News Framework of China and the Philippines on the South China Sea Issue: Taking China Daily and Manila Times as Examples

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Abstract: *The South China Sea issue is a national territorial issue and an international dispute that affects the peace, stability and security of the world. During this period, the news organizations of both countries have also given many descriptions of this dispute. Therefore, this paper compares the differences in the descriptions of the dispute between the two countries by studying the reporting frameworks of news organizations representative of the two countries, and the China Dailyand Manila Times was selected for this study.on the South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines from 2013 to 2015 as samples, to examine the characteristics and differences of newspaper frameworks constructed by newspapers in China and the Philippines. This study demonstrated through framework analysis that China's external communication structure in this conflict is sovereignty, resolute defense, accountability, problem-solving, and non acceptance of arbitration. This article also studied the reports on the conflict between China and the Philippines by China Daily and Manila Times at the same time. It was found that although China Daily presented a relatively complete news schema, its overall structure was more formulaic and singular. Compared with the reports on the Philippines, it was found that the specific content was insufficient and had a distinct emotional color. A panoramic schematic structure should be constructed afterwards to showcase the specific process, in order to better spread China's voice to the world and guide international public opinion.*

Keywords: South China Sea Issue; News Framework; China Daily; Manila Times; Communication Discourse Structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article uses Zang Guoren [1]'s "three-level framework theory" as the theoretical framework to compare and analyze the reports of Manila Times and China Daily on the South China Sea. The study shows that there are significant differences in reporting between the two news media.

The South China Sea dispute, which took place in the 1960s and 1970s, is mainly a dispute over sovereignty over islands and reefs and a maritime boundary dispute between China and South-East Asian countries. The dispute involved two aspects: the first is the claim by South-East Asian countries to territorial sovereignty over China's islands in the South China Sea and the occupation of some of the islands and reefs, which creates territorial problems; the second is that with the development of the law of the sea, disputes have arisen among countries regarding the delimitation of exclusive economic waters and continental shelves. During this period, China and countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines experienced constant friction on the South China Sea issue. In 1997, the Philippines banned Chinese fishing boats from entering Huangyan Island. The subsequent Ren'ai Reef incident directly became the trigger for the outbreak of the South China Sea issue, prompting the Philippines to file a lawsuit with the International Court of Arbitration. In 2013, the "South China Sea Arbitration Case" brought the event to a climax. The South China Sea issue has been widely discussed internationally, with the most intense discussion taking place in newspaper institutions of both countries, such as China Daily and Manila Times. China Daily is an English language daily on the Chinese Mainland. Founded in 1981, it is the only national English language daily of the Chinese government. It aims to provide international readers with Chinese news, current affairs commentary and cultural information. As one of the media led by the Chinese government, China Daily plays an important role on the international stage, providing a window for foreign readers to understand China [2]. The Manila Times is an English language daily newspaper in the Philippines, founded in 1898. It is considered an important observer and reporter of political, business, and social dynamics in the Philippines. The newspaper also provides news content to global readers through its website and social media platforms [3]. Although these two news media are international newspapers, they still represent the interests of their respective countries. This article compares the differences in their reporting on the South China Sea issue and studies the bias of their reporting frameworks.

The differences in reporting on the South China Sea incident by representative international news media from the two countries are studied to explore the role of news frameworks in news reporting. This helps to understand the role and influence of the media on international political issues, and has important implications for guiding public opinion and international relations. It can also provide examples and references for international news reporting. Understanding the news frameworks and reporting methods of different countries in reporting on international affairs can help improve the level and objectivity of international news reporting [4].

The study aims to understand the positions and public opinion orientation of China and the Philippines on the South China Sea issue, providing important references for the maintenance of bilateral relations, regional stability, and international order. At the same time, it also helps to reveal the media's reporting methods and public opinion orientation on the South China Sea issue, provide comprehensive and objective information to the public, and promote rational discussion and resolution of the South China Sea issue.

2. RELATED WORKS

In previous studies, scholars have conducted in-depth analysis and exploration of the China Philippines South China Sea dispute, revealing the multiple factors and impacts of this complex issue from different perspectives. Han Z et al. established a framework for analyzing disputes in the South China Sea and a geopolitical impact model based on the human marine regional system. They utilized Goldstein scores and mentions of events in global event, voice, and speech databases to build a hedging model representing the development of Philippine hedging toward China. The study showed that the complexity of natural, social, and relational attributes in the geographic system of human maritime relations had a profound impact on the Philippines' perception of the Chinese threat, which is the underlying reason for the hedging strategy. The study also suggested that the political game between China and the United States is the driving force behind the South China Sea issue, bringing a new participant to the analysis of the South China Sea incident [5].

