

EVALUATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FRAMING
IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: A CASE STUDY OF
AMERICAN, CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE NEWS
FRAMES

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by Whitney E. Cox

University of Canterbury

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Abstract

News frames represent the way an issue is processed and presented by the media. As such, news frames have great influence over public opinion and could therefore be useful in controlling a country's image abroad. This study builds upon existing literature and theories in an attempt to bring scholarship closer to an understanding of what frames are most likely to be effective for use in public diplomacy by identifying what frames and frame types currently influence audiences internationally. Specifically, The study examines what structures are commonly used to frame international issues, what frame content may not be accepted by a foreign audience and the extent to which elites control the local framing competition. This thesis uses both a framing discourse analysis and a content analysis to evaluate news stories from American, Chinese and Vietnamese outlets as well as American elites. The results found that while elites appear to control the general direction of framing in a country, American journalists are willing to suggest other frames as long as they enhance the drama of the narrative. However, this storytelling imperative is not likely to cross a line into questioning the legitimacy of the media's home country, indicating that such challenging messages should be avoided in public diplomacy. Frequency of frame structure (conflict, responsibility and consequence) use was also identified, and a positive correlation found between privately owned media and use of consequence frame types. Given the less antagonistic nature of these frame structures, they may be extremely effective in public diplomacy communications—as long as the right consequence is emphasised. It is hoped that these findings will aid scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy in identifying effective ways to communicate

messages across countries, and that it will strengthen the argument for the role of 'listening' in public diplomacy.

Introduction

Not long after September 11, 2001, when the American military began increasing its presence in the Middle East, the American government thought it might be worthwhile to improve the image of the United States abroad. Rather than seeking to win a war directly, these undertakings were intended to foster local support for the American intervention in Afghanistan and, later, Iraq. The hope was that this would translate to smoother relations between the Arab World and the United States. Time and money was subsequently invested in projects designed to win the hearts and minds of Middle-Easterners.

One of the projects launched by the State Department involved American advertisement agencies pitching campaigns to help sell Brand U.S.A. to the Arab world. Writer Shalom Auslander was working for one of these firms at the time, and recalls meetings intended to teach the American advertisers how to influence their target audience. Unfortunately, these meetings only served to illuminate the complexity and quantity of factors shaping public opinion in the Middle East—history, religion, the economy, government—and how little was understood about how to affect that opinion. Ultimately the firm gave up on the pitch:

“After dozens of focus groups and tens of thousands of dollars, the only conclusion anyone could reach regarding the question of how to speak to Muslims was that nobody had any idea how to speak to Muslims.” (*This American Life*, 15 December 2006)

This story was featured on *This American Life*, a weekly National Public Radio programme. The title of the episode is ‘Shouting Across the Divide’—a metaphor for the challenge of cross-cultural communication. What the device speaks to is the sense of futility, impossibility and frustration felt by the people who, through vocation or

circumstance, are charged with understanding and being understood in an unfamiliar context. Judging by the State Department's ultimate abandonment of the cross-cultural advertising project, the metaphor is fairly apt.

It is a peculiar paradox of a globalised age: though the physical barriers of international communication have been eliminated; though it is easy, fast and cheap to send a message across the world; though we have more media than ever to facilitate communication, we still have no idea how to actually talk to each other. Now that we have the ability to speak, what can we say that will be both heard and understood? The nature of communication remains grounded in cultural and political contexts and a message from one place will not be understood the same way in another.

One of the biggest problems of the State Department's post-9/11 attempts at communicating with the Arab world was its unshakable concentration on promoting the United States in a way that makes sense to Americans. Jennifer S. Bryson (2011: 39-393) argues that "on the whole, we have been entirely too focused on promoting ourselves rather than seeking first to understand others." This lack of understanding ultimately results promotional messages that do not resonate with their intended audience. The fact is, the same events or issues will be understood differently by different people, and without first identifying where common ground exists, we really are shouting across the divide. After all, if the world were full of individuals who process information the exact same way, there'd be no real need to communicate with them at all.

In the face of seemingly insurmountable incompatibilities, Shalom Auslander's story ends with the recommendation that we back off, and 'let Muslims talk to Muslims' (*This American Life*, 15 December 2006). Unfortunately, the problems of international communication are not that easy to resolve, and simply ignoring global

connectedness is not an option in most cases. Foreign policy, for instance, suffers when its intentions are misunderstood across the countries it affects. Determining how to narrow the chasm between what is said by a government and what is heard by a foreign public is one of the major tasks of public diplomacy—an interdisciplinary field that focuses on communication of foreign policies and national identities.

The driving idea behind this field is that by demonstrating the existence of compatible attitudes and ideas, foreign cultures can avoid conflicts. Despite international miscommunication being as old as international communication itself, the field of public diplomacy is relatively new. Though more and more scholarship is being devoted to public diplomacy research, there is still plenty of uncharted territory, particularly in the area of how to create messages that can be understood and effective across cultures. Needed are studies honing in on the components of successful international communication, one element at a time, until the lessons from case studies can be compiled into a better understanding of how to talk to each other.

Through seeking out common ground in international issues framing, this research aims to add to existing scholarship on how to effectively communicate across culture. Chapter 1 provides an overview of theory and research that contributes to our knowledge of international communication. Specifically, the focus is on the use of international communication in mediated public diplomacy, the importance of news frames in shaping public opinion, and the use of framing in international communication. Stemming from previous research, a research question and three hypotheses are also put forth here. A methodology for answering the question and testing the hypotheses through content analysis of news coverage regarding certain international issues is developed in Chapter 2.

This study examines news stories about four different international events/issues from China, Vietnam and the United States: the sovereignty conflict over the Spratly Islands, Vietnam's petition to the United States for reparations for damage cause by Agent Orange, and criticism of human rights violations in China and Vietnam. Chapters 3 through 6 discuss the nature and results of each case study. Each case was chosen for relevance to the three countries as well as for qualities that may result in interesting findings for public diplomacy in the hopes of yielding useful information for scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy.

Finally, Chapter 7 takes the main findings from the case studies and identifies their bearing on public diplomacy. Here, the results of the case studies are compiled and general conclusions are drawn regarding the frames that are most likely to influence a foreign public through mediate public diplomacy. Hopefully, future public diplomacy campaigns will benefit from this research by applying the findings to real-life cases. Through this kind of theory development and testing we can move closer to an understanding of how to best narrow the divide in cross-cultural communication.

1. Background

Soft Power

Power can be thought of as the “ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want” (Nye, 2008: 94). In international relations, we often see this manifested in threats (war, boycotts, tariffs etc.) or bribes (military protection, trade agreements, aid etc.). Though more recently another kind of power has been identified as critical on the global stage. Soft power is developed through attraction, in which power lies with the actor who can convince others that they all want the same outcomes. Through using assets like an attractive culture, political values or institutions, shared preferences can be established (Nye, 2008: 95). It is the power to coerce, rather than force.

Arguably, the most effective kind of power is that which goes unseen (Bottici and Challand, 2006: 330) and soft power fits this definition perfectly. Nye (2004: 11) identifies three areas in which these qualities exist: culture, political values and foreign policies. *Culture* refers to the appeal of a nation’s ideas, traditions and commodities. Cultural assets include music, cinema, art, literature, brands, consumer products and celebrities. *Political values* are the beliefs and institutions that define the nation’s political systems. *Foreign policies* are an extension of the nation’s political values towards actions outside of their borders. These include economic assistance, humanitarian efforts, trade and tariffs, treaties and pacts and military intervention. No one of these sources can be seen as unilaterally more important than the others, and all should be promoted as part of a campaign to improve soft power. Public diplomats are

concerned with identifying which of these qualities other countries admire, and promoting them for the benefit of international relations.

Creating Soft Power

Those seeking to improve a nation's soft power have a number of available tools for use. In Cull's "Public diplomacy: taxonomies and histories" (2008), he presents five categories under which to classify actions that lead to increases in soft power, three of which will be relevant to this research¹. The first element identified is *listening*, which Cull emphasises "precedes all successful public diplomacy" (2008: 32). Listening is defined as "an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by collecting and collating data about publics and their opinions overseas and using that data to redirect its policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly" (Cull, 2008: 32). Without incorporating this listening component into public diplomacy campaigns, messages are likely to fall flat. If the messages communicated through public diplomacy are not attractive to the audience, then the message will not only be ineffective but may even foster negative sentiment towards the foreign government (Nye, 2008: 95). How salient a public diplomacy message might be can be 'heard' through polls of focus groups of the target audience (Nye, 2008: 95), giving diplomats the opportunity to tailor their messaging appropriately.

Advocacy is a way to improve soft power through promoting a specific policy, idea or even the general interests of the nation (Cull, 2008: 32). Vehicles for advocacy include embassy press releases, government websites or informational materials. Advocacy is most often practiced by governmental organisations and, for this reason,

¹ The two omitted categories are 'cultural diplomacy' and 'international exchanges', which do not benefit from the communications approach that guides this research.

may suffer from a lack of credibility. It may be difficult for audiences to distinguish between advocacy and propaganda, which has negative connotations of manipulation and deception (Zaharna, 2004: 222-4). Additionally, attempts at targeting specific audiences to promote a policy face difficulties in that a message intended for one audience can, and will, reach around the world thanks to efficient global media (Cull, 2008: 48). It no longer makes sense to try and target only one recipient to promote a state, since the message will be heard around the world. Rather, it may be useful for advocates to remove themselves from advocating the state as a whole, but rather promoting more specific ideas and policies that will not be subject to a wide range of interpretations.

The final component of Cull's taxonomy is *international broadcasting*. This component makes use of international media such as radio, television and the Internet to engage and inform an international audience (Cull, 2008: 34). One of the most analysed cases of public diplomacy through international broadcasting is the United States' broadcast of 'Al Hurra', a television news station intended to "provide objective, accurate, and relevant news and information to the people of the Middle East about the region, the world and the United States" (Al Hurra, 2005). This particular case has been widely considered a failure of cross-cultural communication², and highlights one of the major risks of government-sponsored international broadcasting, namely that the message will be seen by its audience as propaganda.

Altogether these components can be used to promote a positive image of a state to a foreign audience. Ideally, relevant stakeholders would coordinate all of these elements to achieve a specific goal, such as support for a foreign policy or peace between countries. Of course, this is rarely the case, given the number of organisations

² Ayesha (2008: 100) actually links the station to the erosion of the American image in the Arab world—a level of failure beyond merely failing to meet objectives.

and individuals involved in creating soft power, both from within the government and outside of it. While efforts are often fragmented, many organisations do attempt to develop soft power in the hopes of political or economic gain. These efforts are generally identified as ‘public diplomacy’.

Public Diplomacy

Defining public diplomacy—articulating what it is and how to approach it—may be one of the more contentious activities within the social sciences. Conceptions of public diplomacy have evolved over time, and vary among professional fields, with definitions casting public diplomacy as anything from modern propaganda to international journalism to large-scale public relations to a branch of traditional diplomacy. Though the main dimensions of public diplomacy are easy to identify and understand, the lack of an accepted definition limits the ability of researchers and practitioners.

For instance, some see public diplomacy as a branch of traditional diplomacy, orchestrated by the state in the interest of forwarding foreign policy interests, albeit a branch making use of non-traditional tools:

Public diplomacy refers to government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television. (U.S. Department of State 1987, cited in Waller 2007:24).

...A government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies. (Hans Tuch, 1990, cited in Melissen, 2005: 11-2)

Alternatively, it has been defined not as a tool to promote certain foreign policies directly, but rather as a subtler means to garner support for these policies through first gaining general support for a nation’s culture and societal values:

Public diplomacy seeks through the exchange of people and ideas to build lasting relationships and receptivity to a nation’s culture, values, and policies. (Defense Science Board 2007, cited in Waller, 2007:33).

Others, often those who come from a background in public relations, see parallels between public diplomacy and marketing. These parallels lead some to define public diplomacy as a particular type of marketing campaign:

Public diplomacy includes interpersonal debate and negotiation between professional diplomats ranging from international treaties, reparations, commercial and trade agreements, economic and development aid, and ecological practices to framework agreements for educational and cultural exchanges. All entail a range of promotional and persuasive strategies and techniques in addition to media relations. (L'Etang, 2009: 610)

The principles of persuasive communication hold true whether you find yourself in the world of marketing or foreign affairs. There is a discipline we learned in marketing every kind of product and service that does apply to the presenting of American values and policies... (Charlotte Beers 2002, cited in Waller, 2007: 31)

Another approach is to view public diplomacy through the lens of communications theory. Public diplomacy strategies thereby become a facet of strategic communication, used by governments to communicate outside of official channels:

Practitioners and scholars agree public diplomacy involves a government's communications beyond its borders outside of state-to-state channels. However, differences arise in the role of public diplomacy in foreign policy making. (Frensley and Michaud, 2006: 202)

While each definition offers a useful way to viewing public diplomacy, each definition remains incomplete. Looking at public diplomacy as the deliberate actions of the state, misses the effect of non-state actors identified by those approaching the field with a public relations or communications framework. In this age of lightening-fast communications technology, the opportunity to access and share information and opinions allows any number of actors to participate in policy debates and implementation (Riordan, 2005: 190). These actors can include independent media, business, educators, students, NGOs, advocacy groups or even an individual with a Twitter account. Without considering these actors, polls measuring public opinion to

gauge the success of public diplomacy campaigns will not be able to point to the cause of success or failure.

To take the approach of public diplomacy as a new spin on public relations is to miss the importance of the policies and power relations driving the campaign. Further, a marketing approach may simply be too reductive for the purposes of developing soft power. To promote a country as one would a product or a brand, one must reduce it to an appealing and easily articulated identity (Melissen, 2005: 20). But by doing so one loses the dynamism that makes a country appealing in the first place. As Riordan (2005: 188) explains: “The strength of a country’s image emerges from its cultural, political and economic plurality. Attempting to impose an artificial coherence, and to spin it to the rest of the world in the way that policy-makers or their consultants think profitable, risks undermining both richness and credibility.”

Adding to the confusion, there has been little progress made in the objective evaluation of success in public diplomacy. Evaluation is defined by measuring achievement against intent, and yet it is surprisingly rare for a public diplomacy campaign to launch with any sort of measurable goal in mind. For instance, Al Hurra, an American international broadcasting effort towards the Arab world, launched in 2004 with the objectives of enhancing the quality of Arab news and fostering an engaged Arab public (Powers and El Gody, 2009: 51). Vague goals such as these are common, but measuring the growing ‘strength of mutual understanding’ would be a feat far beyond the statistical abilities of most researchers. Rather, the goals of a public diplomacy campaign need to be concrete and measurable.

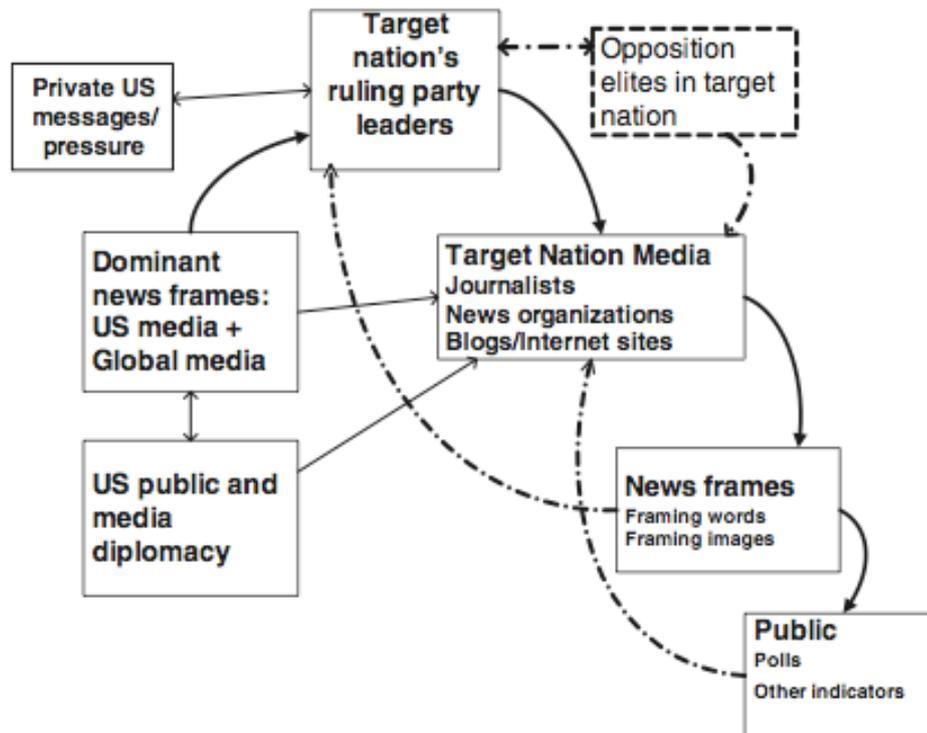
Even with concrete goals, there is the issue of a public diplomat’s capacity to measure success. Polls and focus groups can be used to measure changing opinion, but these results may be subject to what is known among physicists as the observer effect.

This refers to observation that measurement of certain systems changes their outcome, rendering them impossible to ever accurately measure. In some cases, public diplomacy may suffer from the observer effect. For instance, while it is possible to set a measurable goal for a public diplomacy campaign (such as an improvement in public opinion of a country), actually evaluating a programme would require thorough surveys of participants both before and after the campaign. This may make the political intentions of it explicit, and would likely negate any goodwill the project had achieved (Scott-Smith, 2009: 179). Without any tools to measure the effect of the public diplomacy effort it is impossible to know for sure whether or not the programme was successful.

Without a single, widely accepted definition of public diplomacy or method for measuring its success, its effects and best practises are up for debate. Perhaps the most graceful solution is to accept that this truly is an interdisciplinary field, and to apply the relevant theories to the components of public diplomacy. Through micro-level analysis, a clearer picture of the whole can emerge.

Communications Approach

Both international broadcasting and advocacy can be examined through the lens of communications theory. Through these practices, public diplomacy messages may be passed from a government's leadership to a foreign public. This typically occurs through a process that can be visualised through Entman's (2008: 98) cascading activation model (see below), first suggested as a model for domestic media framing and later adapted to a public diplomacy context. The importance of this model lies in its explication of exactly how a media message transfers from its source to its audience, and the multiple filters it must pass through.



Cascading Network Activation (Entman, 2008: 98)

Just as in a real waterfall, the messages that start from the top have the most power as they make their way down, and are the easiest to disseminate (Entman, 2003: 420). With each level of the model, a message is adapted and adjusted to fit the agenda of the actors whose responsibility is to pass it down to the next level. Entman (2003: 421) explains that as a story moves down the levels, “the flow of information becomes less and less thorough, and increasingly limited to the selected highlights, processed through schemas, and then passed on in an ever-cruder form.” This process chisels down an event or issue until it is a simple and easily understandable message.

To direct the importance and focus of the messages within the cascading activation model, message-makers can make use of two tools known as agenda setting and framing. *Agenda setting* (also called *priming*) reflects the idea that by giving certain stories more coverage than other stories, the media is able to influence public opinion regarding the salience of issues (McCombs, 2004: 1). This technique is

particularly useful with international issues—such as those addressed with public diplomacy—when the general public has little or no firsthand knowledge of the issue (Iyengar and McGrady, 2007: 210). Agenda setting has also been found to be most effective when the topics being addressed have personal or societal relevance to the audience (McCombs, 2004: 54)—though research indicates that this is not as effective as framing when it comes to affecting attitudes towards foreign countries (Brewer, Graf and Willnat, 2003).

Framing is a tool used by the media to affect public opinion. While agenda setting tells the audience what to think about, framing tells the audience how to think about it (Iyengar and McGrady, 2007: 220). Entman (2009: 5) offers a similar, but expanded, definition of framing: “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution”. Kellstedt (2005: 168) explains that “Frames help us to make mental connections between things we already know and believe and the things we’re just learning”. It is framing that allows public diplomats to present the details of an event or issue that make them important to foreign policy, and to select certain details over others in order to promote particular interpretations of the foreign issue.

Entman (2004: 417) provides four distinct functions of framing in the media: defining effects or conditions as problematic, identifying causes; conveying moral judgment of those involved, and endorsing remedies or improvements to the problematic situation. The two most important functions, he explains, are the definition of the problem, which typically guides the rest of the frame, and the proposed solution, which can recommend support or opposition for policy (Entman,

2009: 6). In regards to public diplomacy, the solution will be the area in which a foreign policy is prescribed.

The link between framing and public opinion was first developed by psychologists Kahneman and Tversky, who found that decision-making in the same scenarios changed among subjects based on the presentation of information (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007: 11). It has since been well established that media framing affects public opinion, but it is less clear where frames originate and why certain frames gain popularity over other, competing frames. Most events and issues can be understood from a number of perspectives and, in fact, the public is almost always exposed to competing frames. In a study of 14 different newsworthy issues, Chong and Druckman (n.d., cited in Druckman, 2010: 102) find that American, mainstream media presents an average of 5.09 frames per issue.

How Frames are Developed

Political frames are conceived through interactions between journalists, elites and the public. When an issue emerges as important through agenda setting, journalists typically begin research by listening to elites—via press conferences, press releases or interviews. Frames represent their particular interpretation of the facts of an event or an issue, and the development of conflicting frames is typically reflective of a battle for political legitimacy among local elites and challengers (Wolfsfeld, 1997). The indexing hypothesis indicates that the elites have a very strong influence over the shape of the debate as it is presented by the media. In his case study of *New York Times* coverage of American policy making on Nicaragua in the mid 1980's, Bennett (1990: 120) demonstrates that mainstream media closely follows the debate as

it is structured by elites, rather than voicing the opinions reflected by polls of the general public. Hallin (1994: 52) corroborates this theory with a study on American coverage of the Vietnam War, where he found the oppositional voices to be entirely within the parameters of elite debate.

Some argue with these theories, and point to oppositional voices outside of elite debate that have been found in other studies of international news framing. For instance, Althaus's (2003: 404) work on the coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis. In this study, it was determined that elite voices are not the only source of framing, and that journalists often make an effort to find and present oppositional frames. Wolfsfeld (1997: 16-20) suggests that political or social status, strong organisation and newsworthy behaviour may help a challenger's frame gain traction with the media. Understanding the relationship between elite indexing and the inclusion of oppositional frames could be of help to a public diplomat seeking to be heard, either through the influence of local elites or as an external, oppositional voice.

Further complicating the issue of frame source in public diplomacy is research finding that in certain public diplomacy communications, specifically in international broadcasting, perceived distance from the government can improve the trustworthiness of the message (Cull, 2010: 13). This can be problematic for countries with a tightly controlled press. States like China have struggled with public diplomacy campaigns specifically because of a rigidly centralised and controlled government and censored media (d'Hooge, 2005: 102). Typically, government agencies are the least trusted as producers of media messages, and media outlets seen as close to the government are considered unreliable (Cull, 2008: 34-5). This was possibly one of the greatest reasons for Al Hurra's failing as a tool of public diplomacy: over the course of its first weekend on-air, the network ran repeats of an exclusive interview with then-president

George W. Bush, “drawing attention to Al Hurra’s ties to the American government and setting a strong propagandistic tone” (Powers and El Gody, 2009: 52). These networks will also be subject to scrutiny at home if they attempt to be credible by promoting a message that strays from the accepted message at home.

In addition to elites and their challengers, structural factors may determine the range of frames reflected in the news media. Entman (2009: 14) writes that “News organisations and personnel are driven by economic pressure and incentives; professional customs, norms and principles; and normative values”. Economic pressures include the need to attract a large audience, which may cause journalists to adopt frames that are persuasive to a wide audience. In accordance with professional customs and norms, journalists may favour frames that are objective, simple and timely—regardless of what is politically popular (though it is worth noting that local elites are often a journalist’s most reliable and inexpensive source for information considered credible (Mermin, 1999: 18)). Additionally, journalists may look at the issue laterally, examining competitors’ coverage and talking to other journalists (Entman, 2009: 9), thus consolidating the use of popular frames. Challengers to elite framing may also have some success if capitalising on existing frames and current political conditions (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 55). In stories about international issues, messages could also originate from some of the public diplomacy tools categorised by Cull (2008): advocacy from diplomats and embassy press releases or through international broadcasting.

The problems of a credible source and relevant presentation can be surmounted by using public diplomacy tools to influence the mainstream media of a foreign country. If a frame is adopted by the local mainstream media it is less likely to be viewed negatively as propaganda. Entman (2009: 153) offers another possibility:

“Even if foreign sources themselves enjoy scant credibility with most Americans, overseas opposition—more accessible than ever because of the internet—may stimulate more independent counter-framing by journalists, and that can reinforce dissent among U.S. citizens.”

What Makes a Frame Successful?

Due to economic constraints on news producers, it is impossible for all possible frames describing an issue or event to be adopted by the media. Rather, journalists will select certain frames that they expect will best resonate with their audience. Chong and Druckman (2007) measured the effect of strong frames (frames that are compelling and persuasive to the audience) against the effect of weak frames (frames that are unpersuasive) and found that strong frames have significantly more success than weak frames in affecting audience opinion. Not only are strong frames successful on their own, but this same study also found that weak frames can actually push public opinion towards opposing frames.

One characteristic attributed to strong frames is their *availability* to the audience. To be persuasive, a frame must employ concepts that that audience understands (Chong and Druckman, 2007a: 639). Chong and Druckman (2007b: 110) illustrate this by explaining that a person who did not understand the concept of free speech would be unmoved by frames promoting the right to free speech. The simpler a concept, the more likely is it to be seen as available by the audience. Frames that are available to an audience are also available to the nation’s journalists. Journalists therefore maintain a repertoire of established frame structures that will recur in their presentation of issues and events and will be selected from as a way to interpret new events and information (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 54, Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 159).

A strong frame is also used repeatedly, so that audience members think about it often. Chong and Druckman (2007a: 639) refer to this as the *accessibility* of the frame, and explain that “The accessibility of a consideration increases with its chronic use; therefore politically knowledgeable people who often think about political issues have more accessible considerations”. Put simply, if the ideas presented are not familiar to the audience, they are unlikely to be adopted. In this sense, repetition of a frame becomes a factor of its strength.

Accessibility and availability allow the audience to form an opinion without conscious deliberation, and may be more effective when there is minimal competition between frames. In competitive contexts, frames are strongest when they are consistent with the existing attitudes of the audience, characteristic that can be thought of as *applicability* (Chong and Druckman, 2007a: 639). Iyengar and McGrady (2007: 225) find that framing is considered most effective when the message reinforces a held belief of the individual. Different audience members will understand and engage with the same media messages in completely different ways, a discrepancy that can be attributed to processing these messages through a filter of first-hand experiences and prior media exposure (Traudt, 2005: 11).

