

**KINNAIRD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN**



**KINNAIRD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN ROLE OF MEDIA IN  
POLITICS: PROPAGANDA STRATEGIES IN SINO-US RELATIONS  
IN BRI ERA (2016-2022)**



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**ROLE OF MEDIA IN POLITICS: PROPAGANDA IN SINO-US  
RELATIONS IN BRI ERA (2016-2022)**



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## RESEARCH COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that Ms. Mahnoor Zahra Suhail and Najm Ul Sahar Riaz of BS Hons (Session 2019 – 2023), Department of International Relations have carried out research work entitled “Role of Media in Politics: Propaganda in Sino-US Relations in BRI Era (2016-2022)” under my supervision. It is assured that research work is original and has not yet been published anywhere else.

All the changes suggested by supervisors are incorporated

Signature of Supervisor

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ABC</b>	<b>AMERICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION</b>
<b>AIIB</b>	<b>ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK</b>
<b>APEC</b>	<b>ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC CORRIDOR</b>
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIANNATIONS</b>
<b>BRI</b>	<b>BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE</b>
<b>CAFTA</b>	<b>CENTRAL AMERICA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT</b>
<b>CCTV</b>	<b>CHINA CENTRAL TELEVISION</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>CABLE NEWS NETWORK</b>
<b>IMF</b>	<b>INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND</b>
<b>PNTR</b>	<b>PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS</b>
<b>PRC</b>	<b>PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA</b>
<b>RCEP</b>	<b>REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP</b>
<b>SED</b>	<b>STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC DIALOGUE</b>
<b>TPP</b>	<b>TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP</b>
<b>USSR</b>	<b>UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION</b>

# CHAPTER 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of media in global politics is colossal. Political issues are shaped by their portrayal in media. The realm of media is massive and incorporates the discourse in news, social media, academia, literature, films, and cinema. Media can also be referred to as the platform of political communication. The audience of international relations consists of individuals, international groups, and states. They are also known as the international actors which are connected by media. Therefore, international actors often make use of propaganda strategies to influence media. Propaganda is the medium used to shape public opinion. This is evident in the Sino-US relations discussed after the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was established.

This case is supported by the Theory of Communicative Action by Jurgen Habermas. The theory states that the flow of information is a part of government decisions. Governments often plan a “strategic action” to achieve an aim or to decide on a goal. Therefore, for this purpose governments utilize the platform of media where they can exchange information with the public. Though the theory is prevalent on a domestic level, given the current status quo, the flow of information has a trickle-down effect on international politics. The flow of international communication impacts human relations as well. Therefore, it can be denoted that the communication system shapes our perspectives on international issues. Similarly, these perceptions also prevail on an international level. The theory is imperative in the realm of international politics.

Therefore, it is integral to note that the portrayal in media has an impact on the audience of international relations, especially states. Moreover, to influence an international actor, the use of propaganda is imminent. A link is established between the use of propaganda and its impact on international actors. This indicates that the relations of the state are impacted by the portrayal of international politics. In other words, media and propaganda contribute to the construction of narratives that impact state relations. In the case of Sino-US relations, both states are known to utilize strategies of propaganda. However, what is noteworthy is that the medium they use impacts the levels of individuals highlighted above in the realm of international relations. Most individuals are oblivious to the fact that the medium or the discourse constructs their perception about states when discussed on a holistic level, the individual’s perception forms the state’s perception. Therefore, propaganda has a major impact on the states and their relations.

There are historical instances that reflect that propaganda is an avid feature of Sino-US relations. Even when US and China are discussed in isolation, both states are famous for their

utilization of propaganda. During the Cold War, the US advocated for democracy through the means of propaganda. Similarly, the Chinese government is famous for using propaganda to monitor and manage popular sentiment at the time of Mao Zee Dong. Conversely, they both have a conjoined history of propaganda as well. In the late 1940s, the US had a special Committee on Public Information in America which had one section for China specifically where they translated the speeches of Woodrow Wilson into Chinese. It was even regarded as one of the best pieces of translated Chinese literature. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this gradually changed, and US and China used propaganda against each other. The post-BRI developments in the media discourse surrounded two major events: trade wars and the outbreak of the pandemic.

Henceforth, the communicative action theory denotes the idea that the flow of information affects government decisions. During the flow of information, media serves as a medium. Furthermore, governments utilize propaganda strategies to influence their individuals. They utilize propaganda to construct narratives around certain states. For instance, President Bush's narrative around Iran, Iraq, and North Korea in 2002 after 9/11. The narrative impacted states as well. in the current status quo: USA and China are accused of constructing narratives through means of propaganda. Therefore, the prerogative is to assess the impact of the construction of narratives on the levels of the audience.

### **1.1. Significance of the study**

This research is significant because it caters to the contemporary scenario following the digitized era. The importance of media is paramount in global politics, and this topic ponders and analyses the tool of linguistic propaganda along the lines of the Theory of Communicative Action and its role in forming relations of states in the ambit of international relations. The research delves deeper into how Sino-US relations are the apt example in this status quo for understanding the role of media in global politics using how narratives in discourse have been constructed by the US against China in Films, Academic discourse, News Channels, and Social Media Channels, especially after the BRI Projects. This research concentrates on three major events: BRI, Trade Wars, and Covid-19. The prevalent anti-Sino narrative has impacted the levels of stakeholders in the ambit of International Relations. Therefore, the topic also emphasizes on levels of the audience that are the primary stakeholders in the public spheres state relations are based on their perception and the narratives they construct in their minds and project onto different platforms.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

### **1.2.1 Aims and Objective of the study**

- To assess the role of media in the politics following the theory of communicative action
- To understand the impact of narratives (shaped by propaganda) on the public sphere, especially in states
- To explore the significance of narratives as a tool of media in shaping Sino-US relations in the post-BRI Era
- To understand the current narrative around China in the Western media (post-BRI era, 2016 onwards) and compare it with the pre-BRI era (2000-201)
- To explore the role of peace journalism in both US and Chinese media when reporting an issue

### **1.2.2 Research Questions**

- What role does media play in state relations according to the theory of communicative action?
- Why are narratives important in the changing nature of power politics between two sides (China and the USA) in the post-BRI era?
- What differences can be noted in the current situation regarding Western media portrayal of China compared to the past (2000-2013)?
- How can peace journalism be utilized for the US and Chinese media when reporting global issues?

## **1.3 NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Correlation research has been conducted to study the relationship between media (independent variable) and politics. The period of the post-BRI era has been taken up (2013-2022) to study the relationship in detail focusing on propaganda by the US to degrade and exploit China's image. Secondary research consists of collecting and analyzing previously published academic works. The research's legitimacy and authenticity would be enhanced by this. The main secondary sources used in the data collection procedure were books, articles, and research publications. Both studies would involve a great deal of study to fully convey the importance of the topic.

## **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The role of media in global politics is imperative. The Communicative Action Theory suggests that the impact of political discourse -disseminated by the media- impacts people and their interactions. The public sphere is an essential part of the world and makes sense of their lives. Political discourse is a form of communication, and it is understood as a form of communication (Bolton, April 2005). However, the discussion regarding the public sphere is where media plays a significant role. Media formulates and shapes the role of individuals. The language discourse used in media is impactful in creating narratives. Languages linguistically articulate worldviews and correspondingly structure forms of life. Worldviews store cultural knowledge with the help of the language community and interpret the world (Habermas, 1984). Therefore, language marks itself as an important notion in the media. This is where propaganda comes into the debate while discussing media in the public sphere. Media impacts state relations because of the sort of linguistic tactics utilized under the strategies of propaganda. These strategies are stratified by Alfred M. Lee and Elizabeth B. Lee in their book, *The Fine Art of Propaganda*. They are name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain-folk, card-stacking, and bandwagon (Lee & Lee, 1939). These tactics manipulate words to make them sound rational and simultaneously, exploit feelings too. This takes place at a large-scale level which also prevails on a state level. These tactics are noticed in all platforms of media. Therefore, propaganda is the tool used through the means of media.

Moreover, the propaganda of media is rampantly prevalent which impacts state relations. The author, Etna Gilboa, in this article talks about the long history of attempts to devise a communications theory of international affairs. Moreover, the author is of the view that global television networks such as CNN have greatly determined policies and the consequences of certain events. The author has analyzed several works published by CNN and successfully covered the War on Terror and its coverage made other broadcasting channels such as BBC to be produced (Gilboa, 2005). The language used in portraying the news impacted the public sphere and altered the course of history. Moreover, President Bush's speech was analyzed where propaganda strategies were reflected. Words like "great nation", and "resolve" were used to unite the nation and make a tangent towards the common values. He used rhetorical devices to bind himself with the country (Kellner, 2006). The USA has been famous for its use of propaganda since the beginning of the 21st Century. However, the narrative around China in the Western discourse was neutral.

The narrative around China has altered in the post-BRI era, especially in Western Media. This impacted China's position in the public sphere. Media discourse around China has projected an anti-Sino narrative. News channels such as the Voice of America have reflected the idea that how the USA has better to offer as a substitute for the Belt Road Initiative (Widakuswara, 2021). The news channel has reported that USA's Build Back Better World program is better than China's BRI program. Moreover, the comparison illustrates the idea that the BRI program negatively impacts the countries, and on the other hand how America's 3Bws is a better substitute as China has employed forced labor to complete BRI projects. China's projects were regarded as a strategy to infiltrate domestic affairs. China was often branded as imperialist by the Western Discourse (Meczner & Noršić., 2021).

Similarly, in the US-China trade wars, the narrative around China became anti-Sino. The animosity between states is projected in the discourse of media. Yang, in his article, *How the US and Chinese Media Cover the US-China Trade Conflict: A Case Study of War and Peace*, discusses how have stated how media coverage of conflicts escalates state ties due to media depiction. The US-China trade conflict has been taken up to explain this. After analyzing about 739 articles, the author states that it has been noted that US media has made use of more war journalism than peace journalism. Peace journalism means when reporters opt for ways to look for conflict solutions and further peace prospects when they must report a story. Chinese news has made use of more neutral languages, advocating peace journalism practices where they mostly focused on reporting outcomes, causes, and the damages of the conflict (Yang, 2020). However, China is historically famous for using antics of propaganda as discussed by Jessica Chen Weiss and Allan Dafoe in their article *Authoritarian Audiences, Rhetoric, and Propaganda in International Crises: Evidence from China*. However, these antics were prevalent in China alone to promote Chinese patriotism and celebrate the Chinese Government. The Chinese government uses propaganda, surveillance, and censorship to monitor and manage popular sentiment (Weiss & Dafoe, 2019).

Conclusively, using different views and perspectives of researchers, we find a unique relationship between the role of media and state relations. China and US are the main contenders for hegemony. Their decision and portrayal affect the public sphere. The research reflects the idea of how the medium of propaganda has been utilized by the USA in the Post-BRI era and there has been a change in the narrative around China in the Western discourse between the pre-BRI and pre-BRI era. The latter highlighted will be the crux of our research and how the view that peace journalism practices can be opted for in both US and Chinese media when reporting a conflict.

The Theory of Communicative Action is a vital framework for analyzing the role of media in shaping public discourse and political outcomes in contemporary societies. This is especially relevant to the study of propaganda strategies in Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era, as the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and political outcomes in these countries. The aim of this thesis is to examine how media propaganda strategies have been employed in Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era (2016-2022) and how they have influenced public opinion and political outcomes. The theory of communicative action provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing media propaganda strategies as it emphasizes the role of communication in shaping social reality, and the importance of democratic communication in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between different groups and societies. Therefore, this thesis will use the theory of communicative action to explore the dynamics of media propaganda in Sino-US relations, and how these strategies reflect and reinforce broader political and economic interests in both countries.

As noted earlier, the theory of communicative action is a crucial framework for analyzing the role of media in shaping public discourse and political outcomes in contemporary societies. This theory posits that communication is essential to the construction of social reality, and that effective communication requires mutual understanding and cooperation between different groups and societies. In this sense, communicative action emphasizes the importance of democratic communication as a means of fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between different groups and societies, and of creating a shared vision of the common good.

In the context of Sino-US relations, the theory of communicative action can help shed light on how media propaganda strategies are used to shape public opinion and political outcomes in both countries. For example, media propaganda can be used to demonize the other side, to distort facts and information, or to present a skewed or biased perspective on events and issues. By analyzing these propaganda strategies through the lens of communicative action theory, it is possible to gain insights into the broader social and political dynamics that underlie these strategies, as well as the potential for democratic communication and mutual understanding.

Moreover, the theory of communicative action highlights the importance of language, discourse, and dialogue in shaping social reality. In the context of Sino-US relations, this means that media propaganda strategies can be seen as part of a broader discursive struggle over the meaning and significance of events and issues. For example, propaganda may seek to frame a particular event or issue in a way that reflects a particular political or economic agenda, or to create a narrative that supports a particular ideological perspective. By analyzing these propaganda strategies through the lens of communicative action theory, it is possible to uncover

the underlying discursive structures and power relations that shape these narratives and agendas.

## **CHAPTER TWO: HABERMAS' THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

The Theory of Communicative Action focuses on how narratives are developed within a society and how governments utilize these narratives in order to generate the opinion of the masses. This means that it is important to be aware of the limitations and biases of one's own perspective, and to be open to the perspectives and experiences of others. In the context of Sino-US relations, US and China have been the prime actors to create narratives about BRI project by using the means of media and media propaganda strategies must be evaluated critically and reflexively, in order to avoid reproducing dominant discourses and power relations that may be harmful or limiting. By analyzing these propaganda strategies through the lens of communicative action theory, it is possible to uncover the underlying assumptions and biases that shape media propaganda, and to foster more democratic communication and mutual understanding between different groups and societies.

The theory of communicative action is a crucial framework for analyzing media propaganda strategies in Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era. By emphasizing the importance of democratic communication, discursive struggle, and self-awareness, this theory provides a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the role of media in shaping public opinion and political outcomes. Through a critical and reflexive analysis of media propaganda strategies, it is possible to foster more democratic communication and mutual understanding between different groups and societies, and to promote a more just and equitable global order.

The ideas of Habermas have greatly impacted fields of political and legal thought, sociology, argumentation, theology, psychology, etc. Habermas has grounded his project in an extensive concept of communicative rationality which has the intention to be the remedy of the limitations in the notion of cognitive instrumental rationality, informing much of conventional social and political thought. Habermas rightfully asserts that strategic interaction is an aspect of the social and political world which is not capable of being eliminated (Habermas, 1984).

### **2.1. IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION UNDER THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

The Theory of Communicative Action, developed by Jürgen Habermas, emphasizes the importance of communication as a social process that shapes our understanding of reality, our relationships with others, and our actions in the world. In this theory, communication is not simply a means of transmitting information, but a complex and multifaceted process that has a significant impact on our lives. When people communicate, they exchange information, ideas,

and perspectives, which can help them reach a common understanding of a given situation or problem. Effective communication is essential for coordinating actions and achieving common goals, particularly in complex social systems where people need to work together.

In addition to its role in coordination, communication is also important for legitimating social norms and values. When people communicate, they not only transmit information, but also reinforce social norms and values, which help to maintain social order and stability. Communication plays a critical role in reflection, as it allows us to become aware of our own biases and assumptions, and to engage in critical reflection on our own behavior and its impact on others.

## **2.2. ROLE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE ACCORDING TO THE THEORY**

The public sphere, according to Habermas, is a social space where individuals come together as equals to discuss and debate matters of public concern. It is characterized by the absence of coercion and the presence of rational argumentation. In the public sphere, citizens can freely express their opinions, engage in critical dialogue, and collectively shape the public agenda. Habermas argues that a vibrant and inclusive public sphere is crucial for a functioning democracy, as it enables citizens to participate in the formation of public opinion and holds those in power accountable.

Central to communicative action theory is the concept of strategic communication. Habermas asserts that communication should be guided by the ideal speech situation, which entails four validity claims: truth, normative rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility. In an ideal speech situation, individuals engage in an open and honest exchange of ideas, based on a commitment to truth, normative principles, and mutual understanding. By engaging in rational discourse, participants can challenge existing power structures, identify shared values, and work towards consensus. However, Habermas acknowledges that the public sphere is not a realm of pure rationality. He argues that it is often influenced by power dynamics and distorted by social inequalities. In contemporary societies, the public sphere is increasingly shaped by media, commercial interests, and political manipulation. Habermas warns against the colonization of the public sphere by powerful actors who seek to control and manipulate public opinion. This colonization threatens the authenticity and inclusivity of public deliberation, undermining the democratic potential of the public sphere.

To counteract these distortions, Habermas proposes the notion of communicative action as a means to revitalize the public sphere. Communicative action refers to the idealized form of

discourse that is free from domination and manipulation. It involves the mutual exchange of reasons, where participants engage in rational argumentation to reach a shared understanding. Through communicative action, individuals can challenge existing power structures, foster social integration, and generate legitimate norms and values.

In practical terms, communicative action theory highlights the importance of creating spaces and platforms for inclusive and deliberative dialogue. This can include public forums, town hall meetings, or online platforms that facilitate meaningful and respectful exchanges of ideas. In such spaces, individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together to engage in rational discourse, learn from each other's perspectives, and collectively shape the public agenda.

Furthermore, communicative action theory calls for critical media literacy and media reform. It emphasizes the need to counteract the concentration of media ownership and promote independent and diverse sources of information. By encouraging citizens to critically evaluate media messages and engage in fact-based discussions, communicative action theory aims to mitigate the influence of media manipulation and foster a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Communicative action theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the role of communication in democratic societies. By emphasizing the importance of rational discourse and the public sphere, the theory highlights the potential of inclusive and open deliberation to foster democracy and enhance the legitimacy of political decision-making. While acknowledging the challenges posed by power dynamics and media distortions, communicative action theory offers insights into revitalizing the public sphere and promoting meaningful democratic participation.

Being strategic in communication means manipulating language and information in order to achieve a particular goal or outcome. In contrast, communicative action is oriented towards reaching a shared understanding through open and honest dialogue. However, Habermas does recognize that there are situations in which being strategic in communication may be necessary or even desirable. For example, in certain political or business contexts, it may be necessary to use language strategically in order to achieve a specific outcome or persuade others to take a particular action.

