

# Image Construction of National Leader: A Framing Analysis of Global Times' Coverage on Xi Jinping before Two International Polls

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## Abstract

**This study provided a framing analysis of the coverage of President Xi Jinping by Global Times in the year before two international opinion polls, and specifically analyzed the extent of the coverage, news sources, frame usage and the valence of high-frequency words. By analyzing and comparing the articles in two periods, the study discussed the problems of Global Times in shaping the media image of Chinese national leader, including almost unchanged coverage extent, and news sources usage strategies, and the continuing positive portrait under the duty performance frame and governing belief frame. The results imply that Chinese newspaper aiming at international audience, like the Global Times, are sluggish in response to the changing international environment. It may limit the influence of the Chinese media, not necessarily effective at maintaining a good image of Chinese national leaders among the international public.**

## Keywords

**Xi Jinping; Global Times; Framing analysis; National leader; Image construction.**

## 1. Introduction

In shaping of national image, the image of leaders is crucial. Ingenhoff and Klein (2018) pointed out that a political leader might be highly influential in terms of attracting benefits for their country[1]. A survey by Angus Reid Institute found that more than half of Canadians believe that Trudeau's fame is a net positive for Canada and it is good for investment and tourism[2] (Angus Reid Institute, 2017). Vani & Harte (2021) also believed that the spillover effect of a political leader's image on their home country is significant. They found that New Zealand Prime Minister Adrian had been praised for her firm, compassionate and open leadership style. She had established a national image consistent with her own image on the international stage, which had won more attention and respect for New Zealand[3].

Xi Jinping was elected as the president of People's Republic of China on March 14, 2013. On December 17, 2014, the Ash Center of Harvard Kennedy School of Government released a survey, which invited citizens from 30 countries for their views on 10 influential national leaders. And in "Scoring results of 10 Key National Leaders among respondents in 30 countries", Xi got the highest score[4]. However, according to another survey released by the Pew Research Center on June 29, 2022, majorities in all countries surveyed have little to no confidence in Xi's approach to world affairs. Around four-in-ten or more in most places surveyed even say they have no confidence at all in him[5].

The huge difference in the attitude on Chinese leaders in the two international polls warns the complexity of global politics and international relations, as well as the dynamics and contingency of public opinion. For the Chinese government, which seeks to enhance its international image to increase "Chinese clout"[6] (Yan, 2019) and "soft power"[7] (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018), this is an issue that must be given special attention. This significant

image gap may be related to lots of factors like differences in geopolitical background, differences in media coverage and information availability, but from the perspective of media communication, news reports play an important role in shaping the media image of leaders, the national leaders who figure prominently in news coverage are highly relevant in the formation of public opinion[8] (Balmas, 2017). Therefore, the author believes that these two polls provide an appropriate opportunity to test the external communication strategies of Chinese official media. What kind of news frames they uses to shape the image of Chinese leaders has become a topic worth studying before the two polls.

Global Times was chosen to study. It is a national English newspaper of China, which was founded on April 20, 2009. According to the information published by Global Times Market Center on August 17, 2021, since its first publication, the circulation of each issue exceeds 2 million[9]. It has attracted attention of various institutions stationed in China from different countries, including embassies and consulates, international organizations and news organizations. Global Times has also become the first choice for the international world to understand China. Its articles are often edited and circulated by Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France-Presse, and it is one of the Chinese media that have been reprinted most by overseas media. A research by Zhang and Zhang (2017) studied the citation and reprint of Global Times by 39 influential international media, including the Associated Press, the Washington Post, Reuters etc, and found that the total number of times it was cited and reprinted that year was 4624, even more than China Daily[10].

This study aims at examining the coverage of President Xi Jinping by Global Times(online version) before two the polls, comparing and summarize changes of its strategies in the two periods, basically answer the following questions:

RQ1. What is the extent of Global Times' coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?

RQ2. Who are the news sources used by Global Times in their covers of President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?

RQ3. What are the frames employed by Global Times in coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?

RQ4. What are the high-frequency words and the valence of Global Times in its coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?

By exploring these questions, this study provides media professionals with suggestions for shaping the image of national leaders in more comprehensive ways in complex international context. It not only provides practical evidence for the analysis of Chinese news framing, but also provides inspiration for the further study of global communication.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Data Collection

The data in this study are from the online version of Global Times. Take "Xi Jinping" as the keyword for searching, and select the reports which do not repeat. Reports were selected for two periods: 1) December 17, 2013-- December 16, 2014 and 2) June 29, 2021-- June 28, 2022. Both of them are one year before the two surveys on Xi. The total number of reports during the first observation period was 434 and that for the second observation period was 417.

The constructed week approach was selected because of the large number of samples, and the limited research time and ability. Two weeks were constructed in each period of time, and a total of four weeks of Global Times reports on Xi were studied. There were 53 weeks in each observation period, and there were only Monday and Tuesday in week 53 in both period. Only Monday had reports in the 53rd week of the first observation period, so this day was selected

as a sample. And in the 53rd week of the second observation period, only Tuesday had reports, so this day was also selected as a sample.

