cultural differences. Cultural backgrounds can significantly influence how coders interpret context and meaning in qualitative data. For example, a phrase or behaviour that is considered normal in one culture might be viewed differently in another. This can lead to disagreements in how data is categorised and understood (Saldaña 2016).

To be honest, this cannot be fixed 100%. However, through pilot studies, or by taking the "Delphi method" (Linstone and Turoff 2002), which allows coders to have multiple rounds of discussions and feedback, it is possible to converge on a consensus through a structured process.

Source Attribution

In this study, when an article explicitly attributes information to a specific dialogue actor – whether through the use of quotation marks, interviews, news features, or direct references – the message content is categorised under the corresponding individual, organisation, or institution in the coding sheet (e.g., Aldrete 2023, Lee 2014, Shahin et al., 2016). The classification of sources is as follows:

- Hong Kong SAR Government Official Spokesmen
- HK Administration
- HK Leadership
- Police
- China PRC Government Official Spokesmen
- Beijing Central Government Leadership
- Protester
- Bystander
- Ordinary People
- Celebrity
- Expert
- Civil Society
- Foreign Leadership/Politician
- Alternative Media
- Foreign Media
- Anonymous
- Others

During the coding process, if sources could not be identified from the given categories, they were coded into the "Other" category with specific person identification. If an article did not cite any sources, "None" was coded. These source categories were created based on previous studies, which suggested that researchers should categorise each source cited in a news article, potentially including official

sources, protest organisers, independent experts, affected citizens, and anonymous sources (Reich 2009).

3.4.3 The "Paradigm" in Thematic Analysis

In thematic analysis, the term "paradigm" refers to the overarching theoretical framework or perspective that guides the researcher's approach to analysing and presenting the data. In practice, researchers note that there are two paradigms that can be conducted with both constructionist and realist approaches, which are focused on distinct philosophical perspectives (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this study, the researcher only focuses on examining the news content to understand the characteristics of the performance by Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media in protest coverage. Thus, the constructionist paradigm was abandoned, as it involves using interview methods to understand "how individuals and groups construct their realities, meaning, and purpose," (Hansen and Cox 2022.p.19) within specific social and cultural contexts. Additionally, the realist paradigm is independent of individual explanations. Since the aim of this study is to explore the underlying patterns or structures that exist in the protest paradigm and relevant theoretical contexts within China, the critical realist paradigm is more suitable for this study. This paradigm also challenges "pure" observation (Blaikie and Priest 2019), encouraging researchers to approach their work with an open mind, bravely questioning existing theories and subjecting them to rigorous empirical studies.

In this study, thematic analysis was applied with some modifications to the approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), who emphasizes that codes should be emerged in direct way from the data to facilitate the development of themes. However, this research employs dialogic thinking to examine how selected data reflect the underlying logic of China's media characteristics. As Simon (2021) suggests, this method involves critically analysing the issues raised in the media while maintaining an analytical distance from the text and adopting a suspicious perspective on the underlying news values. This approach will also

involve revisiting the literature review. Thus, this study's aiming is to extract from the text or news articles those elements that resonate with, challenge, or contradict theoretical frameworks and the realities they represent.

In this context, Charmaz (2006) suggested that thematic analysis grounded in theory involves several key components: 1) a focus on the context; 2) identifying actors, situations, and actions; 3) acknowledging the existence of multiple realities; and 4) recognising the subjectivity of the researcher (cited by Simon 2021). Accordingly, my study aims to use comparative thematic analysis as a form of resistance against the oversimplification of differences and the reinforcement of dominant "paradigm".

Table 2. Phase of Thematic Analysis (Adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006.p.8, cited by Reynolds 2016.p.117, Simon 2021, Maguire and Delahunt 2017.p.3351)

Phase	Description
Familiarize oneself with the data	Reading articles, taking notes
Generate initial codes	Coding the entire data set "in a systematic fashion" and collate data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	Collate codes into potential themes, gather data relevant to potential theme
Review themes	Check if "themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set"
Define and name themes	Refine specific of each theme with an ongoing analysis, and the

	overall story the analysis tells; generate clear definitions and names for each theme
Produce analysis/report	Select extract examples, analysis the extracts, related back to research questions and literature, produce the report

Inspired by previous studies and other scholars' research designs (see above Table), in this study, the researcher first read the articles generally to familiarise themselves with the news stories. Using sentences as the unit of analysis, and following Saldana's (2013) suggestion "the high number of codes generated corresponds to the way the researcher split the data so as to bring more nuance to the analysis." (p.77). Based on the results of the protest paradigm, the researcher noted key phrases and significant meanings prominent in the protest paradigm and recorded the significant arguments of each article in Excel, categorised by news organisations, date, sources, and main points. A technique named "cutting and sorting" was used to analyse the themes in the reports. As Ryan and Bernard (2003, pp. 94-96) suggest, this technique involves asking, "[w]hat is this expression an example of?" (Ryan and Bernard 2003.p. 87). They also recommend cutting quotes from the text and organising them into different categories or groupings (Ryan and Bernard 2003).

Some researchers, such as van Dijk (2008), argue that news discourse is inherently experiential in nature. This perspective aligns with the dominant empiricism in journalistic discourse, which is reflected in the frequent use of descriptive language to present direct observations or cited source (Facchinetti 2021, Yarlott 2018). Pan and Kosicki (1993) contend that journalists have a wide array of "indicator" to choose form, and these indicators are not arbitrary but part

of the cultural structures embedded in news discourse. The selection of specific indicators, therefore, provides a clear – often powerful – signal of an underlying "frame". They further emphasize that this conceptualization of news discourse extends beyond individual news stories and encompasses the broader flow of discourse on public policy issue (Pan and Kosicki (1993.p.63). This approach enables researchers to track the evolution of discourse over time. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) similarly argue that issue positions and policy options are integral components of news discourse, offering insights into the thematic structure and casual logic of news reports (Iyengar 1991).

Based on above discussion, to address RQ3, I carefully examined each article in the dataset, taking detailed notes on keywords, phrases, and linguistic features associated with "democratic" discourse. The goal of this analysis is to investigate media attitudes and stances toward the Hong Kong protests and actors, determining whether the term "democracy" is presented positively or negatively and identifying the emotional connotations associated with its usage.

To operationalize this analysis, I employed an open-coding scheme. First, I conducted a targeted information filter search to exclude articles that mentioned the term "democracy" without further elaboration or contextual discussion. This step ensured the focus remained on substantive discourse. Inspired by scholars such as Matthes (2012), Steinberg (1998), and Vicari (2010), this study approaches *framing* not merely as an argument but as a positional tool that guides readers toward preferred interpretations. As Fairclough (1995) highlights, such language frameworks include the use of emotionally loaded words, strategic editing, nominalization of behaviors, and selective presentation of agents. These strategies are particularly evident in media coverage of contentious concept like "democracy", where linguistic choices show underlying ideological positions, especially within the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese contexts.

In analysing the selected articles, I will assess whether specific sources (e.g., protesters, government official, or ordinary citizens) occupy central or peripheral positions in the discourse surrounding "democracy". For example, in protest coverage, I will examine whether protesters are portrayed as the focal point of the narrative or whether government voices dominate. This approach helps indicate the narrative emphasis – what aspects are highlighted versus marginalized – and uncovers the media's strategic framing choices when constructing narratives about "democracy" and protest. Again, to ensure a balanced and rigorous analysis, I adopt a realist paradigm approach. This involves analysing the construction of democratic issues as objectively as possible, identifying patterns across the media while acknowledging the role of language and discourse in framing reality. By applying this methodology, I aim to provide a systematic understanding of how democratic discourse is represented, contested, and shaped by various media outlets in the context of the Hong Kong protests.

A pilot study was conducted to validate the codebook and coding scheme's effectiveness. According to Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002), pilot studies are essential for verifying the validity and reliability of the codebook, providing an opportunity to refine the codes for greater clarity and comprehensiveness. This includes adjusting code definitions, categories, and the overall structure of the codebook (Neuendorf 2016). In this process, the researcher randomly selected five articles from each newspaper, using a pre-designed codebook to categorise the stories while noting any classification issues stemming from vague definitions of the variables. The pilot study also allowed the researcher to become familiar with the operational processes and avoid potential problems. Upon completion of the pilot study, the definitions of some variables were slightly revised to enhance clarity.   Following several discussions with supervisors, the final version of the codebook and coding scheme was determined.

Overall, this study benefited from the pilot study, particularly in improving the clarity of the codebook and increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research results (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2014). It also boosted the coder's confidence.   Thus, this study highlights the importance of familiarising oneself with the coding scheme and conducting pilot studies beforehand.

3.5 **Data Collection, Samples, and Challenges**

The data has been collected from the websites of four newspapers and downloaded as PDFs. Firstly, I should introduce the four newspapers (i.e., People's Daily, South China Morning Post, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily) and who they are. People's Daily is an official newspaper run by the Chinese government, representing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and propagating the Party's official viewpoints and narratives. In mainland China, People's Daily enjoys widespread circulation and readership. According to the WAN-IFRA World Press Trends 2016 report, People's Daily has a circulation of 2, 603,000 copies and reaches an estimated 350 million readers across China. It has reporting priority and discourse dominance over other media organisations, particularly on political events. Thus, analysing Hong Kong protest coverage in People's Daily provides insights into how the Chinese government frames and portrays protests to maintain social stability and influence public perceptions.

Considering Hong Kong, this study selected South China Morning Post (SCMP), Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily as research samples for comparison with mainland People's Daily. First, SCMP, established in 1903 and written in English, has a good reputation for independent journalism and a diverse readership in Hong Kong.   SCMP promotes freedom of speech and provides comprehensive coverage of local, regional, and global news. Some Hong Kong scholars confirm that SCMP is a reliable source for balanced reporting and has critical views in its reporting, making it a valuable research resource for understanding conflict events

from liberal media perspectives (Leung 2020).

Wen Wei Po, founded in 1948, is a pro-Beijing newspaper based in Hong Kong. Due to its close ties with the Chinese Communist Party, its conservative reporting style makes it unique compared to other media in Hong Kong. Thus, it is important to examine the protest paradigm and relevant framing techniques in Wen Wei Po. Oriental Daily, launched in 1969, is one of Hong Kong's leading civic newspapers with a wide readership. It has been the top sales leader in Hong Kong's newspaper industry for 48 consecutive years, selling hundreds of thousands of copies daily and reaching a readership of 3,090,368 (see Kantar TNS 2017). Written in Cantonese, Oriental Daily is known for its sensationalist reporting style and tabloid-like content, often appealing to populist sentiments and sensationalising controversial topics. This newspaper provides an opportunity to analyse how a tabloid Hong Kong newspaper frames and describes protests to guide their readers' perceptions.

So far, the selection of three newspapers in Hong Kong represents diverse journalism perspectives: ranging from independent and critical (SCMP) to pro-establishment and conservative (Wen Wei Po) and sensationalist and bold-styling (Oriental Daily). This allows us to examine how different media outlets represent and describe protests in 2014 and 2019 in Hong Kong, offering insights into the plurality of viewpoints within the region. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hong Kong's media system is influenced by both local dynamics and mainland China intervention. Therefore, more than one newspaper sample is selected to better understand the hybrid media landscape in Hong Kong through the similarities and differences in theme, language use, and narrative tendency. May also notice that selecting one newspaper from mainland China and three from Hong Kong as samples may indeed introduce a degree of imbalance in the comparative analysis. However, some reasons provided by the researcher are: People's Daily is highly representative and plays a role of opinion leadership in protest reporting, making

it unnecessary to examine other types of media. Additionally, the aim of this study is not to explore media types, so other news outlets will not be considered.

The news articles were found by several keywords searching in Chinese, Cantonese and English, such as, "香港占中"("Hong Kong Occupy Central Love and Peace"); "香港雨伞抗议"("Hong Kong Umbrella Movement"); "香港非法聚集" ("Hong Kong illegal gathering"); etc.

A total of 2,710 news articles have been collected: 707 articles for OCLP protest coverage from 26th September 2014 to 15th December 2014, and from 6th June 2019 to 20th December 2019. It should be highlighted that the data collected for the 2014 OCLP protests is relatively limited compared to the 2019 protest coverage due to certain challenges, primarily associated with censorship imposed on mainland Chinese media. Only hard news has been selected, excluding soft news such as features, editorials, opinion pieces, and analyses. By limiting the sample to hard news, the researcher can maintain a narrower focus, ensure the reliability of the data, and achieve clearer research aims.

During data collection, I faced some difficulties. For example, regarding the 2014 OCLP protest, following the release of news articles from People's Daily, restrictions were enforced, preventing the retrieval and download of articles from websites. Additionally, these restrictions were accompanied by measures requiring permission to access and download articles, such as requests for citizens' identification (photo ID), background, personal information, and reasons for downloading data.

To address these challenges, the researcher first registered on the People's Daily website using a Chinese citizen ID and applied for the data request. An email was sent to the Chief Editor and the Data Management Department, including a

declaration, a detailed research proposal, and a student statement. Additionally, the researcher provided Chinese Press Credentials (Chinese Journalist Work ID) along with an introduction letter from the Xinhua News Agency to People's Daily. Subsequently, the researcher obtained permission to access the digital dataset. Thus, in the context of media studies, particularly when examining the portrayal of protests, the data garnered from mainland China presents an invaluable resource for analysis.

3.6 **Criticism of the Methods**

We must acknowledge that no research method is perfect or entirely objective. Despite the mixed approach designed and applied in this study, the researcher would like to address some methodological shortcomings. In terms of the quantitative approach, content analysis may oversimplify complex qualitative content by reducing it to measurable categories or frequencies. Krippendorff (2004) suggests that researchers can integrate richer qualitative insights through a more nuanced coding system that captures the depth and context of content beyond quantitative metrics. In addition, quantitative content analysis might overlook the context and nuances embedded in qualitative data, leading to a potential loss of contextual understanding. To address this, the study employed Neuendorf's (2002) suggestion of using quantitative findings alongside qualitative insights to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of context.

On the other hand, as Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss, qualitative thematic analysis may introduce researcher subjectivity and bias in theme identification and interpretation, potentially affecting the reliability of findings. This study agrees with this concern and seeks to improve it by leveraging technology for quantitative analysis and employing efficient coding strategies for qualitative thematic analysis (e.g., Guest et al., 2012). Furthermore, qualitative can be more time-consuming compared to quantitative methods.

Although many scholars (e.g., Tariq 2013, Zohrabi 2013, Gale 2013, Kaushik 2019, Regnault 2018, Creswell 2014) argue that a mixed-methods approach can reduce limitations and share the benefits of each aspect, this study tends to emphasise the disadvantages of such an approach. Firstly, combining both methods can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly in large-scale studies. Secondly, merging quantitative and qualitative findings can present challenges in ensuring that conclusions are truthful and valid. Additionally, displaying findings that effectively integrate both quantitative and qualitative data can be difficult. Some scholars, such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), suggest using visualisation tools to illustrate integrated results effectively, although this study did not adopt that approach.

It is necessary to clarify the distinction between thematic analysis and framing analysis[11], as they are closely related but serve different analytical purposes as some scholar discussed (Clinton 2020). Both approaches involve coding qualitative data into meaningful units, but their focus and application differ: Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), focuses on identifying patterns or themes that are significant to the research question. It is typically applied to qualitative datasets, such as interview transcripts or textual media content. A theme captures a concept that connects various semantic elements of the data (e.g., descriptions of actions, actors, or contextual details) into a coherent whole. Themes are derived inductively (emerging from the data) or deductively (guided by existing theories), and their significance is determined based on their relevance to the research objectives. Framing Analysis (Pan and Kosicki 1993) builds upon thematic analysis by adding a structured, matrix-based organizational framework to facilitate comparison across datasets or cases. Frames represent interpretative structures that highlight particular aspects of reality while omitting others. Unlike thematic analysis, framing analysis is particularly suited for large

---

[11] Lazarus (2022) defines that framing analysis "as a step-wise approach to thematic analysis" (p.1).

datasets or comparative studies, as it systematically organizes data into predefined or emergent categories, enabling cross-sectional analysis and abstraction. As researchers focus themselves in the data, they may find some codes may fail to capture key patterns, prompting the development of new, more relevant codes. This iterative refinement of the coding framework aligns with the ongoing evolution of theories derived from the data (Naeem et al., 2023). In this study, framing analysis can be viewed as an extension of thematic analysis. While thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns within a dataset, framing analysis integrates these themes into a structured framework, facilitating a more systematic interpretation of relationships between themes, sources, and narratives. However, framing analysis can be time-intensive and may be less suitable for individual researchers compared to research teams. Scholars such as Javadi and Zarea (2016) have critiqued the limitations of thematic approaches, particularly regarding rigor and reliability. This study acknowledges these concerns but emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding in qualitative comparative research. Gomez and Kuronen (2011) argue that a deep understanding of political and cultural contexts is a prerequisite for capturing the nuanced meanings and dynamics within qualitative data. In this study, the integration of both thematic and framing analyses ensures a balanced examination of media discourse, capturing both descriptive and interpretative insights.

In summary, the above discussion highlights the visible limitations of the chosen methodology and provides suggestions for improvement. Despite these limitations, a mixed-methods approach promises the rigour and effectiveness of media studies concerning Hong Kong and mainland China.

3.7 Conclusion

In this thesis, to better capture the nuances of protest reporting in different social contexts, a new research method is required that meets overall methodological standards while fitting the specific techniques of particular case studies. The

theoretical perspectives on the protest paradigm provide a solid conceptual framework for methodological considerations, while content analysis and thematic analysis offer practical approaches. It is important to note that the contribution of the methodology in this thesis includes a predefined codebook developed for operationalisation, measurement, and procedural steps, detailing the coding process step by step. Additionally, the methodology chapter discusses why this study selected a mixed-method approach and how it enhances research reliability. The study emphasises that the full benefits are realised only when both methods are used together, with each approach specifically targeting different research questions.

Quantitative content analysis allows for the systematic examination of large-scale data, identifying patterns and trends in the coverage of the 2014 and 2019 protests, while qualitative thematic analysis provides depth and context, uncovering the intricate meanings embedded in media narratives. The comparative case analysis with mainland China further enriches the investigation by providing insights into distinct media systems and their influences on protest narratives. This cross-cultural examination offers a unique lens to explore the protest paradigm within Chinese contexts, contributing valuable insights to the broader field of media studies. The following chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, present Case Study 1 and Case Study 2, respectively, in a comparative analysis across People's Daily, SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily. Through this hybrid approach, the thesis offers nuanced insights into the intricate relationship between media representations, public discourse, and socio-political dynamics in Hong Kong and mainland China.

Chapter Four. Comparative Media Analysis of the Occupy Central Love and Peace movement, 2014

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the first case study, focusing on the Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) protest that took place in Hong Kon in 2014. As David (1996) suggests, "Themes are the recurring typical theses that run through a lot of the reports," (p.31). This chapter examines six characteristics of the protest paradigm which has been repeated in the news coverage – Marginalization; legitimzation; de-legitimization; violence; conflict and nationalism – in a comparative analysis. It also explores the sourcing practices of Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media, investigating their citation habits and the content aspects they prefer to emphasize in their coverage of the OCLP protest.

This chapter also analyses the media discourse surrounding "democracy", comparing word choices and content focuses between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers to show differences in their portrayals and priorities.

4.2 Data

The analytical articles are sourced from four newspapers: People's Daily, South China Morning Post (SCMP), Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily. The table above displays the publication periods and the number of articles released by each of these outlets, totally 707 articles has been collected in this study, from 26th September 2014 to 15th December 2014.

People's Daily: 125 (articles)

SCMP: 219 (articles)

Wen Wei Po: 159 (articles)

Oriental Daily: 204 (articles)

	1-Sep	1-Oct	1-Nov	1-Dec
People's Daily	0	31	69	25
SCMP	21	71	93	34
Wen Wei Po	13	66	68	12
Oriental Daily	16	70	90	28
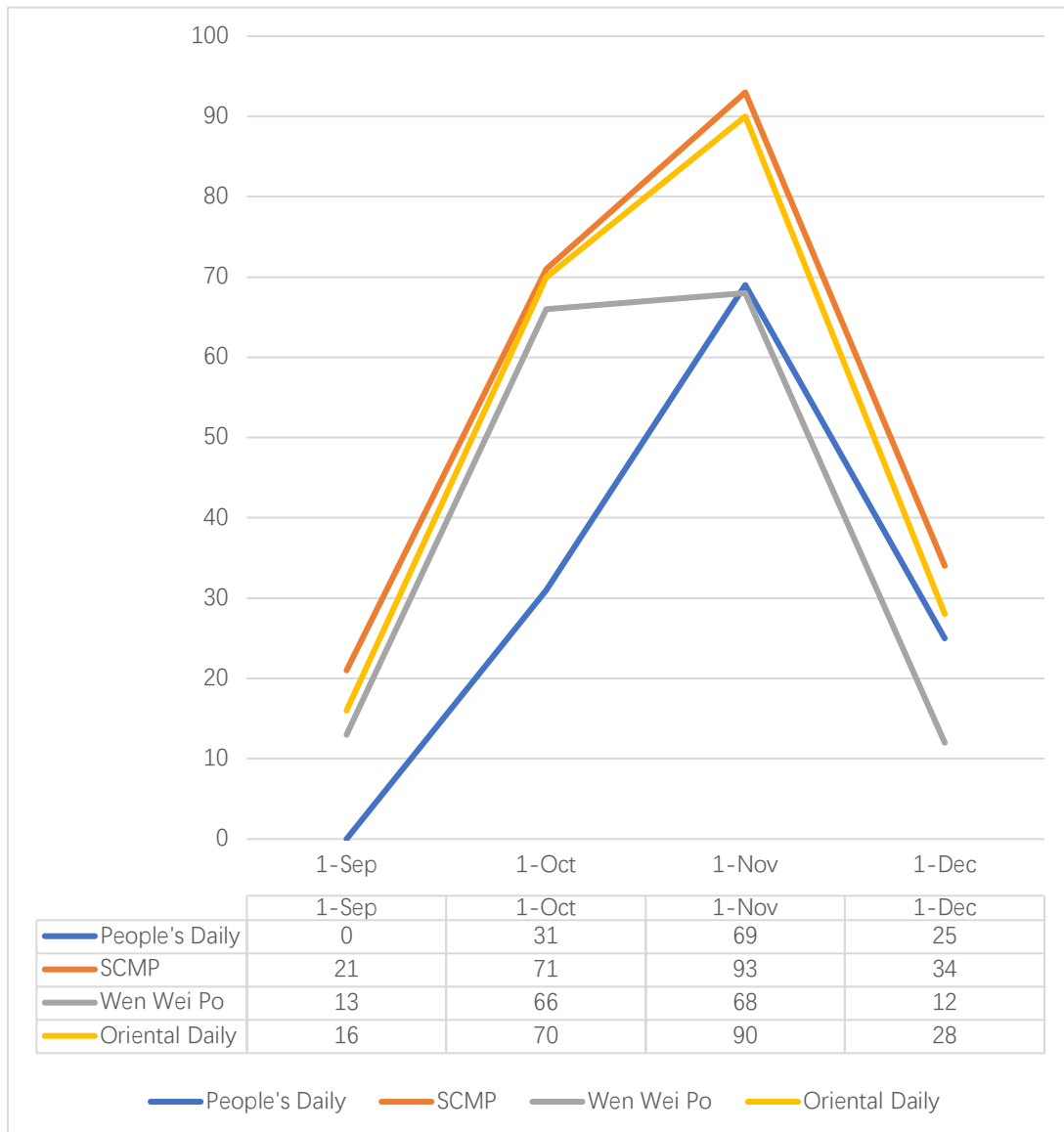
Figure 1. Monthly data composition by medium

The Figure 1 shows the frequency of articles published by four newspapers, over the months from Sep. to Dec. People's Daily initially did not publish any articles on September, indicating a delayed response to the events. The Figure shows an increase, reaching its peak in November with 69 articles, before decreasing again in December to 25 articles. This pattern may indicate a measured response to the OCLP protest coverage, aligning with a controlled narrative as part of state media's approach to managing sensitive issues.

SCMP has a strong and steady presence, increasing its coverage significantly from 21 articles in September to 93 in November. Like other newspapers, SCMP reduced its publication frequency in December within 34 articles, possibly reflecting reduce public interest or editorial decisions to focus on different aspects of the protests or other news topics (Eric et al., 2024). Wen Wei Po's coverage shows a strong response in October and November, peaking at 68 articles in November, but dropping sharply to only 12 articles in December. Oriental Daily had a consistent increase from 16 articles in September to 90 in November, mirroring a proactive approach. However, there is a significant drop to 28 articles in December.

4.2.1 Content Analysis of OCLP Reporting Tendencies

Table 3 illustrates the frequency of six distinct themes utilized in media coverage, with each article assigned to only one primary theme. Significant disparities in thematic emphasis were observed through statistical analysis. Table 3 highlights People's Daily's heavy reliance on the de-legitimzation theme (n=39, 31.20%) compared to other newspapers. Marginalization was the second most prominent theme in People's Daily (n=33, 26.40%), suggesting a strong alignment with the protest paradigm (McLeod 1998), which often employs marginalization tactics (Chan and Lee 1984, Dardis 2006). For example, People's Daily highlighted the protesters' actions by describing them as "physical oddities," showcasing incidents where protesters "rushed at the police, wearing helmets and wielding clubs," (2 Oct. 2014). It further emphasized acts such as "blocking streets, obstructing ambulances, burning road signs, and breaking mall windows," (3 Oct), thereby painting a picture of lawlessness, vandalism, and deviance (McLeod and Hertog 1999, Shahin et al., 2016).

Themes	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
Marginalizing	33	16	12	12

Legitimisation	0	28	18	25
De-legitimization	39	14	10	8
Violence	27	62	96	77
Conflict	20	84	23	97
Nationalism	6	0	0	0
Total (N)	**125**	**204**	**159**	**219**

Table 3. Analytical results for themes used by mainland China and Hong Kong

newspapers

In contrast, Hong Kong media sources did not rely as heavily on marginalization in their portrayal of the OCLP protests. SCMP published 16 articles (7.84%) with a marginalization focus, while Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily each featured 12 articles focusing on this theme (7.55% and 5.48%, respectively).

Despite the prevalence of marginalization and de-legitimzation themes, the analysis shows that the violence theme was prominent across all four newspapers. Wen Wei Po (n=96, 60.38%) focused extensively on violent incidents, detailing clashes between police and protesters. Oriental Daily (n=77, 35.16%) followed closely, centering its coverage on police actions within the chaotic scenes. SCMP (n=62, 30.40%) also prioritized the violence theme but to a lesser extent, while People's Daily (n=27, 21.6%) showed the least emphasis on violence. The focus on violent events aligns with studies by McLeod and Hertog (1999) and Entman (1993), who note that media outlets often sensationalize violent incidents due to their potential to captivate audiences and boost readership. This focus may also be attributed to the competitive nature of Hong Kong's media landscape (Gitlin 1980, Lee 2000).

Oriental Daily (n=97, 44.30%) and SCMP (n=84, 41.18%) led in using the conflict theme to describe the OCLP, followed by People's Daily (n=20, 16.00%) and Wen Wei Po (n=23, 14.47%), as shown in Table 1. This observation suggests that both

Hong Kong and mainland media recognize the effectiveness of conflict in constructing compelling protest narratives. On one hand, conflict allows media to describe protests as dramatic events with clear protagonists and antagonists, thereby capturing audience attention and driving higher engagement (Entman 1993). On the other, the conflict delineates clear boundaries between opposing parties, reinforcing dominant power structures and societal norms (Gitlin 1980).

Table 3 shows significant differences among the newspapers in their use of the nationalism theme. People's Daily published only six articles (n=4.80%) addressing nationalism out of its 125 articles, whereas none of the Hong Kong newspapers employed this theme in their OCLP protest coverage. This finding indicates that Chinese media favours the nationalism to align protest coverage with government narratives, fostering patriotic sentiments (Zhang and Liu 2020). In contrast, the absence of the nationalism theme in Hong Kong newspapers suggests an editorial choice to avoid this divisive topic given Hong Kong's unique political and historical context (Liu and Huang 2020). Hong Kong media's avoidance of nationalism may reflects a commitment to editorial independence, distancing their coverage from mainland narratives to maintain credibility and journalistic integrity.

Furthermore, the study finds that People's Daily utilizes the violence theme to underscore a broader narrative of delegitimization, framing the Hong Kong protests as unlawful and challenging the rule of law. This tactic is consistent with McLeod's (1998) said that the media portrayal of violence in protest coverage can serve to delegitimate the protesters and their cause, aligning with the protest paradigm's tendency to depict protesters as deviant or criminal. Meanwhile, this study tries to argue that People's Daily describe the OCLP protest through the violence lens may reinforcing societal biases and existing the power dynamics of Chinese central state.

	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
Police	0	24	37	37
Protester	27	38	59	40

Table 4. Frequency of Protester versus Police employed in newspapers

Table 4 illustrates the comparative analysis of themes related to clashes between police and protesters, emphasising the different narratives in Hong Kong and mainland media. As highlighted in Chapter one, confrontations between police and protesters are often focal points in protest coverage due to their dramatic, tension-filled nature, which captures audience attentions (Entman 1993).

People's Daily predominantly attributed responsibility for violence to the protesters, evidenced by 27 articles solely blaming them without offering context or examining the reasons behind the actions. This one-sided approach reinforces the narrative set by central authorities, portraying protesters as instigators of disorder without examining underlying grievances or causes.

In contrast, SCMP provided a more nuanced perspectives, attributing blame to both the protesters and the police. SCMP held protesters responsible for violent actions in 24 articles (38.54%), while it acknowledged the police's contribution to escalating tensions in 38 articles (61.30%). Similarly, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily were more balanced in their coverage on this theme, assigning significant responsibility to the police (Wen Wei Po = 59, Oriental Daily = 40), and slightly less to the protesters (Wen Wei Po = 37, Oriental Daily = 37). Through diverse perspectives on police-protester confrontations, the SCMP, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily show a commitment to public discourse, aiming to present a multi-faceted view rather than a singular state-aligned narrative.

4.2.2. Episodic and Thematic Framing Analysis[12]

The Table 5 provided compares the use of episodic and thematic framing across four newspapers. Thematic frames provide broader contextual and analytical views, while episodic frames focus on individual incidents or specific events.

	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
Episodic	25	73	96	67
Thematic	100	131	63	152

Table 5. Frequency of episodic- oriented and thematic oriented employed across the four newspapers.

The People's Daily has using thematic framing in 100 articles (80%) of its coverage, while only has 25 articles (20%) of its coverage been written by episodic framing. This shows a preference for thematic framing, which aligns with its role as a state media outlet. This framing allows for presenting OCLP protests in a way that emphasizes socio-political narratives aligning with government perspectives. This study found that People's Daily employed episodic framing to present news with humour and satire, especially when covering the OCLP. In its satirical approach, People's Daily would focus on specific lawless actions or widely perceived shortcomings of protesters as the basis for ridicule. This type of humour can adopt various framing styles depending on the context provided. For example, when People's Daily highlights individual incidents, such as protesters confronting police, it often uses episodic framing by focusing on single, isolated events. This approach portrays protesters in a certain light without deeper context, emphasising the immediate drama of the situation. However, when the coverage situates these incidents within the broader context of the "one country, two systems" principle,

---

[12] The use of term "framing" in referring to epidotic and thematic studies here serves as a way to classify different approaches to media coverage, specifically how events are organized and contextualized in news coverage. However, this terminology does not imply that this study is conducting a framing analysis in the sense.

discussing the protest actions as violations of this framework, it transitions to thematic framing. Here, the news narrative is not just about the event itself but rather its implications for Hong Kong's legal and political status, thus providing the background necessary to build a more complex narrative that align with government perspectives.

SCMP has 131 articles (64.22%) within thematic framing and has 73 articles (35.78%) within episodic framing. SCMP uses a balanced approach but favour thematic framing, likely aiming o provide a detailed understanding of underlying causes and broader issues in the OCLP, reflecting its attempt to engage readers in broader discussions. Wen Wei Po as Table 5 shown, has 63 articles (39.62%) within thematic framing, and has 96 articles (60.38%) written by episodic framing. This is shows the Wen Wei Po leans more towards episodic framing, focusing on specific events or moments. This framing often highlights incidents, which may align with a strategy to emphasize disruptions in protest movements. Oriental Daily using thematic framing by 69.41% (n=152), while episodic framing with represents 30.59% (n=67) in coverage of OCLP. People's Daily and Oriental Daily's reliance on thematic framing is consistent with media strategies that aim to shape public perceptions by linking individual protest events to larger ideological narratives. The episodic orientation in Wen Wei Po aligns with the protest paradigm, focusing on isolated incidents to potentially portray the OCLP protests as chaotic or disruptive.

The difference in these reporting approaches is significant: thematic coverage by People's Daily aims to contextualise protests as part of larger societal or ideological issues, a strategy that supports state narrative and downplays protest legitimacy. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's episodic framing emphasizes transparency and accountability, focusing on specific events to capture readers' attention and debate.

4.2.3 The Number of Sources

Diversity in journalism is contingent upon both variation and disparity among sources (Birgit 2023), it is meant the importance of examining the breadth and range of sources used. The Table 6 indicated the People's Daily relies heavily on official spokesmen from Hong Kong SAR, with this source representing 29.47% of their sourcing. This reflects a strong alignment with official government perspectives. SCMP (18.32%), Wen Wei Po (23.46%) and Oriental Daily (21.29%) also use this source frequently but to a lesser extent than People's Daily. This suggests that while HKSAR officials are more important source across all newspapers, the Hong Kong newspapers provide a slightly more varied perspective, possibly including other viewpoints.

Sources	People's Daily	%	SCMP	%	Wen Wei Po	%	Oriental Daily	%
HKSAR GOV. Official spokesmen	61	29.47%	59	18.32%	57	23.46%	53	21.29%
Hong Kong Administration	6	2.90%	10	3.11%	13	5.35%	9	3.61%
Hong Kong Leadership	18	8.70%	24	11.59%	20	8.23%	23	9.24%
Police	11	5.31%	10	3.11%	12	4.94%	11	4.42%
China PRC. Official spokesmen	29	14.01%	27	8.39%	22	9.05%	24	9.64%

Beijing Central government leadership	10	4.83%	8	2.48%	8	3.92%	9	3.61%
Protester	0	0.00%	66	20.50 %	60	24.69 %	56	22.49 %
Bystander	7	3.38%	19	5.90%	10	4.12%	12	4.82%
Ordinary People	12	5.80%	40	12.42 %	23	9.47%	29	11.65 %
Celebrate	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.41%	0	0.00%
Expert	43	20.77 %	39	12.11 %	10	4.12%	11	4.42%
Civil Society	0	0.00%	3	0.93%	0	0.00%	1	0.40%
Foreign Leader/politician	5	2.41%	4	1.24%	2	0.82%	2	0.80%
Alternative Media	0	0.00%	1	0.31%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Foreign Media	2	0.97%	4	1.24%	1	0.41%	0	0.00%
Anonymous	0	0.00%	3	0.93%	2	0.82%	6	2.41%
Others	3	1.45%	5	1.55%	2	0.82%	3	1.20%
Total	**207**		**322**		**243**		**249**	

Table 6. Numbers and Percentages for the different sources of information13

(total = 1021)

Interestingly, People's Daily includes no direct sourcing from protesters (0%), which

suggests a significant bias in its portrayal, potentially undermining the protest

---

13 One source may be cited in multiple times in a story, only counted once.

movement by excluding protester voices. In contrast, SCMP (20.50%), Wen Wei Po (24.69%), and Oriental Daily (22.49%) frequently cite protesters, highlighting their stance on the OCLP protests and giving the movement a voice. This divergence reflects the more balanced or even sympathetic approach of Hong Kong media towards the OCLP.

People's Daily once again shows a high reliance on Chinese official sources, with PRC spokesmen (14.01%) and Beijing Central leadership (4.83%) cited more frequently than in the Hong Kong newspapers. This emphasizes People's Daily's focus on nationalistic and centralized government narratives. It corroborates previous influential studies, which suggest that journalists often favour elite sources while marginalizing non-elite voices in their reporting on protests (e.g., Signal, 1973; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1987). The Hong Kong newspapers cited these sources to a lesser extent, with SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily including PRC spokesmen at 8.39%, 9.05%, and 9.64%, respectively, and Beijing central government leadership at 2.48% (SCMP), 3.92% (Wen Wei Po), and 3.61% (Oriental Daily) as shown by Table 6.

People's Daily prominently features expert sources (20.77%), higher than in SCMP (12.11%), Wen Wei Po (4.12%), and Oriental Daily (4.42%). This may indicate a strategy by People's Daily to portrayal the OCLP protests through a lens of authority and rationality, reinforcing the government's viewpoint with expert analysis. In contrast, Hong Kong newspapers use fewer expert sources, which may suggest an emphasis on eyewitness accounts and direct voices rather than authoritative commentary.

There is also a notable use of Ordinary people and bystanders in SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily, with percentages for ordinary people being around 10-12%. This choice suggests an emphasis on capturing a broader societal perspective within Hong Kong. People's Daily, however, only includes 5.80% for ordinary people and 3.38%

for bystanders, indicating that the publication might prioritize official or authoritative sources over ordinary voices in shaping its narrative. This finding illustrates that, unlike the Chinese news media, the Hong Kong media pays more attention to the opinions of ordinary people on the subject of political issues. The results of this study closely correspond with earlier research by Loughborough University (2012), Hermida et al., (2014), Fizgerald (2016), which found that citizens were the most frequently cited sources in media reports on the 2011 Arab Spring. Much important is by amplifying the ordinary people's voices, Hong Kong media can empower marginalized communities and facilitate public dialogue and engagement through the OCLP reporting.