Communicative action theory offers a critical perspective on the functioning of the public sphere within democratic societies. At its core, communicative action theory seeks to understand how individuals engage in rational discourse and reach mutually acceptable agreements through the process of communication. The theory emphasizes the importance of inclusive and open deliberation as a means to foster democracy and enhance the legitimacy of

political decision-making. To be strategic while communicating, one must first recognize the potential risks and limitations of strategic communication. It is important to be aware of the potential for manipulation, deception, and power imbalances that can arise when language is used strategically. In order to mitigate these risks, Habermas suggests several strategies for being strategic while still maintaining the principles of communicative action. These strategies include:

1. Being transparent: Being open and honest about one's intentions and motivations can help to build trust and prevent the perception of manipulation.
2. Respecting others: Treating others as equals and respecting their autonomy and perspective can help to create a more productive and collaborative communication environment.
3. Focusing on shared goals: Emphasizing shared goals and interests can help to align communication efforts and reduce the potential for conflict or manipulation.
4. Recognizing the limits of strategic communication: Acknowledging the limitations of strategic communication and the potential risks can help to mitigate those risks and prevent unintended consequences.

TABLE 2.1. SPEECH ACTS IN THE THEORY

Speech Act	Validity Claim	Discourse	Example
Communicative	Comprehensibility	Explicative	High-level waste is stored at Hanford.
Constantive or Cognitive	True/Correct	Theoretical	Waste from leaking tanks has reached groundwater below the tank farms.
Regulative	Normatively Right	Practical	We should base cleanup decisions on risk, not cost.
Representative or Expressive	Truthful/Sincere	Therapeutic	I am concerned that radioactive contamination from Hanford will give me cancer.

Figure 1 source: *Technocratic vs. Community Conceptions of Risk: A Procedural Evaluation of the Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment*

Overall, being strategic while communicating requires balancing the potential benefits of strategic communication with the principles of communicative action. It requires a nuanced approach that takes into account the specific context and goals of the communication situation, while also being mindful of the potential risks and limitations of strategic communication.

Moreover, Habermas goes on to accommodate strategic and communicative action as two equally foundational elements of social interaction. Strategic action coordinates interaction by influence or force, by influencing the views and opinions of the other party, to bring about social interaction. Entities strategically communicate with each other in order to convey their crux of the message. Communicative action on the other hand coordinates social interaction via consent. These include moral conscience, communicative action, dialogic knowledge and communicative rationality. In order to gain insight into the significance of entire adjustability of the perceptions, it is crucial to take into account moral conscience as a preconception of the Theory of Communicative Action, from which participants put forth their assertions. Participants make use of their empirical right to voice their opinions, when engaging in dialogue with others (Baxter, 1987).

### **2.3. SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE THEORY**

As per Habermas' idea of communicative rationality, knowledge is provided through the capacity of dialogue, in likeliness of exchange, in providing to the other, with respect to the differences and sharing of the lifeworld. In this regard, the theory of Communicative Action puts forth the idea of looking into the reason incised in daily communicative practice and to rebuild from the foundations of rationality of speech an unlimited concept of reason, acknowledged as a result of communicative and dialogic evolution. Dialogical knowledge and communicative rationality are two ways in which social interactions are analyzed in the theory. Dialogical knowledge refers to the idea that knowledge is generated through dialogue and interaction between individuals. Habermas argues that knowledge is not simply a product of individual cognition, but is constructed through the exchange of perspectives, ideas, and experiences between people. In other words, knowledge is created through a process of mutual understanding and shared meaning-making.

Communicative rationality, on the other hand, refers to the capacity of individuals to engage in rational communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement. Habermas argues that communicative rationality is based on the assumption that individuals can participate in a shared process of reasoning and justification, in which claims are evaluated on their own merits rather than on the basis of power or authority. Communicative rationality is thus grounded in the principles of equality, openness, and transparency, and is oriented towards reaching consensus through argumentation and dialogue.

Together, dialogical knowledge and communicative rationality form a framework for understanding how knowledge is created and transmitted in social contexts in the public sphere. By emphasizing the importance of dialogue and interaction, Habermas challenges traditional models of knowledge production that focus on individual cognition and expertise. By emphasizing the importance of rational communication, Habermas offers a normative vision of how communication should be conducted in order to achieve mutual understanding and consensus.

Overall, dialogical knowledge and communicative rationality are key components of the Theory of Communication Action, and are central to broader project of understanding how communication shapes our understanding of reality, our relationships with others, and our actions in the public sphere. Thus, communicative action basically incorporates the act of argumentation, reflection and understanding that looks for freedom from constraints and the obtrusion of ideas that obstruct individuality and critical knowledge.

#### **2.4. CONCEPT OF INTER-SUBJECTIVITY IN THE THEORY**

Inter-subjectivity is a central concept in the Theory of Communicative Action developed by Jürgen Habermas. It refers to the idea that our understanding of the world and our relationships with others are shaped by our interactions with other individuals. In other words, our sense of self and our understanding of reality are not fixed, but are constantly being constructed and negotiated through communication and interaction with others.

Habermas argues that inter-subjectivity is essential for understanding how communication works in social contexts. Communication is not simply a matter of transmitting information from one individual to another, but is a complex and dynamic process that involves shared meanings, values, and norms. Communication is shaped by the history of previous interactions between individuals, as well as the larger social, cultural, and historical contexts in which those interactions take place. Inter-subjectivity is essential for achieving communicative rationality, which is the capacity of individuals to engage in rational communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement. Communicative rationality is based on the assumption that individuals can participate in a shared process of reasoning and justification, in which claims are evaluated on their own merits rather than on the basis of power or authority. This process requires individuals to engage in open and transparent dialogue, to recognize the validity of other perspectives, and to be willing to revise their own views in light of new information.

It can be set apart as a social action which aims at autonomy through inter-subjectivity. Communicative action is mostly based on understanding and learning and for it to take place, the following claims of validity are assumed:

- a. Each subject who has the capability of conversing can take part in discussions,
- b. Actors to discussion can bring in their ideas, desires and convictions,
- c. An interlocutor cannot be stopped from using his rights with the use of internal nor external forces (Wood, 1985).

As for strategic action, actors do not have a primary interest of mutual understanding as to fulfill their respective individual goals which they bring forth in a particular situation. They bring about usage of certain tools which help them strategize their agendas and motives in a tactful manner. When discussing communicative action theory in the world of media, actors in the realm of media utilize various techniques in order to strategize. The use of propaganda becomes imperative and the strategic use of language. The use of propaganda techniques can be viewed evidently. These techniques are name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain-folk, card-stacking, and bandwagon (Lee & Lee, 1939). These tactics manipulate words to make them sound rational and simultaneously, exploit feelings too. This takes place at a large-scale level which also prevails on a state level. These tactics are noticed in all platforms of media. Therefore, propaganda is the tool used through the means of media.

## **2.5. COMMUNICATION MODELS UNDER THE COMMUNICATIVE ACTION THEORY**

The communicative action theory proposes two communication models: the strategic action model and the communicative action model (Habermas, 1984). In the strategic action model, communication is seen as a means of achieving specific goals, such as persuading someone to adopt a particular point of view or buy a product. The focus is on using language and other forms of communication to influence others and achieve one's objectives. Strategic communication is characterized by a sender who is in control of the message and its meaning, and who aims to manipulate the receiver's understanding of the situation.

In contrast, the communicative action model emphasizes the importance of language and discourse in shaping social reality, and highlights the role of communication in promoting social cohesion and cooperation (Habermas, 1984). In this model, communication is seen as a way of reaching mutual understanding and solving problems together. The focus is on dialogue and the exchange of ideas, rather than on persuasion or manipulation. Communicative action

is characterized by a joint effort to understand each other's perspectives, and to find a common solution to the problem at hand.

According to Habermas, communication is not just a tool for transmitting information, but is also a means of creating shared meanings and shaping social relationships. Both models are important in understanding communication, but the communicative action model is more relevant to promoting democratic practices, social justice, and inclusive decision-making processes. The model emphasizes the importance of dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation in promoting effective communication and problem-solving. In contrast, the strategic action model is often associated with propaganda, advertising, and other forms of communication that seek to manipulate or control people's beliefs and behaviors. The strategic action model is often used to promote specific interests or agendas, and may rely on techniques such as emotional appeals, fear-mongering, and misinformation to achieve its goals (Habermas, 1984).

In summary, the communicative action theory proposes two communication models: the strategic action model and the communicative action model. The communicative action model emphasizes the importance of dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation in promoting effective communication and problem-solving, while the strategic action model is often associated with propaganda and other forms of communication that seek to manipulate or control people's beliefs and behaviors. Both models are important in understanding communication, but the communicative action model is more relevant to promoting democratic practices, social justice, and inclusive decision-making processes.

## **2.6. THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND PROPOGANDA IN THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

Propaganda has been a significant aspect of politics since ancient times. The term propaganda refers to the dissemination of biased or misleading information to manipulate people's thoughts and opinions. Propaganda is a tool often used by political leaders to shape public opinion and mobilize support for their political agenda. In the context of International Relations (IR), propaganda is used by states to influence the perceptions and attitudes of other states and their citizens. Propaganda in politics and IR can take various forms, including mass media, advertising, speeches, rallies, and even military actions. One of the most common forms of propaganda in politics is the use of persuasive language to frame an issue in a particular way. For example, political leaders may use emotive language to manipulate public opinion and create an us-versus-them mentality towards other countries.

In IR, propaganda can be used to influence the policies and decisions of other states. One of the most prominent examples of propaganda in IR is the use of propaganda during the Cold War. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union used propaganda to shape public opinion and mobilize support for their respective political systems. The United States often portrayed the Soviet Union as an aggressive and expansionist power, while the Soviet Union depicted the United States as an imperialist and capitalist state. Another example of propaganda in IR is the use of propaganda during the Iraq War. The United States and its allies used propaganda to justify their invasion of Iraq by portraying Saddam Hussein as a threat to global security. The United States also used propaganda to justify the use of torture and other forms of human rights abuses in the fight against terrorism.

In conclusion, propaganda is a prevalent phenomenon in both politics and IR. Political leaders and states use propaganda to shape public opinion, create a sense of unity, and mobilize support for their political agendas. While propaganda can be used for positive purposes, such as raising awareness about a particular issue, it can also be used for negative purposes, such as manipulating public opinion and justifying human rights abuses. The role of media and propaganda is a central concern in the Theory of Communicative Action developed by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas argues that the media plays a key role in shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. In particular, he is concerned about the potential for propaganda to distort public discourse and undermine the principles of communicative rationality.

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action is based on the premise that communication is a fundamentally social activity that is shaped by inter-subjectivity and social interactions. This means that our understanding of the world and our relationships with others are constructed through communication with other individuals. Habermas argues that communication is most effective when it is based on dialogical knowledge and communicative rationality, which involves engaging in open and transparent dialogue that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement.

However, the media can sometimes be used strategically to promote certain interests or agendas, rather than to facilitate open and transparent communication. This is particularly true of propaganda, which is a form of communication that is aimed at manipulating public opinion through the selective use of information and persuasion tactics. Propaganda can be particularly dangerous because it can distort public discourse and undermine the principles of communicative rationality. When individuals are exposed to propaganda, they may be less likely to engage in open and transparent dialogue, and more likely to rely on biased or

incomplete information. This can create a situation in which individuals are unable to reach shared understanding or agreement, which can lead to social conflict and polarization.

To counteract the negative effects of propaganda, Habermas argues that individuals must engage in strategic communication that is based on the principles of communicative rationality. This means that individuals must be willing to engage in open and transparent dialogue, to recognize the validity of other perspectives, and to be willing to revise their own views in light of new information. By engaging in strategic communication that is based on the principles of communicative rationality, individuals can work to promote a more open and democratic public discourse, and to counteract the negative effects of propaganda in the realm of public sphere.

Therefore, propaganda strategies also play an imperative role when it comes to the theory of communicative action. Use of language with propaganda strategy building becomes oriented toward success by means of exerting influence over the opinions of the other party. Habermas believes that rationality does not necessarily include the possession of certain knowledge but instead how actors acquire and use that knowledge to converse. Such an account is said to be pragmatic as it talks about a number of distinctive features with other views that see interpreters as being competent and knowledgeable actors. Moreover, this pragmatic approach leads to an account of practical knowledge in the performative attitude which refers to the perspective of a competent speaker – being from the US or China. Therefore, a theory of rationality makes an attempt to recreate the practical knowledge which is needed to be a knowledgeable social actor. As per Habermas, language holds great importance and is the medium for coordinating action, although not the only medium for that purpose. Therefore, this highlights and makes the topic of how language is used and how opinions are expressed in a certain manner to eventually either manipulate the other party or to get your terms accepted by means of influence or consensual agreement.

Habermas believes a use of language to be oriented towards understanding as the ‘inherent telos’ of speech, and states that actors engage in ‘communicative action’ when they interact with one another with this attitude. As per the theory of communicative action, there exists a public sphere that is regarded as being an area where individuals point out societal issues, freely converse and by conversing they influence political action, which is dominated by certain norms which in turn determine the actions of people and represent the background against which all communication takes place (Wood, 1985).

A construct and narrative is built around which communication – with language being the medium – is to take place. As there exist different narratives on the basis of which actors – individuals, states, etc. build their arguments, this means that it leads to conflicting ideas and

different opinions within many actors. Habermas is of the opinion that each individual within the public sphere freely, without internal or external pressure conveys and builds arguments around his opinions hoping to reach a consensus. As for our topic, 'role of propaganda in politics', propaganda is a tool of media and communication plays a key role in media. For the purpose of effective execution of propaganda, communication is key and how one communicates, what sort of language he opts for, what terms he decides to make use of and his tone, greatly determines the effectivity of his propaganda agenda. As for strategic action, actors do not have a primary interest of mutual understanding as to fulfill their respective individual goals which they bring forth in a particular situation.

The media play a significant role in world politics. The reason that political issues are depicted in the media shapes them. The discourse in news, social media, academia, literature, films, and cinema is all a part of the vast field of media. The mainstream press can even be seen of as a forum for political discourse. Individuals, global organizations, and states make up the audience for international relations. They are also alluded to as the media-connected international actors. As a result, foreign entities frequently employ propaganda techniques to sway the media. The method employed to influence public opinion is propaganda. This is clear from discussions about Sino-US ties following the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that how international relations, notably between nations, are depicted in the media influences the public. Additionally, the application of propaganda to sway a global player is imminent. The impact of propaganda on international players is connected to its use. This demonstrates that how international politics is portrayed has an effect on state relations. In other words, propaganda and the media both play a contribution to the creation of stories that have an effect on interstate relations. Thus, it is an established fact that in the discipline of international affairs, media plays a major role in determining state relations; this causes the theory of communicative action to become integral in this day and age as the use of digital and print media is rampant. However, the actors in the realm of media then become states, and the public sphere becomes the platform of states relations.

However, what becomes imperative to note here is that constructivism plays a relatively important role while state relations are being discussed under the context of theory of communicative action.

## **2.7. INTERSECTION BETWEEN CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE LENS OF THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

Constructivism is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of social interactions and shared meanings in shaping individuals' perceptions of reality. According to constructivist perspectives, individuals actively construct their understanding of the world through cognitive processes influenced by their social and cultural contexts. In this context, narrative generation plays a significant role in the construction of meaning and knowledge. Narratives provide a framework for organizing and interpreting experiences, allowing individuals to make sense of complex phenomena. Constructivism and narrative generation are connected to communicative action theory, as they both emphasize the importance of social interaction and discourse in the construction of meaning. Communicative action theory posits that individuals engage in rational discourse to reach mutual understanding and agreement. Similarly, constructivism highlights the significance of dialogue and shared narratives in constructing knowledge and shaping social realities.

In the context of communicative action theory, narratives serve as a vehicle for expressing perspectives, values, and experiences. By sharing personal narratives, individuals contribute to the public sphere and enrich the diversity of voices and viewpoints. Narratives can challenge dominant narratives, bring marginalized voices to the forefront, and foster empathy and understanding among participants. In this way, narratives generated through communicative action contribute to the formation of collective identities and the construction of a shared social reality. Furthermore, constructivism and narrative generation offer a critical lens through which to examine the power dynamics within the public sphere. Both perspectives recognize that narratives are not neutral or objective representations of reality but are shaped by individuals' subjective experiences and social contexts. Dominant narratives often reflect the interests and perspectives of powerful groups, while marginalizing alternative narratives and voices. By engaging in communicative action, individuals can challenge and deconstruct dominant narratives, bringing attention to marginalized perspectives and promoting social justice.

Constructivism also highlights the dynamic nature of narratives and their potential for change. Narratives are not fixed entities but evolve through ongoing social interactions and negotiations. In the public sphere, communicative action facilitates the generation of new narratives, enabling individuals to collectively reimagine and reshape social realities. Through dialogue and deliberation, participants can challenge existing narratives, propose alternative narratives, and work towards the construction of more inclusive and just narratives that reflect

the diverse experiences and perspectives within society. Constructivism and narrative generation provide valuable insights into the construction of meaning and knowledge within the public sphere. They highlight the role of social interaction, discourse, and shared narratives in shaping individuals' perceptions of reality. By connecting these perspectives to communicative action theory, we recognize the significance of narratives in enriching the public sphere, challenging power dynamics, and fostering a more inclusive and just democratic discourse.

Through communicative action and the generation of narratives, individuals can actively contribute to the construction of social realities and the pursuit of democratic ideals. The use of constructivism becomes important in the theory of communicative action because the use of narratives and propaganda is generated through various constructs. Constructivism states the obvious, that the actions, interactions and perceptions shape reality. Social constructivists are of the thought that our ideas and thoughts are what construct international relations. Constructivism greatly benefits international relations as it addresses concepts that are not discussed by other theories. Social constructivists say that power, wealth and geographical conditions are not the only factors shaping state behavior but identities, norms and ideas are what shape it.