The other 52 weeks in each observation period were divided into 13 4-weeks, and one day was randomly selected in turn every 4week for a total of 13 days, plus the selected day, it formed 2 weeks on the nose. The specific dates of construction week are shown in Table1.

**Table 1.** Two-sampled Week of December 17, 2013 to December 16, 2014 (Period 1) & June 29, 2021 to June 28, 2022 (Period 2)

|          | Monday                 | Tuesday                  | Wednesday              | Thursday               | Friday                  | Saturday                | Sunday                 |
|----------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Period 1 | 2014/12/1<br>5         | 2014/7/22                | 2014/8/13              | 2014/8/28              | 2014/9/26               | 2014/10/25              | 2014/12/14             |
|          | 2014/6/9               | 2013/12/31               | 2014/1/29              | 2014/2/27              | 2014/3/28               | 2014/5/3                | 2014/5/1               |
| Period 2 | 2022/1/24,<br>2021/7/5 | 2022/6/28,<br>2021/12/21 | 2022/6/22<br>2021/12/8 | 2022/5/19<br>2021/11/4 | 2022/4/8,<br>2021/10/15 | 2022/3/26,<br>2021/7/31 | 2022/3/6,<br>2021/9/19 |

After the constructed week, 36 research samples were taken in the first observation period and 44 in the second observation period. Then develop the coding categories.

## 2.2. Coding Procedure

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014), there are two ways to establish coding categories for content analysis: deductive coding and inductive coding[11]. The former is to establish some coding categories before collecting data, and the latter is to establish categories after preliminary examination of data.

The valence of high frequency words and news sources are the easy-to-detect differences between and within media, and they can be done before data analysis. Therefore, it is appropriate to use deductive approach to predefine these coding categories as content analytic variables [11](Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).However, Global Times' reports on Xi Jinping have been changing with time and social conditions, and there are many possibilities of the frame use. This information is loose and fragmented, and few researches can provide accurate methods at present. Therefore, inductive approach should be used there [11](Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Therefore, RQ2 and RQ4 in this study used deductive coding, and RQ3 used inductive coding. RQ1 was studied from three dimensions: number of reports, size and types of each article.

## 2.3. Coding Instructions for RQ1

RQ1 is "What is the extent of Global Times' coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?"In this regard, three questions that should be answered are designed: 1) How many articles? 2) How many words are there in each article? 3)What are the types of content?

In terms of number of reports, this study extracted all reports on Xi during the two observation periods by searching for the keyword "Xi Jinping", and analyzed their monthly distribution and standard deviation to explore the balance of the number of reports during the two observation periods.

Regarding the size of reports, this study classified all the sample reports during the two observation periods into five levels based on the number of words: ultra short, short, medium, medium length, and ultra long. See Table 2

For types of each article, this study classified the content types of reports into straight news, special coverage, comments and others (see table 3) .

**Table 2.** Classifications and Definitions of Articles' sizes

| Classifications | Definitions                                 |
|-----------------|---|
| ultra short     | less than 100 words                         |
| short           | 100 words or more, but less than 300 words  |
| medium          | 300 words or more, but less than 600 words  |
| Medium-long     | 600 words or more, but less than 1000 words |
| long            | 1000 words or more                          |

**Table 3.** Classifications and Definitions of Articles' Types

| Classifications  | Definitions  |
|------------------|--|
| Straight news    | Simply report the latest news events and pay attention to the timeliness of the news. The language is concise, highlighting what, when, why, who, where, how and other basic elements of events. |
| Special Coverage | More detailed and profound reports based on in-depth interviews with typical person or events  |
| Comments         | Articles that make judgments and suggestions on the latest news events or social phenomena. They are targeted and instructive, including editorials, reader comments, etc                        |
| Others           | Other content types that do not belong to the above three categories, such as posters, pictures, news stories, etc   |

## 2.4. Coding Instructions for RQ2

RQ2 asks "Who are the news sources used by Global Times in their covers of President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?" Sun (2021) divided the news sources into four categories: 1) reporters and journalists from news organizations, 2) social specialized agencies, such as political parties, social groups, enterprises and institutions, 3) general public or readers, and 4) other media for secondary reporting or reprinting[12]. This study used Sun's classification method to classify the news sources used by Global Times during the two observation periods.

