



MONASH University

The China Story: a media narrative analysis of Beijing's global communications

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Abstract

This research concerns the use of strategic messages by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its English-language communications about China's foreign policy, as conveyed via *Xinhua*. Message usage in *Xinhua* was tracked over 11 years from 2008 to 2018 with a focus on the events that have influenced the use of these messages.

To date, most scholarly analysis of the CCP's global state media has focused on the influence of ideological and economic imperatives, as well as international dynamics. Other studies have examined the nature of this expansion, including platforms used and the geographies targeted. However, by analyzing how China's news production has been coded to promote particular foreign policy messages, this thesis seeks to shed new light on what the CCP leadership is seeking to communicate and why.

To analyse the CCP's unique and well-funded global communications model, I have adopted a theoretical framework that combines two prominent communication approaches; the Political Economy of Communication (PEC), and the Propaganda Model (PM). Individually, the two theories did not adequately cover key aspects of China's global state media. However, in combination, they provide an effective framework for understanding key aspects.

By surveying important foreign policy speeches by CCP leaders and their English-language dissemination in *Xinhua*, I identified six key messages; world order, common destiny, mutual respect, win-win, harmonious and inclusive. I used the combined PEC and PM framework and a Grounded Theory approach to code and group messages into three themes or sub-narratives (within the overarching, official 'China story'). These smaller stories were of China as: 'champion of a more equitable world'; 'a win-win partner' in trade and diplomacy; and, 'a peace-loving nation'. Using the search database Factiva, I calculated how often messages were used annually, under what circumstances and with what emphasis, in order to identify patterns of communication.

Not surprisingly, analysis revealed that diverse events, within and outside China, triggered their usage, including; the Global Financial Crisis, domestic unrest, the U.S. 'pivot' to Asia, territorial disputes, and the rise of Xi and election of U.S. President Trump. It also revealed three distinct communication phases: Hu Jintao's insistence on domestic stability and global 'harmony'; then Xi's use of regional 'common destiny' messaging, which broadened to

become a vision of China's contribution to a globally 'inclusive' and 'shared future' for all. Under an increasingly emboldened Xi, the CCP has promoted China's global importance (focusing on China's Belt and Road initiative), 'win-win' economic partnerships and non-negotiable interpretations of 'mutual respect' between countries. A key thesis finding is that the CCP is now not just focused on 'telling its story', but also on having its rhetoric adopted in international agreements and suppressing counter-narratives.

The communication patterns identified in this thesis indicate that China's expanding global media influence is underpinned by the significant economic dependence of many countries on China. By highlighting and analysing the strategic language used by the CCP, as delivered through *Xinhua*, this thesis contributes to knowledge about the internal and external factors influencing the CCP's foreign policy thinking.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Date: 13 October 2020

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List of Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CPD	Central Propaganda Department
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GAPP	General Administration of Press and Publication
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GFW	Great Firewall (of China)
ICA	International Court of Arbitration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NDB	New Development Bank
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPC	National People's Congress
OFP	Office of Foreign Propaganda
PEC	Political Economy of Communication
PM	Propaganda Model
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRC	People's Republic of China
SARFT	State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television
SBY	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
SCIO	State Council Information Office
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SOE	State-owned Enterprise
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
U.S.	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Preface

My personal China story

The origins of this thesis are more than twenty years old. My initial curiosity about the ‘China story’ began in a small marketplace in Qingdao, Shandong Province, in the northern summer of 1997. From 1995 to 1997, I lived in China as an international student, with my first year at Liaoning Normal University (辽宁师范大学) in Dalian and my second year studying at Qingdao Ocean University (青岛海洋大学). In Qingdao, I used to shop regularly at the local marketplace and became friendly with one of the stall owners, Liu Xiangling, (刘先生) (Figure 1). Mr Liu was about my age, in his mid-twenties, and I used to buy music tapes and CDs from his stall. Like many young Chinese I knew at the time, he was a hardworking and enthusiastic entrepreneur and had a second business – wedding videography. He often asked me questions about my life in Australia and, as my two years in China were drawing to an end, Mr Liu became increasingly interested in what I would tell my family and friends about China. I told him that I would show them my photos and souvenirs and of course tell them my stories about life in China.



Figure 1: Shane Fairlie and Liu Xiangling, Qingdao 1997.

Then one day, about three weeks before I was to leave, he asked me if I would like him to take a video of my life in China that I could share with my family and friends back in Australia. This was in a time well before mobile phones with easy video options and when obtaining video

footage was difficult. I said an enthusiastic ‘yes’ and was very grateful for his offer, as I knew it would really help capture my life in China and make the experience a little bit easier to share back in Australia, especially at a time when China was still largely unknown. So, about ten days before I left, Mr Liu very kindly came and spent almost an entire day with me filming everything – starting with me waking in the morning in the student dormitory and finishing with dinner at the on-campus 四川菜 (Sichuan cuisine) restaurant run by my Chinese ‘big brother’ (大哥). He filmed me doing my morning exercises at the sportsground, attending class, eating lunch with the local students on campus and shopping at the market in the afternoon. And within a few days he had finished editing and presented me with my own ‘day in the life’, ‘China story’ video. In doing so he had given up at least a full day or two of his own work to ensure I had this video to show people back in Australia.

I was incredibly grateful and wanted to show my appreciation by at least taking Mr Liu out to dinner. But he refused. Repeatedly. And despite my persistent offers to show my gratitude in some way, he continued to say no. Although I understood his Chinese politeness at refusing any gesture of appreciation from me, the one thing I did not understand was his great interest in what I would tell people in Australia about China and then wanting me to share this video. And when I had exhausted all attempts at offering to take him out, I eventually just asked him why he went out of his way to make this video. And his reply was simple... ‘China needs to tell our story to foreigners’.

Fifteen years later, in November 2012, Xi Jinping was announced as the new General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the incoming President of the People’s Republic of China. At his first national meeting on propaganda and ideology the following August, Xi Jinping declared that the CCP needed to find new ways to ‘tell China’s story well, and properly disseminate China’s voice’.¹ And so, this thesis represents a combination of personal and intellectual curiosity as the impact and telling of the ‘China story’ continues to unfold globally. It aims to formally capture the evolution and portrayal of the story, currently led by Xi and broadcast in different ways throughout China’s state media abroad. But it also aims to acknowledge the desire of my old friend Mr Liu and many like him from that time who just wanted people from outside China to better understand the life experiences and dreams of ordinary Chinese like them.

¹ The fable of the master storyteller, *The China Media Project Media Beat*, September 29, 2017, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2017/09/29/the-fable-of-the-master-storyteller/> (accessed January 9, 2020).

From Mr Liu's curiosity and interest in me sharing China with the world in 1997 to now, China's narrative has developed significantly in both its reach and complexity. Compared to the first two decades of post-Mao reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, the 2000s have seen major development and sophistication in content and delivery of the CCP's narratives.

As a communications practitioner with almost twenty years' experience as a media, community and government relations adviser domestically and internationally, I have both a theoretical and practical understanding of communications. Working with senior government officials – including as a political media adviser to Australia's Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister – has given me unique insights into the importance of, and challenges facing, the way a government needs to manage domestic and international audiences when it comes to messaging. It was with this personal and professional experience, as well as curiosity, that I approached this thesis.

Chapter 1. Introduction: China's Global Communications

1.1. China's rise

China's rise as an economic and military power has been the focus of significant debate and analysis by media, academia and policymakers worldwide. Indeed, the rise of China is regarded as one of the most geopolitically significant developments of the twenty-first century (Huang, 2013), with 'no country looming larger on the horizon of the 21st century than China'.² However, China's rise has also contributed to uncertainty and, in some cases, concern for regional and other national governments around the world – in particular, regarding the implications of China's ambitions for the global economy, regional security and existing world order (Evans, 2011). This uncertainty is in part due to a lack of understanding of what is happening in China and the opaque nature of decision-making by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), including with foreign policy development. At times, the CCP's words and actions are contradictory, such as when it puts rhetorical emphasis on peaceful neighbourhood diplomacy while at the same time clashing violently with Vietnamese and Filipino fishing vessels in disputed South China Sea waters. Consequently, China's international engagement is often regarded as 'highly uneven', as the Party leadership is wont to switch between a constructive and combative attitude in its dealing with other countries.³

Over the past 30 years, China scholars and media commentators have analysed various aspects of China's rising power, which, in the past decade, have included a significant investment in global communications. Along with nurturing economic growth, the CCP leadership, as the central government in Beijing, is also focusing on the international expansion of state media, which is especially noticeable at a time when many Western media houses are cutting back on their overseas operations (Zhang, 2013). The CCP is now attempting to build a global media capacity commensurate with China's economic status. The aim is to expand the reach of the Party's propaganda machine, enhance China's soft power globally, and thereby to win influence and trust internationally through effective promotion of positive messages about China (Li and Sligo, 2012). In particular, the CCP has invested heavily in the expansion of its leading state media news agency, *Xinhua*, which for this reason will be the primary source in this thesis (to

² China is reshaping the international order, *Financial Times*, September 16, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/7f454bb6-b733-11e8-a1d8-15c2dd1280ff> (accessed April 27, 2019).

³ The fading of an ageing world order, *Financial Times*, October 23, 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/6d1f9fa-78b1-11e5-a95a-27d368e1ddf7> (10 January 10, 2016).

be discussed further in Chapter 4). Other outlets that have received additional funding and have expanded globally include CCTV International (now Global Television Network, CGTN) and the *China Daily*.

Part of the motivation for the expansion is ‘soft power’. The concept of soft power, introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990, is defined as a country’s ability to influence ‘through attraction rather than coercion or payment’ and is based on a country’s ‘culture, values, and policies’ (Nye, 2008, p.94). This contrasts with ‘hard power’, which Nye describes as ‘the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will’ (Nye, 2003, paragraph two).⁴ The CCP is now attempting to increase its soft power, which includes creating a story about China that appeals to other countries, but that also considers the increasingly important role of public opinion and interest groups in China. To do so has required the Chinese government to develop delivery platforms through which to tell ‘good stories’ about China. This has involved a multi-billion-dollar investment in the nation’s global communications, which has included greater media engagement with overseas Chinese communities, including increased CCP efforts to control local Chinese-language media content (Cai, 2016);⁵ enhanced public diplomacy (such as the establishment of Confucius Institutes as overseas Chinese language and cultural centres); and the placement of state media outlets in key geographic locations (i.e. Europe, the U.S. and Africa).

It is, however, important to note that the CCP’s version of soft power is not solely reliant on the projection of positive images but also includes economic incentives, such as business investment and development (Rawnsley, 2016).⁶ The CCP is evidently aware that it will have greater influence on certain international target audiences through investment spending in their countries, than solely through promoting Chinese governance and institutional values and standards. Although China’s international investments are not a primary focus of this thesis, they have implications for understanding how the CCP has sought to enhance China’s soft power through the telling of its story in state media.

After the CCP’s crackdown on the domestic media following 4 June 1989 and the violent purge of the student-led Democracy Movement in Tiananmen Square, the CCP has increasingly

⁴ Propaganda isn’t the way: Soft power, *International Herald Tribune* (NYE), January 10, 2003, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/propaganda-isnt-way-soft-power> (accessed January 12, 2015).

⁵ Beijing’s control over Chinese-language media more pressing than Fairfax China Daily inserts, *The Interpreter*, June 1, 2016, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/beijings-control-over-chinese-language-media-more-pressing-fairfax-china-daily> (accessed September 17, 2017).

⁶ Media and Power: The Chinese Way with Gary Rawnsley (Rawnsley), *Legatum Institute, YouTube*, posted January 25, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHuAuqT1R1g> (accessed December 21, 2019).

employed strategies that have sought to transform the Party's old propaganda model to an integrated one, mobilising broader media and social forces and using more Westernised language and modes of thinking (Hu and Ji, 2009).⁷ Described by Brady (2008, p.xiii) as a 'marketing dictatorship', the CCP is 'attempting to extend its hold on power by means of an astute combination of newly absorbed techniques from modern Western liberal democracies with more traditional communist methodology' (Brady and Wang, 2009, p.768).

This relatively new media approach has included the Chinese state media's use of international English-speaking journalists and more open reporting on less politically sensitive topics and language, more akin to a Western newspaper than a Communist Party propaganda publication. This shift in thinking to mass persuasion at home and abroad reflects an increased awareness by the CCP of its international image and the need to compete in the 'global marketplace of ideas' and public opinion (Brady 2009b, p.444). As Arquilla notes (cited in Nye, 2014, p.20) in 'today's global information age, victory may sometimes depend not on whose army wins, but on whose story wins'. However, it is critical to remember that a core driver of the CCP's so-called 'public opinion warfare' is preservation of its party-state political system⁸ (to be explored in more detail later).

1.1.1. Increased focus on global communications

The CCP believes that by enhancing its global communications it can boost China's reputation and influence abroad and enable a global audience to see things from its perspective. Important to briefly note here is my use of the term 'CCP' as opposed to 'Chinese government'; this is because these communications are not so much an extension of the vast bureaucratic machine of government in China, but specifically a propaganda tool of the Party (the CCP) itself. The term is also prominently used in the literature regarding Party propaganda in China (Brady and Wang, 2009).

Kurlantzick (2007) points out that China's 'charm offensive' is evidently geared towards improving China's political relations and soothing international concerns about rising Chinese power. Communication directed towards foreign audiences, which I refer to as their 'global communications', once traditionally 'defensive' and 'reactive',⁹ is now regarded as being more

⁷ China's rise and global communication: Problems and prospects [blog post], *Pro. Hu Zhengrong's Blog*, 29 June, 2009 (Hu and Ji), <http://www.huzhengrong.net/chinas-rise-and-global-communication-problems-and-prospects/> (accessed May 3, 2013).

⁸ China's 'Three Warfares' in perspective, *War on the Rocks* (Mattis), January 30, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/> (accessed April 16, 2018).

⁹ Inside China's audacious global propaganda campaign, *The Guardian* (Lim and Bergin), December 7, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping> (accessed February 7, 2019).

proactive and coordinated (Li and Sligo, 2012). This approach includes the relatively new strategy (increasing over the past decade) of targeting key Western print media outlets with opinion pieces and paid media advertising to promote the Party's position on a range of issues, such as the controversial East China Sea territorial dispute with Japan. Although my focus will be on the English-language *Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua)*, where relevant I will also reference opinion pieces in Western newspapers by Chinese government officials, as well as the emerging development of CCP state media (in particular the *China Daily*) partnering with Western media outlets to add paid CCP content into these Western media publications.

Over the last decade, more proactive thinking by the CCP regarding external communications outside of China reflects a significant change in the nature of both Chinese media ownership and approach from the Mao era and the early post-Mao era (Brady and Wang, 2009; Sun, 2010a). Although the Mao era saw an ambitious effort to provide translations of Mao Zedong Thought and key CCP works in other languages, this effort was conducted almost entirely from within China.

This shift in thinking is particularly remarkable for a country attempting an image makeover from a declared *anti-imperialist* revolutionary regime to a self-professed *responsible* great economic power, using a blend of traditional propaganda and mediums, contemporary themes and new media platforms. This combination of messaging was on display at the 2008 Beijing Olympics (after a torch relay disrupted in some Western cities), which was followed in 2009 by the CCP launching a 'going out' media policy centered around a greater emphasis on China's international image and the global telling of 'stories' about China (Hu and Ji, 2009, paragraph 12).¹⁰

The 'China story' (中国故事) is a term that the CCP leadership now uses to refer to the historical and contemporary portrayal of China as a one-party state, civilisation and culture. Although the 'China story' is a grand narrative that claims to encompass 5,000 years of Chinese history, it is told by the CCP in a manner that aims to carefully define the CCP's historical interpretation and support the maintenance of the CCP's political legitimacy. As leading historian and literary scholar Gloria Davies (2013, p.405) notes, it includes a 'highly edited story of its own [the party's] rise' that presents an official history, suppressing mention of some

¹⁰ China's rise and global communication: Problems and prospects [blog post], *Pro. Hu Zhengrong's Blog*, 29 June, 2009 (Hu and Ji), <http://www.huzhengrong.net/chinas-rise-and-global-communication-problems-and-prospects/> (accessed May 3, 2013).

of the CCP's more brutal chapters, including the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square purge of 4 June 1989. This story, which I will refer to as the CCP's 'grand narrative', also includes several important smaller stories, which I will refer to as sub-narratives (小叙述). The primary focus of this thesis is on these sub-narratives – in particular, what they consist of, their background and evolution, and how they are used. These will be more fully explored in Chapter 4.

1.1.2. The 'China story' grand narrative

Analysis and understanding of CCP communications is not possible without putting it into the context of the official 'China story'. As a 'grand narrative', this 'China story' is central to the way the CCP explains and talks about itself domestically and internationally. It is reproduced through a vast propaganda machine, the function of which is to incorporate this grand narrative and the supporting sub-narratives into state media content. This content includes propaganda material used since the CCP came to power in 1949, blended with contemporary references and expressions taken from a range of key works of ancient and imperial China. These are incorporated into contemporary foreign policy rhetoric about China's aspirations, commitments and viewpoints. Although the sub-narratives of the larger 'China story' aim to define China's global status, they must also appear to be consistent with Party rhetoric from Mao Zedong through to Xi Jinping. This presents a challenge for the CCP as, in order to bolster legitimacy of the Party, it must demonstrate a degree of messaging continuity, despite China, the region and the world in the 2010s being vastly different to how they were during the Mao era.

The sub-narratives are a critical part of the CCP's global communications framework. They consist of key words and phrases that are repeatedly used and attached to all major issues and policies, that seek to portray China's global contribution, political continuity and historical linkages (i.e. to the '5,000-year China story'). In traditional Western communications industry terms, words and phrases emphasised repeatedly to support the broader story of an entity or organisation are referred to as 'key messages', defined as 'a foundation for all communications' and that consist of 'concise' statements 'tailored' for an audience and commonly reinforced by 'facts, figures, examples',¹¹ also known as supporting evidence (Figure 2). As Brady (2008, 2009b, 2015a) observes, CCP officials are familiar with Western public relations principles and over the past few years have increasingly incorporated some of these approaches.

¹¹ The best way to develop killer key messages, *Beaumont*, (n.d.), <https://talktobeumont.com/develop-key-messages-for-effective-communication/> (accessed April 17, 2016).

1.1.3. Understanding media narratives and key messages

As noted by Ma and Thomas (2018, paragraph six), despite the CCP's investment of 'enormous resources in the promulgation of official ideologies, media management and public opinion guidance', propaganda often gets 'short shrift in mainstream coverage of Chinese politics, possibly because the propaganda apparatus is frustratingly opaque and its effectiveness hard to measure'. Furthermore, although academic research to date has examined many aspects of the CCP's global communications, including platforms, reach, spend and content, there is limited analysis and considerable ambiguity regarding the specific messaging used by the CCP in a global context. This thesis seeks to identify and examine these specific messages by looking at China's leading English-language state media outlet, *Xinhua*. As noted by Han (2016, pp.4-5), 'analysis of media representations provides some specific advantages and values', which includes the important identification of 'trends' over a long period.

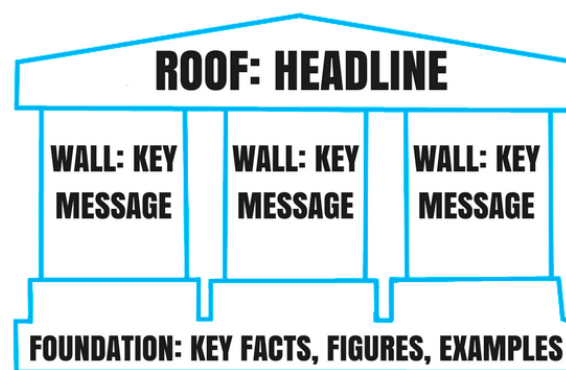


Figure 2: Traditional communications messaging structure – a theme or story (headline), with key messages supported by a foundation of evidence (source – Beaumont).¹²

Since 1989, China has been exposed to major domestic and international changes often involving conflicting institutional and social forces, including fear of domestic political instability; commercialisation of the media and economic pressures; the influence of globalisation; and a society evolving in ways increasingly outside of the CCP's control. The impact of these changes from a communications perspective is an important context in which to consider the drivers of the CCP's global communications. For definitional clarity, the term 'CCP communications' includes both Chinese state media outlets and content i.e. messaging and mediums, that are controlled and censored by the CCP. However, in this thesis, it will primarily refer to the messaging. This term is interchangeable with 'CCP propaganda' insofar as propaganda, in the sense of state-directed and controlled media, is what gets communicated,

¹² Ibid.

with propaganda defined as ‘the control of opinion by ... stories, rumours, reports, pictures and other forms of social communication’ (Laswell, cited in Brady, 2008, p.9).

Although the topic of China’s global communications is broad and involves many aspects, the central focus of this thesis will be to identify the CCP’s sub-narratives and the key messages that constitute them. This examination will also consider how these key messages have evolved over time, how conflicting foreign and domestic policies and priorities influence them and how they vary in changing circumstances. In chapters 5-8, I will unpack some of the impact of these changes from a communications perspective in order to provide greater understanding and rich contextualisation of what is driving the CCP media narrative. As Fiedler (2011) notes, China’s foreign policy media narrative is of considerable interest not just to the media and scholars but also to policymakers, due to the need for developed and developing countries internationally to better understand the intentions of China’s government and the implications of its policies.

1.2. A brief history of China’s state media

Since the CCP came to power in 1949, state media has played a critical role in the propaganda system of China’s one-party state. Although many aspects of state media have now developed commercial features, very different to the state media of the Maoist and early post-Maoist period, the CCP still tightly controls news content and stipulates how politically sensitive issues should be presented. As referenced in an article in *The New York Times* regarding China’s ‘soft power’ in Africa, former CCTV President Hu Zhunfan noted, ‘[t]he first social responsibility and professional ethic of media staff should be understanding their role clearly and being a good mouthpiece. Journalists who think of themselves as professionals, instead of as propaganda workers, are making a fundamental mistake about identity’.¹³

Since the 1990s, China’s state media has diversified considerably, with more open discussion, reporting and editorialising of social and policy issues. However, these are still conducted within parameters set by the CCP, which include restrictions on coverage of sensitive foreign and domestic policy topics (Brady and Wang, 2009). These include issues relating to Party legitimacy, Tibet, Falun Gong, Taiwan, territorial disputes and aspects of relations with Japan and the United States. Such controls rely on a combination of financial incentives (Esarey, 2005) and fear, based on the risk to journalists of imprisonment, family punishment or destruction of personal and professional credibility, as well as organisational impact, such as a publishing

¹³ Pursuing soft power, China puts stamp on Africa’s news, *The New York Times*, August 16, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/17/world/africa/chinas-news-media-make-inroads-in-africa.html> (September 17, 2019).

licences being revoked and offices being closed down (Xu and Albert, 2017). This fear factor has created an environment of self-censorship, which presents an ongoing challenge to Chinese journalists and media outlets seeking to provide a quality media service and/or working to attract readers and revenue.

Despite the controls, domestic media diversification has increased since the 1990s, partly due to a reduction in significant government subsidies for media outlets and an expectation of self-funding, usually through commercial advertising (Zhao, 1998). As noted by Hearn-Branaman (2015), many Chinese media outlets can no longer afford to simply act as Party mouthpieces but must now ensure they produce appealing audience content in order to attract advertisers. There are, however, exceptions in traditional and online media – for example, the ‘strategically’ established and subsidised major CCP state media websites such as the *People’s Daily* (Zhao, 2012, p.160). These changes have presented challenges to the CCP as, despite government restrictions on sensitive issues and an increasing number of crackdowns on press freedom, imposed by Xi Jinping, many newspapers (including some owned by the CCP) at times take relatively bold editorial stands critical of the government, with the need to attract readers and stay financially viable greater than fear of government repression (Hearn-Branaman, 2015). Furthermore, the Internet and digital communications technology such as social media platforms and text messaging has also increased access to a diverse range of information sources and played an increasing role in news agenda-setting (Zhao, 2012), and at times outside of government control.

Internationally, Chinese state media have also evolved, with a significant emphasis now placed on global communications, not only at the national but also the provincial level, with provinces now budgeting for their own promotion to the ‘outside world’ (Brady, 2015a, p.52). Global communications have been deemed a strategic government priority, with Xi in 2012 highlighting the importance of China’s global narrative and the need to influence foreign audiences (Brady, 2015a). Delivering a speech at the National Meeting on Propaganda and Thought Work in August 2013, Xi declared that China should ‘spread new ideas and new perspectives to emerging and developing states ... strengthen media coverage ... use innovative outreach methods ... tell a good Chinese story, and promote China’s views internationally’ (Brady, 2015a, p.55). Although there is an undeniable increase in the CCP’s emphasis on winning over external audiences, the Party leadership remains focused on controlling the information to which people within China have access, and in particular ensuring that the majority of Chinese citizens are exposed mainly to CCP-approved news, analysis and viewpoints that are aligned with the CCP’s objectives. Critical to this control is enforcing

messaging consistency, with expressions such as ‘staying on message or maintaining a unified calibre’ – *tongyi koujing* (统一口径) being used to caution state media workers (Davies, 2013, p.142).

1.2.1. CCP state media chronology

Although domestic media is not a primary focus of my thesis, it is nonetheless important to at least provide an overview of the evolution of CCP state media and key events related to its direction and expansion. Table 1 provides a chronology of the highlights of that evolution.

Table 1: Chronology of CCP state media

Time/ stage	Key features
1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding of the People's Republic of China with existing media increasingly controlled by the CCP and CCP media expanded from disseminating Party literature to reinforcing Party legitimacy
1950s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party's flagship newspaper the <i>People's Daily</i>, rigidly controlled under Mao, used against his enemies • <i>Hundred Flowers Campaign</i> (1956) encouraged open expression of public opinion about the CCP (which Mao then used to crackdown on those critical of the regime) • Introduction of foreign-facing outlet in 1958: <i>Peking Review</i> (now <i>Beijing Review</i>)
1966 -1976 (Cultural Revolution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao's narrative dominated all media outlets (<i>People's Daily</i> content copied verbatim by all other newspapers in the country) • News media system destabilised due to CCP infighting
After Mao's death (1976)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some media controls relaxed under Deng Xiaoping's leadership • <i>People's Daily</i> reformed (late 1970s/ early 1980s) by then editor-in-chief Hu Jiwei • English-language daily newspaper, <i>China Daily</i>, launched (1981)
Post-Tiananmen (1989)/ Jiang Zemin Era (1990s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media controls tightened immediately following Tiananmen but progressively relaxed in the 1990s with increasing commercialisation • Propaganda Industry Tax introduced (to subsidise non-commercially viable propaganda activities) • Introduction of Patriotic Education Campaign (1991) to boost domestic Party support and legitimacy through heightened nationalism • <i>China Daily</i> online version launched (1995) with <i>China Watch</i> supplements (Reports from China) launched in 1996 • <i>People's Daily</i> and <i>Xinhua</i> launched online (1997) • Under President Jiang Zemin, increased focus on foreign propaganda (particular emphasis on promoting China's economy and encouraging foreign investment and trade)
Early 2000's Hu Jintao Era (2002–2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on building 'soft power' (resulted in only limited improvement of China's relatively poor international image) • Growing influence of the Internet and its potential to encourage dissent led to heavier media regulations again • <i>CCTV International</i> launched with <i>CCTV 9</i> in 2000 aimed at English-speaking foreigners, followed by broadcasting in French and Spanish and an aim to become the Chinese equivalent of <i>CNN</i> – a global media presence with 24-hour news coverage. Received considerable state financial support but restricted editorial independence undermined its effectiveness (Brady, 2015a) • In preparation for the 17th National Party Congress in 2007, new restrictions placed on traditional and new media • Early 2009, Beijing announces US\$7.25 billion investment in main media outlets to strengthen international news coverage and global presence (as part of campaign, known as 'big propaganda') • 2009 <i>Xinhua</i> focus on increasing overseas offices; <i>CCTV International</i> began broadcasting in Arabic and Russian • <i>China Daily US</i> launched (2009) and <i>China Daily Europe</i> launched (2010) • <i>China Daily's China Watch</i> supplement launched online (2010) • 2010 <i>CCTV International</i> rebranded as <i>CCTV News</i>. • Expansionist media strategy widely regarded by Chinese mass communication experts as a failure - 'if foreign audiences know that a piece of information comes from an official Chinese media source, they are likely to interpret it as propaganda rather than news' (Brady, 2015a, p.54) • <i>CCTV America</i> launched (2012)
Post-2012 Xi Jinping Era	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2014 - increased govt spending on promotion of Chinese culture abroad • August 2014 - Xi launches new media-management strategy to create a new type of mainstream media that is 'powerful, influential, and credible' (Brady, 2015a, p.55) • Chinese foreign propaganda increased to new level of 'assertiveness, confidence, and ambition' (Brady, 2015a, p.55)

Time/ stage	Key features
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New themes dominate foreign propaganda, including to ‘tell a good Chinese story’ and the ‘Chinese Dream’, which highlight opportunities for economic cooperation, (emphasis on partnership and development) • Xi ramps up ‘efforts to influence foreign audiences’ (Brady, 2015a, p.55) • Shift in focus towards media expansion and foreign propaganda – funding to come from forming large media conglomerates and further commercialising media endeavours. Mergers and acquisitions seen as a key means for influencing foreign public opinion, and traditional and new media are ‘integrated into a multiplatform approach’ (Brady, 2015a, p.55) • Xi – media crackdown. Increased censorship of traditional and social media • <i>China Daily</i>, <i>Beijing Review</i>, <i>CCTV International</i>, <i>Xinhua</i>, and <i>China Radio International</i> continue to expand and increasingly employ foreign media professionals (while retaining editorial control) • 2016 - <i>CCTV International</i> rebrands to become <i>China Global Television Network (CGTN)</i> • 2018 – as part of major institutional reshuffle, China Media Group established (combining <i>China Central Television</i>, <i>China National Radio</i> and <i>China Radio International</i>)

1.2.2. Historiographical issues in the study of China’s state media

The history of CCP state media, as represented in Table 1, has led media scholars to categorise China’s media development into three key periods or phases: (1) 1949–1976 (establishment of the PRC to Mao’s death); (2) 1978–1989 (early reform/liberalisation until Tiananmen); and (3) 1989–current (post-Tiananmen/commercialisation/digitisation). Much of this analysis and interpretation has reflected the ability of Chinese and international scholars to access material within and outside of China, as well as the proliferation of scholarly and general publications that indicate sustained and increased domestic and international interest in media developments in China. The capacity of domestic (mainland Chinese) scholarly and general commentators to discuss and analyse their own state media is important to provide alternative perspectives and contribute to a greater depth to Chinese media analysis, with media studies in China, particularly regarding electronic media, having ‘increased dramatically’ in the first decade of the 21st century (Dong, 2011, p.3).

As Zhang (2014) notes, there is an abundance of studies of the Chinese state media. However, much of the scholarly emphasis is on the period following Tiananmen in 1989. As Yu (2011, p.67) observes, the post 1989-era was a ‘hotbed’ for research into the Chinese state media. This is partly because of the greater access scholars and commentators had to information about the Chinese state media. As a leading global researcher on CCP propaganda, Anne-Marie Brady (2015)¹⁴ recounts her early pre-Internet experiences researching state media as requiring hard-copy research in libraries, looking at mostly Chinese-language sources. Yu (2011, p.68) notes

¹⁴ Plus ça change: Propaganda and thought work in the Xi Jinping era (Brady), *USC US-China Institute*, YouTube, posted July 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf2pvH9Qxpo> (accessed 20 December, 2017).

that although early research relied on ‘content analysis and inference from published official media’, a ‘more open (Chinese) society, easier access to data and people... and new technologies’ has produced a more ‘nuanced’ scholarship of Chinese media since 1989. Chinese media studies have become ‘more sophisticated’ over the past thirty years, with closer academic consideration of Chinese media studies as a separate field, as opposed to just being included in ‘area studies’ and led by Western scholars and Chinese scholars trained in the West (Yu, 2011, pp.67–68). However, it is also important to note that increased academic interest in the Chinese media is commensurate with China’s rising global status and, in many ways, is similar to the dramatic increase in publications about other aspects of present-day China, including political, commercial, military and cultural topics.

The first phase of state media, from the establishment of the PRC in 1949 with Mao as leader until his death in 1976, has probably elicited the least academic research. This is because China was at its most politically restrictive. Western and Chinese-born foreign-based scholars conducted their analysis based on limited resources, mostly obtained outside China. Yu (2011, p.68) notes that much of this early media analysis of China, pursued outside China, adopted a ‘Cold War framework’ and was ‘infected with the Cold War ideology regarding communist China’, with Chinese mass media perceived largely as just an ideologically driven propaganda tool for ‘indoctrination, propaganda and persuasion’ and audiences regarded merely as ‘passive Mao-indoctrinated masses’.

Canada-based sociologist Yuezhi Zhao (2012) has argued that in the study of China’s state media it is important to focus on internal issues and developments, including the role of the media itself and impact of events on the media. This includes, as noted by Yu (2011, p.167), the Chinese media system being ‘deeply implicated’ in debates in the 1960s between different political blocs regarding a broad range of issues including class struggle, the ‘dynamics of history, the market economy and ... the nature of Chinese society and the status of world revolution’.

The reform era and the ‘Open Door Policy’ ushered in by Deng Xiaoping after 1978 also saw a period of propaganda modernisation. As noted by Brady (2002, p.572), the ‘modernization of the Chinese propaganda system in recent years can be traced back to the early days of the post-Mao reform period ... Propaganda cadres in the early 1980s were advised to absorb techniques from the West and ... cast off the dated methods of the past’. For example, the *People’s Daily*, led by then editor-in-chief Hu Jiwei, expanded paper size and coverage, sought to modify the rigid writing style, encouraged public criticism through letters to the editor and called for a media law regarding the rights of journalists (Chu, 1994). However, this period of reform in

some areas of the Chinese state media was ‘explicitly negated’ (Brady, 2009b, p.438) by the new leadership following 4 June 1989, especially given the active role played by many media workers (journalists and editors) in the democracy movement.

Extensive scholarly focus (Brady and Wang, 2009; Shirk, 2007) highlights the impact Tiananmen had on propaganda and state media, with heightened CCP concern over social stability, but importantly many scholars have noted the CCP leadership’s view that ‘government by force cannot guarantee social stability’ (Shanxi Development Guide cited in Brady, 2011, p.188). As Zhao (2012) observes, Tiananmen temporarily ended political debates, but by 1991–92 tensions between the CCP’s socialist claims and its capitalist-oriented economic reform policies had intensified and the Chinese state media were actually caught up in an intra-elite debate with conflicting Party priorities for media content. As noted by Yu (2011, pp.68–69), several publications on Chinese media were created in the 1990s to ‘capture the tides and waves of the massive and messy media reforms’ in China. These included Yuezhi Zhao’s (1998) ‘pioneering research’ (Yu, 2011, p.68) looking at the tensions between media marketisation and political control. This new wave of research for the first time revealed a diversity of audience interpretations and complexity of relationships between official media institutions and producers with local, regional and global influences (Yu, 2011). Research focused on the post-1989 phase has mostly looked at four aspects of state media: (1) commercialisation; (2) digitisation; (3) westernisation; and (4) globalisation.

In the 1990s, research predominantly focused on changes then underway in the state media, including the greater commercialisation of Chinese media that ‘accelerated in the early 1990s’ (Zhao, 2000, p.6). Cost-saving measures were introduced by the CCP that, for the first time, surrendered a degree of information control to publishers and allowed media, including Internet providers, to compete in the marketplace to sell advertisements and ‘attract audiences by feeding the public’s hunger for timely, accurate and lively news’ (Shirk, 2007, p.81). However, in 1992 a ‘Propaganda Industry Tax’ of three per cent was also introduced in order to subsidise non-commercially viable propaganda activities (Brady, 2015a, p.52) deemed critical by the CCP to achieving propaganda objectives.

The 2000s, according to Huang (2007, p.405) started a transition of media regulation in China from a rigid, totalitarian, state control mode to a state–media–market–society negotiation model. In particular, the traditional high-handed media regulation policy had been facing a growing legitimacy crisis, resistance and challenges from liberal-minded media and journalists, and pressure from both internal and external critics. This ‘negotiation’ involved a bargaining

process with differing groups and viewpoints considering new conditions and social, political and media (including new media) forces at play.

The rise of social media in China from the mid-2000s created another wave of interest from scholars and non-academic media and political commentators. This followed a realisation, as noted by Kluver and Qiu (2003, p.26), that despite expectations, ‘the Internet had not dramatically increased the process of democratic political activity’ in China. In 2000, then-U.S. President Bill Clinton famously compared the Chinese government’s efforts to regulate the Internet and restrain online speech as akin to trying to ‘nail jello to the wall’, suggesting it would not be possible (Laskai, 2017, p.194). In 2009, the CCP introduced new censorship software, referred to by many – and particularly, Western – commentators as ‘The Great Firewall of China’ (GFW), after leading sinologist Geremie Barmé coined the phrase in 1997 (Barmé and Ye, 1997).

The GFW is a combination of legislative actions and technologies enforced by the CCP to regulate domestic Internet use. Regulation includes blocking access to selected foreign websites, slowing cross-border Internet traffic, blocking foreign Internet tools (such as Facebook and Google) and mobile apps, and requiring foreign companies to compromise on traditional ‘free expression’ models to conform with domestic regulations in exchange for market access.¹⁵ Furthermore, part of the impact of the CCP reducing the effectiveness of products from foreign Internet companies, was enabling the significant development of China’s internal Internet economy, which was easier for the CCP to monitor, control and censor.

Over the past decade, many Western scholars and media commentators have focused considerable attention on increased CCP media controls in the digital age, as well as the evolution in censorship, including greater ‘self-censorship’. As Davies (2013, p.133) notes, ‘as people learn how to scale the Great Firewall, state censors developed newer and more sophisticated ways to stymie them’. As the technological capacity of the CCP has increased, along with a crackdown on the media more broadly since Xi’s term began in 2013, self-censorship has also increased, and in more sophisticated ways. As Roberts (2018, p.94) observes, ‘the Chinese government’s information control has evolved since the Mao era’. This includes a shift from unequivocal Party direction on media content during the Mao era, to the development of ‘laws and technology that allowed it [the Party] more control over information online’ (ibid, p.104) after the introduction of the Internet in the early 1990s, to now even more sophisticated ways

¹⁵ To reach China, LinkedIn plays by local rules, *The New York Times*, 5 October, 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/technology/to-reach-china-linkedin-plays-by-local-rules.html?mcubz=0>, (accessed 29 August 2017).

of controlling and guiding content and information access. For example, as referred to above, the creation of Chinese alternatives to blocked Western media platforms, such as Weibo 微博 (Twitter); Youku 优酷 (YouTube); RenRen 人人 (Facebook); Baidu 百度 ; and WeChat/Weixin 微信 (WhatsApp with additional features such as online shopping and gaming), that enable the CCP to ‘restrict the space’ and have greater control of content (Rawnsley, 2016).¹⁶

Scholarship has also examined state reprisals for transgressions that have ranged from warnings to publication licences being revoked, to prison terms (Xu and Albert, 2017). With regards to online media, as Davies notes (2013, p.133), the ‘lack of transparency in which the state operates and the severity of punishments meted out by the legal system ensure that most website owners err on the side of caution’.

There has also been a focus on the role of CCP-directed initiatives and ‘netizen’ (Chinese Internet citizens) responses to these. In August 2013, at the National Propaganda and Thought Work Conference, Xi ‘apparently urged the Party to be “combative” online and “wage a war to win over public opinion” by forming a “strong internet army to seize the ground of new media”’ (Ma and Thomas, 2018, paragraph 11). Even prior to this though, as Davies notes (2013, p.134), an ‘army of commentators had been hired to post online comments in support of CCP positions on ‘any given issue, or to provide disinformation’. These commentators became derided as the ‘Fifty-cent Gang’ (五毛党) based on a widely held belief that they are paid fifty Chinese cents per comment or post’ (ibid.). In contrast to CCP-directed online activity, the new Internet environment also contributed to the emergence of citizen journalism in the mid-late 2000s, contributing to a greater diversity of opinion and sources of public information, albeit tightly monitored, in particular after Xi Jinping took power in 2013 and censorship was tightened.

Over the past few years, the research focus on censorship and narrative control has been coupled with an increased academic interest in the growing presence of Chinese state media in a more competitive ‘marketplace of ideas’ (Brady and Wang, 2009, p.787). This occurred, in particular, following China’s ‘going global’ media policy, initiated after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, with scholars acknowledging the ‘tectonic shifts in China’s underlying media landscape’ (Hassid and Sun, 2015, p.8).

¹⁶ Media and power: The Chinese way with Gary Rawnsley (Rawnsley), *Legatum Institute*, *YouTube*, posted January 25, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHuAuqT1R1g> (accessed December 21, 2019).

Another important focus of Chinese media studies by Western scholars is ‘stability maintenance’ (Hassid and Sun, 2015, p.9; Shirk, 2007, p.7), as this is arguably the most enduring theme in understanding political communication in China since the 2000s. Scholars have generally agreed that the threat of instability continues to drive the CCP’s media control (Hassid and Sun, 2015). Scholarly approaches to analysing state control and censorship of Chinese media have, according to Yu (2011, p.69), ranged from the ‘optimistic’, focusing on marketisation and globalisation, to the ‘pessimistic’, which focuses on control and censorship. However, despite Yu’s description of some research as ‘pessimistic’, this thesis also acknowledges the CCP’s effectiveness in censorship evolution and progression, with Brady’s (2009b, p.434) reference to ‘popular authoritarianism’ acknowledging a more flexible and adaptive state media approach, and Bandurski (2016) referring to the CCP’s ‘control 2.0’ followed by ‘control 3.0’. Hassid and Sun (2015, p.9) describe the CCP’s media management strategy as increasingly proactive and involving ‘active manipulation of media and cultural messages’ to ensure that the CCP ‘stays ahead of and helps shape brewing storms’.

1.2.3. The 2008 Beijing Olympics and Chinese state media ambitions

From a historiographical perspective, the Beijing Olympics in 2008 was a key event. The year was also in many ways a pivotal year for the People’s Republic, in which the world’s attention was focused on China. It was also a turning point in the internationalisation of the CCP’s state media and is, therefore, the reason for my focus on China’s global media outreach from 2008 onwards (to be discussed in later chapters). As noted by Gao, Ingram and Kee (2017, p.1), events in 2008 ‘prompted a major rethink by Chinese leaders and advisers on diplomacy and approach to global media’. These events included protests in Tibet in March, the controversy surrounding the Olympic Torch Relay (especially in April), the Sichuan earthquake in May and the Beijing Olympics in August, which also provided rich analytical content both for Western academics and commentators and for Chinese scholars. Regarding the Sichuan Earthquake, as reported in several international media outlets, including *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*,¹⁷ for the first time, state media and even foreign media were able to report from and have access to the disaster site, rather than relying exclusively on controlled content from *Xinhua*. The Olympics also saw an increased surge of media analysis, with a particular focus on national image projection and branding. Canada-based political scientist Hongying Wang was among the first to focus on the CCP’s external image projection, highlighted in her seminal

¹⁷ Congressional-Executive Commission on China, China’s earthquake coverage more open but not uncensored, July 30, 2008, <https://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/chinas-earthquake-coverage-more-open-but-not-uncensored> (accessed December 20, 2019).

work in 2003 examining longstanding image projection efforts by the CCP from the early 1950s (to be discussed in more detail later).

Until the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, there had been very little focus on this concept of Chinese image projection and ‘branding’ by the CCP. But, like the global attention received by any Olympic city – and, in particular, with China hosting its first games – there was heightened domestic and foreign scholarly and media commentary on ‘branding’ concepts in the lead-up to, during and following the games. For example, *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China* (edited by Price and Dayan, 2008), published just before the Olympics and featuring articles from mostly Western scholars, analysed a range of topics in the Olympic context, including public diplomacy and soft power; Asian national identity; journalism; television broadcasting; new technologies and new narratives; and citizen journalism. The Beijing Olympics logo and slogan, ‘One World, One Dream’ (Figure 3), was an object of rich analysis in this and other publications. The slogan ‘One World, One Dream’ as reported in the *China Daily* in 2007,¹⁸ was officially defined as expressing the ‘firm belief of a great nation, with a long history of 5,000 years and on its way towards modernization, that is committed to peaceful development, harmonious society and people’s happiness. It voices the aspirations of 1.3 billion Chinese people to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful and bright world’.



Figure 3: 2008 Beijing Olympics logo and slogan.¹⁹

As well as being regarded by some as China’s ‘coming out’ party, the 2008 Beijing Olympics also signified the start of a shift in China’s international public relations efforts. Findlay (cited in Sun, 2010a, p.58) observed that a post-Olympics China was seen to ‘have graduated into the status of “world power” and, in addition to that, had re-asserted its deep commitments to a

¹⁸ Slogan for Beijing Olympics, *China Daily*, July 31, 2007, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/olympics/2007-07/31/content_6005028.htm (accessed September 4, 2017).

¹⁹ Ibid.

vision of a return to national glory'. Significant scholarly attention now turned to the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the post-2008 evolution in Chinese state media, with a particular emphasis on two aspects: (1) the considerable CCP investment in growing the presence of state media abroad, and (2) the CCP rationale of wanting to address perceived Western media bias. Extensive research by both Western and Chinese scholars has also focused on the evolution of the Chinese state media to shift from a traditional propaganda model to an integrated one. This has occurred in parallel with Chinese scholars, in particular, arguing that there was Western media bias against China and defending the need for the Chinese government to create an alternative global viewpoint on China by creating rivals to the likes of the *BBC* and *CNN* (Hu and Ji, 2012)²⁰ to, according to the CCP, 'counterbalance distorted representation of China in the West' (Li and Sligo, 2012, p.125).

According to Sun (2010b, p.126), China's party-state no longer sought 'more sympathetic' representation by the Western media and instead had moved its propaganda offshore in the 21st century, aiming to break the Western monopoly of the global media landscape. The perception of Western media bias and the CCP's response have developed even further under Xi Jinping. As noted by Varrall (2017, paragraph 11) in the *Financial Times*,²¹ there has been a 'distinct toughening' in China's soft power focus, with an emphasis shift from 'reassuring others that China's rise will be peaceful' to a more forceful approach: 'there is still a sense that reassuring others is important, but there is also a sense that China must dictate how it's perceived'.

Examining other aspects of this evolution in the state media itself, but also in scholarly analysis, Zhao (2008, p.11, cited in Sun 2010a, p.57) poses the question: 'If communication in China should be treated "not only as a key dimension of Chinese politics, but also as an increasingly important sector of the Chinese economy"', how do we also understand the relationship between political power, economic power and symbolic power, with the latter referring to the ability to communicate across different symbolic universes, now rendered urgent and paramount by the Chinese authorities' mission to "go global"'.

Regarding this analysis, there are also some differences in research focus between mainland China-based scholarship and international scholarship outside China. China-based research often echoes the CCP's focus on the need for Chinese media's expansion to explain the importance of China's impact on globalisation (Zhang, 2014). As Zhang notes (2014, p.1),

²⁰ China's rise and global communication: Problems and prospects [blog post], *Pro. Hu Zhengrong's Blog*, 29 June, 2009 (Hu and Ji), <http://www.huzhengrong.net/chinas-rise-and-global-communication-problems-and-prospects/> (accessed May 3, 2013).

²¹ Inside China's secret 'magic weapon' for worldwide influence, *Financial Times*, 26 October, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/fb2b3934-b004-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4> (accessed 18 June 2018).

‘Chinese media discourse is different from that of the West owing to its unique social system and political economy’. This emphasis on ‘different and unique’ is a key tenet of Chinese scholars when discussing the Chinese state media. Conversely, Chinese media studies outside China regards aspects of state control and censorship as integral to the CCP’s media system, issues that are elided in mainland Chinese scholarship.

According to Yu (2011, p.68), perspectives of Chinese media by Western scholars and Chinese scholars trained in the West, are now ‘more balanced’, with greater consideration of how state media is a key part of the CCP’s efforts to adapt domestically and internationally to globalisation and changing geopolitical conditions. Yu (2011, p.68) observes, ‘the openness and diversity of Chinese media research now contrasts with, and yet develops from, the legacy of past decades, when the Cold War ideology and barriers defined and confined scholarship on China’. However, as Hearn-Branaman (2015, p.9) notes, ‘trying to paint an accurate picture of the media system in the PRC is quite difficult ... [as] the system is quite unstable and constantly evolving’.

1.3. China’s propaganda structure

Propaganda work is instrumental to the Chinese political system. The Central Propaganda Department 中宣部 (CPD) was established in 1924, just three years after the CCP itself was founded, and is overseen by a Politburo Standing Committee member, who heads the Central Leading Small Group on Propaganda and Thought Work. The system is responsible for all CCP publicity and for supervising all information domains in China and, where possible, overseas (Ma and Thomas, 2018). As an official organ of the CCP, the CPD (which changed its English name in 1998 from ‘Propaganda Department’ to the more Westernised ‘Publicity Department’) aims to ensure media and cultural content follow the official party line. Directives are enforced through local offices at the provincial, municipal and county level. The CCP Central Committee Foreign Propaganda Group (consisting of senior cadres and leaders of China’s foreign-aimed media outlets) sets China’s foreign propaganda agenda. The CCP Central Office of Foreign Propaganda (OFP), also known as the State Council Information Office (SCIO), oversees external propaganda (Figure 4), guiding the foreign propaganda activities of the multiple government offices whose portfolios touch on foreign matters. The OFP-SCIO is also responsible for ‘clarifying and refuting’ (Brady, 2015a, p.52) stories forbidden from being covered in China but which have been reported on in foreign media. The SCIO’s Fifth Office (better known as the State Council Internet Information Office) is in charge of policing the Chinese Internet and manages the Internet Affairs Bureau, which is also

responsible for oversight of all websites that publish news. The Bureau sends out specific instructions to all large news websites daily, often multiple times per day. These instructions range from interdictions against coverage of certain events, to restrictions on sources and requirements to guide public opinion (Henochowicz, 2012).

Media content is also controlled through formal, although at times opaque, regulation. Regulatory agencies, sitting within the State Council, the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) and the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), set strict regulations on subjects considered sensitive by the government. In March 2013, the State Council announced plans to merge these two regulatory agencies to form the General Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film, and Television.

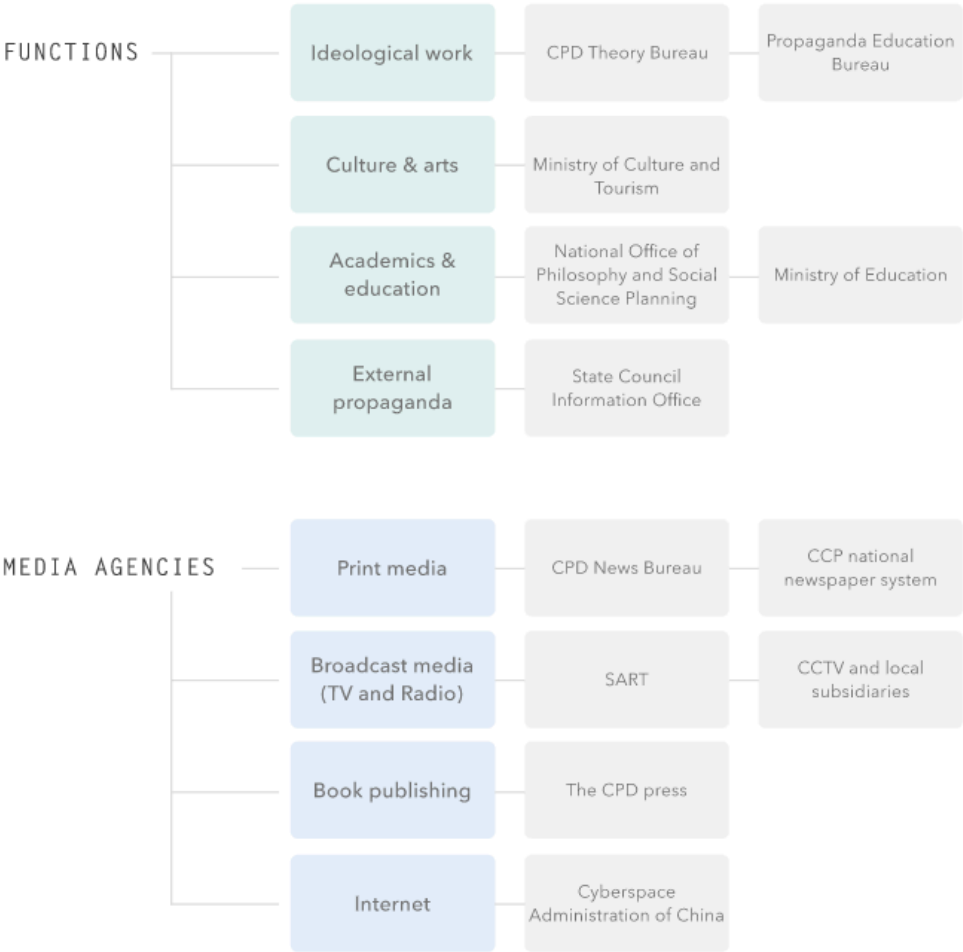


Figure 4: Snapshot of Central Propaganda Department ecosystem (Source: Ma and Thomas, 2018).

Also, important to note is the structural evolution in terms of the control and administration of ‘propaganda’, which, in 2018, was part of a broader CCP merging and restructuring of government ministries. Among other changes, the reach and influence of the CPD, under Xi’s direct oversight, was increased with the assumption of direct control of film, news media and

publications, and the consolidation of domestic and international state media into a new outlet called the ‘Voice of China’.²²

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I will examine in more detail the existing literature regarding the CCP’s global communications. This will be followed by: the articulation of a theoretical framework and methodology (Chapter 3); details of sub-narratives supporting the ‘China story’ (Chapter 4); the findings chapters (Chapters 5 to 8); and my conclusions (Chapter 9).

²² China gives Communist Party more control over policy and media, *The New York Times*, March 22, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-jinping.html> (accessed September 14, 2018).

Chapter 2. Socio-economic Change in China and Chinese State Media: A Survey and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

As the previous section indicates, research regarding China's state media has increasingly diversified and expanded since 1978. This thesis examines the range of existing literature from scholars writing on the Chinese media, including the scholarly focus on the 'going global' of the Chinese state media. To make sense of this literature – in particular, Chinese state media content (and what I will refer to as the CCP's global 'key messaging') – I have relied mainly on two theoretical arguments, the Political Economy of Communication (Mosco, 2009) and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model (1988), to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. An important consideration for the literature review of this topic is looking at the existing research on China's global communications, within the context of the various forces, domestic and global, that have shaped these communications.

2.2. Key themes

Much of the literature explores motivation. In particular, the CCP's increased emphasis on a desire to influence global opinion, especially in the context of China's negative image as an authoritarian state, regarded as posing a threat to China's aspirations to greater global influence (Edney 2014; Ni, 2008; Ramo, 2007). To address these challenges to a good image, the CCP is proactively investing in its 'go global' campaign (Zhang, 2010), which includes a range of public diplomacy initiatives aimed at image enhancement. Public diplomacy tools used by the CCP include cultural exchanges; the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world (which, among other things, host language classes and cultural events); and an expansion of global media assets. Studies by two CCP propaganda experts, Brady (2015a) and Edney (2014) note that the considerable analysis of China's rising 'hard power', defined as 'the use of military and economic means to influence the behaviour of other political bodies' (Copeland in Davies, 2018, paragraph seven),²³ is now being matched by increased analytical focus on the CCP's soft power strategy, which incorporates the global expansion of Chinese state media assets and

²³ Hard power, soft power: Sustaining British influence in a changing global environment, *UK Defence Journal* (Davies), July 18, 2018, <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/hard-power-soft-power-sustaining-british-influence-in-a-changing-global-environment/> (accessed January 9, 2020).

messaging reach. This expansion is happening in a time of dynamic change in the domestic and international economic, political, media and social environment, which includes: (1) China's rising economic status; (2) greater domestic commercialisation and a loosening of state control in the private business sector, media and cultural enterprises; and (3) globalisation – defined as the 'process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture' (Dwyer, 2015, p.326).

As the extant research literature on the CCP's state media is mostly focused on their rapid development under the impact of significant economic and socio-cultural changes in China, I will accordingly examine this literature under four key themes:

1. Domestic politics (e.g. party legitimacy, control and censorship).
2. Economic objectives and commercialisation (e.g. economic imperatives and considerations).
3. Globalisation (e.g. changing global media landscape).
4. Conflicting and emerging domestic social forces (e.g. emerging social changes in China, such as increased wealth and greater public access to information online).

2.2.1. Domestic politics

Several authors (Hu and Ji, 2012; Brady, 2009a; Brady and Wang, 2009; Li and Sligo, 2012) argue that the motivation behind the CCP's global communications expansion is a desire to enhance its soft power, influence global outcomes and challenge the Western media and political model. Although, as most researchers acknowledge (Li, 2008; Clarke, 2016), it is domestic politics, in particular, stability and the domestic audience, that remain the CCP's primary concern and motivation. According to Brady (2009b), the desire for domestic stability, and the perception of legitimate rule as the key to political stability, underpins everything done by the CCP, including foreign policy implementation, which has tended to be primarily about domestic self-protection (Lampton, 2011). Within this context, the literature identifies three primary drivers behind the use and framing of the CCP's communications content:

1. Party **ideology** and positioning
2. Party **fear** of domestic instability and loss of legitimacy
3. The need for the Party to maintain **historical**, narrative and ideological consistency with CCP founding and trans-administration narratives (i.e. between CCP leaders).

The authoritarian nature of the CCP's one-party rule is accompanied by the need for information control. In the globalised digital age, this has evolved to focus not just on what is

being disseminated by the CCP, but also, as highlighted by Edney (2014), efforts to contain potentially threatening counter-narratives and alternate viewpoints abroad. Academics and commentators are increasingly seeing evidence of a more holistic approach by the CCP to influence outcomes and narratives (Figure 5) across a range of industries and sectors, including business, political, academic and cultural. In particular, there has been an academic focus on state media activity that supports the ‘united front’. This term refers in the first instance, to the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the CCP (中共中央统一战线工作部), which manages relations with various important and influential individuals and organisations inside and outside China; this involves overseas influence activities, including attempts to influence foreign government policies abroad vis-à-vis China.



Figure 5: CCP holistic approach to global influence (Source: Kalathil, 2017).

As stated by Groot (2015, p.130), United Front activities involve a broad spectrum of ‘key non-party groups’ within and outside China – including, but not limited to, students, business people, local community leaders, Chinese-language community media and influential foreign nationals – strategically targeted by the CCP either directly or indirectly. This ‘United Front’ work has

increasingly been the subject of research and media commentary, in countries such as Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Canada. Moreover, there is increasing scrutiny of universities in Western countries that host Confucius Institutes, how these Institutes advance the CCP's cultural agenda and their potential impact on host institution autonomy and academic freedom (Bowe, 2018). Academics and journalists outside China have also noted increasing evidence of China's 'political influence seeking in Europe' (Benner et al., 2018, p.2), the U.S., Canada and Australia.²⁴

2.2.1.1. Ideology

Given the importance the CCP has consistently placed on ideological training, it makes sense to identify ideology as the first key driver of CCP communications, in particular, messaging. As an extension of its domestic propaganda, the CCP's global communications are increasingly focused on shaping the viewpoints of readers outside China: the aim is to secure greater familiarity and acceptance abroad of the official Chinese perspective on a wide-range of issues (Edney, 2014). Despite some Western commentary that the CCP lacks a coherent ideology, ideology was and has remained a core tenet of the CCP's narrative of its political legitimacy, and the Party leadership has placed considerable effort on improving its party schools – an extensive school network for training party cadres as well as some military and business people (Shambaugh, 2008) – and on 'crafting its ideological message' (Brown, 2012, p.52).

Increased emphasis on strengthening Party ideology has been a feature of the CCP's rule in the 2000s and particularly under Xi since 2013. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, which the CCP attributed in part to the Soviet leadership's failure to maintain and develop its ideology, is a key reason for this effort. As highlighted by Ma and Thomas (2018, paragraph 38), in 2013, Xi commented on the Soviet collapse saying:

A major reason was intense struggles in the ideological sphere, which comprehensively negated the history of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party ... rendered useless Party organizations at every level, and caused the military to no longer be under Party leadership ... a socialist country as big as the Soviet Union collapsed and fell apart – we must learn from the mistakes of our predecessors.

In order to understand the importance of ideology to the CCP and its impact on the Chinese state media's internal and external communications and messaging, I will now present a brief, non-exhaustive overview of the CCP's ideological evolution, focusing, in particular, on the

²⁴ China's 'brazen' and 'aggressive' political interference outlined in top-secret report. *ABC News*, 29 May, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-29/chinas-been-interfering-in-australian-politics-for-past-decade/9810236> (accessed 15 November 2019).

shifts in interpretation under CCP leaders and how this manifested in their signature platforms and policies.

Marxism-Leninism

Marxism-Leninism was the first official ideology of the CCP, with Marxism supplying the theory behind party building, Leninism developing it in practice and Mao Zedong Thought being Marxism-Leninism applied and developed in China. More recently, the CCP's governance, as observed by Brown (2012, p.52), has been described as a 'system now guided by pragmatism' although, also one that, according to the way party leaders frame the world, 'does seem to be an ideology'. As a one-party state, constantly working to maintain its legitimacy and managing historical linkages in light of past events, current realities and future needs, the 21st century CCP under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping has adapted Party ideology to try and maintain consistency with the Party's historical past while, at the same time, explaining significant changes.

The evolution of the ideological narrative has been underpinned by the Party leadership's shifting interpretation of socialism. This has included what constitutes the different stages of socialism, and how the CCP defines China as being only in the primary stage of socialism, which enables the CCP to present an ideological explanation as to why 'market' (the Party avoids using the term 'capitalist') practices are permitted in China. These varying interpretations and justifications, in particular since Mao's death in 1976, have included a series of ideological additions associated with each subsequent party leader and their administrations, often contested internally, to explain changes to and contradictions regarding the ideological narrative, while trying to maintain a semblance of logic and consistency. As observed by Hu Jintao (cited in Brown, 2012, p.59): 'From first to last, the Party knows that its central task during different historic periods is to deal with these contradictions'.



Figure 6: Long Live Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought (Source: Gan, 2018).²⁵

Throughout the 20th century, party ideology served two functions: first, to achieve the modernisation of China and, second, to create unity where there was fragmentation (Brown,

²⁵ A new class struggle: Chinese party members get back to Communist Manifesto Basics (Gan), *South China Morning Post*, April, 29, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/print/news/china/policies-politics/article/2143841/new-class-struggle-chinese-party-members-get-back> (accessed 4 September 2018).

2012). As stated by Jie Li in Brown (2012, p.54), the post-1949 era under Mao was linked with the idea of an ‘alternative modernity that transcended capitalist modernity and its Eurocentric assumptions of historical teleology and economic determinism’. The impact of this was in two key areas: the creation of the party state and Mao’s emphasis on class struggle in Chinese society, which included the introduction of Marxist terms to denote class, such as proletariat, bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie and capitalist. However, Mao’s vision of modernity never ‘enjoyed entire hegemony’ within the Party and was contested even at the height of Mao’s power, with an example of this contestation being Zhou Enlai’s launch of the Four Modernizations in 1965 and again in 1975 (Brown, 2012, p.55). Eventually, following Mao’s death, the Four Modernizations and ‘measured’ economic objectives replaced class struggle (ibid.), with this new vision eventually leading to the development of a private market economy and the establishment of new institutions, justified by Deng Xiaoping as ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. These shifts away from Mao’s revolutionary ideology further developed with each new leader, starting with Deng in 1978.

Deng Xiaoping

Deng has been credited as being the ‘father of reform’ in China, leading a series of ‘groundbreaking reforms’ focused on the economy that balanced opening up some areas with maintaining control over others (Brown, 2014, paragraph four). Some argue that Deng’s reforms were a rejection of Marxism partly because, among other things, they de-emphasised class struggle (Brown, 2012, p.55), which Mao and Marx considered the ‘main force’ of the communist movement. The CCP that Deng led explained this shift as necessary, claiming that class struggle had been achieved in 1976 (after Mao’s death and the end of the Cultural Revolution). Following Mao’s death, the Party sought to explain this shift in approach by talking about a contextual integration between ‘the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the concrete practice of socialist modernization and developed under new historical conditions’.²⁶

Previously, the CCP had declared that supporting capitalism meant supporting an ‘historical retreat’, and that capitalism was considered the diametrical opposite of socialism, and the relationship between capitalism and socialism was ‘hostile and incompatible’ (Sun, 1995, p.206). However, by referring to ‘economic’ or market’ reforms and the need for China to ‘modernize’, the Party leadership was able to avoid contradicting its own ideological position.

²⁶ Communiqué of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, *Beijing Review*, October 23, 2013, http://www.bjreview.com/special/2013-10/23/content_575162.htm (accessed August 21, 2018).

It was in a political report to the 13th National Congress in 1987 that ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ (中国特色社会主义) was added to the general program of the party’s constitution. General Secretary Zhao claimed that socialism with Chinese characteristics was ‘the integration of the fundamental tenets of Marxism with the modernization drive in China’ and was ‘scientific socialism rooted in the realities of present-day China’ (Chan 2003, pp.187–88). In 1987, the *Beijing Review* declared that the achievements of socialism were ‘evaluated according to the level of the productive forces’ (Chan, 2003, p.178).

At the 14th CCP National Congress in 1992, Deng’s views were officially elevated to Deng Xiaoping Theory (Vogel, 2011, pp.684-85) and ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ became the guiding motto of the CCP with newly appointed CCP General Secretary and President Jiang Zemin at the congress reiterating support for Deng’s famous mantra: ‘It doesn’t matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice’²⁷ (不管黑猫白猫 抓住老鼠就是好猫) (Figure 7). Although Deng reportedly used the phrase before the Cultural Revolution in references to revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries, it became associated with his economic reforms after 1978 and was interpreted as meaning that it was unnecessary to now ask if something was ‘socialist’ or ‘capitalist’, but rather whether it worked or not. As a *China Daily* opinion piece by a foreign resident of Beijing observed in 2018 (the 40th anniversary of Deng launching China’s economic reforms) in the case of the economy ‘as long as the economy works, it’s a good economy’.²⁸

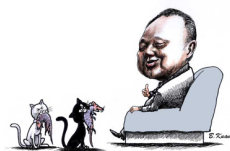


Figure 7: Black or white, as long as it catches mice: cartoon B. Kuang (reproduced in Bottelier, 2017).

In this time of major transition for the Party, another significant contribution from Deng’s leadership was his international strategic thinking. In particular, during a period of political vulnerability that included the ‘Tiananmen tragedy and ... the collapse of the Soviet Union’ (Vogel, 2011, p.658), his ideas for China to ‘hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile’ as well as to ‘get

²⁷ Black cat, white cat..., *China Daily*, August 2, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201808/02/WS5b728ae4a310add14f385b4a.html> (accessed September 16, 2019).

²⁸ Ibid.

some things done' (Kuhn, 2011; Vogel, 2011; and Rozman 2011), became key features of China's development and approach to diplomacy and foreign relations.

Jiang Zemin

Jiang highlighted the importance of party ideological origins by claiming that the CCP 'must never discard Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought' and that 'if we did, we would lose our foundation' (Kuhn, 2011, p.96). However, at the same time he noted that Marxism, 'like any science, needs to change as time and circumstances advance' (ibid.). In 2000, in the context of 'new historical conditions', Jiang first introduced his guiding socio-political theory and ideological contribution, the 'Three Represents' (三个代表) stipulating that the CCP should 'always represent the requirements of the development of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China'.²⁹

The Three Represents was criticised within the Party for departing from the CCP's foundational mission. CCP theorists such as Leng Rong defended this ideological shift by claiming that 'President Jiang rid the Party of the ideological obstacles to different kinds of ownership ... He did not give up Marxism or socialism [and] ... He strengthened the Party by providing a modern understanding of Marxism and socialism' (Kuhn, 2011, p.97). The theory was most noted for permitting wealthy individuals (presented not as 'capitalists' but as 'advanced productive forces') to join the Party 'under certain conditions' and for stating that most people in the private sector were engaged in 'honest labor and work' (Kuhn, 2011, p.108) and were able to contribute to building 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. However, like many of the additions and adjustments to CCP ideology, it was a cause for internal controversy, with this shift, regarded as a 'stunning blow to Party conservatives' (Kuhn, 2011, p.108).

The term 'civilisation' (文明) also became a key concept during the 1990s, with ideological campaigns trying to harmonise the relationship between the CCP's two civilisations – material (economic development) and spiritual (socialist spiritual civilisation) – with the focus being placed on achieving China's 'balanced development' under CCP rule. Under Deng, the emphasis had been on the material, but under Jiang, shifted to encompass the spiritual. Spiritual civilization was the term the CCP under Jiang used to promote a form of 'cultural nationalism' (Dynon, 2008, p.85). In 2002, at the 16th National Congress, Jiang introduced a third concept of civilisation, 'political civilisation', to address the need for political reform, along with the

²⁹ Jiang Zemin's speech at the meeting celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, *China.org*, July 1, 2001, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-speech/a.htm> (accessed December 20, 2018).

‘Important Thoughts of the Three Represents’. According to Kuhn (2011, p.115), the idea was ‘three interrelated objectives – material civilization, spiritual civilization, and political civilization – and one unifying mechanism, the Three Represents’.