Constructivism is a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the active role of individuals in constructing knowledge and meaning while generating narratives through a discourse. Through collaborative construction, individuals engage in a process of co-creating and negotiating shared understandings of the world around them. This approach to learning and knowledge production is closely aligned with the Theory of Communicative Action. According to Habermas, communication is a fundamentally social activity that is shaped by inter-subjectivity and social interactions. When individuals engage in communication, they are not simply conveying information, but are actively constructing and negotiating their understanding of the world around them. This process involves listening to and responding to the perspectives and experiences of others, and working together to create a shared understanding that reflects the diversity of individual perspectives.

Collaborative construction is a key aspect of constructivist approaches to learning and knowledge production, as it emphasizes the importance of active engagement and participation in the learning process. In these approaches, knowledge is not seen as something that is transmitted from a teacher to a passive learner, but as something that is actively constructed through dialogue and interaction between individuals. This process of collaborative

construction is seen as essential for developing a deep and nuanced understanding of complex concepts and ideas.

Theory of Communicative Action offers a framework for understanding the process of collaborative construction, by emphasizing the importance of open and transparent communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement. Through communicative rationality, individuals can engage in a process of critical reflection and dialogue that allows them to examine their own assumptions and biases, and to incorporate diverse perspectives into their understanding of the world.

Overall, constructivism through the lens of the Theory of Communicative Action emphasizes the importance of collaboration, dialogue, and active engagement in the process of knowledge construction. By recognizing the collaborative and constructive nature of communication, individuals can become more effective learners and communicators, better able to engage with others in a spirit of openness, collaboration, and mutual respect. Doing so, constructivists offer alternative explanations and insights for events occurring in the social world. It depends on how actors perceive the actions of certain states as, not as what the actual motive was behind that specific action.

For example, 500 Indian nuclear weapons are not as threatening as five Chinese nuclear weapons for the US as the relations between them both and the US are different from each other. The attitude states have towards each other forms the basis of their interactions. This example also tells us that social constructivists emphasize on the effects ideas and beliefs have on world politics. Attitudes and perceptions regarding certain global actors and their actions give rise to a specific narrative being built on the basis of which policies and strategies towards the actor in question are devised and constructed.

As per constructivism, International Relations are defined as being socially constructed. This approach of international relations has its roots in other social theories such as the critical theory, structuration theory, postmodernism, etc. Alexander Wendt, one of the fathers of constructivism states that there exist two main tenants of this theory being the fact that structures of human association are decided upon by shared ideas instead of material forces, and the fact that identities of actors are constructed by these shared ideas instead of being by nature. Therefore, one idea considered by a state as a threat or interest to itself may not be seen as a threat or interest to another. Keeping this in mind, we must realize that repeated articulations of the idea that China is an enemy will create that situation in the minds of Americans.

Overtime, China will also come to the conclusion that it is indeed America's enemy even if initially it interprets this notion in a distinct manner. Constructivism is of the belief that individuals and societies construct each other. One another significant concept projected by Onuf is of 'speech acts,' that basically refer to the way of making use of language in a way to me the other act (Duffy and Frederking, 2009). Repeating a certain speech act brings in the belief that this speech act is important. Similarly, if the US goes on to state that China is its competitor, then in the end this situation will be constructed with the help of speech acts. There are multiple sources of media through which China is turned into an enemy of the US, such as policy documents, journals, television programs, newspapers etc.

Henceforth, the communicative action theory denotes the idea that the flow of information affects government decisions. During the flow of information, media serves as a medium. Furthermore, governments utilize propaganda strategies to influence their individuals. They utilize propaganda to construct narratives around certain states. The usage of propaganda strategies employs the usage of the approach of constructivism. Constructivism allows policy makers or decision takers to utilize narratives and construct narratives to use it against states.

## **2.8. APPLICATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO RESEARCH PROJECT**

The Theory of Communicative Action developed by Jürgen Habermas provides a useful framework for understanding the complex dynamics of communication and interaction between countries, such as the United States and China in the post-BRI era. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a major Chinese foreign policy initiative aimed at promoting economic and cultural cooperation across Asia and beyond. The US has expressed concerns about the potential implications of the BRI for regional security and economic stability, leading to a complex and dynamic relationship between the two countries. According to Habermas, communication is a fundamentally social activity that is shaped by inter-subjectivity and social interactions. When individuals engage in communication, they are not simply conveying information, but are actively constructing and negotiating their understanding of the world around them. In the case of US-China relations in the post-BRI era, this process involves a complex negotiation of competing interests, values, and perspectives.

To understand this negotiation process, it is important to examine the communicative actions of both the US and China, as well as the broader social, political, and economic contexts that shape these actions. Through open and transparent communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement, the two countries can work to overcome

differences and build more cooperative relationships. However, the potential for strategic communication and propaganda to distort public discourse and undermine the principles of communicative rationality must also be taken into account. Both the US and China have used strategic communication tactics in the post-BRI era to shape public opinion and promote their respective interests. This can create a situation in which individuals are unable to reach shared understanding or agreement, which can lead to social conflict and polarization.

To counteract the negative effects of strategic communication, it is important for individuals and groups to engage in collaborative construction, by working together to co-create and negotiate shared understandings of complex issues. Through this process of collaborative construction, individuals can develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the interests and perspectives of others, and work towards more constructive and cooperative relationships. Therefore, it is integral to note that the portrayal in media has an impact on the audience of international relations, especially states. Moreover, to influence an international actor, the use of propaganda is imminent. A link is established between the use of propaganda and its impact on international actors. This indicates that the relations of the state are impacted by the portrayal of international politics. In other words, media and propaganda contribute to the construction of narratives that impact state relations. In the case of Sino-US relations, both states are known to utilize strategies of propaganda. However, what is noteworthy is that the medium they use impacts the levels of individuals highlighted above in the realm of international relations. Most individuals are oblivious to the fact that the medium or the discourse constructs their perception about states when discussed on a holistic level, the individual's perception forms the state's perception (Gilboa, 2006).

For example, the US will appeal to China's desires and fears with the aim of motivating conduct on China's part that is needed for ensuring USA's success. Moreover, China would cooperate with the US not because it finds the latter's project to be inherently interesting, but because of what it is being able to get from it at the end of the day. This is how countries, and specifically in our case study, the US and China devise their policies towards one another and how they eventually spread propaganda against one another with the aim of instigating other parties against them. This demonstrates strategic action in Sino-US ties in which both parties are oriented towards their own success. It has been analyzed how the strategic actions of states lead to certain outcomes. We will be talking about how within the theory of communicative and strategic action, how via influence and consent linking it with propaganda and strategy building does social interaction be coordinated in Sino-US relations. When either side – the US

or China – makes use of language in a strategic manner, it manipulates language and instrumentalists the opposing party for its own benefit.

A state's identity – who it is and what it thinks of itself – will impact the course of its interactions and actions towards other states as it will eventually aim to uphold that particular notion of its standing in the global order. As for Sino-US ties, USA considers itself to be and has in reality, since post-Cold War era, remained the established hegemon, and it strives to maintain its hegemony while facing continuous challenges from its foe – China, especially in terms of economy. On the other hand, China is striving to rise as an economic hegemon and wishes to establish and maintain its standing as the rightful regional hegemon in South Asia, Through these sources certain statements are made which impact Sino-US ties. Firstly, when talking about policy documents the US National Security Strategy of May 2010 identifies security concerns of the US, and ways in which it is to address those concerns. For the purpose of identifying and characterizing a nation within National Security Strategy is a speech act that surely could place another nation on edge relying on the way China interprets the reference it is given by the US. Indeed consequences will have to be faced by the US as a result of making repetitive speech acts that have negative connotations for China. In the 2010 National Security Strategy China has been talked about at several instances where China has been referred to implicitly and been warned for violating human rights. This has made relations tense between the US and China. Words have played a major part in impacting Sino-US ties. While states make an attempt to reinforce behavior having a positive connotation and global norms, speech acts can have a negative connotation that worsen or make relations tense between them (Weiss & Dafoe, 2019).

In the post-BRI era, there have been several trends in the use of propaganda in China-US relations. Propaganda refers to the deliberate spread of information or ideas with the aim of influencing public opinion and shaping perceptions of events or issues. Both China and the US have used propaganda to promote their respective interests, but the specific tactics and strategies used by each country have varied. One trend in propaganda in China-US relations is the use of social media and other online platforms to spread propaganda and influence public opinion. In China, the government tightly controls the flow of information and uses social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo to disseminate its messages. The Chinese government has also been accused of using fake social media accounts and other tactics to spread disinformation and manipulate public opinion. In the US, social media platforms have been used extensively by political groups and individuals to spread propaganda and influence public opinion. This has led to concerns about the impact of social media on political

polarization and the erosion of trust in traditional news sources. In addition, the US government has also been accused of using propaganda to promote its foreign policy goals, particularly in the context of the US-China relationship. Another trend in propaganda in China-US relations is the use of cultural and diplomatic events to promote propaganda messages. For example, China has used cultural events such as the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai Expo to promote its image as a modern and dynamic country, while the US has used similar events such as the Super Bowl and the Academy Awards to promote its values and ideals. Finally, both China and the US have used propaganda to promote their respective economic interests. In the context of the BRI, China has used propaganda to promote the economic benefits of the initiative, while the US has used propaganda to highlight the potential risks and negative consequences of the BRI (Weiss & Dafoe, 2019).

Overall, propaganda in China-US relations in the post-BRI era is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, shaped by a variety of factors including political, social, economic, and cultural factors. By understanding these trends in propaganda, individuals and groups can become more aware of the potential impact of propaganda on their perceptions and beliefs, and work towards more open and transparent communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement. Therefore, the US and China, both will keep in mind their identities, and their respective perceptions when devising strategies and policies vis-à-vis each other. China is deemed to be a natural foe of the US as it is a large state having an economy that is growing at a rapid pace. Constructivism unlike realism or neorealism, states that actors construct the environment they reside in. The world is constructed by the interactions and exchanges that take place between states. Relating this theory of constructivism to Sino-US relations demonstrates and reflects on how the US is constructing a future world where China is perceived as being its foremost enemy, and constructing its narrative on that belief.

Thus, the Theory of Communicative Action provides a useful framework for understanding the complex dynamics of communication and interaction between countries, such as the United States and China in the post-BRI era. By recognizing the importance of open and transparent communication that is oriented towards reaching shared understanding and agreement, individuals and groups can work towards more constructive and cooperative relationships, while mitigating the potential negative effects of strategic communication and propaganda.

## **CHAPTER THREE: PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN US AND CHINA TILL BRI (1979-2015)**

For the purpose of understanding in detail reasons behind US refusing to recognize the PRC for almost three decades, it is essential to first look into the role of US national style and its Open Door Policy toward China that was considered by the US as a specific extension of its general moralistic national style. Throughout history, the US national style was dominated by isolationism in terms of its political entanglements in foreign policy, along with an emphasis on its own exceptionalism, and an aversion to power politics. War also included an important exception to isolation, however as soon as peace returned, the national style asked for a return to the conventional stance of political detachment towards other nations. It was only the altered balance of power in post WW2 era that could bring an end to this conventional state of affairs and force the US into a normalized involvement of global affairs. However, its conventional national style did not stop to influence its foreign policy positions and eventually compelled the US to opt for what it called a morally appropriate stance towards the People's Republic of China, specifically in light of its abhorrence of communism and its spread. Moreover, its Open Door Policy towards China of 1899 placed emphasis on the fact that other nations should guarantee the territorial and administrative integrity of China, and that no other nation should possess exclusive trading rights in any part of China. Therefore, the US held the opinion that it introduced a specifically moralistic understanding of foreign policy, while its Open Door policy stamped it as a special friend of China, different from other foreign powers that aimed to profit at China's expense.

The US hesitated to accept the new PRC due to the shock of the Chinese Communist triumph in 1949 after having long regarded the Nationalists as the legitimate government of China and its fear of global Communist growth following World War II. The success of the so-called "China Lobby's" domestic political campaigns in the US to accuse the Truman administration of selling Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) "down the river" to the Communists and the lobby's demands that the US continue to recognise the Nationalist government in Taiwan, which is now exiled, also played a significant role.

Given the negative US experience with China during the Korean War, this first US strategic stance was firmly established (1950–1953). Thus, the US argued that "Red China" or "The Peiping Regime" was not a responsible member of the World community and as such did not deserve recognition – a policy the US had used for more than 20 years to prevent the PRC from representing China in the UN. This was done for both domestic and foreign reasons. Only after

the Nixon administration understood that China's growing influence in world affairs made its non-recognition policy obsolete and counterproductive, did this policy start to shift. In 1979, the US formally recognized the PRC (Gunter, 2020).

### **3.1. HISTORY OF SINO US RELATIONS**

A considerable amount of time has passed since the US ultimately recognized the Peoples Republic of China in the year 1979. The China has risen as being the second to the global hegemon – the US, as having the most powerful economy worldwide. Numerous obstacles and challenges have come in the way of both China and the US having smooth relations. The most recent one can be termed as the 2019 Sino-US trade war that poses a threat to not only their mutual prosperity but also that of the world. However, hopefully, the 40 year long Sino-US diplomatic ties will aid them in avoiding the Thucydides Trap of devastating war caused by a newly established economic power challenging the old one.

one of the most dramatic announcements of the Cold War were when President Jimmy Carter made the statement of formally recognizing the People's Republic of China as of 1 January, 1979 and to sever ties with Taiwan. After Mao Zedong's successful revolution in China in 1949, the US did not agree to recognize the new communist regime. Instead, the US continued to recognize and supply the Nationalist Chinese government that had been set up by Chiang Kai-shek on the Taiwan Island. In the year 1950, while the Korean War was taking place, the US and China armed forces came face to face. During the 1960s, the US was outraged by the People's Republic of China supporting and providing aid to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

#### **3.1.1. AMERICAN AND CHINESE POINT OF VIEW REGARDING SINO-US TIES**

Nonetheless, by the 1970s, new circumstances were set in place. Viewing from the American point of view, closer ties with China would mean greater economic and political benefits. Speaking in terms of economy, US businessmen had the intention of taking maximum advantage of the Chinese market whereas politically, American policymakers were of the opinion that they could play the "China card" making use of closer diplomatic ties with China to put pressure on the Soviets into becoming more malleable on a number of issues such as arms agreements. Also, the PRC had grown to want to mend fences with its previous foe. It looked forward to the potential technologies it may acquire from the United States and desired the significant rise in trade that would ensue from normalised relations. The PRC was seeking allies as well. Vietnam and the Soviet Union had an agreement on mutual support,

and the Soviet Union was preparing for a military confrontation with its former partner (Monroe, 2012).

### **3.2. SINO-US RELATIONS SINCE INCEPTION TILL THE INITIATION OF BRI**

Towards the end of the 1960s, Nixon had the aim of improving relations between China and the US in order to increase American assets by carrying out a foreign policy of “maintaining the global balance”. He put a lot of emphasis on the fact that American policy in Asia has found itself in a dead alley and he continuously expressed his desire to go forth in the direction of a “Sino-US rapprochement” and to take up the initiative via Pakistan and Romania for the purpose of conveying messages to China. At the start of the 1970s, Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, continuing from the strategic needs of adjusting the big triangular relations between China, USA and the USSR, gave out such messages through means like requesting Edgar Snow, the American writer to convey the message and invite the American Table Tennis Teams to pay a visit to China, to the effect that China is eager to make contact with the US side and to bring out a thaw in the statement of relations between the US and China.

In April, a verbal message was sent to the US by the Chinese government regarding America’s proposal of conducting a high level talk between the two nations. It was as if China laid down certain conditions for this dialogue to be held as it stated that the US must withdraw its forces from China’s Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait area. A solution to this critical question can be noticed in direct talks between high level representatives of the US and China. Thus, the Chinese was welcome to receive high level US responsible persons like the Secretary of State or President Nixon himself for conducting direct discussions. President Nixon showed willingness to be ready to visit Beijing as he believed bilateral relations were of great significance. A secret meeting was proposed between envoy of the US President, Mr. Kissinger and a high level Chinese official in China, which was accepted by the latter, and this was conducted in July 1971. International situation was discussed in detail during the high level meeting and an agreement was reached on by Premier Zhou Enlai, on behalf of PRC’s government inviting President Nixon on 16 July, 1971, which was accepted by Nixon (Carter, 1979).

President Nixon and his group travelled to China for seven days beginning on February 21, 1972, when they arrived in Beijing. President Nixon met with Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai during the trip. The Sino-US relationship with an emphasis on the Taiwan

and Indo-China concerns was discussed during the two parties' exchange of opinions on the current state of the world.

After many consultations, the US and China issued the Joint Communiqué in Shanghai which is also known as the Shanghai Communiqué on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February in the year 1972. The Communiqué stipulates that the two sides will allow for progressive development of bilateral trade and the further development of contacts and exchanges between the US and China in fields of tech, science, culture, journalism, sports, etc. via multiple channels as well as a US representative making occasional visits to Beijing to further normalize and improve relations between the two nations and for greater exchange of views.

President Yahya Khan had played the role of a go-between China and the US by secretly communicating with Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and US President Richard Nixon that resulted in Dr. Henry Kissinger's journey from Islamabad to Beijing boarded on a Pakistan International Airline's (PIA) plane on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 1971. The first message from China was in the form of a handwritten note which had been personally dictated to Kissinger by Pakistani Ambassador to the US, Agha Hilaly. This was a historic breakthrough between the US and China, and Pakistan had played an indispensable role in making this happen.

With regards to the Taiwan question, China believes that this question is a significant obstruct to normalizing Sino-US ties. It goes ahead with reaffirming the stance that PRC is the only legal government of China, Taiwan is part of China, and no other nation can interfere in Taiwan's internal matters, and for withdrawal of all US forces from the region. China strongly opposed any activities that were in favour of "One China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," or an "independent Taiwan". As per the US side, it acknowledges that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The US government does not pose a challenge to this stance. It in fact reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement with regards to the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With regards to this prospect, the ultimate objective of American forces being withdrawn from Taiwan is put in place.

