Constructing the Other

Analysis of Foreign Correspondents' Discourses and Practices During the Coronavirus Crisis in China

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Abstract

This dissertation examines foreign correspondents' discourses and professional practices during their coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China from the perspective of intercultural communication. On the one hand, it compares reporting on the coronavirus crisis in China by foreign correspondents from eight media outlets through a critical discourse analysis that combines quantitative and qualitative elements. On the other hand, the correspondents themselves explain their experiences during their coverage the crisis, as well as their understanding of foreign correspondence and their approach toward intercultural communication, through a series of semi-structured interviews. By putting research on foreign correspondence and intercultural communication in dialogue, this dissertation represents an attempt to fill a gap in the existing academic literature.

Keywords: Foreign correspondents, intercultural communication, Covid-19, coronavirus, China, critical discourse analysis.

Resum

Aquesta dissertació examina els discursos i les pràctiques professionals dels corresponsals internacionals durant la cobertura de la crisi del coronavirus a la Xina des de la perspectiva de la comunicació intercultural. Per una banda, compara les informacions redactades pels corresponsals de vuit mitjans internacionals a través d'una anàlisi crítica del discurs que combina elements quantitatius i qualitatius. Per altra banda, els mateixos corresponsals expliquen les seves experiències durant la cobertura de la crisi, així com la seva percepció de la professió de corresponsal i la manera com aborden la comunicació intercultural, a través d'una sèrie d'entrevistes semiestructurades. En posar la recerca sobre la feina dels corresponsals i la comunicació intercultural en diàleg, aquesta dissertació suposa un intent d'omplir el buit que existeix actualment en la literatura acadèmica.

Paraules clau: Corresponsals internacionals, comunicación intercultural, Covid-19, coronavirus, Xina, anàlisi crítica del discurs.

Introduction

This research project was meant to be something else. When I set out to begin my doctoral thesis in 2017, the idea that I could live through a pandemic had not crossed my mind. At the time, I was looking to investigate how foreign correspondents from various media outlets covered the conflict in the South China Sea. I had assumed that the South China Sea and the disputes around it would shape international relations in the years to come. Little did I know what lay ahead.

Then the unexpected happened, Covid-19 entered our lives, and here I am: introducing a dissertation about foreign correspondents' coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China with a focus on its intercultural dimension. The case study of this project is double. It consists of a discourse analysis of what certain correspondents based in China wrote in the early days of the pandemic —when China was the hardest-hit country—and a series of interviews with those correspondents. The discourse analysis compares how foreign correspondents with different cultural backgrounds covered a major health crisis. The interviews aim to get a sense of their experiences covering that story, their views on foreign correspondence, and their approaches to intercultural communication.

Although the case study changed once work was well under way, the original goal of this dissertation remains the same. It aims to put foreign correspondence and intercultural communication in dialogue. In doing so, this dissertation hopes to open up new perspectives for intercultural communication as a discipline and provide a better understanding of the figure of the foreign correspondent, which journalism studies have somewhat neglected despite its singularity. One question, in particular, serves as the backbone for the whole dissertation: to what extent can foreign correspondents be considered intercultural mediators?

The idea for the dissertation began to take shape upon my arrival in Barcelona in 2017. However, it was inspired mainly by my experiences, concerns, and doubts over the prior four years working as a correspondent for Agencia EFE —first as an intern in

Washington and later as a staff correspondent in Beijing— as well by life-long exposure to international news as a newspaper and magazine reader.

Another important motive was the realization that a certain mythical aura surrounded the figure of the foreign correspondent and that a more complex, nuanced perspective was missing even from books recommended in universities, like the volume edited by Owen and Purdey (2008). Thorough reflection was often trumped by a mix of anecdotes and representations taken from popular culture.

The fact that other scholars before me had already researched Spanish foreign correspondents, like Tulloch (1998, 2004) or Sahagún (1986, 2001, 2013), or international correspondents based in China, like Zeng (2018a, 2018b, 2018c), paved the way for the approach adopted in this dissertation. Others had already mapped the ground I was in a better position to explore, which gave me no other option than to dig deeper to uncover new insights.

I have always believed that there is nothing more practical than a good theory, so I spent the better part of three years trying to build a solid theoretical framework that enabled me to look at foreign correspondents from the perspective of intercultural communication. That took a considerable effort since none of the theories originated within intercultural communication seemed comprehensive enough for the task. In the end, I decided to reformulate intercultural communication according to Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality and to use that as a basis for the development of a methodology that would allow me to tackle the case study.

The results of that endeavor are shown in the first part of this dissertation. It is divided into three chapters: the first focuses on foreign correspondents; the second addresses intercultural communication, and the third seeks to link foreign correspondents and intercultural communication.

Next, the second part includes all the necessary elements to prepare the practical case. It sets out the goals of the case study, reviews the existing academic literature on the topics addressed —media coverage of health crises and foreign correspondents in China—, explains the methods employed, and details the sample.

The results of the analysis of discourse written by foreign correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China[1] are presented in the third part. Four chapters form this part: quantitative findings, qualitative findings, comparative analysis, and discussion.

The fourth part of the dissertation shows the contents obtained from the interviews with foreign correspondents based in China who covered the coronavirus crisis. Those contents are organized into four chapters: experiences during the coronavirus coverage, views on foreign correspondence, approaches toward intercultural communication, and discussion.

Finally, a conclusion puts theory in relation to practice and vice versa, discusses how the findings obtained in this dissertation compare to the results of previous studies, and wraps up the thesis with some closing remarks.

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[1] It must be noted that the official name Covid-19 had not been adopted when correspondents based in China began covering the story, and that what was initially an outbreak evolved later into an epidemic, only to end up being a pandemic. To facilitate references, this dissertation calls that episode "coronavirus crisis" throughout.

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PART 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I. Foreign Correspondents

When one thinks about international journalism and foreign news reporting, the figure of the foreign correspondent immediately comes to mind. But what is a foreign correspondent? Thanks to literature and cinema, most people have a rough idea of who they are and what they do. In fact, popular culture has contributed to elevating them to an almost mythical status.

Popular representations aside, the exact nature of foreign correspondents' work is less clear. What sort of obstacles do they face for their reporting? Are they able to work by themselves, or do they need a helping hand in their reporting? Are they free from their bosses and editors at home?

Throughout this dissertation, those issues are explained. This chapter represents the first step in that process. It begins with an approach to the figure of the foreign correspondent, including definitions, a proposal for periodization of the history of foreign correspondence. Criteria for the classification of correspondents are outlined in the second section. The third and final section includes some proposals for a theorization of the figure of the foreign correspondent.

1. What Is a Foreign Correspondent?

What sets foreign correspondents apart among journalists is that they report out of a foreign environment. The correspondent, thus, is someone who goes to a foreign country to report what happens there back to his or her place of origin.

Since correspondents bring a perspective from one place, apply it to another and then report back to where they came from, Hannerz (2004) compares them to anthropologists as ethnographic writers. "Foreign correspondents are a sort of anthropologists or anthropologists are a sort of foreign correspondents, to the extent that they engage in reporting from one part of the world to another," Hannerz (2004, p. 3) says.

This section seeks to define and explain the figure of the foreign correspondent. It is intended to give an initial approximation to the concept and serve as the basis for further elaborations and theorizations. The first section offers some definitions collected from existing literature on the topic. Additionally, a brief history of foreign correspondence is provided.

1.1. Defining Foreign Correspondents

International journalism is inevitably linked to the notion of the foreign correspondent. However, according to Gross (2011, p. 4), there is no consensus around the very definition of who and what a foreign correspondent is. Some definitions have been attempted and each emphasizes a specific aspect.

Before jumping on any definition, the notion of "foreign" merits some attention. Foreign is an ambiguous word but refers to something of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own. This suggests that, even though they do not

always use this label, the media's international correspondent networks are rooted in nation-state boundaries. The following subsection, which explores the origins of foreign correspondence, expands on this.

Regarding definitions, Tulloch (2004, p.20) opts for a narrow one and says a foreign correspondent is a journalist hired by a daily general-information newspaper that works permanently outside the country where the medium is from in a regime of exclusivity. Hannerz (2004, p. 4) adopts a more inclusive view:

> "I take the core group of foreign correspondents to consist of those individuals who are stationed in other countries than that of their origin for the purpose of reporting on events and characteristics of the area of their stationing, through news media based elsewhere (usually in their countries of origin). But though this is the core, in the real world of international news reporting, the edges of the category get a bit blurred, through variations in recruitment, geographical mobility, and audience definitions."

For this dissertation, foreign correspondents can be defined as journalists who report international news on a permanent basis from a country different from that in which their media are headquartered. This is a rather broad definition that does not discriminate by type of medium or employment.

The definitions cited above are academic. For sure, journalists themselves highlight other aspects. Some definitions of the figure of the foreign correspondent provided by correspondents based in China can be found in part 4 of this dissertation.

The definitions above establish a difference between foreign correspondents and special envoys —who are sent by their organizations to cover an event or crisis generally for a short period— and from those working on newsrooms' international news desks, who tend to perform editing jobs. There is more to foreign news reporting than foreign correspondence.

Indeed, foreign correspondents are not the only players in the field of international news reporting. Hess (2006, p. 129) points out that most journalistic images of a given country spread by international media are produced by people who are not in that country: editorialists, columnists, commentators, talk-show hosts, headline writers,

photo editors, and cartoonists. But foreign correspondents are the ones who are on the ground, and that gives them a privileged position in international news. The notion of being "on the ground" needs to be generous here. In some cases, the area of coverage of foreign correspondents spans a whole continent.

Tulloch (2004, pp. 19–57), who centers his study on foreign correspondents of daily newspapers, identifies several journalistic agents involved in international news reporting in addition to correspondents: news agencies' correspondents, special envoys, stringers, freelancers, and war correspondents. Although Tulloch (2004, p. 41) considers that stringers can either assist correspondents or work as the only representatives of the medium in a country, other authors differentiate between the figure of the stringer —or local contributor— and that of the fixer —the local assistant that guides and helps the correspondent—. Fixers assist correspondents in all sorts of tasks, from the most mundane such as filling paperwork to more sophisticated activities like establishing sources for stories and translating interviews. In some contexts, particularly if correspondents do not speak the local language, fixers are crucial for correspondents.

1.2. A Brief History of Foreign Correspondence

To elaborate on the historical evolution of foreign correspondence is beyond the ambition of the present study. There have been attempts to do so, with Hohenberg's (1995) *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times* and Knightley's (2003) *The First Casualty* outstanding as the most comprehensive, albeit the latter focuses on war correspondents.

Nevertheless, a few brief historical notes will be of great help to contextualize what is explained later on. Foreign news preceded the existence of correspondents themselves. In the 18th century, when newspapers started to invest in newsgathering, few could maintain a correspondent abroad and relied instead on manuscript newsletters and foreign newspapers, according to Pettegree (2014).

Cole and Hamilton (2008) identify six stages in the history of international newsgathering by foreign correspondents, though their periodization centers on U.S. journalism:

- **The casual correspondents (1700-1840)**: The first American newspapers did not have correspondents abroad—nor reporters or editors at home for that matter. According to Cole and Hamilton (2008, p. 801), existing technologies made foreign newsgathering nearly impossible. Foreign news reports arrived no faster than a horse or ship could carry them and were provided by diplomats and people living or traveling abroad as well as by foreign newspapers and journals.

- **The specials (1840-1900):** As journalism became a business and newspapers began to have specialized reporters and editors, the figure of the foreign correspondent who filed from abroad started to develop. Many foreign correspondents were still volunteers or worked part-time. Still, over time they came to be expected to dedicate themselves to newsgathering and to be seen as professional elites, Cole and Hamilton (2008, pp. 801-802) claim. The prestige press tried to emphasize its foreign coverage, seeking to differentiate itself from the local focus of the popular press. Completion of the first transatlantic cable in 1858 allowed a faster reception of news.

- **The foreign service (1900-1930):** There was a more systematic approach to gathering the news, including having individual correspondents as part of a more extensive network. Cable and telegraph lines enabled journalists to file important news quickly while contributing to a better coordination with headquarters, say Cole and Hamilton (2008, p. 803). That brought significant changes. "The telegraph eliminated the correspondent who provided letters that announced an event, described it in detail, and analyzed its substance, and replaced him with the stringer who supplied the bare facts.

- **The "compleat" correspondents (1930-1970):** Professionalism and competence stepped up as news organizations got a clearer idea of what quality to aim for when it came to foreign news. Cole and Hamilton (2008, p. 803) call the years between the two world wars a beginning of a golden era for foreign

correspondence with some correspondents achieving celebrity status. The age of radio and television expanded the audience significantly for foreign news.

- **The corporate correspondent (1970-2000):** Reporters were able to travel farther and faster to get to stories, which increased their productivity and created new, more demanding working conditions. On top of that, the home office coordinated closer with correspondents while exercising greater control. "[Correspondents] reported live from anywhere. But the ability to file instantly also became a requirement, not just a luxury, and it had costs. Speed tended to trump depth," Cole and Hamilton (2008, p. 805) say.

- **A confederacy of correspondences (from 2000):** The information era that followed the rise of the internet has brought about significant changes to foreign correspondence. Multiple sources provide a continuous flow of foreign news. There are several ways of being a foreign correspondent. Cole and Hamilton (2008, pp. 806-807) cite four: premium news services, in-house correspondents, citizen foreign correspondents, and local foreign correspondents.

One final note that seems relevant to a historical account of foreign correspondence is that Dovifat (1932, p. 243) points out that the newspaper and the modern state developed simultaneously and that foreign press bureaus arose in connection with foreign offices and embassies.

1.3. Summary

This first section represented an initial approach to the figure of the foreign correspondents. They were defined as journalists who report international news on a permanent basis from a country different from that in which their media are headquartered. Cole and Hamilton's (2008) periodization of the history of foreign correspondence in U.S. journalism was explained.

A common thread that binds the two sections of this chapter is that the figure of the foreign correspondent is grounded on the nation-state system. The newspaper and the modern state developed simultaneously, and the very notion of being "foreign" correspondents implies that they are based in countries other than their own.

After introducing foreign correspondence, the next section explores the different ways in which correspondents can be classified.

2. Foreign Correspondents: Criteria for Classification

Classifying foreign correspondents is a challenging task because the criteria employed by one media organization may not be necessarily used by another. Two fundamental distinctions could be established based on the type of medium correspondents work for —whether it is a news agency, a print newspaper or online publication, a radio station or a TV network— or the country they hail from.

Some attempts at classifying foreign correspondents collected from the academic literature are summarized in this chapter. A fresh proposal to establish a classification of foreign correspondents according to different criteria is outlined next.

2.1. Previous Classifications

Authors like Tulloch (2004), Hess (1996), or Hannerz (2004) have sketched principles that could be used to establish different foreign correspondent categories. Their proposals are examined in this section.

Tulloch (2004, pp. 20-27) mentions the degree of experience, the geographic area covered and the prestige amassed —evidenced by being based in "star" bureaus such as Washington, Moscow, or Paris— as criteria Spanish correspondents use to classify themselves. The first two criteria seem sensible, but the notion of prestige is subjective and difficult to apply systematically.

Hess (1996, pp. 47-51), for example, also considers correspondents' prestige but from a perspective. Focusing on their working conditions and establishes a hierarchy by tracing the typical career paths of those who work for print media. From this perspective, an occasional freelancer is at the bottom, and moving to permanent employment is

considered a step up. Working for a wire service constitutes the immediate higher tier from freelancing, with a transfer to a regional newspaper being the next upward move. News organizations with the greatest amount of space available for foreign correspondents like elite national dailies occupy the top of the hierarchy, although some correspondents eye escaping the constraints of daily journalism to write books and long magazine articles, according to Hess (1996, p. 50).

Hess (1996, p. 30) also talks about a geographic division of the correspondents' coverage, referring to how U.S. television networks organize their overseas operations based on geography. Hess (1996, p. 30) compares U.S. television networks' organizational design to the hub-and-spoke configuration used by airlines and differentiates between constant locales, where camera crews are stationed regardless of whether there is news happening there; shifting locales that move following crises; and sporadic locales, where units are only assigned to go if there is anything that could attract interest such as a summit, an election or a major sports event.

Meanwhile, Pollock (1981) divides foreign correspondents into "examiners" and "chroniclers" based on the professional attitudes he observed in a study of correspondents covering Latin America for U.S. media organizations. According to this classification, chronicler reporters emphasize speed, breadth, and reliability. Examiners, by contrast, accentuate providing contextual analysis and interpretation of complex problems and the presentation of choices.

Zeng (2018a) identifies three role types in a study of how foreign correspondents based in China perceived their professional role: "detached disseminators," "populist watchdogs," and "facilitative change agents." According to Zeng (2018a), detached disseminators place great emphasis on neutral reporting and show little interest in advocacy and market; populist watchdogs show a willingness to keep Chinese elites in check while appealing to their home audiences; and facilitative change agents seek to be critical of the Chinese government and loyal to their home governments. Although Zeng (2018a) does not cite it, her classification can be seen as an evolution of Pollock's (1981).

Hannerz (2004) focuses on career orientations to establish a divide of the craft of foreign correspondence between what he calls "spiralists" and "long-timers." While the formers are not strongly rooted in the territory where they report on, the latter remain in

their posting for a more extended period, even throughout their correspondents' lives. Major media organizations that rely on staff correspondents use the spiralist model, rotating their correspondents between assignments under the assumption that "going native" —or start to take things for granted— is a significant occupational hazard. The parallel assumption is that maintaining a "foreign" perspective helps journalists to remain in touch with the audience at home and its interests. "To some degree, there is virtue in innocence. The ideal correspondent, according to this view, has a fresh eye for the particularities of a beat—'a sense of wonder,'" Hannerz (2004, p. 85) says.

Building up on Hannerz's (2004) classification, Zeng (2018b) identifies four types of foreign correspondents working in China: "spiralists," "sporadics," "sinophiles," and "sinojournos." According to Zeng (2018b), spiralists have experience in previous overseas assignments but have not been in China for long; sinojournos have more experience working as a China correspondent but lack experience in other postings; sinophiles have experience in China, but not necessarily as correspondents, and sporadics do not stand out either for knowledge of China or their journalistic experience.

Despite being undeniably helpful, all these attempts perhaps fail to create a comprehensive, systematic classification that pays attention to the multiple variables of foreign correspondence. What one emphasizes, others ignore, and vice versa. Tulloch (2004) and Hess (1996) emphasize correspondents' geographic reach as well as the notion of prestige, but the latter category seems subjective. Pollock's (1981) categories are solid but can be difficult to apply *a priori*, and the same can be said about Zeng's (2018a) professional role types. Hannerz's (2004) division does not suffer that problem, but his typology has already been replaced by a more complex and comprehensive proposal, Zeng's (2018b). Zeng's (2018b) classification of career orientations is, no doubt, fit for her research, but it creates problems when being extrapolated and misses criteria identified by Tulloch (2004) and Hess (1996) that are useful.

The next section sets out criteria for a more comprehensive classification of foreign correspondents to address some of these shortcomings.

2.2. A Proposal for Classifying Foreign Correspondents

In light of the shortcomings of previous classifications just highlighted, this dissertation proposes establishing six possible criteria for classifying foreign correspondents: whether they report alone or as part of a team, seniority, geographic coverage, specialization, professional attitude, and career orientation. This aims to cover the broadest possible spectrum, bearing in mind that a potential seventh criterion —the type of medium for which correspondents work— might not necessarily apply for freelancers, who sometimes work for several media organizations.

2.2.1. Backing

The most elementary level of classification for foreign correspondents considers whether they work alone or as part of a team in a bureau. This field is closely related to specialization, as the fact that there is more than one correspondent in a country or a region allows each one of them to focus on a particular beat.

- **Lone correspondents**: This figure is usually employed by newspapers. In particular, lone correspondents are sent to countries where their media organizations, having enough news interest to deploy a foreign correspondent, think it is enough to send only one correspondent. This usually forces the correspondent to cover all sorts of news topics.

- **Bureau correspondents**: Larger organizations like news agencies and some of the world's most prominent newspapers and broadcasters tend to have more resources to open bureaus where several correspondents are employed. Depending on the size, there is a bureau chief and field reporters, with the possibility of having deputy bureau chiefs and even editors. This enables the

correspondents to be more specialized than lone correspondents, given that they can rely on their colleagues to share the workload.

2.2.2 Seniority

Media organizations tend to regard their employees internally based on the experience they have. Although there can be variations from case to case, they can be generally classified as:

- **Junior correspondent**: Those with less than five years of experience.
- **Established correspondent**: Those who have between five and ten years of experience.
- **Senior correspondent**: Those with more than ten years of experience.

Additionally, there is potentially a pre-junior category, intern, which applies to undergrad and freshly graduated journalists undertaking an internship as foreign correspondents, most often in bureaus.

2.2.3 Geographic coverage

Correspondents can be dispatched to cover areas ranging from a city to a continent. Based on the geographic extension under their jurisdiction, there can be four levels:

- **City correspondents**: In countries big or important enough, a single media organization can have more than one bureau, in which case correspondents are based in one of those bureaus and report on the news originated from the city

where they are located. This typically happens in countries with a clear distinction between the political capital and the main economic or cultural centers.

- **Country correspondents**: This is probably the most straightforward case of geographic coverage by foreign correspondents. They are assigned to cover a country and only need to worry about that particular country.

- **Regional correspondents**: When a region has some news value for media organizations but not enough to cover each of the countries that constitute it individually, they can decide to deploy a regional correspondent. When this happens, correspondents tend to have higher mobility than country or city correspondents, given that they need to cover more than one country.

- **Continent correspondents**: This is the scenario in which news organizations give the smallest degree of importance to a region —before not covering it at all, of course—, but still want to have some presence on the ground, so they do not rely exclusively on news agencies. It is nearly impossible for continent correspondents to do their job by themselves without the assistance of news agencies and fixers or stringers in at least the countries deemed more prominent.

It must be noted that when media organizations opt to dispatch regional or continental correspondents, they often choose locations strategically in travel hubs so that correspondents can cover large territories from there. Some newsworthy events are expected to occur in that spot, but the location has also been chosen to reach other potential news sites quickly.

2.2.4 Specialization

Foreign correspondence is commonly regarded as a kind of specialized journalism: the journalist's specialization is in a geographic area, meaning that he or she is a generalist reporter who covers general news out of a particular city, country, or region. However,

there are instances in which media organizations can afford to have more than one correspondent in a foreign country and even more than one bureau in the same country. This leaves scope for a higher degree of specialization than when a single correspondent is covering a whole continent.

- **Generalist correspondents**: The lack of accompaniment forces them to practice "one-man-band" journalism, sometimes reporting for more than one section of the newspaper or TV news show. However, some destinations imply a heavy production of a specific kind of news, so correspondents can still be somewhat specialized, regardless of whether they work alone or in a bureau.

- **Specialized correspondents**: They focus on a particular field and can deliver more in-depth reporting. The specialization is usually associated with the reporters' location, as some places tend to generate news interest in certain areas.

2.2.5. Professional Attitude

This criterion draws from Pollock's (1981) division of correspondents' attitudes toward their profession. As explained above, Pollock (1981) distinguishes between two broad models:

- **Chronicler correspondents**: Those reporters who view their job as the transmission of news. They tend to have a collegial posture toward officials and to view political issues in confrontational terms.

- **Examiner correspondents**: Those reporters who emphasize their interpretive and analytical skills. Examiners tend to be less dependent on official sources, be tolerant to pluralism in international affairs, and are less likely to favor hegemonic positionings.

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As mentioned above, Zeng (2018a) provides a similar classification of correspondents' perceptions of their professional role, but Pollock's (1981) has been chosen as it is deemed more intuitive.

2.2.6. Career Orientation

The career path that correspondents take can be another criterion to divide them into different categories. Hannerz (2004) divided correspondents into two groups: those who rotate from one posting to another after limited periods and those who stay in the same location for long. Zeng (2018b) takes Hannerz's (2004) division and brings it a step further by distinguishing between two types of rotating corresponding and two other types of long-time correspondents. Drawing from Hannerz (2004) and Zeng (2018b), correspondents' career orientation can also be used as a variable to classify them:

- **Sporadic correspondents**: Those reporters who lack significant experiences of the place where they live and work and previous journalistic experience in other postings as foreign correspondents.

- **Spiralist correspondents**: Those rotating reporters who have relevant experience as foreign correspondents in several places but lack a long-time experience of their current posting. They can bring new perspectives to the locations where they are sent out but are not expected to have a detailed knowledge of the local culture, at least initially.

- **Unexperienced long-timer correspondent**: People who have lived in the place they report from for a long time but do not necessarily have previous journalistic experience there or in other locations. This is sometimes the case with freelancers, who may work as foreign correspondents full-time or flexibly combined with different occupations or means of livelihood.

- **Experienced long-timer correspondent**: Some reporters have long-running experience as foreign correspondents, which they developed mainly in one

location. This gives them an in-depth knowledge of the local culture and language, on which they are specialists. However, one typical charge against this kind of correspondents is that they lack the fresh perspective of the place they cover that spiralists have.

Table 1 shows, schematically, all of the different criteria for classifying foreign correspondents outlined above and the resulting categories. With that graphic summary, this section is ready to conclude.

Table 1: Criteria for classification of foreign correspondents

Backing	Seniority	Geography	Specialization	Attitude	Career
Lone	Junior	Continent	Generalist	Chronicler	Sporadic
	Established	Region			Spiralist
Bureau	Senior	Country	Specialist	Examiner	Unexperienced long-timer
		City			Experienced long-timer

Source: Own elaboration

2.3. Summary

This section sought to outline the different criteria that can be used when attempting to classify foreign correspondents. Some previous categorizations have been analyzed, trying to determine their merits and deficiencies.

Taking into account what had been done by other scholars and researchers, six possible criteria for classifying correspondents have been outlined: their backing, seniority, geographic reach, specialization, professional attitude, and career orientation. The resulting palette of types of foreign correspondents is best illustrated in Table 1. If one conclusion can be drawn from this chapter, that is that the corps of foreign correspondents is far from being homogenous.

3. Toward a Theoretical Approach to the Study of Foreign Correspondence

A comprehensive review of the existing academic literature on foreign correspondents is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In part 2, previous research linking correspondents with intercultural communication and studying correspondents based in China is reviewed. For now, a summary of the different stages in the field of research on foreign correspondence should be enough to inform how a theoretical approach to the study of correspondents could proceed[2].

Starting in the 1920s, scholars began to show interest in the role of foreign correspondents in shaping public opinion and in the links between international news and foreign policy. One of the primary sources for studying correspondents and their work has always been first-hand accounts by the very same protagonists in essays, memoirs, or other books written by active and former correspondents. The two world wars gave rise to some studies on war correspondence and censorship that also paid attention to correspondents.

Nevertheless, research on foreign correspondents began in earnest after the II World War, as journalism studies and the broader communication theory developed. In the 1950s, research took a more empirical approach than previous studies: through surveys, scholars tried to identify correspondents, quantify them, look at where they were working, where they came from, and what their priorities were. Having established a clearer picture of who correspondents were, researchers moved on. They began to write the first historical accounts of foreign correspondence and to conduct systematic analyses of foreign news, although hardly ever these analyses focused exclusively on correspondents.

The number of papers about foreign correspondence and international news has boomed since the start of the 21st century. Yet, researchers often complain about a lack of studies

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[2] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at II Congrés de la Societat Catalana de Comunicació in 2019. See: Calatayud Vaello (2019).

dedicated to foreign correspondents. Hannerz (2004, p. 8), for instance, cites this scarcity to justify the need for anthropological research about the global "tribe" of foreign correspondents.

Other authors direct their criticism to the nature of the research carried out so far rather than the volume of literature published. Self (2011) says studies tend to be isolated and need to be followed up to achieve the kind of coherent theoretical explanation of foreign correspondence expected at the beginning of the 21st century. Indeed, there is plenty of material that relates, either directly or indirectly, to foreign correspondence. Still, a large amount consists of essays, memoirs, and state-of-the-play articles written by journalists.

Hahn and Lönnendonker (2009) criticize the methodological shortcomings found in research on transatlantic foreign reporting, but their criticism could be applied to other regions as well. Hahn and Lönnendonker (2009) observe that most of the quantitative and qualitative content analyses served to characterize the image of a target country in the reporter's home media, without exploring why the coverage was the way it was or examining news that had not been reported. Quantitative questionnaires were the primary way to get an initial image of foreign correspondents' sociodemographic and professional backgrounds, but their distribution generated problems, Hahn and Lönnendonker (2009) add.

First-hand accounts are interesting and provide insights into the profession, but they are not worth much taken at face value. It is understandable that when one sets off to study something, the first thing that needs to be done is to explore the field. Thus, surveys of correspondents were a logical initial step. They had to be done, but, having completed those, something else was needed.

Content analyses were also of great help to identify patterns in selected stories. But often, they tended to be episodic, too narrowly focused on one event or one aspect of coverage, without attempting to establish connections with previous cases or potential future research developments. Other quantitative studies measuring the international news reported by the media help to track changes in coverage. Still, they generally are not designed to get a broader understanding of newsgathering in foreign countries, Cole and Hamilton (2008, p. 799) say.

To get a deeper understanding of why foreign correspondents do what they do, as Gross and Kopper (2011, p. X) put it, "the marriage of theory and practice in academic

research on foreign correspondence has become a necessity." Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the field of research in journalism and communication has flourished. There are plenty of theoretical paradigms that are likely to bear fruit when applied to the figure of the foreign correspondent.

Some studies have already followed this vein. Communication theories such as gatekeeping studies, agenda-setting theory, and framing analysis have been applied to the field of foreign correspondence. Researchers like Pedelty (1995) have also begun to look at foreign correspondents from an ethnographic perspective. And discourse analysis has helped uncover the deeply-held assumptions underlying in correspondents' texts like Lee (2009) did.

But there is still plenty to be done. Bearing in mind that the need for theory and practice has been made evident, this dissertation proposes a theoretical approach to understanding foreign correspondents based on intercultural communication. Before that, the next chapter offers a closer examination of intercultural communication.

II. Intercultural Communication

At first sight, the concept of intercultural communication appears to contain two ideas: communication and interculturality. Taking a closer look at these two elements is helpful as a first approach. Since the prefix *inter* means "between," this suggests that intercultural communication is a form of communication that takes place between different cultures.

Cultures cannot communicate by themselves but by the people who embody them. Therefore, intercultural communication should make one think about people from different cultures trying to communicate with each other. Intercultural communication is, then, a kind of communication. What sets it apart is the cultural factor.

This chapter delves into intercultural communication, starting with what culture and communication mean. Having done that, it should be easier to move on to the notion of intercultural communication. This is what the second section attempts to do, reviewing its main characteristics and exploring the origins of intercultural communication as a research field.

1. Culture and Communication

Culture and communication seem to have an inextricable relationship. A book by Carey (1992) is eloquently titled *Communication as Culture*. Another author, Edward T. Hall (1973), treats culture as a form of communication. To add to the confusion, Hall (1973, p. 217) also states that, in his view, "culture is communication and communication is culture."