Entman (2003: 417) agrees that previous attitudes and experiences are important, writing that the most influential framing will apply words and images that are recognisable and understandable to the audience. He illustrates this idea with the example of American media framing after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. He points out that in some parts of the world those responsible for the attacks were not framed as terrorist but rather as “freedom fighters” opposing an imperial force. The American audience largely rejected this frame in part because the concept of the United States as an imperial force was immediately new and offensive while the idea of “Islamic

fanatics targeting innocent civilians” was already familiar (2004: 16). One way a frame becomes accessible is through repeated exposure to the idea (Chong and Druckman, 2007b: 110).

The qualities that make a frame culturally congruent can be difficult to identify and generalise to be useful in practice. Previous studies indicate that a good starting point is the lack of support among the media for frames that challenge the legitimacy of their home country. Entman (2004: 154-155) explains that during the build-up to the Iraq War in 2003, the American media gave little attention to the United States’ role in supporting Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, and of Iraq’s development of weapons of mass destruction. Entman suggests that these frames were ignored because such a record “put the United States in the awkward position of itself being a nation with a record of supporting terrorism”. Althaus (2003: 396) also finds that while foreign sources do appear often to support oppositional frames, “but only using those themes that left the legitimacy of the American actors and motives unquestioned and that resonated with the cultural values of American audiences.”

Perhaps then, a sign of cultural incongruence can be thought of as a challenge to a country’s political legitimacy. Beetham (1991: 16) suggests that the legitimacy of an actor can be identified through the presence of three qualities:

- I. It conforms to established rules
- II. The rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate, and
- III. There is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation.

This definition offers clear framework through which to evaluate the possibility that, as suggested, challenges to a state’s legitimacy are largely avoided by that country’s mainstream media. For instance, when applying this definition to existing

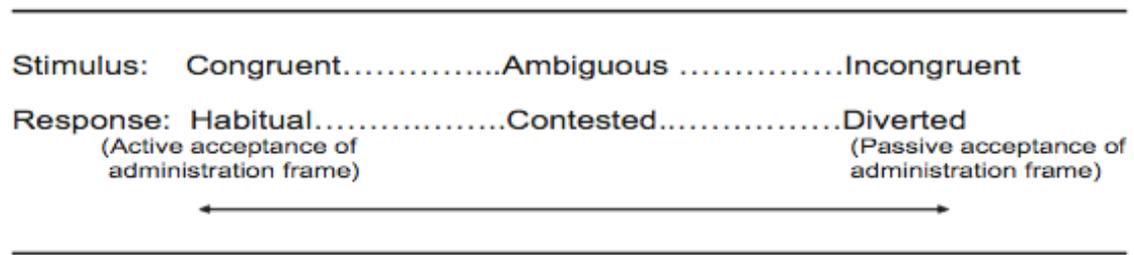
research, there are very few studies that identify cases in which the media appears to challenge local legitimacy, even in cases in which the established rules have clearly been broken. For instance, Rowling et al. (2011: 1057) finds that during the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, in which the United States' government was implicated in the torture of Iraqi prisoners, the press largely presented frames that protected both the country's positive self-identity and the legitimacy of its government. Additionally, Jones and Sheets' (2009) study shows that American journalists were less challenging to American legitimacy over this issue (measured through use of the word 'torture' to describe the Abu Ghraib incident) than the journalists of any other country in the study (Australia, England, Canada, Italy, Germany and Spain).

One case study that does find a country's media challenging their government's legitimacy is Livingston and Eachus' (1996) work on American media coverage of paramilitary organisations in Central America. In this work, the media explicitly linked the United States government to death squads in Guatemala, challenging both the American government's legitimacy and morality in their role in Central America. However, this case study appears to be the exception rather than the rule—there are few other examples of this and, as will be addressed in the final chapter, there are a few unique variables in this case study that may have resulted in Livingston and Eachus' unique findings.

In the most case studies that make up the body of research around international issues framing, frames have not been directly challenging to local legitimacy (see Hallin 1989, Mermin, 1999, Entman, 2003, Althaus, 2003). Possibly, such framing would conflict with the norms and values of the audience, which would make them unlikely to be used in the media. Entman (2003: 423) describes a 'tipping point' at which a message will seem so far outside of the realm of availability, accessibility and

applicability that it will simply be ignored, and illustrates this with the continuum on the following page (Entman, 2008: 93). Hallin (1989: 117) identifies a similar trend in his work on televised stories of the Vietnam War, and describes three spheres that are governed by different journalistic standards: the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, where stories comprise the objective repetition of facts; the Sphere of Consensus, which involves subjects whose values society largely agrees upon, allowing the reporter to advocate the existing values of the consensus; and the Sphere of Deviance, where viewpoints that contradict or challenge the status quo sit, going unreported by the mainstream media. The specifics of what belongs in each sphere is largely culturally relative, and messages from the Sphere of Consensus in one culture may very well find itself in the Sphere of Deviance in another.

For instance, viewers of Al Hurra in Iraq find the channel untrustworthy—far more than viewers from any other Arab nation. This is possibly because the messages promoted by Al Hurra are not consistent with the unique experiences of the Iraqi people (Powers and El Gody, 2009: 59); a discrepancy between experience and media content that results in failed public diplomacy. In fact, the George W. Bush speech that many feel made the station's ties to the American government too explicit may not have been so ruinous if the content of the speech—justification of American soldiers using torture techniques in Iraqi prisons—had not been so inapplicable to Iraqi public opinion (Hafez, 2007: 121). This case serves to point out the importance of understanding the culture and beliefs of the target audience and honing messages appropriately.



Cultural congruence key to elite, media and public responses (Entman, 2008: 93)

Multiple studies on frame types used in international issues have found that conflict and responsibility frames are strong across a range of countries (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Camaj, 2010). A conflict frame emphasises a disagreement or tension between two parties as the main problem, and responsibility framing is characterised by its clear attribution of responsibility for the problem through assigning blame and/or specifying an actor who is accountable for resolving the issue (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 95-96). These two frame types are found frequently in international issues framing, which may be due to their fulfilment of two functions of framing: identifying the cause of the problem and suggesting a solution (Entman, 2004: 417). Additionally, the responsibility frame structure implies a clear protagonist and antagonist, an important element in storytelling (Cook, 1996: 477). The simple dichotomy presented by conflict and responsibility frames could also make them appealing to journalists. Althaus et al. (1996: 416) found that mainstream media coverage of internal, American political debate was typically boiled down to a dichotomy of opinion rather than a rich and multi-faceted conversation. This type of storytelling is consistent with sensationalist news values pushing for drama and simplicity (Wolfsfeld, 2004: 40), and fits easily into conflict and responsibility frame types.

Also evaluated in these studies are consequence frames, which emphasise the effect of the issue or event rather than the cause or solution. For instance, an issue or event may have ramifications for human well-being, economics or the security of a country. These frames have not been found to be as prevalent in explaining international issues, and have also been found to vary in use among issues and media outlets (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 107; Camaj, 2010: 646). In none of these case studies were consequence frames used similarly by different countries for the same issue. Work by Kolmer and Semetko (2009) suggests that use of consequence frames may be linked to the political context of the media outlet's home country. In a study of American, English, Czech, South African, German and Middle Eastern framing of the Iraq War, it was found that the journalists from countries that opposed the war emphasised political consequences more often than the American or English media (2009: 653).

Alternatively, this could be reflective of levels of sensationalism in the local media. Sensationalism can be thought of as the prioritisation of emotional or dramatic news frames, over those that may be more informational or balanced. These frames tend to emphasise immediacy, drama, simplicity and ethnocentrism (Wolfsfeld, 2004: 40) as well as which favours "exaggeration and emotionalism" (Cooper, 2005: 127)—factors that fit well with most consequence framing. Human consequence frames, especially, have been used by sensational media as a simple and emotional way of explaining the direct effect of an issue on other people. In a longitudinal study, Patterson (2000: 4) found that frequency of human consequence frames more than doubled between 1980 and 2000, correlating to a 15% point increase in stories with moderate to high levels of sensationalism. Foreign news producers may be able to capitalise on high levels of sensationalism in the media, and introduce frames that are

interesting enough to stimulate inclusion in media coverage. As Wolfsfeld (1997: 22) explains, “The first obligation of any journalist is to produce a “good story” and when challengers provide better stories than authorities, they get more—though not necessarily better—coverage.”

Framing in International Communications

The same frames cannot be expected to affect audiences equally around the world. Past experiences and information play a major role in frame development, and it follows that much of this learning is a factor of the cultural background of the audience (Tannen, 1993: 15). The political and economic culture within each state is likely to foster the development of specific frames used often to describe certain political issues and create an ‘issue culture’. An issue culture is a collection of idea elements that are “grouped together into more or less harmonious clusters or interpretive packages” and used to describe an issue (Gamson and Lasch, 1983: 398, cited in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 166). For instance, an issue culture around welfare policy may include packages describing ‘welfare freeloaders’, ‘working poor’, ‘poverty trap’ and ‘regulating the poor’ (Gamson and Lasch, 1983: 410-411, cited in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 166). These clusters represent different, repeated interpretations of the same issue that ultimately become understood tropes representing particular ideas, attitudes and values.

Identifying those frames belonging to a nation’s issue culture allows for a better understanding of the parameters of debate within the country. Every system places its own constraints and liberties on its news outlets, and as Hachten and Scotton (2007: 17) point out: “all press systems reflect the values of the political and economic

systems of the nations from within which they operate”. The American model of news, for example, appears objective and independent to Westerners (Tunstall, 1977: 24) and is provided to the consumer by elites (Saridakas, 2005:83). This system also operates under the tenet that the government should not interfere with the messages of the press (Hachten and Scotton, 2007: 20).

The United States’ media model is also largely driven by the profit motive, resulting in an abundance of entertainment programming paid for by advertisements (McChesney, 1999: 229). The commercialisation of media does not simply represent the addition of advertisement to existing programming, but rather speaks to a unique character of the media. Advertising space is more valuable when more potential consumers are exposed to it, resulting in an intent focus on entertaining and attention-grabbing, sensationalised media content. In this system, media content that entertains rather than informs is justified as being dictated by the tastes of the consumers (Curran, 2002: 197). According to Wolfsfeld (2004: 40), these journalistic norms result in news values that “place a high value on emotionalism rather than reason, on entertainment rather than information.

Influencing these media systems is a homogenising process known as globalisation. Globalisation has no agreed upon definition, though for the purpose of this paper it will be understood as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters, 1995: 3). One might further elaborate that these ‘arrangements’ include economic, political and cultural systems. The merits and effects of this ‘social process’ are widely debated. Some see globalisation as representative of the spread of neo-liberal ideology and cultural homogenisation, while others see it as the natural expansion of communication

technology. Through either perspective, it is clear that globalisation reflects the propagation of interconnectedness across the world and the increased redundancy of political borders.

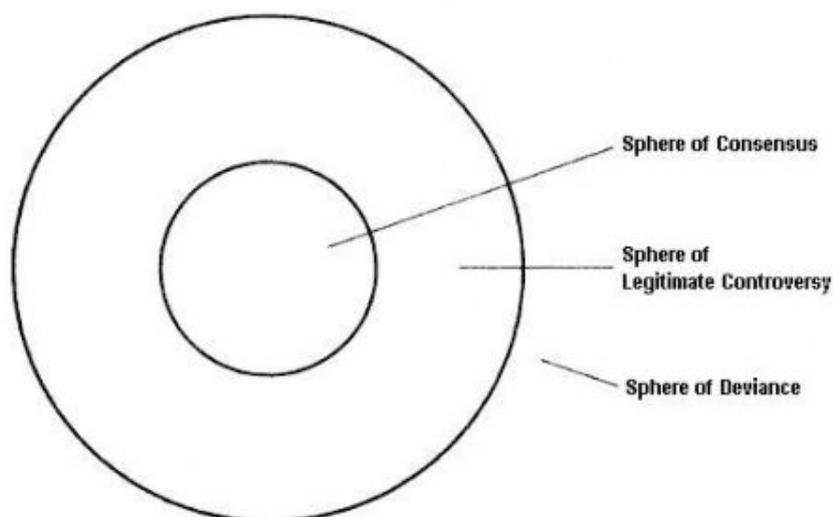
The American system of private media ownership is a good fit to the neo-liberal economic system, and therefore to globalisation. Businesses in all industries benefit from advertising revenue and as markets expand and competition increases, commercial media becomes necessary. The Swiss government, for instance, was pressured to adopt commercial media by local manufacturers who were competing with Italian and German businesses whose commercials were shown on transmissions that could be picked up in Switzerland (Schiller, 1995: 198). In fact, globalisation has resulted in pressure to deregulate the national media in many countries in the world (McChesney, 2008: 245), particularly Western countries.

However, not all countries have adopted this system, and some, such as Vietnam, maintain a news media system controlled by the government. Rantanen (1998: 127) identifies three functions of government-owned news outlets: first, as way for the government to spread information it deemed important; second, as a filter for news received from abroad; and third, as a way to disseminate a positive image of the government. Framing from this system can be expected to strongly reflect the views of the government and to lack oppositional framing.

China's media is an interesting synthesis of the capitalist model and communist government oversight. In many respects, Chinese media shares the for-profit characteristics that define the American media. For instance, Chinese media is designed to appeal to wide audiences as strives to attract advertisers (Tunstall, 2008: 191, Hachten and Scotton, 2007: 95). However, the government maintains strict control over the content of the media, censoring anything that might be seen as

threatening to those in power (Hachten and Scotton, 2007: 94). Frames from this type of media system can be expected to reflect the elite voices and lack oppositional framing, but will also demonstrate some of the same frames that make privately-owned media attractive and engaging to an audience.

These disparate cultures and political systems result in audiences trained to expect and interpret frames differently, and a frame that works in one country cannot be expected to work in another. As the United States learned in the case of Al Hurra however, there is more to this process than simply broadcasting an idea and waiting for the local audience to adopt it. Referring back to Hallin's (1989) Spheres, we can look at the Sphere of Consensus as a representative of cultural values (encompassing "social objects not regarded by journalists and most of the society as controversial" (1986: 116) and the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy as a proxy for political culture (encompassing "issues recognised as such by the major established actors of the American political process" (1986: 116)). Through this visualisation, the importance of framing an issue within the boundaries of a country's political culture are apparent.



Spheres of Consensus, Legitimate Controversy and Deviance (Hallin, 1989: 116)

Clearly, the existing beliefs and habits of journalists in any country come into play when it comes to foreign frame adoption. A study on American foreign policy

framing in Canadian media found that rather than operating as transmitters of a foreign government's advocacy, journalists will process information and present it in a way that is consistent with their beliefs (Frensky and Michaud, 2006). In public diplomacy, it therefore behaves messengers to frame issues in a way that will resonate with the intended audience while still promoting the ideas and values behind proposed policy. This should improve the frame's likelihood of becoming incorporated by the local audience, as represented by the cascading activation model. Once a frame has become a part of the dynamics highlighted by the cascading activation model, it improves the chances that the frame will influence local media and audiences—the ultimate goal of public diplomacy.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This thesis seeks to better understand the use of news framing and how framing might be used in public diplomacy. Rather than evaluating a public diplomacy campaign, this research will examine the stories that are used and understood in the news media across different countries. Through the findings from this study, the messages transmitted through advocacy and international broadcasting can hopefully be understood to better communicate with a foreign audience. This study attempts to investigate and answers the central question:

- **Research Question:** *What news frames from foreign sources are most likely to be adopted by local media and audiences?*

In order to address this question, this thesis compares news coverage of three countries covering four international issues to determine what is being said, how it is

being said and who is saying it in each country involved. By understanding these elements of news stories, the types of frames that are most available, accessible and applicable to the target media and audience can be identified. If a public diplomacy message hopes to enter the local framing competition, as per the cascading activation model (Entman, 2008: 98) described in the literature review, then it may benefit from adopting some of these characteristics that this study uncovers.

The research question is informed by testing three hypotheses. The first hypothesis seeks to identify frame structures that are commonly used across cultures. These structures (also called ‘scripts’) imply a “particular type of story, one that journalists frequently produce by following habitual information processing routines when confronted by certain types of situations” (Entman, 2004: 26). While a frame may identify the problem, cause and solution to the issue, a frame structure indicates the contextual relevance of the issue. For instance, some actors may be interested in the human consequences aspect of an issue, say human rights in China, while others may be more concerned with the economic ramifications of imposing sanctions to punish human rights abusers. Still others may be more concerned with political tensions between China and the West over the issue. The frame structures favoured by a nation’s media should be reflective of the audience’s concerns.

The benefit of identifying similarities in frame structures used across countries is in the potential for understanding how journalists in different countries interpret information about international issues regardless of political and cultural differences. Similarities in frame structure indicate that there may be overlap in the information processing routines of journalists across countries. Conversely, findings of frame structures not used across countries can indicate that the frame structure is not available, or at least not contextually applicable, in certain countries. Identifying such

frames will hopefully move scholarship closer to an understanding of what frames can be used successfully in international communication. The first hypothesis will therefore seek to identify use of frame structures:

- **Hypothesis 1:** *(a) Conflict and responsibility frame structures will be equally adopted across many countries. (b) Consequence frame types will be less popular and used varyingly across countries.*

The first part of this hypothesis is concerned with conflict frames, which emphasise a disagreement or tension between two parties as the main problem (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 95), and responsibility frames, which are characterised by clear attribution of responsibility for the problem through assigning blame and/or specifying an actor who is accountable for resolving the issue (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 96). That conflict frames will be widespread is an idea based on the work of Neuman et al. (1992: 61-62), who found that conflict frames were commonly used by American media covering a variety of issues. Patterson (1993) likewise found conflict frames were common in American presidential election campaign news, while Karlberg (1997) found conflict frames were prevalent when describing environmental issues. These studies indicate that the conflict frame structure is not isolated to military conflicts.

Nor does it appear isolated to American news: Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Camaj (2010) found conflict and responsibility frame types to be favoured by media outlets from different European countries when framing international issues. The other frame types in these studies, which focus on the consequences of an issue rather than fault or solution, were found to vary across issues and countries (Semetko

and Valkenburg, 2000). These earlier studies evaluated media framing in European countries. In this study, it will be seen if these trends are also prevalent in China and Vietnam. If the hypothesis is supported by evidence from these cases then it can be assumed that the findings have the potential to be generalised across countries in different regions, given the culturally and politically dissimilar contexts in which they are found.

While a shared frame structure may point to similarities in the way journalists commonly process and present information, it does not imply that a frame will resonate with a foreign audience. Even within the same frame structure or script, there are many ways for journalists to present the story. Similarities or differences in the content of frames, therefore, are a necessary area of study. Mermin (1999: 13) suggests that foreign frames may often be too unfamiliar to be adopted: “Foreign critics, as a rule, do not phrase arguments in terms that speak to American interests or concerns and often argue in ways that are bound to strike Americans as outrageous, irrational, or simply bizarre.” This is especially relevant when the legitimacy of the media outlet’s home country is challenged by foreign framing, as audiences tend to be nationalistic and ethnocentric in their framing of foreign affairs (Wolfsfeld, 2004: 22-23). The next hypothesis tests this idea:

- **Hypothesis 2:** *Stories challenging an audience country’s legitimacy will be ignored, marginalised or challenged by the local media.*

This hypothesis follows Wolfsfeld’s (1997: 52-54) suggestion that framing contests are largely defined by a struggle for legitimacy between the authorities and the challengers. In these cases, covering the messages of challengers does not conflict

with the legitimacy of the media outlet's home country. Additionally, the works of Hallin (1989), Entman (2004) and Chong and Druckman (2007), indicate that it is unlikely for a frame to be found across cultures if it alienates one of the societies involved because, as Wolfsfeld (2004) argues, media coverage of foreign affairs tends to be ethnocentric and nationalistic. It is assumed therefore, that when the framing contest takes the form of two countries challenging each other's legitimacy (as per Beetham's (1991) definition of the word as conforming to rules established and accepted by both the dominant and subordinate groups), the media will maintain the legitimacy of its home country. Testing this hypothesis will draw from Wolfsfeld's research and identify any cases in which challengers to local legitimacy gain traction within the local media. This information will help answer the research question by identifying whether or not a challenge to the state's legitimacy limits the effectiveness of a public diplomacy message.

The third hypothesis seeks to identify the extent to which journalists will present frames outside the parameters of elite debate. By understanding the influence of local elites on the media, this research will be able to identify the flexibility of American journalists in adopting frames from alternate sources, including foreign advocacy and international broadcasting.

Entman's cascading activation model (2008: 98) indicates that dominant, international news frames can directly influence both a foreign nation's media and their elites when the message is consistent with the audience's culture. Such as in Entman's example of the 'freedom fighter' frame ignored by the American media after 9/11. Wolfsfeld (1997) and Althaus (2003: 405-6) also suggest that journalists are open to presenting oppositional voices when reporting on certain international events or issues, provided that the opposition has political or social status, strong organisation

and carries out exceptional behaviour (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 16-20). However, Bennett (1990) and Hallin's (1994) work indicates that media framing oppositional to the political elite only occurs when the opposition is within the parameters of elite discourse (for example, Bennett's (1990: 118) findings that the American media closely reflected the political elite discourse on U.S. policy in Nicaragua, rather than reflecting American public opinion, which was largely wary of intervention). An investigation of these arguments leads to the third hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 3:** *Journalists will be open to using foreign frames that deviate from local elite discourse.*

This hypothesis seeks to test the extent to which the American media will use frames outside of the parameters of elite debate, and to suggest the most effective way for public diplomacy messages to influence foreign media. If hypothesis 3 is supported by the findings, then it improves the likelihood that public diplomacy messages can be promoted through advocacy and international broadcasting. If it proves false, then public diplomats may find more success by working with local elites to frame the issue. Through testing this hypothesis, this study hopes to further the understanding of whether an oppositional frame can gain traction within the local discourse as a foreign frame influencing local media, or if it must first influence elites.

2. Methodology

To identify what foreign frames might be most likely to be adopted by a country's media, this research uses case studies of four international issues framed by Chinese, Vietnamese and American media. These states were chosen for a number of reasons. First, they serve as examples of countries with strong cultural or political differences. The particular direction of frames is often guided by political agendas (Entman, 2004), so although there may be cultural similarities between China and Vietnam³, the uneasy political relationships between the actors will likely result in dissimilar framing. Second, this thesis addresses communication in the Asia-Pacific region. Though important to the United States' foreign policy interests, public diplomacy in this region has been researched significantly less than the Middle East. Third, most public diplomacy research regarding the United States has been on American attempts to influence foreign opinion. This research evaluates media messaging coming from all three countries, something that may expand our understanding of international communication and mediated public diplomacy.

Four different issues were chosen as case studies, allowing each country to cast itself and the others in a variety of roles (such as aggressor, victim, saviour, and observer). First, the case of a sovereignty dispute over the Spratly Islands is examined. This issue takes place in the South China Sea, where a number of Asian countries (including China and Vietnam) claim ownership over the string of oil-rich islands.

³ While there are significant limitations in generalising something as complex as national culture, it is worth noting some of the similarities between China and Vietnam that Huntington (1996: 225) observes. For instance, that China and Vietnam have millennia-old societies defined by "Asian values", which are influenced by Buddhist and Confucian philosophies.

Despite its distance from the islands, the United States has economic interest in who controls shipping rights to the area as well as political concern over the balance of power in East Asia. This case provides an example of an issue where all three countries have different objectives, making it likely for elite framing to vary from country to country. This offers a case study that will help answer the question of what frames are most likely to be adopted from foreign sources by pointing to similarities or differences in the way journalists of these countries process and present information on the same issue.

Second, the case of Agent Orange reparations is evaluated. Agent Orange is a powerful defoliant used by the United States to remove forest cover from Viet Cong soldiers and to force urbanisation during the Vietnam War. Decades later, the effects of this dioxin on human health and the environment are still felt in Vietnam. This case study follows Vietnam's request for reparations from the United States for damage caused. The United States has already accepted responsibility for the problem and at this point, the dispute is over how much is owed. This issue puts the United States and Vietnam at odds, offering examples of framing between two countries directly opposed on the issue, and will hopefully offer an example of how the American media responds to a challenge to the legitimacy of its former actions.

The decades-long timeframe of this issue also makes it unique for this type of study—most research on international news framing covers specific, short-term conflicts between countries. The length of time lapsed between the initial conflict (the use of Agent Orange) and the effects being reported today may have an effect on the nature of the coverage. Additionally, this issue is not a military conflict and therefore will serve as a good test of whether or not conflict frame structures are used internationally to describe non-conflict issues, as suggested in hypothesis 1. Though

this case does not include all three actors, the benefit of including a long-standing, non-military disagreement between countries outweighs the drawbacks of excluding China from this part of the analysis.

The third and fourth case studies focus on human rights issues in China and Vietnam respectively. In both issues, American actors have criticised the human rights records of the Asian countries, while the Asian countries rebut the charges on the grounds that the United States is applying its own values to other cultures. These two case studies are useful as examples of one of the most difficult problems faced by public diplomacy: how to influence a foreign public when culturally relative values are at the heart of the issue. Additionally, the similarity between these case studies offers an opportunity to compare American elite and media framing of both issues. Through this comparison, the level of influence elites have over the media framing of foreign policy issues can be evaluated, a finding that will be of particular relevance to hypothesis 3, and one that will address the research question by suggesting how sensitive American media is to the country's international political relationships. To evaluate these hypotheses, a two-tiered methodology has been created consisting of a quantitative content analysis and components of a qualitative discourse analysis.

Content Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses in each of these case studies, content analysis will be used to identify frame structure in news stories as well as identifying the problem, cause and solution that make up the content of frames (Entman, 2004: 5). By identifying how, when and in what format frames outside of local political elite discourse on foreign affairs enter the country's media coverage, this research aims to

provide insights on the circumstances that may allow for more effective public diplomacy advocacy and international broadcasting.

Many studies on framing use a content analysis to identify frame structures in news stories (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, Althaus et al., 1996, Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Fridkin and Kenney, 2005; Camaj, 2010). The advantage of this approach is in its relative objectivity and reliability. This type of empirical study is of particular importance in emerging fields, like public diplomacy, where replicable findings can be used to build theory and push forward new research and ideas (Tankard 2001, cited in Camaj 2010: 636). In their 2000 study, Semetko and Valkenburg developed a coding sheet which suggests that all frames fall into one of the following structural categories: conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility. This taxonomy was also used in Camaj's study (2010) on international news coverage of Kosovo's status negotiations. These categories have largely been adopted in this study, and are used to guide the content analysis in its identification of frame structure in news stories.