### **3.3. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND VICE PREMIER DENG XIAOPING'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES 1970S**

US President Jimmy Carter on taking over presidency in the early 1977 sent his Secretary of State Vance and his White House National Security Assistant Zbigniew Brzezinski to China in the same year in August as well as in May 1978 respectively for the purpose of holding talks on improving Sino-US ties. When Secretary of State made a visit to China in August 1977, the

American government was not very sure of accepting the three principles raised by China for setting diplomatic ties between the two nations. However, by May 1978, the US government was determined to establish diplomatic ties with China first and to then hold talks with the USSR from a superior stance with the aim to check the momentum of Soviet expansion as well as to fortify the international strategic status of the US. Brzezinski made it clear during his visit to China that the US was ready to accept the three Chinese principles regarding the establishment of Sino-US ties, and the fact that the US was eager to reach a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question. He made the announcement that the US had given Chief of US Liaison Office in China the authority to hold talks with the Chinese side regarding the aim of normalizing Sino-US ties.

China responded in a positive way to the message that Brzezinski made. Negotiations were conducted between the two parties in Beijing with regards to the establishment of diplomatic ties. The Taiwan question was the main challenge coming up in the negotiations. About after six months of negotiations, the US and China finally concluded that:

- a. US acknowledges the stance of China that exists and that the PRC is recognized by the US as the only legal Chinese government. Within the context, the US will uphold commercial, cultural and other unofficial ties with Taiwan people.
- b. Moreover, on the occasion of normalization of Sino-US ties, the US government will announce the immediate severance of its “diplomatic ties” with Taiwan, it will entirely withdraw from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait US forces before April 1979, while informing Taiwan of the abolition of the Mutual Defense Treaty.
- c. The US and China will recognize each other and conduct diplomatic relations as of 1 January, 1979 and also exchange ambassadors starting 1 March, 1979.

### **3.4. CHALLENGES TO DIPLOMATIC TIES BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA**

The US and China issued the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Peoples Republic of China and the United States of America in December 1978. Nonetheless, certain challenges were not resolved during the Sino-US talks. The US had the hope of China making use of peaceful means to come up with a resolution to the Taiwan question, while China gave importance to the fact that the means of coming up with a solution to this question was China’s internal affair that brooked no outside involvement. At the end, both parties announced their own statements regarding this

question. This just showed that even though diplomatic ties were established between the two nations, the US had not completely abandoned its intention of meddling in the internal matters of China.

Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping visited the United States from 29 January to 4 February 1979 at the invitation of President Carter with the goal of fostering greater understanding between the two nations and the growth of bilateral relations. The U.S. government and people extended a warm welcome to the Chinese leader during his first trip to the country since the People's Republic of China was established (Swaine, 2016).

Vice Premier Deng spoke with President Carter about the state of the world during his visit. On the Taiwan issue, Vice Premier Deng stated that China was willing to settle the matter peacefully but would not commit to refraining from using force because doing so would be detrimental to a peaceful resolution. Both sides agreed that the development of friendly relations and collaboration between the two countries shouldn't be hampered by disparities in the socioeconomic systems of the two nations, according to the Joint Press Communiqué released by both parties. Both a cultural pact and an agreement on scientific and technological collaboration were signed during the visit. Also, they agreed to cooperate in the fields of education, business, and space exploration as well as to develop consular ties and create general consulates in each other's nations.

The Tiananmen Square protests, also known as the June Fourth Incident, were a series of pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing, China in 1989. The protests began in April and lasted for several weeks, with students and other groups calling for greater political freedom and an end to government corruption. The Chinese government declared martial law on May 20, and on June 4, the military was ordered to clear the square by force. The exact number of casualties is unknown, but it is estimated that hundreds or even thousands of people were killed. In response to the government's actions, the United States imposed economic sanctions on China. On June 5, 1989, President George H.W. Bush announced a series of measures aimed at punishing China for its human rights abuses, including the suspension of all military sales and the banning of high-level contacts between the two countries. The United States also worked with other countries to condemn China's actions. On June 9, 1989, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 683, which expressed "deep concern" over the situation in China and called on the government to respect human rights. The economic sanctions imposed by the United States had a significant impact on China's economy. In the year following the Tiananmen Square protests, China's exports to the United States fell by 27%, and foreign

investment in China dropped by 29%. However, the sanctions were gradually lifted in the following years, as the United States sought to maintain a constructive relationship with China.

### **3.5. U.S.-CHINA AGREEMENT ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS 1997**

The U.S.-China Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights was signed in Washington, D.C. on February 26, 1997, by U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and Chinese Vice Premier Wu Bangguo. The agreement aimed to improve the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in China, which had long been a concern for U.S. businesses operating in the country. The agreement covered several areas, including copyright, trademarks, patents, and trade secrets. It required China to bring its laws and regulations into compliance with international standards, and to establish effective enforcement mechanisms to combat piracy and counterfeiting. The agreement also established a bilateral working group to monitor and enforce the provisions of the agreement.

The U.S.-China Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights was seen as a significant step forward in the U.S.-China trade relationship. It helped to address one of the key issues that had been a source of tension between the two countries, and paved the way for increased cooperation in other areas. However, the effectiveness of the agreement has been a subject of debate. While China has made some progress in improving its intellectual property regime, there have been ongoing concerns about piracy and counterfeiting in the country. The U.S. has continued to press China to do more to protect intellectual property rights, and the issue remains a major topic of discussion in the bilateral relationship.

In summary, the U.S.-China Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights was a landmark agreement that aimed to improve the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in China. While it represented an important step forward in the U.S.-China trade relationship, the effectiveness of the agreement has been a subject of ongoing debate and concern (International Trade Administration, 2022).

### **3.6. THE VIEW OF CHINA UNDER CINTON'S TENURE (1993-2001)**

In June 1999, President Bill Clinton made a historic visit to China, becoming the first U.S. President to visit the country since the Tiananmen Square protests a decade earlier. During his

trip, President Clinton held talks with Chinese leaders, including President Jiang Zemin, on a range of issues, including trade, human rights, and security. One of the key outcomes of the visit was the signing of the U.S.-China Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership. The statement affirmed the commitment of both countries to building a constructive and cooperative relationship, and outlined a framework for increased cooperation in areas such as economic development, regional security, and non-proliferation. The visit was also marked by protests and criticism from human rights groups, who accused President Clinton of downplaying human rights concerns in order to advance trade relations with China. In a speech at Beijing University, President Clinton called for greater freedom and democracy in China, but also praised the country's economic progress and cultural heritage.

Overall, President Clinton's visit to China was seen as an important step in the development of the U.S.-China relationship, and helped to pave the way for increased cooperation between the two countries in the years that followed. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) after 15 years of negotiations. This move marked a significant milestone for China's economic reform and opened up new opportunities for trade and investment with the rest of the world. The United States played a critical role in China's accession to the WTO, and granted China permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status shortly after its accession. China's accession to the WTO was a long and arduous process, as it required China to make significant changes to its economic system and trade practices to comply with WTO rules and regulations. Prior to its accession, China had operated under a command economy and had heavily regulated its trade and investment policies. Its accession required the country to open up its economy to foreign competition, reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and improve its protection of intellectual property rights.

The United States was one of the key supporters of China's accession to the WTO, seeing it as a way to open up new markets for U.S. exports and increase opportunities for U.S. investment in China. However, the U.S. also had concerns about China's trade practices and the impact of increased trade with China on U.S. jobs and industries. As a condition of its support for China's accession, the U.S. negotiated a number of market access commitments from China, including agreements to lower tariffs on a wide range of U.S. goods and services, and to open up certain sectors of its economy to foreign investment. Shortly after China's accession to the WTO, the U.S. granted China PNTR status, which removed the annual review process that had been in place since the 1980s to determine whether China should receive normal trade relations status.

PNTR status allowed U.S. companies to trade with China on the same terms as with other countries, and removed uncertainty for businesses that had previously been hesitant to invest in China due to the potential for political instability (Kelleher & Klein, 2002).

China's accession to the WTO and the granting of PNTR status by the U.S. had significant impacts on the global economy. China became the world's largest exporter and its economic growth accelerated, with GDP growth averaging around 10% per year in the decade following its accession. Trade between China and the rest of the world also increased dramatically, with China becoming a key player in global supply chains and a major consumer of commodities such as oil and metals.

However, the impacts of China's accession were not uniformly positive. Many U.S. workers and industries felt the effects of increased competition from China, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Critics of the U.S.'s support for China's accession argued that it had led to the offshoring of U.S. jobs and a decline in U.S. manufacturing competitiveness. In conclusion, China's accession to the WTO and the granting of PNTR status by the U.S. were significant milestones in the development of the U.S.-China trade relationship. While the move opened up new opportunities for trade and investment between the two countries, it also had significant impacts on the global economy and on U.S. industries and workers. The U.S.-China trade relationship remains a complex and sometimes contentious issue, and continues to be a major focus of policymakers and businesses on both sides of the Pacific.

### **3.7. SINO- US RELATIONS UNDER PRESIDENT BUSH (2001-2009)**

In 2005, President George W. Bush visited China and met with Chinese President Hu Jintao. The visit was aimed at strengthening the U.S.-China relationship, which had been strained by a number of issues, including human rights, trade, and Taiwan. During the visit, Bush and Hu discussed a range of issues, including North Korea's nuclear program, Iran's nuclear ambitions, and the U.S.-China trade relationship. One of the key outcomes of the visit was the establishment of the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), which aimed to deepen economic cooperation between the two countries and address issues such as currency exchange rates, intellectual property rights, and market access. The SED met annually until 2011, when it was replaced by the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED).

In 2008, China hosted the Olympic Games in Beijing, which was seen as a coming-out party for the country on the world stage. President Bush attended the opening ceremony, despite controversy over China's human rights record and its treatment of Tibet. The U.S. also sent a large delegation of athletes to the games, and American swimmer Michael Phelps won a record eight gold medals. However, Bush's tenure as president was also marked by a number of other important events related to China. In 2001, a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea, leading to the detention of the U.S. crew and a diplomatic standoff between the two countries. The incident was eventually resolved, but it highlighted the tensions between the U.S. and China over issues such as Taiwan and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Another important event was the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act in 2004, which was seen as a direct challenge to China's support for North Korea. The act imposed economic sanctions on North Korea and called on the U.S. government to support efforts to improve human rights in the country. China, which was North Korea's main ally and trading partner, strongly opposed the act and criticized the U.S. for interfering in its internal affairs. Bush's presidency also saw a number of trade disputes between the U.S. and China, particularly over issues such as intellectual property rights and currency exchange rates. In 2007, the U.S. filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over China's subsidies for domestic industries, which the U.S. claimed were unfairly distorting global trade. The complaint was eventually resolved through negotiations between the two countries, but it highlighted the ongoing tensions in the U.S.-China trade relationship.

In conclusion, Bush's presidency was marked by a number of important events related to China, including his visit to China in 2005, the establishment of the SED, and China's hosting of the Olympic Games in 2008. However, his tenure was also marked by tensions and disputes between the U.S. and China, particularly over issues such as human rights, North Korea, and trade. The U.S.-China relationship remains a complex and important issue for policymakers and businesses on both sides of the Pacific.

### **3.8. SINO- US RELATIONS UNDER PRESIDENT OBAMA (2009-2017)**

In 2009, President Barack Obama visited China and met with Chinese leaders, including President Hu Jintao. The visit was aimed at strengthening the U.S.-China relationship and addressing a range of issues, including trade, climate change, and North Korea's nuclear

program. During the visit, the U.S. and China announced a number of agreements, including a joint statement on climate change and clean energy. Two years later, in 2011, the United States announced its "pivot to Asia" policy, which signaled a renewed focus on the Asia-Pacific region and a shift in U.S. foreign policy away from the Middle East. The policy aimed to strengthen the U.S. relationships with countries in the region, including China, and promote economic growth, security, and democracy.

However, the "pivot to Asia" policy also reflected growing concerns in the U.S. and other countries about China's rise as a global superpower and its increasingly assertive behavior in the region. The policy was seen as a response to China's expanding influence in the Asia-Pacific, including its territorial disputes with Japan and other countries in the South China Sea. In 2013, China launched its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure development program aimed at enhancing connectivity and economic cooperation between countries. The BRI includes a range of projects, including the construction of highways, railways, ports, and other infrastructure across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

**FIGURE 3.1 MAP OF BRI**

**China's One Belt, One Road initiative**



*Source: ICS- Institute of Chinese Studies : China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Impact on India & its China Diplomacy*

The BRI has been touted by China as a way to promote economic growth, trade, and development in participating countries, and to strengthen China's relationships with these countries. However, the initiative has also been criticized for its potential negative impacts, including environmental damage, debt burdens, and concerns about transparency and

governance. The BRI has also been viewed by some countries as a way for China to expand its influence and strategic interests, particularly in countries that are economically and politically vulnerable. Some countries, such as India and Japan, have expressed concerns about China's growing influence in the region and have sought to counterbalance China's power through their own economic and diplomatic initiatives.

In conclusion, the visits of Presidents Obama and Hu, and the announcement of the "pivot to Asia" policy, marked a significant moment in the U.S.-China relationship, reflecting both opportunities for cooperation and concerns about China's growing influence in the region. The launch of the BRI also represents a major development in China's foreign policy and its efforts to expand its global reach and influence. The U.S. and other countries will need to carefully monitor the impact of the BRI and work to ensure that it promotes sustainable development and benefits all participating countries.

### **3.9. PORTRAYAL OF CHINA IN US MEDIA BEFORE BRI (1979-2015)**

Communicative Action Theory and Constructivist Theory can both provide insights into the ways in which the United States portrayed China in its media before the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The two theories differ in their focus and assumptions, but both are useful in analyzing the social and discursive practices that shape how we understand the world around us. Communicative Action Theory, developed by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, emphasizes the importance of communication and discourse in shaping social reality. According to this theory, communication is not simply a means of transmitting information, but is also a process of constructing and negotiating meaning. Communication involves the use of language and symbols to express ideas, beliefs, and values, and to engage in dialogue with others.

In the case of U.S. media coverage of China before the BRI, communicative action theory suggests that the portrayal of China in the media was shaped by discursive practices that reflected broader social and cultural norms and values. U.S. media coverage of China was influenced by a range of factors, including political, economic, and cultural factors, as well as the historical relationship between the two countries. Constructivist Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of social and cultural constructions in shaping our understanding of the world. According to this theory, reality is not simply given, but is constructed through social

and cultural practices. Constructivists argue that our understanding of the world is shaped by the meanings and values that we attach to particular objects, events, and processes.

In the case of the U.S. media coverage of China before the BRI, constructivist theory suggests that the portrayal of China was shaped by a range of cultural and social constructs that influenced how Americans understood and related to China. These constructs included ideas about China's history, culture, and political system, as well as stereotypes and myths about China and the Chinese people. Before the BRI, the U.S. media coverage of China was largely positive, as the U.S. government sought to engage with China and promote economic and cultural exchange between the two countries. The media portrayed China as a country with a rich cultural heritage and a rapidly developing economy, and highlighted the opportunities for trade and investment between the two countries.

**TABLE 3.1. SUMMARY OF DIPLOMATIC HISTORY**

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Major Diplomatic incidents</b>	<b>Implications on Bilateral Relations</b>
1950	Korean War	Worsened ties
1954	First Taiwan Strait Crisis	US threatened a nuclear attack on China
1959	Tibetan Uprising	US condemns China for human rights abuses
1964	China's first atomic testing	Tense Sino-US relations
1969	Sino-Soviet Border Conflict	Leads to China's Rapprochement with the US
1971	Ping-Pong Diplomacy	US recognizing the PRC
1971	President Nixon's visit to China	Signing of Shanghai Communique
1979	Formal Ties and One-China Policy	U.S. President Jimmy Carter grants China full diplomatic recognition, while acknowledging mainland China's One-China principle and severing normal ties with Taiwan
1982	Reagen Era	A third joint Communique is signed: Reaffirmation of US to one-china policy
1993	Policy of "constructive engagement" launched by Bill	
1999	Belgrade Embassy Bombing	Severs Sino-US ties, Chinese protests against US

2000	Signing of US-China Relations Act of 2000	Normalized Trade Relations
2001	Sino-US Spy Plane Standoff	Tense standoff, US member crews detained by Chinese authorities
2005	Sino-US strategic dialogue	US refers to China as a “responsible stakeholder”
2008	China as USA’s largest creditor	Increasing economic interdependence between USA and China
2012	US is critical of China’s trade policies	Trade relations become tense
2013	Sunnylands Summit	Obama and Xi vow to establish a new model of Sino-US relations
2014	Joint Climate Announcement	Boost momentum for global negotiations
2015	SCS Conflict	US warns China over SCS, resulting in tense relations
2018	Imposition of tariffs on China by the US	Adds to chances of Sino-US Trade war
2019	Tariffs on Chinese goods raised from 10 to 25 percent	Intensifies the Trade War
2020	Signing of ‘Phase One’ Trade Deal	Breakthrough in two year Sino-US trade war

However, the media also reflected a range of cultural and social constructs that influenced how Americans understood China. For example, the media often portrayed China as an exotic and mysterious country, with a culture and history that was distinct from that of the United States. This construct reflected a long history of cultural and social distance between China and the West, and reflected a broader tendency to view non-Western cultures as exotic and foreign. Another construct that influenced the media coverage of China was the idea of China as a threat to U.S. national security and economic interests. This construct reflected broader geopolitical tensions between the two countries, as well as concerns about China's growing economic and military power. The media often portrayed China as a competitor to the United States, and highlighted the potential risks of doing business with China. Overall, the U.S. media coverage of China before the BRI reflected a complex set of social and cultural practices that shaped how Americans understood and related to China. These practices reflected broader political, economic, and cultural factors, as well as the historical relationship between the two countries. The BRI represents a major development in China's foreign policy and its efforts to expand its

global reach and influence, and it remains to be seen how this initiative will be portrayed and understood by the U.S. media and the American public.