The category of bystanders describes the individual witnesses in a position to provide details of what occurred during a street protest from a "third eye", thereby assisting the media in providing "facts" and minimizing bias. Table 6 shows that People's Daily used bystanders' voices (n = 7, 3.38%) less often than the SCMP (n = 19, 5.90%), Oriental Daily (n = 12, 4.82%) and Wen Wei Po (n = 10, 4.12%) did. This finding suggests the People's Daily was reluctant to consult bystanders, fearing they might comment negatively on the authorities and government. In addition, these findings indirectly confirm those obtained by the Chinese media scholar Liu (2015), who suggested journalists and media outlets in China face risks of censorship, harassment, or even imprisonment if they publish content deemed subversive or critical of the government. Thereby, quoting bystanders who provide alternative viewpoints or challenge the official narrative may expose journalists to legal or professional consequences. To avoid repercussions, media outlets may opt for self-censorship and refrain from quoting bystanders who could be perceived as dissenters. `
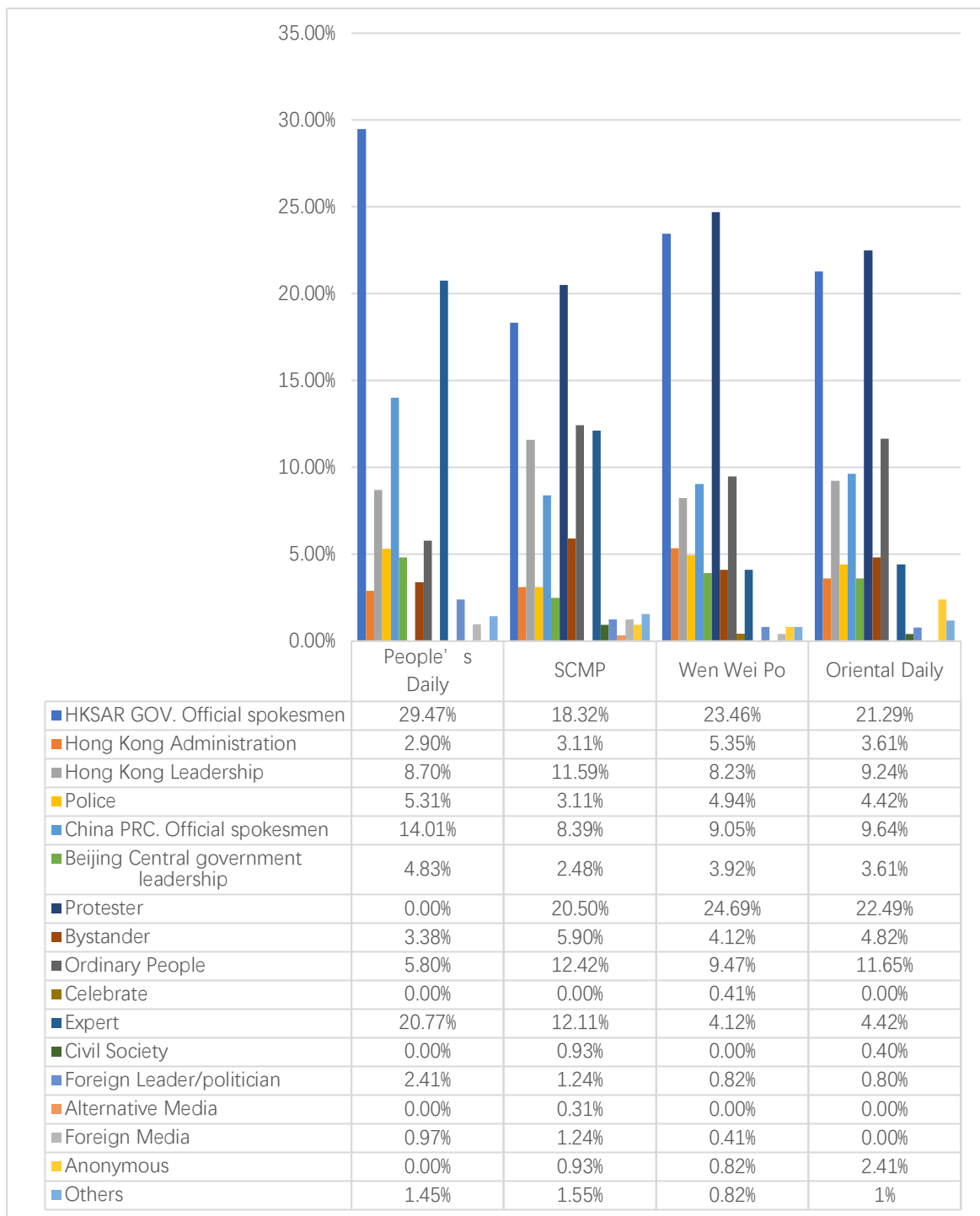
Figure 2. Percentage of Sources were quoted by types in 2014 OCLP coverage

	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
HKSAR GOV. Official spokesmen	29.47%	18.32%	23.46%	21.29%
Hong Kong Administration	2.90%	3.11%	5.35%	3.61%
Hong Kong Leadership	8.70%	11.59%	8.23%	9.24%
Police	5.31%	3.11%	4.94%	4.42%
China PRC. Official spokesmen	14.01%	8.39%	9.05%	9.64%
Beijing Central government leadership	4.83%	2.48%	3.92%	3.61%
Protester	0.00%	20.50%	24.69%	22.49%
Bystander	3.38%	5.90%	4.12%	4.82%
Ordinary People	5.80%	12.42%	9.47%	11.65%
Celebrate	0.00%	0.00%	0.41%	0.00%
Expert	20.77%	12.11%	4.12%	4.42%
Civil Society	0.00%	0.93%	0.00%	0.40%
Foreign Leader/politician	2.41%	1.24%	0.82%	0.80%
Alternative Media	0.00%	0.31%	0.00%	0.00%
Foreign Media	0.97%	1.24%	0.41%	0.00%
Anonymous	0.00%	0.93%	0.82%	2.41%
Others	1.45%	1.55%	0.82%	1%

People's Daily and Hong Kong newspapers uses foreign leaders sparingly, but People's Daily has the highest reliance on foreign political sources at 2.41%, possibly as a means to reinforce nationalistic sentiments by framing international actors in specific roles. Foreign media is minimally cited across all newspapers, with minor

mentions in People's Daily (0.97%) and SCMP (1.24%). This finding illustrates that the Chinese media placed significant value on the views of foreign politicians/leaders, especially when covering major issues. This finding further argues that mainland Chinese newspaper try to be quoting foreign politicians or leaders can lend legitimacy and credibility to Chinese media coverage, especially on contentious issues or sensitive topics. For example, in OCLP protest coverage, by featuring the views of prominent international figures, Chinese media outlets seek to demonstrate that their reporting is internationally recognized and respected, thereby enhancing their reputation and standing both domestically and globally.
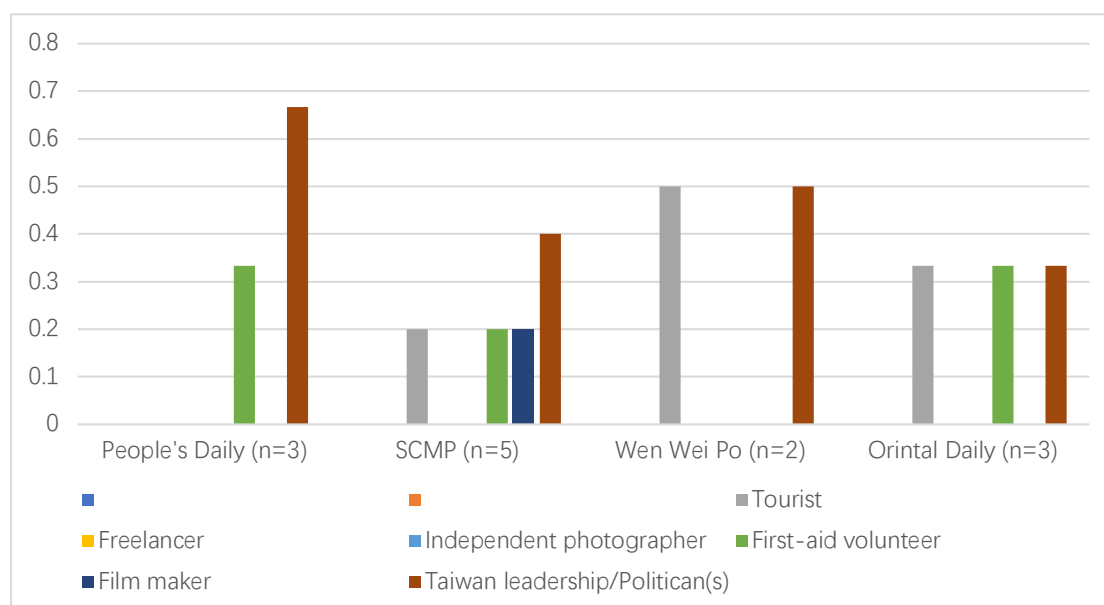
Figure 3. Percentage of "other" sources used by type in four newspapers

The last Figure 2 details multiple sources, representing the "other "category as part of the coding process. In "other" categories, People's Daily included references from Taiwan's leadership/politician (n = 2, 66.67%) and a first-aid volunteer (n = 1, 33.33%), whereas the SCMP quoted a tourist (n = 1, 20%), a first-aid volunteer (n = 1, 20%), filmmaker (n = 1, 20%), and Taiwan's leadership/politician (n = 2, 40%), who was also represented in the OCLP news stories. In the "Taiwan leader/politician" source category, People's Daily's quoted this source with a similar frequency to the

SCMP. Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily focused on Taiwan's leadership/politician's responses to OCLP events, referencing tourists as sources (e.g. Wen Wei Po, n = 1, 50%; Oriental Daily, n = 1, 33.33%). Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily also quoted Taiwanese leadership/politicians; for example, Wen Wei Po at one-time shows a 50% and Oriental Daily a 33.33% proportion for the 'other' category.

The final Figure 2 delineates various sources falling under the "other" category as part of our coding process. Within this category, People's Daily cited references from Taiwan's leadership/politicians (n = 2, 66.67%) and a first-aid volunteer (n = 1, 33.33%). Similarly, the SCMP quoted a diverse range of sources including a tourist (n = 1, 20%), a first-aid volunteer (n = 1, 20%), a filmmaker (n = 1, 20%), and representatives from Taiwan's leadership/political sphere (n = 2, 40%), who were also featured in coverage related to the OCLP events. Notably, People's Daily and SCMP quoted Taiwan's leadership/politicians with comparable frequency. In contrast, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily primarily focused on responses from Taiwan's leadership/politicians, with occasional references to tourists as sources (e.g., Wen Wei Po, n = 1, 50%; Oriental Daily, n = 1, 33.33%). These newspapers also featured quotes from Taiwanese leadership/politicians, with Wen Wei Po representing this source 50% of the time and Oriental Daily, 33.33% of the time within the "other" category. This finding directly indicate mainland Chinese media often prioritize the opinion of Taiwanese leadership on Hong Kong protests and affairs might due to political motivations and the geopolitical tensions between each other (Li and Zhang 2018, 2019). Wang (2019) through analysis the media discourse of the OCLP protest coverage found the similar results, and he argues this focus serves China's strategic interests by highlighting divisions within Taiwan and projecting a unified stance against dissent in Hong Kong.

4.3 Thematic Analysis and Protest Narratives

4.3.1 Emerging Paradigms in Protest Coverage

Theme: Marginalization

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"These protesters are nothing but a group of reckless troublemakers disrupting social order." (Oct 11. 2014)	"The protest has caused disruptions in daily life for citizens and led to significant economic losses for local businesses." (July 17. 2014)	"The march is causing widespread damage to commercial activity and small business owners are suffering." (Oct 10, 2014)	"Protesters continue to block roads, creating chaos and affecting public transport. Residents are growing frustrated with the situation." (Sep 29, 2014)

While both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers portrayed the OCLP protests with a theme of marginalisation, the People's Daily was particularly focused on marginalising the protesters in its coverage. The theme encompassed the mainland media's discontent with the outbreak of the Hong Kong protests. People's Daily described Hong Kong protesters as "reckless lunatics" (19 Nov. 2014) in stories dominated by the marginalisation theme. While People's Daily consistently marginalised the protesters by focusing on their perceived "recklessness," or "lunacy," this portrayal did not merely sever to delegitimize them within a protest paradigm (McLeod and Hertog 1992) but also added layers that described the protesters as a nuisance or obstacle to the broader society. For example, People's Daily emphasised protesters' character flaws when discussing their "illegal gathering" (11 Oct. 2014). This finding reaffirms McLeod's (1998) study, which discussed how portraying protesters 'character flaws serve to delegitimise their cause and aligns with the overarching narrative that portrays protesters as disruptive elements of society. This approach aligns with the nuisance paradigm, where protests are framed as disturbances to societal order and everyday life. For example, while a protest

paradigm often highlight protesters' perceived deviance, the nuisance specifically portrayals them as "burdensome" to society (People's Daily 11 Oct 2014) – this is seen in People's Daily's theming that suggests protesters are not only defiant but also disruptive to the normal functioning of the community, further reinforcing the idea that the protests were not just illegal but an unwelcome intrusion.

Compared to the People's Daily, Hong Kong newspapers addressed the marginalisation theme less frequently in their coverage of the OCLP event. In discussing marginalisation, newspapers like the SCMP highlighted the impact of protesters' actions on nearby businesses. One article stated, "Protesters' occupation forced nearby shopping malls, cafes, and restaurants to close, resulting in significant economic losses for the owners" (17 July 2014). Thus, when depicting protesters as marginalised, Hong Kong journalists often emphasised the economic repercussions of street protests. For instance, Wen Wei Po featured a headline stating, "Protest march cripples commercial activities," (10 October 2014). This approach suggests that while mainland media focused on character flaws to marginalise protesters, Hong Kong media often pointed to the economic impact and disruption caused by the protests.

This difference in reporting reflects broader journalistic practices and political contexts between Hong Kong and mainland China. Mainland media's portrayal aligns with the government's narrative to delegitimise and marginalise the protesters, thereby justifying strong governmental actions against them. In contrast, Hong Kong media, operating under a different set of journalistic norms and facing different societal expectations, tends to focus on the practical consequences of protests, such as economic disruptions.

Thus, the analysis of the marginalisation theme in the OCLP coverage indicates significant differences between mainland and Hong Kong newspapers. People's Daily utilised a narrative that strongly discredits the protesters by attacking their character and framing their actions as extreme and unlawful. Meanwhile, Hong Kong

newspapers like SCMP and Wen Wei Po, while also addressing marginalisation, did so by highlighting the economic impacts rather than focusing solely on the protesters' character flaws.

Theme: Legitimisation

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"The government's response is justified as these protests threaten the unity and stability of our society," (Oct 21, 2014)	"The protesters are a peaceful demonstration, grounded in citizens' right to express dissatisfaction with the current system." (Sep 28, 2014)	"Demands for democracy should not be ignored, and this peaceful protest represents a call for change." (Sep 29, 2014)	"This is a legitimate exercise of civil rights, reflecting deep concerns among citizens about governance and autonomy." (Oct 1, 2014)

The results of the quantitative analysis reveal a stark contrast in the treatment of the legitimisation theme between People's Daily and the Hong Kong newspapers SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily. While People's Daily largely omitted discussions related to legitimisation in its coverage of the OCLP event, the Hong Kong newspapers consistently framed the protests as legitimate expressions of civil rights protected by the Basic Law.

For instance, SCMP employed words such as "reasonable," "justice," and "rationality" to depict the protesters' "peaceful" sit-ins, shedding light on the theme of legitimisation. Furthermore, SCMP, along with Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily, provided in-depth analyses for their readers. They explored the reasons behind the

protests, attributing them to perceived interference by mainland China in the general election of the Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive. Additionally, they argued that Beijing's actions had violated the fundamental principle of "one country, two systems" and encroached upon the civil rights of Hong Kong citizens.

This divergence in coverage highlights the differing roles and pressures faced by media outlets in mainland China and Hong Kong. By contrast, Hong Kong newspapers operate with relatively more freedom and cater to a readership that values civil liberties and democratic principles. Therefore, they are more inclined to present the protests as a legitimate response to political grievances.

The describing of protests as legitimate by Hong Kong newspapers also serves to support the protesters' demands for greater democratic reforms and autonomy from mainland China. By highlighting the perceived breaches of the "one country, two systems" principle, these newspapers not only validate the protesters' concerns but also underscore the broader implications for Hong Kong's autonomy and future governance. The contrasting approaches between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers highlight how legitimacy in protest coverage is not just about whether protests are reported, but how they are themed. Hong Kong media's inclination to validate the protesters' motivations and actions serves a dual purpose, it reinforces the democratic values held by their readership and reflects a journalistic commitment to showcasing civil discourse (Lee 2011, Trappel and Tomaz 2021).

More important is, in Hong Kong newspapers, the use of legitimization in OCLP coverage appears to be a dynamic concept that shifts based on factors such as media portrayal and is interpreted differently by various sources. The legitimacy in Hong Kong's media focuses on viewing OCLP as an effective mechanism within the political system, emphasizing the basis, grievances, and goals of the OCLP protest. This finding in line with previous studies, which highlights that legitimizing protest coverage does not equate to endorsing or promoting the protest (Masullo, Brown, and

Harlow 2023). Rather, legitimization involves presenting the protest narrative in a way that frames protests as a valid and essential component of the democratic process (Shahin et al., 2016, Hussein 2023).

Theme: De-legitimisation

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"The protesters are a group of criminals disregarding the law and the principles of "one country, two systems," (Oct 21, 2014)	"Certain actions by protesters have raised concerns about public safety." (June 21, 2014)	"The march disrupts daily life affecting local businesses." (Oct 10, 2014)	"Protesters are blocking roads and disturbing public order, causing frustration among residents." (Sep 29, 2014)

People's Daily frequently addressed the de-legitimization theme to report the OCLP protests, for example, they were delegitimated the protesters, describing them as "vandals" (19 October 2014). People's Daily also relied on the principle of "one country, two systems" to refute the protesters' purpose: "they [protesters] are a bunch of criminals who [are] deliberately violent [to] the one country, two systems constitution" (21 October 2014). Furthermore, People's Daily described the OCLP and the protesters as a challenge to China's constitution, and a threat to its sovereignty. So far, the delegitimization theme could be think as a potent device within the protest paradigm by People's Daily applied. This finding highlights the media deploy de-legitimization narratives to portray protesters as deviant and criminal (McLeod 1998).

In the context of the OCLP protests, media outlets, particularly People's Daily, utilized the de-legitimisation theme to disparage the Hong Kong protesters and their actions. They characterized the protests as "illegal gatherings" and labelled the participants as "criminals." By describing the protests in this negative light, the media sought to delegitimize the movement and portray it as a threat to social order and stability.

While Hong Kong newspapers did not heavily rely on the delegitimization theme, they did address certain content under this theme. For instance, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) highlighted instances of violent actions taken by protesters that were deemed to be "against the law" (21 June 2014). Additionally, SCMP provided detailed accounts of "deviant" acts committed by protesters in stories dominated by delegitimization:

> "The negative side of yesterday's protest included tensions caused by about 10 young people. The young Hong Kongers, after throwing a big stone, which could have hurt the police and the journalist, threw eggs," (SCMP, 6 October 2014).

This study suggests that violent actions by protesters can prompt the media to delegitimize protests, providing an opportunity to portray the movement negatively and undermine its credibility. As noted by McLeod and Hertog (1999), media organizations often highlight instances of violence to portray protesters as deviant or criminal, thereby discrediting the broader protest. Thus, the utilization of the delegitimization theme by both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers aligns with the traditional protest paradigm, which tends to depict dissenting voices as outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

There is a clear difference here on the subject of de-legitimisation of content, the statement provided by People's Daily comes from the law and related official papers,

such as the People's Daily report: "According to the relevant law, although Hong Kong citizens have the basic right to assemble and march, but if excessive violence, they will face administrative punishment, such as the crime of picking quarrels and provoking trouble." (18 August 2014).

Wen Wei Po raised the argument: "Does the action taken by protesters go against ethical standards?" (2 July 2024). This demonstrates that Hong Kong newspapers focused on ethical concerns and tactics surrounding the Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) movement in their coverage under the delegitimization theme. In contrast, People's Daily preferred to reference numerous rules and laws to delegitimize the protesters' gatherings, repeatedly emphasizing the mandate of "one country, two systems" and stressing that "the central government has the leading power of political reform in Hong Kong" (8 Auguest 2014). In doing so, the legality of political dissenting voices was questioned. Considering this, this study argues that mainland Chinese media coverage of violent incidents can reinforce existing power dynamics and societal norms, ultimately delegitimizing the protesters' grievances.

Theme: Violence

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Scenes of chaos with police injured by protester attacks." (Oct 11, 2014)	"Police used tear gas to disperse protesters, citing security risks," (Sep 28, 2014)	"Rioters threw objects and resisted police disrupting public peace." (Oct 3, 2014)	"Clashes between police and protesters escalated with tear gas deployed." (Oct 3, 2014)

The statistical results indicate that both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers heavily emphasised the theme of violence in their coverage of the OCLP protest. People's Daily, for instance, highlighted scenes of violence, publishing statements such as

"there were a lot of innocent people with blood coming out of their heads" (21 October 2014), and frequently mentioning "ambulances", thereby emphasising the violent aspects of the protests. A notable characteristic of the violence theme in People's Daily coverage was its tendency to rationalise police violence, as evidenced by statements like: "Beijing has urged the Hong Kong SAR to beef up police numbers to ensure such illegal gatherings do not turn into chaos with lots of violence… This is a delay tactic in negotiations with protesters" (19 October 2014). However, no details were provided to support this assertion.

In contrast, Hong Kong newspapers very detailed the measures taken by the Hong Kong riot police to prevent potential violence while maintaining law and order:

> "Be on the alert for violence. Since the [HK] police are responsible for monitoring all demonstrations ... Riot police have added more measures and a new action plan to deal with potential violence in advance." (South China Morning Post, October 29, 2014)

> "Another feature of yesterday was the discontinuous presence of the police, who stood ready to intervene if deemed necessary." (Wen Wei Po, October 29, 2014)

> "Police pulled out the banner and put up a warning sign saying 'Do not cross the line, otherwise shooting'" (Oriental Daily, October 29, 2014)

The evidence presented above suggests that violence acts as a "trigger" for news coverage, capturing readers' attention and engagement (Entman 1993). The high prevalence of the violence theme in the coverage of OCLP events by both Hong Kong and mainland media indicates their adherence to certain aspects of the protest paradigm. However, given the distinct characteristics of the media landscapes in

Hong Kong and mainland China, it is suspected that Hong Kong newspapers rely on the theme of violence due to its sensationalism and dramatic appeal. This may help them attract more attention from the public and generate higher readership numbers.

Moreover, Hong Kong media tend to mention the use of tear gas in their violent stories. For example, SCMP on 28 September 2014 mentioned: "Police fired tear gas at thousands of protesters who had gathered in the Admiralty district. The use of tear gas was a significant escalation in the authorities' efforts to disperse the peaceful demonstrators." On first day of October 2014, SCMP continued addressing: "In an effort to clear the streets, Hong Kong police fired multiple rounds of tear gas at demonstrators," Wen Wei Po also mentioned the tear gas used in violent-oriented stories, for example, 3 October 2014, Wen Wei Po said: "Despite repeated warnings, protesters refused to leave the occupied areas, promoting the police to use tear gas." So far, the heavy mention of weapons used by the police is a feature in the Hong Kong newspapers' use of the violence theme. However, no evidence has been found in the selected articles from People's Daily mentioning tear gas.

Thus, my analysis suggests that the Hong Kong media's focus on tear gas may serve several purposes: firstly, tear gas is a potent symbol of state repression and excessive use of force. By highlighting its use, Hong Kong newspapers can underscore the severity of the government's response to peaceful protests, thereby evoking public sympathy for the protesters. Secondly, the imagery of tear gas, which is highly evocative and dramatic, can amplify the emotional impact of the coverage, making the stories more compelling and engaging for readers. Finally, focusing on tear gas can also serve to criticise the authorities' handling of the protests, suggesting that such measures are disproportionate and unjustified.

On the other hand, by highlighting instances of violence, mainland media may seek to reinforce the narrative of deviance, thereby delegitimising the OCLP and its goals. This suggests a deliberate framing of the protests as disruptive and unlawful, aligning

with the broader political agenda of the Chinese government. Thus, the portrayal of violence in protest coverage serves not only to capture attention but also to shape public perceptions and reinforce existing power dynamics within society. In news stories dominated by the theme of violence, mainland provided limited narrative detail and description regarding the specifics of violent incidents, compared to Hong Kong media. Instead, the reports merely attributed violence to the protesters before quickly shifting focus to other points. This finding challenges the assumed universality of the violent aspects within the protest paradigm, suggesting that the representation of violence may vary based on media objectives and political context.

Furthermore, it is highlights the relationship between two themes – such as violence and conflict – and finds how mainland media, through its emphasis on violence, illustrates the conflict between protesters and authorities, as well as between protesters and ordinary people, - could be one sided or more than two-sided. This suggests that these themes are not always viewed as distinct but can be interwoven to support a particular narrative (Rugo and Parish 2021).

Theme: Conflict

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"The OCLP represents a rebellion against national unity." (Nov 4, 2014)	"Tensions are rising as protesters demand democratic reforms." (Sep 19, 2014)	"Protests reveal deep divides in HK society." (Nov 5, 2014)	"Protesters confront police, leading to arrests." (Oct 10, 2014)

The quantitative analysis reveals that all four newspapers tended to emphasize the conflict theme in their coverage of the OCLP protests. This finding underscores the longstanding role of conflict in politics, as it reflects the fundamental struggle among

opposing political ideologies inherent to democratic societies (Schattschneider, 1975). The portrayal of the conflict theme in the People's Daily emphasizes the substantive and strategic aspects of politics. For instance, an article stated, "[OCLP] it is a political clamour against the whole Chinese nation" (4 November 2014), illustrating the broad scope of the conflict.

In contrast, Hong Kong media focused on the issue of suffrage and election policy, highlighting the importance of friendly political discussions over hardline approaches. For example, Wen Wei Po urged direct talks between the SAR government and protesters to resolve the situation, warning of potential chaos if dialogue does not occur (5 November 2014). Similarly, the SCMP pointed out mainland interference in Hong Kong's universal suffrage and violations of the 'one country, two systems' principle and the Basic Law (19 September 2014), clarifying the underlying conflict between Hong Kong and Beijing.

In addition to political confrontations between protesters and the central government, Hong Kong newspapers also highlighted clashes between riot police and protesters in their coverage of the conflict theme. For instance, the SCMP reported on protesters' attempts to resist the police, resulting in multiple arrests. This story illustrates the adversarial relationship between the police and protesters. Similarly, Oriental Daily described tensions in Tsim Sha Tsui as students clashed with riot police during an OCLP protest (10 October 2014), further emphasizing the confrontational nature of the protests.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the choice of verbs in conflict themes plays a crucial role in making the conflict stories more vivid. People's Daily employed verbs like "rush in," "shout," "move forward," and "pushing," which depict a tense atmosphere of conflict between protesters, police, and ordinary citizens at the scene. Additionally, descriptors such as "friction" and "confrontation" were frequently used

to underscore the clashes between protesters and the Hong Kong SAR government. These narrative strategies contribute to the construction of the conflict theme.

People's Daily frequently juxtaposed statements made by all parties involved in the conflict, seemingly attempting to create a dialogue between protesters and the government or other stakeholders to provoke political responses. In this context, journalists transition from objective observers to active participants in shaping political reality. For instance:

> "Hong Kong's 'Universal Suffrage and Anti-Occupy Central' coalition has submitted to the HKSAR government more than 1.83 million signatures [it has] collected, which represent the voice of Hong Kong citizens against 'Occupy Central' and urge Beijing authorities to intervene and cooperate with the Hong Kong police to resolve the current unrest in Hong Kong as soon as possible. Occupy Central organisers raise a hue and provoke: 'They [Beijing authorities] dare not, come on, we are not scared'" (4 Nov. 2014, People's Daily).

A similar pattern is evident in a report by the SCMP, where journalists aim to demonstrate objectivity and fairness by quoting remarks from both sides of the dispute, presenting two contrasting perspectives:

> "In an interview with the South China Morning Post the same day, the Occupy organizer was asked to comment on Beijing's response so far. Professor Dai said they had 'no regrets or fears'. Asked if he was worried about possible jail time, he said: 'We will not be struck down by jail time'" (4 Nov. 2014, SCMP).

From the above examples, we could find, in the People's Daily report, protesters appear to engage in a direct verbal confrontation with the mainland government. In

contrast, the SCMP portrays protesters as responding to reporters' questions. This distinction highlights the interactive nature of dialogue in the SCMP report, while the People's Daily constructs a new interactive structure by extracting speakers' words from their original context, describing them as part of an antagonistic dialogue to support the conflict theme.

The follows of news reports exemplify journalists catching an opportunity to construct a contentious dialogue around issues with conflicting perspectives, a prevalent narrative mode in both Hong Kong and mainland media dominated by the conflict theme. Specifically, this dialogue is often framed as confrontational, representing the primary mode of discourse and narrative construction. It can be categorized into two main modes: two-sided confrontation and multi-sided confrontation.

In the context of conflict theme stories, the focus is often on highlighting conflicts between entities such as Hong Kong's Democratic Party and the Chinese Communist Party:

> "Martin Lee, founding chairman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, has protested against the mainland Communist Party's persecution of Hong Kong politicians of all parties" (8 July 2014, SCMP).

> "Mainland Communist Party representatives retort that universal suffrage has two insuperable bottom lines: the central government has the right to take the lead and have the final say on Hong Kong's political reform" (13 July 2014, People's Daily).

Another significant conflict addressed in these stories is between authorities and experts. Experts, considered detached and professional, are frequently cited by both Chinese and Hong Kong newspapers to refute opposing opinions:

"Professor Yeung of the Law Department of the University of Hong Kong believes that 'loving the country and loving Hong Kong' is a political concept, not a legal one. He also believes that universal suffrage in Hong Kong should adopt legally operational standards and systems" (3 July 2014, SCMP).

"A Chinese Central Government Official Spokesman stated: 'The decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on the selection of the chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by universal suffrage and the selection method of the Legislative Council in 2016 have set an insurmountable threshold for spokesmen of foreign forces to succeed in seizing the supreme governing power of Hong Kong. If the NPC's decision is accepted, it means that the opposition forces supported by the west for many years will not be elected as the chief executive for a long time, which will make it difficult for foreign forces to support and spend money to support the opposition in Hong Kong and try to control Hong Kong's governance for many years'" (9 Nov. 2014, People's Daily).

Additionally, newspapers sometimes connect expert opinions supporting different aspects to form a dialogue that fits the conflict:

"The imposition of conditions on universal suffrage is evidence that 'one country, two systems' is being undermined, says Professor Peter Leong of the UKU" (1 Oct 2014, Oriental Daily).

"The illegal Occupy Central rally in Hong Kong has entered its fifth day. The illegal gathering has 'seriously disturbed the rule of law and affected Hong Kong's economy and people's livelihood since it was launched in the

early hours of Monday', several mainland legal experts from Law department, Renmin University of China told Peoples' Daily" (3 Oct 2014, People's Daily).

The third aspect of conflict theme narratives involves multiple conflicts, where more than two parties engage in dialogue, resulting in multi-party group confrontation. This form of narrative construction allows media outlets to highlight conflicts from various angles, for example, "A number of pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong expressed dissatisfaction, with Democratic Party chairwoman Emily Lau, voicing opposition to the idea that only people selected by Beijing should be allowed to vote. Regarding this, a student protester who has agreed and said the proposal that Beijing [had] given could not be accepted. British government said they will keep [an] eye on [the] Hong Kong OCLP protest in recent, and worries [about] Hong Kong's future" (30 June 2014. Wen Wei Po).

People's Daily cited Chinese government official spokesmen, mainland citizens, and the strategic alliance countries by conflict theme shaped, for example, "Chinese Central Government spokesman Wang said the so-called "suffrage" was in fact an open challenge to the basic Law, and harm the all Chinese united from mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Regarding [the] Hong Kong illegal gathering, Russian media and experts have hit the nail on the head: US and the West want to "explode" or shake China. Mainland Chinese who [are] living [in] Guangzhou told [our] journalist that 'Occupy Central' [is an] illegal assembly, believing that its consequences can only harm the public interests of Hong Kong and undermine the rule of law in Hong Kong" (6 Oct. 2014 People's Daily).

So far, the evidence demonstrates that both Hong Kong and mainland media tend to employ the conflict theme when discussing the OCLP events, as this theme helps to craft compelling narratives that capture the public's attention. McLeod and Hertog (1999) emphasize the inherent drama of conflict, which naturally draws in readers and

enhances engagement with news content. Consequently, both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers utilize diverse sources to weave together narratives of conflict, facilitating a clearer understanding of the events by presenting identifiable protagonists (i.e., the state) and antagonists (i.e., Hong Kong protesters).

However, a notable distinction lies in how the conflict theme is employed and the narratives it shapes in Hong Kong versus mainland newspapers. The People's Daily focuses on highlighting instances of violence or disruption caused by protesters to delegitimize the protests and support state actions. In contrast, Hong Kong newspapers such as SCMP prefer to underscore the grievances of the protesters and frame the conflict as a struggle for democracy and suffrage elections.

The final significant finding indicate that Hong Kong and mainland media are both agreed that, the human being, is a central role of conflicts who can shaping public opinions. Nearly all arguments surrounding the conflict were initiated and articulated by the sources quoted. However, a key difference lies in how these opinions are disseminated and framed. Hong Kong newspapers such as SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily prioritize local activists as primary opinion leaders, leveraging their on-the-ground insights to provide firsthand information to well-informed professionals engaged with the OCLP. Subsequently, filtered content from these secondary leaders is presented to the broader media and policymakers, ultimately influencing the general audience's perception of the event.

In contrast, mainland media, particularly People's Daily, relies on party members, government-serving elites/academics, and members of national think tanks as primary opinion leaders. Here, the emphasis is on the party's political moderating role in conflicts, with media and journalists assuming the role of secondary opinion leaders.

Theme: Nationalism

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"These protesters, influenced by foreign forces, are enemies of all Chinese people" (Oct 9, 2014)			

As revealed by quantitative analysis, mainland People's Daily deliberately employed narrative tactics to delegitimise the protesters as a collective, framing them as unpatriotic. For instance, they quoted a government official asserting that "Hong Kong is Chinese territory and Hong Kong people are part of the Chinese nation" (7 October 2014). Another article emphasised, "The turmoil in Hong Kong today touches the hearts of all Chinese" (9 October 2014), and condemned "Hong Kong extremists colluding with Western evil forces in an attempt to split the motherland"; "These thugs are the enemies of all the Chinese people" (9 October 2014). This finding contradicts Zhao's (2004) assertion that Chinese nationalism, pragmatically managed by the government, doesn't pose significant risks. However, in the coverage of the OCLP event, People's Daily predominantly focused on fostering a sense of national shame and nurturing blind patriotism.

The recurring presence of the nationalism theme in protest coverage highlights how patriotic discourse and nationalism can swiftly become strategic choices for journalists (Kuang & Wei, 2018). Some scholars have pointed out that issues in China deemed nationally sensitive must adhere to Party standards when republished from state news sources (Feng et al., 2012, Ma 2005, Wu 2006). Terms such as "national dignity", "all the Chinese people", and "Hong Kong compatriots" frequently appeared in nationalism-themed stories in People's Daily. These serve as evidence that People's Daily crafted a series of nationalist discourses capable of reflecting

various interests, demands, and value beliefs by screening, arranging, and portraying different symbols and abstractions. This finding further validates Ernest's (1987) argument that the medium itself, with its abstract, centralized, standardised nature, naturally fosters the core idea of nationalism.

The People's Daily's focus on nationalism to against the OCLP protests has multiple targeting in my analysis, firstly, by reporting the protesters as enemies of the Chinese nation, it seeks to delegitimise their cause and dissuade public support for the movement. This portrayal aligns the protesters with foreign adversaries, thereby appealing to a sense of patriotism and unity among the mainland Chinese populace. Secondly, emphasising nationalism diverts attention from the protesters' specific demands and grievances, presenting the issue as a broader conflict between patriotic citizens and traitorous elements. This strategy helps to simplify the narrative, making it easier to mobilise public opinion against the protests.

Moreover, invoking nationalism can strengthen the legitimacy of the Chinese government and its policies. By positioning itself as the defender of national unity and sovereignty, the government can justify its actions against the protesters, portraying them as necessary measures to protect the nation. This approach also leverages historical sentiments and collective memory of past foreign interventions, reinforcing the narrative that external forces are continually seeking to undermine China.

Regarding this, the use of nationalism by mainland media, particularly People's Daily, in their coverage of the OCLP protests is a deliberate and strategic choice. It serves to delegitimise the protest movement, rally public support for the government's stance, and reinforce the overarching narrative of national unity against external and internal threats. This approach not only shapes public perception but also consolidates the government's authority, demonstrating the powerful role of media in influencing political discourse and national identity.

4.3.2 Contextual Analysis of Source Attribution

In this section, I will examine how the media functions as a platform for diverse voices and as a space for public empowerment by analysing includes an investigation into the content cited by sources, an assessment of the presence of varied voices, and a comparative observation of how effectively the media serves as a platform for representing different perspectives and empowering the public between Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media.

1. Comparing the protesters' voices and the government official sources

As quantitative analysis, the initial finding is HK newspapers quoted sources more frequently than mainland newspaper on average. Firstly, People's Daily predominantly relies on government officials, including spokespersons from the Beijing Central and Hong Kong SAR governments, to shape the narrative around the OCLP protest. For instance, on October 9, 2014, People's Daily reported that "a China central government spokesperson urged the Hong Kong SAR and police officers to clean up the illegal gathering as soon as possible." This indicates how the news coverage often prioritizes authoritative and impartial information from official sources. However, this also highlights a concerning trend where official voices dominate the discourse, while civil society actors and groups are afforded significantly less access and representation in the media coverage.

The official spokesperson from the Beijing government frequently appears in People's Daily coverage, assuming an opinion leadership role by directing other sources to criticize the Hong Kong protesters and urging the Hong Kong SAR and police to stop the chaos as swiftly as possible. For instance, a statement from a Beijing central government spokesperson emphasized the need for all competent authorities in China to vehemently oppose acts of destruction perpetrated by subversive organizations, regardless of their origin, motive, or severity (5 August 2014). This finding resonates with Berkowitz's (2016) suggested that government officials are perceived as credible

and authoritative sources of information, and due to their statements carry weight and legitimacy, thereby boosting the credibility of the news coverage.

In contrast, the protesters' voice where absences in People's Daily coverage can indicates that tightness of censorship and propaganda will dictate the framing, theme and narratives presented in news coverage, while media will priorities consider align with official standpoints and polices as well as censor dissenting voices or perspectives that may challenge the government's authority (Luo and Li, 2019).

Indeed, from the protest paradigm exploration, People's Daily may intentionally avoid quoting protesters' voices to marginalize and delegitimize the OCLP. In other words, by focusing solely on government official sources and omitting protester perspectives, People's Daily may seek to portray the OCLP as illegitimate and maintain the power on control the narrative surrounding protests and align with central government's strategy.

Comparison with People's Daily, Hong Kong newspapers demonstrated a more balanced approach in sourcing from both protesters and government officials. For instance, the South China Morning Post often presented one paragraph featuring a statement from government officials followed by another paragraph featuring standpoints from protesters defending their actions. For example, in an article: "[Beijing] asserts that the illegal gathering has contributed significantly to the instability of Hong Kong society, and to prevent further disruption, the central government is urging the police and SAR to disperse the gatherings," followed with an paragraph "a demonstrator who emphasized to the journalist their commitment to peaceful occupation and refusal to leave." This finding shows how Hong Kong media's efforts to balance sources contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced storytelling approach. By including perspectives from both sides, readers are presented with a broader spectrum of viewpoints, which in turn facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the protests.

A visible different with People's Daily, the HK newspapers SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily were published the protesters' voices in large amount. Wen Wei Po quote from protester's voice who said: "We occupy the streets, peaceful demonstrations are the basic rights of citizens under the law, and we need our voices heard by the government to protect our universal suffrage and democracy further" (11 June 2014). Oriental Daily quoted another protester who said: "[The] promotion of democracy requires concrete actions. We sit, we sing, and we shout, all for a better tomorrow for Hong Kong, for our children!" (10 June 2014). These evidence indicate that HK media serve as a crucial platform for the representation of various social actors, including protesters. As Gitlin (1980) suggests that importance of media in shaping public perceptions and understanding of protests is by offering some space for protesters to articulate their grievances, goals, and demands. Regarding this find, the Hong Kong media opposite with the traditional protest paradigm, and they are upholding the characteristic of media governance that we can be seen in chapter two.

However, unlike People's Daily, the sourcing to government officials is more likely to retweet content from authoritative mainland media (for example People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency), and statements from official press conferences. In addition, the Hong Kong media paid more attention to the Hong Kong SAR government's response to the OCLP protests than to Beijing's official spokesmen. This finding shown that firstly Hong Kong media thoughts Hong Kong's semiautonomous status grants it a degree of political independence from mainland, as a result, the decisions and actions of the Hong Kong SAR government are perceived by Hong Kong media as more relevant and influential in local affairs compared to claims from Beijing. Secondly, this finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Choi (2017) and Lee (2018), who highlighting the significant role of Hong Kong media coverage in shaping public discourse and holding local authorities accountable. Choi (2017) emphasizes the importance of the media in forcing responses from the local

government, while Lee (2018) summaries the focus on local governance as a central aspect of journalism practices in Hong Kong.

2. Comparing the Expert Sources Representing Hong Kong and mainland China

The quantitative analysis has revealed that experts were prominent sources in People's Daily for OCLP protest coverage. For instance, People's Daily cited an expert from Peking University who asserted, "Chaos and illegal occupation on the streets should not be seen as a legitimate expression of dissent or a healthy democracy" (9 August 2014). In another article, professors' analyses were quoted to delve into the underlying causes of the OCLP protests. Thus, experts, with their specialized knowledge, academic credentials, or institutional affiliations, in mainland China lend legitimacy to news stories, particularly in complex and contentious political issues such as protests (Graves, 2013; Grossman, 2022). Furthermore, the frequent use of expert sources indirectly indicates that mainland media aimed to delegitimize the protest, portray the protesters as deviant, and adhere to the protest paradigm in OCLP reporting.

Overall, the expert as source on usage in People's Daily often provide the support the stance of the Beijing central government, and refuse the west who try to access the Chinese public sphere. For example, an article been published by People's Daily and quote an expert who said: "we [the China] refuse the west and western media like BBC who try to call the HK illegal gathering a "revolution' … actually, the Hong Kong chaos has been made by western forces who try to conduct another color revolution in China, unfortunately, they [the west] miscalculate," (10 August 2014). In China's discourse, the word "revolution" is referring to the series of major socio-political transformations that occurred, and within the political culture, this word closely tied to Marxist-Leninist ideology, particularly as interpreted and applied by the CCP, in this context, revolution typically implies a radical transformation of society, often through class struggle and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. Thus, the expert in here much plays a public educator to shape the events

but also communicate the knowledge, as Wang (2011) states that news in China could be seen as a kind of knowledge. From the quote's content, this study finds that while experts may be full of expertise in their respective fields, however, their views and analysis are often influenced by political considerations and Party, thus, the experts' statements in mainland media quote may reflect official propaganda or ideological bias rather than objective analysis.

Despite Hong Kong newspapers quoting expert sources, these experts often represent diverse viewpoints and provide alternative narratives to those presented by the parties directly involved in the OCLP events. For instance, the SCMP quoted a professor from HKU who remarked, "the status of Beijing now is... and the status of the demonstrators are..." (9 August 2014). In this article, the SCMP divided the expert's analysis for the two parties into two paragraphs. This approach fosters a balanced perspective, contributing to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the OCLP events and enabling the public to evaluate the issues from multiple angles.

Similarly, Wen Wei Po quoted an expert from HKU stating, "we invite a professor from the law faculty to analyse the status of the ongoing OCLP" (8 August 2014). This indicates that journalists have the ability to manage experts to interpret and shape the narratives surrounding OCLP events. Thus, this finding suggests that Hong Kong media use expert voices to frame protests within broader social, political, or historical contexts, thereby shaping discourse and describing the protests more thoroughly.