These statements may seem conflictive at first sight, though the following pages try to show that the apparent contradiction is no contradiction at all. What is clear, nevertheless, is that they point to a strong link between communication and culture. Hopefully, the nature of that connection is clarified in the present section, which consists of an effort to unravel the threads that weave communication and culture together.

This endeavor starts with straightforward approaches to the concepts of culture and communication, respectively. It also outlines an explanatory scheme for understanding the relationship between communication and culture, drawing from Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality.

1.1. The Notion of Culture

Culture's meanings have widened so much that one can talk about the culture of the Hakka in China, but also about the workplace culture of Uber Technologies Inc., using the same word. That is, by the way, the same word used in the culture of bacteria, culture stress, or even narcoculture.

Williams (1985, p.87) once said that "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) famously compiled a list of 164 definitions of culture. No wonder, then, that when a few years later T. Hall (1973, p. 43) tried to pitch his definition, he opened his argumentation in the following terms: "Culture is a word that has so many meanings already that one more can do it no harm."

Culture can be defined in three senses:

- **Intellectual definition**: The narrowest definition of culture views it as intellectual achievement. Under this approach, culture is expressed in art, music, literature, or science.

- **Anthropological definition**: The broadest approach to culture sees it as the whole way of life of a group of people. Culture, in this sense, is the central concern of anthropology. Understood as a way of life, culture encompasses not only the intellectually refined achievements of a group but also its ideas, values, beliefs, customs, behaviors, etc.

- **Sociological definition**: Somewhere between the intellectual and the anthropological approaches lies the third sense of culture, which views it as a set of characteristics associated with a specific social environment. This approach is advantageous when observing contemporary societies of the industrialized —or post-industrialized— world, where complexity and diversity make the broad sense of culture as a whole way of life show some limitations. Under this approach, culture is always accompanied by a modifying noun, as in corporate culture, gun culture, or jogging culture.

This dissertation uses the anthropological sense of culture to deal with intercultural communication. This still has some complications. Since the 1980s, there have been several calls to ditch culture as a concept altogether: Kahn (1984), for instance, advocated the demise of the concept of culture arguing that cultures could be neither defined nor delimited.

To avoid getting lost in conceptual disquisitions, two images and one recommendation should help. The first image is Geertz's (1973, p. 5) idea of culture as webs of significance in which humans are suspended. This definition highlights the notion of culture as supporting humans and suggests that it is a somewhat diffused entity whose purpose is to sustain human beings.

The second image is Hannerz's (1992, p. 4) metaphor of culture as a river that contains externalizations of meaning produced by individuals and is in constant flux. This metaphor is also helpful as it emphasizes the dynamic character of culture. Again, it is crucial to bear in mind that dynamism considering that culture is often said to have an essence that is somehow maintained over time. As the metaphor implies, cultures are in flux.

What these two images have in common is that they highlight the idea that culture is about meaning. Culture can be seen as a complex system that contains meanings for social life. Cultures can only be understood concerning the human beings that embody them. At the same time, cultures are dynamic and change over time.

Finally, one recommendation was promised. Regarding the study of culture, Lentz (2017) argues that what matters is not so much to analyze cultures themselves, but the practices of differentiation that take place in the cultural realm: the making and unmaking of differences.

That argument is essential for a dissertation that is concerned with culture within the framework of intercultural communication. Having paid some attention to one of the components of intercultural communication, culture, it is only fair that some consideration is given to the second component, communication.

1.2. Building a Theory of Communication

The concept of communication perhaps does not have such a disputed and complex history as that of culture. However, that does not mean that there is universal agreement

upon what communication is. Emulating what Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) had done for culture, Dance and Larson (1972) found 126 definitions of communication following a literature review on the topic. A more up-to-date effort would no doubt identify hundreds of new definitions.

For this dissertation, communication can be viewed as a form of social interaction. It is a form of interaction because it requires reciprocal action, and it is social because it cannot happen in isolation. For a more complex definition aligned with this view, Carey's (1992, p. 19) can be cited: "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed."

Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2013, pp. 32-36) identify five attributes of communication: it is dynamic (once a word or action is produced, it cannot be retracted or be produced again in the same circumstances), symbolic (there is no proof of direct mind-to-mind contact between people, so all forms of communication need to rely on symbols), contextual (communication cannot occur in a vacuum and its contexts conditions it), learned (what people know about communication is because they once learned it), and has a consequence (all messages do something to their receivers, but usually they provoke non-observable responses like making people think).

Among communication's consequences, one stands out: it creates meaning. Thus, communication can be seen as a process of social interaction that creates meaning. Since culture was presented in the previous section as a container of meanings, it is not hard to connect the two concepts. The following section explores this common ground more straightforwardly.

1.3. When Communication Meets Culture

There have been several very different theoretical orientations and approaches that have linked culture and communication. Collier (2009) highlights a few of them: the Frankfurt School; intercultural communication as understood by Hall and his colleagues

at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute; cultural studies orientations; ethnography of communication; postcolonial approaches; cultural types theories; international communication; and interpretive theories of cultural identities.

However, this dissertation turns to Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality to look for a comprehensive framework for understanding culture and communication within a broader context of a society. The basic idea proposed idea by Berger and Luckmann (1991) is that reality is socially constructed. It does not explicitly address neither communication nor culture, but these concepts are present in their theory under different names.

1.3.1. Communication as a Process Whereby Reality Is Constructed

As stated above, communication is at its most basic level a form of social interaction. One cannot not communicate as long as he or she is in contact with other people. There is more to communication than what is verbally said, as Hall's (1973) notion of the nonverbal "silent language" explains at length.

If communication can be seen at the very least as a form of social interaction, where Berger and Luckmann (1991) write "interaction," one can read "communication." Therefore, interaction, or communication, is the most important experience of the others with which one shares the reality of everyday life. Conversation, a type of interaction, is the most important vehicle of reality maintenance, Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 172) claim. Interaction with others is also part of the process of self and identity formation, which takes place in the process of socialization.

However one looks at it, communication is central to Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality. Keeping this in mind, Carey's (1992, p. 19) definition of communication as "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed" makes perfect sense.

1.3.2. Culture as Knowledge

To fully understand how reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed through communication, as Carey (1992, p. 19) claims, another concept needs to take the spotlight: knowledge.

"My interaction with others in everyday life is […] constantly affected by our common participation in the available social stock of knowledge," Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 56) say. The social stock of knowledge is the name given by Berger and Luckmann (1991) to culture. They may not openly say so, but Berger and Luckmann's (1991, p. 27) claim that common-sense knowledge "constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist" amounts to an implicit acknowledgment. Given that culture is above all a container of meanings, this leaves their understanding of knowledge too close to anthropologists' culture to avoid drawing an equivalence.

Paralleling the interaction-communication equivalence, where Berger and Luckmann (1991) write "social stock of knowledge," one can read "culture." A social stock of knowledge, or culture, is constituted thanks to the accumulation of zones of meaning or semantic fields relating to biographical and historical experience, suitably objectified through language. This social stock of knowledge can be transmitted from generation to generation and is available to individuals in everyday life, for which it provides specific bodies of knowledge.

The social stock of knowledge supplies individuals with the tools to experience reality, including awareness of their situation within society. It is actualized in every individual biography.

Importantly, Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 56) claim that one's interaction, or communication, with others is affected by their participation in the social stock of knowledge. This affection takes place by way typificatory schemes contained in the social stock of knowledge, through which one apprehends others and the others apprehend one in social interactions. These typificatory schemes can be challenged and modified by the interactions. This suggests that interaction, or communication, shapes the social stock of knowledge, or culture.

Having clarified the position that communication and culture occupy in the context of Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality, the link between these two concepts and their relationship with society can be elaborated further.

1.3.3. Communication and Culture in the Social Construction of Meaning

The *raison d'être* of communication and culture is that they are social phenomena. That effectively means that they are subsumed by, and dependent on, a larger whole: society. They originate in a social context and serve society. Any analysis of culture and communication must take into account this reality.

Within society, culture and communication both relate to a common factor: meaning. Culture contains meaning, and communication brings it up so that individuals can use them. Culture and communication help individuals make sense of the world they live in, which happens to be a social one.

From this perspective, Figure 1 shows the relationship between individuals and society in the symbolic realm, where meanings are involved. This relationship is channeled through culture and communication. Thus, there are four elements in the figure: society, individuals, communication, and culture. Between each of them, there are dialectical relationships, which can be characterized as follows:

- **Individual – Society.** Individuals form society and society conditions individuals. Individuals interact in the context of society to create meaning. That is, they communicate. As long as the meanings created in these communicative interactions are maintained over time and transmitted across generations, a culture is created. Culture then becomes necessary for future generations to understand the dynamics of that society.

- **Individual – Communication.** Individuals interact through communication, and communication creates meaning for individuals. This occurs in a social context

and, for meaning to be created in communication, individuals need to share a culture.

- **Individual – Culture.** Individuals know their culture, and that culture contains meaning for individuals. Culture is specific for that society. Individuals learn their society's culture through a series of communicative events. Individuals in communication then activate the meanings contained in culture.

- **Society – Communication.** Society enables communication, and, in turn, communication constructs society. Society is characterized by a culture, which the individuals know to form the society, and such culture contains the meanings that are then activated in communicative processes.

- **Society – Culture.** Society embodies culture, and culture gives consistency to society. Without a series of shared meanings stored in culture, society would not exist; there would only be a gathering of individuals. However, individuals do come together and form societies, giving themselves cultures in the process. Societies, as explained above, are constructed through communication.

- **Communication – Culture.** Communication is made possible by culture, and culture grows from communication. In the dialectical relationship between communication and culture, as carried out by individuals to create meaning, a society is formed.

Figure 1*: Model for the symbolic domain in society*

SOCIETY

Individual ←— Interaction —→ Individual ←— Interaction —→ Individual

Communication   Communication

Creates meaning   Creates meaning

Needs   Grows from   Grows from   Needs

Culture

Knows   Knows

Contains meaning for   Contains meaning for
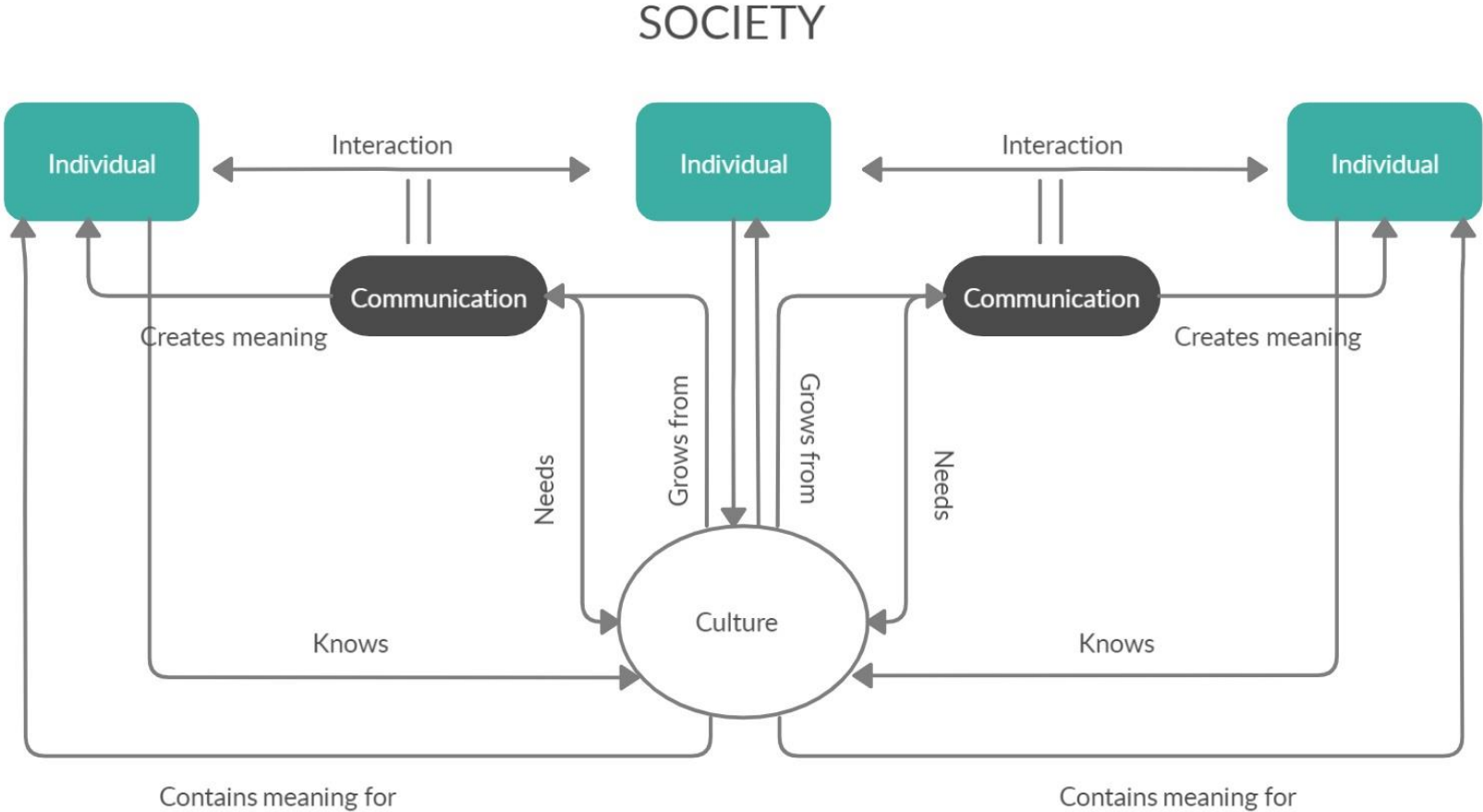
Source: Own elaboration

Based on this scheme, a question sets in: where does society start or end? There is no definitive answer to that question. Boundaries of societies are open for negotiation or struggle. They can be subject to consensus or dispute. One could argue that power begins to be exercised in defining society. Berger's understanding of the term society can be of guide (1963, pp. 38-39):

"The sociologist thinks of 'society' as denoting a large complex of human relationship, or to put it in more technical language, as referring to a system of interaction. The world 'large' is difficult to specify quantitatively in this context. The sociologist may speak of a 'society' including millions of human beings (say, 'American society'), but he may also use the term to refer to a numerically much smaller collectivity (say, 'the society of sophomores on this campus'). Two people chatting on a street corner will hardly constitute a 'society,' but three people stranded on an island certainly will. The applicability of the concept, then, cannot be decided on quantitative ground alone. It rather applies when a complex of relationships is sufficiently succinct to be analyzed by itself, understood as an autonomous entity, set against others of the same land."

Taking all of the above into account, Hall's (1973, p. 217) seeming tautology cited above ("culture is communication and communication is culture") starts to make sense. Indeed, culture is communication, and communication is culture because they both deal with the same thing: meaning.

1.4. Summary

This section set out to explore the ties between communication and culture. It has done so by establishing a model that explains their relationship within the broader context of society based on the theory of the social construction of reality introduced by Berger and Luckmann (1991).

According to this model, culture is a signifying system that stores the social meanings that individuals activate through communication. Communication occurs in a social context, and the meanings originated from communicative processes do not appear out of the blue. They are called up from a stock of meanings accumulated and transmitted through generations, which has come to be called culture.

It follows that meanings activated through communication only make sense in a social environment where the individuals share the same culture or stock of knowledge. What happens when a different culture enters the picture? The following section tries to offer an answer.

2. What Is Intercultural Communication?

The term intercultural communication should make one think about people from different cultures trying to communicate with each other. Intercultural communication is a form of communication that takes place between different cultures. Since cultures cannot communicate by themselves but by the people who embody them, intercultural communication is a form a communication between people from different cultural backgrounds.

Most definitions of intercultural communication are along these lines. According to Rodrigo Alsina (1999, p.12), intercultural communication is the communication between people that possess cultural references so different that they perceive themselves as belonging to different cultures. In Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel's (2013, p. 8) words, "intercultural communication involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems differ enough to influence the communication event." Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018, p. 22) define it as "the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities attempt to negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation and in a larger sociocultural-macro environment."

Broadly speaking, the definition of intercultural communication is not disputed. Other than the general debate about culture, there is no apparent disagreement over what intercultural communication means. There are variations among definitions, but no conceptual disquisition will be needed this time.

This section offers an overview of how intercultural communication became an academic discipline. To conclude, intercultural communication theories are linked to the framework of the social construction of reality outlined in the previous section.

2.1. Intercultural Communication as a Discipline

Intercultural communication began to develop as a research field after World War II, mainly in the U.S. and was U.S.-focused in its early days. It was a time when the old European empires were crumbling, and decolonization processes were gathering pace. As the new hegemonic power emerging from the war, the U.S. needed to build diplomatic and commercial bridges with countries and peoples around the four corners of the world and was eager to. Thus, diplomatic and business needs created a requirement for practical guidelines to facilitate communication between individuals from different cultures, Leeds-Hurwitz (1990) says. This explains, Leeds-Hurwitz (1990) insists, why the field was initially concerned with practical matters and only paid attention to theory later on.

In these initial stages, the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State was an important driver of interest in intercultural communication. While working there, Edward T. Hall (1973) came up with the theoretical notions that supported his 1959 book *The Silent Language*, where he used the term "intercultural communication" for the first time.

Interest in intercultural communication seemingly picked up again in the 1970s, when the field began to be institutionalized with the creation of dedicated chapters in professional associations of communication researchers and specific programs in universities. The 1980s saw the rise of the first theoretical frameworks tackling specifically intercultural communication. Interest in the field was set to grow further with the fall of the Communist sphere and the rise of the globalization era, which accelerated intercultural contacts and heightened the need for further development of the discipline.

The history of intercultural communication as a discipline suggests that it was born at the intersection of anthropology and communication. Leeds-Hurwitz (1990, p. 274) says Hall intended to position the new field of intercultural communication within anthropology, not communication. However, the discipline would end up being intellectually hosted by communication rather than by anthropology.

Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2012) identify four large categories within the multiple perspectives encompassed by intercultural communication: studies on mass media; research on international communication with a focus on communication between national governments —other authors understand international communication research as the study on international relations within mass media—; communication needed to do business on a global basis; and those who emphasize the interpersonal dimensions of communication. These four areas bear a resemblance to those mentioned by Gudykunst (1987).

When defining intercultural communication's object of study, there is an important caveat. Gudykunst and Mody (2002, p. IX) opt for a narrow understanding of intercultural communication involving face-to-face communication between people from different cultures. To put it in Gudykunst and Mody's (2002, p. X) terms:

> "Intercultural communication and international communication are separate areas of research. Intercultural communication researchers tend to focus on the individual as the unit of analysis. International communication researchers, in contrast, tend to work at the macro level using units of analysis such as the nation, firm, world systems, groups and movements. What binds the areas of research together is a substantive concern with differences, difference from the U.S. mainstream and differences between the United States and other nations."

However, that separation has been questioned. According to Shome (2010, p. 151), "the adjoining 'and' between the two terms 'intercultural' and 'international' is minimally dangerous; the 'and' in between makes little sense (as the international is always intercultural and vice versa)." Moon (2010, p. 35) notes that intercultural communication's interpersonal and microanalytic approach is problematic as over-focusing on micro-practices encourages researchers to ignore how structural constraints affect those practices.

Furthermore, Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that face-to-face communication is increasingly interwoven with media-related practices. "We cannot analyse the social

world via a simple division between 'pure' face-to-face communication and a separate presentation of the world to us 'through' media," Couldry and Hepp (2017, p. 16) say.

In any case, Rodrigo Alsina (1997, p. 20) points out that intercultural communication as a discipline aims to establish the foundations for intercultural exchange, to eliminate negative stereotypes that every culture produces against others, to start an intercultural negotiation from a position of equality, and to make one's culture relative to understand and accept other values, getting closer to an intercultural identity.

2.2. When Communication Meets Other Cultures

Different theories have emerged from the field of intercultural communication. Some try to find out how to achieve effective intercultural communication; others attempt to alleviate culture shocks or explore cultural variability, yet others study identity formation processes. All are valid if applied in the proper context and for a suitable research topic. Nonetheless, if one seeks to achieve an in-depth understanding of what intercultural communication is, those theories err on the side of specificity. Again, Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality can be used to explain both culture and communication in an integrated way. From this perspective, the following lines focus on what intercultural communication entails for meaning creation and competence, and identity formation.

2.2.1. Meaning Creation and Competence

In the previous section, it was stated that both culture and communication deal with meaning. A culture stores meaning so that it can be activated in interactive processes between the members of a given society. Bearing this idea in mind, the problem with

intercultural communication becomes clear: their participants do not share the same signifying container, making the creation of meaning in their interaction difficult. More than one social stock of knowledge —or culture— comes into play in a multicultural context. If an individual from culture A possesses a given social stock of knowledge and an individual from culture B possesses a different social stock of knowledge, they live different realities. Their social stocks of knowledge diverge and contain meaning for different things or different meanings for the same thing.

An intercultural encounter does not necessarily result in intercultural communication. For communication to happen, specific competence is required, as explained by Chen's (2009) intercultural communication competence theory. That competence, in turn, requires some common ground. If there is no overlap between the participants' cultures or social stocks of knowledge, and they have no idea at all of each other's culture, communication is almost impossible. Thus, intercultural communication occurs between representatives of different cultures, who do not share a social stock of knowledge, but who nevertheless can manage to negotiate common meanings.

Intercultural encounters can sometimes be far from being smooth, as there are many ways in which they can go wrong. Interaction between individuals with different cultures, or social stocks of knowledge, can be a source of anxiety. This was explained by Gudykunst's (1985) anxiety and uncertainty management theory and partly by Giles's (2006) communication accommodation theory.

When anxiety is generated because one enters a new cultural environment, this kind of anxiety is called culture shock. If a culture shock ever happens, that is because everyone tends to look at the world from their own perspective, a notion known as ethnocentrism. It is, thus, perfectly plausible that their respective stocks of knowledge are equipped with specific pills of social knowledge on how to perceive each other and act when in contact with others. Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 176) briefly touch on this when they say: "specific reality-maintenance procedures may be established to cope with foreigners and their potential threat to the 'official' reality." These procedures may be called stereotypes.

Mass media, schools, families, friends, and peers play an important role in forming stereotypes. Van Dijk (2014, p. 95) explains that stereotypes can only be developed

within social groups that have sociocultural knowledge in common. According to Rodrigo Alsina (2004, p. 6), prejudices and stereotypes are part of individuals' referential universe and allow them to make sense of the world. Prejudices are pre-conceived opinions or beliefs and, when they are shared socially and refer to human realities, they become stereotypes, Rodrigo Alsina says (2004, p. 7).

The notion of stereotype has been heavily influenced Walter Lippmann's (2004, p. 52) definition as a more or less ordered and consistent mental picture of the world to which people's habits, tastes, and expectations have been adjusted:

> "No wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe. It is an attack upon the foundations of our universe, and, where big things are at stake, we do not readily admit that there is any distinction between our universe and the universe."

Patel, Li, and Sooknanan (2011, p. 8) suggest a critical self-reflection of one's stereotypes and prejudices is needed. Rodrigo Alsina (1997, p. 20) goes further and recommends that the negative stereotypes that every culture produces about other cultures must be eliminated to facilitate effective intercultural communication.

The use of stereotypes brings to the fore the issue of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a mindset that perceives the values, beliefs, tradition, language, history, religion, behavior, and ethnic of one's own social or group as being superior to all others and is a barrier to intercultural communication, say Patel, Li, and Sooknanan (2011, p. 33). Given that everyone is ethnocentric to some degree, this tendency should be moderated to achieve effective intercultural communication.

Patel, Li, and Sooknanan (2011, p. 33) say that the real challenge for intercultural communication is hidden ethnocentrism. This is consistent with Hall's (1973 p. 53) suggestion that cultures hide much more than they reveal and particularly from their participants. "Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own," Hall (1973, p. 53) says.

2.2.2. Identity Formation

A final issue to be considered on intercultural communication from the perspective of the social construction of reality is identity. Berger and Luckmann (1991) defend that individuals' identities emerge during their primary socialization process and reflect the attitudes of their significant others toward them. Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 157) claim that primary socialization ends when the individual establishes in his or her consciousness the concept of significant other, thus internalizing society, identity and reality. Identity formation entails a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification, between what is objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated, Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 152) say.

It should not come as a surprise then that intercultural communication theories have shown interest in theorizing identity in intercultural processes. This has given rise to Kim's (2009) cross-cultural adaptation theory and Casmir's (1997) third-culture building theory.

Kim's (2009) cross-cultural adaptation theory is merely descriptive. It describes the intercultural transformations experienced by individuals that have completed their primary socialization in a culture and then have prolonged first-hand contact with a new culture.

Casmir's (1997) third-culture building theory, in contrast, is purposive as it aims to be used by intercultural communication practitioners in real-life situations, not just for theoretical purposes in academic environments. As Hopson, Hart, and Bell (2012) say, this theory marks a departure from the conceptions of adoption or adaptation toward theorizing a framework that enables different cultural groups to come together to form a third culture among them.

What both theories have in common, nonetheless, is that they highlight how belonging and identity are negotiable and revocable. Identity, Lawler (2008, p. 2) defends, involves identification, and is best understood as formed between, not within, persons. "Social identity, and indeed social reality, are made through performance," Lawler

(2008, p. 108) says. Far from being stable, coherent, and unproblematic, identities should be seen as always built on an edgy repudiation of a variety of threats, Lawler (2008, p. 142) claims.

In this regard, one might see identity formation as a constant flux of identification and differentiation. Stuart Hall (2011, p. 4) argues that identities are "not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms with [one's] 'routes.'"

Two areas have been highlighted in this section to interpret intercultural communication from the perspective of the social construction of reality: meaning creation and identity formation. These have the potential to bear fruit as research topics to develop intercultural communication theory further. Since there is no identity without otherness, the social construction of otherness is another promising area.

2.3. Summary

This section has dealt with intercultural communication. After a brief examination of some definitions of intercultural communication, the origins of intercultural communication as an academic discipline and its object of study were reviewed. Finally, meaning creation and identity formation, two critical issues addressed by intercultural communication theories, were examined from the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality.

Looking forward, the processes of identity formation and differentiation have been highlighted as promising areas for furthering the study of intercultural communication. The remaining part of the theoretical framework touches upon these topics. To do so, it goes back to where it started and tries to put foreign correspondence in dialogue with intercultural communication.

III. Foreign Correspondents within Intercultural Communication

Foreign correspondents are constantly in contact with "others" in their foreign postings, and their job primarily consists of reporting on them. It does not take much effort to see that some sort of intercultural communication is involved in foreign correspondence.

One could be tempted to refer to foreign correspondents as intercultural communicators. That, however, could be taken to imply that they somehow facilitate intercultural understandings, which may not necessarily be the case. It is more prudent —or at least more appropriate at this stage in the dissertation— to talk about foreign correspondents within intercultural communication, which insinuates that they are part of the process but not inexorably enablers.

Two sections form this final chapter of the theoretical framework. The first looks to establish links between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication. The last section of the theoretical framework seeks to portray foreign correspondents from a constructivist understanding of intercultural communication.

1. Foreign Correspondents and Intercultural Communication

In this thesis, foreign correspondents have been defined as journalists who report international news on a permanent basis from a country different from that in which their media are headquartered. Meanwhile, intercultural communication has been presented as an interaction that takes place between representatives of different cultures, who do not share a social stock of knowledge, but who nevertheless can manage to negotiate common meanings.

This section seeks to study the overlap between the two central topics of this thesis: foreign correspondents and intercultural communication. It begins with an explanation of why intercultural communication can be a productive perspective from which to look at foreign correspondence. Next, some proposals on how to apply intercultural communication to the study of foreign correspondents are made.

1.1. Why Intercultural Communication Can Contribute to Understanding Foreign Correspondence, and Vice Versa

From an intercultural communication perspective, foreign correspondents are interesting figures to pay attention to on two levels. The first level is their involvement in intercultural encounters. The second level is their journalistic production, which can shape audiences' expectations for future intercultural encounters. These two areas also illustrate how adopting an intercultural communication perspective can lead to a better understanding of foreign correspondence. Indeed, the gain goes both ways: research on foreign correspondents could profit from resorting to intercultural communication frameworks, while intercultural communication research would find an ideal object of study in foreign correspondents.

1.1.1. Foreign Correspondents Engage in Intercultural Communication

By definition, foreign correspondents live and work in one country, yet they report for another. Their day-to-day job is an intercultural one. To carry it out, they engage in intercultural encounters, which requires them to practice intercultural communication.

This puts foreign correspondents in an attractive position to become objects of study for intercultural communication researchers. One may be interested in looking into how correspondents manage these communicative processes, the difficulties they face, the strategies they employ to reach the minimum common ground required for effective intercultural communication, among other aspects. A correspondent's relationship with his or her immediate habitat is of interest for intercultural communication research.

For foreign correspondence research, taking into account intercultural communication could provide insight on potential obstacles reporters may face to get in touch with local sources or investigate whether any misunderstandings occur. These are important issues because they might condition what ends up being produced by foreign correspondents.

1.1.2. Foreign Correspondents Contribute to Shaping Intercultural Expectations

Whatever comes out of the intercultural encounters foreign correspondents engage in as part of their job can then be reflected in their journalistic production. When audiences read, hear or watch these pieces, their image of the foreign culture on which the correspondents are reporting is subject to being influenced or even changed.

Hannerz (2004, p. 23) notes that most people do not have personal experiences of much of the world and rely on the media to provide them:

"Rather than having been everywhere and seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched everything, people —including those aspiring to be informed citizens of the world— depend on the representation provided by various agencies of information brokerage, and the news media have a central place here."

It is worth noting that García-Jiménez, Pineda, and Rodrigo Alsina (2017, 2016) have shown that media accounts of intercultural communication in Spain suggest a representation of cultural diversity does not translate into greater intercultural communication.

Correspondents are sent out to foreign countries to provide information on them, but this does not mean that what a foreign correspondent says about the country where he or she is posted will be uncritically absorbed by the audience. Indeed, what influence they have on society remains open for debate, but correspondents are no mere bypassers.

A key issue here is what Hannerz (2004, p. 37) calls embedding of news reporting. Such embedding can vary along two dimensions: individually and geographically. Some individuals have a great, varied store of personal experience to which news stories may be related. Similarly, societies have different degrees of closeness in their ties with other societies, making news stories more or less embedded in the social context.

This highlights correspondents' production as another area for potential inquiry that combines foreign correspondence and intercultural communication. Again, both fields would benefit from examining it.

For intercultural communication research, this would entail closer scrutiny of one of the primary sources of everyday life knowledge, which then conditions exchanges between representatives of different cultures. People with little embedding with the content of foreign news reports might create expectations based on them, which can then favor or hinder their ability to establish effective intercultural communication if an opportunity arises.