In conclusion, Communicative Action Theory and Constructivist Theory can both provide valuable insights into the ways in which the United States portrayed China in its media before the Belt and Road Initiative. According to the constructivist theory, the way in which China was portrayed before the BRI reflected the dominant beliefs and values of the US society at that time, which emphasized the superiority of liberal democratic values and the market economy. This construction of China as an economic competitor and a potential partner in the global market was largely based on the US economic and strategic interests and was reinforced by media and political elites in the country. However, with the launch of the BRI and China's increasing influence in the global economy and politics, the constructs around China have shifted, and the US has increasingly viewed China as a strategic competitor and a threat to its interests, leading to the adoption of more negative and critical views in the media and political discourse.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CHINESE AND US NARRATIVES SURROUNDING BRI PROGRAM**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the most ambitious and expansive development projects in modern times, seeking to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa through a network of infrastructure and economic initiatives. Launched by China's President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI aims to promote economic growth, facilitate infrastructure development, and enhance connectivity between countries across the region. The BRI has been widely discussed in terms of its economic implications, but its political dimensions have received less attention.

The BRI has been the subject of intense debate and analysis by scholars, policymakers, and media outlets worldwide. Supporters of the BRI argue that it will promote economic development, reduce poverty, and enhance regional integration. They highlight the potential benefits of infrastructure investment, increased trade and investment, and greater connectivity between countries. Moreover, proponents see the BRI as a way to promote China's peaceful rise and leadership in the region and beyond. However, critics have raised concerns about the BRI's political implications, including the risk of debt traps, environmental damage, and the erosion of local cultures and traditions. Some have also questioned China's intentions in promoting the project, arguing that it represents a challenge to the existing world order and a potential threat to regional stability.

In this context, the role of narratives in shaping power politics in the post-BRI era has become increasingly significant. Narratives are stories or accounts that frame our understanding of the world and the events that shape it. They shape our perceptions of reality, influence our attitudes and behaviors, and have significant political implications. In the case of the BRI, narratives have played a critical role in shaping our understanding of the project and its political implications. Narratives of Chinese leadership, development and modernization, geopolitical competition, and connectivity and interdependence have emerged, each with its own set of implications for power politics in the region.

The narrative of Chinese leadership portrays the BRI as a manifestation of China's growing economic and political influence in the region. This narrative has been reinforced by President Xi Jinping's description of the BRI as a "project of the century." The narrative of Chinese leadership has implications for power politics in the region, raising questions about China's intentions and its relations with other regional powers. The narrative of development and modernization portrays the BRI as a means to promote economic growth and reduce poverty in the region. Proponents argue that the project will facilitate infrastructure development,

increase trade and investment, and enhance connectivity between countries. However, critics have raised concerns about the potential risks of environmental damage, displacement of local communities, and the erosion of local cultures and traditions.

The narrative of geopolitical competition portrays the BRI as a manifestation of China's growing ambitions to challenge the existing world order and to assert itself as a global power. The project has also been viewed as a response to the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which were seen by some as efforts to contain China's rise. This narrative of geopolitical competition has significant implications for power politics in the region, raising concerns about a potential "new Cold War" between the US and China, as well as increased tensions between China and other regional powers.

Finally, the narrative of connectivity and interdependence portrays the BRI as a means to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties between countries in the region. The project has been seen as a way to promote regional integration and to reduce the potential for conflict and instability. This narrative of connectivity and interdependence has significant implications for power politics in the region, raising calls for greater cooperation and collaboration between countries, as well as for the development of regional governance mechanisms to manage disputes and promote stability. In conclusion, the BRI is a complex and multifaceted project that has significant political implications for the region and beyond.

#### **4.1. THE BRI AND NARRATIVES OF CHINESE LEADERSHIP**

One of the key narratives that emerged in the wake of the BRI is that of Chinese leadership. China's push to promote the BRI has been presented as a manifestation of its growing economic and political influence in the region. Chinese President Xi Jinping's description of the BRI as a "project of the century" has further reinforced this narrative (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). This narrative of Chinese leadership is not without its critics, however. Some have argued that the BRI is a thinly veiled attempt to extend Chinese influence and power across the region, and that it represents a challenge to the existing world order (Koh, 2019). Others have pointed to the potential risks of overreliance on Chinese investment and the possibility of debt traps for developing countries involved in the project (Brautigam, 2018).

The narrative of Chinese leadership has emerged as a dominant theme in discussions of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Proponents of the BRI argue that China's push to promote economic development and enhance connectivity across the region is a reflection of its growing economic and political influence in the region. This narrative has been reinforced by Chinese President Xi Jinping's description of the BRI as a "project of the century" and his call for China

to play a greater role in shaping the global order (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). Supporters of the narrative of Chinese leadership argue that the BRI represents a new model of development that challenges the traditional approach of Western-led institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. According to this narrative, China is uniquely positioned to lead the region in addressing the challenges of economic development and poverty reduction, and to provide an alternative vision for global governance that reflects the interests of developing countries.

However, critics have raised concerns about the implications of this narrative for power politics in the region. Some argue that China's push to extend its influence through the BRI represents a challenge to the existing world order and a potential threat to regional stability (Koh, 2019). Others have raised concerns about the risk of debt traps for developing countries involved in the project, and the potential for China to use its economic leverage to exert political influence (Brautigam, 2018). Moreover, the narrative of Chinese leadership has implications for China's relations with other regional powers. The BRI has been seen by some as a reflection of China's growing ambitions to challenge the United States as the dominant global power. This has raised concerns about a potential "new Cold War" between the US and China, as well as tensions between China and other regional powers such as Japan and India (Breslin, 2018).

In response to these concerns, China has sought to reassure the international community that the BRI is not a tool of Chinese hegemony or expansionism. Chinese officials have emphasized the project's commitment to principles of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, and have pledged to work with other countries to ensure that the BRI contributes to regional development and stability (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Despite these reassurances, the narrative of Chinese leadership remains a point of contention in discussions of the BRI. Critics argue that China's push to promote economic development and enhance connectivity across the region is motivated by a desire to extend its influence and power, and that the BRI represents a challenge to the existing world order. Proponents, on the other hand, see the BRI as a reflection of China's growing economic and political influence in the region, and a means to promote regional integration and development.

In conclusion, the narrative of Chinese leadership has emerged as a dominant theme in discussions of the Belt and Road Initiative. While supporters argue that the BRI represents a new model of development that challenges traditional Western-led institutions, critics have raised concerns about the potential implications of Chinese leadership for power politics in the region. The narrative of Chinese leadership has significant implications for China's relations with other regional powers, and for the future of global governance and international relations.

## 4.2. NARRATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION

Another prominent narrative in the post-BRI era is that of development and modernization. The BRI has been presented as a means to promote economic growth and reduce poverty in the region. Proponents of the project argue that it will facilitate infrastructure development, increase trade and investment, and enhance connectivity between countries. This narrative has been particularly appealing to developing countries in the region, many of whom see the BRI as an opportunity to attract much-needed investment and to modernize their infrastructure. However, critics have pointed to the potential risks of environmental damage, displacement of local communities, and the erosion of local cultures and traditions (Ferdinand, 2017).

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**FIGURE 4.1 COUNTRIES OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)**

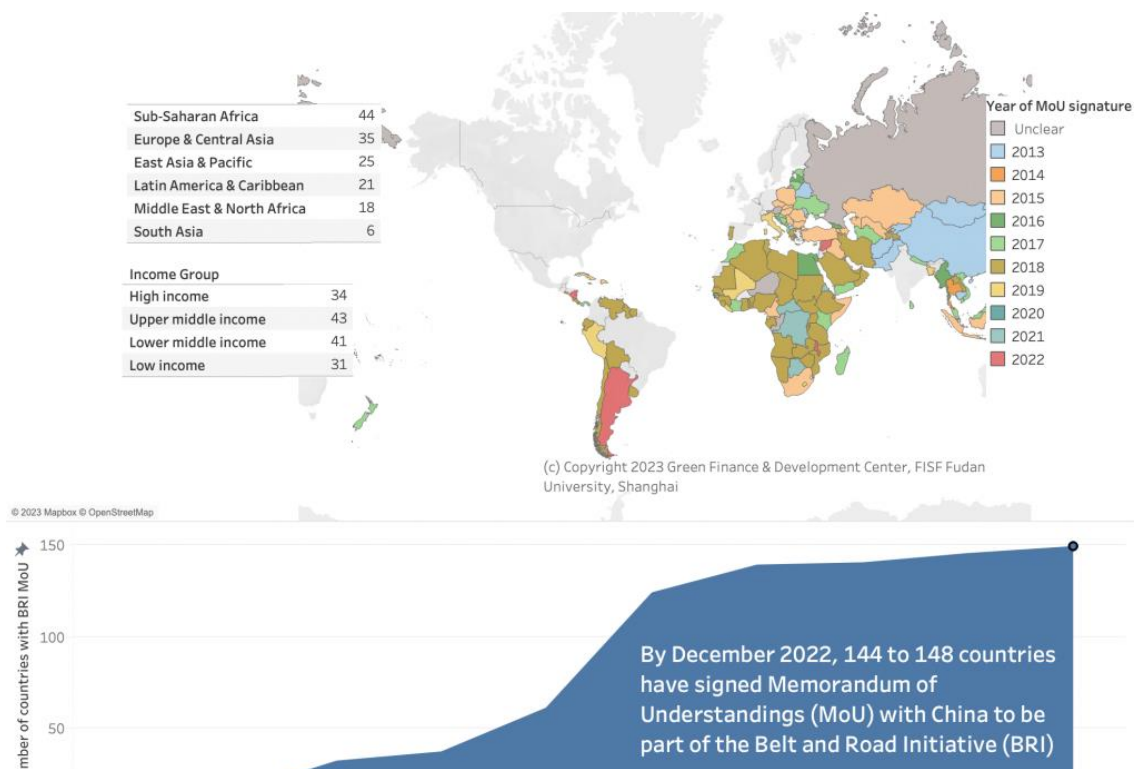


Figure Source: 2Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – by December 2022, 144 to 148 countries had signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with China to cooperate under the BRI framework

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been widely presented as a narrative of development and modernization, which aims to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and facilitate infrastructure development in the region. Proponents of the BRI argue that the project has the potential to increase trade and investment, enhance connectivity between countries, and promote economic integration across Asia, Europe, and Africa. This narrative has been particularly appealing to developing countries in the region, who see the BRI as a means to attract much-needed investment and modernize their infrastructure.

The narrative of development and modernization has its roots in the discourse of modernization theory, which emerged in the post-World War II era as a response to the challenges of development faced by newly independent countries in the Global South. Modernization theory posited that economic development and social change were necessary to achieve modernity and to catch up with the West. This narrative has been used by China to present the BRI as a model of development that challenges the traditional approach of Western-led institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Critics, however, have raised concerns about the potential risks associated with the BRI. Environmental damage, displacement of local communities, and the erosion of local cultures and traditions are some of the potential risks that have been highlighted (Ferdinand, 2017). The large-scale infrastructure projects that are central to the BRI have been criticized for their potential environmental impact, including deforestation, water pollution, and habitat destruction. Critics have also pointed to the risks of overreliance on Chinese investment, the potential for debt traps for developing countries involved in the project, and the possibility of unequal power relations between China and other countries in the region (Manning, 2016)..

Moreover, the narrative of development and modernization has implications for the way in which development is understood and practiced. The focus on economic growth and modernization often neglects social and environmental concerns, leading to the marginalization of vulnerable communities and the exacerbation of inequality. This has been particularly evident in the case of large-scale infrastructure projects, which have been criticized for their disregard of local communities and their traditional livelihoods. Despite these concerns, the narrative of development and modernization remains a dominant theme in discussions of the BRI. The appeal of economic growth and modernization is particularly strong in developing countries, where infrastructure development is seen as a key to unlocking economic potential and reducing poverty. The narrative of development and modernization has also been used by China to promote the BRI as a model of development that is based on mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

In conclusion, the narrative of development and modernization has emerged as a dominant theme in discussions of the Belt and Road Initiative. While proponents see the BRI as a means to promote economic growth and modernize infrastructure in the region, critics have raised concerns about the potential risks associated with the project. The focus on economic growth and modernization often neglects social and environmental concerns, leading to the marginalization of vulnerable communities and the exacerbation of inequality. The narrative of development and modernization has implications for the way in which development is understood and practiced, and highlights the need for a more inclusive and sustainable approach to development.

### **4.3. NARRATIVES OF GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION**

A third narrative that has emerged in the post-BRI era is that of geopolitical competition. The BRI has been seen by some as a manifestation of China's growing ambitions to challenge the existing world order and to assert itself as a global power. The project has also been viewed as a response to the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which were seen by some as efforts to contain China's rise (Manning, 2016). This narrative of geopolitical competition has significant implications for power politics in the region. It has led to concerns about a potential "new Cold War" between the US and China, as well as increased tensions between China and other regional powers such as India and Japan.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been a subject of significant geopolitical analysis since its launch in 2013. The initiative has been viewed through multiple lenses, including those of economic development, infrastructure connectivity, and political influence. One of the most prominent narratives that have emerged in the post-BRI era is that of geopolitical competition. This narrative centers on the perception of China's growing ambitions to challenge the existing world order and to assert itself as a global power. This paper explores the narratives of geopolitical competition that have emerged in the post-BRI era and their implications for power politics in the region. The narrative of geopolitical competition in the post-BRI era has been fueled by several factors. First, China's growing economic and military power has raised concerns among regional and global powers about its intentions. Some view the BRI as a means of extending Chinese influence and power across the region and beyond. This view has been reinforced by Chinese President Xi Jinping's description of the BRI as a "project of the century," further underscoring China's ambitions for global leadership (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). Second, the BRI has been viewed as a response to the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which were seen by some as efforts to contain China's rise (Manning, 2016).

The narrative of geopolitical competition has significant implications for power politics in the region. It has led to concerns about a potential "new Cold War" between the US and China, as well as increased

tensions between China and other regional powers such as India and Japan. The BRI has been viewed as a challenge to the existing world order, particularly the US-led global system. Some experts argue that the initiative represents an alternative model of economic and political governance that poses a threat to the US-led liberal order (Acharya, 2018).

Moreover, the BRI's focus on infrastructure development has raised concerns about its potential military applications. The initiative's emphasis on ports, railways, and other transportation infrastructure has led some to speculate that China could use these assets for military purposes in the future (Liu & Song, 2019). This perception has led to increased scrutiny of China's activities in the region, particularly in the South China Sea. The narrative of geopolitical competition has also had implications for regional cooperation and governance. Some experts argue that the BRI's emphasis on bilateral agreements and infrastructure development could undermine existing regional governance mechanisms. The initiative's focus on bilateral deals rather than multilateral agreements has been seen as a challenge to existing regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Zhang, 2019).

On the other hand, some experts argue that the BRI could provide an opportunity for increased regional cooperation and integration. The initiative's focus on infrastructure development could help to facilitate regional connectivity and reduce the potential for conflict and instability. Some have even suggested that the BRI could be integrated into existing regional governance mechanisms, such as the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (Zhang, 2019).

In conclusion, the narrative of geopolitical competition in the post-BRI era has significant implications for power politics in the region. The perception of China's growing ambitions to challenge the existing world order has led to concerns about a potential "new Cold War" between the US and China, as well as increased tensions between China and other regional powers. This narrative has also had implications for regional cooperation and governance, with some experts arguing that the BRI's emphasis on bilateral agreements and infrastructure development could undermine existing regional organizations.

#### **4.4. NARRATIVES OF CONNECTIVITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE**

A fourth narrative that has emerged in the post-BRI era is that of connectivity and interdependence. The BRI has been presented as a means to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties between countries in the region. The project has been seen as a way to promote regional integration and to reduce the potential for conflict and instability. This narrative of connectivity and interdependence has significant implications for power politics in the region. It has led to calls for greater cooperation and collaboration between countries, as well as for the development of regional governance mechanisms to manage disputes and promote stability (Zhang, 2018).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been widely hailed as a project that will enhance connectivity and promote economic development across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Proponents of the project argue that it will facilitate infrastructure development, increase trade and investment, and enhance connectivity between countries. However, the BRI has also been criticized as a thinly veiled attempt to extend Chinese influence and power across the region, and as a challenge to the existing world order. In this paper, we explore the narrative of connectivity and interdependence in the post-BRI era, and its implications for power politics in the region.

One of the key narratives that has emerged in the post-BRI era is that of connectivity and interdependence. The BRI has been presented as a means to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties between countries in the region. The project has been seen as a way to promote regional integration and to reduce the potential for conflict and instability. This narrative of connectivity and interdependence has significant implications for power politics in the region. One of the main implications of the narrative of connectivity and interdependence is the promotion of greater cooperation and collaboration between countries. As countries become more interconnected, they are likely to have greater incentive to work together to address common challenges and to promote shared goals. This could lead to the development of regional governance mechanisms to manage disputes and promote stability.

For example, the BRI has spurred the development of new institutions and platforms for regional cooperation, such as the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These institutions and platforms are designed to facilitate greater economic integration and cooperation between countries in the region. The AIIB, in particular, has been seen as a potential challenger to the existing global financial order dominated by Western countries and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. However, the narrative of connectivity and interdependence is not without its critics. Some have argued that the BRI could exacerbate existing geopolitical tensions and rivalries in the region. For example, India has been skeptical of the project, viewing it as a way for China to extend its influence in South Asia and to encircle India. India has also raised concerns about the strategic implications of Chinese investment in ports and other critical infrastructure in the region.

Another concern is that the narrative of connectivity and interdependence could mask the underlying power dynamics at play in the region. While the BRI has been presented as a way to promote economic development and regional integration, it is also a manifestation of Chinese power and influence. As such, the project could be seen as a way for China to shape

the regional order in its favor, and to advance its own strategic interests. Furthermore, the promotion of connectivity and interdependence could also lead to increased dependence on China for critical infrastructure and technology. This could have implications for the sovereignty and independence of countries in the region, and could also exacerbate existing power imbalances between China and other countries in the region.

In conclusion, the narrative of connectivity and interdependence has significant implications for power politics in the post-BRI era. While it has the potential to promote greater cooperation and collaboration between countries in the region, it could also exacerbate existing geopolitical tensions and rivalries. It is important for policymakers and scholars to critically examine the underlying power dynamics at play in the region, and to develop strategies to ensure that the benefits of connectivity and interdependence are shared in a way that is equitable and sustainable.

