

# International Media Framing of Current Territorial Dispute in the East China Sea



Amelia Kimball and Ashley Klein | Faculty mentor: Won Yong Jang  
Department of Communication and Journalism – University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

## OBJECTIVE/ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the difference and similarities in news framing between Xinhua, a Chinese news agency, and the American news agency, the Associated Press. This idea of framing was examined using an island dispute in the East China Sea, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This study explores how media framing has reflected the dominant ideology and national interests of the countries in which the news agencies are located. Thus, this study is to examine and compare similarities and difference in the amount and nature of territorial disputes coverage, specifically frames and sources.

## THEORY – MEDIA PROPAGANDA MODEL

- Dominant Ideology
- National Interest
- Journalistic Ideology

Media agenda: news agencies

Media framing: “how to think about it”

Public agenda: “what to think about”



The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands  
Photo credit: The Guardian, “Japanese firms close offices in China as islands row escalates”  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/17/japanese-firms-close-offices-china>

## METHOD

### Sample

Territorial Disputes in East China Sea  
Key words: China, Japan, Island Disputes, Senkaku Islands, Diaoyu Islands, East China Sea

242 stories were analyzed: Xinhua (N =155) and AP (87).

## Measures

- Frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000)
  - Conflict/Human Interest/Attribution of Responsibility/Consequences/Morality Frames
  - absence (0) to outstanding focus (2)
- Frame Nature (Entman, 2004)
  - Descriptive/interpretative/Affective /Solution
  - absence (0) to outstanding focus (2)
- National Images (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000)
  - Very Negative (-2) to very Positive (2)
- National Interest Frame (Lee & Yang, 1996)
  - Conflict/Cooperation/Threats Frames
  - absence (0) to outstanding focus (2)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS & RESULTS

Research question 1: How is it covered in terms of volume?  
Table 1: Number and percentage of stories by agency and year

Year	Agency Type					
	All Stories		AP		Xinhua	
	N	N	%	N	%	
	(242)	(87, 36%)		(155, 64%)		
2012	67	29	33.3	38	24.5	
2013	65	21	24.1	44	28.4	
2014	110	37	42.5	73	47.1	

Research question 2: How is it covered in terms of theme?  
Table 2: Generic frames in territorial dispute coverage

Frames	Agency Type					
	AP		Xinhua		t	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P
Conflict	.85	.24	.69	.26	-4.77	.000**
Human Interest	.48	.23	.55	.28	2.12	.035*
Attribution of Responsibility	.53	.35	.71	.19	4.33	.000**
Consequences	.29	.16	.29	.19	.19	.849
Morality	.25	.20	.35	.17	3.78	.000**

Note: minimum=0, maximum=2

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .001

Research question 3: How does each agency describe the territorial dispute?

Table 3: Frame nature in territorial dispute coverage

Frames Nature	Agency Type					
	AP		Xinhua		t	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P
Descriptive	1.0	0	1.0	0		
Interpretative	.95	.21	.67	.48	-5.80	.000**
Affective	.01	.11	.00	.00	-1.00	.32
Solution	.38	.49	.79	.44	6.45	.000**

Note: minimum=0, maximum=2

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .001

Research question 4: How does each agency describe the image of each nation involved?

Table 4: National image presented in dispute coverage

Frames	Agency Type					
	AP		Xinhua		t	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P
US	.0	.0	-.36	.74	-1.79	.096
South Korea	.0	.0	-.04	.30	-282.12	.78
Japan	.02	.23	-.73	.56	-12.43	.000**
China	-.06	.24	.23	.52	4.31	.000**
Russia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vietnam	.00	.00	-1.1	.68	-7.48	.000**
North Korea	-.5	.71	-.5	.71	-	-

Note: minimum=-2, maximum=2

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .001

Research question 5: What national interest frames were used in media coverage?

Table 5: National interests frames in territorial dispute coverage

National Interests	Agency Type					
	AP		Xinhua		t	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P
Conflict	.989	.107	.91	.288	-3.06	.003*
Cooperative	.02	.15	.09	.31	2.27	.02*
Threats	.02	.15	.001	.08	-.95	.344

Note: minimum=0, maximum=2

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .001

Research question 6: What sources were used/mentioned/quoted?  
Table 6: Distribution of sources

	All Stories	AP	Xinhua	X2 (d. f=1)
			(%)	
Academic/Researcher	26	13.82	9.0	1.317
Resident & Citizen	6	5.7	0.6	5.999*
Netizens/Social Media	-	-	-	
Business/Industry Group	-	-	-	
Economists	-	-	-	
Unnamed experts or celebrity	11	10.3	1.3	10.529*
Domestic government agencies	75	27.6	32.9	.737
Domestic media	3	3.4	0	5.412*
Foreign government agencies	158	86.2	53.5	26.315**
Foreign media	17	13.8	3.2	9.527*
Inter-governmental (UN)	1	0	0.6	.567

## CONCLUSION

Through our research we observed...

- o The Associated Press is more likely than Xinhua to use the conflict frame. Xinhua uses more of the attribution of responsibility and morality frames.
- o Xinhua focuses more on solutions than AP does. AP focuses more on the interpretive frame nature.
- o AP puts Japan and Vietnam in a better light than Xinhua. Xinhua is most positive about China, their own country. AP shows a slight negative trend towards China.
- o AP tends to use more citizens and unnamed experts/celebrities as sources whereas Xinhua uses mostly domestic government agencies as sources of information.

These conclusions make sense based on allies the countries have, freedom of press, etc.



Newspapers  
Photo credit: Cease Fire Magazine, “Goodbye to the freedom of the press?”  
<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/goodbye-freedom-press/>

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