Two adjustments have been made to Semetko and Valkenburg's coding categories however—the 'morality' category that was used in previous research was omitted, and a new category called 'security' was added. 'Morality' was not included as a frame structure category as the use of morality in these articles is being approached through the framing discourse analysis addresses moral judgements to some degree. The identification of cause and solution also offer an assignment of blame—a framing function that explains which side is 'right' and therefore controlling the framing competition (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 54). As the category is being refined and analysed in depth, it did not seem necessary to include it in the structural analysis. The security frame structure is included because of its relevance to the case study regarding

the territory conflict over the Spratly Islands, and because of its relevance to an American audience post-9/11 (as the event brought questions of global security to the forefront of the public's attention). This category is similar to the 'conflict' category, though focuses on the military and geo-political consequences of the issue rather than the nature of the problem. Through coding for this frame type, this thesis addresses the question of whether issues of security feature across cultures or if it is a strictly American preoccupation.

Testing Hypothesis 1

The content analysis consists of a number of questions with between two and five multiple choice answers possible. Each question in the content analysis represents a specific frame structure (conflict, responsibility, human consequence, economic consequence or security) and each positive answer is categorised as indicative of frame structure. Some questions include multiple answers, qualifying the positive answers with details of the framing. For the purpose of identifying frame structure, any of the qualifying 'yes' answers will be considered indicative of frame presence.

The results of the content analysis will offer data regarding the frame types favoured by each media outlet to describe each issue, demonstrating how media outlets in different countries present different international issues. These findings will be used to test the first hypothesis, which posits that conflict and responsibility frame structures will be the two most common ways to explain an international issue. The hypothesis also suggests that frames structures focusing on the consequences of the issue (analysed here as human consequence, economic consequence and security frame structures) will be used, though not with the same consistency and universality as

conflict and responsibility frame structures. If this idea is supported, then it will be important to note which consequence frames were used, by which countries, and in which contexts.

Testing this hypothesis will help answer the research question by identifying what frame types are shared across cultures. Knowledge about the frame structures that are employed by journalists in different countries will suggest their usefulness in public diplomacy communications. If a frame structure is used widely in one country, but not at all in another, it follows that the journalists and audiences across these cultures have divergent information processing routines guiding their interpretation of the event. In these cases, it is unlikely that a message from one country's media will be available, accessible or applicable enough to be adopted by the other. Through an understanding of the frame structures used internationally, this study will hopefully add to the body of knowledge regarding foreign frames that are most likely to be accepted across countries. Understanding frame structure use across countries is the first level of analysis in this research. A better understanding of how messages can be used successfully in public diplomacy will develop by addressing the content of these frames.

Testing Hypothesis 2

In order to address the second hypothesis, multiple answer choices were provided for most questions. These answers allow for further analysis using Entman's functions of framing (problem, cause and solution (2003: 417)). This allows the study to evaluate the problem, cause and solution identified by the media across the

countries. This should allow for a replicable analysis of how the issue is characterised by the media. Questions and answers for the framing categories are:

Conflict

Does this article reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups/governments?

1. Yes, disagreement between Chinese parties and American parties.
2. Yes, disagreement between Vietnamese parties and American parties.
3. Yes, disagreement between Chinese parties and Vietnamese parties.
4. Yes, other disagreement.
5. No disagreement.

Does one party/individual/group/country express disapproval/disappointment of another?

1. Yes, disapproval of Chinese parties.
2. Yes, disapproval of Vietnamese parties.
3. Yes, disapproval of American parties.
4. Yes, other disapproval.
5. No disapproval.

Responsibility

Does this article suggest that any individual, group or level of government (local or international) is to blame for the problem?

1. Yes, Chinese party is to blame.
2. Yes, Vietnamese party is to blame.
3. Yes, American party is to blame.
4. Yes, other.
5. No blame assigned.

Does the story mention a solution(s) to the problem?

1. Yes, issue can be resolved by China.
2. Yes, issue can be resolved by Vietnam.
3. Yes, issue can be resolved by the United States.
4. Yes, other.
5. No.

Human Consequences

Is the main focus of the article the effect of the issue on individuals or communities?

1. Yes, Chinese individuals/communities.
2. Yes, Vietnamese individuals/communities.
3. Yes, American individuals/communities.
4. Yes, other.

5. No.

Does this article provide an example of someone negatively affected by the issue?

1. Yes, example of a Chinese individual.
2. Yes, example of a Vietnamese individual.
3. Yes, example of an American individual.
4. No.

Economic Consequences

Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Does this article mention any financial losses or gains linked to this issue/event?

1. Yes, Chinese loss or gain.
2. Yes, Vietnamese loss or gain.
3. Yes, American loss or gain.
4. Yes, other.
5. No

Security

Does the article suggest that the issue may result in armed conflict?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Does the article suggest the issue could reduce security or political stability?

1. Yes, Asian security/stability.
2. Yes, American security/stability.
3. Yes, global security stability.
4. Yes, other.
5. No.

Through the identification of problem, cause and solution, the second hypothesis, suggesting that frames challenging a country's legitimacy will not be used by that country's media, can be tested. To guide this evaluation, Beetham's (1991: 16) three-part definition of what constitutes political legitimacy will be used to guide a discourse analysis. For instance, in the case of the Spratly Islands, legitimacy will be challenged through accusations of illegal claims to territory of the Chinese and

Vietnamese governments. In the case of Agent Orange reparations, the challenge to legitimacy will be pointed towards the past actions of the American military—the simple act of requesting reparations for using Agent Orange implies its illegality. Finally, the cases regarding human rights will bring to question the legitimacy of the Chinese and Vietnamese governments when it comes to the treatment of their people. Through analysing how challenges to legitimacy are presented (if they are at all), the research hopes to address the question of what frames are most likely to be adopted by foreign media by identifying whether a frame challenging notions of a country's legitimacy will be presented. If the analysis supports the hypothesis, it may suggest that frames challenging local legitimacy should not be used in public diplomacy messages.

Testing Hypothesis 3

Finally, the third hypothesis seeks to find out if the main claims of the indexing hypothesis regarding the relationship of political elites and media on foreign affairs is correct. The purpose of testing this hypothesis is to find out to what extent oppositional frames from foreign sources are incorporated into mainstream media framing. Foreign news framing is often based on remarks by local elites, such as politicians and governmental agencies, who serve as credible sources for journalists (Bennett, 1990: 106). These sources provide references for journalists, though their voices are not the only ones presented—as Wolfsfeld (1997) found, under certain circumstances challengers can also influence the media. Therefore, this study will evaluate the framing of American political elites and mainstream media in each case study in order to assess when frames employed by foreign media but not local political

elites enters local media coverage of foreign affairs⁴. To do this, statements from the American political elite will undergo the same content and discourse analysis as the media stories. These results will be compared and contrasted to the findings from the analysis of the media.

These findings will attempt to add a new element to existing research on how the parameters of media framing on international relations is determined, allowing for identification of the factors that might allow for effective public diplomacy messaging. Specifically, it is through this comparison that this study hopes to develop an understanding of whether or not messages need to correspond with local elite debate in order to gain media attention in that country. This will add an important element to the research question's answer regarding what qualities a frame should have in order to increase the likelihood of its adoption by foreign media.

Data Collection

Due to the timeline and scope of this research, an 18-month span from January 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 was chosen as a sample and articles published during this time were collected. Within this time span, there was a disparity in regards to the number of articles produced by each media outlet. Searches of the Chinese and the American media yielded numerous results, the searches were ordered for relevance in the Factiva database and enough results were selected to give a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 10. As fewer results were returned by the other

⁴ Statements made by Chinese and Vietnamese political elites were not studied due to the limited scope of this project, however given the strict governmental control of journalism in these countries (van Leeuwen, 2006: 219, Sun, 2002: 17-8), it is assumed that elite statements would not be notably different from the framing reflected in the national media outlets.

outlets, all relevant articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre and United States State Department, Senate and House of Representatives were analysed.

Articles covering the case study issues came from outlets representing four groups (Chinese media, Vietnamese media, American mainstream media and American elites). The Chinese media chosen for this study came from Xinhua, a state-run press agency. This organisation was founded in the 1930s, originally as a propaganda tool for the Chinese Communist Party. Recently, however, Xinhua has been undergoing a transformation into a profitable, comprehensive news service. Despite these developments, Xinhua remains loyal to the Chinese Communist Party, and continues to reflect their political and social objectives (Hong, 2011: 389). Xinhua is a prolific organisation, producing approximately 12,000 daily news items about China. The outlet operates websites in six major languages (Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic) and professes to attract 800 million hits per day (China View, 2007). The reach and popularity of this international broadcasting outlet make Xinhua a valuable tool for researching Chinese framing of international issues.

Articles from Xinhua used in this study were retrieved via the Dow Jones Factiva Database. In the study of the Spratly Islands, articles were found via a search for 'Nansha' (the Chinese name for the Spratly Islands). In total, 29 articles were recovered. Articles covering human rights in China were found via a search for 'human rights' and 'China'. These were sorted by relevance and the first 81 out of 500 articles were chosen.

Article from the Vietnamese media was provided by the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, a state-run organisation. The Vietnam Foreign Press Centre was established in 1983 to assist foreign journalists reporting on Vietnam by providing logistical support and written content (Foreign Press Centre 2009). This organisation typically posts four

news pieces a day on its website (www.presscenter.org.vn/en/), all collected from different Vietnamese news agencies, such as Voice of Vietnam and Vietnam News. These agencies translate their articles from Vietnamese into English (van Leeuwen, 2006: 218). Though this sample represents a variety of Vietnamese news producers, the strict control of Vietnamese media (the level of state control is comparable to that of China) means that messages tend to remain true to the government's official stance on foreign policy issues across domestic media outlets.

Articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre that were used in this study were obtained via a Google search using the preface 'site:presscenter.org.vn'. In the study of the Spratly Islands, 20 relevant articles were obtained through a search for 'Spratly Islands'. 18 relevant results were found on the issue of Vietnam's human rights through a search of 'human rights' within the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre's site during the time period observed. Articles on the issue of Agent Orange reparations were found through a search of 'Agent Orange', and 27 relevant results were returned.

No single outlet was selected to represent the American media, but rather samples were taken from both public and private news outlets across the country. Articles were found in the Factiva database by filtering search results to include only sources from the United States. Results were then sorted by relevance and selected in this order. This produced a sample of American media for each issue that spanned the entire date range as well as a variety of outlets, including government media (such as the Voice of America radio station), national for-profit media (such as CNN and The Wall Street Journal) and localised media (such as Deseret News from Salt Lake City, Utah).

In the case of the Spratly Islands, articles were found through the Factiva database for a search of 'Spratly Islands'. Results were ordered by relevance, and any

result over 2,000 words was excluded to eliminate a few instances of news services reprinting full texts of bills. 143 results were returned, and the first 58 articles were chosen⁵. Articles covering the issue of human rights in China were found through the Factiva database for a search of ‘human rights’ and ‘China’. Results were ordered by relevance, and any result over 2,000 words was excluded. 19,610 results were returned, and the first 96 articles were chosen. Articles on the subject of Vietnamese human rights abuses were found through the Factiva database for a search of ‘human rights’ and ‘Vietnam’. Results were ordered by relevance, and any result over 2,000 words was excluded. The first 94 articles were chosen. For the case study of Agent Orange reparations, articles were found through a search for ‘Agent Orange and Vietnam’. Most items returned focused on the effect of Agent Orange in American veterans of the Vietnam War, but 20 articles were found with relevance to reparations to Vietnam.

Statements made by American elites were also evaluated for the purposes of comparing results to those of the American media. Through this comparison, the research will test the third hypothesis regarding elite influence over frames. The sources included in this component of the study were press releases, remarks and testimony from the United States Department of State (retrieved from www.state.gov) as well as remarks and press releases issued by United States senators (retrieved from www.senate.gov) and congressmen (www.house.gov). These statements reflected both major political parties, which should offer a comprehensive look at the parameters of the debate among American elites.

In the study of the Spratly Islands, 10 relevant search results were found for the time period. These results were found through searches of ‘Spratly Islands’ (the

⁵ This gives a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 10. This criteria was used in all cases when selecting a sample from a large pool of articles.

United States refers to the Spratly Islands rather than the Nansha Islands) on the websites of the US State Department, the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. On the issue of human rights abuses in China, 29 relevant search results were found. These results were found through searches of ‘China’ and ‘human rights’ on the websites of the US State Department, the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. For Vietnamese human rights abuses, 27 relevant results from the time period observed were found through searches for ‘Vietnam human rights’ on the websites of the US State Department, the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives. 16 relevant results were found regard the effect of Agent Orange on Vietnam, and the United States’ responsibility to make reparations. These results were found through a search of ‘agent orange’ and ‘Vietnamese’ on the websites of the US State Department, the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives. 10% of the articles were tested for inter-coder reliability, and a score of 7 or above on the Krippendorff’s Alpha was achieved for each variable.

	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Elites	American Media
Human Rights in China	81		29	96
Human Rights in Vietnam		18	27	94
Dispute Over Spratly Islands	29	20	10	58
Agent Orange Reparations		27	16	20

Table 1. Data sources and sample sizes

3. Case Study: Sovereignty Dispute Over the Spratly Islands

The Spratly Islands are a chain of uninhabited islands in the South China Sea. While the islands themselves are not remarkably valuable, the waters that surround them are important as shipping routes and are speculated to be rich in oil and gas deposits. The Spratlys ('Nansha' in Chinese) are claimed as sovereign territory of China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. China has been accused to taking a 'divide and conquer approach' to the sovereignty conflict, by seeking bilateral negotiation with each country laying claim to the islands (Reuters, 22 March 2012). China's great political and economic clout gives the country has a definitive advantage over its Southeast Asian neighbours. Due to this imbalance of power, the option of negotiating bilaterally leaves the smaller countries at a disadvantage at the bargaining table. Without any political or economic leverage, the smaller countries have struggled to sway China on the issue.

As Termsak Chalermpanupap, Director of ASEAN's Political and Security Directorate, explains: "[the ASEAN claimants] cannot go into bilateral [negotiations] because of the Chinese assumption that everything belongs to China. Certainly you can't offer what you don't own" (States News Service, 21 June 2011). With nothing to offer the Asian superpower, the smaller countries are looking beyond bilateral negotiations for a solution. Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines have sought both the support of the ASEAN organisation as well as the United States government.

China, however, feels that international interference in the issue is a threat to regional stability. China argues that the issue does not affect the countries as a collective, nor the ASEAN organisation as a whole, and thus should be resolved bilaterally (States News Service, 14 June 2011). By internationalising the issue, China

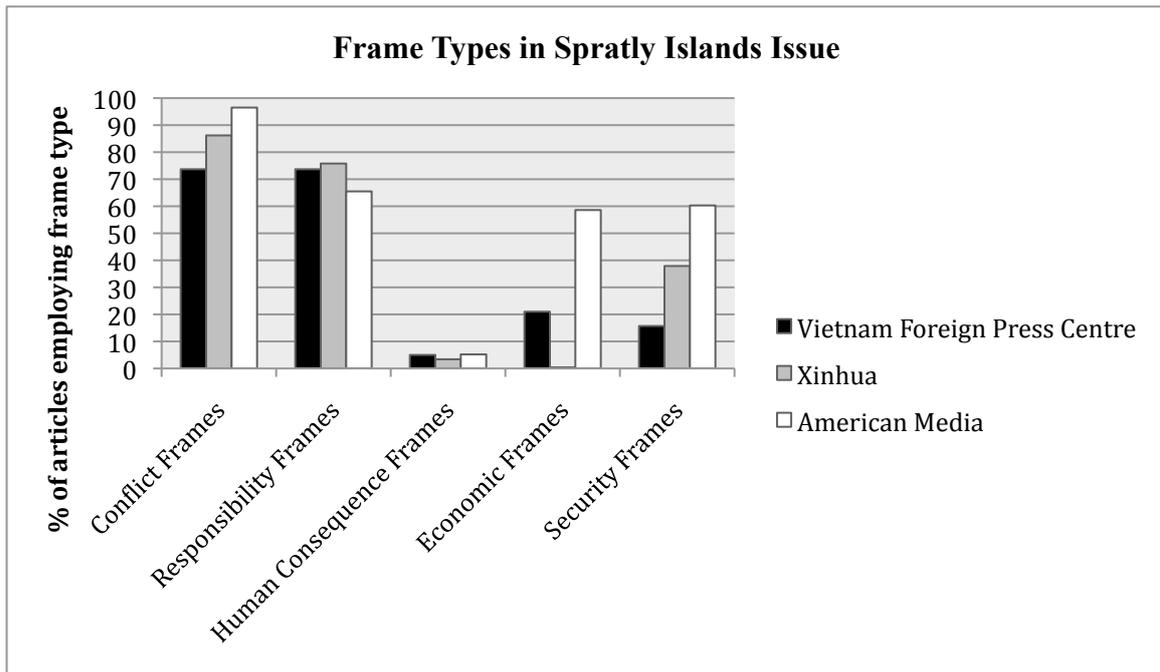
feels that the Southeast Asian nations are escalating what should be a regional problem into an international issue.

United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has declared that the United States remains neutral in the conflict, though the country does have a national interest in protecting the freedom and security of the shipping passages in the South China Sea (States News Service, 20 June 2011). Additionally, the United States has a defence treaty with the Philippines that would require the US to support the Philippines in a conflict.

Further complicating the issue is the United States' relationship with China. A rising global power, China owns some of the United States' debt, giving the Asian country economic leverage in negotiations. This gives the possibility of conflict with China additional ramifications for the American economy, something that would concern policymakers. On the other hand, the relationship between the United States and China is adversarial in many respects (according to Seton Hall University Professor Yang Liyu, the United States views China as its biggest military threat (States News Service, 14 June 2011)). This relationship will doubtlessly evolve in the coming years, but as it is, the two countries remain fairly wary and cautious of each other.

Hypothesis 1 and the Spratly Islands Case

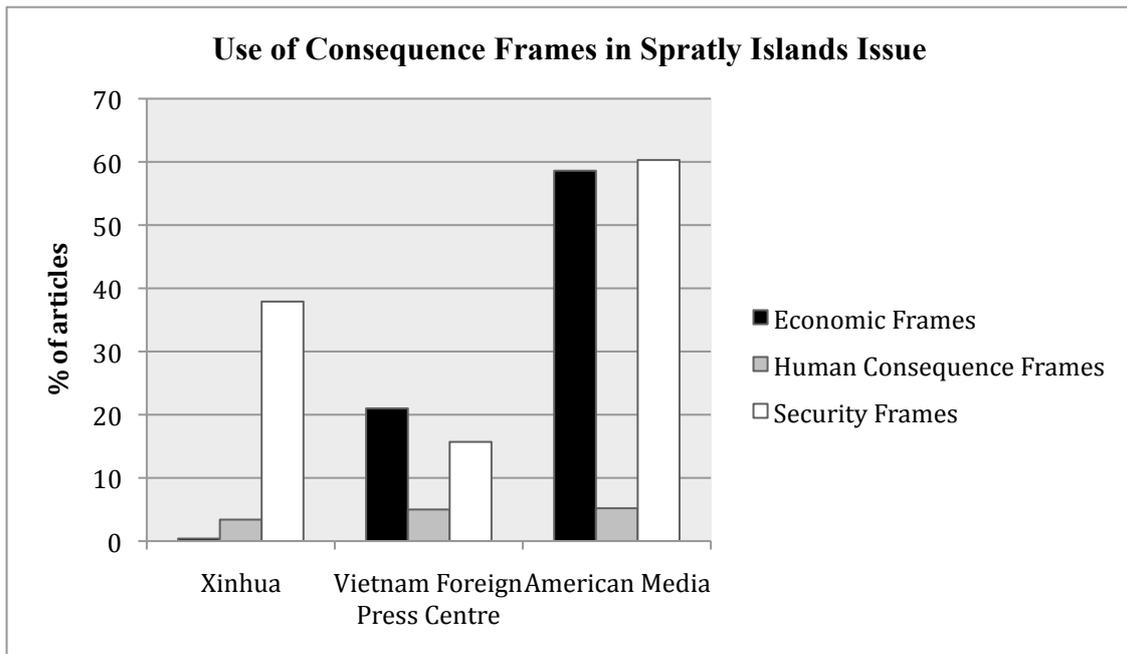
This hypothesis seeks to understand what frame structures are most widely accepted internationally by evaluating the frequency of different frame types used by the media outlets from the United States, China and Vietnam. Figure 1 shows the results of the content analysis, which find that conflict frames are employed most often to describe the Spratly Islands issue: 68.4% of the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, 86.2% of Xinhua and 96.6% of the American media identify the issue as a conflict between two or more countries. Also as hypothesised, responsibility frames are the second most common frame type among all media outlets. 73.7% of Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, 75.8% of Xinhua and 65.5% of American media articles employ some element of responsibility framing. However, it should be noted that this case study features a potential military conflict and finding conflict and responsibility frames prevalent here does not imply they will be used widely for every issue. While the hypothesis is supported here through common use of conflict frames, the subsequent case studies will provide a better test of this hypothesis.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict Frames	86.2%	73.7%	96.5%
Responsibility Frames	75.8%	73.7%	65.5%
Human consequence Frames	3.4%	5%	5.2%
Economic Frames	0.4%	21%	58.6%
Security Frames	37.9%	15.7%	60.3%

Figure 1.

Consequence frames are the third frame type evaluated by this hypothesis, and are divided into three separate structures for the content analysis: human consequence, economic and security frames. Figure 2 shows their respective use in this issue.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Economic Frames	0.4%	21%	58.6%
Human Consequence Frames	3.4%	5%	5.2%
Security Frames	37.9%	15.7%	60.3%

Figure 2.

Of the consequence frame types, security frames are the most common, with 15.8% of articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, 37.9% of articles from Xinhua, and 60% of articles from the American media use security frames for this issue. The nature of this issue is that of a territorial dispute between Asian countries, and the question of regional security and stability naturally follows. Interestingly, the Asian media is less likely to see the conflict as tied to security than the American media. Given the location of the conflict, it could be presumed that China and Vietnam would be more concerned than the United States about the security consequences of this issue. That the United States used this frame type so often for an issue so geographically far away may speak to an American interest in this frame type, perhaps, the more sensationalist nature of private media.

Economic frames are the most common consequence frame type found in the Vietnamese media, and are also commonly used by the American media (58.6% of the American articles and 21% of the Vietnamese articles). The dispute over the Spratly Islands centres around the ownership of valuable resources and has the potential to be framed as an economic issue, yet this frame type is extremely uncommon in articles from Xinhua (0.4%). Pursuit of economic development has been previously identified as a common, previously accepted theme in Chinese media (de Burgh, 2003: 171), but it appears that Xinhua does not see significant economic consequences for this issue. Further research would be required to determine whether this frame structure was not used due to political reasons or if use of economic consequence frames structures is limited to certain types of issues.

Hypothesis 2 and the Spratly Islands Case

The second hypothesis seeks to identify any cases of foreign frames challenging a state's legitimacy, and whether these frames are ever presented by that country's media. Through testing this hypothesis, this study hopes to identify the importance of constructing public diplomacy messages within the existing parameters of a country's sense of legitimacy. In this case study, legitimacy is most likely to be questioned when China or Vietnam claims sovereignty over the islands, an act considered to be illegal by the other claimant. Additionally, the United States' interest and potential intervention in the dispute could also be presented as illegitimate by the Chinese media—a case of the dominant actor (the United States) violating the wishes and rules of the subordinate (China). The results of the discourse analysis are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Most Common Conflict, Cause and Solution by Outlet

	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	Xinhua	American Media
Conflict	Conflict with China over Spratly Islands	Conflicts with Southeast Asian countries over Spratly Islands; issue is being ‘internationalised’	Conflict between China and Southeast Asian countries over Spratly Islands; China is growing as a political power
Cause	China is falsely claiming sovereignty over the islands	Disagreement over sovereignty; United States is pursuing a political agenda by getting involved	Disagreement over sovereignty; China grabbing resources to support its rapid development
Solution	China should respect Vietnam’s sovereign rights to the islands	Direct, bi-lateral negotiations between relevant countries; Southeast Asian countries to cease violating China’s sovereignty	Asian countries should negotiate peacefully; American officials need to stand up to China

For this issue, all of the outlets largely define the problem in the same way: 86.2% of articles from Xinhua, 68.4% of the articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, and 87.9% of articles from the American media, frame the issue as a conflict between China and one or more of the Southeast Asian countries laying claim to the islands (articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre describe it more specifically as a conflict between China and Vietnam)⁶. The focus of this conflict is over who has

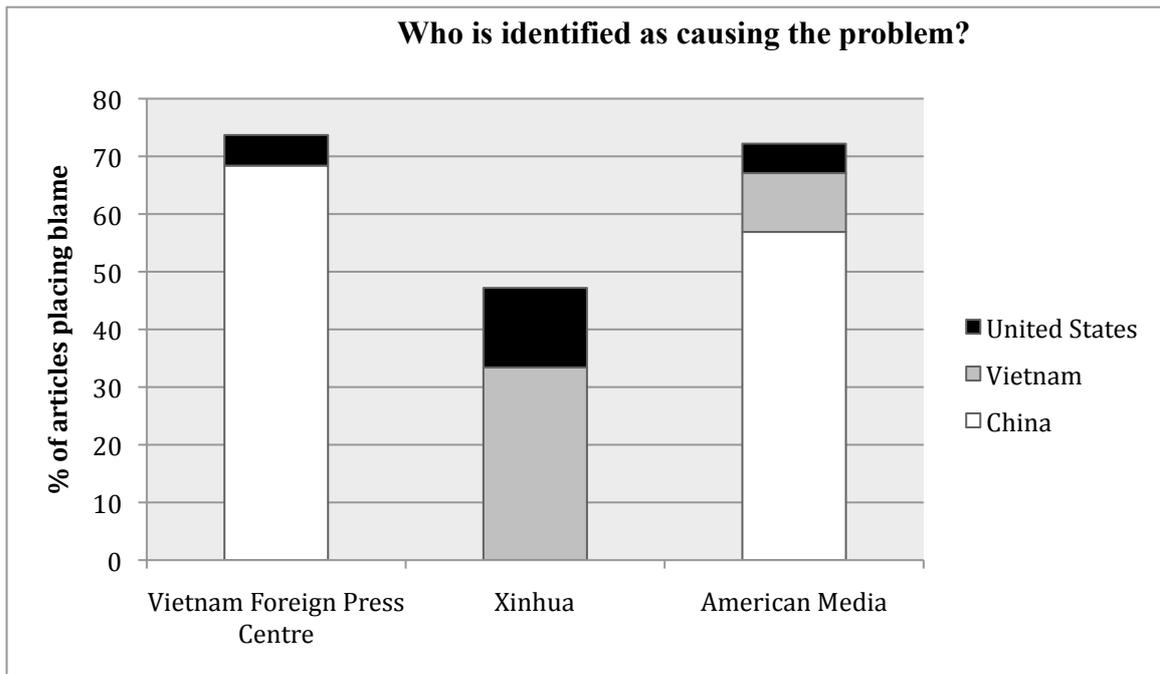
⁶ For the purposes of data in this section, the ‘non-Chinese, non-American actors’ Xinhua occasionally blamed or described as responsible for resolving the issue will be represented as ‘Vietnam’. The reason for this is that the coding reflected cases in which Southeast Asian countries were blamed, including Vietnam though perhaps not explicitly naming the country. As far as foreign policy is concerned, which is the goal of public diplomacy, Vietnam is a part of the ASEAN group that is opposing China’s

sovereign right to the Spratly Islands. Occasionally, the United States is identified as a party involved in the conflict, (13.8% of articles from Xinhua, 5.3% from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, 19% from the American media) though always in a related problem and never as the main source of tension in the South China Sea.