For foreign correspondence research, this places correspondents and their production in a larger context, one that is necessarily intercultural as it corresponds to their status as people at the intersection between different cultures. Researchers focused on foreign

correspondence should not underestimate the importance of this context because as much as correspondents' interactions with their habitat condition their output, the audience targeted by their news reports influences it too.

1.2. *Toward an Intercultural Communication Approach to the Study of Foreign Correspondents*

This section showed that significant overlaps exist between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication. As a result, it makes sense that a theoretical approach to the figure of the foreign correspondent takes into consideration intercultural communication.

To explain why intercultural communication can be a productive approach to research foreign correspondents, it was argued that correspondents engage in intercultural communication processes as part of their work and contribute to shaping their audiences' intercultural expectations.

Having completed this general introduction to the interrelation between intercultural communication and foreign correspondents, the following section sets out the specific theoretical positioning of this thesis to be applied to an empirical study of foreign correspondents and their production.

2. Foreign Correspondents: Intercultural Communicators or Social Constructors of Foreign Realities?

Foreign correspondents work at the intersection of different cultures, their own, and that of the place where they work. On paper, they may be seen as bridges between cultures. Nevertheless, the metaphor is problematic. If one were to believe it, the next logical step would be to claim that foreign correspondents are intercultural communicators. But, are they?

Correspondents are intercultural communicators to the extent that they engage in communicative processes with people from cultures different than their own. Any reading beyond that, seeing correspondents as some sort of facilitators of dialogue between civilizations, is open for debate.

This section attempts to place correspondents within intercultural communication from Berger and Luckmann's (1991) social construction of reality. To do so, correspondents are studied as participants in intercultural communication processes and as producers of intercultural discourses.

Since this dissertation is concerned with the production side of foreign correspondence, the reception side of the communicative equation will be left out. Reception of intercultural discourses is an important topic that deserves attention —and it has been studied from an intercultural perspective, among others, by Pineda, García-Jiménez, and Rodrigo-Alsina (2017)— but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Before moving onto the study of correspondents as participants in intercultural communication processes and as producers of intercultural discourses, one point needs to be made: foreign correspondents are members of social institutions called the media. To understand foreign correspondents, therefore, is essential first of all to understand who they work for.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) say mass media are institutions that fulfill an essential function of communicating meaning in modern times. The media orient people by providing typical interpretations of typical problems. According to Noelle-Neumann (1993, p. 156), the media create a certain consensus and influence the individual's perception of what can be said or done without danger of isolation. Moreover, van Dijk (2014, p. 3) explains that the media try to make sure their audience's knowledge of the world is up to date.

The media create what Berger and Luckmann (1991) call symbolic universes, encompassing an institutional order in a symbolic totality. For example, by pretending that by reading a newspaper or watching a TV news program, one knows what is going on in the world.

Media organizations legitimate other institutions belonging to the same institutional order. This has historically been the case, for example, for the notion of the nation-state. Newspapers and nation-states developed hand in hand. The media's role in constructing national identities has been studied, for example, by Giró (1999). But, as Giró (2004) argues elsewhere, the media should not be seen as a monolith given that "cracks" might appear conveying voices that offer alternatives to hegemonic views.

It should not surprise, then, that Anderson (1991) argues that the ceremony of reading a newspaper is paradoxical of the rise of nations as imagined political communities. The newspaper reader performs the ceremony in silent privacy but is aware that it is being replicated by thousands of others of whose existence he or she is confident but of whose identity he has no notion. "What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?" Anderson (1991, p. 35) wonders.

Reporters, thus, help people make sense of what is going on in the world. Correspondents' specific role is to make sense of foreign realities. The realities covered by correspondents are not foreign *per se* but because they are presented as such. If one thinks about it, correspondents consider the events they cover to be "international" events, but these are seen as "local" in the place where they occur. It is all about the perspective applied to look at them. For correspondents, a certain degree of ethnocentrism is not only unavoidable but desirable. After all, they have to cater their

texts to their home audiences, and Tulloch (2004, p. 122) says that going native is considered problematic for foreign correspondents.

2.1.   Foreign Correspondents as Participants in Intercultural Communication Processes

Meaning creation and identity formation have been highlighted above as critical aspects for understanding intercultural communication from Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality. These topics are adopted as focus areas for studying foreign correspondents as participants in intercultural communication processes.

2.1.1. Identity

Foreign correspondents undergo a socialization process as media reporters and a socialization process even more specific as foreign correspondents. When they are sent out to their foreign postings, they have to undertake additional socialization, as newcomers, to learn the culture of the place to which they have been dispatched.

To put it in Berger and Luckmann's (1991) terms, foreign correspondents need to incorporate the social stock of knowledge of the places where they have been posted to their personal knowledge. As part of this, they may learn a new language or develop skills to communicate with local people in the place where they work. This can be seen as new socialization, which may lead to an intercultural identity. The degree to which correspondents incorporate local elements into their stock of knowledge will dictate whether they build a "third culture" in Casmir's (1997) terms or complete what Kim (2009) calls a cross-cultural adaptation process.

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If foreign correspondents live long enough in a country and end up being cross-culturally adapted, that might generate frictions at work: they will have gone native. Since their role is to make sense of a foreign reality, they need to perceive that reality as foreign. That would explain why many media organizations adopt a rotation scheme under which their correspondents usually spend between three and five years in a foreign posting, after which they either return to headquarters or are sent to another location.

Nonetheless, some degree of cross-cultural adaptation or third-culture building is desirable if one is to make sense of a foreign reality with solvency. Otherwise, the picture of the foreign reality presented by foreign correspondents would be severely distorted. It is interesting, then, to study how correspondents negotiate their intercultural identity with their home office to balance an accurate representation of their host culture while making their texts digestible for their audiences.

2.1.2. Competence

Correspondents' intercultural competence is, along with identity, a crucial aspect for the study of foreign correspondence within intercultural communication. Their skills are subject to the socialization processes they undergo before arriving in their posting and once there. Depending on those socializations, correspondents could reject integration in the local culture and decide to interact with locals through intermediaries such as a translator or a fixer. This figure —explained in the first chapter of the theoretical framework— would then become the intercultural link between the foreign correspondent and the foreign reality he or she inhabits.

If this is not the case, intercultural skills acquired by the foreign correspondent become relevant. Chen's (2009) intercultural communication competence theory can aid in understanding the skills developed by correspondents. The seven criteria listed by Rodrigo Alsina (2000, p. 72) for achieving effective intercultural communication can also be of help: a shared language; knowledge of the other culture; awareness of own

culture; minimizing prejudices; empathy; metacommunication to overcome cultural shock and misunderstandings; and balance between interlocutors.

Therefore, the intercultural socialization that correspondents embark on before they are dispatched to their posting emerges as an interesting area to better understand foreign correspondence within intercultural communication. Two areas seem particularly relevant: the identities resulting from those socialization processes and the skills that correspondents use to create meaning in their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds.

2.2. Foreign Correspondents as Producers of Intercultural Discourses

Foreign correspondents exercise an influence in shaping their audience's images of foreign cultures. Expressed in terms of the social construction of reality, that can be explained by the fact that media institutions are the ones in charge of updating the social stock of knowledge about current events. Within them, foreign correspondents have the specific role of updating the social stock of knowledge regarding the meanings of current events taking place in other cultures.

Discourses produced by foreign correspondents are socially critical because they are expected to update the social stock of knowledge about other cultures. This can be observed by paying attention to two discursive resources: strategies of identity and otherness, and story lines.

2.2.1. Identification and Othering

Foreign correspondents' legitimation function is first of all exercised in the representation of identity and otherness. If they are sent out to a foreign place, they

might be expected to present that place as foreign and the people from that place as "others." That is, as people with whom the correspondent's audience cannot identify because of the different cultural background.

Representations of identity and otherness in discourse can be revealing. To put it in Hall's (2011, p. 4) words:

"Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constructed unity—an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation)."

Identity and otherness do not necessarily have to be absolutes, black and white. There can be progressiveness, and the extent to which correspondents represent their host culture as closer or further away from their own is also revealing.

When analyzing representations of identity and otherness, van Dijk's (2011, pp. 396–399) Ideological Square model can be used. The Ideological Square model is a theoretical framework for analyzing discursive strategies of ideological polarization that posits that members of a group will present themselves positively and present those out-groups, or others, negatively, they see as opponents, competitors, or enemies. Since this can be viewed as a four-angled approach, van Dijk (2011) graphically pitches it as an Ideological Square, as Figure 2 shows:

Figure 2: Van Dijk's Ideological Square model

Emphasize *Our* good things	Emphasize *Their* bad things
De-emphasize *Our* bad things	De-emphasize *Their* good things

Source: Van Dijk (2011, p. 396)

Van Dijk (2011, p. 396) developed this conceptual framework to analyze ideology in discourse:

> "Although relevant for most ideologies, this category is quite typical for racist, nationalist and political-economic ideologies (such as socialism and neo-liberalism), as well as most ideologies of resistance, such as feminism and pacifism, but less prominent in professional ideologies."

Van Dijk's (2011) Ideological Square model provides a valid theoretical grounding for analyzing representations of identity and otherness in correspondents' discourses. As a result, it is taken to analyze strategies of identification and othering in discourse.

2.2.2. Story Lines

Story lines can be seen as stereotyped interpretations of the logic behind events that contribute to the media's symbolic universe. They are frames that save space and time for correspondents and activate mental frames in their audiences. For audiences, story lines help to see continuities in a string of shifting realities. They give audiences a sense of being at home in the world, of understanding what is going on.

As Hannerz (2004, pp. 145-146) warns, a problem with story lines —especially when they have too wide a scope— is that they concentrate too much attention on some single sets of characteristics when more diversity would help to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of reality. Generally, the longer a correspondent stays in a place, the less likely he or she is to resort to primordialist assumptions and clichés, although story lines are also a way to give coherence to a correspondent's career. As Hannerz (2004, pp. 145-146) says:

"There is some attempt to subvert to established story lines. But story lines are not likely to go away altogether—they are simply too useful to journalism, and particularly to foreign correspondence. Perhaps it is sometimes better and more realistic just to ask for more of them, taking a step or two in the direction of a broader frame for continuity in regional news work."

Story lines bear a resemblance to what van Dijk (2014, pp. 238–239) calls the global functional topic of discourses, which he defines as global information shared with previous discourses that is part of the common ground, or knowledge shared by the journalist and his or her readers. This global functional topic differs from new information provided in discourse, which van Dijk (2014, pp. 238–239) calls global functional focus.

Therefore, analyzing how identity and otherness, as well as story lines, find their ways into foreign correspondents' discourses would also help better understand their work's intercultural dimension.

2.3.   Summary

A question opened this section. The last few pages have demonstrated that, rather than a dichotomy, both attributions are accurate of foreign correspondents. Indeed, correspondents are both intercultural communicators and social constructors of foreign realities at the same time, but each description applies at a different level. At an interpersonal level, they engage in intercultural communication processes, which lead them to build some sort of intercultural identity —however weak or hidden— and it would be desirable for them to develop intercultural communication competence.

At a mediated level, foreign correspondents construct foreign realities because that is what their societies' institutional orders expect them to do. As part of media institutions,

they perform a legitimation function. Their specific role consists of constructing a symbolic universe where the reality of the places where they live and work is presented as foreign and those who inhabit those places as others. Since institutional constraints require correspondents to be constructors of foreign realities, correspondents' attitudes toward intercultural communication perhaps should be reframed in terms of whether correspondents seek to favor or not an intercultural dialogue.

By studying correspondents' roles as participants in intercultural communication processes, and the discursive strategies they employ to construct foreign realities, these theoretical assumptions can be put to the test empirically. That is the goal of the rest of this thesis.

PART 2: APPROACHING THE CASE STUDIES

I. Objectives

This dissertation aims to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To analyze articles about the coronavirus crisis in China written by the foreign correspondents included in the sample.

    a. To study from a quantitative perspective the social actors, sources, and story lines of the articles included in the sample.

    b. To examine the topics, representation of social actors, and strategies of identification and othering present in the articles included in the sample.

    c. To compare how the foreign correspondents included in the sample covered the coronavirus crisis in China.

2. To understand the professional practices of the foreign correspondents included in the sample.

    a. To evaluate the obstacles correspondents found while reporting on the coronavirus crisis in China, as well as their strategies toward the coverage.

    b. To review the professional routines the sampled foreign correspondents usually follow.

c. To analyze correspondents' intercultural relationships as part of their activity.

The first objective is linked to discourse analysis, while the second is associated with interviews. The methods used in this research are explained in the third chapter of this part of the dissertation.

By combining the results obtained from discourse analyses and interviews, this dissertation aspires to answer the following general research question:

- Can foreign correspondents be considered intercultural mediators?

In addition to all of the above, this dissertation also aims to answer these specific research questions:

- How is the intercultural dimension represented in the discourse of the foreign correspondents included in the sample?
- Do correspondents perceive their activity as a form of intercultural communication?

II. Literature Review

To assess whether this dissertation contributes to enlarge academic knowledge, it is essential to review what others have done previously. Since this dissertation looks at how foreign correspondents covered a viral outbreak in China, with an eye on the cultural dimension of their discourse, existing academic literature on those issues is reviewed in this chapter.

To begin with, literature on media coverage of health crises is examined. The focus moves next to research on foreign correspondents, with a review of studies linking correspondents to intercultural communication and the literature on foreign correspondents stationed in China.

1. Research on Media Coverage of Health Crises

This section explores the existing academic literature of public health crises, focusing on epidemics and infectious diseases. It starts with an approach to what researchers have figured out about how the media cover health crises. The following three sections address, respectively, scholarly research on media coverage of epidemics and infectious diseases in general and of SARS and Covid-19 in particular.

1.1. The Importance of Studying Media Coverage of Health Crises

Media coverage of health crises has drawn considerable scholarly attention, both from the perspective of communication studies and from that of public health. Covid-19 is just the latest of a series of epidemics and public-health crises that have taken place in recent decades. From viral outbreaks such as Ebola or Zika to long-running health risks like obesity and smoking, the media regularly pay attention to health issues. That coverage has led, in turn, to academic studies that scrutinize the factors that shaped it and its social consequences.

The first point that needs to be made, as Thomas et al. (2020) said, is that how the media portray health crises matters. Clarke (1992, p.105) defended that even one's experience of disease is tangled with the media's coverage of it. "The media portrayal may affect the social relations, the self-images, the economic and political positions of persons with the disease, their loved ones and others," Clarke said (1992, p.105).

In a health crisis, media use tends to rise. Westlund and Ghersetti (2015) evidenced that people envision themselves turning to the media during a crisis, resulting in a cross-

generational homogenization of media use in times of crisis. The fact that people tend to turn to the media in a crisis context is not necessarily positive. While the media can promote public health, they have often been accused of sensationalizing health issues. After studying the coverage of the emergence of West Nile virus in the U.S. in 2000 by major North American newspapers, Roche and Muskavitch (2003) found that the information they provided was of limited usefulness to readers.

When one lacks direct personal experience with a health issue, perception of risk is primarily influenced by the volume and dramatization of the information reported by the media. Kasperson et al. (1988, p. 184) maintained that, even when coverage is accurate and balanced, large volumes of information can result in a social amplification of risk. Garfin, Silver, and Holman (2020) took this argument one step further and suggested that high levels of media exposure, by themselves, in the context of a health crisis can lead to increased anxiety, which can add pressure on healthcare facilities that may already be under strain.

In addition to the social amplification of risk, Kasperson et al. (1988) raised awareness about the opposite effect: the social attenuation of risk. Kasperson et al. (1988, p. 178) pointed out that smoking had many well-known health risks but generated low levels of media interest. After analyzing reports from different outlets available in a Canadian city from January 1999 through December 2003, Berry, Wharf-Higgins, and Naylor (2007) showed that in 2003 the media offered more information on SARS and West Nile Virus than on other health problems that had a greater prevalence in the population, like obesity or heart disease.

Indeed, Frost, Frank, and Maibach (1997) concluded that the news media misrepresent the prevalence of leading causes of death in the U.S. and their risk factors, which may contribute to a distortion in the perception of health risks by the public. In Frost, Frank, and Maibach's (1997) study over one year, tobacco and heart disease were identified as the most underrepresented causes of death, while illicit drug use, motor vehicles, and toxic agents were found to be the most overrepresented causes.

Taking a twenty-year period from 1977 to 1997 as a sample, Adelman and Verbrugge (2000) tried to make sense of how major U.S. newspapers covered cancer, heart disease, AIDS, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and arthritis and concluded that death makes the

news. Adelman and Verbrugge (2000) saw that newspaper coverage of diseases tends to respond to their mortality levels rather than to their morbidity. According to Adelman and Verbrugge (2000), newspaper coverage of disease has three stages: emergence, maturation, and decline. The amount of news coverage that a disease receives runs in parallel to mortality trends, and sharp upturns and downturns in mortality are mirrored in news volume, Adelman and Verbrugge (2000) found.

To sum up, media coverage of health crises can have both positive effects, like raising awareness, and negative ones, like sensationalizing and creating excessive anxiety. Not all health crises attract media attention to the same degree. The usual news values that journalists tend to use apply to health crises. Like with all news-related matters, newness is also relevant for the media as reporters tend to pay more attention to lethal diseases in an emerging phase than those with a greater prevalence but whose fatality rates are relatively stable.

1.2. Media Coverage of Epidemics and Infectious Diseases

In recent decades, there have been several outbreaks of infectious diseases and epidemics that have been covered by the media and resulted in a sizable academic literature. AIDS, Ebola, SARS, H1N1, and Zika are probably the most prominent examples before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before Covid-19 struck, Wallis and Nerlich (2005, p. 2,630) claimed that the AIDS epidemic had been "by far the most widely discussed disease in social and cultural studies," with cultural and linguistic framing of the disease receiving considerable attention. That might be due to the media stigmatization that people with AIDS suffered in the 1980s and 1990s.

Clarke (1992) compared cancer, heart disease, and AIDS coverage and found AIDS to be presented in the most negative terms, with patients being portrayed as diseased, doomed people. Similarly, McAllister and Kitron (2003, p. 58) observed that AIDS was

"the disease of the peripheral, the poor, the deviant, the morally ill (and is really only newsworthy when it threatens the 'mainstream')."

Ebola was another infectious disease media coverage of which was scrutinized in some studies. Focusing on coverage of the 1995 Ebola outbreak in what was then known as Zaire by newspapers, magazines, TV networks, and internet sites from Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., Ungar (1998) noted the media discourse shifted from an alarming to a reassuring tone through a strategy of othering.

Ungar's (1998) conclusion was backed up by a later study by Joffe and Haarhoff (2002), which looked at how British newspapers represented Ebola and how their readers made sense of it. Joffe and Haarhoff (2002) found a common picture in which Ebola was presented as African, linked with African practices, and perceived as posing a minor threat to Britain, thus confirming that people indeed did feel contained by the media's reassuring interpretative package.

Another Ebola outbreak in the U.S. in 2014-2015 led to renewed criticism of sensationalizing by the news media. Towers et al. (2015) said coverage of the U.S. outbreak was disproportionate to the actual threat to national public health. Sell et al. (2017) argued that the content of news stories they analyzed did not necessarily indicate that the media reported Ebola in a hyperbolic way, although the volume of coverage may have influenced public attention.

Monjas Eleta and Gil-Torres (2017) did find sensationalist elements in the coverage of the only case of local infection of Ebola in Europe —which occurred in Spain in 2014— by Spanish newspapers. Monjas Eleta and Gil-Torres (2017) found shortcomings in the communicative strategy of the Spanish government, as well as sensational portrayals in the newspaper coverage due to the great use of images, personalization of information, sourcing, and alarmist vocabulary.

Similar concerns resurfaced in the coverage of a Zika virus outbreak in 2016 by U.S. news media. Sell et al. (2018) found that nearly all news stories included in the sample of their study contained at least one risk-elevating message, while there was a smaller proportion of stories containing risk-minimizing messages, 61%.

Regarding the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, several studies have looked into the role of the media from different perspectives. Klemm, Das, and Hartmann (2016) observed

that the volume of media attention was immense, that news reports highlighted threat over preventive measures, and that coverage maintained a nebulous tone due to conflicting findings. An earlier study by Mayor et al. (2013, p. 1,020) noted public skepticism toward media messages due to a perception of the media's hype of the risks posed by the virus.

Academic literature on media coverage of AIDS, Ebola, Zika, and H1N1 has paid attention to linguistic aspects and their effects on the stigmatization of specific social collectives, interpretative tools used by the outlets, sensationalism, as well as social perceptions of those news reports.

1.3. Media Coverage of SARS

The SARS epidemic of 2002/2003 has some similarities with the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, which constitutes the case study of this dissertation. Both were viral respiratory diseases caused by coronaviruses that emerged in China and reached both neighboring countries and far-flung lands. Of course, there are significant differences too, the main one being that the SARS epidemic was gone in a matter of months, while Covid-19 continued to ravage the world at the time of writing. The similarities between the two diseases, and the robustness of the academic literature on news media coverage of SARS, make it worthwhile to dive deeper into the insights uncovered by scholarly research on that topic.

The academic literature on news media coverage of SARS is particularly rich in studies of media framing, metaphors, or a combination of both. These approaches follow in the footsteps of a long tradition. Studies of metaphors in health-communication issues have abounded in recent decades, particularly those focused on the use of military and war-like metaphors. The work of Susan Sontag (1977, 1989) has been hugely influential. Sontag (1977, 1989) observed —and criticized— that military vocabulary had become commonplace in medical discourse and that news reporting on health issues tended to

use the metaphor of fighting a war against a disease envisaged as an enemy, an alien other, to create a sense of urgency. Since the "disease is war" metaphor leads to the stigmatizing of certain illnesses and their patients, Sontag (1989) called for refraining from using it altogether.

Before being analyzed in media coverage of SARS, media metaphors were studied for AIDS, cancer, and heart disease by Weiss (1997). More recently, Zheng (2020) also studied military metaphors in disease coverage by the People's Daily from 1946 to 2019.

With regards to SARS, Baehr (2006) took on Sontag's (1977, 1989) critique of metaphorical representations of disease and defended that martial language use in Hong Kong during the SARS crisis was a way of tapping into a group of symbols linked to social distress, rather than a glorification of war itself. Specifically for the media, the war metaphor allowed reporters to "organize, simplify and dramatize the message in an eye-catching and patriotic way," Baehr said (2006, p. 55).

An analysis by Chiang and Duann (2007) of the use of war metaphors in the coverage of the SARS epidemic by Chinese and Taiwanese newspapers found that they contributed to presenting SARS as a political issue rather than a medical one. They identified shortcomings in Sontag's (1989) understanding of the "disease is war" metaphor, as Chiang and Duann (2007) found that each newspaper constructed different meanings of self and other through their SARS war metaphors, revealing their underlying political agendas and ideologies.

Hudson (2008) reached a similar conclusion: he observed that the discourse of the Singaporean media during the crisis played a pivotal role in reinterpreting the disease metaphorically as a threat to the integrity of the nation. The metaphor of war was systematically deployed during the SARS crisis in Singapore to the extent that the disease became a political event as much as a medical event, Hudson (2008) argued. According to Hudson (2008, p. 165), "the complicity between the press and politics is central to understanding how illness was represented as an enemy of the nation."

These observations from Chiang and Duann (2007) and Hudson (2008) are in stark contrast with the findings of a study by Wallis and Nerlich (2005) on the coverage by U.K. media of SARS. Wallis and Nerlich (2005) saw a deviation in U.K. media

coverage of SARS from the narratives, metaphors, clichés, and analogies identified as dominant by previous research on AIDS. "Most strikingly, coverage of SARS avoided the use of war and plague metaphors, which normally dominate 'control of disease' discourse, relying instead on a combination of killer and control metaphors," Wallis and Nerlich (2005, p. 2,630) said.

However, it must be noted that an earlier study by Washer (2004, p. 2,565) found that British newspapers did run several stories in the early days of their coverage of SARS about how the disease could be "the next plague." Washer (2004) also spotted a repetition of the trends outlined by Ungar (1998) —promoting fear initially and reassuring messages later— in the way the British media covered SARS by treating it as a mysterious threat first and, later on, as one that was distant from the British public because the Chinese were "other."

Joye (2010) reviewed how two Belgian television stations covered the outbreak of SARS and found that they constructed and maintained a socio-cultural difference between "us" —the West, Belgium— and "them" —the affected Asian countries, and China in particular—. The former were represented positively, as active in controlling the situation and showing crisis-management skills, while the latter were depicted in negative terms, either as being passively suffering a disaster or with references to the Chinese government's cover-up and inability to control the epidemic, Joye (2010) found.

Some studies compared news media coverage of SARS across a sample from different media systems. Beaudoin (2007) compared frames used in SARS coverage by Xinhua and the AP, noticing that frames of attribution of responsibility, human interest, and severity were more common in AP than Xinhua, but that the economic consequences fame was more common in Xinhua. Beaudoin (2007) explained those differences in terms of the SARS timeline and the different news environments that exist in China and the U.S.

Huang, Chi, and Leung (2005) analyzed coverage of the SARS crisis in China and Vietnam by three international newspapers to reassess the concept of media representation of the "other." Coverage of SARS in China by the Western press showed that media representations of China were indeed negative, but not so the representations

of Vietnam, implying that portrayals of the "other" were not always negative. As a result, Huang, Chi, and Leung (2005, p. 691) called for a more refined definition of what is being meant by "other." This conclusion was further elaborated by Huang and Leung (2007), who argued that English-speaking journalists' coverage of SARS in China and Vietnam demonstrated that they essentially gave credit where credit was due and that different representations of the two countries mirrored disparities in their handling of the crisis.

In a study of SARS coverage by newspapers from four media systems, Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008) found that the media focused on tracking the evolution of the disease across society and not on its impact on the individual. Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008) also observed that government sources were the most frequently used and that many of the themes addressed in the media coverage were government-related issues.

A subset of studies that merit being considered on its own is the group of papers that analyzed how the media portrayed risk, a preoccupation also present in research on coverage of Ebola, Zika or H1N1 cited in the previous section. Berry, Wharf-Higgins, and Naylor (2007) showed that SARS was mainly reported by media outlets of a Canadian city in terms of risk, with the virus being portrayed as "mysterious" and "deadly." Hansen (2009) concluded that it was the nature of the SARS virus —which represented an unusual risk, affected celebrities, and caused scientific controversy— that attracted media attention in Norway.

Lewison (2008) included 15 news media outlets from seven countries in his study of framing of scariness during the SARS epidemic. While risks to human health dominated mentions overall, the single biggest risk reported by the analyzed media was the behavior of the Chinese government, Lewison (2008, p. 251) said.

All of the research on media coverage of SARS cited so far consisted of content analyses of different sorts. Hsu (2008) tried something different: reaching out to journalists who covered the SARS outbreak in Taiwan to convey their perceptions and experiences. Among other findings, Hsu (2008) observed that journalists tended to overuse quotes from expert sources, rely too much on anecdotal evidence, and misjudge infection risk.

Looking at the studies summarized in this section, it is striking how many of them highlighted how the disease was used to promote political agendas, as well as to cement strategies of identification and othering; that was the case of Chiang and Duann's (2007) study of how Chinese and Taiwanese newspapers used war metaphors referring to the epidemic to push alternative definitions of self and the other, but also of how Singaporean media used the same metaphor to boost national unity, as explained by Hudson (2008). Washer (2004) and Joye (2010) found that British and Belgian media used SARS coverage to represent the Chinese as othered. Huang and Leung (2007) attenuated those claims and defended that Western journalists only represented China negatively because Beijing mishandled the crisis and that their reporting on Vietnam was more positive. And Lewison (2008) noted the media's focus on political risks arising from China's government behavior. None of these studies explicitly addresses the role of foreign correspondents in the coverage, which is what this dissertation does.

1.4. Media Coverage of Covid-19

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the virus and the social consequences have become preferential objects of study. Communication studies are no exception. Booming research on media coverage of the Covid-19 crisis promises to dwarf that centered on previous epidemics, given the widespread impact of the pandemic.

Since many research projects are still a work in progress at the time of writing, a review of the existing academic literature on media coverage of Covid-19 has to be necessarily incomplete. This section attempts to summarize the main findings of what has been published so far to the extent that it relates to the subject of this dissertation. Since this dissertation examines the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China from correspondents from Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Spain, and the U.K, studies that either devote themselves to media coverage of the crisis in China or by members of those media systems are presented.

As in the case of SARS, studies looking at what topics attracted media attention with regards to Covid-19 and at how reporters framed them dominate the field. Zhang and Shaw's (2020) paper addressing the coverage by three U.K. outlets of China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak is the closest to this dissertation among the reviewed studies. Taking articles published by the BBC, The Guardian, and the Daily Mail over 20 weeks from January to May, Zhang and Shaw (2020) found that the three covered similar topics and coincided in reporting coronavirus as a threat, although some topics, as well as the sentiment they conveyed, were different: the BBC tended to be neutral, with fewer direct criticism of China and absent praise; the Daily Mail packaged stories more sensationally and paid attention to social topics; while The Guardian was somewhat in the middle in terms of emotion and put human rights at the center of its coverage of China's handling of the crisis.

Spanish media's coverage of Covid-19 has been scrutinized in some studies as well. According to Argiñano and Bilbao (2020), Spanish newspapers treated the coronavirus crisis as a foreign matter in January and February, but in March and April, the focus moved to Spain. Argiñano and Bilbao (2020) found that civil society was the main social actor, followed by politicians and that explicit war-like vocabulary was present in about 9% of their sample. Picazo Sánchez, de Frutos Torres, and Gutiérrez Martín (2020) noticed that Spanish newspapers used alarm frames according to their ideological orientation in their front pages, although their use of reassurance frames lacked a political motivation. The economic side of the crisis got more attention than the health situation in Spanish newspapers' front pages, according to Picazo Sánchez, de Frutos Torres, and Gutiérrez Martín (2020).

Mahima et al. (2020) saw that print media in the Kannada language in India conveyed the message that Covid-19 was a growing health crisis in which steps were being taken and held the public administration accountable for its policies. From a different perspective, Sharma and Anand (2020) analyzed coverage by various mainstream Indian newspapers of a religious event during the pandemic and found that media placed blame on the Muslim organizers but did not highlight the shortcomings of the government to the same extent.

Rajandran (2020) observed that Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong framed Covid-19 through war metaphors in his broadcasts during March, April, and May 2020. No study focused on coverage by Hong Kong media has been found.

As the preceding lines show, the academic literature on media coverage of Covid-19 has so far analyzed topics addressed by the media, framing strategies, and social actors portrayed. However, cross-national comparisons of Covid-19 coverage are lacking. Moreover, no study has been found that focuses on the role of foreign correspondents within that coverage.

2. Research on Foreign Correspondents

This section offers a review of literature on foreign correspondents with a focus that aligns with the object of study of this dissertation: studies that have looked at the intersection between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication, and those that have researched foreign correspondents based in China.