Hu Jintao

In 2003, Hu introduced the ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’ (科学发展观), formulated as a guiding socio-economic principle of the CCP. It later became institutionalised as Hu’s major contribution to Party ideology. This concept incorporated scientific socialism; sustainable development; social welfare; a humanistic society; increased democracy; and the eventual creation of a ‘Socialist Harmonious Society’ (和谐社会). Two key themes were featured: ‘putting people first’ and making development ‘comprehensive, balanced and sustainable’.³⁰ This was regarded as a response to increasing corruption and inequality and the perception of social injustice due to inconsistent economic growth across Chinese society, which had led to significant social tensions in the 1990s and early 2000s. Under Hu, the governing philosophy had again shifted, this time from economic growth to overall societal balance and harmony, but still with a longer-term Party focus on building a ‘moderately, well-off society’ (Wang, 2014, p.7). However, to maintain the perception of a consistent Party ideology, the concept was regarded as a sub-ideology of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. According to Hu in his report at the 17th National Congress in October 2007, the successful combination of Party theories and concepts helped attain a ‘new realm in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions’.³¹

In 2006, Hu expressed the need for the CCP to develop a socialist core value system.³² Like all major ideological additions, this was an attempt to craft the Party’s ‘biography’ as a continuous development – one that would enable the CCP to present itself as always building on its past rather than diverging from it. In Hu Jintao’s report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007, he committed the Party to ...

build up the system of socialist core values and make socialist ideology more attractive and cohesive ... consolidate the guiding position of Marxism ... educate the people in the latest achievements in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions ... rally the people with our common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics ... [and also to] foster a culture of harmony.³³

³⁰ Hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics and strive for new victories in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, *Beijing Review*, November 20, 2007, http://www.bjreview.com.cn/document/txt/2007-11/20/content_86325.htm (accessed August 11, 2017).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Communist Party orders ‘core socialist values’ on the curriculum, *South China Morning Post*, December, 24, 2013, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1389382/communist-party-orders-core-socialist-values-curriculum> (accessed November 22, 2018).

³³ Hu Jintao’s report at the 17th Party Congress, *China Daily*, October 25, 2007, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/25/content_6225092_7.htm (accessed August 11, 2017).

Hu's concept of 'harmony' was also importantly extended to include the idea of a 'harmonious world', which Hu introduced at a United Nations Summit in September 2005, in a speech entitled 'Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity'.³⁴ The speech, with six references to 'harmonious', focused on the themes of 'common prosperity' and 'peaceful co-existence'. This theme of 'harmony' will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. Officially, this contribution of 'harmony', in particular 'socialist harmonious society' as part of the Scientific Development concept, was regarded as a 'successor and extension ideology' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 229) to Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and Jiang Zemin's Three Represents.

Xi Jinping

Xi's approach as Party leader has involved a strong 'renewed emphasis' on ideology. As noted earlier, Xi has attributed the collapse of the Soviet Union to ideological disunity (Brady, 2016). Under Xi, the CCP's latest administrative evolution in ideology has now culminated in 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era', which was enshrined in the Party's Constitution at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017 as Xi Jinping Thought.³⁵ Having his doctrine and name together in the constitution has elevated his status above his two predecessors, Jiang and Hu (who have their doctrines in the constitution but without name attribution), and places Xi at the same level as Mao and Deng.³⁶



Figure 8: Leaders of the PRC (Source: Chinasage).³⁷

³⁴ Statement by H.E. Hu Jintao President of the People's Republic of China at the United Nations Summit, UN webcast, September 15, 2005, <https://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements15/china050915eng.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2020).

³⁵ CPC creates Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, *Xinhua*, October 19, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/19/c_136689808.htm (accessed January 9, 2019).

³⁶ China enshrines 'Xi Jinping Thought', elevating leader to Mao-like Status, *The New York Times*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-communist-party.html> (accessed November 17, 2017).

³⁷ Leaders of the People's Republic of China, *Chinasage*, (n.d.), <https://www.chinasage.info/leaders.htm> (accessed May 21, 2017).

Xi Jinping Thought was promoted as a continuation of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Three Represents and the Scientific Development Perspective as part of a series of guiding ideologies, seeking to preserve the perception of ideological continuity. As noted by Politburo Standing Committee member Yu Zhengsheng in a *Xinhua* article reporting on the 19th Party Congress ‘this important thought represents the latest achievement in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context, and is an important component of the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics’.³⁸ Xi Jinping Thought is a sweeping 14-point policy³⁹ combination of past ideological contributions with contemporary trends and realities:

1. Ensuring CCP leadership over all forms of work in China.
2. The CCP should take a people-centric approach for the public interest.
3. The continuation of ‘comprehensive deepening of reforms’.
4. Adopting new development ideas based on science and for ‘innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development’.
5. Following ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ with ‘people as the masters of the country’.
6. Governing China with the rule of law.
7. ‘Practising socialist core values’, including Marxism, communism and ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’.
8. ‘Improving people’s livelihood and well-being is the primary goal of development’.
9. Co-existing well with nature with ‘energy conservation and environmental protection’ policies and ‘contribut[ing] to global ecological safety’.
10. Strengthening national security.
11. The CCP should have ‘absolute leadership over’ China’s People’s Liberation Army.
12. Promoting the ‘one country, two systems’ model for Hong Kong and Macau with a future of ‘complete national reunification’; and to follow the One China policy and 1992 Consensus for Taiwan.
13. Establishing a common destiny between Chinese people and other people around the world with a ‘peaceful international environment’.
14. Improving party discipline in the CCP.

³⁸ CPC creates Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, *Xinhua*, October 19, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/19/c_136689808.htm (accessed January 9, 2019).

³⁹ 19th Party Congress: Xi Jinping outlines new thought on socialism with Chinese traits, *The Straits Times*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/19th-party-congress-xi-jinping-outlines-new-thought-on-socialism-with-chinese-traits> (accessed July 10, 2018).

In March 2018, at the National People's Congress, constitutional restrictions limiting Xi to serving two five-year terms, like Jiang and Hu, were removed. At the time of writing this thesis, Xi Jinping had effectively become 'President for Life',⁴⁰ meaning his total contribution to the ideological narrative was open-ended.

2.2.1.2. Fear

The second key driver behind the CCP's communications and messaging is, arguably fear. Although China is economically stronger and more secure internationally than it has been in over two centuries, the CCP leadership has a deep sense of domestic insecurity (Shirk, 2007) and fear of instability.⁴¹ The Party leadership's fear of domestic instability and any opposition to its one-party rule has been a longstanding part of the Party's history, in particular following the 1989 Tiananmen so called 'close call', after which the CCP suffered a significant ideological and reputational blow and the leadership became fixated on social stability (Shirk, 2007, p.7).

After Tiananmen, the CCP leadership was anxious to win over the Chinese people for it knew that force was only a short-term means of social control in China's market society and that the most sustainable means of social control was persuasion (Brady and Wang, 2009). However, its 'persuasion' needed to accommodate the 'peasants and workers', that the CCP was founded to defend and support, and which as a class, have a 'millennial tradition of unrest that has no parallel anywhere in the world' (Arrighi, 2009, p.79). Increasingly, however, the CCP in the 1990s and since, has focused its attention on the growing middle class in China.

However, there are some variances in scholarly opinion on the impact of the 'middle class' on government communications. Sparks (2012, p.65) believes 'the enthusiastic embrace of consumption by the Chinese middle class can certainly be seen as one side of a devil's bargain in which political power is ceded to the CCP in return for material prosperity', others such as Hale (2014) and Shirk (2007) argue the middle class is increasingly more willing and capable of mobilising their opinions. At any rate, the interests of middle-class Chinese and their demands for more accountable government can be regarded as presenting a potential threat to the CCP's authority.

⁴⁰ 'President for life' Xi risks repeat of China's Mao-era mistakes, *South China Morning Post*, March 11, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2136255/president-life-xi-risks-repeat-chinas-mao-era-mistakes> (accessed August 29, 2018).

⁴¹ Caught between 'black swans' and 'gray rhinos', Xi Jinping fears instability and dissent, *AsiaNews*, February 23, 2019, <http://asianews.it/news-en/Caught-between-'black-swans'-and-'gray-rhinos',-Xi-Jinping-fears-Instability-and-dissent-46332.html> (accessed February 15, 2020).

As noted by several researchers Brady (2009b) and Brady and Wang (2009), domestic concerns and political legitimacy have always been a major focus of the CCP and the driver behind the need to tightly control mass communications, in order to influence and shape public thinking. However, domestic policy is now scrutinised by an increasingly well-informed Chinese public that appears less afraid to demonstrate, protest and voice opinions both online and physically. Reports from 2010 alone indicate that there were more than 180,000 protests (including riots and mass gatherings) in mainland China (Hale, 2014). Criticism of Party rule has also contributed to growing attention from CCP officials, increasingly sensitive to both domestic flak and global opinion, having to deal with tensions arising between these, at times, competing audiences and social forces. Although the CCP has always tightly controlled both traditional and new media to avoid ‘potential subversion of its authority’, domestic control now involves monitoring systems and firewalls, the threat of closing publications and websites, and jailing journalists, bloggers, and activists (Xu and Albert, 2017, paragraph one). Economy (in Xu and Albert, 2017, paragraph two) describes the CCP as being in a state of ‘schizophrenia’ about media policy as it ‘goes back and forth, testing the line, knowing they need press freedom and the information it provides, but worried about opening the door to the type of freedoms that could lead to the regime’s downfall’. Furthermore, in an information age that sees more than 800 million Chinese citizens active online,⁴² with many regarded as adept at finding ways around Chinese government firewalls, greater access to and sharing of information and comments has increased the government’s fear of the potentially destabilising impact of heightened nationalism.

In February 2016, Xi Jinping announced a new media policy for state media, declaring ‘[a]ll the work by the party’s media must reflect the party’s will, safeguard the party’s authority, and safeguard the party’s unity’, emphasising that state media must align themselves with the ‘thought, politics, and actions’ of the Party leadership. This message was reinforced in a *China Daily* essay on Xi’s policy in the same month, noting that ‘the nation’s media outlets are essential to political stability’.⁴³

The CCP has invested heavily in revamping its propaganda model and modernising official Party ideology (Bondes and Heep, 2012). Shortly after being announced as the new Secretary of the CCP in November 2012 at the 18th National Party Congress, Xi introduced a new nation-

⁴² China Focus: China has 802 million internet users, *Xinhua*, August 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/21/c_137405424.htm (accessed September 4, 2019).

⁴³ State media should play due role in properly guiding public opinion, *China Daily*, February 22, 2016, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2016-02/22/content_23590290.htm (accessed February 15, 2020).

building concept, ‘the China dream’ (中国梦). Coincidentally, *New York Times* journalist Thomas Friedman (2012) had penned an article a month before, in October 2012, titled ‘China needs its own dream’,⁴⁴ with Friedman talking of a ‘China dream’ that ‘marries people’s expectations of prosperity with a more sustainable China’. Many foreign commentators reviewing Xi’s speech ‘dismissed the China Dream as unoriginal ... mark[ing] the start of a major campaign to reorient domestic policy and to overhaul propaganda work’ (Ma and Thomas, 2018, paragraph two). Xi’s dream was defined among other things, as a nationalistic rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Li, 2013) that tied the aspirations of the Chinese people to the Party, which has always been a core tenet of CCP propaganda, making the two inseparable. In this case, promoting a Chinese dream for the nation meant increasing prosperity and returning China to its previously held status as a pre-eminent authority in the region, and also as a global power. Initially, Xi’s key tasks as new leader, faced with the reality that ‘faltering public trust was as much an existential threat to its legitimacy as a potential economic collapse’, were two-fold: ‘strengthen a weakened Party’ through a massive anti-corruption campaign; and deliver a ‘reimagined Party narrative to win the hearts and minds of Chinese people’ (Ma and Thomas, 2018, paragraphs 4-5).

The concept of the ‘China dream’ was part of the CCP leadership’s fear of legitimacy loss, and as observed by Davies (2020, p.22), Xi’s ‘anxieties about waning faith in CCP rule’. Increasing online connectivity in China – bringing the ability to ‘speak back to power’ (Davies, 2013, p.403) and to convey information instantaneously – and the resulting greater possibility of rapid and uncontrollable public mobilisation of demonstrations against the policies and actions of the CCP, are a real concern for the CCP. This requires monitoring sensitive issues and vocal opinions on the Internet, but policymakers, through the use of populist media such as the Central Propaganda Bureau’s *Global Times*, hope also to shape public opinion (Shirk, 2007).

Hearns-Branaman (2009, p.133) regarded Chinese civil society as capable of producing only minimal ‘flak’ or criticism towards the CCP (as state media owners). However, others, such as Hale (2014) and Zhao (2013), who have written more recently, and as digital platforms have become more prevalent, observe that domestic opinion pressure, especially in the social media space, is of concern to policymakers. In fairness to Hearns-Branaman, his 2009 research does offer some excellent global state media insights and theoretical analysis, but social media use has dramatically increased since then and represents a shift in Chinese society and the

⁴⁴ China needs its own dream, *The New York Times* (Friedman), October 2, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/friedman-china-needs-its-own-dream.html> (accessed August 11, 2014).

emergence of an information flow potentially disruptive to the CCP's control of information. In his 2015 research, Hearn-Branaman further reiterated this 'flak' thinking, saying that until special interest groups were allowed more freedom, flak would still be 'limited in scope and scale' (p.120), and that critique of state media would most likely be Internet-related.

CCP officials have been paying increased attention to online commentary and opinion polls, since the early 2000s, especially regarding sensitive domestic and international issues. However, there is scholarly divergence in thought regarding the extent to which online opinion and Internet use and access, can actually influence the CCP's policy and communications. The Internet's role in facilitating 'bottom-up communication' and setting the news and public debate agenda of the entire Chinese media system, has been a significant development in the past two decades (Zhao, 2012, p.160). Even one of China's most nationalistic state media outlets, the *Global Times* (2014),⁴⁵ has noted that the development of a market-oriented media and the Internet has meant tougher public 'demands and higher expectations' than in the past. Goldkorn (2013, paragraph one)⁴⁶ wrote that; 'while blogging remains the most dynamic space for public expression in China, the last word always belongs to the state'. However, it is important to note the rapid and ongoing increase in Chinese citizens with Internet access, which according to the China Internet Information Center and reported in *Xinhua* in 2018, reached over 800 million users by June 2018.⁴⁷

2.2.1.3. History

The importance to the CCP of controlling how history gets told makes it the third driver behind the CCP's communications and messaging, as highlighted in the literature. Central to the CCP's telling of the 'China story' since the death of Mao has been the '5,000 years of history' narrative that places the CCP's rule after 1949 along a continuum that stretches back to early China. Xi is regarded as emphasising the importance of Chinese history and traditional culture more than any other leader since the CCP took power in 1949, 'adamant in preserving a Marxist outlook in modern China' and to combine modern Marxism with 5,000 years of heritage (Li, 2018, p.25). However, strong contradictions exist within many aspects of the 'China story', with successive CCP administrations having selectively adopted and discarded key sections of its

⁴⁵ CCTV ought to regain supervisory role, *Global Times*, February 18, 2014, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/843093.shtml> (accessed June 31, 2015).

⁴⁶ Nearly free speech in China, *ABC* (Goldkorn), October 31, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-31/goldkorn-china-internet-free-speech/5060956> (accessed February 15, 2014).

⁴⁷ China Focus: China has 802 million internet users, *Xinhua*, August 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/21/c_137405424.htm (accessed September 4, 2019).

own historical past and of the premodern past to produce a ‘highly edited’ story to suit its own interests (Davies, 2013, p.405).

Among the more striking contradictions is the state-approved elevation of Confucius and Confucianism since the 1980s, which stands in stark contrast to Mao’s attack on the Four Olds – ideas, culture, customs and habits (Figure 9) – and widespread destruction of Confucius temples and other religious and historical structures during the Cultural Revolution. The importance of Confucianism was especially prominent under Hu Jintao, exemplified by the ‘Confucius’ brand being used for a new CCP initiative to establish learning institutes in foreign universities around the world, with Hu Jintao officially opening the first ‘Confucius Institute’ in Uzbekistan in June 2004.⁴⁸ Xi has similarly extolled the ‘ancient virtues of Confucius as the guiding light of modern China’,⁴⁹ which was part of the speech he made in 2014 to commemorate the 2565th anniversary of Confucius’s birth.



Figure 9: Four Olds slogan poster (Source: Asianlitandfilm).⁵⁰

History can be challenging for the CCP. In its use of history for political messaging, Party leaders and propagandists seek to depict the CCP as the guardian of a long and illustrious national history that all Chinese should feel proud of and connected to. However, as several scholars have noted, to claim this guardianship also burdens the CCP with the weight of historical responsibility (Shirk, 2007). The CCP proclaims itself as custodian and guardian, not just of the modern-day Chinese nation-state defending territorial sovereignty, promoting

⁴⁸ Confucius Institutes taking Chinese to the world, *China.org*, March 23, 2007, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/education/204196.htm> (accessed May 10, 2019).

⁴⁹ Xi launches cultural counter-revolution to restore Confucianism as China’s ideology, *Huff Post*, December 18, 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/xi-jinping-confucianism_b_5897680 (accessed September 14, 2018).

⁵⁰ Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward, *Asianlitandfilm*, (n.d.), <https://asianlitandfilm.weebly.com/real-life-in-the-cultural-revolution-and-the-great-leap-forward.html> (accessed February 7, 2017).

national integration and engendering socio-economic development (Zhao, 2012), but also of a civilisation with a long history of military, philosophical and cultural traditions. Moreover, as Lovell (2007, p.26) notes:

Chinese history, or a particular view of that history, quickly became one of the most important weapons in the Party's armoury of patriotic propaganda: the proposition that the Communists were simply the inheritors of a tried and tested model of the unified, authoritarian Chinese nation supposedly established 5,000 years ago – Capitalising on a long-held, though hazy, Chinese public pride in the antiquity of their state, the Communist patriotic education campaign transformed the idea that the Chinese nation leapt, fully formed, into existence thousands of years ago into a cliché spouted tirelessly by agents of the Chinese Politburo ... to bludgeon anyone listening – Chinese or foreign – into believing that this is how China always was; and evermore shall be (until the Communists say differently).

Pressure on CCP domestic propaganda to successfully influence and shape the thinking and actions of the Chinese public, is heightened by the CCP's self-defined role as cultural guardian. This propaganda seeks to convince the Chinese public that the existing one-party state governance model is the best political model for China, especially as it navigates ongoing threats from the West and regional and global challenges.

Historical and cultural references abound in speeches by CCP officials, both domestically and internationally – for example, there are references to military strategists like Sun Zi, and the re-embracing of a Confucian vocabulary, such as the promotion of a 'harmonious' society (Qing, 2011, p.14). These historical and cultural references are not, in themselves, a core focus of my research. However, their usage is relevant to my analysis of 'history' as a key driver of CCP messaging. I also think that detailed examination of how and when senior CCP officials use historical anecdotes, is worthy of further academic research.

Despite the considerable scholarly interest and commentary on domestic political drivers behind the CCP's propaganda and communications, there is a research shortcoming regarding how these drivers relate to communications content, in particular specific messages used by the CCP, over time. Wang's 2003 and revised 2011 work provide insights into identifying certain key narratives and their usage since the 1950s. However, much of Wang's focus is on the contents of domestic Chinese publications and government work reports. As Wang herself notes (2003, p.51), 'my focus here is what images the Chinese government has tried to build of China rather than what images have reached the intended audience. Therefore, it is not my concern whether or how many foreigners actually read these documents'. In order to gain a better understanding of the CCP's global communications messaging, greater analysis is required of their usage in global state media platforms, designed to target foreign audiences.

2.2.2 Economic objectives and commercialisation

With unprecedented economic growth over the past two decades contributing to more than 300–400 million Chinese moving from the lower to the middle class (Hale, 2014), the legitimacy of the CCP is increasingly pinned to this growth continuing (Triffitt, 2013)⁵¹ to create jobs and to prevent widespread unemployment and large-scale unrest (Shirk, 2007). Considerable economic development in a globalised environment, along with a more prominent global profile, has played a part in two major changes to traditional domestically focused communications by the CCP: (1) the expansion of state media globally to help influence international policymakers and support domestic economic imperatives; and (2) domestically, a shift to a more commercial media framework, enabling outlets greater content flexibility with non-sensitive issues (Edney, 2014).

2.2.2.1. Economic objectives

Of particular interest to scholars examining Chinese state media, is the CCP's 'going global' strategy, initiated in 1999 as a proactive international strategy to advance China's global political and economic position, which now involves state media as a critical part of the approach (Nelson, 2013). In particular, the CCP's global communications are not about informing the public but, rather, about channelling a specific view of China to the rest of the world (Tullock, 2013). As a case in point, the expansion and investment of Chinese state media into key commercial global markets, such as Africa, demonstrate the value the CCP places on state media abroad to help shape local perceptions and narratives of China, including political, cultural and commercial aspects, with the state media serving as a de facto marketing arm for local Chinese business interests (Edney, 2014). This means state media channels supporting China's economic interests by promoting Chinese companies as committed to local communities offshore and highlighting the benefits of China's economic development model and also Chinese culture.

For example, China now has an increased need for natural resources and raw materials to fuel significant economic growth; this has resulted in Africa being targeted as a 'land of opportunity' because of its rich reserves of natural resources (Shirk, 2007, p.134). In just five years, from 2007 to 2012, the value of China's annual exports to Africa more than doubled from US\$37.7 billion to US\$85.3 billion (Nelson, 2013). The CCP has also now identified Africa as a media priority and provided what is effectively business marketing support to economic activity

⁵¹ Author discusses China's 'age of radical modernity', *ABC PM*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/author-discusses-chinas-age-of-radical-modernity/5145288?pfmredir=ms&pfm=sm> (accessed January 9, 2014).

through considerable state media investment in Africa, including 28 *Xinhua* bureaus across the continent.⁵² This use by the CCP of global state media platforms as a marketing and public relations arm for Chinese business interests abroad, is also a considerably underexplored theme, although it will not be in scope for this thesis.

China's increasing international activity has also resulted in greater global scrutiny, which is confronting for a regime that has traditionally suppressed scrutiny and dissent and controlled information flow. As Rawnsley (2016)⁵³ points out, while China's 'charm offensive in Africa' – which includes major infrastructure investments – has led African elites to say they get more respect from China that they did from the West, among non-elite working class Africans, the Chinese presence has been described as 'concrete colonialism', with 'concrete' referring to China's significant investment in bricks and mortar infrastructure.

In the Pew Research Center's 2017 Global Attitudes Survey,⁵⁴ four key findings about how China is viewed by its regional neighbours highlighted these countries' apprehension about China's economic and military rise.

1. Views of China's economic growth are mixed: 'Australians are most positive about China's economic growth; by a three-to-one margin, more people say China's economic growth is good for Australia than bad. In contrast, only 20% of Indians see China's economic rise as a good thing for their country'.
2. Most in the region worry about China's growing military power: '[I]n South Korea, Japan and Vietnam – countries actively engaged in disputes with China over military deployments or territory in the East and South China seas – nine-in-ten or more think China's growing military power is a bad thing for their country'.
3. Although China's power and influence is not seen as a top threat globally, many in Asia-Pacific countries see it a key concern: 'Outside the region, a median of 27% see China's power and influence as a major threat to their country. But among the seven Asia-Pacific countries surveyed, a median of 47% see it as a major threat'.
4. Few in the region express confidence in Chinese President Xi Jinping: '[T]here is limited confidence in him to do the right thing regarding world affairs. A median of 34% across

⁵² China wants state media to peddle its 'soft power' in Africa, but tech platforms are a better bet, *Quartz Africa*, October 30, 2019, <https://qz.com/africa/1736534/china-daily-cgtn-fight-for-influence-in-africa-vs-bbc-cnn/> (accessed January 16, 2020).

⁵³ Media and power: The Chinese way with Gary Rawnsley (Rawnsley), *Legatum Institute, YouTube*, posted January 25, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHuAuqTIR1g> (accessed December 21, 2019).

⁵⁴ Pew Research Center, How people in Asia-Pacific view China, October 16, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/16/how-people-in-asia-pacific-view-china/> (accessed January 9, 2018).

the Asia-Pacific region say they have a lot or some confidence in him, ranging from a high of 53% in the Philippines to a low of 11% in Japan’.

In 2018, elections across Asia, including in Pakistan, Cambodia and the Maldives, were characterised by opposition parties tapping into anti-Chinese resentment and ‘anxiety’. To win popular support, they targeted in particular Chinese-funded infrastructure initiatives and the adverse social and environmental impact of these initiatives.⁵⁵

2.2.2.2. Commercialisation

One of the key features of existing literature on the CCP’s state media, is the focus on commercialisation. The commercialisation of state media was part of China’s transformation into a more modern, open economy after 1978. As mentioned earlier, from the early 1990s, the CCP surrendered a degree of its information monopoly to reduce government operational costs and subsidies. After the emergence of the Internet in the mid-1990s, providers were competing with and overtaking the traditional print press for advertisement income and readership, to feed ‘the public’s hunger for timely, accurate and lively news’ (Shirk, 2007, p.81). As a result, the rapid growth of online commercial media has dramatically increased the government’s responsiveness to issues (Shirk, 2007) and even seen a transformation to a more commercialised and populist approach to communications. Referred to by Brady (2009b, p.434) as ‘popular authoritarianism’, the approach is less reactive, with an unprecedented mindfulness of public opinion at home and abroad, and has in many ways laid the foundations for the CCP’s investment in a global communications network by highlighting the value in telling a positive story about China to a wider audience. However, the impact of this media commercialisation on the CCP and Chinese society is still evolving and requires ongoing research.

As Triffitt (2013) notes:⁵⁶ ‘There is no way that the command and control propaganda-style way of dealing with a country as big as China, with the level of Internet penetration and exchange of ideas and knowledge which is challenging the Communist Party on a daily basis, can survive with the current system ... without some attempt to increase the amount of public participation’. However, as Pugsley (2006, p.87) observes, despite a more open approach and market-oriented media, the Chinese media at home and abroad still revolves around ‘overt displays of nationalism’ with little scope to move beyond Party ideology. More recently, Varrall

⁵⁵ China emerges as wild card in elections across Asia, *Nikkei Asian Review*, June 5, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/China-emerges-as-wild-card-in-elections-across-Asia> (accessed November 17, 2018).

⁵⁶ Author discusses China’s ‘age of radical modernity’, *ABC PM*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/author-discusses-chinas-age-of-radical-modernity/5145288?pfmredir=ms&pfm=sm> (accessed January 9, 2014).

(2015b, paragraph seven) observes that despite some signs of an ‘increase in openness’ under Hu Jintao, this appears to have been ‘systematically rescinded’ under Xi Jinping.

According to Graham (2007), there is an increasing emphasis on the role of propaganda communication in the production of values and power and a strong emphasis on the relationship between economic and political power. There is considerable research highlighting the ‘commodification’ of the Western media, defined by eminent Canadian scholar Vincent Mosco in his highly regarded 2009 publication *The Political Economy of Communication*, (2009, p.2) as ‘transforming things valued for their use into marketable products’, particularly in the U.S., with multi-media giants increasingly involved in both producing and distributing content (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). However, analysis of the Chinese state media as a producer and distributor of content transformed into economic gain has been underexplored. To date, one of the few scholars to complete a comprehensive political-economic analysis of the China’s state media is U.K. researcher Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman (2009, 2015).

Hearn-Branaman has used Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model to conduct specific analysis of the CCP’s state media. The 1988 Propaganda Model (PM) was a groundbreaking study of U.S. mass communications from a political economy viewpoint that Hearn-Branaman applied to the CCP’s state media in 2009, and then again in 2015, finding that China’s state media had evolved in commercial ways that made the application of the PM more relevant in 2015 than in 2009. He noted that in analysing state media and that, over the six years since the two publications, similarities between the U.S. and Chinese media systems in a more globalised world, had actually increased.

2.2.3. Globalisation

The impact of China becoming the world’s second-largest economy since 2011, together with accelerating globalisation through digital technology, has produced the following significant trends: (1) there is increasing international scrutiny of and international media attention on China; (2) domestically in China, people have greater access to information through the Internet and rapidly developing social media technology; and, (3) global soft power competition has placed greater pressure on the Chinese state media to conform to global norms (of which government transparency has arguably been and remains the most important).

Since starting this research in 2012, I have discovered that published academic and media analysis has focused on the expansionist and increasingly confident ‘globalised’ CCP rhetoric used by Xi and his administration (to be analysed in later chapters). However, as noted by Chen Daoyin from the Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, in a 2018 *South China*

Morning Post article, the 2018 ‘trade war’ between the U.S. and China, has shown that recent, more assertive propaganda from the Chinese government ‘overhyped China’s rise to becoming a great power and that image looked pale and unconvincing after the United States started a trade war’.⁵⁷

One significant effect of globalisation is the overcoming of geographical restraints by mass media and communication technologies (Mosco, 2009). Media giants have continued to extend their reach with satellite capacity and the growth in increasingly cheap and accessible viewing devices such as smart phones. Similarly, the CCP has also extended its geographical reach through a global communications network that includes a significant and growing *Xinhua* footprint. This includes, in 2018, *Xinhua* boasting 180 news bureaus globally, publishing news, images and audio/video programs 24/7, and *China Radio International* broadcasting in 65 languages (an increase of 43 languages in the past decade).⁵⁸ Other major state media outlets have also expanded, such as *CCTV International*, rebranded in 2016 as *China Global Television Network (CGTN)*, as the CCP seeks to create an alternative voice and ‘compete with their western counterparts’ such as the *BBC* and *CNN* (Hu and Ji, 2012, p.32), often regarded by the CCP as portraying them in a negative light.

This expansion has also heightened Chinese nationalism, which can be a critical tool of the Chinese government’s propaganda and legitimacy but also a potential threat to domestic stability. China is by no means unique in this regard. As Mosco writes, it is not uncommon for countries to use national identity and its emotional sentiment to compete in the global marketplace, which includes China with its ‘massive mobilisation of nationalism’ in the service of ‘winning global competition for markets’ (Mosco, 2009, p.181). As observed by Shirk (2007, p.11), the sharp decline of communism following Mao’s death, and the continuing erosion of communist principles as China’s market economy developed and created class inequalities, contributed to an embrace by the CCP of nationalism ‘as its new ideology’. However, it must be noted that the management of nationalism by governments can be challenging and that this challenge is not unique to the CCP. Other one-party regimes who control domestic media content, such as Vietnam, must at times also balance official strong government responses to the actions of other countries (for example, maritime clashes with Chinese vessels in the South

⁵⁷ Xi Jinping to shake up propaganda, censorship chiefs as China’s image abroad suffers, *South China Morning Post*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2156921/xi-jinping-shake-propaganda-censorship-chiefs-chinas> (accessed August 31, 2018).

⁵⁸ China is spending billions on its foreign-language media, *The Economist*, June 16, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/china/2018/06/14/china-is-spending-billions-on-its-foreign-language-media> (accessed February 7, 2020).

China Sea, referred to in Vietnam as the East Sea), with trying to ‘keep a lid on’ anti-foreign sentiment ‘for reasons of domestic stability’ (Bui, 2017, p.169).

2.2.4. Rising status

The CCP has played an increasingly active global role in international affairs, especially through its participation in multilateral institutions (Hale, 2014). However, China’s higher international profile has also attracted increased criticism from the Western media. Concerns have been raised regarding China’s poor performance in regard to global norms and standards such as government transparency, a free press, political debate and freedom of opinion. There has also been published criticism from foreign NGOs and governments. For example, there has been extensive international media coverage of China’s significant infrastructure loans and other financial dealings, particularly in developing countries. As noted by Frost (2018, paragraph nine), ‘huge loans for infrastructure projects can feed large scale corruption and saddle poorer countries with unsustainable debt’. This illustrates the unease that China’s rise has caused among governments (and readerships) in other countries. Other significant issues regarding China that have attracted critical and negative international media coverage are: (1) domestic human rights – with UN reports claiming up to two million Muslim and Uighur minorities are in detention in China, and forced into ‘political camps for indoctrination’;⁵⁹ and (2) geopolitics, such as considerable international condemnation of China disregarding the International Court of Arbitration 2016 ruling against China for building an artificial reef and installations in disputed waters in the South China Sea.⁶⁰

In response, the CCP has consistently criticised the Western media for presenting biased and negative accounts of China. This was highlighted in a 2008 editorial, during the controversial Olympic Torch Relay, in *The Telegraph* written by Fu Ying, then Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom, claiming that Western media ‘demonise’ China.⁶¹ As mentioned earlier, according to Sun (2010b, p.126), China has ceased waiting for a more ‘objective’ or ‘sympathetic’ Western media. In particular, since the Beijing Olympics in 2008, state media outlets such as *CCTV* have increased their global media presence with an aim of competing with – and even breaking – what it regards as the Western monopoly of the global media

⁵⁹ U.N. says it has credible reports that China holds million Uighurs in secret camps, *Reuters*, August 10, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un/u-n-says-it-has-credible-reports-that-china-holds-million-uighurs-in-secret-camps-idUSKBN1KV1SU> (accessed March 30, 2019).

⁶⁰ China’s Xi Jinping rejects any action based on international court’s South China Sea ruling, *South China Morning Post*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1988990/chinas-xi-jinping-rejects-any-action-based> (accessed January 16, 2019).

⁶¹ Chinese ambassador Fu Ying: Western media has ‘demonised China’, *The Telegraph*, April 13, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3557186/Chinese-ambassador-Fu-Ying-Western-media-has-demonised-China.html> (accessed January 9, 2014).

landscape and countering the global Western influence, even in China, that China sees as a threat to domestic stability (Edney, 2012). This will increasingly involve Chinese state media abroad aiming to provide global audiences with what the CCP regards as a more ‘balanced picture of China, less ‘distorted’ by the West’ (Li and Sligo, 2012, p.125). However, as noted by Hale (2014, p.35), ‘[i]t will be difficult for China to improve its political image in the Western world without reaching an accommodation with the Western media’.

It will also be difficult for the Chinese voice and viewpoint to be heard in a global media market dominated by established, recognised and popular Western media conglomerates (Li and Sligo, 2012). Significant investment in global communications by the CCP over the last ten years primarily stems from the CCP’s concern that its ability ‘to influence international perspectives regarding China is weak’ (Esarey, 2011, p.3).⁶² Rawnsley (2010, paragraph 13)⁶³ notes that ‘the possible influence of China’s international media will be offset by the actions of its government at home and abroad’; which includes ‘issues of democracy, human rights Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan’. As noted in 2011 by Arnold Zeitlin at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (2011, paragraph 21) in *The Guardian*, ‘there is no point in spending huge gobs of money on media expansion without addressing issues such as human rights and policies’.⁶⁴

2.2.5. Access to information

Domestically, an increased ability by Chinese citizens to access, receive and spread information represents a threat to the Chinese government of shared sentiment, anger and frustration spreading quickly online across China, ‘despite the best efforts of the authorities to control the flow of information’ (Davies, 2012, p.130). Even when large sites block stories such as anti-Japanese demonstrations, the news can spread quickly and Chinese netizens are increasingly renowned for the ability to subvert official firewalls. There is also greater availability by way of foreign news sources and relatives living abroad with access to different media sources. This access to information is contributing to better-informed domestic opinion and political comparisons of alternative viewpoints and facts on a range of domestic and international issues.

In response, the CCP is increasingly focused on greater control of domestic and international narratives and also counter-narratives, that differ from the CCP’s official line (Edney, 2014).

⁶² U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing: China’s narratives regarding national security policy, March 10, 2011, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Esarey.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013).

⁶³ Here we go again: The contradictions in China’s international media strategy [blog post], *USC Center on Public Diplomacy Blog*, May 4, 2010, <https://www.uscpubliediplomacy.org/blog/here-we-go-again-contradictions-china%E2%80%99s-international-media-strategy> (accessed August 29, 2012).

⁶⁴ Chinese state TV unveils global expansion plan, *The Guardian*, December 9, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/08/china-state-television-global-expansion> (June 20, 2014).

Institutions and persons targeted under the CCP's control efforts range from commercial and traditional media to political and academic writers and publishers. Recent commercial examples include the CCP coercing international flight carriers in 2018 to change their website references to Taiwan from an international flight destination to a Chinese domestic destination.⁶⁵

In the digital age, China's rising global status and the CCP's fundamentally anti-Western (and anti-Japan) propaganda have contributed to a more vocal and nationalistic public opinion that is also harder to contain. For the Party, both domestic and international environments are becoming more vulnerable to popular nationalism, with the CCP increasingly responsive to public opinion as the average Chinese has found a 'growing number of ways to express their nationalistic feelings and impose pressure upon foreign policy makers to be firm in protecting China's national interests' (Zhao, 2013, p.2), both at home and, increasingly, abroad. This includes perceived offences to the broad sweeping term, 'the Chinese people', which the CCP positions as inseparable from the nation-state and the Party itself. For example, as noted in a *Xinhua* article (published during the 2017 National Congress), the Dalai Lama being received in an 'official capacity' by foreign countries, is referred to as 'a severe insult to the feelings of the Chinese people'.⁶⁶ For decades, the Party has leveraged nationalistic sentiment to support its one-party rule. However, this sentiment can lead to extremely vocal public demands for actions on certain issues and, as Johnston (2013, p.22) notes, 'Chinese leaders generally do not like popular expressions of public opinion because they find that these constrain their options'.

2.2.6. Soft power competition

Soft power influence, as perceived by the CCP, would lead the world to become more accepting of the CCP's political and governance system, as well as CCP-led national and international aspirations. This is now driving targeted international public opinion battles to help create an international public opinion environment that is 'objective, beneficial and friendly' to China (Economy, 2010, p.149). As Xi has declared, 'the stories of China should be well told, voices

⁶⁵ Airlines switching to 'Taiwan, China' despite White House's rejection of 'Orwellian nonsense' – but US carriers hold out, *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2147277/airlines-switching-taiwan-china-despite-white-houses> (accessed September 4, 2018).

⁶⁶ China reaffirms opposition to Dalai Lama's visits to foreign countries, *Xinhua*, October 21, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/21/c_136696346.htm (accessed September 17, 2019).

of China well spread and characteristics of China well explained'.⁶⁷ For this reason, Chinese state media now participate in international public opinion battles on issues ranging from climate action advocacy in *CGTN*,⁶⁸ to the 'defense of globalization' in the *China Daily*,⁶⁹ to help position the CCP as a 'responsible' global leader offering a point of leadership difference to the United States (to be further discussed in Chapters 5-8).

The focus on soft power is also motivated by the Chinese government's acknowledgment that international relations and foreign attitudes towards China can impact domestic stability. As stated by UK-based academic Michael Barr, in his book on the challenge of Chinese soft power (Barr, 2011), for China (which despite being the world's second largest economy, still regards itself as a developing country), soft power is related as much to domestic development as to improving its international image. Increasingly China is part of a global system and China's internal problems now often lie in a broader world context (Hu and Ji, 2012). Foreign affairs and international conditions, especially economic ones, are linked to domestic stability and the legitimacy of the CCP, and economic success and dependence on the international market and governance institutions have meant the opinions, attitudes and decisions of those abroad can impact China internally (Barr, 2011). This was highlighted recently, as mentioned earlier, by the start of a U.S.–China trade dispute in 2018.

China is now investing billions in communications (Li and Sligo, 2012), with reports of an annual spend of US\$1.3 billion on expanding its global media presence,⁷⁰ and attempting, among other things, to emphasise its softer side, including the promotion of traditional Chinese culture, and wanting a 'cultural aircraft carrier to extend its global influence'.⁷¹ China believes that to successfully compete in the 'global marketplace of ideas' it is critical to have the right tools and assets, and these include a multi-dimensional global state media (Brady, 2009b and Nelson, 2013). The CCP's international media platforms are designed to project a new and

⁶⁷ Xi: China to promote cultural soft power, *China.org.cn*, January 1, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-01/01/content_31059390.htm (accessed January 25, 2017).

⁶⁸ Climate change: A battle that must be won, *CGTN*, September 28, 2019, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-23/Climate-change-A-battle-that-must-be-won-Kdd9aGzQmk/index.html> (accessed January 9, 2020).

⁶⁹ China's growing role in global development, *China Daily*, May 12, 2017, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-05/12/content_29312577.htm (accessed August 17, 2019).

⁷⁰ China's media interference is going global, report says, *Time*, March 25, 2019, <https://time.com/5557951/china-interference-global-media/> (accessed June 19, 2019).

⁷¹ Chinese state TV unveils global expansion plan, *The Guardian*, December 8, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/08/china-state-television-global-expansion> (accessed May 14, 2014).

improved international image⁷² as a ‘responsible and peaceful global player’ (Li and Sligo, 2012, p.117).

According to Nye (2008), the countries more likely to be attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those using multiple channels to help frame issues. China’s approach is broadening and now incorporates a variety of platforms, including greater international media collaboration. For example, the CCP is now regularly inserting editorial pieces and paid *China Daily* news supplements (called *China Watch*) into Western newspapers, such as *The Guardian* (UK), *The New York Times* (U.S.) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia).⁷³ More recently, this involved the high-profile example of the *China Watch* supplement appearing for the first time in a much smaller publication in U.S. farm country, the *Sunday Des Moines Register*. As noted by Drake University’s David Skidmore, this shows the CCP ‘trying to maximize pressure on the [U.S.] administration to change its trade policies toward China by attempting to show White House and Republicans that they’re going to pay a price with the mid-terms’.⁷⁴

2.2.7. Conflicting and emerging domestic social forces

The CCP’s global communications have evolved and developed in a period of conflicting and emerging domestic social forces and economic transition in China, with a declining growth rate, in particular since 2010 (Figure 10), in contrast to the previous decade of consistent double-digit economic growth. In response, the CCP’s efforts to increase market opportunities for domestic companies abroad have become an important part of the CCP’s economic strategy, with the flagship initiative being the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative, announced by Xi Jinping in a speech at Kazakhstan’s Nazarbayev University in September 2013, proposed to ‘join hands’ with suitable partners in ‘building a Silk Road economic belt with innovative cooperation mode’ and was described as ‘a grand cause benefiting people in regional countries along the route’.⁷⁵ As later reported in *Xinhua*, after a name rebrand to Belt and Road Initiative ‘the “Belt and Road” initiatives seek to promote win-win cooperation among participating

⁷² China yearns to form its own media empires, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/05/business/global/05yuan.html> (accessed June 19, 2014).

⁷³ China’s propaganda arms push soft power in Australian media deals, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 31, 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/chinas-propaganda-arms-push-soft-power-in-australian-media-deals-20160531-gp7yz6.html> (accessed August 11, 2018).

⁷⁴ Chinese-backed newspaper insert tries to undermine Iowa farm support for Trump, trade war, *Des Moines Register*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2018/09/24/china-daily-watch-advertisement-tries-sway-iowa-farm-support-trump-trade-war-tariffs/1412954002/> (accessed August 11, 2019).

⁷⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Xi Jinping delivers important speech and proposes to build Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries, September 7, 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzsysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml (accessed January 2, 2017).

nations ... [and] are like an invitation by China for countries to ride its express train of economic development'.⁷⁶

Internationally, however, the initiative 'faces growing degrees of opposition' (Lemahieu, 2019, paragraph 14).⁷⁷ Although 'the idea is welcome'⁷⁸ in many countries, with Chinese funding promised for major infrastructure projects, 'some Asian countries, including India and Vietnam, are wary and most Western countries share their unease'. In particular there are concerns about 'possible security risks', regarding the Chinese navy taking 'advantage of ports' and crude CCP maps showing the BRI running through disputed territory, including the South China Sea where the CCP has been building 'fortresses on reefs'. Other major concerns include Chinese financing conditions which are 'often shrouded in secrecy'; projects usually requiring the 'use of lots of Chinese labour'; and countries at risk of 'piling up dangerous amounts of debt, which some fear is designed to give China a strategic hold over them' (ibid.).

The domestic drivers of CCP messaging as discussed above, and the broader political challenges faced by the CCP, are highlighted in Bisley's (2018, paragraph three)⁷⁹ description of the BRI as a 'vast infrastructure development program, a geopolitical gambit, a bid to develop China's poor western and southern regions, and an effort to recycle surplus capacity'. For example, major infrastructure loans to developing nations require the use of Chinese companies to build the assets, which also increases international market access for Chinese provinces and companies.

The globalised information age has created significant challenges for China's one-party state, particularly regarding information flows and content. There are now heightened and emerging domestic tensions as changing societal forces in China and abroad cause conflict between existing institutions (e.g. the Central Propaganda Department and social media; regulatory authorities and foreign businesses), and structures and individuals and groups (including ethnic minority tensions and environmental protests).

⁷⁶ Belt and Road Initiative to benefit Asia, beyond, *Xinhua*, March 31, 2015, http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092675722.htm (accessed January 16, 2017).

⁷⁷ Five big takeaways from the 2019 Asia Power Index. *The Interpreter*, (Lemahieu), May, 29, 2019, <http://lowyinstitute.org.au/the-interpreter/power-shifts-fevered-times-2019-asia-power-index> (accessed June 19, 2019).

⁷⁸ China's belt-and-road plans are to be welcomed – and worried about, *The Economist*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/07/26/chinas-belt-and-road-plans-are-to-be-welcomed-and-worried-about> (accessed July 10, 2019).

⁷⁹ Melbourne joins the Belt-and-Road, *The Interpreter* (Bisley), October 31, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/melbourne-joins-belt-and-road> (accessed August 21, 2019).



Figure 10: BRI proposed route, 2018 (Source: von Hein, 2018).⁸⁰

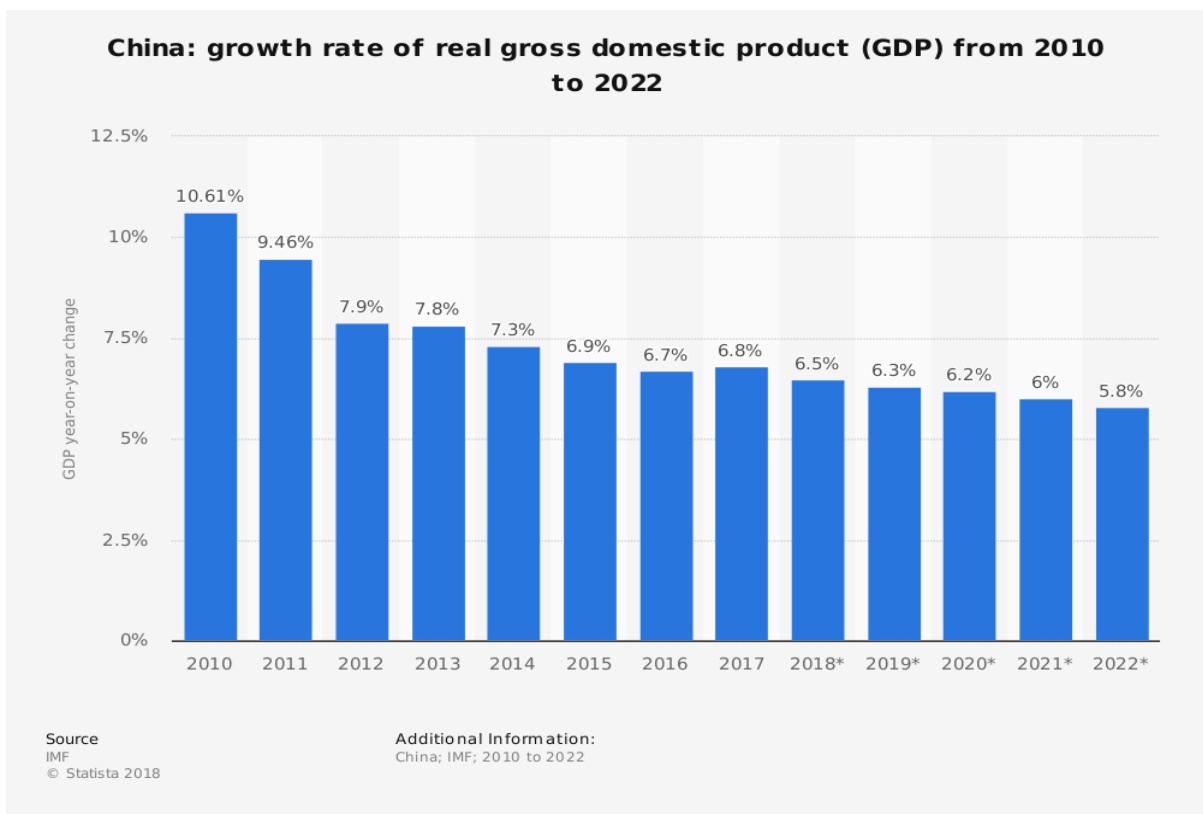


Figure 11: Declining GDP growth rate (Source: IMF Statista, 2018).⁸¹

⁸⁰ Xi Jinping and the 'Chinese Dream'. *DW.com*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/xi-jinping-and-the-chinese-dream/a-43685630> (accessed August 31, 2018).

⁸¹ World Economic Forum, China's economic growth is the weakest since the credit crunch, October 19, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/10/chinas-economic-growth-is-the-weakest-since-the-credit-crunch> (accessed January 9, 2019).

These individuals and groups act as ‘agents’ of change and can include prominent individuals, such as high-profile activists and those participating in demonstrations (e.g. regarding official corruption of local environmental concerns). On the basis of my analysis of the literature, there are two key considerations regarding the impact of conflicting and emerging domestic social forces: (1) institutional structures and processes (e.g. the ten-year tenure of top Party leadership roles and high-level Party structures); and (2) societal change (the emergence of a more informed, educated, travelled and wealthier society).

2.2.8. Institutional and societal change

As Mosco (2009, p.186) notes, in considering the relationship between an existing structure and agents of change operating within that structure, we need to also examine the relationship between the maintenance of that structure and the ‘inevitability of social change’. The influence on the CCP’s global communications on the interaction between at-times competing forces and conflicting tension, at home and abroad, is an area underexplored in the existing literature.

Conflict exists between the CCP’s media (including Internet) censorship structure and a Chinese society that consists of an increasingly vocal lower-middle class, an increasingly active, expectant and nationalistic worker/poorer class (Figure 12) and the resulting shift in China’s societal make up due to increased wealth, education and access to technology and information. However, as Zhao (2012, p.143) notes, CCP rule has proven to be ‘highly resilient and adaptive’. The traditionally rigid structure of the Party’s propaganda model, although still tightly controlled, has gradually evolved to incorporate the influence of populist social elements (Brady, 2009b).

-
- Upper middle/wealthy
 1. State and social administrators
 2. Managers
 3. Private entrepreneurs
 - Lower middle/middle classes
 4. Individual business owners
 5. Professional and technical personnel
 6. Office workers
 - Workers/poorer classes
 7. Employees of commercial services
 8. Industrial working class
 9. Agricultural labourers
 10. Urban and rural jobless, unemployed and semi-employed

Figure 12: Ten class strata (Source: Goodman, 2013, p.52).

As noted even in the often-hyperbolic Chinese state media outlet the *Global Times* in 2014, ‘if social networking websites become a dominant force in guiding opinion, they will probably evolve into a moral high ground in China’s public opinion domain’.⁸² This article appears to be in response to the increasing prevalence of ‘numerous extreme opinions’ online, in contrast to the official line in traditional media – in this instance, the government’s premier broadcasting outlet, *CCTV* (ibid.)

New media and an increasingly active public social media presence, are now regarded as having the potential to influence the CCP’s existing communications structure and to some extent, over the CCP’s foreign policy messaging. Triffitt (2013)⁸³ observes that even though the Internet is highly policed by the CCP, through the Internet there is an emerging civil society arising out of the exchange of information, with ‘the distinction between the way in which ordinary Chinese citizens view the party now as compared to potentially 20 years ago without the Internet ... the level of debate, questioning of central state decisions is much greater than it ever was before’. As noted by Scobell et al. (2019, p.98) in their study of Chinese public discourse regarding North Korea in 2015, ‘[w]hile the specific impact of online public opinion on Chinese foreign policy is difficult to assess, China’s state monitoring and censorship decisions suggest that it is of irrefutable interest and relevance to policymakers’.

Over the past decade, CCP officials have paid increasing attention to online chatter and opinion polls in order to incorporate relevant public moods into policies and messages. For example, as cited in Zhao (2012, p.161), Hu Jintao ‘chatted with netizens’ to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the *People’s Daily* in June 2008, while in March 2009, during the National People’s Congress, *Xinhuanet.com* opened a space titled ‘Premier, Please Listen to Me’ for Internet users to ‘send their concerns to the top leadership’.

Particularly regarding sensitive domestic and global topics, the Internet in many instances plays a leading role in setting the news and public debate agenda of the entire Chinese media system, facilitating ‘bottom-up communication’ (Zhao, 2012, p.160). This highlights the potential for tension between the CCP’s propaganda structure and individual agents expressing and spreading vocal and populist opinions as a potentially threatening social force.

⁸² CCTV ought to regain supervisory role, *Global Times*, February 18, 2014, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/843093.shtml> (accessed September 29, 2017).

⁸³ Author discusses China’s ‘age of radical modernity,’ *ABC*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/author-discusses-chinas-age-of-radical-modernity/5145288> (December 19, 2014).

Since the introduction by Xi of the ‘China dream’ campaign in 2012 and the continuing promotion of China’s ‘rejuvenation’, the CCP’s emphasis has been on reflecting significant domestic social changes, including the importance of meeting the expectations of the lower middle/middle classes while allowing more members of the working and rural poor to attain a middle-class living standard (Li, 2013).

Despite increasing control by the CCP, the emergence of information on new media and discussion of sensitive topics, although closely monitored by the government, has reshaped public opinion in 21st century China (Sun, 2013). This marks a significant shift from when Chinese citizens obtained all their information about their country and the world from a few officially controlled media sources that ‘said pretty much the same thing’ (Shirk, 2007, p.81).

To date, continued economic growth has, in part, strengthened the CCP’s one-party system, along with Xi’s heavily publicised personal popularity,⁸⁴ however the CCP faces challenges from growing and ‘significant issues around inequality’ (Triffitt, 2013).⁸⁵ As Brady and Wang (2009) note, the challenges presented by a changing social environment have prompted the reorganisation of Party and state institutions and modernisation of the operational techniques of the CCP’s propaganda machine. Most recently, under Xi, domestic propaganda has undergone significant changes, with increased funding for and a restructuring of state media organisations to ensure greater direct Party control. This heightened propaganda focus has contributed to ‘noticeably improved quality’ with the days of a ‘tepid’ Three Represents and a ‘bland’ Harmonious Society being replaced, for example with a ‘China dream’ that is ‘relatable and uplifting’ (Ma and Thomas, 2018, paragraph 42).

Economically, many commentators have written that China will replace the U.S. as the global superpower by 2030 and that China’s economy will overtake that of the U.S. by that time.⁸⁶ However, there are also those who dispute this prognosis, arguing that China is too burdened by domestic limitations and challenges such as environmental issues, corruption and social inequity

⁸⁴ The world’s most popular leader: China’s President Xi, *The Diplomat*, December 20, 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/12/the-worlds-most-popular-leader-chinas-president-xi/> (accessed December 20, 2019)

⁸⁵ Author discusses China’s ‘age of radical modernity,’ *ABC*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/author-discusses-chinas-age-of-radical-modernity/5145288> (December 19, 2014).

⁸⁶ See for instance, China will overtake the US by 2030, *Financial Review*, November 25, 2019, <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/china-will-overtake-the-us-by-2030-20191124-p53djg> (accessed January 9, 2020).

(Lampton, 2011; Shambaugh, 2015).⁸⁷ Moreover, others argue that corruption and inequality are increasing as China's wealth grows, with adverse economic outcomes for the country.⁸⁸

However, what is evident is that the more affluent, educated and ambitious middle class in China will continue to exert pressure on the CCP structure as 'potential agents of Chinese democracy' insofar as they will demand increasing accountability from the government (Zhao, 2011, p.568). As noted by Whyte (2015, p.9):

China's leaders have done an impressive job in recent years of addressing poverty and material inequality, thus keeping the distributive injustice social volcano dormant. However, they have so far been unwilling or unable to make fundamental reforms to address procedural injustices. Unless they can provide Chinese citizens with more effective protections from the arbitrariness and abuses of entrenched power, a shared sense of injustice will persist, and this active volcano will continue to smolder, with the potential to erupt and threaten Party rule.

With 56 ethnic groups, five (unofficially) time zones, and cities and provinces with widely varying socio-economic status, cultures, industries, languages and even histories, China is more akin to a European Union than a single country. Some Chinese ethnic groups (Uighurs and Tibetans) have attracted considerable global attention and even support, with separatist calls and at times violent protests, starkly contradicting the CCP's portrayal of a harmonious and unified 'multiethnic society', while 'Taiwan challenges the party's narrative that it represents all Chinese people'.⁸⁹ This makes the CCP's task of keeping China united, socially stable and cohesive an incredible challenge. Critical to this cohesiveness is the unified image the CCP seeks to project to internal audiences, and increasingly to external audiences as well.

2.3. CCP Image Projection

Academic authors who have considered media messaging as 'images' and 'narratives' include Wang Hongying (2003 and 2011), Anne-Marie Brady (2009b, 2015a) and, more recently, Merriden Varrall (2015a). Wang's 2003 seminal work looked at the images of China the CCP has tried to establish, in particular 'what kind of actor has the Chinese government portrayed China to be in international affairs' (2003, p.50). Wang analysed select editions of the *Beijing Review* (originally the *Peking Review*) from 1958 to 2002 and government work papers (政府

⁸⁷ The coming Chinese crackup, *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198> (accessed June 19, 2017).

⁸⁸ China's new president Xi Jinping: A man with a dream, *BBC*, March 14, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-21790384> (accessed August 21, 2014).

⁸⁹ China's 'Three Warfares' in perspective, *War on the Rocks* (Mattis), January 30, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/> (accessed April 16, 2018).

工作报告) dealing with foreign relations from 1954 to 2000. From this analysis, Wang identified nine images of China the CCP sought to project:

1. Peace-loving country
2. Victim of foreign aggression
3. Socialist country
4. Bastion of revolution
5. Anti-hegemonic force
6. Developing country
7. Major power
8. International cooperator
9. Autonomous actor.

According to Wang (2003, p.52), the data indicated both ‘change and continuities’ over time in the images projected by the CCP. Those images used continuously but ‘with different levels of vigour’ include China as a ‘peace-loving nation’, ‘victim of foreign aggression’, ‘opponent of hegemony’ and ‘developing country’. Those discontinued were the Maoist-era images of China as a ‘socialist country’ and ‘supporter of revolution’, which were de-emphasised in the reform period, as emphasis was instead placed on China as an ‘international cooperator’ and a ‘major power’. Wang added to this in 2011 by updating content to encompass later editions of the respective publications (up to 2008) and also highlighting the CCP's embrace of the concept of soft power and the role of favourable image projection abroad. According to Sun, Fitzgerald and Gao (2018, p.63), ‘the recognition of its own image problem is a motivating force behind China’s embrace of “soft power”’.

Varrall (2015a, paragraph one) published on Chinese worldviews and foreign policy, identifying four narratives as ‘key to understanding China’s worldview as it relates to foreign policy’. These themes included:

1. China’s so called ‘century of humiliation’
2. Cultural characteristics (being inherent and unchanging)
3. History as destiny
4. Filial piety and familial obligation (as they apply both inside China and to China’s neighbours).

The ‘century of humiliation’ and ‘victim’ narratives have been widely acknowledged by Western scholars as part of the CCP’s ‘founding narrative’ (Varrall, 2015a; Kaufman, 2011; Shirk, 2007), along with the importance of the narratives of China as a ‘peace-loving’ and ‘responsible’ country (Wang, 2003; Varrall, 2015a). U.S. scholar Alastair Johnston (2013, p.7)

provides some unique analysis of CCP terminology from academic and media descriptions of China's diplomacy as 'newly or increasingly assertive'. Johnston analyses messaging around 'sovereignty' in Chinese state media (the *People's Daily*), and U.S. media outlets that reference the term 'assertive' in relation to China. However, analysis of more contemporary CCP narratives, in particular in the age of Xi, is limited but increasingly important as a way to provide new insights into CCP foreign policy priorities.

2.4. Summary

In this survey and literature review chapter, I have sought to highlight the efforts made by the CCP since the 2008 Beijing Olympics to boost its international image through a combination of new and revitalised narratives (Edney, 2012; Ni, 2008; Humphreys and Finlay, 2008). Brady and Wang (2009) observe that the CCP's tight control of messaging enables central messaging to be easily detected with usually only slight variations in terms of emphasis and frequency of usage. Existing published research on the messages being used by the CCP to communicate its foreign policy, indicate, for instance, that these messages represent a combination of China's revolutionary past with current political legitimacies (Qing, 2011) and which have resulted in Mao-era narratives being modernised (Pugsley, 2006), particularly since the 2008 Beijing Olympics. As Varrall (2015a, paragraph one) notes, although 'narratives are not the only factors shaping Chinese foreign policy, understanding them provides for a more nuanced guide to China's aims and ambitions'.

The value of examining messaging aimed at foreign audiences, as noted by Edney (2012), is that although it can vary from the domestic narrative, it sometimes can be less overtly nationalistic and more revealing. To date, much of the literature on the CCP's external communications has focused on new platforms (e.g. global expansion through increased new online state media outlets), motivation (e.g. creating alternative social media 'voices' for the CCP's communications) and challenges (e.g. state media credibility as an authoritarian government). Although some research has been conducted on certain aspects of CCP rhetoric (Wang, 2003; Johnston, 2013; Varrall, 2015a), there is a research gap regarding the CCP's message usage in English-language, foreign-facing state media. In particular, there has been limited analysis of news content related to how and when specific messages are used, the relationship of these messages to activities and events within and outside China, and the impact of changing global and domestic institutional and social forces on the CCP's messaging.

Some research has been conducted (Johnston, 2013; Shirk, 2007; Wang, 2003) on national image-building and China's foreign policy narratives. However, their research has mostly been focused on accounts published in Chinese domestic state media and in major Western media outlets. The CCP's foreign-facing state media has been less studied, and when it has, the news content has been examined only in relation to a small number of themes, in particular the CCP's positioning of China as a 'victim' of historical oppression by foreign powers and the narrative of China's 'peaceful rise'. There are several important aspects of the CCP's recent communications that are tangentially related to this thesis. They include: the placement of paid advertising in Western media (such as *China Daily* supplements in major media outlets in the U.S., Australia and Europe); the CCP's influence on local content for Chinese-language media in Western countries; and state media as a marketing tool for Chinese business interests (Edney, 2014). An example of the latter being a 2018 article in the *China Daily Africa*, entitled 'Outsourcing is a win-win for Africa, China'.⁹⁰ The article was written by a Liberian based journalist who shared a story about his friend who had told him that 'a certain Chinese road construction company had been outsourcing contracts to local companies and that he had been lucky to win a subcontract...' which 'helped to solidify his presence in the local industry'. These are issues, to which I will refer, where relevant, in the course of analysing data in this thesis.

To better understand and analyse the nature of the CCP's globally unique communications model, new theoretical thinking is required. Due to it being a unique blend of socialist and capitalist media systems, the CCP model does not fit easily into existing media classification schemes which are 'of limited value' regarding analysis (Hearns-Branaman, 2009, p.122). As noted earlier, in his later research (2015), Hearns-Branaman adjusted these views to account for changes to increased state media commercialisation and the fact that Western models, such as the Propaganda Model, could now add more value in the effective analysis of the CCP's global communications. Huang (2009, cited in Baran and Davis, 2009, pp.455–56) argues for the need to use a more flexible or transitional media approach to evaluating specific media systems because 'the post-Cold War era in the information age is witnessing an accelerated social and media transition across the world' and that media researchers now 'confront more mixed social and media systems than standard ones'.

Huang (cited in Baran and Davis, 2009, pp.455-56) refers to the value of analysing 'transitional media', looking at systems transitioning towards Western-style democracy and a more market

⁹⁰ Outsourcing is a win-win for Africa, China, *China Daily Africa*, September 23, 2018, http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/weekly/2018-09/23/content_36956354.htm (accessed November 29, 2019).

driven approach. However, this approach is not applicable to the Chinese media system as, although China (like Russia and Poland) is moving towards a more market-based media system ('transitology'), there is limited political transition occurring (Sparks, 2008) and much of the content is still directly under the control and censorship of the CCP. Indeed, both Chinese and Western scholars of Chinese media have noted a willingness on the part of China's state media to incorporate new strategies and technology relevant to 'manufacturing consent' in a modern marketplace of ideas (Brady and Wang, 2009, p.786). 'Popular authoritarianism' has brought a new level of political and economic stability to China and the role of propaganda is a crucial factor in the success of this new order (Brady and Wang, 2009).

Baran and Davis (2009, p.124) note that the changing global political environment, advances in communication technologies and rapid globalisation have led media scholars to call for a more flexible approach to evaluating a given media system. Regarding China's unique media structure, Zhao (2012, p.172) suggests that it is 'useful to move beyond a single model to understand Chinese media institutions and practices in the dynamic and creative tensions among political instrumentalization, commercial instrumentalization, professionalization, and pressures for popular participation in the era of digitalized and socialized communications'. The CCP's unique blend of state control with market characteristics, both domestically and globally, means that no single theory in the existing spectrum of communication theories can adequately analyse the CCP model. Clearly, a new approach to theoretical analysis of the Chinese media system is required.

In a US Congressional Hearing on China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy in 2011, Esarey (2011, p.6),⁹¹ referred to the Chinese expression *tingqiyan guanqixiang* (听其言观其行), 'listen to what is said and watch what is done' in regards to 'appraising' the Chinese government's 'real intentions'. In other words, the importance of monitoring both the actions of the CCP, as well as the messaging. The world is watching and listening to China, wanting to better understand what China's rise means for neighbours, the broader region and the world – and, in particular, if the rise will be peaceful (Wang, 2009). By analysing what is being said and done by the CCP in the context of its global communications; this thesis aims to offer some explanation as to: (1) what the CCP's key messages are in its global communications and what factors contribute to their usage; (2) how these messages have evolved over time; and, (3) what

⁹¹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing: China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy, March 10, 2011, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Esarey.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013).

kinds of global and domestic activities and events may have influenced the use of these messages.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1. Theoretical framework

There is no simple answer to the question of which communication theories are most relevant and useful for understanding the CCP's global communications, in particular its key messages and their underlying drivers. Although a number of theoretical frameworks can provide useful entry points for communications analysis (Mosco, 2009), the CCP communications approach is rightly regarded as internationally unique (Sparks, 2008). Although the CCP retains tight media censorship over designated sensitive topics, such as Tibet, Taiwan, US and Japan relations and reporting on high-level CCP members, it has also allowed a more commercial and populist approach to other subjects, such as local news and entertainment (Edney, 2014). It is, therefore, important to ensure that the theory or theories to be used in my research are flexible enough to enable meaningful analysis of such a unique communications model. This chapter will describe the theoretical approach which I have determined will best suit my proposed analysis.

To begin with, it is important to note that single, existing communication theories (primarily focused on capitalist systems or on countries in transition) do not adequately reflect the conditions under which CCP communications operate. Even though the CCP's media outlets increasingly display more capitalist media system traits (e.g. a more commercial look and feel), the diverse range of domestic and global state media outlets that China has produced remain essentially under the watchful control of the CCP's Central Propaganda Department. Despite a major CCP effort to create a more globally visible media presence and a more Westernised, commercial look and feel (including the use of high-profile Western journalists), the CCP's global communications is still inherently based on a propaganda model, with content on certain topics still tightly controlled. This control continues to impact the credibility of the Chinese state media abroad, as the omission or highly censored reporting of domestic, regional and global issues deemed sensitive by the CCP (e.g. Taiwan relations, Xinjiang and maritime territorial disputes), continues to be criticised by Western scholars, commentators and respected global NGOs.

Yu (2011, p.67) notes that 'China offers a rich context for media studies scholars to experiment with new theories and models'. A well- rounded analysis of the CCP's communications requires an original framework that accommodates both a traditional state-controlled propaganda model but also the diverse combination of global and domestic economic, social and institutional factors that have contributed to the evolution of the CCP's communications. These factors include economic growth, domestic social stability, external territorial tensions and vocal expressions of nationalistic online views by Chinese citizens ('netizen nationalism'). To adequately capture these at-times competing elements, two prominent and complementary communications theories, Mosco's work on the Political Economy of Communication (PEC) and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model (PM), will be examined. As noted by Hearn-Branaman (2015), other studies have previously explored the political economy of Chinese media, including Zhao (2008) and even Brady (2009b), who referenced the Propaganda Model; however, for my research, I will be combining elements of both the PEC and PM theoretical frameworks.

It must also be noted that as part of my research into suitable theoretical frameworks, public diplomacy theory was considered. As defined by Sharp (cited in Melissen, 2005, p.11), public diplomacy is the 'process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented'. This definition considers a very broad range of mediums and activities, from cultural events and exchanges, international broadcasting and university scholarships, to foreign aid and popular culture. However, given the breadth of activities and mediums that public diplomacy theory includes, I decided to seek theories that I can more specifically apply to media messaging and geopolitical events that influence their usage. According to Ma (cited in Hearn-Branaman, 2015, p.20), as Asia is not 'isolated from the development of transnational capitalism' it does not need 'completely new media theories'; instead, scholars should 'modify and adapt existing theories to suit the Chinese context'.

Although it does not capture all relevant aspects of the CCP's global communications, the PEC still provides useful analytical points for aspects of the model – particularly in considering the impact of globalisation, domestic societal shifts, media commercialisation and soft power competition in the digital age. To examine other key aspects of the CCP's global communications (such as the influence of fear and ideology) that are not addressed by the PEC – in particular, messaging – parts (or 'filters') of the Propaganda Model will be used to create a more comprehensive theoretical framework for analysis.

Mosco (2009, p.2) highlights three components that make up the main starting points for the PEC. These are: (1) **commodification**, ‘the process of transforming things valued for their use into marketable products’, what they can bring in exchange and how communication can become a product producing profit; (2) **spatialization**,⁹² ‘the process of overcoming the constraints of geographical space’ with, among other things, mass media and communication technologies (e.g. television overcomes distance by bringing images of world events to every part of the globe); and (3) **structuration**, ‘the process of creating social relations’, mainly those organised around social class, gender, and race.