In the Xinhua articles identifying the United States as involved in the conflict, the United States is accused of ‘internationalising’ a regional issue in an attempt to gain more political traction in East Asia (Xinhua, 21 September 2010; Xinhua, 30 December 2010; Xinhua, 14 June 2011). In Xinhua’s framing of the issue as a problem of American intervention, the United States’ attempt to ‘internationalise’ the issue for its own political benefit was the cause of the problem (13.8% of articles from Xinhua blamed the United States for the problem). Xinhua presents no consequences relevant to the United States—neither Chinese nor Vietnamese news indicate that security or economic implications extended beyond Asia—indicating that Xinhua does not see any justifiable reason for American intervention.

There was some overlap regarding the general cause of the issue (often presented as a general misunderstanding of who had rights to the islands), but overall the outlets had differing interpretations of who is largely at fault and who is responsible for the solution. This is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. The Vietnam Foreign Press Centre attributes most of the blame to China (68.4% of articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press). Xinhua did not assign any blame in over half of the articles, and in cases where it did, blame was directed at others (34.6% of blame was placed on other claimants, 13.8% of blame was placed on the United States).

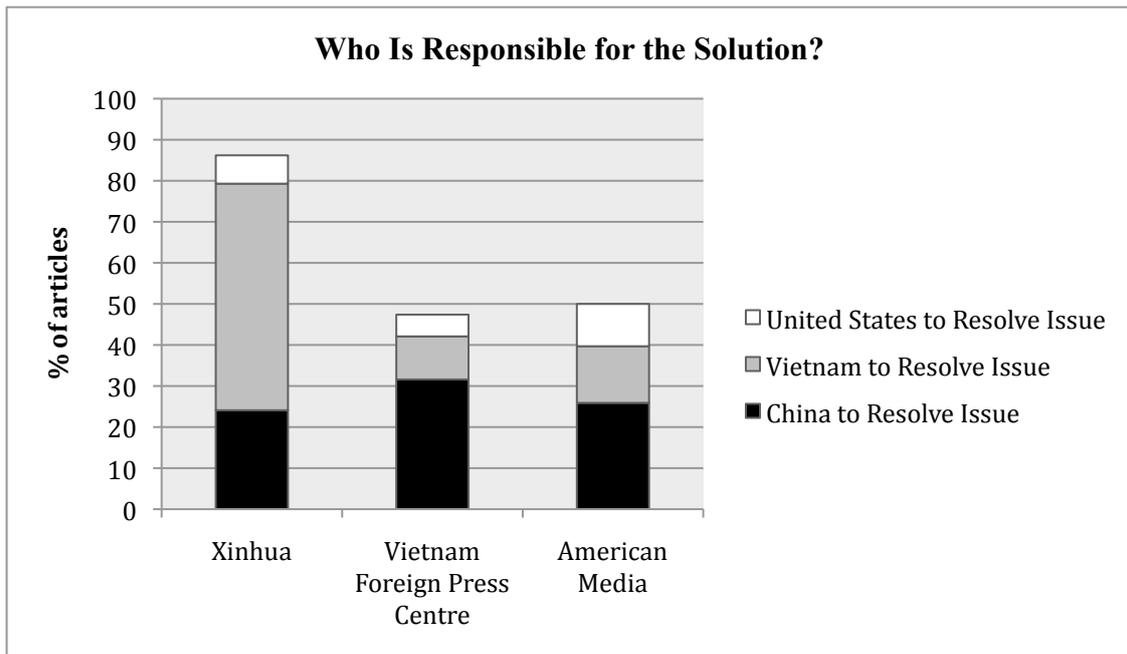
claim to the Spratly Islands. Therefore, it is reasonable to count these cases as blaming Vietnam, though it may not have been explicitly named.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
No Blame	55.2%	26.3%	34.5%
China to Blame	0%	68.4%	56.9%
Vietnam to Blame	33.4%	0%	10.2%
United States to Blame	13.8%	5.3%	5.1%

Figure 3.

The solutions put forth for this problem are even more diverse—no single proposal dominates the framing of any single country, much less shared across several. Often, a suggestion is made to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiations. However, Vietnam and China both appear unwilling to budge on the issue of their country’s rights to the islands, each country asking the other to respect their sovereign rights to the islands. When China or Vietnam promote the use of friendly, bi-lateral negotiations to resolve the issue, neither indicate a willingness to compromise its ownership rights—both Xinhua and the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre place the onus for resolution more heavily on the opposing country, as is reflected in the content analysis results showing responsibility for solution.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
No Solution	24.1%	42.1%	50%
China to Resolve Issue	24.1%	31.6%	25.9%
Vietnam to Resolve Issue	55.2%	10.5%	13.8%
United States to Resolve Issue	6.9%	5.3%	10.3%
Other Solution	6.9%	10.5%	8.6%

Figure 4.

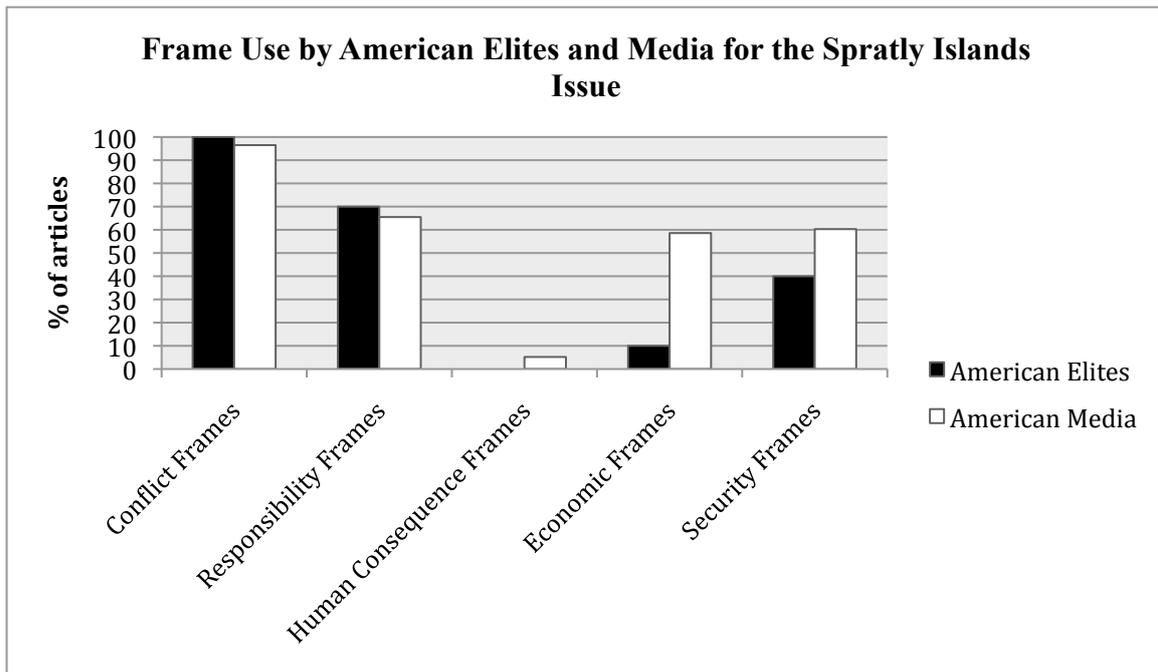
No consensus is found among the American media either: the most consistent solution is no solution at all (50%). The 50% of articles that do propose a solution suggest a range of possibilities, including changing the name of the sea (States News Service, 21 June 2011), calling on the relevant countries to resolve their claims and share the waters (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 13 October 2010), as well as condemning China and promoting international dialogue.

The significant commonality between all of the proposed causes and solutions is that none question the legitimacy of the media outlet's home country despite these challenges existing in foreign frames. For instance, the Vietnam and China question

one another's following of established rules when they argue accuse each other of sovereignty violations—accusations that are represented in the 'blame' category of the discourse analysis. Instances of identifying the home country as at fault for cause are rare, and are limited to the American media blaming its own country for not intervening in the dispute—an extension of the United States' legitimacy rather than a challenge to it. Solutions also support each country's own legitimacy by ignoring or marginalising oppositional frames suggesting the country withdraw its claim the islands (Vietnamese and Chinese media both recommend the other country take this action, but never suggest it for their own) or its participation in the dispute (Xinhua's suggestion that the United States has no role in this conflict was occasionally mentioned, but widely marginalised by the American media (States News Service, 14 June 2011, Washington Post, 23 June 2011)). Overall, these findings support the hypothesis and indicate that a challenge to local legitimacy may prevent a foreign frame from influencing another country's media.

Hypothesis 3 and the Spratly Islands Case

This hypothesis is tested by comparing the content from the American media to the discourse from the American elites and identifying instances in which frames are used by one group and not the other. Figure 5 shows the results from comparing a content analysis of articles from each source. Here, we see that conflict and responsibility frame structure use is very similar between American elites and media. Use of consequence frames, however, indicates more variation between elite and media framing. While both used 'security' and 'human consequence' frames on occasion, the American media was more likely overall to use a consequence frame structure to describe the issue.



	American Elites	American Media
Conflict Frames	100%	96.5%
Responsibility Frames	70%	65.5%
Human consequence Frames		5.2%
Economic Frames	10%	58.6%
Security Frames	40%	60.3%

Figure 5.

The tendency of the media to use consequence frame structures may be due to its sensationalising nature, which favours the drama and emotionalism that can be found in stories focusing more on the potential consequences of an issue than on the solutions. Sensationalism may be most evident among those articles framing the issue as a security problem. Though around a third of articles from both outlets indicate that the conflict over the Spratly Islands is related to Asian regional security/stability, few articles from the American elites project that this tension may result in armed conflict. However, over half of the articles from the American media are willing to make this suggestion. The reason for this may be that the drama of a potential military conflict is useful in attracting an audience. While American elites may need to be considerate of

the political ramifications of their suggestions, an American newspaper may feel it has more opportunity for dramatic conjecture.

The American media also deviates from elite framing by indicating that this issue does have consequences relevant to the United States—10.3% of American articles indicate this issue has some bearing on global or American security while none of the elite statements extend the security concerns beyond Asia. In these cases, the conflict is explained as indicative of China's military and economic rise. According to these articles, the problem is China's aggressive rise as a world power, and the sovereignty dispute is but an example of China flexing its muscle in the region. In these cases, the problem is identified as China asserting itself in the region in order to increase its power (56.9% of American articles blamed China for the problem). Here, American journalists are tapping into a frame that is relevant to their audience—in 2011, a Pew Research poll found that 65% of Americans view China as either an adversary (22%) or a 'serious problem' (43%). 20% of Americans identify China as the greatest threat to the United States; making China the top perceived threat, just above North Korea at 18% (Pew Research Group, 2011). Through these identifications of problem, we see the United States each paint China as a menacing hegemony—a frame not presented by China's media.

This frame is used only by the American media, and is not found in the American elite statements, indicating it is not a product of indexing. The media also identifies causes of the problem that are not found in elite statements—whenever cause is identified by the elites, the problem is blamed on China. The media, on the other hand, also places blame on Vietnam/other Southeast Asian nations and the United States. Further media deviation from elite statements is evident in the solutions proposed. The American elites' most common solutions involved United States action

through intervention or formal condemnation of China (40%), or Chinese action through facilitating negotiations (30%) or ceasing its aggressive acts (10%). Within the solutions proposed there was also a wide range of ideas from the American media (see Fig 6 and 7). The variety of solutions proposed here could speak to the flexibility of offering solutions in foreign policy issue framing, at least when the local elites have not come to a widely accepted solution themselves.

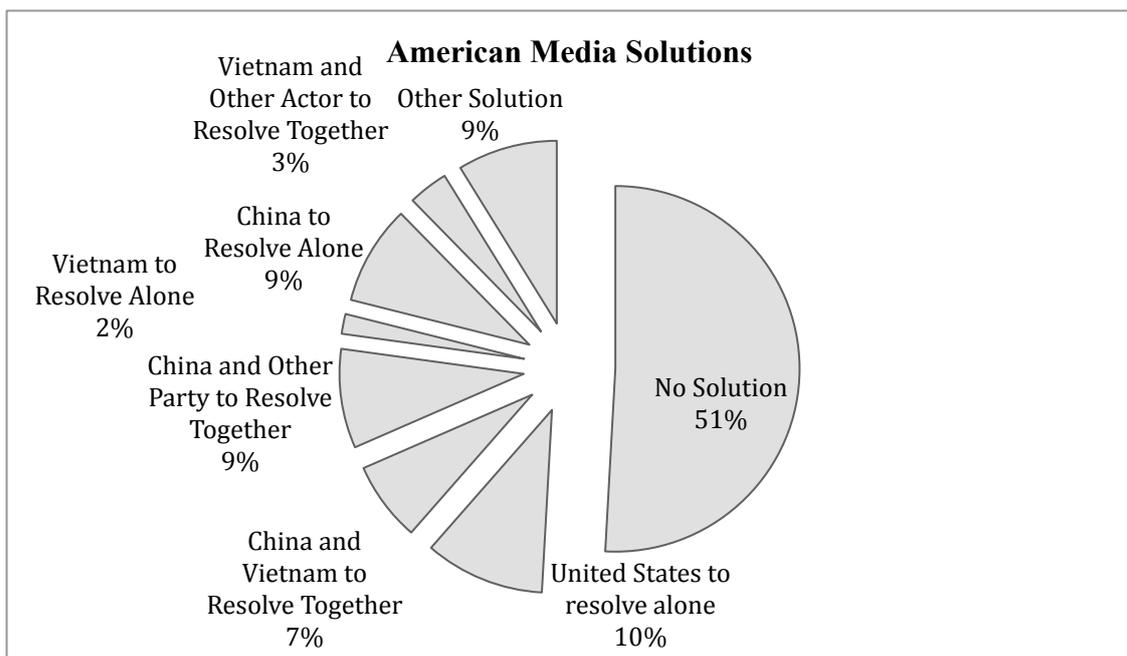


Figure 6.

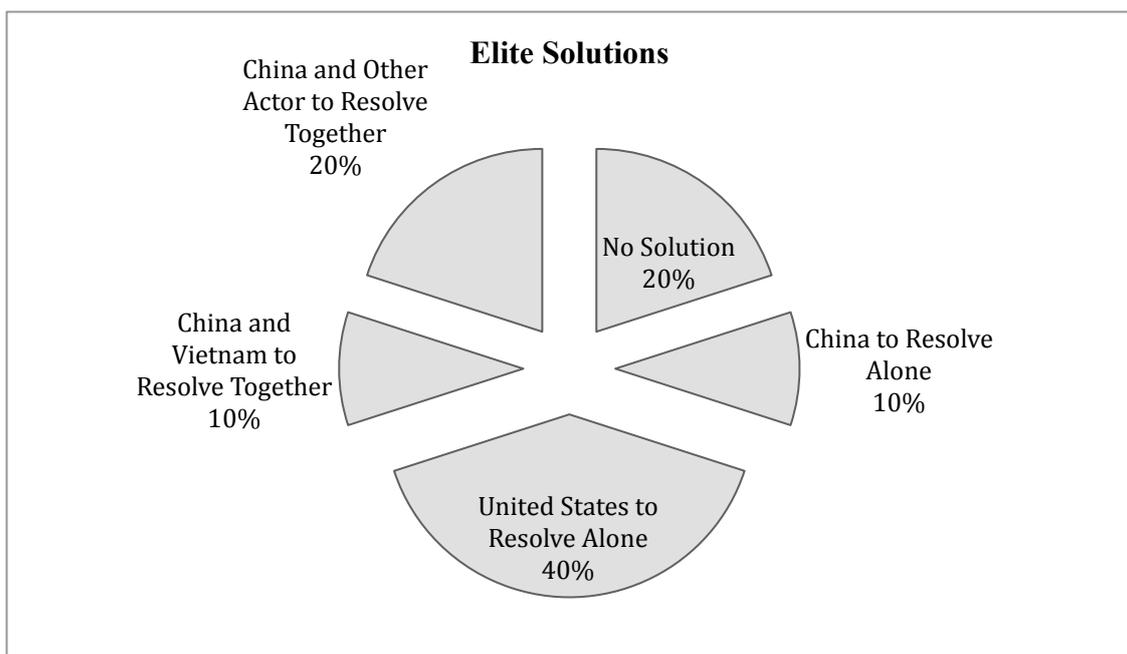
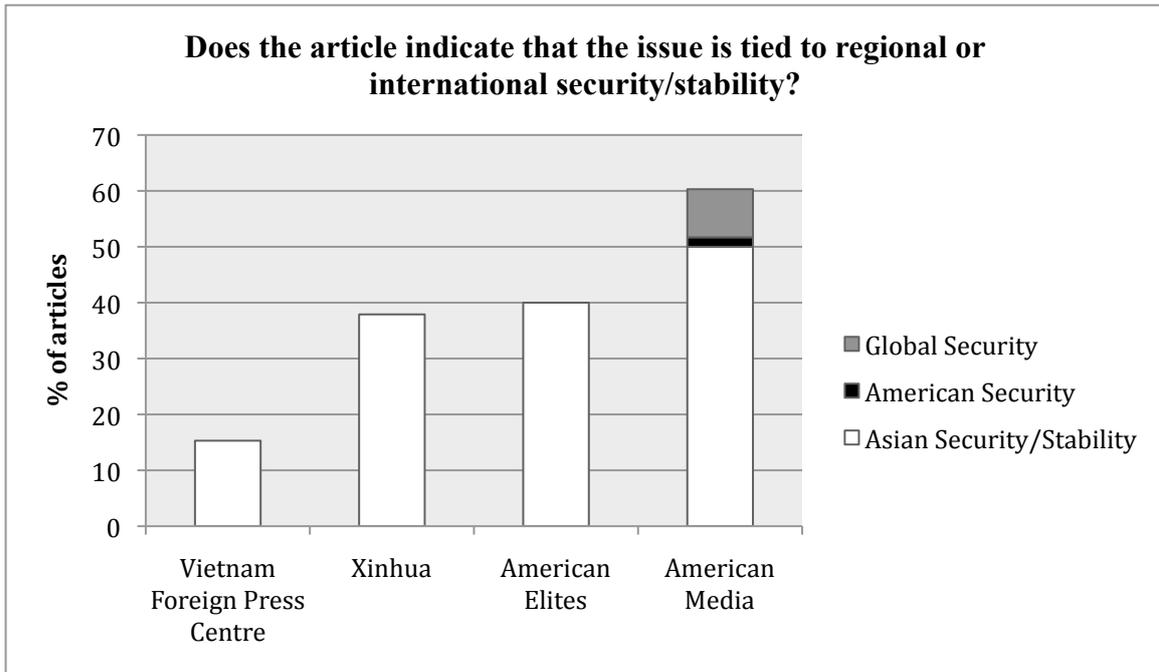


Figure 7.

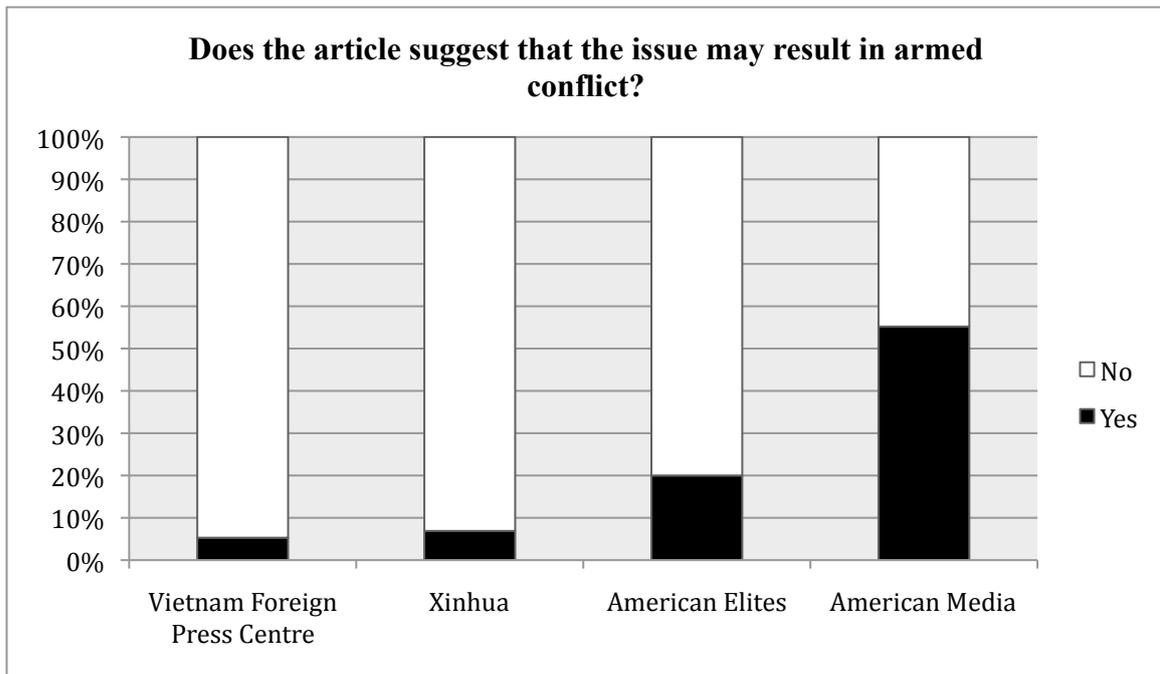
These discrepancies between elite and media framing challenge the work of Bennett (1990) and Hallin (1989), both of who suggest that frames not used by elites will not be present in the media. So where did these frames originate? Althaus (2003:395) suggests that international sources may influence framing, though this case does not indicate that frames were adopted from foreign media sources. Examination of some of the articles that employ this framing (Investor's Business Daily, 22 July 2010; Wall Street Journal, 28 July 2010, Wall Street Journal, 4 March 2011, Wall Street Journal, 5 March 2011) finds that these claims are sourced from Americans, such as a top American military officer, a public policy researcher, a foreign affairs researcher as well as from the journalists themselves.

Additionally, by incorporating results from Xinhua and the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, it appears that these outlets did not influence the American' media's use of security frames. Figures 8 and 9 both show that the American media's use of security frames does not follow the lead of either Asian outlet or the American elites.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media	American Elites
No Security Consequences	58.6%	84.2%	39.7%	60%
Consequences for Asian Security	37.9%	15.3%	50%	40%
Consequences for American Security			1.7%	
Consequences for Global Security			8.6%	

Figure 8.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media	American Elites
No suggestion armed conflict may result	93.1%	94.7%	44.8%	80%
Suggestion armed conflict may result	6.9%	5.3%	55.2%	20%

Figure 9.

The findings here indicate that while frames outside of the parameters of elite debate are presented, these frames are not adopted from foreign sources. This finding stands in stark contrast to other studies challenging the indexing hypothesis, in which foreign sources are found frequently. Althaus, Edy, Entman and Phalen (1996) find that in coverage of the Libya crisis in the 1980s, 52% of sources cited in the New York Times were foreign. That study, however, coded for sources rather than frames. It is quite possible that if a similar methodology had been applied here, a number of foreign sources would have surfaced, though perhaps not in the articles challenging the framing of the American elites.

Conclusions

Overall, the findings in this case study support all three hypotheses, though with some caveats regarding the application of these findings to public diplomacy. In regards to frame structure, it appears that conflict and responsibility frames are widely used across cultures to describe this issue. The consequence frame types appear less frequently and unevenly among the countries. For instance, the American media uses security frames more than any other consequence frame, while the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre uses economic frames the most of the consequence frame types. These inconsistencies are consistent with previous work on international issues framing. However, the nature of the issue is conducive to conflict and responsibility frames and their prevalence in this case should not be taken as fact of their overall use. It will be interesting to see whether these trends hold in other case studies going forward.

In testing hypothesis 2, the study found no instances of frames challenging the legitimacy of a country presented in the local media, despite the existence of these frames in foreign media. As such, the American frames presenting China as using the Spratly Islands conflict as part of its expansionist plan was never used in China. Conversely, the Chinese framing that the United States was using the Spratly Islands conflict as a justification for pursuing political agendas in Asia was never used by the American media. These findings support the hypothesis and suggest that frames challenging a country's legitimacy may not influence foreign media through public diplomacy communications.

If a challenge to legitimacy is consistently found to be outside the realm of what a nation's media will find acceptable, this may be a better threshold for the Sphere of Deviance than the parameters of elite debate as suggested by Hallin (1989) and Mermin (1999). Through the comparison of political elite and media framing, it

appears that the American media presented a number of ideas that were not found in the elite discourse, such as additional causes, solutions and consequences. These findings are not consistent with the indexing theory as the guiding force behind news framing of foreign policy issues in the United States. A more fitting explanation may be Wolfsfeld's (1997: 45) proposal that alternative frames that are consistent within a nation's political culture will join the framing competition. Althaus (2003) suggests that foreign sources often inform the debate, resulting in alternative frames used by the media. However, no evidence of foreign influence on American media was found in this case study, implying that the limitations of the indexing theory do not necessarily mean foreign frames outside of elite debate will be adopted by journalists. Indeed, it appears that the foreign frames examined have not influenced the American media in this case.

Returning to the question guiding this research, we ask what news frames from foreign sources appear most likely to be adopted by local media and audiences? The findings of this study have shown that challenges to the legitimacy of the media's origin country are not likely to be adopted, indicating that such a frame is likely to fall into the Sphere of Deviance and will not be adopted. The study also found the indexing theory not to be comprehensive enough to preclude the use of any oppositional frames in the media. This could imply that there is a middle ground between consistency with elite framing and an outright challenge to legitimacy, in which frames can provide oppositional or challenging ideas while still being accepted by local media. An identification of these parameters of acceptable, oppositional debate will be sought throughout the next case studies.