1.1. Research on Foreign Correspondents and Intercultural Communication

In light of what was stated in the theoretical framework, it should not be a surprise that Mowlana[3] in 1975 referred to foreign correspondents as intercultural communicators. Since then, however, robust research to support or question that characterization has been blatantly absent.

There are precedents of research on foreign correspondents from an intercultural perspective, but limited. Starck and Villanueva (1992) explored the role of cultural aspects in the work of foreign correspondents and concluded that cultural issues received limited attention. Their thesis was that foreign correspondents could do a better job of accurately depict other cultures if they were more aware of the rule of culture in their work.

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[3] Cited by Christopher Tulloch (2004, pp. 72–73): Mowlana, Hamid. "Typewritter-Ambassadors: Explaining America to the World." *Intellect*, September-October, 1975.

Brown and Youmans (2012) studied the limitations of Al-Jazeera's English channel to become an intercultural window in America due to audience antipathy. Brown and Youmans (2012) discovered that indirect exposure to the channel, via coverage by domestic media, resulted in reduced prejudice, suggesting that the intercultural-communication potential of foreign media in the U.S. depends to some extent on intermedia framing or on how foreign media is depicted by domestic media.

Pfeil (2015) analyzed people-to-people exchanges between EU and Chinese media personnel, arguing that promoting this dialogue would help them overcome prejudice and improve mutual knowledge. Pfeil (2015) identified institutional structures linked to the political context as the most significant obstacle to promote interpersonal interaction between European and Chinese journalists.

Often studies on foreign correspondents are labeled as studies on "intercultural communication," but without elaborating on this perspective any further, as Ospina Estupinan's (2017) study of coverage of China by Latin American newspapers. On the other hand, some other studies adopt an intercultural perspective but do not necessarily mention intercultural communication. Fürsich and Kavoori's (2001) study of travel journalism, which presents it as a transcultural encounter, would fit in this category, as would Hahn and Lönnendonker's (2009) paper about U.S. correspondents in Europe.

The theoretical framework echoed complaints about the shortcomings and gaps in the field of research about foreign correspondents. The intersection between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication seems to be an area where that hole is particularly deep, which underscores the need for further research projects like this dissertation.

1.2. Research on Foreign Correspondents Based in China

Foreign correspondents based in China have been objects of study in several academic papers. That can be partly attributed to the fact that news media interest in China has

grown considerably in recent decades, as has the number of correspondents being stationed there, and to the fact that correspondents in China themselves make the news from time to time when the Chinese government expels one of them.

Only 43 foreign correspondents were working in China in 1978, a number that increased to about 700 from 445 media organizations and 59 nations by the end of 2013, according to data collated by Cheng and Lee (2015, p. 850). However, Zeng (2018c, p. 21) cites registration information from the International Press Center of China's Foreign Affairs Ministry to say that the number of registered foreign correspondents fell to 636 in 2015 from 682 in 2013. Additionally, Sun (2015, p. 129) indicated that China hosted between 3,000 and 5,000 reporters on short-term visits each year.

From a sociological perspective, Zeng (2018b) undertook to classify foreign correspondents in China according to their journalistic and Chinese habitus. Since her classification has been described in the theoretical framework, it is not elaborated further here. Zeng's (2018b, p. 5) study also helps to shed some light on the demographic profile of the foreign correspondents posted in China in the mid-2010s:

> "The survey data provide the opportunity to picture the basic demographic dispositions of China correspondents, who are generally well-educated (97% of the respondents hold a college degree or above) and experienced (with an average of 15.8 years working experience as a professional journalist), but heavily male-dominated (only 23.2% are women). They are mostly middle-aged in their 30s or 40s. Only two respondents are fresh college graduates in their early 20s."

There had been attempts before to categorize the foreign press corps in China, or at least a portion of it, such as Bennett's (1990). However, Zeng's (2018b) work is more comprehensive in its effort to cover all foreign correspondents registered in mainland China and more up-to-date.

In another study of perceptions of professional roles among foreign correspondents in China cited above, Zeng (2018a) found a mixture of cross-national convergence and divergence, which suggested that national journalistic cultures explain significant differences in how correspondents understand their role. Zeng's (2018a) classification

of foreign correspondents in China in three groups according to their perception of their professional role ("detached disseminators," "populist watchdogs," and "facilitative change agents") has already been explained in part I of the theoretical framework and will not be repeated here.

Zeng and Song (2018) analyzed the Twitter profiles of 129 China correspondents and concluded that they use that social media platform more for broadcasting than for networking. In another technology-focused study, Belair-Gagnon, Agur, and Frisch (2017) set out to analyze foreign correspondents' use of chat apps during political unrest in China and Hong Kong since the 2014 "Umbrella Movement" and found that they were used both for newsgathering as well as for internal writing and editing processes.

Earlier, MacKinnon (2008) examined the relationship between blogs and foreign correspondents in China and found that, while blogs constituted potentially an alternative sphere where correspondents could find sources, insights, and story ideas, the field was also dominated by a few bridge blogs —usually written by bilingual people with professional credentials— which had emerged as a sort of gatekeepers. Sanclemente (2016), a former China correspondent turned researcher like MacKinnon, also paid attention to the overlap between foreign correspondence and blogging.

The use of social media, chat apps, and blogs by foreign correspondents all relate to sourcing practices. Cheng and Lee (2015) examined the sourcing strategies of Taiwanese correspondents in China through a combination of in-depth interviews and surveys, based on the closeness of the social ties between correspondents and sources, and concluded that they obtained the most valuable information —exclusive stories about important matters, or insights for gaining solid news judgments— from solid and heterophilous ties. Although Taiwanese correspondents in China found it easier to build strong ties with homophilous sources such as Taiwanese businessmen, their most common source, the information these sources provided was often open agenda, Cheng and Lee (2015) observed.

Following up on sourcing, Mokry (2017) examined the voices shaping China's image portrayed by five weekly newspapers, including their correspondents there. Mokry (2017, p. 662) found that access to sources, or lack thereof, due to the reporting conditions in China was crucial.

Zhang and Shoemaker (2014) studied the correlation between foreign reporters' aggressiveness and Chinese government officials' openness and their impact on foreign media's coverage of China and concluded that both had an influence. Foreign reporters' pre-formulated attitudes toward Chinese government officials affected their coverage of the Chinese government, although openness from officials reduced the influence of those attitudes on media coverage, according to Zhang and Shoemaker (2014). Thus, foreign correspondents in China were open to change their pre-formulated attitudes toward Chinese officials if officials were open and transparent, Zhang and Shoemaker (2014) said.

Sun (2015) showed how China's public diplomacy efforts have not been fruitful in courting foreign correspondents due to, among other factors, the government's inability to understand how foreign correspondents work. Sun (2015) explained that Western correspondents' reporting on China is guided by their conviction of what news should be like, according to which as long as a story is credible and balanced, it does not matter whether it is perceived to portray a positive and negative representation.

This begs the question of what kind of image of China is conveyed by foreign media outlets, a topic that has garnered considerable academic attention. Studies on the image of China presented by the media are, perhaps, the most common approach in the scholarly literature to foreign news reporting. Paradoxically, the output of correspondents is hardly ever singled out in those studies, limiting the insights on their work that can be gained from that research. Willnat and Luo's (2011), Liss's (2003), and Peng's (2004) studies are among the most cited.

One exception is De Swert and Wouters's (2011) study of news coverage of China on Belgian television news. The findings of De Swert and Wouters's (2011) research showed that stationing a foreign correspondent in a distant country increased the attention given to that country but did not lead to changes in the content covered, thus having a limited impact on the overall portrait of China.

Most "China image" studies focus on the representations of China in U.S. media. A recent example is Tang's (2018) paper on how China's image was represented in three U.S. mainstream newspapers between 2008 and 2010 —which contemplated the work of foreign correspondents—. Tang (2018) concluded that American media

representations of China were constantly stereotyped, incomplete, unbalanced, and distorted, and coincided with the previous literature in revealing a largely negative image of the country since the foundation of the People's Republic.

Like Tang (2018), Peng (2004) also observed that coverage of China by The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times between 1992 and 2001 was consistently negative across time and without significant differences between the two newspapers, even though the number of stories they published increased by 50% over the analyzed sample. Similarly, Liss (2003) found that the four American newspapers whose output he analyzed presented China as a threat. Yang and Liu (2012) focused on U.S. print media's coverage of the "China threat" issue from 1992 to 2006 and concluded that this topic never disappeared, although its presence did fluctuate, with peak periods followed by times of declining interest.

In contrast to those longitudinal studies that looked at media representations of China over a prolonged period, Kobland, Du, and Kwon (1992) tried a more condensed approach: they examined coverage by The New York Times of student demonstrations in South Korea in 1980 and China in 1989 and found anti-communist media frames and bias against China. According to Kobland, Du, and Kwon (1992), the newspaper emphasized the challenges facing China's regime and presented the demonstrators' demands as legitimate, while, in the case of South Korea, the focus was on the protests themselves and the government's reaction was portrayed as understandable.

While most "China image" studies center on American media, the way China is represented in other media systems has been studied as well. Li (2012) observed that Australian television current affairs programs presented the political dimension of China negatively, the economic and environmental dimensions neutrally, and the cultural dimension positively, and noted that the framings tactics were biased, evoking fear of Chinese communism and historical prejudices against China. Similarly, in a study of the representation of China on Spanish TV, Rodríguez Wangüemert, Rodríguez Breijo, and Pestano (2017) found that China received considerable, frequent, and relevant coverage, although negativity and mistrust persisted and confrontational and threat topics prevailed.

However, it should be stressed that other researchers, most notably Leung and Huang (2007) and Huang, Chi and Leung (2005), contested the idea of English-speaking media bias against China: they concluded that media criticism arose mainly due to China's actions and that another Asian communist regime, Vietnam, received more favorable coverage during the SARS crisis.

Other studies have undertaken a cross-national analysis of media portrayals of China. That is the case of Willnat and Luo's (2011) study of global television news coverage about China, which found that 2.2% of the news items they collected focused on China, which puts it as the second main focus of international news after the U.S. Willnat and Luo (2011) looked at television news coverage of China in 15 nations and territories and observed that internal politics, internal order, international politics, sports, business, and the economy were the dominant topics, while little attention —or none— was paid to cultural and social aspects. Most news actors came from the field of domestic politics, but business and average citizens also drew considerable attention, according to Willnat and Luo (2011).

1.3. Summary

To sum up, foreign correspondents based in China have been the object of some scholarly studies. Researchers have analyzed their demographic profile, career orientations, use of new technologies, and sourcing practices. Their output, too, has been widely scrutinized. However, there is little insight to be gained from the large and growing body of research on the "image of China" portrayed by the media. Those studies hardly ever separate the contribution to that representation of foreign correspondents on the ground from that of other media actors.

III.   Methods and Sample

The case study of this dissertation is double: it analyzes the discourse of foreign correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China and interviews those correspondents. The next few pages explain the methods used, and the criteria followed in selecting the sample being considered.

The first section looks at discourse analysis and particularly at critical discourse analysis, or CDA, the perspective adopted for analyzing the discourse produced by China correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis there. Semi-structured interviews, the chosen method to structure the conversations with correspondents, are explained in the following section. The third section is devoted to the sample of the case study, describing it as well as how it was chosen and collected.

1. Discourse Analysis

Part 3 of this dissertation consists of an exercise in discourse analysis from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA. The methodology employed is mainly qualitative, but there is a quantitative element as well. On the one hand, quantitative content analysis can give a sense of patterns across a large sample of texts, which can be helpful as a starting point. On the other hand, some meaning-making techniques may slip through the analytical categories employed in quantitative research. Qualitative analysis may complement this, filling the blanks left by the quantitative approach. A more comprehensive analysis thus emerges through the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

CDA is a perspective on discourse analysis and critical scholarship that has been often used in communication research, particularly on studies focused on messages transmitted by mass media. This thesis follows its own model of discursive analysis and applies it to the study of discourses produced by foreign correspondents. The model pursued here could be defined as a semantic analysis of discourse, focusing on its cultural dimension.

The backbone of this model follows Richardson's (2007) proposal for analyzing newspapers. According to Richardson (2007), to understand how journalistic discourse works, analysis needs to pay attention to the form and meanings transmitted by the text, how this relates to the way it is produced and interpreted, and the relation of this all to the broader society in which the discursive event takes place.

Given the goals of this dissertation, the analysis of the relation between journalistic discourse and society emphasizes the texts' cultural dimension. That is, references to both the correspondent's own culture and representations of foreign cultures in texts are paid close attention to.

Following Fairclough (1992) and Richardson (2007), this is done on three levels: textual analysis, discursive practices analysis, and socio-cultural practices. The first phase of

the analysis centers on the meanings contained in the text. Discursive practices take the spotlight in the second phase of the analysis. Finally, socio-cultural practices are examined in the third leg of the analysis. Table 2 provides an overview of these three levels and the specific categories that form each of them.

Table 2: Model for discourse analysis

Dimension	Category	Task
Text	Topic	Define the topic of the text
	Social actors	Identify social actors that appear in the text
	Representation of social actors	Examine choice of names for referring to social actors present in the text as well as processes of quality assignation, and characterize the relationships between participants and the roles they play in the processes described in reporting
Discursive practices	Sources	List who gets to speak in the news stories
Socio-cultural practices	Identity/otherness representation	Look for indicators of representation of in-group and out-group membership
	Story lines	Figure out whether there is a story line that goes beyond the text

Source: Own elaboration

The following lines offer an overview of the items included in the analysis model displayed in Table 2 for greater clarity.

1.1.1. Textual Analysis

At the textual level, the discourse analysis begins by identifying the topics, or macrostructures, of the texts being examined. Van Dijk (1977, pp. 3-4) differentiates between macrostructures, or topics, and microstructures, or the sequence of propositions underlying the sequence of sentences of the discourse. The model of analysis used in this dissertation is not particularly exhaustive in the analysis of microstructures because that would be too narrow a focus. The analysis of microstructures is geared toward the study of social actors and how they are represented. Below is a more detailed explanation of each of the categories contemplated.

- **Topic**: Van Dijk (1977, p. 3) says the notion of semantic macrostructure has been postulated in linguistics to account for the global meaning of discourse. In short, the semantic macrostructure of a given text is the topic it addresses. In journalistic discourse, particularly in news stories, this is usually expressed in the headline and lead paragraph.

- **Social actors**: To understand how members of a given culture are represented in journalistic discourse, they need to be identified in the text. This first subcategory intends to find the social actors —individuals, governments or governmental bodies, social organizations, companies, institutions, collectives, etc.— that are present in discourse.

- **Representation of social actors**: When analyzing how social actors are represented in discourse, it is crucial to examine the choice of names for referring to social actors present in the text and processes of quality assignation. Van Leeuwen (1996, p. 43) says representations can endow social actors with active or passive roles. Therefore, the study of transitivity, which describes relationships between participants and their roles in the processes described in reporting, also matters. In short, transitivity seeks to answer the who (or what) does what to whom (or what), Richardson (2007, p. 54) says.

Topics, social actors, and representation of social actors are therefore the categories of discourse analysis at the textual level included in the model employed in this dissertation.

1.1.2. Analysis of Discursive Practices

The second leg of the discourse analysis model used in this dissertation is concerned with discursive practices specific to journalists. One category is considered here: sourcing.

- **Sources**: Since journalists do not always witness the events they report on, they rely on sources for obtaining information. Rodrigo Alsina (1999) defends that sources are a vital element in the information-production process and that the relationship event-sources-news story is essential to understand the social constructive of informative reality. Rodrigo Alsina (1999, pp. 119-121) distinguishes between mentioned sources and used sources. Since this analysis focuses only on written discourse, only those sources mentioned as such in discourse can be identified.

Considering sources cited in discourse constitutes the second level of discourse analysis. Analyzing who gets to speak in the news is always important, and this thesis is no exception.

1.1.3. Socio-Cultural Practices Analysis

The third dimension of the analysis model focuses on socio-cultural practices. The third chapter of the theoretical framework of this dissertation suggested that looking at

strategies of identification and othering and story lines could help in the study of foreign correspondents as producers of intercultural discourses.

- **Identity/otherness representation**: As explained in the third chapter of the theoretical framework, van Dijk's (2011) Ideological Square model offers a theoretical grounding for analyzing representations of identity and otherness. According to this model, group members tend to speak or write positively about their own group and negatively about those out-groups they see as opponents, competitors, or enemies. Van Dijk (2011, p. 398) says an emphasis on group members' positive characteristics, as well as of negative traits of out-groups, may be accomplished by a variety of semantic and formal structures like the choice of topics, level of description, implications, or agency, to name a few.

- **Story lines**: The notion of story line was explained in the theoretical framework. Story lines can be defined as frames that simplify narrative threads of news stories and give coherence to individual events by situating them in a long-term chain of developments in a bigger picture. According to Lakoff (2004, p. XV), frames are mental structures that shape the way people see the world. Framing has been used in media research since the 1970s and has increased in recent years to the point that the very same concept of the frame has been somewhat diluted, which is why this thesis opts for the notion of story line instead. As pointed out by Hannerz (2004, pp. 216-217), story lines are essential for foreign correspondents' training and socialization as they act as institutional memories. In the analyses for this dissertation, story lines need to be identified by inference.

Thus, representation of identity and otherness and story lines constitute the analysis of socio-cultural practices, the third and final level of discourse analysis used in this dissertation.

1.2. Some Notes on the Presentation of Results

Applying the analysis model shown in Table 2 systematically to the sample produces many results. Some categories lend themselves to quantifiable results, while others are qualitative. Therefore, the presentation of results from the analyses carried out for this dissertation includes two chapters, statistical and qualitative findings, in which results for the coverage of each of the correspondents are outlined plus a third one, a comparative analysis of the results of all correspondents.

The first chapter summarizes the main observations found after the analysis of those categories that have been quantified. Three categories are contemplated here: social actors, sources, and story lines.

To determine the main social actors in the coverage of each correspondent, a two-step process is followed. First, all the social actors found in each article are counted, and those that get the most references are considered the main social actors of the article. The selection of the main social actors aims to respect the content of the text. Suppose in a given article, Xi Jinping is mentioned on his own more times and prominently enough to be considered as a separate actor from the broader collective of Chinese authorities. In that case, that distinction is respected in the analysis. The second step consists of counting the main social actors of all the articles written by any given correspondent.

To quantify sources, another two-step process is followed. It starts by identifying all the sources cited by correspondents in their articles. Having identified them, the sources are grouped under types of sources like government sources, scientists and doctors, the media, ordinary people, policy experts, and commentators, etc. If one article cites an official with China's National Health Commission, a virologist, and two random people from the street, that article has two common-people sources, one governmental source, and one scientific source. In this dissertation, official data is considered a central government source, and scientific sources include scientists, doctors, the institutions they work for, and the papers or other output they produce. The results for the category of sources are presented focusing on the types of sources cited by each correspondent.

The third quantitative category is story lines. This is a mixed qualitative-quantitative category because identifying a long-term trend referenced in a given article is a matter of interpretation. Nevertheless, once identified, the story lines are subject to being quantified and counting which story lines are introduced more often and which less is illustrative. To this end, the story lines of each article are identified, and then they are aggregated to present all the story lines found across the whole sample ordered by frequency of appearance.

With regards to the qualitative part of the analysis, a further three categories are considered: topics, representation of social actors, and strategies of identification and othering. The analysis of these categories requires a non-numerical approach to the sample.

The explanation of the topics section is straightforward: each article is summarized into one sentence. The topics addressed by each correspondent in their coverage are then outlined.

To look at the representation of social actors, the discursive strategies used to refer to the main actors found in the sample of each correspondent are scrutinized. Transitivity is also considered here. Explaining each one of the strategies would be a nearly endless task, so only the most illustrative or interesting strategies are included in the presentation of results for this section.

In the section on strategies of identification and othering, cultural references are examined as well as examples of discourse polarization employed by the correspondents with regards to the main social actors of their coverage. Again, only the most illustrative examples are provided in this section.

Finally, the final part of the presentation of the results of the discourse analysis looks to compare the individual findings for each correspondent. This allows establishing similarities and differences among them.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to analyzing the discourse produced by foreign correspondents, part 4 of this dissertation also seeks to reach out to correspondents to study their approach to the profession. That is, not only the production of their work is considered, but also the processes through which those outcomes are achieved. To fulfill that goal, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used.

Again, the research method employed is eminently qualitative. Albeit it is also subject to quantification, the quantitative angle is left aside here to adopt a purely qualitative approach. It was deemed more appropriate for this dissertation to have in-depth conversations with a reduced group of correspondents than to conduct a survey based on a larger sample which would have delivered more superficial insights.

Once the method was settled, the interview process had four phases: preparation of the questionnaire, reach-out to interviewees, the interviews, and transcription. After completing those four steps, analysis of the results of the interviews could begin. The following lines will briefly outline how those steps were undertaken.

2.1. Preparation of the Questionnaire

Since semi-structured interviews were the method chosen for developing the second leg of the case study of this dissertation, preparing a questionnaire that would serve as the basis for the conversations was essential. Of course, the questionnaire was just a starting point, open to modification as the conversations developed. That is why the interviews

were semi-structured. However, to address the same topics in all interviews and be able to compare correspondents' responses, it was essential to follow a similar pattern.

There were three areas of interest for which correspondents' perceptions and views were sought after: their coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China, the profession, and their experience with intercultural communication. Therefore, the questionnaire was organized around three blocks.

Table 3 shows the questionnaire that was followed in the interviews:

Table 3: Questions for interviews with China correspondents

1st Block: Coverage of the coronavirus crisis
When did you first hear about the coronavirus?
How did you plan your coverage? Was it more a matter of following events as they developed, or did you think about a series of topics you wanted to address?
What difficulties did you find in your coverage?
Did you have any problems finding sources?
Would you attribute any of these difficulties to cultural elements?
Did people around you affect your coverage in any way?
In hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently or written differently?
Did your approach to the coverage change at the time? Has it changed since then?
2nd Block: Foreign correspondence
What is a foreign correspondent for you?
What professional routines do you usually follow?
What difficulties do you usually find?

What kind of relationship do you have with the headquarters of your newspaper?	
What does it take to be a good foreign correspondent, in your opinion?	
3rd Block: Intercultural communication	
How would you define your cultural identity?	
Being a foreign correspondent, you have to navigate between different cultures. Does that change the way you perceive them? How?	
Would you say that you have acquired intercultural competence by being a foreign correspondent?	
To obtain information while working as a foreign correspondent, do you use intercultural competence?	
In the stories you write, do you try to favor an intercultural dialogue?	
In your opinion, which of the two options below defines better what a foreign correspondent is? Why?	- An intercultural communicator
	- A constructor of foreign realities

Source: Own elaboration

Once a basic questionnaire had been prepared, it was tested in a pilot interview. The purpose of this test was to run the questions through a person with a profile similar to those of the interviewees to see whether the length was appropriate and whether the questions worked or needed some adjustments. It was expected that the interviews would take about an hour.

Xavier Fontdeglòria, a former China correspondent for El País who also covered the Covid-19 pandemic from Spain, was the interviewee for the test. The test interview was conducted on December 3, 2020. It took about 45 minutes, shorter than expected but within an acceptable range. The main takeaways from the test interview were that more explanation was needed before asking certain questions. In the first block, it was

necessary to delimitate more clearly the period studied in the dissertation; similarly, some introduction was required before the questions about intercultural communication to explain what was meant by intercultural communication or by intercultural competence and that specific examples of those skills would help interviewees.

The questionnaire did not change after the test interview. Still, the observations about the need for a further explanation beyond formulating the questions —particularly in the intercultural communication block— were taken into account when doing the actual interviews.

Once the questionnaire had been prepared and tested, the next move was to reach out to correspondents to request the interviews. There were issues with the sample of interviewees, which are explained in the following section.

Since it was not possible to go to China to conduct in-person interviews due to funding and time constraints, the interviews were conducted using video call applications like Skype or WeChat and Signal's voice call function. All interviews were recorded. During each interview, the questionnaire given in the previous section was followed with only small variations. Occasionally, follow-up questions were asked.

Having done the interviews, the last step before analyzing the contents obtained from correspondents' responses was the transcription. Here, the software tool Otter.ai was used for those interviews conducted in English. Otter.ai provided draft transcripts that needed to be carefully checked and corrected. That presented the contents from the interviews in a workable format.

2.2. Some Notes on the Presentation of Results

After transcribing the interviews fully, their contents were grouped under the three large areas mentioned above: coronavirus coverage in China, views on foreign correspondence, and experience with intercultural communication. Those three areas

were taken as the basis for the presentation of the relevant findings from the interviews, which can be found in the corresponding part of this dissertation.

Rather than systematically presenting the responses from each correspondent, the presentation is structured around the topics they addressed. Thus, a more qualitative approach to correspondents' views on those topics is offered.

3. Sample

The present section looks at the sample considered for the case studies of this dissertation and the criteria used to select it. Since there are two methodologies, two samples are explained: one for the discourse analysis part and another for the interviews. Both are closely linked: the subjects interviewed were among the authors of the articles contemplated for the discourse analysis.

3.1. Discourse Sample

The sample for the discourse analysis part of this dissertation includes articles written by eight correspondents based in China. Given the importance of culture for the object of study, the Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (2020) was taken as a reference to select the correspondent. That map takes data from the World Values Survey and orders them according to two dimensions: a first dimension of "traditional vs. secular-rational values" and a second dimension of "survival vs. self-expression values." It then shows a series of cultural zones in which the world can be divided. The division of the world in cultural clusters Inglehart and Welzel (2020) offers a criterium for choosing the sample of this dissertation.

It was decided that correspondents from four different cultural zones would be included: Catholic Europe, English-Speaking, South Asian, and Confucian. This was the maximum number of cultural zones that could be contemplated considering the language-knowledge limitations of the author, which excluded correspondents from countries from what Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (2020) calls European Protestant, Orthodox Europe, and the African-Islamic world. Where possible,

correspondents working for newspapers from the same country were selected to make results from within each cultural group comparable. Thus, correspondents working for Spanish media were selected as representatives of Catholic Europe, correspondents for U.K. media as representatives of the English-speaking countries, and correspondents at Indian media as representatives of South Asian countries.

With regards to Confucian countries, the choices need an explanation. Since it was not possible to find two correspondents reporting in English from the same country, it was decided to choose correspondents from Singapore and Hong Kong who work from prestige newspapers from those cities: The Straits Times and the South China Morning Post (SCMP), respectively.

Singapore is included in the latest edition of the Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (2020) as a country within West and South Asia, despite its geographic location in Southeast Asia, the fact that the majority of its population is ethnic Chinese, and that the country and its political culture are often characterized as Confucian or neo-Confucian. Researchers such as Massey and Chang (2002) showed the influence of Confucian values on Singapore's journalistic culture, while Weber, Yang, and Shien (2008) analyzed the role that Singaporean journalists play in disseminating Confucian values. Thus, considering a Singaporean correspondent as a representative of the Confucian culture zone seems like an appropriate choice. Moreover, Hong Kong is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, but its media system is widely regarded as being independent of that of the mainland. Lee (2008), for instance, observed significant differences between Hong Kong and mainland China media during the SARS crisis.

In those cases where two correspondents working for media from the same country were chosen, media outlets from different ideological leanings were included. In the case of Spain, correspondents from left-leaning El País and right-leaning ABC were chosen. In the case of the U.K., correspondents from left-leaning The Guardian and right-leaning the Telegraph were chosen. In the case of India, the potential availability of correspondents for interviews was taken into account to select correspondents from the news agency Press Trust of India (PTI) and the newspaper Times of India.

To select the individual correspondents whose work would be analyzed, in those cases where the organizations had bureaus, it was decided to choose the highest-ranking reporter in the bureau or bureau chief. That was the case for El País, The Guardian, The Straits Times, and the South China Morning Post. ABC, PTI, Times of India, and the Telegraph had only one correspondent each.

The total sample considered for the discourse analysis is made up of a total of 277 articles written by eight correspondents. Table 4 shows the distribution of articles across the sample.

Table 4: Sample for discourse analysis

Cultural Cluster	Country	Media Outlet	Correspondent	Articles
Catholic Europe	Spain	El País	Macarena Vidal Liy	33
Catholic Europe	Spain	ABC	Pablo M. Díez	44
South Asian	India	PTI	K J M Varma	93
South Asian	India	Times of India	Saibal Dasgupta	13
English-Speaking	U.K.	The Guardian	Lily Kuo	34
English-Speaking	U.K.	The Telegraph	Sophia Yan	24
Confucian	Singapore	Straits Times	Tan Dawn Wei	27
Confucian	HK (PRC)	SCMP	Jane Cai	9

Source: Own elaboration

This sample represents all stories focused on China written by these correspondents since they began covering the outbreak of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan until China ceased to be considered the center of the pandemic. The sample begins at different points for each correspondent: January 7 for Lily Kuo; January 8 for Saibal Dasgupta;

January 11 for K J M Varma; January 21 for both Pablo M. Díez and Sophia Yan; January 23 for Jane Cai; and January 24 for Macarena Vidal Liy and Tan Dawn Wei. The sample ends on March 13, 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that Europe had replaced China as the center of the pandemic.

The content was gathered through news database Factiva by doing individualized searches for the media outlet (in Factiva's terms, "source") correspondents worked for through the following search:

> "(china or wuhan) and (virus or coronavirus or covid-19 or pneumonia or outbreak or epidemic or pandemic)"

For the two correspondents who reported in Spanish (Macarena Vidal Liy and Pablo M. Díez), the following search formula was used:

> "(china or wuhan) and (virus or coronavirus or covid-19 or neumonía or brote or epidemia or pandemia)"

Factiva's language filter was activated for English and Spanish. The date range selected was from December 1, 2019, to March 13, 2020, and the source filter was activated in each case for the medium each correspondent worked for.

The results obtained were then manually checked to make sure, first, that the articles were authored by China correspondents (including joint bylines) and, later, that the articles focused on China. This means that some articles written by China correspondents about third countries were excluded from the sample as they did not report on China. The results thus obtained were then cross-referenced with further searches using Factiva's author category to avoid omissions.

3.2. Interview Sample

Since the interviews with correspondents were seen as a complement to the discourse analysis, correspondents whose articles were analyzed were interviewed. As mentioned in the previous section, some issues emerged during the reach-out phase of the interviews.

Interviewees were contacted via email and social media platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, or WeChat. The first round of messages to correspondents was sent out between December 2020 and January 2021. Some correspondents responded immediately, others took a few days or weeks, and some never replied.

When a correspondent did not respond to the initial message, another was sent out after at least two weeks through a different medium —i.e., if the initial contact had taken place by email, the second attempt was conducted via LinkedIn or Twitter—. For correspondents that did not reply to that second attempt, a third message was sent to give them a final chance to participate.

Six correspondents replied to the interview requests: five accepted, one turned it down, and the other two did not respond. One of the five correspondents who consented to be interviewed requested to be sent the questions by email and provide written replies, a petition that was granted.