However, these were the narratives regarding BRI reflected by the Chinese leadership. The following is the US narrative of the Chinese BRI program.

#### **4.5. US PORTRAYAL OF BRI PROGRAMME**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a development program launched by China in 2013, aimed at building infrastructure to promote economic growth and regional integration. However, the US media's coverage of the BRI has been influenced by the historical relationship between China and the West, which has often been characterized by bias and Orientalist attitudes. This bias can be traced back to the colonial era, when Western powers sought to dominate and control China. The US media has often portrayed the BRI as a sinister strategy by China to expand its influence and undermine US interests, using techniques such as selective framing, demonization, name-calling, and guilt by association. This framing is influenced by broader narratives about the "China threat" promoted by US policymakers and think tanks.

The US media has played a significant role in shaping public opinion about the BRI and China's intentions behind it. However, this coverage cannot be understood in isolation from the historical relationship between China and the West, which has influenced the way China is perceived and portrayed in the media.

The history of Western media coverage of China is characterized by a long-standing bias and Orientalist attitudes, which have often depicted China as an exotic, inscrutable, and inferior "other" (Jin & Harindranath, 2017). This bias can be traced back to the era of colonialism and imperialism, when Western powers sought to dominate and control China. Even after China gained independence, Western media continued to portray China as a backward, authoritarian

country that was hostile to the West. This bias has persisted to this day, as seen in media coverage of issues such as human rights, Tibet, and Taiwan. The US media's portrayal of the BRI can be seen as part of this broader trend of Orientalist attitudes and bias towards China. The US government has been critical of the BRI, viewing it as a threat to US global dominance and influence. In response, the US media has often framed the BRI as a sinister geopolitical strategy aimed at expanding China's influence and undermining US interests.

#### **4.6. PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES AND MEDIA FRAMING USED BY US MEDIA TO PORTRAY BRI PROGRAM**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a massive infrastructure development program launched by China in 2013, aimed at promoting economic growth and regional integration. The BRI has received significant media coverage in the US, with the US media playing a crucial role in shaping public opinion about the initiative and China's intentions behind it. This essay explores how media framing and agenda setting can shape the way audiences understand China, with specific examples drawn from media coverage of China's economic rise and military expansion. Media framing refers to the way that news stories are presented to the public, including the language, tone, and perspective used. Framing can influence how audiences perceive a particular issue or event, as it can highlight certain aspects of the story while downplaying or ignoring others. Agenda setting refers to the way that the media can influence what issues are seen as important or relevant by the public, by deciding what stories to cover and how to cover them.

Media framing and agenda setting can have significant implications for how audiences understand China. For example, media coverage of China's economic rise may emphasize threats to Western businesses rather than opportunities for collaboration. This framing can create a narrative of China as an aggressive and predatory economic actor that is seeking to undermine Western interests. Such a framing is often associated with a broader narrative of the "China threat," which has been promoted by US policymakers and think tanks. Similarly, media coverage of China's military expansion may emphasize threats to the US rather than China's own security concerns. This framing can create a narrative of China as a dangerous and aggressive military power that is seeking to challenge US dominance in the region. Such a framing can be associated with a broader narrative of the "Indo-Pacific strategy," which has been promoted by the US government as a way of countering China's growing influence in the region.

Media framing and agenda setting are influenced by a range of factors, including political, economic, and cultural factors. For example, the US media's framing of China may be influenced by the US government's foreign policy objectives, as well as by cultural stereotypes and biases about China. Additionally, media ownership and financing can also influence the way that news stories are framed and agenda set. One example of media framing and agenda setting can be seen in media coverage of China's investments in Africa. In the US media, China's investments in Africa have often been framed as a form of neocolonialism, with China being accused of exploiting African resources and saddling African countries with debt. This framing can be seen as part of a broader narrative of the "China threat," which portrays China as a dangerous and aggressive power that is seeking to undermine Western interests. Such a framing ignores the potential benefits of China's investments in Africa, including infrastructure development and job creation.

Another example of media framing and agenda setting can be seen in media coverage of China's military activities in the South China Sea. In the US media, China's military activities in the South China Sea have often been framed as a threat to US interests and regional stability. This framing can be seen as part of a broader narrative of the "Indo-Pacific strategy," which portrays China as a dangerous and aggressive military power that is seeking to challenge US dominance in the region. Such a framing ignores China's own security concerns in the region, as well as the role that US military activities in the region have played in exacerbating tensions.

One propaganda technique that the US media has used to construct this narrative is selective framing. Selective framing involves emphasizing certain aspects of a story while downplaying or ignoring others, in order to create a particular impression or narrative. In the case of the BRI, the US media has often focused on negative aspects of the program, such as the potential for debt trap diplomacy or the lack of transparency and accountability, while downplaying its potential economic benefits and the fact that many countries have voluntarily chosen to participate in the program. Another propaganda technique that the US media has used is demonization. Demonization involves portraying an individual or group as evil, dangerous, or immoral, in order to create a sense of fear and hostility towards them. In the case of the BRI, the US media has often portrayed China as a sinister and predatory actor that is seeking to dominate and control other countries. This demonization has been fueled by a broader narrative of the "China threat," which has been promoted by US policymakers and think tanks. Finally, the US media has also used propaganda techniques such as name-calling and guilt by association. Name-calling involves using derogatory or inflammatory terms to describe an individual or group, in order to discredit them. In the case of the BRI, the US media has often

used terms such as "debt trap diplomacy" or "neo-colonialism" to describe China's motives and actions. Guilt by association involves associating an individual or group with negative or disreputable actions or individuals, in order to tarnish their reputation. In the case of the BRI, the US media has often associated the program with corruption, authoritarianism, and human rights abuses in China.

In addition, the US media also uses emotional appeals to influence public opinion about China, such as fear and patriotism. The US media often frames China's economic rise as a threat to US businesses and jobs, creating a sense of fear among the US public. Additionally, the US media often portrays China as an ideological and political adversary, creating a sense of patriotism and national identity among the US public. Selective reporting is another propaganda technique used by the US media to influence public opinion about China. This technique involves reporting on certain events or issues while ignoring others, often to support a particular narrative or agenda. For example, the US media often ignores China's efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak and provide aid to other countries, while emphasizing the negative aspects of China's response to the outbreak.

In conclusion, the US media's portrayal of the BRI is shaped by a long history of bias and Orientalist attitudes towards China, as well as by US government policies and narratives about the "China threat." The US media has used propaganda techniques such as selective framing, demonization, name-calling, and guilt by association to construct. The media framing and agenda setting can shape the way that audiences understand China, with significant implications for US-China relations. The US media's framing of China is often influenced by political, economic, and cultural factors, as well as by broader narratives of the "China threat" promoted by US policymakers and think tanks. It is important to critically analyze media coverage of China and to consider alternative perspectives that may challenge dominant narratives and biases.

NARRATIVES OF BRI	
Chinese narrative of BRI	US narrative of BRI
Narratives of development and modernization	Narratives of portraying China as a "threat"
Narratives of geopolitical competition	Narratives of BRI under the label of neo-colonialism

Narratives of connectivity and interdependence	Narratives of portraying China as the “other”
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#### 4.6.1 ANALYSIS OF US AND CHINESE JOURNALISTIC TEXTS

Texts are conversational and journalistic texts are also conversational. Journalists can express their own views and attitudes and have a dialogue with readers by intervening in others' words in their reports.

For Example

Example 9: "China doing better in 2020, is very important for China. It is also very important for the rest of the world given China's share in the world economy," the IMF chief emphasized.

Example 10: China has made a "promising start to rebooting its economy" and controlling the spread of COVID-19, according to a report from Imperial College London, providing hope for nations in lockdown due to the pandemic.

Example 11: "I want to thank Shanghai and our sister city Guangzhou, who are sending medical masks and widely needed personal protective equipment for our front line doctors and nurses and medical teams," Garcetti said." This is the power of partnerships This is how we tap into our relationships in order to protect our people." (Garcetti)

In Examples 9, 10, and 11, China Daily has directly introduced the discourse of authoritative figures. The use of words such as "important", "promising" and "rebooting" shows that China's economy, despite the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic is still on a good momentum of development and will contribute to the recovery of the world economy. Example 11 directly quotes the statement of the mayor of Los Angeles. On one hand, it shows the severity of the epidemic in the United States. On the other hand, it shows that China is practicing a community with a shared future for mankind, practicing the humanitarian spirit and helping other countries overcome the epidemic at an early date. This is what China is trying to do.

#### 4.6.2 COMPARISON OF THE WORDS USED IN NEWS REPORTS ABOUT THE COVID-19

The media plays a very important role in how to objectively report the epidemic, reduce public panic and maintain social stability.

After searching the Time's reports about the COVID-19 from January 6 to February 3, we analyzed the keywords. In reporting the progress of the epidemic, the paper used many keywords including "spike", "exponentially" and "enormous". By comparison, the keywords used by China Daily, such as "increase", "climb to", "bring the number to" and "total" are more

objective and neutral. In English, the word "exponentially" has been coined to describe the number of cases that have been confirmed. China Daily's standard use of words can help people rationally and correctly view the progress of the event. The authors found that Time exaggerated the danger of the virus and the consequences of its spread. For example, Time uses the word "spread" more than 200 times to describe the spread of a virus or panic. On average, there are nearly four mentions per story and most of them are used as a verb. Like another popular phrase, "pass around," "spread" here focuses on a virus "spreading around," which tends to create negative impressions and panic.

In contrast, China Daily's extensive use of the word "spread" appears almost exclusively as a noun. Instead, they are often accompanied by "curb", "control" and "contain" to signal the government's efforts to curb the spread of the disease. China Daily has spread throughout the country and among Chinese people throughout the country. In addition, Time wrote that the COVID-19 infection pneumonia is a "global pandemic." A pandemic is a large one with a large number of deaths. It can even affect infectious diseases on many continents around the world. Time looks at the social, economic, and political impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. In many articles, words such as "crisis, workers, factories, flights, passengers, supplies, travelers, departing" frequently appear. For example, with the further spread of COVID-19 and the continuous upgrading of epidemic prevention and control measures, many of the country's enterprises and factories have been shut down. Some flights have been canceled and the normal operation of society has been greatly affected. In the context of globalization, the damage caused by the epidemic to the domestic economy and financial market will inevitably spread to all countries in the world.

#### **4.3.1 CNN'S DEROGATORY REMARKS AGAINST CHINA**

One of CNN's commentators labeled Chinese as "goons" and its products as "junk", making China lodge a formal complaint against US television network and demanding sincere apology for this vicious attack. CNN responded to China's initial criticism by saying there had been no intent to cause offence and that it "would apologize to anyone who has interpreted the comments in this way". It said commentator Jack Cafferty was offering a "strongly held" opinion of the Chinese government, not the people. According to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu, that was not enough.

"Their statement not only did not make a sincere apology, but also took aim at the Chinese government, attempting to sow discord in the relationship between the Chinese people and the Chinese government," Jiang said.

Cafferty, the CNN commentator, had said the United States imported Chinese-made “junk with the lead paint on them and the poisoned pet food”, adding: “They’re basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they’ve been for the last 50 years.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao stated that: “Those in the field of journalism should abide by their morals. They don’t have the privilege to rail against or slander other people or other governments,”

#### **4.7. APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATIVE THEORY OF ACTION ON US PORTRAYAL OF CHINESE BRI PROGRAM**

China's Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013, has also received significant media coverage in the US. The US media's framing of the BRI has been heavily influenced by US propaganda techniques and constructivism, as well as by broader narratives of the "China threat." The BRI has often been framed by the US media as a form of neocolonialism, with China being accused of exploiting developing countries and creating a debt trap. This framing reflects the US government's concerns about China's growing influence in the world and its desire to maintain US hegemony. However, this framing often downplays the potential benefits of the BRI, such as infrastructure development and job creation.

The US propaganda techniques and constructivism are based on the communicative theory of action, which suggests that communication is not just about conveying information but also about shaping reality. The US media uses various propaganda techniques to influence public opinion about China, such as demonization, emotional appeal, and selective reporting. For example, the US media often demonizes China by portraying it as a dangerous and aggressive power that poses a threat to US interests and global stability. This demonization creates a negative image of China in the minds of the US public and reinforces broader narratives of the "China threat."

The application of communicative theory of action on US portrayal of Chinese BRI program can provide insights into how US propaganda techniques have been used to construct certain narratives and agendas, which have influenced public opinion towards China. This essay aims to explore the ways in which communicative theory of action can be applied to analyze the US media's portrayal of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and how this portrayal has affected US-China relations.

Communicative theory of action is a theoretical framework that explains the role of communication in shaping social reality. It posits that communication is not just a means of conveying information, but it is also a way of constructing social meaning and shaping public

perception of reality. According to Habermas (1984), communicative action is based on a rational dialogue among individuals who share common interests and seek to understand one another. In this way, communicative action aims to create a shared understanding of the world that is grounded in mutual respect and consensus.

However, in the case of US media's portrayal of China's BRI program, communicative action has been used in a manner that has led to the construction of negative narratives and agendas. The US media has employed propaganda techniques to frame the BRI program as a threat to US national interests, rather than as an opportunity for cooperation and mutual benefit. This has resulted in a polarization of public opinion towards China and has undermined efforts to build positive relations between the two countries.

One example of how communicative theory of action can be applied to US portrayal of Chinese BRI program is through the analysis of media framing. Media framing refers to the way in which media organizations select and emphasize certain aspects of an issue, while downplaying or ignoring others. In the case of China's BRI program, US media has often framed it as a threat to US national security interests, rather than as a development strategy that could benefit both China and the US. This framing has contributed to a negative perception of the BRI program and has led to a lack of support for US participation in it.

Another example of the application of communicative theory of action on US portrayal of Chinese BRI program is the analysis of agenda setting. Agenda setting refers to the ability of media organizations to determine which issues are considered important by the public. In the case of China's BRI program, US media has often set the agenda by highlighting negative stories and downplaying positive ones. This has led to a narrow and biased portrayal of the BRI program and has contributed to a negative public perception of China. Furthermore, US propaganda techniques such as demonization and exaggeration have been used to construct a negative narrative about China's BRI program. Demonization involves portraying China as an evil and aggressive force that threatens US national interests, while exaggeration involves magnifying China's economic and military power to create a sense of fear and anxiety among the US public. These techniques have been used to create a sense of distrust and hostility towards China, and have undermined efforts to build positive relations between the two countries.

In conclusion, the application of communicative theory of action on US portrayal of Chinese BRI program highlights the ways in which communication can be used to shape public perception of reality. The US media's use of propaganda techniques such as media framing, agenda setting, demonization, and exaggeration have contributed to a negative portrayal of

China's BRI program and have undermined efforts to build positive relations between the two countries. By understanding the ways in which communicative action can be used to construct certain narratives and agendas, it is possible to develop strategies that promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the US and China.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SINO-US PEACE JOURNALISM**

Peace Journalism, as per the term, basically refers to a form of journalism carried out to look into root causes of conflict for the purpose of formulating opportunities for society at large to take into consideration and value non-violent responses to conflict. Peace Journalism can be traced back to the year 1965 when Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge looked into detail what makes foreign news newsworthy. Jake Lynch and Johan Galtung went on further to develop the notion of peace journalism and made the assertion that the media war reporting, in specific predominantly exhibit biases towards violence and rest on the conceptual belief that conflict equals to war. Under the field of peace journalism, this perspective was seen to be problematic as it prevents conflict to be taken into consideration as an opportunity for the search of a new harmony between the parties involved, through a process that does not necessarily have to turn into a war.

Peace Journalism plays importance on a nonpartisan coverage of all sides, exposing the lies and untruths, by putting focus on common individuals and aims at finding solutions and promoting peace initiatives. Conflict is a major theme in international relations. Peace journalism calls for a greater proactive role for the news media while conflicts are reported with an aim to reduce it rather than escalating it or remaining spectators.

Peace Journalism basically advocates for conflict-sensitive reporting by training journalists to add to dialogues among communities of the parties in conflict that avoid stereotypes and maintain professionalism with fairness, accuracy, balance and responsible conduct. Peace Journalism can put forth critical thinking and transparency by a journalists acknowledgment of the restrictions of sources and therefore making an attempt to diversify them. In addition to that, the dual nature of war and peace journalism measurement implies that news stories may often contain both war and peace attributes, instead of assuming they are mutually exclusive (Ha, 2019).

- Explores the backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, presenting causes and options on every side (not just „both sides“);
- Gives voice to the views of all rival parties, from all levels;
- Offers creative ideas for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking and peacekeeping;
- Exposes lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and reveals excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties;

- Pays attention to peace stories and post-war developments.

## **5.1. PRESS SYSTEM AND JOURNALISM PRACTICE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA**

For the purpose of comparing journalistic practices between the US and China, it is essential to gain insight into their journalistic traditions and press systems. While the media system of the US is more often perceived as being a model of libertarianism, the media system of China is considered to be somewhat like the Soviet communist model. Nonetheless, when comparing media systems, a more nuanced approach needs to be taken up. Even though history of US journalism can be traced far back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the modern ideals of nonpartisan and objective journalism only began to exist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. WW1 and WW2 set the basis for much of modern American journalistic practices reinforcing a national identity.

China is not the same as in the past when the news media were totally controlled and funded by the Communist party and people had no alternative source to obtain information about the outside world. Journalists in China have been exposed to western journalism skills and knowledge and many took workshops and obtained degrees from western countries or from faculty that were trained in the West. Chinese government encouraged journalism faculty to attend international conferences on journalism and communication research or becoming visiting scholars in western institutions. Although the party media still play a dominant role in promoting government's views and conveying information the government wants to disseminate, one cannot neglect the increasing commercialization of news media, particularly in the past 40 years of economic boom. News media have to consider news audiences' interest to attract advertising, resulting in a new form of professionalism among journalists in China. China's news media has been classified into two types: the party press and the market oriented news press with substantial differences in foreign affairs coverage. The former focuses on the leaders and government with a preaching style while the latter is more lively and provides more contextual information and nongovernmental sources. In 2014, media convergence was established as a national strategy and most mainstream news media in China have developed an active online presence on multiple platforms including online news sites, mobile news apps, Weibo, and WeChat accounts. In 2017, the market shares of internet, print media, broadcast, and mobile phones as news media were 15%, 6%, 13%, and 51%, respectively. A majority of media outlets added their presence online as well as offering their own news brand mobile applications. Social media in China provides a platform for both individuals and media organizations to release information and attract huge amount of readers. Compared to emerging

commercial new media producers, traditional mainstream media have unique advantages as they have inherited professional teams for news production from well-established traditional media and, most importantly, the government licenses to cover major political news and international affairs. So, in examining foreign policy-related matters such as the US–China conflict, the role played by the official traditional mainstream media is crucial because of their exclusive access to government information and resources to cover more news on the topic (Ray, 2019).