## 2.5. Coding Instructions for RQ3

RQ3 is "What are the frames employed by Global Times in coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?" Inductive coding was used to analyze and summarize the news frames for all sample content. They were classified into four frames: duty performance, personal image, diplomatic conflict, and governing belief (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Classifications and Definitions of Coverage's Frames

| Categories          | Definitions   |
|---------------------|---|
| Duty Performance    | It focuses on describing the behaviors and actions of Xi Jinping in fulfilling his basic responsibilities as a national leader. Such as attending meetings, receiving guests, visiting, telephone communication, sending condolence messages, etc |
| Personal Image      | About the character and background of President Xi Jinping, including Xi's personal or family activities and stories  |
| Diplomatic Conflict | It about Xi Jinping's handling of conflicts between China and other countries, including expressing dissatisfaction or resistance to the opinions or actions of other countries   |
| Governing Belief    | Focus on Xi Jinping's attitude or future plannings to a certain field. Such as emphasizing "energy security", advocating "common prosperity", etc   |

## 2.6. Coding Instructions for RQ4

RQ4 asks “What are the high-frequency words and the valence of Global Times in its coverage on President Xi Jinping in 2014 and 2022?” ROST CM6 was used to extract 82 high-frequency adjectives that appeared more than 3 times in samples during each period, and the emotional analysis of these high-frequency adjectives was carried out. ROST CM6 is a computing platform developed by Wuhan University to support humanities and social science research. This software can realize a series of text analysis, such as Weibo analysis, chat analysis, website analysis, Chinese and English word frequency statistics, emotional analysis and so on.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014), trichotomizing the content will ensure exhaustivity[11]. Therefore, the total valence of high-frequency adjectives in two periods was divided into three categories: positive, neutral and negative.

## 2.7. Data Analysis

This study summarized a large number of descriptive data such as frequencies and percentages, and used tables, figures and other visual methods to display the results.

## 2.8. Inter Coder Reliability

In this study, after reading a total of 80 articles of two constructed weeks, the variables were coded, involving two coders including the author. The reliability of coding shows the consistency and stability of results, according to the Holsti reliability calculation formula:  $C. R. = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$  (M is the number of codes with the same classification, N is the total number of codes)[11] (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). In this study, there are four codes for reliability and validity testing, that is, article' type, news source, frame and valence. Their reliability is 0.83, 1.00, 0.80 and 1.00, respectively, and the total reliability coefficient is 0.91. For most purposes, values greater than 0.75 or so may be taken to represent excellent agreement beyond chance[13] (Nili, et al., 2020).

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. The Extent of Global Times' Coverage on President Xi in 2014 and 2022

News media sets public prominence for objects or attributes. When a large number of news reports focus on a problem, people think it is an important problem[14] (Vargo et al., 2018). Therefore, this study explored the extent of Global Times' coverage on Xi in two time periods from three aspects: the number of reports, the article size, and the type of content.

### 3.2. Number of Reports

From December 17, 2013 to December 16, 2014, Global Times web version published a total of 434 articles related to Xi Jinping, with a monthly average of about 36. From December 29, 2021 to December 28, 2022, there were 417 articles, with a monthly average of about 35. The difference between the latter and the former is less than 3%, so there is little difference in the total number of articles between the two periods. This shows that the Global Times' attention to the events about President Xi in these two time periods is basically the same.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the monthly distribution of Global Times' coverage in two periods, with standard deviation of 17.0 and 9.85 respectively, and relative coefficient of variation (CRV=standard deviation/mean) of 47.22% and 28.3% respectively. Both the standard deviation and the relative coefficient of variation reflect the dispersion of the data. This group of data shows that in both periods, the frequency of coverage of Xi by Global Times fluctuated.

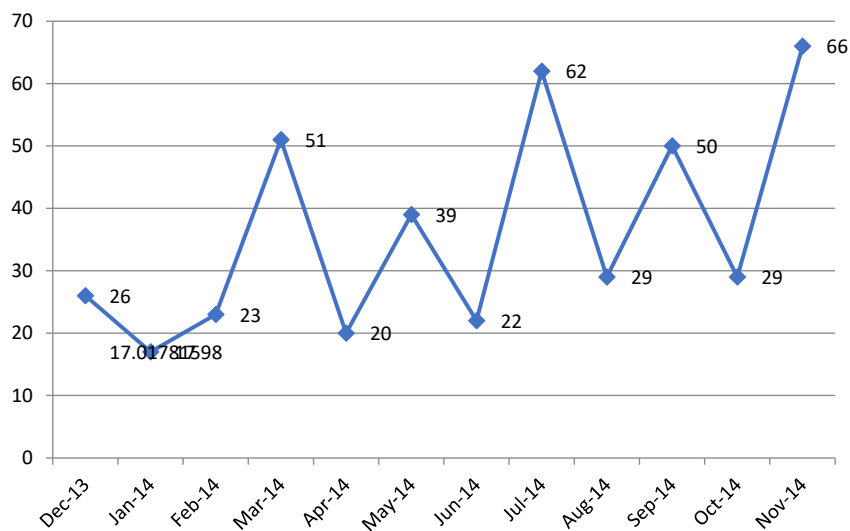


Figure 1. Monthly Distribution of Samples during December 17, 2013 --- December 16, 2014