It is also worthwhile to note that in areas where the American media deviated from elite framing, frames used did not appear to be sourced internationally. This

prompts the question of whether the qualities of foreign frames prevent them from being used by American media, a question that will be considered throughout the next three case studies. Although the limitations of this case study may also be a reason—it is possible that other foreign sources with political systems and cultures more similar to those of the United States (for instance, Canada or the United Kingdom) would be uncovered with a more thorough analysis. As this thesis is more concerned with communication between dissimilar countries, this possibility has not been investigated here though it may be a worthy area for future study.

4. Case Study: Agent Orange Reparations

Agent Orange is the codename for a powerful dioxin used by the American military to defoliate large areas of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The intention of using the herbicide was to eliminate the food and shelter of Viet Cong soldiers as well as to force urbanisation among civilians as part of the American war strategy (Stellman et al., 2003, cited in Palmer, 2007: 172). The dioxin was sprayed on over three million hectares of forest, disrupting ecosystems by removing tree cover. Aside from its intended and deleterious effect on plant life, contact with Agent Orange has also been linked to a number of human health issues (Palmer, 2007: 174). These include severe birth defects and increased miscarriages, nerve disorders and a number of cancers. The dioxin has leached into the soil of affected areas and therefore entered the food system through plants, animals and fish, continues to cause health problems for people living in certain rural areas of Vietnam. Vietnam claims to have up to three million citizens affected by Agent Orange, though some American authorities have argued that the Vietnamese are discounting the possibility of birth defects being caused by malnutrition and environmental factors (Tulsa World, 23 May 2010).

To pay for the damage to human health and the environment, Vietnam is petitioning the United States for reparations. Specifically, a figure of \$300 million has been quoted as necessary to adequately clean up the 'hotspots' where Agent Orange in the soil continues to affect the health of the Vietnamese people.

Adding to the complexity of the issue are the American soldiers who have also reported health problems. American veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and suffer from one of 17 associated conditions receive treatment paid for by the US

government. Additionally, children born to these servicemen who suffer from spine bifida also qualify for free medical care (Tulsa World, 23 May 2010). Interest groups representing the veterans often lobby for increased funding and medical services, which may make the issue of reparations towards Vietnam more accessible, available and applicable for Americans.

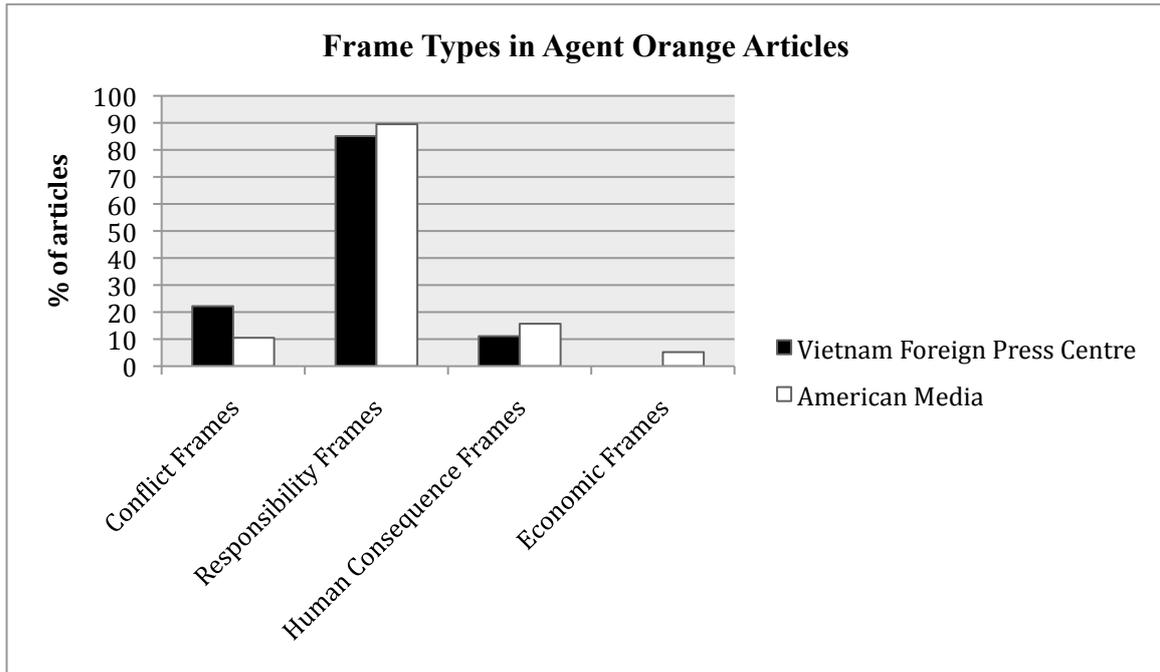
The issue of Agent Orange reparations is one without many disputed facts, and it is difficult to find a frame in which the United States is not largely at fault for the problem. As such, this case study offers a clear opportunity for the American media to view its country of origin as at fault—perhaps the best way to test the willingness of media to use frames that challenge their country’s legitimacy. Additionally, this issue focuses on consequences to an action taken decades earlier. As such, this may provide an opportunity for consequence frame structures to emerge as dominant in coverage and provide interesting results when testing the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 and the Agent Orange Case

The findings from the Spratly Islands case study supported the hypothesis, however it was noted that the Spratly Islands issue is perhaps more appropriate for conflict and responsibility frames than other issues might be. The issue of Agent Orange reparations, for instance, may provide different results. Here, the conflict causing the problem has long been resolved, and consequence frames may be more fitting. This case should offer a test of the strength of conflict and responsibility frames in international issues.

Results from the content analysis, as illustrated in Figure 10, show that conflict frames are found far less often than responsibility frames in this issue. The Vietnam Foreign Press Centre uses some element of conflict framing in 22.2% of their articles,

and the American media uses conflict frames in only 10.5% of their articles to describe this issue. The results find that while conflict frames are not often used, responsibility frames dominate the Agent Orange issue. This is consistent with the hypothesis and with the findings from the first case study.



	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict Frames	22.2%	10.5%
Responsibility Frames	85.1%	89.5%
Human consequence Frames	11.1%	15.7%
Economic Frames		5.2%

Figure 10.

It was anticipated that this case study might provide a suitable circumstance for consequence frames. However, they are not widely used in this issue. Neither media outlet used significant economic⁷ or security frames, and only 11.1% of articles from

⁷ Though the issue of money surfaced in most articles about this issue, the mention never extended beyond a reference to sums wanted from, or pledged by, the United States to resolve the problem. Without any explanation of the ramifications of these

the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, and 15.7% from the American media employed elements of human consequence framing. The limited use of human consequence framing is a noteworthy observation from these findings. The nature of the issue provides ample opportunity to employ human consequence framing, and the Vietnamese outlet, in particular, could employ these frame as a way to illustrate the problem and garner sympathy for Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange. If consequence frames are linked to sensationalist news values though, it is possible that the Vietnamese press is simply disinclined to use human consequence frames in general.

Overall, the results of this case study support the roles of widespread use of responsibility frames as well as the limited used of consequence framing. These findings do, however, bring into question the widespread use of conflict framing suggested by the hypothesis. Possibly, conflict framing grows less relevant as time passes, though further study would be needed to confirm this. This finding indicates that conflict frames, like consequence frames, may be reliant on an appropriate context for use, whereas responsibility frame structures may be suitable for most issues. It is also worth noting that there does not appear to be any negative correlation between use of conflict frames and use of consequence frames—indicating that the resolution of a conflict does not necessarily result in a context in which consequence frames are widely used.

sums on the economy of the United States or Vietnam, mention of money was not identified as part of an economic consequence frame.

Hypothesis 2 and the Agent Orange Case

Results from the first case study supported this hypothesis by finding several cases in which challenging frames were used in one country and not another. Due to the nature of the Agent Orange case study, challenging frames may be more difficult to avoid. The very fact of requesting reparations for an action suggests that the United States acted outside of the established rules for international military conflict. This study may therefore address how a country's media handles challenges to legitimacy. Such findings can be used for a better understanding of what types of whether a challenge to a state's legitimacy in news frames can influence a foreign media or whether such frames will be ignored.

The findings of the discourse analysis are highlighted in Table 3:

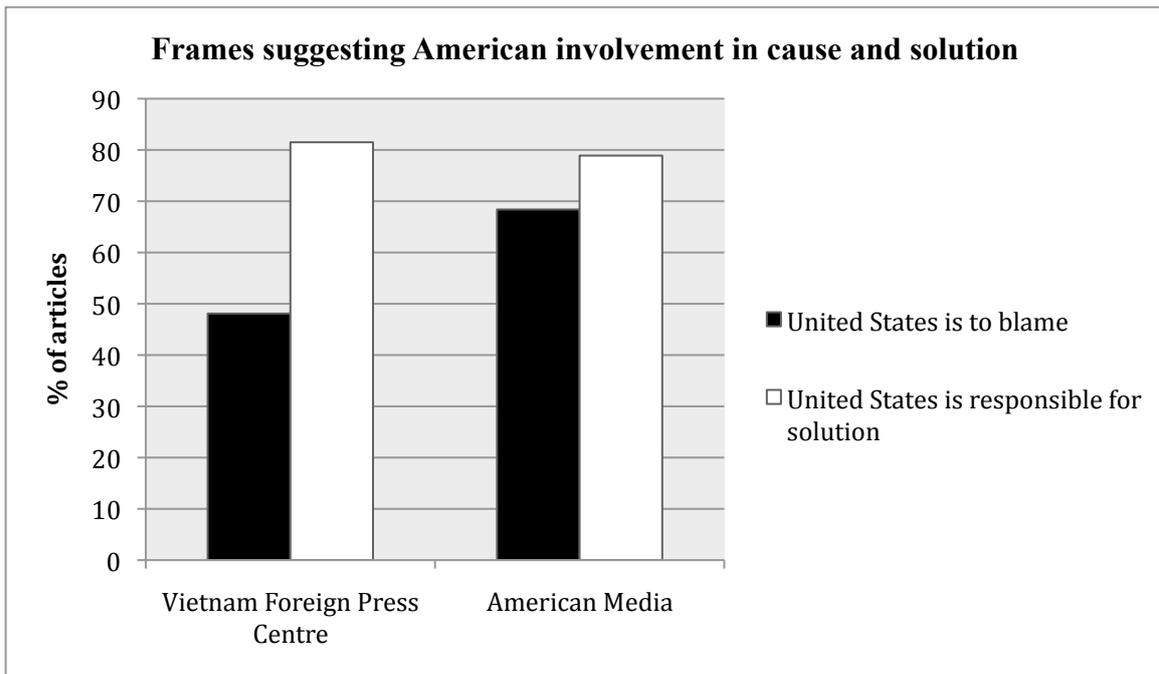
Table 3. Summary of Most Common Conflict, Cause and Solution by Outlet

	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Problem	Lasting effects of Agent Orange	Lasting effects of Agent Orange
Cause	Use of Agent Orange by the United States during the war	Use of Agent Orange by the United States during the war
Solution	United States to fund cleanup and support victims	United States to fund cleanup and support victims

In this case study, identification of problem and cause is consistent between the countries. Based on these results, the problem appears as the legacy of Agent Orange used in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 70s. In articles that place blame, cause is given as the United States' use of the dioxin during the war, though a number of articles do not refer specifically to the United States as having used Agent Orange—51.9% of

articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, and 31.6% from the American media do not place explicit blame. Rather, these articles simply refer to the legacy of Agent Orange as the problem and then move on to discuss the ways in which Vietnam and the United States are working together on the solution.

As in the identification of problem and cause, the proposed solution is also generally consistent across the outlets: money is needed to clean up remaining Agent Orange ‘hotspots’ as well as to support those suffering the health effects of the dioxin. Though Vietnam is expected to be involved in several of the articles, the responsibility for providing the money was largely placed on the United States. 81.5% of articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, and 78.9% from the American Media suggest the United States is at least partially responsible for the solution. Included in these are 3.7% of articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre and 10.5% from the American media that propose that Vietnam and the United States take action together. Use of frames suggesting the United States is implicated in either the cause or solution is visualised in Figure 11, while causes from both outlets are shown in Figures 12 and 13.



	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
No Blame	51.9%	31.6%
Blame on United States	48.1%	68.4%
No Solution	14.8%	10.5%
United States Responsible for Solution	81.5%	78.9%
Vietnam Responsible for Solution	3.7%	10.5%
Other Solution	3.7%	10.5%

Figure 11.

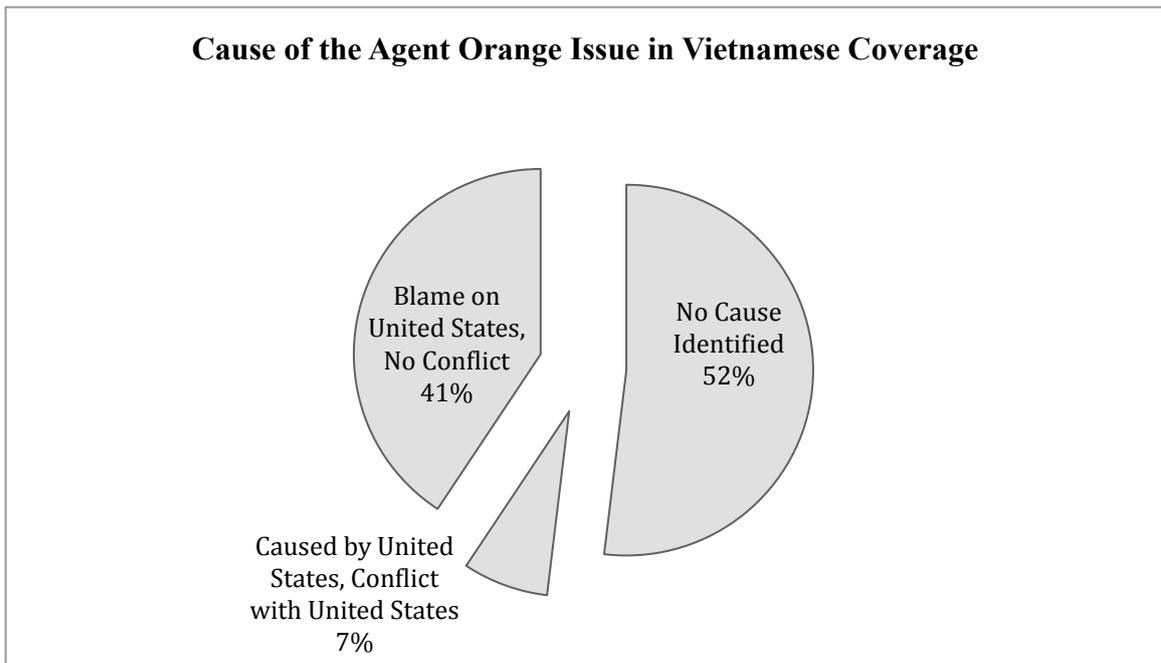


Figure 12.

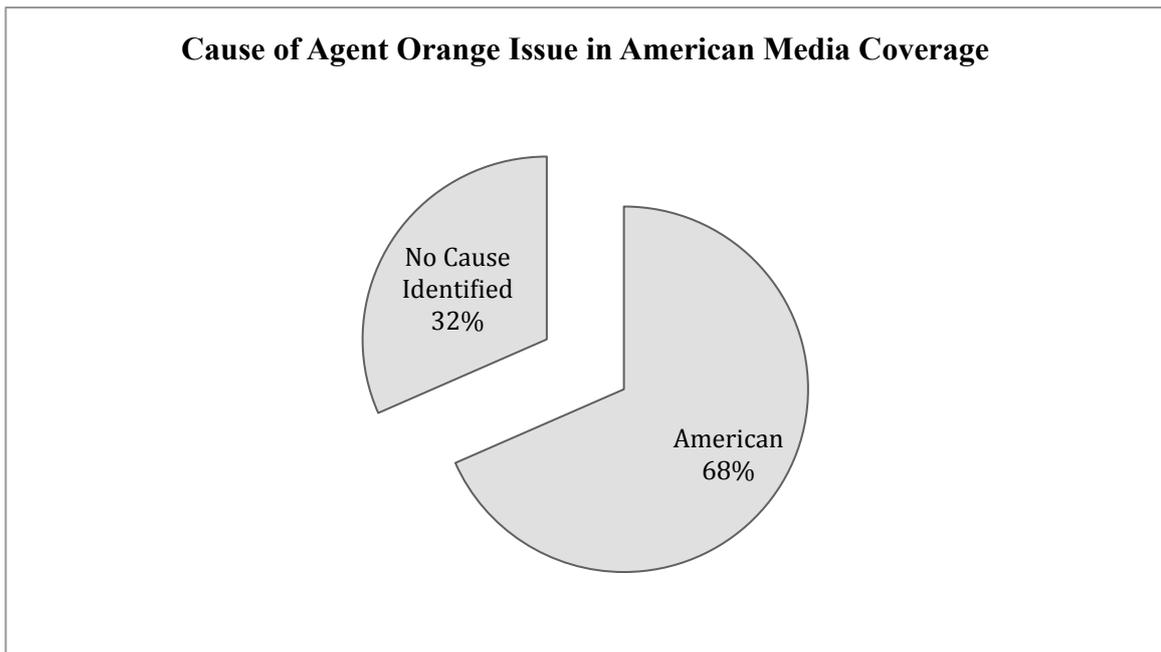


Figure 13.

Some Vietnamese articles suggest another cause, one that does question current American actions. These articles accuse the United States of not doing enough to fulfil its responsibility to the Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange, especially in light of the billions of dollars that went towards treating American veterans suffering from the effects of the dioxin (more evidence for dioxin victims' lawsuit against US, Voice of Vietnam, 6 May 2011). Though this frame is used rarely by the Vietnam Foreign Press

Centre, it is never used by the American elites or media. Again, it seems that the American media is averse to adopting frames that challenge the legitimacy of American actions—in this example the challenge arises from the subordinate actor (Vietnam) rejecting the legality of the actions of the dominant actor (the United States).

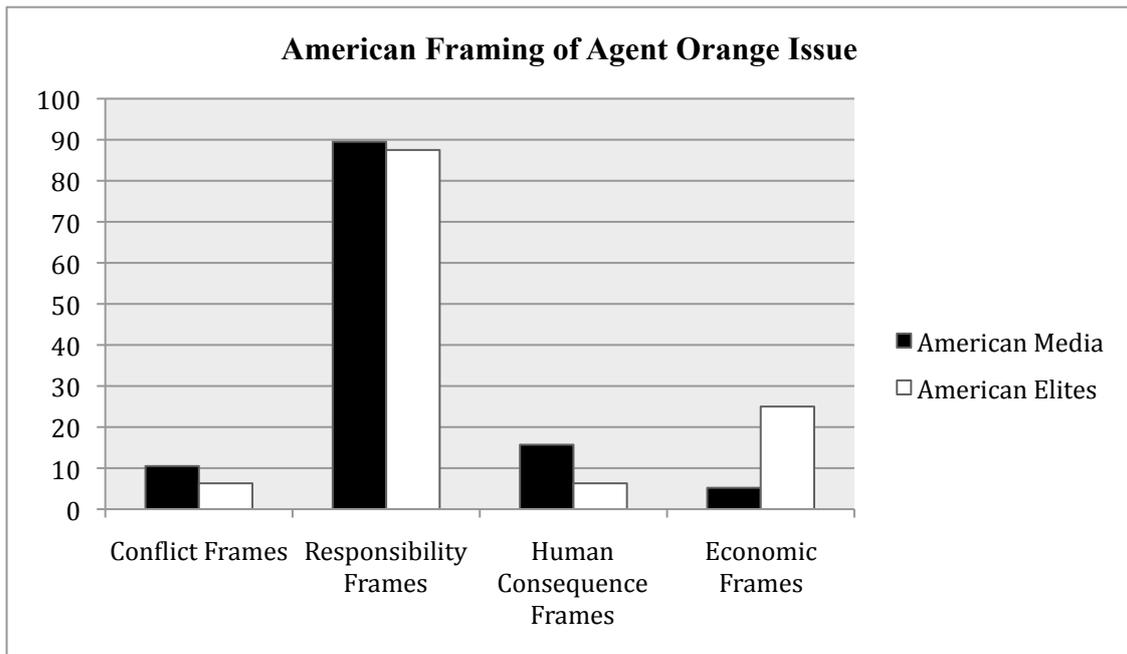
The findings of this framing analysis have interesting implications for the hypothesis. On the surface, it appears that the American media uses frames challenging American legitimacy to describe this issue. However, it should be noted that these frames do not question the recent actions of the country, but rather what was done in the distant past. No frames challenging the United States' current actions, such as the Vietnamese frames suggest that the United States is not paying enough in reparations, are presented by the American media or elites. While a dispute over how much money is owed is hardly as significant as accusing the United States of a war crime, the former was omitted from American framing while the latter was extremely common. This finding may therefore support the hypothesis, albeit with the caveat that frames questioning the legitimacy of *past* actions are treated differently to frames questioning current policies and values.

Hypothesis 3 and the Agent Orange Case

This hypothesis is designed to test the indexing theory regarding who influences media framing of international issues. Results from the Spratly Islands case study did find evidence of the media deviating from elite frames, though did not find any international sources behind this divergence. While journalists appear willing to look outside of the debate legitimised by the elite, the ability of a foreign source to introduce new framing is not yet established. This case study did not provide any

evidence of this occurring, in fact the framing presented by the American media closely follow the elite debate. Findings from the discourse analysis indicate that the problem, cause and solution for this issue is the same between media and elites: the problem was caused by the United States and the United States is largely responsible for resolving it. The American media explicitly blames the United States more often than the elites do (68.4% of media articles, compared to 37.5% of elite statements), though this could be due to the necessity of fully explaining the issue to its audience in each article, while American elites may be able to assume their audience already understands the cause of the problem.

Figure 14 shows that frame structure is also used similarly between the elites and the media: responsibility frames are common while conflict and consequence frames were used less often. Among the consequence frames, economic frames are used more often by the elites, and human consequence frames are used more often by the media, but overall no significant differences are evident.



	American Media	American Elites
Conflict Frames	10.5%	6.3%
Responsibility Frames	89.5%	87.5%
Human consequence Frames	15.7%	6.3%
Economic Frames	5.2%	25%

Figure 14.

Conclusions

The results of this case study are less supportive of the three hypotheses than the results of the Spratly Islands case were. First, findings regarding frame structure were also inconsistent with the hypothesis, indicating that conflict frame types are not as universally applicable as suggested. This indicates that conflict frames, like consequence frames, may be tied to context and only used when appropriate. One possible explanation for this is the amount of time that has passed between the cause of the problem (which was identified by the articles as the use of Agent Orange in the 1960s) and today. Camaj tracked the use of conflict frames over time in her study on Kosovo negotiations, and found no decrease in use of conflict frames as the situation

resolved (2010: 647). However, her timeline was much shorter than the decades that have passed between the 1960s and today. It is possible that by avoiding conflict frames, the attribution of blame becomes less adversarial and therefore less explicitly challenging to the audience. This suggestion could perhaps be examined with cases playing out over varying spans of time to see if there is a point in which conflict frames lose their applicability.

The frame analysis found that frames challenging the legitimacy of American actions during the 1960s are ubiquitous in American media and elite framing. This finding also challenges its hypothesis. However, this case study may have some qualities that set it apart from previous studies. For instance, it is possible that audiences are more sensitive to challenges to current status quo than to the legitimacy of actions past—an idea supported by the finding that the Vietnamese frames questioning the United States' current level of commitment to the reparations is not presented in American media. Presenting the use of Agent Orange as an action taken years ago, in special circumstances, it becomes easy to distance a sense of positive American identity from the image of a country acting illegitimately in the hopes of winning a war. Through this distance, both of time and political realities, it becomes possible for the American audience to understand this issue without any conflict to their own sense of legitimacy.

Alternatively, an internal battle for legitimacy between the American government and American war veterans suffering the effects of Agent Orange may have influenced the way the American media frames the issue. This possible amendment to the hypothesis warrants further investigation, which could be achieved through a longitudinal study of American elite and media framing of this issue since it first arose. Also perhaps worth investigating a link between the findings

from testing hypothesis 1 and 2, specifically whether the lack of conflict frames is linked to the willingness of the American media to identify their country as to blame for the issue.

Testing of the third hypothesis also finds framing of the Agent Orange issue is very similar between the American elites and media. However, as was seen earlier in this chapter, the American framing in this case is also consistent with the framing from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre, indicating that the parameters of debate may have been set on an international level. This idea is furthered when we consider that this is a relatively new position for the American government to take: the United States was historically reluctant to accept claims to the detrimental health effects of Agent Orange (Gough, 1986: 64). The elite debate has clearly changed over the past forty years, possibly bringing it to a synthesis with Vietnam's perspective on the issue. Could it be that Vietnamese advocates have directly influenced the American elites? Or perhaps Vietnamese news coverage has been introduced to the cascading activation model? Or is this due to the precedent of granting American veterans medical benefits for Agent Orange related illnesses? Further study, incorporating frames from American and Vietnamese Agent Orange advocacy groups, is needed to answer this question. This could provide a better understanding of how the parameters of debate are shaped, and also suggest opportunities within public diplomacy for influencing foreign elites.

In its pursuit of understanding what media frames are most likely to be adopted from foreign sources, this case study seems to challenge each hypothesis. Based on the findings, it seems that conflict frames are as variable as consequence frames, that messages challenging a state's legitimacy are used in that country's media, and that no messages deviating from elite statement will influence media framing. However, each of these findings could possibly be explained as an exception to the rule, resulting from

the longevity of this issue. Testing this is outside of the scope of this thesis, but may be worth future investigation. The viability of this suggesting would be useful for scholarship regarding the development and evolution of international issues framing.

5. Case Study: Human Rights in China

Non-profit organisations, governments and individuals around the world have accused the Chinese government of egregious human rights violations. Accusations include Internet censorship and torture of dissidents, unfair imprisonment of human rights and pro-democracy activists, lawyers, writers, artists and musicians. Alleged human rights violations have been documented and publicised by international organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and governmental organisations like the US State Department. Chinese officials disagree with these reports, responding that they represent the views of Western political actors who lack an objective understanding of the facts at hand (Xinhua, 19 March 2010). Additionally, Chinese officials have cited human rights as being culturally relative, and that the prioritisation of individual liberties over the collective good is a Western value, not compatible with China's plan for development (States News Service, 11 May 2011). Chinese officials have also responded to accusations with evidence of great improvements regarding poverty alleviation throughout the country (19 March 2010).