Herman and Chomsky (2008, p.1) describe their PM theory as focusing on the ‘inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass media interest and choices’. It traces the routes by which money and power can determine media content, marginalise dissent and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public. The PM refers to factors that ‘misshape’ the news, which they call ‘filters’, and how the news is impacted by these filters before it reaches the intended audience or general public. The PM identifies five filters (pp.1-2) of media institutions: (1) ownership; (2) sourcing (of information); (3) advertising (revenue); (4) flak (negative third-party comments regarding content); and (5) fear/ideology (of or against a potential threat/way of thinking, real or imagined). Of these five filters, three are primarily economic (ownership, sourcing and advertising), one is socio-cultural (flak) and one ideological (fear). When the PM was introduced in 1988, the ‘fear’ filter was referred to as ‘anti-communism’ (ideology) in the context of Western media analysis; however, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the official end of the Cold War in 1991, this filter was redefined to encompass any dominant fear determined by government and elites to suit a broader purpose and serve as a ‘national religion and control mechanism’ (Herman and Chomsky, 2008, p.2).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, key drivers for CCP communications include domestic instability and political legitimacy. My research will use two of the filters (flak and fear) from the PM to contribute to analysis, as they address a gap in the PEC theory and offer a more comprehensive explanation of the nature of and drivers behind the CCP’s messages, in particular the CCP’s focus on legitimacy and instability. Although the PM has generally been used to examine capitalist media institutions, as Hearn-Branaman (2009) notes, the model also helps explain the increasingly commercial nature of the CCP’s communications. Despite Read (2002, p.1) stating that the PM is an ‘ineffective model’ for media analysis’ that has been ‘overtaken by

⁹² Spelling here and forthwith, as per Mosco’s spelling, i.e. with a ‘z’ rather than a ‘s’.

events and outdated by technology’, he does acknowledge (ibid, p.14) that ‘the (intellectual) attraction may be to filters themselves rather than the model as a whole’. This thinking is reinforced by Hearn-Branaman (2009, 2015), who notes that the individual filters can add considerable value to the examination of the CCP’s communications model

3.1.1. China’s global communications and the Political Economy of Communication

This thesis adopts Mosco’s (2009, p.127) PEC model as an approach that accepts both the ‘abstract ideas’ (theory) that guide thinking and ‘concrete observations’ (practical data) to enable detailed analysis of the CCP’s key messages. As Mosco (2009, p.11) notes, the value of the PEC research is that it starts from the view that ‘social change is ubiquitous, that structures and institutions are constantly changing, and that it is therefore more useful to develop starting points that characterise processes rather than simply identify relevant institutions’. This is critical in developing comprehensive insight into the CCP’s messages, as affected on the one hand by historical and cultural precedents, and on the other hand by dynamic and changing social processes both domestically and globally. For example, over the 11-year period this research examines, changes that have impacted Chinese state media have included: global media expansion; an increase in control and censorship from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping; netizen influence; and bureaucratic restructuring.

To highlight the importance of a multi-faceted analytical approach, Mosco (2009, p.127) notes that ‘neither economics nor culture(s) alone provide the magic key to unlocking our understanding of communication’. To accommodate both economics and culture in his analysis, Mosco’s PEC model attends to both cultural and economic factors in relation to the commodification, spatialization and structuration of media. Mosco (2012, p.571) notes that ‘Marx makes clear that commodification and spatialization are intimately connected to the process of structuration, the development of social relations, including new forms of communication’. Mosco acknowledges the value of Marxist theory for understanding global communication, adding that it has a special pertinence when examining the communications of a communist state founded on Marxist-Leninist principles. As Mosco notes (2009, p.571), ‘it is not an exaggeration to conclude that the Marx of political economy and of cultural studies, form pillars of critical communication study’.

3.1.1.1. Commodification

The first component of the PEC, commodification, explores how acts of communication can become a product for profit. Graham (2007, p.238) notes that ‘the exercise of power and the

production of values are inextricable', that power is merely one form of value translated into another and that the more resources for communication that are made available in a political-economic system, the more effectively political economies of communication can operate in 'significant ways to produce new values' (ibid. p.239).

As China is increasingly influenced by a range of often conflicting domestic and global factors, the CCP's key messages are heavily driven by the need for social stability, which includes jobs and economic growth. Increased prosperity is critical to Xi Jinping's vision of the 'great rejuvenation of China' and CCP resources – including state-owned enterprises, the financial and private sector and the domestic and international media – play an important role in supporting Xi's 'China dream' of an increase in domestic prosperity and the rejuvenation of China as a regional power.

This growing global communications network is used to promote China abroad as an economic model to be emulated, an ideal trading partner, a culture to be admired and learned from, an appealing tourist destination and even an ideology and governance structure to be supported by countries – usually one-party states – that wish to eschew Western democratic models. Significant CCP media and other investment and engagement throughout Africa (Nelson, 2013) and the Pacific have seen increased framing by the CCP of China as part of the developing-country fraternity;⁹³ a worthy alternative economic and governance model to the West (Ramo, 2004);⁹⁴ and an advocate for greater democracy in world affairs and the need to reform the existing Western-led world order.

Commodification also captures key domestic influences, such as commercialisation, which has become increasingly important in the structure of China's domestic state media as well as communications aimed at foreign audiences deployed by China's global state media platforms. As Mosco (2009, p.130) observes, commodification is 'at work in (the) society as a whole': it penetrates 'communication processes and institutions', enabling 'improvements and contradictions within society' to influence all kinds of communicative practices. Communications have a special and particularly powerful role to play within commodification because they contain 'symbols and images whose meaning helps to shape consciousness' (Mosco, 2009, p.134).

⁹³ China, Pacific island countries lift ties to comprehensive strategic partnership, *Xinhua*, November 17, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/17/c_137612239.htm (accessed September 17, 2019).

⁹⁴ *The Beijing Consensus*, The Foreign Policy Centre (Ramo), November 5, 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130824150344/http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/244.pdf> (accessed August 21, 2013).

Since the CCP became the ruling party in 1949, the use of communication to shape domestic consciousness and control public opinion has been a political imperative (Bandurski, 2016). However, this is now increasingly focused also on attempts to influence the consciousness of foreign audiences and enhance China's international reputation, and 'woo the public, both at home and abroad, for its vested interests' (Chang and Lin, 2014, p.450). The information age has only 'advanced opportunities' (Mosco, 2009, p.12) for the commodification of the CCP's messages, while also deepening and extending the CCP's capacity to measure and monitor the effectiveness of its messaging and more effective packaging and repackaging of the CCP's communication content. This thesis considers how the CCP has commodified Chinese history and culture for its own interests and in order to present China to other countries as a valuable economic partner.

3.1.1.2. Spatialization

The second component of the PEC, spatialization, is defined as 'the process by which mass media and communication technology overcome the constraints of geographical space' (Mosco, 2009, p.128). Spatialization encompasses globalisation and the worldwide restructuring of industries, companies and other institutions. Mosco (2009, p.14) notes that content is turned into 'marketable commodities', including data that can be sold to companies, but that communication is not reducible to a single process. From the earliest development of political-economic thinking, spatialization has taken its place alongside commodification. In the mid-nineteenth century, Marx stated that 'capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier, thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport, the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it' (Mosco, 2012, p.571).

Spatialization thinking considers the CCP as a global entity and brand, including the impact of China's state media 'going global' (Li and Sligo, 2012); the messages used, in particular since the 2008 Beijing Olympics; and efforts to gain greater global influence. Indeed the 'going global' of Chinese media represents a unique state media communications' outreach model that now pervades the flows of information globally. In the early 2000s, state media outlets including *Xinhua*, *CCTV* and the *People's Daily* 'beefed up bureaus' and began 'refashioning themselves as international outlets' rather than as purely domestic news providers. *CCTV* was rebranded as *CGTN* in 2016, with a network of more than 70 overseas bureaus broadcasting in

five languages across more than 180 countries.⁹⁵ The new globalised CCP communications' approach is also designed to reach new and larger audiences via new mediums and with new messages (to be discussed in Chapter 4). Its aim is to promote and enhance China's status as a global political, military, cultural and economic business entity.

Although the PEC defines spatialization mostly in terms of the institutional extension of corporate power in the communications industry (Mosco, 2009, p.158), this thesis will look at the extension of state power globally through the communications industry. With CCP efforts, as mentioned earlier, to create an alternative voice to established global media entities (such as the *BBC* and *CNN*), a unique global precedent is being set with the extension of government reach through global communications. Mosco (2009) discusses corporate concentration that permits companies to better control the production, distribution and exchange of communication. However, in this research, the focus will be on how the CCP seeks to control the production, distribution and exchange of communication through state-owned global media and CCP dictated messaging.

The concept of spatialization is also conceptually helpful in drawing attention to another influencer of the CCP's communications, namely nationalism. The CCP has used nationalism in its global media campaign. This is by no means unique as countries use national identity and all of the emotion or sentiment it conjures up to be more globally competitive on various levels. China's 'massive mobilisation of nationalism' has been in the service of winning global competition for markets (Mosco 2009, p.181). However, for the CCP, nationalism is a double-edged weapon. Hearn-Branaman (2009, p.135) notes that many China observers distinguish between a 'highly developed sense' of popular nationalism and state-sanctioned nationalism in China. With more than 800 million Chinese citizens online,⁹⁶ the threat of heightened nationalism mobilising rapidly via the Internet is a matter of serious concern for the CCP, as sensitive foreign policy issues – especially those regarding Japan or the U.S. – have the potential to trigger massive and volatile demonstrations (Shirk, 2007).

Mihelj (2011, pp.1–2) observes that for some 'the vision of a global future is a threatening prospect, and one that has to be countered with a renewed loyalty to the nation, [while] for others, globalization simply means a new set of opportunities for nation-building and national promotion, this time on a world-wide scale'. Mihelj (ibid., p.18) also states that 'nationalism is an internally

⁹⁵ China and the world: how Beijing spreads the message, *Financial Times*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/f5d00a86-3296-11e8-b5bf-23cb17fd1498> (accessed January 26, 2019).

⁹⁶ China Focus: China has 802 million internet users *Xinhua*, August 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/21/c_137405424.htm (accessed September 4, 2019).

contested vision and division of the world, which sees the social world as fundamentally divided with relevance structured along national lines' and that 'nationalism is also a principle of legitimation, which holds that in order to achieve legitimacy, an institution needs to act as a representative of the nation, or be otherwise devoted primarily to serving the nation and its interests'. This principle of legitimation is particularly evident in the issue of the East China and South China Seas territorial disputes (to be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5-8).

3.1.1.3. Structuration

The third component, structuration, is defined as 'the process of creating social relations, mainly those organised around social class, gender and race' (Mosco 2009, p.185). Mosco (2009) uses structuration to examine how structures are constituted out of human agency and how human agencies and social structures are influenced by each other. Specifically, he addresses the roles of business and government institutions in establishing a social structure or context; the role of human agency (the range of practices and activities occurring within societal structures); and what forms of social action can take place within 'the constraints and the opportunities provided by the overarching social structure within which action happens' (Mosco, 2009, p.16). According to Mosco (2009, p.16), 'research based on structuration helps to balance a tendency in political-economic analysis to concentrate on structures, typically business and government, by incorporating the ideas of human agency, social process, and social practice'. This reflects the dynamic and often competing internal and external social influences on the CCP's global state media, which were particularly evident in the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The CCP's harmonious torch relay theme (described as the 'Journey of Harmony') was contradicted by global images of the behaviour of Chinese security officials,⁹⁷ a violent crackdown in Tibet and state-sponsored Chinese protests en route that aimed to overwhelm human rights campaigners.⁹⁸

Structuration also highlights how classes are defined and the role they can play in changing societal structures. Many academics and media commentators have identified China's rising middle class as potentially posing perhaps the greatest influence and threat to the CCP's foreign policies and messaging. Sparks (2012, p.65) for instance, as mentioned earlier, believes that the embrace of consumption by the Chinese middle class can certainly be seen as 'one side of a devil's bargain' in which political power is deferred to the CCP in return for increased

⁹⁷ Torch guards complaints reported, *BBC*, April 25, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7367722.stm (accessed July 23, 2015).

⁹⁸ Chinese rally in Australia for troubled torch, *Reuters*, April 24, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-33221420080424> (accessed July 23, 2008).

prosperity. According to Chinese online literary commentator and blogger Han Han, ‘most mainland Chinese were so preoccupied with making money they didn’t care about censorship’ (cited in Davies, 2012, p.141). This highlights the economic pressure on the CCP to ensure continued economic growth that enhances the livelihoods of Chinese citizens in order to maintain domestic stability and preserve the political legitimacy of the CCP. This ‘pressure’ is not unique to the CCP, with fellow notionally communist state Vietnam, also having experienced a shift in regime legitimacy from ‘socialist ideology’ to ‘performance legitimacy’ (Thayer, 2017, p.183).

Structuration helps us explain the influence on the CCP’s communications of geographically dispersed and socio-economically diverse domestic agents. As mentioned earlier, this includes a shift in China’s societal make up due to more Chinese citizens with increased wealth, education and access to technology and information. The structure of the Party’s propaganda model has evolved in the past decade to incorporate the influence of domestic social agents and market forces and develop a form of governance that Brady (2009b, p.434) describes as ‘popular authoritarianism’. However, the CCP media model is still underpinned by censorship and the threat of punitive action, particularly under Xi, ranging from media licence withdrawal to imprisonment for those who do not adhere to CCP policy regarding certain types of media content (Xu and Albert, 2017).

Structuration also includes the concept of societal hegemony, which Mosco (2009, p.206) defines as being ‘situated between ideology [as a misrepresentation of social reality to advance specific interests and maintain hierarchies of power] and values’ (denoting shared social norms connecting the wide range of differently placed people and strata in society). These concepts reflect structural versus agency tension within a self-defined communist ideology, increasingly challenged by global norms of accountability and public scrutiny and the presumed universal sanctity of civil rights, media freedoms and political and judicial transparency. Structuration also includes the notion of traditions (Mosco, 2009, p.206), defined as a powerful instrument in the construction of hegemony that ‘roots people in a past that achieves a mythic status’. This reflects one of the key drivers of CCP messaging: the CCP is framed as a guardian, not just of the modern-day Chinese nation-state, in which it seeks to defend China’s ‘territorial sovereignty, promote national integration, as well as engendering social economic developments’ (Zhao, 2012, p.150); it is also frequently presented as the custodian of China’s ‘5,000-year-old civilisation’ narrative.

The PEC brings an emphasis on the nature of power to the structure–agency dualism, and it is indeed the drive for power (to hold and extend political control) that heavily influences the CCP use of propaganda. As Mosco (2009, p.209) notes, ‘structures constrain individuals by using economic, political and cultural power’; however, the PEC also highlights the use of media and technology by people to increase their own power and shape social structures. This is demonstrated in the case of an increasingly active public social media presence in China that is now acknowledged as having some influence over the CCP’s foreign policy rhetoric. Over the past decade, CCP officials increasingly pay attention to online chatter and opinion polls in order to incorporate relevant public moods into policies and rhetoric, particularly regarding sensitive domestic and global topics – with the Internet, in many instances, playing a leading role in setting the news and public debate agenda of the entire Chinese media system, facilitating ‘bottom-up communication’ (Zhao, 2012, p.160). Examples include increasing Chinese community intolerance of CCP officials disregarding community concerns on issues such as pollution, bribery, cover-ups and ‘procedural injustices’ (Whyte, 2015, p.9). This highlights the potential for tension and influence between structure, the CCP model of communications, and agency – for example, potentially volatile public opinion as a disruptive social force.

3.1.2. China’s global communications and the Propaganda Model

Although the PEC can be used to examine the key elements of the CCP’s global communications, to more comprehensively analyse another driving force behind CCP communications – fear of instability and loss of political legitimacy – an additional theoretical lens is required. Herman and Chomsky’s PM – in particular, two of the individual filters it proposes – addresses the gaps in the PEC model’s ability to comprehensively examine the CCP’s global communications. As Hearn-Branaman (2009, p.120) notes, although the PEC model helps to expose several of the key drivers behind the CCP’s messaging, it is not comprehensive enough to explain them all: ‘the PM’s analytic dimensions differ in several important ways from those put forward by traditional media concepts’. The PM’s focus on issues of fear and the influence of political parallelism and state intervention make it useful for analysing key themes of China’s unique model of global communications. This includes messaging such as ‘harmony’ and the emphasis on stability, required for continued critical economic development. This also encompasses CCP narratives on advocating for greater international inclusiveness, a ‘better world order’ and a ‘shared common destiny’ (to be explored later).

The PM's first three filters – ownership, advertising and sourcing – although potentially useful for explaining other aspects of CCP's evolving communications structure, are not considered for analysis in this thesis. However, to emphasise the value of the relevant filters, I will briefly explain why these three filters are less relevant. Regarding the first filter, 'ownership', as Zhao (2012, p.153) notes, the 'Chinese state's legacies in promoting public ownership and its professed commitment to socialism have posed an ideological limit on privatization ... and continue to restrict private capital, let alone the privatising of existing media outlets' (i.e. ownership of key global state media outlets is with the CCP not a for-profit company). The second filter, 'advertising', which refers to the licence to do business involving dependence on advertising and media becoming more accountable to advertisers, has a degree of relevance and might have a greater impact on Chinese media in the future as commercial interests continue to compete with Party priorities. However, this dimension is still less relevant to the leading, global Chinese state media outlets and beyond the scope of this thesis.

Zhao notes that 'although the post-Mao Chinese state recognizes the media as incorporating both propaganda organs and profit-making enterprises, it remains wary of private capital because there is no guarantee that private news outlets will not turn their back against it and support oppositional forces, especially during times of political crisis' (2012, pp.153–54). The third filter, 'sourcing', is also not relevant because the majority of referencing still comes from Party sources or pro-China sources (usually Western academics or foreign government officials) reiterating the CCP's preferred messages. As Hearn-Branaman's (2009, p.130) case study on Chinese state media reports (*Xinhua*) of Hu Jintao's visit to Africa revealed, 98.7% of sources were from Chinese government and non-oppositional government sources, compared to 61% in similar coverage by *Reuters*.

In contrast, the other two individual filters – 'flak' (criticism) and 'fear' – can provide useful insights and cover the shortcomings of the PEC as a single analytical model. For example, the impact of 'flak' is demonstrated by the CCP's increasing sensitivity to both domestic and global opinion. It also reveals the tension between different drivers impacting the CCP's communications, particularly regarding sensitive issues, including the wealth of senior CCP members, unrest in Tibet, the treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang and territorial disputes. As mentioned earlier, the fifth filter, originally defined by Herman and Chomsky as 'anti-communism', was revised after the Cold War to be referred to as a dominant 'fear', usually based on a government's 'ideology'. I think this filter offers the most insightful explanation of the CCP's key messages, which many (Shirk, 2007; Brady, 2009b; Johnston, 2013) regard as

being primarily driven by efforts to maintain the perception of ideological consistency and fear of social instability and loss of political legitimacy and control. The ‘fear’ filter also explains the longstanding propaganda approach to ensuring that the Chinese public fears ‘the other’ (e.g. the foreign West, the Japanese) and believes the CCP alone can protect and defend China’s integrity, core interests and values, including culture, economy, nation-state and civilisation. As Graham (2007, p.230) notes, ‘each cultural group has its vested values’ and created objects that ‘arouse[s] hostility’ and are ‘presented as a menace to as many of these values as possible’, with values able to increase by ‘the object’ being made to ‘appear as a stumbling block to their realization’. President Xi Jinping’s introduction of the ‘China dream’ in 2013 is closely aligned with this concept of ‘increasing values’, as well as the potential arousal of hostility towards those who stand in the way of an aspirational ‘China dream’, part of which involved the ‘rejuvenation’ of China to a status of regional power.

Graham (2007, p.231) also notes that the propagandist must learn how to make ‘an old principle apply to a new idea’, and there is an increasing emphasis on the role of communication in the production of values and power and a strong emphasis on the relationship between economic and political power. Since the 1980s, the legitimacy of the CCP has been increasingly tied to economic growth (Triffitt, 2013)⁹⁹ and is confronted by ongoing external and internal issues that threaten to expose and challenge the legitimacy of the CCP. This highlights the CCP’s focus on explaining away the contradictions of current actions, such as declaring China as a ‘peace-loving’ nation notwithstanding its controversial maritime construction in the South China Sea (Figure 13) and allegations of sinking fishing vessels belonging to other contesting parties, such as Vietnam.¹⁰⁰

As mentioned earlier, the CCP also seeks to explain ideological shifts as reflecting the need for the Party to adapt suit the current environment. This is evident in formulations frequently used in CCP official speeches, publications and state media reports such as ‘due to the trend of the times’ or ‘to suit historical conditions’. For example, as referenced in the CCP’s *China’s Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation*: ‘Multi-polarity and economic globalization have

⁹⁹ Author discusses China’s ‘age of radical modernity’, *ABC PM*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/author-discusses-chinas-age-of-radical-modernity/5145288?pfmredir=ms&pfm=sm> (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Chinese ship rams, sinks Vietnamese fishing boat in Vietnam’s waters, *Tuoi Tre News*, May 26, 2014, [tps://tuoitrenews.vn/society/19897/chinese-ship-rams-and-sinks-vietnamese-fishing-boat-in-vietnams-waters](https://tuoitrenews.vn/society/19897/chinese-ship-rams-and-sinks-vietnamese-fishing-boat-in-vietnams-waters) (accessed April 17, 2019).

deepened ... countries have become more interdependent with their interests more intertwined; and peace, development and win-win cooperation have become the trend of our time.’¹⁰¹

By using the Propaganda Model to complement the PEC for the purposes of analysis, this thesis seeks to examine how ‘fear’ can influence the impact of ‘flak’. This means looking at how a one-party state such as China may respond differently to criticism of the government compared to a democratic and open society, where public criticism and discussion are often an integral part of society. It also highlights how criticism of the Chinese government (from parties within or outside of China) plays out locally and globally, producing tension between domestic and international influences on the CCP’s messaging. For example, regarding territorial disputes, the CCP needs to publicly play the non-compromising strong hand, especially with regards to



Figure 13: The CCP’s peace-loving narrative is contradicted by controversial territorial actions, such as building military installations in disputed South China Sea waters.¹⁰²

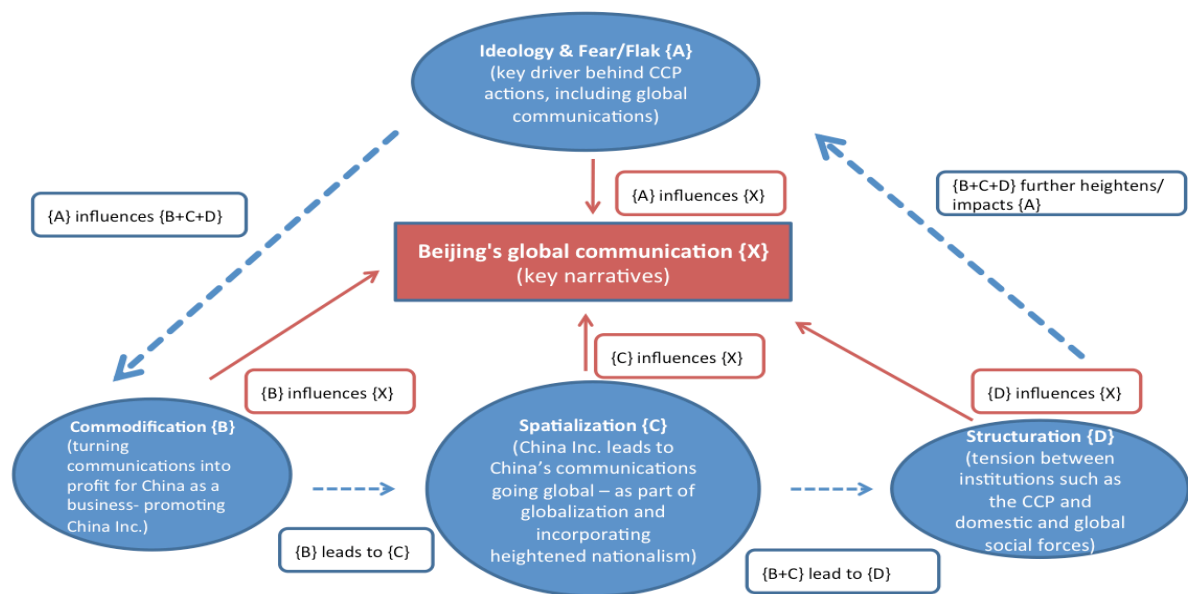
China’s relations with Japan. As noted by Xiao (2013, p.58), ‘when ordinary Chinese people with strong views on the Diaoyu issue are angry, no Chinese leader dares to be seen as ‘soft’ towards Japan’.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *China’s Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation*, April 2, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/t1143406.shtml (accessed November 2, 2019).

¹⁰² China building runway in disputed South China Sea islands, *Time*, April 17, 2015, <https://time.com/3826713/china-building-airstrip-disputed-south-china-sea-islands/> (accessed May 10, 2016).

3.1.3. Summary

Mosco (1996) notes that although the PEC cannot provide a comprehensive explanation of all communication activity, it can explain certain issues well and provide context for most research questions in communication. Combining Mosco's PEC (2009) and Herman and Chomsky's PM (2008) provides for a better account of the interplay between related structures and the actions occurring within these structures. These structures include the CCP's 'ownership' of China's propaganda-based communications system and the historical development of this system; the 'spatially transcending' nature of and the institutional structures that facilitate globalisation; and the social and institutional structures within which agents, whether the increasingly vocal domestic social groups or global and domestic geopolitical players operate (Figure 14). In my research into China's global communications I will use a combined theoretical approach, as it reflects the uniqueness of a CCP model that merges capitalist market-based influence with a traditional propaganda structure.



To achieve better understanding of CCP communications, a relevant communications theory is required. China has a unique communication system that is primarily driven by the need for political legitimacy and influenced by a diverse range of domestic and global forces (social, political, economic and cultural). Existing communications theories are not able to comprehensively examine this system and explain in detail the underlying influences. However, parts of the Propaganda Model ({A}) and parts of the Political Economy of Communication theory ({B}+{C}+{D}), combined, are able to explain Beijing's global narratives (X).

Figure 14: China's global communications theoretical framework.

Sparks (2012, p.61) states:

[T]he Chinese media are still, as they always have been, very much concerned with propaganda and each media organisation was and is responsible to the appropriate party committee. While this narrow focus may be justified, there is clearly more to be said about the Chinese news media than this (traditional) dominant approach is prepared to recognise.

Synthesising Mosco's PEC interpretation and Herman and Chomsky's PM enables a comprehensive examination and analysis of the CCP's global communications, in particular its key messages and drivers. In particular, I am interested in the critical impact of globalisation and commercialisation on the CCP's messaging now, more so than in the past. This combined theoretical framework has been designed for its pertinence to the themes explored in this research – namely, the analysis of specific CCP key messages as essentially state-controlled propaganda, influenced by structural, domestic and global factors (economic and political) and the tensions generated when these factors are incompatible.

Neither theory on its own can explain all elements of the 'China story' as the CCP's grand narrative. However, a synthesised perspective enables consideration of all key aspects of the constantly evolving nature of the CCP's global communications. The combination of these two theories, delivers a conceptual framework that can analyse, in particular, what drives CCP messaging and how and when they are used and manipulated. In particular, it highlights the unique nature of the CCP's global communications and how the CCP works to address conflicting global and domestic interests and, as noted by Barmé (2013, p.xvi), the 'contradictions' between what is being said and done by the CCP.

3.2. Methodology

My methodological approach aims to clearly identify specific CCP key messages, collect substantial data showing usage trends over an 11-year period and produce meaningful findings that explain these trends.

The CCP's grand narrative and the key messages that contribute to it seek to present China as a powerful yet peace-loving nation with a truly unique set of characteristics, against the frequently cited '5,000 years' of Chinese history. These key messages also seek to construct ideological and rhetorical continuity between different periods of the CCP's rule from Mao to Xi Jinping's current leadership. This is done in a way that attempts to reduce criticism of the Party and preserve the legitimacy of previous leaders while adapting the Party message to the 'current environment' or, as mentioned above, the 'trend of the times'. Since 1949, state media has played a critical role in propagating these key messages, particularly the official news agency, *Xinhua* – as mentioned in Chapter 1, the CCP's oldest, largest and most influential media organisation.

Founded in 1931, and known as the *Red China News Agency* until 1937, *Xinhua* has been described as the ‘eyes and tongue’¹⁰³ of the Party, for observing what is important and communicating key information. *Xinhua*, along with the *People’s Daily*, is at the top of the official state media hierarchy, and for this reason will be my primary source (Figure 15). Although I will also use other state media outlets, including the *People’s Daily* and *China Daily*, as sources for referencing key message material, my usage tracking will only focus on *Xinhua*. This is due to its extensive reach but also, most importantly, to its primacy as the central source of CCP messaging and – especially when it comes to issues regarded as sensitive by the CCP – as the primary source of article content for other state media outlets.

3.2.1. The official hierarchy of Party state media

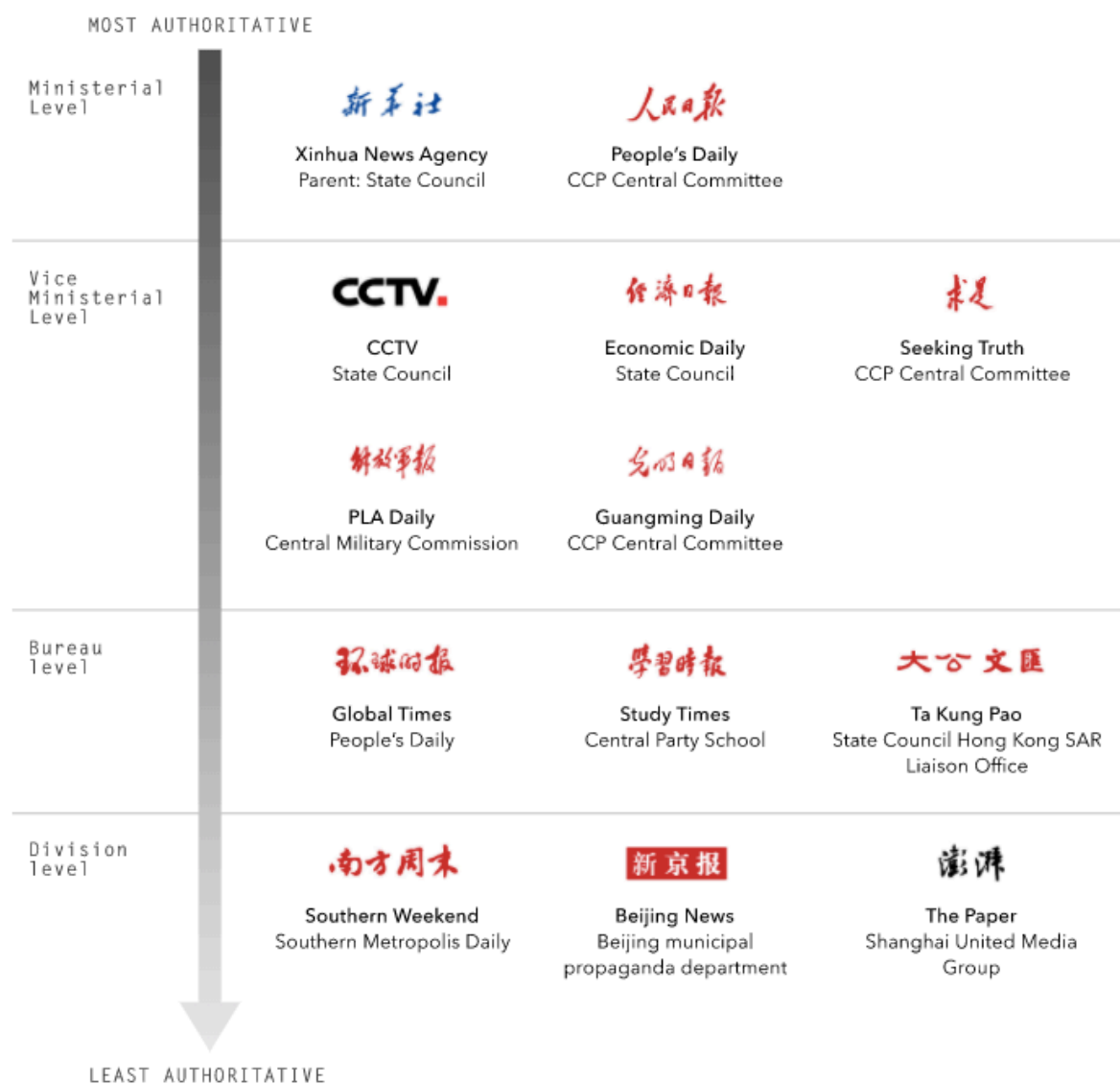


Figure 15: The official hierarchy of Party-state media (Source: Ma and Thomas, 2018).

¹⁰³ China's government news chief 'missing' in Britain, *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/7913013/Chinas-government-news-chief-missing-in-Britain.html> (accessed April 7, 2020).

I also considered using the *China Daily* as a primary source, as it is a prominent state-controlled English-language voice of the CCP to the outside world. The *China Daily* also has dedicated foreign-facing (Western-audience targeting) editions such as the European and U.S. editions (along with Asian and African editions). It also has an increasingly prevalent paid advertising news supplement, *China Watch*, that appears in news format (Figure 16) in key Western media outlets – for example, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* in the U.S., the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Daily Telegraph* across Europe and in Australia's Fairfax newspapers – *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *The Age*.



Figure 16: *China Watch* supplement in major Australian newspapers.¹⁰⁴

My initial thinking regarding analytical approach and methodology, was to use the *China Daily* as my primary source, to select a topical foreign policy issue and to examine how CCP messaging was used in reference to the issue. As a case study, I looked at the East China Sea territorial dispute – in particular, the declaration in November 2013 by the CCP of an Air

¹⁰⁴ Media Watch, ABC, May 27 2016, https://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/1619_chinawatch.jpg (accessed January 16, 2018).

Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ)¹⁰⁵ over Japanese-administered islands in the East China Sea, known as the Senkaku Islands in Japanese and Diaoyu Islands in Chinese. This resulted in some useful findings, which I will discuss in Chapter 4. However, much of the content was actually from *Xinhua* and the more closely I examined messaging, the more I discovered that certain CCP messaging was used repetitively and bundled across a range of issues. Through this, I realised that more meaningful data could actually be collated by focusing on the specific messages themselves (as opposed to focusing on one particular issue). I then shifted my approach to identify and focus on specific key message usage over time using *Xinhua* as my primary source. I also decided to examine other CCP key foreign policy platforms, such as major foreign policy speeches and publications, to collate a list of frequently used CCP messages.

The surge in the CCP's global communications outreach from 2009 has attracted significant academic, media and political analysis (Zhao, 2013; Barmé, 2013). To date, however, there has been limited empirical analysis of the programmatic approach used by the CCP's communications, in particular the messaging used. The identification of key messages and the analysis of their usage in a leading CCP news agency is my attempt to address this gap.

3.2.2. Track-able media content

In conducting data collection (*Xinhua*'s message use) and analysis (context) and then making connections and categorisations (into broader narrative themes), I determined that the principles of Grounded Theory would be used for my methodology approach, with its focus on making comparisons and asking questions (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Grounded Theory is an inductive research methodology that involves the systematic generation of theory from systematic analysis of data. It is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. Primary data (*Xinhua* content) will be examined by combining qualitative and quantitative methods and through content analysis that looks at trends in message usage over a defined period.

Data will be collected from technical and non-technical literature, including: (1) media (English language, CCP state media and major foreign media outlets); (2) Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs material (including policy announcements, speeches, press conference transcripts, white papers, CCP Five-Year Plans and other statements); and (3) other publications (including

¹⁰⁵ China justifies its air defense identification zone, *China Daily*, December 3, 2013, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/03/content_17149589.htm (accessed July 26, 2014).

academic papers, global opinion surveys and think-tank/research centre reports and articles). At times, where relevant, reference will also be made to other media platforms to emphasise certain points. This data will be ‘cross-tabulated’ with information from non-media publications (academic and other journals) to enable message comparisons and contrasts to be made, including changes in use, evolution and manipulation over time, context and timings.

Although global television and radio are mediums that have received considerable investment from the CCP and are an important part of China’s global communications, they will not be used as my primary sources for two main reasons. First, consistent tracking of content over an extended period (i.e. 11 years) is difficult due to older material being harder to access and content often being removed online after a certain time (e.g. a few months). Second, the ability to access and analyse content is more limited as there are no adequate databases that enable contrastive analysis of this type of content over an extended period.

Only soft-copy material will be reviewed as hard-copy newspapers are more difficult to access and analyse over an extended period. Hard copies usually only have one edition per day, whereas online editions can have updates and variations of the same story published online within a few hours, enabling more consistent and better analysis regarding key message usage variations over an extended and defined period (i.e. 2008 to 2018). Having personally conducted analysis of hard-copy vernacular and English-language CCP state media newspapers (including *China Daily* and *People’s Daily*) while living in China in 1995–1997, I have direct experience of how challenging this can be, especially trying to capture and record data and to identify communication patterns.

Social media was also initially considered as a data source for looking at key message usage. Over a period of 24 months (2013–2015), I tracked key Chinese media Twitter accounts, including *Xinhua*, *CCTV (CGTN)* and *China Daily* and found that tweeting was inconsistent (e.g. periods of limited or no tweeting followed by a flurry of tweets) and often consisted of more populist social news topics, such as quirky animal images, celebrities and light-hearted commentary (Figure 17). Social media (such as Twitter) are still relatively new compared to website news outlets and I determined them not to be a viable source of meaningful and measurable data analysis over a set timeframe (i.e. several years).



Figure 17: *Xinhua* tweet.

3.2.3. Coding key messages

To discover how, when and where messages are used and have evolved, *Xinhua News Agency* (China) searches were conducted over a set period. This aimed to ensure the amount of data collated was manageable yet substantial enough to make robust observations based on data from an accessible, meaningful outlet (i.e. *Xinhua*). The analysis of data involved the following three stages (Figure 18).

1. **Open coding** – breaking down and analysing words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, developing their properties and dimensions and identifying concepts, events and incidents. This involved the identification of key messaging used by the CCP and the consideration of the broader context in which they were used.
2. **Axial coding** – making connections, between major categories or between a category and sub-categories by examining under what conditions and contexts an event had occurred and by examining the consequences of any action/ interaction. For example, what smaller components made up the grand narrative of the ‘China story’, how did they interact and under what circumstances.
3. **Selective coding** – selecting the core category and systematically integrating and relating it to other categories (this included looking at how messages were combined and contributed to a broader narrative).



Figure 18: Sequential guidelines of Grounded Theory.¹⁰⁶

3.2.4. Cross tabulation – ‘other activity’

To enhance the coding process, cross tabulation was conducted by examining ‘other activity’. This refers to consideration of major activities and events taking place globally and/or domestically in each particular year that may have influenced specific message usage. Sources for ‘other activity’ included media, academic and policy commentary (i.e. think-tank/research centre reports and articles). This will be displayed in specific detail in Chapters 5 to 8. Cross tabulation also assisted in addressing the questions: what are the underlying drivers behind these messages, and what individual elements impact them?

3.3. Data analysis approach

Analysis of key message data was conducted by using the media search database Factiva. Factiva was selected as it is a globally recognised media search engine and a primary research tool for post graduates undertaking media analysis at Monash University. Using Factiva, I examined *Xinhua News Agency (China)* online English-language articles over the 2008–2018 period that included defined key messages. This 11-year period was chosen as it commences with China’s global ‘coming out’ party at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, followed by the 2009 introduction of the CCP’s ‘going global’ media policy; includes the important period of leadership change (from Hu to Xi); and captures distinct shifts in messaging from China as an ‘emerging’ regional power to an ‘emerged’ global power.

Key messages were inserted into the Factiva search engine along with the word Chin* (to capture references to both China and Chinese). Key search words were also modified to capture slight variations in use – for example, Harmon* (with an asterisk) to capture ‘harmony’ as well as ‘harmonious’. In Factiva, the use of the wildcard asterisk enables the capturing of those

¹⁰⁶ *Grounded theory: Simple definitions and examples*, (n.d.), <https://www.statisticshowto.com/grounded-theory/> (accessed January 9, 2020).

particular letters as well as any additional lettering to a particular word. Articles also often contained references to more than one topic and had more than one key message. To address this, I counted only the primary topic (usually introduced in the heading and/ or first paragraph) and the primary message, which was usually the first key message used in the article. For example, if an article was about China–Latin American economic relations being ‘win-win’, I counted the article as a Latin America ‘other region’ topic with ‘win-win’ as the key message, even if the article later on also referred to ASEAN relations and China being a ‘peace-loving’ nation.

It is also important here to clarify the encoding process I undertook regarding Taiwan. With academic literature and media commentary generally acknowledging Taiwan as an independent nation-state, but the CCP referring to it as part of China, I needed to decide if I would classify it as ‘internal’ (domestic) or ‘external’ (international, outside of China). Given this thesis is about Chinese state media and messaging created and used by the CCP, I classified Taiwan as ‘internal’, simply because it was the way the ‘sender’ (i.e. the CCP) referred to Taiwan.

Using the aforementioned approach, in my next chapter, I will examine the key messaging most predominantly used by the CCP.

Chapter 4. The ‘China Story’ Sub-narratives

4.1. Introduction

Within the context of the ‘China story’ grand narrative, key messages are used individually or bundled together by the CCP to express a key theme and create a sub-narrative (次叙述). Open coding was used in this chapter to identify the specific key messages and sub-narratives used by the CCP, and the extent to which they were used in *Xinhua* over the 11-year period. This examination will then enable me to select a manageable and meaningful dataset with which to delve more deeply into the CCP’s messaging as Chinese state media ‘go global’.

4.2. Context

CCP messaging since 1949, like the various policy platforms and political narratives of other governments around the world, has evolved over time in accordance with developments in domestic and international circumstances. However, unlike many other governments, the CCP has needed to continually legitimise past and present actions and to adhere to previous narratives. This has meant that where there are obvious contradictions between the CCP’s past and present policies and perspectives, the messaging has ignored or suppressed these contradictions. For example, the CCP’s transformation from a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party promoting class struggle and international revolution, to a party-state champion of market globalisation, is simply treated as an inevitable development without any real explanation.

As stated by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the UNGA annual General Debate in 2018, ‘[a]ll countries should adapt to the general trend of economic globalization, and ensure that it moves towards a more open, inclusive ... and win-win direction to truly deliver benefits to every country and everyone. International trade is complementary and ... China is acting to ... safeguard the free trade system.’¹⁰⁷

Despite having benefited significantly from Western-led capitalist economic structures and stability (Li, 2013), the CCP continues at times to criticise these structures. This presents an ongoing challenge for the CCP as it tries to maintain consistency and domestic credibility of its

¹⁰⁷ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi attends the general debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and delivers a speech, September 29, 2018 https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1601122.shtml (accessed January 9, 2019).

own ideological narrative while also modernising its approach and positioning itself as a champion of global trade. These challenges are occurring at a time of heightened international attention to developments in China. Xi Jinping, as China's most globally prominent leader and 'Storyteller-in-Chief' (Ma and Thomas, 2018 paragraph 37), has actively sought to expand China's presence on the global stage. He has frequently delivered keynote addresses, announced agreements and participated in important international meetings concerning global economic development and other related issues. Xi's speech at Davos (January 2017) championing free trade in the face of signs of greater U.S. protectionism, was widely noted at the time. Chinese state media have covered China's global outreach attentively, from human interest stories such as Chinese personnel joining the international rescue efforts to free a junior football team trapped in caves in Thailand (June 2018),¹⁰⁸ to the creation of regional security organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (with Central Asian states) and the establishment in April 2018 of a new Chinese international aid agency, the State International Development Cooperation Agency.¹⁰⁹

Although the emphasis of the CCP's key messaging has shown some variation in the decades since 1949, there has still been a degree of consistency in the themes used by the CCP, despite significant social, cultural and economic changes in China. As Pugsley (2006) notes, the former reliance on Mao Zedong Thought has been replaced with consumerist reproductions of nationalistic ideology, such as China's rise being described as an economic 'win-win', which refers to the mutual benefits to be gained by countries partnering with China, especially in trade or investment. Wang (2011; 2003) and Varrall (2015a) show that traditional narratives, such as those associated with China as a victim ('century of humiliation') are still being used, although in more tempered ways. Xi's comments to Politburo members in 2014 (Brady, 2015a, p.55) demonstrated a blend of these traditional and more recent CCP messages: 'China should be portrayed as a civilized country featuring a rich history ... China should also be known as a responsible country that advocates peace and development, safeguards international fairness and justice, makes a positive contribution to humanity, and as a socialist country which is open and friendly to the world'.

As outlined in Chapter 1, there are several themes the CCP has tried to project since 1949. These include the portrayal of China as an historical victim of foreign imperialism on the one

¹⁰⁸ Chinese rescue experts to join search for Thai footballers lost in cave, *China Daily*, June 29, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201806/29/WS5b360bd1a3103349141dfd2c.html> (accessed January 16, 2019).

¹⁰⁹ China unveils int'l development cooperation agency, *Xinhua*, April 18, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/18/c_137120544.htm (accessed September 16, 2018).

hand; and on the other hand, as socialist; anti-hegemonic; developing; and an international cooperator. Through coding, analysing words and phrases, identifying and examining concepts, and integrating categories across the current literature and in the key CCP platforms, I was able to identify specific key messages and then group them into key themes. These key messages, often bundled together, are as follow.

1. China is a *peace-loving* nation (热爱和平的国家) that supports a policy of *non-interference* in the affairs of other countries (不干涉政策) and committed to a *harmonious* society and world (和谐社会) with greater international *inclusiveness* (包容性).
2. China is committed to a new *world order* (国际/世界新秩序) and a shared *common destiny* (命运共同体).
3. China believes in *mutual trust* (互相信任) and *mutual respect* (互相尊重) between countries and that China's rise is *win-win* (双赢) and of *mutual benefit* (互惠互利) to China and other countries.
4. China is committed to greater international *equality* (平等) and *democracy in international affairs* (国际事务中的民主).
5. China was and continues to be a *victim* of foreign aggression (外国侵略的受害者).

As 13 key messages are too many to analyse in specific detail within the scope of this thesis, I selected nine to do raw data analysis of and then, based on those findings, selected six as the primary focus of my thesis in Chapters 5 to 8. I did this in order to keep data amounts manageable and analysis meaningful.

Considering both quantitative and qualitative considerations, the selection of these six will be based on the following criteria:

- (1) Featured prominently in the CCP's foreign policy communications (i.e. in major CCP speeches, state media articles and policy papers).
- (2) Usage trend is significant (i.e. major increases or decreases).
- (3) Data collation is specific and manageable (i.e. directly attributable to the CCP's context and usage of the term).

Based on these criteria, I was able to determine that the following three messages presented technical difficulties for analysis:

- (1) **Victim** – despite the literature highlighting the importance of the ‘victim’ narrative to the CCP, given the generic nature of the term – e.g. being linked to natural disasters, both domestic (e.g. the 2008 Sichuan earthquake,) and international (e.g. the 2011 tsunami and earthquake in Japan) – I consider much of the raw data likely to be related to natural disasters and not CCP’s foreign policy. For example, in 2008 there were n:1738 ‘victim’ references in relation to the Sichuan earthquake, which dropped to n:1048 in 2009 then rose again to n:1228 in 2010 (Qinghai earthquake).
- (2) **Equality and democracy** – despite the prevalence of both messages in the CCP’s foreign policy rhetoric, both also have generic natures that can be linked with a range of other countries (e.g. existing and emerging democracies and processes, and CCP criticism of) and circumstances (e.g. worker rights, gender issues).

Although these three are all worthy of more detailed research, for the purposes of data analysis in this thesis, I decided to focus on less ambiguous and more easily defined data sets.

Let me illustrate this with an example. Initially, I had considered the term ‘mutual benefit’, as a message worth exploring as it had previously formed part of the vocabulary of the 1954 Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, but is now often used quite differently, in the same context as the term ‘win-win’. Although usage of the term ‘mutual benefit’ increased overall, it was relatively consistent from 2008 (n:326) to 2018 (n:534), and the increase and prevalence is less than the significant increase in ‘win-win’ usage over the same period (from n:330 in 2008 to n:1210 in 2018). Consequently, given the similar contexts in which the two messages are used, I chose to focus on ‘win-win’ as it is more likely to offer meaningful insights.

For these reasons, I will focus on developing relevant data on the following nine key messages (before reducing the list again to six).

- (1) Win-win
- (2) Inclusive (inclusiveness)
- (3) Harmony (harmonious)
- (4) Non-interference
- (5) Mutual trust
- (6) Mutual respect
- (7) Common destiny
- (8) World Order
- (9) Peace.

4.3. 'The Chinese art of bundling'

Looking at key message usage over the 11-year period, with consideration of significant domestic and global complexities, changes and challenges the CCP has faced during this time, I was also able to identify a CCP trend I call the 'Chinese art of bundling'. I define this as where a particular sub-narrative/ key message is connected with another sub-narrative or key message(s) in a particular speech or media article. This is done even if there may be some contradictory elements, such as when *Xinhua* reports on the East and South China Sea territorial disputes, for example, bundling together the assertion of 'non-interference in the domestic affairs of China and protecting territorial sovereignty' messaging with 'China as a peace-loving nation' messaging. For example, in an article on Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi's speech at the UNGA annual General Debate in 2012, the *China Daily* reported: 'While asserting China's firm position on upholding its territorial sovereignty, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said on Thursday that Beijing will continue to promote peace, development and cooperation.'¹¹⁰

These messages are often used and grouped in different ways depending on broader themes and contexts. Below are examples of how they can be categorised in terms of meaning and my combined PEC and PM theoretical framework (Table 2). This blend of messaging reflects, among other things, the significant emphasis the CCP places on aiming for continuity of both narrative and ideology, as well as, at times, offsetting more assertive language with more conciliatory wording (e.g. 'defending territory' and 'peace-loving'). Importantly, it is this historical context that also needs to be understood when looking at the CCP's current message usage and trends, in order to understand that many of these messages are not short-term political slogans (similar to election campaigns in countries such as Australia and the U.S.) but, rather, messages that have been extensively considered and often deployed over decades.

As mentioned in Chapters 1 to 3, from an analytical perspective, messaging can also be grouped in accordance with the broader political-economic factors that can influence these messages, examples of which are as follows:

Economic objectives and commercialisation – China's approach to commercial and economic development is an integral part of the CCP's global communications. An emphasis is generally placed on China as a stable and reliable trading and financial partner whose rapid economic rise has been and will continue to be of benefit to all. In other words, China poses no

¹¹⁰ China to continue promoting peace, development, *China Daily*, September 28, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/28/content_15791581.htm (accessed September 16, 2014).

threat to other countries commercially or economically. There are two key messages to note in this regard:

1. China's rise is a win-win for the international community
2. China is a peace-loving nation, committed to a harmonious society and world.

Globalisation – the CCP's communications play an increasingly important role in 'selling' the benefits of partnering or trading with China. The messaging aims to convince international markets that Chinese investment is positive, non-threatening, financially beneficial to the host nation and a global force for economic good. Globalisation is positively featured in the CCP's global communications of these key messages:

1. China's rise is a win-win for the international community; and China believes in mutual trust and mutual respect in international relations. This is particularly evident in how the BRI is portrayed. For example, as stated by China's Ambassador to Bangladesh in a *Xinhua* article just prior to the inaugural 2017 BRI forum in Beijing: 'It [the BRI] is inclusive rather than exclusive. It's voluntary rather than compulsory. It's based on equality and mutual respect rather than discrimination. It's a win-win situation rather than winner takes all'.¹¹¹ China believes a new world order is required to make the world a better place, including necessary changes to the current global financial system; and, China believes in a more just and democratic approach to international affairs (i.e. all countries, especially the developing world, deserve a more equal say).
2. China is a peace-loving nation

Conflicting social forces – conflicting constraints exist for the CCP as it strives to balance the demands of two at times very different audiences – domestic and international. As an authoritarian regime, the CCP's top priority in global strategy may not be to expand China's national interests or to exercise power abroad, but instead to gain external acceptance and internal support that will perpetuate the regime (Sheng, 2010). Party communications must manage conflicting forces and often competing messages and behaviours, such as justifying territorial assertiveness in terms of defending the national interest, securing regional stability and being 'peace-loving'. The role of this type of conflicting messaging is best exemplified in the CCP's frequent use of the following key message, which has become its ready-to-hand

¹¹¹ Interview: Asia to become new economic center of gravity for China's Belt and Road Initiative: Bangladeshi experts, officials, *Xinhua*, May 9, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/09/c_136268954.htm (accessed September 16, 2018).

response to any political problem outside China, as well as its response to any outside criticism of actions undertaken by the Chinese state:

3. China is committed to a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations

In Table 2 below, I have coded these messages by their key elements, identified the targeted audience and considered which theoretical argument (within my overall theoretical framework) best describes the function and effect of these messages.

Table 2: Key messages linked to theoretical framework

Key message	Audience	Theoretical Framework Link
China is an inclusive, harmonious and peace-loving nation	Domestic and global	PM – fear filter; PEC – structuration process
China supports a more equal/ just better world order and a shared common destiny	Global	PEC – commodification process; PM – fear filter
China believes in non-interference in domestic affairs of others	Domestic and global	PEC – commodification/ structuration processes
China’s rise is mutually beneficial and a win-win for the international community	Global	PEC – commodification/spatial processes
China is a unique civilisation/ political system (mutual trust and respect)	Domestic and global	PEC – commodification/ spatial/ structuration/ processes

4.4. Three sub-narratives

Considering the social, economic and political forces both at home and abroad to which the CCP must respond, I have grouped the key messages into three key sub-narratives (Table 3). These groupings indicate how the messages have been referenced in academic literature; how they are used in key CCP foreign policy addresses; which aspects of Chinese history are drawn on in these messages; and how these messages contribute to the CCP’s ‘China story’ grand narrative. For example, articles referring to the ‘world order’ often also mention the need for greater ‘equality’ and ‘democracy’ in international affairs, and that developing countries share a ‘common destiny’. My findings have enabled me to identify three recurring sub-narratives:

1. ‘The story of China as champion of a more equitable world’
2. ‘The story of China as a win-win partner’
3. ‘The story of China as a peace-loving nation’.

Table 3: Sub-narratives and key search words/ phrases

Sub-narratives	Key messages (words/ phrases)
The story of China as a peace-loving nation	Peace; harmony; non-interference; inclusive
The story of China as champion of a more equitable world	World order; common destiny
The story of China as a win-win partner	Mutual trust; mutual respect; win-win

4.5. Key message in UNGA speeches

CCP representatives use a variety of mediums and platforms to communicate these key messages domestically and internationally in relation to foreign policy issues. One of the most internationally prominent of these platforms is the annual General Debate of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (Table 4).

Table 4: Key message usage in China's address to the UNGA annual General Debate

Year	Win-Win	Inclusive	Harmony	Non-interference	Mutual Trust	Mutual Respect	Common Destiny	World Order	Peace
2018	5	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	15 (incl. title)
2017	2	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	5 (incl. title)
2016	3	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	7 (incl. title)
2015	6 (incl. title)	3	3	0	0	2	0	3	14
2014	2	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	17 (incl. title)
2013	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	15
2012	5	4	2	0	3	2	0	1	21
2011	3	4	5	2	0	1	0	1	26
2010	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	10
2009	4	0	4	0	1	0	0	1	15
2008	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	11 (incl. title)

4.6. Key message usage data

To further assess the eligibility of which key messages to select and focus on for more detailed analysis, I used Factiva to calculate the annual usage and trends of the 13 key messages in *Xinhua News Agency (China)* over the period 2008 to 2018. Regarding usage trends, the key messages fell into three categories: (1) considerable increase over time (i.e. 2018 usage was greater than 2008, with a consistent upward usage trend); (2) considerable decrease over time

(i.e. 2018 usage was less than 2008, with a consistent downward usage trend); and (3) considerable fluctuations over time (i.e. distinct trends upwards and downwards over the 11-year period).

It is also important to note here that I discovered some slight anomalies in Factiva usage, this included slight shifts in key message references. When I tabulated data from 2008 to 2017 and then again in 2019 and 2020 to capture and reference 2018 data and 2019 data, numbers had increased slightly. For example, in 2017 when I checked 2008 *Xinhua* references to ‘win-win’ the total number was 303, but when I checked the number again in 2019 it was 330. In the case of ‘common destiny’, when I checked the data in 2017, *Xinhua* usage was n:126 for 2016 but when I checked again in 2019 it was n:138. This was the case for several key messages. However, despite these anomalies I do not believe the integrity of the data is compromised as the increases in number were relatively minor, from <n:2–30 approximately.

4.6.1. Considerable increase over time

Two key messages increased over time, with consistent upward usage trends (Figure 19):

1. Win-Win – from n:330 in 2008 to n:1210 in 2018.
2. Inclusive – from n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018.

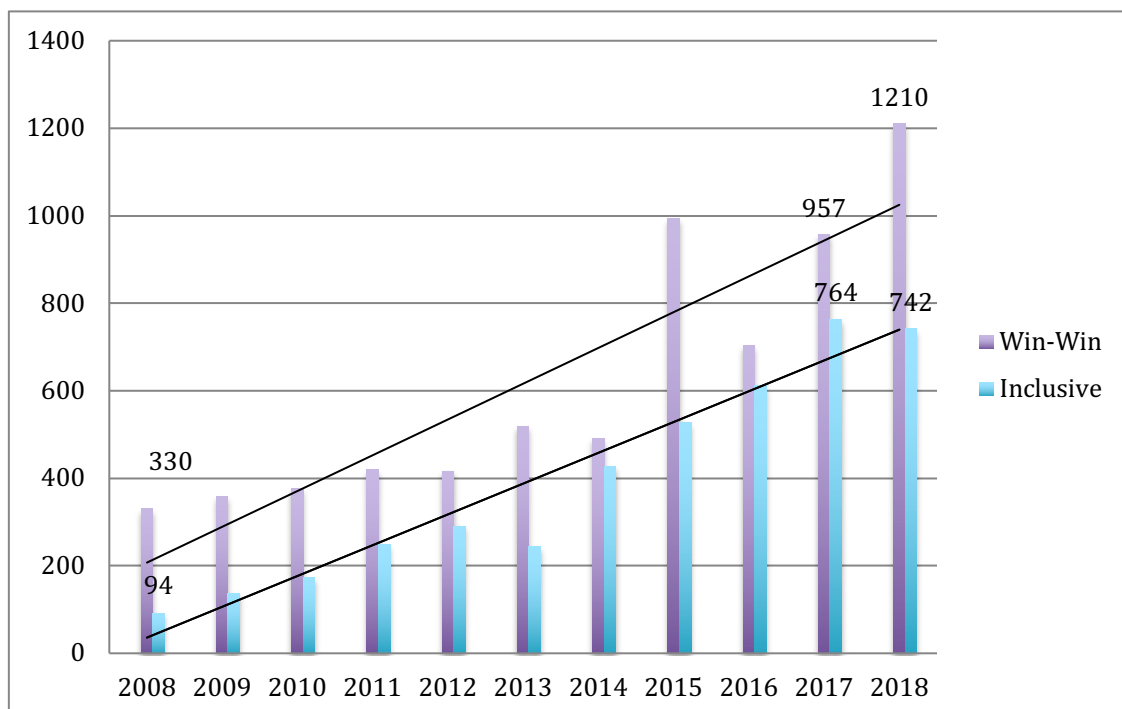


Figure 19: *Xinhua* key message usage – considerable increase over time.

4.6.2. Considerable decrease over time

One key message decreased over time, with consistent downward usage trend (Figure 20):

1. Harmony – from n:851 in 2008 to n:417 in 2018.

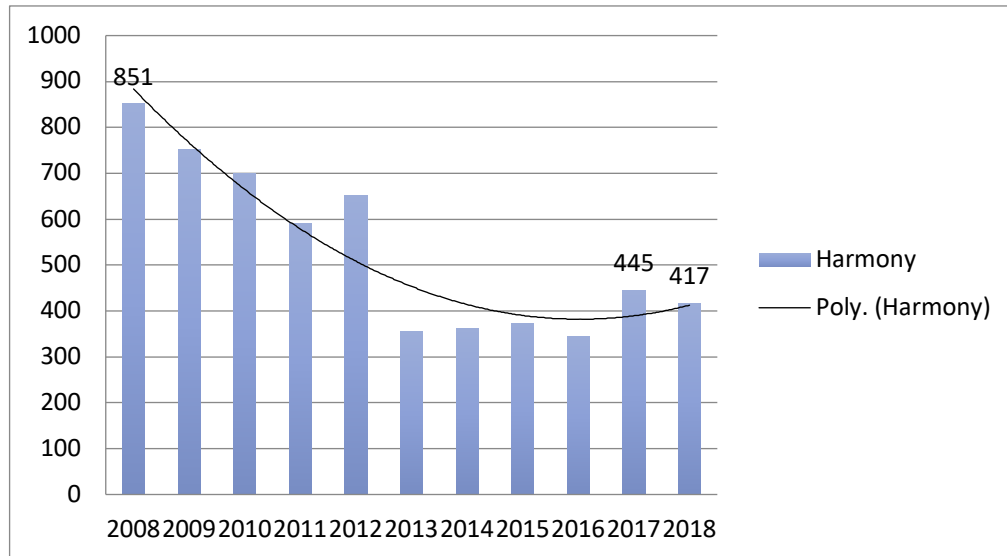


Figure 20: *Xinhua* key message usage – considerable decrease over time.

4.6.3. Considerable fluctuations over time

Six key messages increased overall but with considerable fluctuations over time (Table 5):

1. Non-interference – from n:39 in 2008 to n:52 in 2018.
2. Mutual Trust – from n:435 in 2008 to n:740 in 2018.
3. Mutual Respect – from n:187 in 2008 to n:433 in 2018.
4. Common Destiny – from n:2 in 2008 to n:23 in 2018.
5. World Order – from n:11 in 2008 to n:53 in 2018.
6. Peace – from n:2535 in 2008 to n:2386 in 2018.

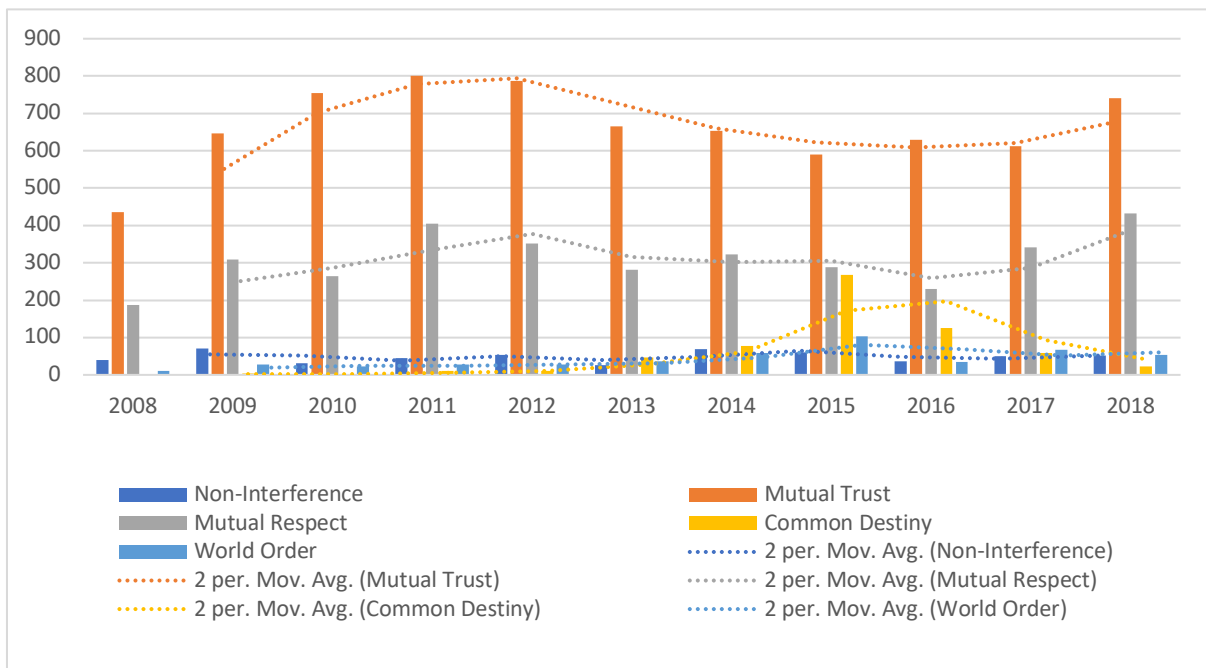


Figure 21: *Xinhua* key message usage – considerable fluctuations over time fluctuation.

Note: ‘Peace’ has been excluded to show a clearer data set.

Win-win usage increased considerably, from n:330 in 2008 to n:1210 in 2018, with a particularly sharp increase from n:491 in 2014 to n:994 in 2015. Other sharp usage increases occurred from n:491 in 2014 to n:994 in 2015, then again from n:704 in 2016 to n:957 in 2017 and up again significantly to n:1210 in 2018, with one sharp decline from n:994 to n:704 in 2016. In UNGA speeches, usage peaked with n:6 in 2015 to coincide with the significant *Xinhua* usage increase from 2014 to 2015.

Table 5: References to ‘win-win’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	330 0xUN	359 4xUN	377 1xUN	420 3xUN	417 5xUN	519 1xUN	491 2xUN	994 6xUN	704 3xUN	957 2xUN	1210 5xUN

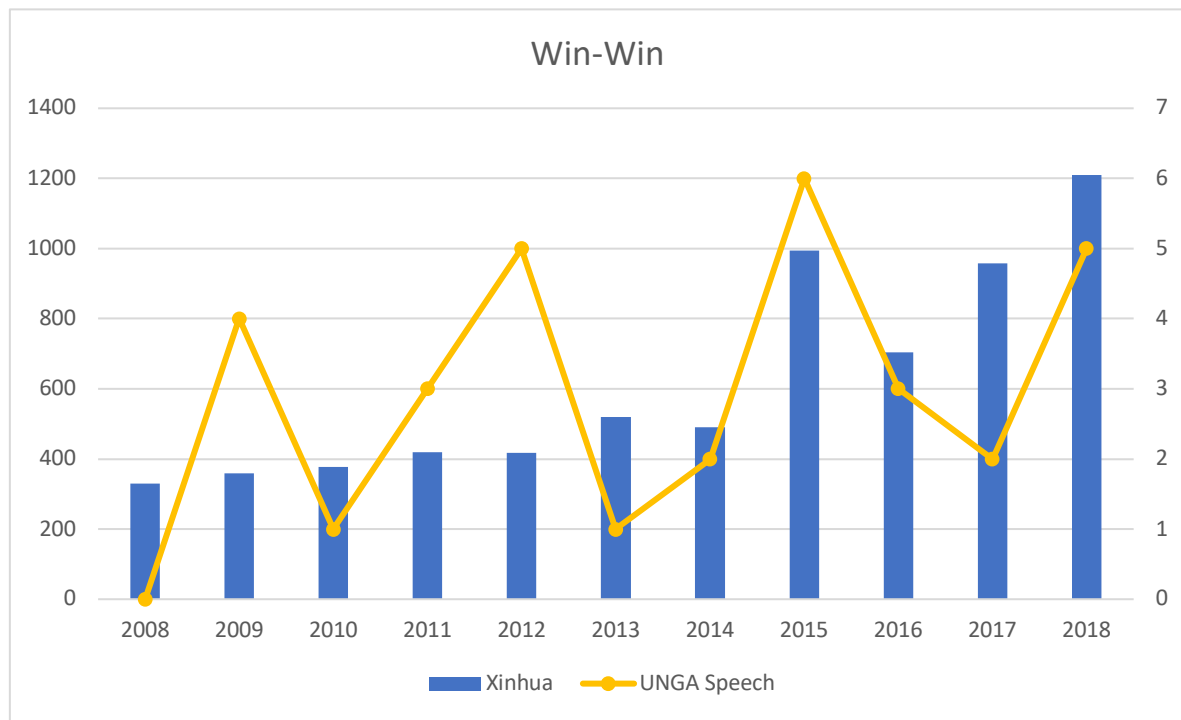


Figure 22: Win-win usage 2008–2018.

Inclusive (which includes references to ‘inclusiveness’) usage increased considerably from n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018. There were two sharp usage spikes in usage, from n:245 in 2013 to n:427 in 2014 and from n:612 in 2016 to n:764 in 2017. In UNGA speeches, usage had three peaks of n:4 in 2011 and 2012 as *Xinhua* usage increased in the last two years of Hu Jintao’s leadership and then again in 2016.