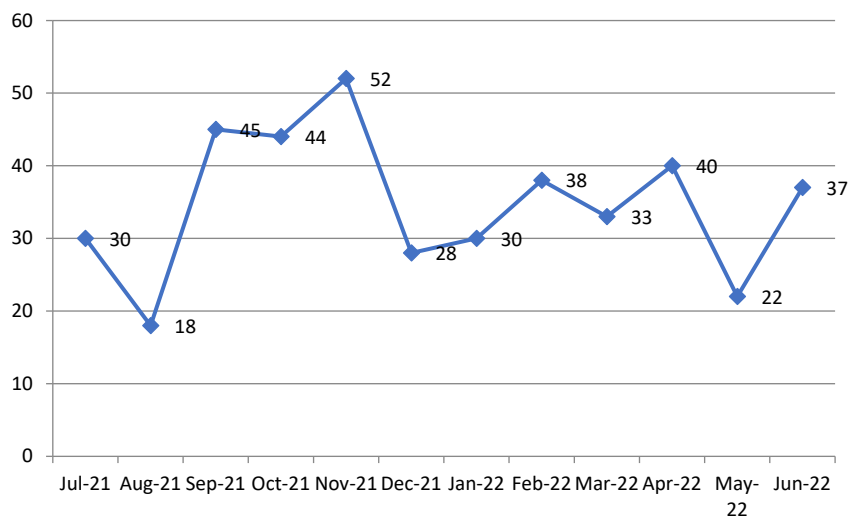


Figure 2. Monthly Distribution of Samples during June 29, 2021 --- June 28, 2022

### 3.3. Article Size

The number of articles' words reflects the depth of news content and the breadth of writing perspective to a certain extent, and also reflects their choice of story details after considering the needs of readers. The length of the reports samples in the two observation periods is shown (see Figure 3).

It can be seen from Figure 3 that in the first observation period, Global Times' reports on President Xi was mainly 100 to 599 words, followed by more than 600 words and less than 1000 words. The number of long stories with more than 1000 words was 0, and there are also fewer ultra-short articles with less than 100 words. The data in the second observation period shows that the strategies of Global Times on the length of articles seems to have changed: the number of ultra-short articles with less than 100 words has increased sharply, far exceeding the number of articles with 300-599 words which in the second place.

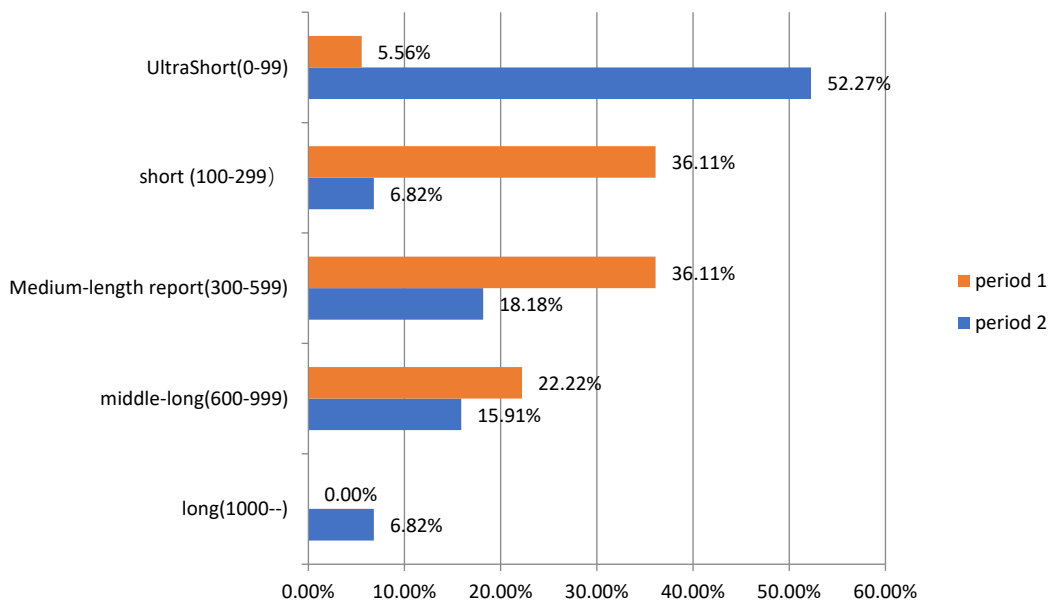


Figure 3. Length of Sample Articles in Two Observation Periods

### 3.4. Types of Content

News genre refers to the external form of news articles in terms of reflecting ideological content, arranging structure, expression, and language use[15] (Liu et al.,2016). In the news report, for the same theme of a person or an event, presenting it with different styles and content types is conducive to deepening reader’ awareness and memory, thus improving the communication effect[16] (Li & Ling, 2021). In this study, all reports are divided into four types:straight news, special coverage, comments and others. The content types of the samples in the two observation periods are shown in Figure 4 below.