The interviews took place between January 5 and January 27, 2021. The four interviews conducted live ended up taking significantly longer than originally envisaged and longer than the test. Just one took less than an hour (58 minutes), while the other three took, respectively, 1 hour and 18 minutes, 1 hour and 23 minutes, and 1 hour and 24 minutes (split into two parts). Table 5 shows how long each interview took and when it was conducted:

Table 5: Sample for interviews

Interviewee	Format	Length	Date
Correspondent 1	Live	23 minutes	January 5, 2021
		1h 1 minute	January 6, 2021
Correspondent 2	Live	1h 18 minutes	January 12, 2021
Correspondent 3	Written	-	January 17, 2021
Correspondent 4	Live	1h 23 minutes	January 25, 2021
Correspondent 5	Live	58 minutes	January 27, 2021

Source: Own elaboration

The response rate for this dissertation was 75%, and the acceptance rate was 62.5%. While it would have been desirable to have a rate of 100%, other researchers have encountered similar issues in the past while doing research based on interviews with foreign correspondents.

In a study in which interviews also sought to complement findings from content analysis, Mokry (2017) said conducting interviews with correspondents "proved difficult" and acknowledged that she was only able to contact "some" of them. Zeng (2018a) reported a response rate of 17% for a survey conducted among all foreign correspondents based in China. In a more longitudinal study, Cheng and Lee (2015) achieved an acceptance rate of 83.6%, although their sample included only correspondents from Taiwan.

One final point that needs to be added about the interview sample is that one of the correspondents consented to be interviewed on the condition of anonymity. As a result, a set of classification questions according to the criteria outlined in the theoretical framework, which had been included in the interviews, was removed from the presentation of the results. Also, to avoid revealing that correspondent's identity, the

findings from the interviews are presented citing, respectively, Correspondent No. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

PART 3: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

I. Statistical Findings

Three categories included in the analysis model have been quantified and resulted in meaningful findings: social actors, sources, and story lines. Based on the frequency with which social actors were mentioned in each article, the main social actors of the correspondents' coverage can be established. The sources cited in each article can also be counted and classified. Finally, the story lines present in the articles and their recurrence are also identified.

1. Social Actors

1.1.   *Macarena Vidal Liy – El País*

Hundreds of social actors are mentioned in the 33 articles written by El País's correspondent analyzed for this dissertation[4]. Not all of them receive the same consideration. There are 14 actors or collectives of actors that stand out. Chart 1 shows their distribution across the sample.

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[4] An earlier version of the analysis of the sample written by this correspondent can be found in Calatayud Vaello (2021). The results differ because the sample for this analysis only contemplates articles written by one correspondent, while that earlier analysis for included articles by another correspondent.

Chart 1: Main social actors in the coverage by Macarena Vidal Liy – El País
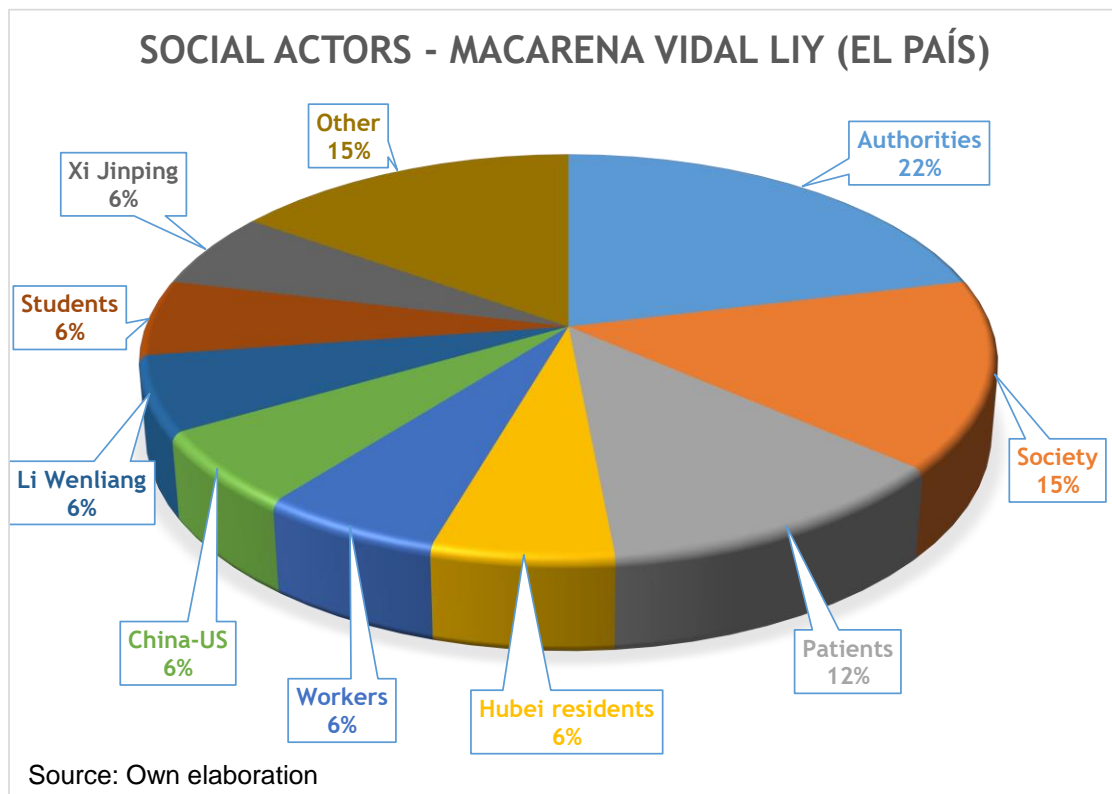
SOCIAL ACTORS - MACARENA VIDAL LIY (EL PAÍS)

- Other 15%
- Xi Jinping 6%
- Students 6%
- Li Wenliang 6%
- China-US 6%
- Workers 6%
- Hubei residents 6%
- Patients 12%
- Society 15%
- Authorities 22%

Source: Own elaboration

Chinese authorities are the social actor that El País's correspondent pays more attention to. Based on the frequency of mentions, authorities are the principal social actor in seven of the 33 articles collected or 22% of the total.

Authorities are followed by the Chinese society as a whole, which is the main social actor in five of the 33 articles, or 15%. People affected by the coronavirus come in the third position, being the most cited social actor in four articles, or 12% of the total.

Six social actors appear as the most prominent ones in two articles each: Hubei's residents; Chinese workers; the dyad China-U.S.; doctor Li Wenliang; Chinese students; and President Xi Jinping.

A further five articles have other social actors as their main arguments: Hubei and Wuhan's authorities; foreign governments implementing restrictions toward people arriving from China; scholars; the World Health Organization, and people trapped after the collapse of a hotel in Fujian province that was being used as a quarantine facility.

1.2.   Pablo M. Díez – ABC

The coverage by ABC's correspondent of the coronavirus crisis featured hundreds of social actors[5]. Judging by the regularity with which they are presented as the main social actors in articles, 19 social actors or collectives of social actors were highlighted. Chart 2 shows the main social actors their weight across the sample.

Chart 2: Main social actors in the coverage by Pablo M. Díez - ABC
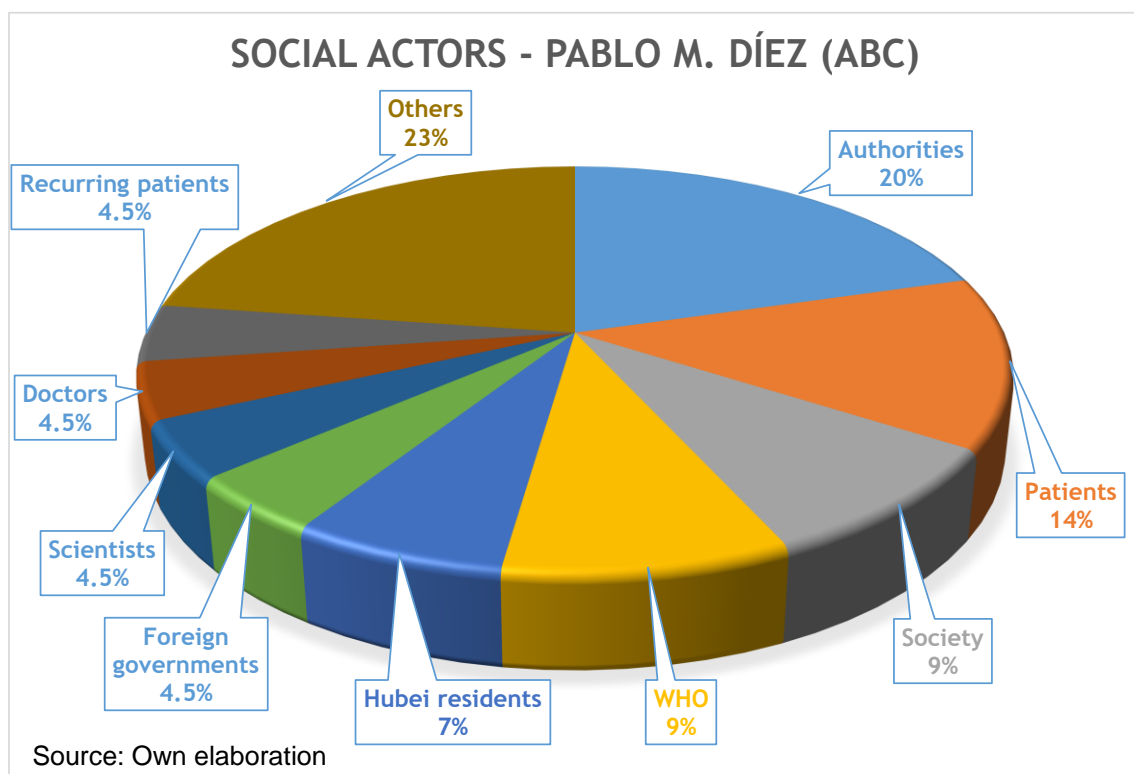
As illustrated by the chart, Chinese authorities are the most important social actor of the sample: they take the spotlight in nine of the 44 articles, about a fifth of the total.

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[5] An earlier earlier version of the analysis of the sample written by this correspondent can be found in Calatayud Vaello (2021).

Authorities are followed by people affected by coronavirus, who attract prominent attention in six articles, or 14% of the total.

Chinese society as a whole and the World Health Organization are each the most important social actors in four articles or about 9% of the total sample each. Hubei and Wuhan's residents are the main social actor in three articles. Meanwhile, foreign governments implementing restrictions toward China and people arriving in their territories from China are the most important actors in two articles, as are scientists, doctors, and recurring coronavirus patients.

A further ten social actors appear as the main actor in one article each. These are the Spanish government; Hong Kong's government; Macau's government; Li Wenliang; a man who died in Paris and became the first coronavirus death in Europe; Xi Jinping; Hubei's authorities; German authorities; construction workers of hospitals in Wuhan, and activists.

1.3.   K J M Varma – PTI

While the coverage of the coronavirus crisis by PTI's correspondent refers to thousands of social actors, 28 actors receive particularly prominent attention, based on the number of mentions. Chart 3 shows the main social actors in his coverage.

Chart 3: Main social actors in the coverage by K J M Varma – PTI

SOCIAL ACTORS - K J M VARMA (PTI)

- Others 18%
- Hubei residents 2%
- Mother and baby 2%
- Man in Tibet 2%
- WHO 2%
- Xi Jinping 3%
- Medical workers 3%
- Victims of hotel collapse 3%
- Indians in Hubei 5%
- Indian officials 7%
- Authorities 21%
- Patients 32%

Source: Own elaboration
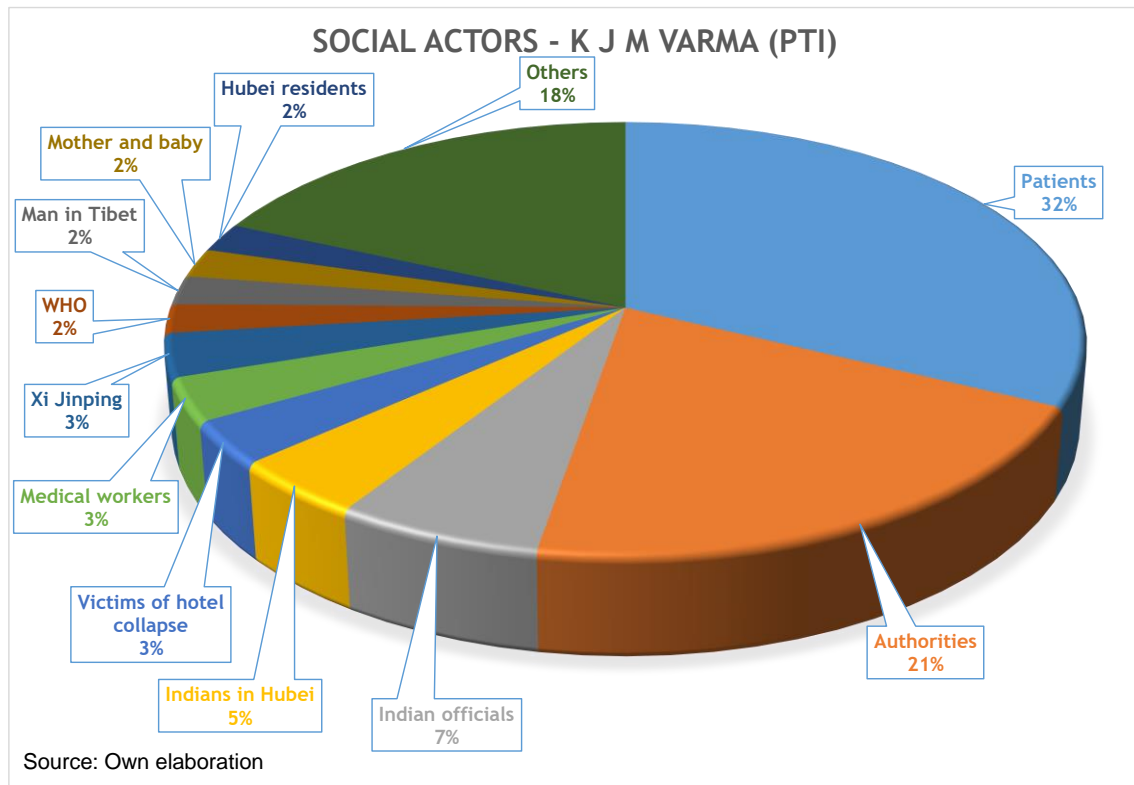
People who died from covid-19 or got infected with the virus are the dominant actor in nearly a third of the articles of the sample, 30. Chinese authorities are the second most prominent social actor, as they feature as the most important actor in 19 articles or 21% of the total. These two collectives of social actors dominate the sample. There is a considerable gap between coronavirus patients and Chinese authorities —they account for more than half of the total— and the other main social actors in the coverage by this correspondent.

Indian officials come in the third position, as they are the main social actor in six articles. Indian residents in Wuhan are the most prominent social actors in a further four articles.

Three social actors appear as the most important ones in three articles each: the victims of the collapse of a hotel which was being used as a quarantine facility in Fujian province; medical workers and Xi Jinping. An additional four actors take the spotlight

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in two articles each: the World Health Organization; Tibet's first coronavirus patient; a mother who gave birth to her baby while infected with the virus, and Hubei's residents.

There is a series of 17 other social actors who receive prominent attention in one article each. They are Li Wenliang; a man who died in the Philippines and became the first coronavirus victim outside of China; China's foreign minister Wang Yi; governments of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa); the dyad China-U.S.; authorities from Nyingchi in Tibet; researchers; the duo formed by Xi Jinping and Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan; businessman Jack Ma; Bollywood star Aamir Khan; Wuhan authorities; the Asian Development Bank; the organizers of the Beijing International Film Festival; Apple; foreign investors in China; an Indian resident in China who was believed to be the first foreigner infected with coronavirus; and China's Premier Li Keqiang.

Indian social actors have an important role in the coverage by PTI's correspondent. Indian officials and Indians in Hubei are the third and fourth, respectively, of the whole sample for this correspondent, and two other Indian actors are situated as the most prominent articles in one article each: Bollywood star Aamir Khan and an Indian resident in China who was believed to be the first foreigner infected with the coronavirus.

1.4. Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

Eight social actors feature as the most prominent ones in the 13 articles written the Times of India's correspondent that constitute the sample, based on the frequency of citations. Chart 4 shows how these main social actors are distributed.

Chart 4: Main social actors in the coverage by Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

SOCIAL ACTORS - SAIBAL DASGUPTA (TIMES OF INDIA)

- Chinese travelers 8%
- Wuhan residents 8%
- Xi Jinping 8%
- Experts 8%
- Indian Embassy 8%
- Indians in Wuhan 15%
- Authorities 15%
- Patients 31%

Source: Own elaboration
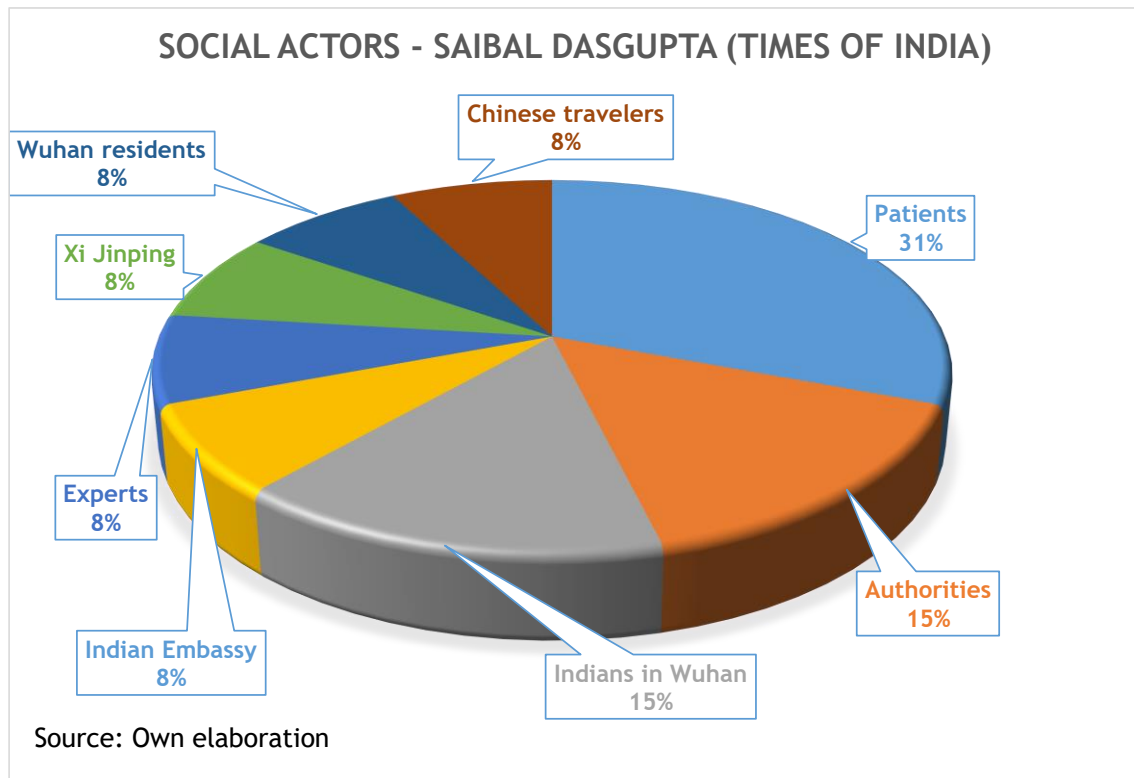
As presented by the chart, people affected by the virus are the main social actor in the coverage by this correspondent. They are the most prominent actor in four of the 13 analyzed articles or 31% of the total. Chinese authorities and Indian people living in Hubei come next, with two appearances as the main actor of the text for each collective.

A series of additional social actors appear as the main actor of the five remaining articles of the sample: India's embassy in Beijing; scientific experts; Wuhan residents who left the city before the lockdown was introduced; Chinese traveling abroad and Xi Jinping are each the most prominent actor in the remaining articles.

Indian social actors, therefore, have a notable presence in his coverage: Indians in Wuhan are the main social actors of two actors and the country's embassy in Beijing is the most important actor in another article.

1.5.   Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

Among the hundreds of social actors mentioned by The Guardian's correspondent in her 34 sampled articles, 12 different social actors emerge as the most prominent. Chart 5 shows how they are distributed across the sample.

Chart 5: Main social actors in the coverage by Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

SOCIAL ACTORS - LILY KUO (THE GUARDIAN)

Others 18%
Wuhan residents 6%
Authorities 26%
Xi Jinping 6%
Critics 12%
Patients 20%
Society 12%

Source: Own elaboration
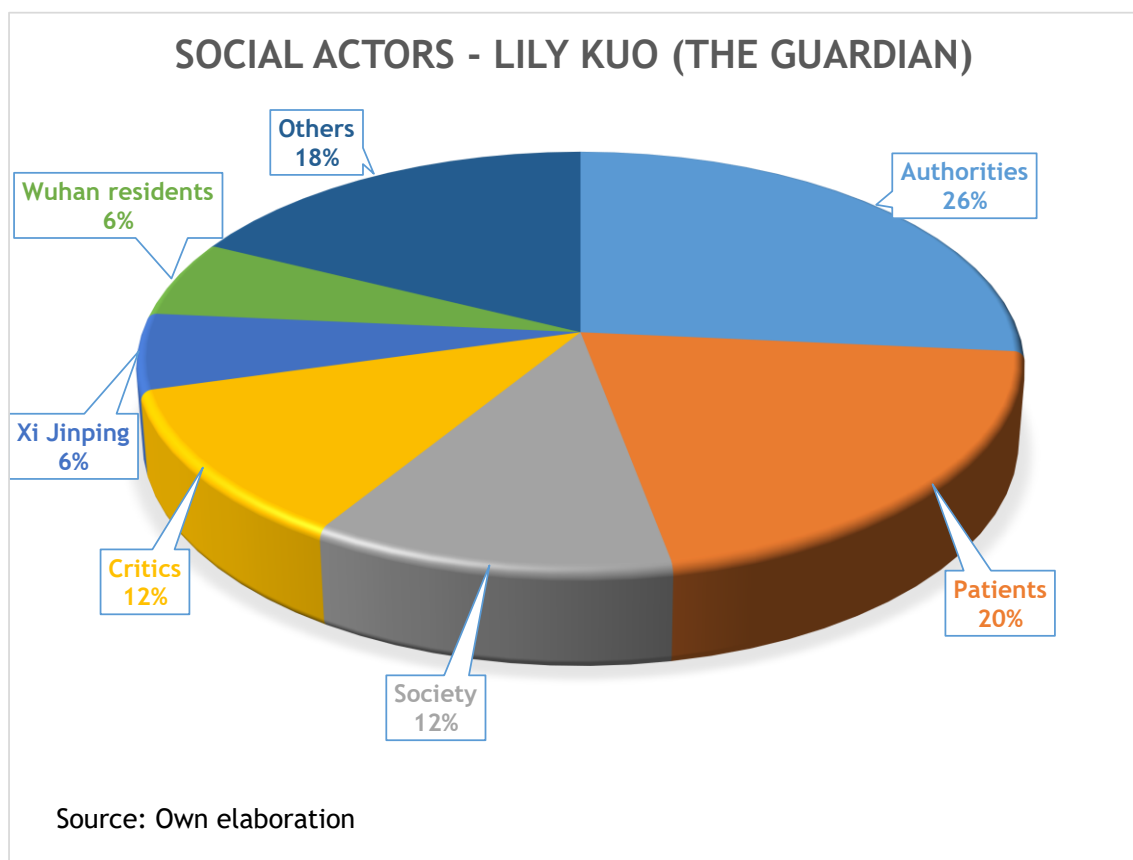
Chinese central authorities are the main social actors in nine of the 34 articles of the sample or around 26% of the total. People affected by coronavirus are the second most important social actor of her coverage. They are given the most prominent role in seven articles or around a fifth of the whole sample.

A further four social actors appear as the most frequently cited actor in more than one article. Chinese society as a whole and critics of the regime are the main social actors in four articles each, or 12% of the total each. Meanwhile, Xi Jinping and Wuhan's residents are the main social actors in two articles each.

Six other social actors take the spotlight each in one article: a man who died in the Philippines and became the first coronavirus death outside of China; officials from Hubei who were sacked because of how they handled the early stages of the epidemic; two nurses who wrote a letter pleading for international help; the collective of parents in East Asia; Britons in China, and the World Health Organization.

1.6. Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

Of all social actors mentioned by The Telegraph's correspondent included in the sample of this dissertation, there are 13 that loom large because of their frequency of citation. Chart 6 illustrates the distribution of social actors across the sample.

Chart 6: Main social actors in the coverage by Sophia Yan – The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

SOCIAL ACTORS - SOPHIA YAN (TELEGRAPH)

Authorities 29%

Other 37%

Foreign governments 13%

Society 8%

Patients 13%

Source: Own elaboration
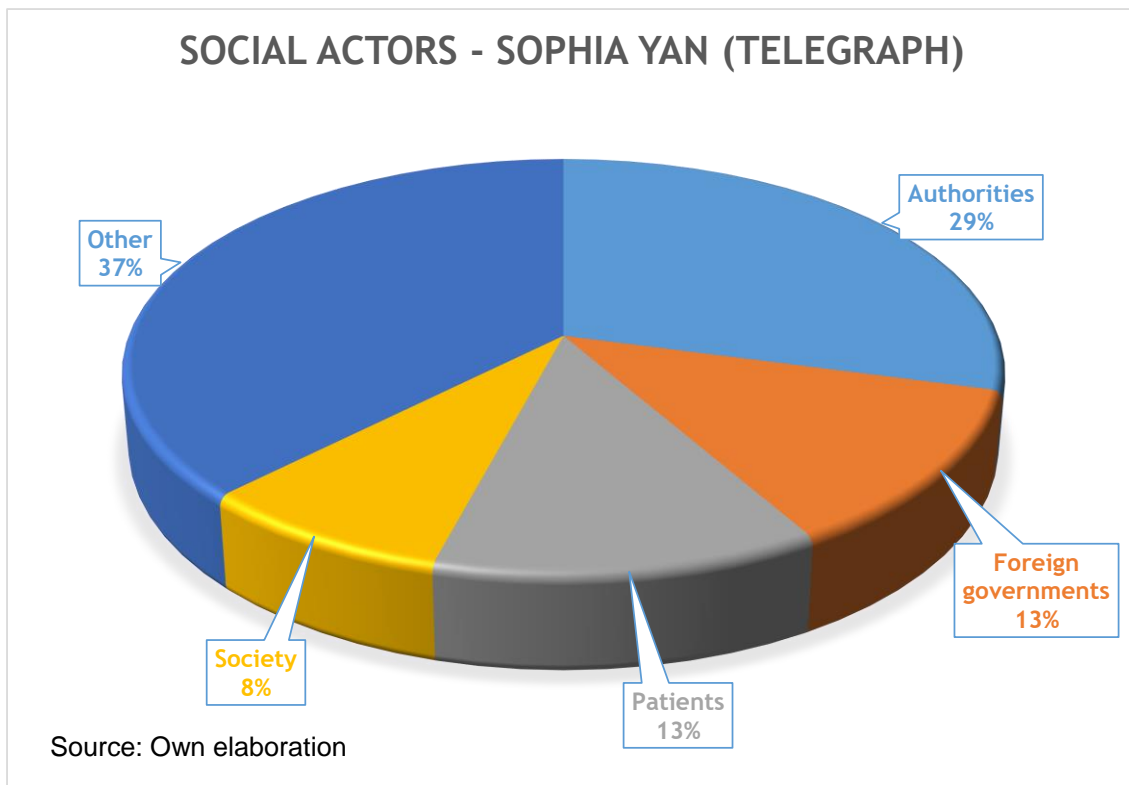
Chinese central authorities are the most important social actor of the sample: they are the most prominent actor in seven of the 24 articles sampled or 29% of the total. Governments of other countries and people affected by coronavirus come in the second position, as each of them is the main social actor in three articles. China's society as a whole is another prominent social actor, taking the spotlight in two articles of the sample.

Nine social actors are the most frequently cited in the remaining nine articles that make up the sample: Britons in Hubei; Wuhan mayor Zhou Xianwang; Hong Kong's striking hospital workers; Li Wenliang; people from mainland China arriving in Hong Kong; the correspondent herself in an article written as a first-person account; British entrepreneurs who set up businesses in China; Xi Jinping, and Wuhan's residents.

Thus, the main social actors of this correspondent's sample include two collectives of Britons in China —those who reside in Hubei and those who have started up businesses in China— as well as two Hong Kong-related collectives —hospital workers on strike

and people from mainland China arriving in the former British colony—, which are presented as the most prominent actors in articles representing 16% of the total sample.

1.7. Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

In the 27 articles by The Straits Times' correspondent sampled for this project, 11 social actors stand out as those mentioned the most frequently. Chart 7 displays their distribution across the sample.

Chart 7: Main social actors in the coverage by Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

SOCIAL ACTORS - TAN DAWN WEI (STRAITS TIMES)

Other 30%
Authorities 41%
Hubei residents 7%
Patients 22%

Source: Own elaboration
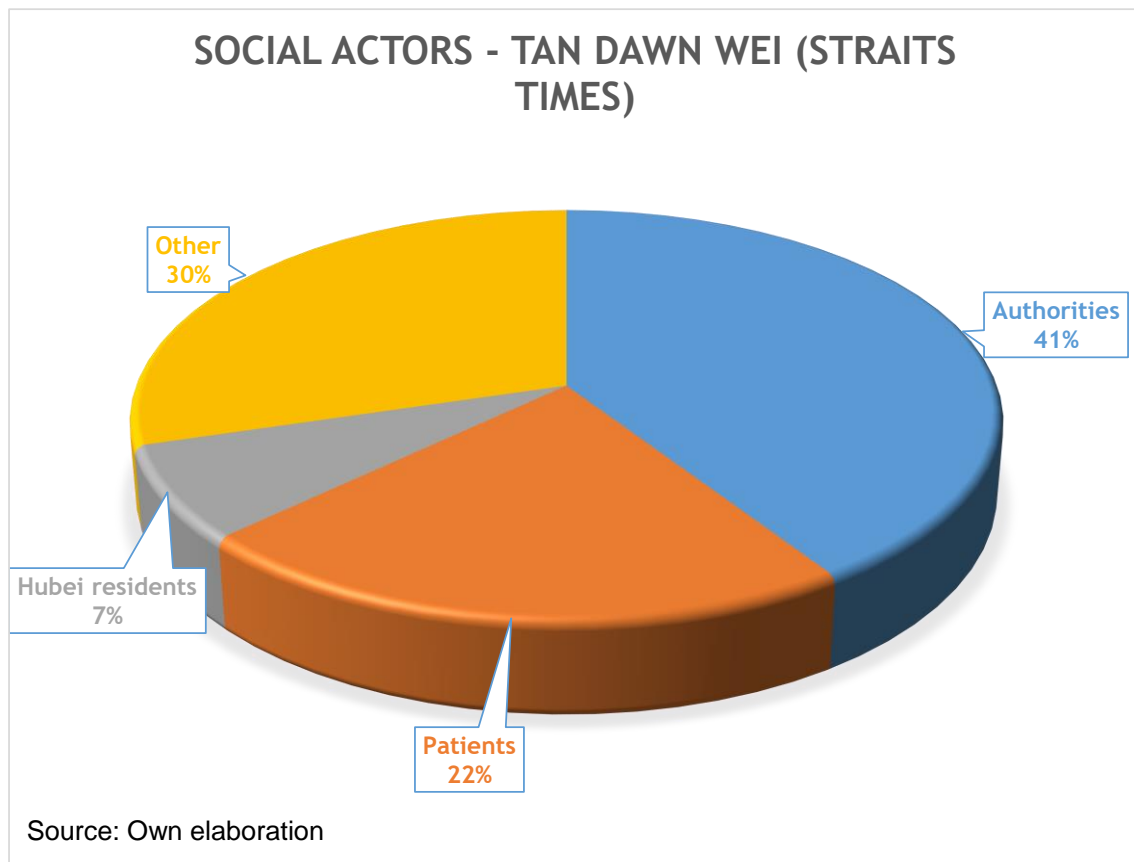
Chinese authorities are the most prominent social actor in 11 articles, based on the frequency of citations. That is, 41% of the articles included in the sample paid the most attention to authorities from the central government.