In addition, Oriental Daily published an article featuring expert voices explaining, "he [the expert] will provide an analysis of the laws and rules relevant to the OCLP and try to clarify why demonstrators say they are allowed" (17 July 2014). This finding suggests that sometimes Hong Kong media may seek to legitimize protests by featuring expert standpoints that support the goals or grievances of the protesters. In sum, Hong Kong media not only challenge the traditional protest paradigm but also,

by presenting expert analysis that aligns with the objectives of the protest, they can bolster the legitimacy of social movements and amplify protesters' demands.

In addition to the different angles of experts' citation between Hong Kong and mainland, another significant difference is that mainland media put the frequency of experts' citation before other members of society, which proves the hierarchical power structure of society in a specific political discourse[14]. Regarding this, the current study agrees with Foucault's (1977) suggestion that through language, symbols, and narratives, political discourse reinforces dominant ideologies and marginalizes dissenting voices, thereby perpetuating existing power dynamics within society. In People's Daily, they prefer to use the views of one group of experts to confirm the accuracy of another group of experts' analysis, for example, on 17 July 2014, People's Daily published that "Professor Liu's explanation are gain the support by Dr. Yao who comes from law faculty of Tinghua". That is, the dominant groups use discourse to construct and maintain their authority, while marginalising and subjugating subordinate groups (Edward 1978, Gramsci 1971).

3. Comprising the voices from civil society access

Based on the content analysis, it is evident that Hong Kong media embraced a diverse range of voices from society, including bystanders, ordinary citizens, tourists, and others. This diversity in sourcing provided multifaceted perspectives that enriched the narratives presented by Hong Kong media outlets. For example, SCMP quoted a bystander to illustrate the confrontations between demonstrators and police following the launch of tear gas on 8 July 2014. Similarly, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily featured statements from ordinary citizens expressing understanding for both the police and demonstrators while emphasizing their identity as Hong Kongers on 9 July

---

[14] Some historians argue that Chinese elite groups have had the power to inform and educate ordinary people in China since ancient times. They contend that the Chinese cultural media in which these elites worked was imbued with the moral superiority of the educate elites and their legitimate authority over the country's illiterate ordinary people (e.g., Liang 2000, Liu, Wang, Cheng, and Wang 2000, Wang 2001). In my opinion, the views expressed by elites in modern Chinese media, as a traditional form of expression, are imbued with the soft power sentiments characteristics of traditional Chinese forms.

2014. These sources contributed to the nuanced portrayal of events, particularly in stories related to themes of violence.

In contrast, while People's Daily quoted the voices of bystanders, ordinary citizens, and other societal members, however, the citation of such content differed significantly. For example, People's Daily published an article quoting an ordinary Hong Kong citizen stating, "We are different from them [the protesters], we love China, we are Chinese" on 11 November 2014. Such this, People's Daily utilized the voices of ordinary citizens to construct a narrative of confrontation between the general public and the protesters, thereby aligning with the Chinese government's agenda to marginalize the protesters.

Overall, although the perspectives of bystander and ordinary people's voices were presented in differ by Hong Kong and mainland newspapers, the true is, those bystanders and ordinary people's voices could contributes to shaping the protest paradigm partly, for example, mainland newspaper using bystander's quote who has can proof protester's violent and dramatic behaviours along with the government narratives which strengthen the marginalization theme. The bystander and ordinary people's voices in Hong Kong newspapers helps public to understand the events, particularly for conflict theme shaped. Should be notable here, bystanders and ordinary people's voices cited by Hong Kong newspapers try to humanize the OCLP event through the experiences highlighted, and emotions of individuals caught up in the events. This finding illustrate that Hong Kong media humanization can foster empathy among the audience and encourage the public to relate to the issues at hand on a personal level and create a personal story for protesters case by case. This suggests that humanizing the narratives of those affected can serve as a strategy for legitimizing protest movements, supporting Brown's (2020) argument that humanizing victims' stories can help counter the marginalizing tendencies in protest paradigm. This narrative challenges traditional protest paradigm by reducing the stigmatization and detachment often associated with coverage of social movements.

4. Comprising the voices came from the police

As discussed, the portrayal of police actions in media coverage can significantly shape the narratives surrounding protests and influence the protest paradigm. Therefore, this study has carefully examined how Hong Kong and mainland newspapers cite police sources and compared the content of these quotations. On September 28, 2014, an SCMP news article titled "Who Launched the Attack" depicted a tense standoff between protesters and police. The journalist vividly described the scene, noting that the police stood nervously behind low barricades while carrying red banners warning the crowd to stop attacking or face force. Suddenly, the protesters charged the police with pointy umbrellas. The article utilized verbs such as "rush", "retreat", and "shout" to illustrate the actions of both parties involved, ultimately attributing the attack to the protesters. However, contrasting perspectives emerged in other reports, with some attributing the violence to the police. Oriental Daily, for instance, reported instances of police throwing tear gas into the crowd and riot police rushing into protesters. This finding suggests media may sensationalize and exaggerate instances of police deviance, potentially contributing to negative perceptions of law enforcement (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991).

Although Hong Kong media initially tended to blame the protesters for their violent actions against the riot police, their stance shifted once tear gas was deployed, leading to criticism of the police's crowd control tactics. For example, SCMP quoted a police statement, reporting: "We [the police] will use tear gas and other means to stop the chaos and prevent potential violence" (17 July 2014), while Wen Wei Po quoted the same police officer, stating: "Police cannot promise to refrain from further action if the chaos resumes" (17 July 2014). Additionally, Hong Kong newspapers tend to provide their own analysis and viewpoints on police statements and announcements. This finding suggests that media coverage, which tends to emphasize crime and violence, may lead to a distorted view of policing and its effectiveness (Robert 2000). For example, SCMP included comments from ordinary people expressing negative

attitudes toward police actions: "Their [the police] reaction is too extreme..., a HK citizen who told journalist" (17 July 2014). Importantly, Hong Kong newspapers frequently highlighted the weapons and equipment used by the police, such as tear gas, batons, shields, rubber bullets, etc. These descriptions may contribute to sensationalism and bias in shaping media coverage of police issues (Lan 1997).

In comparison with Hong Kong newspapers, People's Daily also quotes from the police but only highlights their "brave behaviours" without providing more details. In a story published on 19 October 2014, People's Daily quoted an injured police officer who said: "It is my duty to protect this city…" and continued to argue: "They [protesters] prevented an ambulance from reaching a fallen police officer... Off-duty police officers have been attacked, fire extinguishers have been used to put out fires, spike boards and other weapons have been used against police... We [the Chinese state], no matter what Western countries may think about the inhumane attack on the state police, these atrocities will never be tolerated in China". In this article, we can see that mainland newspapers focus on police injuries to reinforce the narrative of law enforcement officers as protectors of society. Importantly, People's Daily highlights the police's vulnerability in the face of perceived threats. This portrayal can evoke sympathy and support for the police and their actions among the public.

Unlike Hong Kong media, People's Daily emphasizes the rights of the police to use weapons and equipment. For example, "[The] police said it was lucky he had a shield to protect himself, otherwise he would have been bleeding by protesters' aggressive attack like his injured colleagues," (20 October 2014). This finding suggests that mainland media not only emphasizes police injuries to serve to legitimize the use of force by law enforcement but also portrays protesters as aggressors who pose a physical threat to the police. Therefore, mainland media through quote from police side to narrative there are need for robust police responses, including the use of tactics such as tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons.

Overall, the quotations of police by both Hong Kong newspapers and mainland media contribute to two distinct narratives. As Lee (2018) suggests that due to the tightly controlled political environment in mainland China, where the government often dictates the narrative to serve its interests, mainland media tend to portray the police in a more favourable light, especially during times of unrest like the OCLP events. Therefore, mainland media emphasize the police's role as guardians of social stability and order. In contrast, Hong Kong media enjoy greater press freedom and autonomy in content shaping. Therefore, they can adopt a more critical stance toward law enforcement, for example, scrutinizing police actions and holding them accountable for any perceived abuses of power. This difference in media environment results in divergent portrayals of police behaviour and contributes to the contrasting narratives presented by Hong Kong newspapers and mainland media.

5. Comprising the Voices from Western Forces and Taiwan's sounds

While Western leaders or official spokespersons are not frequently cited, the references to their statements are significant. For example, the SCMP cited the US President describing the OCLP as follows: "The Occupy Central protesters have demonstrated in a truly peaceful manner, under the shadow of the world's most powerful authoritarian government, the determination of Hong Kong people to defend their freedom and the rule of law." Similarly, Wen Wei Po reported sharp criticism from Britain regarding China's handling of the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, quoting the British Prime Minister David Cameron who labelled China's refusal to allow British MPs to visit Hong Kong as a mistake, likely to attract more international scrutiny to Hong Kong's political situation. The Oriental Daily quoted Ottawi, chairman of the British Foreign Affairs Committee, asserting on a Monday that, "The UK has every right to know whether China is adhering to the provisions of the Joint Declaration." These examples highlight the role of Western leadership as source in shaping narratives around conflicts, and how Hong Kong media's choice of quotations can reveal a tendency to select certain topics.

Another finding is, Hong Kong newspapers also serve as analysts of international conflicts between China and the West over the OCLP event. For example, SCMP provided an analysis from the United Kingdom stating: "British Prime Minister David Cameron expressed deep concern about the situation in Hong Kong, emphasizing the importance for Hong Kong people to genuinely elect their Chief Executive... He urged China to honour the Sino-British agreement ensuring freedom of speech and assembly for Hong Kong residents... The ongoing dispute over Hong Kong's political reform and the resultant illegal "Occupy Central" actions are fundamentally a governance struggle, yet the China central government has responded that only the "one country, two systems" policy can secure a clear future and broad prospects for Hong Kong's development," (December 1, 2014). Regarding this, as the OCLP escalated into an international issue, Hong Kong journalists navigated complex diplomatic waters by balancing conflicting narratives from Western and China central government sources. Through their reporting and analysis, HK media play an important role in shaping public understanding of international relations beyond the OCLP event.

The People's Daily often critiques and interprets quotes from Western leaders. For example, in response to Western countries' concerns about the "illegal gathering (OCLP) in Hong Kong, the People's Daily quotes President Xi Jinping: "Unswervingly safeguard the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong." Following this, the newspaper reflects on British Prime Minister David Cameron's views on the OCLP movement, stating, "The British Prime Minister said China should to hear what the HK demands in OCLP, however, actually, Britain needs to be ashamed of this, and the colonists' blatant interference in the internal affairs of other countries is a foolish act" (29 September 2014). This demonstrates that the People's Daily frequently portrays Western leaders in a negative light within the discourse of mainland media.

Additionally, this study discovered that although the frequency and number of quotes from Taiwan leaders in the People's Daily are relatively low, the newspaper tends to naming and shaming the Taiwan leadership by quotation. For example, People's Daily first corrects the title used by Western media for Tsai Ing-wen: "Tsai Ing-wen is a leader of the Taiwan region of China, not the president," and it quotes her saying in next, "Tsai says, Taiwan understands Hong Kong, Taiwan supports Hong Kong, and Taiwan stands with Hong Kong." Subsequently, it criticizes her with harsh commentary: "... All Chinese are ashamed of her... She will go down in history as a sinner... a traitor to the nation" (18 Oct. 2014). This evidence first demonstrates that by leveraging nationalist discourses, themes, and sentiments, mainland media coverage can bolster support for the country's stance on territorial disputes and sensitive political issues. Secondly, it illustrates that mainland newspapers strategically amplify or downplay certain quoting to advance their own agendas.

4.4 Media Discourse in Protest coverage – "Democracy"

This section is aiming to answer the research question 3: how did the discourse relating to "democracy" compare between the mainland China and Hong Kong newspapers during the protests of 2014 and 2019? As I discussed in method chapter, "language does not mirror an independent object world but constructs and constitutes it." (Barker and Galasinski 2001.p.1). Thus, this study tries to through the term "democracy" highlighted by four newspapers to insight into how both Hong Kong and mainland media are used it to build arguments for influence public perceptions.

Numbers	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily	Total
"Democracy"	14	42	38	22	116

Table 7. Number of news articles related to "Democracy" for four newspapers

Figure 3 shows the frequency with which each newspaper used the term "democracy" in their coverage of the OCLP protests. This term appears only 14 times in People's Daily's coverage, this relatively low frequency reflects the mainland Chinese media's tendency to limit discourse on democracy that could challenge the state's authority (Huang 2016). SCMP has the highest usage of "democracy" with 42 articles. It is shows SCMP places significant emphasis on democracy, often presenting it as a core issue of the protests. This suggests a tendency to light democratic values and the push for greater autonomy, reflecting Hong Kong's unique socio-political environment, where democratic aspirations have greater public support. Wen Wei Po references "democracy" 38 times. While Wen Wei Po covers democracy more than People's Daily, it tends to frame the term within a context that questions the protesters' approach, emphasising the need for order and respect for the rule of law. The term appears 22 times in Oriental Daily as Table 7 shown. Oriental Daily shows a central stance, providing coverage on democracy but with less frequency than SCMP, this indicating a middle-ground approach, where democracy is acknowledged but not necessarily as a dominant narrative.

The data presented in the Figure 6 illustrates the monthly trends in the number of "democracy" – related articles published by four newspapers. People's Daily shows a significant increase in democracy-related coverage in October, with a peak of 21 articles. This rapid rise from zero articles in September reflects the intensifying response from mainland media as the OCLP protests gained momentum.
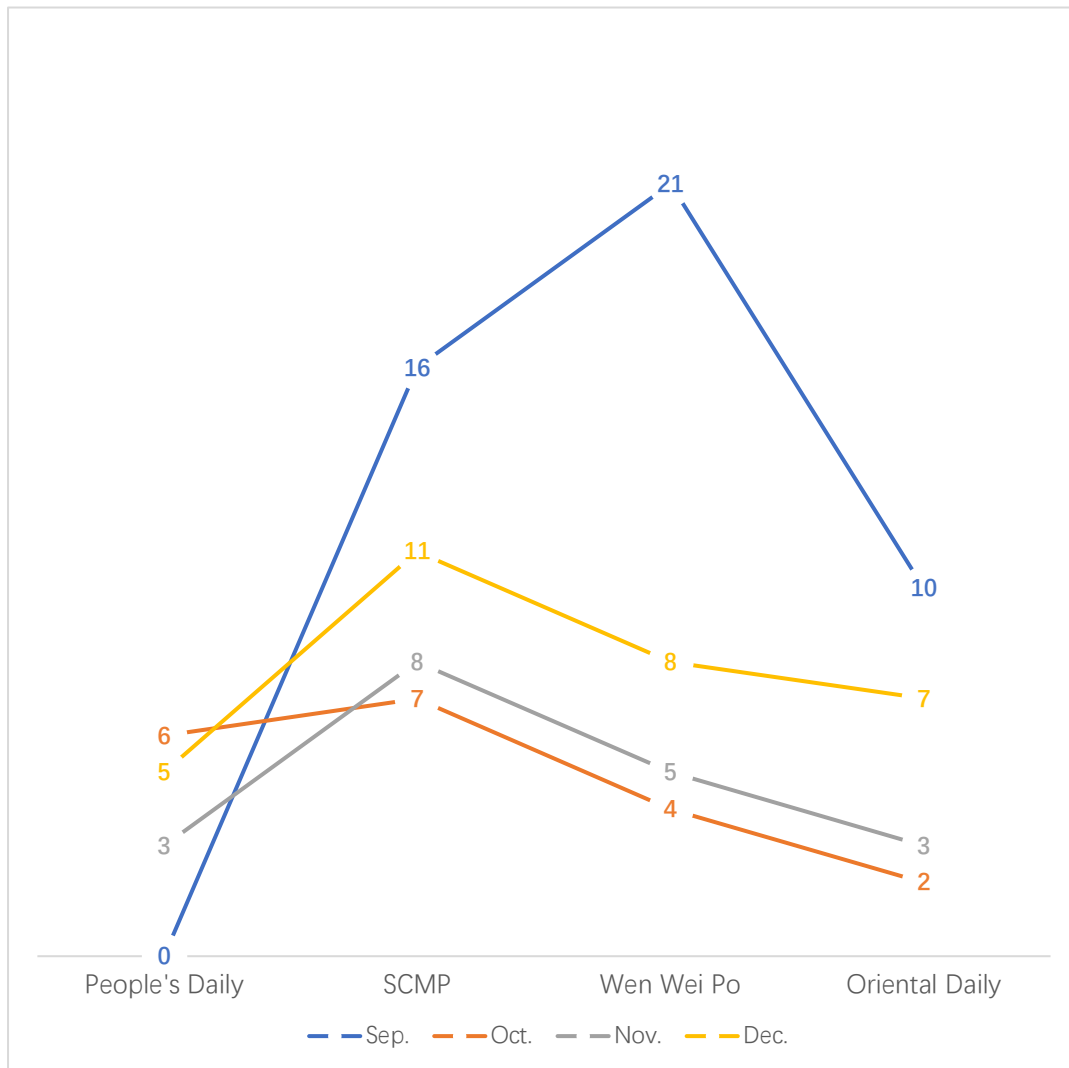
Figure 4. Monthly Trends in the number of "Democracy"-related articles
published by four newspapers between September and December 2014

SCMP consistently publishes democracy-related articles across all four months, peaking at 16 in September and gradually declining to 7 in December. This decline could indicate the initial strong focus on democratic discourse as the protest began, with interest slightly waning as the protests continued (Williams 2020). Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily display a similar trend to SCMP, though with fewer democracy-related articles each month. We Wei Po peaks at 8 articles in September and then gradually declines to 3 in December, dropping to 7 by December.

This finding suggests that the Chinese newspaper, People's Daily, did not engage significantly with democratic issues during the 2014 OCLP protest. On the other hand, the Hong Kong newspapers, actively covered democratic themes, indicating a greater openness to discussing and debating democratic principles and protests within the local media landscape. This divergence highlights differing media systems and political climates between mainland and Hong Kong, where the latter enjoys more press freedom and carry out the media governance function to discussing sensitive political issues such as democracy.

4.4.1 Linguistic Strategies in Newspapers: "Democracy"

This section introduces the framework for the following content analysis of democratic discourse in the media, drawing on Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA). In Language and Power, Fairclough (1992) suggests that discourse analysis should be grounded in sociocultural practice, requiring careful attention to the organizations of discourse at multiple levels. Here, discourse is understood as the actual use of language in social contexts, functioning as a form of social practice. Fairclough (1992) introduced three stages in CDA, i.e., description, interpretation, and explanation (p.7) for combines language-oriented discourse analysis with sociological and ideological theories. Fairclough (1992) also noted ideology as the worldview implicitly embedded in art, law, economic, and individual and collective life (Gramsci 1997.p.328). Thus, texts are seen as material manifestations of ideology, with properties at every-level, such as vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, presupposition, meaning, style, tone, and more, reflecting underlying ideological frameworks (Fairclough 1992.pp.87-91). This study will adopts this approach to analysis the discourse of "democracy" to compare the linguistic features constructed by Hong Kong and mainland media, examining the implicit ideologies embedded in each. Through this approach, I aim to uncover the deeper ideological structures that influence how "democracy" is represented in different media contexts.

Although four newspapers have been published articles by democracy-related themes, however they differed in how they described the themes, sources cited, and topics selected. For example, People's Daily produced a democracy theme article focusing on the discussion on the political advancement of democracy and the notion of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong, and critiquing the "Western-style democracy proposed by the protesters as backward" and "inconsistent with China's national circumstances." (6 October 2014). In contrast, SCMP details outlined the OCLP and protester's democratic ideals, and said "they are generally sensible, pragmatic, well-informed, well-educated and civic-minded, … after so many years of patience, it is [universal suffrage] surely not too much to ask." (2 October 2014). This finding suggests that while both People's Daily and SCMP addressed democracy-related themes, their perspectives diverged significantly. People's Daily adopted a critical stance towards Western-style democracy and the demands of the protesters, aligning more closely with the official stance of the Chinese central government. In contrast, Hong Kong newspaper SCMP portrayed the protesters as reasonable and justified in their pursuit of democratic reforms, reflecting a more sympathetic view towards the protesters' cause.

Once the OCLP involves more conflicts, mainland People's Daily adopted a more critical and questioning stance in its story published: "The recent "Occupy Central" in HK society runs completely counter to the principles of democracy and is reversing the course of democracy," (6 October 2014). Hong Kong newspaper like Wen Wei Po, however, highlight the slogan "fighting for democracy" and further says: "this is an event to defend democracy in Hong Kong," (7 October 2014). This finding demonstrates the stark contrast in how the mainland and Hong Kong media framed the OCLP events, where People's Daily viewed the OCLP as undermining democracy as a threat to stability and governance. On the other hand, Hong Kong media emphasized the pro-democracy aspirations of the protesters, and try to portray their actions as a legitimate quest for democracy. SCMP used expert voices in its story emphasizing "democracy", for example, "This is an important start for Hong Kong

people to realize they should unite to fight for democracy, Professor Lee told reporters" (October 29, 2014), and "Hong Kong's 2014 pro-democracy protests marked an important step in Hong Kong's politicized evolution, University of Hong Kong academic tells reporters," (19 October 2014, SCMP). In terms of the construction of democratic issues, the Hong Kong media is more inclined to prioritize the views of the intellectual elite among its citizens. These elite citizens are often presented as "opinion leaders" and express their unique and profound opinions regarding certain major and widely influential social issues. This fining has aligned with Li and Lee (2018) who found Hong Kong media frequently feature opinion leaders who can offering profound insights and perspectives on significant social issues, including matters related to democracy.

Indeed, People's Daily cited the expert's source who has provide the explanation upon the OCLP and democracy, but by different attributions. For example, "Martin Jacques, a renowned British scholar and author, made a noteworthy remark: Hong Kong did not even enjoy formal democracy during British rule. It was ruled by Britain 6,000 miles away. The idea of democracy in any form was first introduced by the Chinese central government." and continue, "Qian, a Chinese political scientist, offered his perspective: Discussion, consultation, and compromise are the fundamental methods of democratic politics, and it is also a fundamental principle of democracy not to allow a few individuals to infringe upon the public space and interests of society through illegal means. ... The minority [protesters] view themselves as the future saviours of Hong Kong, yet imposing their political views on Hong Kong society in a manner that encroaches upon the public interests of the community constitutes a violation of democratic principles." (6 October 2014). This finds in mainland while experts provide valuable insights, their perspectives may not always reflect the full spectrum of views within society, particularly those of marginalized or underrepresented groups.

This study finds that unlike the other three newspapers in their firm stance on democracy, Oriental Daily maintains the tone was rational but unnerved, especially when the mainland and Hong Kong are debating democracy toughly. For example, Oriental Daily says: "The aftermath of Occupy Central poses a significant question: whether the government will clear the ground, or the protesters will depart voluntarily. The first issue revolves around resolving the divisions, polarization, and even animosity within Hong Kong society sparked by Occupy Central. As a city of immigrants, Hong Kong lacks ethnic divisions, yet the current dispute between supporters and opponents of Occupy Central has overshadowed the initial disagreements on constitutional reform, evolving into a broader conflict between those who back the government and those who oppose it. The second challenge involves rebuilding the spirit and framework of the rule of law in society." (19 November 2014). This finding emphasis Oriental Daily's focus on the practical challenges and societal divisions stemming from the OCLP, rather than taking a firm stance on democracy like the other newspapers. This finding has similar with Cheung (2019) who found compared to other media, Oriental Daily prioritizing discussions on practical solutions and societal reconciliation rather than ideological debates on democracy.

Thus far, both mainland and Hong Kong newspapers have exhibited their perspectives on democracy, each showcasing its perceived strengths. A comparison between the two reveals a common thread of defending their respective positions with a tone that can be characterized as arrogant, understood as a condescending or aggressively assertive attitude. For example, People's Daily took an assertive stance by posing five questions and answers, challenging the notion of international standards for democracy and questioning the motivations behind the protests (People's Daily, 19 August 2014). Conversely, SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily adopted a tough tone in their defence of Hong Kong's societal identity, admitting the protester's effort who try to break free from colonial influences and not be solely judged by democratic standards (SCMP, 20 August 2014).

This finding illustrates how both mainland and Hong Kong media assert their superiority while criticizing each other, albeit through different approaches: People's Daily tends to dismiss the voices of protesters, focusing instead on challenging the legitimacy of the 2014 movement, while SCMP and other Hong Kong newspapers directly address mainland China, advocating for a society rooted in democratic principles. This aligns with Le's (2010) assertion that media discourse reflects cultural characteristics, manifested in language use, belief transmission, and social interaction. She suggests, the accusation of arrogance may stem from a cross-cultural misunderstanding, suggesting that achieving impartiality requires a deeper understanding of the images projected by these newspapers.

The presentation of arguments regarding democracy differs between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers. For example, SCMP adopts a strategy of juxtaposing and quoting conflicting views, effectively engaging readers in deliberation over differing perspectives. This way highlights the influential role of contrast in shaping and driving public discourse. An example from SCMP wrote: "A professor from Peking University stated that young Hong Kong students had been negatively influenced by liberal intellectuals. A Hong Kong University Law School professor disagree said that the young and educated have been enlightened and refuse to accept restricted universal suffrage" (SCMP, 7 Oct. 2014). In contrast to SCMP's approach, People's Daily demonstrates a preference for highlighting government officials' and experts' voices in discussions on democracy, rather than incorporating multiple perspectives. This suggests a guided approach to democracy discourse in mainland China, where certain voices are privileged over others, and there are thresholds for the inclusion of specific political discourse. This finding again shows the contrasting media systems in Hong Kong and mainland, with Hong Kong media displaying a more open attitude towards diverse viewpoints on democracy issues compared to the more controlled discourse observed in mainland.

Through the discourse analysis in terms of terminology which has been used for describing "Democracy," we could see clear that "the construction of a text can be regarded as a process of vocabulary selection, which is influenced by certain social contexts, ideology and power relations," (Fairclough 1992.p.190). It can be found that the Hong Kong and mainland media shape totally different images of democracy and great different exists in their attitudes toward the OCLP events. First of all, Hong Kong newspaper Wen Wei Po uses the word "determination" to describe the protester's faith to fight the authorities for democracy (9 October 2014), and using the "courage" and "unwavering" to describe the protester's belief for protect the democracy through the non-violence demonstration (9 October 2014). Oriental Daily use the "legitimate" to discuss what the relations between democracy, universal suffrage, and protest (19 July 2014). In contrast, People's Daily says "negatively influenced" to describe the young protesters' behaviour and using "unacceptable" to describe the ideals of democracy they proposed.   Meanwhile, People's Daily heavily relied on the expert's sources who can provide the explanation for concepts of democracy, for example, on 18 August 2014, People's Daily cite a professor Wang who says that "the fake democracy they [protesters] proposed that in colonisation they [HK] doesn't enjoys any democratic life but when they return motherland the gain lots of freedom by "one country, two systems", regarding this, say fight for democracy for Hong Kong is entirely wrong," This approach reflecting the People's Daily's critique of the protesters' demands for democracy in HK. Overall, this finding shows that differences in the portrayal and attitudes towards democracy between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers during the OCLP protests, it also supports Fairclough's (1992) suggestion that discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures, while the latter shapes and constrains the former.

As indicated in Table 8, SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily frequently employ positively charged terms to depict democracy, such as "hope" and "best wishes." However, this study found that implication and omission are key characteristics of the words emerging in Hong Kong newspapers' discourse on democracy. For example,

SCMP elaborates on the concept of Hong Kong democracy and its relationship with OCLP protests through the lens of Western ideologies on democracy, without delving into discussions regarding China's socialist characteristics of democracy theories. Similarly, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily prefer to introduce the policy of "one country, two systems" by highlighting the "two systems" aspect. This finding indicates that the democracy discourse in Hong Kong newspapers also is selective, biased, and reflective of their own political affiliations. This finding aligns with Van Dijk's (1991) suggestion that "implicit ways of expressing underlying meaning or opinions, such as implication and suggestions, may be used to persuade readers to the point of view of the newspaper," (p.198), thus, the use of words like "suggests," "advice," "maybe," and "possibility" in Hong Kong newspapers' discourse could suggest an attempt to shape public perceptions regarding the democracy in line with their desired narrative. Thus, subtle linguistic choices can significantly influence public' interpretations and understanding of political issues.

In People's Daily, news coverage often coveys its stance and perspectives by quoting individuals such as experts, official spokesman, or leaders of influential organisation, thereby enhancing the credibility of the content. Compared to Hong Kong newspapers, People's Daily often sheds light on the negative aspects of democracy by shaping the perspectives of Hong Kong protesters and the West. As indicated in Table 8, words such as "fake," "lie," "hypocrisy," and "double standards" are used to describe the democracy that OCLP protests aimed to achieve. Interestingly, this study found that in discussions about democracy, People's Daily does not focus on the concept of China's characteristics of democracy. Instead, it focuses more on discussing the "one country, two systems" policy from the perspective of the "one country" aspect. Again, this finds challenge some scholars like Bing (2014) who thought the China's media tends to discussion the Chinese-style democracy rather than "one country two systems" in Hong Kong issues. On the other hand, this study found that People's Daily employs a strategic approach in its discourse on democracy, using language that discredits the democratic ideals promoted by the protesters and

the West. In other words, by emphasizing negative aspects and aligning with authoritative voices, People's Daily attempts to shape public opinion and reinforce its own ideological stance. Furthermore, the omission of discussions on China's version of democracy highlights a deliberate choice to prioritize narratives that support the Chinese government's policies and objectives.

This study concurs with Beukeboom (2019) that the use of nouns, verbs, and adjectives in media discourse significantly shapes communication and perception. This also aligns with Durant and Lambrou's (2009) assertion that "media stylistics" can reveal particular "modes of communication" that disrupt linguistic transitivity (Hodge and Kress 1988, Fowler 1991) — essentially, who did what to whom. This disruption is evident in the structure of arguments linked to verbs, such as when the subject of an active verb in a sentence becomes an optional agent in a related passive construction, and the object of this passive sentence emerges as the subject. By examining how the term "democracy" is used and articulated in media texts, this study discovers that different models of transitivity in Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media provide distinct ways of describing social agency within areas of conflict. These include conflicts between Western democratic ideals versus socialist democratic ideals with Chinese characteristics, and between expressions of Western democratic awareness and the democratic expression habits of mainland media. This nuanced use of language in media discourse thus plays a crucial role in shaping and framing conflicts within the broader socio-political dialogue.

4.5 Discussion

The conclusion that Hong Kong media aligns with the protest paradigm while mainland media tends toward a nuisance paradigm is an essential finding that contributes significantly to the comparative analysis of media systems in Hong Kong and mainland China. The distinction is rooted in the difference in how each media

system handles the coverage of OCLP protests, particularly in their narrative choices and sources.

In Hong Kong, the protest paradigm is evident in how the newspapers focus on dramatic, violent, and chaotic incidents during OCLP (Lee 2014, An 2016). However, the Hong Kong media also diverges from the feature of protest paradigm by heavily using protesters'voices, providing platforms for them to articulate their demands and concerns. This legitimsation of protester perspectives and their cause is a departure from the protest paradigm found in previous studies (Hertog and McLeod 1999). In essence, while Hong Kong media covers violent clashes and dramatic episodes that in line with the protest paradigm, they simultaneously elevate the discourse by providing space for a broader discussion of the protest events' objectives, which in turn influence public understanding and response. This is in contrast to findings by researchers Kilgo (2017) and Harlow et al., (2017), who highlighted the marginalization of protesters in protest paradigm elsewhere.

In contrast, mainland media's portrayal is rooted in a nuisance paradigm, where OCLP protests are often described as disturbances and improper expressions of discontent, thereby delegitimsing them. Should be noted, the paradigm is further reinforced through mainland media reliance on official narratives that reporting protests as disruptive rather than as legitimate political actions. This finding is consistent with studies by Boyle et al., (2012), who found that media systems often portray protests in a way that delegimises the actors involved, particularly when national interests are at stake.

As I indicated in the analytical sections, although the nuisance paradigm and the protest paradigm both offer frameworks for understanding how media coverage shape public perceptions of social movements, but they differ significantly in their focus and narrative strategies. My study suggests these paradigms can be recognized in media texts through their treatment of protest events, the portrayal of protesters, and the

emphasis placed on the consequences of the OCLP protests. Firstly, both paradigms tend to focus on the negative aspects of protests, often marginalizing and de-delegitimsing the protests, includes highlighting conflict, chaos, and disruption caused by the protests. In addition, in both paradigms, protesters are often described as disruptive or even dangerous. This can either be though direct condemnation (protest paradigm) or more subtle ways, such as emphasizing the inconvenience caused to everyday life (nuisance paradigm).

The reporting pattern of mainland Chinese media reflects a unique way to covering OCLP, shaped by Confucian political culture and ethnical order. Unlike previous scholars who found the confrontations and conflict in protest coverage (e.g., Brown 2019, McLeod 2007, Oliver 2000), mainland tend to highlight the "virtue" or moral character of the protests, as a reflection of deeply rooted cultural values. According to Ling et al., (2006), Chinese society places a high value on personal morality, which permeates various aspects of public life, including media representations – rather than focusing on the divisive aspects of the OCLP, mainland media emphasize themes of order, harmony, and ethical behavior, aligning with Confucian ideals that prioritize social stability and collective harmony over individual dissent.

The differences between those two paradigmatic, are first, protest paradigm topically focuses on the chaotic nature of protests, highlighting violent confrontations, the breakdown of order, and the threat that protests posed to political stability (McLeod and Hertog 1999). In this study, Hong Kong media focus on reporting the clashes between police and protesters, and tear gas's used by police forces. The nuisance paradigm, by contrast, focuses less on overt violence and more one the inconvenience and disruption that protests cause to everyday life (Di Cicco 2010). For example, in this study, mainland newspaper was less to discussion the violence from protesters or police-sides and have not quotes from protesters' side. However, protesters are still portrayed as a nuisance to society, disrupting Hong Kong citizens daily routines, traffic, and public services. That is to say, the nuisance paradigm can delegitimse

protests by focusing on how they annoy or inconvenience the general public rather than addressing the root political causes.

The second different is, protest paradigm using episodic frames to cover violent moments, often drawing on dramatic visual imagery that highlights chaos. This is usually accompanied by quotes from officials, police, and elite sources that describe the protest as illegitimate and harmful to public safety (Hertog and McLeod 2001). However, nuisance paradigm often employs thematic frame, focusing on the broader implications of how protests interrupt normal life and create social friction. For example, mainland media quotes from Hong Kong citizens who complain about the inconvenience of OCLP protest, rather than focusing on the protesters 'grievances or demands. Much important is, this study highlights the dynamic nature of legitimacy in the context of protests, suggesting that legitimate is not fixed but shifts based on media portrayal and audience interpretation (Masullo et al., 2023). This find departs from the traditional understanding that legitimate is static and emphasis how media coverage plays a central role in shaping public perceptions of protests. As we known, the protest paradigm such as Mourao and Brown (2022), Schmidt (2023), suggests the legitimate of social protests through various journalistic practices. These include reliance on official sources, marginalization techniques such as focus on violence, and framing protests as disruptive without examining their underlying grievances. My study shows how legitimate changes when the Hong Kong media begin to humanize protesters in violent-oriented stories or focus on the mental and emotional states of those affected by protests. This contrasts with protest paradigm's focus on disruption and violence. By portraying injured protesters in a more humanized light, Hong Kong media reports shift the conversation from whether the protests are legitimate political acts to concerns about human rights and emotional impact. This finding suggests that legitimate can shift toward the protesters when media coverage moves beyond the standard framework of violence, and protest paradigm.

In addition, this study found that the personal narratives constructed by Hong Kong media around the protesters played a critical role in legitimating the protest. This approach consists with previous studies that have shown how personalising and humanizing protesters can shift public perception towards a more empathetic view of social movement (e.g., Harlow and Brown 2022). By focusing on the individual experiences of protesters, the Hong Kong media diverged from the protest paradigm, which often dehumanizes protest participants and focuses disorder. This personalised approach can reduce negative pubic attitudes towards protests, offering a counternarrative that legitimses the protesters' demands and challenges the dominant portrayal of protests as chaotic and violent (Brown 2021). Mainland media, however, took a markedly different approach, focusing on "innocent citizens," affected by the protests, this rebranding of events shift the OCLP protests from being seen as political movements to social or ethnic issues, effectively depoliticizing them and describing them within a broader narrative of social harmony and stability.

One of the most salient findings is that Hong Kong media frequently published protester's voices and allowed for debates with official opinions, while mainland media relied more heavily on expert and elite sources, describing the OCLP protests within nationalistic narratives. This finding has consisted with Huang (2014) and Zhao (1998) who pointed that the central role of elite and expert sources in mainland media, where national interests and government perspectives are prioritized in the reporting of politically sensitive events. Also, this finding supports the argument by Pan and Lu (2003) that Chinese media are an extension of the state's apparatus, reflecting state priorities and maintaining social stability. However, some researchers argue for example Zhao (2004) critiques the excessive reliance on nationalist discourse, suggesting that it stifles internal residents' values democratic freedoms.

This finding confirms the presence of discourse hegemony (Hall 1984). However, it is essential to highlight that hegemony in dominant discourse, particularly at the elite and government official in mainland, often relies more on consent than coercion.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1971) suggests that dominance is not maintained merely through legal and coercive measures; rather, it is achieved primarily by securing the active consent of subordinate classes and groups (see Hall 1989a). In this sense, media hegemony can be think as the state's ability to influence public opinion and sustain social cohesion by shaping ideology through both selective sourcing and discourse construction.

Additionally, through the sourcing analysis, this study found, in the protest paradigm, media typically relies on official sources such as police, government spokesman, and experts who calls the protest as harmful to social order (Boyle, et al., 2012). In contrast, in the nuisance paradigm, the media tend to quote citizens who are impacted by the protests, emphasizing personal inconvenience, while potentially ignoring political motives behind the protests.

Therefore, the protest paradigm and nuisance paradigm are useful frameworks for analysing protest coverage, but their deployment depends on the political context and media environment. The OCLP protest coverage demonstrates how Hong Kong media, while sometimes adhering to the protest paradigm, departed from it by giving voice to protesters and fostering a more democratic discourse. Mainland media, on the other hand, leaned towards the nuisance paradigm, emphasizing the disruption causes by the protests and reinforcing state-centered narratives through elite and expert sources. These differences suggest the broader distinctions between the media systems of Hong Kong and mainland China, with the latter prioritizing social stability and national unity.

The analysis of media discourse around democracy, based on the comparison between Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media, found distinct approaches in how each side shapes the narrative around the OCLP protests. Mainland media consistently criticized Western-style democracy as incompatible with China's unique political and cultural context, often positioning it as a destabilizing force. In contrast, Hong Kong

newspapers, tended to describe protesters as reasonable actors with legitimate demands, reflecting a more open and supportive stance towards the idea of universal suffrage. Mainland coverage became increasingly critical as OCLP protest escalated, describing the demonstrations as counterproductive and regressive, for example, framed OCLP as "reversing the course of democracy." Hong Kong outlets, on the other hand, framed the protests as an effort to defend democracy in Hong Kong, despite gradually tempering this position as violence escalated. The choice of terminology in both Hong Kong and mainland media further outlined their differing approaches. Mainland media use terms like "fake democracy," or "hypocrisy," to undermine the legitimacy of the protesters' demands. Hong Kong outlets used words such as "determination" and "unwavering" to legitimse the protesters 'efforts. So far, these findings align with earlier studies on media discourse, Van Dijk (1991) argued that implicit expressions in media coverage, through word choice and lexical emphasis, serve to subtly frame public perceptions and reinforce certain narratives. Mainland Chinese media's focus on downplaying Western democracy in favour of China's political system reflects this strategic use of language to consolidate the party-state's authority, as mentioned by Zhao (2000) and Chunlong (2004). Furthermore, Fairclough (1992) stressed that the construction of texts is always tied to power relations, which is clearly observed in the selective vocabulary employed by both mainland and Hong Kong media. This study, however, found a nuance different with previous studies by showing how Hong Kong media, despite sometime critiquing protests tactics, tend to adopt a more sympathetic narratives compared to the more ideologically driven, state-centric narratives in mainland China.

Chapter Five. Comparative Analysis of Anti-Government Protest Coverage, 2019

5.1 Introduction

This chapter conducts a comparative analysis of the second case of protests in 2019, Hong Kong. The first section will outline the scope and context of the 2019 protests, setting the stage for deeper analysis. The second section will present a content analysis focused on the sourcing patterns and tendencies of Hong Kong and mainland media, aiming to offer a comprehensive understanding of how each media sphere shaped and influenced the events of 2019. The last section will explore the portrayal and media discourse of "democracy" across the selected sample articles, with particular attention to language and terminology. This nuanced examination of language use will highlight the ideological and distinctions in how democracy was conceptualized and conveyed in Hong Kong and mainland reporting.