A specific issue that features prominently in news coverage of the issue between 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2011 is the award of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. The prize was awarded to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident who was, and remains, incarcerated for his part in writing a document that challenged the authority of the state. His wife, Liu Xia, was put under house arrest though she has not been charged with a crime. China protested the award of the Nobel Prize to Liu, who Beijing considers to be a convicted criminal, and pressured a number of its trade partners not

to attend the ceremony. Ultimately, fifteen countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Venezuela, Egypt, Sudan, Cuba and Morocco) did not send delegates to the ceremony—an indication of either genuine support for China or of China’s economic bargaining power. The United States did send a delegation, but the Obama administration was criticised by some members of Congress for not speaking out against the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo.

International organisations as well as members of the United States government have openly criticised the Obama administration’s inaction on the issue. While the administration has verbally challenged China on their human rights record, the administration is often accused of taking a soft stand in favour of maintaining economic and diplomatic ties with the China. The American and Chinese governments regularly hold dialogues on the subject of human rights, though no major actions have been taken as a result of these conversations. One reason that the Obama administration may be hesitant to apply too much pressure to China is the country’s position as a rising global superpower and concerns over the economic and geopolitical ramifications of a conflict. China also holds some American debt, which adds a level of complexity to any interaction between the two countries.

This case study was chosen for two main reasons. First, it represents an issue in which the Asian and American outlets are in disagreement over the definition of the main concept driving the conflict: human rights. Evaluating an issue whose definition is seen as culturally relative⁸ offers a good example of one of the most difficult aspects of international communication. Identifying any common framing between the United

⁸ That ‘human rights’ is contentiously defined is itself a contentious claim. The moral debate surrounding the extent to which certain human rights should be considered universal is interesting, though does not factor into this research. Rather, human rights will be discussed as culturally relative in the sense that the governments of the United States, China and Vietnam promote contrasting definitions of the term.

States and China may illuminate framing techniques that can be used to circumvent the problem of cultural relativity. Second, this case study is mirrored by the study of human rights in Vietnam. These issues are superficially very similar, though the United States has very different relationships with China and Vietnam and elite framing of the human rights issues is bound to reflect this. A comparison of the American media and elite framing used in these issues will provide an idea of how strong the indexing effect is in describing international issues.

Chinese Framing of Human Rights

In the framing of human rights issues in China, Xinhua's used three very distinct packages. These packages each reflect unique results in the content analysis, and may confuse the findings if taken together. For this reason, it is beneficial to look at Xinhua's articles as three separate data sets, quantified by where blame for the issue is placed:

- *Progress*: 52.2% of the articles do not place any blame or identify any solution. These articles report progress made by the Chinese government in improving human rights and promoting an open, international dialogue around the issue. These articles focus only on progress and, as a result, do not reflect positive answers for any of the coding questions.
- *American intervention*: 18% of articles blame the United States for the issue. These articles conclude that the real problem at hand is a lack of agreement between the countries on what constitutes human rights. Additionally, the United States is occasionally accused of using this issue for political leverage and of acting hypocritically. Of the articles suggesting that the US is to blame

for the problem, 80% suggested that the United States holds the solution to the problem. 80% of these articles express disapproval of the United States.

33.33% of these articles focus on the effect of the issue on American individuals or communities.

- *Nobel Prize*: 20% of the articles placed blame on another, non-American, non-Chinese party. Typically, this is the Nobel Committee and countries that supported the decision to award the prize to Liu Xiaobo. 72.7% of these articles express disapproval of a non-American, non-Chinese party. 63% of these articles offer no solution to the problem. 27% suggest the Chinese government take action.

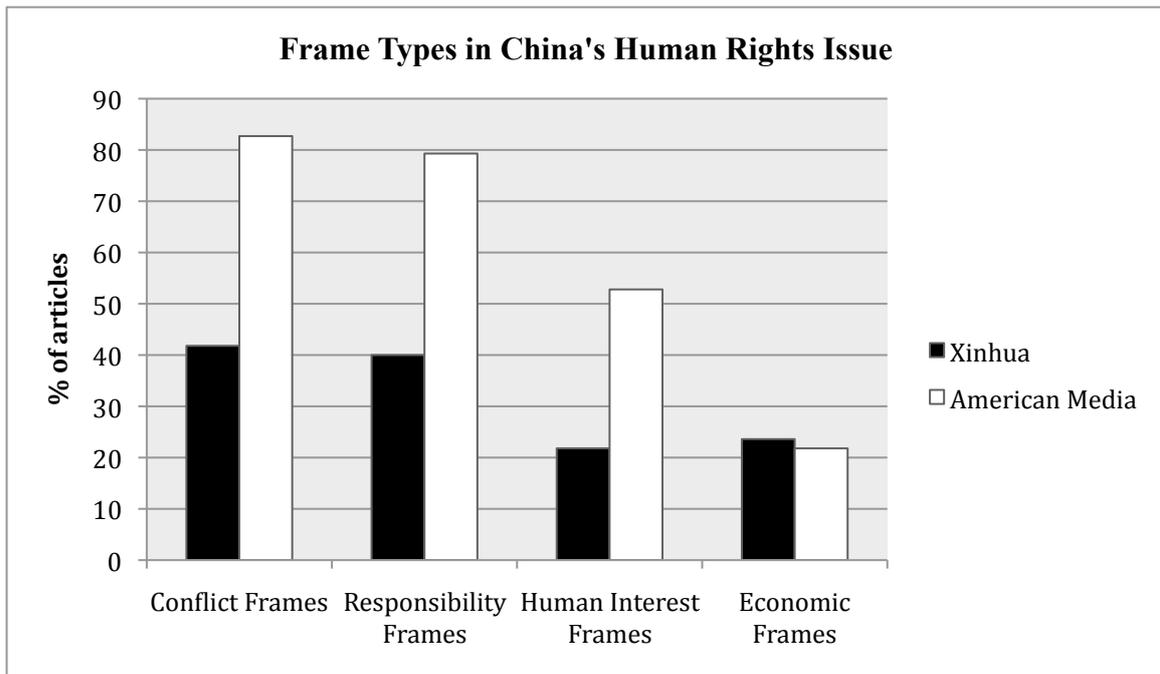
The existence of the ‘progress’ narrative from Xinhua, featuring articles promoting the message that all is well, lack any frame structure recognised by the content analysis. Though the existence of these articles is interesting, this types of story would have limited use in public diplomacy messaging—articles that project a situation as universally positive are not considered news in Western countries (Fawcett, 2011: 253), and would not be expected to influence a Western country’s media if used in public diplomacy communication. Conversely, Western countries targeting China (or any country with state-controlled media) would have difficulty manipulating this type of frame for use in public diplomacy. Without a problem or cause, there can be no solution and therefore no promotion of policy. As such, they are largely ignored in the findings.

Hypothesis 1 and the Chinese Human Rights Case

Findings from the previous case studies have thus far supported the hypothesis’s suggestion of widespread use of responsibility frames, as well as the

limited and isolated use of consequence frames. Conflict frames, however, have emerged as less pervasively used than originally thought, and perhaps more tied to context than responsibility frames are. This issue provides a good opportunity to further test the use of conflict frames, as this issue is not distanced by time (as in the Agent Orange case), nor is it an explicit conflict over something tangible (as in the Spratly Islands case). Whether conflict frames are used more like responsibility or more like consequence frames in the human rights case studies may shed some light on when conflict frames are likely to be adopted into media framing from a foreign source.

As seen in Figure 15, findings are generally consistent with the hypothesis. Responsibility frames describing the issue are common in articles from the American media, though this type of framing does not appear pervasive at Xinhua. However, by removing data from the 'progress' narrative, which does not reflect any frame types in the content analysis, responsibility frames are found to be common. All Xinhua articles on the topic of the Nobel Prize and American intervention assign blame, while 36.4% of Nobel Prize articles and 100% of the American intervention articles propose a solution.



	Xinhua	American Media
Conflict Frames	41.8%	82.7%
Responsibility Frames	40%	79.3%
Human consequence Frames	21.8%	52.8%
Economic Frames	23.6%	21.8%

Figure 15.

Also consistent with the hypothesis are the findings around conflict frames, which are used often by both countries as a way of explaining this issue. The United States typically frames the issue as a conflict (82.8% of articles from the American media). Only 41.8% of all articles from Xinhua describe the issue as a conflict of some kind, however by controlling for the influence of the progress articles again, we can see that conflict frames are indeed popular at Xinhua as a way to explain this issue. Figure16 shows the presence of conflict frames within the ‘Nobel Prize’ and

‘American intervention’ narrative, where conflict is common.

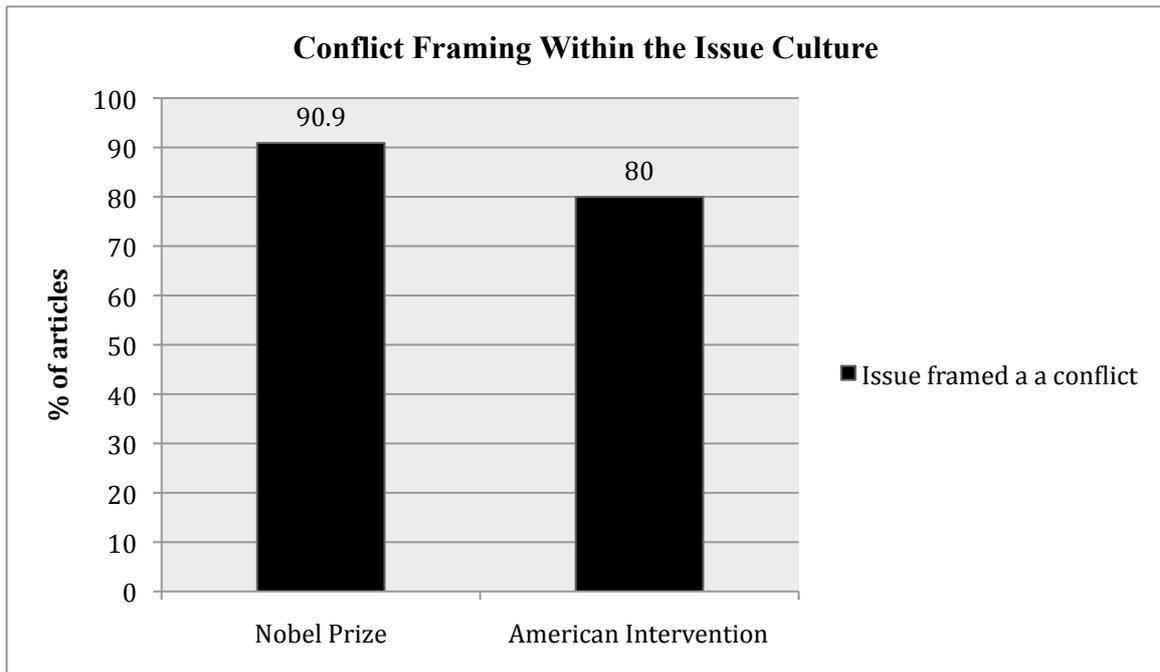


Figure 16.

Both outlets use human consequence and economic consequence frames to illustrate the issue (see Figure 17). Among Xinhua’s three main narratives, human consequence and economic framing was used the most in articles describing unwarranted American intervention—18.2% of these articles used human consequence framing and 27.3% used some element of economic framing. The human consequence elements typically arise when Xinhua’s stories are intended to point out the hypocrisy of American accusations of Chinese human rights violations. These articles critique human rights violations in the United States by placing the focus of the story on the lives of Americans. These articles include statistics on gun violence, poverty, child abuse and other societal problems to paint a bleak picture of life in the United States (Xinhua, 12 March 2010, Xinhua, 11 April 2011b, Xinhua, 11 April 2011c). The American media uses some element of human consequence framing in over half of

their articles (57.5%), most commonly an example of a Chinese individual to illustrate the situation (51.7%).

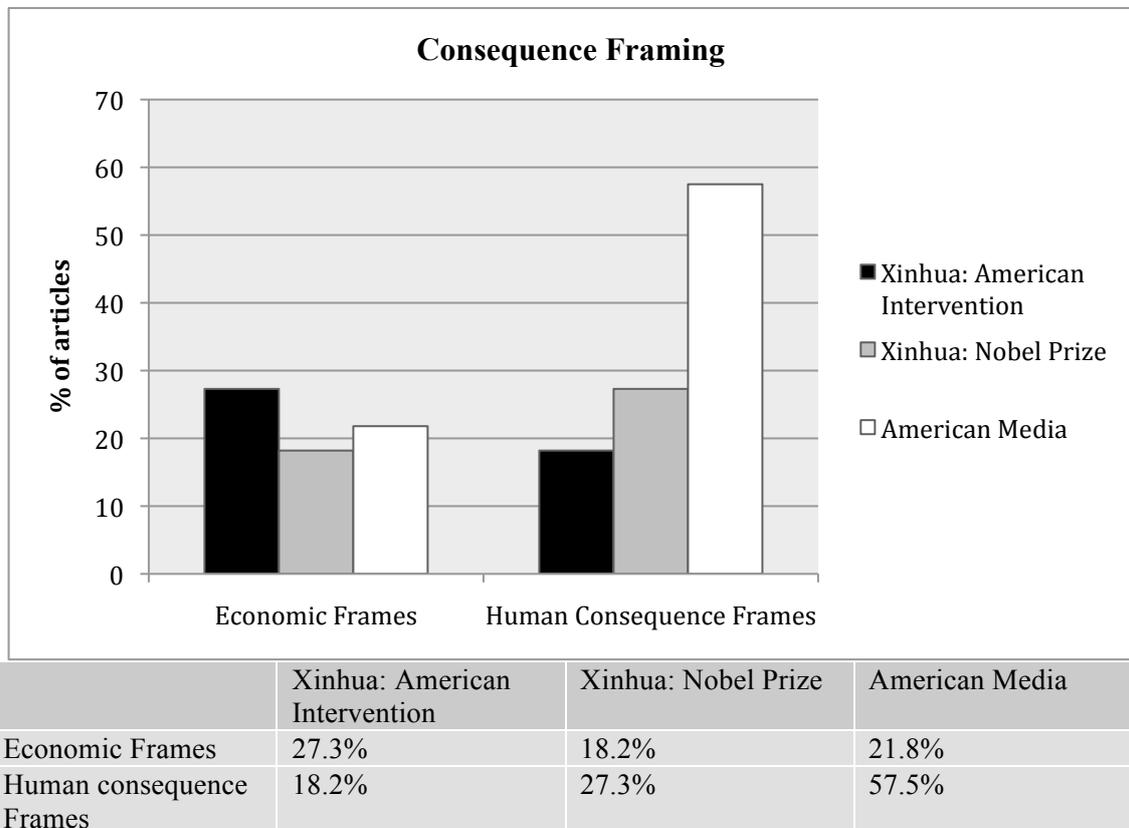


Figure 17.

By disregarding data from Xinhua’s ‘progress’ narrative, the hypothesis appears supported by the findings from this case study. As predicted, responsibility and conflict frames were commonly used in both countries, while use of responsibility frames varied. Through examining Xinhua’s framing as two different data sets, we see that even within one country the use of consequence frame structure is dissimilar. This implies that prevalent use of certain consequence frames is not likely to be found consistently in any one country, but rather is highly dependent on the nature of the story being told. This suggests that consequence frame structures may be more sensitive to cultural relevancy than conflict and responsibility frame structures are. It follows that these frame types can be used effectively in public diplomacy messages when a context salient to the audience can be identified.

Hypothesis 2 and the Chinese Human Rights Case

Findings around hypothesis 2 have thus far been mixed. The results from the first case study indicate that messages challenging a state's legitimacy will not be used by that country's media, however the results from the second case study suggest that there may be exceptions to this. It is therefore important to continue testing this hypothesis, looking for any further exceptions or stronger evidence of support. As the human rights issues revolve around mutual accusations of illegitimacy (through the United States accusing the Asian countries of acting outside of internationally established rules on human rights and through the Asian countries accusing the United States of acting outside of rules recognising sovereignty as primarily important in international relations), these case studies are ideal for testing whether or not foreign frames challenging a country's legitimacy will influence that country's media.

The findings from this case study's discourse analysis are laid out in Table 4. Here, we see that the American media identifies this problem as the Chinese government violating the human rights of its citizens—47.1% of articles from the American media reflect disapproval of China. 5.7% of American media some disapproval of the United States, but rather than disapproving of the United States' interference in the issue, as Xinhua does, these articles indicate that the United States has not done enough to intercede. Though oppositional, this framing cannot be considered a challenge to the United States' legitimacy—rather it seeks to extend American legitimacy in order to justify action against China.

Table 4. Summary of Most Common Conflict, Cause and Solution by Outlet

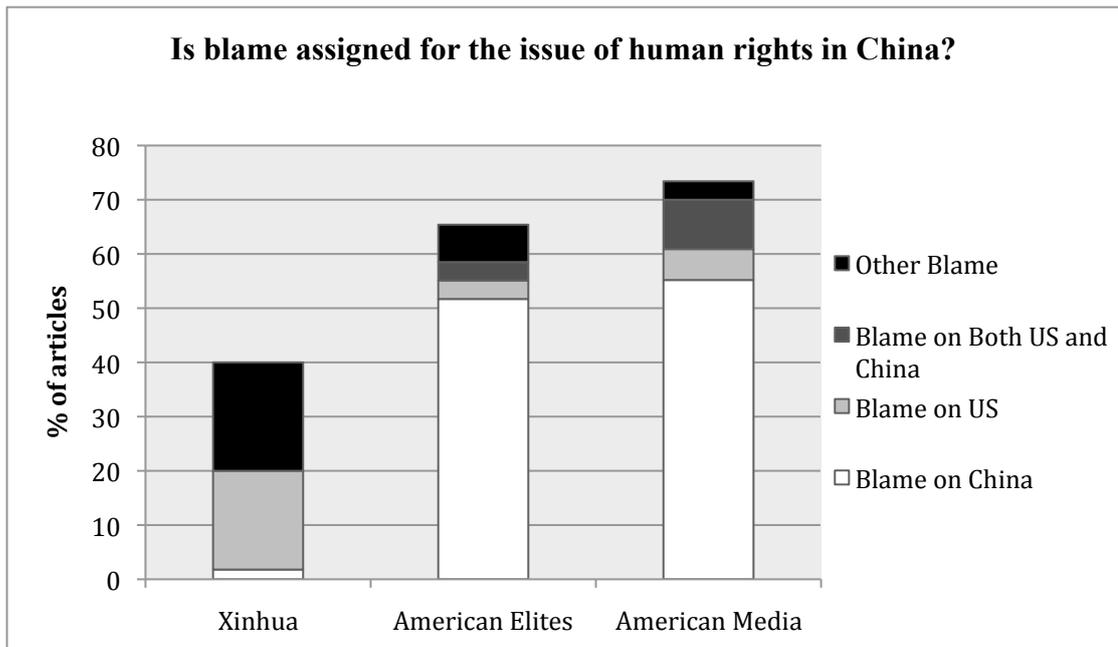
	Xinhua (Western Intervention)	Xinhua (Nobel Prize)	Xinhua (Progress)	American Media
Problem	Outside criticism of China’s human rights policies	Nobel Committee awarding Peace Prize to a criminal	No problem	Human rights violations in China
Cause	Western political agendas; different interpretations of human rights	Political agendas; viewing Western values as universal	No cause	Oppressive Chinese government; US not doing enough
Solution	West to cease criticism; open, international dialogue on human right issue	China to continue along its path to development	China to continue improving the lives of its citizens	US to pressure China for reforms

An attempt to expand the parameter of legitimate action was also found in the American articles explaining the cause of the problem as economic in nature (14.9% of American media indicate that this issue has some tie to China’s economy). Here, human rights issues are described as parallel to developing the economic relationship between China and the West, and the economy and human rights are discussed together in diplomatic meetings (MarketWatch, 28 June 2011). The nature of this relationship is expanded upon in a few articles, explicitly describing the ramifications of an imbalanced economic relationship on human rights advocacy (Newsweek, 8 February 2010, The Wall Street Journal, 18 May 2011). In these cases, economic frames are used as a way to explain why China has been ‘allowed’ by the West to violate the human rights of its citizens—indicating that the country sees itself as legitimate in intervention.

Predictably, the cause identified in the American articles is the Chinese government’s oppressive policies. Figure 18 charts the blame of China among the outlets and shows that 70% of the articles in the American media assign blame to

China. 14.8% of articles from the American media place some blame on the United States. Solutions are proposed in 46% of articles by the American media, and usually indicated that the American government should pressure China for reform (29.9% of articles from the American media). 9.2% of articles from American media also recommend involving China in an open, international dialogue. As for the possibility of China taking actions to resolve this issue on its own, only 9.2% of articles from the American media articles see this as a solution.

This framing, where the Chinese government is at fault, is not found in any articles from Xinhua. Within the Xinhua sample, only two of the three main narratives suggest a problem, cause and solution. Stories on both ‘American intervention’ and the ‘Nobel Prize’ identify the problem as Western countries applying their cultural standards to Chinese society. The 20% of Xinhua’s articles that focus on the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to dissident Liu Xiaobo blame the Nobel Prize Committee for causing this conflict. Xinhua often refers to the decision of the award committee as politically motivated (Xinhua, 12 December 2010a), an interference in China’s internal affairs (Xinhua, 12 December 2010) and expresses disapproval of the organisation behind the Nobel Peace Prize: “The decision to award a convicted criminal only disgraces the Nobel Peace Prize itself and destroys its credibility in China (Xinhua, 17 October 2010). Cause in Xinhua’s ‘American intervention’ stories also focuses on the West’s undue interference in China’s domestic affairs. More specifically, the cause of the problem is the United States creating an issue where there is none (Xinhua, 12 July 2010, Xinhua, 9 May 2011).



	Xinhua	American Media	American Elites
No Blame	60%	20.7%	34.5%
Blame on China Only	1.8%	55.2%	51.7%
Blame on United States Only	18.2%	5.7%	3.4%
Blame on Both China and United States		9.1%	3.4%
Other Blame	20%	3.4%	6.9%

Figure 18.

Most articles under the ‘Nobel Prize’ narrative do not suggest a solution, though most articles focused on American criticism do. The solutions proposed by Xinhua for the ‘American intervention’ narrative largely involve the United States leaving China alone. These articles request that the United States stop “its hegemonic practice of portraying itself as a human rights ‘preacher’” (Xinhua, 12 April 2011), and to “take concrete actions to improve its own human rights conditions, check and rectify its acts in the human rights field’ (Xinhua, 11 April 2011). Dialogue is also occasionally suggested as solution in these articles, and offers the only overlap found between the American media and Xinhua regarding problem, cause and solution. As in the American framing, dialogue is a secondary solution here, suggested in only 18.2% of these articles, compared to 63.6% of these articles that suggest the solution is

solely the responsibility of the United States. Figures 19 and 20 show the breakdown of solutions proposed by American and Chinese outlets:

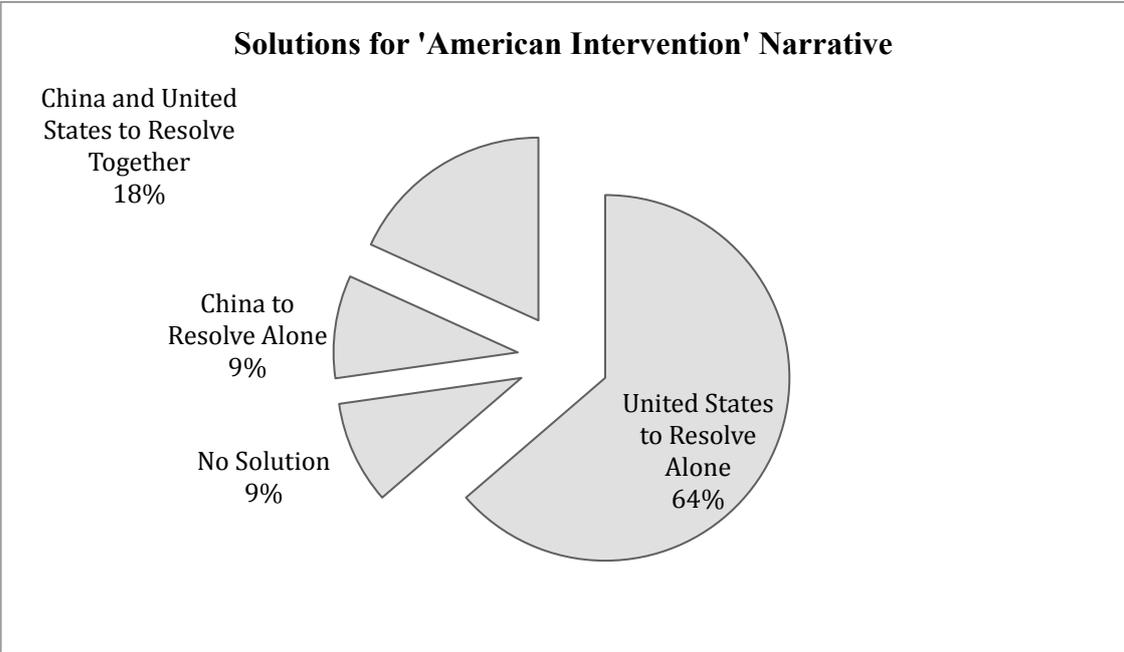


Figure 19.