Table 6: References to ‘inclusive’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	94 0xUN	139 0xUN	175 1xUN	249 4xUN	292 4xUN	245 1xUN	427 3xUN	527 3xUN	612 4xUN	764 1xUN	742 3xUN

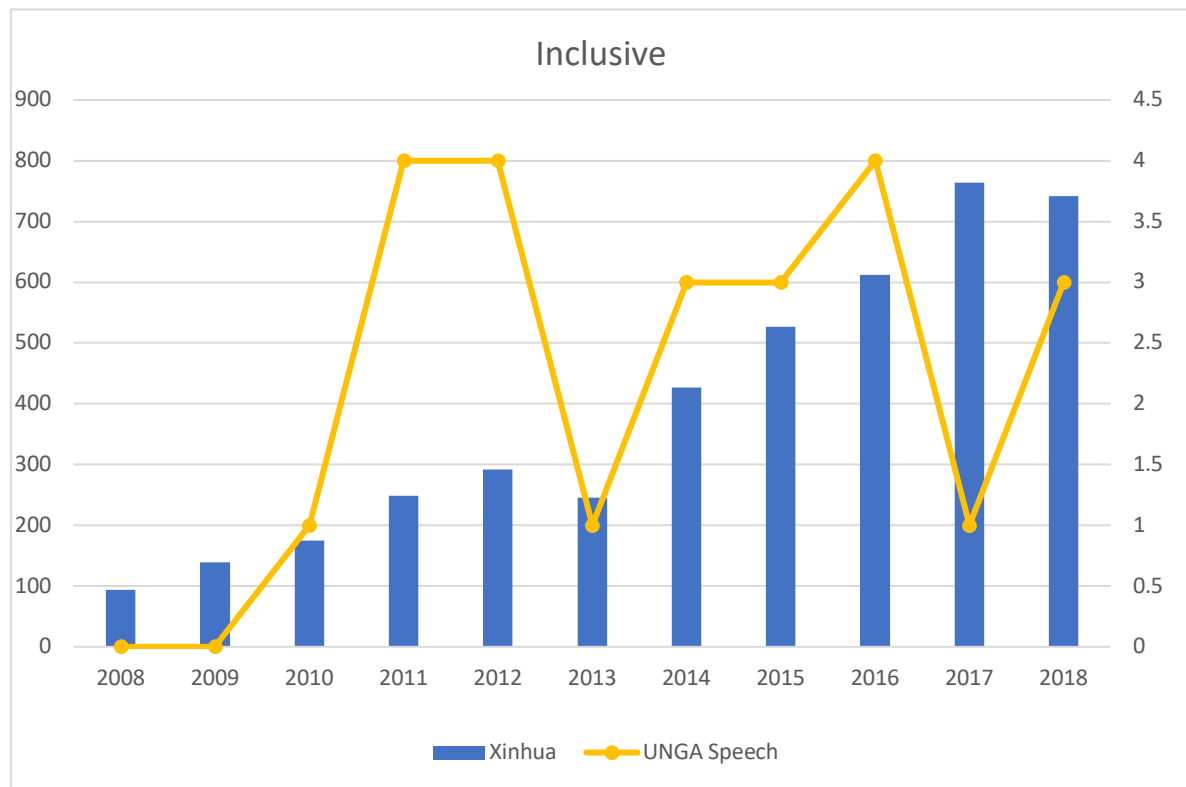


Figure 23: Inclusive usage 2008–2018.

Harmony (which includes references to ‘harmonious’) usage was the only key message to experience a general decline from n:851 in 2008 to n:417 in 2018. This included a peak of n:851 in 2008 and a trough of n:345 in 2016. There were two increases in usage, from n:591 in 2011 to n:652 in 2012 and again from n:345 in 2016 to n:445 in 2017, and one sharp decline from n:652 in 2012 to n:355 in 2013. In UNGA speeches, usage also declined from n:14 references in Hu Jintao’s leadership during 2008–2012 (peaking at n:5 in 2011) to only n:8 references in the following five-year period under Xi Jinping from 2013 to 2017.

Table 7: References to ‘harmony’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	851 2xUN	751 4xUN	700 1xUN	591 5xUN	652 2xUN	355 1xUN	362 2xUN	374 3xUN	345 1xUN	445 1xUN	417 2xUN

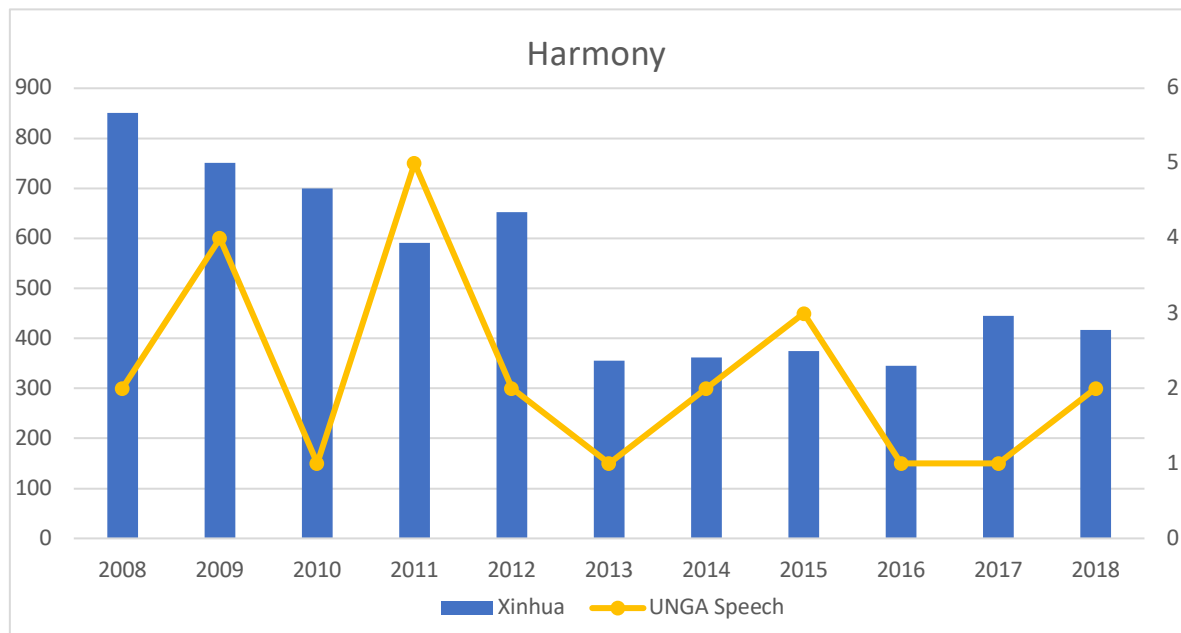


Figure 24: Harmony usage 2008–2018.

Non-interference usage increased from n:39 in 2008 to n:52 in 2018; however, usage fluctuated considerably during that time with a peak of n:71 in 2009 and a trough of n:26 in 2013. There were two sharp spikes in usage, from n:39 in 2008 to n:71 in 2009, and again from n:26 in 2013 to n:69 in 2014, and three sharp decreases, from n:71 in 2009 to n:31 in 2010; from n:54 in 2012 to n:26 in 2013, and from n:60 in 2015 to n:37 in 2016. Despite distinct fluctuations in *Xinhua*'s usage of 'non-interference' (e.g. from n:71 in 2009 to n:31 in 2010, and back up to n:69 in 2014) there were only n:3 references in the UNGA speeches, in 2008 n:1 and 2011 n:2.

Table 8: References to 'non-interference' in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	39	71	31	45	54	26	69	60	37	50	52
	1xUN	0xUN	0xUN	2xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN

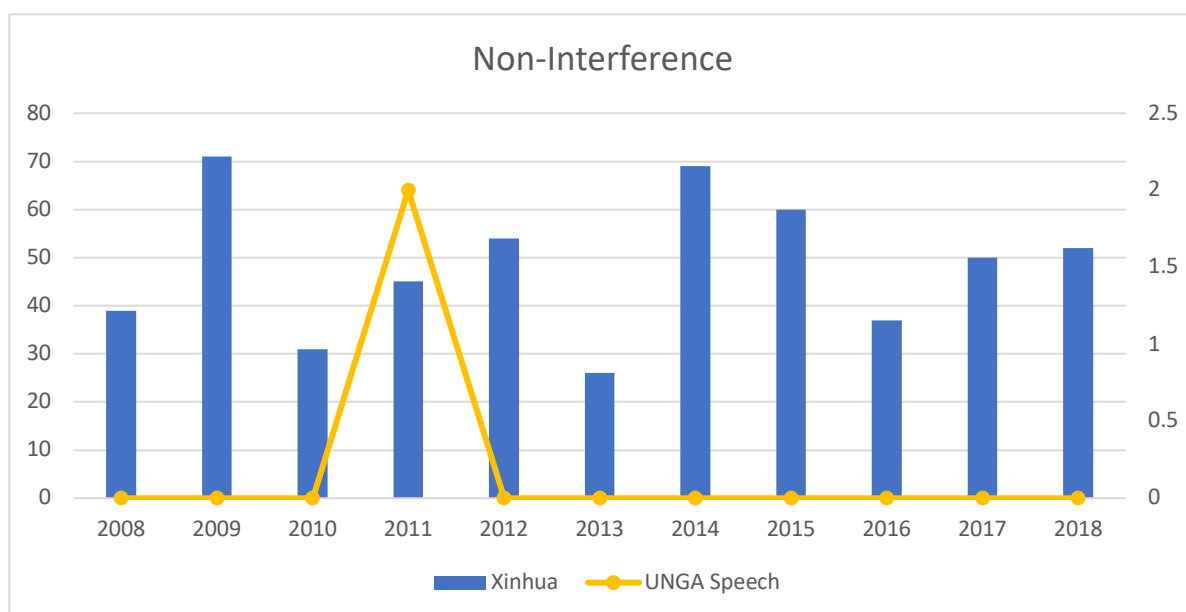


Figure 25: Non-interference usage 2008–2018.

Mutual trust usage increased from n:435 in 2008 to n:740 in 2018; however, usage fluctuated during that time, with a major peak of n:801 in 2011 then a decline, although still at much higher levels than 2008. Usage experienced three sharp increases, from n:435 in 2008 to n:646 in 2009, then from n:646 in 2009 to n:755 in 2010, and then from n:613 in 2017 to n:740 in 2018, and one sharp decline from n:787 in 2012 to n:666 in 2013. There were only five references in UNGA speeches: n:1 in 2009, n:3 in 2012 and n:1 in 2018.

Table 9: References to ‘mutual trust’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	435	646	755	801	787	666	654	590	629	613	740
Mentions	0xUN	1xUN	0xUN	0xUN	3xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	1xUN

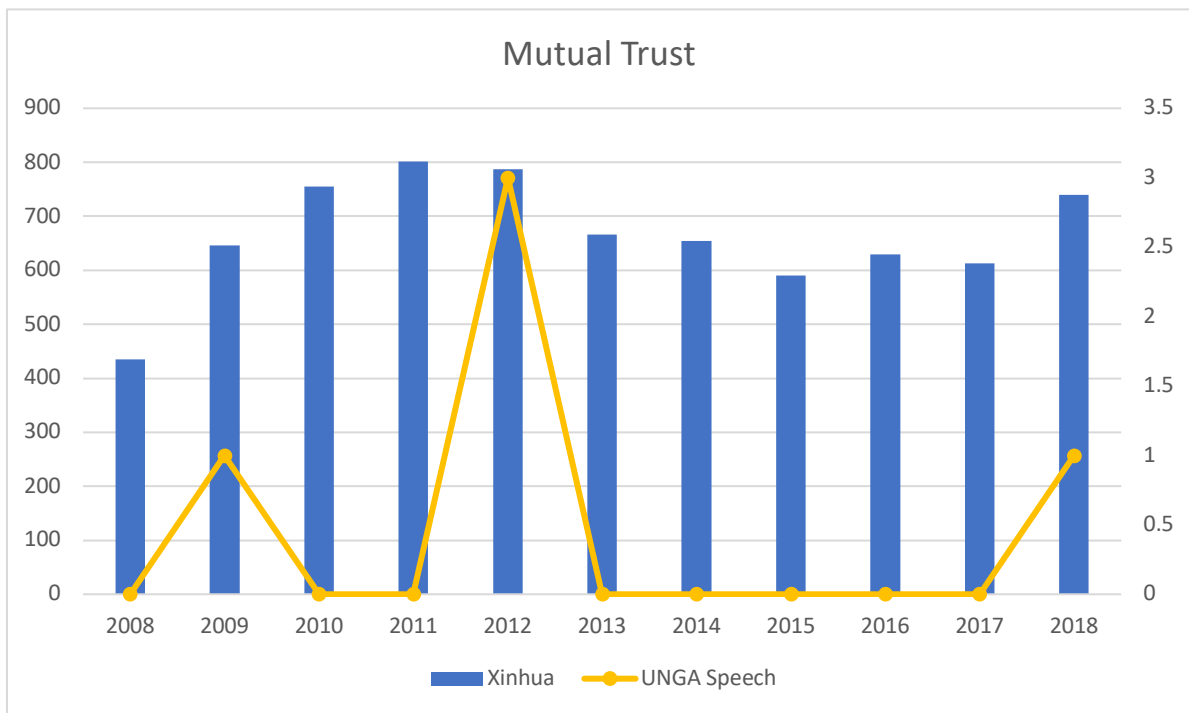


Figure 26: Mutual trust usage 2008–2018.

Mutual respect usage increased from n:187 in 2008 to n:433 in 2018, with usage peaking at n:433 in 2018. Usage saw four sharp spikes, from n:187 in 2008 to n:309 in 2009, from n:264 in 2010 to n:405 in 2011, from n:230 in 2016 to n:342 in 2017 and again from n:342 in 2017 to n:433 in 2018. There was a slight increase in usage emphasis at the UNGA from the Hu Jintao five-year period of only n:3 in two years (2011, 2012) compared to Xi’s leadership, with n:5 in three years (2014, 2015, 2017) from 2013 to 2017.

Table 10: References to ‘mutual respect’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	187	309	264	405	351	282	323	289	230	342	433
	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	1xUN	2xUN	0xUN	1xUN	2xUN	0xUN	2xUN	0xUN

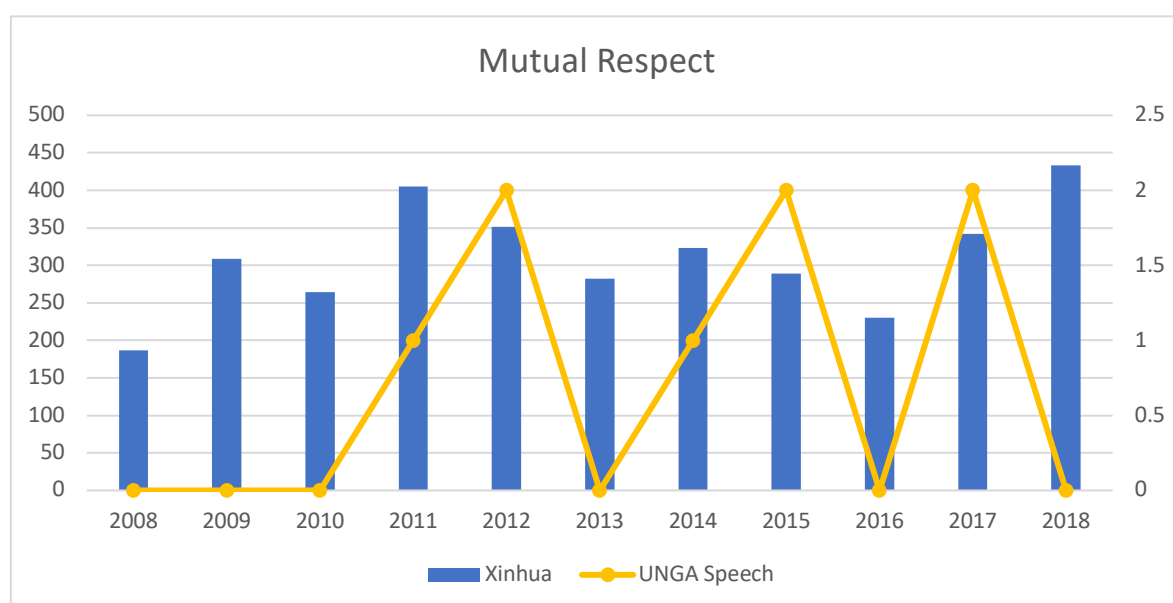


Figure 27: Mutual respect usage 2008–2018.

Common destiny increased significantly in usage from n:2 in 2008 to n:268 in 2015, but then decreased to n:23 in 2018 (Table 11). There was a sharp increase from n:11 in 2012 to n:46 in 2011 and then another increase from n:77 in 2014 to n:268 in 2015. However, the next three years saw three respective declines in usage, from n:268 in 2015 to n:138 in 2016 and then from n:138 in 2016 to n:59 in 2017, and then down to just n: 23 in 2018. However, usage also evolved since 2015, with expanded references to common ‘interests’, ‘responsibilities’, ‘prosperity’, ‘development’ and, more recently, ‘common’ being replaced with ‘shared’ and ‘destiny’ being replaced with ‘future’, i.e. ‘shared future’ (in *Xinhua*, n:59 in 2016 to n:884 in 2018).

In UNGA speeches, initial usage also reflected *Xinhua* usage patterns, with the first mention at the UNGA in 2013, coinciding with increased references in *Xinhua* from 2012–2013 (Table 11). However, despite *Xinhua* usage increases until 2015, it was not used again at the UNGA. Instead in 2015, Xi Jinping himself made the address for the Chinese Government speaking at the UNGA for the first and only time (to date), introducing a ‘community of shared future for mankind’. The way the word ‘common’ was then used in the UNGA speeches by Chinese officials, broadened to include n:5 mentions in 2015 (including common values, future, security and two references to common development), n:3 in 2016 (common interests, prosperity and development); and n:3 in 2017 (common security, responsibilities and progress).

Table 11: References to ‘common destiny’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	2	3	1	9	11	46	77	268	138	59	23
	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	1xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN	0xUN

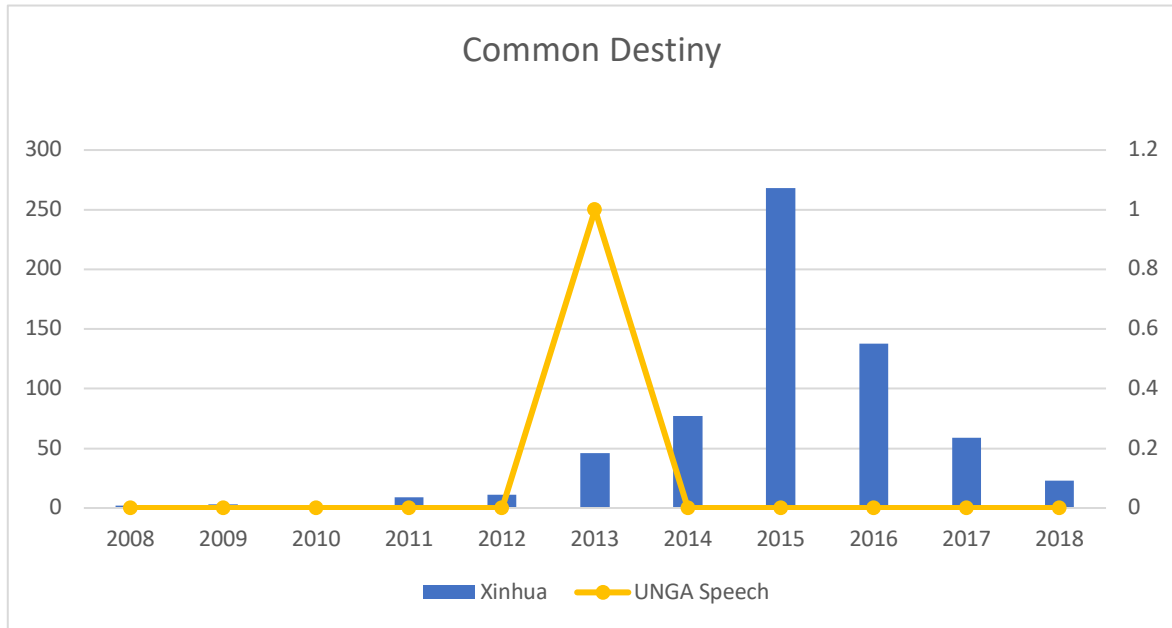


Figure 28: Common destiny usage 2008–2018.

World order usage increased from n:11 in 2008 to n:53 in 2018 with a peak of n:103 in 2015. Usage saw two sharp increases of n:58 in 2014 to n:103 in 2015, and again from n:35 in 2016 to n:67 in 2017, and one sharp decline from n:103 in 2015 to n:35 in 2016. However, measuring usage is more difficult to examine precisely in contrast to other messages due to various articulations that have increased since 2015, including ‘global order’ and ‘international order’. In UNGA speeches, usage was the same with n:5 references from 2008–2012 (with a peak of n:2 in 2010) and n:5 references in the following five-year period, 2013–2018 (with a peak of n:3 in 2015).

Table 12: References to ‘world order’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	11 0xUN	27 1xUN	22 2xUN	19 1xUN	28 1xUN	36 1xUN	58 0xUN	103 3xUN	35 0xUN	67 0xUN	53 1xUN

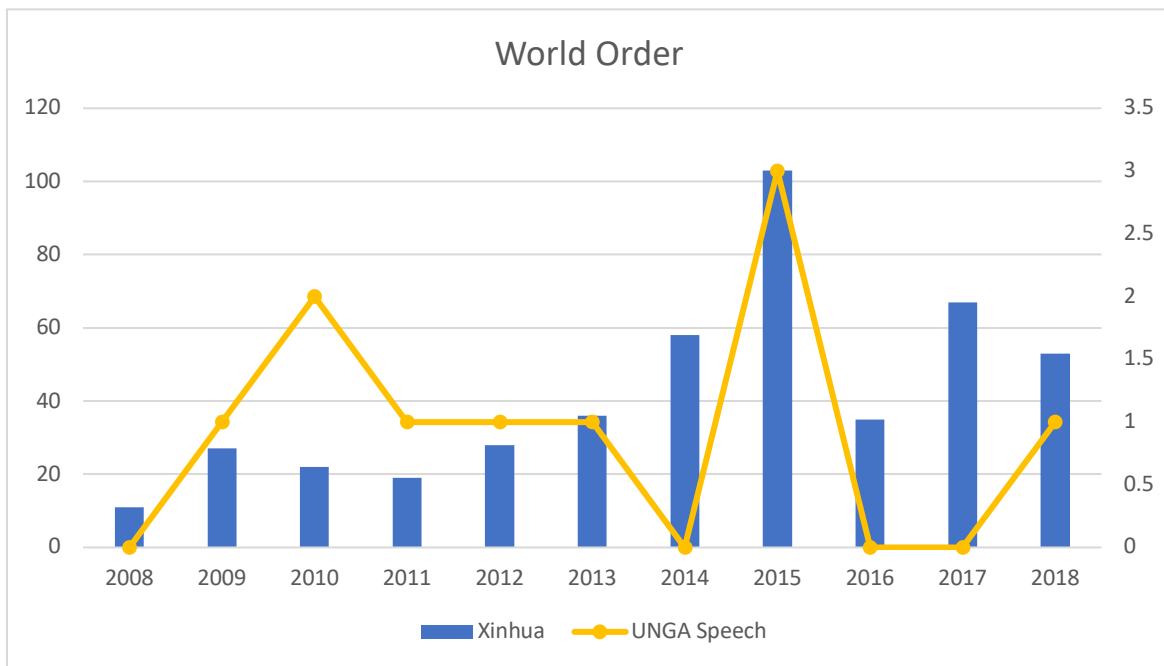


Figure 29: World order usage 2008–2018.

Peace (peace-loving/ peaceful) experienced a slight overall decrease from n:2535 in 2008 to n:2386 in 2018, with usage peak in 2015 with n:3090. Usage saw three spikes – from n:2626 in 2009 to n:2873 in 2010, from n:2517 in 2011 to n:2792 in 2012 then from n:2640 in 2014 to an 11-year peak of n:3090 in 2015 – and four sharp declines, from n:2873 in 2010 to n:2517 in 2011, from n:2792 in 2012 to n:2509 in 2013, from n:3090 in 2015 to n:2850 in 2016 and from n:2703 in 2017 to n:2386 in 2018. In UNGA speeches, usage was a regular feature in the annual addresses although usage was much greater under the Hu Jintao five-year period – n:83, compared to only n:59 in the first five years of the Xi administration.

Table 13: References to ‘peace’ in *Xinhua* and UNGA speeches, 2008-2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Mentions	2535 11xUN	2626 15xUN	2873 10xUN	2517 26xUN	2792 21xUN	2509 15xUN	2640 17xUN	3090 14xUN	2850 7xUN	2703 6xUN	2386 15xUN

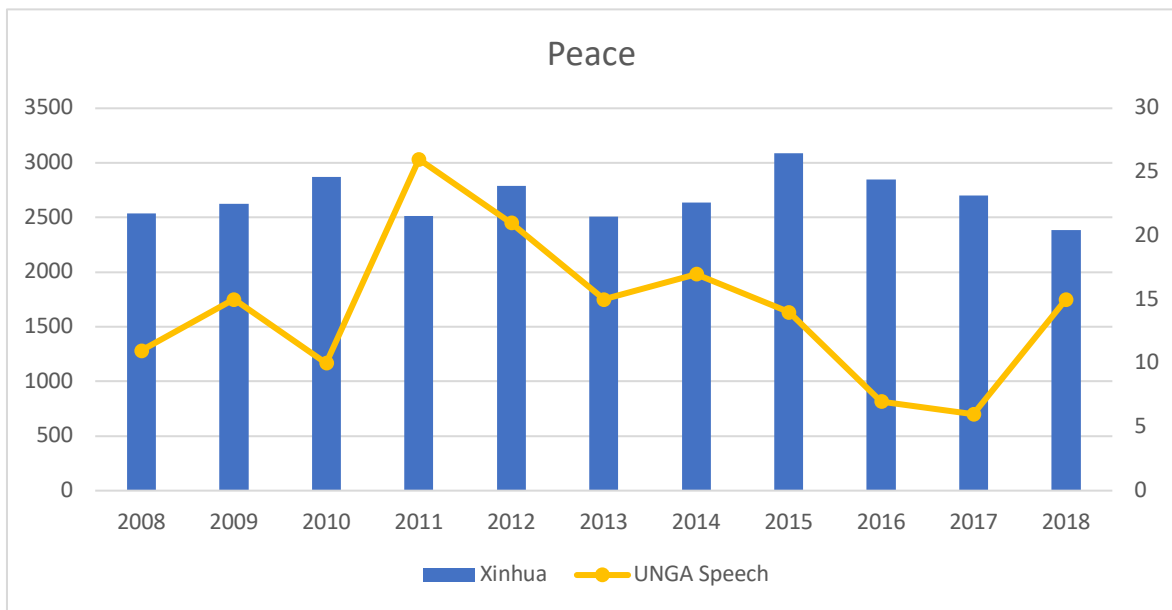


Figure 30: Peace usage 2008–2018.

4.7. Key message consolidation

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, in order to delve more deeply into the CCP’s key messages using datasets that are both meaningful and manageable, I selected just two key messages for each sub-narrative – a total of six key messages, based on the raw data findings above and aforementioned criteria: (1) featured prominently in the CCP’s foreign policy communications; (2) usage trend is significant; and (3) data collation is specific and manageable.

Table 14: Key message assessment matrix

	Peace	Harmony	Non-interference	Inclusive	World order	Common destiny	Mutual trust	Mutual respect	Win-win
Featured prominently	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Usage trend significance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specific and manageable data	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

‘Peace’ is a generic term with a difficult-to-manage data set: n:29,521 references over the 11-year period (at a yearly average of n:2,684 references). In contrast, the other two ‘peace-loving’ related key messages, ‘inclusive’ and ‘harmony’, are more nuanced, with ‘harmony’ having a direct link to both the contemporary CCP and historical China, and ‘inclusive’ representing a recent embrace of this term by a more internationally focused CCP.

‘Non-interference’ usage was minimal; with a yearly average of just n:49 references and with the lowest 11-year peak of all nine key messages (n:71).

‘Mutual trust’ is often used in conjunction with ‘mutual respect’ so I determined there was no need to examine both. I decided on ‘mutual respect’ due to the potential for differing interpretations between the CCP and other parties, making for more meaningful analysis, in contrast to the key message of ‘trust’ which represents a more benign expression.

4.8. Key message trend observations

From the *Xinhua* data collation, certain usage observations can be made about the individual key messages and the grouping of the sub-narratives. Highlights include:

1. ‘Win-win’ emerging as the CCP’s most prominent key message.
2. ‘Inclusive’ focus increasing as part of the CCP’s emergence as a more active global ‘stakeholder’.
3. Major shift away from Xi Jinping’s initial signature message of ‘common destiny’.
4. Significant usage fluctuations (sharp increases and decreases in usage) in certain years for six key messages, including: 2011–12, 2014–15 and 2017–18.

The next four chapters aim to examine these trends in more detail, focusing in particular on the international and domestic factors that have contributed to:

- Significant overall increases over time (annual usage significantly greater in 2018 than 2008).
- Significant overall decrease over time (annual usage significantly less in 2018 than 2008).
- Significant overall increase over time, with fluctuations (annual usage significantly greater in 2018 than 2008 but with meaningful fluctuations in between).
- Minor overall increase over time, with fluctuations (annual usage slightly greater in 2018 than 2008 but with meaningful fluctuations in between).

This will be done by grouping the key messages into their respective sub-narratives and then analysing the trends of specific message usage in the context of internal and external events. I will also look at which of these key messages have been highlighted by academic and media commentators and which messages have not. I will also consider how these changes have contributed to the telling and evolution of the ‘China story’ grand narrative over this hugely significant and eventful 11-year period in modern Chinese history.

Moreover, it is important to note here that my original intent was to cover the ten-year period from 2008 to 2017. However, in late 2017, following the significance of Xi Jinping’s address to the Party Congress in October 2017 declaring a ‘New Era’, and the March 2018 removal of constitutional limits to Xi’s leadership timeframe, I deemed it important to also include 2018 data as potentially an important indicator of the CCP’s key messaging and priorities for the forthcoming five-year period.

Table 15: Sub-narratives and supporting key messages

Sub-narratives	Key message and usage trends (words/ phrases)
The story of China as a peace-loving nation	Harmony (significant overall decrease); inclusive (significant overall increase)
The story of China as champion of a more equitable world	World order (minor overall increase with fluctuations); common destiny (minor overall increase with fluctuations)
The story of China as a win-win partner	Mutual respect (significant overall increase with fluctuations); win-win (significant overall increase)

I will now just focus on these three sub-narratives and the two related key messages within each sub-narrative, examining in particular the origins of each message and usage overview over the 11-year period of significant change for the CCP, China and the world. Chapter 5 starts this analytical journey by examining the story of ‘China as champion of a more equitable world’.

Chapter 5. The Story of China as ‘Champion of a More Equitable World’

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the sub-narrative, ‘the story of China as champion of a more equitable world’, and the key messages supporting it over the 11-year period (2008–2018). The two key messages supporting this sub-narrative are: (1) ‘common destiny’ and (2) ‘world order’.

At the outset, it is important to note that China’s ‘champion’ narrative is not new. As noted by Wang (2003, p.63), some of the most prominent images during the Maoist period were those of ‘China as a bastion of revolution’, championing revolutionary change in the developing world. Importantly, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the CCP viewed the developing world as its ‘greatest political opportunity’ and believed that a ‘revolutionary image’ would help ‘increase China’s political influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America’ (ibid., pp.63–64). This involved the CCP’s use of aid for ‘propaganda purposes’ and to ‘emphasise differences between its aid and that provided by the West’ (ibid., p.65).

Essentially, this narrative of China as ‘champion’ of the developing world originated with Mao, and although much has changed within and outside China since the Mao era, the core foundations of this narrative have not. However, the ‘revolution’ now encouraged by the CCP is about regional ‘prosperity’ and ‘stability’, guided by China. The narrative now suggests that all countries, in particular developing nations in Asia, can advance economically and ‘achieve modernisation ... while preserving their independence’¹¹² if they are aligned with China’s interests. However, in recent years, concerns have been raised by international commentators regarding this ‘guidance’ from China and the embrace of China by authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes such as Cambodia, Laos and the Maldives, which are also increasingly in financial debt to China.¹¹³

¹¹² The ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in Xi Jinping’s New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed April 12, 2019).

¹¹³ Eight countries in danger of falling into China’s ‘debt trap’, *Quartz*, March 8, 2018, <https://qz.com/1223768/china-debt-trap-these-eight-countries-are-in-danger-of-debt-overloads-from-chinas-belt-and-road-plans/> (accessed January 8, 2019).

This chapter explores how the ‘champion’ sub-narrative works, by:

1. Showing how the CCP has encoded messages in *Xinhua* articles, pertinent to the ‘champion’ sub-narrative;
2. Explaining how these messages, constitutive of the ‘champion’ sub-narrative, feed into the grand narrative of the ‘China story’; and
3. Highlighting which messaging has been identified in academic and media commentary (and which has not).

5.2. China as ‘champion of a more equitable world’ in the grand narrative, the ‘China story’

China’s ‘champion’ narrative portrays China as the world’s largest developing country, willing to support smaller developing states, with ‘support’ ranging from direct trade and investment, to UN Security Council votes and vetoes and a ‘non-interference’ approach (in particular, regarding governance, freedom of speech, legal systems and human rights). As mentioned above, the ‘champion’ narrative has been closely aligned with the CCP’s broader nation-building narrative since the early years of Chinese Communist Party rule after 1949. Although the CCP continues to emphasise the overarching theme of China as ‘champion’, the position has dramatically shifted from that of a global, anti-capitalist, revolutionary state, to a ‘champion’ of economic globalisation, a critical trading partner to many countries (developing and developed), and benefactor and advocate of the developing world. This shift also highlights the broadening of the sub-narrative from being aimed exclusively at developing countries (particularly in Asia), to being used more broadly as a global theme, in particular regarding a ‘common destiny for all mankind’ (to be discussed later in this chapter).

Nonetheless, the primary audience of the ‘champion’ sub-narrative remains the developing world – particularly countries with authoritarian regimes seeking economic development, often sharing with China a legacy of colonisation and a history of mixed relations with Western countries (and Japan). This is reflected in the origins and initial focus of the two individual key messages. For instance, Foreign Minister Wang Yi in a July 2018 statement entitled ‘China Has Always Been a Member of Developing Countries’¹¹⁴ (Figure 31), emphasises connecting the past, present and future:

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi: China has always been a member of developing countries, July 10, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1576562.shtml (accessed December 22, 2018).

China has always attached great importance to its relations with developing countries. China's own development means the growth of the overall strength of developing countries ... no matter what stage of development it reaches and how the international situation changes, China will continue standing together with developing countries and will be a reliable friend and sincere partner of developing countries forever ... China's unequivocal stance is based on China's actual national conditions and stage of development, and also stems from China's historical encounters ... [and] being subjected to foreign aggression in modern times.

Wang's statement highlights the three foundational pillars of the CCP's 'champion' sub-narrative that my research uncovered:

1. Durable partnerships: the CCP seeks to show evidence of China's long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with developing countries (and regions).
2. Shared experiences: China's own history of poverty and being subjected to foreign aggression means, according to the CCP, that it understands, far better than Western developed nations, the plight, challenges and aspirations of developing countries.
3. Commitment to help: regardless of China's economic growth and increase in global status, the CCP will continue to support and 'champion' developing countries.

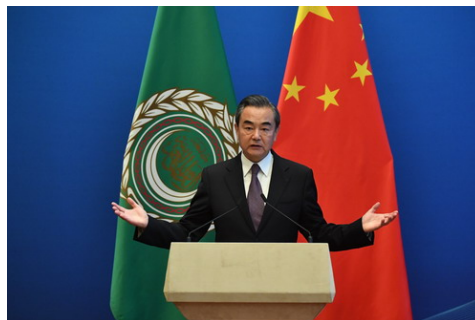


Figure 31: Wang Yi: China has always been a member of developing countries.¹¹⁵

These themes are regularly intertwined in the CCP's discourse and are intended to boost the perceived authenticity of China's engagement with the developing world and, importantly, to highlight key differences between China and Western democratic countries, the U.S. in particular. In other words, China is presented as a 'real friend' who understands the situation of developing countries.

In this regard, this narrative seeks to highlight that China has also been a 'victim of foreign aggression', implicitly referring to colonial powers seizing Chinese territories in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The CCP emphasises this shared history with other developing

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

countries, particularly those in the Asian region, but also with countries in Africa and Latin America. In a February 2016 *China Daily* article,¹¹⁶ summarising Foreign Minister Wang's visit to Africa, Wang presented China as sharing much in common with developing countries: 'Indeed, China, the world's largest developing country, and Africa, a continent home to the largest number of developing countries, whose ties have been strengthened by shared historical experiences and struggles, had always been a community of common destiny.'

This theme was strongly reinforced by Xi in his 2015 address to the UNGA annual General Debate, 'China's vote at the United Nations will always belong to developing countries'.¹¹⁷ The speech was significant as it was Xi's first at the UNGA since becoming president in 2013 and coincided with the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, referred to by the CCP as the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and also the World Anti-Fascist War.

Xi's speech demonstrated the adaptability of the CCP's approach to how the war is positioned with regard to differing domestic and international audiences. In particular, treatment of China at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army in the 1930s and 1940s, is a theme used at times by the CCP to affirm a historical alliance with the United States, and to attempt to connect Japan 'then and now' by demonising Japan over contemporary issues. Official Chinese references to Japan's historical crimes are commonplace in Chinese state media, especially when referencing the East China Sea territorial dispute, for example in 2012,¹¹⁸ and also during the 2017 political debate¹¹⁹ in Japan about changes to Article 9 of Japan's constitution, regarding the role of Japan's Self Defence Force.¹²⁰ These events deeply concerned and angered the Chinese government. Negative descriptions of Japan by China's Party leaders and official spokespersons also seeks to connect China with its neighbours, to remind them that they had all suffered at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army.

¹¹⁶ Chinese FM's visit to Africa attests to strong China-Africa ties, *China Daily*, February 8, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-02/08/content_23430274.htm (accessed November 5, 2016).

¹¹⁷ Xinhua Insight: Xi's world vision: a community of common destiny, a shared home for humanity, *Xinhua*, January 15, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/15/c_135983586.htm (accessed November 12, 2018).

¹¹⁸ Rising Japanese militarism, *China Daily US Edition*, September 20, 2012, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-09/20/content_15769918.htm (accessed August 11, 2014).

¹¹⁹ Commentary: High time for Japan to stop further militarization, *Xinhua*, September 1, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/01/c_136572034.htm (accessed November 29, 2019).

¹²⁰ Japan's path to constitutional amendment, *The Diplomat*, May 26, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/japans-path-to-constitutional-amendment/> (accessed June 21, 2018).

In China's address to the 2012 UNGA annual General Debate in September 2012,¹²¹ shortly after the Japanese Government sought to nationalise the disputed East China Sea islands, then Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi referred specifically to the dispute, linking Japan's past and present: 'By taking such unilateral actions as the so-called "island purchase", the Japanese government has grossly violated China's sovereignty. This is an outright denial of the outcomes of the victory of the world anti-fascist war and poses a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the *Charter of the United Nations*.'

By also highlighting 'shared struggles' between China and developing countries (often used by the CCP in an Asian context regarding Japanese aggression in WWII), the CCP emphasises how China presents a real alternative as an international partner when compared with Western countries and with China's main Asian strategic competitor, Japan. The fact that many developing nations are also ruled by one-party states with similar views to the CCP regarding transparent governance, political participation and human rights, has lent credence to China's 'champion' narrative.

The narrative has become a means for explaining why countries should partner with China, politically and commercially. In South East Asia, for example, after Hun Sen's regime in Cambodia dissolved the main opposition party in 2017, media noted that Chinese willingness to fund major projects in Cambodia had 'allowed Hun Sen to brush off Western criticism of his crackdown on dissent',¹²² with Cambodia now regarded as 'a stepping stone to counter Western influence in Southeast Asia'.¹²³ In Africa, the CCP's engagement approach stands in contrast to that of the US, with China investing heavily, particularly in infrastructure projects, with limited external scrutiny. This is in sharp contrast to the U.S., which demands that African countries 'take more responsibility' for themselves and for 'US tax payer dollars invested there to be more closely scrutinised'.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yang Jiechi attends the general debate of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly and delivers a speech, September 28, 2012, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/diaodao_665718/t975807.shtml (accessed November 2, 2015).

¹²² Defiant Hun Sen tells U.S. to cut all aid to Cambodia, *Reuters*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-usa/defiant-hun-sen-tells-u-s-to-cut-all-aid-to-cambodia-idUSKBN1DJ049> (accessed July 17, 2018).

¹²³ Cambodians wary as Chinese investment transforms their country, *Nikkei Asian Review*, July 18, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Cover-Story/Cambodians-wary-as-Chinese-investment-transforms-their-country> (accessed August 16, 2018).

¹²⁴ U.S.: Washington unveils a new strategy for Africa, *Stratfor*, December 13, 2018, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/us-washington-new-strategy-africa-aid-investment> (accessed December 28, 2018).

As China grows in economic strength and regional and global influence, it seeks to provide developing countries with partnering and developing pathway options. Chinese trade, foreign direct investment and soft loans that fund major projects are being compared favourably to traditional Western partners by many authoritarian regimes (ranging from Cambodia in South East Asia to Egypt in the Middle East and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa). As noted by General Ahmed Zaki Abdeen, head of an Egyptian state-owned enterprise, in his criticism of U.S. reluctance to invest in Egypt: ‘Stop talking to us about human rights. Come and do business with us. The Chinese are coming – they are seeking win-win situations. Welcome to the Chinese.’¹²⁵ The ‘champion’ narrative plays an important part in legitimising China’s global economic expansion as the world’s largest developing nation, whose pre-1949 history of struggle against imperialism qualifies it as an understanding ‘champion’ of the interests of smaller developing nations. The breadth of this narrative is reflected in how the key messages are connected and used, such as in the case of the BRI, which, according to Chinese academic Professor Wang Yiwei, promotes the formation of a ‘new global and economic order’ that is a ‘community of common destiny’, with the implication that the ‘common destiny’ of developing countries derives from their shared history of anti-imperialist struggle.¹²⁶

Furthermore, a key component of this sub-narrative and the individual key messages is what I refer to as ‘Sinicisation’ – namely, the formulation of historical links between the CCP and ‘ancient China’ and positioning the messaging as uniquely Chinese or inherently linked to China. This is an important and omnipresent trait of the CCP’s key messages, and the work of the Central Propaganda Department more broadly. It seeks to position messaging in two ways. First, it signals that the message/concept is ‘created by China’, aiming to highlight China’s contribution to a particular theme, and, second, it reinforces the CCP’s ‘China story’, i.e. the portrayal of a long, unbroken history of a 5,000-year-old civilisation. It also reinforces the importance of ideology to the CCP and the attempts of Party propagandists increasingly to portray CCP rule as embodying both Party values and Chinese civilisational values, that transcend individual Party leaders and their administrations. This focus on ideological and civilisational preservation and continuity, also highlights, as noted in my Theoretical

¹²⁵ Money and muscle pave China’s way to global power, *The New York Times*, November 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/25/world/asia/china-world-power.html> (accessed April 2, 2019).

¹²⁶ The ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in Xi Jinping’s New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed April, 12 2019).

Framework chapter, the value in using the Propaganda Model, in particular the ‘fear/ ideology’ filter, to conduct media analysis of CCP state media content.

5.3. Use of key messages in China’s global state media

As referenced in Chapter 4, my analysis of *Xinhua* data has shown that over the 11-year period (2008–2018) there was an overall increase in emphasis on the ‘champion’ narrative with usage increasing for ‘common destiny’, and ‘world order’. However, in the past three years, from peak usage of both key messages in 2015, usage has shifted in both emphasis and the number of references, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 16: Key message trends of the ‘Champion’ sub-narrative

Key Message	Usage 2008–2018	Peak usage
Common destiny	n:2 to n:23	2015 – n:268
World order	n:11 to n:53	2015 – n:103

These key messages will now be examined in close detail. I will first provide details on the origin of each message and then an overview of usage during the period 2008–2018. What is important is not just the overall trend of usage increase and/or decrease but also the emphases within each key message – for example, a ‘world order’ that needs to be ‘maintained/ safeguarded/ upheld’, compared to one that needs to be ‘more just/democratic/ better/inclusive’; and a ‘common destiny for Asian countries’ (regional) compared to a ‘common destiny for all mankind’ (global).

5.4. Introduction of key messages

5.4.1. Common Destiny (命运共同体): origin and usage overview

5.4.1.1. Origin

Despite the high-profile usage of ‘common destiny’ by Xi and other senior CCP officials, detailed analysis is still relatively limited. Only a few Chinese scholars have considered the differing motivations behind the uses of the expression, a ‘community of common destiny’, with even less research having been conducted by Western scholars (Zhang, 2018). Zhang (2018, p.196) notes that the term was initially proposed by the CCP to ‘mend ties with neighbouring states in the context of escalating territorial disputes’, and also part of the CCP’s ‘long term strategy to maintain a period of strategic opportunity in the first two to three decades of the 21st century to further develop itself’.

However, as part of my research, I have discovered that this theme of ‘common destiny’ exists in different variations elsewhere and pre-dates the CCP’s adoption of it as a key foreign policy message shortly after Xi came to power in 2013. Specifically, it occurred in speeches delivered within the context of ASEAN meetings. ASEAN has the motto of ‘one vision, one identity, one community’, and the ASEAN community is defined as a ‘community of opportunities’, with much ‘achieved in coming together as one community’ and that ‘moving forward, the ASEAN Community will continue to provide opportunities to its citizens and ensure that improvements in their lives are sustained under a common vision and identity’.¹²⁷

Importantly, ‘common destiny’ appeared in key ASEAN speeches as early as 2007. In an address by then Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) at the ASEAN Forum: Rethinking ASEAN Towards the ASEAN Community 2015,¹²⁸ SBY declared:

The East Asia Summit, launched in 2005, brings together 16 countries of an East Asia that has been redefined no longer as a strictly geographic entity but as a group of countries on this side of the world, with long-established habits of consultation and cooperation, and a sense of common destiny. And so, by concentrating on economic cooperation and functional cooperation, we achieved a certain degree of cohesion and nurtured a sense of common destiny.

In 2009 at the 15th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Chairman Cha-Am Hua Hin stated:¹²⁹

We emphasised the importance of promoting better understanding among the peoples of ASEAN particularly based on our common roots and shared historical heritage. We underlined the importance of getting ASEAN to the people and agreed to utilise various media to offer the people the shared common destiny and to forge a common identity.

As ‘common destiny’ was already part of the ASEAN discourse and, given the importance accorded to ASEAN by the CCP leadership in China’s regional diplomacy, Xi’s use of a ‘common destiny’ was, originally, carefully tailored for an ASEAN audience. In his first trip as President to South East Asia, Xi delivered a speech to the Indonesian Parliament on 3 October 2013 in which he declared that ‘by making joint efforts, we will build a more closely knit China–ASEAN community of common destiny so as to bring more benefits to both China

¹²⁷ *Factsheet of ASEAN Community*, April, 2016, <https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/11a.-April-2016-Fact-Sheet-of-ASEAN-Community.pdf> (accessed December 22, 2018).

¹²⁸ Keynote Speech by H.E. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono President Republic of Indonesia at the ASEAN Forum: Rethinking ASEAN Towards the ASEAN Community 2015 Jakarta, August 7, 2007, https://asean.org/?static_post=keynote-speech-by-he-susilo-bambang-yudhoyono-president-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-asean-forum-rethinking-asean-towards-the-asean-community-2015-jakarta-7-august-2007 (accessed December 22, 2018).

¹²⁹ Chairman’s statement of the 15th ASEAN Summit – ‘Enhancing Connectivity, Empowering Peoples’, Cha-Am Hua Hin, Thailand, 23–25 October 2009, https://asean.org/?static_post=chairman-s-statement-of-the-15th-asean-summit-enhancing-connectivity-empowering-peoples (accessed December 22, 2018).

and ASEAN and to the people in the region’.¹³⁰ This was followed three weeks later (24 October) by a domestic symposium on China’s peripheral diplomacy, where Xi declared that China would pursue ‘amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in its diplomatic work so that the awareness of a community of shared destiny would take root in neighbouring countries’.

Although President Hu Jintao had earlier stated that ‘the awareness of community of common destiny takes root in neighbouring countries’,¹³¹ and ASEAN had used the phrase ‘common destiny’ in 2007, according to the CCP it was Xi who introduced the term. In a January 2017 *Xinhua* article, titled ‘Xi’s world vision: a community of common destiny, a shared home for humanity’, the concept is clearly attributed to Xi.¹³²

Thousands of years ago, China envisaged a world where people live in perfect harmony and are as dear to one another as family. Today, President Xi Jinping has given the world a new name – a community of common destiny. Since Xi first proposed the concept in late 2012, it has gone on to shape China’s approach to global governance, giving rise to proposals and measures to support growth for all.



Figure 32: President Xi Jinping meeting with Indonesian President SBY in Jakarta, October 2013.

¹³⁰ Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament, *ASEAN China Center*, September 21, 2016, https://reconasia-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/filer_public/88/fe/88fe8107-15d7-4b4c-8a59-0feb13c213e1/speech_by_chinese_president_xi_jinping_to_indonesian_parliament.pdf, (accessed April 12, 2019).

¹³¹ The ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in Xi Jinping’s New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed April 12, 2019).

¹³² Xi’s world vision: A community of common destiny, a shared home for humanity, *People’s Daily*, January 15, 2017, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0115/c90000-9167028.html> (accessed November 2, 2018).

5.4.1.2. Usage overview

Since 2013, ‘common destiny’ has been increasingly used in CCP diplomacy, mostly by President Xi in international settings (Zhang, 2018). The initial target audience was China’s immediate Asian neighbourhood, with a focus on the growth and development of the region being intertwined with China. Although the audience is still primarily within this region, it has been extended to other developing countries and regions and since 2016, also has a more general ‘global’ focus, particularly when used in the context of the BRI – although, important to note, it is never used with regards to bilateral relations with developed countries.

As my analysis indicates, ‘common destiny’ is an example of an ‘adopted’ key message, embraced and rebadged by the CCP and even now proclaimed by the CCP as a significant Chinese contribution to global diplomacy. In academic research, this expression has been described as a ‘catchall category for the country’s regional and broader global engagement’ (Barmé, 2015, p.xii) and criticised as ‘vague in meaning and loosely used’ (Zhang, 2018, p.196). Indeed, the CCP appears to have kept the core idea of ‘common destiny’ relatively opaque to make it applicable to a variety of contexts and audiences. These range from regional relationship descriptions, such as ‘China and Africa have always been a community of common destiny’,¹³³ to the politics of global Internet governance, with Xi declaring at the 2016 third World Internet Conference in Wuzhen that ‘building a cyberspace community of common destiny’ was a ‘pressing demand in an information-led world’.¹³⁴

Importantly, ‘common destiny’ has now evolved into different variations of the original term, including ‘shared destiny’ and ‘shared future’. ‘Common destiny’ and ‘shared destiny’ can both be translated into Chinese as 命运共同体. In English, however, the two terms have a slightly different nuance. ‘Common’ has a more neutral connotation, as it refers to that which is ‘belonging to or involving the whole of a community’.¹³⁵ ‘Shared’ has a slightly more positive connotation than ‘common’, as it refers to something ‘enjoyed jointly with others’ or ‘distributed between members of a group’.¹³⁶ Davies (2015, p.168) notes, ‘the word for destiny,

¹³³ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi Co-Chairs the third round of political consultations between Chinese and African foreign ministers on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, September 24, 2013, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgjb/eng/zxxx/t1080815.htm> (accessed February 20, 2019).

¹³⁴ President Xi stresses international cooperation in cyberspace governance, *China Daily*, November 16, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/3rdWuzhenWorldInternetConference/2016-11/16/content_27397748.htm (accessed April 2, 2019).

¹³⁵ Meaning of ‘common’ in English, *Lexico*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/common> (accessed April 15, 2018).

¹³⁶ Meaning of ‘shared’ in English, *Lexico*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shared> (accessed April 15, 2018).

mingyun 命运, can also mean “fate” [and] whereas destiny foretells a happy end, fate can progress to gloom and doom. The official interpretation of *mingyun*, however, in this case, excludes “fate” – in the rhetoric of the party-state, destiny can only be positive’.

Xi’s first-term foreign policy (2013–2017) saw an expansion of China’s global influence and the transformation of China from regional to global power with messaging focused on Xi’s ‘China dream’ (and even its linkage to a CCP-espoused ‘Asia-Pacific’ dream), but also on the ‘community of common destiny’ (Po and Li, 2017, p.85). Xi increasingly emphasised his vision of developing a ‘community of common destiny’, with this expression featured in a wide range of policy statements from cybersecurity to bilateral relations with other countries (Po and Li, 2017, p.85). Although referenced in *Xinhua* prior to Xi becoming President, these pre-2013 references to ‘common destiny’ were limited.

In his November 2012 National Congress work report, Hu Jintao, as outgoing CCP General Secretary, said ‘we should raise awareness about human beings sharing a community of common destiny’.¹³⁷ Before this, the expression ‘common destiny’ appeared only infrequently from 2008 to 2010. What is important to note is that in 2007, the concept of a ‘community of shared destiny’ was used by the CCP in regards to cross-strait relations with Taiwan specifically (Rigby and Taylor, 2015; Zhang, 2018). In 2011, ‘common destiny’ also appeared in China’s foreign policy white paper *China’s Peaceful Development*¹³⁸ in the statement: ‘The international community should reject the zero-sum game which was a product of the old international relations ... It should find new perspectives from the angle of the community of common destiny.’ However, as mentioned, ‘common destiny’ as a key message, did not become a prominent part of the CCP’s messaging until 2013.

From 2008–2018, usage was primarily externally focused, with a small number of domestic references; in 2009 (at a time of heightened ethnic tension in Xinjiang Province); and in 2012, 2013 and 2016 (mostly in regards to cross-strait relations with Taiwan). The focus on external relationships can be divided into three categories:

1. Bilateral – to describe China’s relations with developing countries:

¹³⁷ Full text of Hu Jintao’s report at 18th Party Congress, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, November 27, 2012, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/18th_CPC_National_Congress_Eng/t992917.htm (accessed August 29, 2018).

¹³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China’s peaceful development, September 6, 2011, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm (accessed July 16, 2015).

China is working to expand convergence of interests with more and more countries, such as Pakistan, Laos and Cambodia, and form communities of common destiny on a bilateral basis (*Xinhua*, 2017).¹³⁹

2. Regional – to characterise China’s strategic relations with Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Central Asia:

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s pledge to build a community of common destiny with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has generated enthusiastic resonance in Cambodia (*Xinhua* in *Global Times*, 2013).¹⁴⁰

3. Global – to promote a generalised sense of China’s efforts to facilitate activities that would benefit ‘all mankind’:

Thousands of years ago, China envisaged a world where people live in perfect harmony and are as dear to one another as family. Today, President Xi Jinping has given the world a new name – a community of common destiny (*Xinhua*, 2017).¹⁴¹

Table 17: References to ‘common destiny’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total mentions	2	3	1	9	11	46	77	268	138	59	23
Domestic references	0% (3)	100% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	36% (4)	7% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	9% (12)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Global references	0%	0% (0)	0% (0)	67% (6)	55% (6)	26% (12)	13% (10)	35% (94)	33% (46)	44% (26)	43% (10)
Regional/ Bloc references	50% (1) Greater Mekong Sub- region	0% (0)	0% (0)	33% (3)	9% (1)	60% (28)	71% (55)	33% (88)	41% (57)	37% (22)	39% (9)
Individual/ other references	50% (1) Japan	0% (0)	100% (1) Egypt	0% (0)	0% (0)	7% (3)	16% (12)	32% (86)	17% (23)	19% (11)	17% (4)

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

Despite official mentions of the term in 2011 and 2012, there were minimal references in *Xinhua* with only a slight increase in usage from 2011 (n:9) to 2012 (n:11). But from 2013 (n:46), Xi’s first year as President, ‘common destiny’ began to feature prominently at key internal and external events and usage increased considerably, starting with Xi using the term at a key address at the Boao Forum in March 2013, encouraging participants to ‘foster a sense

¹³⁹ Xi’s world vision: a community of common destiny, a shared home for humanity, *People’s Daily*, January 15, 2017, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0115/c90000-9167028.html> (accessed November 2, 2018).

¹⁴⁰ Cambodian experts laud Xi’s pledge to foster closer China-ASEAN ties, *Global Times*, October 4, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/815494.shtml> (accessed March 12, 2018).

¹⁴¹ Xi’s world vision: a community of common destiny, a shared home for humanity, *People’s Daily*, January 15, 2017, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0115/c90000-9167028.html> (accessed November 2, 2018).

of community of common destiny'.¹⁴² In October that year, Xi emphasised the term at the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference,¹⁴³ with a pledge to 'connect China's dreams with the wishes of peripheral countries, such as living a happy life and creating beautiful regional development prospects, thereby rooting the sense of common destiny in peripheral countries'. Emphasis at these two key events helped establish the groundwork and precedence for embedding 'common destiny' as a key foreign policy theme for Xi, in particular, during his first three years as Chinese President.

During the Hu period being examined in this thesis (2008–2012), the term was scarcely used, with only n:6 in 2008–2010 and then n:20 in 2011–2012, mostly in a global context. With Xi, the emphasis initially shifted to China's neighbourhood (2013–2014) and then to a combination of global and regional references (2015–2018). Looking at usage in closer detail, it is important to also consider what is not being said as well as what is being said (as commentators often note about content analysis of the CCP's state media). As mentioned above, it has been used bilaterally with developing countries, regionally with developing regions, and globally with 'all mankind'. However, it is not used to characterise bilateral relations with developed nations, nor regional relations with developed regions, such as North America or Western Europe. Ironically, given the often-fraught Sino-Japanese relationship, the only exception to this was a single reference to 'common destiny' in 2008, to characterise China's relationship with Japan.

The year 2015 marked a significant evolution in the use of China's 'champion' sub-narrative with an increased focus on the 'global' rather than the 'regional' and an increase in references to the broader concept of a 'shared future/destiny' with the world. 'Common destiny' references to global issues increased from 13% in 2014 to 35% in 2015, highlighting a shift in target audience from predominantly developing regions and Asian countries, particularly South East Asian, to a broader global audience. Xi's one and only speech to date at the UNGA annual General Debate¹⁴⁴ was in 2015, when he presented China's views on the world, including China's commitment to 'uphold the international order', and 'create a shared future for

¹⁴² Xi Jinping, Working together toward a better future for Asia and the world, April 7, 2013, <http://english.boaoforum.org/mtzxxwz xen/7379.jhtml> (accessed April 16, 2019).

¹⁴³ Important speech by Xi Jinping at Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, October 30, 2013, http://www.cciced.net/cciceden/NEWSCENTER/LatestEnvironmentalandDevelopmentNews/201310/t20131030_82626.html (accessed April 28, 2019).

¹⁴⁴ Xi Jinping, Working together to forge a new partnership of win-win cooperation and create a community of shared future for mankind, September 29, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgswbxcxlhgcl70znxlfh/t1305051.shtml (accessed August 29, 2016).

mankind'. A feature *Xinhua Insight* story in January 2016,¹⁴⁵ discussing Xi's extensive international engagement since becoming Party leader in November 2012, noted that he had made '19 visits abroad', spent '133 days outside the country' and met with '165 state and government leaders on home soil'. The point of the article was to highlight how Xi had toiled tirelessly 'not only for the (sake of) Chinese dream but also for the shared destiny and future of the world as a whole'.

The end of Xi's first five-year term was punctuated by his address at the 19th National Congress in October 2017. The speech signaled a major evolution in Chinese foreign policy, which was reflected in the shift in emphasis of the 'common destiny' key message, and highlighted in a speech section entitled 'Adhering to the Path of Peaceful Development and Constructing a Community of Common Destiny with Mankind'. The National Congress, normally held once every five years, was Xi's first as both China's President and the CCP's General Secretary, and he dedicated 205 minutes to highlight the CCP's achievements and his vision for the future. This vision included the declaration of a 'new era', with 26 references to China as a 'great' or 'strong' power¹⁴⁶ and the globalisation of 'common destiny' as a significant contribution by the CCP to international relations thinking and terminology. Xi's 'new era' was about fostering a 'new type of international relations' and building 'a community of common destiny with mankind' as the primary aim of China's foreign policy.¹⁴⁷ This way of describing 'common destiny' indicated its importance as a term for signifying China's intention to be globally influential under Xi's leadership. This will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

5.4.1.3. Sinicisation of 'Common Destiny' (命运共同体)

Despite 'common destiny' previously featuring in ASEAN speeches, and then President Hu Jintao's usage (albeit minimal), the CCP, through state media and in major fora, clearly sought to directly attribute it to Xi. The CCP's promotion of 'common destiny' can be considered as a deliberate attempt to monopolise this term as 'uniquely' – and also 'historically' – Chinese, with state media positioning 'common destiny' as an important Chinese contribution to 'mankind'. To date, there has been no acknowledgement that this concept was previously used

¹⁴⁵ Xi's worldwide diplomacy benefits China and the world, *Xinhua* writes, *Larouche*, January 6, 2016, <https://larouchepac.com/20160106/xis-worldwide-diplomacy-benefits-china-and-world-xinhua-writes> (accessed December 10, 2018).

¹⁴⁶ Xi Jinping's marathon speech: Five takeaways, *The New York Times*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-party-congress.html> (accessed June 20, 2018).

¹⁴⁷ The 'Community of Common Destiny' in Xi Jinping's New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed April 12, 2019).

by ASEAN. Another example of the concept's Sinicisation can be seen in *Xinhua*'s description of Xi's 'innovative' diplomacy and agenda for global governance being described by the CCP as 'supported by the ancient Confucian philosophy' of 'building a community of common destiny' (*Xinhua*, March 2016).¹⁴⁸ In a *Xinhua* article titled 'CPC [Communist Party of China] draws governance wisdom from tradition', Vice President of the International Confucian Association Mou Zhongjian said he believed 'community of common destiny' was a 'deep-rooted idea in Chinese culture that has always viewed all people around the world as one family'.¹⁴⁹

In July 2016, an event called 'Sun Yat-sen and the future of the Asian Community of Common Destiny' was held in Tokyo to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birth. According to *Xinhua*, the event was dedicated to 'reviewing and studying Sun's ideals and their connection and significance to the current world, and exploring ways to build the Asian Community of Common Destiny'. Li Zhaoxing, former Chinese foreign minister, delivered the keynote speech and declared that 'Sun's ideal that Asian countries should cooperate together on equal footing to achieve regional prosperity, is still relevant today' and that 'China's current objective of building an Asian Community of Common Destiny was also a lifetime goal of Sun's'.¹⁵⁰ Linking 'common destiny' to 'ancient China' through Confucianism and to modern China through Sun Yat-sen, the CCP is attempting to establish continuity of messaging and also ideology, with an emphasis on 'yet another' significant Chinese contribution to the world based on its long history (part of the 'China story' theme).

This focus on 'continuity' is also reflected in the way the 'world order' message is used. However, due to the monumental economic shift in China from the Mao era, 'world order' as a key message has considerable challenges in balancing the old and new rhetoric.

5.4.2. World Order (国际/世界秩序): origin and usage overview

5.4.2.1. Origin

This next section examines the origins of the 'world order' key message. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this message is connected with the Propaganda Model's 'ideology/fear' filter, with the CCP continuing to be largely driven by the domestic fear of instability and an 'unshakeable

¹⁴⁸ Chinese diplomacy to build global community of common destiny, *China Daily*, March 3, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/zaker/1143609/2016-03-03/cd_23715934.html (accessed April 17, 2019).

¹⁴⁹ CPC draws governance wisdom from tradition, *People's Daily*, March 4, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0304/c90000-9024760.html> (accessed April 16, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ Sun Yat-sen's 150th birth anniversary marked in Tokyo, *China.org.cn*, July 12, 2016, http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2016-07/12/content_38864803.htm (accessed December 7, 2018).

anxiety about the continuing legitimacy’ of the Party (Davies, 2019, p.49). It is also an underlying feature of Xi’s ‘China dream’, with the premise that China’s ‘national rejuvenation’ is about a shift in the current ‘world order’ that, at the very least, restores China to being the pre-eminent regional power (replacing, after 70 years, the U.S.).

History is full of references to the concept of a ‘world order’, in particular one that is ‘changing’ and ‘new’. These range from the ancient Roman poet Vergil in the first century BCE referring to a ‘great series or mighty order of ages ... born anew’¹⁵¹ to more contemporary references to ‘world order’, such as after WWI and the Cold War,¹⁵² and most recently, Xi Jinping declaring China’s critical role being to ‘guide the international community to jointly build a more just and reasonable world order’.¹⁵³ The ‘world order’ theme is obviously not created by the CCP. Furthermore, Xi’s reference to a ‘more just’ world order is not unique to the CCP, with others, such as former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, having declared the need to ‘establish a new world order based on justice, on equity, and on peace’.¹⁵⁴ However, as part of the broader ‘China story’, ‘world order’ is a key message that simultaneously highlights both the CCP’s evolution and its challenges in managing tension between global and domestic priorities. Although it has been a key theme since the CCP came to power in 1949 (and even before), a major challenge for the Central Propaganda Department is trying to portray ideological consistency despite the dramatic shift in global, economic realities from the revolutionary Mao era to now.

Under Mao, the Leninist idea of ‘Internationalism’ (国际主义) as a Communist-inspired ‘new world order’ was a key focus of the CCP’s international messaging. Although the term can be defined in a number of ways, in this context it was regarded as an important component of socialist political theory, based on the principle that working-class people of all countries must unite to overthrow capitalism and imperialism (Figure 33). In this sense, the socialist understanding of internationalism is closely related to the concept of international solidarity. As noted by Mao, ‘Chinese Communists must therefore combine patriotism with internationalism. For only by fighting in defence of the motherland can we defeat the aggressors and achieve national liberation. And only by achieving national liberation will it be possible for

¹⁵¹ Great Seal, Vergil’s *Eclogues*, <https://greatseal.com/mottoes/seclorumvirgil.html> (accessed April 30, 2019).

¹⁵² The unpredictability of the new world order, *Andystalman.com*, (n.d.), <http://andystalman.com/en/the-unpredictability-of-the-new-world-order/> (accessed April 30, 2019).

¹⁵³ Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to lead the ‘new world order’, *Quartz*, February 22, 2017, <https://qz.com/916382/chinese-president-xi-jinping-has-vowed-to-lead-the-new-world-order/> (accessed October 12, 2018).

¹⁵⁴ Address by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz at the UNGA, October 1979, <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-delivered-34th-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-city> (accessed February 27, 2019).

the proletariat and other working people to achieve their own emancipation. The victory of China and the defeat of the invading imperialists will help the people of other countries. Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism’.¹⁵⁵



Figure 33: Vigorously support the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America – Zhou Ruizhuang (1964).¹⁵⁶

As mentioned above, the more general ‘world order’ message of the CCP has been part of the Party’s narrative since even before it came to power in 1949, with Mao predicting global ideological change: ‘The communist ideological and social system alone is full of youth and vitality, sweeping the world with the momentum of an avalanche and the force of a thunderbolt’.¹⁵⁷ Under Mao, the focus was on poor colonies of Western powers being urged to rise up as part of international revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, the extreme rhetoric and violence was justified by Mao and his Red Guards by an imperative to ‘scatter the old world, build a new world’ (1967, Figure 34). However, in the early 1970s greater engagement with developed, Western countries (Gurtov, cited in Wang, 2003, p.64), resulted in ‘political and strategic gains after China toned down its rhetoric of world revolution. In 1970, at the height of China’s radical foreign policy practices, only 53 countries had diplomatic relations with China. By early 1974, the number had grown to 90.’

¹⁵⁵ *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, December 1966, <http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/QCM66.pdf> (accessed October 12, 2018), p.176.

¹⁵⁶ Vigorously support the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, *chinese posters.net*, 1964, <https://chinese posters.net/gallery/e3-724.php> (accessed November 29, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Volume II, December 1965, <http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/MaoSW2.pdf> (accessed March 10, 2018), p.133.



Figure 34: Scatter the old world, build a new world (打碎旧世界创立新世界).¹⁵⁸

With China now the world's second largest economy and also a primary global stakeholder on a range of issues, current usage of 'world order' by the CCP reflects the significant rise in China's status and influence. It also reflects the perception among influential Chinese commentators, such as Yan Xuetong, that 'Western liberalism is no longer leading international norms' and that 'power will be redistributed around the world instead of focused in the West' (Yan, 2018, p.1, cited in Bandurski, 2018). As noted in earlier chapters, the change in CCP leadership in 2013 also saw a shift in the CCP's growing international confidence and messaging, with both Chinese and international commentators, declaring the end of Deng's reform era dictum to 'hide our capacities and bide our time'.¹⁵⁹ From Hu in 2011 calling on China to 'make the international order and system more just and equitable', to Xi declaring that China will 'take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system'.¹⁶⁰ However, this shift to a more proactive CCP position in global affairs has presented an ongoing messaging challenge for the CCP as it simultaneously calls for the current world order to be 'maintained/ safeguarded/ upheld' but also 'changed and reformed'.

¹⁵⁸ Cultural Revolution (1966-1968), *chineseposters.net*, 1967, <https://chineseposters.net/gallery/d29-184.php> (accessed November 29, 2018).

¹⁵⁹ The 'Community of Common Destiny' in Xi Jinping's New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed April 12, 2019).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

5.4.2.2. Usage overview

The complexities faced by the CCP in articulating ‘world order’ are not surprising given that policymakers in different countries are increasingly anxious about the changing world order. Reporting on a speech delivered at the Russian-led Valdai Discussion Club in October 2016 by Fu Ying, chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress, a *Xinhua* editorial¹⁶¹ stated that the ‘issue of world order is now an agenda of global concern’. This, in part, reflects the rise of many Asian economies coupled with growing economic and political disillusionment in some Western democracies that are ‘ceasing to influence international politics in a unified manner’ (Yan in Bandurski, 2018, paragraph 13). However, changes to the relatively stable ‘post-WWII order’ are challenging the political systems and international trade, security and cultural relationships for many countries, not just China. For the CCP, the ‘world order’ message is a significant challenge as it requires a balancing of China’s position as a non-threatening global leader, selectively acknowledging the importance of the existing order that benefits China, while simultaneously criticising components of the same existing order (especially in relation to the U.S. and Japan).