5.2 Data

The study will collect relevant news articles covering the 2019 Hong Kong protests, from June 6 to December 20, 2019, from the official websites of People's Daily, SCMP, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily. A total of 2,003 articles have been gathered for this analysis.

People's Daily: 301 (articles)
SCMP: 646 (articles)
Wen Wei Po: 482 (articles)
Oriental Daily: 574 (articles)

The Figure 4 illustrates the publications frequency of articles related to the 2019 protests from four newspapers. There is a peak in coverage across all newspapers from July to October, with the highest frequencies recorded in August and September.

This aligns with the escalation of the 2019 protests, which saw increased public and governmental tension. Oriental Daily shows the highest peak in August (n=125), indicating intense local interest and coverage during this period. SCMP and Wen Wei Po also reach high points in August and September (with 107 and 101 articles, respectively), suggesting that these newspapers were responsive to the rising intensity of the protests. People's Daily has a notably lower peak at 69 articles in September, indicating more restrained coverage compared to Hong Kong based-newspapers.

	1-Jun 6-Jun	1-Jul 6-Jul	1-Aug 6-Aug	1-Sep 6-Sep	1-Oct 6-Oct	1-Nov 6-Nov	1-Dec 15-Dec
People's Daily	23	44	67	69	55	32	11
SCMP	46	97	101	107	104	123	68
Wen Wei Po	40	81	99	101	100	51	10
Oriental Daily	45	99	116	125	103	59	27
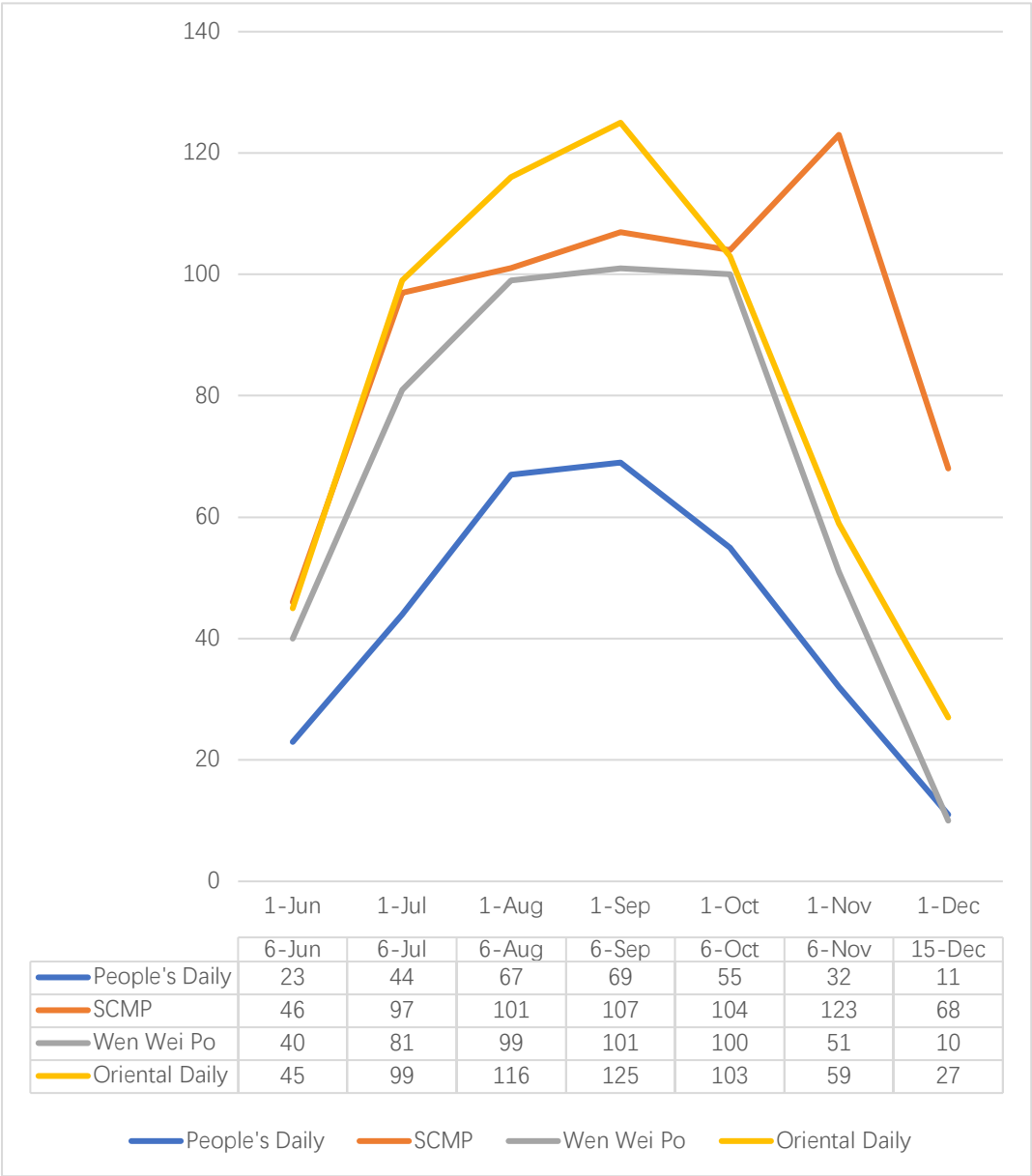
Figure 5. Numbers of news articles about anti-government protests per newspaper over time

After the September peak, there is a gradual decline in coverage across all outlets. By December, article numbers drop significantly, with People's Daily publishing only 11 articles and Oriental Daily at 27. The pattern suggests that media attention waned as protest activities decreased or as the events became less newsworthy (Monisola and Oluyinka 2021).

The higher frequency of articles in Hong Kong newspapers may reflect a journalistic priority to report on issues of immediate relevance and urgency to Hong Kong citizens, as well as less restrictive editorial polices compared to mainland China.

5.2.1 Content Analysis of 2019 Protests Reporting Tendencies

Based on the Table 8, several patterns emerge regarding the thematic focus in the protest coverage of the four newspapers. People's Daily primarily used the marginalisation theme (n=97, 32.22%) to describe 2019 protests, characterising protesters negatively. The aligns with the protest paradigm, which often delegitimizes protests by describing them as disruptive or deviant (McLeod 1998).

Themes	*People's Daily*	*SCMP*	*Wen Wei Po*	*Oriental Daily*
Marginalizing	97	104	87	42
Legitimating	14	37	21	27
Delegitimating	83	61	56	50
Violence	51	201	215	357
Conflict	41	233	100	90
Nationalism	15	10	3	8

Total	301	646	482	574

Table 8. Analysis of the themes employed by news organisations in Hong Kong

and mainland

The newspaper frequently employed the de-legitimization theme on People's Daily (n=83, 27.57%) to challenge the legitimacy of the 2019 protests, with far less focus on legitimization (n=14, 4.64%), which was used selectively to support police actions. Compared to its 2014 OCLP coverage, People's Daily also heightened its focus on violence (n=51, 16.94%) and conflict (n=41, 13.62%), likely to paint the protests as threats to public safety and social stability. This emphasis on violence aligns with studies suggesting that media often sensationalize violent protests to maintain public order (Gitlin 1980).

The SCMP employed a balanced approach, using the legitimization theme (n=37, 5.73%) more than People's Daily and describing the 2019 protests as legitimate expressions of civil rights. Although it applied the de-legitimization theme (n=61, 9.44%), it also featured diverse viewpoints, reflecting democratic values. About Oriental Daily and Wen Wei Po – these newspapers also used the legitimization theme but focused more on the violence theme, especially Oriental Daily (n=357, 62.20%) and Wen Wei Po (n=215, 44.61%). The heavy focus on violent clashes suggests a partial adherence to the protest paradigm, where protest coverage highlights chaotic scenes to undermine protest legitimacy (Lee 2014, Proust 2022, Demmers 2004).

Nationalism theme was more prominent in People's Daily (n=15, 4.98%) than in Hong Kong newspapers, highlighting how mainland media used patriotic discourse to align with government narratives and reinforce national unity. SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daly rarely used the nationalism theme, likely reflecting. Hong Kong's

distinct political context and the media's intent to avoid aligning too closely with mainland ideologies, preserving editorial independence.

These findings illustrate divergent media approaches between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers. While People's Daily aligns with the protest paradigm's use of marginalization and de-legitimization, Hong Kong media exhibit a more balanced portrayal, occasionally legitimizing the 2019 protests and addressing police accountability.

	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
Protester	51	124	200	318
Police	0	77	15	39
Total	51	201	2015	357

Table 9. Frequency of sub-themes for police and protesters in violence-oriented stories

In examining the violence theme, this study found distinct approaches taken by Hong Kong and mainland newspapers in describing the confrontations between police and protesters, as shown in Table 9. Statistical analysis suggests that People's Daily predominantly attributed responsibility for violence to the protesters (n=51), reinforcing a one-sided narrative that largely absolved police of blame. This aligns with the protest paradigm, which frequently portrayal of protester actions as disruptive or abnormal (Brown 2019).

In contrast, SCMP presented a more balanced perspective, distributing blame between both the protesters (n=124) and the police (n=77). By acknowledging instances of police violence alongside protester actions, SCMP portrayed a nuanced view that recognized both sides' contributions to the confrontations. This balance suggests a more impartial approach within Hong Kong media, which seeks to consider multiple

facets of the situation rather than aligning entirely with state narrative or protester perspectives. Similarly, Wen Wei Po(n=200) and Oriental Daily (n=318) heavily emphasized protester violence, with minimal focus on police actions (Wen Wei Po, n=15; Oriental Daily, n=39). However, these newspapers did not ignore police violence entirely, as they occasionally highlighted calls for investigations into police conduct. This indicates that while Hong Kong newspapers highlighted protester violence, their coverage included demands for accountability and did not uniformly support the police stance.

5.2.2 Episodic and Thematic Framing Analysis

	People's Daily	*SCMP*	*Wen Wei Po*	*Oriental Daily*
Episodic	192	459	307	386
Thematic	109	187	175	188

Table 10. Frequency of episodic and thematic framing across the four
newspapers

People's Daily used episodic framing in 192 out of 301 articles, which constitutes 63.79% of its coverage. Thematic framing was employed in 109 articles (36.21%). This suggests a preference for episodic framing, which align with People's Daily's approach of focusing on specific incidents rather than broader thematic discussions. This episodic framing supports a focus-on event-driven narratives, likely with an emphasis on stability and order, in line with state narratives.

SCMP used episodic framing in 459 out of 646 articles, which represents 71.07% if its coverage. Thematic framing was used in 187 articles (28.93%). SCMP's reliance on episodic framing suggests a journalistic style focused on reporting unfolding events and providing readers with immediate coverage of protest incidents. This

episodic framing likely appeals to Hong Kong's audience selling real-time updates during the 2019 protests, although the lower thematic percentage shows some attempt to contextualize events within broader issues. Episodic framing appeared in 307 out of 482 articles, totalling 63.69%. Thematic framing was used in 175 articles, or 36.69%. Similar to People's Daily, Wen Wei Po also leaned towards episodic framing, albeit slightly less than SCMP. This finding shows Wen Wei Po's role in highlighting specific incidents that portray the protesters in a particular light, supporting narratives of order and stability favoured in mainland perspectives. Oriental Daily published 386 episodic framing stories, in 67.25%. 188 articles were thematically framed, representing 32.75% of the coverage. Oriental Daily's use of episodic framing was substantial, though slightly lower than SCMP. This balance suggests Oriental Daily attempted to capture the immediacy of events while still including a relatively higher thematic framing proportion, allowing for some contextualization of events.

The reliance on episodic framing suggests that these four newspapers prioritized immediate, event-focused coverage over contextual or analytical storytelling, especially during periods of heightened protest activity. This trend might be influenced by the need for real-time information or a focus on dramatizing individual protest incidents (Erik 2012, Aidan 2014). However, it is important to note that excessive reliance on episodic framing can diminish the public's tolerance and patience for protests. By repeatedly highlighting the weaker and more violent aspects of protests, such framing may desensitize viewers, leading them to perceive the protests as chaotic or disruptive rather than as legitimate expressions of dissent. This could inadvertently shift public sentiment, reducing empathy toward the protesters and undermining the broader social or political issues underlying the movement. For Hong Kong, incorporating more thematic framing could enhance public understanding by connecting these events to underlying social or political issues, supporting public to view of the protests' causes and implications. Conversely, mainland media's episodic framing may reflect a focus on presenting protests as

isolated disturbances rather than part of systematic issues, align with the broader state-controlled narrative.

5.2.3 The Number of Sources

The Table 11 provides, and overview of the different sources used across four newspapers – in their coverage of 2019 protests. Hong Kong SAR government spokespersons constituted a significant source for all newspapers, with slight variation: People's Daily (14.94%), SCMP (14.65%), Wen Wei Po (13.84%) and Oriental Daily (13.33%). This suggests a balanced use of government statements in both Hong Kong and mainland media. Police statements and representations were prominent in the coverage, especially in Hong Kong newspapers: SCMP (15.90%), Wen Wei Po (15.50%), and Oriental Daily (17.61%), compared to People's Daily (12.48%). The higher frequency in Hong Kong media indicates a focus on security and law enforcement perspectives in the local reporting of 2019 protests. This finding shows that government officials and experts were prominently featured, outnumbering other categories of mainstream sources. This suggests that Chinese media places significant value on official government sources, aligning with Gans (1980), who found that official spokespersons were often the most sought-after sources by journalists. Moreover, this preference for official sources may reflect a conservative bias within Chinese authoritarian media.

Sources	People's Daily	%	SCMP	%	Wen Wei Po	%	Oriental Daily	%
Hong Kong SAR GOV. Official Spokesmen	85	14.94%	188	14.65%	150	13.84%	134	13.33%
Hong Kong Administration	11	1.93%	18	1.40%	17	1.57%	14	1.39%

Hong Kong Leadership	46	8.08%	102	7.95%	105	9.69%	98	9.75%
Police	71	12.48%	204	15.90%	168	15.50%	177	17.61%
China PRC. Official Spokesmen	60	10.54%	71	5.53%	71	6.55%	58	5.77%
Beijing Central Government Leadership	20	3.51%	28	2.18%	27	2.49%	31	3.08%
Protester	16	2.81%	273	21.28%	188	17.34%	190	18.91%
Bystander	34	5.98%	78	6.08%	88	8.12%	70	6.97%
Ordinary People	53	9.31%	126	9.82%	130	11.99%	107	10.65%
Celebrate	3	0.53%	4	0.31%	1	0.09%	2	0.20%
Expert	98	17.22%	102	7.95%	82	7.56%	73	7.26%
Civil Society	0	0	5	0.39%	5	0.46%	3	2.30%
Foreign Leader/Politician	38	6.68%	40	3.12%	32	2.95%	30	2.99%
Alternative Media	0	0	3	0.23%	2	0.18%	0	0.00%
Foreign Media	10	1.76%	19	1.48%	9	0.83%	6	0.60%
Anonymous	5	0.88%	7	0.55%	0	0.00%	2	0.20%
Others	19	3.34%	15	1.17%	9	0.83%	10	1.00%
Total	569		1,283		1084		1,005	

Table 11. Number of sources used in the anti-government protest coverage

across newspapers15 (Total = 3.941)

SCMP, as Table 9 shown, sourced protesters' voices the most (21.28%), followed by

Wen Wei Po (17.34%) and Oriental Daily (18.91%), with People's Daily using

protesters as a source only 2.81% of the time. This stark difference highlights the

Hong Kong media's tendency to present protesters' perspectives, contrasting with the

limited representation in mainland media. This finding indicates that while People's

---

[15] Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding errors.

Daily did allocate some space to voices from protesters, it primarily used this discourse to bolster the accusations made by the government and elites against the protesters.

People's Daily showed a significantly higher reliance on experts (17.22%) compared to SCMP (7.95%), Wen Wei Po (7.56%), and Oriental Daily (7.26%). This suggests that mainland media may use experts to provide analysis that aligns with a controlled narrative, as opposed to direct voices from the public or protesters. People's Daily used Chinese PRC official spokespeople (10.54%) and central government leadership (3.51%) more frequently than the Hong Kong newspapers, reflecting its orientation toward portraying the official state perspective. In comparison, SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily sources Chinese official less frequently, aligning more with the local context of the protests (see Table 9).

The significant presence of police as a quoted source in the People's Daily during the 2019 protests (n = 71, 12.48%) underscores the strategic role of law enforcement narratives in shaping media discourse. Through the use of carefully crafted language, such as employing the terms "us" and "them" in quotes attributed to the police, the People's Daily effectively dichotomized the protesters and the police. This theme served to portray the police as defenders of law and order, positioning them as innocent victims and heroes in the face of perceived aggression from protesters. This approach aligns with the previous studies on media framing, which suggests that the strategic selection and presentation of sources can influence public perceptions of social and political events (Entman 1993). By emphasizing the perspective of the police in their coverage, the People's Daily sought to delegitimize the protests and justify the actions of law enforcement. This aligns with the broader agenda of state-controlled media to maintain social stability and uphold the authority of the ruling regime (Choi 2017).

The data presented in Table 11 highlights the significant role of the police as a source in the coverage of the 2019 protests by SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily. Across all newspapers analysed, this study found that police's voice has prominence in media narratives surrounding the protests. The SCMP stands out for its relatively higher frequency of quoting the police compared to other Hong Kong newspapers, with 204 instances (15.90%). This indicates a substantial reliance on law enforcement perspectives in the newspaper's coverage of the protests. However, it is noteworthy that even though the SCMP quoted the police frequently, they still quoted them less often than they did protesters' opinions, with 273 instances (21.28%). This suggests that SCMP try to provide a balanced portrayal of the events by multiple perspectives, including those of the protesters. On the other hand, Oriental Daily and Wen Wei Po also treated the police as important sources, with similar frequencies of police quotations (177 for Oriental Daily and 168 for Wen Wei Po). This shows the significance of law enforcement narratives in shaping media coverage across different outlets in Hong Kong.

The analysis of sourcing practices in People's Daily during the 2019 protests reveals a notable reliance on experts as key sources of information and analysis. With experts accounting for 17.22% (n = 98) of all sources quoted, People's Daily demonstrates a clear preference for incorporating expert perspectives into its coverage of the protests. This preference shows the significance of expert opinion in shaping media narratives and informing public understanding of complex socio-political events.

Ordinary people and bystanders were cited relatively frequently by Hong Kong newspapers, SCMP (9.82% and 6.08%), Wen Wei Po (11.99% and 8.12%), and Oriental Daily (10.65% and 6.97%). People's Daily also included these voices (9.31% and 5.98%) but to a lesser extent. This indicates a broader representation of public opinion in Hong Kong media, which contrasts with the more controlled sources in People's Daily.

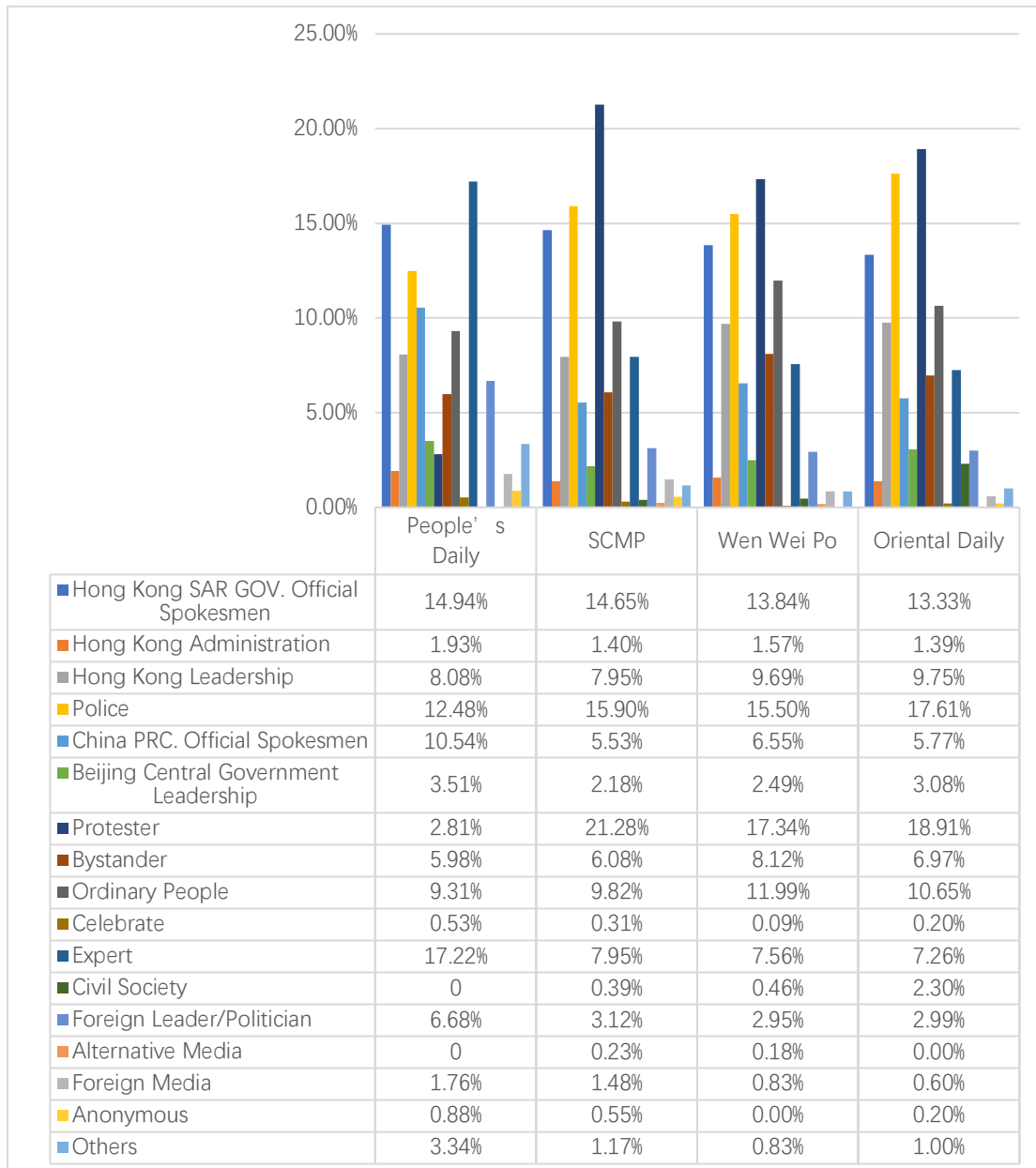|	People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
Hong Kong SAR GOV. Official Spokesmen	14.94%	14.65%	13.84%	13.33%
Hong Kong Administration	1.93%	1.40%	1.57%	1.39%
Hong Kong Leadership	8.08%	7.95%	9.69%	9.75%
Police	12.48%	15.90%	15.50%	17.61%
China PRC. Official Spokesmen	10.54%	5.53%	6.55%	5.77%
Beijing Central Government Leadership	3.51%	2.18%	2.49%	3.08%
Protester	2.81%	21.28%	17.34%	18.91%
Bystander	5.98%	6.08%	8.12%	6.97%
Ordinary People	9.31%	9.82%	11.99%	10.65%
Celebrate	0.53%	0.31%	0.09%	0.20%
Expert	17.22%	7.95%	7.56%	7.26%
Civil Society	0	0.39%	0.46%	2.30%
Foreign Leader/Politician	6.68%	3.12%	2.95%	2.99%
Alternative Media	0	0.23%	0.18%	0.00%
Foreign Media	1.76%	1.48%	0.83%	0.60%
Anonymous	0.88%	0.55%	0.00%	0.20%
Others	3.34%	1.17%	0.83%	1.00%

Figure 6. Percentage of sources used by tapes in Hong Kong and mainland
newspapers (%)

Foreign leaders and politicians were cited more frequently by People's Daily (6.68%)
compared to Hong Kong newspapers, where these sources were used minimally,
SCMP (3.12%), Wen Wei Po (2.95%), and Oriental Daily (2.99%). This may suggests
an emphasis in People's Daily on international political views, possibly to describe
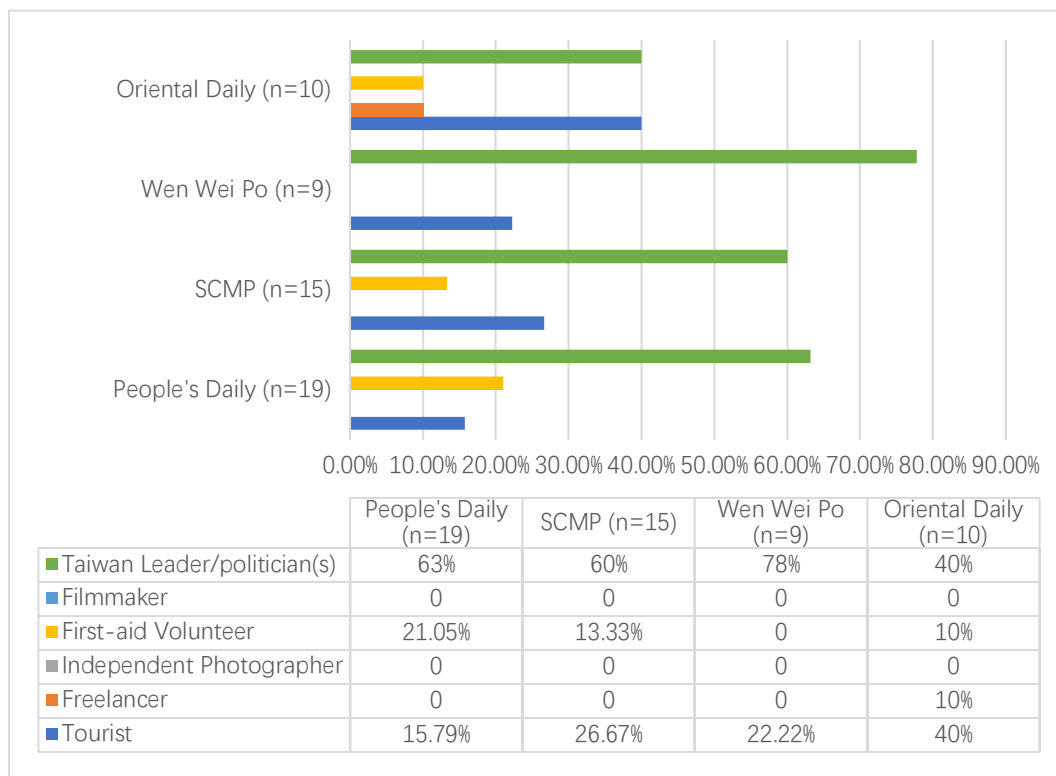the 2019 protests within a global or geopolitical context.

	People's Daily (n=19)	SCMP (n=15)	Wen Wei Po (n=9)	Oriental Daily (n=10)
■ Taiwan Leader/politician(s)	63%	60%	78%	40%
■ Filmmaker	0	0	0	0
■ First-aid Volunteer	21.05%	13.33%	0	10%
■ Independent Photographer	0	0	0	0
■ Freelancer	0	0	0	10%
■ Tourist	15.79%	26.67%	22.22%	40%

Figure 7. "Other" Sources in protests coverage (%)

Figure 7. Percentage of "other" sources cited in four newspapers (%)

When comparing source categories, it becomes evident that People's Daily paid significant attention to the opinions of Taiwan's leaders during the 2019 protests, citing them 12 times (63.16%). This focus on Taiwanese leaders was followed by quotes from first-aid volunteers (n = 4, 21.05%) and tourists (n = 3, 15.79%). Similarly, Hong Kong newspapers also prioritized comments from Taiwanese leaders/politicians in their coverage of the 2019 protests. For example, SCMP quoted Taiwanese leadership/politician sources nine times (60%), which was more frequent than Wen Wei Po (n = 7, 77.78%) and Oriental Daily (n = 4, 40%). These findings align with previous research indicating that leaders and politicians often receive significant coverage in news reporting, comprising approximately 60% of all news coverage (Soderlund et al., 1984; Frizzell and Westall, 1989; Crete, 1991; Johnston et al., 1992). The prominence of political figures in news coverage underscores their influence and the attention they command in public discourse. Additionally, the focus

on Taiwanese leaders in the context of the 2019 protests highlights the geopolitical significance of the protests and their implications for cross-strait relations.

The inclusion of tourists' perspectives across the four newspapers during the 2019 protests, the presence of tourists' voices in the SCMP and Oriental Daily was equal (n = 4) to, and more frequent than in People's Daily (n = 3, 15.79%) and Wen Wei Po (n = 2, 22.22%). Tourists were included primarily to speak about their evacuation from holiday resorts. While these findings do not definitively conclude that tourists, along with first-aid volunteers and other eyewitnesses, offered a platform for more diverse viewpoints and story angles, they do indicate an increased representation of citizens and the general public in the media discourse compared to the 2014 OCLP coverage. This evidence suggests that the importance of diverse perspectives in media coverage to capture the complexity of social and political phenomena (Smith 2010, Shoemaker and Reese 2014).

5.3 Thematic Analysis and Protest Narratives

5.3.1 Emerging Paradigms in Protest Coverage

This section provides a thematic analysis to examine the media narratives and paradigm used by Hong Kong and mainland newspapers in their coverage of the 2019 Hong Kong protests. Through this comparative thematic analysis, the study aims to shed light on the complex dynamics of media description in contentious social and political contexts.

Theme: Marginalisation

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Protesters disrupt HK's daily life, harming economic	"Occupations lead to disruptions in local business and	"HK streets overtaken by unruly mobs,	"Citizens suffer due to the chaos caused by a

stability." (July 4, 2019)	everyday life." (June 29, 2019)	causing disturbance." (Aug 8, 2019)	minority." (July 18, 2019)

As quantitative analysis shows that four newspapers has addressed the marginalization theme for describe the 2019 protests. In People's Daily, the marginalization theme was prominently highlighted through the use of negative words and phrases, such as "violent and chaos incidents," "bloody protests," "unfortunate incidents," and "mob uprisings." Additionally, terms describing Hong Kong as being plunged into "overwhelming chaos" were utilized, along with reflections on how protesters had "lost [their minds]." This linguistic serves to depict the protests in a negative light, portraying them as irrational, violent, and chaotic, which has adhered the traditional protest paradigm. This finding has in line with previous studies who suggests that the choice of language can significantly influence public perceptions of events (Entman, 1993). In this study, by employing negative terminology and portraying the 2019 protests in a derogatory manner, People's Daily effectively marginalizes the protesters and shapes public opinion in line with the government's stance. For example, People's Daily on 15 August, 2019 wrote:

> "Protesters in Hong Kong have descended into violence and chaos, causing severe disruptions to public safety. Innocent citizens are being caught in the crossfire as radicals take to the streets, undermining the stability, and harmony of our society."

In another articles, People's Daily mentioned the 2019 protest "endanger" the lives of ordinary people: "… The recent actions of rioters have put the lives of ordinary Hong Kong residents at risk. With their violent tactics and disregard for law and order, these radicals are nothing but a danger to the peaceful and law-abiding citizens of Hong Kong," (1 September 2019). These examples illustrate how People's Daily described

the 2019 protests within a theme of marginalisation, portraying the protesters as violent disruptors threatening the safety, stability, and prosperity of Hong Kong.

In the coverage by Hong Kong newspapers like Wen Wei Po and the SCMP, the marginalization theme is evident through the focus on protesters' physical appearances and actions. For example, Wen Wei Po reported on "masked mobs" smashing banks, shops, and bookstores linked to mainland China, while the SCMP described protesters wearing black masks, vandalizing property, setting fires, and engaging in bloody fist fights. Thus, the characteristics of this theme in Hong Kong media's practices is to marginalize the protesters by emphasizing their destructive capacity and portraying them as violent and irrational. Simply to say, by highlighting these aspects of the protests, the newspapers contribute to a narrative that delegitimizes the demonstrators and their grievances. This finding is similarly with People's Daily, which seeks to undermine the legitimacy of the 2019 protests. On the other hand, the finding here emphasis on physical appearances and violent actions also reflects a strategy of othering, wherein the protesters are portrayed as different from and dangerous to the rest of society (Dardis, 2006). By focusing on these aspects, the newspapers reinforce stereotypes and stigmatize the protesters, making it easier to dismiss their demands and justify repressive measures by the authorities.

A unique findings should be highlighted here, People's Daily tend to use marginalisation theme portraying protesters or dissenting groups as fringe elements that are disconnected from the mainstream society, for example, use of derogatory terms such as "radicals," "extremists," or "lunatics,", and highlighting character flaws, irrational behaviour, and illegitimate motives of the protesters, on 5 October, 2019, People's Daily addressed: "Radical elements within the protest movement are seeking to destabilise Hong Kong," "Innocent citizens are being caught in the crossfire as radicals take to the streets," (15 August 2019 People's Daily). This finding confirms that news reports frequently employ stigmatizing language to label marginalized groups (Murray et al., 2024). In contrast, Hong Kong media tend to use

nuisance paradigm for describes the Hong Kong protesters and dissenting actions as bothersome or troublesome to the daily lives of ordinary citizens. For example, SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily frequency use the term like "disruption," "inconvenience," and "annoyance,", emphasis on the negative impact of protests on everyday life, such as SCMP wrote: "protesters' occupation forced nearby shopping malls, cafes, and restaurants to close, resulting in significant economic losses for the owners." (17 July). My analysis suggests, while both themes can be used to criticise and undermine protests, the marginalisation theme focuses on discrediting the protesters' legitimacy, whereas the nuisance highlights the practical inconveniences. The human-centred language used by Hong Kong media contributes to a sense of humanization in news coverage – as Murray et al., (2024) adopting a human-centred approach in media language can serve as a potential remedy, helping to slightly increase public trust in news.

Theme: Legitimisation

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"The police's response is a necessary measure to protect Hong Kong's rule of law," (Oct 8, 2019)	"Protesters advocate for democratic rights, a legitimate part of Hong Kong's freedoms," (July 7, 2019)	"Youth demand change to protect HK's future," (Oct 8, 2019)	"The protests represent the people's desire for transparency and fair governance." (Sep 19, 2019)

During the early stages of the street demonstrations, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) provided legal standards to protect the "peaceful" protesters, stating that the occupied streets were peaceful and non-violent, and that the demonstration was within the bounds of the law (15 June 2019). Similarly, Wen Wei Po, in its initial coverage,

posed the question "what about protest?" and legitimized the protest and protesters'

demands by highlighting their potential to improve the deliberativeness of the

political system and bring important issues to the forefront of public discourse (10

June 2019). Oriental Daily also referenced the law to support the protesters and their

street demonstrations, acknowledging that while the Hong Kong government had

withdrawn the controversial bill, the initial protests had succeeded in highlighting

frustrations with the existing political system in the city. Overall, this study found that

Hong Kong media tended to portray the 2019 demonstrations by recurring the use of

words like "peaceful," "awful," "non-violent," and "rational," in stories related to

legitimization. The vast majority of articles in the Hong Kong media within the

legitimization theme centred on ethical concerns surrounding the activists' actions,

highlighting their adherence to legal and moral standards in their pursuit of political

change.

In legitimation-oriented stories, I found that discourse plays an important role in

influencing how the media utilizes this theme. For example, SCMP addresses "Why"

questions to explore issues, such as "Why should we support this [HK protests]?".

The answer to this "why" question often relies on authority, following the rationale of

"because I say so," where some form of authority is vested in "so-and-so" (Van

Leeuwen 2008.p.106). Wen Wei Po, on the other hand, uses the "authority of

conformity" to legitimize the actions of protesters, answering "why" people are

gathering on the streets with statements like "massive numbers of Hong Kongers are

angry about the Bill." Oriental Daily emphasizes the significance of the protests as a

means to "protect democracy," to justify the question "why" people occupied the

streets, thereby legitimating their actions in protests.

All three Hong Kong newspapers use goal-oriented rationalization to legitimize the

gatherings, with SCMP highlighting "for [in] the people" to construct a narrative of

action aimed at protecting "democracy and autonomy," In contrast, mainland media

emphasize the moral evaluation aspect of legitimacy discourse, describing protesters

as "betrayers of the motherland," and "selfish," to delegitimize the 2019 protests. Mainland also frequently uses the "personal authority" of leaders to legitimize state actions, with statements like "President Xi emphasizing…" or "Warnings from the Minister," and quotes from other high-level officials to oppose the 2019 protests. These examples illustrate that legitimation involves "making sense of power… for those who exercise it, for those who are subject to it, or for both" (Braker 2004.p.37, Abdi and Basarati 2008, cited in Pandanwangi et al., 2020). Furthermore, "the establishment of institutional identities serves to justify the exercise of power, outlining both its methods and intended purposes" (Braker 2004.p.38).

People's Daily adopted the legitimization theme for their coverage of the 2019 protests, but without acknowledging the legitimacy of the protests themselves. Instead, their focus was primarily on highlighting the actions of the police in response to the protests. For example, on 19 September 2019, People's Daily claimed that there were no overreactions from the police's side, emphasizing that their actions were in accordance with the requirements of the law and their duty to maintain the stability of the city. In this article, phrases such as "good job," "responsibilities," and "duty," were highlighted to claim the legitimacy of the police's actions. However, People's Daily was no address of the underlying grievances of the protesters or the legitimacy of their demands. Instead, the emphasis was on portraying the police as fulfilling their duty to uphold law and order, thereby framing their actions as justified and necessary for maintaining social stability. This finding indicates the mainland media is in line with Chinese state's stance on the 2019 events, which prioritizes maintaining control and stability over addressing the grievances of the protesters. This theme also potentially strengthens the protest paradigm which through reinforce the narrative of the government's authority and legitimacy, while marginalising the voices of dissent.

Through a comparative analysis of news stories focused on legitimization, this study finds that the core reason behind the contrasting narratives on the same theme lies in the differing discourse strategies of legitimization employed by each side. According

to Van Leeuwen (2008), legitimization discourse includes four strategies: authorization, evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis – Hong Kong media have adopted the first three strategies, while mainland media tend to use the "Personal authority" of CCP leader to counter the legitimization of the 2019 protests. Neither the mainland nor Hong Kong media adopted a "myth" discourse. Thus, both use language as a discourse strategy to manipulate facts and present them to the audience in a credible and favourable way (Bahador 2014). However, the key difference is that mainland media act as representatives of the government, serving its vested interests.

Theme: De-legitimisation

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Foreign forces support these riots to destabilize Hong Kong," (Oct 6, 2019)	"Some protesters resort to extreme measures, crossing lawful boundaries." (July 15, 2019)	"Radical elements provoke unrest under the guise of reform." (June 29, 2019)	"Violence used by protesters undermines any legitimacy claims." (Nov 2, 2019)

In contrast to the legitimization theme, People's Daily extensively utilized the delegitimization theme in their coverage of the 2019 protests, portraying them as "illegal" and even as acts of "terrorism." For instance, People's Daily reported on protesters storming Hong Kong's legislature and damaging the chamber, condemning the "extreme violence" carried out by "radical," protesters. They sought to undermine public support for the protests by highlighting their illegal actions and citing relevant laws and regulations. Moreover, People's Daily delegitimized the protesters by providing limited context and background information, describing protesters' actions as violations of the law and incitements to national security threats. The study also found instances where People's Daily questioned the legitimacy of certain groups

involved in the protests by placing their identities in quotation marks, and issued statements that portrayed the protesters as childish, disorganized, or threatening. These findings suggest that mainland media, particularly People's Daily, employed the delegitimization theme to discredit the protests and undermine their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. By reporting the protests as illegal and violent acts, they sought to justify the government's crackdown on dissent and suppress public support for the protesters' demands. This approach reflects the Chinese government's narrative of the protests as a threat to social stability and national security, rather than legitimate expressions of grievances (Chen et al., 2019).

Hong Kong newspapers shaped the narrative of the 2019 protests by employing the delegitimization theme. For example, SCMP attributed the confrontations to protesters who had vandalized subway stations, labelling their actions as "unacceptable" (8 September 2019). Similarly, Oriental Daily provided detailed accounts of the chaos caused by protesters, asserting that their actions were in violation of the Basic Law and deemed unacceptable (8 September 2019). This trend indicates that Hong Kong media sought to de-legitimize the 2019 protests by emphasizing the protesters' disregard for laws and rules, portraying them as lawbreakers and threats to social order. In addition, as the protests escalated into violence, the SCMP reported on October 6, 2019, that "external radicals and agitators are exploiting the situation to achieve their own independent and violent agenda," This suggests that Hong Kong newspapers aimed to manage public perception by reporting the violent protests as illegitimate and unlawful. Thus, the onset of violence served as a trigger for the media to employ the protest paradigm and its associated narratives in discussing the 2019 protests.

Comparing the de-legitimise themed stories between Hong Kong and mainland, I found, People's Daily highlighting connections to West interference, describing the protesters as a threat to national security and public order, for example, People's Daily used terms like "extremists," "foreign agents," to describe Hong Kong

protesters, however, Hong Kong newspapers sometimes align with similar language, but generally, the focus is less severe compared to mainland. For example, SCMP reported on the economic impacts and public inconvenience cause by the protests, using words like "disruptive," and "economic losses,", thus, this study suggests, Hong Kong media tend to use the nuisance paradigm to coverage the 2019 protest. Furthermore, while both the de-legitimisation theme and the nuisance serve to undermine the protest, they do so in different ways.