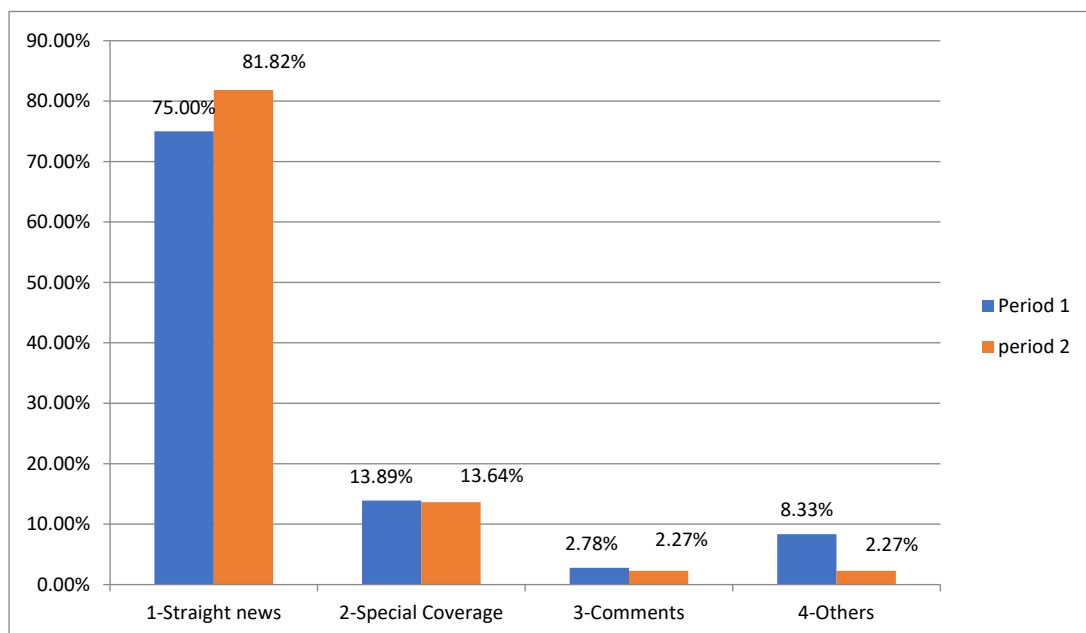


Figure 4. Content Types of Global Times’ Coverage on President Xi in Two Observation Periods

It can be seen from the figure that the sample reports' types in the two periods have not changed much. They are mainly straight news, followed by special coverage, with few comments and other types. In both periods of time, the proportion of straight news accounted for more than 75%, and in the later observation period, the proportion of it even exceeded 80%.

### 3.5. The News Sources of Global Times' Coverage on President Xi in 2014 and 2022

News source is an important factor to identify the reliability and authority of news content, and also an important factor to influence readers' choice and judgment of news.

This study used news sources classification method by Sun (2021), examined the news sources used by Global Times during the two observation periods from four categories: Global Time's journalists, other media for reprinting, social institution and general public[12] (See Table 5).

**Table 5.** News sources of Global Times during two observation period

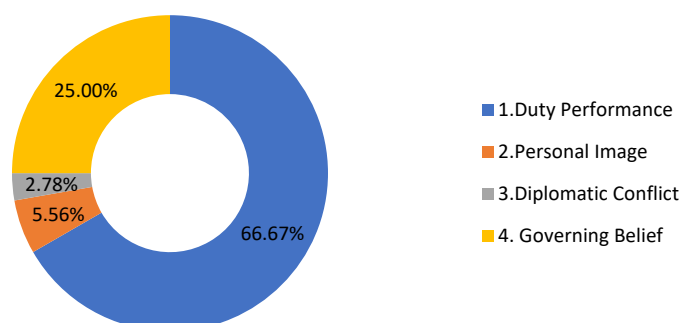
| News Sources | Media Reporters     | Other Media for Reprinting |                           | Social Institutions | General Public |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|              | <i>Global Times</i> | <i>Xinhua News Agency</i>  | <i>China-daily.com.cn</i> |                     |                |
| Period 1     | 25.00%              | 75.00%                     | 0.00%                     | 0                   | 0              |
| Period 2     | 27.27%              | 70.45%                     | 2.27%                     | 0                   | 0              |

In the first observation period, Global Times only used the reports from its own reporters and the reprinted Xinhua News Agency. Xinhua News Agency is its main news source, accounting for 75%. In the second observation period, there were still only two sources of its coverage, that is, media reporters and reprints, and only added a source for reprinting, which was the China Daily website.

It can be seen from Table 5 that in the reports on Xi, Global Times has stable and authoritative news sources.