Two other collectives of social actors were highlighted in more than one article of the coverage by this correspondent: people affected by coronavirus and Hubei and Wuhan residents. People affected by the epidemic were the main social actors in six articles or 22% of the total. Meanwhile, Hubei residents took the spotlight in a further two articles or 7% of the sample.

Moreover, eight other social actors were the most important ones in the remaining eight articles: Li Wenliang; the Chinese society as a whole; Zhang Jie—a volunteer from Wuhan who was portrayed as driving doctors and nurses to and from hospitals—; Singaporean businesses in China; Singaporean diplomats who helped evacuate Singaporean nationals from Wuhan and Hubei; Xi Jinping; Chinese HIV patients, and Hubei authorities. Therefore, Singaporeans take a prominent role in two of the 27 articles written by this correspondent, or 7% of the total sample.

1.8.   Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

The nine articles written by the South China Morning Post's correspondent included in the sample highlight eight different social actors, based on the frequency of mention. Chart 8 illustrates their distribution across the sample.

Chart 8: Main social actors in the coverage by Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

SOCIAL ACTORS - JANE CAI (SCMP)

- Xi Jinping 11%
- Women 11%
- Patients 11%
- Li Wenliang 11%
- Chen Yixin 11%
- Wuhan residents 11%
- Society 11%
- Authorities 23%

Source: Own elaboration
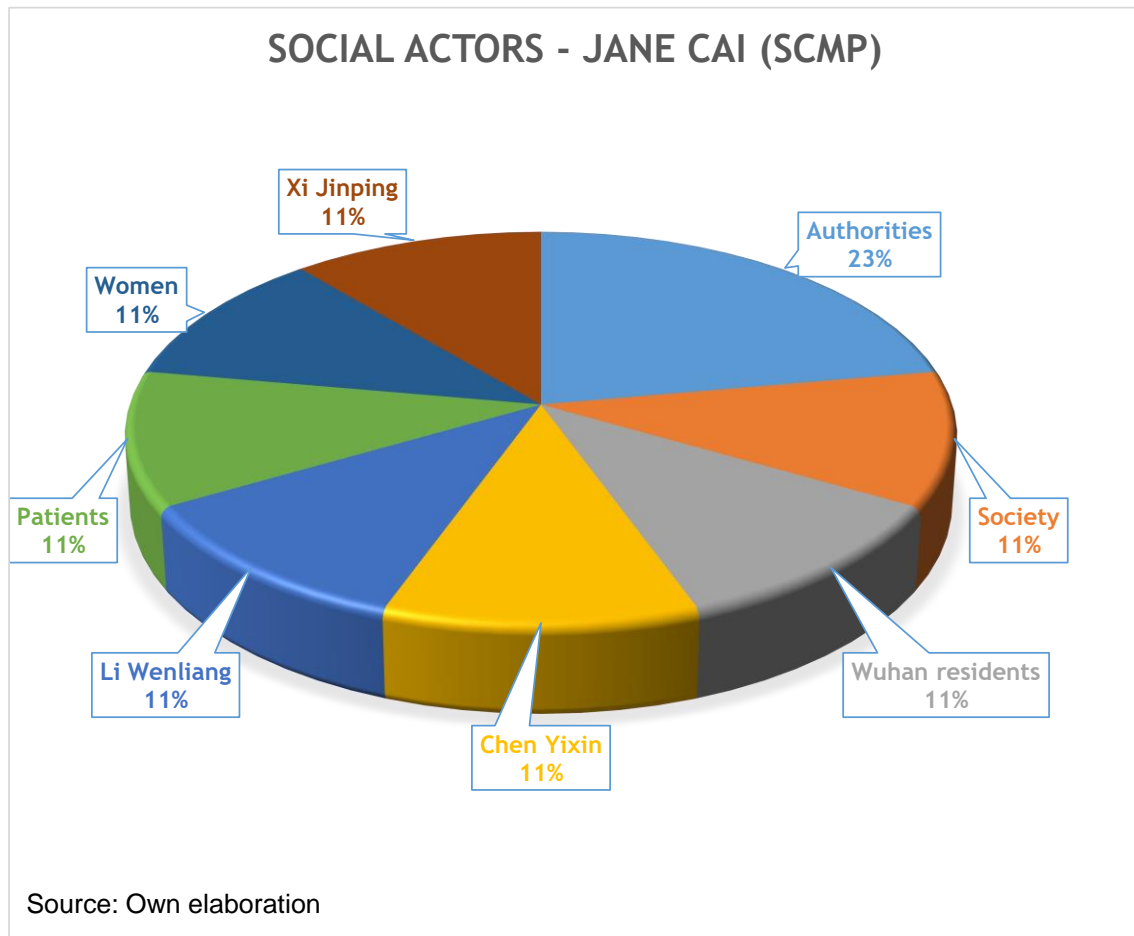
Chinese authorities are the most prominent social actors in two articles of the nine articles of the sample or 23% of the total. This makes them the most important social actor in the whole sample. A series of seven social actors or collectives of social actors are the most frequently cited in the remaining seven articles: China's society as a whole; Wuhan's residents; Chen Yixin —a Chinese politician who was appointed as deputy head of the national team overseeing the handling of the outbreak in Hubei—; Li Wenliang; people affected by coronavirus; women in the frontline of China's efforts to contain the epidemic, and Xi Jinping.

2. Sources

2.1. Macarena Vidal Liy – El País

In the 33 articles that constitute the sample from El País's correspondent's coverage, a total of 169 sources have been identified as being cited[6]. That means that 5.1 sources per article are cited on average. Chart 9 lays out these sources grouped by affiliation and ordered by frequency of citation.

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[6] An earlier version of the analysis of the sample written by this correspondent can be found in Calatayud Vaello (2021). There is a difference between the results here presented with regards to sourcing and those outlined in that analysis: patients and relatives, which have been separated here, were counted together there.

Chart 9: Sourcing in the coverage by Macarena Vidal Liy – El País

Source: Own elaboration
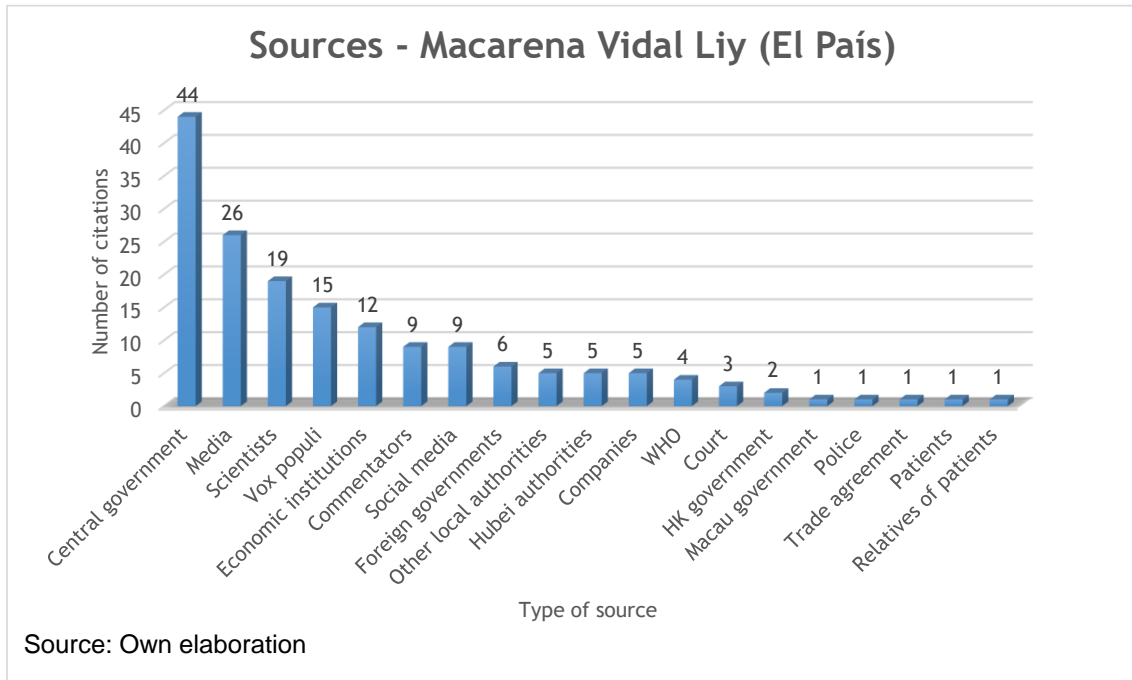
As shown in the chart, China's central government is the top source in the sample from this correspondent. Sources affiliated with the Chinese central government are cited in 44 instances. That is, 26.0% of all sources cited in the sample are associated with the central government.

Media reports are the second source of information by frequency of citation. They are cited in 26 cases, or 15.4% of the total. Scientific sources are cited 19 times or 11.2%.

To a lesser extent, ordinary people and economic institutions are notable sources of information for this correspondent, as they are cited 15 and 12 times respectively, with 8.9% and 7.1% of the total. Policy commentators or social scientists and social media are each cited in nine instances. Foreign governments act as sources of information in six cases. Hubei's officials, other local Chinese authorities, and companies or business lobbies each appear five times as sources. The World Health Organization is cited four times.

Sources that are cited with less frequency include Chinese courts; Hong Kong's government; Macau's government; Chinese police; a trade agreement between China and the U.S.; coronavirus patients, and relatives of the patients.

2.2. Pablo M. Díez – ABC

A total of 138 sources have been identified in the coverage by ABC's correspondent[7]. That means that, on average, his articles have 3.1 sources. In two articles, no source was identified. Chart 10 shows them ordered by frequency of citation.

Chart 10: Sourcing in the coverage by Pablo M. Díez – ABC

Source: Own elaboration
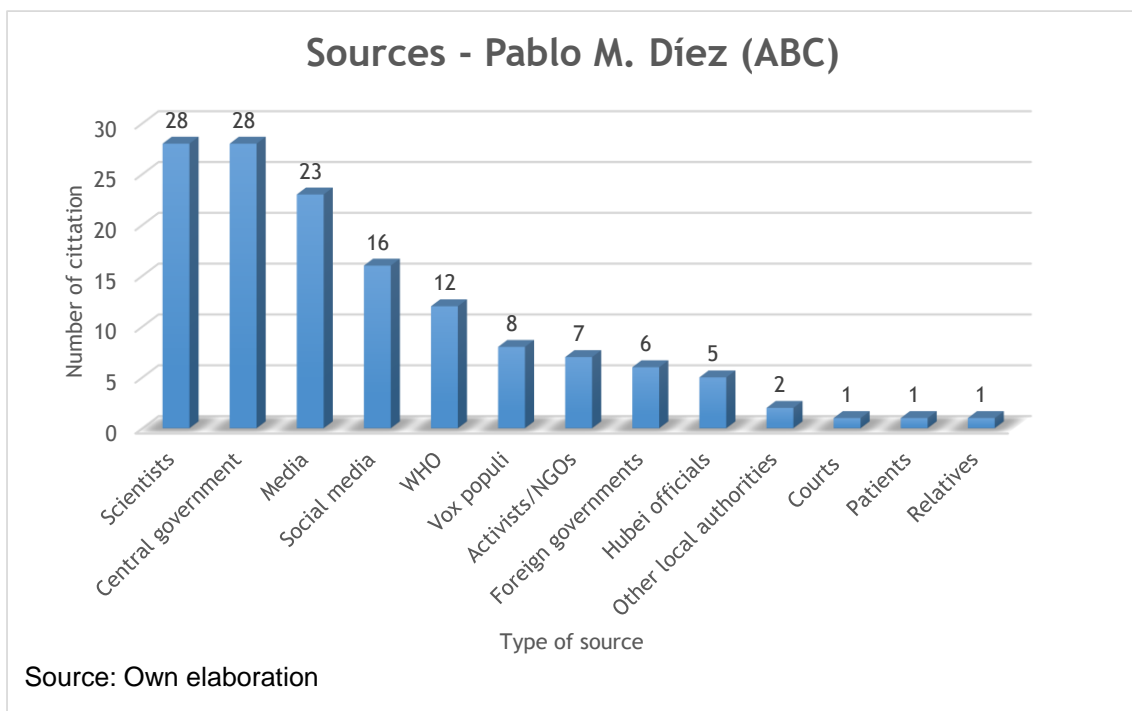
Scientific sources and China's central government are the top sources in the coverage by this correspondent, with 28 citations each or 20.3% of the total. That means that these

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[7] An earlier version of the analysis of the sample written by this correspondent can be found in Calatayud Vaello (2021). There is a difference between the results here presented with regards to sourcing and those outlined in that analysis: patients and relatives, which have been separated here, were counted together there.

two types of sources together account for about 40.6% of the total sources identified in the articles written by this correspondent.

Media outlets come in the third position, with 23 citations, or 16.7% of all sources cited. Social media is the fourth type of source with 16 citations, making up 11.6% of the total. The World Health Organization is cited as a source in 12 instances or 8.7% of the total.

Some other sources are cited less frequently: there are eight cases of ordinary people being cited as sources; seven of activists or non-governmental organizations; six of officials from Hubei province, and two from other local authorities. Courts, patients, and relatives of patients are each cited once as sources.

2.3.   K J M Varma – PTI

A total of 346 sources can be found in the sample from PTI's correspondent, which includes 93 articles. That means that articles cite 3.7 sources on average. Chart 11 presents the sources of the sample ordered by frequency of citation.

Sources - K J M Varma (PTI)

Chart 11: Sourcing in the coverage by K J M Varma – PTI

Source: Own elaboration
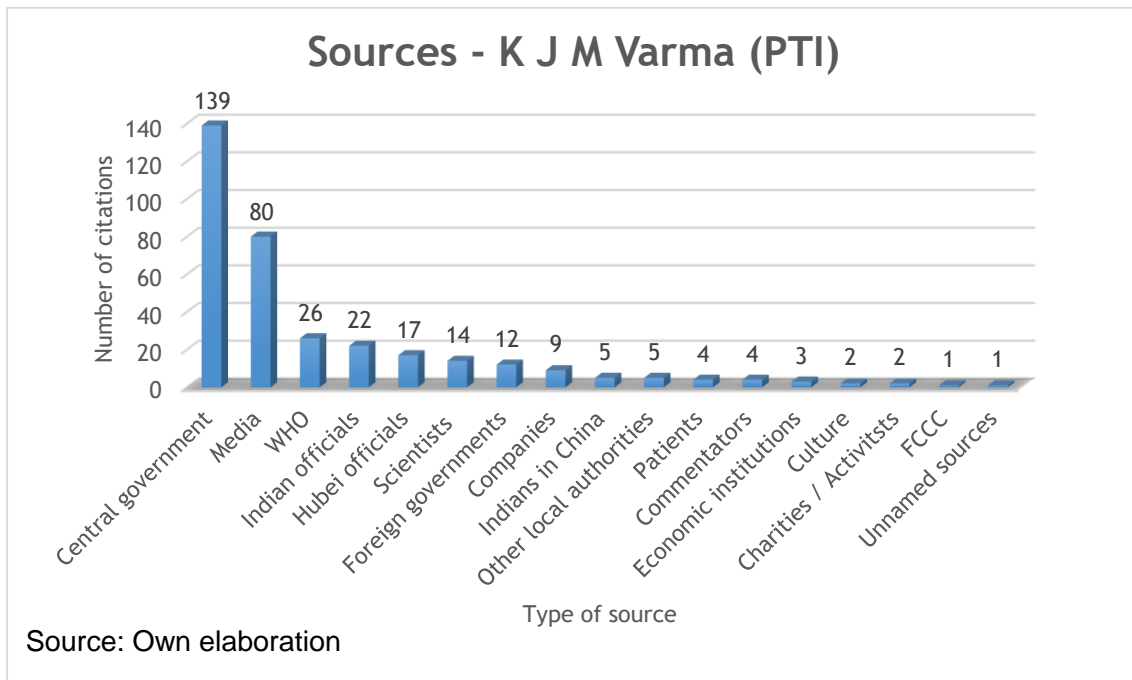
China's central government is the most frequently cited source by this correspondent. The 139 citations of central government sources mean that 40.2% of the total sources are affiliated with Beijing.

With 80 citations, media reports are the second source by frequency of citation. Media outlets represent 23.1% of the total sources of the sample. Other important sources are the World Health Organization and Indian officials, with 26 and 22 citations, respectively, placing them in the third and fourth position and representing 7.5% and 6.4% of the total. Hubei's officials come in as the fifth source with 17 citations, or 4.9% of the total.

Scientists and foreign governments are cited 14 and 12 times, respectively, while companies are referenced as sources in nine instances. Indians in China and other local authorities —local Chinese authorities other than Hubei's— are each cited five times as sources. In contrast, patients of coronavirus patients and policy commentators are cited in four cases each.

Other sources observed in the sample include economic institutions, cultural sources (the organizers of Beijing's film festival and Bollywood star Aamir Khan), charities and

activists, and the Foreign Correspondents Club of China. There is also one unidentified source.

2.4. Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

A total of 48 sources have been identified in the 13 articles by the Times of India's correspondent collected for the sample. That represents an average of 3.7 sources per article. Chart 12 sets out the distribution of the types of sources based on the frequency of citation.

Chart 12: Sourcing in the coverage by Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

Source: Own elaboration
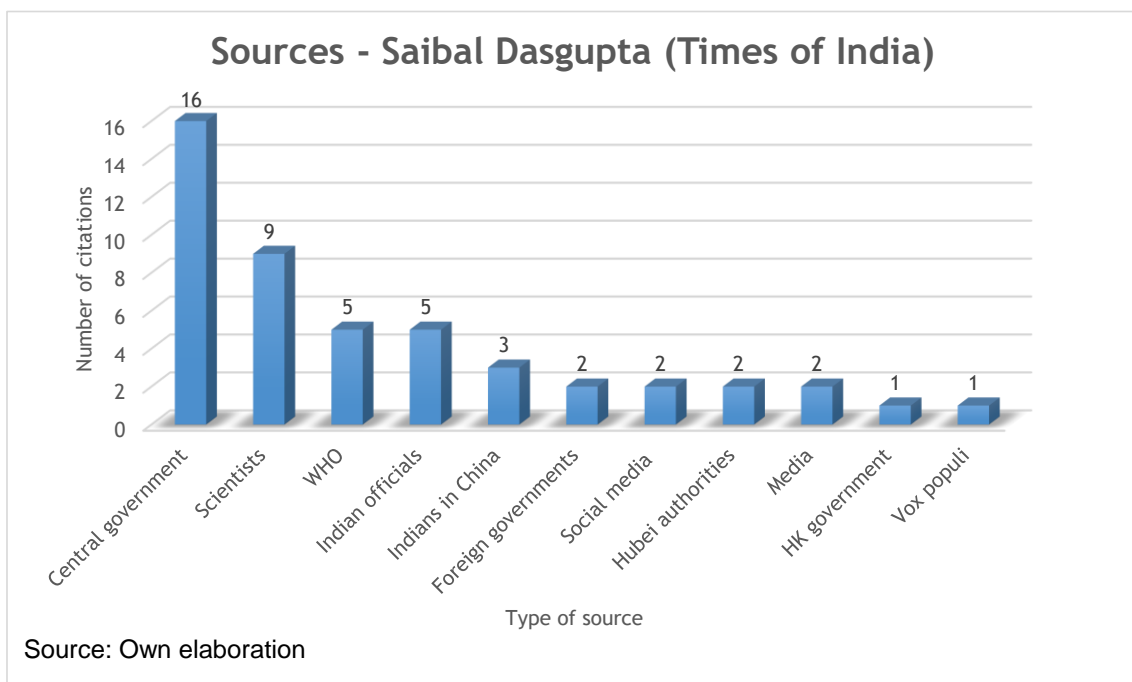
As shown by the chart, sources affiliated with the Chinese central government dominate in the articles written by this correspondent. With 16 citations, China's central

government officials and institutions account for approximately a third of the total sources cited by this correspondent.

Scientists are the second most important type of source for this correspondent, with nine citations that represent 18.8% of the total. The World Health Organization and Indian officials, each cited in five instances, or 10.4% of all the sources each, occupy the third tier of sources for this correspondent. Indians in China are cited as sources in three instances.

Foreign governments, social media, authorities from Hubei province, and other media organizations are cited as sources by this correspondent in two instances each. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's government and an ordinary person are used as sources once each.

2.5. Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

In the 34 sampled articles by The Guardian's correspondent, a total of 287 sources are cited. That represents an average of 8.4 sources per article. Chart 13 displays the distribution of these sources according to their affiliation.

Sources - Lily Kuo (The Guardian)

Source: Own elaboration
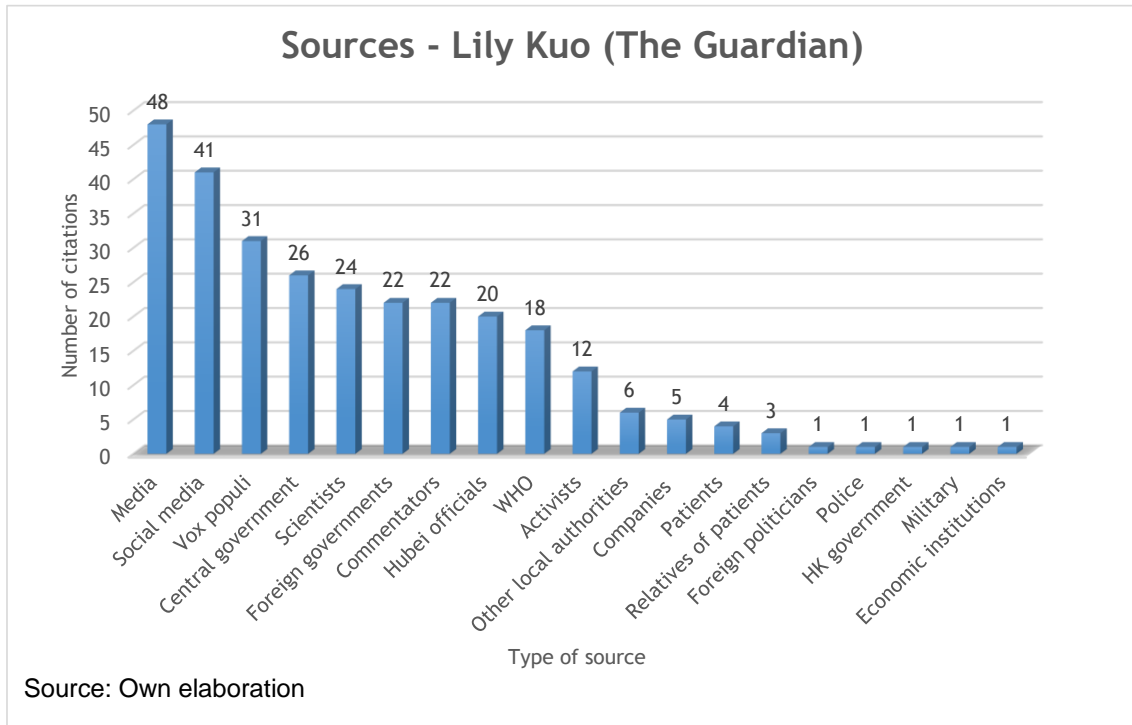
The media are the most frequently cited source of information for this correspondent. With 48 citations, media reports account for almost 16.7% of her total sources in the analyzed sample.

Social media feature as the second source in importance in the sample considered. There are a total of 41 instances of information being sourced from social media, or 14.3% of the total sources. Ordinary people are the third most prominent source in the sample, with 31 citations which account for 10.8% of the total.

Sources from the Chinese central government are cited in 26 instances or 9.1% of the total. A total of 24 cases of citations to scientific sources have been counted in the sample, representing 8.4% of the total.

Foreign governments and policy commentators are each cited in 22 instances, while Hubei's officials are cited as sources 20 times. The World Health Organization acts as a source for this correspondent in 18 cases. Activists complete the top 10 of the most frequently cited sources in the sample with 12 citations.

Other sources cited in the sample include other local authorities; companies; coronavirus patients; relatives of patients; foreign politicians; Chinese police; Hong Kong's government; China's military, and economic institutions.

2.6. Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

The 24 sampled articles by The Telegraph's correspondent cite a total of 156 sources. That is, each article has an average of 6.5 sources. Chart 14 shows the number of citations for each type of source in her sample.

Chart 14: Sourcing in the coverage by Sophia Yan – The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

Source: Own elaboration
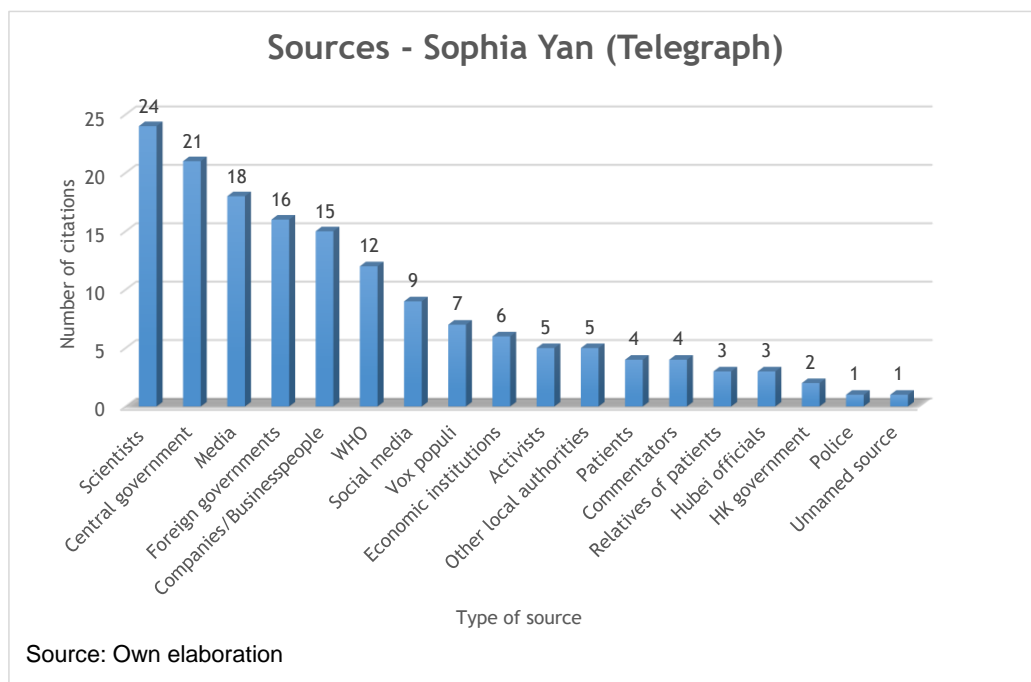
Scientists and doctors are the most frequently cited type of sources. There are 24 instances of scientists and doctors acting as sources in the coverage by this correspondent, or 15.4% of her total sources.

Chinese central authorities are the second most important source, as they are cited 21 times as sources, accounting for 13.5% of the total sources. Information is sourced from rival media outlets on 18 occasions, which means that media represent 11.5% of the sources cited by this correspondent.

Foreign governments and business sources are cited 16 and 15 times, which means they are the fourth and fifth most frequently used sources by this correspondent, taking 10.3% and 9.6% of the total. The World Health Organization is cited as a source in 12 instances, while social-media content is referenced in nine.

Views from ordinary people are cited as sourced in seven instances, while economic institutions appear as sources six times in the sample. Activists and Chinese local authorities —other than Hubei's— are each cited five times as sources. Coronavirus patients and policy commentators appear as sources in four instances each. Other sources include relatives of patients, Hubei officials, Hong Kong's government, and the police. There is also one unnamed source.

2.7.   Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

A total of 146 sources are cited in the 27 articles by The Straits Times' correspondent analyzed in the sample. That yields an average of 5.4 sources per article. Chart 15 shows the frequency with which each type of source is cited in her coverage.

Chart 15: Sourcing in the coverage by Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

Sources - Tan Dawn Wei (The Straits Times)

Source: Own elaboration
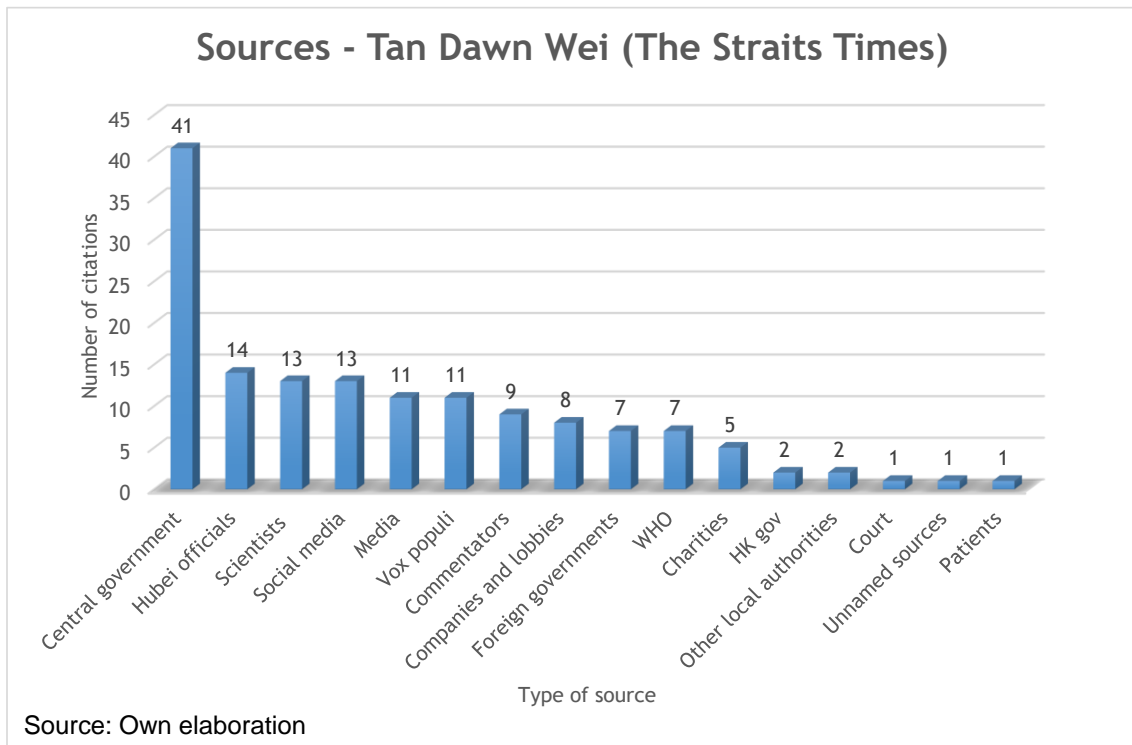
Sources linked to the central government of China are the dominant source for this correspondent. They are cited in 41 instances and represent 28.1% of the total sources of her coverage. Hubei and Wuhan's officials and institutions are cited in 14 cases and represent the second most important source for this correspondent, accounting for about a tenth of her total sources.