The analysis finds that Hong Kong media's shift from affirming the legitimacy of 2019 protests to introducing elements of delegitimization results from the use of framing strategies. For example, SCMP illustrates this hybrid approach by describing the protests in multiple, contrasting ways, in the first paragraph, it highlights the "peaceful," methods as legitimate forms of protest expression; in the second paragraph, it emphasises the illegality of violent forms of dissent; and in the third, it brings in local Hong Kong experts to provide commentary and nuanced analysis on the protests (18 Sep. 2019). This layered portrayal demonstrates how the media employs a dynamic blend of legitimization and delegitimization narratives to describe protests in a complex light. This finding suggests that legitimization and de-legitimization are not isolated or opposing forces; rather, they interact closely and are often intertwined in media portrayals, shaping both the performance and perception of protest movement. Previous studies support this view, noting that media often oscillates between legitimizing and de-legitimating, depending on factors like audience expectations, political context, and the evolving nature of the protests (Shahin et al., 2016). Brown et al., (2019) also argue that media coverage can simultaneously validate protest actions while critiquing specific tactics or behaviours, thus engaging a hybrid paradigm that reflect the complexities of social movements in media discourse.

Theme: Violence

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Rioters violently confront the police, causing injuries and damage." (Sep 4, 2019)	"Both protesters and police engage in clashes; tear gas used to disperse crowds." (Oct 19, 2019)	"Scenes of chaos and violence fill the streets as clashes continue." (Oct 6, 2019)	"Shocking acts of violence leave the city in turmoil." (Oct 7, 2019)

The quantitative results indicate that all four newspapers heavily relied on the violence theme to shape their coverage of the 2019 protests. In the initial observation, two aspects of the violence theme came into focus: protesters' vandalism behaviours and violent clashes between protesters and police officers. Hong Kong newspapers heavily focused on the latter, particularly the violence perpetrated by police officers against protesters. For instance, the SCMP on October 19, 2019, highlighted the prevalence of various forms of violence during the protests, including the use of rubber and sponge bullets, pepper spray, batons, bricks, violent arrests, water cannons, and tear gas. This depiction of police brutality expressed sympathy towards the protesters and condemned the excessive use of force.

Similarly, Wen Wei Po, on October 6, 2019, reported an incident where police fired live gunfire at a demonstrator, gravely injuring an adolescent. This narrative continued three days later when another child was shot in the thigh. These articles emphasized the actions of the police and the resulting injuries suffered by protesters, sparking controversy and public outrage. These evidence indicates that violence is the hot topics for media capturing the protests, on the other hand, this study founds Hong Kong media try to highlighting instances of police brutality and the harm inflicted upon protesters, thus, Hong Kong newspapers particularly SCMP aimed to provide a balanced perspective on the events unfolding during the protests.

In the violence-themed stories, fear emerged as a prominent underlying sub-theme, presented by the media's coverage. For example, People's Daily released a statement from the Beijing central government addressing the violence, accompanied by images of paramilitary troops marching near the border. In this article, People's Daily conveyed the message that the PLA (the Chinese garrison) stationed in Shenzhen was prepared to intervene in Hong Kong if deemed necessary, stating: "If Beijing felt it was essential, it would not hesitate to take action." This highlights how news coverage tended to become more negative as the protests grew more violent (Boyle et al., 2012). Additionally, the use of sentiment words further amplified the violence theme, contributing to the atmosphere of fear, this finding aligns with Boyle et al., (2012) suggests media may employ emotive language to convey the sense of danger or urgency surrounding the events, some words like "chaos," "mayhem," or "violence" can evoke fear and alarm among audiences, describing the protests as threatening to public safety.

In this study, researcher observed distinct patterns in the terminology employed by different newspapers to solidify the violence theme and construct narratives. For example, People's Daily utilized terms like "terrorism," "riot," "the mob," "indict," and "the assault," to cover the protests in a highly negative light, portraying them as acts of aggression and disorder. These words not only evoke fear and alarm but also carry political connotations, aligning with the government's stance on the protests and reinforcing the official narrative of the events. Similarly, the SCMP employed verbs such as "oppose" and "complain" to illustrate attitudes following the incidents, suggesting dissent and dissatisfaction with the status quo. This theme may reflect a more nuanced approach, acknowledging the complexity of public sentiment and the diverse reactions to the protests.

On the other hand, Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily focused on verbs that highlighted the aftermath of violent conflicts and the implications for citizens, such as "attack," "escape," "treatment," and "prevention." These newspapers emphasized the human

impact of the protests, portraying individuals as both victims and agents of change. By highlighting the spirit and resilience of the people involved, they sought to evoke empathy and solidarity among readers. These findings show that the use of language in media coverage of protests reflects not only the events themselves but also the perspectives and agendas of the media's reporting on them.

One unexpected finding in this study on the violence theme is the distribution and use of the discourse of terrorism in the newspapers. For example, People's Daily said: "… shows the terrorism," (19 October 2019) for describe the unrest incident in 2019 events. This finding shows that the term "terrorism" can delegitimise the protesters and justify harsh government actions against them, such as mainland media tend to portray the 2019 protesters as violent extremists posing a threat to public safety and national security. Here, the approach the People's Daily used was different within Tibet, and Xinjiang issues described, when mainland newspaper describe Hong Kong protests as acts of terrorism, it often aligns with the Chinese central government's narrative of maintaining stability and national unity. On the other hand, when mainland media discuss Tibet and Xinjiang issues, media often employ a different narrative, focusing on themes of separatism and ethnic unity (Grose 2021, Liu, Qian and Lin 2019).

Compared with People's Daily, three Hong Kong newspapers were refused to use the "terrorism" in violence themes stories to describe the chaos. SCMP journalist reflected on violence used by both sides, examining it from a moral rather than purely political perspective: "Mainland claims the normal violent incident as "… sign of terrorism" was shock HK … Yet once the side or the protesters descend into violence, it is hard for either side to back out" (16 November 2019).

Regarding this, I argue, mainland media simplifies complex conflicts by using broad labels – discourse of terrorism. Violence stories provide a clear, albeit oversimplified, dichotomy of good versus evil. By labelling perpetrators as terrorists, People's Daily

can easily categorise them as the "enemy", legitimising stronger government and military response, this narrative its clearly beyond the protest paradigm. In terms of Hong Kong media, although they refuse to label chaotic as acts of terrorism in 2019 protest coverage, however, they pay attention to descriptions of bodily injury in violent-themed stories. For example, SCMP on 1 October 2019 wrote by detailly: "in the midst of violent clashes between protesters and police, dozens of individuals were seen with bloodied faces and limbs. Medical volunteers were overwhelmed as they tried to attend to injuries ranging from minor cuts to severe head trauma." Oriental Daily on November 12, 2019 mentioned: "Scenes of chaos ensued as protesters suffered various injuries. One young man was captured on video with a deep gash on his forehead, blood streaming down his face, while others were treated for broken bones and pepper spray burns." "As the violence escalated, many protesters were injured. Reports indicated multiple instances of broken limbs, bruised bodies, and severe lacerations as a result of clashes with the police." (5 August 2019 Wen Wei Po). This study argues, the human body in Hong Kong media representations, especially in the context of violence and protests, transcends its physical existence and becomes a powerful symbol – this symbolic representation can convey a range of meanings, including victimhood, resistance, and state oppression. This finding aligns with Chouliaraki (2006) who says: "the portrayal of injured bodies in media serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of political conflict, evoking emotional responses that can sway public opinion" (p.34)[16]. Therefore, I argue, in Hong Kong media, the human body is imbued with symbolic meanings. Injuries are not just medical conditions but representations that carry deeper social, political, and emotional connotations.

---

[16] Other scholar such as Butler (2009) said: "The injured body in protest imagery often functions as a symbol of resistance, signifying the protester's dedication and the lengths to which they will go to achieve justice" (p.287). Hargrave (2009) highlight: "Media depictions of bodily harm inflicted by state actors can delegitimise government actions, portraying them as oppressive and highlighting human rights abuses" (p. 209, also can found in Kleinman A and Kleinman J 1997.p.20). Their studies further indicate that by portraying the huma body as a symbol rather than just a physical entity, media narratives can mobilise public sentiment and bring attention to broader social and political issues.

Theme: Conflict

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Protesters' goals conflict with the stability and unity of China," (Sep 9, 2019)	"The conflict between protesters and the government reflects deep-rooted societal issues," (Aug 9, 2019)	"Youth clashes with authorities over differing visions for HK's future," (Oct 6, 2019)	"Confrontations intensify as both sides refuse to compromise." (Nov 2, 2019)

Compared to other themes like violence, marginalization, or nationalism, conflict, it is more multifaced. The conflict theme in both mainland and Hong Kong newspapers played a significant role in shaping the narratives surrounding the 2019 protests. One characteristic of this theme was the emphasis on disputes and struggles between China and what were perceived as "external forces." For example, People's Daily reported, "… this is a Western conspiracy to start a colour revolution in Hong Kong" (18 July 2019), and "China has again warned against the Trump administration's interference in its internal affairs and warned the British not to damage its friendly relations with China" (20 July 2019). This finding shows conflict theme can polarize public opinion by reinforcing divisions between "us" and "them,"[17] thereby simplifying the narrative into a binary opposition, which limits understanding of the nuanced issues at play (Davies 2008, Kokina 2023).

This theme used for 2019 protests coverage shows that Western interference serves to reinforce the narrative of external manipulation and threats to China's sovereignty.

---

[17] Wondolleck et al., (2003) further explains that this approach fosters an "internal/external dynamic" where outsiders are often stereotyped, and motives are attributed to them – sometime inaccurately but deliberately – to reinforce the internal group's positive self-image.

Additionally, this study found that the use of diplomatically toned language in these reports highlights the strategic messaging employed by mainland Chinese media to rally domestic support and garner international sympathy. By describing the 2019 protests as a conflict between China and Western forces, People's Daily aimed to delegitimise the protest movement and justify the Chinese central government's crackdown on dissent. Thus, the conflict theme could highlight the role of mainstream media in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of geopolitical conflicts. On 5 September, 2019, People's Daily points "Chinese official have condemned the interference of Western governments in Hong Kong's internal affairs, accusing them of instigating violence and chaos. … The protests, which have turned into violent riots, are seen as part of a broader strategy by Western forces to destabilize China." On 2 December, People's Daily said: "Foreign Forces behind the escalating of Hong Kong riots," The discourse of diplomacy used by People's Daily on conflict-themed news precisely validates recent discourse research on China's public and digital diplomacy. This study suggests that China's diplomatic stance is frequently perceived as a justified response to external provocations in defence of its national interests (D'Hooghe, 2005; Chang and Lin, 2014). This approach aligns with the domestic inclination toward popular nationalism (Sullivan and Wang 2023, Zhang and Tang 2024), and consistently reinforces the narratives of "Western invasion" and "colour revolution." This indicates that the self-initiated patriotic consciousness led by the discourse of elites (Hughes 2017) is a narrative strategy of mainland media in response to Western concerns. However, some Chinese scholars express concerns that the influence of assertive or aggressive nationalist public opinion on the media could potentially coerce the central government and influence its foreign policy-making (Yang 2020, Huang 2022, Chubb 2018, Chen et al., 2019, Zhang and Tang 2024).

In conflict-dominated stories, the mainland and Hong Kong media engage in heated exchanges over what each perceives as the drivers of the 2019 demonstrations, People's Daily describe the demands of Hong Kong's protesters as rooted in "greed," portraying them as "selfish" "thugs" with illegitimate goals. Hong Kong newspapers

like Wen Wei Po describe the protests as stemming from legitimate 'grievances,'' emphasizing deep-seated political and social discontent. Woodward (2007) highlight that understanding the causes and dynamic of conflict plays a significant role in shaping approaches to conflict resolution. When conflict is framed as stemming from greed, as People's Daily portray, it legitimizes hardliner responses as necessary to curb self-interest-driven disorder. Furthermore, this study found that two-sided conflicts can escalate into violence (e.g., police and protester), intensifying the portrayal of violence in protest coverage. For example, People's Daily wrote the protesters were driven by "self-serving motives," and were "disrupting public order for personal gain." (18 Sep.2019). This characterization of greed as the primary driver provided justification for authorities to adopt stringent measures, arguing the such actions were necessary to prevent chaos fueled by self-interest.

This finding suggests that understanding the multifaced causes of violence is important for shaping perceptions of conflict and identifying potential paths to resolution. It also highlights the interconnectedness between multiple themes, illustrating how one theme, such as conflict, can reinforce another, like violence, within media narrative. This interrelationship suggests that thematic elements do not exist in isolation but interact to shape a comprehensive portrayal of protests.

Hong Kong media also employed the conflict theme, but their focus was often on the confrontations between protesters and the police, and the impact on the local community. For example, South China Morning Post reported extensively on the violent clashes, using headlines like "Police and Protesters Clash in Central as Tensions Rise" (15 August 2019) and describing scenes of tear gas and rubber bullets. SCMP also highlighted the impact of these conflicts on ordinary citizens, noting disruptions to public transport and the daily lives of Hong Kong residents. This approach provided a more nuanced view of the protests, acknowledging the violence while also giving a platform to the protesters' grievances and the community's struggles.

Oriental Daily and Wen Wei Po, on the other hand, tended to align more closely with the mainland narrative, though not as overtly. They reported on the violence and disruption but often included statements from government officials and business leaders emphasising the need for law and order. For instance, Oriental Daily might feature headlines such as "Businesses Suffer as Violent Protests Continue" (10 September 2019), focusing on the economic impact and the inconvenience caused by the protests, thus subtly supporting the authorities' stance without the overt geopolitical framing seen in People's Daily.

Theme: Nationalism

People's Daily	SCMP	Wen Wei Po	Oriental Daily
"Protests challenge our shared Chinese identity, eroding national pride." (Aug 20, 2019)	"Hong Kong struggles to balance local identity with national expectations." (July 2, 2019)	"Calls for 'independence' betray Hong Kong's place within China." (Sep 10, 2019)	"National pride is at stake as protesters push for divisive changes." (Nov 4, 2019)

In their coverage of the 2019 protests, newspapers from both mainland China and Hong Kong explored nationalist themes from differing perspectives. This study preliminarily indicates that the use of specific terms contributes to the differing portrayals of nationalism by Hong Kong and mainland media. Moreover, there is a notable divergence in their engagement with nationalist discourse. From the viewpoint of the People's Daily, journalists initially labelled the 2019 protesters as "national traitors," accusing them of actions that "severely hurt the feelings between

the people of the two places [HK and mainland]," Consequently, People's Daily urged the protesters to "stop this harm to the nation as soon as possible" (2 July 2019).

In another article, People's Daily emphatically stated that "Britain exercised typical colonial rule over Hong Kong," detailing how "the British government consistently obstructed democratic reforms in Hong Kong." The article argued that "after Hong Kong's return to the motherland, it truly began its journey towards democratic development." The perspective from People's Daily which emphasis the notion that Hong Kong and the mainland are inseparable, part of one nation bound by deep national sentiments that transcend the mere concept of a country (20 August 2019). In an article published on August 21, the People's Daily employed phrases with nationalist sentiment such as "the motherland is good, Hong Kong will be good" and "Hong Kong is my home, the motherland is my root." In nationalism themed stories, People's Daily kept highlight: "the mainland and Hong Kong are bound together as a community of destiny, linked by blood, cultural ties, and economic integration, and should breathe together, share a common destiny, and collaborate closely." (21 Aug.2019). In another article, People's Daily reiterated, "We firmly believe that Hong Kong compatriots not only possess the wisdom, ability, and means to effectively manage and develop the Special Administrative Region but will also undoubtedly play an active role in national affairs, share the dignity and glory of being Chinese with people from all ethnic groups across China, and embrace the responsibility and mission of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (3 September 2019). So far, the examples above show that nationalism is still the default ideology for understanding controversial politics in China. By using familiar terms such as "territorial integrity," "traitor," "motherland," and "root," mainland media have limited their understanding of the Hong Kong protests to a narrow discourse space, and creates a strong sense of antagonism through an aggressive writing style and tone.

The repeated use of the anthropomorphic metaphor of "blood relatives" and "mother (i.e., mainland China) and children (Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan)" by mainland

media in nationalist-themed news demonstrates that political actors strategically organise and employ emotional and nationalist discourse in the media. Emotion, considered a "power issue" (Alloing and Pierre 2020.p.3, cited by Huang 2023), serves as a tool for biopolitical influence, where actors leverage affective appeals to exert control over individuals (Foucault 1994a). Consequently, nationalist discourse in media extends beyond the realm of ethical considerations in political communication and enters the domain of propaganda. This type of propaganda uses media to disseminate emotionally charged content and selectively filter information to shape public perception. Furthermore, alongside People's Daily's assertive nationalist stance toward Western perspectives, Chinese media appear to employ a "hard/soft" communication strategy regarding the Hong Kong protests. This strategic approach, which blends assertive and conciliatory elements, aims to breach opposing viewpoints by balancing offensive and defensive tactics[18] (Huang 2023).

Furthermore, this study found that in its coverage of the 2019 protests, People's Daily sought to mobilize overseas Chinese and Chinese students to participate in the discourse opposing the Hong Kong protesters. For example, People's Daily commended Chinese students in Australia for standing up to "Resist Hong Kong separatists and debunk their lies." In another article, People's Daily once again lauded the actions of mainland students, noting that they "held up the five-star red flag and sang the national anthem in protest...Feel proud of them," (15 Aug. 2019). These observations support Cheung's (2015) suggestion that Chinese media promote a singled nationalist agenda, which he suggests is rooted in anxiety and resentment.

---

[18] Mao viewed war as not only a confrontation of coercive forces but also as a process that necessitated the mobilisation of the masses through strategic communication efforts (Lee 1979, Cho 2011, Huang 2023). The objective was to uphold the values of the targeted public, guide, and coordinate public opinion to "unite all forces that can be united" (Mao 1956). Accordingly, the strategy of protracted warfare emphasised two key tactics: "offence in defense" and "external operations within internal lines" (Mao 1967.p.157).

At the same time, People's Daily has tried to base nationalist discourse on postcolonial concepts, repeatedly using terms such as "China rising," "saving Hong Kong," "saving the nation," "national sovereignty and territorial integrity," and "washing away a century of humiliation" to label the 2019 protests in response to the West. Consequently, in mainland media discourse, nationalism is deeply intertwined with notions of nationality, national consciousness, and the pursuit of dignity. Thus, in China's quest for dignity and international status, Chinese nationalism remains intrinsically anti-foreign, and especially anti-Western (Chan 2011).

By contrast, the themes of nationalism that Hong Kong's media have shaped in the 2019 protests are complex. SCMP highlight the slogan from protesters' shout: "HKers Come on!", "HKers Rebel!", "HKers, Fight!", "Free HK!" (17 June 2019). These slogans indicates that a desire for a unique identity comes from Hong Kong people's shared experiences. In a separate story, SCMP published the lyrics of a song written by protesters for the 2019 demonstrations, in which "The dawn comes to restore this Hong Kong," "Walk sons and daughters, for justice, revolution of The Times, pray for democracy and freedom, eternity, I wish glory to Hong Kong", potentially presenting the frustration and emotional pain caused by the suppression of human rights, but also highlighting the people of Hong Kong standing up against injustice despite the bloodshed (Yeung 2019). The lyrics contain key words related to ethnic and civic nationalism, and in terms of nationalism, the SCMP highlights words such as "land", "tears", "frustration", "fear", "blood", etc. - a common thread in the narrative of ethnic nationalism, like Ignatieff's (1994) Blood and Belonging -- a song is a metaphor for the feelings of fear and frustration that people are willing to shed blood and tears to defend their "homeland" from foreign oppression. Therefore, in the perspective of Hong Kong media, nationalism is expressed through daily life.

In Wen Wei Po, on 10 September 2019, journalist who has written: "[Sing] this song together for us, for Hong Kong, for future," within the news title "sing with you". Oriental Daily reported the same incident (i.e., protesters gathered at Sha Tin Square

to sing the protesters' adaptation of the song, namely "sing with me"), and although the journalists did not provide their own opinion, the full lyrics were offered on the news text. Therefore, the result shows that in nationalism themed stories, Hong Kong media's nationalist discourse has expressive and informative compared with mainland media's education functions. In this way, nationalism themed stories in HK allows for the re-imaging of possibilities and facilitates the creation and dissemination of counter-discourses (Fraser 1992). Consequently, Hong Kong newspapers has described the moral legitimacy of the 2019 demonstrations as "a common idea among the public" (Merrifield 2013.p.70), through constructing the nationalism-dominate narratives, Hong Kong citizens are reclaiming and reshaping public space, thereby regaining control over their right for express.

5.3.2 Contextual Analysis of Source Attribution

This section will present a content analysis of source selection within the four newspapers, examining how different sources shape narratives. As we know, the choice of sources in news production is shaped by a combination of routine production practices and professional newsroom standards (Berkowitz 2009), The narrative build through these selected sources is fundamental to shaping how audiences understand events and issues.

1. Comparing the protesters' voices

Both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers quoted voices from protesters, although People's Daily featured fewer such quotes in its coverage. Initially, Hong Kong media frequently included quotes from protesters during the early stages of the 2019 demonstrations. For example, SCMP quoted a street demonstrator who stated, "We [protesters] are not only occupying for the withdrawal of the bill, but also for the future of Hong Kong," (20 June 2019). Similarly, Wen Wei Po provided large space for protesters to express their views, with quotes such as, "Many Hong Kongers have gathered here to be seen and heard by the SAR. We [protesters] demand the withdrawal of the bill!" (21 June 2019). Thus, protester voices quoted by Hong Kong

media typically centred around a common theme—the withdrawal of the Bill. This finds Hong Kong media has abilities to through managing the protesters' view to influence the governance and policymaking.

In contrast, People's Daily use the protesters' quotes to present other perspectives of the 2019 demonstrations. For example, People's Daily quote a protester who in front of line: "I don't' care who injured, we just want they [government] to hearing ours's voices," (9 July 2019), and in another article, a protester who said: "I [protester] scratched his/her [police] face, but so what!" (9 July 2019). These two news texts show that People's Daily try to quote the protesters' own voices for proof themselves as "the insane" and "radicals" (14 June 2019). This finds People's Daily adopted a different approach in sources application such as instead of amplifying protesters' demands, they selectively quoted protesters to portray them in a negative light. In addition, by highlighting quotes from protesters expressing disregard for injuries or engaging in aggressive behaviour towards the police, People's Daily sought to frame the protesters as irrational and violent. This finding further confirms that protester's voices could strengthen the protest paradigm and its narratives in media used.

Along with the 2019 protests escalated more violent and confrontations, People's Daily turn over the words to describe the protesters from "rioters" to "terrorist".   For example, People's Daily quotes a protester who has been shout to the police: "Step back… I will burn myself, … I will be burning this city" (8 August 2019). This article shows quoting protesters' voices in a selective manner not only serves to delegitimize the overall protest or justify the government's crackdown on dissent, but also can portray protester as a fringe group whose actions warranted strong government intervention. This finding has aligned with Koopmans and Statham (1999) who found that by connecting protesters with terrorism or portraying their actions as threatening to public safety and security, media aims to win the public support for the protests and justify repressive measures by authorities. On above examples compared, this study found that, while both Hong Kong and mainland newspapers utilized protester's

voices in their coverage of the 2019 protests, they did so with different intentions and effects — while Hong Kong newspapers used protester's voices to advocate for political change, People's Daily used them to reinforce the government's narrative and legitimate the force actions took by police.

The finding that SCMP is the most frequent user of protesters' voices among the three Hong Kong newspapers, this finding suggests that SCMP acknowledges that protesters' voices are essential in the political sphere in its information production process, and focuses its citations on the process by which protesters describe their actions and assign value to them. For example, SCMP published on June 17, 2019: "Thousands of Hong Kong citizens gathered in Tsim Sha Tsui to demand the government withdraw the ordinance, and large numbers of demonstrators voiced their political demands, with one protester telling journalist they were 'fighting for the soul of the city [HK]'". In a news article dated July 29, SCMP emphasized the protesters' "loud voice," and "echoed," their political demands for the SAR government to do the investigation for policing issues in clearing process: "We make our voices loud, we shout! We ask the Chief Executive to withdraw the Bill and do investigate to the police," and "So many injured protesters, can the Chief Executive not see? They are all Hong Kong citizens! We just want to speak out...Listen our voice!" This finding in line with Norval's (2009) suggestion that the term such as "speaking up" or "loud voice" -- holds significant political weight in a democratic context as it highlights the influence of power structures on individual lives. According to Couldry (2010), if a voice in the political arena is viewed as an individual's articulation of their own circumstances and their lived experience, then the expression of the protesters in SCMP transcends mere commentary (be it an opinion, proposition, etc.). Instead, their voice serves as a representative of their self-awareness and their experiential understanding of the world.

Oriental Daily and Wen Wei Po also cited protester's voices and opinions in 2019 protest coverage, and more than People's Daily. For example, Wen Wei Po cited a

group of protester's voices who expressing their unfair treatment by the police, saying "police brutality is intolerable," (4 August 2019). Oriental Daily interview some youth protesters who says, "We apply the democracy we learn in books to practice, and democracy iso only true when it is practiced" (18 October 2019), and most of the quotes in the article came from their statement. So far, the voices and views of protesters have been quoted by Hong Kong media, which not only breaks the marginalization pattern of protesters in the protest paradigm, but also shows the feelings of protesters in the ongoing protests. For example, Hong Kong newspapers have highlighted the words of protesters who describe their feelings, such as "disappointed," "angry," "fearful," "tearful," "feeling sad," these are strong emotional terms, has had reveals an emerging emotional politics in which "sensory intensity," such as sounds, sensations, and other non-verbal dynamics, is prevailing (Massumi 2002).

2. Comparing the expert's voices

Same with 2014 OCLP protest coverage, expert, once again dominated the lots of the space as People's Daily used in 2019 protest reports. For example, People's Daily quotes a lawyer Wong Ying-ho who said: "the law has a long way to go and should not be overlooked … If there are criminals who flee to Hong Kong after committing crimes in the mainland, Macao, or Taiwan, there must be an appropriate legal basis to deal with them, … otherwise Hong Kong will become a toxic place and it will be difficult to guarantee the safety of the public," (17 August 2019). People's Daily tend to rely on experts with professional backgrounds to provide nuanced insights and legal expertise, guiding the public's understanding of the events unfolding during the 2019 protests.

Much of the previous literature and empirical studies on sourcing analyses have discussed the role of experts in reporting protests and analysed the various reasons why the media rely on experts' opinions when shaping a particular standpoint in news texts (e.g., Danielle and Summer 2019, Sonora 2007, Jennifer et al., 2007, Sarah et al.,

2013). In China's culture, experts are similar to intellectuals, who in the Chinese context are called "Zhishi Fenzi" (知识分子). When illuminating field theory, Bourdieu (1991) offered a profound analysis of the field of television news, he believed that journalists and experts perform a kind of "ladder trick" in the process of news production. Journalists enhance the professionalism and authority of reports through the words of experts, and experts elaborate on their views with simple, clear, and incisive words to boost media popularity.

To accumulate "cultural capital", French anthropologist scholar Regis (1981) believed that there are various methods to obtain fame and capital through the media as a means to ensure the existence of intellectuals. What intellectuals care most about is how best to expand their influence and establish a successful image in the media. As a group of intellectuals, experts and scholars will inevitably prefer self-interested information when expressing their views or describing professional knowledge in the media, in order to demonstrate the value of their own existence and accumulate cultural capital within their own knowledge field. This will inevitably cause bias in terms of selection tendency.

In China, intellectuals (i.e., experts) undertake dual missions: academic responsibility and social responsibility (Hu 2013). Qian (2009) argues that the reason why mainstream journalists rely on the opinions and analyses of intellectuals in the process of news production is that intellectuals, different from other social classes, often set up social models in terms of spiritual and moral aspects. Political tendency is a form of expression of people's values, reflecting their political cognition, political evaluation, and the development level of political mentality. According to the 17.22% quote rate in People's Daily, experts in the text affirmed the central government's political judgment on the Hong Kong protests 100 percent, consistent with the government's attitude towards the settlement of the Hong Kong riots. This finding further confirms that in the social structure established by the Communist Party of China, the political inclination of Chinese experts or intellectuals can be divided into

several characteristics: supporting the current narrative, principles, and policies of the Party; supporting the leadership of the Communist Party of China; and paying close attention to domestic and foreign affairs, enhancing awareness of political participation (Li 2008). However, this study found that the group of intellectuals expressed indifference to the political reality in civil movements, avoiding political punishment.

The selection of expert sources by Hong Kong newspapers, has been presented narratives that align with the perspectives of the protesters and the broader public sentiment in 2019 events. For example, SCMP quoted a professor who affirmed the reasonableness of the demonstrators' actions and their demands, highlighting the legality and legitimacy of their protests: "the actions of the demonstrators and their claims are reasonable, and also allowed by law" (9 July 2019). Thus, this study found that the expert's voices may departure the tradition protest paradigm, rather than delegitimising the protests and marginalizing the protesters, experts tend to emphasise the legitimacy of the demonstrators' demands.

Another finding is that the use of expert opinion by the Hong Kong media is likely to stimulate the emergence of the nuisance paradigm. For example, a professor of Law at the University of Hong Kong says, "The protests have significantly disrupted the daily lives of ordinary citizens, raising serious questions about the balance between civil disobedience and public order." (Oriental Daily 19 September 2019). This perspective highlights the unintended negative consequences of the protests, describing them as a disturbance to societal norms and functions.

Furthermore, experts from various fields such as economics and urban planning have voiced concerns about the long-term impact of the protests on Hong Kong's economy and infrastructure. An economist from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University noted, "The sustained protests have deterred foreign investment and tourism, leading to economic downturns that could take years to recover from." (SCMP 5 August 2019).

Similar, an urban planner pointed out, "The repeated blockades and vandalism during the protests have not only damaged public property but also strained the city's resources in terms of repair and maintenance." (Wen Wei Po 7 August 2019). By incorporating these expert opinions, the Hong Kong media not only provides a platform for informed analysis but also subtly influences public perception by highlighting the drawbacks of the protest events. This aligns with the nuisance paradigm, which focuses on the adverse effects of social movements, potentially undermining their legitimacy and support.

In contrast, mainland media use expert opinion to reinforce the government's stance and delegitimize the protests, a political analyst from a government-affiliated think tank told People's Daily, "The [Hong Kong] protests are orchestrated by foreign forces aiming to destabilise China. It is imperative to uphold the rule of laws and maintain order for the country's stability." (9 August 2019).

Although the functions of experts' opinion in mainland and Hong Kong were differenced, however, from the perspective of hegemony theory and media discourse power, we can more clearly see how both forms of media produce discourse hegemony together with the intellectual elites by constantly presenting information sources shared by experts and scholars, extending favouritism towards intellectual elites in terms of social construction. In general, the media can always provide a "Speaking stage" for those in power with vested interests and transmit hidden logic and potential mechanisms through discourse hegemony. This is a similarity between the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media's selection of sources.

3. Comparing the government officials' voices

Undoubtedly, People's Daily frequently relies on government officials as sources in its coverage of the 2019 protests. For example, a Beijing central government spokesman stated, "A large body of evidence indicates that relevant NGOs have supported anti-China rioters in Hong Kong through various means, strongly

encouraging them to engage in extreme violent criminal acts, and instigating 'Hong Kong independence' separatist activities" (2 December 2019). This finding shows first the government officials are often considered credible and reliable sources, especially when it comes to matters of national security. People's Daily quotes from the government officials' views could margination the protesters indirectly, for example, the terms like "be funded"," premeditated", and "be designed" etc. were solidity the imaginations of public's mind that "HK 2019 riots was funded by the west forces," (People's Daily 8 August 2019).

In contrast with People's Daily, Hong Kong newspaper SCMP try to balance the viewpoint from government officials. For example, they published the mainland central government's opinions: "[The] Central Government firmly supports the Hong Kong SAR Government in advancing the work of amending the Extradition Bills." (12 June 2019), and in second paragraph SCMP adopt the SAR government official who said: "The Hong Kong SAR government and leaders have heard everyone's voice and are re-discuss the Bills preparedly," (12 June 2019). In these two contrasting quotations, Hong Kong newspaper attempt to strike a balance and showcase the differing responses of the central government and the SAR to the protesters.

In addition, the study found that Hong Kong media's use of the SAR government's position is different from that of the mainland. For example, the South China Morning Post quoted an official spokesperson for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region as saying: "The SAR has seen the demands of the citizens and will consider all of them, please remain peaceful." (July 8, 2019). Oriental Daily quoted the same source: "The SAR asked the rally to remain peaceful and will arrange another meeting to respond to the protesters' demands" (July 11, 2019). The above quotes from official Hong Kong government sources reflect the conservative style of the SAR government's response to the protesters. Instead, People's Daily carried the line of an official spokesman for the central government: "The improvement of the situation in Hong Kong will not come from retreating or compromising with the opposition…

"One can give up the idea that the central government will back down on our principles,' Zhang said" (August 8, 2019). Thus, the contrast in citated between Hong Kong and mainland newspapers is indicative of the political contexts within which they operate. Hong Kong media highlighting a willingness to consider protesters' demands and maintain peace through the SAR's statement. This aligns with the style of governance and public communication that the HKSAR government typically upholds, one that tends to be more responsive and sympathetic to public sentiments (Tian 2011, Fang, Chang, and Zhou 2015), and calls for calm. On the other hand, the mainland media's portrayal, especially in the central government officials used, emphasized a rigid stance, reflective of the central government's prioritisation of stability and unity over concession or dialogue. In other words, the central government official sources, as used and shaped through mainland media, portrays an image of strength and determination, reinforcing the idea that the central government's principles and authority are non-negotiable, regardless of public dissent.

4. Comparing the Wests' voices

As quantitative analysis found that, the western leadership's sources has been raised in usage by four newspapers. For example, People's Daily quotes from British Foreign Secretary who said: "… may terminate the extradition treaty between UK and HK," and following up another quote from Beijing central government official source who leave the comments upon this: "The British side's recent erroneous remarks and actions concerning HK, … grossly interfere in China's internal affairs," (20 July 2019). This indicates two points, firstly, the increased attention from Western leaders on the 2019 protests may have influenced the response of mainland media; secondly, the voices of Western leadership are not presented independently but are often accompanied by commentary from Chinese government official sources, providing additional context to their quotation. This finding suggests the phenomenon where the voices of western leadership are often contextualized or countered by commentary from Chinese government officials in mainland media coverage (Li and Wang 2019).

In addition, this study has aligned with Li et al., (2019) who found that quotes and statements from Western leaders were often juxtaposed with responses from Chinese government officials when Chinese mainstream media coverage Hong Kong protests. Thus, study argues this approach could be served to describing Western criticism within the context of Chinese sovereignty and internal affairs, emphasising China's rejection of foreign interference.

People's Daily has adopted some foreign leadership's voices who has shown friendly or hold stance with Chinese government on HK 2019 events. For example, People's Daily quote Russians leadership who said: "The riots in HK would not have happened without western support," and emphasized terms such as "firmly," "insist," and "believed" to convey the sentiment that: "he firmly believed that without a unified conspiracy, such riots would not have occurred and developed, no one outside the West is willing to put so much effort and money into planning an insurgency in HK," (27 August 2019). This suggests, mainland media sought to delegitimize the protest both domestic and international readers through quoting western leaders who share similar views on the 2019 protests, and important is, western leadership's voice in here reinforced the narrative that the 2019 protests were not legitimate expressions of local grievances, but rather orchestrated acts of foreign interference aimed at destabilizing China. This finding has in line with Zhang (2019) who found that quoting Western leaders who align with the Chinese government's stance served a strategic purpose, that is in China geopolitical discourse agenda that portraying itself as a victim of Western interference.

By contrast, the Hong Kong newspapers has positioned itself in a neutral position, citing Western leaders from both perspectives. For example, Wen Wei Po quote U.S. President speaks: "[the situation] in Hong Kong is very serious, very serious, … we will see happens next, but I am sure everything will work out, … I hope all parties, including China, can resolve it [HK riots]" (14 August 2019), and in another paragraphs Wen Wei Po quote Singapore leader's comment who has "believed the

Chinese government can deal with it very soon," Oriental Daily in same day, quote the U.S. President: "many people blame me and the United States for the problems that are happening in HK, I can't imagine why," (14 August 2019), and quotes the Russian's speak who said: "These young people [protester] in HK have lost themselves, given up independent thinking, and have only lazily chosen to believe the West's deceptive rhetoric full of confusion,"(Oriental Daily 14 August 2019). So far, these evidence suggest that Hong Kong newspapers try to enrich their coverage by including perspectives from western leadership, this finding indirectly confirms that Hong Kong media still enjoys autonomy on news content addressed, and journalists willing readers to evaluate different arguments and form their own opinions.

5. Comparing the Polices' voices

Due the violence theme as dominated in 2019 protest coverage, as a result, confrontations between police and protesters took centre stage in the reporting of 2019 events across four newspapers. Quantitative analysis shows that Hong Kong media try to balance the voices between protesters and police, particular in the violent incident occurred. For example, SCMP cited amounts of protesters and polices' voices, and let them exchange arguments, sentence by sentence. During altercations with police, a female demonstrator was struck with a round of pellets to the right eye. The police were quoted by the SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily as saying, "We [police] admit that beanbag was used, but we can't be sure if she was shot by the us [police]," and SCMP kept going: "We [police] have started investigating the case and will update the public with the results of the investigation as soon as possible"(SCMP 11 August 2019). In followings paragraph, SCMP quotes the protester's voice who blamed the police's statements was "irresponsible".

In contrast, People's Daily tend to describe the police as "hero"[19], and quote a frontline police who pointed out: "the weapons carried by radical protesters are

---

[19] Cottle (2006) discusses how media often frame law enforcement or military forces as "heroic" in conflict, creating a mythologized image that serves to legitimize state actions and rally public support.

increasingly dangerous, from stones and iron bars to slingshots that launch steel balls and umbrellas with knives tied to the tips of umbrellas, seriously threatening the lives of police officers on the scene." (26 August 2019). In another article People's Daily cited a police officer who said: "This is the most dangerous situation he's faced in his career,", People's Daily highlighted the officer's identity with terms such as "Chief Superintendent" and "more than 20 years in the police force" to demonstrate the credibility of his speaks. This suggests that mainland media through marks polices' identity to emphasis the challenges faced by law enforcement in stops the chaos and boosting the public to support for their actions. Thus, this study argues that the discourse of heroism is crafted to encourage behaviour that aligns with politically and morally desirable standards.

Furthermore, this study found that with the escalation and frequent occurrence of violent activities in 2019, the number of citations to police sources in Hong Kong media also increased, and the content of citations were longer. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong media appears to be crafting stories that are exclusive to the police and the individual protesters who confront them. For example, Oriental Daily uses sources and perspectives of protesters and police to describe themselves and the protest movement in an attempt to reveal the unfairness of protesters and the hardships of police governance. The source pattern Oriental Daily used, by offering perspectives from both sides, these outlets are attempting to shed light on the perceived injustices faced by protesters and the challenges in police governance. This approach aligns with Dumitrica and Felt (2019), who suggest that communication technologies have the power to bring individual lived experiences to the forefront of political discourse, symbolically placing the individual at the centre of political narratives. Similarly, SCMP has tended to create protest stories exclusively for the police, such as the November 7, 2019, story in which the reporter used only the police account and the protesters' response existed only in the police's reports and allegations.

Hallin (1986) in book The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam, explores the "mythic" portrayal of American soldiers a heroes, especially during early coverage of the Vietnam War.

However, in another report on the same day, the South China Morning Post used only the protesters' oral account, with the tag: "This is another perspective on the previous news police story" (7 Nov. 2019). This finding is so interesting that the voices of both protesters and police have been recognized by the Hong Kong media as the power of a personal story to shed light on the inequalities and injustices generated by formal politics in everyday life. People's Daily, in contrast, crafts narratives that predominantly portray the police as "heroes" of the 2019 protests, creating exclusive and personal stories from their perspective while largely neglecting the voices and concerns of the citizens. This one-sided storytelling could imply that emphasising authoritative or elite perspectives might automatically undermine the legitimacy of the political opposition (i.e., protesters in this case).

5.4 Media Discourse in Protest Coverage – "Democracy"

The data in Table 12 shows the distribution of news articles related to "Democracy" across four newspapers, highlighting a significant variance in the coverage of democracy-related topics between Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media during the 2019 protests period. The SCMP leads with the highest number of democracy-focused articles at 209, representing 32.35% of its total news coverage. This high percentage suggests that SCMP, as a Hong Kong-based publication, prioritizes democratic discourse more prominently than its mainland counterparts.