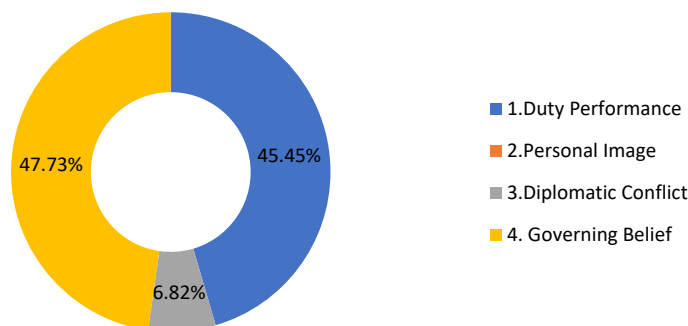
### 3.6. The Frames Employed by Global Times in its Coverage on President Xi Jinping

A news event is often given different narrative structure and content by different news agencies in different context. Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) identified five most commonly used news frames to apply to different news contexts: conflict, human interest, economic sequences, moral and responsibility[17]. After studying the sample content, the author summed up four news frames for this study: duty performance, personal image, diplomatic conflict, and governing belief. The results are shown in figure 5 and figure 6.



**Figure 5.** Frames Employed by Global Times in First Observation Period





**Figure 6.** Frames Employed by Global Times in Second Observation Period

In the frames used by Global Times, duty performance and governing belief are obviously the two main parts. Its distribution during the two observation periods is slightly different. In the first observation period, duty performance frame accounted for 66.67%, and governing belief frame accounted for about one quarter of the total number of samples with 25%. In the second observation period, the frame of duty performance and governing belief were both about 45%. During the first observation period, the dominant frame of duty performance helped to create the image of a politician who was diligent in all kinds of government and international affairs. In the second observation period, the rapidly rising concept of governing belief frame and diplomatic conflict frame is likely to create a tough politician image.

Moreover, it is worth noting that during the two observation periods, there were few samples of personal image frame and expression conflicts frame, although the samples of diplomatic conflict in period 2 have increased significantly.

### 3.7. The the High-frequency Words and the Valence of Global Times' Coverage on Xi before the Two Polls

Words are one of the most intuitive elements reflecting the characteristics of media images. The research results of Barriga-Paulino et al. (2022) confirmed that the audience will process according to their own experience and ideas while accepting the information, and at the early stage of audience's automatic processing, the emotional state of words will affect the processing[18].

Word frequency has long been viewed as the best predictor of lexical access [19] (Hamrick & Pandža, 2020). Word frequency statistics is a basic means used in corpus researches. High-frequency words are more impressive than low-frequency words. Therefore, the common words used by Global Times to report Xi have a considerable impact on the image construction of him, and the nature of high-frequency words (positive, neutral, negative) will more affect the emotional impression of the audience on Xi.

Using adjectives can help reporters understand more clearly what happened. However, the unique high-frequency words in the media corpus can reflect the differences in the focus of media reports. Some high-frequency words (such as qualified adjectives) may be the points of serious differences between opposing views [20] (Mastrine, 2022). In the construction of personal image, adjectives play a very important role. In this study, a software called ROST CM6 was used to extract high-frequency adjectives that appeared more than 3 times in the samples of each period, and emotional analysis was performed on these high-frequency adjectives. There were 76 high-frequency adjectives in the samples in the first period (see Table 6), and 82 in the second period (see Table 7).

**Table 6.** The Valence of High-frequency Adjectives (frequency >3) in Period 1

| Valence  | Number | Percentage | Main High-frequency Words  |
|----------|--------|------------|--|
| Positive | 19     | 25.00%     | more,great,strong,senior,prime,important,peaceful,positive,outstanding,clear...                      |
| Neutral  | 56     | 73.68%     | national,bilateral,economic,military,central,other,political,global,capital,east,strategic,public... |
| Negative | 1      | 1.32%      | bad  |
| Total    | 76     | 100%       |  |

**Table 7.** The Valence of High-frequency Adjectives (frequency > 3) in Period 2

| Valence  | Number | Percentage | Main High-frequency Words   |
|----------|--------|------------|---|
| Positive | 18     | 21.95%     | More, important, great, positive, largest, high-quality....                           |
| Neutral  | 62     | 75.61%     | global, international, central, regional, economic, bilateral, military, political... |
| Negative | 2      | 2.44%      | Terrorist, negative   |
| Total    | 82     | 100%       |   |

The coverage on Xi in the two observation periods were not only almost the same in the valence of words, but also the same in some high-frequency words. In both periods, the proportion of high-frequency adjectives which expressing neutral emotions was the largest, followed by adjectives with positive attributes. The negative high-frequency adjectives were very few in both periods, accounting for only about 2%. It can be seen from this that in the two periods, the valence of coverage was to avoid the appearance of negative tendencies and highlight the neutral and positive attributes.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. On the Continuously Fluctuating News Release Frequency

The findings show that Global Times failed to take into account the balance of the number of articles published each month. The prominence of objects, such as public figures and issues, in society is largely determined by their frequency of media coverage and reporting[21] (Vargo et al., 2018). The fluctuation in Global Times' coverage frequency of Xi during different periods may result in discrepancies in attention paid to his image, ultimately affecting the public's perception and evaluation of him. Ma (2019) suggests that excessive communication density during a particular period may provoke audience rejection[22]. Managing the density of communication in a specific period is helpful to reduce audience rejection.