Scientists or doctors and social media come tied in the third position, with 13 citations for each category, or 8.3% of the total each. Other media outlets and ordinary people are cited as sources on 11 occasions each, in the fourth tier of this correspondent's sourcing.

Policy commentators or experts in social scientists are cited as sources in nine instances, while eight business sources are cited. Foreign governments and the World Health Organization act as sources on seven occasions.

Hong Kong's government and other local authorities from mainland China —other than Hubei and Wuhan's— are cited twice each. Moreover, courts and coronavirus patients are each cited once as sources. There is also one unnamed source.

2.8.   Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

With regards to sourcing, the nine articles written by the South China Morning Post's correspondent included in the sample cite a total of 80 sources. That means that her articles cite 8.9 sources on average. Chart 16 shows how often each type of source is cited.

Chart 16: Sourcing in the coverage by Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

Source: Own elaboration
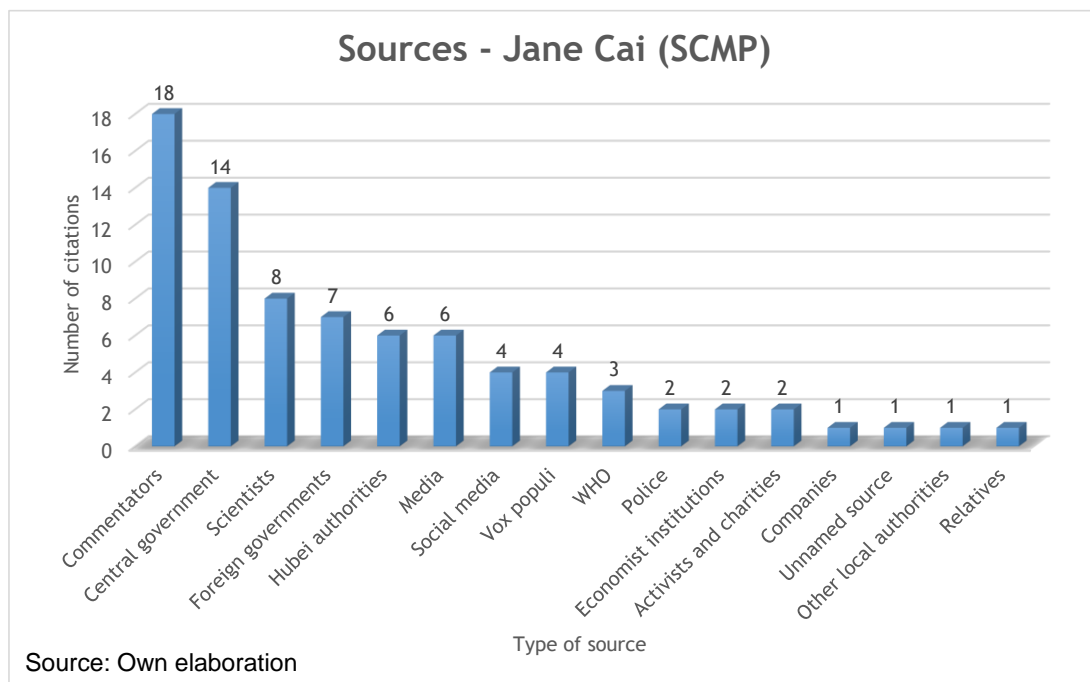
Policy commentators are the most frequently used source: they are cited in 18 instances. That means that 22.5% of the total sources cited belong to this category.

Chinese central government institutions or officials are the second type of source by frequency of citation. A total of 14 central government sources are cited, making up 17.5% of the total sources.

Scientists and doctors are the third type of source based on the frequency of citation. There are eight instances of scientists and doctors being cited as sources in the coverage by this correspondent, representing a tenth of the total. Foreign governments or officials are cited on seven occasions, accounting for 8.8% of her total sources.

Hubei's authorities and other media outlets are each cited as sources in six instances, while social media and ordinary people act as sources four times each. The World Health Organization is cited three times as a source.

Activists and charities, the police, and economic institutions become sources of information in two cases each. Several other sources are cited only once: companies, other local authorities, and relatives of coronavirus patients. Finally, there is one unnamed source.

3. Story Lines

3.1. *Macarena Vidal Liy – El País*

A total of seven different story lines were identified in the sample from El País's correspondent. While some articles introduce more than one story line, there is none to be found in some others. Chart 17 illustrates those story lines based on the frequency of appearance.

Chart 17: Story lines in the coverage by Macarena Vidal Liy – El País

STORY LINES - MACARENA VIDAL LIY (EL PAÍS)

Story line	Number of articles
XI'S POWER	1
CHINA-US RIVALRY	1
ANGER AT GOVERNMENT	1
GOVERNMENT CONTROL	2
LACK OF FREEDOM	7
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS	8
LACK OF TRANSPARENCY	8

Source: Own elaboration
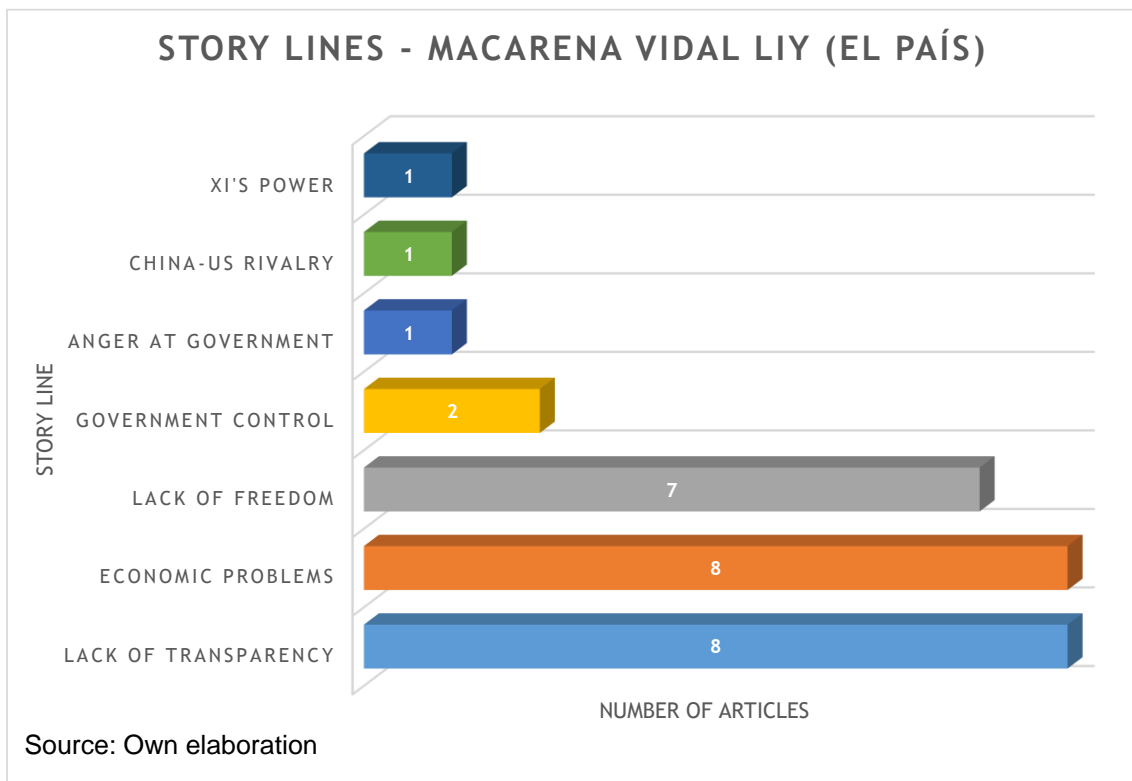
"China lacks transparency" and "China faces economic problems" are the story lines that this correspondent uses more often: they appear in eight out of the 33 articles included in the sample. The former story line is used when describing the behavior of the Chinese government, particularly with regards to its disclosure —or lack of disclosure— of information, and is often accompanied with comparisons with the historical precedent of the SARS epidemic. The latter is employed in articles that address the economic fallout of the coronavirus and associated with long-running structural issues affecting the Chinese economy.

These story lines are followed by "Freedoms are lacking in China," which can be identified in a further seven articles. "Government controls people in China" is present in two articles. Finally, a series of story lines appear in two articles of the sample ("Xi Jinping has accumulated power," "China and the U.S. are rivals," and "Chinese are angry at their government").

Therefore, an analysis of the coverage produced by the China correspondents of El País shows that they link the coronavirus crisis with story lines that go well beyond the topics strictly related to a major health crisis.

3.2. Pablo M. Díez – ABC

ABC correspondent's articles included in the sample contain six different story lines. Again, some articles include more than one, while some others have none at all. Chart 18 shows them according to their prevalence in his coverage.

Chart 18: Story lines in the coverage by Pablo M. Díez – ABC

STORY LINES - PABLO M. DÍEZ (ABC)

Story Line	Number of Articles
XI'S POWER	1
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS	1
GOVERNMENT CONTROL	7
ANGER AT GOVERNMENT	7
LACK OF FREEDOMS	7
LACK OF TRANSPARENCY	13

Source: Own elaboration
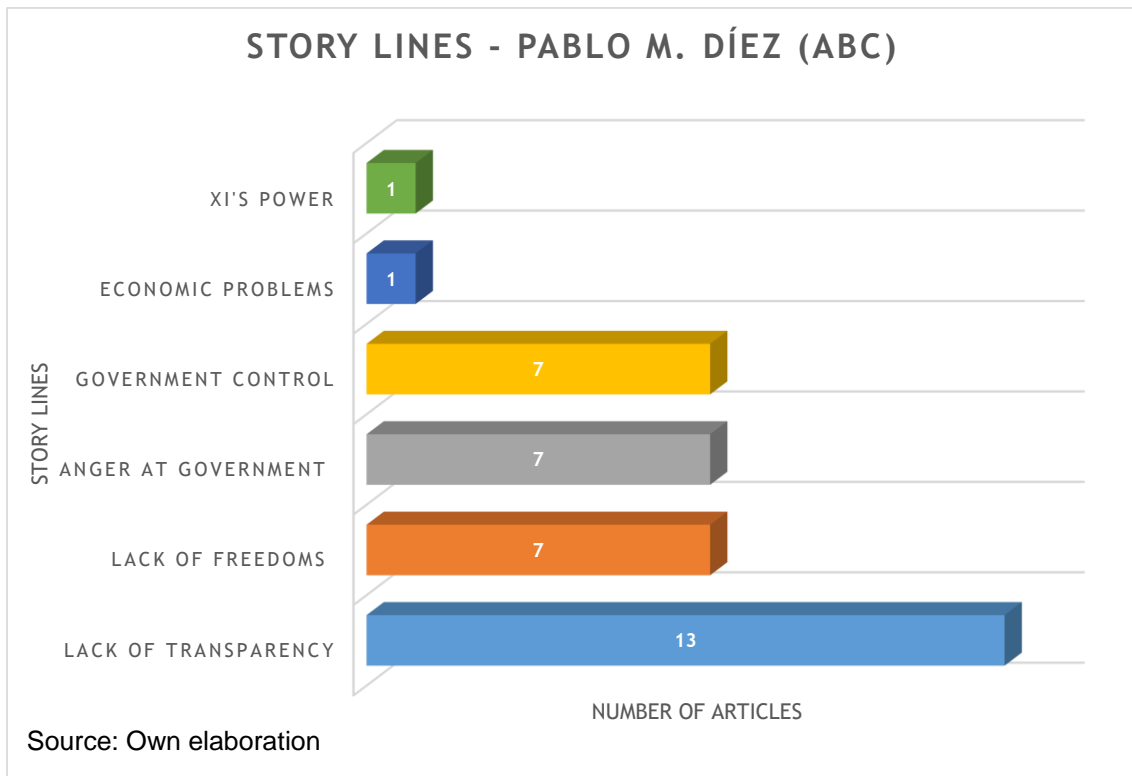
"China lacks transparency" is the story line that ABC's correspondent uses more often: it is found in 13 of the 44 articles. This story line is usually introduced by citing the historical precedent of the SARS epidemic.

The story lines "Government controls people in China," "Freedoms are lacking in China," and "Chinese are angry at their government" appear each in seven articles. There are a couple of additional story lines found just in one article written by this correspondent: "China faces economic problems" and "Xi Jinping has accumulated power."

The preceding lines show that the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China by this correspondent included reference to long-term trends that went well beyond the immediate health crisis.

3.3.   K J M Varma – PTI

No story line was identified in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China carried out by PTI's correspondent.

3.4.   Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

No story line was identified in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China by the Times of India's correspondent.

3.5.   Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

Six different story lines were identified in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis by The Guardian's correspondent. Not all articles included story lines, but there was often more than one present in those which did. Chart 19 shows their distribution across her coverage.

STORY LINES - LILY KUO (THE GUARDIAN)

Source: Own elaboration
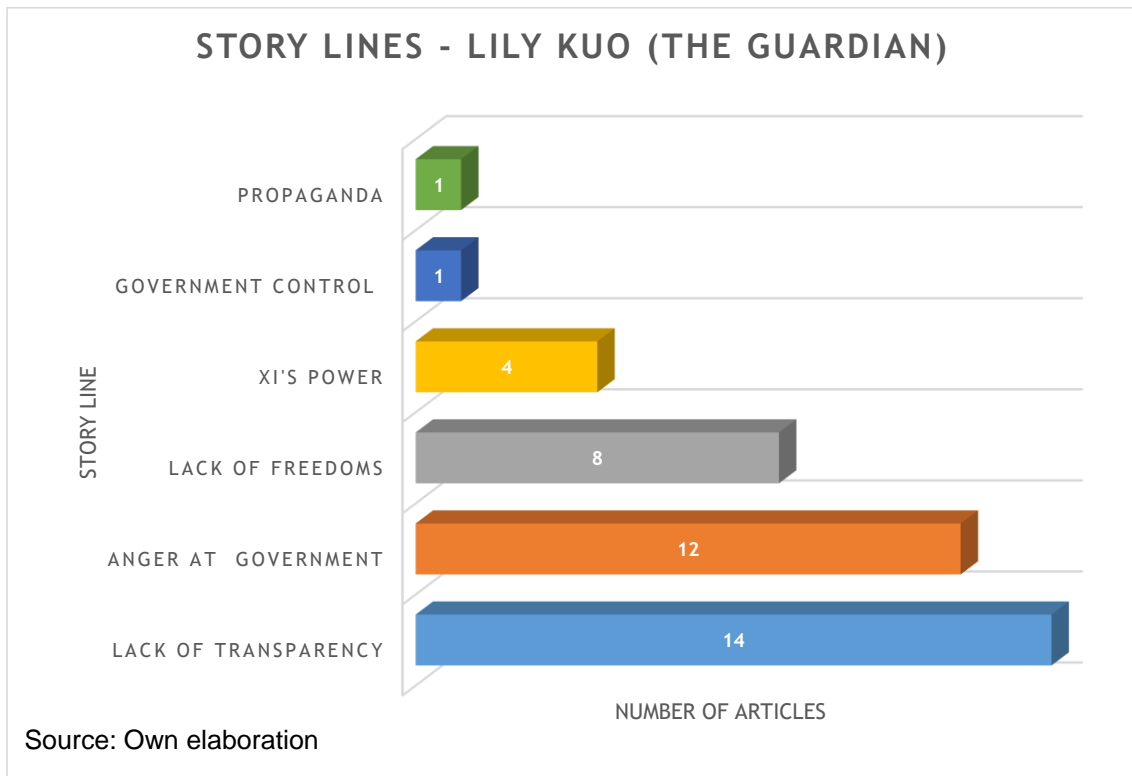
As the chart shows, the dominant story line in the coverage by this correspondent is "China lacks transparency," which is found in 14 articles. "Chinese are angry at their government" and "China lacks freedoms" come next, with 12 and eight appearances, respectively.

The story "Xi has accumulated power" has been observed in four articles. There are yet two other story lines, "Government controls people in China" and "China resorts to propaganda," which are present in one article each.

The range of story lines identified in the articles written by this correspondent reveals that the scope of topics addressed by her reporting went beyond the immediate health crisis arising from the coronavirus outbreak to encompass a variety of other long-term trends.

3.6.   Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

In the coverage by The Telegraph's correspondent, a total of six story lines were observed. While some of the 24 articles in her sample did not include any story line, others included more than one. Chart 20 illustrates the weighting of each story line in her coverage.

Chart 20: Story lines in the coverage by Sophia Yan – The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

Source: Own elaboration
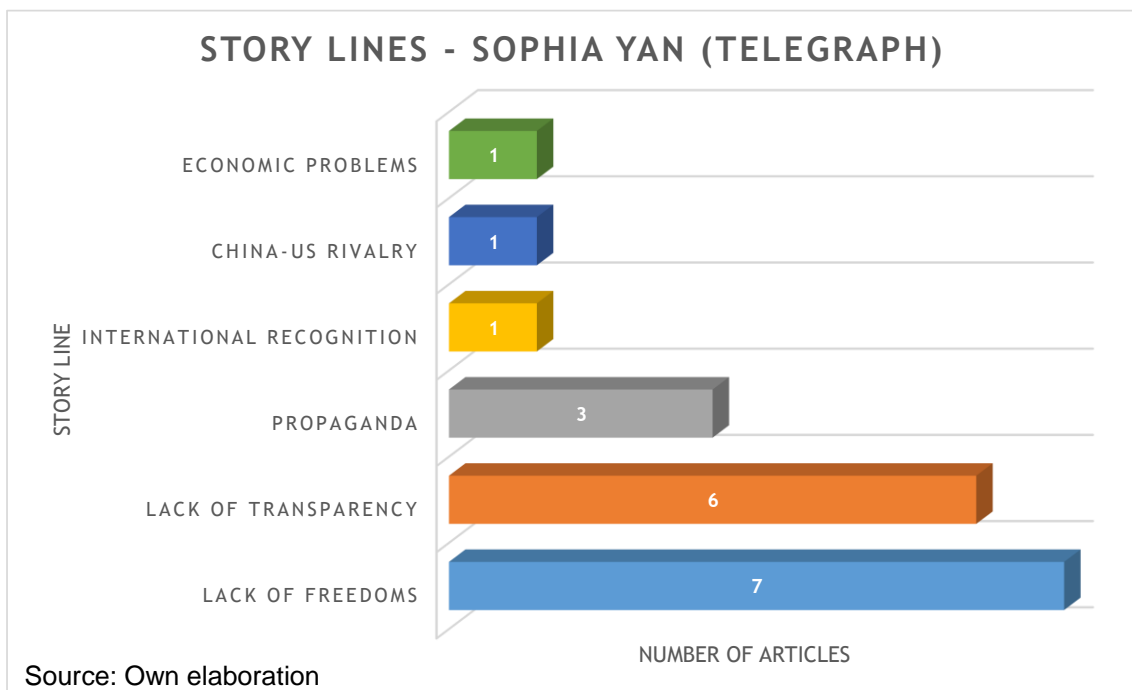
With mentions in seven articles, "China lacks freedoms" is the story line that appears with the highest frequency in the coverage by this correspondent. This story line is used to describe the response of the Chinese government to the coronavirus crisis, referencing restrictions in individual freedoms that characterize everyday life in the country.

"China lacks transparency" is the second most important story line for this correspondent, as it has been found in six articles. "China resorts to propaganda" has

been observed in three articles. A further three story lines have been identified in one article each: "China wants a larger international recognition," "China and the U.S. are rivals," and "China faces economic problems."

Therefore, the story lines used by this correspondent expand beyond the immediate coverage by a health crisis.

3.7. Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

Five different story lines were found in the coverage by The Straits Times' correspondent. Most articles did not reference a story line, but the few that did often included more than one story line in the same article. Chart 21 shows their distribution.

Chart 21: Story lines in the coverage by Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

Source: Own elaboration
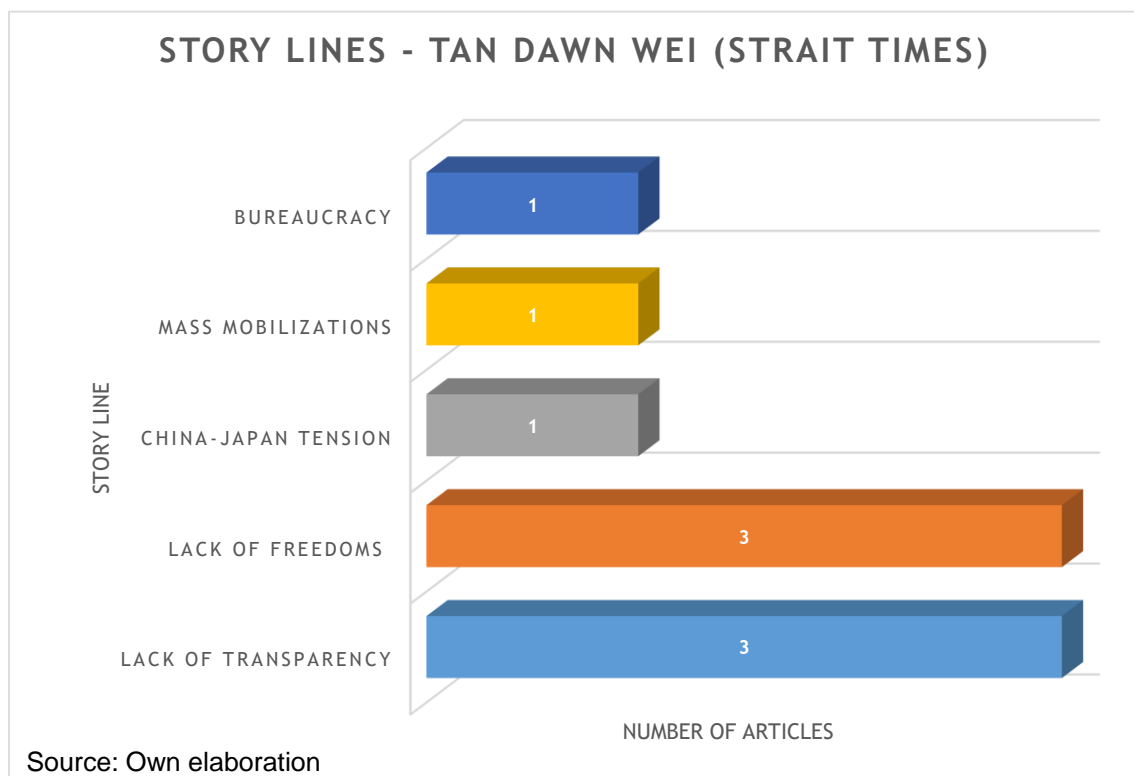
Two story lines have been found in three articles each: "China lacks transparency" and "China lacks freedoms." These story lines are used in articles that focus on the response from the Chinese government to the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictions, often comparing it to the SARS epidemic.

Three other story lines have been detected in one article each: "China and Japan have a strained relationship," "Mass mobilizations are a feature of Communist China," and "China is a bureaucratic country."

Thus, the story lines referenced above show this correspondent went beyond reporting a health crisis in her coverage.

3.8.   Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

A total of seven story lines have been observed in the nine articles sampled from the South China Morning Post's correspondent. Most articles included at least one story line, but not all of them. Chart 22 shows the distribution of the story lines she used in her coverage.

STORY LINES - JANE CAI (SCMP)

Story Line	Number of Articles
INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION	1
MALE DOMINATION	1
PROPAGANDA	1
PARTY CONTROL	1
XI'S POWER	1
CHINA-WEST	4
LACK OF FREEDOMS	4

Source: Own elaboration
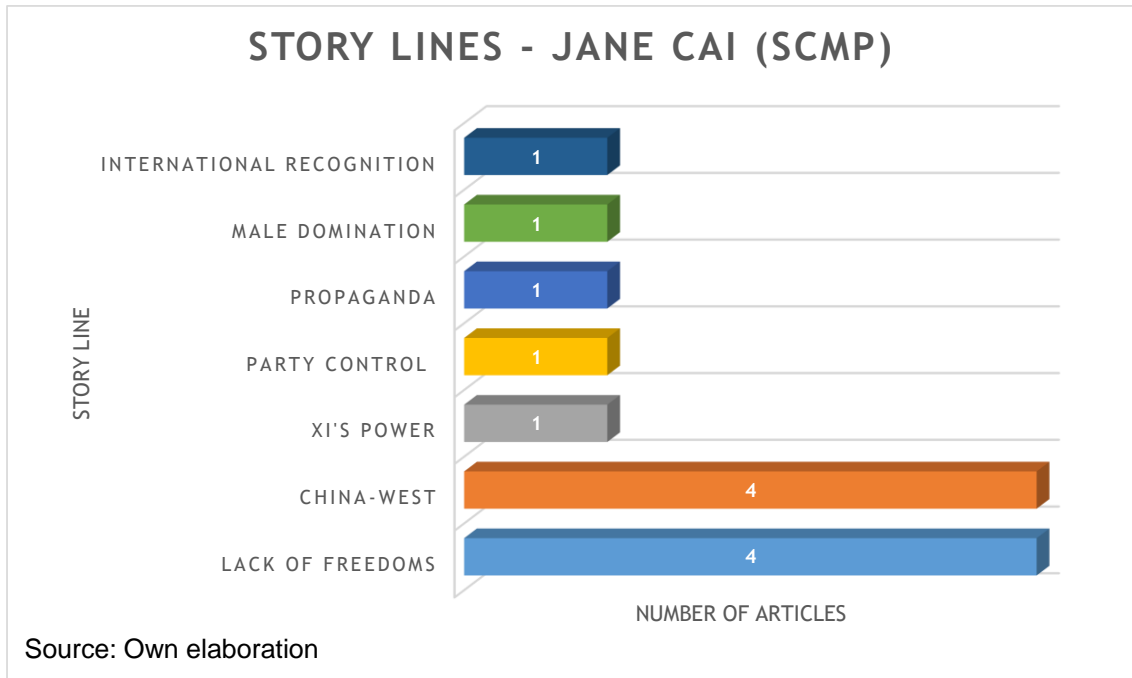
The story lines "China lacks freedoms" and "China and the West are different" are the dominant ones in the coverage by this correspondent. Each of them appears in four of the nine articles.

A further five story lines have been observed in one article each: "Xi Jinping has accumulated power," "Communist Party controls people in China," "China resorts to propaganda," "China is a male-dominated society," and "China wants larger international recognition."

Again, these story lines speak to the diversity of topics addressed in the coverage by this correspondent, which span well beyond the reporting on a public health crisis.

II. Qualitative Findings

In addition to the quantitative findings summarized above, the analysis of the sample was complemented by a qualitative component that addresses some of the meaning-making resources used by the China correspondents studied in their coverage of the coronavirus epidemic. Three aspects are highlighted here: the topics of the articles analyzed, how they represent the main social actors present in the coverage, and the strategies of identification and differentiation used.

To make the references to each article easier, the stories are referred to with a code — articles published by Macarena Vidal Liy of El País are shortened as MV; ABC correspondent Pablo M. Díez's articles as PD; PTI correspondent K J M Varma's as KV; Times of India correspondent Saibal Dasgupta as SD; The Guardian correspondent Lily Kuo's as LK; The Telegraph correspondent Sophia Yan's as SY; Straits Times correspondent Tan Dawn Wei as DW; and South China Morning Post correspondent Jane Cai's as JC— and their number from article list provided in the references.

1. Topics

1.1. Macarena Vidal Liy – El País

El País's correspondent joins coverage of the coronavirus crisis on January 24. Her first article (MV1) focuses on the spread of the new coronavirus in and outside China. Next, she looks at the response from Chinese authorities, including measures to contain the outbreak and to forbid trade in wild animals, in articles published on January 25 and 27, respectively (MV2 and MV4). In between, there is an article that explains how Chinese leaders are trying to show they have learned a lesson from the SARS epidemic of 2002-2003 (MV3).

After that initial focus on the epidemic itself and on measures implemented to curb it, this correspondent starts to pay attention to the consequences of those measures, be they on Chinese society or the economy. In an article published on January 28 (MV5), she examines how the Chinese government seeks to control people from Hubei. On January 30, she reports on how the coronavirus outbreak is expected to hurt the Chinese economy (MV6).

These topics continue to be present throughout her coverage, which is heavy on economic-focused articles (such as MV11 or MV26) while at the same time looking at social implications. There are, for instance, two articles that look specifically at the impacts of lockdowns on education on February 15 (MV23) and March 6 (MV28), and one on psychological problems as a result of life under lockdown, published on March 7 (MV29).

The effects of the epidemic on China's international relations are also examined in some articles. There is a story about countries cutting ties with China because of coronavirus, published on February 2 (MV8). Still, the aspect that draws closer scrutiny is the epidemic's effect on the bilateral relationship between China and the U.S. (also present

in MV10 and MV14). This has led to the consideration of the dyad China-U.S. as a social actor for the analysis of the sample.

Another milestone in her coverage is the death of Li Wenliang. There are two articles about the impact caused by his death on Chinese society on February 7 and 8 (MV13 and MV 15), a profile of Li also on February 8 (MV16) and a further article on February 9 (MV18) about scholars calling for freedom of expression in the wake of his death.

After Li's death, articles about the social and economic consequences of the epidemic referenced above alternate with other stories that track the epidemic. This latter group encompasses articles published on February 12, 14, and 29 (MV21, MV22, and MV27), leading up to three final articles of the sample on March 9, 11, and 13 (MV31, MV32, and MV33), which report on the containment of the epidemic in China. The frequency of publication diminishes toward the second half of February as the disease hit other countries like South Korea, Italy, or Spain and slowed down in China toward the end of February and early March.

1.2.   Pablo M. Díez – ABC

ABC's coverage of the new coronavirus was not started by its China correspondent but by reporters in Madrid. When the correspondent joins, his first two articles, published on January 21 and 22 (PD1 and PD2), focus on the spread of the virus. From the third onward, published on January 24 (PD3), the focus moves to measures implemented by Chinese authorities to contain the expansion of the virus and the effects of these measures on the population.