There is no shortage of evidence (also reflected in the *Xinhua* messaging data) that indicate the CCP’s desire for changes to the international system to better favour China. It is also important to note that the CCP’s push to ‘transform itself from regional to global power are not new’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.87), or unique to Xi’s time. This is evidenced by the sharp rise in ‘world/international order’ messaging from 2008 to 2009 at the height of the Global Financial Crisis, and again from 2011 to 2012 (to be discussed in more detail later), with a view ‘among Chinese elites that China gained ground’ on Western, developed countries, in particular the U.S., regarding economic and governance credibility, and that the timing was ‘opportune for China to make its mark on the world stage, including by gradually shaping global norms and structures to China’s benefit’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.87). For over a decade, the CCP has been calling for ‘global institutional reform’ within the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization (Zhang, 2010, p.40). The CCP is also actively pursuing a strategy of ‘reshaping the orders of multiple selected regions that are strategically important to its national interests’ (Zhang, 2010, p.49), which include South East and Central Asia, with an aim to creating and directing ‘a new, regional cooperative institution that reflects its own vision of international relations’.

¹⁶¹ Senior Chinese diplomat calls for more inclusive world order based on mutual trust, *Xinhua*, October 26, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/26/c_135780506.htm (accessed March 25, 2017).

Within this context of the CCP's pushing for change to global institutions, there is always the domestic consideration. This is reflected in the at-times contradictory nature of both key messages within the 'champion' sub-narrative, but in particular the 'world order' message. As mentioned in earlier chapters, domestic stability is the number one priority of the CCP, and behind its global advocacy for change and reform lie economic security concerns, especially energy security (Zhang, 2010, p.54). China's need for energy security has seen significant efforts, such as energy-focused trade pacts and Chinese investment in key locations, including Chinese oil company ventures in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Central Asia (Zhang, 2010, p.54). Despite this, in 2017 China's oil import dependence was as high as approximately 65% of the required quantity and set to rise as high as 80% by 2030, as a result of falling domestic production and economic growth.¹⁶² This is important to remember, as high-profile initiatives driven by the CCP over the past five years, such as the BRI, are regarded as critical to China's economic and energy security. The BRI, in particular, is both a challenge and opportunity for the CCP as it commits China to unprecedented bilateral, regional and global engagement, while also being driven by a commitment and need to deliver economic benefit to both domestic provinces and companies in financial need.

The 'world order' key message itself does not have a specific target audience and is used extensively; however, what is audience-specific is the context in which it is used, i.e. what 'world order' looks like/needs/is varies depending on the audience. For example, the CCP simultaneously seeks to promote itself as a 'champion' for needed change to the current international system, while also promoting itself as a 'champion' in safeguarding multilateralism, globalisation and the current international system, in particular since the election of Trump as U.S. President in late 2016. This in itself seems incredible, given the Mao-era rhetoric that not only condemned capitalist countries but advocated the overthrow of their governments. Although emphasis on 'world order' usually depends on context and audience (i.e. what is the issue and which country is being engaged/referred to by the CCP), as will be shown in this next section, CCP messaging regarding 'world order' is often contradictory, as the CCP positions itself differently to different audiences.

The contradictions associated with the context in which these key messages are delivered, contribute to the regional and global uncertainty about the CCP's intent and future role in international affairs. They are also an example of 'structuration', noted in the earlier Theoretical

¹⁶² China's energy security investments: Outlook for 2018, *Global Risk Insights*, January 31, 2018, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2018/01/chinas-energy-security-investments-outlook-2018/> (accessed January 18, 2019).

Framework chapter, highlighting institutional tension between the CCP and competing domestic and global forces. This structural tension is best illustrated by two major CCP challenges:

1. Conflicting international objectives (e.g. peaceful neighbourhood diplomacy and at-times violent maritime clashes with local fishermen in disputed waters).
2. Competing domestic/international agendas (e.g. global leadership clashing with internal politics, such as the sudden 2018 arrest of former Chinese Interpol chief Meng Hongwei in China).¹⁶³

These conflicting policy objectives include seeking to ‘portray an image of a benign great power on the one hand and the strong desire to “flex its muscles” to maximize its interests over disputed territories on the other’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.90). The CCP has made it clear that countries have a choice; to support Chinese policy (i.e. no criticism) and benefit economically or to not support China and risk political, economic or even military retribution. This ‘carrot and stick approach’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.86) means countries must ‘accommodate themselves to the values and interests’ of China or risk ‘loss of rights and privileges in the community of common destiny’ (Arase, 2015, p.2).

There is a longstanding domestic consensus that the CCP needs to continue its focus on domestic issues and sustaining economic growth. However, this creates some uncertainty with Party leadership regarding China’s role in international relations, in particular how involved it should be in the ‘world order’. The CCP is ‘reluctant to commit substantive resources or accept too much international responsibility, especially when China’s national interests are not directly at stake’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.90). These concerns are based on China still being a ‘developing country requiring significant resources for mounting domestic issues’ and that ‘overstretching resources could hinder Chinese growth and hamper ascent in the international system’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.91).

However, there is also now increasing demand from the international community for China to adopt greater global responsibilities, with some foreign observers criticising China as a ‘free rider and absent in past decades from dealing with global issues’ (Chang Liao, 2016, p.87). Attempts to reconcile the domestic and international agendas and ‘structural tension’ are reflected in ‘China’s media outlets including *Xinhua* as well as Chinese policymakers and

¹⁶³ China installed its top cop to steer Interpol. Then he disappeared, *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-installed-its-top-cop-to-steer-interpol-then-he-disappeared-11556304500> (accessed April 23, 2019).

analysts having repeatedly highlighted the importance of these initiatives to China's domestic economy' (Poh and Li, 2017, p.90). Tension caused by competing priorities is reflected in the CCP's 'world order' message as China seeks more control in international affairs but is also reluctant and keen to highlight the value of the 'status quo'.

In contrast to Mao's rhetoric regarding communism as an international movement and a future world order, the messaging in CCP state media (under both Hu and Xi) has been more nuanced. This includes highlighting China's importance within the global economy and the contribution China can make to, and its active participation in, regional and international affairs. This ranges from 'defender' and 'champion' of the existing economic order, to advocate for 'change' with a proposed 'alternative' to the traditional Western-led approach. For example, as noted in *Xinhua*:¹⁶⁴

To deal with common global challenges, nations across the globe need to forge a more inclusive and trust-based world order_that features mutual respect, common security and win-win cooperation, a senior Chinese diplomat said. Fu Ying, chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of China, shared with the audience her view on how to reform the current world order in order to promote global governance.

CCP articulation of 'world order' has evolved from something that needed to be revolutionised by poor, colonised peoples around the world, to something that has nothing to do with political revolution per se. In accordance with the CCP's at-times competing foreign policy objectives and audiences, its references to a 'world order' have become much more flexible. At times, a 'world order' is something that needs to be 'maintained/safeguarded/upheld'; at other times, it needs to be 'changed/reformed' or become 'more just/democratic/better/inclusive'. Specifically, the three main usage definitions are as follows.

1. The need to 'maintain/ safeguard/ uphold the post-World War II order' (often used in the context of ostracising Japan). As reported in a *Xinhua* article:

The whole international community is commemorating the 70th anniversary of the WWII triumph, Chinese and foreign experts have called for concerted China-U.S. efforts to safeguard the hard-won post-war world order, which is now faced with grave challenges mainly as a result of attempts by right-wing forces in Japan to deny the outcome of WWII and to change the country's pacifist constitution.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Senior Chinese diplomat calls for more inclusive world order, *Xinhua*, October 26, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/26/c_135780506.htm (accessed March 25, 2017).

¹⁶⁵ Spotlight: Maintenance of post-war order requires concerted effort, *Xinhua*, September 18, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-09/18/c_134636822.htm (accessed January 16, 2016).

2. The need to ‘protect an international free and globalised trading system’ (specifically from a protectionist US Trump administration). As noted in a *Xinhua* report on Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaking at the 2018 UNGA annual General Debate: ‘What we see today is that international rules and multilateral mechanisms are under attack ... China’s answer is clear-cut. All along, China has upheld the international order and pursued multilateralism.’ The article also noted that ‘[a]ttacks on multilateralism were most manifested Tuesday in US President Donald Trump’s speech at the same debate’.¹⁶⁶
3. The need to ‘change, reform and improve global governance and systems’ (based on ‘unfair, unjust Western models’). As noted by Chen Fengying, former head of China’s World Economy Institute, in a *Xinhua* article during the 2017 National People’s Congress:

As world dynamics change, global governance structure should change accordingly ... due attention should be given to emerging economies ... China has on several occasions urged the IMF to review the distribution of quotas and votes to ensure a fairer representation of emerging and developing economies ... The world is in dire need of new global governance frameworks, and China should not stand by with folded arms as it has the ability to contribute.¹⁶⁷

The tension between these three articulations of ‘world order’ is highlighted in usage trends and emphasis during key periods from 2008 to 2018.

Table 18: References to ‘world order’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
World order	11	27	22	19	28	36	58	103	35	67	53
New	100% (11)	48% (13)	18% (4)	47% (9)	18% (5)	19% (7)	19% (11)	18% (19)	11% (4)	15% (10)	21% (11)
Maintain/ safeguard/ uphold	0% (0)	4% (1)	5% (1)	0% (0)	32% (9)	33% (12)	14% (8)	20% (21)	14% (5)	4% (3)	26% (14)
Change/ changing/ reform	0% (0)	26% (7)	27% (6)	5% (1)	21% (6)	6% (2)	5% (3)	11% (11)	6% (2)	19% (13)	13% (7)
More - just/ democratic/ better/ inclusive	0% (0)	15% (4)	27% (6)	26% (5)	14% (4)	39% (14)	26% (15)	16% (16)	43% (15)	28% (19)	32% (17)
Current (certain point in time)	0% (0)	7% (2)	23% (5)	21% (4)	14% (4)	3% (1)	36% (21)	35% (36)	26% (9)	33% (22)	8% (4)

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

The usage of ‘world order’ increased from n:11 in 2008 to n:53 in 2018 with a peak of n:103 in 2015. As a key message, usage of ‘world order’ increased following the 2008 Beijing

¹⁶⁶ China’s defense of multilateralism resonates with world at UNGA debate, *Xinhua*, September 30, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/30/c_137503501.htm (accessed March 11, 2019).

¹⁶⁷ China pushes for fair, inclusive global governance, *Xinhua*, March 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/14/c_136127236.htm (accessed March 11, 2019).

Olympics, which greatly increased the international status of China. The messaging evolution also involved increased usage of the term ‘international order’ although there are no major connotation differences in Mandarin between ‘world order’ and international order (国际/世界秩序, respectively) and the CCP uses both, at times interchangeably.

Over the 11-year period (see Table 18), usage levels had two sharp spikes of n:58 in 2014 to n:103 in 2015 and again from n:35 in 2016 to n:67 in 2017; and one sharp decline from n:103 in 2015 to n:35 in 2016 which, coincided with an increased usage of the term ‘international order’. In 2018, ‘world order’ usage dropped again from n:67 in 2017 to n:35 in stark contrast to use of ‘international order’ which jumped from n:86 in 2017 to n:200, in 2018, following the 19th National Party Congress in October 2017 in which Xi’s historic address¹⁶⁸ had n:0 references to ‘world order’ but n:3 to ‘international order’. These included: (1) ‘The Chinese Dream can be realized only in a peaceful international environment and under a stable international order’; (2) ‘China will continue its efforts to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order’; and (3) ‘Changes in the global governance system and the international order are speeding up’. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the ‘world order’ concept is not unique to the CCP. However, the CCP has unequivocally connected history, destiny and Chinese entitlement to the future world order.

5.4.2.3. Sinicisation of World Order (国际/世界秩序)

As mentioned above, the CCP’s ‘world order’ key message has been linked by the CCP with the broader ‘China story’ narrative. It is an important historical thematic in Xi’s ‘China dream’, with the ‘world order’ becoming an integral, albeit challenging, part of China’s rising status and global re-emergence, particularly since entering the WTO in 2001. Xi’s ‘national rejuvenation’ narrative as part of the ‘China dream’ incorporates both the past and present. Domestically, it is articulated as part of its struggle to right a historical wrong and that over the past century, China being ‘largely absent as an economic and military force – was merely an historical aberration’ (Economy, 2010, p.8).

The future of national rejuvenation requires a ‘world order’ with conditions favourable to China, with the CCP’s global communications contributing to helping China seize its ‘rightful’ global position (Li and Sligo, 2012; Ford, 2011) and changing the existing world order (Rozman,

¹⁶⁸ Xi Jinping, Secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new Era, 19th National Congress, October 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed April 28, 2019).

2011). Furthermore, the CCP's 'world order' message now also seeks to encompass other nations. As noted by Professor Wang Yiwei,¹⁶⁹ '[t]he concept of building a community with a shared future for humanity has become an important notion for the progress of human civilization ... China's window of opportunity is turning into the world's window of opportunity'. In October 2017, in his report to the National Party Congress (p.22),¹⁷⁰ Xi claimed: 'The dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of other countries; the Chinese Dream can be realized only in a peaceful international environment and under a stable international order.' It also importantly allows for the 'China dream', as the 'righting of historical wrongs', to also be extended to the dreams of other previously 'wronged nations'.

Furthermore, the 'Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation' was linked by Xi to the 'China story' at the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018:¹⁷¹

'Over a history of thousands of years, Chinese people have always held fast to their dreams and make endless efforts', he said, citing ancient Chinese mythologies, such as Pangu creating the world, Nyuwa patching up the sky, Fuxi drawing eight diagrams, Shennong tasting herbs, Kuafu chasing the sun, Jingwei filling up the sea and Yugong removing mountains. 'To realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation has become the greatest dream of Chinese nation.'

This merging of the past and present, China's prominent global status and a changing world order, demonstrates the intent by the CCP to carefully frame the future as one led by China.

5.5. Summary

The 'champion' narrative examined over the 11-year period from 2008 to 2018 is a story of two distinct stages – Hu's administration from 2008 to 2012 and Xi's from 2013 to 2018 – but also, importantly, three phases: 2008 to 2012 (Hu's final years in office and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics), 2013 to 2015 (Xi's first three years in office) and 2016 to 2018 (Xi's next three years). The latter stage of Xi is reflective of the CCP creating a narrative that championed not just the global cause of the developing world, but also the global cause of multilateralism in the face of protectionist Trump rhetoric (to be discussed specifically in Chapter 8).

¹⁶⁹ One year on, China navigates new era under Xi, *Xinhua*, October 18, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/18/c_137539903.htm (accessed April 30, 2019).

¹⁷⁰ Xi Jinping, Secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, 19th National Congress, October 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed June 10, 2018).

¹⁷¹ Chinese people are people with great dreams, *Xinhua*, March 20, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/20/c_137052329.htm (accessed November 16, 2018).

‘Common destiny’ shifted from essentially a CCP message for an Asian neighbourhood audience to a message for a global audience about a Chinese-led, inspired and guided ‘shared future for all mankind’. This broadening was reflected in Xi’s address at the 19th National Party Congress:¹⁷²

[T]he culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics has kept developing, blazing a new trail for other developing countries to achieve modernization. It offers a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence; and it offers Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind.

Although aspects of the ‘champion’ narrative expanded to a more global audience and emphasis, such as the shift from ‘Asian community of common destiny’ to a ‘shared future for all mankind’, the CCP’s ‘champion’ messaging evolved to be clearly aimed at two things with two distinct audiences: (1) creating a coalition of ‘China-friendly’ governments in the developing world, with China as advocate and financial benefactor – combining the carrot of benefit and the stick of threats, promoting a China model and growth pathway in contrast with the traditional Western-led approach; and, (2) undermining the U.S. and its relationship with traditional developing country partners, as well as increasingly looking to create tension between the U.S. and its traditional, Western, developed country partners, with China as the friend of globalised trade and advocating for a ‘more just world order’ in contrast to a U.S. portrayed by China as a zero-sum focused protectionist.

Messaging was crafted, despite contradictions, to position China as the new international leader of globalisation, advocating for reform, change and greater representation (more just/democratic/better/inclusive) for the developing world. This was despite simultaneously espousing stability, (maintain/ safeguard/uphold) with Trump’s ‘America First’ and Japanese ‘militarism’ painted as the enemies of multilateralism and regional stability respectively. As noted by Callick (2018, paragraph one), ‘China is supremely purposeful. In Xi’s New Era, he wants China’s economic heft to be reflected in international influence and respect and in a capacity to transform global institutions to better suit its own ambitions’.

As Rigby and Taylor (2015, p.60) note, the concept of a ‘community of shared destiny’ was essentially about ‘ensuring peace and stability in China’s external strategic environment

¹⁷² Xi Jinping, Secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, 19th National Congress, October 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed April 28, 2019).

through the development of good relations with neighboring countries’ but that ‘ironically, it is difficult to recall a period, in recent history at least, where there has been such a substantial gap between Beijing’s public rhetoric and what it has been doing in practice, with the result that it has alienated, alarmed and infuriated many of its neighbours’. However, the ‘common destiny’ message and its contribution to the ‘champion’ sub-narrative is now increasingly being adapted and featured more broadly in key CCP platforms. One example is a 2018 documentary on the BRI presented at the Venice Film Festival, called ‘Common Destiny’.¹⁷³

The shift from a primarily regional ‘common destiny’ to ‘shared future for all mankind’, which implies a more expansive goal incorporating ‘global governance’ and a strong alignment with China’s BRI, is another indicator of the CCP’s efforts to shape global affairs. Furthermore, it is also being positioned in direct contrast to how the CCP is seeking to present and frame the U.S. The title of a *Xinhua* commentary article about the January 2018 World Economic Forum in Davos puts it plainly: ‘Shared future or America First’.¹⁷⁴

As business leaders and policy makers from across the globe assemble ... they are faced with two fundamentally different outlooks. One is present in the theme of this year’s World Economic Forum annual meeting ... ‘Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World’. The other is upheld by US President Donald Trump. His signature self-centered ‘America First’ policy has led his country away from multiple multilateral pacts and infused anxiety into both allies and the broader world.

Leveraging Trump being viewed as a ‘wildcard’, and the ensuing uncertainty regarding the role of the U.S., China is clearly signposting its intention to ‘challenge the US and the existing world order and to become the global leader’.¹⁷⁵ The audiences for these messages and this positioning can be divided into two categories: (1) traditionally US-reliant developing country partners (e.g. the Philippines) and; (2) developed countries (e.g. Western European countries such as Germany, Canada and even the UK) with increasingly frayed U.S. relations. However, China continues to contend with global perceptions and ongoing ‘concerns’ about its ‘disrespect for international norms’, fueled, for example, by the CCP’s 2016 dismissal of the International

¹⁷³ Chinese documentary ‘Common Destiny’ presented at Venice Film Festival, *Xinhua*, September 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/03/c_137439621.htm (accessed December 18, 2018).

¹⁷⁴ Commentary: Shared future or America First, *Xinhua*, January 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/24/c_136921547.htm (accessed October 12, 2018).

¹⁷⁵ Japan’s advice to Australia to co-exist with China, *The Interpreter*, October 5, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/japan-advice-australia-co-exist-china> (accessed October, 13, 2018).

Court of Arbitration ruling on the South China Sea, and also its actions regarding ‘cybersecurity, non-proliferation, space and even the Antarctic Treaty System’.¹⁷⁶

As evidenced by Xi’s introduction of the ‘shared future’ messaging, the CCP vision is firstly a regional order based on its own values and interests, but ultimately a global order fashioned to accommodate this intent. This intent, in many respects, feeds into an appetite for emerging economies to challenge the existing Western-led order. As noted by Baker (2018, para 14):¹⁷⁷

Global integration and trade has opened the way for China, India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and even Africa and Latin America to achieve rapid advancements in economic activity, technological development and social mobility. And because of this success, these countries are now asking why the globe’s internal system is underwritten by a narrow set of Western values and why they must adhere to such alien concepts if they wish to participate and compete in the world order.

From 2008 to 2018, the ‘champion’ narrative evolved in relation to an important change in the CCP’s leadership style and in response to international and domestic circumstances. This is reflected in Xi and other Party leaders using ‘world order’ to dovetail successfully with the Western ‘world order’ narrative in relation to the importance of multilateralism and globalisation. However, in relation to asserting how China is different to the West, in particular the U.S., ‘world order’ meant changing the current system to better incorporate the views of the developing world and many non-democratic regimes, that do not want their political systems challenged by traditional Western-led approaches to reform, development assistance and political governance.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that the CCP’s ‘champion’ narrative is used mainly in addresses to the developing world, to position China as a dominant yet benign presence. It is not a narrative for developed Western countries. As noted by Chinese scholar Shi Yinong as far back as 2010 (cited in Zhang, 2010, p.59), ‘the rise of each great power is associated with the rise of a particular set of values’. The ‘champion’ narrative reflects China’s attempts to present itself as an economic role model and global leader, attempting to establish ‘a more just global system’ and thereby to forge a ‘common destiny’ with its Asian neighbours and developing countries internationally.

These ‘highly adaptive’ messages are all essentially about creating a coalition of countries reliant on and being supportive of China but, at the same time, they seek to embed Chinese

¹⁷⁶ Four reasons to manage China’s rise. *The Interpreter*, November 6, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/four-reasons-manage-china-rise> (accessed December 20, 2018).

¹⁷⁷ Challenging the inevitability of the liberal world order, *Stratfor* (Baker), July 26, 2018, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/challenging-inevitability-liberal-world-order> (accessed August 4, 2018).

views into global thinking and the lexicon of international relations. Essentially, a key part of China's bid for global, economic and political dominance is influencing the global narrative landscape. Furthermore, there is evidence that the CCP approach, based on 'an authoritarian political system and state-directed market economy', is gaining appeal in contrast to traditional Western-led approaches, with some countries, such as Cambodia, 'now follow[ing] Beijing's direction, attracted by China's deep pockets'.¹⁷⁸

Previously, tightly controlled Chinese communist propaganda was dismissed by much of the Western, developed world. However, as demonstrated by Xi Jinping at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, the propaganda of the Chinese government has evolved considerably. Although many of the key messages are not unique CCP creations, they are contemporary adaptations that suit the 'trend of the times', which, along with more sophisticated bundling, have emerged as a more unified presentation of themes and narratives. Furthermore, the CCP's key messaging has also strongly enmeshed itself as part of broader regional and global themes – in particular, the 'champion of a more equitable world' narrative at a time when key regional and global institutions and fora, including UN agencies, the World Economic Forum, the EU, ASEAN and APEC, also focus language on greater equality and efforts to support the developing world.

The 'champion' narrative is now not just about China advocating on behalf of the developed world but also, importantly, about supporting resistance and, a viable economic and political alternative for many countries to the traditional Western development pathway. In particular, over the past decade China's economic might and global engagement has enabled the CCP to boost its financial assistance to developing countries, empowering one-party states along the way, from Fiji in the Pacific to Cambodia in South East Asia. The CCP is seeking to change and influence and tap into the large number of countries in the developing world wanting a financial 'champion' to help accelerate their development. However, as noted in Chapter 1, to be successful communications messaging must be supported by 'evidence'. This appeal and relative success, will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter as I examine the 'story of China as a win-win partner'.

¹⁷⁸ What does a Chinese superpower look like? Nothing like the U.S., *Bloomberg Businessweek*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-08-27/what-does-a-chinese-superpower-look-like-nothing-like-the-u-s> (accessed October 5, 2018).

Chapter 6. The Story of China as a ‘Win-Win Partner’

6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the sub-narrative, ‘the story of China as a win-win partner’, and the key messages supporting it over the 11-year period 2008–2018. As identified in Chapter 4, this sub-narrative primarily consists of two key messages: (1) ‘win-win’ and (2) ‘mutual respect’.

It is important to note that of the two sub-narratives analysed in this thesis, the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative is the most transactional and representative of a modern, powerful CCP. This sub-narrative has both historical and contemporary origins, beginning with the 1954 Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (‘Five Principles’). This sub-narrative can be viewed through the lens of the Political Economy of Communication framework, in particular ‘spatialization’, as the transactional nature of this sub-narrative is enabled through a CCP 24/7 global state media presence that ‘transcends space and time’. At its most basic, the win-win sub-narrative is about the CCP declaring two things: first, that money can be made by partnering with China; and second, that to access these financial benefits the ‘partner’ must accept certain non-negotiable conditions. The latter point, to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, is of particular importance, as the scope of what the CCP defines as non-negotiable has broadened significantly, in both territorial and non-territorial ways, even over the 11-year scope of this thesis.

As noted in Chapter 3, the concepts of ‘mutual benefit’ and ‘mutual respect’ are key components of the Five Principles and have been referenced by the CCP since their inception in 1954. These principles were established at a time when China was an impoverished and civil-war-torn nation with a new government. It was about protecting borders and part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) thinking that sought to create a separate paradigm outside the confines of an intensifying Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Five Principles are foundational for many of the CCP’s current foreign policy positions and key messages, but in particular the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative. They were part of China’s response to the ‘century’ of humiliation and first ratified with one of China’s longest land bordering neighbours, India (shortly followed by a similar signing with Myanmar). The principles included:

1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression

3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit
5. Peaceful co-existence.

Although China's geopolitical environment and international standing have changed considerably since 1954, the broad tenets of the Five Principles continue to be referred to in the CCP's various international engagement activities – in particular, 'equality and cooperation for mutual benefit' and 'mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty'. For example, as noted by then Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping during his 2011 visit to Thailand and meeting with the Thai Privy Council President:

The current good relationship between China and Thailand stems from the fact that both countries adhere to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, respect each other, treat each other as equals, move ahead hand in hand and pursue mutual benefit and win-win results.¹⁷⁹

However, these two principles have also evolved, with 'mutual respect' now encompassing a broader definition beyond territorial boundaries to also encompass political boundaries and 'core interests' introduced and defined by the CCP. These boundaries include political and social differences, and, as noted earlier (Edney, 2014), efforts to resist and contain alternative viewpoints and narratives abroad that are counter to the CCP's own. For example, as reported on CCTV during then-Vice President Xi Jinping's 2010 visit to Finland:

[B]ilateral ties have weathered various tests and enjoy stable development because the two sides stick to principles including ... mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and respect each other's core interests and major concerns China appreciates Finland's persistent adherence to the One China policy and its understanding and support regarding the issues related to Tibet, anti-terrorism and human rights.¹⁸⁰

This now means that, for the CCP, any criticism at all regarding CCP actions or policies, within or outside China's territorial boundaries, can constitute infringement of the CCP's 'political boundaries'. This is now quite extensive and ranges from more traditional issues such as human rights (e.g. minority groups, judicial processes, civil society), Taiwan and Tibet, to emerging themes such as bilateral trade, multilateral participation and cybersecurity. And 'mutual benefit',

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vice President Xi Jinping meets with Thai Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda, December 24, 2011, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zsjg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2787_663568/2789_663572/t891081.shtml (accessed September 13, 2017).

¹⁸⁰ Chinese vice president discusses cooperation with Finnish president, *CCTV*, March 27, 2010, <http://english.cctv.com/20100327/101428.shtml> (accessed July 10, 2017).

although still used, is now articulated as part of the more prevalent and commercialised key message of ‘win-win’.

There is now a strong emphasis by the CCP on China’s bilateral relationships, with a particular focus on the economic aspect. As noted by Chinese academic Wang Yizhou, the CCP is ‘not skillful at creating win-win results through multilateral regimes; they would rather choose bilateral negotiations that may give them a possible advantage’.¹⁸¹ A 2018 *Xinhua* article reporting on the China National Offshore Oil Corporation acquiring a Canadian energy group stated:

One should realize that China’s overseas investments are actually a win-win proposition. That’s because China gains talent, technologies and products while the other side accesses China’s big markets. The merits would ultimately breach the ideological prejudice. The business of business is business. Any government should stay sober-minded to separate business from politics when it comes to international trade and investment.¹⁸²

This ‘proposition’ forms the basis of the ‘carrot’ in the CCP’s ‘carrot and stick’ approach, mentioned previously in Chapter 5 (Poh and Li, 2017, p.86), with other matters disregarded by the CCP as ‘ideological prejudices’.

As in Chapter 5, this chapter explores how the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative works, by:

1. Showing how the CCP has encoded messages in *Xinhua* articles, pertinent to the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative;
2. Explaining how these messages, constitutive of the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative, feed into the grand narrative of the ‘China story’; and
3. Highlighting which messaging has been identified in academic and media commentary (and which has not).

6.2. China as a ‘win-win partner’ in the grand narrative, the ‘China story’

As mentioned above, China’s ‘win-win’ narrative consists of two key parts: (1) China is a financial opportunity; and (2) as stated by Xi Jinping, with ‘no attachment of political

¹⁸¹ Opportunities and challenges for China’s new leaders in building mutual trust with the world, *Global Asia*, September 16, 2013, https://globalasia.org/v8no3/cover/opportunities-and-challenges-for-chinas-new-leaders-in-building-mutual-trust-with-the-world_wang-yizhou (accessed September 4, 2017).

¹⁸² ‘China threat’ theory still exists despite Nexen purchase, *Xinhua*, February 26, 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2013-02/26/content_28075224.htm (accessed February 27, 2018).

strings'.¹⁸³ The first part of the 'win-win' message revolves around China's economic strength and the foreign assistance and investments that China has made across the Asian region and globally. It is aimed at persuading countries not only to make an economic commitment to partner with China, but also to do so quickly to avoid the risk of a 'missed opportunity'. For example, as stated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, 'China welcomes our African brothers and sisters to continue their ride on China's fast train of development'.¹⁸⁴ The CCP has also referred to this train as the 'Oriental Express', using the famous twentieth-century train route from Western Europe to the edges of Eurasia to highlight the historical longevity of China's attractiveness to the West. In referencing the AIIB in 2015, a *Xinhua* article titled 'Launch of AIIB promises fast track to common development, win-win cooperation' stated:

Welcoming passengers from around the world, an 'Oriental Express' train is getting ready to hit the rails toward a destination of common development and win-win cooperation ... The enthusiasm among Western countries to take a ride on this 'Oriental Express' train is also due to the understanding that the bank, aiming to complement rather than compete with the existing global financial institutions, would provide them with lucrative business opportunities.¹⁸⁵

The second part, the 'mutual respect' key message, implies that any social, political or ideological differences between China and another country must be respected by the other country. Attempts to present narratives counter to the CCP's position (e.g. regarding territorial disputes, domestic human rights, Tibet or Taiwan), are unacceptable, i.e. risk the loss of economic opportunity ('carrot') and/or punitive economic or military consequences ('stick'). Increasingly, the key message has evolved from territorial 'mutual respect' to an all-encompassing respect that includes broader CCP policies. For example, a joint communiqué between China and the Republic of Maldives in December 2017 stated:

The two sides reiterated their mutual understanding and support for each other on issues of core interests. The Chinese side adheres to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs ... and wishes Maldives economic and social development greater success. The Maldivian side reaffirmed its unwavering respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China and reiterated its firm commitment to uphold its One China Policy, supports China's position on Taiwan and Tibet and the efforts by the Chinese Government to realize national reunification.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ FOCAC Beijing summit shows China's approach, dedication to Africa, *Xinhua*, September 6, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/06/c_137449669.htm (accessed September 4, 2018).

¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets the press, March, 9, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1540928.shtml (accessed July 5, 2019).

¹⁸⁵ Launch of AIIB promises fast track to common development, win-win cooperation, *China Daily*, April 15, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-04/15/content_20442627.htm (accessed October 5, 2018).

¹⁸⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Joint Press Communiqué between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Maldives, December 8, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1517889.shtml (accessed May 2, 2019).

This emphasis on putting aside ‘differences’ and just focusing on ‘benefit’ in economic development partnering with China is also a strategic point of difference with ‘the West’, and the U.S. in particular. Much like the sub-narrative of ‘common destiny’, the CCP also seeks to position the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative as a better option for developing countries wishing to develop economically while eschewing the traditional Western-led institutional demands for better governance, human rights and political transparency. As noted by Shen (2019, p.206):

While Western donors, whatever their underlying motivations, have traditionally adopted a language of altruism when speaking of aid, China’s leadership speaks of ‘equality and mutual benefit’ – a ‘win-win’ philosophy that has been the bedrock of China’s foreign policy and aid agenda in Africa and elsewhere since the 1970s.

The breadth of this combined theme of ‘respect and benefit’ was reflected and reinforced in Xi’s speech in October 2017 at the annual National Party Congress, which also ‘bundled’ several other messages.

China will continue to hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit and uphold its fundamental foreign policy goal of preserving world peace and promoting common development. China remains firm in its commitment to strengthening friendship and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and to forging a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.¹⁸⁷

Xi’s statement, in particular his reference to the Five Principles, highlighted what my analysis indicates are the three intertwined foundational pillars of the CCP’s ‘win-win’ narrative:

1. Transaction: China is a significant business development opportunity for all countries.
2. Acceptance: social and political differences must be ‘respected’, i.e. CCP policies and actions at home and abroad must be accepted for the transactional relationship to proceed.
3. Adherence: underpinning the relationship is adherence to the CCP’s literal and figurative territorial boundaries being adhered to (including the ‘One China policy’ and CCP defined maritime and land territories). For example, ‘[t]he Chinese side appreciates Denmark’s adherence to the one China principle’.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Xi Jinping’s report at 19th CPC National Congress, *Xinhua*, November 3, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed February 27, 2018).

¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Conference on January 6, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt_1/t1428756.htm (accessed October 5, 2019).

These pillars are embedded in the broader CCP discourse and highlight the significant evolution in the CCP's global status, from poverty stricken to world's second largest economy, seeking to extend its regional maritime territories and international sphere of influence. The sharpening of these two particular key messages, from the more benign language of the original Five Principles to a degree of urgency and non-negotiability about bilateral economic relationships, reflects the confidence that China's phenomenal rise inspired in CCP leaders from 2008 to 2018. In 2008, then Premier Wen Jiabao was reported in *China Daily* as noting that '[t]remendous achievements have been made in trade and economic cooperation, with China becoming the largest trade partner to Australia'. The article noted that 'Wen also explained the Chinese government's principles and stand on the Taiwan issue and introduced the facts about economic development, human rights promotion and cultural protection in the Tibet Autonomous Region' and that '[Australian Prime Minister] Rudd said that he understood and reiterated that the Australian government has always adhered to the One China policy'.¹⁸⁹

In 2014, regarding territorial disputes and tensions with Vietnam (Figure 35), Xinhua reported:

Protests broke out last week in some Vietnamese cities ... following Vietnam's intensive disruptions of China Oilfield Services Limited's normal drilling in waters of China's Xisha Islands in the South China Sea. 'If you have a strong anchor like China growing at 8, 9 or even 7 percent, it generates consequences for other countries (in the region) so they all grow faster than they might have', said Yukon Huang ... Huang said Vietnam ... which has massive demand for capital equipments, benefits enormously from importing lower-cost capital goods from China ... My advice for Vietnam is that think about how you benefit from China's rise rather than worrying about the insulation.¹⁹⁰

The wording shows China being presented as going *reasonably* about its 'normal' business, as opposed to Vietnam's *unreasonable/irrational* 'intensive disruption' of China's oilfield operations.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the three sub-narratives are all connected and contribute to the broader grand narrative, the 'China story'. However, individually they each contribute an important and distinctive aspect of the Chinese government's propaganda, with the 'win-win'

¹⁸⁹ China, Australia pledge further cooperation, *China Daily*, April 10, 2008, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-04/10/content_6607729.htm (accessed November 3, 2018).

¹⁹⁰ Vietnam's anti-foreign violence has negative impact on economic growth, *Xinhua* in *My Sin Chew*, May 24, 2014, <http://mysinchew.sinchew.com.my/node/98526> (accessed November 15, 2019).



Figure 35: Vietnamese protest against Chinese activity in disputed South China Sea waters.¹⁹¹

sub-narrative focused on the ‘present’ and on why countries benefit or ‘win’ from ‘doing business with China’. One of the differences between the two sub-narratives is change over time. The ‘champion’ sub-narrative involves elements of contradiction as China has changed significantly from Mao-era representations of China as a ‘bastion of anti-capitalist revolution’ to Xi-era representations of China as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ in ‘global multilateralism’ and a ‘trade champion’. In contrast, the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative has remained consistent and still retains the basis of the original ‘mutual benefit’ theme from the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, but simply ‘commercialised’ in definition.

To understand and best analyse the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative, it must also be viewed primarily through the Political Economy of Communication lens. Although each narrative and key message is underlined by the Propaganda Model’s ‘fear/ideology’ filter (domestic instability and loss of CCP legitimacy) at a broader level, it relates directly to the PEC’s ‘structuration’ and ‘spatialization’ components. The ‘win-win’ sub-narrative contains messaging that China is a non-threatening, stable financial partner whose economic development can benefit individual countries (bilateral relations), regions (i.e. Africa, Latin America and Asia) and more broadly the world. This sub-narrative is about ‘selling’ China as an indispensable bilateral trading partner, which also serves to clear an economic, political and military pathway for China’s expansion regionally and globally. The PEC’s spatialization focus is about globalisation and transcending space and time; these two key messages are not only communicated extensively, literally to the four corners of the globe, but they are also a product of globalisation, especially the key message of ‘win-win’. This is reflected in the CCP articulation of the BRI:

¹⁹¹ The Vanguard Bank standoff shows China remains undeterred, *The Interpreter*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/vanguard-bank-standoff-shows-china-remains-undeterred> (accessed August 29, 2019).

[BRI] is not a geopolitical strategy but international public goods offered by China to the world ... China has also been seeking green and sustainable development, committed to high quality and high standards in its projects and paying great attention to fiscal sustainability ... These are in line with China's long-term strategy featuring mutual benefits [and] win-win results.¹⁹²

6.3. Use of key messages in China's global state media

As discussed in Chapter 4, my analysis of *Xinhua* data has shown that over the 11-year period (2008–2018), there was a consistent and significant overall increase in emphasis on the 'win-win' sub-narrative with distinct usage increase for the two messages, 'win-win' and 'mutual respect' (see Table 19). In particular, the significant increase on emphasis in 'win-win' from n:491 in 2014 to n:1210 in 2018.

Table 19: Key message trends of the 'win-win' sub-narrative

Key Message	Usage 2008–2018	Peak usage
Win-win	n:330 to n:1210	2018 – n:1210
Mutual respect	n:187 to n:433	2018 – n:433

These key messages will now be examined in close detail, including, as in the Chapter 5 format, looking at the origins of each message, and then an overview of usage during the period 2008–2018, including overall trends of increased usage, sharp increases and decreases and shifts in audience focus.

6.4. Introduction of key message

6.4.1. Win-win (双赢): origin and usage overview

6.4.1.1. Origin

In essence, 'win-win' is the CCP's modernised and commercialised version of 'mutual benefit'. Although 'mutual benefit' is still used by the CCP, its usage over the 11-year period is considerably less (n:304 in 2008 to n:534 in 2018) than 'win-win' (n:330 in 2008 to n:1210 in 2018). A standard dictionary definition of 'win-win' is a 'situation or result that is good for everyone who is involved'.¹⁹³ However, according to China's most prominent Internet search engine Baidu, 'win-win' is a business marketing term that combines the 'harmony' of

¹⁹² Belt and Road Initiative no Marshall Plan, Chinese FM says, *Xinhua*, August 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/24/c_137416644.htm (accessed December 20, 2018).

¹⁹³ Win-win definition, *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/win-win> (accessed June 19, 2019).

‘traditional Chinese culture’ with the ‘competition’ of the ‘Western market’ in a situation where both customers and businesses ‘win’.¹⁹⁴



Figure 36: The Win-Win puzzle pieces



Figure 37: From the *China Daily* – ‘Win-win, China’s rise poses more opportunities than threats to the United States’.¹⁹⁵

The term ‘win-win’ emerged in the U.S. in the 1960s, became a popular business phrase during the 1980s, and has since spread into mainstream English.¹⁹⁶ Although claims as to who first

¹⁹⁴ Win-win, *Baidu*, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%8F%8C%E8%B5%A2/21806> (accessed February 7, 2020).

¹⁹⁵ Win-win, *China Daily*, January 13, 2020, <https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202001/13/WS5e1bc520a31099ab995f6c30.html> (accessed February 7, 2020).

¹⁹⁶ Win-win or lose-lose, *Grammarist* (n.d.), <https://grammarist.com/usage/win-win-or-lose-lose/> (accessed January 9, 2019).

coined the term vary – the Christian proselytiser and negotiation specialist Herb Cohen¹⁹⁷ and controversial ‘lifestyle’ community founder Vic Baranco¹⁹⁸ have been named as first users – what is clear is that ‘win-win’ has been widely used since the 1980s and now appears in the communications of a range of actors in diverse contexts. These contexts range from trade relationships to corporate social responsibility, cultural exchanges, climate action and cybersecurity discussions. This diversity of usage is also evident in how the CCP deploys the term. For example, in a cultural context, the 2018 International Cultural Angel Arts Festival held in Los Angeles with children from China, the U.S. and Mexico participating, was hosted by the ‘Win-Win International Youth Culture and Arts Development Association’;¹⁹⁹ in an economic context, there are headline statements such as ‘China keen to promote win-win cooperation in blue economy’;²⁰⁰ and, in a multilateral context, a Chinese official stated that ‘the core of tackling climate change is how to achieve a win-win situation’.²⁰¹

Regarding the CCP’s usage of ‘win-win’, it is important to note that the term was adopted from the U.S. in 1999, specifically following the agreement reached between the U.S. and China on Beijing’s ascension to the WTO on November 15. In the lead-up to the signing, in March 1999, Kenneth Lieberthal, senior director of the US National Security Council, described the agreement as a ‘win-win, good not only for US business and interests, but also for China and Chinese interests’.²⁰² The following month, Chinese Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng, stated that ‘China-imported consumer goods, usually cheap and of high quality, will help the US control inflation and benefit US consumers. So why not do the business that is win-win?’²⁰³ Then, on 15 November 1999, US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, in a press conference regarding the agreement, stated, ‘we have, I think, effected very much a win/win for the United States and China’.²⁰⁴ There was another reference in the published agreement

¹⁹⁷ Herb Cohen: Master Negotiator, *CBN* (n.d.), <https://www1.cbn.com/700club/herb-cohen-master-negotiator> (accessed November 15, 2018).

¹⁹⁸ Lafayette Morehouse and Victor Baranco – A brief history & resource guide, <https://authentic.singles/lafayette-morehouse-and-victor-baranco/> (accessed November 9, 2018).

¹⁹⁹ 2018 Int’l Cultural Angel arts festival held in Los Angeles, *Xinhua*, August 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/21/c_137405621.htm (accessed October 5, 2018).

²⁰⁰ China keen to promote win-win cooperation in blue economy: official, *Xinhua*, November 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2018-11/28/c_137637579.htm (accessed January 16, 2019)

²⁰¹ Chinese representative calls for cooperation to safeguard world, *China Daily*, November 10, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201811/10/WS5be62393a310eff303287c41.html> (accessed January 16, 2019).

²⁰² Ties with China important – Clinton’s security advisor, *Xinhua*, March 31, 1999, link not accessible/only available in pdf (accessed September 5, 2019).

²⁰³ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, Chinese Trade Minister on Sino-US trade relations, (n.d.) <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/wto/t36890.htm> (accessed January 25, 2020).

²⁰⁴ USTR Barshefsky’s press remarks following negotiations with China on the WTO, *Tech Law Journal*, November 15, 1999, <http://www.techlawjournal.com/trade/19991115pc.htm> (accessed August 29, 2019).

highlights on the same day: '[a]s part of the efforts to find “win-win” solutions to sensitive areas, China agreed to accelerated tariff reduction in exchange for a slightly longer phase-in period’.²⁰⁵ The following day, then Chinese Trade Minister Shi was quoted as saying, ‘the last six days of day and-night negotiations were conducted in a win-win spirit ... and finally we reached an agreement that serves the interests of both China and the United States.’²⁰⁶ This was followed by Jiang Zemin stating it was a ‘win-win situation for both sides’ and Western media noting it was the ‘same phrase used by Ms Barshefsky’.²⁰⁷



Figure 38: Chinese Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng shakes hands with U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky.²⁰⁸

Although the scope of this thesis is usage from 2008 to 2018, in this instance, it is important for context to at least reference usage in the decade prior, which clearly indicates that 1999 was a pivotal year in the CCP’s usage of the term ‘win-win’. It is important to note that the year before, in 1998, ‘win-win’ was used only n:2 in *Xinhua*, and not by the CCP. One reference was the UNEP referring to climate change, the other was U.S. Secretary of State Albright referring to improved U.S.–China relations: ‘the improvement in US–Chinese relations is very much in Japan’s interest as well ... In fact, it is a win-win-win outcome for the people of the United States, Japan and China. For relations between, and among, our three nations are not a zero-sum game.’²⁰⁹ In 1999, the number of ‘win-win’ references in *Xinhua* increased to n:33,

²⁰⁵ U.S.-China Bilateral WTO Agreement, White House Briefing, 15 November, 1999, <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/New/WTO-Conf-1999/factsheets/fs-004.html> (accessed October 26, 2018).

²⁰⁶ U.S. reaches an accord to open China economy as worldwide market, *The New York Times*, November, 16, 1999, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/111699china-us-trade.html> (accessed October 26, 2018).

²⁰⁷ Champagne toast as landmark agreement is signed, *The Irish Times*, November 16, 1999, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/champagne-toast-as-landmark-agreement-is-signed-1.250741> (accessed December 10, 2019).

²⁰⁸ 70 years on: how opening up has brought winds of great fortune, *The Telegraph* (China Watch), September 23, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/china-watch/politics/wto-has-benefitted-china/> (accessed December 10, 2019).

²⁰⁹ U.S. to Japan: You’re still our Asian ‘cornerstone’, *CNN*, July 4, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9807/04/japan.albright/> (accessed January 17, 2016).

with n:16 references (only n:7 by the CCP) before 15 November, and n:17 references afterwards and all either related to the agreement and/ or CCP usage. Following this, despite some fluctuations, ‘win-win’ usage started to increase and become a prominent feature of CCP foreign policy rhetoric.

Table 20: References to ‘win-win’ in *Xinhua*, 1996–2007

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0	0	2	33	46	74	44	108	177	372	299	246

6.4.1.2. Usage overview

Unlike the expression ‘common destiny’, which evolved to become ‘shared destiny’, ‘win-win’ has not evolved into another expression and has simply increased in usage. Although its predecessor, ‘mutual benefit’, has historical and cultural links and was specifically referred to in the Five Principles, ‘win-win’, like ‘common destiny’, is a newly ‘adopted’ term. However, despite its ‘foreign’ (in this instance, U.S.) origins, ‘win-win’ is now being used extensively by the CCP, and even part of a CCP-led reinterpretation of human rights that includes promoting ‘development initiatives with the aim of promoting partnerships, win-win outcomes and common development’.²¹⁰ The term is also now used in domestic Chinese media reports – for example, Wang Yi’s remarks that China–U.S. relations must be ‘win-win’ and not ‘lose-lose’.²¹¹

As the regional and global economic presence and influence of the CCP has expanded, in particular since 2013 through the BRI, ‘win-win’ has become the primary CCP message for countries to engage, i.e. ‘do business’, with China. It has evolved from being the BRI signature slogan in 2013 to a term referenced extensively by the CCP in international, regional and bilateral relations as reflected in the significant increase in usage from 2015 onwards, with a doubling of references from n:491 in 2014 to n: 994 in 2015. This is similar to several other CCP key messages sharply increasing from 2015 (to be addressed in more detail later in the thesis).

As a term that Western, English-speaking nations are generally familiar with in a variety of contexts, ‘win-win’ has faced limited media and academic scrutiny compared to other CCP’s

²¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council adopts China-proposed resolution, *Xinhua*, June 23, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/23/c_136387460.htm (accessed January 16, 2018).

²¹¹ Wang Yi: China-US economic and trade issues should be properly resolved through win-win rather than lose-lose, *The Paper*, June 14, 2018, https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_2196216 (accessed February 15, 2020).

key messages, such as ‘common destiny’. However, the insertion of ‘win-win’ and ‘mutually beneficial’ in the March 2018 UNHRC resolution triggered expressions of concern from several countries, including Australia. In particular, there were concerns that some of the terminology in the resolution, such as ‘mutually beneficial cooperation’ and ‘community of shared future’, are ‘not clearly understood in the Human Rights Council, or in other UN Forums’.²¹²

‘Shared future’ and ‘mutually beneficial’ are part of CCP official discourse and frequently quoted in Chinese state media, as well as in key speeches made by Xi and other senior Party officials. However, they are not terms that have been previously used and embedded in formal UN dialogues and the interpretations of them are not clear in an international context.

For the CCP, however, ‘win-win’ as the evolution of ‘mutual benefit’ includes and reflects provisions and conditions, including the exclusion of anything the CCP regards as contentious, such as differences in institutional values, political systems and social priorities. Instead, it is exclusively focused on mutual financial gain, based on the CCP’s ‘carrot and stick’ approach. It is linked with strict conditions, including ‘mutual respect’ for differing social and political systems and adherence to the One China policy. For example:

China is committed to building a new relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean with ... salient features, namely ... win-win cooperation on the economic front ... The one China principle is an important political foundation for China to develop its relations with other countries in the world. The Chinese government appreciates that the vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries abide by the one China principle and support China’s great cause of reunification. China is ready to establish and develop state-to-state relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries on the basis of the one China principle.²¹³

Over the 11-year period, several shifts and fluctuations occurred. Although 19% of references were domestic in 2008 (mostly Taiwan), domestic usage decreased to just 2% by 2018, with ‘win-win’ becoming essentially an externally focused CCP economic key message, with four key features:

1. Significant overall increase from n:330 in 2008 to n:1210 in 2018, which included usage spikes in 2013 and 2015, then again quite considerably in 2017 and 2018. This reflects the

²¹² Department of Foreign Affairs, Resolution on Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the field of Human Rights – Australia’s Explanation of Vote, Australian Mission to the United Nations, March 23, 2018, <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/un/unhrc-2018-2020/statements/Documents/statement-on-promoting-mutually-beneficial-cooperation-in-the-field-of-hr-23-march-2018.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2018).

²¹³ Full text of China’s Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean, *Xinhua*, November 24, 2016, http://www.china.org.cn/world/2016-11/24/content_39777989.htm (accessed October 10, 2017).

CCP's increasing attention in its foreign policy rhetoric to highlighting China's contribution to global governance, economic development and diplomacy:

With its own development and becoming increasingly closer to the center of the world stage, China has been injecting positive energy into the international community in pursuit of better global governance over recent years. As the world's second largest economy and the biggest contributor of global economic growth, China's innovative concepts on improving global governance and promoting global peace and common prosperity have gained wide recognition and support from other countries ... After colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism, the world is ushering in an era of 'win-winism' as initiated by China ... 'Win-winism' highlights an open world economy for common development of all countries and joint efforts to address global challenges.²¹⁴



Figure 39: Controversial comic book promoting the BRI in Malaysia as 'Win-Winism'.²¹⁵

2. Usage is predominantly economic. In 2018, this included references to; the U.S. (73% economic), other developed countries (79% economic), Asia/ regional (60% economic), other developing regions (82% economic), global (70% economic), and developing countries (79% economic).
3. Increased focus on developing regions outside of the Asian, 'neighbourhood' (i.e. a decline on Asian focus and increase in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe focus). This was most noticeable in 2015 and 2018.

China believes that the sure way to boost China-Africa cooperation is for both sides to leverage its respective strength; it is for China to complement Africa's development through its own growth, and it is for both China and Africa to pursue win-win cooperation and common development.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ China Focus: China offers wisdom in global governance, *Xinhua*, October 3, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/03/c_136657069.htm (accessed January 16, 2018).

²¹⁵ Malaysia banned comics about 'Belt and Road' because of its insensitivity to culture, *VTC News*, October 24, 2019, <https://vtc.vn/the-gioi/malaysia-cam-truyen-tranh-ve-vanh-dai-va-con-duong-vi-vo-cam-voi-van-hoa-ar506151.html> (accessed December 24, 2019).

²¹⁶ Full text of Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech at opening ceremony of 2018 FOCAC Beijing Summit, *Xinhua*, September 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/03/c_129946189.htm (accessed September 4, 2018).

4. Consistently greater focus (for nine of the 11 years) on bilateral relations with developing countries vs developed countries: ‘China will pursue win-win cooperation with foreign nations and accommodate the legitimate concerns of other countries, especially the developing ones’.²¹⁷

Table 21: References to ‘win-win’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	330	359	377	420	417	519	491	994	704	957	1210
Domestic (other)	4% (13)	2% (7)	2% (6)	1% (4)	4% (17)	1% (4)	2% (9)	1% (6)	1% (4)	1% (14)	2% (20)
Domestic (Taiwan)	15% (49)	6% (19)	3% (12)	1% (3)	2% (9)	1% (6)	3% (13)	1% (9)	0% (3)	0% (2)	0% (1)
Global	11% (36)	26% (93)	21% (81)	21% (87)	18% (74)	16% (84)	14% (67)	24% (242)	23% (165)	31% (300)	26% (311)
Asia/ neighbours	18% (60)	7% (25)	10% (39)	10% (44)	9% (38)	12% (62)	15% (75)	9% (85)	12% (82)	4% (37)	6% (70)
Other developing regions*	8% (26)	11% (39)	11% (40)	9% (36)	10% (40)	13% (65)	12% (60)	20% (201)	14% (96)	10% (100)	15% (182)
Bilateral developing Countries**	23% (76)	14% (49)	20% (75)	23% (97)	15% (64)	20% (102)	20% (98)	20% (197)	27% (191)	20% (195)	20% (246)
Bilateral developed countries**	11% (36)	15% (55)	16% (61)	10% (42)	18% (74)	11% (58)	13% (65)	10% (97)	9% (64)	11% (106)	11% (134)
U.S.	2% (5)	12% (43)	9% (33)	19% (78)	17% (71)	16% (85)	11% (56)	10% (102)	10% (67)	16% (155)	16% (194)
EU/Europe	5% (18)	7% (24)	3% (13)	4% (18)	4% (16)	5% (24)	6% (29)	3% (26)	2% (12)	2% (22)	3% (40)
Other	11	5	17	11	14	29	19	29	20	26	12

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

* Developing regions/ blocs include Africa, Latin America, Middle East (Arab States), BRICS, CEEC, Pacific Island States, Caribbean, Lower Mekong Countries

** Developing and developed country status based on World Bank Indicators

Despite steady, incremental usage increases in the second half of Hu’s leadership period (2008–2012), ‘win-win’ usage increased considerably from the first year under Xi (from n:417 in 2012 to n:519 in 2013), indicative of a major increase in CCP bilateral economy activity, with China surpassing the USA as the world’s leading trade partner, with 124 countries considering China their largest trading partner and only 76 having that relationship with the U.S. This was a major shift and almost complete reversal from 2006, when the U.S. was the larger trading partner for 127 countries, and about 70 had that relationship with China.²¹⁸ Another major usage spike

²¹⁷ Official says China seeks steady economic growth, deeper reforms, *China Daily*, January 25, 2008, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-01/25/content_6420445_2.htm (accessed July 10, 2019).

²¹⁸ China overtakes US as world’s largest trading country, *RT*, February 11, 2013, <https://www.rt.com/business/china-us-largest-trading-country-908/> (accessed December 18, 2019).

occurred in 2015 (from n:491 in 2014 to n:994 in 2015). This spike was also reflected in UNGA usage with an 11-year peak of n:6 ‘win-win’ references (out of a total of n:32 over the 11-year period) made during Xi’s UNGA address. There was another spike in 2018 from n:957 in 2017 to n:1210 in 2018, to be discussed in more detail later. Usage also focused more on developing countries compared to developed countries, as was the case with the key message of ‘common destiny’, with average usage over the 11-year period of 20% of references for developing bilateral relationships, compared to just 12% for developed bilateral relationships.

In many areas, the ascension of Xi to power in 2013 marked a pivotal year for China. This included Xi, in his June meeting with President Obama in California, defining the concept of a ‘new type of great power relations’, as: (1) no conflict or confrontation; (2) mutual respect; and, (3) mutually beneficially cooperation (Li and Xu, 2014). Seeking to elevate its status to a more level playing field with the U.S., this idea of China and the U.S. having developed a ‘new type of great power relations’ has since been extensively used by the CCP since 2013 (ibid.). Importantly, this new idea was ‘bundled’ with several key messages, in particular ‘win-win’. In highlighting major developments in China’s diplomatic strategy, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated: ‘A new model of major-country relations is to break the historical pattern of conflict and confrontation between major countries, and to find a new path that seeks win-win cooperation and delivers benefits to all parties’.²¹⁹



Figure 40: Sunnylands Summit 2013: ‘The Chinese dream is about cooperation, development, peace and win-win’ (Xi Jinping).²²⁰

²¹⁹ China pursues peaceful development, active int’l role, *China.org*, March 8, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2014/2014-03/08/content_31718375.htm (accessed February 27, 2018).

²²⁰ At U.S.-China shirt-sleeves summit, formalities and suspicions abound, *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2013,

In 2015, as evidenced in major increases in ‘win-win’ usage, the CCP again actively sought to highlight that China’s role in global developments had significantly increased:

China on Sunday pledged to play a bigger role in international affairs while stressing its commitment to peace and justice by advancing win-win cooperation and common development. Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted old Chinese wisdom and modern approaches in the country’s diplomacy ... The minister said China’s diplomacy in 2015, with two main themes of peace and development, will focus on making progress in the ‘Belt and Road’ infrastructure initiatives ... The hallmark of Chinese diplomacy with major countries is win-win cooperation, he said.²²¹

The CCP’s emphasis on bilateral economic cooperation and economic ‘win-win’ messaging increased again significantly in 2015. For example, Xi’s October visit to the UK saw the bilateral relationship elevated to a ‘global comprehensive strategic partnership’, with messaging to highlight the clear conditionality of ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’:

The two countries will open up a golden era of enduring, inclusive and win-win relationship and jointly create a brighter future for bilateral relations ... As long as both sides stick to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, inclusiveness and mutual learning, the China-Britain relationship can develop in an enduring, stable and healthy way ... China-Britain ties have been cemented during Xi’s state visit as a large number of business deals have been signed.²²²

This spike in usage also included an increase in focus on other developing regions outside Asia. In 2008, 18% of references were to Asia, compared to just 8% for other developing regions. From 2014 to 2015, the Asia focus dipped from 15% to 9% and ‘other developing regions’ jumped from 12% to 20%; in 2018, emphasis was still on other developing regions (15%) with Asia/neighbourhood references only at 6% of total references. This also reflected the BRI expanding to a broader global focus that included Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa after starting as an Asian-focused initiative.

The China-proposed ‘Belt and Road’ initiatives reflect the common aspiration of countries along the routes and the implementation of the blueprint will bring huge benefits for Asia and the rest of the world ... the ‘Belt and Road’ initiatives seek to promote win-win cooperation among participating nations ... [and] are like an invitation by China for countries to ride its express train of economic development.²²³

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/at-us-china-shirt-sleeves-summit-formalities-and-suspicious-abound/2013/06/09/2ab97c06-d125-11e2-a73e-826d299ff459_story.html (accessed January 16, 2019).

²²¹ China eyes bigger global role with Chinese solutions, *China.org*, March 9, 2015, http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2015/2015-03/09/content_34994863.htm (accessed July 10, 2017).

²²² China, Britain lift ties to ‘global’ level, *Global Times*, October 22, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/948421.shtml> (accessed September 4, 2018).

²²³ Belt and Road Initiative to benefit Asia, beyond, *Xinhua*, March 31, 2015, http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092675722.htm (accessed January 16, 2017).

From 2015, increased usage also included a greater global emphasis and as mentioned, efforts by the CCP to incorporate ‘win-win’ messaging into its communications about global fora and international relations. The 2018 spike in usage was from n:957 in 2017 to n:1210 in 2018, the highest level of usage over the 11-year period. As mentioned earlier, the CCP was successful, albeit controversially, in the introduction of the 2018 UNHRC resolution. As noted by human rights specialist Adrien Claude Zoller, ‘the resolution recalled certain language and concepts heard during the Cold War when the Soviet Union also invoked the idea of “mutually beneficial cooperation”’.²²⁴ This key event was illustrative of the global expansion of the longstanding CCP approach to domestic propaganda: ‘If you control public communication you can control the way people think and how they behave.’²²⁵ The significance of this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

6.4.1.3. Sinicisation of ‘win-win’ (双赢)

As several usage examples provided in the previous section indicate, the CCP has also Sinicised the concept of ‘win-win’, further estranging the term from its origins in U.S. business terminology. Starting, as mentioned above, with ‘mutual benefit’ as part of the Five Principles in 1954, before evolving to ‘win-win’ following the 1999 U.S.–China WTO Agreement, the CCP is now actively seeking to broaden and embed its Asia regional and global ownership of not just the term, but also the CCP’s prescribed definition.

In 2013 Zhou Wenzhong, Secretary-General of the Boao Forum for Asia, referred to the ‘Asian tradition of seeking win-win results’,²²⁶ while at APEC 2014 Liu Chenyang, director of the APEC research centre of Nankai University, said ‘China will continue carrying out its obligation to guard the prosperity and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, which is also determined by the traditional Chinese culture of pursuing harmony in diversity and a win-win situation’.²²⁷ This connection was further highlighted during Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s visit

²²⁴ China’s ‘win-win’ rights initiative makes waves in Geneva, *SWI*, March 26, 2018, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/un-human-rights-council-_china-s--win-win--rights-initiative-makes-waves-in-geneva/44000588 (accessed October 10, 2018).

²²⁵ China congress: How authorities censor your thoughts, *BBC*, October 16, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41523073> (accessed October 13, 2018).

²²⁶ 2013 Boao Forum to focus on ‘restructuring’, *Xinhua*, April 5, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90883/8195694.html> (accessed January 25, 2019).

²²⁷ Xinhua Insight: China spearheads APEC initiatives for regional integration, *Global Times*, November 15, 2014, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/891951.shtml> (accessed September 4, 2017).

to the UK in 2015, in his statement that: ‘China adheres to the principles of cooperation and win-win, and such principles are genetically imbedded in China’s traditional culture’.²²⁸

6.4.2. Mutual Respect (互相尊重): origin and usage overview

6.4.2.1. Origin

‘Mutual respect’ is a transcultural term that the contemporary CCP has used widely since 1998 (see Table 22), becoming a key message with strong connections to traditional Chinese culture, including Confucianism and Daoism. More broadly, as noted in *CGTN* by Luo Yongkun from the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, mutual respect is at the ‘core of Asian values’.²²⁹ As ‘mutual respect’ is also a theme present in the other major world religions and philosophies, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and in foundational Western philosophical works from Aristotle to Kant (DeLue, 2006, p.117), it has global resonance and is now a term the CCP makes effective use of in its foreign policy rhetoric.

Table 22: References to ‘mutual respect’ in *Xinhua*, 1996-2007

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Mutual respect	0	0	160	216	171	162	100	138	258	200	200	168

One of the first uses of ‘mutual respect’ in the CCP’s foreign policy language was in 1954, as part of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. In an Asian context, in particular South East Asia, ‘mutual respect’ was used extensively and featured in a range of high-profile guiding doctrine and statements – for example, in the Bandung Declaration in 1955 and in the ASEAN 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, with ‘mutual respect’ regarded as a ‘fundamental principle’ (‘Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations’²³⁰) and, more recently, at the 2017 APEC in Vietnam, highlighting ‘cooperation characterised by ... mutual benefit and mutual respect’.²³¹ However, since 1954 CCP usage of the term has evolved considerably, from an inherently defensive posture about respecting territorial integrity, in particular shared borders, to an inherently

²²⁸ Chinese FM meets scholars from leading British think tanks, *Xinhua* (China Daily) June 9, 2015, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-06/10/content_20960816.htm (accessed September 5, 2017).

²²⁹ Asian Values – Expert: Asian values should have a place in a globalized world, *CGTN*, July 4, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514e3249544e78457a6333566d54/share_p.html (accessed December 21, 2019).

²³⁰ ASEAN, Treaty of Amity and Cooperation In Southeast Asia, February 24, 1976, <https://asean.org/treaty-amity-cooperation-southeast-asia-indonesia-24-february-1976/> (accessed November 10, 2018).

²³¹ ‘APEC Vietnam 2017’ – Fostering a shared future in a changing world, *Viet Nam News*, November 6, 2017, <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/416951/apec-vietnam-2017-%E2%80%93-fostering-a-shared-future-in-a-changing-world.html> (accessed June 19, 2019).

offensive posture about economic bilateral relations being conditional on countries publicly acknowledging CCP policy on sensitive issues such as domestic human rights, Tibet, Taiwan and disputed maritime territories. Like all of the CCP's key messages, it has evolved into a term that is presented to different audiences in different ways.

6.4.2.2. Usage Overview

Usage of 'mutual respect' differs from well-known signature slogans of the Xi administration such as 'common destiny/ shared future for all mankind' and the 'China dream'. As mentioned previously, the CCP has stated that Xi coined the term 'common destiny' and that 'win-win' is part of 'Xiplomacy' and Xi's 'flagship vision'.²³² However, 'mutual respect' as a foundational part of the Five Principles has broadened considerably in definition, is used in very different ways depending on audience and context, and is predominantly used bilaterally, as opposed to other key messages, such as 'win-win', which are also used extensively in a global context (e.g. when referring to 'all mankind').

This difference in interpretations of 'mutual respect', i.e. that it excludes values and focuses mainly on economic conditions for doing business, is increasingly problematic and has caused strained relations between China and many countries. As a Western concept, 'mutual respect' implies an acknowledgment of the other without a compromise of one's own values. As noted by former Australian Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Secretary Bruce Billson, 'having mutual respect does not mean you disregard your values'²³³ and Australia, for example, should not accept behaviours by China that are contrary to Australian democratic, institutional values.

In contrast, the CCP interprets 'mutual respect' to mean not only an acknowledgment of political differences, but also adherence to CCP directives in accordance with CCP-defined political boundaries. These political boundaries, at times opaquely and erratically defined and defended by the CCP, include CCP-designated internal matters, ranging from territory (such as the controversial 'nine-dash line', the East China Sea ADIZ and disputed territories in the South China Seas) to Chinese policy regarding Taiwan, Tibet and the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the CCP's insistence that airlines change their websites to refer to Taiwan as part of mainland China,²³⁴ can be considered as an attempt to ensure that

²³² How Xiplomacy pushes change in global governance, *China Daily*, December 15, 2018, <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/articles/35/168/226/1544868413019.html> (accessed June 19, 2019).

²³³ The Drum, *ABC News*, October 31, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-31/the-drum:-thursday-31st-october/11660512> (accessed November 4, 2019).

²³⁴ Airlines switching to 'Taiwan, China' despite White House's rejection of 'Orwellian nonsense' – but US carriers hold out, *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2147277/airlines-switching-taiwan-china-despite-white-houses> (accessed September 4, 2018).

others adhere to the CCP's perspective on China's political boundaries. This example indicates how the CCP's use of 'mutual respect' has now broadened beyond the original Five Principles definition which only focused on territorial boundaries (i.e. 'mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty').

In short, 'mutual respect' in the CCP's international relations discourse, now implies mutual acceptance of the CCP's definition of what rightly belongs within China's dominion, including the political and physical boundaries that are defined by the CCP alone. In 2008, after months of strained China–Germany relations following German Chancellor Angela Merkel's meeting with the Dalai Lama, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu stated at a press conference: 'China hopes the German government and leaders always honor their commitment made to China on Taiwan and Tibet issues and seriously consider and fully respect China's great concerns on issues relevant to its core interests.' The press conference media report in *China.org* (sourced from *Xinhua*) also stated: 'The German side had expressed explicitly to China that Germany attaches great importance to its ties with China, it would continue to firmly adhere to the One China policy, and it recognizes Taiwan and Tibet as parts of Chinese territory'.²³⁵

As mentioned, 'mutual respect' is predominantly a term CCP officials use when making public statements about China's bilateral relations with both advanced developed countries and less-developed countries. This is demonstrated by the fact that on average over the 11-year period, 66% of all references to 'mutual respect' in *Xinhua*, were used in the context of China's bilateral relationships. This is in contrast for example, to the key message 'win-win', with an average use in reference to China's bilateral relationships of 45% (i.e. a greater focus on the global and regional).

²³⁵ China hopes Germany honors its commitments on Taiwan, Tibet, says FM spokeswoman *China.org*, 23 January 2008, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/international/240384.htm> (accessed December 18, 2017).

Table 23: References to ‘mutual respect’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total mentions	187	309	264	405	351	282	323	289	230	342	433
Domestic (other)	n/a (0)	n/a (5)	n/a (1)	n/a (3)	n/a (0)	n/a (1)	n/a (0)	n/a (2)	n/a (2)	n/a (7)	n/a (1)
Domestic (Taiwan)	n/a (0)	n/a (1)	n/a (3)	n/a (1)	n/a (0)	n/a (0)	n/a (1)	n/a (0)	n/a (0)	n/a (3)	n/a (0)
Global	16% (30)	6% (19)	8% (20)	9% (38)	8% (29)	10% (29)	12% (39)	21% (62)	12% (27)	15% (50)	17% (74)
Asia/ neighbours	2% (3)	3% (9)	4% (11)	4% (17)	6% (22)	4% (10)	10% (32)	2% (6)	7% (16)	4% (13)	3% (12)
Other developing regions*	7% (14)	6% (19)	8% (21)	3% (14)	7% (24)	9% (26)	10% (31)	11% (31)	9% (20)	3% (10)	13% (57)
Bilateral developing countries**	29% (55)	28% (88)	29% (77)	25% (101)	25% (89)	19% (53)	18% (59)	19% (56)	28% (65)	19% (65)	26% (111)
Bilateral developed countries**	24% (44)	17% (51)	35% (93)	10% (41)	17% (61)	18% (50)	19% (61)	12% (34)	16% (37)	21% (71)	13% (57)
U.S.	9% (16)	18% (57)	8% (22)	41% (168)	30% (107)	29% (81)	23% (73)	27% (77)	20% (45)	29% (99)	22% (97)
EU/Europe	28% (24)	9% (27)	4% (11)	3% (13)	3% (12)	3% (8)	4% (13)	n/a (3)	4% (9)	2% (8)	3% (12)
Other	n/a (0)	11% (33)	2% (5)	2% (9)	2% (7)	9% (24)	4% (14)	6% (18)	4% (9)	5% (16)	3% (12)

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

* Developing regions/ blocs include Africa, Latin America, Middle East (Arab States), BRICS, CEEC, Pacific Island States, Caribbean, Lower Mekong Countries

** Developing and developed country status based on World Bank Indicators

Usage falls into two categories, which I classify as statements issued ‘with a word of caution’ and ‘without a word of caution’. The description, ‘with caution’, refers to the CCP’s imposition of specific conditions on the conduct of bilateral relations, in particular economic relations often expressed through the use of statements that begin with the conditional formulation, ‘as long as’. This serves to restrict the relationship between the two countries to a set of practices predetermined by the Chinese government.