In terms of news dissemination translation, Qin B et al. studied the reconstruction narrative and instantiation stance in the news translation of the China Philippines South China Sea dispute, integrated attitude frameworks and reconstruction strategies. The article analyzed and interpreted the reports of mainstream Chinese news media on the South China Sea issue, and found that there are slight differences in Chinese and British reporting, but the Philippines is also seen as a negative image in newspapers [6]. Meanwhile, Castro R C D discussed in the article the transition of the Philippine policy towards China under the leadership of the Duterte administration from appeasement to soft balance [7].

Based on these studies, it can be seen that the South China Sea issue is not only influenced by geopolitical influence and systemic pressures of competitive games, but also by the language and stance choices of news reports. These studies provide a basis for a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the South China Sea issue, and help to reveal the complexity of the South China Sea dispute and its impact on the regional political landscape and international relations. This article combines the above research perspectives and uses framework theory to analyze the differences in reporting between China and the Philippines on the South China Sea issue.

3. METHODS

3.1 Framework Theory

Frames are ways of understanding and interpreting each other's symbols, a set of rules of interpretation agreed upon by both parties [8]. In everyday communication, people form symbol systems and reach a consensus on the meaning and use of each symbol. The meanings of these symbols arise from long-term social interactions and are recognized and pursued by many people. Frames can therefore be seen as the basis for understanding and communication, helping people to communicate better and understand each other's intentions and meanings. The book "Framework Analysis" published by sociologist E. Goffman in 1974 had a direct impact on the study of news frameworks [9]. "Framing is seen in this book as an "interpretive schema" that can influence people's perception and interpretation of social events. According to Goffman, social events are inherently chaotic and disorganized, and human cognitive abilities are limited, so frames are needed to locate, perceive, identify, and label events. The presence of frames allows people to sift, emphasize and reproduce information, which in turn creates an understanding and perception of social phenomena[10]. It is "the standard for selecting, emphasizing, and expressing existence, production, and meaning"[11]. The definition of frameworks can be divided into three categories: The first category of definitions is more interested in the effectiveness of message delivery frames and

sees them as a way to influence audience perception. The second category of definitions views framing as an active process of meaningful production and emphasizes its active role in message construction and delivery. Definitions in the third category further deepen the importance of framing by considering it not only as production but also as a method of regular screening [12]. People follow certain rules in constructing opinions and attitudes to form categories with specific meanings. Over time, people tend to see a frame as a specific cognitive framework for understanding something, understanding and explaining the use of it. This fixed framework can connect seemingly unrelated things to form a complete cognitive system.

The news framework proposed by Taiwanese scholar Zang Guoren is an important concept in his three-stage framework theory, which refers to the fixed form that a specific newspaper presents in all news reports based on various texts. Zang Guoren believed the real journey of framing is the process of selecting and reorganizing the content of the news story, which ultimately constitutes the frame of reality. He states that all three types of reality have high, medium and low levels of framing [13]. The high level defines the thematic event and includes an overall understanding and orientation of the event. The intermediate level includes several aspects such as significant events, historical context, past events, outcomes, impacts, attributions, and evaluations, which together form a more detailed and comprehensive description of the event [14]. On the other hand, the lower level is a representation of a frame composed of language or symbols that includes individual words, phrases, sentences, and rhetoric or metaphors formed from this basic language. These linguistic elements are concrete representations of frame conditions and are important vehicles for conveying information and semantics.The "three-level framework" theory is used to compare and analyze the differences in the framework constructed by Philippine media for South China Sea news in different periods, and explore the characteristics and essence of their changes.

3.2 Content Analysis Method

The content analysis method was first proposed by German sociologists. In "On Explanatory Sociology", the research method of content analysis was first proposed, emphasizing the importance of understanding social phenomena and human behavior through systematic analysis of texts and symbols. Subsequently, content analysis gradually gained widespread application in the field of social sciences and became one of the important methods for studying text and media content [15].

This article mainly uses content analysis to compare the differences in news reporting frameworks between China and the Philippines. The investigation surveys China Daily and Manila Times, and a sample of news reports on all South China Sea disputes from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015 by two news media. The news reports from 2013 to 2015 are selected as the sampling time range. At present, research on the China Philippines South China Sea dispute mainly focuses on the 2012 Huangyan Island standoff [16], and there is little overall research on the post Huangyan Island era. The samples of China Daily and Manila Times are obtained from the newspaper search platform on the official website of People's Daily and the search platform on the official website of Manila Times, respectively. The searched samples are viewed in full, retaining only content related to the South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines, including statements by China and the Philippines on the South China Sea issue, actions of the two countries in the disputed waters, and reports related to the positions and attitudes of other countries in the South China Sea dispute, excluding irrelevant content. A total of 118 valid samples are obtained in the end. On the official website search platform of Manila Times, advanced search is used to search for news reports that always contain the words "The South China Sea" in the entire text, excluding irrelevant reports. A total of 57 valid samples are ultimately obtained.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Specific Data Reported by Both Sides on the South China Sea Issue