Numbers	People's Daily (n=301)	SCMP (n=646)	Wen Wei Po (n=482)	Oriental Daily (574)	Total
"Democracy in News"	67	209	135	96	507

Table 12. Number of news articles related to "Democracy" in Hong Kong and

mainland China

In contrast, People's Daily published only 67 democracy-related articles, accounting for 22.26% of its coverage. Wen Wei Po and Oriental Daily, with 135 and 96 articles respectively. The data shows that while Hong Kong newspapers do engage with democratic themes, the extent varies, with SCMP showing the most substantial focus on democratic discourse.
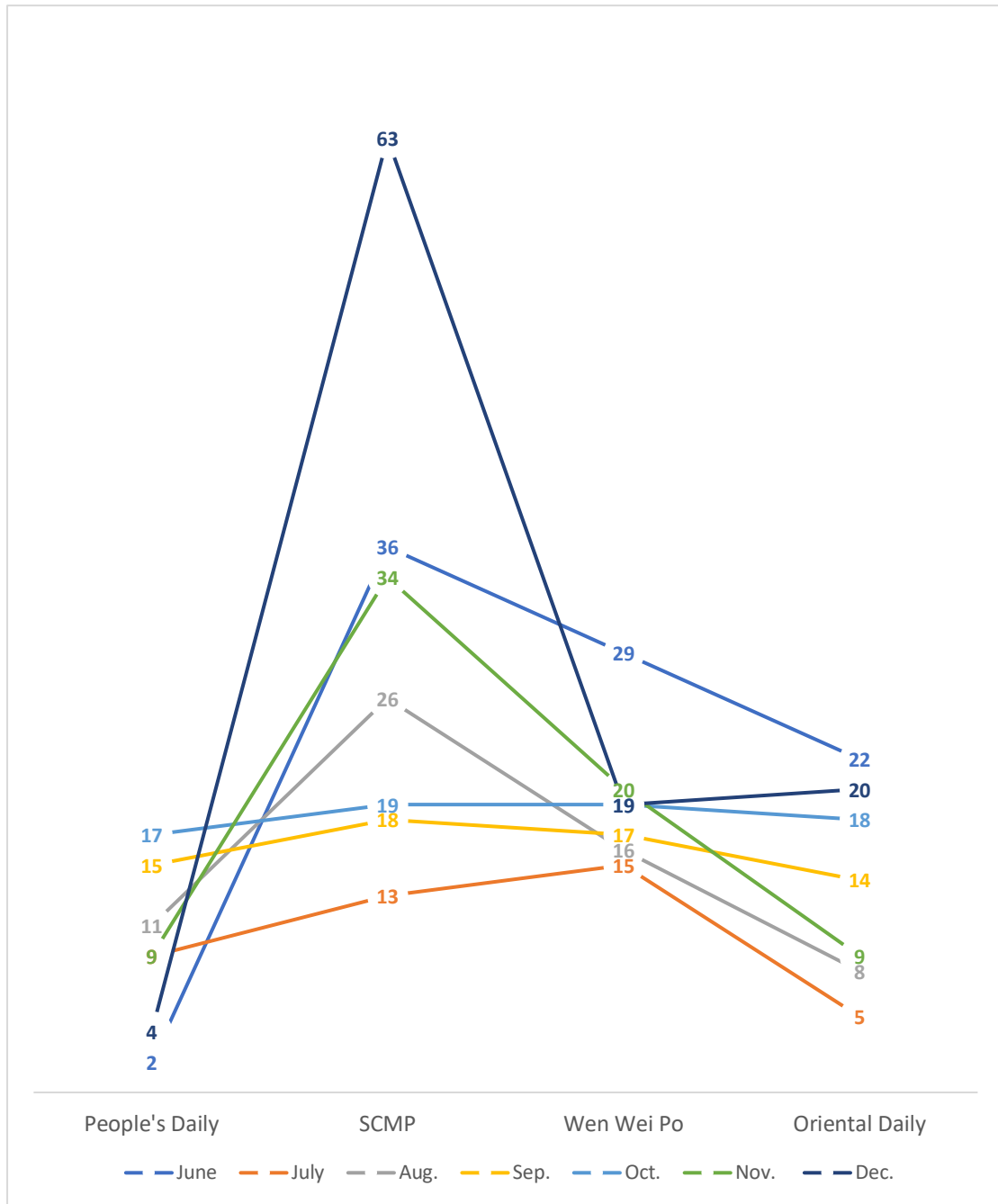
Figure 8. Monthly Trends in the number of "Democracy"- related stories
published by four newspapers from June to December 2019

Figure 8 shows the monthly trends in the publication of "Democracy"- related stories across four newspapers. The time frame coincides with the peak period of the Hong Kong 2019 protests, providing insight into how each newspaper's focus on democracy shifted during this politically intense period. People's Daily show a sharp increase in democracy-related coverage in August, reaching a peak of 63 articles, followed by a

significant drop in subsequent months. This spike in August suggests a concentrated focus by mainland media to address to the escalating 2019 protests at this time, possibly to shape public perception in line with state narratives. After August, the frequency of democracy-related articles declines steadily, indicating a reduction in emphasis as the initial intensity of the 2019 protests may have decreased or shifted in focus.

SCMP demonstrates relatively consistent engagement with democracy-related topics from June through December, with slight fluctuations (see Figure 12). SCMP reaches its highest point in June (36 articles), likely correlating with the early stages of the protests. The trend remains steady, though gradually declining, with a decrease in December. Wen Wei Po also displays increased coverage of democracy-related issues during the mid-protest period, peaking in September with 26 articles. Similar to People's Daily, Wen Wei Po's emphasis on democracy declines in later months, which could indicate an alignment with state interests, gradually moving away from democratic discourse as the protest progressed.

Oriental Daily shows a more moderate and steadier pattern, with its highest output in September (19 articles). This steadiness suggests a restrained approach to covering "democracy", potentially reflecting an editorial stance that is less politically engaged or more cautious (Norman et al., 2019).

5.4.1 Linguistic Patterns in Media Representation: "Democracy"

In media discourse analysis, linguistic frames play an important role in shaping the conceptual structures though which readers interpret events, issues, ad social phenomena (Entman 1993). Linguistic frames refer to the strategic use of language – specific words, metaphors, and rhetorical choices – that guide how a story is understood. By establishing certain frames, media narratives can influence public perception, highlight particular aspects of a story, and downplay others (Lakoff and

Johnson 1980, 1999). This section will examine how linguistic frames operate as tools for constructing reality in media texts, focusing on how they guide interpretation, shape emotional responses, and establish cultural or ideological perspective.

Firstly, no news articles in People's Daily supported the protesters' democratic agenda, nor were there even any neutral-tone articles. Instead, Hong Kong newspapers shoed their support for democracy and helped the protesters to explain democracy to the public at the beginning of the 2019 protests, for example, SCMP addressed article to says: "Stand out! Hong Kongers! Protecting the democracy, Protecting the Law, Protecting the autonomy for this city [HK]," (9 July 2019), the```` tone of articles been showed the SCMP tended to support the side of protesters and their agenda on democracy issues. However, since the demonstrations turn to violent and request do investigation for Hong Kong polices' forcemeat, Hong Kong media shift their stance to criticist the "violence tactics would not be help for democracy promote," (Oriental Daily 19 August 2019). This finding slightly highlights the damage that violence does to democracy theme.

The paradigm on this theme shaped by People's Daily is characterised asking – self-answered, for example, People's Daily in first paragraph says: "who try doing colour revaluation in China?" and in second paragraph to answer this question by self: "The attempt by the US and Western countries to disrupt China's internal affairs and sovereignty by reigniting the "colour revolution" in Hong Kong is out of the question. The overseas Chinese, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan compatriots and the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation will resolutely resist." (11 Nov 2019). In the third paragraphs, People's Daily says to Chinese like: "We [Chinese] should see clearly this is [HK protests] is a plot made by the west who try to spreadiest China, and destroy our nation united, … damage our root of democratic beliefs for China Characteristics of Socialism," (11 Nov.2019). So far, this paradigm of theme, shown People's Dily try to establish the opinion field which can divided into domestic fields and international fields, and the dual expression modes of nationalism and patriotism

are shaped respectively. This finding suggest that the nationalist sentiment expressed in the democratic consciousness of People's Daily internally advocates the cohesion and cohesion and centripetal force in the concept of democracy and emphasize the unique and consistent democratic value of China (Chunlong 2004, Zhao 2000, Vukovich 2019), as McCabe (1997) thoughts: "Patriotism is a principle that springs from the special obligations and privileges that nationality morally imposes" (p.121).

People's Daily also prefer to highlight the colonialism history for Hong Kong to discuss the "democracy", for example, People's Daily on 29 Nov 2019 stressed that: "During the colonial rule of Hong Kong, there was no democracy at all, let alone democratic elections. To this day, no matter how far we go, we cannot forget why we set out.", "When Hong Kong does well, the country does well; The country is become better, but Hong Kong will be better either.", and "All Chinese people, no matter what clothes they wear, no matter what stance they take, at least have the pride of the Chinese nation. Hong Kong people should have that kind of national pride." These evidence shows that in mainland, patriotism has become a principle or a means to carry out social integration, in doing so, in theme of democracy, People's Daily regards the patriotism as the value premise of democratic speech when address the theme, and the democratic consciousness emanating from it is of course infused with patriotism.

Furthermore, under the construction of this theme, "democracy" is considered by People's Daily as "the result of country's political system, and it is also chosen by the people," (8 July 2019), therefore, People's Daily tend to emphasize that choosing to "occupy the streets" to express political demands is actually not an appropriate way of democratic expression. In the following discussion, People's Daily addresses how the imposition of Western democratic models can potentially trigger political instability in other nations. The article illustrates this by citing examples such as the colour revolutions, the Ukrainian revolution, and the Arab Spring, arguing that the forced

implementation or export of Western-style democracy often results in inefficiency, instability, and, in the worst cases, chaos.

In the last paragraph of this article, People's Daily said that "the current riots in Hong Kong have shown that the West has ulterior motives for exporting its democratic ideas to the world," in the People's Daily's views: "after [the west] exports democracy to foreign countries, there will be two situations: people will either move from "ecstasy to despair" or "ecstasy to anarchy", … see HK now!" (8 July 2019). Thus, this study found that mainland media tended to discuss the "the west dictates its values to the rest of the world," to constructing the narratives around the "democracy" discourse.

In contrast, this study found the "democracy" emphasized by Hong Kong media characterized is nativist. Compared with the abstract concept of democracy highlighted by mainland media, Hong Kong media tend to focus the entity power in "civil society", such as the right to demonstration, veto power for policy, and even political innovation to concretize "democracy". SCMP published article said: "[the demonstration] is actually defensive, aiming is to create a stable environment in the city, and keep to semi-autotomy on politics," (23 June 2019). Wen Wei Po stressed out: "how did we get into this mess and what happens next?" (23 June 2019). Furthermore, the democratic consciousness of the three Hong Kong newspapers is more inclined to the characteristics of "developmentalism", i.e., it not only caters to the internal appeal of the construction of system legitimacy, but also the implicit and tended criticism. SCMP published an article: "The government's lack of accountability in protecting the democratic values of Hong Kong's citizens is a driving factor fuelling anxiety in the city, forcing protests to turn into anti-establishment protests. The journalist interviewed former chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association Stephen Tse, who said: 'It is difficult for Hong Kong citizens to imagine a country ruled by law without true democracy'" (9 October 2019). Wen Wei Po published a news article explaining that "Western ideals of freedom and

democracy have been ingrained in Hong Kong society for more than a century under British colonial rule and are a core part of the city's identity" (11 Oct. 2019). However, in the second paragraph, the journalist critically observed that, "The political freedoms enjoyed by the people of Hong Kong are fragile and can only be sustained if the government obeys Hong Kong law and is held accountable by the people." The above next of democracy construction by SCMP and Wen Wei Po shows that the democratic consciousness of Hong Kong media reveals the fragility of the democratic system and civil rights from the perspective of taking rights seriously, reveals the excessive power and lack of restraint of administrative power, and reveals the weakness and weakness of the judicial system between Hong Kong and the mainland in the current social situation. This finding suggests, in the view of Hong Kong media, the rise of civil rights is the distinctive features of Chinese democracy in HK's political development and is also the social foundation and value premise for the construction of civil society.

In addition, the use of some adjectives, adverbs and verbs has demonstrates that the texts of Hong Kong media have a strong atmosphere of humanistic commentary. On the basis, Hong Kong media regard themselves as the role of analysts of democratic concept and theories, infiltrate the values of civil rights into Hong Kong newspapers, and try to transform the democratic political consciousness of China and Hong Kong with the power of news. In stark contrast, the People's Daily described the protesters as "resistance" to the rule of law, and "saboteurs" of democracy. People's Daily instead to describe the defended HK citizens who has against the protests in 2019 were "efforts for units nation together, and … work for the great cause of national rejuvenation," (11 Nov.2019). In contrast, Hong Kong newspaper SCMP discuss "how ultranationalists undercut China's efforts to win world's love" to express that "nationalistic outbursts do not signal strength" (11 August 2019) to against People's Daily said: "China cares about win-win, cares the road under its own feet, does not care about how the world views HK issues, how to view China, how to evaluate the socialist democracy within Chinese characteristics," (9 August 2019). In these two

examples, we can see clear that the expression of both sides is serving their ow interests.

An analysis of an article from People's Daily on December 6, 2019, reveals a critical perspective on Hong Kong's democracy. People's Daily suggests that Hong Kong's "too loose" and "dysfunctional" democracy serves as "a breeding ground for terrorism." This viewpoint not only connects the discourse of terrorism with democratic themes but also delineates a specific narrative by setting the public agenda and shaping a unique political story. This approach resonates with Chouliaraki's findings (2010), highlighting the terms like "democracy" and "terrorism" can activate the audience's "latent concerns." Furthermore, the People's Daily asserts that "any incitement to violence in the guise of protests will fail and that human rights abuses will not triumph," unceasingly, People's Daily also emphasizes that Hong Kong is an intrinsic part of China, asserting that its democratic issues are strictly China's internal affairs. It describes the violent acts of so-called democracy not just as terrorism but also as criminal behaviour. This stance aligns with the December 2015 enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Law by China's National People's Congress, as noted by Li (2016), which detailed definitions of terrorism and criminalized certain behaviours and advocacies.

Prior research on discourse of terrorism in China, primarily concerning the Uygur community in Xinjiang and the Tibet issue, shows similar patterns. Barbour and Jones (2012) noted that major upheavals in China are often presented in a way that defines the geopolitical atmosphere, delineating boundaries between different identities and setting norms for the conduct of "others." They observed that media coverage post-riots describe the events within the context of the global war on terror, where Chinese media defend severe responses to protect citizens from the threat of "the other." The current analysis also uncovers similar results, with mainland media delineating clear lines between the identities of Hong Kong protesters and other citizens, categorising them as three identities: criminals, terrorists, or foreign instigators. This classification

is used to justify the treatment of "the other," further entrenching the state's stance on how to respond to dissent and unrest.

Another visibly characteristics on democracy discourse shaped is the sources cited for democracy debate on the newspapers, another to say, who can lead public or represent the mass to discuss the "democracy" is a key for both Hong Kong and mainland media. For example, People's Daily published an article with the title "Many countries have spoken highly of China's release of the white paper on Hong Kong's democratic development under the principle of "one country, two systems"'. In this article, the journalists quote academics from various countries who had commented on Hong Kong's affairs, all of whom supported Beijing. For example, one journalist wrote:

> Yuri Tavrosky, a professor at the Russian People's Friendship University, said the Chinese central government has made every effort to safeguard Hong Kong's social stability and democratic system under the guidance of the "one country, two systems" policy. In practice, "one country, two systems" has demonstrated strong vitality and institutional resilience, which is conducive to Hong Kong's development and prosperity. (11 Dec. 2019)

The above article provides evidence that the Chinese media and government seek the support of Allies in the ongoing geostrategic competition. The results suggest that while mainland media may offer a platform for public engagement in democratic discourse, the spectrum of voices that are amplified and the authority with which opinions are expressed remain tightly regulated. This dynamic is in line with observations by Lang and Lang (1968), who noted the media's role in circulating elite perspectives and shaping public opinion formation, expression, and reception.

An illustrative instance of this mediated discourse is reflected in a piece from People's Daily, which cites seven academic experts to guide the conversation around

democracy in Hong Kong. Questions such as, "Who can provide democracy for Hong Kong?", "What are appropriate avenues for expressing opinions to the government?", and "Where do the principles of Western democracy diverge from those of Chinese democracy?" are posed, prompting explanations from these scholars (October 11, 2019). This narrative approach highlights the intermediary function of mainland media in political participation, effectively bridging—and at times dictating—the discourse between the general populace and the echelons of established power.

Similarly, Hong Kong newspapers use the same strategies on sources cited to shape the "democracy", for example, an article was published by SCMP in which journalists discussed democracy, as follows: "Liu Guangyuan, a senior diplomat in Beijing, told a briefing by the consul-general, foreign chambers of commerce and select media that Hong Kong had to wake up from the 'myth of US-style democracy'"(11 Dec. 2019). In this article, Hong Kong journalists described the event as "very awkward" and observed that China and the West were "just talking over each other." The term "political difficulties" was used to portray Hong Kong's democracy, and the article described the Americans as unfriendly and intending to cross a "red line" by interfering in China's domestic affairs, including Taiwan, the Hong Kong protest, Xinjiang issues, and the build-up in the disputed South China Sea.

This study also found how Hong Kong media newspapers SCMP, Wen Wei Po, and Oriental Daily engage with various perspectives to articulate "democracy" and craft narratives around democratic issues. For example, the SCMP featured a protester on August 19, 2019, who stated, "We are standing here for democracy in Hong Kong. We are democracy fighters and masters of the country, and the government should listen to our voice." Similarly, Wen Wei Po highlighted the significance of free speech on July 7, 2019, remarking, "The law grants us the right to freedom of speech, which is a fundamental assurance of democracy, a protester told journalist." Moreover, Oriental Daily on August 19, 2019, showcased the sentiments of Hong Kong citizens, with one expressing the belief that "the SAR should address the

demands of the protesters, which is a manifestation of democracy." The above illustrates how the Hong Kong media is not monolithic but rather presents a tapestry of democratic expression by integrating a spectrum of voices and dissenting viewpoints. Indeed, the portrayal of democratic issues in the Hong Kong media spans from ideologically driven individuals to citizens asserting their political rights, which signifies the maturation of modernity and democratic progress.

At the crux of understanding democracy is the concept of citizenship, as posited by McWilliams in 1964: It emerges when the individual begins to define their role within the state's framework, truly becoming the sovereign of the state and of themselves. However, as Cheng outlined in 2001, citizens are not merely natural persons but also bearers of rights. In essence, citizenship and rights are two inseparable aspects, coalescing organically in the modern citizen's thoughts and actions. Consequently, the varied approaches of Hong Kong's media in representing democratic issues not only re-emphasize civil rights within the public discourse but also act as a pivotal catalyst for the evolution of democratic governance.

A unique finding been apparent that both Hong Kong and mainland media emergent discourse of Sinophobia in news content when discuss the "democracy". SCMP, in an article titled "Democracy or Sinophobia?" (31 October. 2019), journalist therein characterizes the protesters' call for democracy as an "excuse," suggesting it serves as a palatable rationale for American political intervention in Hong Kong affairs. The article also casts a spotlight on the relatively obscure yet potent concept of "Sinophobia"—a term that Hong Kong journalists suggest fuelled the protesters' intense reactions, spurred by fears of China's ascending military and political might. Sinophobia, as identified by communication scholars, encapsulates anti-China sentiments. This phenomenon often manifests in Hong Kong as attributions of social issues to the influx of mainland Chinese citizens and the governance by central China, thereby recharacterizing class conflicts within Hong Kong as clashes of cross-cultural identities, as noted by Jiang in 2018. The findings of this study reveal that the term

"Sinophobia" transcends its use in commonplace social issues, extending to the media's portrayal of intricate political events.

Chinese communication researchers suggests that in both Hong Kong and Western discourse, Sinophobia attitudes are often interwoven with anti-communist and anti-socialist sentiments. Such narratives, propagated through various media channels (e.g., Liu, 2011; Burton, 2020; Lowe and Tsang, 2017; Sarah, 2020; The Economist, 2020), consistently paint China in a negative light, particularly in the context of democracy and human rights issues. For instance, China is frequently depicted as a non-democratic society with scant regard for human rights, a sentiment echoed in the work of Lowe and Tsang (2017). This nuanced portrayal in the media serves as a critical lens through which the complexities of international perceptions of China are both reflected and shaped.

People's Daily prefers to interpret "Sinophobia" in cultural terms and link it to democratic discourse, such as one of their news articles: "The Western forces smearing socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics is actually a fear of China's rise and framing the success of the practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong, and from this perspective the failure of Western colonial culture makes them crazy,", and in the following paragraphs, People's Daily explain the term by each for "colonial culture", "Sinophobia", "socialist democracy", etc. (1 Dec.2019). The findings suggests that mainland media leverage soft power, particularly cultural elements, to pursue goals through non-coercive strategies (Wang and Lu 2008). This approach is rooted in the concept of Chinese state's intangible assets, as discussed by Luke (1974) and Lssac (1987). This suggests that mainland media are shifting their communication style from traditional didactic persuasion to a more subtle form of emotional management in the coverage of political events.

5.5 Discussion

The comparative analysis of media coverage of the 2019 protests in Hong Kong by both Hong Kong and mainland media shows a distinction in the application of protest paradigm. The important finding of this case study is the emergence of a hybrid paradigm in mainland media coverage that combines elements of the protest paradigm and nuisance paradigm. This hybrid paradigm allows for a more nuanced portrayal of the 2019 protests by simultaneously focusing on their dramatic and chaotic elements and the inconvenience they cause to society, while elevating the protest discussion to a national security issue through the use of discourse of terrorism.

Firstly, from the protest paradigm, mainland media focus on violence, disorder, and conflict between protesters and authorities, reflecting features of this mode (McLeod and Hertog 1999). The reporting of protesters as destructive is meant to delegitimse the movement and present it as a threat to political stability, not only to society. From the nuisance paradigm, mainland media describe protests as disturbances to daily life, negatively influence the tourist in Hong Kong and disrupting public order. This portrayal in line with the idea that protests are not only politically problematic but also socially disruptive, a hallmark of the nuisance paradigm (Di Cicco 2010).

In terms of Hong Kong media, they frequently reported on the dramatic confrontations between protesters and police, with particular attention to violent clashes, street battles, and the destruction of public property. This in line with the protest paradigm's focus on chaos and disorder (McLeod and Hertog 1999). This study found, Hong Kong media used sensational imagery and language to describe moments of high tension, which, in turn, attracted public attention. However, these reports also had the effect of describing the protests as a threat to public safety, which align with the protest paradigm, where the media often focus on conflict and sensationalism (Hertog and McLeod 2001). Despite the focus on violence, Hong Kong media heavily use the voices of the protesters in 2019 protest coverage, legitimising their grievances. For example, by giving extensive coverage to the protesters' demands such as opposition the Extradition Bill and calls for democratic

reform, the media provided a space for the protesters to explain themselves, thus offering a counter-narrative to the official stance. This departs from the protest paradigm, where protesters are often delegitimized (McLeod 2007, Brown 2019).

In parallel with the protest paradigm, Hong Kong media also described 2019 protests as a nuisance, particularly in reports focusing on the impact of protests on daily life. For example, Hong Kong media coverage often highlighted the disruption caused by road blockages, mass gatherings, and the shutdown of major infrastructure, such as the Hong Kong International Airport.

Should be noted here, unlike mainland media, Hong Kong media often combined the nuisance narrative with sympathetic accounts of protesters' motivations. By focusing on the emotional toll of police violence or the vulnerabilities of young protesters, Hong Kong media shifted away from a purely negative coverage of 2019 protests as nuisances, instead describing them as necessary disruptions driven by broader socio-political issues (Taylor and Wagg 2014). Therefore, the hybrid approach reflects the struggle for identity within Hong Kong, where the media is caught between reflecting local democratic ideals and the influence of mainland Chinese governance. The use of both paradigms allowed Hong Kong media to report on the 2019 protest from multiple angles, maintaining a degree of editorial independence while facing political pressures (Du 2018).

The use of discourse of terrorism by mainland media to describe the 2019 protests is one of important findings of this study, showing a shift in how the state frames and manages dissent. In the early stages of the 2019 protests, mainland media referred to the movement as a disruptive form of dissent. However, as violence escalated and international attention intensified, the media narrative shifted to classify the protests as a form of terrorism. By invoking discourse of terrorism, the protests were no longer described simply as challenges to governance but as existential threats to the state and national security. Furthermore, this study found that says "… show a terrorism"

allowed mainland media to link the Hong Kong protests to broader security concerns, particularly within the context of global counter-terrorism efforts. This approach parallels the narrative used by mainland in reporting on demonstrations in Tibet and Xinjiang, where separatist movements are often described as terrorist to threats to national unity (Roberts 2018). Therefore, this study shows how mainland media uses discourse of terrorism as a tool for political control, framing domestic unrest in a way that aligns with global counter-terrorism narratives. Important is, the shift toward terrorism discourse reflects a broader trend in China's media strategy, where soft power tactics, such as narrative control and propaganda, are increasingly used to shape political events in a way that supports the state's interests (Zou 2021). This finding also challenges previous studies that have primarily focused on mainland China's use of authoritarian or coercive control, suggesting that the Chinese government is increasingly adept at using more subtle forms of media manipulation to manage dissent.

The explicit use of domestication and cultural stereotypes in news reporting often reflects a failure to transcend national perspectives, as it shows a reliance on national biases to interpret dissenting voices. In the case of mainland media, the portrayal of the Hong Kong protests shows a tendency to interpret events through a distinctly nationalistic lens, seeking explanations that align with China's own cultural and ideological logic. This tendency can lead to oversimplified or stereotypical representations of diverse ethnic or political groups, rather than fostering a direct and nuanced understanding of different cultural perspectives (e.g., Tanikawa 2018, Curtis 2019). This limitation is also tied to what scholars' term "geopolitics of journalism," where national agenda subtly shape media narratives (Hallin and Mancini 2004). For example, mainland portraying the Hong Kong protests as threats to national unity and stability, contrast, Hong Kong media tend to foreground issues of democracy, autonomy, and civil rights, positioning themselves as facilitators of broader social debates rather than mere extension of political agendas. This divergence illustrates not

only the ideological gap between the two systems but also the impact of domestic political imperatives on reporting styles and content priorities.

This study finds in several conditions that may trigger both Hong Kong and mainland media employ a hybrid paradigm to reporting 2019 protests. Firstly, during long-lasting protests, media coverage may initially focus on violent clashes (aligning with the protest paradigm) but shift over time to emphasize the daily inconveniences causes by prolonged demonstrations (nuisance paradigm). In such cases, the media's adoption of a hybrid paradigm is often influenced by factors like the duration, the length, and the frequency of the protests. Secondly, this study finds media outlets often adopt a hybrid approach when they want to balance audience engagement, for example mainland media (by highlighting a more dramatic, protest-like elements) with maintaining the status quo (by portraying the protests as a nuisance to daily life). This tactic allows the mainland media to align with institutional power by describing the protests as a threat to order, while also responding to public frustration about the events' disruptions (Kilgo et al., 2019). Furthermore, my study found the nuisance paradigm is particularly potent in cases where protests lack a cohesive narrative or clear leadership. In these cases, the media may focus on how protests affect daily life rather than on the political reasons behind them, thus making the protests seem less purposeful and more chaotic (Di Cicco 2010). Therefore, the hybrid paradigm is not only strategically versatile but also reflects how media adopt their narratives to evolving protest dynamics.

Through a sourcing analysis, my study shows that both Hong Kong and mainland media depend heavily on elite sources and expert opinions, but there are notable differences in the content of these citations. In mainland media, experts cited tend to be aligned with government narratives, often supporting the state's political goals, national unity and social stability. For example, during the 2019 protests, mainland media frequently highlighted nationalism theme, and described protests as being influenced by foreign forces, a narrative often supported by expert opinions. This

reflects findings by scholars such as Zhao (1998) and Repnikova (2017), who suggest that the party-state system carefully curates the selection of expert voices to align with the state's political interests.

The mainland media's frequent references to party-state leaders and the ways they frame these figures help cultivate a subtle atmosphere of moral authority, highlighting the leadership's ethnical influence. In article where leaders and elite voices are both cited, the elite often act as supporters rather than equals, reinforcing a hierarchical relationship rooted in respect and deference. This "ethical leadership" embodies unique aspects of leader-follower dynamics in China, suggesting that subordinates respond distinctly to leaders who emphasize moral integrity alongside their formal authority (Cheng et al., 2004, Zhu 2011).

Some scholars have extensively discussion the significant role that protest paradigms play in shaping news coverage, but they have also noted that these paradigms do not affect all protests equally. One study introduces the concept of a "hierarchy of social struggle" (Brown and Harlow 2019.p.508) to explain these variations. This concept challenges that traditional binary assumption that the protest paradigm is most prevalent in social movements that oppose the status quo. Instead, the study suggests that the protest paradigm can be better understood by examining the power structure that resist change. For example, Harlow (2019) found that protest coverage reflects societal hierarchies, particularly those rooted in race and ethnicity. For example, protests advocating for racial justice and indigenous rights were found to be less legitimsed in media coverage than protests centered on other issues. This racialised hierarchy in media representation reflects the broader societal power dynamics that influence which social protests are seen as valid or illegitimate. In my study of the 2019 protests, the media's coverage can be similarly understood through this lens. By relying heavily on elite and expert sources, mainland media shaped the narrative to align with state power, emphasizing national security and portraying the protests as a threat. This creates a hierarchy in the representation of protest movements, where

narratives that threaten or challenge the central authority of the state are delegitimsed, while those that align with state objectives are amplified.

Hong Kong media tend to prioritise and legitimize protesters' voices, providing a platform for them to articulate their demands. This is not merely an act of journalistic neutrality but a reflection of Hong Kong's unique socio-political context, where public discourse has historically allowed more freedom for political expression compared to mainland China. The value placed on protesters' voices by Hong Kong media highlights a commitment to representing local identities and democratic ideals, which are central to the region's post-colonial identity (Veg 2019). Unlike in Western contexts where media might also frame protests as part of a broader democratic struggle, in Hong Kong, the act of giving protesters a voice resonates more with its localised political identity, highlighting a desire for autonomy.

The Hong Kong media's use of diverse sources and the inclusion of multiple perspectives can be seen as a strategic approach that indirectly supports the gaols of the protesters by shaping public opinion and potentially influencing policymakers (Koopmans 2004). By presenting a range of voices, the Hong Kong media creates a more balanced narrative that highlights the broader implications of the protests and potential future impacts rather than focusing solely on immediate incidents of violence and chaos, as the protest paradigm (Chan and Lee 1984, Cottle 2008).

In terms of third question, my study provides an insightful analysis of how both Hong Kong and mainland media shaped the discourse surrounding the 2019 protests, specifically in terms of democracy and national identity. The key findings from text analysis finds significant contrasts between how the concept of democracy is portrayed in Hong Kong and mainland China, as well as how Sinophobia and national narratives are employed in both sides. While mainland media entirely rejected the protesters' democratic aspirations, portraying them as part of a "Western conspiracy," to destabilise China, Hong Kong media initially supported the protesters, using

explicit language to encourage the public to stand up for democracy, autonomy, and the rule of law. This stance, however, shifted when the protests became violent. This shift highlights the complexity of Hong Kong's media environment, which struggles to balance its nativist sentiments, pro-democratic values, and the political pressures of aligning with or distancing itself from the mainland. The evolution from full support to caution in reporting consist with prior studies by Veg (2019) and Chan (2019), who suggested that the Hong Kong media are both resistant to and influenced by mainland power structures.

Both Hong Kong and mainland media use Sinophobia as a key element in their democratic discourse, albeit from different perspectives. Hong Kong newspapers portrayed Western intervention in Hong Kong as a Sinophobia attempt to undermine China's rise, reflecting a more defensive stance on Hong Kong's autonomy within China's political system. Conversely, mainland media employed Sinophobia as a rallying cry to galvanize nationalist sentiment, positioning Hong Kong protesters as puppets of the West. This dichotomy of Sinophobia aligns with Jiang (2018), who suggested that media representations of cross-border tensions between Hong Kong and mainland China often invoke anti-Chinese sentiments to characterise internal conflicts. Mainland media's use of this discourse is particularly potent, serving as a cultural weapon to consolidate democratic support and frame democracy as a Western import incompatible with Chinese values.

Chapter Six. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the main findings of the study, which examined the media coverage of the Hong Kong protests in 2014 and 2019. The analysis focused on how both Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media shaped their narratives, the paradigms they adopted, and the impact these paradigms had on public perception and discourse. The first section outlies the key findings in response to each of the three RQs. The second section highlights the original contributions of this study, and the last section addresses several limitations and provides recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Key findings: media coverage of protests in mainland China and Hong Kong

6.2.1 Paradigmatic shifts in media coverage[20]

This chapter concludes my study on the extent to which the protest paradigm was followed in the Hong Kong and mainland media coverage of the 2014 and 2019 movements, as well as contrasting characteristics and differences in protest coverage between the two regions. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, I conducted a multifaceted and in-depth analysis of how four newspapers constructed their narratives around protests, and coverage. Through the study of protest paradigm and devices, I emphasized how media serve to reproduce dominant ideologies and discourses by disseminating symbolic representations and concept. In essence, the framing mechanisms and tools associated with the protest paradigm, as utilized by the media (Dardis 2006, McLeod and Detenber 1999), have been instrumental in assigning negative attributes to minority or protest groups. By using information

---

20   I would like to clarify the rationale for using the term ‟frame‟ to describe the six variables in the thematic analysis of my study. As van Dijk (1988) highlights, the meaning journalists intend to convey in discourse and the meaning understood by audiences may not always align. However, the structured arrangement of symbolic elements within a news story creates a cognitive ‟window‟ that shapes how the story is perceived (Pan and Kosicki 1993). Thus, the intended meaning of a news story directs audience's attention and constrains the range of perspectives available to them (Hallahan 1999). This structural function of thematic elements is often why they are referred to as ‟a frame‟ (Pan and Kosicki 1993.p.59). In my study, when using ‟frame‟ in thematic analysis, I refer to them as "conceptual frames" or "interpretative patterns" to clarify their thematic nature (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2006.pp.77-101). For example, recurrent patterns in how media outlets portray the legitimacy and actions of protesters. Thus, the word "frame" will appear in descriptive discussion; it does not mean my study uses the framing analysis approach but allows frames to emerge as meaningful constructs in the data rather than as pre-defined analytical categories.

sources closely aligned with power centers, the Chinese media depicted these groups (protesters) as radicals and threats to societal stability, thus reinforcing the preservation of existing social structures. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of Media Systems Dependency (MSD) theory and its function in upholding dominant power dynamics. In the sections that follow, I will outline the key findings and implications of the two case studies.

2014

The results suggest that there are significant differences between mainland and Hong Kong media in their adherence to the protest paradigm during OCLP protest. These differences highlight the influence of socio-political contexts, media systems, and ideological priorities on protest narratives. Mainland media demonstrated a high degree of compliance with the protest paradigm, presenting a story's one-sided, and utilizing its significant features to undermine the legitimacy of the OCLP protests. Protesters were described as abnormal actors who disrupted social order — this often involved the criminalization and demonization of protesters (McLeod and Deber, 1999, Lee 2014) — with frequent use of terms such as "nuisance" (e.g., traffic disruptions, economic losses) and "deviance" status (e.g., acts of violence) to describe OCLP. This approach aligns with a broader national strategy aimed at maintaining stability and delegitimizing dissent (Ropp 2005, Wang 2012), downplaying protesters' demands (Di Cicco 2011), and political grievances while diverting attention away from systemic issues.

In contrast, Hong Kong media adhered less strictly to the protest paradigm, using its features more selectively and occasionally deviating from them to legitimize the 2014 protests. For example, Hong Kong media emphasized the political demands of the protesters and gave prominence to their public advocacy for universal suffrage. Furthermore, Hong Kong media provided balanced coverage of conflict-related issues, incorporating multiple viewpoints, including those of protesters, government officials, and other stakeholders. Although the "nuisance" was occasionally employed

to acknowledge the disruption caused by the protests, it often contextualized these disruptions as necessary and justifiable within the broader democratic aspirations of the movement. This contrast highlights how mainland media's stricter adherence to the protest paradigm functions as a tool of social control (McLeod and Hertog 1999), reinforcing the status quo (Boyle 2021), and also, this process is shaped by hegemonic ideologies, economic structures, journalists' personal biases, and journalistic conventions and practices (Alexandros 2022). On the other hand, Hong Kong media adopted a more flexible and participatory approach, reflecting the unique dynamics of its semi-autonomous media environment.

Through comparative analysis, this study identifies several characteristics of how Hong Kong and mainland media apply protest paradigm. Mainland media emphasize the "abnormal" of protests to reinforce their illegitimacy, but they rarely disclose the scenes and details of protest conflicts. However, Hong Kong media use the protest paradigm's devices more selectively, often framing transgressions within the context of systemic frustration rather than portraying them as inherent to the protesters. This approach marks a departure from the earlier protest paradigm (Ju, Alice, Jeong, Ho and Chyi 2014). Sometimes, violent clashes between protesters and police result in negative coverage, often characterized by a lack of substantive analysis and a pessimistic tone by Hong Kong newspapers. However, when protesters engage in decisive political actions, such as advocating for policy or legislative reforms, they are more likely to receive favourable and constructive coverage in Hong Kong media. In such cases, violent tactics from protester-sides are often ignored or downplayed. This finding suggests, on the one hand, that "the boundaries of the paradigm... less rigid than previously described" (Harlow and Kilgo 2020, p. 3). On the other hand, it emphasizes that the relationship between Hong Kong media and protesters, marked by a degree of synergy, is crucial to breaking away from the traditional protest paradigm.

Another key finding suggests that mainland media observed and interpreted the 2014 protests differently from previous studies (Du 2016, Guzman 2016, Veneti et al.,

2016, Edney 2015). This difference is evident in both the initial characterization of the movement and the framing and narrative discourse. Previous scholars have described the protests as a movement of "[Hong Kong] people seeking democracy" (Guzman, 2016), and Western scholars have noted that Western media portrayed the protests as "a force for social mobilization and political change" (Halverson et al., 2020.p.312, Urman 2021). In contrast, I found, the mainland media tended to described the OCLP protests as "wreaking havoc on the economy". This finding highlights the power of framing in delivering meaning, as noted by Gamson and Modigliani (1989.p. 3). These frames are carefully constructed to ensure that the narrative resonates effectively within their respective regions, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and appeal. By selecting specific aspects of protest events, media texts shape and constrain audience interpretations. This is particularly true in sensitive conflicts, where mainland media employ frames that reflect divergent interpretations, likely influenced by regional political priorities. Media representation, as a complex social construct (Shoemaker and Reese 2013), is shaped by multiple factors, including the selection of sources, first-hand experience, and political ideology. For example, the mainland media's framing of the protests appears to emphasize economic harm to delegitimize the OCLP movement, while downplaying systemic grievances and political demands (Guzman 2016). This finding potentially indicates that media bias in mainland China may primarily arise from perceived government constraints and priorities rather than from journalistic values or editorial autonomy (Ong 2015). In contrast, Hong Kong media, while acknowledging disturbances such as the destruction of public facilities, portrays these actions as "inevitable by products of democratic expression," This suggests Hong Kong media's more nuanced and context-sensitive approach, reflecting the city's democratic aspirations and public sentiment.

Second, the portrayal of the tactics used in the Hong Kong protests differs significantly between mainland and Hong Kong media. Mainland Chinese media did not address the specific strategies of the protests, whereas Hong Kong media provided

a more detailed description of the tactics, demands, scale of mobilization, and specific slogans of the movement (Hamdy and Gomaa 2012). This aligns with previous study suggesting that media often ignore the purpose of protests (Zhuang et al., 2014), and reaffirms prior studies indicating that news media choice are strongly and significantly affected by event intensity (Christian and H.Christoph 2022). Lim (2020) argues that the Hong Kong protests are the result of "resentment against the government." - this long-standing resentment drove individuals to gather and protest the status quo as they sought an alternative path forward. The demands of this mass movement were framed as calls for radical change to the entire social structure and were explicitly political from the outset (Smith and Fetner 2019). The divergence in how mainland and Hong Kong media reported on the same event has inevitably shaped or altered public perceptions of the Hong Kong protests. This divergence enhances our understanding of how cognitive dissonance within media can produce significant social and political implications (Tsfati and Walter 2019). As Fenton (2008) observes, movements such as these incorporate many critical elements, including cultural resonance, historical narratives that sustain a shared heritage, and efforts to address past moral, ethical, and national crises. Media act as a platform to provide communication opportunities, forge necessary connections, and construct a shared political imagination. I argue that these differences in coverage arise from cultural and regional political factors.