The CCP often describes China’s bilateral relations as involving ‘non-negotiable’ issues. For example, a *China Daily* article in June 2018, referenced a U.S. request to ‘discuss how to describe Taiwan on the websites of US carriers’. In the article, the response by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson ‘reiterated that the one-China principle, serving as the political foundation of China-US relations, is nonnegotiable’.²³⁶ However, the CCP does so in more

²³⁶ One-China policy is nonnegotiable, Beijing reiterates, *China Daily*, June 29, 2018, <http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201806/29/WS5b36277da3103349141dfd50.html> (accessed November 22, 2019).

benign and less benign ways, contingent on the country or situation in question. Over the 11-year period, one can see that the CCP has designated specific countries for more explicit ‘threat’ language. This issuing of ‘cautions’ first emerged in 2010 and was mostly directed towards developed, Western democratic countries. During the 11-year period, only n:3 developing countries – Turkey, the Philippines and Vietnam – received ‘warnings’, with most of these directed to Vietnam, compared to n:8 for developed countries (with many of these repeated references) including Britain, Canada, Finland, Australia, Germany, Norway, Japan and the U.S. For example, in 2008, as mentioned earlier, at a time of strained China-German relations, a *China.org* report on the meeting of the German Foreign Minister with then Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi noted: ‘Yang said **as long as** China and Germany adhere to the principle of mutual respect, equality and mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, respect and understand each other’s major concerns, China-German ties would see steady and healthy expansion ... Yang urged the German side to honor its commitments, so as to avoid “unnecessary disturbance” in developing bilateral ties.’²³⁷

In a speech ... Wen [Chinese Premier] said China–US relations have made significant progress since his first official visit to the United States in 2003 ... However, ‘due to differences in social system development level, history and culture, China and the United States may not see eye to eye on certain issues,’ he said, adding that **as long as** the two sides engage in dialogue and consultation on the basis of equality and mutual respect, they will be able to gradually dispel misgivings and enhance mutual trust [my emphasis].²³⁸

China is ready to deepen energy and resources cooperation with Australia and continue to promote bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, while properly handling the concerns of the two sides,’ he said. ‘China and Australia can become close partners of cooperation in numerous areas **as long as** they follow the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefits and strengthen dialogues and negotiations,’ Wen said [my emphasis].²³⁹

In contrast, the ‘threat’ language is rarely used with developing countries or regions. On the contrary, the language used by senior Chinese officials emphasises shared history, values and friendship. For example:

Africa: China’s top legislator Wu Bangguo said ... that the friendship between China and Africa is a trend of history and a shared wish of the people. ‘We were both victims of imperialist and colonialist aggression and oppression. We both hate to see the big, strong and rich bullying the small, weak and poor. We both cherish the value of equality and mutual respect, which has

²³⁷ German, Chinese FMs meet to mend ties, *China.org*, January 23, 2008, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/international/240386.htm> (accessed December 18, 2017). Emphasis added.

²³⁸ Chinese premier calls for further strengthening of China-U.S. relations, *Sina*, September 24, 2008, <http://english.sina.com/china/2008/0923/187986.html> (accessed March 30, 2017). Emphasis added.

²³⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

enabled our friendship to be carried forward,' he said ... China and Africa are good brothers that treat each other as equals.²⁴⁰

China and Myanmar are closely connected by extensive mountains and rivers, and the two peoples call each other baobo [brothers and relatives]. China is willing to link its strategies with Myanmar's, to cooperate in key areas and to advance major projects ... China supports Myanmar in choosing a path suitable for its own national condition and backs its efforts to develop its economy and improve people's livelihoods ... China respects Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity.²⁴¹

The key message of 'mutual respect' is not only used in statements to two different audiences (developed and developing countries) but is also differently expressed contingent on whether the addressee is a functioning democracy or a country under one-party or authoritarian rule, similar to that of the CCP. These can be differentiated into two sub-categories based on institutional ideals: democracies with distinctly different political and social values and ideals to the CCP (mostly developed countries), and countries that share similar one-party state political structures. When addressing the former, the CCP's references to 'mutual respect' means ensuring the CCP's political and territorial boundaries are not encroached in any way; when addressing the latter, the CCP implies that it will advance the mutual interests of China and the other country, by maintaining strong ties with and supporting the incumbent one-party government in the other country.

Insofar as Western countries regard 'mutual respect' to include respect for the core institutional values of democracy, including the value of individual rights, the CCP's understanding of 'mutual respect' cannot avoid being at odds with the understanding of the same term when used by official representatives on Western countries. This difference is to some extent reflective of a broader difference between Western and Asian uses of terms like 'mutual respect'. For example, the European Parliament has placed a strong emphasis on individual rights and a 'respect for human dignity' and has pointed out that 'home, family and personal communications must be respected'.²⁴² In contrast, ASEAN's principles include a reference to 'mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and national identity' and for countries to exist free from 'external interference'.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Top Chinese legislator says China-Africa friendship trend of history, *Xinhua*, May 22, 2011, <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/7387480.html> (accessed October 29, 2018).

²⁴¹ China, Myanmar to enhance trust, *China Daily*, August 19, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-08/19/content_26527661.htm (accessed December 19, 2018).

²⁴² Fundamental rights, *European Parliament in Plain Language* (n.d.), <https://europarlmentti.info/en/values-and-objectives/values/fundamental-rights/> (accessed October 5, 2019).

²⁴³ ASEAN, ASEAN Overview, <https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/overview/> (accessed October 5, 2019).

6.4.2.3. *Sinicisation of ‘mutual respect’*

As mentioned earlier, unlike some other key messaging (such as ‘common destiny’ and ‘win-win’), which the CCP has actively sought to ‘Sinicise’, ‘mutual respect’ is a traditional idea widely understood across cultures and one that the CCP can easily claim to be part of traditional Chinese culture. As noted by Secretary-General Yan Zhaozhu at the World Cultural Forum (Taihu, China) in 2012: ‘In the contacts between countries, they (*the Chinese people*) always advocate and practice mutual respect, equality, harmony and cooperation ... It is with such an ideal that the Chinese people have walked the history of several thousand years.’²⁴⁴

Understanding this historical and cultural connection between ancient China and modern China, in particular, the historical interpretations by the CCP is also important to understanding the complexities faced by the CCP – in particular, the structuration (e.g. changing domestic social dynamics) challenges. As discussed in Chapter 3, with China evolving into a significant international presence, in particular since the GFC, there is domestic ‘structural’ tension regarding how these deeply ingrained values such as ‘mutual respect’ translate into a competitive global marketplace.

These challenges are reflected in high-profile CCP initiatives, including the BRI. Although, as mentioned in previous chapters, some aspects of the BRI have been criticised by (mostly) Western countries (regarding issues such as loan schemes and debt implications for poorer countries), for the CCP, the messaging is a mix of ancient and modern China which is understood differently by Western and non-Western nations, and developing and developed countries.

6.5. Summary

The ‘win-win’ sub-narrative is a story of expanding CCP influence, largely through the CCP redefining the terms of bilateral relationships, underpinned almost wholly by China’s economic strength. The increasing use of the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative coincides with the CCP’s assertion of hard power. As noted by Gao, Ingram and Kee (2017, p.6), many of Xi’s initiatives (such as the BRI and the AIIB), ‘represent a shift of strategy from soft power to hard economic resources, which are needed by many countries, whether near to or far from China’. The CCP makes clear that countries wishing to do business with China must accept the conditions that the Chinese government imposes. The CCP has adopted an American business and negotiation term to

²⁴⁴ China–Europe cooperation faces bright prospects, *Xinhua*, November 29, 2012, <http://www.ecns.cn/voices/2012/11-29/37860.shtml> (accessed July 10, 2019).

convey to other countries that China is a significant business opportunity, an economic ‘express train’ that must be boarded quickly if they wish to benefit.

However, in exchange for the financial benefits, partner countries must ‘respect’ what the CCP defines as China’s political and territorial boundaries. In short, ‘respect’ requires countries to accept what the CCP regards as the ‘non-negotiable’ 不可谈判的 issues of Tibet, Taiwan, Chinese domestic human rights policies (e.g. Uighur detentions in Xinjiang Province) and China’s declared maritime boundaries, in particular in the East and South China Seas. The ‘nine-dash line’ is among the most recent of these ‘non-negotiable’ issues, with the South China Sea regarded by the CCP as a ‘core interest’.²⁴⁵

Similarly, the CCP adopts a ‘carrot and stick’ approach to the One China Policy – as demonstrated, for example, by Xi’s commitment to assist the small African nation of Sao Tome and Principe after it switched allegiance from Taiwan to China. As reported in a 2016 *Xinhua* article,

Xi said China is willing to work with Sao Tome and Principe to jointly push forward ... the establishment of a comprehensive cooperative partnership featuring ... equality, mutual trust, and win-win cooperation ... Xi said China will support Sao Tome and Principe to improve its national comprehensive development plan, and boost mutually beneficial cooperation in tourism, fishery and agriculture ... [President] Trovoada said... Sao Tome and Principe will firmly adhere to the One China policy.²⁴⁶

The evolution of this sub-narrative is reflected in the way it has been used and acknowledged internationally. Following the initial introduction of the Five Principles in 1954, they were incorporated²⁴⁷ into the Ten Principles of International Peace and Cooperation declared at the 1955 Bandung Conference of 29 Afro-Asian countries in Indonesia. The language of the initial principles was incorporated and also broadened with more specific articulation and a strong emphasis on alignment with the Charter of the United Nations (at a time when many participating countries were still European colonies and seeking or moving towards independence). The Principles were then further expanded in 1957 and incorporated into a UN resolution on peaceful co-existence presented by India, Yugoslavia and Sweden, and

²⁴⁵ The South China Sea is now a ‘core interest’ of Beijing – and that’s a problem for its neighbours, *Business Insider*, July 3, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-south-china-sea-is-chinas-core-interest-2015-7> (accessed December 20, 2018).

²⁴⁶ Xi calls for mutual support between China, Sao Tome and Principe, *Xinhua*, April 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-04/14/c_136209660.htm (accessed November 15, 2018).

²⁴⁷ Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, Panchsheel, June 2004, http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191_panchsheel.pdf (accessed November 16, 2018).

unanimously adopted on 11 December 1957, by the United Nations General Assembly.²⁴⁸ In contrast to this unanimous support in 1957, the Chinese-led 2018 UNHRC resolution which called for ‘promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights’, and like the 1957 resolution also emphasised ‘mutual respect’,²⁴⁹ passed with a vote of 28 to one, but with 17 abstentions and concerns raised by several Western, democratic nations and human rights observers.

The CCP has used its ‘win-win’ sub-narrative to pursue significant bilateral trade opportunities, ensuring that countries agree to the CCP’s demands. The success of this sub-narrative, and the aforementioned resolutions, has now emboldened the CCP, as noted by Piccone (2018, p.5), to ‘promote key Chinese interpretations of principles of sovereignty and human rights internationally’. Simply put, ‘win-win’ has become the CCP’s term for rewarding countries that do not criticise China’s authoritarian government, its ‘One China’ policy or China’s maritime territorial claims.

As mentioned, the three sub-narratives discussed in this thesis all contribute to the CCP’s broader ‘China story’ grand narrative. When the CCP discusses the future, it relies on the ‘champion’ sub-narrative, which now features a Xi Jinping-inspired vision of a ‘shared future for all mankind’. When discussing the present, the CCP uses the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative both to invite economic cooperation and to demand acceptance of the CCP’s view on ‘non-negotiable’ issues. In the next chapter, we will consider the third sub-narrative of China as a ‘peace-loving nation’. This is a story bound up in the past with what the CCP promotes as ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘harmony’.

²⁴⁸ United Nations, Peaceful and neighborly relations among states, December 14, 1957, <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3Ac0015832-d1e5-4a42-9727-2480e07a35e8> (accessed July 10, 2019).

²⁴⁹ UN rights body adopts China-sponsored resolution on mutually beneficial cooperation, *Xinhua*, March 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/24/c_137061083.htm (accessed July 10, 2018).

Chapter 7. The Story of China as a ‘Peace-Loving Nation’

7.1. Introduction

The sub-narrative of China as a ‘peace-loving nation’ over the 11-year period 2008–2018, consists mainly of two key messages: (1) China is presented as an ‘inclusive’ and (2) ‘harmonious’ nation.

In terms of contribution to the broader ‘China story’ grand narrative, the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative is the most important of the three sub-narratives analysed in this thesis. This is because: (1) it underpins the necessity of peace to stability, with the CCP legitimising its rule by claiming to have delivered the social stability necessary for securing China’s economic growth; and (2) it distinctly references China’s past, present and future to represent China under CCP rule as a ‘peace-loving’ – hence, non-threatening to other nations. As noted by Cheng (2012, p.171), ‘although China’s foreign policy philosophy has gone through historical changes, the core values remain peace, harmony and cooperation’. It is a sub-narrative that in modern times has evolved in direct connection with China’s remarkable economic growth and rise as a global power, in particular over the past two decades.

‘Peace-loving’ highlights the CCP’s ultimate priority of domestic stability and fear of instability, which, as referenced earlier in my theoretical framework, accords with the Propaganda Model of communication as one requiring tight control and filtering of information. From a theoretical perspective, the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative also reflects elements of the PEC, which highlights tensions caused by conflicting social and structural forces such as the CCP’s ongoing efforts to balance domestic priorities and international demands. As China’s rise has led the governments of other countries to express growing concern over the CCP’s authoritarian rule and its global ambitions, the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative has been used by the CCP to seek to assuage these concerns. This has been the case since the early 2000s, as discussed in Chapter 4, with the official Chinese discourse presenting the shifting world order as not only non-threatening but actually a ‘win-win’ and potentially beneficial to all. This chapter seeks to deconstruct this proposition through analysing trends of key message usage and themes over the 11-year period.

As in Chapter 5, this chapter explores how the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative works, by:

1. Showing how the CCP has encoded messages in *Xinhua* articles, pertinent to the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative;
2. Explaining how these messages, constitutive of the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative, feed into the grand narrative of the ‘China story’; and
3. Highlighting which messaging has been identified in academic and media commentary (and which has not).

7.2. China as a ‘peace-loving nation’ in the grand narrative, the ‘China story’

China’s ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative represents a rhetorical alignment of CCP domestic and international priorities. It also combines the ‘old and new’ with a mix of historical cultural connections (‘harmony’) and contemporary international relations terminology (‘inclusive’). These elements are critical to the CCP that require domestic, regional and global stability in order to strengthen and maintain its legitimacy. This combination of the old and new is reflected in a 2018 *Xinhua* commentary that stated: ‘President Xi’s proposal of building a community with [a] shared future for mankind is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, which values harmony, peace and inclusive prosperity rather than control or hegemony’.²⁵⁰

Xi’s approach highlights what my research indicates are the three foundational and intertwined pillars of the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative:

1. Merging the traditional and the modern: China’s traditional values and the CCP’s core socialist values as a positive force, enabling China’s ‘peaceful’ interactions with other countries under conditions of twenty-first century economic and cultural globalisation.
2. Blending the internal and external: seeking domestic, regional and global stability that simultaneously contains domestic issues and assures the world of China’s peaceful intent.
3. Point of difference: offering a ‘collective’, alternative approach to international relations, in contrast to an ‘individualistic’, Western model (in particular, what Chinese state media, refer to as the ‘hegemonic’ U.S. approach; described in a 2019

²⁵⁰ Commentary: China in uphill battle to become top economic power, *Xinhua*, February 13, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/13/c_136973264.htm (accessed December 16, 2019).

Xinhua editorial on U.S. foreign policy as ‘always [having] been characterized as choosing hegemony instead of global harmony and cooperation’²⁵¹).

My focus is on how state-run media use ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘harmony’ in this sub-narrative, as attributes of China as a ‘peace-loving’ nation. As mentioned in Chapter 4, to focus on what Chinese state media mean by ‘peace’ or ‘peace-loving’ per se would be self-defeating, precisely because peace is a broad term, used frequently by governments, individuals and groups to describe a broad range of events. It would be difficult to extrapolate meaningful data from such a high number of media representations (on average approximately n:2600 per year in *Xinhua* from 2008 to 2018). Additionally, ‘harmony’ is an integral part of Chinese political rhetoric and explicitly linked to traditional Chinese culture (in contrast to the more universal term ‘peace’). But also, importantly for this thesis, looking at the word ‘harmony’ and its current usage better captures the challenges of contemporary CCP rhetoric, seeking to merge the old and new and the international and the domestic, and the tensions that this has created.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the CCP continues to struggle with assuaging the fears and concerns of governments and peoples internationally about China’s growing global economic, political and military might. The CCP’s threats of exercising military and economic ‘hard power’²⁵², have been widely reported and commented on in the international media. As noted by Cheng (2012, p.165), ‘[as] China’s comprehensive national power grows, its efforts to reduce the “China threat” perception have become more challenging’. In this context, the CCP has sought to utilise ‘traditional strategic culture’ in an attempt to reassure the international community, as reflected in the 2011 white paper *China’s Peaceful Development* (ibid., p.165), which featured a simultaneous emphasis on a CCP commitment to building a ‘harmonious world’ and a ‘harmonious society’.²⁵³

The four key messages discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 have all been adapted from external sources (i.e. they are not unique to China, and not developed exclusively by the CCP). Within the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative, the key message of ‘inclusive’ is also the CCP’s adaptation of an external source (in this case the Asian Development Bank); however, the key message of ‘harmony’ is unique in that the CCP can claim genuine historical connections with this as a ‘Chinese virtue’. Of all the six key messages analysed in this thesis, ‘harmony’ is the most

²⁵¹ Spotlight: U.S. foreign policy leans more to global hegemony than harmony, *Xinhua*, May 29, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/29/c_138097857.htm (accessed June 20, 2019).

²⁵² Propaganda isn’t the way: Soft power, *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, 2003, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/propaganda-isnt-way-soft-power> (accessed January 11, 2020).

²⁵³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China is committed to the path of peaceful development, September 15, 2011, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t860218.shtml (accessed February 27, 2019).

traditional, historically rooted and, therefore, the most connected with the ‘China grand narrative’, the ‘China story’. As noted by Wan (2012, p.105):

[China’s] return to a top rank in the world now means needing to examine whether its long traditions will now have a greater impact on how it thinks about foreign affairs and how other countries view China. Indeed, Chinese leaders and thinkers are increasingly looking back to Chinese history for inspiration and analogies.

This examination of ‘long traditions’, in this instance, the term ‘harmony’ as a key message of the CCP, is important as it encapsulates the contemporary challenges of the CCP to merge ‘internal and external’ rhetoric, both for its ideology and in response to twenty-first century economic globalisation and geopolitical realities.

The CCP has produced a grand narrative of China’s historical becoming since 1949, and, as noted earlier by Davies (2013, p.405), in a manner that presents the CCP as the heroic protagonist of a ‘highly edited story’ of China’s rise. However, despite the various messages used by the CCP and their origins and changes over time, ‘harmony’ represents the use of a pre-modern Confucian virtue to project the image of China as an enduring and ‘peace-loving’ civilisation. This is important to consider, especially in the context of how the CCP communicates to and engages with different audiences that include ‘the global whole’, specific regions and bilateral relations with developed and developing countries. The ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative is underpinned by the widespread references to harmony in the Chinese traditional philosophies and themes embedded in Daoism, Confucianism and Yin-Yang thinking (Figure 41). Harmony, moreover, is a social virtue in countries that share a common Confucian tradition such as South Korea, Vietnam and Japan, as well as in other Asian nations, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka that practice Buddhism.

For example, a 2018 photo exhibition to commemorate 15th anniversary of China-ASEAN strategic partnership, was described as

illustrating colorful narrative of dynamic and harmonious relations between the two sides ... under four sub themes of ‘Harmony with Nature,’ ‘Harmony with Modernity,’ ‘Harmony among Communities’ and ‘Harmonious Relations’ ... [Chinese] Ambassador Huang said ‘harmonious co-existence’ is the essence of Asian culture, and ‘harmonious co-existence’ is also a vivid portrayal of China-ASEAN relations.²⁵⁴

This concept of ‘harmony’ is not unique to China and is widely used in the official and popular cultures of other Asian countries, including for example, in inter-state relationships within

²⁵⁴ China–ASEAN photo exhibition held to mark 15th anniversary of strategic partnership, *Xinhua*, September 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/28/c_137498852.htm (accessed December 19, 2019).

ASEAN. As noted in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 (2016, p.19), one of ASEAN's strategic measures is to promote 'social harmony'.²⁵⁵ Harmony has also featured in the official rhetoric of other authoritarian regimes, such as in Indonesia under Suharto (Heryanto and Mandal, 2003, p.5).

Although there are mentions of harmony in the political and cultural discourse of countries like the U.S. and Australia, such as the notion of domestic 'black and white racial harmony' and 'celebrating cultural diversity' (such as Australia's annual 'Harmony Day'²⁵⁶), traditionally, the concept and term 'harmony' is not commonly used in Western countries.



Figure 41: The Daoist Yin-Yang symbol of harmony and balance.²⁵⁷

To the extent that this 'peace-loving' sub-narrative highlights how the CCP is the rightful custodian of China's '5,000-year' history, it epitomises the attempts of successive post-Maoist administrations to legitimise CCP rule in terms of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. The representation of CCP rule as inheriting the best of the 'old' (pre-modern China) and the 'new' (modern China since 1949) is directly connected to the Party leadership's defence of CCP rule as necessary for improving living standards and maintaining domestic stability. As noted in the CCP's 2011 white paper *China's Peaceful Development*:

China [the CCP] will accelerate the building of a harmonious society with emphasis on improving people's lives, thus strengthening the foundation of achieving social harmony ... Our goal is to ensure that all people have the right to education [and] employment ... so that all the people share the responsibility of creating a harmonious society.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, March 2016, <https://asean.org/storage/2016/01/ASCC-Blueprint-2025.pdf> (accessed April, 15 2020).

²⁵⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, Harmony Day, March 21, 2018, <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/get-involved/events/harmony-day> (accessed June 9, 2020).

²⁵⁷ https://www.zazzle.com/balance_harmony_yin_yang_button-145062423712412747

²⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China's peaceful development, September 6, 2011, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm (accessed July 16, 2015).

By using the PEC framework, I have considered the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative in relation to ‘spatialization’, in particular, with the pre-modern ‘virtue of harmony’ now thrust into a globalised and digitised, 24/7 competitive marketplace of ideas, while ‘structuration’ reflects conflicting social forces continuing to intersect within and outside China – for example, regarding controversial, regional maritime territorial disputes. Both with Japan in the East China Sea and with multiple parties, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia in the South China Sea, we can see the CCP challenge of balancing domestic and international priorities with a credible ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative. For example, as reported in a *China Daily US Edition* article in 2014, following a China–Vietnam clash in disputed waters and the sinking of a Vietnamese fishing vessel, ‘Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin reiterated ... that China would continue to pursue the peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations’ and that ‘no country should doubt China’s determination and will to safeguard the peace and stability of the South China Sea’.²⁵⁹ These statements highlight some of the issues surrounding a ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative that seeks to assure neighbours, but that also features actions by the CCP in the region that run counter to harmonious relationships.

7.3. Use of key messages in China’s global state media

As discussed in Chapter 4, my analysis of ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative data in *Xinhua* has shown that over the 11-year period (2008–2018) there was a major increase in ‘inclusive’ references, but a decrease in ‘harmony’ references (see Table 24). References to ‘inclusive(ness)’ increased significantly from n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018, with a peak of n:764 in 2017. In contrast, ‘harmony’ references declined from n:851 in 2008 to n:417 in 2018, with a peak of n:851 in 2008.

Table 24: Key message trends of the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative

Key Message	Usage 2008–2018	Peak usage
Harmony (harmonious)	n:851 to n:417	2008 – n:851
Inclusive(ness)	n:94 to n:742	2017 – n:764

These key messages will now be examined in closer detail, including, as in the Chapter 5 format, looking at the origins of each message, and then an overview of usage during the period 2008–2018, including; overall trends of usage, sharp increases and decreases, and shifts in audience focus.

²⁵⁹ Tensions rise as fishing vessel sinks, *China Daily* (US Edition), May 28, 2014, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-05/28/content_17548924.htm (accessed December 18, 2017).

7.4. Key message introduction

7.4.1. Inclusive (包容性): origin and usage overview

7.4.1.1. Origin

Globally, as an ‘international relations’ term, ‘inclusive(ness)’ gained prominence in the late 1990s, when development banks and the UN and other international agencies started talking about the concept of ‘inclusive financing’ (defined as ‘the range of banking products and financial services made available to poor populations’).²⁶⁰ In 2000, the World Bank’s annual report²⁶¹ stated in a section entitled ‘Responding to a changing world’ that ‘[a]s structural reforms have proven a necessary but insufficient condition for poverty alleviation, the Bank has emphasized the need to make growth inclusive’ (p.11) and that the Bank has ‘made progress in promoting a more equitable and inclusive approach to development’ (p.95). By 2008, there were 24 mentions in the Bank’s *Year in Review* report.²⁶²

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), with the mission statement of being ‘committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific’,²⁶³ stated in its 1999 report that the ADB ‘declares poverty reduction as its overarching goal and adopts a poverty reduction strategy anchored in pro-poor growth, inclusive social development, and good governance’. As part of its Medium-Term Strategy II (May 2006), the ADB declared in reference to the rise of China and India that ‘ensuring the inclusiveness of growth in developing Asia as a whole is important’ and that the ‘three “I” s – integration, inclusiveness, and innovation – together present significant challenges for policymakers in the region’ (p.30). The Strategy also identified ‘strengthening inclusiveness’ as one of the ADB’s five strategic priorities.²⁶⁴ The concept of ‘inclusiveness’ featured as part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015), with references to ‘inclusive finance’ being ‘an important

²⁶⁰ Definition of Financial Inclusion, *ADA Microfinance* (n.d.), <https://www.ada-microfinance.org/en/about-ada/definition-financial-inclusion> (accessed April 27, 2019).

²⁶¹ World Bank, *Annual Report 2000*, Volume 1, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/931281468741326669/pdf/multi-page.pdf> (accessed December 22, 2018).

²⁶² World Bank, *Annual Report 2008: Year in Review*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/7524/462560WBAR00EN1ry0Sept020080English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed November 7, 2018).

²⁶³ Asian Development Bank, ADB’s Work in the People’s Republic of China, <https://www.adb.org/countries/prc/overview> (accessed December 20, 2018).

²⁶⁴ Asian Development Bank, ADB Through the Decades: ADB’s Fourth Decade (1997–2006), 2017, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/216296/adb-fourth-decade-updated-edition.pdf> (accessed December 19, 2018).

driver for attaining the MDGs' (p.14)²⁶⁵ and also part of G20 messaging, with a 2006 ministerial communiqué (p.113)²⁶⁶ referring to 'effective domestic policy responses supported by effective international policy cooperation and strong and inclusive international institutions'.

It is important to note that following the announcement of Deng's reforms in 1978, Chinese government officials were increasingly active in engaging with multilateral institutions in a range of areas – in particular, signing an MOU with the World Health Organization in 1978, joining the World Bank in 1980 and partnering with the ADB in 1986, with the ADB establishing a Resident Mission in Beijing in 2000 (Duckett, 2018). As noted by Duckett (2018, p.17), 'for all their recurring concern about the potentially negative impacts of "Western thinking" – Chinese party state agencies have been keen to search abroad for policy ideas' and 'China's post-Mao international integration and participation in international organizations have profoundly influenced domestic policy'.

Co-opting wording from international organisations is not something that only the CCP does. Many national governments around the world adopt positive and inclusive terminology and invoke universal values to describe their internationally-oriented activities in areas ranging from financing, international development, sustainability and even political movements (e.g. climate action). In this instance, it appears that 'inclusive' as a CCP key message has been adopted by the CCP because, among other reasons (as discussed in earlier chapters), it represents a 'trend of the times' (大势所趋). This 'co-opting' and adaptation is clearly acknowledged in *Xinhua*.

President Hu Jintao has pledged to adopt 'Inclusive Growth,' a concept created and advocated by Asian Development Bank in 2007, for resolving social problems as a result of economic development. According to Hu, inclusive growth means to spread the benefits of economic globalization and development among all countries, regions and people and to realize balanced economic and social progress through sustainable development (*Xinhua*, in *China Tibet Online*, 2010).²⁶⁷

This highlights that although the CCP still controls key messaging, particularly regarding issues deemed sensitive by the Party, it is also aware of the importance of adopting 'trending' international themes. However, despite this adoption being acknowledged in 2010, the CCP has

²⁶⁵ World Bank, *Inclusive Finance: Korea-World Bank High Level Conference on Post-Crisis Growth and Development*, June 3–4, 2010, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/84797-1275071905763/Inclusive_Finance-Stein.pdf (accessed November 28, 2019).

²⁶⁶ G20, *The Group of Twenty: A History*, November 2007, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/docs/g20history.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2018).

²⁶⁷ 'Inclusive growth' key to leapfrog development in Tibet: scholars, *China Tibet Online*, November 26, 2010, <http://chinatibet.people.com.cn/7212261.html> (accessed December 10, 2018).

re-engineered the ‘inclusive’ theme to: (1) ‘Bundle’ it with other key messages of the CCP; and (2) Sinicise the term as a Chinese theme from ‘ancient’ times (as opposed to it being a multilateral institutional creation).

7.4.1.2. Usage overview

According to the United Nations Development Programme, from an economic growth perspective ‘inclusive’ is primarily about consideration for the most ‘vulnerable’ in society.²⁶⁸ From a social perspective, it is defined as ‘improving the terms of participation in society ... through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights’.²⁶⁹ However, even by the UN’s own admission, the definition is somewhat ambiguous²⁷⁰ and open to interpretation.

Regarding the CCP’s referencing and interpretation, despite the significant increase in CCP usage of the term ‘inclusive’ over the 11-year period, as a key message, the presentation of China as peaceful, harmonious and non-threatening has a less clearly defined audience than other messages such as (the originally Asia-focused) ‘common destiny’. In many ways, this ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative is often ‘bundled’ together with other key messages, particularly at international events. For example, as reported in *Xinhua*, in a 2017 address at a China–U.S. Innovation-Driven Development Forum at the Brookings Institution, Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong stated that ‘China’s innovation is all-round, inclusive, open and win-win’ and that, for China, ‘innovation is the first driven force for development, and China will thoroughly apply the idea of innovation [and] harmony’.²⁷¹ It is also part of the CCP’s broader global narrative push to embed itself into existing international relations dynamics by using pre-existing and established international development terms, but with Chinese characteristics.

Importantly, ‘harmony’ as a key CCP message also serves the function of demonstrating a major point of difference with what the CCP has referred to negatively as ‘Western values’. Like other key messages, such as ‘inclusive’, ‘win-win’ and ‘common destiny’, ‘harmony’ is

²⁶⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), What does inclusive economic growth actually mean in practice? Our Perspectives [blog post], July 31, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2015/7/31/What-does-inclusive-economic-growth-actually-mean-in-practice-/> (accessed July 10, 2019).

²⁶⁹ United Nations, Identifying social inclusion and exclusion, 2016, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf> (accessed August 17, 2019).

²⁷⁰ UNDP, What does inclusive economic growth actually mean in practice? Our perspectives [blog post], July 31, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2015/7/31/What-does-inclusive-economic-growth-actually-mean-in-practice-/> (accessed July 10, 2019).

²⁷¹ China’s innovation all-round, inclusive, open and win-win: Chinese vice premier, *Xinhua*, September 28, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/28/c_136646375.htm (accessed December 19, 2020).

used to position China as offering a distinct, alternative international relations model to the West, in particular the U.S. For example, a 2017 *Xinhua* commentary published just before a high-level BRI forum in Beijing states: ‘For a Western world that embraces competition, it is not easy to understand the Chinese way of thinking that calls for harmony and stability.’²⁷² This messaging aims to resonate primarily with countries that have traditionally struggled with the US narrative regarding the importance of democratic rule and human rights. For this reason, ‘harmony’ as a key CCP message will be an important one to track in future research, in particular the degree to which the CCP also seeks to embed it in the multilateral discourse of UN resolutions, which it has succeeded in doing with other key messages.

Usage of ‘inclusive’ in *Xinhua* increased considerably, from n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018 (see Table 25), with the CCP embracing the term for both internal and external purposes: a Beijing City slogan declared that one of the four key features of the so-called ‘Beijing Spirit’ was ‘inclusiveness’ (Cartier and Tomba, 2012, page.39); in the CCP’s 13th Five-Year Plan²⁷³ there were references to ‘inclusive’ domestic growth; and Xi announced that one of the global objectives of the BRI was ‘inclusiveness’ (Golley and Ingle, 2018, p.52). Despite this extensive usage, it remains largely under-analysed in the existing literature and by other China commentators, particularly regarding its adoption from the ADB and subsequent ‘Sinicisation’ by the CCP.

Looking at this period, there are two particular things to note: (1) the steady increase in usage of ‘inclusive’ in nine of the 11 years, in particular, the sharp increases from n:245 in 2013 to n:427 in 2014 and from n:612 in 2016 to n:764 in 2017; and (2) the decrease in usage from 2012 to 2013 (n:292 to n:245). Although this 2012–2013 decrease will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, it is worth noting here that with 2012 marking the end of Hu Jintao’s administration and the start of Xi Jinping’s, my research indicates a shift in usage. This involved a shift from ‘harmony’ to ‘inclusive’ as the primary key message for presenting China as a ‘peace-loving’ nation, marking a significant recalibration of the CCP’s external communication.

²⁷² Commentary: Be open-minded about China’s Belt and Road Initiative, *Xinhua*, April 27, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-04/27/c_136240797.htm (accessed December 31, 2019).

²⁷³ National Development and Reform Commission, The 13th Five-Year Plan, December 7, 2016, <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201612/P020161207645765233498.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2019).

Table 25: References to ‘inclusive’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total mentions	94	139	175	249	292	245	427	527	612	764	742
Domestic	13% (12)	4% (6)	6% (10)	8% (21)	12% (36)	9% (21)	10% (41)	6% (33)	8% (51)	10% (79)	4% (30)
Global	13% (12)	19% (26)	18% (31)	14% (35)	18% (52)	22% (55)	15% (63)	22% (114)	42% (260)	22% (167)	43% (319)
Regional (Asia)	3% (3)	6% (8)	8% (14)	7% (18)	7% (21)	19% (47)	31% (132)	37% (195)	19% (117)	23% (173)	10% (77)
Economic Growth	4% (4)	17% (24)	22% (38)	20% (49)	12% (36)	18% (43)	14% (61)	8% (44)	13% (77)	14% (108)	10% (77)
Development	3% (3)	5% (7)	6% (10)	8% (19)	5% (14)	11% (26)	9% (37)	9% (49)	8% (51)	9% (71)	7% (52)
Global system	23% (22)	24% (34)?	13% (22)	18% (45)	4% (13)	3% (7)	3% (12)	1% (6)	3% (18)	12% (94)	4% (30)
Other	40% (38)	24% (34)	29% (50)	25% (62)	41% (120)	19% (46)	19% (81)	16% (86)	6% (38)	9% (72)	21% (157)

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

Category definitions:	
Domestic	Includes references to China referring to itself as intrinsically ‘inclusive’ by nature or the CCP’s approach to internal matters such as governance matters in Hong Kong, cross-strait relations with Taiwan, and CCP domestic policies
Global	Includes references to China’s view or involvement with multinational fora, globalisation, trans-regional organisations (such as BRICS), U.S. relations in a broader global context and non-Asian, regional groupings, including Africa, Europe, Middle East and Latin America
Regional (Asia)	Includes references to regional organisations (e.g. ASEAN and APEC), and CCP driven initiatives (e.g. AIIB, BRI)
Economic Growth	Includes references to domestic, regional and global growth
Development	Specific reference to ‘inclusive’ economic development
Global System	Refers to the international financial system/ global governance/ multilateral trading system
Other	Includes references to internal matters/ policies in other countries (e.g. political situation in Syria, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan), China’s bilateral relationships and non-international relations subjects (e.g. commercial applications and cultural performances)

The increase in usage of ‘inclusive’ across the 11-year period was also reflected in the number of external (foreign policy related) ‘inclusive’ references in major CCP policies and statements. In the CCP’s five-year plans; external references to ‘inclusive’ went from n:0 in the 2006–2010 and 2011–2015 plans to n:3 in 2016–2020, and at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi’s address had n:5 external references to ‘inclusive’. The ‘inclusive’ key message was also used consistently by CCP leadership (usually the Foreign Minister) in China’s speeches at the UNGA annual General Debate, with a total of n:24 references from 2008 to 2018; this included Xi’s one and only speech to date at the General Debate²⁷⁴ in 2015, when he presented China’s views on the world, which included urging the international community to ‘increase inter-civilization exchanges to promote inclusiveness’. In these UNGA speeches, ‘inclusive’ had three peaks: n:4 in 2011 and 2012 as *Xinhua* usage also increased in the last two years of Hu

²⁷⁴ Xi Jinping, Working together to forge a new partnership of win-win cooperation and create a community of shared future for mankind, September 29, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbxclhgl70znxlfh/t1305051.shtml (accessed August 29, 2016).

Jintao's leadership, and then n:4 again in 2016, which coincided with another *Xinhua* usage spike from 2015 to 2016.

Given that the CCP's key message of 'harmony' has a greater domestic focus and, although referenced by Xi, was Hu Jintao's key political motto, my research indicates that 'inclusive' came to be used more extensively by the CCP under Xi. This adaptation of an existing international relations term reflects the CCP's approach to follow the 'trend of the times', i.e. adopt something that is prominent in a broader international setting – in this case, an established term used by major, global institutional actors such as the World Bank and the ADB, along with other governments aid donors, and therefore with a more widely understood and less controversial definition. This contrasts with the relative opaqueness of the CCP's 'common destiny' message and the ambiguousness of its 'harmony' key message.

With the world's attention turned to China as host of the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, references to 'inclusive economic growth' climbed from 17% in 2009 to 22% of all references to 'inclusive' in 2010, as total references again increased (from n:139 in 2009 to n:175 in 2010). The CCP also increasingly sought to embed 'inclusive' more broadly as both a domestic and international theme. As noted in a special *China Daily* article, 'China Focus: Inclusive growth, a development perspective in China':²⁷⁵

According to Hu, inclusive growth means to spread the benefits of economic globalisation and development among all countries, regions and people. As China gears up for the Fifth Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, it will discuss proposals for the country's 12th Five-Year Plan (2011–2015) and the term 'inclusive growth' is expected to become the new buzzword and is likely to be written into the Plan.

Furthermore, despite its ADB origins, 'inclusive' became used as part of the CCP's presentation of its policy-making as consistent with Party ideology; as reported by *Xinhua*, Hu Jintao stated at an APEC ministerial meeting in Beijing in 2010 that 'China was a strong advocator and active player in realizing inclusive growth' and that '[t]he concept (of inclusive growth) is consistent with our pursuit of scientific development and social harmony'.²⁷⁶

In contrast, although 'inclusive' was still linked to growth under Xi, importantly, it was also broadened, as part of the Xi-era messaging recalibration, to become a more encompassing

²⁷⁵ Inclusive growth, a development perspective in China, *China Daily*, October 13, 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-10/13/content_11405073.htm (accessed July 27, 2018).

²⁷⁶ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, Chinese President attends APEC human resources meeting, September, 16, 2010, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/gdxw/t753269.htm> (accessed January 9, 2019).

theme that was featured heavily in Chinese-led major events. In March 2016, *Xinhua* reported on Premier Li Keqiang's address at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Boao Forum for Asia. The article, titled 'Chinese premier calls for further openness, inclusiveness in Asia', quoted Li as saying: 'Openness and inclusiveness are at the root of cultures in Asia. Over the long history, the various nationalities, religions and cultures have coexisted, interacted and learned from one another, and they have all had important contributions to human civilization' (*Xinhua*, March 2016).²⁷⁷ In 2016, China hosted its first-ever G20 summit in Hangzhou, becoming only the second Asian country to do so (after the 2010 summit in Seoul). The theme of the Hangzhou summit was 'Towards an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy'. *Xinhua* reported in January 2016:²⁷⁸

[The] G20 China year is inclusive and looks after issues related to the interests of African countries, noted La Yifan, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia. La said the G20 China year is inclusive that it focuses on current issues of global concern. He reiterated that the G20 China year theme would be innovation, dynamism, inclusiveness of the economic growth.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the shift in messaging following Trump's election as US President involved increased efforts by the CCP to use the term 'inclusive' to present other countries as agreeing with itself. For example, after a January 2017 bilateral meeting between Xi and the Swiss President, *Xinhua* reported: 'China and Switzerland ... pledged to better develop their innovative strategic partnership and jointly oppose trade protectionism ... The two sides agreed to work together to protect the open and inclusive global trade regime, and push for a more just and equitable global governance system.'²⁷⁹ And following a bilateral meeting between Xi and the Hungarian Prime Minister in May 2017, *Xinhua* also reported that 'Hungary supports the joint efforts made by China and the EU to safeguard and promote a free, open and inclusive multilateral trade system [and] oppose protectionism in trade and investment' (*Xinhua in China Plus*, May 2017).²⁸⁰

It also featured prominently in the positioning of CCP-led initiatives such as BRICS and the BRI. The BRICS 2018 Johannesburg Declaration, was titled *BRICS in Africa: Collaboration*

²⁷⁷ Chinese premier calls for further openness, inclusiveness in Asia, *People's Daily*, March 24, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0324/c90883-9035201.html> (accessed July 19, 2018).

²⁷⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, G20 China year looks after issues close to African interests: Ambassador, January 23, 2016, <http://et.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxx/t1334853.htm> (accessed October 27, 2018).

²⁷⁹ China, Switzerland agree to boost ties, oppose protectionism, *Xinhua*, January 17, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/17/c_135987595.htm (accessed October 13, 2018).

²⁸⁰ China, Hungary establish comprehensive strategic partnership, *Xinhua in China Plus*, May 13, 2017, <http://chinaplus.cri.cn/news/politics/11/20170513/4559.html> (accessed October 13, 2018).

for *Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution*,²⁸¹ and *Xinhua* (December 2018)²⁸² quoted a ‘Nepali scholar and former top government official’ as praising the BRI for maintaining ‘the principle of inclusive partnership of nations in development endeavors without any threat to the national sovereignty of the participating country’. Increasingly, ‘inclusive’ became a multi-purpose term for the CCP, and one that Chinese state media was at pains to highlight as intrinsic to Chinese culture.

7.4.1.3. Sinicisation of inclusive (包容性)

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, *Xinhua* in 2010 clearly acknowledged the term was first used by the ADB as a keyword in its international projects.²⁸³ However, the CCP has sought to link ‘inclusive’ with the broader ‘China story’ narrative by stating that this relatively new international development term, is in fact, part of China’s 5,000-year history. ‘Inclusive’ has been emphasised by the CCP as deeply engrained and indeed ‘genetically encoded over thousands of years’ in the Chinese people. For example, at a speech at the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, highlighted ‘inclusive’ as an historical trait of Chinese ethnic groups:²⁸⁴ ‘The Chinese nation has a long history and a splendid culture. For over 5,000 years, generation after generation of the Chinese people of different ethnic groups have lived on this vast land. They have formed a fine character of diligence, courage and self-reliance. They are open-minded and inclusive’.

In August 2013, *Xinhua* syndicated a story about an exhibition of ancient Chinese bamboo slips at the UN in New York. The story highlighted ‘inclusiveness’ as an ancient, Chinese concept:²⁸⁵

The Chinese envoy also highlighted that before paper was created, Chinese people had inscribed on these bamboo slips, ideas that are familiar to the ears of today – ‘harmony without uniformity,’ ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘peace and cooperation among states’. Over thousands of years, these ideas have been encoded in the genes of Chinese people, and have been guiding China in its interaction with other countries.

²⁸¹ BRICS Summit: Continued constant commitment, *Australian Outlook*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/brics-summit-continued-constant-commitment/> (accessed August 17, 2018).

²⁸² Nepali scholar praises Belt and Road Initiative as model of economic development, *Xinhua*, December 29, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/29/c_137706845.htm (accessed March 10, 2019).

²⁸³ ‘Inclusive growth’ key to leapfrog development in Tibet: scholars, *China Tibet Online*, November 26, 2010, <http://chinatibet.people.com.cn/7212261.html> (accessed December 10, 2018).

²⁸⁴ Full text of Wu Bangguo’s speech on China National Pavilion Day at Shanghai World Expo, GOV.cn, October 2, 2010, http://www.gov.cn/english/2010-10/02/content_1714717.htm (accessed March 10, 2019).

²⁸⁵ Ancient Chinese bamboo slips displayed at UN headquarters, *Xinhua*, September 25, 2013, <http://mongolschinaandthesilkroad.blogspot.com/2013/09/ancient-chinese-bamboo-slips-displayed.html> (accessed February 27, 2019).

In May 2017, in a keynote speech²⁸⁶ at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing, Xi proclaimed that the so-called ‘Silk Road spirit’ had become a ‘great heritage of human civilization ... [s]panning thousands of miles and years’ and that the ‘ancient silk routes embody the spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness’. In creating these historical linkages, the CCP seeks not only to adopt a relatively new international relations term into its messaging, but also to connect it with the CCP’s articulation of the ‘China story’, with a long history of ‘ancient’ Chinese contributions to both the region and the world. Following the 2017 inaugural Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, *Xinhua* reported Xi Jinping as saying that the BRI represents the ‘spirit of harmony that takes root in ancient Chinese culture’ and that ‘[h]armony is intrinsic to the open and inclusive initiative ... [that] hopes to create a big family of harmonious co-existence’.²⁸⁷ With the BRI now regarded as one of the most significant CCP foreign policy objectives and a signature platform of Xi’s leadership, this in many ways exemplifies the future focus of CCP communications; seeking to blend the domestic and international and merge the old and new.

7.5. Introduction to the key message ‘harmony’

7.5.1. Harmony (和谐): origin and usage overview

7.5.1.1. Origin

The CCP’s use of ‘harmony’ draws on the term’s cultural and historical associations with pre-Qin and imperial China. ‘Harmony’ is a political ideal in two of China’s most significant philosophical contributions, Confucianism and Daoism, whose foundational texts date back at least 2,000 years. This textual longevity of ‘harmony’ is frequently noted in the speeches of leading Chinese officials. For example, Yan Zhaozhu, Secretary-General of Chinese NGO the World Cultural Forum, said at the 10th Euro-China bilateral cooperation forum in 2012: ‘China is strongly committed to peaceful development and harmony ... It is with such an ideal that the Chinese people have walked the history of several thousand years.’²⁸⁸ However, this concept of ‘harmony’ has also been modernised by the CCP, with rhetoric that connects the historical

²⁸⁶ President Xi proclaims Silk Road spirit, *Xinhua*, May 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136281165.htm (accessed February 27, 2019).

²⁸⁷ Commentary: Revive Silk Road spirit for a shared future, *Xinhua*, May 15, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/15/c_136286373.htm (accessed January 16, 2018).

²⁸⁸ China-Europe cooperation faces bright prospects, *Xinhua*, November 29, 2012, <http://www.ecns.cn/voices/2012/11-29/37860.shtml> (accessed December 20, 2019).

‘blood of Chinese people’²⁸⁹ with key CCP platforms and policies, in particular Hu Jintao’s ‘scientific development’ and Xi Jinping’s ‘China dream’ and Belt and Road Initiative.

Following a 2007 joint anti-terrorism exercise by central Asian countries as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) framework, called ‘Peace Mission 2007’, a *Xinhua* report quoted Ruan Zongze, deputy director of the China Institute of International Studies, who stated that China’s joint military manoeuvres were a ‘clear indication that China aspires to promote peace and harmony by reducing conflicts in the world’. The article defined harmony as ‘coordination, combination, integration and peace among different elements’ and stated that ‘thousands of years ago’ Confucius (551–479 BCE) ‘expounded the philosophical concept of “harmony without uniformity”, which, according to the *Xinhua* article, meant that the ‘world is full of differences and contradictions, but the righteous man should balance them and achieve harmony’.²⁹⁰

Regarding the CCP’s modernisation of ‘harmony’, the ‘harmonious society’ (和谐社会) messaging within China and the ‘harmonious world’ (和谐世界) messaging internationally, was introduced by Hu Jintao in the early 2000s and is now considered the ‘hallmark’ of Hu’s legacy (Wang, 2014, p.7). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the ‘harmony’ discourse was part of Hu’s ‘scientific development’ platform and was regarded as simultaneously seeking to address domestic challenges by providing Chinese citizens with a ‘new developmental objective’ while also being used as part of Chinese state media’s global expansion, in speeches by Hu and other Party leaders to indicate that ‘China was moving into a new stage of development’ (Zheng and Tok, 2007, p.1). According to Zheng and Tok, the promotion of ‘harmony’ as a keyword in China’s official discourse demonstrated that the CCP was seeking to ‘synchronize its internal and external outlooks, so that its international behaviours are no more than extensions of its self-belief and domestic policies’ (2007, p.8). This is important to note, as it highlights the importance of the term ‘harmony’ to the CCP in its attempts to bridge the internal and external rhetorical divide in its communications. ‘Harmony’ used as a keyword allows the CCP to demonstrate some level of consistency in its messaging.

Domestically, the term ‘harmonious society’ was used to promote ‘the idea of a harmonious relationship between different groups within China’ (and also between people and nature), at a

²⁸⁹ Concept of peaceful development flows in blood of Chinese people, *People’s Daily*, May 5, 2014, <http://en.people.cn/90785/8617777.html> (accessed January 16, 2019).

²⁹⁰ Harmonious world: China’s ancient philosophy for new int’l order, *People’s Daily*, October 2, 2007, <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/6275743.html> (accessed April 17, 2019).

time of ‘rising tensions in Chinese society due to socio-economic transformation’, which included ‘a striking rise of domestic social tensions’ across the country, including between Chinese Han and ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang (Wang, 2014, p.7). Internationally, the CCP used ‘harmonious world’ to describe the kinds of relationships China sought to establish with other countries, especially its ‘Asian neighbors over territorial disputes’ (ibid., p.7). According to the US-based think-tank, the Council on Foreign Relations, the use of ‘harmony’ as a key message became not only part of the CCP’s efforts to portray China’s ‘rise’ and ‘development’ as peaceful, but also a way for it to ‘counter narratives from the West that China’s emergence was a threat to the existing international order’ (Albert, 2018, paragraph three).

In September 2005, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the UN, Hu delivered a speech titled ‘Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity’.²⁹¹ The speech featured n:6 references to ‘harmonious’, which included ‘upholding the spirit of inclusiveness to build a harmonious world together’ in relation to preserving the ‘diversity of civilizations’ and making ‘international relations more democratic’. It also included ‘harmonious co-existence’, with an aim to creating a ‘harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity’. Of the six key messages analysed in this thesis, ‘harmony’ is the one that has the two most distinct audiences – the generic global and the specific domestic.

7.5.1.2. Usage overview

Although usage generally declined from 2008 onwards, usage of ‘harmony’ in the first five years of this analysis (2008–2012), during the period of Hu Jintao, differed greatly from the next five years (2013–2017) under Xi’s leadership. This typifies a demarcation of old leadership from new leadership, which has been a feature of the CCP’s power transitions since Mao. However, it is also important to mention that this change in leadership rhetoric, emphasis and language is not unique to CCP politics, and is a common feature of a change in leadership in many countries, even within the same political party. Clearly, ‘harmony’ was a key theme and message under Hu’s leadership. In the final five years of Hu’s time as President (2008–2012), there were n:1743 ‘harmony’ references to domestic issues, in contrast to just n:684 ‘harmony’ references to global issues. In contrast, during the first five years of Xi as leader (2013–2017), there was a significant reduction in usage, resulting in n:739 domestic references and just n:281

²⁹¹ United Nations, Statement by H.E. Hu Jintao President of the People’s Republic of China At the United Nations Summit [webcast], September 15, 2005, <https://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements15/china050915eng.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2020).

global references. Under Xi, both domestic and global references decreased with a slight increase in environmental focus, from a total of n:121 under Hu (2008–2012), compared to n:142 under Xi (2013–2017). Although references to ‘nature’ were still statistically small compared to the two priority focus areas of ‘domestic’ and global’, it reflects the third component of the original Confucian-inspired references to ‘harmony’, with an emphasis on the relationship between ‘humans and nature’. This small shift is illustrative of an increased focus globally on environmental issues and China’s greater participation in global affairs, in particular since 2015 at international forums such as the annual UN climate change talks. As noted by the World Economic Forum, China has stepped into a global ‘leadership gap’ on climate change and is championing what China calls ‘ecological civilization’; defined as achieving ‘harmony between people and nature’.²⁹²

Although the period before 2008 falls outside the tracking scope of key messages for my research, it is contextually relevant to note here that references to ‘harmony’ in 2004 were just n:299 and then jumped significantly to n:771 in 2005, the same year as Hu’s UN speech on a ‘harmonious world’. In 2008, the first year of my analysis, ‘harmony’ was a key feature of China’s ‘coming out’ during the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Figure 42) and central to other globally focused Chinese state initiatives, such as the commissioning of China’s humanitarian ship ‘Peace Ark’ in 2008. Since 2008, with each year dubbed ‘Mission Harmony’, the ship has visited developing countries across Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Latin America, including Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cuba, Venezuela and PNG, aiming to bring ‘much-needed medical care to people from all around the world free of charge’.²⁹³

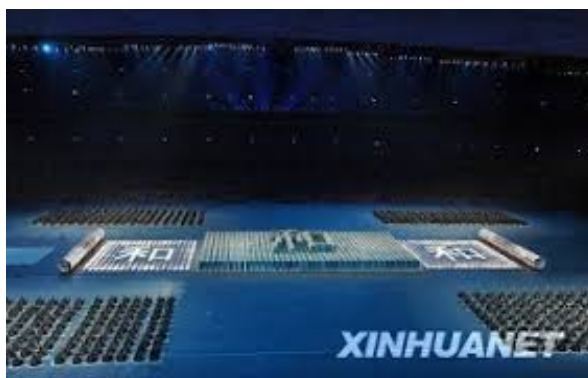


Figure 42: Chinese character for ‘harmony’ (和) featured prominently in the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

²⁹² The geopolitical impact of China’s approach to fighting climate change, *World Economic Forum*, December 7, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/the-geopolitical-impact-of-china-s-approach-to-fighting-climate-change/> (accessed June 19, 2019).

²⁹³ A look at China’s ‘floating hospital’ Peace Ark, *CGTN*, April 19, 2019, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414d7941544d34457a6333566d54/index.html> (accessed January 5, 2020).



Figure 43: The Peace Ark in PNG, 2018.²⁹⁴

Although ‘harmony’ is regarded as Hu’s rhetorical legacy, it is also unique among the CCP’s key messages, as it has such a strong connection to traditional Chinese culture. For this reason, among others, despite a decline in usage over the 11-year period, the term remains embedded in important CCP themes – especially domestically. This is evident in the official description of the so-called ‘Two Centenaries’ (两个一百年). Although components of these ‘Two Centenaries’ were referenced earlier by Jiang Zemin²⁹⁵ and Hu Jintao,²⁹⁶ they rose to prominence at the 18th National Congress, when Xi Jinping introduced them as foundational to his ‘China dream’. They refer to two targets for the CCP’s 100-year anniversary: (1) ‘building a moderately prosperous society in all respects’ by the time of the CCP’s centenary in 2021; and (2) ‘building a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious’ by the time the PRC celebrates its centenary in 2049.²⁹⁷

With regard to target audiences for the CCP’s messaging, usage of ‘harmony’ was also very different to the other five key messages analysed thus far. The other five messages were distinctly addressed at different times to a range of audiences, including; at occasions marking bilateral relations with developing countries and developed countries, at occasions affirming regional and global initiatives, and in ‘other regions’ such as Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, for major events and agreements. Conversely, the message of ‘harmony’ was only

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Full text of Jiang Zemin’s Report at 16th Party Congress on Nov 8, 2002, November 18, 2002, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/3698_665962/t18872.shtml (accessed November 15, 2019).

²⁹⁶ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, Full text of Hu Jintao’s report at 18th Party Congress, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, November 27, 2012, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/18th_CPC_National_Congress_Eng/t992917.htm (accessed November 15, 2019).

²⁹⁷ Interview: Xi’s philosophy modernizes China’s governance, improves global architecture – expert, *Xinhua*, October 11, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/11/c_136672283.htm (accessed November 15, 2019).

used for speeches and statements of the broadest and most general types both domestically and internationally.

- (1) *Domestically*, the term was used to highlight the importance of ‘social harmony’. For example, at the National People’s Congress in 2011,²⁹⁸ Standing Committee Chair Wu Bangguo referenced ‘the important strategic thought’ of the Scientific Outlook on Development and the major strategic task of building a harmonious socialist society. And in reference to new CCP judicial guidelines introduced in 2018, *Xinhua* stated that ‘core socialist values comprise a set of moral principles: prosperity, democracy, civility [and] harmony’.²⁹⁹
- (2) *Globally*, the term was used to promote a ‘harmonious world’. For example, at a 2018 meeting with UNESCO Director-General, Xi Jinping stated: ‘In the new era ... China also upholds the concept of a world of great harmony and harmonious co-existence.’³⁰⁰ And in articulating the extension of the internal to the external, Chinese Consul-General Luo Linquan in San Francisco stated: ‘The concept of harmony is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and thoughts. It is the philosophy behind China proposing to build a community of shared future for mankind’.³⁰¹

As the data demonstrates, ‘harmony’ references appeared across communications about a range of domestic and global issues, with average usage percentage over the 11-year period at 43% for domestic issues and 17% for global issues (compared to the next highest average of just 6% for regional references). Although the number of specific references to ‘harmony’ in a ‘bilateral’ and ‘regional’ context was comparatively minor, the notion of ‘harmony’ was still a key feature of the CCP’s regional diplomacy, including in relation to contentious South China Sea issues. For example, as noted in 2015 by Foreign Minister Wang Yi regarding China’s construction of facilities in the disputed South China Sea: ‘China’s policy toward its neighbors is guided by the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. It aims to bring harmony, stability and prosperity to the neighborhood’.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Report on the work of the National People’s Congress. *US–China Institute*, 10 March, 2011, <https://china.usc.edu/wu-bangguo-2011-report-work-national-people%E2%80%99s-congress-march-10-2011> (accessed January 25, 2020).

²⁹⁹ New judicial guidelines proposed to safeguard core socialist values, *Xinhua*, September 18, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/18/c_137476297.htm (January 19, 2020).

³⁰⁰ Chinese president meets with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, *Xinhua*, July 16, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/16/c_137329118.htm (accessed January 26, 2020).

³⁰¹ Feature: ‘Beauty of Chinese characters’ attracts San Francisco youths, *Xinhua*, March 16, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/16/c_137043752.htm (accessed October 13, 2020).

³⁰² Island, reef construction in South China Sea justified: FM, *China Daily*, March 8, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015twosession/2015-03/08/content_19750414.htm (accessed January 29, 2020).

Table 26: References to ‘harmony’ in *Xinhua*, 2008–2018

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total mentions	851	751	700	591	652	355	362	374	345	445	417
Domestic	43% (365)	56% (417)	39% (275)	51% (300)	59% (386)	44% (156)	45% (163)	33% (124)	37% (129)	38% (167)	29% (120)
Environment / nature	3% (26)	3% (23)	5% (32)	3% (20)	3% (20)	4% (13)	4% (14)	5% (17)	8% (28)	8% (30)	10% (40)
Global	23% (194)	21% (158)	22% (157)	16% (93)	13% (82)	16% (56)	10% (37)	19% (72)	10% (36)	18% (80)	22% (91)
Regional (Asia)	5% (45)	3% (24)	7% (52)	9% (52)	6% (39)	9% (31)	7% (26)	5% (19)	9% (31)	3% (15)	5% (19)
Other developing regions	n/a (2)	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	n/a (2)	n/a (1)	2% (6)	2% (7)	1% (3)	n/a (0)	2% (7)
Bilateral Developing*	1% (11)	2% (14)	2% (13)	2% (10)	2% (15)	3% (10)	5% (18)	2% (7)	2% (7)	4% (17)	4% (15)
Bilateral Developed*	1% (9)	3% (19)	2% (15)	2% (14)	2% (11)	2% (8)	5% (17)	2% (8)	3% (11)	4% (4%)	1% (6)
Europe/ EU	1% (7)	1% (4)	1% (4)	n/a (0)	n/a (1)	n/a (0)	n/a (1)	n/a (1)	n/a (0)	n/a (2)	n/a (2)
Other	23% (192)	12% (91)	22% (151)	17% (101)	15% (96)	23% (80)	22% (80)	32% (119)	30% (100)	26% (117)	28% (117)

NB: % rounded up or down to nearest whole number

* Developing and developed country status based on World Bank Indicators

Main category definitions:	
Domestic	Includes references to police, social stability, family relations, ethnic groups, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao development, Chinese philosophy and history.
Global	Includes references to ocean/ maritime relations, air space sharing, Five Principles, different civilisations and ‘East and West’.

Regarding China’s bilateral relations with developing countries, as noted by Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Xiong Bo in a 2017 lecture on Xi Jinping Thought, ‘China and Cambodia have become good neighbors like brothers ... The relationship between the two countries could be seen as a model for nations to live together in harmony and cooperate for mutual benefits’.³⁰³ And for bilateral relations with developed countries, as reported in the *Global Times*, Xi Jinping noted at a 2013 APEC meeting that, ‘his country is ready to work with Australia to deepen their strategic partnership and make their ties a fine model of harmonious co-existence and win-win cooperation between countries of different social systems, history, culture and at different development stages’.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era introduced to Cambodian university students, *Xinhua*, November 8, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/08/c_136737926.htm (accessed January 18, 2020).

³⁰⁴ Chinese, Australian leaders pledge to boost ties, *Global Times*, October 7, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/815793.shtml> (accessed December 30, 2019).

Unlike the other five key messages, which placed a reasonable degree of messaging emphasis on China's 'Regional (Asia)' relations and China's 'bilateral' relations, 'harmony' references were more limited in scope over the 11-year period (2008-2018). These included average references over the 11-year period to just: 6% for the Asian region; 5% for environment/ nature; and, <3% for bilateral relations. The minimal usage of 'harmony' in reference to bilateral relationships is understandable, given that the term is not widely used in diplomacy outside the Confucian and Buddhist cultural sphere. However, what is surprising is that the CCP did not often describe China's relations with other Asian countries as aspiring towards 'harmony'. Despite referencing 'harmony' as part of 'Asian culture', Chinese state media has not reported on bilateral relations between China and other Asian countries as based on striving to achieve an ideal harmony. Nonetheless, at the launch of a China-ASEAN photo exhibition in 2018, Chinese Ambassador to ASEAN Huang Xilian, did make a point of stating that 'harmonious co-existence is the essence of Asian culture, and "harmonious co-existence" is also a vivid portrayal of China-ASEAN relations'.³⁰⁵

In the overall declining trend of usage over the 11-year period, 'harmony' usage showed some fluctuations. References in 2016 dropped to just n:345 (the lowest during the 11-year period), but there was a jump in 2017 to n:445 as Xi made n:8 references to 'harmony' in his speech at the 19th National Congress in 2017.³⁰⁶ This included n:4 domestic references (social harmony), n:3 references to 'humans and nature' but just n:1 for the global context. This highlighted that although the term was a signature word of Xi's predecessor, it was still an important CCP theme, in particular in domestic communications. In 2018, at n:417 references – a slight decrease from 2017 but still the second highest usage under Xi – 'harmony' was still a key word in Xi's communications and appeared in his address at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, in which he stated that 'building a world of great harmony and enabling people to co-exist peacefully are the philosophy cherished by the Chinese people for thousands of years'.³⁰⁷ I argue that this type of usage reflects the CCP's growing confidence in exploiting the value of China's cultural traditions, formerly condemned by Mao, such that the CCP ultimately claims

³⁰⁵ China-ASEAN photo exhibition held to mark 15th anniversary of strategic partnership, *Xinhua*, September 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/28/c_137498852.htm (accessed December 19, 2019).

³⁰⁶ Xi Jinping, secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, 19th National Congress, October 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed April 28, 2019).

³⁰⁷ Xi calls for building world of great harmony, *Xinhua*, April 11, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/11/c_137103763.htm (accessed December 26, 2019).

‘harmony’ as both a key platform of CCP leadership and one that it has inherited from China’s more than two millennia old dynastic legacy.

Although 2019 is out of scope in tracking key messages, it is still worth noting that references to ‘harmony’ in *Xinhua*, increased significantly in 2019; from n:417 in 2018 to n:616 in 2019. The key message also featured in the CCP’s 2019 white paper, *China and the World in the New Era*, which distinctly highlighted the two priority ‘harmony’ areas of the domestic and the international, as well as also referencing humanity living in harmony with nature: ‘With a history dating back more than 5,000 years, Chinese culture contains the cosmological view of the unity of man and nature, the international view of harmony between all countries [and], the social view of harmony in diversity.’³⁰⁸ This future-focused white paper indicates that ‘harmony’ will continue to be a keyword of the CCP.

7.5.1.3. Sinicisation of harmony

China’s modern history has been one of conflict, violence and revolution. For the better part of the twentieth century and up to the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976, ‘class struggle’ was the CCP’s key message. Even during the 1980s, as the CCP transitioned from Mao-era ‘class struggle’ to post-Maoist economic reforms, the rhetoric of class struggle remained authoritative, although it was being rapidly eclipsed by the Deng-era message of ‘modernisation’. Hu Jintao’s introduction of ‘harmony’ as a key message thus marked a distinctive turn to the Confucian tradition. This was a turn that would not have been possible in CCP discourse without the overarching definition of CCP rule after Mao as ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. The statement in the CCP’s 2011 white paper, *China’s Peaceful Development*, illustrates the extent to which CCP rule in the 2010s had distanced itself from its founding mission of ‘revolutionary struggle’ towards the dictatorship of the proletariat: ‘The world has been believed to be a harmonious whole in the Chinese culture ever since the ancient times.’³⁰⁹ Unlike other CCP key messages such as ‘common destiny’ and ‘win-win’, which the CCP has adopted from external sources, the CCP is not trying to Sinicise ‘harmony’ but, rather, has sought to ‘modernise’ and now ‘internationalise’ the idea of ‘harmony’ as a key goal of the CCP in the twenty-first century. This is in striking contrast to the goals that had legitimised CCP rule in the twentieth century, which included, as noted by Zhang (2015, p.197) ‘eradicating

³⁰⁸ Full text: China and the World in the New Era, *Xinhua*, September 27, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/27/c_138427541.htm (accessed January 18, 2020).

³⁰⁹ State Council of The People’s Republic of China, *China’s Peaceful Development*, White Paper, September 6, 2011, http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm (accessed January 16, 2017).

“feudal dregs” such as Confucianism as one of the main missions of his [Mao’s] continuous revolution’.

It was Hu Jintao in the early 2000s who formally modernised the key message ‘harmony’ in an environment of tensions; domestically between ethnic groups, and internationally with neighbours over disputed territorial waters. But it is under Xi, despite an initial period of declining usage of ‘harmony’ immediately following the leadership transition from Hu, that we are now seeing greater efforts by the CCP to ‘internationalise’ the term. As stated in a 2018 *Xinhua* ‘China Focus’ editorial, ‘[i]nternational interest in classical Chinese philosophy is growing, with oriental concepts of harmony, community and beauty seen as vital in the period of globalization’.³¹⁰ Importantly this heightened focus is reflected in my analytical data, which has seen an increase in references to global ‘harmony’ in *Xinhua*, from just 10% of total usage in 2016 to 18% in 2017, and 22% in 2018.

7.6. Summary

As stated earlier, the key pillars of the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narratives are about merging the old and new, blending the domestic with the international, and creating a clear position of difference with the West, in particular the United States. As an example of the CCP’s use of Confucianism, this ‘modernisation’ of harmony is an attempt at producing a unifying message for both domestic and international audiences.

The CCP’s ‘internationalisation’ of ‘harmony’ is exemplified in Xi’s signature BRI, with its strong emphasis on ‘harmony’ and ‘inclusiveness’. For example, at the 2018 Boao Forum for Asia, Xi Jinping declared that ‘[c]ountries should all be committed to building an inclusive world and creating a harmonious atmosphere’.³¹¹ And as noted in a 2018 *Xinhua* commentary, the BRI action plan is based on four principles, including ‘harmony and inclusiveness’.³¹² This reflects the transition of ‘harmony’ from Hu’s modernisation to Xi’s ‘internationalisation’. I contend that this emphasis on these two key messages is an important strategic communication move by China, because, as previously mentioned, the CCP’s messages, such as ‘common destiny’ and ‘win-win’ (and ‘mutual benefit’) have attracted, and will continue to attract, a degree of negative international scrutiny. However, terms such as ‘inclusiveness’, already

³¹⁰ China Focus: Scholars suggest oriental philosophy offers better future for humanity, *Xinhua*, August 23, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/23/c_137413696.htm (accessed December 20, 2019).