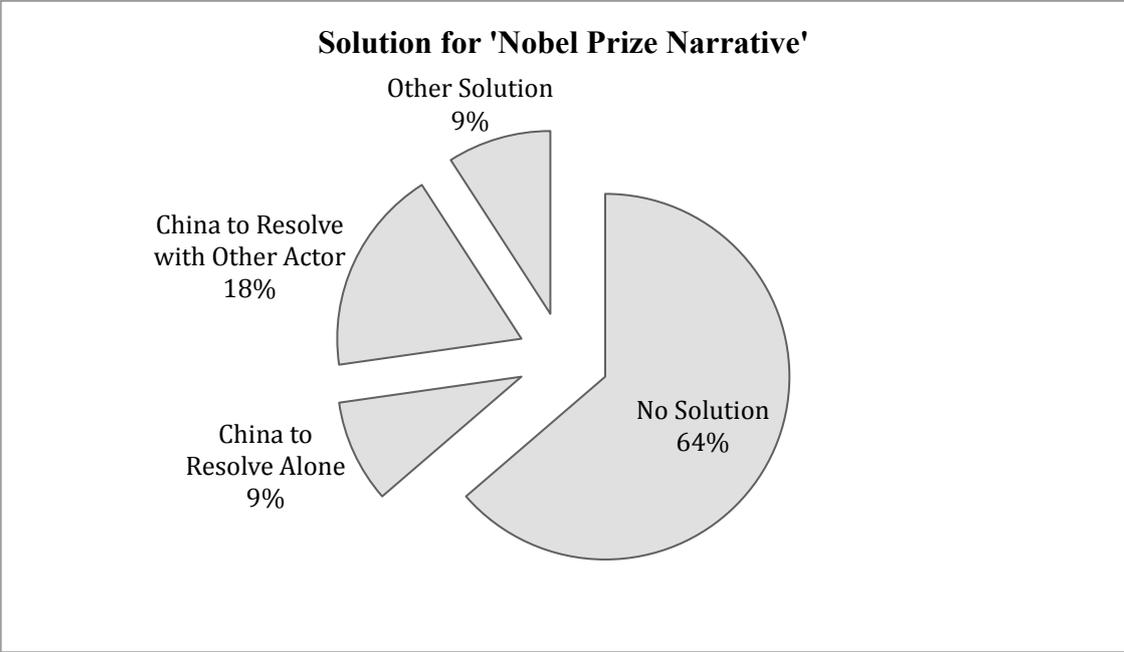


Figure 20.

Hypothesis 3 and the Chinese Human Rights Case

Hypothesis 3 is evaluated in the next chapter, where the frames used by the American elites and media on both China's and Vietnam's human rights issues can be compared. By grouping the results together, the analysis moves towards a stronger understanding the indexing effect on American journalists.

Conclusions

Results from testing hypothesis 1 provide support for the hypothesis, indicating that responsibility and conflict frames are common across narratives and countries, while use of consequence frames varies. By evaluating Xinhua's framing in terms of two data sets, it appears that even within a country, preferred consequence frame structures is not a constant variable. It follows that an understanding of what consequence frame structures might be adopted from a foreign source may first require an understanding of what stories are being told within the issue culture in that country.

In testing hypothesis 2, it was found that the framing of the issue never brings to question the legitimacy of the media's origin country, even though this legitimacy is widely challenged by the foreign media. Examples of self-blame are rare here, and confined to American journalists lamenting their country's tolerance of human rights violations in China. In no instances do the media question the universality of their definition of human rights, nor do any articles suggest that the origin country might be in violation of human rights itself. While different interpretations of human rights do not directly question a country's legitimacy, they do bring into question the legitimacy of actions taken if a new definition were to apply. For instance, adopting China's view

of human rights would challenge the legitimacy of a number of American laws and values. These findings therefore do support the hypothesis that frames challenging a country's legitimacy will be omitted from that nation's media. These definitions were never questioned within the country's own media, however, indicating that a foreign frame founded on culturally relative values is unlikely to be adopted. The only common ground found in problem, cause and solution was the proposal of dialogue as a solution, though these proposals were uncommon. Overall, it appears that frames questioning a country's values and legitimacy will not be adopted from a foreign source.

From these findings, an answer to the question of what foreign frames are most likely to be adopted by a country's media draws closer. For instance, frame structure appears to make a difference on a frame's use in the media. While no clear preferences for frame structure appear isolated to countries, consequence frames have been found in each case study to be used less consistently. Further, the type of consequence framing (human consequence, economic, security) used appears to be tied to the narrative being promoted—the likelihood of a foreign consequence frame being adopted is therefore reliant on the type of story being told through the media. A clearer answer regarding the role of elites on international issues framing will hopefully result from the next chapter, where American framing of the Chinese and Vietnamese human rights issues will be compared.

6. Case Study: Human Rights in Vietnam

The Vietnamese government has been accused of violating its citizens' human rights, specifically freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have issued reports and statements condemning Vietnam's attitudes towards human rights, as have government organisations like the US State Department. The issue is a source of tension between the United States and Vietnam.

The American/Vietnamese political relationship has had a difficult past to overcome. As former enemies of war, the United States and Vietnam have made a great deal of progress in their political and economic relationship since the conflict ended in 1975. Diplomatic relations were not normalised until 1995. Since this milestone, trade between the countries has skyrocketed and in 2009 bilateral trade passed \$15 billion (Solomon, 2010). Additionally, the Vietnam is a strategic political ally when it comes to standing up to China. If the United States wishes to maintain any sort of relevance in eastern Asia, it is important that it maintain a positive relationship with countries like Vietnam.

Though little American action has been taken against Vietnam's alleged human rights abuses, non-governmental organisations and other actors have vocalised strong disapproval of the Vietnamese Communist Party. In general, American elites and other international actors seem more willing to criticise Vietnam than they are China. Brantly Womack, a professor of politics at the University of Virginia, suggests that this may be due to Vietnam standing in as a weaker version of neighbouring China, another country in which human rights are an issue. Or, as Professor Womack succinctly puts

it: “Vietnam is a kickable China” (quoted in Pomfret, 2010). In this case, some actors may see Vietnam as a country to be used to send a message to China.

Several US congressmen, notably Ed Royce (R), Loretta Sanchez (D) and Zoe Lofgren (D), all from California districts with large Vietnamese populations; Chris Smith (R) from New Jersey; and Joseph Cao (R) from Louisiana (the first and only Vietnamese-American to serve in Congress), have been especially vocal about this problem. Specifically, they have suggested an appropriate American response would be to place Vietnam on the State Department’s list of ‘Countries of Particular Concern’ (CPC). The countries identified as CPCs are “nations guilty of particularly severe violations of religious freedom” (U.S. State Department) and are usually punished with economic sanctions. Vietnam was placed on the list in 2004, though was removed in 2006. International non-profit groups like Human Rights Watch, as well as American politicians have requested that the State Department re-designate Vietnam as a CPC in order to pressure Vietnam into respecting religious freedoms. Despite this urging, the State Department has not added Vietnam to the list.

In April 2011, Congressman Smith put forth the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2011. This resolution, if passed, would prohibits any increase in American non-humanitarian aid to Vietnam until the country makes major inroads in protecting basic human rights. The politicians involved in this bill hope that it will pressure the Vietnamese government into releasing its political and religious prisoners as well as fighting against human trafficking. Fostering support for this bill, as well as putting pressure on the State Department to reclassify Vietnam, has been a major focus of a handful of vocal politicians during the observed time period.

Vietnamese spokespeople have responded to allegations of human rights abuse by suggesting that human rights are culturally relevant values and differ from country

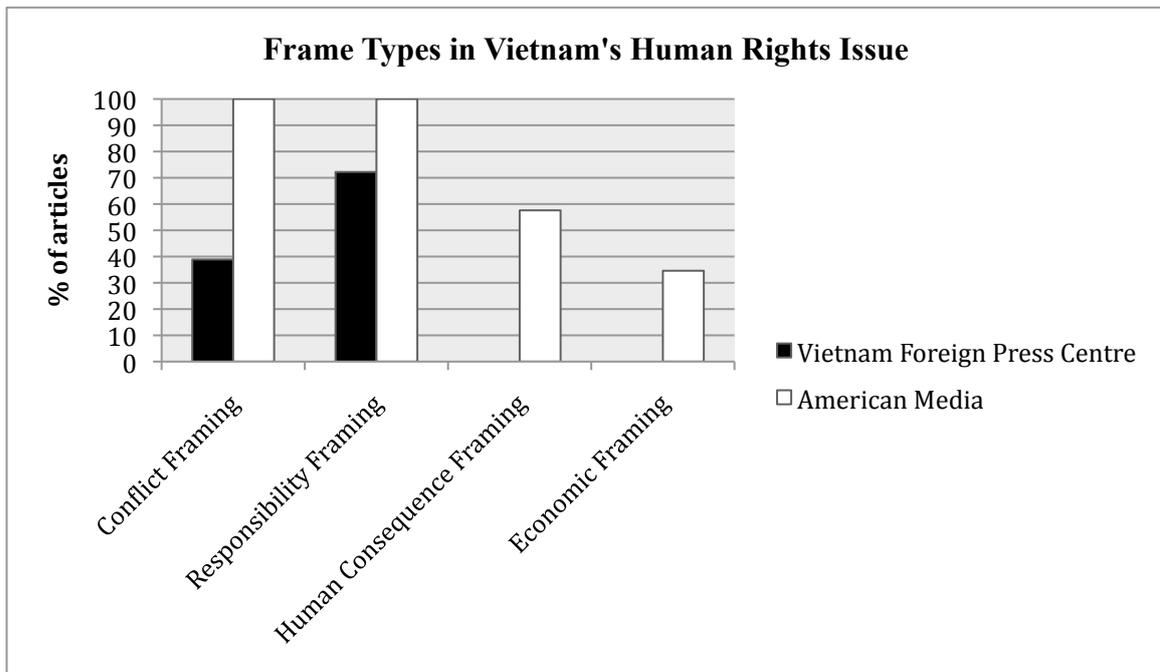
to country. Pham Gia Khiem, Vietnam's Foreign Minister, has stated "Human rights cannot be imposed from the outside," (Solomon, 2010) implying that the United States and other international actors have no role to play in the issue. Vietnam has also suggested that accusations of human rights violations are based on misinformation and political pursuits. The country is quick to point out the progress it has made in the area of human rights as well as the measures it continues to take to improve the lives of its citizens.

Like the case study involving human rights in China, this case provides a useful example of international framing of an issue complicated by cultural relativity. Additionally, the results here will be compared to the American media and elite framing of the Chinese issue, illustrating the extent to which the American media is sensitive to the American political relationships with China and Vietnam.

Hypothesis 1 and the Vietnamese Human Rights Case

Responsibility frames are present in 72.2% of the articles from the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre and all of the articles from the American media. Once again, common use of these frames is found across countries. This supports the hypothesis and suggests that these frames may be the most likely frame structure to be adopted from a foreign source. Conflict frames are used in all of the American media articles, though only 38.9% of Vietnamese articles. This is the second time in this research that the findings from a case study challenge the hypothesis's prediction about the frequent use of consequence frames. In the Agent Orange Study, it was suggested that the passage of time could have made conflict frames less applicable to the issue—a suggestion that does not apply to this issue. Additionally, conflict frames were found

often in the Chinese framing of its human rights issue, indicating that their use may be relative to national preferences and media practises. Figure 21 shows the use of frame types for this issue:



	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict Framing	38.9%	100%
Responsibility Framing	72.2%	100%
Human Consequence Framing		57.6%
Economic Framing		34.6%

Figure 21.

Use of consequence frames in this case study also supports the hypothesis. No consequence frame structures were ever used by the Vietnamese media to describe the issue, though human consequence frames and economic frames are both used often by the American media. 44% of articles from the American media use the effect of the issue on Vietnamese individuals and communities as the focus of the article. 16.7% of the American media articles also indicate that the issue is tied to Vietnam’s economy. In these cases, the human rights issue is often seen as a cause of tension between the

United States and Vietnam, one that hinders Vietnam’s overall development (The Wall Street Journal, 23 July 2010). As in each of the other case studies, frequency of consequence frames is found to change from issue to issue and even among countries within an issue. This could indicate that a consequence frame used in one country is unlikely to be found equally salient to another country, limiting its chance of being adopted.

Hypothesis 2 and the Vietnamese Human Rights Case

The previous case study examined the frames used to address the human rights situation in China. That study found very little common ground between the countries regarding problem, cause and solution. The details of Vietnam’s human rights issue are similar to China’s—the United States alleges the Asian country is violating its citizen’s rights, and the Asian country argues that the United States is unfairly applying its own standards to other cultures—and so it is expected to feature similar framing.

Table 5 offers a summary of common frames used in this issue:

Table 5. Summary of Most Common Conflict, Cause and Solution by Outlet

	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict	Western countries unjustly accusing Vietnam of human rights violations	Vietnam violating the human rights of its citizens
Cause	Western political agendas	Vietnamese government is oppressive, United States not doing enough
Solution	Vietnam to improve education about its human rights policies; Vietnamese National Assembly to improve human rights legislation; Vietnam to engage with other countries on human rights issue	United States to pressure Vietnam for reforms

As in the case of China's human rights, the American media identifies the problem as an oppressive government violating its citizen's human rights (80.8% of American articles identify a conflict between Vietnamese parties). Like Xinhua, the Vietnamese outlet also publishes some articles that offer no problem, cause, nor solution (27.8%). Again, these come in the form of 'all is well' statements and can be seen as symptomatic of a state-controlled media system. When problems are identified, the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre indicates that the issue was not a Vietnamese violation of human rights, but a problem created and subsequently exploited by the West for political purposes (27.8% of articles present this problem as a conflict between the United States and Vietnam).

Within the Vietnamese articles identifying blame, all is placed on the United States and other Western actors (22.2% of Vietnamese articles place blame on the United States, while 16.7% place blame on an other actor (not Vietnamese, American or Chinese), and 5.6% place blame on both the United States and another actor) and never on Vietnam. According to Vietnamese spokespeople, the cause of the problem is that critics are making "biased and misguided comments that do not rightly reflect the Vietnamese state's policy on and implementation of human rights" (Voice of Vietnam, 31 May 2010). In one article, the U.S. State Department is accused of making "politically intentional and partial comments on Vietnam that do not reflect rightly the real situation" (VNA, 17 June 2010), "partial remarks based on untrue information" (Vietnam News, 15 March 2010) and "offering opinions that interfered in [Vietnam]'s internal affairs" (Vietnam News, April 11 2011).

The American media, on the other hand, identifies the cause as the oppressive Vietnamese government, placing blame on Vietnam in all of these articles.

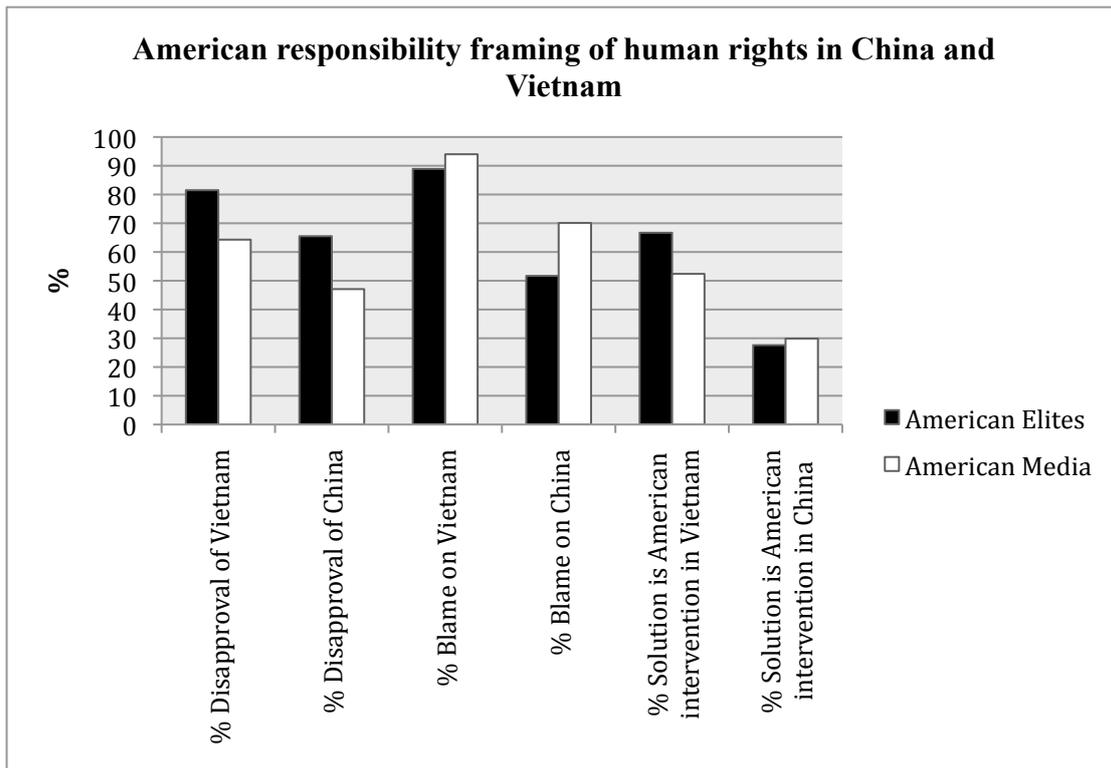
Responsibility for solution, however, is often awarded to the United States. 50% of articles from the American media suggest the United States should step in and resolve the issue, while 34.6% suggest that Vietnam can resolve it. 11.5% do not recommend any solution. A similar imbalance between who is causing the problem and who can resolve it is found in the coverage from the Vietnamese media. Though the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre largely blames the problem on the West, the Vietnamese articles never suggest that a non-Vietnamese actor can resolve the issue. Rather, the 38.9% of articles that do propose a solution suggest that Vietnam is the sole country that can resolve the issue. Specific solutions are varied and include Vietnam's willingness to "share its experiences and learn from other nations in ensuring the rights of minority groups" ('Vietnam respects rights of minorities', 2010), the launch of a magazine designed to "disseminate the Party's standpoints and guidelines as well as the State's policies and laws on human rights" (Voice of Vietnam, 15 July 2010) as well as drafting new laws in the National Assembly to further protect human rights (DTI News, 5 January 2011). Solutions proposed by the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre tend to be one-off propositions, and often reflect actions that had already been taken.

In both countries, the problems, causes and solutions identified are compatible with the nation's values and norms. In neither instance are the conceptions of what constitutes 'human rights questioned, nor is there any suggestion that the problem may be due to the media's origin country acting immorally or illegally. As in the case of human rights in China, this issue provided an opportunity for journalists to question established norms and values and to weigh them against those from another culture, and as in the Chinese case, these challenges are not voiced. That this type of framing is absent in both of these case studies supports hypothesis 2, indicating that avoiding challenges to legitimacy is an important factor in the adoption of foreign frames.

Hypothesis 3 and the Vietnamese Human Rights Case

The benefit of testing this hypothesis is to contribute to the understanding of how strong the indexing effect is when it comes to media frames on international issues. The superficially similar case studies of Chinese and Vietnamese human rights provided an especially good opportunity to test the indexing hypothesis and hopefully move scholarship closer towards an understanding of the role elites play in shaping media framing. As the Chinese and Vietnamese issues are quite similar it can be expected that they will be framed in a similar manner by the American media. For instance, if the American media accepts that human rights are a culturally relative idea in the context of Chinese violations, the same philosophy should apply towards the Vietnamese.

Despite this expectation, differences in the coverage were found. Figure 22 shows that in important areas where framing of the Chinese and Vietnamese issues differed, the American media tends to follow the lead of the American elites. For instance, both groups place blame and disapproval on Vietnam more frequently than they do on China, and both groups recommend American intervention as a solution more often in Vietnam than in China. It would seem that Vietnam is indeed treated like a “kickable China” by both American elites and the media. Additionally, China’s holding of American debt may make any American conflict with this country more economically harmful than a conflict with Vietnam.



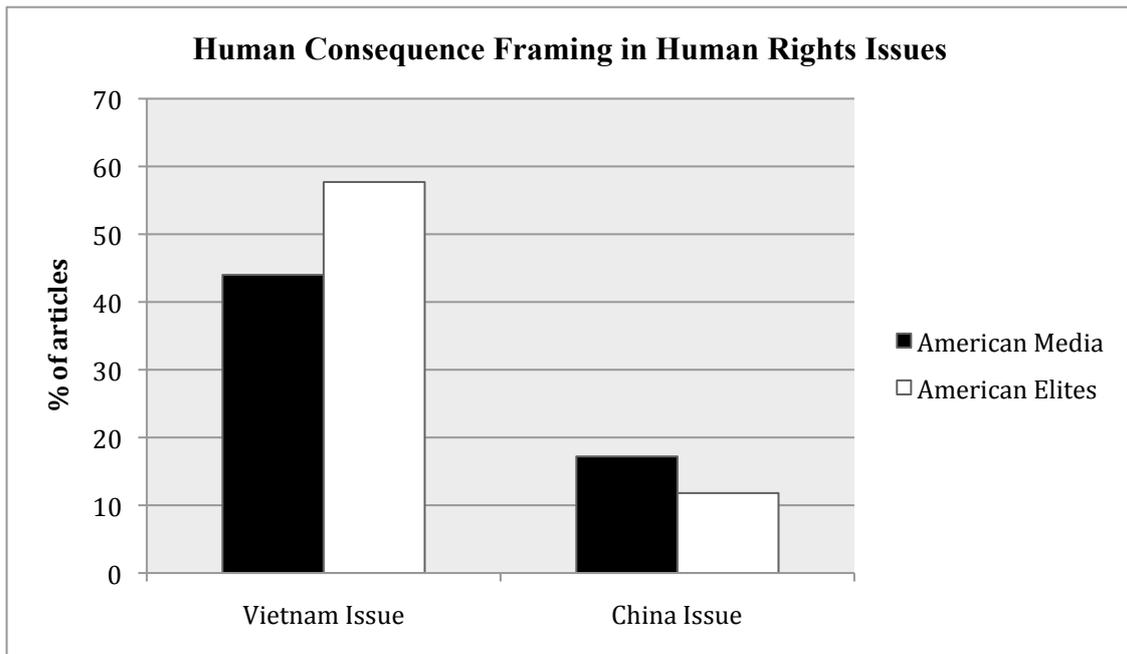
	American Media	American Elites
Disapproval of Vietnam	64.3%	81.5%
Disapproval of China	47.1%	65.5%
Blame on Vietnam	94%	88.9%
Blame on China	70.1%	51.7%
Solution is American Intervention in Vietnam	52.4%	66.7%
Solution is American Intervention in China	29.9%	27.6%

Figure 22.

The United States elites and media both use economic frames more often in articles about human rights violations in China than they do to describe the same issue in Vietnam. 21.8% of American media and 86.2% of elites present the Chinese issue as having economic consequences, compared to 17.9% of American media and 7.4% of elites on the Vietnamese issue. Additionally, the content of these frames is different. When describing the Chinese issue, economics become the reason China cannot be pressured into developing human rights (Newsweek, 8 February 2010, The Wall Street Journal, 18 May 2011), while articles describing the Vietnamese issue suggest that human rights violations are the reason Vietnam cannot be helped in

reforming its economy (The Wall Street Journal, 23 July 2010, Congressional Documents and Publications, 16 July 2010). The different use of economic framing of the issue by the American outlets further highlights the fact that China has economic leverage over the United States, whereas Vietnam does not.

The human consequence framing of American coverage of the human rights violations is also off-balance in relation to the issue in China and the issue in Vietnam (see Figure 23). Both American outlets consistently see the problem as an oppressive government, and it is not unusual for them to use anecdotes or personal examples to illustrate the problem and perhaps make it more available and applicable to the audience. However, the Vietnamese issue receives over twice as much coverage from a human consequence perspective than does the Chinese issue—44% of American media and 57.7% of elite statements make the effect of the issue on Vietnamese citizens the focus of the story, compared to 17.2% of media articles and 11.8% of elite statements on the Chinese issue.



	American Media	American Elites
Vietnam Issue	44%	57.7%
China Issue	17.2%	11.8%

Figure 23.

Conclusions

Findings from testing the first hypothesis were mixed, though mostly supportive of the hypothesis. Specifically, this case study finds a consistent and frequent use of responsibility frames, a finding that suggests that these frame types are more likely to be found relevant across countries and therefore more likely to be adopted by a foreign source. The opposite can be said about consequence frames, a finding which is also consistent with the hypothesis. In fact, the only challenge to the hypothesis was the irregular use of conflict framing. Based on the results from each of the case studies, it appears that conflict framing is less pervasively used than responsibility framing, but also less variable than consequence framing. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that conflict frames are likely based in context, however the circumstances that engender conflict framing are far broader than those

that result in consequence framing. In other words, conflict frames are more likely than consequence frames to be relevant across countries, though some issues may be less accommodating to their use than others.

Again, hypothesis 2 was supported by the results. The problems that are identified are consistent with disparate interpretations of ‘human rights’, and the causes and solutions further support the attitudes of the media’s nation of origin. Self-blame is a rare occurrence, and when it was found it appeared in the context of American elites and media feeling that the United States was not doing enough to ensure human rights are respected in Vietnam. There are no instances of framing that challenge one country’s legitimacy being found in their media, despite the presence of such framing in another country. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that it is extremely unlikely for a challenging, foreign frame to be adopted by another country’s media.

The findings of this case study shine some light on the relationship between the American media and the American elites. By comparing the American framing of the Chinese human rights issue to that of the Vietnamese human rights issue, the influence of the elites on the media is visible. For instance, the press followed the example set by the elites and blamed Vietnam more often than China while simultaneously giving more responsibility for the resolution to China than Vietnam. This points to more implicit political sensitivity to the American relationships with China and Vietnam than a completely ‘free’ press would be expected to show. Though the American elites are not likely to be the only factor guiding American media framing, the results of the case study do point to a strong influence.

The disparate use of consequence frames is of note, and possibly caused by the American elites (and, assuming the indexing theory has some effect, the American

media) feeling that the human rights issue in China is complicated by the relationship between China and the United States, thus making it too complex to see as a purely human consequence story. Additionally, evoking sympathy for the Chinese citizens among the American audience may create a popular opinion that action must be taken, which (based on the findings from the analysis of solution framing), the United States is less eager to do in China than in Vietnam.

Through the results of four case studies, several patterns can now be identified pointing to what foreign frames are most likely to be adopted by another country's media. First, foreign frames that challenge a country's legitimacy are likely to be ignored, marginalised or disputed by that country's media. Such messages should therefore be avoided in any attempt to influence a foreign country's media. Second, consequence and conflict frame structures may be less relevant in certain countries and in certain contexts. Relevance of consequence frames, especially, appears highly reliant on context, making them less likely to be equally salient across cultures. Third, evidence of elite indexing was found, however the media also deviated from elite messaging on several occasions. While elites may influence the general direction of the debate, it appears that oppositional frames from foreign sources do have an opportunity to enter the framing competition. The significance of these findings, and their application to public diplomacy, will be further developed in the next chapter.