## **5.2. WAR AND PEACE JOURNALISM**

Conflict is considered to be a significant theme of international news. Peace journalism calls for a greater proactive role for the news media when reporting conflicts with an aim to lessen it rather than escalating it.

When it comes to reporting violent conflicts, peace journalism practices could possibly lay down international norms and bring about improvement in the professional ethical standards. Based on peace journalism, Howard has advocated conflict-sensitive reporting by providing journalists training in a way to add to dialogues among communities of the parties in conflict that do not take into consideration stereotypes and uphold professionalism with accuracy, balance, and responsible behavior. While peace journalism has a lot of good pointers and has received widespread support from many journalism scholars such as Keeble, Tulloch, Youngblood, Zollman, etc. it also has certain criticisms. It has been argued that journalists do not hold as much power as advocates of peace journalism assume. Journalists are faced with multiple constraints, and along with that by advocating for peace journalism, the peace responsibility of the government and military had been moved to journalists. Greater transparency and reflexivity has been stressed upon among journalists by bringing to light the conditions of reporting and by applying a critical view on sources. Violence (war) versus nonviolence (peace) is the fundamental premise of the peace and war journalism dichotomy. Peace journalism can promote critical thinking and transparency by a journalist's acknowledgment of the restrictions of sources and therefore making an attempt to diversify them. In addition to that, the dual nature of war and peace journalism measurement makes the implication that news stories may often contain both war and peace attributes, rather than assuming they are mutually exclusive. For instance, a story can make use of elite sources – war journalism – while envisioning a win-win solution – peace journalism. A more inclined focus on “peace” items than “war” items constitutes peace journalism framing and allows readers to seek for more peace resolution of a conflict.

**TABLE 5.1 COMPARISON BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE JOURNALISM**

<b>War Journalism</b>	<b>Peace Journalism</b>
1. Elite-oriented – Focuses on leaders and elites as actors and sources of information.	1. People-oriented – Focuses on the common people as actors and sources of information.
2. Differences-oriented – Reports on areas of differences that might lead to the worsening of the conflict.	2. Reports areas of agreement – Reports on areas that might lead to a solution to the conflict.
3. Focuses on here and now – Does not report on the factors contributing to the conflict nor the consequences of it. Only reports about the what, who, where and when of an event	3. Reports causes and consequences – Reports on the factors contributing to the conflict as well as the consequences of it.
4. Dichotomizes the good and the bad – Points finger at other quarters as parties responsible for the issue.	4. Avoids labeling of good guys and bad guys – Does not point finger at other quarters as parties responsible for the issue.
5. Two-party orientation – One party wins, one party loses.	5. Multiparty orientation – Gives voice to the various parties involved in the conflict.
6. Partisan – Biased towards one side in the conflict.	6. Nonpartisan – Neutral and not taking sides.
7. Zero-sum orientation	7. Win-win orientation
8. Uses victimizing/ demonizing/ emotive language – Reports what has been done to the people or the environment.  – Uses language to paint the enemy’s image as wicked or threatening.  – Uses language to evoke readers’ negative emotional reaction towards the enemy.	8. Avoids victimizing/ demonizing/ emotive language  – Reports what has been done and could be done by the people, and how they are coping. – Uses more precise descriptions, titles or names that the people give themselves

	– Reserves strongest language only for the gravest situation; does not exaggerate.
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Source: This table was made by using various sources.

### 5.3. US COVERAGE OF CHINA AND CHINA’S COVERAGE OF US

Sino-US relationship can be described as being constructed from “military allies” to “ideological enemies” and from “moral adversaries” to “strategic partners” in responding to environmental and domestic needs. The media framing of the Sino-US relationship was heavily influenced by each of the country’s cultural and domestic orientations.

China tacitly deals with criticism now and does not like to be criticized in the foreign media. It is very sensitive regarding its image. China has known to become increasingly responsive by taking part in the media debate via its own channels, global media platforms and through other actions towards journalists for the purpose of explaining its actions with regards to its foreign advancements, for example what measures it was taking regarding the COVID-19 Virus. More visibly coordinated content has been viewed on the Chinese media such as Twitter and Facebook accounts, which are blocked in China and the target audience is mainly abroad.

A comparative study of broadcast news content between ABC in the US and CCTV in China by Chang, Wang, and Chen (1998) gave further support to the idea that social and cultural norms dictate the framing of news content about domestic and international affairs. Interestingly, CCTV gave more coverage to certain events in the US than ABC. In contrast, there were no reports about China on ABC during the study period, suggesting an unbalanced flow of information. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, China’s portrayal in the US has grown increasingly negative. Although it is apparent political relationships affect the news coverage, whether journalists in each country practice war journalism which escalates the conflict, or peace journalism which promotes peaceful relationships and compromises in a direct conflict between the U.S. and China, has not been explored. The conflict escalation or peace promotion effect of war and peace journalism is based on the assumed news framing effect of peace and war journalism. McGoldrick and Lynch’s (2016) four-country laboratory experiment on audience responses’ to peace journalism on TV found that viewers who were exposed to news presented in the peace journalism framing were more in favor of nonviolent conflict responses and solving structural issues than those who were exposed to news following the war journalism model.

The role each country plays in the conflict as initiator or responder in the conflict, relationship between press and government and the partisanship of the news media outlet has an impact on the coverage of conflict in the US and China.

### **5.3.1 TRADE WAR: AN EXAMPLE OF REPORTING BY US AND CHINA**

The recent trade conflict between the US and China provides with opportunities for both peace and war journalism framing by journalists. Accusations were made by the American government of unjust trade practices against China on the basis of intellectual property theft, devaluing the currency to favor Chinese exports to the US, and government subsidy. The US government made an announcement regarding the imposition of tariffs on Chinese imports as a punitive measure and pressurized China to accept its demands. Nonetheless, China perceived this as being a direct attack having the intention to impede its economic growth via false accusations and stall its economic and technological advancement. China took it as a survival threat. Chinese journalists can possibly evoke nationalist thoughts by publicly addressing the government's stance for the purpose of generating suitable public opinion for the decisions taken by the government against American sanctions. A distinct perspective could be provided by the Chinese media on Sino-US ties by making use of alternative sources and commenting on the country's economic development (Siraj, 2010).

Although responsibilities of conflicts typically involved both parties, there would always be one that took the offensive or initiated the conflict by taking actions against the other party, blaming its wrongdoing and expecting concessions. The U.S. is considered the initiator of the trade war because President Donald Trump, in his tweet dated March 2, 2018, clearly stated, "When a country (USA) is losing many billions of dollars on trade with virtually every country it does business with, trade wars are good, and easy to win." The offensive the U.S. took was by imposing tariffs in 2018 starting with June 15, 2018's declaration by Trump that the United States would impose a 25% tariff on \$50 billion of Chinese exports. The initial \$34 billion would start July 6, 2018, with a further \$16 billion to begin at a later date. The US news media, on the other hand, being in the country initiating the trade war with the high tariffs to reduce the trade deficit with China and have the market pressure and need for drama and sensational news, should play up the conflict and are more likely to practice war journalism than peace journalism. China played a role of defending against the U.S. tariff attack by tariff retaliation. But China had a strong desire for a peaceful solution or trade agreement because it was in the Chinese government's interest to avoid public panic on the consequence of the tariffs. With more state ownership of news media and controlling access to government information,

Chinese news media should follow the government's interest and exhibit more peace journalism practices.

### **5.3.2 ANALYSES OF NEWS COVERAGE BY THE US AND CHINESE MEDIA**

When looking into the news coverage of the Sino-US trade conflict, it was seen that news reports were framed more as peace journalism in comparison to war journalism. Much more peace journalism language was made use of both in the US and in China. The US, being the initiator of the tariffs and under commercial pressure, had its news media being more eager to have the US be the victor of the trade conflict, and blamed China for the trade deficit and was more likely to make use of war journalism practices in comparison to China. For example, a war journalism headline was noted in the New York Times' September 17<sup>th</sup> report of the additional tariff which basically said; "Trump hits China with tariffs on \$200 billion in goods, escalating trade war," and the initial paragraphs justified Trump's action: "President Trump, emboldened by America's economic strength and China's economic slowdown, escalated his trade war with Beijing on Monday, saying the US would impose tariffs on \$200 billion worth of goods and was prepared to tax all imports." The story basically started off by telling the readers that the US was in a strong position while China had a weak position (Matingwina, Media as a Front in the US-China Trade War: A Transnational Comparative Framing Analysis of US and Chinese Newspapers, 2020). Thus, it can be noted that war and peace journalism practice is influenced by the positions and stance of parties to a conflict as being the initiator or the respondent to the conflict. This factor needs to be considered along with culture, journalistic, and institutional constraints when it comes to journalism practices.

To facilitate conflict resolution, news media in the country initiating the conflict should minimize its war journalism framing and increase its peace journalism framing. The burden of peace journalism should not be only on the news media of the country responding to the conflict. In this study of the trade conflict, the U.S. news media much more often referred it as a trade "war" on China than Chinese media and were highly dependent on elite sources including the government and think tanks and consultants widely available in the U.S. But the views of the sectors most affected by the conflict were largely ignored. In addition, its much higher use of emotive words and demonizing language on China and focus on differences between the two countries were the main cause of its higher score in war journalism (Wu, 2018). So, the U.S. media were more likely to use combative rhetoric. As a responder to the conflict, Chinese media were more likely to discuss similarities and mutual interests between the countries involved and covered those sectors which were most affected by the tariffs. As a

state controlled press, they also followed the government's cautious approach in the trade negotiation and mostly focused on the current happenings as the Chinese style of war journalism. Peace journalism can be practiced in both western democratic and Chinese communist media in a conflict. In the case of the US–China conflict, peace journalism practices were more prevalent than war journalism practices based on the scores of the news items.

Whether the truce between US and China in December 2018 over the trade war has anything to do with the peace journalism practices of Chinese and U.S. news media cannot be determined as of now as many other factors could have contributed to the truce. But at least temporary peace was achieved at that time. Although the Chinese government is not elected by the people, the government still has to monitor the public's opinion and manage people's expectations so that they would support the government's policies instead of fostering discontent with the government. The Chinese media's higher use of peace journalism was in line with the Chinese government's tactic of negotiating a better deal for the China during conflicts such as the trade war by creating a vision for common ground and emphasizing the benefit of free trade. The retaliation to the tariffs was positioned by the Chinese government as a defense to the attack by the U.S. whose purpose was to contain China's economic growth and technological advancement. The heavy coverage by the Chinese media helped to create salience of the government's position, shaped the public's understanding of the conflict and facilitated reflection on China's economic and technological development by providing competing frames on the topic as the conflict evolved.

#### **5.4. APPLICATION OF PEACE JOURNALISM**

Peace Journalism as the third party conflict is a human interaction, which involves parties with incompatible interests. What renders such incongruity an overt and explicit strife is the awareness of the unsuitability and the ensuing choice of confrontation. Awareness is raised by communication, either with the environment or with the rivaling party. Communication produces information, which affects each side's decision whether to hash out the differences or shun them. Thus, communication becomes a crucial determinant in conflict and conflict resolution: it creates consciousness of, and attentiveness to, the other. Destructive and debilitating communication, which promotes noises, distortions, interruptions, deceptions, ploys, and false clues, promotes and expedites conflict. In contrast, constructive or beneficial communication relies on honesty, open channels and the effort to align the sent message with the received one. Such a pattern of interaction strives for accommodation and the relaxation of tensions and hostilities (Hazelbarth , 2021).

Peace Journalism basically possesses the characteristics of favoring constructive communication. Introducing peace journalism into conflict theory can bring forth the theoretical understanding and actual practice of conflict transformation. Peace journalism is known as a motivator of peace and a promoter of de-escalation. It can successfully accomplish an important role by inspiring journalists to demonstrate disputes in a distinct way than that to which they normally ascribe.

A viable conflict resolution process needs to be based on genuine and honest interaction between antagonists, in which unmet human needs are openly talked about and interests rather than positions are candidly aired. Interests like meeting basic needs bring about motivation in parties to pursue conflicts in earnest. Failing to do so or ignoring such grievances transforms conflicts into deep-rooted ones. Peace journalism, with its keen eye for causes and stimuli and with its commitment to a fairer depiction has the ability to bring such unmet human needs to the front and diminish uncontrollable conflicts. Irresolvable conflicts normally require a third party for the purpose of mediation between rivaling parties or to bring about their interaction. On-going disputes result in animosity, violence and consequently mistrust to the point that no direct communication is considered as being appropriate. The third party plays the role of stimulating mutual positive motivation in order to reduce conflict.

#### **5.4.1 INVISIBLE EFFECT**

Another important component of the peace and conflict orientation is reporting not just on events themselves but also the long-term, longitudinal, or other invisible effects of those events. Visible effects, are the measurable effects of conflict and violence, such as destruction, fatalities, injuries or displacements. These are the effects typically covered in war journalism pieces; however, peace journalism requires the journalist to analyze the invisible effects of each of these actions, as well, resulting in a larger picture of the realities of all parties involved in the conflict. For each visible effect, there are several invisible effects that may have more long-term importance. The invisible effects they outline include the hatred that stems from bereavement; a psychological need for revenge and victory, perpetuating the cycle of violence; and damage to the social structure. In the long term, failing to address these invisible effects may make the society vulnerable to future violence. Reporting on the invisible effects shows the public the true long-term consequences of conflict; however, there is a time element involved for the journalist compiling information for a story. Under Reese' hierarchy of influences model, the work routines of journalists inhibit the ability to dedicate time to fully develop a story exposing invisible effects. One flaw in this theory Hackett notes is the assumption that Western work routines are universal. Although a shift in Western mass media

routines may be necessary to provide journalists the time and resources to build a contextual framework for covering conflict, some journalists already excel at multi-tasking – working on covering multiple in-depth and complex stories at a time – and the journalism profession does honor those who have made the investment.

#### **5.4.2 AVOID DICHOTOMOUS LABELING AND PARTISAN REPORTING**

A third component of the peace and war orientation involves his desire for journalists to avoid dichotomous labeling to indicate “good” or “bad” sides of a conflict as is typical in war journalism frames. “Dichotomizing between the bad guys and the good guys involves casting simplistic moral judgment about the parties’ involved and assigning blame to the party who started conflict”). Avoiding this component of peace journalism may be tricky for journalists to practice, because journalists are prone to assigning roles in their stories. However, journalistic codes of ethics call for truthfulness, autonomy, and unbiased reporting that when followed would resolve the use of dichotomous language. In an attempt to stay impartial, journalists should avoid assigning labels based on moral orientation because that label illustrates bias. For example, it has been stated that “no-one ever uses demonizing labels to describe himself or herself and so for a journalist to use them is always to take sides”; instead, the journalist should refer to the parties by the names they give themselves, or use literal terms in descriptions, such as “bombers” rather than “terrorists.” Similar to the avoidance of dichotomizing language, nonpartisan reporting requires the reporter use the most factual objective phrasing in the linguistics or impressions provided in a story. Providing accounts of atrocities or, conversely, attempts at resolution, evenly and by all parties of a conflict will help illustrate the conflict in its full context. This means avoiding the focus of one party’s wrongdoings and instead reporting all wrongdoings, regardless of the side, and objectively addressing the allegations made by each side (Nagar, 2016).

#### **5.4.3 AVOID VICTIMIZING, DEMONIZING, AND EMOTIVE LANGUAGE**

Closely related to acknowledging and understanding bias is an awareness of government-promoted labels such as “terrorist” or “terrorism” in communicating information. Using precise language, rather than victimizing, demonizing or emotive language, is a key precept of peace journalism. Victimized language is defined as terminology that only depicts what has been “done to” a group of people and what could be “done for” that group of people. The disempowering language includes phrases like “tragedy,” “defenseless,” “devastated,” and “pathetic”. They argue that journalists should report in ways that empower the people and

describe what the people in trying situations have done or could do. An example of this includes the use of feature stories that “accentuate the positive of an individual or individuals in miserable circumstances by finding something innovative they have done to survive. Give a sense of how their day pans out” Empowering the subjects through feature-writing further disseminates the story of their resilience, rather than treats the subjects merely as those afflicted or victims of conflict. Examples of demonizing language include “vicious,” “cruel,” “brutal,” and “barbaric” (McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000). The use of these terms reflects the journalist’s moral judgment of the action and confines the journalist to one side of the conflict, as well as furthers the emotional appeal of the supposedly afflicted side toward violence. In this sense, journalists should report what they know about specific events and give as much information as possible regarding the reliability of other reports or descriptions of the wrongdoing. In other words, the peace journalist should follow the maxim for good writing: show, don’t tell. Precise details about events are better than demonizing labels. They also are more truthful. Similar to demonizing language, the use of emotive language can further escalate conflict by emotionally resonating with audiences. It has been suggested that reporters avoid words such as “genocide,” “tragedy,” or “massacre,” and instead be precise about what is known. Not to be confused with minimizing suffering, the avoidance of emotive language is merely an attempt to maintain rationality in reporting and “reserve the strongest language for the gravest situations” (p. 32). In other words, carefully chosen words are more accurate and more truthful. Peace journalism requires that a Western journalist reporting for a Western audience not be a product of the dominant ideology, where othering and ethnocentrism lead to both dichotomous labeling and emotive, victimizing, or demonizing language. Propaganda theory, the hierarchy of influences model and the journalistic field model all acknowledge the importance of public acceptability to economic factors (i.e., ratings); therefore, it could be risky for journalists to appear as sympathizers to groups determined by the government or populous as evil or bad. For example, if military or government media representatives discuss conflict in terms of demonizing language media must be conscious of this terminology and find language that is not prone to propagating violence or fueling hatred.