Numerous scholars have verified the impact of the political status quo on how news media present protests, highlighting differences in news cultures (Kalyango et al., 2017, Nassanga et al., 2017; Schäfer and Painter 2020).Mainland journalists tend to avoid reporting on protests against the government and thus provide limited coverage of dissent raised by protesters. Additionally, journalists in mainland China adhere more closely to so-called development journalism, striving to balance market logic with state constraints. This is reflected in high selection bias (i.e., sources) and moderate description bias. In contrast, Hong Kong media are more inclined to support Hong Kong local democracy development and social change rather than acting as

detached or unfavourable observers (Kalyango et al., 2017). They place greater emphasis on the political nature of the protests. Mainland media, on the other hand, interpreted the OCLP events in ways that depoliticized individual or journalists' claims while reinforcing state legitimacy. This was achieved by portraying the protests with more positive emotions, minimizing depictions of violence and police presence. Also, mainland media coverage was more thematic in its framing compared to the more episodic approach observed in Hong Kong media. Thus, different political contexts and associated news cultures significantly influence the level of attention given to protest issues and the themes or dimensions emphasized in their coverage.

In a departure from previous marginalized narratives, mainland media moralized the protests, describing them as acts of "betrayal of the nation." This use of nationalist discourse offers insight into how party-state regimes manage protests. For the mainland, I argue that nationalism in media can provide leaders with an opportunity to appeal to public opinion, credibly express the extent of public anger, demonstrate their determination to stand firm, and justify an unyielding negotiating position. As Zubrzycki (2006) emphasizes, the salience, meaning, and use of nationalist discourses - both symbolic and ceremonial - evolve over time in response to political contexts. Controversial events, in particular, play a significant role in evoking the "collective expression" of a nation (p.216).

In contrast, Hong Kong media more frequently express public anger—both rational and irrational—particularly in response to harsh police actions and "selective" government responses. They often create protesters' personal stories, suggesting that personalized and emotional storytelling is central to media coverage of humanitarian events (Hoffman 2016, Ceder 2017). On the other hand, unlike Hochschild's (1983) conclusion that anger is stigmatized in media discourse as a negative emotion—one that may provoke aggression and violence and thus needs to be managed — I argue that medium's anger has unique performative qualities. Media anger is discursively constructed through news narratives and is often collective and political in nature. In

the case of Hong Kong, these features render certain forms of media anger discursively legitimate, become as Nussbaum (2016) refers to as "transitional anger" — an anger that is oriented toward demands for justice and social change.

In summary, the protest paradigm is not static but can be adapted and blended with other paradigms, such as the "nuisance," to reflect different political and cultural contexts. While the protest paradigm may appear simple and formulaic, its mechanisms are far more complex than previously theorized. For instance, the rigid framing features of the paradigm (e.g., deviance and nuisance framing) are insufficient to fully explain the dynamics of the mainland media ecosystem and its influence on protest coverage. In contexts like Hong Kong, where public sentiment often aligns with the protesters, strict adherence to traditional protest paradigm risks alienating audiences (Wei 2015). The selective use of the paradigm by Hong Kong media demonstrates the need to adapt to public opinion while simultaneously mitigating geopolitical pressures (Leung 2012). If we move beyond the idea that the protest paradigm is a universally applied social control mechanism that operates uniformly across media systems and instead accept its contingency, it becomes, as Lee (2014) states, "becomes meaningful to examine variations in the applicability of the protest paradigm" (pp. 27-28).

2019

Through an analysis of the protest paradigm and devices, this study identifies the emergence of a new hybrid paradigm in the Hong Kong and mainland media's protest coverage in 2019. This pattern adapts to specific contextual needs and produces more nuanced or strategic narratives. It highlights both deviance and vandalism while incorporating elements of political or ideological significance, offering a broader narrative of protests that shifts depending on the media's agenda. In mainland media, there is a clear prioritization of state authority and stability. Protest coverage blends nuisance with illegal language borrowed from the protest paradigm - terms such as "terrorism" and "foreign interference" - to describe the 2019 movement as an

existential threat to national security. The narrative attributes the rise of the 2019 protests to foreign interference and emphasizes their negative impact on both China and Hong Kong, thereby legitimizing state responses while delegitimizing the protests themselves.

Operating in a contentious political environment, Hong Kong media adopt a more flexible narrative approach, balancing deviant behavior and disruptive framing with an emphasis on protesters' political demands, reforms agendas (i.e., Bill), and systematic grievances. Additionally, by amplifying protesters' voices, Hong Kong media legitimize their grievances and situate their actions within the broader context of democratic aspirations and social justice. This finding aligns with Watkins (2010), who observed that, in some cases, protest coverage highlights the underlying values and legitimacy of social movements, challenging the typically negative portrayal inherent in traditional protest paradigms. This supportive stance suggests the role of Hong Kong journalism as an advocate for public sentiment (Lin and Jackson 2020), in contrast to the more neutral or critical frameworks observed in other contexts (e.g., Bilodeau et al., 2023, Delmas 2018). Thus, the tactical flexibility of protest narratives in Hong Kong media highlights the utility of the hybrid paradigm as a strategic tool for adapting media narratives to political pressures, public opinion, and cultural norms.

One characteristic of the hybrid paradigm is its ability to shift between negative, neutral, and occasionally positive tones, reflecting broader political and cultural dynamics. Although this study did not specifically analyze tone, however, thematic analysis found that as 2019 protests escalated, mainland media coverage generally shifted from a neutral nuisance paradigm to a negative deviant protest paradigm, reinforcing narratives about state legitimacy and public order. But, while additional storylines (especially those involving violence) are inevitable during ongoing protests, mainland media sometimes avoided making minor episodes the primary focus. Instead, they emphasized overarching themes, explaining the background,

consequences, or broader implications of the conflict to describe the 2019 protests within a larger narrative. This finding contrasts with Zhang, Wang and Hu's (2021) who has claimed that Chinese media tend to emphasize violent and disruptive behavior during protests to create a more dramatic narrative.

Hong Kong media coverage has evolved from an early emphasis on protesters' systemic grievances and the legitimization of their claims to balancing deviant behavior with political discourse frames during periods of heightened tension. This evolution reflects the media's alignment with public sentiment and democratic aspirations. This study contrasts with Juris's (2005) focus on performative or symbolic violence in protests. Instead, Hong Kong media narratives often describe protest violence as a natural consequence of protest events rather than as something that entirely undermines the legitimacy of the protests. This finding further emphasize that various factors influence how, and to what extent, news reports follow the protest paradigm. These factors include newsroom norms and professional practices (Harlow and Kilgo 2020) as well as journalists' personal political tendencies (Huang 2020).

In addition, the case studies found that social and political crises can create opportunities for movements to assert their existence and engage in public discourse (Bartman 2018, Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). While such crises can attract media attention by providing newsworthy events, movements must establish legitimacy to garner public support (Andrews and Caren 2010). In this regard, I found that Hong Kong media play a significant role in shaping the legitimacy of protest campaigns and even fostering more functional discussions on the underlying issues. Contrary to previous research, framing issues as social issues—rather than focusing on protests themselves—helped legitimize protests by portraying them as representatives of social needs. This was achieved by directing attention to the object of the protests rather than the demonstrations themselves (Wouters 2015). Furthermore, this finding suggests that non-Western countries (refer to regions here), influenced by their unique historical and political contexts, may portray protesters more seriously and positively

in the media (Shahin et al., 2016). This observation confirms that legitimacy is a crucial mechanism influencing the extent of negativity in the portrayal of movements and serves as a key element in identifying a hybrid paradigm.

This study highlights that the hybrid paradigm is particularly effective in combining local narratives of destruction with broader political or ideological meanings. It highlights that, because news is frequently intertwined with political agendas, the creation of strategic frames involves not only the "routinized control of social meanings" by communicators (Durham, 1998, p. 104, cited by Zhang et al., 2021) but is also shaped significantly by external social forces, especially political influences. For example, Hong Kong media blended coverage of local nuisances with systemic critiques to situate the protests within larger calls for democratic reform and social justice. This aligns with Kilgo and Harlow's (2019) assertion that media coverage of protests is not static but evolves in response to factors such as political context, mainstream public opinion, and the framing strategies employed by protest groups. If protesters are thinking as "challengers" (Gamson, 1990), then Hong Kong media, contrary to the conclusion that media gradually highlight protesters' demands and portray them more sympathetically over time (Edwin, Neal, and Weijun, 2024), choose to defend protesters in the early stages of coverage. Hong Kong newspapers promote favorable narratives that emphasize that the protests themselves are not divisive. This finding slightly diverges from previous research, which argues that criminalizing protest coverage portrays protests and social movements in a consistently negative light (Brown and Harlow 2019, Proust 2022, Tuzo 2024, Lee 2014, Keyes 2013). In addition, my findings suggest that humanizing victim stories can be a powerful tool for legitimizing social movements (Masullo, Brown, and Harlow 2024). For example, personal stories of protesters injured during clashes with police can enhance media sympathy for the victims (Brown and Mourao 2022). In other words, the way Hong Kong media portrays victims of police violence does not necessarily reinforce the negative characteristics associated with the protest paradigm. This finding contrasts with Brown's (2021) conclusion that protest-related criminal

incidents tend to reinforce media negativity, reducing public identification with and support for protesters. Instead, the inclusion of victim narratives offers an alternative perspective that legitimizes the protest movement and has the potential to reshape audience perceptions.

Legitimacy refers to the recognition granted by social actors (Deephouse 1996), encompassing a perception that actions or behaviors are positive, moral, beneficial, comprehensible, and acceptable within a specific social context (Van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). From a social constructionist viewpoint, actions or behaviors only become illegitimate when perceived as such by relevant audiences (Entman 2012). In this study, I found that authoritarian regimes often use media-driven discursive strategies to reinforce their resilience (Gunitsky 2015). These regimes strategically utilize nationalism and anti-Western narratives to counter resistance to their authority (Love and Windsor, 2018). Specifically, three key discourse strategies are employed: First, the regime establishes a clear divide between loyal citizens (in-group) and dissenting protesters (out-group). Second, it fosters internal cohesion by emphasizing shared values, such as patriotism and nationalism, among in-group members to minimize the influence of the out-group. Third, the regime constructs external threats, often portraying Western forces as adversaries, to unite domestic audiences and bolster internal legitimacy. These findings suggest that merely examining adherence to the protest paradigm is insufficient for comprehensively analyzing how China's media represents social movements. Instead, assessing the broader spectrum of representational elements—such as legitimation, delegitimation, nationalism, and conflict—provides a more nuanced understanding. This finding suggests that news coverage may actively shape political responses to events by selectively highlighting specific issues (Hawkins 2011). Since different news organizations define and theme issues differently in their reporting, solely examining adherence to the protest paradigm is insufficient for a comprehensive analysis of how Chinese media represent social movements.

Finally, the emergence of the hybrid paradigm recalls renewed reflection on media power and public opinion. The hybrid paradigm illustrates how media in both mainland and Hong Kong use protest paradigm' devices as a flexible tool to influence and shape public opinion in ways that align with their respective agendas. When Western forces entered the communication landscape in China, mainland media chose to respond to protesters' behavior by violating their rights, and this approach was seen as a necessary and pragmatic response to public demands for some form of action. When reporting on riots, the most salient elements in mainland media coverage were focused on identifying those responsible for the violence or describing the opposing sides in the conflict (using a conflict theme). Consequently, the riot itself does not necessarily become the central focus of the analysis; instead, specific characteristics of the riot are shaped by the most prominent framing approach used to describe the story. This response to Kozman's (2016) suggestion that when both sets of frames (e.g., protest frame and general frame) are analyzed simultaneously, the relationship between frame categories indicates they can be studied through a hybrid framing approach.

Hong Kong media used the hybrid paradigm to shape public discourse and critique government policies, seeking a balance between amplifying protesters' voices and maintaining societal stability. This approach fosters a participatory media environment, which indirectly exerts pressure on authorities while legitimizing the protesters' grievances. This finding reaffirms that factors such as protest locations (Oliver and Myers 1999), their proximity to news organizations (Kilgo et al., 2018a), journalistic norms and professional practices (Harlow and Kilgo 2020, Oliver and Maney 2000, Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014), and the ideological affinity of media organizations (Kim and Shahin 2020) influence how media interpret protest behavior in alignment with the protest paradigm. More importantly, the dual function of hybrid paradigms—moving beyond the "predictable protest paradigm" (Chan et al., 2022) - emphasizes their role in either reinforcing or challenging power structures. This dynamic contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of media system

dependencies (Ball-Rokeach 1998) and the complex interplay between media, geopolitics, and public opinion.

While the framing of a specific issue highlights aspects that are prominent in news coverage, the coverage by Hong Kong and mainland media does not always align with existing protest categories. The case of Hong Kong in 2019 was not simply about "protests" but rather a "protest process," where each day brought new developments, and many aspects of social life were impacted by this ongoing process. As a result, when reporting on protests as sociopolitical processes, media coverage focused on riots, debates, spectacles, and conflicts while also addressing other dimensions that did not necessarily fit within existing theoretical frameworks. This underscores the importance of considering the context in which protest movements occur to fully explain protest coverage (e.g., Kilgo 2020, Kilgo and Mourão 2021, Proust and Saldana 2022).

6.2.2 Voicing and Silencing: who leads, who follows

A notable divergence was observed in source usage. Mainland media relied heavily on elite-driven, official government sources, aligning with state narratives that downplayed the legitimacy of the protests. This finding indicates that newspapers in mainland China as an essential ideological tool in the state's efforts to maintain governance and control over public discourse (Chua 2013). In contrast, Hong Kong media were more balanced, featuring both authorities and protesters 'voices, contributing to a more pluralistic discourse. This suggests that Hong Kong media played an active role in fostering democratic debate, while mainland media maintained a state-centered narrative.

This study identifies elite-driven sourcing as a defining characteristic of mainland Chinese media, which challenges the prevailing view of an authoritarian media model as suggested by previous scholars (e.g., Stockmann 2011, Repnikova 2020). Rather

than simply reflecting state control, the media in mainland China relies heavily on elite sources to construct protest narratives that align with the party-state's interests. The elite-drive discourse describes protests and other politically sensitive issues in ways that reinforce the legitimacy of the government and maintain social stability. While this may appear authoritarian when viewed through a Western lens, it reflects a more complex system in which discourse hegemony is deeply embedded in China's hierarchical political culture. Rather than merely excluding alternative voices, as is often emphasized in Western authoritarian models, the Chinese media system prioritizes the maintenance of social order and moral authority (Repnikova 2020). This finding contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Chinese media system, highlighting how its function extends beyond authoritarian suppression to incorporate elite authority and moral guidance rooted in the country's political and cultural traditions. Consequently, this challenges simplistic authoritarian classifications and offers a more refined lens through which to analyses media operations in mainland China. As noted by Huang (2014, 2017), this hierarchical structure in Chinese culture supports a media system in which elite sources are not only trusted by expected to provide wisdom and guidance to the public. Thus, media discourse, shaped by those in position of power (Fairclough 1989, 1995), has become an indispensable instrument for political elites to manage an increasingly fluid society (Shirk 2008). Sourcing analysis indicates that China is characterized by a predominantly top-down pattern of political communication (Renwick and Cao 2003). Furthermore, thematic analysis shows that China's media, by citing elite standpoints, constructs a belief system driven by two key imperatives, one for help political elites manage a large, fasting-changing society, such as social movements (Cao 2001); and on the other, it serves as a tool to legitimize political authority, reinforce government policies, and address society fractures by promoting stability and unity (Brown 2012).

The role of journalists in China, particularly as "authoritative intellectuals"embedded within elite circles, further complicates the media's relationship with the public. As Wang and Luo (2011|) describe, Chinese journalists are seen as a bridge between the

masses and the elite, but not in the objective sense assumed in Western liberal journalism. That is to say, they are moral gatekeepers who channel the ethical and ideological boundaries set by the state. As Jennifer Hasty's (2005) work on journalism in Ghana, where she highlights that journalism in many contexts serves as a tool for individualistic and political positioning rather than a means of neutral information dissemination. In this context, I argue that the social power of newspapers is deeply rooted in the belief that certain journalists possess a unique authority to guide and educate their readers. This perspective contrasts sharply with the liberal journalism model, which asserts that freedom and equality are the foundational principles enabling a media system that facilitates meaningful public discourse (Chua 2013). Instead, the narrative within Chinese journalism implies that the significance of a text is derived from the inherent moral and intellectual inequality between the journalist and the reader. This perceived inequality can endow the text with a compelling influence, shaping the reader's understanding and creating a specific construction of meaning. Therefore, through a systematic analysis of these elite sources, I highlight that the authority wielded by these elites shapes the paradigmatic approach to protest coverage. In other words, in party-state China, the control of news is not merely about censorship or direct oversight. Instead, it is significantly influenced by the moral and intellectually authority embedded within elite sources.

This finding aligns with Jensen's (2011) observation that political journalists often position themselves as authoritative gatekeepers of knowledge and intellectual superiority, subordinating other social actors and delegitimizing "out-groups." It also suggests the hierarchical value system between journalists and protesters, as highlighted by Hanitzsch and Vos (2018). Nerone (2013) characterizes political journalism as an "ism" — a belief system that has been historically professionalized to occupy a dominant role in informing the public. Drawing on Bourdieu's perspective that news production is part of large-scale cultural production, the preference for elite sources by mainland journalists can be interpreted as an exercise of power to reaffirm authority, exclude "others" (Carlson, 2015), and defend

established values (such as state stability) within the cultural creation process (Hovden 2008).

While previous research has shown that this authority traditionally resides with institutionally bound journalists (Eldridge 2018), I argue that, in contemporary China, journalistic capital and authority are increasingly concentrated among politically aligned journalists. These journalists not only serve the objectives of the state but also play a key role in maintaining the boundaries of authority. Elite sources and mainland journalists collectively reinforce these boundaries by prioritizing and legitimizing the norms and values of the dominant group, while marginalizing and subordinating "out-groups" (Loosen 2015, Eldridge 2018). This dynamic highlights how journalism in China functions as both a cultural and political tool to protect entrenched power structures.

In contrast, this study found that although Hong Kong media also frequently used elite sources, they were more likely to use local Hong Kong experts who tended to be pro-protesters, an approach that would provide readers with a narrative contrary to the state's view. It is worth noting that the status of Hong Kong experts in the Hong Kong newspapers shifts according to the government's response to the protests. For example, during the 2014 protests, Hong Kong experts transitioned from "supporting" the protesters to "becoming" the protesters when the government's response was unfavourable. This dynamic indicates that the role of experts is not static but fluid, influenced by political context and the stance of the authorities. This supports the idea proposed by Curran (2011) that media experts often navigate between being objective analysts and active participants in political discourse, depending on the broader socio-political environment. This finding reinforces the principles of Newsworthiness, particularly the idea that the presence of elites is a significant determinant of newsworthiness (Bednarek and Caple 2014). Even when the content of information provided by elite sources does not significantly shape a report's news value, the inclusion of such sources alone often lends legitimacy and importance to the story

(Strömbäck et al., 2012). The reliance on (local) elite sources by Hong Kong journalists further demonstrates that their involvement signals an issue's societal significance. The elite sources used implicitly suggested that the matter warrants public attention and aligns with the self-perception of journalists as social "watchdog" responsible for monitoring and reporting on critical issues (Skovsgaard 2014). On the other hand, the cultivation of a "democratic" world-view in Hong Kong is significantly influenced and constrained by the perspectives of local policy experts and the theoretical agendas of specific administrative officials. This observation aligns with Poster's (2001) argument that the media's selection as a "rational institution." Reflects a reconfiguration of hegemony within the neorealist and conservative ideologies. Furthermore, more reliance on elites' quotes by Hong Kong media sometimes could contributes to a narrative that describes protests as disruptive and illegitimate, further strengthen the protest paradigm.

This study also indicates that Hong Kong media significantly depart from the protest paradigm by heavily relying on protesters' voices, contrasting with previous studies that emphasize a more neutral or negative reporting of protests (e.g., Chan and Lee 1984, Henn 2023, McLeod 2007, Adegbola 2022). Rather than merely observing the events, Hong Kong media positions itself as a guiding force in protest coverage, offering a platform for protesters to articulate their views and challenging the government's narrative. This departure marks a distinct role of Hong Kong media as active participants in shaping public discourse around protests, rather than the passive, state-aligned model seen in mainland Chinese media. By guiding public consideration of the events through the lens of protester perspectives, Hong Kong media establishes itself as a critical intermediary in the broader protest dialogue, showcasing a unique media system that diverges from mainland China's elite-driven, state-centric approach.

The two empirical studies founds that the role of police voice in shaping protest narratives, especially in the transition from the nuisance paradigm in 2014 to the

protest paradigm in 2019, is significant. In terms of mainland, in 2014, the police voices were present but were not as central to the discourse. As mainland newspaper covered, the police's role was more one of managing nuisance rather than confrontation significant violence or disorder. However, as violence escalated in 2019, then both Hong Kong and mainland media narrative shifted towards the protest paradigm, in which the role of the police became far more central. Hong Kong media coverage began to emphasize confrontations between police and protesters, with the police portrayed as a crucial line of defense against escalating chaos. In terms of mainland, increasingly employed a narrative that framed the protests as existential threats to state security, the police in this context, were positioned not merely as law enforcers but as defenders of national unity and sovereignty. Indeed, the elevation of police voices contributed to a more militarized and securitized discourse, making a clear departure from the nuisance paradigm and aligning the media coverage with the protest paradigm, where the focus was on delegitimating the protests through narratives of violence and instability.

Furthermore, the increasing presence of Western source citations in both Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media from 2014 to 2019 reflects an important shift in the reporting of the protests and provides insights into how external perspectives influences domestic reporting patterns. However, their standpoints actually influence on mainland Chinese media remained minimal, as the narrative was largely controlled by state-sanctioned messaging that described the protests as disturbances to Hong Kong public order. In Hong Kong media, Western sources were often used to validate the protester's demands for democratic freedoms and to criticize the Chinese government's stance. This finding in line with Veg (2019) who suggested citations from international bodies, human rights organizations, and Western governments movement with broader discourse of democracy, human rights, and resistance to authoritarianism.

Interesting is, even in mainland media, Western sources were cited more frequently than in 2014, but for different purposes. Mainland media cited Western sources primarily to criticize the perceived interference of foreign powers in China's internal affairs. The increase in citations of Western politicians and commentators allowed mainland media to present the protests as part of a larger geopolitical struggle, wherein Hong Kong's protests were framed as being fueled by Western nations seeking to undermine Chinese sovereignty (Zhao 2010). In nationalism theme studies, I found this strategy helped mainland media reinforce nationalistic sentiments and align the coverage with state narrative that emphasized stability and control over foreign meddling.

This finding has significance for how the West can influence media reporting patterns in China. While Western perceptive may not directly alter the core messaging of mainland Chinese media, the increase in Western source citations suggests that the Chinese media landscape is not entirely impervious to global narratives. It is meaning the selective incorporation of Western sources reflects a more sophisticated approach by Chinese media, where international voices are used strategically to bolster state narratives rather than a challenge them. In contrast, these Western sources may reinforces democratic aspirations as cited by Hong Kong media. The Hong Kong media tend to citation that standpoints from the Western rather than concludes their views by journalists initially.

To conclude, in comparing the use of sources and citations in the 2014 and 2019 Hong Kong protests between mainland China and Hong Kong media, this study demonstrates both differences and similarities in reporting patterns. In both cases, official sources dominated the narratives, especially in mainland, where government and police statements were prominently featured. Hong Kong media's approach to balancing voices from official sources and protesters represents a unique paradigm in constructing protest narratives. This uniqueness lies in its dynamic approach to legitimsation, where the media navigate between the state's official narratives and the

perspectives of protesters. By incorporating voices from both sides, Hong Kong
media create a more complex and layered representation of protests, unlike the
predominantly one-sided portrayals observed in many other contexts (Javier et al.,
2023). This balance is particularly significant in a politically charged environment, as
it demonstrates how media can both challenge and reinforce dominant power
structures while shaping public perceptions of protests. By citing a diversity of voices,
including those of protesters, Hong Kong media contrast sharply with mainland,
which tends to emphases the official perspectives more heavily. This tendency for
Hong Kong media to blend governmental and protester voices aligns with the study
by Chan and So (2003), who finds how Hong Kong media have historically
functioned as platforms for broader public discourse, making multiple viewpoints to
shape public understanding. Important is, the inclusion of protester voices creates a
more balanced portrayal of social movements, giving legitimacy to the protesters'
concerns and fostering public debate (Lee and Chan 2015).

6.2.3. "One Country, Two Systems" and Discourse of Democracy

The analysis of the discourse of democracy in media coverage of the 2014 and 2019
protests shows critical distinctions in how Hong Kong and mainland media construct
democratic ideals. Overview, this study emphasis that media narratives surrounding
democracy are shaped by power relations that produce dominant discourse while
marginalizing alternative views (Richardson 2001). The findings indicate how, in the
Hong Kong context, democracy is framed in relation to the "two systems" principle,
emphasizing the preservation of the region's distinct political, legal, and social
institutions. In contrast, mainland Chinese media emphasize the "one country" aspect,
focusing on national unity and central authority, thereby portraying democracy
through the lens of stability and national cohesion.

This study suggests in mainland China, where national unity and state control are
paramount, democratic discourse is tightly regulated and closely aligned with the
goals of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhao 1998, Qu 2018, Liu and Liu 2011). This

has resulted in a form of democracy discourse that is narrowly defined within the boundaries set by the state, often centered on issues of stability and nationalism. Thus, mainland media in 2014 and 2019 Hong Kong protests, portrays democracy as being compatible with, and subordinate to, the larger goals of national cohesion and the protection of sovereignty.

In contrast, Hong Kong's media discourse around democracy places greater emphasis on civil liberties, political rights, and the rule of law, reflecting its political system's roots in British common law and its more liberal political culture (Lee and Chan 2015). In Hong Kong, the media can by choosing which aspects of the protests to highlight-such as the demands for universal suffrage (i.e., 2014) or the violent clashes between protesters and police (i.e., 2019) – the media not only informs the public but also shapes how the public perceives democracy and its implications for governance. Indeed, in Hong Kong, this has meant that democratic discourse has remained an open and contested space, with the media continuing to facilitate public debate, even as political pressures have mounted. In contrast, mainland media's coverage of the same events has been highly selective, focusing on the themes of violence, chaos, and instability, describing the protests as threats to national security. This approach in line with the broader "one country" narratives, in which dissent is seen as a challenge to state authority rather than as a legitimate expression of political rights. Through this lens, democracy is framed not as a universal right but as a privilege contingent on the preservation of order and unity, which the state must oversee and maintain.

Moreover, from a linguistic perspective, the democratic discourse employed by the Chinese party-state in the context of the Hong Kong protests shows a deeper insight into the unique political culture of China, which is rooted more in Confucianism and collectivism than in Western notions of authoritarianism. Mainland Chinese media frequently uses the term that emphasize stability, unity, and harmony, which are culturally significant in Chinese political thought. These values shape a discourse around democracy that is distinctly different from Western liberal democracy. Instead

of focusing on individual freedoms, as it common in liberal democratic frameworks, China's democratic discourse revolves around collective good and national strength, which are central to maintaining social stability. In this sense, the linguistic framing within China's democratic discourse departs from an authoritarian definition in the strictest sense and instead embodies a cultural model of governance that prioritizes collective stability over adversarial politics. Therefore, through this lens, defining the party-state system in China as purely authoritarian overlooks the complexity of its cultural and linguistic underpinnings. The language used in protest narratives, particularly the invocation of harmony and collective stability, signals a more nuanced form of governance that reflects deep-rooted Chinese political traditions rather than simply an authoritarian framework.

In the Chinese contexts, the concept of "protest" is intricately linked to national governance and societal harmony, deeply rooted in Confucian values of order and collective responsibility. Zhao and Huang (2014) have argued that Chinese media discourse around protests tends to be framed within a state-centric narrative that emphasizes the protection of social order, often dismissing protests as misguided of public sentiment. Through the text analysis, my study finds the portrayal of protests in mainland media, tends to downplay their democratic aspirations, framing them as disturbances to the social fabric. Actually, reflects a broader state strategy of managing "public opinion guidance", where the media is an active participant in shaping public perceptions about the role of protests in society (Chan and Qiy 2002). thus, I argue, this framing is rooted in the governance model of the Chinese Communist Party, where maintaining control over public discourse is essential to upholding the authority of the state. Rather than adopting an authoritarian model as understood in the West, Chinese media operates under a national governance model that intertwines the concepts of state authority and public good, using media as a tool to propagate these values. The focus is less on suppressing dissent for its own sake, and more on ensuring that protests are seen as threats to collective harmony rather than legitimate democratic participation (Zhao 2010, Gobel and Ong 2012).

In contrast, this study finds that colonial influence has also created a complex struggle of identity for Hong Kong media in their relationship with mainland China. On the one hand, Hong Kong media highlights Hong Kong is political and legally party of China in news coverage; on the other hand, its media and public discourse often resist integration into the mainland's political ideology, as evidenced by Hong Kong newspaper reaped the word of "belonging."Chan and Lee (2007) mentioned that Hong Kong face a dual pressure, to adhere to Chinese sovereignty while preserving the colonial values of free speech and press autonomy. This internal struggle is evident in the media's coverage of protests, where a tension exists between aligning with mainland China's national interests and upholding the democratic values inherited from the colonial period. Some key phrases that Hong Kong media highlighted such as "struggles for freedom,"(i.e., 2014 OCLP protests) and "civil resistance,"(2014, and 2019 protests), which are influenced by Western democratic discourse (Fung and Chen 2018). Therefore, this study suggests the colonial history[21] has shaped the linguistic and ideological practices in Hong Kong media.

Again, Hasty (2005), argues that journalism is not just about news production but is a culturally specific practice has involves traversing local political power structures. In Hong Kong, journalists must contend with both local political pressures and the overarching authority of Beijing, which complicates their role as independent arbiters of truth (Ma 2020). According to Ma (2020) pointed that the result is a form of

---

[21] Every colonized nation, having experiences the suppression and marginalisation of its indigenous culture, faces the language and cultural values imposed by the colonizing power. This phenomenon is what Frantz Fanon (1986) describes as an internalised "inferiority complex," where the identity of the colonized is reshaped and valued based on the standards of the colonizer. Fanon (1986) expresses this when he states, "He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (p. 9, cited by Zhang 2023). By the 19th century, the "fictitious reality" constructed by Orientalist discourse had evolved into a powerful instrument of imperial control. This narrative was not only accepted by the colonisers but internalized by the colonized, reinforcing the belief in Western superiority. Not only let people trust the military and technological dominance of the West solidified, the "white man" was inherently stronger and superior. Thus has been seen in study of Hong Kong, as Lee and Chan (2010) discussed that "[in Hong Kong] 'To be or not to be' is not an answer, because it is tantamount to 'to be or to be nothing'"(p.18). This dynamic not only highlights the assimilations pressures faced by colonized individuals but also highlights the profound psychological impact of colonialism, which redefines self-perception and cultural value through the prism of colonial dominance in Hong Kong.

journalism that is often-self-consorting yet simultaneously resistant, reflecting the broader tensions between Hong Kong's liberal traditions and mainland China's authoritarian control. In the case of 2014, Hong Kong journalists' reporting has placed them in direct opposition to both the HKSAR government and Beijing central government, as they seek to give voice to the protesters and offer a platform for democratic discourse. This dynamic reflects what Waisbord (2000) calls "journalism as a form of resistance," where reporters use their platform to challenge the status quo and advocate for change.

However, the resistance is not without its limits. The increasing influence of mainland China over Hong Kong's media landscape, through economic pressure, ownership structures, and direct political intervention, has led to what some scholars refer to as "convergence." (Wang 2024, Wei 2024). My study found that the democratic discourse in Hong Kong media coverage shifted from 2014 to 2019 – in 2014, the tone around democratic issues was primarily "critique" and "accountable,". However, by 2019, the tone evolved into one that was more "reflective" and "advocacy-oriented," thus, this study suggests that Hong Kong journalists have been socialised into a form of journalism that is both pragmatic and oppositional (Cheng 2016), this pattern involves acknowledging the limits imposed by the political environment while still attempting to push the boundaries of press freedom. Thus, this study argues that media systems play an important role in constructing social knowledge and legitimising themselves within contested media environments.

6.3 Contributions

In this PhD study, a key significant contribution has been the critical reevaluation of the protest paradigm, showing that it alone is insufficient to fully examine and analyse protest coverage, particularly in the context of Hong Kong and mainland China. The known protest paradigm, as defined by scholars such as Chan and Lee (1984), emphasize the media's tendency to delegitimse protests by focusing on violence, chaos, marginations, and disruption. However, this study highlights that the protest

paradigm does not fully capture the nuanced ways in which media across different political and cultural contexts report on protests. This study builds on existing paradigms and further develops them through a detailed analysis of the data, offering a refined framework to understanding media representations of protests. The nuisance paradigm expands the scope of understanding by emphasizing public inconvenience, daily disruptions, and social irritations, especially in media coverage from mainland. This presents a more subtle delegitimisation strategy, focusing less on overt violence and more on the impact of protests on social order and stability. Through the thematic analysis for elements of themes, this study contributes to the relationships between the two sets of themes, and leads a new perspective to considering should we adhere, develop, or overthrow the protest paradigm in a de-Westernised context. My study has responded with the suggestion put forth by Harlow and Brown (2023) in A New Protest Paradigm: Toward a Critical Approach to Protest News Analysis, which calls for a re-examination of the protest paradigm through-over.

This study proposes a hybrid paradigm that combines elements of both the protest and nuisance paradigms, recognized the slight differences between some elements of two paradigmatic may have, for example, the portrayal of violence during protests. The protest paradigm emphasizes the chaotic, violent, and confrontational aspects of protests, and media framing under this paradigm often highlights clashes between protesters and authorities, property destruction, and scenes of disorder (Boyle et al., 2012). On the other hand, the nuisance paradigm, as described by Di Cicco (2010), portrays protests in a dismissive manner, emphasizing the inconveniences and irritations they cause to daily life rather than focusing on violence or criminal behavior, which are central to the protest paradigm. Additionally, the nuisance paradigm describes protesters as ungrateful to the existing system or even unpatriotic, further delegitimsing their actions and minimizing the social significance of the protests. In my study, when violence is reported under this theme, it is often downplayed or described as an inconvenience that disturbs public order or interferes with regular society functions. Important is, the violence is not portrayed as a threat to

the state or social fabric but rather as an annoyance that disturbs peace and daily routines. Therefore, my study recommends the future studies to recognize the nuanced elements to identifying whether the protest paradigm or the nuisance at play. These paradigms offer different media strategies to marginalize the political importance of protests.

The hybrid paradigm reflects a more complex media strategy, particularly in 2019 Hong Kong protests, where the media in both Hong Kong and the mainland used a blend of these paradigms to frame protests within a broader national security narrative. In terms of methodology, this research agrees with previous scholars, such as Kilgo and Harlow (2017), who have called for expanding the protest paradigm to include more empirical studies that reflect the unique political and cultural contexts in which protests occur. Though an exploration of the protest paradigm, this study proposes two additional paradigms that warrant attention: the nuisance paradigm and the hybrid paradigm. These paradigms aim to contribute to a more comprehensive analytical framework for scholars to utilize and further develop when examining media coverage of protests. The findings emphasize the need for a more flexible and context-sensitive approach to studying protests. For example, the characterization of protests as a "national threat" could be considered a defining element when discussing terrorism-related narratives within the context of Chinese media. Thus, relying solely on the typically protest paradigm, which may not adequately reflect the media's role in shaping protest narratives in non-Western contexts.

Additionally, the study expands the scope of media system studies in China by exploring the duality of "one country, two systems," showing how mainland and Hong Kong media differ in their describing of democracy, governance, and dissent. By applying these paradigms, the study also enriches existing literature on agenda-setting, censorship, and discourse management, contributing to future study in political communication, media studies, and protest analysis. Another contribution of this study is the development and application of a methodological framework for

analysing how state-controlled media systems shape public discourse on protests and political dissent. This method combines discourse analysis with thematic coding to identify and evaluate specific narratives, such as the use of "national threat: or "terrorism" to delegitimize protests and strengthen nationalist sentiments. The finding that "terrorism"- related language is embedded in the response to protests appears to be a phenomenon unique to the Chinese media context. This insight contributes to understanding how state-embedded media discourse shapes and influences the development and portrayal of protests. By systematically analysing these elements, the framework not only suggests how party-state media operate to marginalize dissent but also offers a comparative model for examining media functions in other "authoritarian" or hybrid regimes. This approach enables researchers to explore "parallels" and divergences across different political and cultural contexts, providing a versatile tool for understanding the media's role in legitimizing or undermining protest movements globally.

My thesis emphasis that scholarly inquiry into Chinese media systems requires an approach that transcends Western-centric models, advocating for a de-westernization of media studies. While paradigm such as Di Cicco's nuisance paradigm have their roots in Western contexts, linked to the growing conservatism in the United States, this study demonstrates the importance of adapting and contextualizing such models to fit the distinct political, cultural, and social realities of non-Western media systems. In the case of Chinese media, the nuisance paradigm evolves to incorporate elements such as nationalism, state, control, and the framing of protests as existential threats to societal stability, which are distinct from its original Western context. This adapted framework highlights the need to reconceptualize existing paradigms when analysing media systems in party-state model or hybrid regimes, ensuring that they account for unique cultural and ideological dynamics. By doing so, this thesis contributes to the broader de-westernization of media studies and provides a more context-sensitive approach to understanding media functions globally.

Curran and Park (2000) have already suggested the need to study non-Western media systems on their own terms, understanding them within their unique socio-political contexts. Thus, my study contributed both in the mainland and Hong Kong, follow a party-state model where the ruling Communist Party's priorities and ideologies are embedded in the media's structural and operational logic. This is not simply a matter of authoritarian control, but rather a dynamic interaction between state power, cultural values, and the historical role of media as a tool for governance. It also shows that Hong Kong's media, while comparatively more pluralistic, is influenced by these same dynamics, especially in its coverage of protests, where protesters' voices are represented but always within a framework that acknowledges the wider political context of "one country, two systems," The fact that Hong Kong media incorporate a more diverse range of voices does not place it in opposition to the mainland media, rather, it reflects the region's distinct political and historical identity, which is shaped by both colonial legacy and its reintegration into the Chinese state. Thus, my study's findings contribute and suggests the future research on Chinese media must incorporate a critical understanding of these cultural, historical, and power dynamics, rather than relying on Western paradigms that may not fully capture the unique characteristics of the party-state system.

6.4 Research Limitations, and Recommendations for Future Studies

The limitations of this PhD study, which undertook a comparative analysis of media systems between Hong Kong and mainland China during the 2014 and 2019 protests, are notable in both methodological and theoretical aspects – I have mentioned in Chapter Three.

From a methodological perspective, the study's reliance on textual analysis of media coverage may have introduced subjectivity in the interpretation of discourse, especially given the complex political environments of both regions. While this approach provided insights into the tone and theme used by the media, it did not fully account for audience reception or the broader societal impact of media narratives,

which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how this discourse shaped public opinion. In addition, the study's time frame is limited to two protest events, which, while significant, may not capture long-term shifts in media strategies or political discourse. A longitudinal study could provide more strong conclusions about how media paradigms evolve over time in response to political events in China.

One limitation of this study lies in the selection of data for analysis, particularly with respect to the type of news content considered. The study focuses on hard news coverage of protests from Hong Kong and mainland China, and excludes other types of news stories, for example, opinion, editorials, and feature articles, which may provide richer insights into the broader media landscape and the portraying of protests. This study focuses solely on newspapers, which limits the scope of analysis. The social media, and other types of media has not included, thus, this study may miss in how different media formats influence and construct protest narratives.

One significant limitation of this study relates to the coding and variable selection process within the content analysis of Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media coverage of protests. Content analysis, being a method that relies on predefined categories and variables, often necessitates a degree of simplification that may not capture the full complexity of media narratives. In the case of this study, the coding scheme was designed to measure aspects like source usage, discourse, and elements of protest paradigm. The selection of variables for analysis cam also be limiting, a pilot study was conducted in advance. In this stage, a pilot study allowed for any ambiguities or areas where the variables might not capture all relevant aspects of the data. This approach has also benefited for a single coder in analysis process. Another methodological limitation relates to the operationlisation of key variables. Concepts like "violence," "conflict", "marginalization" can be difficult to measure consistently, especially across different media contexts. The subjective nature of these concepts means that even with a structured coding system, there is a risk of

interpretative bias in how these variables are defined and applied across different pieces of content.

In terms of theoretical limitations, the research challenges the dominant protest paradigm but also acknowledges that expanding existing paradigms, for example the nuisance paradigm and proposing hybrid patterns, requires further empirical validation. The adoption of these paradigms in non-Western contexts, such as China, and Hong Kong, might will be constrained by theoretical frameworks originally designed for Western media systems. The study's focus on media texts without integrating perspectives from other critical media theories, such as audience studies or media ownership influence, could be seen as a limitation, as it may not fully capture the multi-dimensional nature of media's role in shaping protest narratives.