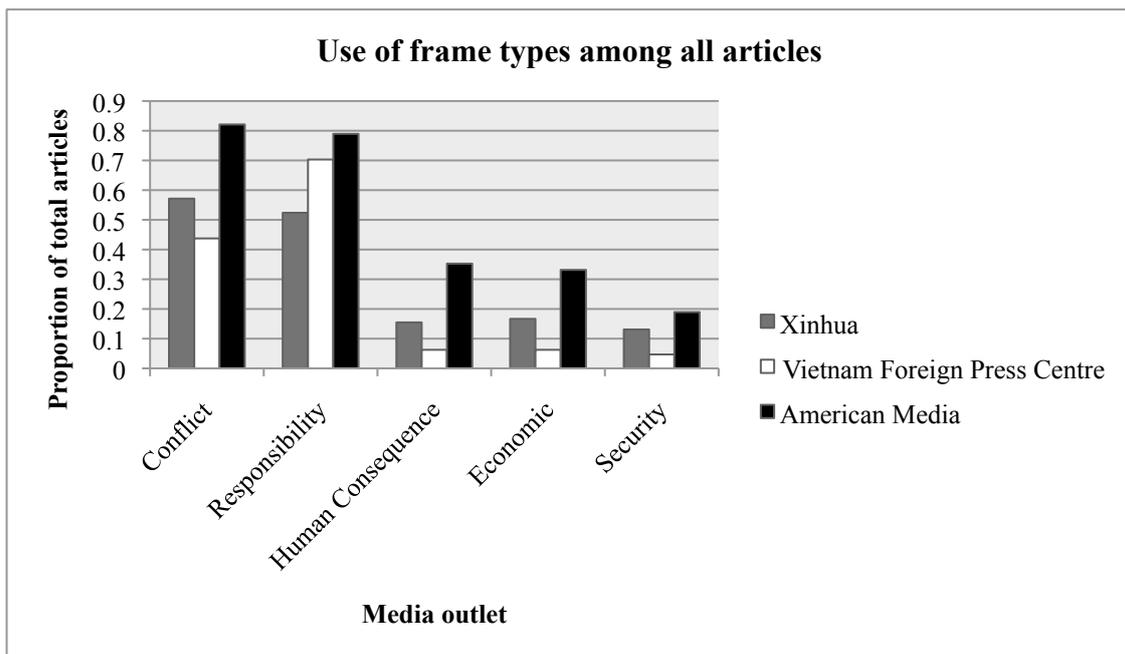
7. Conclusion

As previous research has shown, media framing can have a significant effect on public opinion (Entman, 2004, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007: 11). Of course, not all potential frames will be adopted and promoted by the media, meaning that entering the framing competition is the first step to a message influencing an audience. The purpose of this study was to move towards a better understanding of what traits make certain frames more likely to be adopted by foreign media and how these traits might be used in public diplomacy. Through this, it may be possible to gauge the likelihood of a news frame influencing the media of a foreign country through advocacy or international broadcasting, allowing a message to successfully speak to an audience at home and abroad.

To answer the research question, this thesis sought to identify what frame attributes are commonly used across different countries. Identifying existing frames provides an understanding of what ideas and attitudes constitute public opinion in a target audience country, suggesting a foundation for public diplomacy messages. Three hypotheses were tested in this study, in the hopes of developing a stronger understanding of framing of international issues in China, Vietnam and the United States. Though the conclusions are specific to these countries, it is hoped that some of the lessons can be applied to public diplomacy in general.

Conclusions from Testing Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis focused on the types of frames used to explain international issues to domestic audiences. The benefit of evaluating this hypothesis is to better understand what, if any, frame structures might prohibit a message from being applicable across countries. Based on previous studies, it was suggested that conflict and responsibility frames would be widely used to describe such issues. In Figure 24, we see the use of frame types across outlets for all issues combined:



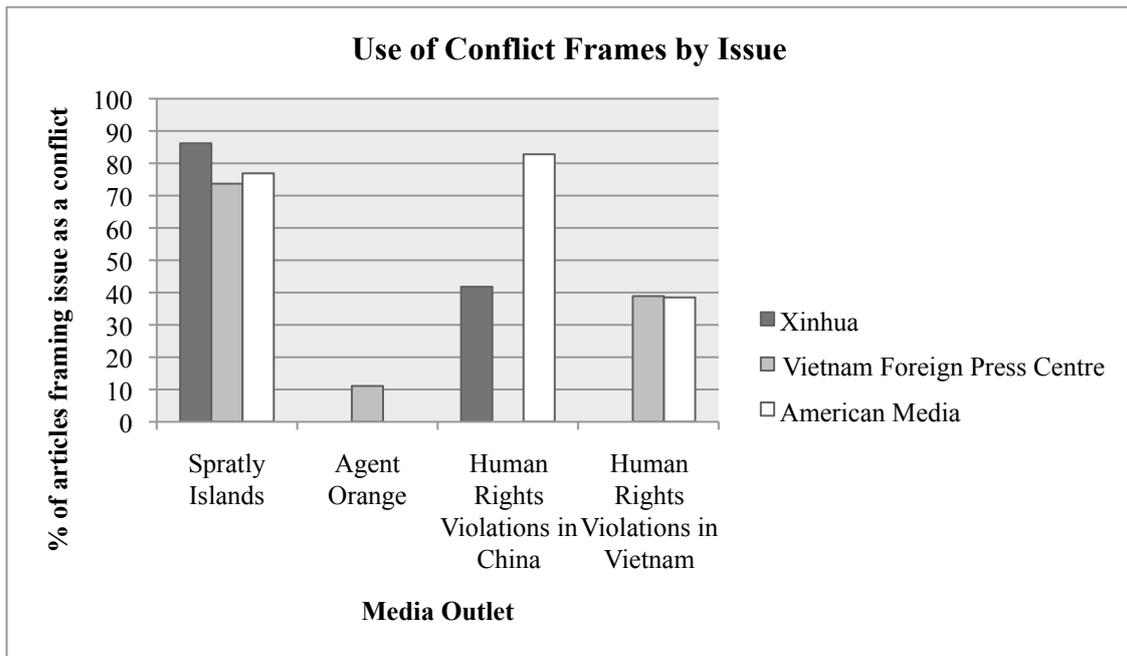
	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict Frames	57.1%	43.8%	82.1%
Responsibility Frames	52.3%	70.3%	78.9%
Human Consequence Frames	15.5%	6.3%	35.3%
Economic Frames	16.7%	6.3%	33.2%
Security Frames	13.1%	4.7%	18.9%

Figure 24.

Conflict and Responsibility Framing

Overall, it was found that the United States, China and Vietnam do regularly use conflict and responsibility frames as a way to explain international issues. Combined with data from previous studies finding these frames common in European media (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, Camaj, 2010), it appears that these frames have a general applicability.

Despite general support for the first part of the hypothesis, this thesis did find one issue in which conflict frames were not commonly used. The figure on the following page (Figure 25) shows the use of conflict frames among the outlets on a per issue basis and the rare use of conflict frames in the Agent Orange case study stands out. In this case study, the American media never used conflict frames and the Vietnamese media used them only rarely, indicating that there may be certain contexts in which these frames are not applicable. Again, this outlier may be due to the decades-long time span of the issue and the irrelevance of framing the issuing the context of the original conflict, a possibility that would require further research to confirm.



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Spratly Islands	86.2%	73.7%	76.9%
Agent Orange		11.1%	
Human Rights in China	41.8%		82.8%
Human Rights in Vietnam		38.9%	76.9%

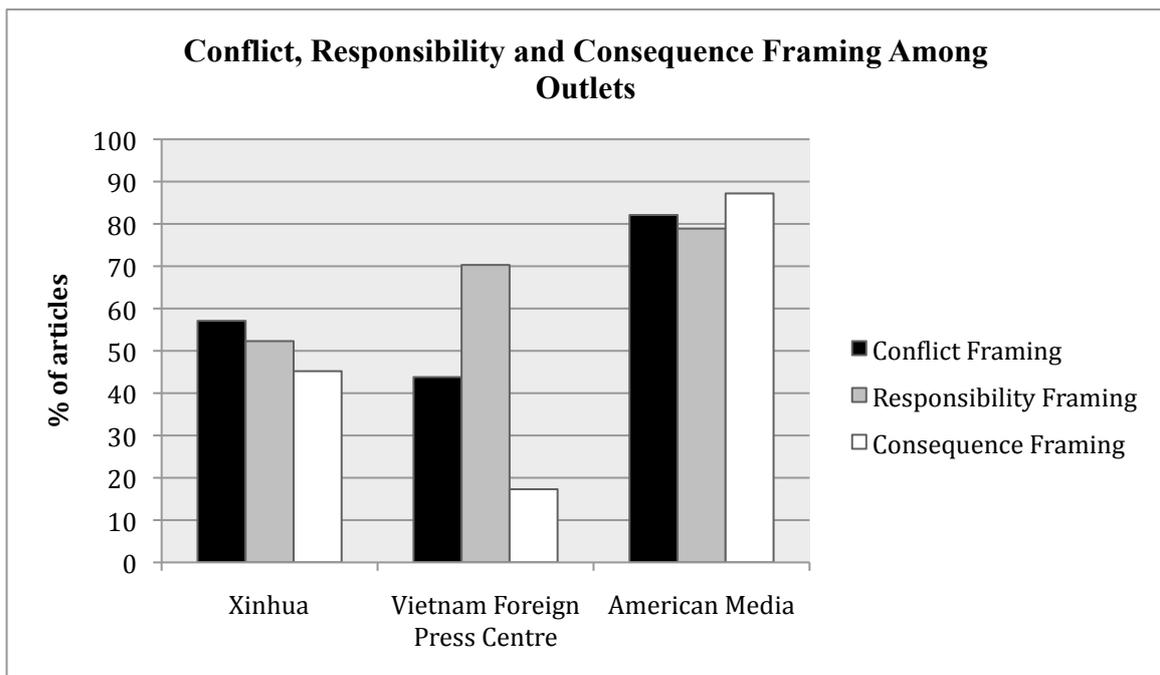
Figure 25.

Consequence Framing

No particular consequence frames were found to be more generally used than the others. They were also used unevenly among the three countries studied. Again, this is consistent with the hypothesis. This may suggest that consequence frames may have limited use in public diplomacy—it appears unlikely that a particular consequence frame structure that appeals to an audience in one culture will also appeal to an audience in another. Likely, these frames are more reliant on context than either responsibility or conflict frames and will not be as widely applicable.

When the data are grouped together as consequence frames, rather than viewed separately as ‘economic’, ‘human consequence’, and ‘security’ frames, a trend (visible

in Figure 26) emerges within each country. Overall, consequence frames appear extremely common among American media, moderately common at Xinhua and uncommon at the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre. The use of consequence framing should perhaps therefore be linked to the system of media ownership in place. The outlet with the least commercialisation (the Vietnam Foreign Press Centre) was significantly less likely to use consequence framing in their news stories. This trend may indicate a relationship between consequence framing and the privately-owned news outlets (which may be more inclined to dramatise the issue though candidly explaining the consequences of the problem).



	Xinhua	Vietnam Foreign Press Centre	American Media
Conflict Frames	57.1%	43.8%	82.1%
Responsibility Frames	52.3%	70.3%	78.9%
Consequence Frames	45.2%	17.3%	87.2%

Figure 26.

These findings on frame structure use support the results of Camaj's (2010) study on frame usage by European media on the subject of Kosovo's status negotiations, a study that also found news outlets favouring conflict and responsibility frames regardless of the outlet's national origins. Camaj used these findings to further the hypothesis that news media is becoming increasingly homogenised through processes of globalisation. It was not the intention of this thesis to test the effects of globalisation on news framing, but it is difficult not to draw the same conclusion when these results are compared to Camaj's—the fully-commercialised American media had more in common with the partially-commercialised Chinese media than with the state-run Vietnamese media.

The type and frequency of consequence framing describing this issue varied across countries. This indicates that certain consequences appear to hold more relevance to different audiences. Interestingly, the results suggest that successful use of these frame types may be more tied to current social and political concerns than to the actual likelihood or significance of the consequence. For instance, the case study of the Spratly Islands provided the most likely issue for security frames as this issue is a territorial dispute between Asian countries, and the question of regional security and stability naturally follows. Indeed, the frame was found among all of the outlets, but especially the American media—the country that would be the least effected by a conflict in the South China Sea. While such a conflict is unlikely to affect the average American, the concern over global security issues is consistent with a general American approach to international affairs. Since the events of September 11, 2001, terrorism, war and threats to international security have grown increasingly more relevant to Americans (Chanley, 2002: 478). The lesson here may be that consequence frames used in public diplomacy may be most effective after taking a moment to

understand the issues important to the target audience, such as via recent opinion polls or media analyses.

While conflict and responsibility frames are common across all cultures, findings around consequence frames may be more flexible and apt for use in public diplomacy. While conflict and responsibility frames, by nature, cast two parties against each other, consequence frames may be used in a less adversarial manner. The Agent Orange case study, the only case where conflict frames were uncommon and the only case where both countries agreed on the problem, cause and solution, provides a strong example of this. Though they vary in use, each of the consequence frames are presented at some point by each country indicating that any of them could potentially influence another country's media. Additionally, use of consequence frames appears influenced by the level of privatisation of the media. With preliminary research identifying a country's largest, most relevant concerns, consequence frame structures may have a great deal of potential as effective formats for public diplomacy messages.

Conclusions from Testing Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis posited that framing from one country would not be presented by another's media if it challenges the audience country's legitimacy, an idea largely supported by the findings. In none of these case studies is contentious framing present in the domestic media, even though many cases identified the existence of such framing in other countries.

The case studies on human rights in China and Vietnam perhaps support the hypothesis most clearly. On one side of the issue, American framing argues that the Asian governments violate the civil liberties of their citizens. On the other, the Asian

countries argue that the United States is misrepresenting violations as an excuse to intercede in China and Vietnam's domestic affairs. Additionally, framing from Xinhua challenges the American government's legitimacy by casting the United States as the violator of human rights—citing poverty and gun violence statistics as evidence. These challenging frames were not acknowledged by the American media, and while the Asian media did occasionally mention the American criticism, it was always in the context of a rebuttal to it.

The case of the Spratly Islands identified similar, though less incendiary, challenges to legitimacy—Xinhua indicated that the United States had no right to intervene, yet while the necessity of intervention was debated by the Americans, their country's right to get involved was never questioned. In no instance did journalists question their country's definition of human rights, or their country's respect of them. It would seem that common use of a frame in one country is not enough to earn it entry into the framing competition in another country.

These findings are consistent with most research on international issues framing, though this idea has been challenged on occasion. As mentioned previously, one case study on American coverage of Guatemalan death squads (Livingston and Eachus, 1996) does find that frames challenging local legitimacy were used regularly by the mainstream media. Incidentally, this case study shares a particular quality with the only case study in this thesis to find similar challenges to local legitimacy. In the case study involving Agent Orange reparations, the United States was unanimously blamed for the problem. It was noted that conflict frames were rarely used in this issue, and this may give the blame less of an adversarial tone and make it easier for the American audience to accept.

More likely though, the challenges to legitimacy are accepted due to the amount of time that has passed between the Vietnam War and today. This is consistent with Livingston and Eachus's (1996) study on Guatemalan death squads. They compared American framing of Latin American paramilitary organisation before and after the Cold War, and found that after the Cold War, American media was much more inclined to explicitly identify the American government as complicit with violent and illegitimate organisations. While they ultimately attribute this to a new political and social climate following the Cold War, they do acknowledge that their second study was on an issue long passed, which could have affected results (1996: 434). That their finding has not been followed by more post-Cold War, mediated challenges to legitimacy may identify it as an exception rather than a rule, much like the Agent Orange study appears here.

Overall, the case studies indicate that the details of problem, cause and solution presented in a frame are extremely important for public diplomacy messages. If a frame is too challenging to the audience country's current sense of its legitimacy, it simply will not be acknowledged. Though a number of studies have indicated that the media is willing to present frames that oppose elite statement (Wolfsfeld, 1997, Althaus, 2003), it appears that a line is drawn at challenging the legitimacy of the current status quo, indicating that this could be the point at which journalists will limit their storytelling. The implications of this on the practise of public diplomacy should be obvious: antagonistic framing will not be compatible with the audience's sense of reality, and such frames are not likely to influence local media.

Conclusions from Testing Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis sought to uncover the nature of the relationship between elite statements and local media framing. Each of the case studies finds that while the media does occasionally offer competing frames, the general direction of elite framing is followed. Findings from the Spratly Islands issue demonstrated some deviation of the media from elite framing, though this was not a significant challenge, and American media framing of the Agent Orange issue mirrored American elite framing almost perfectly. The comparison of framing on the human rights in Vietnam and China perhaps provided the strongest evidence of indexing. Here, the American media followed the framing of the elites within the issue, subsequently demonstrating a bias towards contrasting solutions of intervention in Vietnam and a more hands-off approach with China.

That the strength of indexing may vary from issue to issue has been suggested before, though no definitive answer as to the cause has emerged. Bennett (1990: 122) proposes that one factor that may influence the indexing effect is the importance of the issue to American corporate interests. Possibly, issues bearing more relevance towards maintaining the current order would be less likely to introduce multiple voices and viewpoints, whereas issues that appear more trivial will feature more different frames. Though the bearing each of the case study issues has on American corporate interests is purely speculative, this does not appear to be a major factor in the American media's adoption or deviation from American elite framing.

First, the issue of Agent Orange reparations featured the most consistent and similar framing from the media and elites, though this issue arguably has the least

relevance to maintaining the corporate or political status quo. The human rights issues, in which media framing also closely followed elite framing, can be seen as slightly more relevant—the issues create tension between the United States and its trade partners—though still not critical to maintaining the current order. The Spratly Islands issue is easily the most relevant to the United States’ government and economy—even if the threat to global security is an exaggeration, security and economic issues in Asia can have an effect on the international systems that the United States participates in—and indicated the least amount of correlation between elite and media framing.

Perhaps a stronger explanation for the varying strength of elite indexing is the existence of a ‘storytelling imperative’ among journalists. Cook (1996: 479) suggests that American news values mandating news be “timely, terse, easily described, dramatic, colorful and visualizeable” will often drive journalists to add new plot elements to their stories. These elements do not constitute new frames, but rather build upon those already suggested by elites. Althaus (2003) makes a similar observation in his study of Persian Gulf crisis, noting that oppositional frames in the media fell within one of four identified narratives. While he does not mention whether any of these particular narratives were used by elites, it can be inferred that the media relies on a handful of established frames to present an issue. As was found in each of the case studies here, in instances where the American media promoted frames that had not been used by elites, these frames added to or argued with the existing frames (such as the emphasis on American security consequences in the Spratly Islands case or the alternative solutions proposed in the issue of Vietnam’s human rights). Never did the media introduce an entirely new idea. Based on the findings in this thesis, each of these larger narratives appears grounded in elite framing, albeit with the media adding elements of drama to create new frames.

This research points to another possible explanation for varying degrees of indexing: findings suggest that in cases where local elite framing has not yet been consolidated into a handful of recurrent frames, it may be possible for alternative frames to directly influence the media. Figure 27 shows the correlation between the percentage of American media articles that suggest no solution (indicating an incomplete frame) and the consensus among American elites as to the best solution (implying the number of frames being promoted by elites). Though lacking enough data to come to a definitive conclusion, the chart suggests a negative correlation between elite consolidation of frames and number of frames employed by the media.

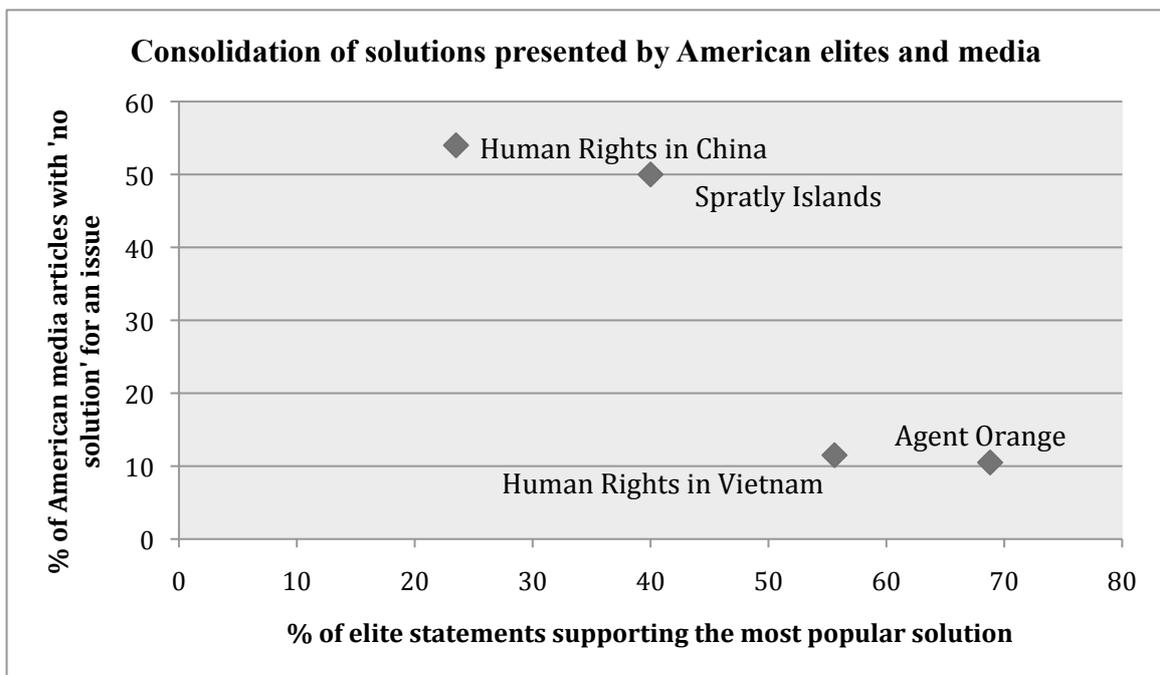


Figure 27.

It is possible that the strength of indexing is related to the consistency of elite messaging. If there are only one or two narratives promoted, then the media follows; if there are more, the media may be more open to new frames. The two case studies that show the least consistent framing, the issues of the Spratly Islands and human rights in China, are also the two case studies that appeared to have the most deviation from elite

framing in terms of frame structure. Mermin (1999: 116) reported similar findings in a case study on American military intervention in Somalia—an outlier in his research which otherwise largely supported the indexing theory. He concluded that the frequent use of oppositional frames in the media coverage was due to the administration appearing “uncertain and confused” regarding their foreign policy in Somalia. This finding may be easily explained through previous research on strong framing, which indicates that repetition of a single theme is a major factor in the success of a frame (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Possibly, without the repetition of certain frames from the elites, the media has trouble identifying strong frames for an issue and is more willing to look elsewhere. This may indicate an opening for public diplomacy messages to enter the framing competition.

This finding could be useful as a way to identify opportunities to introduce frames through public diplomacy communications. It should be noted though, that this finding is unlikely to hold true for countries with one-party systems, like Vietnam or China. In these countries, debate among the elites may be non-existent and opportunities to enter the framing competition may therefore be considerably more limited. In these cases, public diplomacy messages may struggle to enter the framing competition through directly influencing local media.

The bearing this conclusion has on public diplomacy is in the process through which a public diplomacy message is most likely to influence a foreign public, as suggested by the cascading activation model (Entman, 2008). Though the model indicates that international news frames could influence local media directly, and though other studies have found foreign sources are common in American news stories (Wolfsfeld, 1997, Althaus, 2003), this thesis found no evidence of non-elite influence on framing. Rather, the findings from testing this hypothesis point to one thing: that

while framing may occasionally present stories that fall outside of the elite-sanctioned Sphere of Legitimate Debate, they will not fall far. Most likely, frames will deviate from elite framing only to make the issue more fitting with a dramatic narrative, and such liberties are more likely to be taken in cases where elite opinion on the issue is not consolidated. Overall, these results support Althaus, Edy, Entman and Phalan's (1996: 411) revision of the indexing hypothesis in which they suggest that while elites may not be the most commonly cited source in news stories, their focus still guides much of the coverage.

Discussion

Framing represents the way information about an event or issue is processed and presented. Journalists are tasked with identifying the most important details of a story and linking them together to explain what happened, who is involved and why it matters. Stories are written so as to communicate the event or issue to a specific audience, and will use frames that are already established as relevant to and understood by their audience. Different contexts lead to different framing, and it comes as no surprise that journalists across borders and cultures often come up with completely different ways to explain the same event. These news frames can therefore be a useful way to 'listen' in public diplomacy and determine existing attitudes and opinions of the target audience. Stories form the foundation of how we understand experiences, and the stories that make sense to an audience can tell us a great deal about their attitudes, values and experiences.

Presenting an issue in a way that is consistent with local framing will ensure that a message is understood and not just heard. Through considered framing, an issue

can be presented in a way that emphasises commonality, not differences. Even if the policies promoted are not widely supported by the audience, even if disagreement remains, the message will at least have been understood. This is not to suggest that public diplomats pander to an audience without regard to foreign policy activity. A government's unpopular actions should still be framed in a way that the audience will be able to relate to. Chong and Druckman (2007) point out that strong framing opposing a held opinion can push an audience towards a more moderate opinion, though the idea itself may not be wholly adopted. It follows that relevant and consistent framing can positively influence public opinion, even when the overall interpretation of an issue differs.

Strong framing is not a panacea for bad policy. If the actions of one country negatively affect the citizens of another, no storytelling technique can fix that. Rather, framing should be seen as a tool for listening and for facilitating dialogue. As was demonstrated in the case studies here, there are ways to create a message that will not likely be accepted by a foreign audience—by questioning held values like human rights, or challenging the audience country's legitimacy. These frames can do nothing to further the goals of public diplomacy, and should be avoided whenever possible. Again, careful framing cannot make an unpopular policy popular, but it can highlight the similar values and ideas that drive the policy.

It is the job of public diplomacy scholars and practitioners to develop and test theories in order to bridge that divide. Through the case studies here, this study intended to add to knowledge regarding use of framing in international communications and effective public diplomacy. The conclusions outlined in this chapter are theoretical only—each suggestion should be trialled in advocacy or international broadcasting before an evaluation of its actual usefulness can be made.

Success of the frame could easily be observed through its adoption or disregard by the local media or through public opinion polls. It is through constant testing and retesting of theories in a practical context that we can move closer to an understanding of how messages can be framed so that they are understood by international audiences.

This study also uncovered areas in need of further research, especially in regards to the findings of the Agent Orange case study. Here, the framing from the two countries were similar, even though the framing placed the blame on the United States—the only case where self-blame was part of a strong frame. As noted, the timeline and context of this issue may be what makes it unique among the others. However, a longitudinal study of American framing of the Agent Orange issue could be used to establish when the American media and elites began adopting this frame, and what actors were involved. As mentioned, American war veterans also suffer from the effects of Agent Orange, and it is possible that the precedent set by policies towards veterans have resulted in the willingness to take responsibility for the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam. If this is the case, then it may be useful for public diplomacy messages to seek out domestic issues relating to the foreign policy issue and adopt similar framing. The knowledge base surrounding public diplomacy will only continue to grow through scholarship and practice. It is therefore critical that we continue developing and testing theories to better understand how to more effectively communicate across borders—improved public diplomacy is our best chance at bridging the divide that hinders international communication.

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