#### **5.4.4 MULTIPARTY ORIENTATION**

A more people-oriented approach naturally allows for a multiparty orientation, another component of the people/elite orientation. Giving weight to all voices affected by the conflict may establish the journalist or media entity as sympathetic to parties castigated by the public for political reasons; however, Seib (2004) argues, “patriotism does not require backing down from truth” (p. 32). In conflict resolution, the more solutions or alternatives to violence, the

more likely the conflict can be resolved in amicable or peaceful ways (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). Therefore, threats to this characteristic of peace journalism are similar to those discussed in the sections related to dichotomous labeling, using particular language and “win-win” orientations. According to McGoldrick and Lynch (2000), the peace journalism approach requires journalistic insight into each party’s sentiments, fears, resentments, and grievances. This also includes highlighting grassroots peace initiatives—parties working to create dialogue between conflicted parties. In a 2012 study, Lynch and McGoldrick analyzed the effect of peace/war frames on Australian and Filipino audiences and found significant effects on the viewers’ sense of hopelessness, where exposure to peace journalism stories that “gave a voice to all parties—not merely the government and main opposition party” (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012: 1047)—left viewers feeling less hopeless, less scared, and less disgusted.

#### **5.4.5 GIVING A VOICE TO THE VOICELESS**

This people-oriented approach to journalism means sourcing information from the people engaged in and affected by the conflict, who may not otherwise be heard. Done correctly, these interviews or analyses can help a journalist understand and report the invisible effects of war, violence and conflict. From a propaganda model perspective, this tenet is unlikely to exist. War journalism frames are elite-oriented and focus on leaders throughout the peace process and rely on elites as sources of information. The propaganda model supports this notion of source favoritism and asserts that one influence on media is the reliance on government for information. However, this is not the case in all media practices. The flaw in this theory assumes that media across the globe rely on government-fed information and operate consciously according to elite influences (advertisers, owners, etc.) Elaborating on this further, the hierarchy of influences model addresses the work routines of journalists and the tendency to contact government sources in military or conflict zones. Numerous studies have documented U.S. media’s reliance on official sources on foreign policy issues (Bennet, 1990; Entman, 1991). For peace journalism to prevail, journalists must somewhat detach themselves from government sources and seek perspectives otherwise unheard. Understandably, mainstream media cannot altogether ignore the leaders of their countries; however, not all journalists need to go to the news conferences or briefings. Some can spend time with civilian sources and develop an understanding of non-elitist viewpoints. Indeed, sometimes that reporting is honored as was Anthony Shadid’s work for The Washington Post on the Iraqi people’s “struggle to deal with the legacy of war” (Pulitzer.org, 2010). Ricchiardi (2006) asserts that reporters familiar with the history and culture of an area are more likely to know whom to talk to in seeking information or new perspectives. Although war journalism reporting

cannot be altogether avoided, perhaps it can be mitigated through peace journalism stories. Of course, finding local sources requires more effort. Galtung and Ruge (1965) acknowledged that decades ago: The more culturally distant an event occurs, the higher the tendency to report on elite interests, such as how the event will impact elite nations.

## **5.5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE JOURNALISM IN CURRENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

The propaganda model, hierarchy of influences model, and journalism as a field theory all present challenges for peace journalism; however, in consolidating and exploring the characteristics of peace journalism, evidence has surfaced that peace journalism can and does exist in Western media environments. In other areas of the world, predominantly conflict-stricken territories, there are media and training organizations that dedicate resources to developing “responsible” reporting of conflicts. A great example of peace journalism at work is Search for Common. By acknowledging that conflict is inevitable, but violence is not, Search for Common Ground’s Common Ground News Service strives to bring people together, share goals and differences, and find solutions to conflict before violence breaks out, during war, working to end violence, and in the aftermath. Although institutions like Search for Common Ground are active in conflict areas, there needs to be a mass mediated standard for responsible reporting of conflict and violence. Reporting on the here and now is not enough to educate and inform public opinion; conflict coverage should involve dismissing the notion of being a reactionary journalist and instead telling a story providing historical context from all sides of the conflict. Even in the face of economic constraints, news organizations can find creative ways to partner and/or train local news organizations of conflict-stricken areas, to procure contextualized and impartial accounts of the precursory events, ongoing struggle, or aftermath. Indeed, even mainstream profitable news organizations recognizing the need to extend conflict coverage in war zones find a way. From a historical perspective, the argument against peace journalism based on limited funding or resources should be reconsidered. Western media cannot rely on parachute journalism to construct the news in its full context. Through no fault of the journalists, it is unreasonable to expect parachute journalists to become an expert in the history and culture of all geographic areas included in their coverage. Instead, news organizations should cooperate with non-profits such as Reporters without Borders or Human Rights Watch to help provide the contextualized content needed to regain the public’s appetite for news that illuminates rather than provokes. Hackett concludes that one solution to enable peace journalism, as a practice, is the citizens’ power in demanding a better media. From an

entertainment value perspective, peace journalism frames have no less power than war journalism frames in “awakening reader interest” and it was found that audiences felt “less hopeless” after viewing peace journalism pieces. Therefore, perhaps it is not necessarily in the public’s hands to demand peace journalism practices, but is a responsibility of educational or media institutions training journalists to ensure journalists and future editors understand the value and impact of fully contextualized reporting, as well as its newsworthiness as public need-to-know information. Journalism training should also address how reporters can identify systematic bias of sources and motivations of sources in providing information. Understanding the motivations of sources and the bias implied in such words as “terrorist” or “terrorism” will help news organizations produce content that is more congruent with peace journalism.

Suggestions can be made regarding better enablement of peace journalism as a journalistic practice like citizens demanding a better media. Peace journalism possess no less power in comparison to war journalism from an entertainment value point of view in awakening the interest of the reader. Educational and media institutions providing training to journalists need to make sure that future editors and journalists gain understanding of the value and influence of fully contextualized reporting along with its newsworthiness as public need-to-know information. Moreover, journalism training needs to address ways in which reporters can identify systematic bias of sources and motivations of sources in providing with information. It is important to understand the motivations of sources and the bias which is implied in terms such as “terrorism” or “terrorist” in order to aid organizations in coming up with content that is more congruent with peace journalism (Marsh, 2023).

After evaluating contemporary and past states of conflict coverage worldwide, there exists hope for peace journalism despite the numerous challenges imposed by governments, institutions and professional routines. Even though Western media might possibly have to depend on paradigmatic cultural shift in the journalism industry to fully acknowledge and understand the benefits of peace journalism reporting, it would aid journalists in integrating peace journalism methodologies into current journalistic traditions and practices. Peace journalism incorporates the idea of truth instead of propaganda-focused reporting and hence it should be embraced by journalists for its ability to help readers resolve conflict. With this concept of truth-telling rather than propaganda-focused reporting, all sides to a conflict are reported and the voice of the unheard is reported in ways that neither demonize nor dehumanize. Western media organizations could possibly include the prevalence of peace journalism frames in conflict coverage.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1. SUMMARY OF WORK**

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the role of media in shaping public opinion and political discourse in the context of Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era. Through an analysis of media coverage and propaganda strategies employed by both China and the United States, it has become clear that the media plays a significant role in the perpetuation and dissemination of political ideologies, narratives, and agendas. From the communicative theory of action perspective, we can see that media organizations use various propaganda techniques to construct specific narratives that shape audience perceptions of political events.

Communicative action theory is a sociological framework that emphasizes the importance of communication in shaping social reality. In the context of Sino-US relations, this theory can be used to explain the actions of both the US and China in relation to one another.

This thesis delves into the role of media in shaping public opinion and political discourse in the context of Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era. By examining media coverage and propaganda strategies employed by both China and the United States, the study finds that the media plays a crucial role in perpetuating and disseminating political ideologies, narratives, and agendas. This reinforces the significance of the media in shaping public opinion, which can have significant consequences for international relations.

Using the communicative theory of action perspective, the thesis highlights how media organizations employ various propaganda techniques to construct specific narratives that influence audience perceptions of political events. This underscores the power of media in shaping social reality and highlights the need for critical analysis of media content. The rise of China as a global superpower has created a complex and dynamic relationship with the United States. The media's role in shaping public opinion has significant implications for this relationship. In this context, communicative action theory provides insights into the actions of both the US and China in relation to each other.

The study finds that both China and the United States use media to promote their interests and ideologies, often resorting to propaganda techniques that selectively present information to construct specific narratives. In this way, the media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, which can influence political discourse and have far-reaching consequences. The thesis highlights several propaganda techniques used by media organizations to shape public opinion. These include framing, agenda-setting, and selective presentation. Framing refers to the way in which a story is presented, which can influence how the audience perceives it.

Agenda-setting is the process by which the media determines which issues are worthy of attention, influencing the public's perception of the importance of certain issues. Selective presentation involves choosing what information to present to the audience, which can affect their understanding of events.

Using examples from media coverage of Sino-US relations, the study demonstrates how these propaganda techniques are used by media organizations in both countries. For instance, Chinese media often frames stories in a way that promotes China's interests and portrays the US negatively. On the other hand, US media frequently employs agenda-setting to focus on China's actions, highlighting areas of conflict between the two nations. The thesis also emphasizes the need for critical media literacy and the ability to analyze media content. By understanding the role of media in shaping public opinion, individuals can better evaluate the accuracy and bias of media coverage, which is particularly important in the context of Sino-US relations.

In conclusion, this thesis provides a valuable analysis of the role of media in shaping public opinion and political discourse in the context of Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era. Through the lens of communicative action theory, the study highlights the power of media in shaping social reality and provides insights into the actions of both the US and China in relation to one another. The thesis underscores the need for critical analysis of media content, particularly in the context of international relations, and emphasizes the importance of media literacy in evaluating media coverage.

## **6.2. MAJOR FINDINGS**

From the perspective of communicative action theory, communication is not simply a means of transmitting information, but rather a way of constructing meaning and shaping social reality. This means that the way in which the US and China communicate with one another has a profound impact on the way they understand one another and the world around them.

In the case of Sino-US relations, we can see how communication has been used as a tool for both cooperation and conflict. On the one hand, both countries have engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation, such as through high-level meetings and trade negotiations. These actions reflect an underlying belief in the power of communication to build trust and understanding between nations.

On the other hand, we can also see how communication has been used to perpetuate conflict and promote political agendas. The US media, for example, has often framed China as a threat to US interests, emphasizing the risks of China's economic and military expansion rather than

opportunities for cooperation. This narrative reflects the underlying political agenda of the US government to maintain its dominance in the international arena. China, in turn, has also used communication to promote its own interests and assert its influence on the global stage. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has sought to promote its economic and political power while presenting itself as a leader in global cooperation and development. This strategy reflects China's belief in the power of communication to shape global perceptions of China and promote its own interests.

From this perspective, we can see how communication has played a critical role in shaping Sino-US relations in both positive and negative ways. The use of propaganda techniques by both sides reflects the importance of communication in shaping political ideologies and narratives, and the potential consequences of these narratives for international relations. Furthermore, communicative action theory also emphasizes the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding in shaping social reality. In the context of Sino-US relations, this means that communication and dialogue are critical to promoting cooperation and addressing areas of conflict. By fostering open and constructive communication, both countries can work towards promoting a more nuanced and objective understanding of one another, and finding solutions to the complex challenges facing the global community.

Communicative action theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex and dynamic relationship between the US and China. By emphasizing the role of communication in shaping social reality, this theory highlights the potential for communication to be used as a tool for both cooperation and conflict. As we continue to navigate the complex landscape of international relations, it is crucial to remain mindful of the importance of communication in shaping perceptions and promoting cooperation between nations. Despite the limitations of this study, such as the narrow time frame of 2016-2022 and the focus on US media, the findings have important implications for our understanding of the relationship between media, politics, and international relations. The media's role in shaping public opinion and political discourse cannot be ignored, and as such, it is important for individuals to critically evaluate media coverage and consider the sources and motives behind particular narratives. Moreover, policymakers and media organizations should be aware of the potential consequences of media propaganda on international relations and work towards promoting a more objective and balanced representation of political events.

In conclusion, this thesis highlights the complex and dynamic relationship between media, politics, and propaganda in Sino-US relations in the post-BRI era. By analyzing the various

propaganda strategies employed by the US media, we gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which media can be used as a tool for political power and influence. As we continue to navigate the complex landscape of international relations, it is crucial to remain vigilant and critically evaluate media coverage to promote a more informed and nuanced understanding of the world around us.

### **6.3. SUGGESTIONS**

Suggestions can be made regarding better enablement of peace journalism as a journalistic practice like citizens demanding a better media. Peace journalism possess no less power in comparison to war journalism from an entertainment value point of view in awakening the interest of the reader. Educational and media institutions providing training to journalists need to make sure that future editors and journalists gain understanding of the value and influence of fully contextualized reporting along with its newsworthiness as public need-to-know information. Moreover, journalism training needs to address ways in which reporters can identify systematic bias of sources and motivations of sources in providing with information. It is important to understand the motivations of sources and the bias which is implied in terms such as “terrorism” or “terrorist” in order to aid organizations in coming up with content that is more congruent with peace journalism (Marsh, 2023).

After evaluating contemporary and past states of conflict coverage worldwide, there exists hope for peace journalism despite the numerous challenges imposed by governments, institutions and professional routines. Even though Western media might possibly have to depend on paradigmatic cultural shift in the journalism industry to fully acknowledge and understand the benefits of peace journalism reporting, it would aid journalists in integrating peace journalism methodologies into current journalistic traditions and practices. Peace journalism incorporates the idea of truth instead of propaganda-focused reporting and hence it should be embraced by journalists for its ability to help readers resolve conflict. With this concept of truth-telling rather than propaganda-focused reporting, all sides to a conflict are reported and the voice of the unheard is reported in ways that neither demonize nor dehumanize. Western media organizations could possibly include the prevalence of peace journalism frames in conflict coverage.

Accuracy, independence, objectivity and accountability are amongst the most important principles of peace journalism. Consequently, journalists must be rigorous in their duty to provide all relevant facts, assuring that their voice does not tailor to the special interests and needs of corporate and political leaders, and consciously portray the context of every story. If

the practice of journalism does not adhere to these principles, it may risk depicting only one side of the story and may fail to convey an honest narrative that acknowledges the complex and numerous social, economic, cultural and political factors that contribute to conflict, and therefore may contribute to criminalize and stigmatize the most vulnerable groups. Journalists, for the purpose of advocating peace journalism need to focus on trying to humanize all victims of a conflict, and seek to uncover the complexities behind violent driven situations. In this sense, journalists should not exploit suffering and loss, and should seek to convey a balanced account of the information. More independent, digital newspapers could possibly be developed that aid citizens in holding political leaders accountable, contributing to raise awareness on prevalent sensitive and complex realities.

Peace journalism can play a crucial role in covering complex issues such as the China-USA trade wars and the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a more nuanced and constructive approach to reporting. By applying peace journalism principles and connecting it to the theory of communicative action, the media can contribute to greater understanding, dialogue, and the pursuit of peaceful resolutions.

In the case of the China-USA trade wars, peace journalism can offer an alternative perspective that moves beyond a simplistic portrayal of winners and losers. Instead of focusing solely on the economic aspects of the conflict, peace journalism emphasizes the human consequences and underlying issues at stake. This approach encourages the inclusion of voices from both sides, as well as neutral observers, experts, and stakeholders. By presenting diverse viewpoints, peace journalism fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and motivations behind the trade wars.

Applying the theory of communicative action to the China-USA trade wars, peace journalism can create spaces for rational discourse and mutual understanding. It enables media outlets to provide platforms for open and respectful dialogue between representatives from both countries, facilitating the exchange of ideas, concerns, and potential solutions. By engaging in communicative action, media practitioners can promote transparency, challenge biased narratives, and contribute to the negotiation and resolution of trade conflicts. Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, peace journalism can counteract the sensationalism and fear-based reporting often associated with health crises. It focuses on ethical reporting that prioritizes accurate information, scientific evidence, and the human impact of the pandemic. Peace journalism seeks to foster empathy and solidarity by highlighting stories of resilience, cooperation, and collective efforts to overcome the crisis. By showcasing the experiences and

struggles of individuals affected by the pandemic, peace journalism contributes to a more compassionate understanding of the global health emergency.

Applying communicative action theory, peace journalism can create opportunities for informed public discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic. It encourages media outlets to provide spaces for experts, scientists, policymakers, and affected communities to engage in rational discourse. Through these exchanges, diverse perspectives can be shared, debated, and evaluated, leading to a better understanding of the virus, effective public health strategies, and the promotion of cooperation between countries. By facilitating communicative action, peace journalism serves as a catalyst for collective problem-solving and the pursuit of evidence-based solutions. The application of peace journalism in the context of the China-USA trade wars and the COVID-19 pandemic aligns with the theory of communicative action. Communicative action emphasizes the importance of inclusive and open deliberation to foster democracy and enhance the legitimacy of decision-making processes. Peace journalism, through its focus on balanced reporting, ethical considerations, and solutions-oriented coverage, promotes rational discourse and mutual understanding.

By providing platforms for dialogue, peace journalism enables individuals from different backgrounds, including policymakers, experts, and affected communities, to engage in meaningful conversations. It helps bridge divides, challenge biases, and foster empathy and solidarity. Through communicative action, peace journalism contributes to the formation of shared values, the identification of common interests, and the generation of collective solutions. In conclusion, the application of peace journalism in the context of the China-USA trade wars and the COVID-19 pandemic can promote a more constructive and comprehensive approach to reporting. By emphasizing balanced perspectives, ethical considerations, and solutions-oriented coverage, peace journalism contributes to greater understanding, dialogue, and the pursuit of peaceful resolutions. When connected to the theory of communicative action, peace journalism creates opportunities for rational discourse and mutual understanding, enhancing the democratic potential of media in addressing complex global issues.

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