³¹¹ Xi calls for building inclusive, harmonious world, *Xinhua*, April 12, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0412/c90000-9448422.html> (accessed January 31, 2018).

³¹² *Xinhua* Insight: ‘Belt and road’ blueprint boosts practical cooperation, *Xinhua*, March 29, 2015, http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2015-03/29/content_35187066.htm (accessed January 30, 2020).

extensively used by international donor agencies, and the culturally ingrained Eastern concept of ‘harmony’, are yet to face the same type of international criticism and scrutiny.

Use of these two key messages in different contexts (both domestically and internationally) reflect an increasingly adaptable CCP able to adjust to international trends and themes in political messaging. For this reason, the usage of ‘harmony’ and ‘inclusiveness’ by the CCP regarding global issues is likely to increase and even broaden. A prime example (mentioned earlier in the chapter) is the connection with the current global trend of major organisations, ranging from UN agencies and national governments, to universities and multinational companies,³¹³ talking about ‘innovation’, and CCP references to China’s innovation being ‘inclusive’ and its development applying the ideas of both ‘innovation [and] harmony’.³¹⁴

The increase in usage of ‘inclusiveness’, particularly from just n:245 in 2013, to n:527 in 2015, is reflective of the adaptability of the CCP’s propaganda to international circumstances, such as the adoption of multilateral (i.e. U.N.) themes. The sharp decrease in the usage of ‘harmony’ from n:652 in 2012 to n:355 in 2013 – and now signs of increase again –also reflect another shift in the CCP’s positioning towards expanding its global influence with a crafted combination of the overt hard power of the political and ideological, and the ‘soft power’ of philosophical and cultural contributions.

However, despite the strong emphasis the CCP places on its ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative, in particular in the context of domestic, regional and broader international stability, it remains the CCP’s most controversial sub-narrative. As the CCP continues to face international criticism for its aggressive maritime actions in the South China Sea and for its violent crackdown on dissenters in China, it would appear that its messages of being ‘inclusive’ and ‘harmonious’ have yet to be effective. The next chapter will examine the concerns that other countries have raised about China’s aggressive attitude under Xi, along with analysis of the domestic and international events that may have shaped the usage and evolution of the CCP’s three sub-narratives.

³¹³ Stop calling it ‘innovation’, *Harvard Business Review*, February 19, 2020 <https://hbr.org/2020/02/stop-calling-it-innovation> (accessed April 17, 2020).

³¹⁴ China’s innovation all-round, inclusive, open and win-win: Chinese vice premier, *Xinhua*, September 28, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/28/c_136646375.htm (accessed December 19, 2020).

Chapter 8. Chronology of Key Events and Usage Trends of Key Messages 2008–2018

8.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the usage trends of the key messages of the three sub-narratives and six key messages. It focuses on the connection between usage increases and decreases from 2008 to 2018 and key domestic and international events that have influenced these fluctuations.

Based on the usage trends over the 11-year period, there are three distinct phases of the CCP's global communication: (1) the second half of the Hu administration (2008–2012); (2) the first three years of the Xi administration (2013–2015); and (3) the second three years of the Xi administration (2016–2018). Although many domestic and international events contribute to the CCP's communications and emphases at any given time, there were five events during this period (2008–2018) that arguably had an impact on the particular messages used:

- (1) The 2008 Beijing Olympics and the Global Financial Crisis (2008–2009).
- (2) Domestic tensions in China (2009–2010).
- (3) The US Pivot to Asia (2011–2012).
- (4) Maritime territorial disputes: South China Sea and East China Sea (2010–2018).
- (5) The rise of Xi and the election of US President Donald Trump (2016–2018).

As noted in Chapter 1, the nature of the CCP's communications is relatively 'opaque' (Ma and Thomas, 2018). For this reason, it is difficult to precisely attribute cause and effect regarding events and Party narratives. However, I think important insights can be gained based on accumulated evidence over the 11-year period that clearly demonstrate the CCP's adaptive and evolving global communications, impacted by key internal and external events. This is further reinforced by the limited but specific research from other scholars, such as Zhang's (2018) leading work on 'common destiny', discussed in Chapter 5.

From 2008 to 2018, the CCP's grand 'China story' developed in three important ways, over three distinct phases.

(1) CCP's positioning itself as a champion of globalisation and multilateralism. The CCP shifted from presenting itself as the 'champion of a more equitable world', a sub-narrative

focused more on China's relations with developing countries, to promoting itself as the 'champion of a globalised world under threat from a protectionist United States'.

The key messages of 'world order' and 'common destiny' within the 'champion' sub-narrative were scarcely emphasised in 2008–2012. Over this five-year period, the total 'world order' usage was only n:107, compared with n:352 for the following five years (2013–2018); and 'common destiny' was only used n:26 in 2008–2012, compared to n:611 in 2013–2018. However, there was a significant difference between Phase Two and Phase Three (the first three years of Xi's leadership, compared to the next three years); 'world order' decreased from an 11-year peak of n:103 in 2015 to n:53 in 2018 and 'common destiny' declined from a peak of n:268 in 2015 to just n:23 in 2018.

(2) Increased positioning by the CCP of China as an important business opportunity with the emergence of the CCP's most prominent sub-narrative 'China as a win-win partner'.

This development included a rise in the usage of conditional, 'mutual respect' messaging, linked to trade. The CCP increasingly sought to highlight other countries' acceptance of the CCP's domestic and international policies in exchange for the opportunity of trade and investment with China. For example, in 2018 El Salvador signed a joint communique, effectively renouncing its bilateral relationship with Taiwan and establishing formal diplomatic relations with the PRC. As reported by *Xinhua*, the communique stated 'The two governments agree to develop friendly relations between the two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect ...' and quoted Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as saying 'Adhering to the one-China principle is a universally recognized international norm ... the fundamental foundation for China to establish and develop relations with any country' and that 'forging diplomatic relations with China is in the fundamental and long-term interests of the Salvadorean people ... [with China] willing to join hands with El Salvador to achieve their joint development'.³¹⁵

Of the three sub-narratives, 'win-win' was the only one with both key messages having an overall increase from 2008 to 2018: 'win-win' from n:330 in 2008 to n:1,210 in 2018, and 'mutual respect' from n:187 in 2008 to n:433 in 2018.

(3) China as an inclusive and therefore peace-loving twenty-first century global leader.

The distinctive rhetorical transition from Hu Jintao's signature 'harmony' platform to Xi

³¹⁵ China Focus: People's Republic of China, Republic of El Salvador establish diplomatic ties, *Xinhua*, August 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/21/c_137407089.htm (accessed June 28, 2020).

Jinping's signature 'inclusive shared future' platform reflected an increasingly confident CCP in international affairs and an emphasis on China's leading role in global development initiatives.

As mentioned in Chapter 7, usage of 'harmony' declined steadily in the final five years of Hu Jintao's leadership and then dropped sharply in Xi Jinping's first year as leader in 2013, from n:652 in 2012 to n:355 in 2013. All three phases, however, involved a consistent and notable increase in 'inclusive' as a key message, from just n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018. This included n:2,118 references in the third phase (2016–2018), compared to just n:949 in the first phase under Hu Jintao (2008–2012).

8.2. Phase One: 2008–2012 (Olympics' showcase, domestic tensions, leadership transition and the U.S. 'pivot')

Phase One was the second five-year period of Hu Jintao's leadership and the beginning of the important transition to Xi Jinping's presidency (2008–2012). Historically, like the leadership changes in many countries, new leaders of the same or a different party seek to make their mark by presenting their own signature policy initiatives and visions for a better future. The CCP's leadership transition process from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping was no different in this regard. This transition involved a mix of distinctive, new messaging and emphases, and a continuance of traditional, core Party messaging. This first phase had two distinct sub-narrative features.

The first was the slow but steady emergence of the 'win-win' sub-narrative. During this phase the key messages 'win-win' (from n:330 in 2008 to n:417 in 2012) and mutual respect' (from n:187 in 2008 to n:351 in 2012) both increased steadily, which demonstrated an emerging confidence within the CCP regarding China's greater participation in global affairs and the economic 'value proposition' that China could offer to other countries – particularly in contrast to the loss of credibility suffered by the US-led global capitalist system following the GFC.

The second was the shift in the 'peace-loving' sub-narrative. During this phase, there was a gradual decline in the use of the key message 'harmony' (from n:851 in 2008 to n:652 in 2012), concomitant with an emergence and increase of use of the key message, 'inclusive' (from n:94 in 2008 to n:292 in 2012). This transition away from the use of 'harmony', which had been essentially a domestic propaganda key message, reflected that the CCP was no longer as concerned about domestic instability. Instead, the CCP increased emphasis on use of 'inclusive' as a more 'globally focused' key message that represented a proactive CCP, more willing to engage with the world.

I will now examine the key domestic and international events from 2008 to 2012 that contributed to the increase in usage of the ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’ key messages (and the emergence of the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative). I will also look at the impact these events had on the other four key messages.

8.2.1. 2008 Beijing Olympics – a benchmark year

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, 2008 was a watershed year for China. Several major events attracted unprecedented international attention for and scrutiny of the CCP. Domestically, the hosting of the Beijing Olympics followed a controversial international torch relay. Although promoted by the Chinese government as the ‘harmonious relay’, the global relay was marred by often violent protests and clashes in several Western countries between pro-Tibet and human rights activists and ‘pro-China’ groups.³¹⁶ This coincided with a major earthquake in Sichuan province (with over 70,000 deaths) and large-scale ethnic protests in Tibet. These events also occurred as the global economic fall-out from the GFC was unfolding, with China viewed by many economies as critical to staving off a more wide-scale global depression.

8.2.2. 2009/2010 – domestic unrest and growing global confidence

In 2009, the CCP faced significant domestic challenges with an increase in ethnic tensions, as major riots in China’s Western province of Xinjiang caused a reported 140 deaths in July.³¹⁷ However, at the same time, amid the afterglow of a successful Beijing Olympics, the impact of the GFC was being more acutely felt across the world, especially following the collapse of the US banking sector in September 2008.³¹⁸ Reflected in the key messaging, with ‘stability’ and ‘harmony’ as complementary Party watchwords in 2008–2009, was the CCP’s focus on resolving extreme domestic tensions in Xinjiang (the 2009 Urumqi riots were the most violent in decades) and its concomitant attempt to extend China’s post-Olympics global reputation boost.

The international focus was highlighted by the CCP’s ‘going global’ media strategy (referenced in Chapter 1), and reflected in the CCP’s building on its external facing ‘win-win’ sub-narrative, with both ‘win-win’ (n:330 in 2008, n:359 in 2009) and ‘mutual respect’ (n:187 in 2008, n:309

³¹⁶ Protests of China make Olympic Torch relay an obstacle course, *The New York Times*, April 7, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/world/europe/07torch.html> (accessed June 19, 2017).

³¹⁷ China locks down western province after ethnic riots kill 140, *The Guardian*, July 6, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/06/china-uighur-urumqi-riots> (accessed February 27, 2017).

³¹⁸ Global financial crisis: five key stages 2007–2011, *The Guardian*, August 7, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/aug/07/global-financial-crisis-key-stages> (accessed September 4, 2018).

in 2009) increasing in usage. ‘Win-win’ shifted to a predominantly externally focused message, with emphasis on the domestic dropping from 19% in 2008 (which included 15% on Taiwan) down to just 8% in 2009 and the global emphasis increasing from 11% in 2008 to 26% in 2009. ‘Mutual respect’ also experienced a doubling of externally focused messaging, in particular regarding China’s relations with the U.S., which increased from 8% of references in 2008 to 18% in 2009. This highlighted that, post-Beijing Olympics, the CCP leadership was more confident in its willingness to participate on the global stage and to also engage with the government of an economically exposed U.S. with a new assertiveness.

Despite China’s global reputation receiving a post-Olympics boost, the issue of domestic tensions was still a major concern for the CCP. Although references to ‘harmony’ decreased from n:851 in 2008 to n:751 in 2009, this was most likely just a result of decreased Olympic references to harmony (e.g. ‘Journey of Harmony’ Olympic Torch Relay). Importantly, it was not the decrease in overall usage but that the significant increase in ‘harmony’ usage was in relation to domestic issues (from 43% in 2008 to 56% in 2009, the second highest emphasis on ‘domestic harmony’ during the 11-year period). This domestic focus was also reflected in the ‘common destiny’ message. Although it was yet to emerge as a significant ‘key message’ of the CCP, and the usage of ‘common destiny’ was low (only n:3), all references in *Xinhua* were domestic, and specifically referred to ethnic groups in China all ‘sharing a common destiny’.

The key message, ‘inclusive’ increased (from n:94 in 2008 to n:139 in 2009), accompanied by a decrease in domestic references (from 13% to 4%) and an increase in global and Asian regional references (from 13% to 19% and 3% to 6% respectively). Moreover, as the impact of the US-triggered GFC continued to be felt around the world, the CCP increased its emphasis on economic growth as or needing to be ‘inclusive’, from just 4% in 2008 to 17% in 2009. These shifts in both the ‘peace-loving’ and ‘win-win’ sub-narratives highlighted the CCP’s focus on (1) promoting China as an alternative economic point of difference from which countries could benefit, and (2) telling the U.S. that it now needed to start showing more respect for the CCP’s economic approach. As mentioned in Chapter 5, elements within the CCP saw the time as ‘opportune for China to make its mark on the world stage’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.87) and promote the CCP’s economic and governance model more widely.

In 2009, references to ‘world order’ also increased, doubling from n:11 in 2008 to n:27 in 2009. Although the CCP’s usage of ‘world order’ in *Xinhua* still remained relatively limited until 2012, (only n:69 references from 2010–2012), the emphasis on ‘world order’ was important. For example, the CCP started to refer to the need for an alternate international financial system.

As noted by Rozman (2011), the CCP also increased efforts to foster relations with non-democratic nations after the global financial crisis was blamed on capitalism and, when ‘international cooperation [regarding the GFC response] started to disintegrate as individual countries pursued their own agendas’.³¹⁹ Almost half (48%) of the references to ‘world order’ referred to a ‘new world order’, with 41% referring to a combination of the need to ‘change/reform’ the world order and the need for a ‘more just/democratic/ better/inclusive’ world order. From 2009 through to 2018, references to the ‘world order’ needing ‘change/reform’ or to be ‘more just/democratic/better/inclusive’ accounted for at least one third of all CCP ‘world order’ references. These statistics indicate that, following the GFC, the CCP was intent on pushing for change to the global financial system. However, important to note is the way the CCP was starting to push for this change, i.e. it was not expressed as solely an objective of the CCP, but rather, as the CCP advocating on behalf of the developing world, who deserved a ‘more just/democratic/better/inclusive system’.

From 2008 to 2011, the most significant emphasis placed on the key message ‘world order’ was on China providing an alternative to the existing order (i.e. new, change, more just): 100% in 2008, 89% in 2009, 77% in 2010 and 78% in 2011. As noted in a 2008 end-of-year *Xinhua* editorial: ‘People expect the international community to draw lessons from the [global financial] crisis and undertake necessary reform of international financial system ... so as to establish a new international financial order that is fair, just, inclusive and orderly.’³²⁰ Clearly, the CCP aimed to maximise the opportunity to exploit the GFC as a major dent in the credibility of established Western capitalism in order to promote the idea of needed change, led by the CCP’s self-styled ‘socialist market economy’.

In 2010, much the world’s attention again turned to China, this time as host of another major global event, the World Expo in Shanghai. However, despite some minor fluctuations, there were minimal shifts in messaging trends from 2009. The most noticeable shift was the continued increase in the usage of ‘inclusive’ (from n:139 in 2009 to n:175 in 2010) and with a particular emphasis on ‘economic growth’, climbing from 17% of references to ‘inclusive’ in 2009 to 22% in 2010. As reported in a special *China Daily* feature article, according to Hu Jintao inclusive growth was about ‘spread[ing] the benefits of economic globalization and

³¹⁹ Global financial crisis: five key stages 2007-2011, *The Guardian*, August 7, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/aug/07/global-financial-crisis-key-stages> (accessed September 4, 2018).

³²⁰ Marked changes in world’s political, economic landscape, *Xinhua*, December 29, 2008, <http://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2155586/posts> (accessed September 4, 2018).

development among all countries, regions and people'.³²¹ 'World order' references also increased their emphasis on 'change/reform' and on achieving 'more just/democratic/better/inclusive' outcomes (from 41% in 2009 to 54% of total references in 2010). The CCP continued to leverage the failures of US economic policy (as the main cause of the GFC) and started to promote China not only as economically different but as a champion of 'inclusive economic growth'. The CCP also started to incorporate 'inclusive economic growth' into its own domestic political narrative. As reported in *Xinhua*, at a 2010 Beijing APEC meeting in Beijing, Hu Jintao stated that China was not only a 'strong advocator and active player in realizing inclusive growth' but that the concept (inclusive growth) was 'consistent with [China's] pursuit of scientific development and social harmony'.³²²

8.2.3. 2011/ 2012 – leadership transition and the U.S. 'pivot to Asia'

From 2009 to 2010 there were relatively minor shifts in 'mutual respect' and 'win-win' messaging. In contrast, from 2010 to 2011 there was a major shift and considerable CCP focus on the 'win-win' sub-narrative in 2011. Usage of both key messages increased significantly from 2010; 'win-win' from n:377 in 2010 to n:420 in 2011, and 'mutual respect' from n:264 in 2010 to n:405 in 2011. Of particular interest was the 'win-win' focus on China's dealings with the U.S., which increased sharply from just 9% in 2010 to 19% in 2011 – the greatest emphasis of 'win-win' with regard to the China–U.S. relationship over the 11-year period. The importance to China of stable and positive relations with the U.S. during this time was also reflected in the significant increase in references to 'mutual respect' with regard to China–U.S. relations, increasing from just 8% in 2010 to 41% in 2011, the highest over the 11-year period. This focus on China's position vis-à-vis the U.S. can be attributed primarily to two key occurrences: (1) domestic vulnerabilities surrounding the CCP leadership transition, and (2) a strategic US rebalancing towards Asia. In November 2011, then US President Obama announced that he wanted US foreign policy to 'pivot to Asia' which 'worried' the CCP (Lieberthal, 2011). In addition to the 'pivot announcement' coming at a time of the CCP's heightened domestic sensitivity regarding the once-in-a-decade leadership transition, it also came as China was experiencing a slowing in annual economic growth, down to 7.4% in 2012, China's lowest rate since 1999.

³²¹ Inclusive growth, a development perspective in China, *China Daily*, October 13, 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-10/13/content_11405073.htm (accessed May 2, 2017).

³²² Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, Chinese President attends APEC human resources meeting, September 16, 2010, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/gdxw/t753269.htm> (accessed May 2, 2017).

As the CCP prepared for leadership transition in 2011 and 2012, the ‘Arab Spring’ was unfolding in the Middle East, with autocratic regimes, including in Tunisia and Egypt, being overturned after mass public protests.³²³ Domestically, the anxiety of the CCP leadership was evident in its strict censorship of international news coverage of these protests. In the CCP’s international media messaging, however, the focus was on China’s stability, with an overall increase in the CCP’s ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative. Externally, ‘inclusive’ references continued to climb with another increase from n:175 in 2010 to n:249 in 2011 and then to n:292 in 2012. Despite the notoriously opaque nature of Chinese foreign policy, the increased usage of ‘inclusive’ probably represented a combination of factors; including an effort to promote regional stability and ‘harmony’ and portray the CCP as an ‘inclusive’ economic partner, committed to sharing economic success and growth opportunities with countries in the Asian region. Internally, usage of ‘harmony’ increased again (after four years of declining usage) from n:591 in 2011 to n:652 in 2012, with a major emphasis on the importance of ‘domestic’ harmony at 59%, the highest level of emphasis on ‘domestic’ over the entire 11-year period. This reflected the CCP’s need for domestic (as well as regional) stability to ensure a smooth leadership transition, despite a series of ‘tumultuous’ Party events including corruption ‘spiraling out of control’ and high-profile Party official Bo Xilai and his wife being investigated for murder allegations.³²⁴

This push for stability was also reflected in the shift in emphasis of references to ‘world order’. Usage of this term increased (from n:19 in 2011 to n:28 in 2012), and importantly there was a significant shift in emphasis. In 2012, CCP rhetoric referring to a ‘new and improved’ ‘world order’ decreased from 78% in 2011 to 53% in 2012 and references to the need to ‘maintain/ safeguard/ uphold’ the existing ‘world order’ increased from 6% in 2011 to 32% in 2012. This highlighted the importance to the CCP of stability during the period of domestic political leadership transition, as the CCP decreased its vocal advocacy for global systemic change and increased its emphasis on stability and the global status quo.

However, this emphasis on the ‘status quo’ was also used by the CCP in reference to high-profile tensions with the Japanese Government over the disputed Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands. This is an issue that has consistently resulted in the CCP’s rhetoric defaulting to a ‘maintain/ safeguard/uphold’ the current world order, in an effort to demonise Japan and remind the world

³²³ Arab spring, Chinese winter, *The Atlantic*, September 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/09/arab-spring-chinese-winter/308601/> (accessed January 9, 2019).

³²⁴ What motivates Chinese President Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption drive? *NPR*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/10/24/559004647/what-is-the-motivation-behind-chinese-president-xi-jinpings-anti-corruption-driv> (accessed March 1, 2020).

of Japan's historical wrong doings in WWII. For example, as noted in a *Global Times* 2012 end-of-year opinion editorial: 'China-Japan relations faced their most serious challenge in the 21st century as Tokyo betrayed the consensus reached between leaders of older generations of the two countries and blatantly challenged the post-war world order.'³²⁵ In September 2012, the Japanese government purchased the islands from private ownership, claiming they did so to avoid a nationalistic Tokyo city governor buying them. This resulted in widespread anti-Japanese riots across China, stern rebukes from CCP officials, including at the UNGA annual General Debate, and a series of punitive economic and diplomatic measures introduced by the CCP.

However, in 2012 China's territorial tensions were not only with Japan in the East China Sea, but with South East Asian countries as well. In April, clashes occurred between Chinese and Filipino maritime vessels in the South China Sea (referred to as the East Sea in Vietnam), and in May, with Vietnamese vessels.³²⁶ However, territorial issues with these other countries, as noted in a *Global Times* opinion editorial, focused on not just the CCP's 'resolve to safeguard its territorial sovereignty [as being] unshakeable', but also on the CCP's commitment to 'peaceful diplomatic policy' and 'being a good neighbor'.³²⁷ This was in contrast to the anti-Japanese rhetoric, which continued to invoke Japan's militaristic past and focus on, as reported in a *China Daily US Edition* editorial in September, 'Japan's renewed militarism'.³²⁸ Importantly, the anti-Japanese rhetoric regarding the dispute also aimed to 'drive a wedge into the U.S.–Japan alliance'³²⁹ by questioning the value for the U.S. of a military conflict over the islands that would jeopardise the U.S.–China economic relationship.

8.3. Phase Two: 2012/13–2015 (new leadership, growing confidence and territorial expansion)

There was a distinct shift over the 11-year period (2008-2018) from late 2012, as a result of the leadership change from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, which continued into Xi Jinping's first three years as president and CCP General Secretary. When Xi assumed the role of CCP General

³²⁵ Braving surging waves with pacific firmness to guard sovereignty, *Global Times*, December 23, 2012, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/751712.shtml> (accessed January 16, 2017).

³²⁶ South China Sea tensions rise as Vietnam says China rammed ships, *Reuters*, May 7, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-seas-fishermen/south-china-sea-tensions-rise-as-vietnam-says-china-rammed-ships-idUSBREA4603C20140507> (accessed January 16, 2017).

³²⁷ Braving surging waves with pacific firmness to guard sovereignty, *Global Times*, December 23, 2012, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/751712.shtml> (accessed January 16, 2017).

³²⁸ Rising Japanese militarism, *China Daily US Edition*, September 20, 2012, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-09/20/content_15769918.htm (accessed August 11, 2014).

³²⁹ China's Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands ploy to undercut the US-Japan alliance, *The Interpreter*, September 6, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-s-senkakudiaoyu-islands-ploy-undercut-us-japan-alliance> (accessed September 14, 2019).

Secretary in November 2012, China was in its strongest economic and military position since the CCP came to power in 1949. By late 2012, China enjoyed the stature of a regional economic and military power and a fast-emerging global one.

Media reports and Party leadership speeches in this second phase had three distinct features in the sub-narrative.

(1) The emergence of the ‘champion’ narrative. Usage of ‘world order’ increased significantly (from n:28 in 2012, Hu’s final year, to n:103 in 2015); and ‘common destiny’ became a distinct rhetorical feature of Xi’s early leadership with usage jumping from just n:11 in 2012 to n:268 in 2015. This reflected Xi’s focus on building and consolidating an international coalition of developing countries, mostly with authoritarian regimes, that would ‘support’ the CCP by providing the CCP with favourable economic conditions and political acquiescence. It was also a response to regional territorial tensions and the U.S. seeking to boost its presence and relations in the Asian region.

(2) Increased focus on ‘transactional’ global business relationships with a shift in ‘win-win’ messaging. There was a small but gradual decline in the usage of ‘mutual respect’ (from n:351 in 2012 to n:289 in 2015) but with an increase in emphasis on global issues (from 8% in 2012 to 21% in 2015); and a distinct rise in the CCP and Xi’s use of ‘win-win’ messaging (from n:417 in 2012 to n:994 in 2015). The latter figure, in particular, reflected *Xinhua*’s reports of often high-level trade discussions between China and many countries who were increasingly dependent on trade with China, in which speeches delivered by CCP leaders sought to foreground Chinese interests in these bilateral relations.

(3) The shift from ‘harmony’ to ‘inclusiveness’ in the China as a ‘peace-loving nation’ sub-narrative. There was a sharp decline in Hu Jintao’s signature ‘harmony’ rhetoric (from n:652 in 2012 to n:374 in 2015), but a major increase in references to China as an ‘inclusive’ nation and one that promotes ‘inclusiveness’ (from n:292 in 2012 to n:527 in 2015), as the CCP increased its participation in global affairs and regional leadership initiatives.

8.3.1. 2013 – new leader, new initiatives

Following the regional territorial disputes and the announcement in November 2012 that Xi Jinping was to be the new leader of China, 2013 saw the CCP’s messaging entering into a second phase (over the 11-year period). As mentioned, there was a major focus on the ‘champion’ sub-narrative with ‘world order’ and ‘common destiny’ messaging both increasing in usage. This included another increase in ‘world order’ messaging (from n:28 in 2012 to n:36

in 2013), and a greater emphasis on the need for a ‘more just/democratic/ better/inclusive’ world order (from only 14% of references in 2012 to 39% in 2013). Regarding ‘common destiny’, although Hu Jintao had earlier referred to a ‘community of common destiny’, from 2013, the expression started to clearly emerge as Xi’s signature rhetoric. Usage of ‘common destiny’ increased from n:11 in 2012 to n:46 in 2013, which included a greater regional emphasis; Asian/regional bloc references increased from 9% in 2012 to 60% in 2013 as global references dropped from 55% in 2012 to 26% in 2013.

However, in the two years (2013–14) where the CCP placed greater emphasis on regional leadership and ‘common destiny’, it also controversially and assertively increased efforts to expand its declared territory in the South China Sea and further its ownership claims of disputed areas with Japan in the East China Sea. As noted by *Xinhua* in the *Global Times* (2012),³³⁰ the ‘revitalization of the Chinese nation can’t be realized without the vast blue ocean’. This concerted effort to expand and control ‘blue ocean’ territory included the CCP’s declaration of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in November 2013 over the Japanese administered Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, which overlapped with a previously declared Japanese ADIZ and also, to a smaller extent, a previously declared South Korean ADIZ.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, in 2013 and 2014 the CCP also declared disputed territories in the South China Sea as part of China’s ‘core national interests’. This announcement was accompanied by an increase in Chinese commercial and other vessel activity in disputed areas, creating further bilateral and regional tensions. During this time, Xi and other senior Party officials strongly emphasised ‘Asia sharing a common destiny’, which also complemented other statements in the CCP’s rhetoric demanding that Asian issues be dealt with by ‘Asians themselves’ as opposed to ‘external parties’, i.e. the United States (Zhang, 2018, p.199).

As mentioned in Chapter 5, following Xi Jinping’s use of the term ‘common destiny’ in a key address at the March 2013 Boao Forum, in which he encouraged participants to ‘foster a sense of community of common destiny’,³³¹ the CCP announced over the next three years a series of Asia-centric, ‘common destiny’-focused, CCP-led initiatives. This steady increase in the usage of ‘common destiny’ and the emphasis on the Asian region was epitomised in the initial concept of One Belt One Road, later renamed as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI was announced by Xi Jinping in 2013 in his state visits to Kazakhstan in September and Indonesia

³³⁰ Braving surging waves with pacific firmness to guard sovereignty, *Global Times*, December 23, 2012, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/751712.shtml> (accessed January 16, 2017).

³³¹ Xi Jinping, Working together toward a better future for Asia and the world, April 7, 2013, *BOAO Forum for Asia*, <http://english.boaoforum.org/mtzxxwzxcn/7379.jhtml> (accessed April 16, 2019).

in October.³³² Speaking to Indonesia's Parliament, Xi delivered a speech titled 'Constructing Jointly the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny', in which he introduced the major regional economic strategy BRI, along with the AIIB initiative.

The importance of this shift in the CCP's messaging to a greater focus on an Asian 'common destiny' and the 'world order' needing to be 'fairer' for other countries (i.e. developing countries) represented a combination of factors. According to Rigby and Taylor (2015, p.60), the concept of a 'community of shared destiny' (incorporating 'common destiny' rhetoric) represented a 'direct response' to the US pivot. However, Zhang (2018), as mentioned earlier, regarded 'common destiny' as a response to regional territorial tensions. In reality, it resulted from a combination of factors, including Xi's administration seeking to consolidate China's relations with neighbouring countries at the start of Xi's presidency, with the aim of establishing China as the leader in the 'Asian neighbourhood' (a term favoured by *Xinhua*). Critical to this were high-profile regional cooperation initiatives, including the BRI and the AIIB. Despite the BRI being regarded as domestically driven, in particular addressing 'material' economic problems (e.g. oversupply of raw materials and lifelines for failing companies in China),³³³ it was nonetheless promoted by CCP senior officials and highlighted in *Xinhua* as a demonstration of Xi's Asian or regional 'common destiny' commitment.

The year 2013 also was the start of an important new dynamic in China–U.S. relations. As reported in a *People's Daily* end-of-year feature article, the June summit in California, between Xi and US President Barack Obama, 'charted a clear course for the future development of the bilateral ties' and included the two parties 'agreeing to build a new type of major-country relationship'.³³⁴ Although the concept of a 'new type of major-country relationship' was first outlined under Hu Jintao's administration by State Councillor Dai Bingguo at the U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in 2010, it 'achieved prominence' after the Xi–Obama summit, where Xi explained that the 'new type of great power relations' was based on the principles of 'no confrontation or conflict', 'mutual respect' and 'win-win cooperation'.³³⁵ The 'win-win' emphasis was reflected in an increase in 'win-win' usage (from n:417 in 2012 to

³³² Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative, *English.gov.cn*, March 28, 2015, http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092566326.htm (accessed July 10, 2017).

³³³ Belt and Road: China's biggest brand, *The Interpreter*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/belt-road-china-biggest-brand> (accessed October 5, 2018).

³³⁴ Yearender: China, U.S. well on track to build new relationship despite challenges, *People's Daily*, December 25, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90883/8495006.html> (accessed January 9, 2018).

³³⁵ Where does Japan fit in China's 'New type of great power relations?', *The ASAN Forum*, March 20, 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/where-does-japan-fit-in-chinas-new-type-of-great-power-relations/> (accessed February 29, 2020).

n:519 in 2013). However, this increase was also indicative of a surge in the CCP's global economic activity. As mentioned in Chapter 6, China surpassed the U.S. as the world's leading trade partner, with 124 countries considering China their largest trading partner and only 76 having that relationship with the U.S.³³⁶ China's increased economic activity was reflected in the emphasis Chinese state media placed on 'win-win' messaging with regard to China's relations with developing countries: in this regard, 'Asian neighbourhood' increased from 9% to 12% in 2013; focus on 'other developing regions' increased from 10% to 13%; and focus on bilateral relations with 'developing countries' increased from 10% to 15%. In contrast, the 'win-win' emphasis on bilateral relations with 'developed countries' decreased from 18% to 11%.

During his trip to Indonesia in October 2013, Xi Jinping announced the CCP's intention to create the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Bank members included many traditional US 'allies' such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and South Korea. Although some research acknowledged it was 'unlikely to have a major impact on other development banks', it was still regarded as likely to 'make China a major player in the global development banking system' (Poh and Li, 2017, p.89). Shortly thereafter, the BRICS' New Development Bank headquarters was established in Shanghai. As noted earlier in this chapter, the CCP was committed to creating alternatives to the US-led global financial and governance system. Presenting these China-led international bank initiatives in a positive light, Rebecca Liao, member of the National Committee on United States–China Relations, stated that the creation of these banks 'presented developing countries with alternatives to the Bretton Woods institutions', with the AIIB 'born out of two main grievances' about the World Bank shared by many developing nations: (1) the conditionality of 'onerous' World Bank loans; and (2) the frustration of governments of countries which are 'emerging markets – China in particular – with their 'relative lack of influence at the World Bank and the IMF'.³³⁷ These initiatives formed a comprehensive CCP approach to Asian regional positioning and leadership, with Xi Jinping describing the AIIB as an example of working for 'win-win cooperation' and noting that the bank would 'give priority to ASEAN countries' needs'.³³⁸

³³⁶ China overtakes US as world's largest trading country, *RT*, February 11, 2013, <https://www.rt.com/business/china-us-largest-trading-country-908/> (accessed December 18, 2019).

³³⁷ Council on Foreign Relations, The World Bank Group's role in global development, April 9, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/background/world-bank-groups-role-global-development> (accessed October 5, 2019).

³³⁸ Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament, *ASEAN China Center*, September 21, 2016, https://reconasia-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/filer_public/88/fe/88fe8107-15d7-4b4c-8a59-0feb13c213e1/speech_by_chinese_president_xi_jinping_to_indonesian_parliament.pdf, (accessed April 12, 2019).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a key feature of China's one-party system is that CCP leaders must publicly maintain rhetorical continuity. For example, while many political parties in other countries also expect their key representatives to stay on message, with a degree of continuity between administrative changes in the same party, in China this is a political imperative. However, the exception is in periods of CCP leadership transition. The prominence of major ideological contributions and key messages of previous leaders diminishes as new key messages are introduced and emphasised by the new leader. This was demonstrated by the transition from Hu to Xi and the declining usage of the key message, 'harmony'.

In 2013, there was a decreased emphasis on the 'peace-loving' sub-narrative together with a distinct shift away from Hu Jintao's signature rhetoric of 'harmony'. Usage of 'harmony' dropped from n:652 in 2012 to just n:355 in 2013. Although the primary focus of 'harmony' was still on domestic issues, the domestic emphasis also dropped, from a peak of 59% in 2012 to 44% in 2013. However, with this decrease in emphasis on the domestic, came two slight internal usage increases; in regards to 'global' issues, from 13% to 16%, and regarding 'Asian regional' issues from 6% to 9%. Regarding the 'inclusive' key message, despite an overall decrease in usage, from n:292 in 2012 to n:245 in 2013, and a decreased focus on 'other regions' (such as Africa and Latin America), and on 'bilateral relationships' (from 41% in 2012 to 19% in 2013), there were increased references to 'Asia' (7% to 19%), and 'global' issues (18% to 22%).

Chinese state media reports presented Xi as having placed considerable early efforts into positioning himself as a regional and also global statesman, with China reaching 'about 800 agreements with other countries'.³³⁹ However, the priority for the CCP still remained domestic stability and 'harmony'. This focus was highlighted by a major anti-corruption campaign widely reported in China's local and global state media. Although anti-corruption campaigns were carried out under Hu Jintao,³⁴⁰ the campaign launched by Xi's administration in 2013 was a key feature of Xi's leadership style. The unprecedented scale of the CCP's simultaneous crackdowns on large and small cases of official 'malpractice and corruption' was portrayed in the state media as the prosecution of the 'illegal activities' of 'tigers' (high-ranking Party leaders) and 'flies' (rank-and-file cadres).³⁴¹ In this regard, although the CCP's messaging in 2013 was externally focused and reflected an increasingly active foreign policy, domestically,

³³⁹ China pursues peaceful development, active int'l role, *China.org*, March 8, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2014/2014-03/08/content_31718375.htm (accessed August 29, 2017).

³⁴⁰ Govt sets new targets in anti-corruption campaign, *China Daily*, December 29, 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-12/29/content_11768074.htm (accessed March 1, 2020).

³⁴¹ Xi Jinping vows 'power within cage of regulations' *China Daily*, January 22, 2013, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-01/22/content_16157513.htm (accessed July 30, 2019).

the Party leadership under Xi was keen to present itself as waging war against corruption in the CCP's 'historical mission' of the CCP to achieve 'national rejuvenation'.³⁴²

8.3.2. 2014 – increase in strategic partnering

In 2014, as the CCP's focus on the Asian region and the developed world increased, so did its attempts at extending the rhetoric it had previously used for domestic reception to an international audience. The most striking example of this development was the state media's dissemination of Xi Jinping's 'China dream' as a globally relevant message. In March, *Xinhua* reported on Foreign Minister Wang Yi's speech during the National People's Congress about China's Diplomacy: 'sharing [the] Chinese dream with the rest of the world, as the country seeks a more active international role ... China will not only adhere to the principle of peaceful development itself but also expect other countries to do so ... [the] Chinese dream is not only about Chinese people but also closely linked with the dreams of people across the world.'³⁴³ This highlighted the CCP's intent to increase China's involvement in international issues. More importantly, it signalled the CCP's intent to extend its domestic narratives beyond Chinese borders.

This emphasis on China's pursuit of a 'more active international role', as articulated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and reported in *Xinhua*,³⁴⁴ highlighted three priorities in the CCP's diplomatic strategy: (1) 'a new model of major-country relations'; (2) 'neighbourhood diplomacy featuring amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness'; and, (3) 'a more balanced approach between upholding justice and seeking interests'. According to Wang, the new model of major-country relations was about finding a 'new path that seeks win-win cooperation and delivers benefits to all parties', the guideline for a neighbourhood diplomacy is about showing 'China's sincerity and goodwill to neighboring countries and its readiness to work with them to build a community of common destiny' and 'a more balanced approach between upholding justice and seeking interests' means putting 'justice first, pay more attention to and better take care of the needs of developing countries' (ibid.).

This 'neighbourhood diplomacy' focus was conveyed using the 'champion' sub-narrative and key messaging. 'Common destiny' increased (from n:46 in 2013 to n:77 in 2014) with a greater

³⁴² The 'Community of Common Destiny' in Xi Jinping's New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed January 25, 2018).

³⁴³ China pursues peaceful development, active int'l role, *China.org*, March 8, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2014/2014-03/08/content_31718375.htm (accessed August 29, 2017).

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

emphasis on the Asian region and other regional blocs (from 60% in 2013 to 71% in 2014). At the same time, ‘global’ references decreased again (from 26% in 2013 to just 13% in 2014) as the CCP continued to invest in initiatives to ‘reshape the regional economic order’, viewed by China as its ‘backyard’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.88). At the Fourth Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in May 2014 in Shanghai, Xi stated that ‘it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia and solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia’.³⁴⁵ In this connection, he referred to China’s initiation of a ‘new Asian Security Concept’ (ibid.), as distinct from the ‘US led security architecture’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.89).

Bilateral partnering also enabled the CCP to defend its position on territorial disputes. It sought to do things ‘bilaterally’ to avoid risking external interference from regional bodies, such as ASEAN. Furthermore, as reported in *China Daily Asia* (sourced from *Xinhua*),³⁴⁶ at the 21st ASEAN Regional Forum in Myanmar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi echoed Xi in calling for a security concept for the twenty-first century so as to ‘ensure the long-lasting peace and security of Asia’ and noted that ‘major countries should be objective ... stick to the principle of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation’, and that the concept called for ‘consultation and dialogue rather than threat of force, openness and inclusiveness rather than mutual repulsion, win-win cooperation rather than zero-sum game’. This heightened focus on the Asian region in 2014 was reflected in the increasing usage of ‘mutual respect’ (after a dip from 2012 to 2013) from n:282 in 2013 to n:323 in 2014, with an increased emphasis on Asia from just 4% in 2013 to 10% in 2014. This was the highest Asia-focused usage of ‘mutual respect’ over the 11-year period.

A similar focus can be seen in the use of the ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative and increased references to ‘inclusive’ (from n:245 in 2013 to n:427 in 2014). Importantly, from 2013 to 2014, there was an emphasis on references to the ‘Asian region’ increasing from 19% to 31% and ‘global’ references decreasing from 22% to 15%. The AIIB was officially launched in October, and as reported in the *China Daily*, was described as ‘inclusive’ and ‘open to countries committed to Asian, global development’.³⁴⁷ Heightened diplomatic activity in Xi’s first two years (2013 to 2014) saw the CCP upgrade 11 bilateral partnerships to ‘comprehensive strategic partnerships’ and eight into ‘all-round friendly and cooperative partnerships’ to deepen mutual

³⁴⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Asian security concept for new progress in security cooperation, May 21, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1159951.shtml (accessed December 20, 2019).

³⁴⁶ Chinese FM calls for new security concept to ensure peace in Asia, *China Daily Asia*, August 11, 2014, https://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2014-08/11/content_15156053.html (accessed May 21, 2018).

³⁴⁷ AIIB open to countries committed to Asian, global development, *China Daily*, October 24, 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2014-10/24/content_18799133.htm (accessed September 5, 2018).

cooperation on political and military issues (Chang-Liao, 2016, p.88). By the end of 2014, the region with the highest number of formal bilateral relationships with China was Asia, at 34% (see Table 27). China was clearly seeking to simultaneously increase its global presence and across Asia, in particular.

Table 27: China's partnership network, at the end of 2014 (Source: Struver, 2016, p.5)

	Comprehensive strategic partners		Strategic partners		Partners		Total	
	No.	Col. %	No.	Col. %	No.	Col. %	No.	Col. %
Africa	2	6.9	2	10.5	4	21.1	8	11.9
Americas	5	17.2	2	10.5	2	10.5	9	13.4
Asia	9	31.0	9	47.4	5	26.3	23	34.3
Europe	10	34.5	4	15.8	7	36.8	21	31.3
Middle East	1	3.5	2	21.1	0	0	3	4.5
Oceania	2	6.9	0	10.5	1	5.3	3	4.5
Total	29	100.0	19	100.0	19	100.0	67	100.0

In November 2014, Xi Jinping addressed the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs and called for China to develop a 'distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major country' and to conduct diplomacy with a 'salient Chinese feature and vision'. As reported in *Xinhua*, at the APEC CEO summit also in November, Xi introduced the 'Asia-Pacific dream',³⁴⁸ saying that 'China's economy will bring huge opportunities and benefits to the region and the world' and that to 'realize the Asia-Pacific dream', the region should 'redouble efforts to forge a partnership of mutual trust, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation'. In his closing remarks, he also emphasised the importance of establishing an environment of regional economic cooperation that is 'open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial for all'.³⁴⁹

Following these key speeches, in December, the CCP 'demonstrated increasing impatience toward the United States' seeming reluctance to grant China more influence over existing global governance structures and to agree to a more equitable international political and economic order', as the Chinese Foreign Ministry 'formally expressed regret' over the US Congress not passing reform legislation granting emerging markets and developing countries more voting

³⁴⁸ Chinese president proposes Asia-Pacific dream, *China Daily*, November 9, 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/09/content_18889698.htm (accessed October 5, 2017).

³⁴⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Closing remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, November 11, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/ytjhzzdrsrcldrfzshyjsxghd/t1210451.shtml (accessed June 19, 2018).

power and governance authority at the IMF (Poh and Li, 2017, p.88). The CCP's frustration in 2014 further fueled its 'champion' sub-narrative but also, importantly, empowered Chinese state media to use more globally focused rhetoric.

8.3.3. 2015 – WWII anniversary and Xi at the UN

The year 2015 was one of high international activity for Xi, which was reflected in a shift in the CCP's emphasis from the region to the global. In July, the International Olympic Committee made a ruling in favour of China (by four votes over Kazakhstan) to host the 2022 Winter Olympics. In September, Xi made his second trip to the U.S. in two years, where he also delivered his only address to date at the United Nations General Assembly annual General Debate. Also, in September, the world marked the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, referred to as the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression by the CCP. This anniversary saw heightened criticism by the CCP of historical Japanese actions, which it linked to the current threat posed by a 'militaristic' Japanese government to the existing 'current' world order. For example, in a *Xinhua*-sourced *China Daily* article referencing the 70th anniversary of the Potsdam Proclamation, Japan's revision of security legislation was described as 'posing a threat to the existing world order'.³⁵⁰

This was also the year that Xi further sought to raise his own global profile and to export the CCP's governance model with the launch of the English edition of the first volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. According to a *Xinhua*-sourced article, the first of the two volumes was translated into 24 languages with more than 6.6 million copies distributed.³⁵¹

If Xi's first two years, 2013–14, were about consolidating, building and extending a base of regional relationships and influence, 2015 was about the CCP's shift of focus to regions outside its 'Asian neighbourhood'. 'World order' references increased significantly from (n:58 in 2014 to n:103 in 2015, an 11-year peak), with a shift in emphasis away from an 'alternative' world order, i.e. 'more just/democratic/better/inclusive' (drop from 26% to 16%), to references to 'maintain/safeguard/uphold' the current order, which increased from 14% to 20%. It is important to note in this connection that there were also frequent explicit references to defending the 'current world order' (52%).

³⁵⁰ China warns Japan to keep their promise on its WWII surrender, *China Daily*, July 24, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015victoryanniv/2015-07/24/content_21399305.htm (accessed September 14, 2017).

³⁵¹ First volume of Xi's book on governance republished, *China.org*, January 29, 2018, http://www.china.org.cn/china/2018-01/29/content_50344828.htm (accessed April 15, 2020).

I think this collective increase in the CCP's emphasis on China as defending the status quo country was also influenced by China's bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, which was announced in July 2015. The bid was themed 'Winter Dream' (adding another 'dream' concept to the 'China dream' and 'Asia-Pacific dream') and was successful despite China's 'lack of tradition in winter sports' and the CCP having become even more 'repressive' since the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics.³⁵² When China won the bid for the 2022 Olympics, Chinese state media presented it as a 'true victory for the Chinese people'.³⁵³ In January 2017, when Xi met with the International Olympic Committee President in Switzerland, *Xinhua* reported Xi as even highlighting the connection between hosting the games, peace and the BRI: 'Hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics will also boost the economic growth of China and other countries sitting along the Belt and Road routes, and enhance regional peace and stability'.³⁵⁴

This increase in the usage of 'world order' appeared to have two distinct audiences. In state media articles relating to Asia, Africa, Latin America and developing countries in general, the emphasis was on the world order being 'new', 'changing' and needing to be 'more just/democratic/better/inclusive'. For articles on relations with the U.S. and Europe, the emphasis was on 'maintaining/safeguarding/upholding' the current world order – in particular, when used in the context of criticising Japan for what the CCP regarded as increasingly right-wing militaristic behaviour. The evidence of Japan's militaristic behaviour presented in Chinese media coverage has included: constitutional changes to allow Japanese combat troops on foreign soil for the first time since 1945; regular visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo (burial place of A-Class WWII war criminals) by senior Diet members; and the nationalisation of disputed islands in the East China Sea. In particular, in 2015, 'status quo' references surpassed 'alternate world order' references for the first time since 2008. This coincided with China's commemoration of the 70th anniversary of WWII and 'victory over Japan', with China holding its first-ever military parade as tensions between China and Japan deepened over the disputed islands in the East China Sea.

Although there was an increased emphasis on 'maintain/safeguard/uphold' in Xi Jinping's speech at the UNGA, he also reiterated a call for a new type of international relations: 'We

³⁵² A Winter Olympics in a city without city snow, *The Atlantic*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/a-winter-olympics-in-a-city-without-snow/400250/> (accessed December 30, 2018)

³⁵³ China makes Beijing 2022 a game-changer for Olympic reform, *China Daily*, December 24, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201812/24/WS5c209c9fa3107d4c3a002891.html> (accessed August 17, 2019).

³⁵⁴ Chinese president meets IOC president, pledges to make 2022 Winter Games an excellent event, *Xinhua*, January 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/18/c_135994428.htm (accessed September 14, 2018).

should renew our commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, build a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, and create a community of common destiny for mankind'.³⁵⁵ This was reflected most significantly in the major increase in references to 'win-win' (from n:491 in 2014 to n:994 in 2015). This included an 11-year peak of n:6 references to 'win-win' in Xi's UNGA speech (out of a total of n:32 over the 11-year period). Global emphasis on 'win-win' increased from 14% in 2014 to 24% in 2015 and there was an increase in emphasis on developing regions outside of Asia, from 12% in 2014 to 20% in 2015. In contrast, emphasis on the 'Asian neighbourhood' dropped from 15% to 9%.

These changes are reflected in a speech presented by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the annual session of the National People's Congress in March 2015. The *China Daily* reported Wang as saying that, 'in a globalized world, the interests of countries are increasingly intertwined, and countries may have different cultures, faiths or systems, but, at the very least, we can all accept the idea of win-win cooperation'. Moreover, 'by building a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, we want to replace [the] old practice of going it alone, and reject the old mentality of "winner takes all"'.³⁵⁶ This reflected an important shift from Xi's 2013 focus on a 'new type of major-country' relations specifically related to China and the U.S. to now incorporating a broader concept of 'international relations'. A striking example can be found in a *Global Times* article about Xi Jinping's visit to the UK in October 2015, which pointed out that 'this landmark visit has also opened a new chapter of China-West exchanges, injected fresh impetus into cooperation between the Asian giant and Europe, and once again demonstrated the bright prospects of Xi's idea of building a new model of international relations with win-win cooperation at its core'.³⁵⁷

Other CCP-led initiatives that had initially had a more regional focus were also now being positioned as important global contributions. *Xinhua*'s coverage of Xi Jinping's UK visit was at pains to describe it as fulfilling goals set out by Xi:

The idea for the community of common destiny for mankind is wise, profound, with common prosperity as its core ... China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment

³⁵⁵ Chinese president advocates new type of int'l relations, *China News Service*, September 29, 2015, <http://www.ecns.cn/2015/09-29/183030.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2018).

³⁵⁶ Hallmark of major-country diplomacy is win-win cooperation: minister, *China Daily*, March 8, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015twosession/2015-03/08/content_19750681.htm (accessed December 22, 2018).

³⁵⁷ China-Britain joint efforts on economic resurgence benefit Europe, world, *Global Times*, October 24, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/948757.shtml> (accessed December 23, 2018).

Bank, and the BRICS, among others, all are components of the community aimed at reaching a shared, prosperous and harmonious future.³⁵⁸

The shift in language from a *regional* to a *global* ‘common destiny’ language in state media messaging, was reflective of the CCP’s increased focus on the global arena, away from its ‘Asian neighbourhood’ rhetoric. Usage of ‘common destiny’ jumped from n:77 in 2014 to n:268 in 2015 and the emphasis on the Asia regional/ regional blocs dropped (from 71% to 33%), while references to a global ‘common destiny’ increased (from 13% in 2014 to 35% in 2015). Although the ‘Asian neighbourhood’ was still of importance to the CCP, Xi Jinping was clearly seeking to make the global scope of China’s international relations more prominent in Chinese state media coverage of China’s international relations. At this time, the usage of ‘mutual respect’ decreased slightly (from n:323 references in 2014 to n:289 in 2015), with a concomitant increase (from 12% in 2014 to 21% in 2015) in emphasis on global issues, and a drop in emphasis on Asia issues (from 10% in 2014 to just 2% in 2015 – the equal lowest, with 2008, over the 11-year period). Similarly, for ‘inclusive’ references – which did continue to increase (from n:427 in 2014 to n:527 in 2015) – there was an increase in emphasis on global inclusiveness, from 15% to 22% (the equal highest focus on the ‘global’ since 2008).

The use of ‘common destiny’ in relation to individual bilateral relations and other bilateral issues, also increased (from 16% in 2014 to 32% in 2015). The shift in emphasis of the ‘champion’ sub-narrative, in particular the ‘common destiny’ key message, towards a focus on these individual bilateral relations, coincided with stronger CCP rhetoric regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The CCP declared that inter-country disputes were bilateral matters requiring a bilateral solution without ‘interference’ from other parties, including other countries, regional organisations (e.g. ASEAN) and international bodies (e.g. the international Permanent Court of Arbitration that has observer status at the UN General Assembly). This was in direct contradiction to the CCP’s ‘world order’ key message that emphasised a need to respect multilateralism, greater global governance and adherence to international law. However, Chinese state media has so far neither explained nor justified this contradiction in the CCP’s discourse.

A significant trend in the individual/bilateral context was that Chinese state media references in 2015 were predominantly about countries in China’s ‘Asian neighbourhood’ and other developing countries, not Western nations or Japan. This was despite high-profile engagement

³⁵⁸ Spotlight: British communities laud outcomes of Chinese president’s visit, *SINA English*, October 25, 2015, <http://english.sina.com/china/p/2015/1025/858909.html> (accessed December 23, 2018).

by senior CCP officials with their counterparts in Western countries, including visits by Xi to the U.S. and UK and several European leaders (including the French President, German Chancellor and King of the Netherlands) visiting China. This reveals an important aspect of China's global strategy, namely that although relations with developed Western countries were and remain important to China, the CCP was at pains to maintain relations with developing countries. The media emphasis on a 'shared history of struggle' and a 'shared dream' of rising from poverty to prosperity is evidently directed at developing countries since this rhetoric makes little sense in relation to China's dealings with the U.S. and other G7 countries. Instead, Xi's speeches in 2015 emphasise China's common economic interests with developed Western nations, describing these bilateral relations as 'common interests' rather than 'common destiny' (Zhang, 2018, p.199).

8.4. Phase Three: 2016–2018 (the rise of Xi and the election of the U.S. President Donald Trump)

Phase Three saw the consolidation and prominent expansion of Xi Jinping's leadership, based on both Xi's domestic popularity and China's significant global economic status and regional maritime claims. From 2015 onwards, Xi's administration displayed increasing confidence in its use of hard power through issuing military and economic threats, and through intimidation and inducements (for example, towards the Philippines' government following the ICA ruling in July 2016, to be discussed later in this section). This third phase showed three distinct features of the sub-narrative in *Xinhua* reporting on regional and international developments, and speeches by CCP leaders.

(1) A significant shift in the 'champion' sub-narrative from supporting developing countries or the Asian region to serving global mankind. *Xinhua* media coverage changed from using a 'common destiny' to refer mainly to China's relations with developing countries and the Asian region to using 'common destiny' to mean the 'shared future of all mankind' (with specific references to 'common destiny' declining from n:268 in 2015 to just n:23 in 2018). In other words, this shift positioned China as not only *a* global leader among other global leaders, but as *the* global leader. There was a concomitant replacement of 'world order' with increased references to 'international order' ('world order' decreased from n:103 in 2015 to n:53 in 2018).

(2) Confident and targeted increase in emphatic uses of the 'win-win' sub-narrative. The emphasis on economic relationships and 'doing business' with China increased, along with

highlighting that ‘respect’ means doing business no questions asked, as both key messages increased: ‘win-win’ (from n:994 in 2015 to an 11-year peak of n:1210 in 2018) and ‘mutual respect’ was embraced again, from n:289 in 2015 to an 11-year peak of n:433 in 2018.

(3) Increased rhetoric about China as an ‘inclusive’ global leader. The CCP under Xi strengthened its participation in global affairs, including efforts to use CCP rhetoric in global fora (such as in the UN Human Rights Council, UNHRC). This greater global participation was reflected in the continued increase in the use of the ‘inclusive’ key message (from n:527 in 2015 to n:742 in 2018). Interestingly, despite ‘harmony’ being associated with Hu’s administration, usage of the term increased slightly during this period (from n:374 in 2015 to n:417 in 2018).

8.4.1. 2016 – South China Sea disputes and BRI goes global

In 2016, the CCP’s messaging entered a distinct new and third phase (2016–2018) over the 11-year period, with increased efforts by the CCP to position China as a global leader. This included an increasingly active CCP working to reshape regional and global dynamics, especially regarding multilateral trade, although, as noted by Poh and Li (2017, p.85), China continued to be a ‘conflicted great power’ given the CCP’s ‘continued domestic preoccupations’ and a ‘relatively fixed mindset among the Chinese elite on China’s role in world affairs and lack of capabilities and experience in undertaking more international responsibilities’. This was also a time of some anxiety for the CCP regarding the possible outcomes of the late 2016 U.S. presidential elections, with heightened nationalistic rhetoric from candidates, and strongly protectionist language being used by the Republican candidate, Donald Trump.

In September, Xi announced to the CCP Politburo that it was time for China to play a more active role in global governance, emphasising that China should ‘proactively participate in shaping international rules on emerging global issues’, with a transition from China as a ‘passive recipient of rules to becoming an active player in shaping global norms and rules’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.87). This increasingly proactive international posturing by Xi’s administration hardened following the eventual election of Donald Trump as U.S. President on an ‘America first’ platform. Xi ‘presented himself as the global champion in areas from climate change to global health and from international peacekeeping to anti-piracy’.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ China’s international influence, *Australian Outlook*, September 27, 2018, <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/chinas-international-influence/> (accessed October 5, 2018).

Usage of ‘inclusive’ increased again (from n:527 in 2015 to n:612 in 2016) with a significant increase in ‘global’ focus, up from 22% in 2015 to 42% in 2016. In contrast, the emphasis on the ‘Asian regional’ dropped from 37% to 19%. The focus on ‘global inclusiveness’ was highlighted with China’s hosting its first ever G20 summit, only the second Asian city (after Seoul in 2010) to do so. The key message ‘inclusive’, was a main part of the G20 theme, ‘Towards an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy’. As noted by China’s Ambassador to Ethiopia La Yifan in a January 2016 *Xinhua* article: ‘The G20 China year is inclusive ... focuses on current issues of global concern ... [including] inclusiveness of the economic growth.’³⁶⁰ This ‘inclusive’ focus was also reflected in usage of the ‘world order’ key message. Although usage dropped from an 11-year peak of n:103 in 2015 to just n:35 in 2016 (which coincided with an increase in the CCP’s usage of the term ‘international order’), there was an important shift in emphasis. Following the 70th anniversary of WWII in 2015, the CCP again shifted focus back to a more expansionist and reformist global approach. This was reflected in emphasis on ‘maintaining/safeguarding/upholding’ the current ‘world order’ dropping from 20% in 2015 to 14% in 2016; and focus on a ‘more just/democratic/better/inclusive’ world increasing significantly from 16% in 2015 to 43% in 2016.

In parallel to a year of the CCP’s rhetoric promoting itself as an ‘inclusive’ global leader, ongoing South China Sea territorial tensions escalated. Chinese state media ‘reacted angrily’ and dismissed as ‘naturally null and void’³⁶¹ the decision by the International Court of Arbitration (ICA) in July to rule in favour of the Philippines’ government’s rejection of CCP’s territorial claims in the South China Sea. The CCP also deployed ‘military threats’ to Vietnam (Fawthrop, 2018, p.1 paragraph 33)³⁶² to stop offshore exploration and even pressured Cambodia to ensure that ASEAN was unable to reach consensus on a joint statement on Chinese activity in the South China Sea.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ G20 China year looks after issues close to African interests: Ambassador, *Xinhua*, January 22, 2016, <http://et.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxx/t1334853.htm> (accessed April 15, 2019).

³⁶¹ Beijing rejects tribunal’s ruling in South China Sea case, *The Guardian*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/philippines-wins-south-china-sea-case-against-china> (accessed September 4, 2018).

³⁶² Vietnam mass protests expose Hanoi’s dilemma, *The Diplomat* (Fawthrop), June 21, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/vietnam-mass-protests-expose-hanois-china-dilemma/> (accessed July 24, 2018).

³⁶³ China in vogue, but Vietnam still Hun Sen’s lifeline, *The Diplomat*, June 26, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/china-in-vogue-but-vietnam-still-hun-sens-lifeline/> (accessed September 4, 2018).

The strong rejection and criticism by the CCP of the ICA ruling was coupled with an unequivocal ‘carrot and stick’ ultimatum to a new Filipino government. This style of messaging is neatly illustrated in the following *China Daily* account:

As the farce of arbitration on the South China Sea is to end soon, it is time for the new Philippine government of Rodrigo Duterte to stop the wrong foreign policy of its predecessor, so as to bring China-Philippines ties back to the track of sound development. Only enhancing win-win cooperation and developing the economy are in the fundamental interests of the two countries. As is known to all, China has been prudent and tolerant in handling its relations with the Philippines while considering the Philippine people’s livelihood.³⁶⁴

The day after the ICA ruling, the CCP published the white paper *China Adheres to the Position of Settling Through Negotiation the Relevant Disputes Between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea*, with an emphasis on the need for bilateral negotiation, as opposed to, for example, any involvement by ASEAN or the U.S.

The CCP’s representation of South China Sea territorial tensions in state media coverage highlighted two key aspects of the CCP’s interpretation of ‘common destiny’: (1) ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ (Poh and Li, 2017, p.86), i.e. to be part of China’s common destiny, one needs to be aligned with or at least not opposed to the CCP’s interests, and countries would be rewarded or punished accordingly (Arase, 2015); and (2) China was the ‘hub’ of this common destiny, and neighbouring countries – the ‘spokes’ (Arase, 2015, p.2) – accordingly had an obligation to ‘respect’ the CCP’s agenda. It also reflected the CCP’s approach to bilateral relations. Individually, smaller Asian states were not capable of arguing successfully against China over territory, so it was important for China to ensure there was no collective ASEAN regional consensus against China and that issues instead had to be dealt with bilaterally.

Commencing in 2016, there was a shift away from ‘common destiny’ which reflected a change in the CCP leadership’s attitude to the region. Usage decreased significantly (from n:268 in 2015 to n:138 in 2016) as the messaging moved from initially a regionally focused ‘common destiny’ to a more globally focused ‘shared future’ and ‘shared destiny’ for ‘all mankind’ (see Table 28). However, despite this drop in usage, ‘common destiny’ was still highlighted at events, conferences and in articles, to emphasise the importance of the BRI. Examples include: the *Xinhua*-organised 2016 seminar in Nepal titled ‘Community of Common Destiny under Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia’ (*Xinhua* 2016); the 13th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning in 2016, China with the theme ‘Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Forging an Even-

³⁶⁴ Expectation of resumption of sound development of China-Philippines relations, *China Daily*, July 3, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-07/03/content_25945506.htm (accessed September 5, 2018).

Closer China–ASEAN Community of Common Destiny’ (*Xinhua*, 2016); and the 13th annual Beijing Forum–Islamabad 2016 with the theme. ‘China and Pakistan in the Community of Common Destiny for all Mankind’ (*Xinhua*, 2016). The emphasis on ‘common destiny’ in these contexts also directly contributed to the broader ‘champion’ narrative as it highlighted China as the world’s second-largest economy and largest developing country, actively seeking to support the interests of other developing countries.

Table 28: Common destiny, shared destiny and shared future usage in *Xinhua*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Common destiny	11	46	77	268	138	59	23
Shared destiny	0	8	41	62	48	76	23
Shared future	0	1	3	43	59	474	884

‘Shared destiny’ was used to characterise China’s regional and global interests and the expression drew in part on the concept of ‘All-Under-Heaven’ (天下), a traditional reference to the imperial realm in dynastic China, which enabled the CCP to suggest that ‘China can be a moral, political and economic great power’ (Barmé, 2014, p.xii). This ambition is implicit in the CCP’s rhetorical shift towards espousing a global ‘common destiny’ in which China would work toward a ‘shared future for all mankind’ (as opposed to the former emphasis on regional well-being). And importantly, Chinese state media highlights Xi’s role and the role of the CCP leadership when using this key message to promote China’s contribution to global leadership. As a *China Features* article states: ‘In September 2015, he [Xi] suggested a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, and creating a community of common destiny for mankind’ and that, as stated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, ‘China is the first among world’s major countries to set win-win cooperation as its main objective in dealing with ties with other nations’.³⁶⁵ This ‘bundling’ of the ‘champion’ sub-narrative with the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative, was reflective of the CCP leadership aiming to further insist on China’s global stature as the emerging pre-eminent power of the twenty-first century.

8.4.2. 2017 – declaration of Xi Jinping’s new era

What began as a shift towards a greater ‘global’ emphasis in 2016, increased in 2017, in a significant year that included the five-year CCP People’s Congress and the start of a new US

³⁶⁵ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, China comes to the fore in multilateral diplomacy, September 27, 2016, <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/HotTopics/2016cf/t1401297.htm> (accessed January 16, 2018).

administration led by President Donald Trump. Just four days before the 21 January 2017 inauguration of President Trump, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos that was ‘applauded wildly’³⁶⁶ and clearly sought to position China as the new champion and defender of globalisation and free trade. As noted by Minxin Pei from Claremont McKenna College in the U.S., the ascension of Trump to the U.S. presidency has presented both threats and opportunities to China.³⁶⁷ For example, Trump’s policy decisions during the year, such as the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, were responded to promptly by the CCP with reaffirmation of China’s commitment to the Accord. Increasingly, America’s global reputation suffered ‘amid widespread opposition to his administration’s policies and a widely shared lack of confidence in his leadership’,³⁶⁸ and the CCP’s messaging trends showed a distinct focus on capitalising on these negative attitudes to the new U.S. President.

This heightened an increasingly confident and vocal global positioning by the CCP was reflected in the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative, with both key messages increasing significantly in usage, together with the shift of emphasis discussed above. ‘Mutual respect’ increased (from n:230 in 2016 to n:342 in 2017), with usage being directed toward China’s relations with the U.S. (from 20% in 2016 to 29% in 2017). Also, as developed countries and traditional democratic allies of the U.S. were nervous of Trump’s protectionist and even anti-globalisation rhetoric, the CCP’s increased references to ‘mutual respect’ also saw a new focus on China’s relations with developed countries, from 16% in 2016 to 21% in 2017 and a decreased focus on developing countries, from 28% to 19%.

‘Win-win’ usage also increased significantly (from n:704 in 2016 to n:957 in 2017). This also featured a shift in emphasis towards the ‘global’, from 23% in 2016 to 31% in 2017, the highest over the 11-year period, and a decrease in focus on developing countries (down from 27% to 20%), the ‘Asian neighbourhood’ (from 12% to 4%) and other developing regions (from 14% to 10%).

This major emphasis on ‘win-win’, combined with the CCP’s concerted focus on positioning China as a global leader and benefactor that the whole world should partner with, was most

³⁶⁶ China’s international influence, *Griffith Asia Insights*, October 2, 2018, <https://blogs.griffith.edu.au/asiainsights/chinas-international-influence/> (accessed January 25, 2019).

³⁶⁷ China needs a new grand strategy, *Project Syndicate*, February 9, 2017 <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-post-cold-war-strategy-trump-by-minxin-pei-2017-02?barrier=accesspaylog> (accessed August 31, 2018).

³⁶⁸ Pew Research Center, Trump’s international ratings remain low, especially among key allies, October 1, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/10/01/trumps-international-ratings-remain-low-especially-among-key-allies/> (accessed January 25, 2019).

striking in Chinese media coverage of the BRI's global expansion in 2017. In Beijing in May, the CCP hosted the inaugural Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. As reported in *Xinhua*,³⁶⁹ Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address, describing the initiative as 'the project of the century' and guided by five key principles: (1) 'peace' – win-win; (2) 'prosperity' – benefits for all; (3) 'opening up' – inclusive and beneficial to all; (4) 'innovation'; and (5) 'connecting civilisations' – mutual respect. Xi's speech also featured three references to 'win-win', including the need to 'foster a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation'; that the BRI was about achieving a 'new model of win-win cooperation' and that China would 'endeavour to build win-win business partnerships with other countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative'.

In 2017, amid considerable regional tension regarding North Korean missile and nuclear tests in July and September respectively, the CCP leadership placed particular emphasis on presenting China as a 'peace-loving' nation, which was reflected in increased usage of both key messages, 'inclusive' and 'harmony'. References to 'inclusive' increased from n:612 in 2016 to n:764 in 2017, and although there was a decrease in emphasis on 'global' issues (from 42% in 2016 to 22% in 2017), there was an increase in references to 'global systems' (from 3% to 12%), as the CCP offered a 'point of difference' alternative to U.S.-led global institutions and systems, which had been repeatedly criticised by US presidential candidate and later President Donald Trump.

The increase in references to 'inclusive' extended to CCP participation in regional groups and bilateral relations as a major point of difference to Trump's 'non-inclusive' rhetoric. At Trump's inauguration ceremony in January 2017, Trump declared: 'We assembled here today are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power. From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it's going to be America first.'³⁷⁰ In contrast, as mentioned earlier, just days beforehand Xi Jinping declared at the World Economic Forum: 'We must remain committed to developing global free trade and investment, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation through opening-up and say no to protectionism'.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Full text of President Xi's speech at opening of Belt and Road forum, *Xinhua*, May 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm (accessed August 11, 2018).

³⁷⁰ In pledging to put 'America first', Trump holds the world at his mercy, *The Guardian*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/20/trump-inauguration-america-first-foreign-policy> (accessed December 20, 2018).

³⁷¹ State Council Information Office, Full text: Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the World Economic Forum, April 6, 2017, http://www.china.org.cn/node_7247529/content_40569136.htm (accessed December 19, 2018).