### 4.2. On the Soaring Number of Ultra-short Articles

In the Internet context, news audiences have a wide range of options for information. As a result, online news media need to consider which story clues to present to their readers, as compared to traditional newspapers. Publishers have always had to balance the advantages and disadvantages of quick news bulletins versus in-depth, long-form articles. Writing too much might discourage readers who are only interested in the facts, while writing too little might omit crucial details that attract casual visitors and turn them into loyal readers[23] (Neary, 2022). An American study indicates that for news articles with less than 2000 words, the average reading time and reader interest increase as word count increases[23] (Neary, 2022). However, Chinese statistical data suggests that Chinese readers' reading habits have become increasingly fragmented, and that they only read for entertainment purposes[24] (Mei, 2020).

Thus, Chinese newspapers tend to simplify articles as much as possible to accommodate their impatient readers, while American newspapers prioritize detailed reporting. Consequently, Global Times' reports from 2013 to 2014 appeared to align more closely with the reading preferences of the international community, compared to those from 2021 to 2022. Furthermore, articles that are too short may fail to cover the news in sufficient detail, resulting in an unclear and incomplete construction of leaders' images.

#### **4.3. On the Continuously Monotonous News Type**

The content types of the samples news on Xi in the two observation periods have not changed much, with straight news being the most common type, followed by special coverage, and with few comments and other types. This suggests that Global Times has a consistent approach to news reporting, and prefers to rely on straight news to convey information to its readers. Moreover, it may indicate that Global Times prioritizes factual reporting over opinions or interpretations. However, it is important to note that the lack of comments and other types of content may limit the diversity of perspectives and opinions presented in the news.

Different news genres have different stylistic attributes, and news reports should adopt a variety of genres to adapt to the personalized and dynamic interest characteristics of readers[25] (Bodó et al., 2019). The lack of diversity of news types of Global Times' coverage on Xi may affect readers' reading interest, thereby weakening the influence of reports.

#### **4.4. On Stable News sources**

Both Xinhua News Agency and Global Times have a distinct official nature of the communist regime, there is an inherent preference for the choice of sources of information. However, once readers think that their current news sources often contradict their beliefs and opinions, they will turn to other news media[26] (Hamborg, et al., 2019). A reader with access to all news sources could get an unbiased perspective. Too monotonous official reports will affect national readers' trust in the image of Xi.

Moreover, Global Times has a tendency to rely too much on reprinting news from other media. It obviously lacks initiative in creating a comprehensive image of President Xi timely and rapidly.

#### **4.5. On the Dominance of Duty Performance Framing and Governing Belief Framing**

The slight differences in the distribution of news frames used by Global Times between the two observation periods indicate a shift in the emphasis placed on different aspects of Xi's image. It seems to change from a capable and diligent leader to a tough politician with leadership. While displaying a strong image, political leaders may also gain more domestic support, as this image has proven to be an alluring form of political PR., which will convince people that this leader can better safeguard the interests and security of the country and will provide stability and "greatness" to their nations [27] (Eksi & Wood, 2019). However, for international audiences, this tough image may cause them concern and anxiety, as they fear that this approach will lead to increased conflict and tension between the country and the outside world.

Based on the information impulse that appears in the media, the most important aspects in the formation of leader image can be divided into the following parts: political position, practical policy, personal qualities, visual image [28] (Qadamboyovich, 2022). Specific qualities in political leaders, including honesty, intelligence, friendship, sincerity, and trustworthiness are what people care about[29] (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Especially in this era when news has long been a cross-media phenomenon characterized by high redundancy, people living in a culture of news saturation often take an evasive attitude towards many news, especially political news, because of their low civic literacy, lack of political knowledge, or their cynical

attitude towards politicians[30] (Schröder, 2019). So the lack of personal image frame and diplomatic conflicts frame in coverage makes it difficult for readers to understand Xi's personal charm and character as a national leader, which will have a negative impact on readers' cognition of President Xi's image.

#### 4.6. On Similar High-frequency Words and Valence

Global Times' frequent use of neutral and positive adjectives in its coverage of Xi's image could help establish a strong and powerful leader image among domestic audiences, thereby enhancing his leadership and influence. However, this reporting strategy may cause concern and anxiety among foreign audiences, who may perceive this strong image as a potential source of conflict and escalating tension between the country and the outside world[31] (Weeks, 2012). A psycho-physiological experiment that captures the audience's reaction to the actual news content shows that negative news can cause a stronger and more lasting response than positive news[32](Soroka & McAdams, 2015). So excessive positive media coverage of an issue will weaken the public's attention and sensitivity to the issue. The overemphasis on the positive attributes and the excessive use of words with strong propaganda color may lead to the loss of international readers' perception and the crisis of trust of Xi's image.