1) Number of reports

The number of media reports can reflect how much attention the media pays to a certain topic. The study selects the two news media's reports on the South China Sea incident and on each other in the past three years, and the specific number is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Statistics of the number of reports from China Daily and Manila Times

In Figure 1, it can be clearly seen that the number of news reports on the South China Sea disputes by the two news media organizations, China Daily, is showing a steady increase, and its number of reports is much higher than that of the Manila Times.Compared with China Daily, Manila Times has significantly fewer articles on the South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines, but overall it shows a gradually increasing trend. In the three years of reporting, both newspapers reach their peak in reporting volume in 2015.

2) Message source

The source of news is an important category that needs to be analyzed when studying news framework theory [17]. The quality of the report depends on the quality of the source of the news. Journalists rely on three types of sources to obtain information: people's sources (including authorities and news event participants), material sources (including records, documents, reference materials and newspaper clippings) and online sources (information sources of a large number of people and material sources on the Internet) [18].

According to the statistics in Figure 2, it can be seen that the official sources of Chinese news in China Daily have an absolute advantage, accounting for 46% of the total proportion, followed by Chinese media, accounting for 21.9%. In Figure 3, it can be seen that the distribution of sources for the Manila Times is more balanced, with Philippine officials, American officials, experts and scholars, and Chinese officials occupying important positions in the overall proportion.
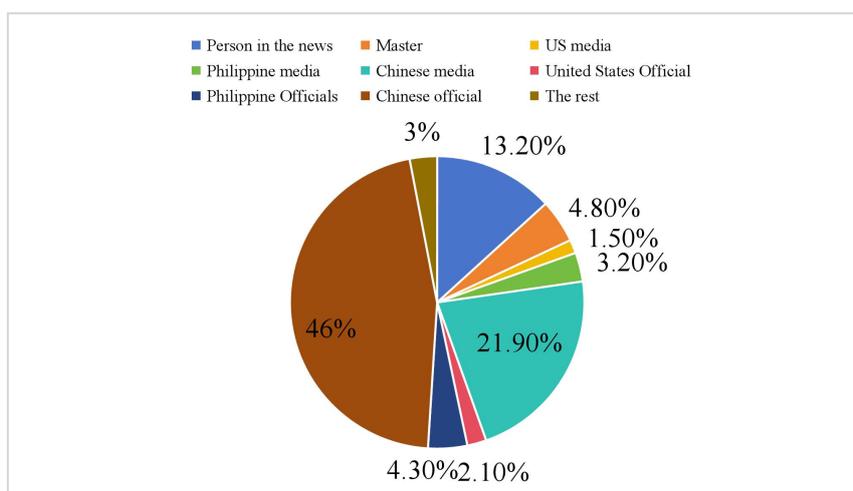

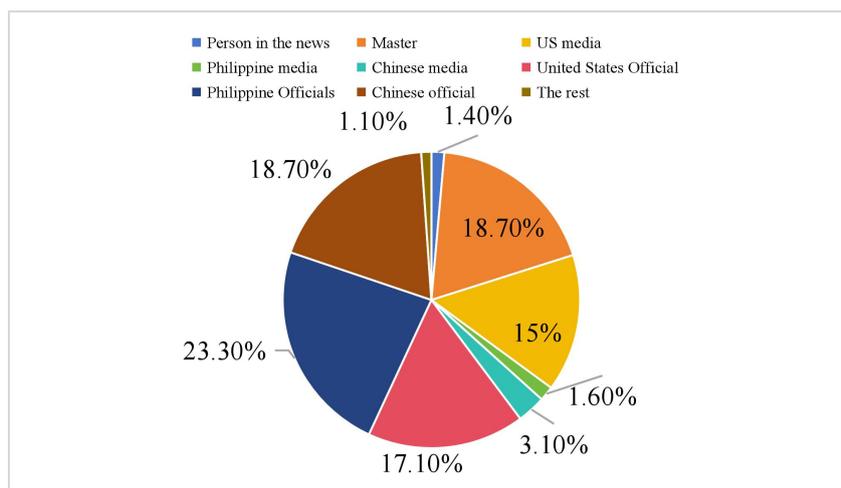**Figure 2:** Percentage distribution of news sources in China Daily

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of sources for Manila Times

3) Schematic structure of news

The graphical structure of news has a general structure of the message, showing the different elements of the message in a certain order. This structure helps to emphasize the theme of the message and allows the reader to focus more on the main information [19]. The statistical results of the schematic structure of China Daily and Manila Times are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of graphic and textual structures in China Daily and Manila Times