This timely rhetorical juxtaposition of a more outwardly focused China and a more inwardly focused U.S. emboldened the CCP to also use its ‘inclusive’ key message to attempt to present other countries and organisations as agreeing with itself. As referenced in Chapter 8, this included bilateral relations with non-traditional partners. For example, a *Xinhua* report of Xi Jinping’s meeting with the Swiss President in January 2017 stated: ‘The two sides agreed to work together to protect the open and inclusive global trade regime, and push for a more just and equitable global governance system.’³⁷² Similarly, as part of a comprehensive strategic partnership announcement with Hungary in May 2017, *Xinhua* reported that ‘Hungary supports the joint efforts made by China and the EU to safeguard and promote a free, open and inclusive multilateral trade system, [and] oppose protectionism in trade and investment’.³⁷³

The CCP also leveraged the uncertainty caused in Asian countries by Trump’s ‘America First’ rhetoric, and increased emphasis on the ‘inclusive’ towards the Asian region (from 19% to 23%). A good example of this appears in a November 2017 *Xinhua* report of the 20th ASEAN–China, Japan and South Korea leaders’ meeting, which stated that ‘[d]espite the rise of an anti-globalization sentiment and trade protectionism worldwide, China has been rooting for greater and deeper economic integration in East Asia’. The same report quoted Premier Li Keqiang as advising that, ‘the “ASEAN way”, featuring consensus through consultation, openness and inclusiveness ... should be followed’.³⁷⁴

In essence, the CCP used ‘win-win’ to characterise China’s relations with all of its trading partners. This is perhaps best summed up in a July 2017 article by Chinese state councilor Yang Jiechi on Xi Jinping, ‘Diplomacy Thought’ (*Xinhua*, July 2017),³⁷⁵ that featured eight references to ‘win-win’, four references to ‘inclusive’ and five references to ‘shared future’ (in contrast to zero for ‘common destiny’). These included Xi Jinping calling for economic globalisation to be ‘a more open, inclusive and balanced process that delivers win-win outcomes to all; promoting a global governance system that is fairer, more equitable, inclusive and balanced’; and ‘recognizing the need to adapt to and sustain the trend of peace, development and win-win cooperation in our times’, to deliver the ‘important vision of building a new type

³⁷² China, Switzerland agree to boost ties, oppose protectionism, *Xinhua*, January 16, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/16/c_135987507.htm (accessed October 13, 2018).

³⁷³ China, Hungary establish comprehensive strategic partnership, *Xinhua* in *China Plus*, May 13, 2017, <http://chinaplus.cri.cn/news/politics/11/20170513/4559.html> (accessed October 13, 2018).

³⁷⁴ Spotlight: Against anti-globalization wave, China champions greater economic integration in East Asia, *Xinhua*, November 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/14/c_136752245.htm (accessed November 1, 2018).

³⁷⁵ Full text of Chinese state councilor’s article on Xi Jinping’s Diplomacy Thought, *Xinhua*, July 19, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/19/c_136456009.htm (accessed December 20, 2018).

of international relations and a community of shared future for mankind'. It also highlighted the BRI's transformation from a regional to a global initiative, stating that the BRI had 'developed into an open and inclusive platform of international cooperation and a widely-welcomed public good for the global community'.

An explicit connection between 'win-win' messaging and CCP ideology was made in October, just prior to the 19th National Congress, when *Xinhua* published a feature article titled 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics: 10 ideas to share with the world'.³⁷⁶ The article highlighted 'win-win' and described China as a 'beneficiary and contributor to globalization', citing the AIIB and the BRI as examples of these positive contributions, 'against the backdrop of rising anti-globalisation rhetoric'. This increased focus on the global scope of China's economic pursuits and policy initiatives (seeking to accentuate China's systemic and ideological differences from the U.S.), demonstrated the CCP's growing confidence in China's economic and military superpower status.

It is worth noting here that over the 11-year period, although there was an overall decline in the usage of 'harmony' in *Xinhua* (with a drop from n:851 in 2008 to n:417 in 2018), there was also a sharp increase in usage in 2017. Usage increased from the 11-year low in 2016 (of n:345) to the highest level during the Xi period, of n:445 in 2017. This indicated that the CCP was considering the potential value of using 'harmony' to enhance the internationally focused 'win-win' message of partnering with China (as opposed to the uses of 'harmony' during the Hu era to promote the domestic message of establishing a 'harmonious society' in China). Evidence of this can be found in the increased references to 'harmony' in *Xinhua* articles dealing with global issues in 2017 (from 10% in 2016 to 18% in 2017).

At the inaugural Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, Xi stated that the ultimate goal of the BRI was 'moving closer towards a community of shared future for all mankind' (Zhang, 2018, p.16). Later in 2017, as discussed in previous chapters, at the 19th Party Congress in October, Xi's speech, in which he declared the arrival of a 'new era', was highly significant in the impact it would have on the CCP's key message usage, as reflected in *Xinhua* reports. usage of key messages. Although 'common destiny' was referenced in the penultimate section of Xi's speech, titled 'Adhering to the Path of Peaceful Development and

³⁷⁶ China Focus: Socialism with Chinese characteristics: 10 ideas to share with the world (2), *Xinhua*, October 8, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/08/c_136665119.htm (accessed September 4, 2018).

Constructing a Community of Common Destiny with Mankind’,³⁷⁷ during his 205-minute address he made no references to ‘common destiny’ but six (including two sub-headings) to ‘shared future’ (for all mankind). This would suggest that the ‘new era’ was all about China leading the ‘shared future’ for all mankind, and that ‘common destiny’ had served its purpose as a regionally focused message.

Importantly, the genesis of ‘shared future’ used in this manner, and becoming a prominent message for the CCP leadership in 2017 (increasing from just n:59 references in *Xinhua* in 2016 to n:474 in 2017, see Table 28), can be traced ten months earlier to Xi’s January 2017 keynote address at the UN Office in Geneva. This was an important moment in messaging for the CCP leadership. Titled ‘Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind’, Xi’s address, according to a *Xinhua* report, offered ‘inspiration to a world beset by rising challenges and risks’ and showed that ‘China has proposed the building of “a community of shared future”’, and achieving ‘win-win’ outcomes. Xi also pledged that China was ‘ready to work with all the other UN member states as well as international organizations and agencies to advance the great cause of building a community of shared future for mankind’.³⁷⁸

In 2017, the CCP also successfully sponsored two UN resolutions that sought to officially embed CCP narratives and interpretations into official UN language. In March, the CCP succeeded in having its concept of building a ‘human community with shared destiny’ and ‘a community of shared future for all humankind’ incorporated into a UN Security Council resolution for the first time. A *Xinhua* report about this resolution referred generically to ‘international diplomats’ praising the resolution as ‘mirroring the global recognition of China’s great contributions to the global governance’.³⁷⁹

In June 2017, the CCP introduced another UN resolution. This was submitted by Xi to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Titled ‘The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of all Human Rights’,³⁸⁰ the document, as *Xinhua* reported, welcomed ‘further efforts to promote development initiatives with the aim of promoting partnerships, win-win

³⁷⁷ The ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in Xi Jinping’s New Era, *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (accessed September 4, 2018).

³⁷⁸ Chinese landmark concept put into UN resolution for first time, *Xinhua*, February 11, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/11/c_136049319.htm (accessed April 15, 2018).

³⁷⁹ Spotlight: Chinese landmark concept put into UN Security Council resolution for first time, *Xinhua*, March 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/18/c_136139045.htm (accessed September 5, 2018).

³⁸⁰ U.N. Human Rights Council, Resolution HRC/35/L.33/Rev.1, The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, June 20, 2017, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/d_res_dec/A_HRC_35_L.33Rev.docx (accessed September 4, 2019).

outcomes and common development’ and recognised ‘the common aspiration of building a community of shared future for human beings’.³⁸¹ China’s submission of these UN resolutions in 2017 marked a milestone in the CCP’s efforts to officially embed its key messaging far beyond its own borders and into the formal structures of multilateral institutions.

The same rhetoric appeared in the two speeches delivered by Xi in November 2017 in Vietnam at the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting, in which he sought to highlight China’s cooperative global and regional approach, in contrast to Trump’s ‘America First’ approach. The first of these speeches was Xi’s keynote address on 11 November,³⁸² in which Xi positioned China as a champion of globalisation and urged other countries to ‘strengthen the multilateral trading regime’ among Asian countries. Xi stated that ‘[w]e should uphold multilateralism, pursue shared growth through consultation and collaboration, forge closer partnerships, and build a community with a shared future for mankind’. He also said that this cooperative multilateralism was essential for ‘conducting global economic governance in a new era’. In the second speech at the first session, titled ‘Working Together for a New Chapter of Win-Win Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific’, he highlighted, among other things, ‘inclusive development’, the need to ‘strengthen the multilateral trading regime’ and China’s move towards a ‘community of shared future’ in the Asia-Pacific.³⁸³ However, although Xi’s proclamations were ‘warmly received’, there were ‘deep doubts about the sincerity’ (Pei, 2018, p.30), in particular, regarding fair and ‘inclusive’ multilateral and bilateral trading practices.

8.4.3. 2018 – ‘President for Life’, upending ‘non-interference’ and the U.S.-China trade war

In March 2018, at the National People’s Congress, the Constitution of the PRC was amended to allow the current President and Party Secretary-General Xi Jinping to remain in those positions beyond the two five-year terms introduced by Deng Xiaoping. As mentioned earlier, this effectively allowed Xi to be ‘President for life’³⁸⁴ – a position of power not seen since the end of the Mao regime in 1976 and occurring, importantly, at a time of significant global power for the CCP. However, at the same time as this domestic power consolidation by Xi, China–U.S. relations were deteriorating because of trade tariffs imposed on China by Trump’s

³⁸¹ UN Human Rights Council adopts China-proposed resolution, *Xinhua*, June 23, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/23/c_136387460.htm (accessed January 16, 2018).

³⁸² Full text of Chinese President Xi’s address at APEC CEO Summit, *Xinhua*, November 11, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/11/c_136743492.htm (accessed August 29, 2018).

³⁸³ Full text of Xi’s remarks at Session I of APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting, *Xinhua*, November 11, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/11/c_136745175.htm (accessed August 29, 2018).

³⁸⁴ China’s Xi allowed to remain ‘president for life’ as term limits removed, *BBC*, March 11, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-43361276> (accessed December 19, 2018).

administration. This was also a time when China's disputes with neighbouring countries over the South China Sea had increased.

Following Xi's statement at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, 2018 marked a shift in the 'champion' narrative. Use of 'common destiny' faded away to just n:23 mentions from n:59 in 2017, as 'shared future' was used n:884 times in 2018, up from n:474 in 2017, n:59 in 2016 and n:43 in 2015, and just n:3 in 2014. It is worth noting that the three 'shared future' references in *Xinhua* in 2014 were not made by CCP officials but by external parties, including a Pakistani executive director of the Pakistan-China Institute,³⁸⁵ an Australian Member of Parliament³⁸⁶ and the Italian Prime Minister.³⁸⁷

To reiterate, the shift in 2018 from minimal use of 'common destiny' to significant use of 'shared future' reflected the importance and centrality of China's global role in the CCP's messaging. This was expressed in terms of Xi's new rhetoric of working toward a 'shared future for all mankind' and his declaration of a 'new era' of CCP rule under his leadership. However, this shift in emphasis was also the result of ongoing competing internal and external challenges faced by the CCP. In Xi's address in June at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in Beijing, there was an implicit acknowledgement of these challenges:

We should ... continuously facilitate a favorable external environment for realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation and promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, ... The flag of a community with a shared future for humanity should be upheld to help make the global governance system fairer and more reasonable.³⁸⁸

Xi also acknowledged the importance of 'keeping in mind both internal and international imperatives' and the CCP's challenge of simultaneously taking 'an active part in leading the reform of the global governance system' but with the key CCP caveat to 'firmly safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests'.³⁸⁹

As with other CCP key messages, Xi's new key message of 'shared future', also sought to encompass a wide range of themes as it became increasingly used in speeches by Xi and other CCP leaders at various local forums and organisations. For example, when reporting Xi's

³⁸⁵ Roundup: China, South Asia seek cooperation on counter-terrorism, economic development: experts, *Xinhua*, June 9, 2014, link not accessible/only available in pdf (accessed June 30, 2017).

³⁸⁶ *Xinhua* opens China-Australia photographic exhibition in Sydney, *Xinhua*, September 26, 2014, link not accessible/only available in pdf (accessed June 30, 2017).

³⁸⁷ Educational, social policies become new Sino-Italian "Silk Roads": experts, *Xinhua* in *People's Daily*, October 19, 2014, <http://en.people.cn/n/2014/1019/c90883-8796794.html> (accessed June 30, 2017).

³⁸⁸ Xi urges breaking new ground in major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, *Xinhua*, June 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c_137276269.htm (accessed December 20, 2019).

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

speech at the 2018 annual Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting, *Xinhua* highlighted Xi as saying '[w]e should, guided by the Shanghai Spirit, work closely to build an SCO community with a shared future, move toward a new type of international relations, and build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world'.³⁹⁰ Moreover, the World Economic Forum's annual theme in 2018, 'Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World', as *Xinhua* was at pains to point out, 'echoes Chinese President Xi Jinping's vision of "Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind"'.³⁹¹

Although the 'peace-loving' sub-narrative decreased slightly overall in 2018, the shift in emphasis towards China's global role was important. Use of the attribute 'inclusive' dropped slightly (from n:764 in 2017 to n:742 in 2018), but there was a significant increase in references to the 'global', rising from 22% in 2017 to 43% in 2018, as the Asian regional emphasis dropped from 23% to just 10% in 2018. This decrease in references to the Asian regional aspect of China's foreign policy further reflected the CCP's confidence in China's leading position and authority in Asia, in particular, among South East Asian countries. As noted by political scientist Huong Le Thu in a December 2018 assessment of China and the region: 'In Beijing, there is a recognition of the declining importance of ASEAN ... ASEAN served its purpose for a limited period of time. It was useful for China when its diplomatic network was limited and was constrained in its relations with the West. ASEAN platforms served a purpose of normalising China's presence in the regional setting' (Huong, 2018, paragraph four).

Although the usage of 'harmony' decreased slightly from n:445 in 2017 to n:417 in 2018, the shift in the emphasis of this key message was significant. As noted earlier, 'harmony' had been a prominent domestic key message under Hu Jintao; in 2018, however, usage of 'harmony' in relation to domestic issues decreased to just 29%, the lowest over the 11-year period and down dramatically from a domestic focus high of 59% in 2012. In contrast, the use of 'harmony' to describe China's 'global' aspirations (often as part of the sub-narrative of China as a 'peace-loving nation') increased from 18% in 2017 to 22% in 2018).

'Common destiny' had been an integral part of the 'champion' sub-narrative in 2014–15, but by 2018 there was a noticeable decrease in references to 'common destiny', as part of this sub-narrative (down from n:268 in 2015 to just n:23 in 2018) – although, as mentioned earlier, this decrease was due to the major change in rhetoric to a 'shared future' and a rhetorical emphasis

³⁹⁰ Xinhua Headlines: Xi chairs SCO summit to draw up blueprint for shared future, *Xinhua*, June 10, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/10/c_137244791.htm (accessed September 17, 2018).

³⁹¹ Spotlights: World sees shared future a new goal of economic development, *Xinhua* January 1, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926651.htm (accessed June 19, 2018).

on global issues affecting contemporary ‘mankind’. Regarding ‘world order’, usage declined from n:67 in 2017 to n:53 in 2018 but, also as mentioned earlier, the CCP was now using ‘international order’ as its preferred term. However, still important in the usage of this key message was the emphasis on ‘maintaining/safeguarding/upholding’ the current world order, which jumped from just 4% in 2017 to 26% in 2018. In contrast, the call for ‘change/ reform’ dropped from 19% to 13%.

In previous years, particularly in 2015 for the anniversary of the end of WWII, the CCP had often used ‘maintaining/safeguarding/upholding’ the existing ‘world/international order’ to encourage other countries to agree with China’s criticism of Japan’s historical crimes, as well as to attempt to drive a wedge between Japan and its allies (in particular the U.S.) by portraying the Japanese government’s effort to revise domestic legislation as a current ‘threat’ to regional peace and the existing ‘world/international order’. However, in 2018 the CCP used ‘maintaining/safeguarding/upholding’ to position itself as a ‘responsible’ global stakeholder protecting the existing global order against the actions of the Trump administration.

Ironically, although the U.S. government used ‘responsible’³⁹² global stakeholder in the early 2000s to encourage ‘responsible’ international behaviours by the CCP, by 2018 the CCP was embracing the role, in contrast to a U.S. global image that had ‘plummeted’³⁹³ following the election of Donald Trump as president. This focus on China’s role as pivotal to a globalised world and a multilateral trading regime was evident in what had become the CCP’s most prolific sub-narrative in 2018 – namely, that China was a ‘win-win partner’ for all countries and that ‘mutual respect’ would secure ‘win-win’ situations for all of China’s partners.

The CCP successfully internationalised its key message of ‘mutual respect’ in 2018 through incorporating it into a UNHRC resolution that it proposed in March 2018. As with the two China-led UN resolutions that were successfully adopted in 2017 (discussed earlier), this 2018 resolution demonstrated that the CCP’s approach of ‘controlling’ external narratives and ‘addressing’ counter-narratives had now firmly expanded to ‘establishing’ new international narratives based on the CCP’s definitions. With the passage of this 2018 resolution, ‘mutual respect’, as defined by the CCP, became part of the UN’s lexicon. Titled ‘Promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights’, this resolution called on member states to

³⁹² Whither China: From membership to responsibility? U.S. Department of State Archive, September 21, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm> (accessed June 30, 2020).

³⁹³ Pew Research Center, Trump’s international ratings remain low, especially among key allies, October 1, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/01/trumps-international-ratings-remain-low-especially-among-key-allies/> (accessed January 9, 2019).

‘uphold multilateralism and work together to promote mutually beneficial cooperation’ and to recognise ‘the importance of fostering international relations based on mutual respect, fairness, justice and mutually beneficial cooperation, with the aim of building a community of shared future for human beings’.³⁹⁴ A *Xinhua* report quoted the head of the Chinese Mission to the UN Yu Jinhua as stating that, ‘to achieve the goal of universal human rights, all countries need to firmly establish the concept of win-win cooperation’.³⁹⁵

Although the resolution was adopted 28 votes to one, there were 17 abstentions, which included several Western countries such as Australia. Despite not casting a ‘no’ vote, Australia still formally registered concern by issuing a statement saying the resolution sought to ‘embed new, undefined concepts into the human rights discourse’ which are ‘not clearly understood in the Human Rights Council, or in other UN Forums’ (Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2018, paragraph 12).³⁹⁶ In Australia’s statement, the Australian government also expressed concern that the ‘draft resolution focuses overly on the relations between States’.³⁹⁷ This highlighted an expansion of the previously mentioned CCP approach regarding dealings with South East Asian countries on territorial disputes, in which the CCP sought to resolve issues bilaterally, especially when dealing with countries that were smaller and weaker than China.

In 2018, this emphasis on bilateral relations, as was the case in previous years, was often expressed in terms of China seeking to establish a situation of ‘mutual respect’. Greater use of ‘mutual respect’ in *Xinhua* (from n:342 in 2017 to n:433 in 2018), was increasingly in the context of speeches delivered by CCP leaders in relation to matters concerning developing regions outside Asia (with such references increasing from 3% in 2017 to 13% in 2018), and bilateral relationships with developing countries (with references increasing from 19% to 26% over the same period). The increase in ‘mutual respect’ references on these matters was concomitant with a drop in usage of the same term on matters regarding China–U.S. relations, from 29% to 20%, and China’s relations with developed countries, from 21% to 13%. With regards to China’s bilateral business relationships with developing regions outside Asia in 2018, *Xinhua* reports showed increased usage of the term ‘win-win’ (from 10% in 2017 to 15% in

³⁹⁴ U.N. General Assembly, Resolution 37/L.36, Promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights, A/HRC/37/L.36 (March 19, 2018), <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/L.36> (accessed September 4, 2019).

³⁹⁵ UN rights body adopts China-sponsored resolution on mutually beneficial cooperation, *Xinhua*, March 24, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/24/c_137061083.htm (accessed October 5, 2018).

³⁹⁶ China’s ‘rule of law in international relations’, *The Interpreter*, August 1, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinas-rule-law-international-relations> (accessed January 16, 2019).

³⁹⁷ Australia Human Rights Council, *Resolution on Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights – Australia’s Explanation of Vote*, March 23, 2018, <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/un/unhrc-2018-2020/statements/Documents/statement-on-promoting-mutually-beneficial-cooperation-in-the-field-of-hr-23-march-2018.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2018).

2018). These reports referenced China's relationships with Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Pacific and were in contrast to limited use of 'win-win' in relation to Asia (at just 6% of total references).

The year 2018 saw the CCP actively consolidating China's relations with some 71 countries across Asia, Europe, Latin America and even the Pacific, as part of its BRI initiative.³⁹⁸ It is worth repeating here that despite the small decrease in *Xinhua*'s use of 'inclusive' as an attribute of China (from n:764 in 2017 to n:742 in 2018), it was nonetheless still a prominent feature of the CCP's global messaging when promoting not just the BRI, but also other Chinese-led initiatives, such as BRICS. For example, the BRICS 2018 Johannesburg Declaration was titled 'BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution', which, in direct contrast to Trump administration rhetoric,³⁹⁹ called for 'strengthening multilateral engagement through the United Nations system and Paris Climate Agreement, while arguing for the reformation of existing multilateral structures to better reflect 21st century power dynamics'.⁴⁰⁰ Regarding the BRI, its expansion was now permeating so many countries that in some cases the agreements were even bypassing bilateral relationships to become country-state/province agreements, such as the signing of an MOU between the Chinese Government and the Australian state of Victoria.⁴⁰¹

However, in 2018 China's expanding economic influence was hindered by a U.S.-initiated 'trade war'. The trade war was a major turning point in China-U.S. relations and has had adverse effects for other countries globally, including Australia. Media commentary, which had characteristically presented China in the 2000s and since as having evolved from a 'poor, developing country aspirant to membership of the WTO' to a 'very large, upper-middle income economy' and the 'largest trader in the world', was now highlighting the ways in which China-U.S. tensions grew out of U.S. impatience with China. In 2018 U.S. President Trump often accused China of having secured 'unfair transfers of American technology and intellectual property to China'.⁴⁰² However, as noted by the Australian National University- based East

³⁹⁸ American Enterprise Institute, The Chinese state funds Belt and Road but does not have trillions to spare, March 2018, <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BRI.pdf> (accessed December 30, 2018).

³⁹⁹ Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord, *Whitehouse.gov*, June 1, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/> (accessed March 25, 2019).

⁴⁰⁰ BRICS Summit: Continued Constant Commitment, *Australian Outlook*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/brics-summit-continued-constant-commitment/> (accessed December 29, 2018).

⁴⁰¹ Melbourne joins the Belt-and-Road, *The Interpreter* (Bisley), October 31, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/melbourne-joins-belt-and-road> (accessed August 21, 2019).

⁴⁰² US-China trade row: What has happened so far? *BBC*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44529600> (accessed December 21, 2019)

Asia Forum, China has not so much ‘flouted the rules of the system’ but rather ‘outgrown them bigtime’,⁴⁰³ indicating that the CCP will continue to look at ways to mould the current Western-led global system into one that allows greater control and input from China.

At the UNGA debate in September 2018, Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s speech exemplified the CCP’s greater confidence in China’s global status and, more importantly, in presenting CCP ideology as globally relevant, unlike the ideas promoted by the U.S. Government under Trump:

What we see today is that international rules and multilateral mechanisms are under attack ... Should we stay committed to multilateralism or let unilateralism have its way? Should we seek to uphold the architecture of the world order or allow it to be eroded upon and collapse? These are questions of critical importance ... China’s answer is clear-cut ... All along, China has upheld the international order and pursued multilateralism ... [and] China has never wavered in its conviction to multilateralism and to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.⁴⁰⁴

Wang Yi’s statement served to reinforce two key CCP positions in 2018: (1) the CCP is the new global champion of multilateralism and globalisation, reasonable and cooperative, unlike the US which, under Trump, has become increasingly focused on its own interests at the expense of the global public good; and, (2) the CCP’s support for defending the established international/world order has been consistent and longstanding.

This growth in China’s status and power was also evidenced, among other things by two China-based development banks being granted observer status at the 2018 UNGA; the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), initiated by China and the BRICS group respectively and only established in 2015 and 2014.⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore, global perceptions of China also now reflected China’s international status, with a ‘global median of 70%’ saying ‘China plays a more important role in the world than it did 10 years ago’.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Decoupling the US from Asia, *East Asia Forum*, November 19, 2018, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/11/19/decoupling-the-us-from-asia/> (accessed January 9, 2019).

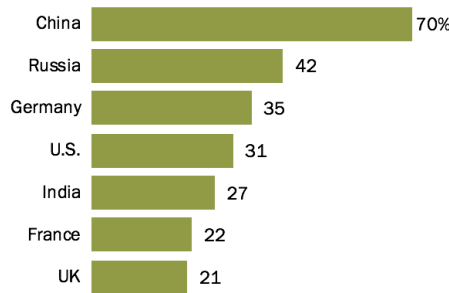
⁴⁰⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Multilateralism, shared peace and development, September 29, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1600861.shtml (accessed December 23, 2018).

⁴⁰⁵ Two China-based development banks become UNGA observers, *Xinhua*, December 21, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/21/c_137688211.htm (accessed August 17, 2019).

⁴⁰⁶ Pew Research Center, 5 charts on global views of China, October 19, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/19/5-charts-on-global-views-of-china/> (accessed January 25, 2019).

Consensus that China plays a bigger role in the world today

% who say ___ plays a more important role in the world than it did 10 years ago



Note: Percentages are medians based on 25 countries.
Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey, Q31 & Q32a-f.

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Figure 44: 2018 Global attitudes to China.

However, despite these uses of the ‘win-win’ sub-narrative to draw attention to China’s global status and its growing economic influence on a majority of countries worldwide, a global survey by Pew Global Research in 2018⁴⁰⁷ highlighted that reputational challenges persist for the CCP. Although there was clear evidence of damage to the reputation of the U.S. caused by Trump’s often controversial comments about other countries, including China, the Pew survey showed that the idea of a US-led world order was ‘still attractive to most’ and that when asked which would be better for the world (China or the U.S. as the top global power), ‘people in nearly every country’ – including in many of China’s Asia-Pacific neighbours – still tended to select the U.S.⁴⁰⁸ Ultimately, communication is about influence and achieving desired outcomes and, despite an approximate annual CCP spend of US\$10 billion on external propaganda,⁴⁰⁹ the impact of the CCP’s considerable global investment in communications and influence is mixed.

Studies of the CCP’s ‘going global’ media strategy launched in 2009, have explained that the Party leadership was motivated to correct what it saw as a persistent Western media bias towards China. This was regarded as a problem that leading CCP officials sought to address through direct intervention, by competing with its Western media rivals, in the global media market that they dominated. However, in 2020, although the prospect of the ‘China story’ ‘winning’ over readers in the global marketplace of ideas still mattered to the CCP leadership

⁴⁰⁷ Pew Research Center, Trump’s international ratings remain low, especially among key allies, October 1, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/10/01/trumps-international-ratings-remain-low-especially-among-key-allies/> (accessed December 30, 2018).

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ China’s \$10b propaganda push spreads Down Under, *Financial Times*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/324d82c4-2d60-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95> (accessed September 5, 2018).

(as demonstrated by the CCP's ongoing investment in global state media), with China's economic influence and confidence having increased dramatically since 2009, the thinking of the CCP, led by Xi Jinping, towards media influence and the traditional 'soft power' thinking has also changed.⁴¹⁰ As observed by Li Xiguang, head of Tsinghua University's International Center for Communication Studies, 'In the beginning the Chinese government talked about culture — Peking opera, acrobatics — as soft power ... When Xi Jinping came to power, he was totally different from previous leaders. He said China should have full self-confidence in our culture, development road, political system and theory'.⁴¹¹

As mentioned in Chapter 3, limitations existed with using the PM and PEC as individual theoretical frameworks. These included the PEC's failure to accommodate the influence of fear and ideology as drivers of a globalised Chinese state media; and PM filters, such as the influence of advertising revenue as being largely irrelevant to a critical 'Party mouthpiece' such as *Xinhua*. However, these combined frameworks helped with analysis of my findings, in particular, the PEC's focus on spatialization. This highlighted the technological ability of the CCP to develop a well-funded global state media presence, reaching every continent and able to serve as a real time newswire alternative for media in many countries. Regarding the PM, the focus on ideology and fear as key drivers behind China's global state media expansion, has been important to note increased ideological confidence of the CCP leadership, in contrast to the declining global reputation of the world's leading Western liberal, the U.S.

As indicated above in the Pew findings regarding ambivalent global attitudes toward China, the growing number of countries that have become increasingly economically dependent on China has led China's international relations discourse to promote China as an ideal trading partner. This is evident in the CCP leadership's privileging of the economically focused key message of 'win-win' being the CCP's most prolific message in 2018 (at n:1210 compared to just n:330 in 2008). However, the CCP is also seeking to complement the economic influence with a global narrative that positions itself as an international leader. Using Western-developed and internationally familiar terminology such as 'inclusive' (the second most prominent CCP key message, also with a dramatic increase in usage from n:94 in 2008 to n:742 in 2018)

⁴¹⁰ Inside China's secret 'magic weapon' for worldwide influence, *Financial Times*, 26 October, 2017 <https://www.ft.com/content/fb2b3934-b004-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4> (accessed 18 June 2018).

⁴¹¹ Southeast Asian narratives about US-China competition (part 1): choice and necessity, *The Strategist*, November 13, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/southeast-asian-narratives-about-us-china-competition-part-1-choice-and-necessity/> (accessed December 31, 2019).

demonstrates that the CCP is focused on assuming global leadership, with other countries to follow in accordance with the CCP's terms and conditions.

My concluding chapter draws together the findings outlined in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9 to highlight the shift in positioning by an increasingly confident CCP, as evidenced through key message emphasis changes. These included; a transition from 'equitable world champion' to 'multilateral champion', the emergence of China as a critical but highly subjective business partner, and China, led by Xi, as an 'inclusive' global leader and point of difference to wavering U.S. international leadership. And importantly, looking at the resultant effect and impact of the CCP's global communications, underpinned by a significant increase in economic influence, on audiences internationally. I will also make suggestions for further research in this field; and highlight key features to be considered in the future regarding understanding and responding to the CCP's global communications.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

9.1. Introduction – ‘Without the CCP, there can be no new China’

The central focus of my thesis has been to identify the sub-narratives and key messages in articles published by China’s state-run media about key events and speeches made by the CCP’s leaders. My findings indicate the versatile ways in which these sub-narratives and key messages have been used to maintain and reinforce the ‘China story’ of CCP rule since 1949. This grand narrative of China and the Chinese people as being entirely reliant on the CCP for their well-being, is the foundational form of the ‘China story’ *within China*, encapsulated in the slogan and song, ‘without the CCP, there can be no new China’ (没有共产党就没有新中国).⁴¹² *Outside China*, the same ‘China story’ is now told in ways to show how the people of countries outside China can also benefit from the global leadership of the CCP and the economic success of China’s development, with CCP senior officials all but saying ‘without the CCP, there is no global leadership; without China, there is no global prosperity’.

This thesis has built on the existing, albeit limited, research literature on CCP narratives and image projection (Wang, 2003 and 2011; Brady 2011; Varrall, 2015a). Most of the literature on the CCP’s global communications however, has dealt primarily with the CCP’s motivation for going global and on reasons for intensifying the expansion of China’s state media overseas (e.g. because of China’s expanding economic investments, across South East Asia and Africa, and more recently across Latin America and now even the Pacific). This academic emphasis on motivation has enabled me to focus on something less studied; namely, the content of this ‘going global’ state media enterprise and the kinds of messaging that have been used. These insights included the key primary drivers behind the Chinese government’s propaganda, political ideology and fear, along with other important influencers, such as domestic social and structural changes in China, economic imperatives, media commercialisation, globalisation and international issues.

My theoretical framework, as a combination of Mosco’s Political Economy of Communication (PEC) and Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model (PM), was inspired by recommendations from scholars (such as Yu, 2011, p.67) stating that China’s unique communications model necessitated experimentation with ‘new theories and models’. Taking

⁴¹² Without the Communist Party, there would be no New China! (English Lyrics), *Socialist East, YouTube*, posted January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZV3hVz4IXQ> (accessed June 28, 2020).

this into account, the elements I used from the PEC – commodification, spatialization and structuration –, combined with the PM’s flak and ideology/fear filters, proved insightful in addressing my research questions, particularly in examining the evolution of and major influencers on the key messages over the period of 2008 to 2018:

- (1) The 2008 Beijing Olympics and the Global Financial Crisis (2008–2009).
- (2) Domestic tensions in China (2009–2010).
- (3) The US Pivot to Asia (2011–2012).
- (4) Maritime territorial disputes: South China Sea and East China Sea (2010–2018).
- (5) The rise of Xi and the election of US President Donald Trump (2016–2018).

As a result of this analysis, I was able to identify three sub-narratives in which nine key messages were frequently deployed:

- (1) China as a ‘champion of a more equitable world’ – ‘common destiny’ and ‘world order’.
- (2) China as a ‘win-win partner’ – ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’.
- (3) China as a ‘peace-loving nation’ – ‘inclusive’ and ‘harmony’.

In tracking usage of these sub-narratives and key messages over time, I selected the six most relevant key messages for detailed study, which allowed me to identify three distinct phases in the CCP’s global communications: (1) the CCP’s anxious focus on domestic stability and global peace narrative (‘harmony’) under Hu’s leadership; (2) the emergence of Xi’s ambitious claims of China’s leadership role in delivering a ‘common destiny’ for the Asian region; (3) the expansion of these claims to the promotion of a ‘shared future’ for all mankind, in which the world would benefit from so-called ‘win-win’ economic partnerships with China, as long as everyone abides by the CCP’s non-negotiable definitions of ‘mutual respect’.

China has been building international relationships for decades in different ways. However, from a communications perspective, as it relates to the scope of this thesis, there has been a dramatic upscaling of the CCP’s determination to consolidate its international influence. This pattern of events started with the CCP’s launch of its 2009 ‘going global’ media campaign, which accompanied the Chinese government’s intensification of relationship building with neighbouring countries, as the economic dependence of these countries on China increased. The combination of messages used by CCP leaders – such as an ‘Asian common destiny’ and ‘regional inclusiveness’ – thus became the approved code for Chinese state media to report on

loans, infrastructure support and trade deals (often under BRI branding) that China negotiated with other countries.

Using this model of operation, when the Chinese government expanded its investments into other developing countries in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, to ensure the critical supply of goods for China, the same rhetoric about ‘common destiny’ and ‘inclusiveness’ followed. Since then, these economic relationships have been complemented by messaging around the need for a fairer ‘world order’ and greater ‘mutual respect’ between countries of all economic, political and geographic shapes and sizes.

As noted in previous chapters, these messages have been carefully framed to highlight a shared past of ‘colonialism’ and to remind people in developing countries of other shared political sensitivities with China, such as the need for each country to have its sovereignty respected with regard to issues of ‘interference’ ‘human rights’ and ‘democracy’. This was highlighted in a *Xinhua* report of Xi Jinping’s speech at the 2018 Beijing Summit on China-Africa Cooperation, where Xi announced that in dealing with China, African countries would suffer ‘no interference in their internal affairs’ and that there would be ‘no attachment of political strings to assistance’.⁴¹³

China has also sought to build closer economic relationships with the developed world. Initially the focus was on trade and investment deals which were accompanied by non-threatening, ‘soft power’ framed rhetoric about China as a ‘peace-loving’ nation. However, as China’s global economic status has increased, in particular vis-à-vis the importance of trade with China for many developed Western countries, this more reassuring rhetoric has been replaced by more pragmatic ‘win-win’ messaging, together with reminders that China’s understanding of ‘mutual respect’ required other countries to respect the CCP’s one-party system within China.

9.2. How China will win ...

The increasing ability of China to have an influence on the developed and developing world over the past decade, is in many ways exemplified by the formalisation of some of the CCP’s key messages such as ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’ via UNHRC resolutions in 2017–18. Despite criticism from several countries that these resolutions actually ‘weaken(ed) human

⁴¹³ FOCAC Beijing summit shows China’s approach, dedication to Africa, *Xinhua*, September 6, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/06/c_137449669.htm (accessed September 4, 2018).

rights principles’,⁴¹⁴ and although many democratic, developed Western countries ‘abstained’ from voting on these resolutions, the governments of most countries were reluctant to actually oppose them. I have deliberately highlighted these resolutions again in my conclusion, as I think the way in which the CCP was able to influence a diverse range of UNHRC member countries into accepting its rhetorical messaging, accurately reflects China’s status, and shows that it is winning influence on a considerable global scale.

In many ways, looking at the UNHRC voting patterns, global attitudes towards China do not necessarily reflect the likelihood of a country acting in a certain way regarding China. For example, 2018 research from the Pew Research Center indicated generally divided views towards China, with a ‘median of 45%’ having ‘a favorable view of China’ and 43% holding ‘an unfavorable view’ across the 25 countries surveyed.⁴¹⁵ Despite these evenly divided opinions of China, the March 2018 resolution succeeded with 28 ‘yes’ votes and only one ‘no’ vote. Although there were 17 abstentions (Figure 45), the fact is that the resolution easily passed and the concerns raised by countries such as Australia ultimately did not matter to the outcome. The coalition of countries the CCP has amassed to support its voting objectives, is emboldening China’s Party leaders to successfully export not only goods but its rhetoric too.

Looking at voting patterns, the CCP will increasingly ‘win’, i.e. have a significant influence on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues and fora, as the majority of countries have either like-minded regimes and/or are significantly dependent on China economically (this even includes countries such as Japan and Australia). According to New York University’s Yu-Jie Chen, ‘China has unparalleled power – money, alliances, and accompanying influence – to undercut international human rights institutions’ and ‘regularly wins the support of like-minded members of the council’; according to Ted Piccone (2019) from the Brookings Institution, ‘the list will grow as Beijing invests in – and pressures – more vulnerable countries that rely on its economic support’. Piccone (2018) also observes that the CCP is successfully ‘building consensus for its state-led model of development and ‘win-win cooperation’ as key elements of the international human rights regime’ and that this approach is likely to continue as the CCP ‘exerts more pressure on vulnerable countries and exploits the vacuum of leadership posed by an increasingly wobbly West’.

⁴¹⁴ China’s ‘win-win’ rights initiative makes waves in Geneva, *SWI*, March 26, 2018, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/un-human-rights-council-_china-s--win-win--rights-initiative-makes-waves-in-geneva/44000588 (accessed October 10, 2018).

⁴¹⁵ Pew Research Center, 5 charts on global views of China, October 19, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/19/5-charts-on-global-views-of-china/> (accessed January 30, 2020).



Figure 45: Voting for UNHRC resolution (A/HRC/37/L.36 March 19, 2018).⁴¹⁶

China's economically coercive influence is especially powerful on economically vulnerable countries, including a democratic country such as Greece. In May 2017, Greece blocked a European Union statement to the European Council criticising China's human rights record. According to an EU diplomat, this decision 'undermined efforts to confront Beijing's latest crackdown on dissent'.⁴¹⁷ In 2018, a *New York Times* report described China's investment in Greece as 'a kind of neocolonialism without the gunboats' which was rejected in a *Xinhua* article titled 'Amid high expectation, Belt and Road Initiative brings more win-win results to Europe' and that featured no less than seven references to China's 'win-win' approach to

⁴¹⁶ Promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights, *Right Docs*, March 2018 <https://www.right-docs.org/doc/a-hrc-res-37-23/> (accessed September 17, 2019).

⁴¹⁷ China's party paper trumpets U.N. rights resolution as combating West's monopoly, *Reuters*, June 24, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un-idUSKBN19F0A8> (accessed January 16, 2018).

economic development and prosperity.⁴¹⁸ This example further highlights the CCP's coding of its ability to influence outcomes, based on economic strength, as a 'win-win' situation.

The breadth of the CCP's economic influence has been further extended through a series of major initiatives including the AIIB and BRI, which have been accompanied by, as Rawnsley (2019, pp.284,295) notes, a 'confidence' by the CCP, reflected in the way it 'engages and communicates with the world' and its commitment to 'expanding international activities and programs'. The significant global expansion and reach of China's state media is also supported by the fact these state-controlled and generously funded media outlets do not have to deal with the financial difficulties faced by independent news outlets in democratic countries. Many Western media outlets, in countries such as Australia, as mentioned in Chapter 1, are cutting back due to commercial viability issues, exacerbated by digital platform prevalence and the resultant loss of traditional advertising revenue sources (Wilding et al., 2018).

The increased usage by the CCP's senior leadership of messages such as 'win-win' and 'mutual respect', reflected in *Xinhua*, highlights that internationally, the CCP is working to institutionalise not just its ideology but also its governance model, as it seeks to fill a void in a world disillusioned with the traditional US-led international order and liberal-democratic approaches (Mearsheimer, 2019). This global leadership positioning by the CCP is being conducted via a globalised propaganda model that represent an extension of what the CCP has been doing domestically since 1949. The CCP's closely crafted media messages, delivered first by Party leaders or in the form of communiques and resolutions and then voluminously repeated by Chinese state media outlets for both domestic and global dissemination, have become an effective vehicle for the CCP to strengthen its relations and appeal with non-democratic, one-party regimes in developing countries (Horesh and Lim, 2017). The overall effect of the CCP's messaging is to reiterate the following points: (1) China offers a far better path than the U.S. model of governance; (2) China offers an economic development pathway that does not threaten existing (non-democratic) one-party regimes; (3) China is a true 'champion' of assisting the economic development of developing countries; and, (4) China is a critical 'win-win' business partner, with partners who do not criticise China's government policies, to be rewarded.

As mentioned earlier, over the course of my analysis from 2008 to 2018, the CCP's global messaging has become more geographically targeted, reflecting the CCP's domestic needs and

⁴¹⁸ Xinhua headlines: Amid high expectation, Belt and Road Initiative brings more win-win results to Europe, *Xinhua*, May 14, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/14/c_137178205.htm (accessed February 27, 2020).

geopolitical priorities (i.e. reflecting which bilateral and regional relationships are important to China) This includes the increased emphasis by CCP senior officials on the CCP's messaging and interpretations as being widely regarded and accepted 'trends'. This was highlighted in Foreign Minister Wang Yi's addresses at the UNGA annual General Debate in 2018: 'Peace, reconciliation and harmony are the surging trend ... Equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation are the call of our times ... As a major responsible country, China commits itself to the path of peaceful development.'⁴¹⁹ This highlights the CCP's approach to adapting key messaging to contemporary circumstances but also its strong emphasis on the need for other countries to accept the CCP's perspective.

Although outside the scope of this thesis's focus (2008–2018), it is important to at least briefly acknowledge the novel coronavirus global pandemic, particularly how it relates to and reinforces my findings. The virus, known officially as COVID-19, is believed to have started in a marketplace in China's Wuhan City in late 2019. According to a *Caixin* investigation reported in *The Straits Times*, the outbreak was subsequently covered up by the CCP for several weeks,⁴²⁰ before spreading to most countries across the world. To date (mid-August, 2020), over 21 million people have been infected, more than 760,000 lives lost,⁴²¹ with numbers only expected to rise, and a devastating effect on the livelihoods and welfare of countless millions around the world. This was certainly not the global impact the world had been predicting for China in the 21st century; nonetheless, it is an impact of unprecedented scale. In addition to the significant global health impact, of direct relevance to this thesis are the efforts by the CCP to control the global narrative regarding virus origin, blame and response. After the emergence of COVID-19, this first involved the 'throttling of information'⁴²² by the CCP, and subsequently involved a global propaganda campaign that cast doubt on the origins of the virus (and indeed speculated that it was caused by the U.S.), and sought to portray China as a hero defeating the virus and coming to the world's assistance.

⁴¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Multilateralism, shared peace and development, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1600861.shtml (accessed December 19, 2019).

⁴²⁰ Wuhan doctors say colleagues died in vain amid official cover-up, *The Straits Times*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/wuhan-doctors-say-colleagues-died-in-vain-amid-official-cover-up> (accessed March 30, 2020).

⁴²¹ World Health Organization, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Situation Report - 209, 16 August, 2020, https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200816-covid-19-sitrep-209.pdf?sfvrsn=5dde1ca2_2 (accessed August 20, 2020).

⁴²² Wuhan doctors say colleagues died in vain amid official cover-up, *The Straits Times*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/wuhan-doctors-say-colleagues-died-in-vain-amid-official-cover-up> (accessed March 30, 2020).

As highlighted in my research findings, the CCP has an increased focus on global narrative and counter narrative control. This was demonstrated in the CCP's efforts to create a global misinformation campaign about the origins of the virus, despite the WHO confirming the virus was unknown before the outbreak in Wuhan in December 2019.⁴²³ For example, as reported in *Aljazeera*, China's Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian tweeted in early March that '[i]t might be the US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan', with speculation from Chinese academics adding to this narrative, and the CCP's state media simultaneously pushing the 'generous' and 'global leader' narrative to shift 'domestic and international attention away from the pent-up anger ... towards the CCP'.⁴²⁴ In an article published in *The Atlantic*, Brookings Institute senior fellow Shadi Hamid, observed that by pushing this narrative, 'China is avoiding the blame' and 'successfully dodging culpability for its role in spreading the coronavirus'.⁴²⁵

Since 1949, the CCP's communications have involved key messages, including Party slogans, repeated and embedded in everyday life, through every possible medium. From the 1940s to the 1990s, print newspapers, radio, TV, flyers, banners and loudspeakers were the Party's chief means of communications. In the digital twenty-first century, the CCP has relied increasingly on messaging apps such as WeChat and popular social media platforms to disseminate its messages. Globally, this exportation of approach has included, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the use of social media platforms popular outside China, in particular Twitter and Facebook, along with Chinese state media purchasing advertising space to insert content into international media publications and local Chinese community media outlets. In the case of Australia, this has extended so far as to enable censorship of some Chinese-Australian community media by the CCP (Fitzgerald, 2019). This highlights the 'spatialization' component of the PEC, as the CCP's global state media reach is enabled by technological capacity to transcend space and time and easily deliver timely content to strategically targeted foreign media outlets and audiences.

Multi-billion-dollar CCP investment in state media expansion since 2009 has also resulted in outlets such as CGTN and *Xinhua* now having a presence in all major cities around the world;

⁴²³ World Health Organisation, Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19), *World Health Organisation Newsroom*, March 9, 2020, www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses (accessed March 31, 2020).

⁴²⁴ China in coronavirus propaganda push as US ties worsen, *Aljazeera*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/china-coronavirus-propaganda-push-ties-worsen-200325085419818.html> (accessed March 31, 2020).

⁴²⁵ China is avoiding blame by trolling the world, *The Atlantic*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/china-trolling-world-and-avoiding-blame/608332/> (accessed March 22, 2020).

the export of CCP-monitored and controlled WeChat as a global presence; and, China's media having entered into 'strategic partnerships with other media groups across the world' (Rawnsley, 2019, p.294). Paid *China Daily* advertorials are a case in point for these are proving to be financially rewarding but ethically controversial for many of the world's most prominent media outlets. As observed by Rawnsley (2019, p.285), the CCP is now investing significant resources into developing a public diplomacy strategy to communicate a narrative of 'strength, self-assurance, affluence and political responsibility that can challenge the popular impression of China as a revisionist power that routinely violates human rights and threatens regional and global stability'.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Arquilla (cited in Nye, 2014, p.20) notes that in the information age, influence in an international relations context is about 'whose story wins'; however, as my findings in this thesis indicate, the CCP has now all but proven that, the 'soft power story' only wins if accompanied by 'hard power', specifically economic coercion and/or incentive. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 8, the ICA 2016 ruling on the CCP's illegal infrastructure activity in the South China Sea and the change in position by the Filipino Government, was more based on 'hard' economic dependencies the Philippines had on China, rather than a 'soft' telling of China's story as a peace-loving nation or friendly regional neighbour.

As highlighted in the PEC model's 'structuration' component, communications are impacted by social changes whether domestically or globally. There has been a considerable shift in global geopolitics in recent years with the rise of Xi Jinping and in China's global economic status, coinciding with Donald Trump's controversial domestic and international policies. As noted by a former senior White House official, '[t]he coming together of China's more assertive public defense of their own system coincides with a moment where the US and by extension the West seems like it's having some trouble'.⁴²⁶ Media speculation is rife as to whether US-China relations will improve or deteriorate. There are commentators who have wondered whether China's Party leadership has considered the threat posed to China if it were to take over from the U.S. as the world's leading superpower, insofar as this may mean that China might be pulled into every major global event, which would ultimately undermine and threaten domestic stability and, therefore, the Party's own legitimacy. As noted earlier by Poh and Li (2017, p.91), CCP leaders have concerns that 'overstretching resources could hinder Chinese growth and hamper ascent in the international system'. Put simply, these commentators are

⁴²⁶ China and the perilous politics of coronavirus, *Politico*, March 1, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/01/coronavirus-ambassador-cui-tiankai-118376> (accessed March 2, 2020).

suggesting that China's party-state rulers are not equipped and do not want to manage global affairs in the way that successive U.S. governments have done since the end of WWII. Despite efforts to, and calls for, 'change' and for a 'more just/democratic/better/inclusive' world order and international institutions, over time, the CCP's leaders have remained cautious of overextension and uncertain about China taking on global responsibilities or leadership roles in multilateral institutions if they 'do not bring about direct domestic benefits' and/or if 'Chinese interests are not directly at stake' (Poh and Li, 2017, pp.90-91).

9.3. Recommendations for further research

The two sets of recommendations for further research and consideration I present below are based on my academic and data-driven insights. I provide them within the context of a widely accepted view of the need for greater 'mutual understanding' between China and other countries (in particular liberal-democracies), and with an appreciation of the necessity of *realpolitik* considerations (i.e. the realities of bilateral relations amongst countries with vastly different, and often opposing, economic and political realities and priorities). In my thesis, I hope to have demonstrated the importance of continuously examining and tracking what the CCP is saying (i.e. its messaging), and also the importance of not just assuming that the meaning behind the messaging of the CCP leadership equates to how it has been or is being understood outside China, particularly in countries that are identified as Western countries.

Specifically, I recommend ongoing analysis of two key messages.

(1) Mutual respect: usage of this key message in *Xinhua* increased significantly from n:342 in 2017 to n:433 in 2018, and, although out of scope for this thesis, to n:544 in 2019. Given that this is now embedded in the UN's human rights lexicon, there is value in tracking usage of this term by CCP leadership in the next two to three years. Specifically, looking for signs of greater adoption and usage of the term 'mutual respect' by other regional or multilateral agencies, in international fora and by other national governments. For example, in the case of the CCP's key message 'shared future'; the theme of the 2018 World Economic Forum event in Davos was 'Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World'.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁷ World Economic Forum, World Economic Forum 2018 to call for strengthening cooperation in a fractured world, September 20, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/press/2017/09/world-economic-forum-2018-to-call-for-strengthening-cooperation-in-a-fractured-world/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

(2) Harmony: although out of scope for this thesis, it is important to note that usage of this term by CCP senior leaders as reflected in *Xinhua*, increased significantly from n:417 in 2018 to n:619 in 2019. This meant that for the first time in seven years, usage levels were similar to what they were during the Hu Jintao-era. I think there will be efforts by the CCP leadership to increase its usage of this term regarding global issues, and also importantly, efforts by China to have this term inserted into global events and institutional language (similar to the way ‘shared future’, ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’ are now being used in more global contexts, led and driven by China).

I also recommend consideration of how the CCP’s messaging needs to be viewed and responded to.

(3) What does the CCP *really* mean when it says what it says? Countries need to more fully appreciate and understand the highly coded nature of the messaging used and defined by the CCP’s leadership. This means that countries need to more fully consider the long-term ramifications of adopting the CCP’s terminology. Liberal-democratic countries in particular, differ in fundamental ways from the CCP’s one-party system and in the democratic values they uphold as opposed to the priority the CCP accords to patriotism and the loyalty it demands from Chinese people to itself. The focus for engagement must thus be on ‘shared interests’ and ‘mutual understanding’ as opposed to the CCP’s formulaic definitions of terms such as ‘mutual respect’ and ‘win-win’, together with the coercive demands written into these terms.

Contrary to the increased usage of these terms by the CCP’s leaders in key speeches reported in *Xinhua*, there has been little or no evidence that China’s less powerful trading partners can expect to develop sustainable and equal bilateral relations with China. This is because the CCP has been shown invariably to not acknowledge or ‘respect’ alternative views that run counter to its own policies and priorities. This has been highlighted in official Chinese statements (as mentioned in Chapter 7) that reinforce the CCP’s insistence that ‘as long as’ countries adhere to the Chinese government’s viewpoints the relationship will be smooth, and that counter-viewpoints are not-acceptable (meaning that countries risk punitive measures being taken against them by China). Ideally, bilateral or multilateral relations should be based on the democratic notion of ‘agreeing to disagree’, or as famously worded by English author Evelyn Beatrice Hall in *The Friends of Voltaire* (1906, p.199), ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it’. However, there must be some room for accommodation on the part of all parties concerned.

The CCP is a one-party regime, seeking to maintain legitimacy, control and stability as it works to raise the living standards of its 1.35 billion citizens. Western-style democracy, which includes, in-principle, government transparency, judicial independence, liberal human rights, and freedom of speech and media, is the antithesis to the CCP governance model. Given this fundamental difference, expecting genuine ‘mutual respect’ between the CCP and the governments of democratic countries is simply not realistic. The bilateral focus must be on a general acceptance of the other as a representative national government and this is something that the Chinese Government insists on when it accuses other countries of attempting to interfere in matters within China’s borders. However, bilateral relations should also be based on ‘shared interests’, including the threat of climate change, trade and completely transparent and open exchanges in other fields such as military, sporting, research and cultural activities. For example, the Chinese navy contributing to multinational anti-piracy efforts,⁴²⁸ and China’s current approach to global leadership on climate action.⁴²⁹

More attention should be paid to how and why the CCP leadership has chosen to increase its use of ‘win-win’ and ‘mutual respect’ messaging (in particular in 2016–2018). In an Australian context, as noted by Thomas (2015, paragraph 40) in his article on Xi Jinping’s visit to Australia in late November 2014 and the Australian government’s face-value adoption of Xi Jinping’s rhetoric, ‘Australia must listen attentively to what China is saying’ and ‘needs to go beyond the tip of Xi’s words to consider the unseen iceberg of Chinese Foreign Policy thinking that lies beneath the surface’.⁴³⁰ Amongst other things, Thomas was referring to official Chinese language sources indicating Xi’s strategy towards Australia as being one aimed at economically ‘cajol[ing]’ Australia into deciding on a range of minor strategic issues in China’s favour (ibid.).

In bilateral relations, both sides seek to promote their own interest and there is always a fear that one’s own values and principles might be compromised. As stated (and referenced in Chapter 7) by former Australian Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Secretary Bruce Billson, ‘having “mutual respect” does not mean you disregard your values’.⁴³¹ Insofar as it is unrealistic

⁴²⁸ As Somali pirates return, Chinese navy boasts of anti-piracy operations, *The Diplomat*, April, 16, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/as-somali-pirates-return-chinese-navy-boasts-of-anti-piracy-operations/> (accessed September 15, 2019).

⁴²⁹ China is positioned to lead on climate change as the US rolls back its policies, *The Conversation*, September, 12, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/china-is-positioned-to-lead-on-climate-change-as-the-us-rolls-back-its-policies-114897> (accessed January 16, 2020).

⁴³⁰ Rhetoric and reality – Xi Jinping’s Australia policy, *The Australia-China Story*, March 15, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/25524742/Rhetoric_and_Reality_Xi_Jinpings_Australia_Policy (accessed April 17, 2020).

⁴³¹ The Drum, *ABC News*, October 31, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-31/the-drum:-thursday-31st-october/11660512> (accessed November 4, 2019).

to expect the CCP to entertain any form of ‘mutual respect’ other than on its terms, it would be preferable for bilateral relations to be discussed in terms of ‘shared interests’ and ‘mutual understanding’, with very specific definitions about what these terms mean and entail in each context in which they are used.

Although the CCP has adopted terms with international origins, such as ‘inclusive’ and ‘win-win’, its interpretations of these terms and intent in using them are highly particular and confined to promoting China’s interests internationally. It is important to be mindful of what Nordin and Weissman (2018, p.240) have described as a ‘rhetorical trap’. For example, according to the CCP, the BRI’s ‘Silk Road spirit’ includes values such as ‘peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit’,⁴³² which, according to the CCP, are ‘shared by all countries around the world’. This pushes the audience to either ‘agree with the stipulated understandings of China’ or ‘declare itself as belonging on the “wrong” side of the divide between “peaceful and unpeaceful” and “harmonious and disharmonious”’ (ibid., pp.245–46). To reiterate, before adopting the CCP’s key messages in international fora, agreements and joint statements, it is important to have clear definitions of the respective terms and/or use more established, conventional international relations language.

Specifically, I recommend that the CCP’s ‘mutual respect’ key message only be adopted internationally if the definition is clear and understood by all parties (i.e. beyond the CCP’s own uncompromising interpretation). This is especially important given, as mentioned earlier, the significant increase in usage of the term by CCP leadership (and reflected in *Xinhua*); from n:342 in 2017 to n:433 in 2018, and although out of scope of this thesis’ timeline, to n:544 in 2019. As the term ‘mutual respect’ is now also embedded in UN human rights lexicon, it is important for liberal democracies to be vigilant in bilateral, regional and multilateral settings as to the CCP’s usage, definition and expectation in any given context (be it political, military, economic or cultural).

Like a business contract, what is acceptable and not acceptable must be clearly defined as much as possible, with these set definitions referred to by participating parties, as required (including in the case of trade, national sovereignty or territorial disputes occurring). For example, foreign governments must accept that the CCP closely monitors and expels foreigners, such as business people, journalists, or NGO workers, for breaching what the CCP determines as illegal activity, including for broad-based and often opaque ‘national’ security’ reasons. Likewise, this must be

⁴³² President Xi proclaims Silk Road spirit, *Xinhua*, May 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136281165.htm (accessed February 27, 2019).

understood by the CCP as the right of other countries to also determine what is legal or illegal activity, acceptable or unacceptable, regarding political, security or business matters in their own country. Recent examples of pushback from other countries include the decision by the U.S. government in early 2020 to declare the CCP's state media outlets operating in the U.S. as 'foreign government functionaries',⁴³³ or the Australian government's 2018 foreign interference legislation.⁴³⁴ Regarding the latter, CGTN reporting (sourced from *Xinhua*) noted the CCP's 'shock' and 'strong dissatisfaction' with the 'prejudice and Cold War mindset of some Australian leaders and media' and the CCP's implied threat in calling on Australia to 'take effective measures to eliminate the negative impact to "avoid disturbance and shock" in China–Australia ties'. This was despite the same article also acknowledging the Australian government was acting on reports of 'Chinese infiltration in Australia' and as part of an effort 'to defend its national sovereignty by law'.⁴³⁵

In the case of Australia, the value of a more open and clearer approach to bilateral relations with China, was articulated by Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Peter Varghese.

Collaboration is essential to research and innovation. We do, however, recognise that research collaboration should not come at a cost to our national security ... we welcome the dialogue which the government has initiated to more clearly define 'no go' areas of research with foreign partners ... Australia has to come to grips with China's emergence as a leading economy and a research powerhouse. Our political systems and values are very different. But boycotting China is not a sensible option. What we need is a clear-eyed engagement with China which serves our interests and is faithful to our values.⁴³⁶

(4) In a world of fake news and false narratives, evidence-based, factual statements are essential. Non-evidence-based narratives must be called out. The CCP certainly has every right to bolster its global communications capacity, especially with an aim (as mentioned in Chapter 1) to have a media presence 'commensurate' with its economic status, and to give the world the option of an alternative viewpoint regarding China. However, just as other global media outlets

⁴³³ US designates 5 Chinese state media outlets as Beijing operatives, *South China Morning Post*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/united-states-canada/article/3051246/us-imposes-restrictions-5-chinese-state-media> (accessed March 25, 2020).

⁴³⁴ Senate rushes through foreign interference legislation before by-elections across the country, *ABC News*, June 28, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-28/foreign-interference-legislation-passes/9914480> (accessed March 25, 2020).

⁴³⁵ China expresses 'strong dissatisfaction' at Australia's prejudice, *CGTN*, December 8, 2017, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3345444f30637a6333566d54/share_p.html (accessed September 16, 2019).

⁴³⁶ Australian universities and China: we need clear-eyed engagement, *The Strategist*, August 23, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australian-universities-and-china-we-need-clear-eyed-engagement/> (accessed November 15, 2019).

are the subject of international scrutiny, this must also apply to the CCP's state media content abroad.

The CCP, as noted by Brady (Figure 46), has over the past two decades used terms such as 'China threat' and 'Cold war thinking' to address predominantly Western, liberal-democratic country criticism of the CCP. However more recent terms have emerged that the CCP uses to counter criticisms of the CCP, such as 'xenophobia' and 'anti-China' – terms which the CCP knows resonate among communities, governments, politicians, media and businesses in Western countries highly sensitive to accusations of racism. However, as noted by Swinburne University's John Fitzgerald, 'Australian politicians need to push back' against the CCP's complaints that 'criticism of its Communist regime is tantamount to racism' as the CCP attempts to 'drive a wedge' within Australian society and 'silence criticism by distorting legitimate commentary and reporting on its activities'.⁴³⁷

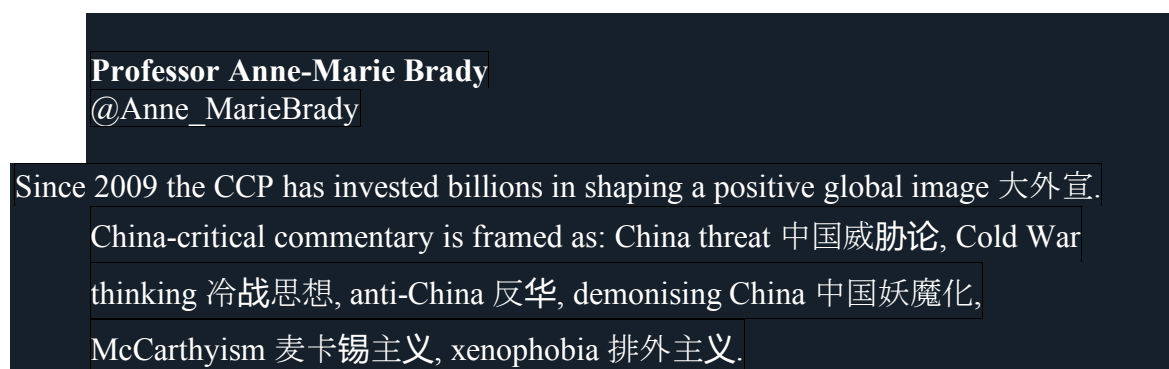


Figure 46: CCP terms used to deflect external criticism.⁴³⁸

(5) Why do like-minded, values-aligned countries need to act together? This should not be misconstrued as seeking to 'contain' China. However, given that the CCP's approach to international relations is based, in certain circumstances, on military and economic threats (especially with smaller countries, economically dependent on China), it is important that values-aligned countries and blocs work together to uphold international consensus on human rights, disputed territories, codes of maritime conduct, freedom of the press, and principles of international law and economic relations (including international loan arrangements). In order to better co-exist with a CCP-led China, it is important that values-based alliances work together to create clear standards of acceptable international behaviour.

⁴³⁷ China trying to portray criticism of government as racism, says report, *Australian Financial Review*, October 2, 2019, <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/china-trying-to-portray-criticism-of-government-as-racism-says-report-20191001-p52wgb> (accessed January 16, 2020).

⁴³⁸ https://twitter.com/Anne_MarieBrady/status/1159591544514478080

(6) Can the CCP's messaging on 'harmony' be believed? Notwithstanding the uncertainties of COVID-19, China's significant and growing military and economic influence is undisputed. However, the CCP also continues to increase its positive contributions to international affairs, such as through UN peacekeeping, anti-piracy naval efforts, technology developments and climate change commitments. Yet, the opaqueness of CCP governance; China's assertive maritime behaviours against smaller states in disputed South China Sea waters; the CCP's history of human rights abuses and its strict media control and censorship (ranked 177th out of 180 in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index) have caused other countries to view the Chinese government with suspicion.⁴³⁹ The CCP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has further exacerbated this lack of trust.⁴⁴⁰

If the CCP were to make a substantive contribution to the 'harmony' promoted by Party leaders, Chinese officials would need to demonstrate willingness to collaborate with their international counterparts in meaningful and productive ways.

With regard to the global and transnational threat that climate change and environmental degradation pose, China has shown some leadership and the CCP's leadership has an opportunity to define and drive climate change aims realistically and effectively, and thereby living up to its claims of seeking to achieve 'harmony with nature', 'harmonious relations' and 'harmonious co-existence'.⁴⁴¹

9.4. Closing note

The three sub-narratives examined in this thesis contribute to the CCP's 'China story' individually and in complementary ways. They allow the CCP to portray Chinese culture as 'harmonious' and 'inclusive', and the CCP as culturally oriented towards forging relationships that are 'harmonious' and 'inclusive'. In promoting a 'win-win' approach when dealing with other countries, China's Party leaders use these attributes to present China as a 'peace-loving' nation. Indeed, the Xi Jinping-inspired vision of a 'shared future for all mankind' requires the world to believe that only a 'harmonious' and 'inclusive' China, ruled by the CCP and working

⁴³⁹ 'An intense climate of fear has been triggered.' Press freedom a rising concern in 2019, report says, *Time*, April 18, 2019, <https://time.com/5572179/reporters-without-borders-rsf-world-press-freedom-2019/> (accessed June 19, 2019).

⁴⁴⁰ How China's incompetence endangered the world, *Foreign Policy*, February 15, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/15/coronavirus-xi-jinping-chinas-incompetence-endangered-the-world/> (accessed March 3, 2020).

⁴⁴¹ China-ASEAN photo exhibition held to mark 15th anniversary of strategic partnership, *Xinhua*, September 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/28/c_137498852.htm (accessed December 19, 2019).

in the interests of all countries, could bring prosperity to all countries (i.e. the aforementioned ‘without China, there is no global prosperity’).

In early 2020, the Australian National University’s Rory Medcalf opined that, ‘[a]ny book making claims about this uncertain decade is a gift to fate’.⁴⁴² That certainly applies to this thesis. However, I think there are some important indicators that can be obtained from the evidence I have collated regarding the messaging used by the CCP’s leadership and reported in *Xinhua*. As mentioned above, the CCP’s ‘peace-loving’ sub-narrative seeks to portray China as a country that is historically peace-loving, with a tradition of non-aggression and ‘inclusive’ and ‘harmonious’ relationships. In contrast, the CCP portrays ‘the West’ as having a history of expansionism and colonisation. Although it is important to understand the CCP’s messaging in a contemporary context, it is also important to understand the foundations, origins and history associated with these messages. For present-day China and the CCP, this represents a combination of legacies and interpretations from the CCP’s early rule in the 1950s, such as the ‘century of humiliation’, and the re-embrace of historical and cultural elements previously denigrated by the CCP (e.g. in the Mao era), such as Confucianism.

The CCP’s telling of its ‘China story’, which involves a merging of old and new messages, is reflected in the September 2019 CCP white paper *China and the World in the New Era*.⁴⁴³ The paper contains references to what this research indicates will be the CCP’s messaging focus for the next few years: ‘win-win’, ‘mutual respect’, ‘inclusiveness’, ‘shared future’ and also a resurgent use of the term ‘harmonious’. For example, as stated in the white paper, ‘With a history dating back more than 5,000 years, Chinese culture contains the cosmological view of the unity of man and nature, the international view of harmony between all countries [and] the social view of harmony in diversity’.

The thought on which I would like to finish on comes from former Chinese President Jiang Zemin – the man who presided over China during my two years living there. In an address at Harvard University in 1997, titled ‘Enhance Mutual Understanding and Build Stronger Ties of Friendship and Cooperation’, Jiang Zemin said:

Mutual understanding is the basis for state-to-state relations. Without it, it would be impossible for countries to build trust and promote cooperation with each other ... However, this is not

⁴⁴² Coronavirus shock will cascade through the Indo-Pacific region, *The Strategist*, March 3, 2020, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/coronavirus-shock-will-cascade-through-the-indo-pacific-region/> (accessed March 7, 2020).

⁴⁴³ Full text: China and the World in the New Era, *Xinhua*, September 27, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/27/c_138427541.htm (accessed January 18, 2020).

enough To know China better, one [must] approach it from different angles. China today has been evolved from its past ... Therefore, it is important to approach China from a historical and cultural perspective.⁴⁴⁴

I read this to mean that one should be aware of not just what the CCP is saying, but also understand the historical, cultural and political ‘whys’ and ‘whats’ that are implicit in the messaging. Or as noted earlier by Thomas, to also consider the ‘unseen iceberg’⁴⁴⁵ component of the CCP and China.

To the extent that China’s rise and future power will continue to have an incredible impact on the world in the 21st century, it is important for governments, businesses, research institutes and other organisations engaging with China, to better understand the CCP’s messages, precisely because they are used so extensively in China’s global state media. In a globalised world, it is an ongoing challenge for all nation-states to balance *realpolitik* with the preservation of their own national priorities. To the extent that China’s global communications increasingly revolve around the idea that ‘without the CCP, there is no global leadership; without China, there is no global prosperity’, mutual understanding should require that this idea be robustly discussed, because any real hope for genuine ‘win-win’ depends on it.

⁴⁴⁴ US-China Institute, President Jiang’s speech at Harvard University, 1997, November 1, 1997, <https://china.usc.edu/president-jiangs-speech-harvard-university-1997> (accessed August 17, 2019).

⁴⁴⁵ Rhetoric and reality – Xi Jinping’s Australia policy, *The Australia-China Story*, March 15, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/25524742/Rhetoric_and_Reality_Xi_Jinpings_Australia_Policy (accessed April 17, 2020).

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