#### 4.7. Evaluation and Suggestions

This study shows the objective existence of the frame in the production of news content, especially in the image coverage of political figures. Through the selection, emphasis and present of characters and events, Global Times highlighted its own perspective and reporting policies to audience to help them perceive and understand its information. At the same time, its news frame production is affected by many factors such as social and cultural value orientation. Moreover, the rapidly changing international context and the orientation of public opinion reflect the non-absoluteness of the effect of the news frame.

Chinese international news media not only do not deny their role in guiding public opinion, but also take guiding public opinion as one of their basic tasks [33](Guo, 2011). So Global Times has long had some fixed reporting patterns, such as a continuous positive, rational and institutionalized language style. However, on the basis of maintaining its own nature, Chinese official newspaper should pay timely attention to the rapidly changing international context and complex international public opinion, which means making strategic changes and improvements in shaping the image of leaders, so that promote the continuity and effectiveness of the ideal leader image construction for overseas audiences.

Specifically, Global Times should diversify its news sources and content types, taking into account the changing interests and expectations of international audiences. This may include reducing the number of ultra-short articles, and using more richer frame types, and examine the nature and effectiveness of frames. For example, adding more personal image frame and emotional frame in coverage after 2021, in order to neutralize the image of political careerist created when the leader strengthening the export of his governing ideas and the change of diplomatic strategies.

In short, Global Times should recognize that adherence to similar communication patterns and passive responses to Chinese government policies are likely to be less effective in shaping the image of Chinese leaders in the eyes of the international public. The dynamic situation of international opinion is very worthy of attention, it is necessary to take the initiative to constantly innovate the characterization frames and communication methods, not only to assist leaders to convey political strategies, but also to meet the information needs of the international audience to a certain extent.

## 5. Conclusion

This study evaluates the content of Global Time's coverage on Xi Jinping in the year of the two international polls in extent, news sources, frame and valence, and analyzes its strategies and problems in the process of shaping the image of national leader.

In the two periods, the number of reports of the Global Times on Xi did not differ significantly, and there was no tendency to increase attention. In addition, the number of monthly releases fluctuated greatly, so the reports may concentrated or insufficient in sometimes, which affects the stable reception of audience information. In the second observation period, the Global Times also ignored the consideration of international readers' interest in reading, and launched a large number of ultra-short news which was difficult to present details. Moreover, as a newspaper which can represent the Chinese official, Global Times insisted on the authority of information and never accepted contributions from social groups and the public, so that its news sources was monotonous. The deficient news sources will not only limit the perspective, but also affect the diversity of content types. The findings indeed showed that the Global Times did not produce diversified news types, and straight news with concise elements was released in large quantities. Not only that, Global Times also showed great dependence on the news reprinting mode. The proportion of news content which independently produced by its own journalists was small, and they lacked initiative in shaping the image of leaders.

Moreover, the frames describing Xi's responsibilities and ideas totally led to the image construction of him. Although in the second period, the frame of governing belief exceeded the frame of duty performance, the two frames essentially emphasized the similar frame logic, further consolidating Xi's image of a political careerist in dealing with China and international affairs. The serious deficiency or even disappearance of the personal image frame that expressed personal stories and personality traits made it impossible to meet the audience's expectations for a comprehensive and vivid image of characters.

In the valence of the report, it was difficult for readers to see the negative emotions about Xi Jinping. The use of high-frequency adjectives in the two periods also highlighted the neutral and positive attributes, trying to avoid the negative image of him as a national leader to the audience. Chinese news media always intend to represent and disseminate a consistent official voice of the authority[34] (Zhang et al., 2019). They tend to positively report China in comparisons with Western media[35] (Liu et al., 2018). However, the overemphasis on the positive nature of Xi's national image and the excessive use of words with strong propaganda color may cause the revulsion of international readers and shake their trust in his image.

In conclusion, in the year of two international polls,during the two observation periods of December 17, 2013 -- December 16, 2014 and June 29, 2021 -- June 28, 2022,in the context of the intensification of conflicts between China and major Western countries, Global Times adhered to similar frame logic and valence, used monotonous news sources, and did not improve in terms of production time, distribution and article length. It have failed to take positive and effective measures to shape the image of leaders in the face of the changing international situation.

This study has some limitations. First of all, it used the method of constructed week to analyze the coverage of Xi Jinping the years before the two polls, taking the samples as the representative. Although this method is reasonable, it did not cover all the articles, the accuracy of the research result is insufficient to a certain extent. Secondly, this study only analyzed the content of Global Times' reports on Xi Jinping, summarized its characteristics and problems, but did not deeply explore the reasons why the Global Times chose these strategies to construct the image of Xi. Therefore, the depth of this study needs to be improved. Moreover, it can carry out the production frame analysis and audience frame analysis of Global Times during this period in the future.

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