Schematic structure	China Daily	Manila Times
Main events	31.5%	37.6%
Previous event	14.2%	13.9%
Histories	5.4%	3.6%
Result	1.3%	4.1%
Slander	31.6%	23.5%
Valuation	11.5%	14.2%
Attribution	2.9%	2.7%

From Table 1, it can be seen that in the graphical structure presented by China Daily's reporting articles on the South China Sea issue, the main events and oral responses account for a large proportion, each approaching one-third of the overall. On the contrary, the description of the consequences accounts for the smallest proportion. And in the schematic structure presented in the Manila Times article reporting on the South China Sea issue, the main event section is most prominent, and the proportion of other sections is more balanced compared to China Daily.

It can be seen that China Daily lacks a schematic structure, such as insufficient presentation of the Philippines' words and actions in the main event section, and a focus on reporting on Chinese behavior. In the previous incident section, China Daily only describes 14.2% of the Philippine side, mainly focusing on the military cooperation agreement reached between the Philippines and the United States and the reports on joint military exercises. Secondly, spoken language reactions occupy an important position in the schematic structure, and the main body of spoken language reactions is mainly Chinese officials. The oral response in China Daily is close to the overall proportion, only slightly lower than the main events, and also reflects the reporting style of heavy rhetoric. The reporting structure is programmatic and singular, and that the China Daily is usually a fixed form of reporting in its description of the South China Sea issue and the relationship between China and the Philippines. The basic schematic structure reported by China Daily is mainly based on previous events+major events+oral reactions, with occasional interweaving of history and causes. The focus of the report is on the response of Chinese officials to the issue, with a relatively large proportion of such structures.

4) Both sides report high-frequency words

Through investigation, it is evident that the core terms used in the Manila Times report on the South China Sea issue include "China", "Philippines", "ocean", etc. These words are all nouns, serving as the subject or object of a sentence and used in conjunction with verbs and adverbs multiple times. From this, the behavioral characteristics that can be expressed in news reports can be learned. Therefore, by investigating the verb combinations between "China" and "Philippines" in the report, the changes in the image of China and the Philippines constructed by language symbols can be examined. In this article, the Word Sketch Difference tool [20] is selected for statistical analysis. Tables 2 and 3 reflect a comparison of the number of times "China" and "Philippines" are used as subjects and objects in two newspapers regarding the South China Sea issue.

Table 2: Comparison of verb collocations with Philippines and China as subjects

China		Philippine	
Collocated verbs	Number of occurrences	Collocated verbs	Number of occurrences
Have	65	Have	36
Claim	21	File	31
Rejection	15	Lose	7
Say	7	Ask	4
Use	8	Seek、present	2
Take up, want, urge	5	Make，call，initiate，slam	3
Violate	3		

Table 3: Comparison of verb collocations as objects between the Philippines and China

China		Philippine	
Collocated verbs	Number of occurrences	Collocated verbs	Number of occurrences
Say	21	Say	26
Slam	7	Include, help, support	5
Urge	5	Represent, concern	2
Include	3		

From Tables 2 and 3, it can be seen that China is often described as an agent. Verbs related to "China" usually refer to China's "tough stance" of "refusing" to solve problems, bullying and interference in the South China Sea region, and "blasphemy" of laws and regulations, among other negative words and actions of China. It should be noted that the verb "have" appears the most frequently. Through text analysis, this word is more commonly used as an auxiliary verb, emphasizing China's influence on the South China Sea. In the structure that targets "China", China is often subjected to criticism and pressure from the international community led by the United States. The words commonly used to describe the Philippines are verbs such as "support," "care," and "help," which are expressed as objects of international support and protection.

5. CONCLUSIONS

On the South China Sea issue, China's foreign policy communication mechanism highlights its firm stance on sovereignty and territorial integrity. In foreign reports, China has always emphasized the historical basis and legitimacy of its territorial sovereignty over the South China Sea. On the issue of territorial disputes, China's discourse structure in external communication presents the image of a victim and guardian, pointing out that the dispute is first initiated by the Philippines. Therefore, the Philippines should bear full responsibility. Secondly, the obvious feature of China's discourse structure in foreign exchanges is its anti hegemonic stance against US intervention in the South China Sea issue. On the other hand, the Manila Times reports itself as a victim on the South China Sea issue, but does not provide comprehensive coverage of the entire news event. In addition, it has been found in the research that the discourse power of Chinese media is forcefully deconstructed by the West when it comes to external communication. There are also cases where the context of Chinese media communication is high and does not match the discourse context of other countries. Finally, based on the South China Sea issue, it is suggested that Chinese media strengthen the construction of international media and external reporting, expand China's voice and influence on the international stage, and break the monopoly of Western media's discourse power.

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