For future study on media coverage of protests in China, several methodological recommendations can be made to enhance the depth and scope of analysis. Firstly, the audience studies would provide insights into how different populations interpret and engage with media portrayal of protests, allowing researchers to explore the societal impacts on media narratives beyond content analysis. Employing mixed-methods approach, for example combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, would allow for an examination of media patterns. Content analysis could be complemented by surveys or interviews with journalists and media professionals to understand the influence of editorial choices, newsrooms cultures, and regulations in shaping protest events.

The future direction of journalism literacy and education is a key area of focus for researchers examining the evolution of media systems, particularly within the context of China and Hong Kong. Researchers should consider investigating how journalism education in China shape not only the skills but also the ideological framework through which reporters operate in distinct political contexts. Journalism literacy in China, for example, is deeply intertwined with the state's party-centric values and

governance principles, whereas in Hong Kong, it reflects a legacy of colonial influence and journalistic independence, both of which are under strain. Thus, the interview, semi-interview, observation, or focus groups will be a good method to be applied in the future studies for examine the journalist's practices.

Additionally, interdisciplinary study, particularly collaborations with anthropology and ethnography, could provide more granular insights into the lived experiences and everyday practices of journalists. These fields provide tools to investigate how media professionals navigate constraints, negotiate their roles within political systems, and interpret their responsibilities to society. By ethnographic methods, researchers could better understand the cultural, historical, and social dimensions that shape journalism in China and Hong Kong, moving beyond content analysis to explore the relationships between media institutions, political authority, and individual agency.

To the end, I am agreeing with Colin Sparks (2012) in recommending that researchers move "beyond political communication" towards "a broader perspective on the Chinese press". Sparks (2012) wrote that contemporary China deviate significantly from the classical totalitarian model, suggesting that Chinese media must be understood beyond the narrow focus of how far journalists can push boundaries within the political realm. A limited approach that centers solely on political science risks overlooking critical developments outside of overt political areas – development that could have significant implications for Chinese society and governance. Future study should adopt a more open-minded approach in examining the media landscape and should seek to understand the subtler dynamics at play, including cultural, economic, and social factors that influence journalistic practices and media systems in China.

References

Aalberg, T. & Curran.J. (2012). How Media Inform Democracy: A Comparative Approach. (Eds.). New York: Routledge.

Alasuutari, P., Qadir, A., & Creutz, K. (2013). The domestication of foreign news: News stories related to the 2011 Egyptian revolution in British, Finnish, and Pakistani newspapers. Media, Culture & Society, 35(6), 692-707.

Aldrete, M. (2023). Challenging the protest paradigm and winning legitimacy. Analysis of the representation of the social movement against femicide in the mainstream media in Mexico. Current Sociology 0(0). Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921231211578

Anderson, J., & Middleton, M. (2014a). Developments in empirical and rhetorical communication theory. Paper ICA Conference, Seattle.

Archetti, C. (2008). News coverage of 9/11 and the demise of the media flows, globalization and localization hypotheses. International Communication Gazette, 70(6), 463-485.

Arditi, B. (2012). Insurgencies don't have a plan, they are the plan: Political performatives and vanishing mediators in 2011. Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, 1(1), 1-16.

Ashley.E. & Xiao Qiang (2008). Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere. Asian Survey: A Bimonthly Review of Contemporary Asian Affairs. University of California Press. Vol.XL.VIII, No.5.

Babbie, E. (1986). Observing ourselves: Essays in social research. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Bochel, C. (2013) Petition systems: contributing to representative democracy?, Parliamentary Affairs, 66(4), 798–815.

Bockover, M. I. (2003). Confucian values and the Internet: a potential conflict. Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 30(2), 159-175.

Boege, V., Brown, M. A., & Clements, K. P. (2009). Hybrid political orders, not fragile states. Peace Review, 21(1), 13-21.

Bohman, J. (1996). Public deliberation: Pluralism, complexity and democracy. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bohman, J. (1997). Deliberative democracy and effective social freedom: capabilities, resources, and opportunities. In Bohman, J (Ed.), Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics (pp. 321-348). Massachusetts: MIT press.

Boomgaarden, H. G., De Vreese, C. H., Schuck, A. R., Azrout, R., Elenbaas, M., Van Spanje, J. H., & Vliegenthart, R. (2013). Across time and space: Explaining variation in news coverage of the European Union. European Journal of Political Research, 52(5), 608-629.

Bart Cammaerts (2015). Technologies of self-mediation: affordances and constraints of social media for protest movements.

Berger, A. (1991). Media research techniques. Newbury Park, CA:Sage.

Blumler, J., McLeod, J., & Rosengren, K. (1992). An introduction to comparative communication research.

Brad, W. (2016). Emotion shapes the diffusion of moralized content in social networks. Psychological and Cognitive Sciences. Vol.114.No.28.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2).pp.77-101. ISSN 1478-0887.

Brown D.K., & Mourao, R.R. (2021). Protest Coverage Matters: How Media Framing and Visual Communication Affects Support for Black Civil Rights Protests. Mass Communication and Society, 24(4). 576-596.

Brown D.K., Harlow S. (2019). Protests, media coverage, and a hierarchy of social struggle. The International Journal of Press/Politics 24(4): 508-530.

Brown. E. (2014, May 14). Timeline: Michael Brown Shooting in Ferguson, Mo. USA Today. Retrieved from: https://www.wbur.org/npr/201918229/judge-to-zimmerman-you-have-no-further-business-with-the-court

Bryman, A. (2016). Social Research Methods. Fifth edition, Oxford University Press.
Boyle, M.P., McCluskey, M.R., Devanathan, N., Stein, S.E., & McLeod, D. (2004). The Influence of Level of Deviance and Protest Type on Coverage of Social Protest in Wisconsin from 1960 to 1999. Mass Communication and Society, 7(1), 43-60.

Castells. M. (2009). Communication Power. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-956704-1.

Chan, J. & Lee, P. (1992). Mass Communication: Consumption and Evaluation. In Indicators of Social Development – Hong Kong 1990. Edited by: Lau, S., Wan,P., Lee, M. and Wong, S. 79-103. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong.
Chan, J., Lee, C.C. & Lee, P. (1992). Fighting Against the Odds: Hong Kong Journalists in Transition. Gazette, 50: 1-20.

Chan, R., & Lim, M.Z. (2013). May Day protesters voice mixed bag of woes: Other than population concerns, issues range from wages to language. The Straits Times.

Chan.J., & Lee, C.-C (1984). The Journalistic Paradigm on civil protests: A case study of Hong Kong. In A. Aron & W. Dissanayake (Eds.). The news media in national and international conflict (pp.183-202). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis. SAGE Publications Inc. ISBN -10 0-7619-7352-4.

Chen, H. (1998). On the uneven development of Chinese newspaper market. Hong Kong: Pacific Century.

Chen, L. (2003). On the nature of media monitoring and is problems in China. Journalism and Communication, 18-21.

Chong, D & Druckman, J. (2007). 'Framing Theory', The Annual Review of Political Science, 23.

Creswell, J. (2007). Data analysis and representation. In Creswell J. (Ed.), Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed., pp.179-212). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). Research design. Qualitative and mixed methods approaches. London: Sage.

Curran, J. (2002). Media and Power, London: Routledge.

Curran, J. (2011). Questioning a New Orthodoxy. In Communication and Society: Media and Democracy, edited by J.Curran, 28-46. London, England: Routledge.

Dai, W. (2013). Hybrid Journalists -- Chinese Journalists in an era of reform: their values and challenges. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford, UK.

D'Angelo, P. & Jim A. K. (2009). Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives. Routledge.

Danielle Dilgo & Rachel R. Mourao (2019). Media Effecta and Marginalized Ideas: Relationships Among Media Consumption and Support for Black Live Matter. International Journal of Communication 13(2019), 4287-4305.

Danielle, C.&Mario, J.S. (2021). Digital media and misinformation: An outlook on multidisciplinary strategies against manipulation. J Comput Soc Sci; 5(1):123-159.

Di Cicco, D.T. (2010). The public nuisance paradigm: Changes in mass media coverage of political protest since the 1960s. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 87(1), 135-153.

Edlestein, A. (1982). Comparative communication research. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. Journal of Communication, 43(4)9.

Entman, R.M., & Rojecki, A. (2001). The Black image in the White mind: Media and race in America. Chicago. IL: University of Chicago Press.

Eric Kit-wai Ma. (1999). Rethinking media studies. The case of China. 1st Edition, De-Westernizing media studies: Rouledge.p.12.

Esser, F., & Hanitzsch, T. (2012). The handbook on comparative communication research. London: Routledge.

Esser,F., & Hanitzsch, T. (2012). On the Why and How of Comparative Inquiry in Communication studies. In F. Esser & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), Handbook of Comparative Communication Research. London: Routledge, 3-22.

May, T., & Jacobs, A. (2019, September 26). Carrie Lam Comes Face to Face With Angry Hong Kong Residents at Town Hall. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/world/asia/carrie-lam-hong-kong-protests.html

Murderous violence in Hong Kong 'must not be tolerated': China's ambassador to UK. (2019, November 19).

Mourao R.R, Brown D.K. (2022). Black Lives Matters coverage: How protest news frames and attitudinal change affect social media engagement. Digital Journalism 10(4): 626-646.900.

Fang, K. (2021). Praise from the International Community: How China Sses Foreign Experts to Legitimize Authoritarian Rule. The China Journal, volume 87, number 1.

Fei, X.T. (1993) Rural China and rural reconstruction. Taipei: Strom & Stress Publishing.

Feng, H. (2001). What the duty of Party-communication in modern China. (in Chinese).

Finlay, L. (2021). Thematic analysis: The 'Good', the 'Bad' and the 'Ugly'. European Journal Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy, Volume11, 103-116.

Fisher, J. (2023). The regulation of political finance.

Fiske, A.P. (2002). Using individualism and collectivism to compare culture: A critique of the validity and measurement of the constructs: Comment on Oyserman et al. Psychological Bulletin, 128.78-88.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. Social Text, 25/26, 56-80.

Fung, A. & Lee, C.C. (1994). Hong Kong's Changing Media Ownership: Uncertainty and Dilemma. Gazette, 53:127-33.

Gao, M.C.F (2008). The battle for China's past Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Retrieved on June 2014.pp.xi,270p.).

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. Basic Books, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins Publisher, Inc.

Gelman, S.A. & Roberts, S.O. (2017). How language shapes the cultural inheritance of categories. See from https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1621073114

Geoffrey, G. (2012). Debates, Town-Hall Meetings and Media Interviews. ANU E Press, pp. 111-20.

Gitlin, T. (1980). The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gries, P. (2004). China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., & Namey, E.E. (2014). Introduction to Applied Thematic Analysis, In: Applied Thematic Analysis. SAGE Publications, Inc. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483384436

Guo, K (2002). Development Status and Trend of China's External Media in the past 30 years of reform and opening up [J]. International Communication, 2008, (11).

Hall, E.T. (1959). The Silent Language. Doubleday & Company, INC., Garden City, New York.

Hall.S. (2010). Racist ideologies and the media. In P.Marris & Thornham (Eds.), Media studies: A reader (pp.271-282). New York: NYU Press.

Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P.,(2012). Comparing Media Systems beyond the Western World. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press (Eds).

Hammersley, M. (2013). What is Qualitative Research? London and New York: Bloomsburry.

Harlow and Johnson (2011). The Arab Spring| Overthrowing the Protest Paradigm? How The New York Times, Global Voices and Twitter Covered the Egyptian Revolution.

Harlow, S., Salaverria, R., Brown, D., & Garcia-Perdomo, V. (2017). Protest Paradigm in Multimedia: Social Media Sharing of Coverage About the Crime of Ayotzinapa, Mexio. Journal of Communication. 67 (3): 1-22. Doi: 10.1111/jcom.12296.

Harlow, S., Salaverria, R., Kilgo.D.K., & Garcia-Perdomo, V. (2017) Protest paradigm in multimedia: Social media sharing of coverage about the crime of Ayotzinapa, Mexco. Journal of Communication, 67(3), 328-349.

Hasty, J. (2005). The Press and Political Culture in Ghana. Indiana University Press.

He, Z. (2000). Chinese communist party press in a Tug-of-War: A political-economy analysis of the Shenzhen special zone daily.

Herbermas, J. (1989). The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society. (T. Burger and F. Lawrence, trans.) Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hertog.J.K., & McLeod, D.M (2001). A multiperspectival approach to framing analysis: A field guide. In S.D.Reese.O.H. Gandy, & A.E.Grant (Eds.). framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world (pp.139-161). Mahwah. NJ: Erlbaum.

Hertog.J.K., & McLeod, D.M. (1995). Anarchists Wreak havoc in downtown Minneapolis: A multi-level study of media coverage of radical protest. Journalism and Mass Communication Monographs, 151. 1-48.

Huang, C,J. (2007). Editorial: From Control to Negotiation: Chinese Media in the 2000s. The International Communication Gazette. Doi: 10.1177/1748048507080863.

Huang, Y. (2013). Governing health in contemporary China. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Huang, Yi-Hui. (2009). Theorizing Chinese Communication research: a holistic framework for comparative studies.

Huang, Z,Z. (2002). "Public Sphere" and "Civil Society" in China? -- The third sphere between the state and society. In Deng Zhenglai, [Eng] J. C. Alexander (Ed.)

(2002). The State and Civil society ---- A research approach to social theory. Beijing: Central Compilation Publishing House, 1993.

Iyengar, S. (1991). Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacobs, R.N. (2000). Race, media and the crisis of civil society: From Watts to Rodney King. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

James.C & Myung-Jin, P. (1999). De-Westernizing Media Studies. 1ˢᵗ Edition, London, Routledge, eBook ISBN:9780203981764.

Jim, M. (2005). Media Content Analysis: Its Uses, Benefits and Best Practice Methodology. Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal, 6(1), 1-34.

Jensen S.Q. (2011). Othering, identity formation and agency. Qualitative studies 2(2):63-78.

Jin, C.R. (2006). China's diplomacy involves listening to China's voice in the wide world [J]. World Knowledge, 2006, (7).

Kaarle, N (2006). Media and Society: In search of models. Gorbachev Foundation & Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University.

Kaarle, N.(2000). Few Voices, Many Worlds: Towards a Media Reform Movement (editor with Michael Traber). London: World Association of Christian Communication.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology (1845-1846)

Khalid,D. Andreas, E. Walid, D. Tim, K., & Nils, A (2023). Visual audience gatekeeping on social media platforms: A cirtical investigation on visual information diffusion before and during the Russo-Ukrainian War. Information systems journal: https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12483

Kellner, D. (1993). Critical Theory Today: Revisiting the Classics. SAGE Journals. 10(2). Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/026327693010002002

Kerem, Y. & Herbert, K. (2020). Analytical perspectives on varieties of clientelism. Democratization 2020, VOL.27, No.1, 20-43.

Kilgo. D.K., & Harlow.S. (2019). Press, protests and a hierarchy of social struggle. The International Journal of Press/Politics. Advance online publication. Doi: 10.1177/1940161219853517

Krippendorff, K. (2013). Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology. Third Edition. Sage Publications, Inc.

Kuang 2018, Ernst 2022, Repnikova 2017, MK Dimitroy 2017, Fan et al., 2019

Lasswell, H. (1927). Propaganda techniques in the world war. New York: Knopf.

Latham.K (2000). Nothing but the Truth: News Media, Power and Hegemony in South China.

Lee, C-C. (2001). Media and Democracy in Asia. The Public, 8(2):13.

Lee, F.L.F. (2014). Triggering the protest paradigm: Examining factors affecting news coverage of protests. International Journal of Communication, 8(2014), 2725-2746.

Lee, P. (1992). Media and Communications. In The Other Hong Kong Report, Edition by Cheng, J & Kwong, P. 383-403. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Lee, P.S.N. & Chu, L.L. (1995). Hong Kong media system in transition: A socio-cultural analysis. Asian Journal of Communication, 5(2).pp. 90-107. Doi: 10.1080/01292989509364725.

Lee, P.S.N., So, C.Y.K., & Leung, L. (2015). Social media and Umbrella Movement: insurgent public sphere in formation. Chinese Journal of Communication, 8(4), 356-375.

Lee.F.L.F & Chen.J.M. (2013). Exploring Hong Kong as the "movement society": An analysis of the form and development of contentious collective action of Hong Kong. In S.K.Cheung, K.C.Leung, & K.M.Chan (Eds). Hong Kong, discourse, media (pp.243-269). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press. (in Chinese).

Leese, D. (2011). Mao Cult Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution.pp.328.

Leung, K, & Chan, M., (1995). New Perspectives on Communication Laws (Eds.), Hong Kong: Commercial Press.

Leung,D., & Lee, F. (2014). Cultivating an active online counterpublic: Examining usage and political impact of Internet alternative media. International Journal of Press/Politics, 19(3), 340-359.

Li, P. (2005). Social Conflict and Class consciousness: A Study of Local Chinese Social Contradictions. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005.

Li, Y.H. (2006). Group Sketch and Social identity construction of a "Different crowd": A narrative analysis of news reports of "Migrant workers" in

contemporary city newspapers. Journal of Journalism and Communication Research, (2), 2006.

Lin,F. & Zhao D, X. (2008). News and Social Movements in China under the Absence of hegemonic Culture. Journal of Communication and Society (Hong Kong). (5), 2008.

Liu, N. (2004). Resentment Explanation, Mobilization Structure and Rational choice ---- An analysis of the possibility of collective action in urban areas of China. Open Age (4), 2004.

Liu, Y (2006). Impressions of Tibet in French media reports ---- A Case study of Le Monde [J]. Chinese Tibetology, 2006, (4).

Liu,N. (2008). Some Theoretical Reflections on Collective Action in Contemporary China ----- Observations based on empirical cases. Open Times. (4), 2008.

Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C.C. (2005). Practical Resources for Assessing and Reporting Intercoder Reliability in Content Analysis Research Projects.

Lu, X. (2004). Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: the Impact on Chinese thought, Culture, and Communication. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Lu, X. and Benson, T. (2004). Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Columbia: University of South Carolina.

Lu, Y. & Pan Z, D. (2002). The Imagination of Fame: Journalistic professionalism in China's Social Transformation. Research in Journalism. (71), 2002.

Lu, Y. (1998). Chinese News in Hong Kong Chinese Newspapers: A Framework study of News Texts. Journalism University. (2), 1998.

Luo 2014, Zhang 2023

Ma, E., & Chan, J. (2004). SARS, talk radio, and public opinion apparatus in Hong Kong.

Ma, L (2007). Study on Arab Islam in the Context of Western Hegemony [M]. Beijing: Jiji Press, 2007.

Mao, Z. (1972). A Talk to the Editorial Staff of the Shansi-Suiyuan Daily's Selected Works. Vol. IV. Beijing: Foreign Language Press.

Mark, C-K. (2012). China and the world since 1945 an international history: The Making of the Contemporary world. pp.xiii.144.p.Retrieved on 7 June 2014.

Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1845). The German Ideology, Moscow: Progress Publishers

McLeod, D.M., & Hertog,J.K. (1999). The manufacture of public opinion by reporters: Informal cues for public perceptions of protests groups. Discourse & Society, 3(3), 259-275.

Michelle F.Weinberger (2008). A Cultural Perspective on Experientialism

Neuendorf, K. (2002). The Content Analysis Guidebook. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Neuman, W. (1997). Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches. Needham Heights. MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Norris, Pippa (2008). Cultural Convergence: Cosmopolitan Communications and National Diversity. Harvard Kennedy School.

Norris.P. (2000). A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Oren.L, Tasha G. & Petro, P.(2004). Global Currents: Media and Technology Now.

Ostini.Y, Jennifer and F, A.Y. H (2002). Beyond the Four Theories of the Press: A New Model of National Media Systems. Mass Communication & Society.

Pan 2008, Wang 2006

Pan, Z. (1997). System Reconstruction in China's Press Reform. Journalism and Communication Research. (3), 1997.

Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. (1997). Swiching trains of thought: The imopact of news frames on readers' cognitive response . Communicaton research, 24(5), 481-506.

Papioannou, T. (2015), Overcoming the Protest Paradigm? Framing of the 2013 Cypriot Protests in International Online News Media. The Cyprus Review, 27(1).35-69.

Pei, Y. (2008). Chinese Concept of "Power" (I). Foreign Theoretical Trends. (2), 2008.

Peters, A., Hothorn, T. & Lausen, B. (2002), Ipred: Improved predictors. R news, Vol.2.No.2,pp.33-36.

Ramos, D.C. (2014). High Context. In S. Thompson (ed.), Encyclopedia of diversity and social justice. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Retrieved from:

http://db19.linccweb.org/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/ent ry/rowmandasj/high_context/0.

Reese, S.D. (2010). Finding Frames in a Web of Culture: The case of the War on Terror. In P.D'Angelo & J.A.Kuypers (Eds.). Doing news framing analysis: empirical and theoretical perspectives. New York: London, Routledge.

Reese, S.D., & Lewis, S. (2009). Framing the War on Terror. The internalization of policy in the US Press. Vol.10(6): 777-797.

Research on the Communication Effect of Chinese English Media [J]. International Media, 2002, (4).Mass communication and Social movements: Perspectives from Frame Theory.] ** Master Thesis, Institute of Journalism, National Chengchi University, 1994.

Reul, R., Paulussen, S., Raeijmaekers, D., van der Steen, L., & Maessele, P. (2016). Professional journalistic routines and the protest paradigm: the Big Potato Swap in traditional ad alternative media. Journalism, doi: 10.1177/1464884916636170.

Riessman, C.K. (2007). Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences. CA, USA: SAGE Publications.

Riffe, D., & Freitag, A. (1997). A content analysis of content analyses: twenty-five years of Journalism Quarterly. Journalism and Mass communication Quarterly, 74, 873-882.

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. (1998). Analysing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Rong, J. (1998). Transformation from pressure System to Democratic Cooperation System: Reform of political system at county and township levels. Beijing: Central Compilation Publishing House, 1998.

Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes. Field Methods, Vol.15.No.1, pp.85-109.

Saldana, J. (2013). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. SAGE. ISBN: 978-1-44624-736-5.

Sandra.J, Jan.B and Heidi Houlberg.S (2021). Exploring Media-Covered Accountability of Public Agencies. Administration and Society. Volume 54, Issue4, April 2022,pp.575-604.

Sarah J. Jackson and Brooke Foucault Welles (2015). Hijacking myNYPD: Social Media Dissent and Networked Counterpublics. Department of Communication Studies. Northeastern University, Boston MA 617-373-2000. USA

Sigal, L.V. (1986). Sources make the news. In R.K.Mannoff & M. Schudson (Eds.). Reading the News (pp.9-37). Pantheon Books.

Stroobant, J., De Dobbelaer, R., & Raeymaeckers, K. (2018). Tracing the sources. Journalism Practice, 12(3), 334-361.

Schemer, C., Wirth, W. & Matthes, J. (2012). Value Resonance and Value Framing Effects on Voting Intentions in Direct-Democratic Campaigns. American Behavioral Scientist, Vol.56.No.3, pp-334-352.

Shahin, S., Zheng, P., Sturm, H.A., & Fadnis, D. (2016). Protesting the paradigm: A comparative study of news coverage of protests in Brazil, China and India. International Journal of Press/Politics, 21(2), 143-164.

Sheafer, T. and Gabay I. (2009). Mediated Public Diplomacy: A Strategic Contest over International Agenda Building and Frame Building, Political Communication, 26 (4), 447-467.

Sieff, M. (2008). Africa: Many Hills to Climb, World Policy Journal, 25(3), 185-195.

Soderlund, W.C., Briggs, E.D, Najem, T.P., and Roberts, B.C. (2012). Africa's Deadliest Conflict: Media Coverage of the Humanitarian Disaster in the Congo and the United Nations response, 1997-2008. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Shambaugh, D. (2007). China's Propaganda System" Institutions, Processes and Efficacy. The China Journal (57).p.33.

Shoemaker, P. & Reese, S. (1996). Mediating the message: theories of influences on mass media content. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese,S.D. (1996). Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content. 2nd ed, Longman, White Plains, N.Y.

Struve, B. (2019). The Chinese print media's reporting of domestic 'terrorist' attacks: ideographs, social values and counter-terrorism frames. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow.

Siebert,F.S., T. Peterson, & W. Schramm (1956). Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do. Urbana, IL:Univ.of Illinois Press.

Smith, J., McCarthy, J., McPhail, C. (2001). From protest to agenda building: Description bias in media coverage of protest events in Washington,DC. Social Forces 79(4): 1397-1423.

Sparks. C (2013). Global media studies: its development and dilemmas. Media, Culture & Society. 35(1) 121-131.

Sparks.C (2017). Can We Compare Media Systems? Advancing Comparative Media and Communication Research 1st Edition, eBook ISBN: 9781315179285.

Spence, A., & Pidgeon, N. (2010). Framing and communicating climate change: The effects of distance and outcome frame manipulations. Gobal Environmental Change, 20(4, 656-667.

Shoemaker, P.J. (1984). Media treatment of deviant political groups. Journalism quarterly, 61(1), 66-82.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basic of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA:Sage.

Strivastav 2015, cited by Mandla 2023

Sun, J.S (2008). Language, Identity and International Order: A Study of Post-Constructivism. World Economics and Politics, 2008, (5).

Tan, J. (2017). Adherence to the protest paradigm? An examination of Singapore's news coverage of Speakers' Corner protests from 2000 to 2015. See: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/

Tang. L. (2016). Social media and outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases: A systematic review of literature. American Journal of Infection Control. Volume 46, Issue 9, pp.962-972.

Thomson, T.J., & Greenwood, K. (2017). I "Like" that: Exploring the characteristics that promote social media engagement with news photographs. Visual Communication Quarterly, 24(4), 203-218.

Turner, J.C., Brown, R.J., & Taijel, H. (1979). Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favoritism. European Journal of social psychology, 9(2), 187-204.

Thussu, D. (2018). A new global communication order for a multipolar world. Communication Research and Practice, 4(1), 52-66.

Tuchman, G. (1972). Objectivity as strategic ritual: An examination of newsmen's notions of objectivity. American Journal of Sociology. 77(4). 660-679.

Tufekci, Z. & Willson, C. (2012). Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. Journal of Communication, 62-363-379.

Tushnet, M. (2015). Advanced Introduction to Freedom of Expression. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Vaismoradi, M., Turune, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. Nurs Health Sci. Sep; 15(3):398-405. Doi: 10.1111/nhs.12048.

van Dijck.J. (2013). The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media. Oxford. New York: Oxford University Press.

Vilmer. J. (2018). Information Manipulation: A Challenge for Our Democracies. ISBN: 978-2-11-152607-5.

Vicari, S. (2010). Measuring collective action frames: A linguistic approach to frame analysis. Politics 38:504-25.

Voltmer, K. (2008). Comparing Media Systems in New Democracies: East Meets South Meets West. Central European Journal of Communication, 1:1.

Von Pape, T., Quandt, T., Hanitzsch, T., & Waiuberg. J. (2013). Countries of interest. In A. A. Cohen (Ed.), Foreign news on television: Where in the world is the global village? New York: Peter Lang.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1988). News as Discourse. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1996). Discourse Studies: A multidisciplinary introduction (2 Volumes). In Richardson, J. E (2007) Analysing Newspapers: an approach from critical discourse analysis. Houndmills: Palgrave.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1991). Racism and the Press. London: Routledge.

Van Gorp, Baldwin (2009). Strategies to take subjectivity out of framing analysis. In D'Angelo and J. Kuypers (Eds.) (2009). Doing news framing analysis: Empirical, theoretical, and normative perspectives. New York: Routledge.

Vreese, C. H. de (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. Information Design Journal, Document Design 13 (1), 51-62.

Walejko. Q., Gina, V.,& Ksiazek,T. (2008). The Politics of Sourcing: A Study of Journalistic Practices in the Blogosphere. Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence. www.aaai.org

Wang, X. (2006). Exploring Sample Sizes For Content Analysis Of Online News Sites. Submitted to the Communication Theory & Methodology Division, AEJMC.

Wang, Y. (2004). Victims of the Cultural Revolution – An Investigative Account oof Persecution, Imprisonment and Murder. Hong Kong: Kaifang Magazine Press.

Wei, S. (2007). Who Are We: Mass Media's Collective Identity Construction for New Social Movement -- A Case study of mass media coverage of the PX Project in Xiamen. University of Journalism. (3), 2007.

Wimmer, R.D & Dominick, J.R. (2014). Mass Media Research: An Introduction. Ninth Edition.

Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (2011). Mass media research: An introduction. Wadsworth series in mass communication and journalism, 9th ed, Cegage-Wadsworth, Boston, Mass.

Wolfsfeld, G. (2011). Making sense of media and politics: Five principles in political communication. Routledge, New York.

Xia, Q., & Zhang Mingxin. News Frame and Fixed Prejudice: Party Member image and Elite Image in mainstream newspapers in Mainland China from 1979 to 2005. Journalism and Communication Research, No.2, 2007, p. 31.

Xu,K. (2013). Framing Occupy Wall Street: A Content Analysis of The New York Times and USA Today. International Journal of Communication, 7, 2412-2432.

Yin, J.F. (2008). Beyond the Four Theories of the Press: A New Model for the Asian & the World. Press, Journalism & Communication Monographs, vol. 10, pp. 13-62.

Yuezhi Zhao (2012). Understanding China's media system in a world historical context. Cited in HallinD.C. & Mancini.P. Comparing media systems beyond the Western world 2012. Cambridge University Press.

Yeung, J., Griffiths, J., & Regan, H. (2019, November 13). Carrie Lam says she has confidence in police watchdog. Retrieved from https://www.cnn.com/asia/live-news/hong-kong-protests- nov-11-intl-hnk/h_b965e2b946b93c1a0637746120408f2c

Zeldes, G.A., Fico, F. & Lacy, S. (2008). Context and Sources in Broadcast Television Coverage of the 2004 Democratic Primary. Mass Communication and Society, Vol.11 No.3.pp. 340-356.

Zhang, D., & Xu, Y. (2022). When Nationalism Encounters the COVID-19 Pandemic: Understanding Chinese Nationalism From Media Use and Media Trust. Global Society, 37(2), 176-196.

Zhang, G.L. (1998). Modern Mass Communication. Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1998, pp. 153-161.

Zhang, W,X. & Li W, Y. (2007). Review on Constructivism Theory of national Interest [J]. Foreign Theory Trends, 2007, (8).

Zhang, X.L. (2009). Chinese State Media Going Global. Background Briefs, East Asian Institute, the National University of Singapore.

Zhao (1998). Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom line. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1998.

Zhao, L (2007). Understanding the Three dimensions of China's soft Power: Cultural diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy and foreign aid Policy [J]. Social Science Forum. 2007, (9).

Zhao, L. (2004). From commercialization to conglomeration: The transformation of the Chinese press within the Orbit of the Party State. Journal of Communication. 50(2).3-26.

Zhao, Y. (1989). Media, Market, and Democracy in China. Urbana- Champagne: University of Illinois Press.

Zhao, Y. (1998). Media, Market, and Democracy in China: between the party line and the bottom line. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Zhou, R (2006). Research on the Image of China in the Distant ---- in the West [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006.

Zylinska (2022), 'The Future of Media', Edited by Joanna Zylinska with Goldsmiths Media. ISBN 978-1-913380-14-4 (pbk).

Appendix

Codebook and questions

1. Name of protests
   2014 OCLP = 1; 2019 Antigovernment = 2
2. Newspapers
   People's Daily = 1
   SCMP = 2
   Wen Wei Po = 3
   Oriental Daily = 4
3. Date of article published
   _____(dd/mm)

Code for each frame, if the frame present code 1; absence code 2 (each article allows only one frame)

4. Is the story use the marginalization frame to describe the event?
   a) Does the story mention the violence crime rather than relaying the messages or protest? YES or No (Brown 2019, Lee 2014)
   b) Does the story mention property crime? (focus on vandalism and destruction) Yes or No (McLeod 2007)
   c) Does the story mention the carnival? (a focus on theatrics) Yes or No
   d) Does the story focus on freak shows? (a focus on deviance and eccentricities rather than theatrics)? Yes or No (Dardis 2006)
5. Is the story use the violence frame to describe the event? (Please note, if violence variable be identified, please go to 11 categories for sub-frame code *police issues*, if violence frame absence, end of code for sub-frame)
   a) Did the article mention any attacks on persons happened in protest? (it defines a person, group, or institution is harmed, injured, or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action) Yes or No (Dardis 2006, Lee 2014, McLeod 1995)
   b) Did the article highlight the spectacle and sensationalism? Yes or No (Dardis 2006)
   c) Did the story focus on negative consequences of the protests such as property damage; traffic congestion; disruption of institutional processes; expenditure of community resources? Yes or No (Reul et al., 2018, McLeod 2007)
   d) Does the article emphasis the abuse of the police force (including the weapon; strategies and tactics they may use) Yes or No (Chan and Lee 1984, McLeod 2007)
6. Is the story use the conflict frame to describe the event?
   a) Did the article mention denotive and connotative beyond the protest? Yes or No (Amenta et al., 2017)
   b) Did the article mention two (or more) actors stand in opposition to each other, have different motivations, aims, strategies, frames of reverence? Yes or No (McLeod 2007, Entman 1993)
   c) Did the article mention any kind of problem or conflict that eventually requires a solution? (e.g., conflict will be fixed or not) Yes or No
7. Is the story use the legitimization frame to describe the event?

a) Does the story emphasis the issues behind the protests? Yes or No (Shahin et al., 2016, Wouters 2015, Harlow et al., 2017)
b) Does the article cited more protest sources, focusing on aggressive by law enforcement? Yes or No (Harlow et al., 2017)
8. Is the story use the delegitimization frame to describe the event?
   a) Did the article mention the protest lack of credibility? Yes or No (Blumer and Gurevitch 1995)
   b) Did the article mention the protest are self-interest not representing society or not being supported by the society majority? Yes or No (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990)
   c) Did the article mention the protest lack of unity, focus, or organization? Yes or No (Dardis 2006)
9. Is the story use the nationalism frame to describe the event?
   a) Did the article mention the nation's interests? (includes national security; national ethics; national sentiments; national loyal) Yes or No (Zhao 2004)
   b) Did the article mention the national identity (includes the historical)? Yes or No (Zhang 2000)
   c) Does the article emphasis the "us/them" discourse – the two opposing identities of individuals/groups? Yes or No (Sun 2002, Peter 2006, Law 2001-)
   (note keywords for nationalism frame may sentences presented: patriotic, motherland, national flag, Chinese people, anti-PRC, anti-China, sovereignty, Hong Kong separatist, external forces, Western, intervention, interference)

Code for Episodic vs. Thematic framing (Iyengar 1991)
(Note: Episodic stories depict issues as individual or event-specific instances not connected to a broader context. These stories may focus on a one-time event or on one group or person rather than a succession of events or society as whole. An example of an episodic news story about democracy might be a story that reports test scores for a political movement and attributes the low scores to democracy definition in the district without exploring other possible causes, such as democracy protests or a new type of test question. Stories will be identified as episodic if the story topic is a one-time event, if the story topic covered is a one-time event, if the story's content uses a person as a human interest or emotional hook and the story's content assigns responsibility to a specific person, group, or cause.

Thematic stories give the broader context if issues. They speak of larger bodies, such as whole institutions, countries, or groups of people to explain a larger issue instead of using single events or people. These stories usually have less of a personal focus. They cover ongoing issues and may offer solutions. An example of a thematic news story about democracy could be a story reporting on the relationship between Hong Kong society and Mainland China society and causes or solutions are offered to provide a broader context to the story).

10. Overall, is the article more episodic or thematic (please choose one)

Episodic = 1
Thematic = 2
11. Sub-frame policing issues (Harlow et al., 2020, Brown 2021)
   a) Does the article mention who caused the violence in the protest? 1 = Police, 2 = Protester, 3 =Both, 4 = None
   b) Does the article mention how to solution of the police issues? (e.g., journalist adds to the solution for police issues, a negotiation party pushes the progress by bringing up suggestions; interests between opponents are balanced) 1 = Yes, 2 = No

Note: for sub-frame only be coded once the violence framing has been identified first. Several elements needs to be considered, which may help to discover how the media shape policing issues within the protest paradigm: 1) violence/damage; 2) repression; 3) oppression; and 4) blame (Harlow et al., 2020)

Code Source, if the source presented in the article, please tick the box
(Note: please code all the sources may be cited in the article. The source can be identified by direct quote or "" --- double quotation marks. The source of the same identity is only recorded once if it has been used many times. In most cases, an article's introduction allows for an unambiguous identification of the person (s)).

12. HKSARGOV. Official spokesmen
13. HK Administration
14. HK Leadership
15. Police
16. China Central government official spokesmen
17. Beijing Central government leadership
18. Protester
19. Bystander
20. Ordinary People
21. Celebrate
22. Expert
23. Civil Society
24. Foreign Leader/politician
25. Alternative Media
26. Foreign Media
27. Anonymous
28. Others

Open coding for RQ3
29. Does the article mention the "democracy" or address the relevant issues in text, if code Yes, please continue; if No, please end of code.
30. Please decide what the story's main argument is about for "democracy" (write down)

_____
31. Please find what is the result of the protest taken/How does the story end/or any conclusions they have given for democracy debate?

32. Please find any statement that article given for "democracy" discussion, and write it down
_____
(Note, the coding unit statement cannot be defined ex ante by formal criteria. Some verbs and conjugated forms may indicating a point of view or position that is to be interpreted as an external actor's statement include, but are not limited to: accept, according to, admit, advise, advocate, affirm, allude to, announce, answer, apologize, appeal, appraise, appreciate, approve, argue, ask, assume, assure, back, beg, believe, bring forward, call, caution, challenge, choose, commend, comment, compliment, concede, condemn, confess, confide, confirm, consider, contradict, covet, criticize, debate, decide, decline, declare, deem, demand, describe, desire, disagree, disapprove, disclaim, disclose, dislike, dismiss, disregard, doubt, dread, emphasize, endorse, estimate, expect, explain, express, favor, fear, feel, guess, highlight, hint, hope, implore, imply, indicate, inform, judge, lament, like, make clear, make an explanation, mean, mention, note, notify, object, opine, place emphasis on, plead, pledge, point out, praise, prefer, presume, proclaim, promise, pronounce, propose, publish, raise concern, reckon, recommend, regard, refuse, regret, reject, remark, repeal, report, request, reveal, revoke, root for, say, seek, signal, solicit, speak, state, stress, suggest, support, suppose, suspect, sympathize, tell, trust, underline, underscore, urge, value, voice, vote, want, warn, wish, worry, would like, write).

33. Does there has any information around "democracy" needs to know? (Includes the tone, description, narrative styles), please write down
_____

Hierarchical Rules for Coding and Classifying Variables (violence, conflict, marginalization, delegitimization, legitimization, and nationalism)

1. Define Frames Clearly, see 4) to 11)
2. **Contextualize in Theoretical Framework**
   a) Frames serves as **variables** for analyzing media's role in shaping public opinion about protests;
   b) Using frames operationalized as variables aligns with framing theory's emphasis on issue salience and problem definition;
   c) Frames act as analytical tool in thematic coding, helps coder map broader narratives to micro-level textual elements.

3. Distinguish between Frames and Themes
   Frames: conceptual categories with operational definitions that guide the coding process and function as variables for analysis
   Themes: patterns of meaning emerging from the data that often overlap with frames but do not necessarily align with pre-defined variables.

4. **Classification Rules for Overlapping Sentences**
   Rule1: Prioritize Salience
      - If a sentence reflects multiple frames (e.g., violence and conflict), prioritize the most salient variable based on word choice, emphasis, and explicit content.
      - Example: "The protest erupted into violent clashes as both sides refused to negotiate" is violence-oriented, as the term "violent clashes" is explicit, even if conflict is implied.
   Rule2: Distinguish Intent
      - Use the sentence's context and intent to determine the primary frame.
      - Violence is event-specific (physical harm), while conflict emphasizes disputes or opposition (abstract tension).
   Rule3: Hierarchy of frames
      If salience and context do not resolve overlap, apply a hierarchical coding order:
      a). Violence (explicit physical harm always supersedes other variables).
      b). Conflict (if no violence, but tension or disagreement is evident).
      c). Marginalization (if the subject group is framed as irrelevant or powerless).
      d). Delegitimization (if protest demands or actions are framed as invalid).
      e). Legitimization (if the protests are validated or their rationale supported).
      f). Nationalism (if patriotic or anti-foreign narratives dominate the sentence).
   Rule4: Sentence Aggregation
      - Unit of Analysis: If one article or report contains multiple sentences reflecting different frames, classify the article based on the dominant frame observed throughout.
   Rule5: Ensuring reliability
      1) Run a pilot study;
      2) Refine definitions and rules based on results of pilot study, observed during coding and re-testing;
      3) Maintain a codebook with operational definitions, examples, and hierarchical rules, for example:

Article Sentence:
"The protesters and police clashed violently in a standoff that highlighted the deep divisions within the country."

- Violence Frame: "Clashed violently" suggests physical harm as the primary focus.
- Conflict Frame: "Standoff" and "deep divisions" indicate ongoing opposition between parties.
- Classification: Violence-oriented due to the salience of "clashed violently" and the hierarchical coding rule prioritizing violence over conflict.