The international evacuation of Wuhan's foreign residents receives attention in articles published on January 27 and 30 (PD7 and PD12). The travel restrictions to and from China are addressed in an article published on February 1 (PD15). Also on the international front, ABC uses milestones in the international spread of the virus as a peg to report on the latest developments in China, hence requiring its correspondent there to

take part in the coverage. This is seen in articles with joint bylines about the first local infections in Germany on January 29 (PD10) or the first death in Europe on February 16 (PD31). ABC's China correspondent teams up with the newspaper's Geneva correspondent to cover the WHO's view on what is happening in China. Articles published on January 31, February 12, and 26 (PD13, PD28, and PD35) are the result, while there is a fourth article on the WHO's assessments of China's response to the epidemic written by the paper's China correspondent alone on March 2 (PD39).

The stress on China's healthcare system created by the coronavirus is addressed in articles published on January 27 and 31 and February 19 (PD8, PD14, and PD34) as well as in the hospitals built to address the problem, in an article on January 29 (PD11). The failures of local authorities to contain the outbreak in its early days are scrutinized too in an article on January 28 (PD9), as is the fear of the virus among the population (PD16) and the widespread anger against the authorities (PD19). This is heightened by a series of articles that follow Li Wenliang's death on February 7, 8, 9, 15, and 17 (PD23, PD24, PD25, PD30, and PD32).

After a series of articles focused on the failures or shortcomings in the handling of the crisis by Chinese authorities, the tone of ABC's correspondent takes a turn toward the end of February. An article published on February 26 (PD35) that reports on the findings of a mission sent by the WHO to China, which lauds Beijing's response to the epidemic, seems to mark an inflection point.

Moreover, there are articles about the stigma suffered by people from Hubei in other parts of the country on February 5 (PD20), the war-like vocabulary employed by the authorities to refer to the virus on February 17 (PD33), and how people try overcome boredom caused by the lockdown on February 29 (PD38).

Alternated with those stories more focused on the social consequences of the epidemic and the lockdown, there is a preoccupation with the rising number of infections and deaths in articles published on February 4, 10, and 14 (PD18, PD26, and PD29) when the epidemic is on the rise, as well as potential new dangers like reinfections on February 28 and March 6 (PD37 and PD41), human-animal transmissions (PD40) and the possible link between the spread of the virus and temperature (PD43). Finally, news

of the containment of the epidemic is also reported on March 7 and 13 (PD42 and PD44).

1.3.   K J M Varma – PTI

PTI's China correspondent K J M Varma begins covering the coronavirus crisis on January 11 with an article that reports on the first fatality of what was then considered a new, mysterious pneumonia outbreak (KV1). His next article, from January 19 (KV2), focuses on Indian people that might have been affected by the outbreak of coronavirus in China. Starting from January 20 (KV3), this correspondent starts to look at how authorities are trying to tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

These three groups of topics —the evolution of the epidemic, the response from Chinese authorities, and the Indian angle— broadly encompass the main focal points of his coverage. During much of January, this correspondent covers only occasionally the coronavirus outbreak. His coverage starts to gather pace toward the end of the month and achieves full speed throughout February and March, when he usually publishes more than one article a day. On those days, one article typically focuses on the highlights of the evolution of the epidemic, such as the death of a man in the Philippines, the first outside of China, on February 2 (KV17); the death of Li Wenliang on February 6 (KV24), the crossing of the 1,000-death mark on February 11 (KV31); or a surge in the number of cases officially counted after a change in the diagnosis method on February 13 (KV37). If there are no noteworthy milestones, at least one article tracks the evolution of the death toll and infection count. In contrast, other articles look at aspects that relate specifically to India, report statements from the Chinese government, or address eye-catching cases of the epidemic —such as a mother who gave birth to a baby while infected, in articles on February 11 and 15 (KV32 and KV45)—, of the government response like the quarantining of cash (KV46), or developments deemed

newsworthy such as the use of Chinese traditional medicine (KV44) or trials of drugs against coronavirus (KV46), both from February 15.

The evacuations of Indian citizens from Wuhan and Hubei province are an important topic in his coverage. Articles about this topic were published on January 31, February 1, 2, 3, 10, 13, 17, 24, 25, and 27 (KV14, KV16, KV18, KV20, KV28, KV38, KV52, KV63, KV66, and KV69). Tibet is a region that receives preferential attention for this correspondent: it appears in further articles published on January 26, January 30, February 12, and 14 (KV7, KV11, KV35, and KV42).

With regards to statements from the Chinese government, there are reports on how Chinese officials criticize foreign governments for their restrictions against Chinese citizens due to coronavirus, such as in a February 6 article (KV22). In this regard, dialectic tensions between China and the U.S. are reflected in articles on February 6 and 14 (KV23 and KV40), as well as on March 9 and 12 (KV87 and KV92). However, he also reports on the Chinese government's gratitude over aid received to combat the epidemic, like in pieces published on February 12 and 14 (KV36 and KV41). China's deployment of medical staff to Iran is reported on February 29 (KV72), as is Xi Jinping's call for international collaboration on March 3 (KV76).

Other topics that draw attention from this correspondent, although to a lesser extent, are the suffering of medical staff (KV54 and KV68); the expulsion of three correspondents from The Wall Street Journal (KV55 and KV56); a mission from the World Health organization to China and its findings (KV47, KV51, KV61, and KV62), the collapse of a hotel that was being used as a quarantine facility in Fujian province (KV83, KV84, and KV89) or the economic fallout of the crisis (KV81 and KV93).

1.4.   Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

The Times of India's correspondent starts covering the coronavirus crisis on January 20, with an article that explains that the Chinese government has confirmed more cases of

people infected with the virus (SD1). On the following day (SD2), it is noted that both the World Health Organization and Chinese experts have warned that the coronavirus may spread from human to human. On January 22 (SD3), another article again chronicles how the virus is spreading across China. Further articles following the evolution of the outbreak in China are published on January 29 and 30 (SD8 and SD10).

The focus moves to Chinese authorities' response on January 24 (SD4), with an article the reports on the lockdown of Huanggang, in Hubei province, hot on the heels of the previous lockdown of Wuhan, the provincial capital. Additional measures from the Chinese government are also looked at in another article on January 26 (SD5). Another article from January 31 (SD12) indicates that Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on the military to help the country fight against the virus.

The first article with an Indian angle is published on January 27 (SD6) and indicates that the Indian Embassy in Beijing has launched a new hotline for Indians stranded in Wuhan. India-focused articles are also published on January 29 (SD9), when the correspondent writes about pleas for evacuation from Indian employees of a Chinese company, and on January 31 (SD11), when he notes that the evacuation of Indian nationals from Hubei is about to take place.

Two further articles touch on topics related to travel against the background of the Chinese New Year. One, from January 28 (SD7), explains that it is estimated that five million people left Wuhan during the Spring Festival. The last article of the sample, published on February 1 (SD13), reports on the problems encountered by Chinese travelers abroad due to coronavirus.

1.5.   Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

As early as January 7, The Guardian's correspondent reports on how Chinese authorities are trying to investigate and contain a new respiratory illness (LK1). Her next article comes on January 14 (LK2), and it centers on a woman in Thailand who has become the

first case of the new coronavirus outside of China. On January 21 (LK3), she writes another article about the confirmation by Chinese authorities that the coronavirus was spreading among humans.

On the same day, January 21 (LK4), her first article that departs from the official is published: relatives of coronavirus patients claim that Chinese hospitals are undercounting cases. That skepticism toward the official line continues throughout her coverage: on January 28 (LK7), she reports on how some Chinese citizens question the government due to the coronavirus crisis; on February 2 (LK9), on how they criticize officials over their handling of the coronavirus outbreak; and on February 6 (LK14), on coronavirus patients and their relatives' descriptions of how the healthcare system is overwhelmed by the outbreak.

Meanwhile, she also focuses on the response from Chinese authorities, with articles on January 23 and 24 (LK5 and LK6) about lockdowns in Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province to prevent the spread of coronavirus. On February 2 (LK8), she reports that Chinese people are showing signs of paranoia and frustration amid coronavirus-related restrictions. On February 8 (LK15), the Chinese society is living coronavirus lockdowns with a mix of fear, anger, solidarity, and resignation.

Articles that track the evolution of the epidemic, such as those published on February 3, 4, 12, 14, and 21 (LK10, LK11, LK19, and LK20), alternate with other pieces about new measures adopted by authorities on February 11 and 24 (LK18 and LK23), and with yet others that convey critical views of the Chinese government response, like one from February 5 (LK13) that claims that President Xi Jinping is seeking to take credit and avoid blame in his handling of the coronavirus outbreak; one from February 10 (LK16) that reports on the disappearance of citizen journalist Chen Qiushi; and another from February 11 (LK17) reflecting the criticism of academic Xu Zhangrun, who blames a culture of suppression and impotence created by Xi for the coronavirus crisis.

Some articles center on individual cases of people who have been affected by the epidemic, such as one published on February 16 (LK21) that explains that Wuhan native Liu Mengdi is angry after her family struggled to get treatment for sick relatives; or another (LK24) that tells the story of community workers that found a child alone at home with his dead grandfather during the coronavirus lockdown in Hubei province.

In March, toward the end of the sample, topics already addressed —like criticism of Chinese authorities by ordinary people or prominent dissidents— continue to appear, like on March 1, 6, 9, and 11 (LK25, LK28, LK29, and LK33). Other stories take on new subjects: like a March 4 article (LK27) that looks at how school closures across East Asia are creating problems for parents. Two articles on March 9 explain, respectively, how Chinese authorities got to grips with their coronavirus outbreak by introducing social distancing, locking down cities, and monitoring citizens (LK30), and how Chinese society is expected to suffer pervasive public monitoring even after the coronavirus epidemic (LK31). Finally, the last article of the sample indicates that Chinese authorities are pushing propaganda casting doubt on the origin of coronavirus (LK34).

1.6. Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

The first article in the sample from The Telegraph's correspondent reports on the confirmation by Chinese authorities that the new coronavirus is spreading from person to person, on January 21 (SY1). Over the following days, she publishes a series of government-focused pieces that address their attempts to head off accusations of lack of transparency by threatening citizens who hide information (SY2), an increase in restrictions to respond to the outbreak (SY3), the introduction of a lockdown in Hubei province (SY4), and how their growing international influence put the World Health Organization under pressure not to declare the coronavirus outbreak an emergency (SY5).

There continue to be articles centered on the authorities throughout her coverage, with articles such as the one published on January 28 (SY9) about Wuhan's mayor offer to resign; one from February 5 (SY15) on authorities' struggles to contain the outbreak or one from February 7 (SY16) about a step-up in restrictions introduced by them to stem the spread of the virus. These combine with other articles that look at broader social

effects such as pressures being suffered by China's healthcare system (SY6 and SY7), the efforts by Chinese society to adapt to health precautions (SY11), increasing tension among Wuhan residents amid the lockdown (SY12), new features of everyday life in China such as forms, temperature tests and constant checks (SY19) and the use of propaganda to inspire hope and obedience (SY20).

On January 26 (SY8), this correspondent contributed to an article about how British residents in Wuhan complained that the British Foreign Office was not helping them. Another article on February 19 (SY22) explains how British entrepreneurs in China are struggling due to coronavirus lockdowns. Besides, some articles pay attention to coronavirus-related developments at Britain's former colony Hong Kong, like those published on January 29, February 4, and February 9 (SY10, SY14, and SY18), including restrictions on people arriving from mainland China. Similarly, an article from February 2 (SY13) notes the U.S., Australia, and other countries imposing travel bans for people who have visited China.

Li Wenliang's death and his elevation to martyr status are reported on February 8 (SY17). The problems of medical workers like him again take the spotlight in another article published on February 19 (SY21).

The last two articles of the sample focus on the economic problems likely to arise from the coronavirus crisis (SY23) and Xi Jinping's claim that the worst of the coronavirus crisis is over for China (SY24).

1.7. Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

The coverage of the coronavirus crisis by The Straits Times' correspondent begins on January 24, with two articles that report on the lockdown of five cities in Hubei province introduced by Chinese authorities to contain the coronavirus outbreak (DW1) and on how Wuhan residents have been caught by surprise by the previous day's lockdown announcement (DW2). The evolution of the outbreak is the focus of her

following articles: one from January 27 (DW3) conveys Chinese authorities' warning that the virus transmission is increasing, while a further two on January 29 and January 31 (DW4 and DW5) track the growth in the number of people infected and dead.

Another article on January 31 (DW6) explains how Chinese authorities are trying to prevent a spike in coronavirus cases at the end of the Chinese New Year vacation. Further restrictions are reported in articles from February 17 and March 3 (DW17 and DW23). A February 2 article links the government's response to China's history of mass mobilizations under communist rule, while an article from February 16 (DW16) explores how Chinese authorities are using propaganda to win back the favor of the population and another one from February 20 (DW19) denounces that Hubei residents suffer excessive policing.

Shortages of medical equipment and hospital beds become the focus of her coverage on February 4, 5, and 6 (DW8, DW9, and DW10). An article on February 7 (DW11) notes how Chinese authorities are criticizing other governments' restrictions, while a change in the way coronavirus patients are counted is reported on February 14 (DW14).

The death of Li Wenliang and an associated debate about freedom of speech in China are addressed in an article published on February 9 (DW12). Li's is not the only individual story reported by this correspondent: she also explains in an article on February 16 (DW15) how Wuhan native Zhang Jie and his employees are volunteering to drive doctors and nurses to hospitals, and how another Wuhan resident, Ding Hui, got infected with coronavirus (DW18). Another article focused on a specific collective, Chinese HIV patients, is published on March 11 (DW27).

In March, she wrote two Singapore-focused stories: about how Singaporean companies in China are suffering the economic fallout from the outbreak and lockdowns on March 2 (DW22), and about how foreign ministry officials prepared exhaustively to evacuate Singaporeans from Hubei (DW24). Finally, on March 10 and 11 (DW15 and DW26), this correspondent reports on Chinese authorities' views on the evolution of the epidemic: first about their cautiousness despite a decline in the number of cases, and the following day about their confidence as Xi Jinping visited Wuhan.

1.8. Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

The sample includes nine articles written by the South China Morning Post's correspondent, each loosely connected to the other. The relative scarcity and uneven temporal distribution of the articles make it difficult to establish patterns in the topics addressed by her articles.

Her first article was published on January 23 (JC1) and explains why experts link some Chinese people's love of eating wildlife to the origin of the coronavirus outbreak. On the following day (JC2), another article addresses the huge challenge facing the Chinese government in quarantining a city the size of Wuhan.

The following article in the sample, published on February 12 (JC3), centers on the appointment of Chen Yixin, who is considered a protégé of Xi Jinping, as the official in charge of enforcing law and order in Hubei. On February 15 (JC4), another article looks at how Chinese people have deemed Li Wenliang a hero, but not the Communist Party. Her next article, from February 18 (JC5), indicates that Chinese authorities are accelerating the adoption of biosecurity legislation after the coronavirus outbreak.

Meanwhile, on February 28 (JC6), she reports that more people are getting infected with coronavirus in South Korea than in China for the first time. As the epidemic slows down in China, her attention shifts to Chinese women who have important roles in China's efforts to contain the coronavirus crisis, in an article published on March 4 (JC7). Another article from March 7 (JC8) points out that the Chinese government sees a decline in the number of coronavirus cases as an opportunity to boost its clout abroad. Finally, on March 11 (JC9), the last article of the sample from this correspondent reports on Xi Jinping's claim that victory over coronavirus is near during a visit to Wuhan.

2. Representation of Social Actors

2.1. *Macarena Vidal Liy – El País*

As explained by the statistical findings, Chinese authorities are the social actor that El País's correspondent pays more attention to, followed by Chinese society as a whole and people affected by the virus.

Chinese authorities are mostly referred to in an impersonalized way as "government," "China," or "Beijing," and often generic references like "authorities" are used. Sometimes, references to specific institutions like China's National Health Commission or the State Council are made, but less frequently. Whenever there is a personalized and individual reference for authorities, China's president, Xi Jinping, is usually the one who is singled out. There are also specific references to individuals who act as sources when they intervene in press conferences or are interviewed by the official press.

The portrayal of Chinese authorities in some articles published by El País is in negative terms. Their handling of the coronavirus crisis is deemed a "disaster" (in MV16, a profile of Li Wenliang), and they are made responsible for actions like hiding information for political reasons, undercounting deaths, ordering propaganda production, or censoring (like in MV11). This article also reports that China's central government tries to distance itself from the initial handling of the crisis by local authorities in Wuhan and Hubei. This claim appears in articles MV7 and MV24 too.

The second most important social actor of the sample collected from this correspondent's work is the Chinese society as a whole. Here, generic references are combined with specific references to individuals who serve as personalization of the phenomena being explained in the articles. This happens in most articles about the economic and social consequences of the lockdowns. For instance, student Yuanyuan and her mother Mingming in MV9 are mentioned to talk about the return to work after

the extended Lunar New Year vacation; in MV23, Lena Wang and her family are used to illustrate the shortcomings of online education.

Article MV17 focuses specifically on China's working-class or, in the correspondent's words, "the population group officially known with the little euphemistic term of *diduan renkou* or lowest group of society." They are presented as being primarily immigrants and as being the most vulnerable group in addition to medical workers because of the risk of losing their job or of being infected with the virus.

There are several articles with economic themes, and here Chinese society is presented as facing challenges. In MV10, for example, China is presented as having economic difficulties and being isolated from the rest of the world. The Chinese economy is said to be experiencing its "slower growth in 30 years" and facing "lasting consequences" from its "biggest catastrophe in years," which is no other than the coronavirus crisis. It is added that its stock markets have suffered "their worst slump in five years" after border closures, flight cancellations, and vetoes to travelers that have been in China by foreign countries, a "panic" against which Chinese authorities are "impotent."

Often, Chinese society is presented as the passive object of the actions of the Chinese authorities. Indeed, even when Chinese society is presented as agent of some actions, there are many instances where its agency is omitted. This is the case of the headlines of articles MV7, MV13, and MV15, where actions carried out by Chinese society —or, at least, part of it— are nominalized as "outcry," "anger" or "grief" and agency, therefore, ends up somewhat blurred.

In MV13, for example, the Chinese public is referred to through a nominalization strategy in expressions such as "rage and grief" or "rage ruled last night in China." Later on, the text says there has been a "wave of grief and fury" which has reached "unprecedented levels in China," and that could "spark a popular reaction that endangers the sacrosanct priority for the Chinese regime, the social stability." In MV15, Chinese society's reaction to the death of Li Wenliang is referred to as "the closest to a generalized protest that China has lived in years" and said to have generated an "unprecedented avalanche" that has left the Chinese government "alarmed."

Finally, people affected by the coronavirus are the third main social actor in the sample from El País's correspondent. The vast majority of references to people affected by the

virus are impersonalized, as they usually appear aggregated as statistics or are referred to in generic terms. However, there is a great deal of attention paid to the death of Li Wenliang, who serves as personalization of this collective. Li is also represented as a victim of Wuhan and Hubei's authorities' mishandling in the early phase of the outbreak. In MV13, the circumstances surrounding his passing are called a "skit." MV16 portrays Li as a symbol of the coronavirus crisis: he is referred to as a "hero," "public face," and "an emblem of attempts by ordinary people of telling the truth and protecting themselves against the errors of the system."

2.2. Pablo M. Díez – ABC

Chinese authorities are the main social actors in the coverage by ABC's China correspondent of the coronavirus crisis, followed by people affected by the virus. With regards to authorities, impersonalized references to "government" or "regime" abound. Whenever there is an individualized reference, it is usually to mention Xi Jinping. There are references to specific government bodies like the National Health Commission or the Ministry of Public, but less frequent than the generic ones.

Skepticism toward Chinese authorities is present throughout the sample beginning in the first article. In PD1 and the early phase of the coverage in general, memories of their cover-up of the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003 give way to a note of caution against a possible repetition of the same mistakes.

In some articles, there is a distinction between the actions of the Chinese central government, on one side, and the governments of Hubei province and Wuhan city. In PD9, the central government is represented as an "authoritarian regime" that forces local authorities to appear before the press, which is said to be counterproductive:

"In an attempt to demonstrate transparency, the Chinese regime is forcing medical and provincial authorities to appear before the media every day. But the purpose, praiseworthy as it might be, is turning out to be disastrous as it exposes the deficiencies not only communicative, but also intellectual, of some officials[8]."

In that article, the correspondent cites remarks by Wuhan's mayor, Zhou Xianwang, blaming a delay in issuing a warning to the city's citizens because the regime's bureaucracy did not allow him to do so without approval from Beijing. However, in PD29, the opposite interpretation is offered: a "purge" of local authorities in Wuhan and Hubei is said to be a response to their failure to control the epidemic and attempts to hide it. The appointment of Chen Yixin, a protégé of Xi Jinping, is said to seek "to put an order in chaos."

The reporter presents the Chinese government as "authoritarian" or "the authoritarian regime of the Communist Party" in several articles, while the epidemic is said to have revealed its shortcomings. In PD25, China is referred to as a "superpower that spends billions in pharaonic projects but neglects the health of its people." The idea that the Chinese government does not care about its people also appears in PD14. PD19 refers to China as "a giant with feet of clay" and reports on people killing themselves in Wuhan "for not being able to go back to their homes after being rejected by hospitals," a lead that is not followed up in subsequent articles.

Article PD20 characterizes the relationship between the Chinese people and their government in the following terms:

"The epidemic not only has put China on its knees, paralyzed the country and exposed its healthcare shortcomings, but also threatens the regime of the Communist Party. With the initial hiding of the outbreak, the delayed posterior response, acknowledged by local

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[8] In Spanish in the original: "En un intento por demostrar transparencia, el régimen chino está obligando a sus autoridades médicas y provinciales a comparecer ante los medios cada día. Pero el propósito, por loable que sea, está resultando desastroso al dejar al descubierto las carencias no solo comunicativas, sino también intelectuales, de algunos cargos locales."

authorities, the existing social contract in China, which imposed an authoritarian system in exchange for economic progress and stability has been broken[9]."

Articles PD20 and PD33 compare the response to the epidemic from China's society as a whole to the Cultural Revolution, the campaign of political agitation and personality cult launched by Mao Zedong in 1966 and which lasted until 1976. In article PD20, efforts to trace and isolate people from Hubei, the center of the outbreak, are presented as a "ferocious hunt." The parallelism with the Cultural Revolution surfaces again in PD33, which explains how Chinese authorities are presenting their coronavirus containment efforts as a "popular war."

Despite these criticisms, the correspondent also reproduces praises from the World Health Organization toward Chinese authorities' handling of the epidemic. Thus, in PD35, for example, he cites the organization to say that "epidemiological risk has been very well managed by Chinese authorities."

In other articles, the coronavirus epidemic is compared to Chernobyl's nuclear accident. This occurs first in PD24, and the idea is further elaborated in PD25: "Despite the seriousness of the situation, no one believes that in China a revolution against the party is about to set off because of coronavirus. But no one thought that the USSR was going to fall either and it did five years after trying to hide Chernobyl[10]." Article PD32 reinterprets Xi Jinping's statements, which claimed that he oversaw China's efforts to contain the epidemic from January 7, to suggest that his leadership may be questioned within the Communist Party.

The correspondent suggests in several articles that China's social stability could be at risk because of growing popular anger against the government. Although articles like PD19 present individual cases of people criticizing the Chinese government's handling

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[9] In Spanish in the original: "La epidemia no solo ha puesto de rodillas a China, paralizando el país y destapando sus carencias sanitarias, sino que amenaza al régimen del Partido Comunista. Con la ocultación inicial del brote y la tardía respuesta posterior, admitida por las autoridades locales, se ha roto el contrato social vigente en China, que imponía un sistema autoritario a cambio de progreso económico y estabilidad."

[10] In Spanish in the original: "A pesar de la gravedad de la situación, nadie cree que en China vaya a estallar una revolución contra el partido por el coronavirus. Pero tampoco pensaba nadie que la URSS iba a caer y lo hizo cinco años después de intentar ocultar Chernóbil."

of the crisis —and thus being active—, Chinese society is repeatedly presented as the passive object of the government's actions and often victimized. Articles like PD5 or PD16 offer personalizations of the suffering and fears of Chinese people by citing ordinary people, but references to Chinese society are most often impersonalized and collectivized.

Other social actors presented as victims of the Chinese government in the coverage by this correspondent are medical workers, dissidents, and Hubei's residents. All three converge in the figure of doctor Li Wenliang, whose death receives considerable attention as personalization of that victimhood.

In the first articles of the sample, Hubei's population is presented as the victim of the new coronavirus, which is the main argument. PD4 compares the situation in Wuhan's hospitals to "scenes of an apocalyptic movie." However, once the lockdown is introduced, the population moves on to become a victim of the government's decisions. In PD8, authorities are blamed for shortages of medical equipment, chaotic scenes in Wuhan, and at the same time are said to control citizens in "the country with the greatest control and surveillance over its citizens."

Dissidents are victimized in articles PD24 and PD30. PD24 represents in favorable terms Chen Qiushi, a lawyer and citizen journalist who recorded what was happening in Wuhan's hospitals and crematoriums, and Wang Yajun, who is described as a "well-known activist," as both have gone missing and are presumed to have been detained by authorities. PD30 cites the Chinese government's viewing of health workers as "angels" and dissidents as "demons" and offers a victimized representation of activists who suffer the oppression of the Chinese government.

While medical workers are also mentioned in PD30, their victimization occurs mainly in articles PD14 and PD34, which show doctors and nurses as suffering authorities' actions and omissions during the coronavirus crisis. The headline of PD34 claims: "Chinese doctors pay with their life the censorship about coronavirus[11]." In addition to Li Wenliang, other medical workers who have died of coronavirus are identified, like

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[11] In Spanish in the original: "Los médicos chinos pagan con su vida la censura sobre el coronavirus."

doctor Liu Zhiming and nurse Liu Fan, as is another person who was reprimanded for alerting of the outbreak, Ai Fen.

There are two articles that present China and Chinese people as victims of foreign actors, PD12 and PD15. In PD12, it is said that there is "panic" to visit China due to the coronavirus outbreak, although Chinese authorities are blamed for that too: "That is what happens when a country locks down an entire province with almost 60 million inhabitants: it risks being put under quarantine in turn by the rest of the world[12]." PD15 notes the existence of a "growing anti-Chinese sentiment all over the world." The headline of that article claims that "the world" has put China under quarantine due to the "stigma" of the epidemic. In the body of the text, it is clarified that only twenty countries have adopted restrictions toward people arriving from China.

Hubei people are said to be "stigmatized" too in articles PD20 and PD33 by the Chinese society. These articles depict China's tracing efforts as a "human hunt" and a new Cultural Revolution, where Hubei's people are presented as the victims. The rest of China's society is portrayed as the victimizers, instigated by authorities.

When it comes to Chinese people affected by the virus, in most articles, the references to them are generic ("patients," "dead people," "lives claimed") or statistical. PD5 offers a profile of the people who died from the virus to date: older than 40 and with previous conditions, but with exceptions such as a two-year-old girl and with no symptoms in some cases.

Despite the frequency with which coronavirus patients are mentioned, there are few personalizations of this collective. There is greater granularity in the descriptions of remarkable cases, like a man who died in the Philippines and became the first victim outside of China in PD17. Another person who has been infected by the coronavirus is identified by name in PD33 article and cited as a source.

The apparent exception to the trend of anonymizing coronavirus patients is Li Wenliang. In PD23, he is described as a "martyr of the regime's repression," "face of this epidemic," "victim of the Chinese regime first, of coronavirus later," "new hero in China," or "the first who dared to talk about the disease." The emphasis on Li

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[12] In Spanish in the original: "Eso es lo que sucede cuando un país cierra una provincia entera con casi 60 millones de habitantes: corre el riesgo de que el resto del mundo lo ponga a su vez en cuarentena."

Wenliang's descriptions is usually placed on the fact that Chinese police reprimanded him.

This correspondent finds a few other "heroes" in his coverage. Hong Kong doctor Yuen Kwok-yung is described as "one of the heroes against SARS" in PD10; Zhong Nanshan is introduced as "hero against SARS and main medical advisor to the government" in PD27, and deemed as a "hero" in PD44 for his efforts against Covid-19; while Chinese doctors are presented as the "authentic heroes of this catastrophe" in PD34.

2.3. K J M Varma – PTI

The statistical findings mentioned above show that people affected by the virus are the main social actor represented in the coverage by PTI's correspondent. A closer look at the strategies used to present them in discourse reveals that the overwhelming majority of references are generic or statistical.

There are detailed accounts of the daily evolution of the numbers of people infected and dead, which enumerate how many have been infected, hospitalized, discharged from hospital, put under observation, and how many have died. In those articles, people affected by the virus are mostly numbers. Since the preoccupation is their health, they are classified according to their health condition. Their health condition is usually taken as a nominalization to refer to them, most notably in the pervasive use of "death toll." Often, Hubei's patient numbers are compared with the national total, so there is a geographical element of classification too. Toward the end of the sample, there are comparatives between the numbers of patients and deaths in China and other countries.

This lack of detail to refer to the collective of people affected by the coronavirus is somewhat balanced with the focus on prominent specific cases in certain articles. In these cases, greater detail is given on these people, conveying more comprehensive representations. Li Wenliang (KV24), a pregnant woman (KV32 and KV45), a patient in Tibet (KV11 and KV35), or a Chinese man who died in the Philippines and became the

first death from coronavirus outside China (KV17) are examples of these particular cases of coronavirus infections or deaths.

With regards to references to Chinese authorities, there is diversity in the referential strategies used. Given that many articles adopt a similar structure, the following pattern can be established: generic or impersonalized reference first (usually "officials" or "China," respectively) followed by a reference to the specific government body, and spokesperson of such body lower down.

The referential strategies used tend to be neutral. This generally applies to Chinese authorities as well, although there are a few deviations from that trend, like calling Xi Jinping "China's most powerful leader after the CPC founder Mao Zedong" or saying that he "initially came under criticism for not acting in time to stem the virus when it first showed up in December last year, but later won praise for a decisive follow-up action" (both in KV90). When Indian authorities are involved, references tend to be more specific, particularly regarding the Indian Embassy in Beijing.

References to Indians in Wuhan and Hubei are usually generic ("Indians," "Indian nationals") and sometimes numeric. Most often, they are referred to as a collective. Still, occasionally some of their members are singled out and even become the focus of some articles, like six Indians who were stopped from boarding an evacuation flight due to high fever (KV16) or an Indian woman appealing to leave Wuhan (KV20).

2.4. Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

People affected by the virus are the main social actors represented in the coverage by the China correspondent of The Times of India. Referential strategies used to refer to them are mainly generic and statistical.

As could be expected, references to patients focus on their health condition. The only distinctions are between those who have died, those who have been confirmed to be

infected, and those who are suspected of being infected. In some instances, this goes one step further with nominalizations: those who have been killed by the virus become "deaths" or the "death toll" of the epidemic, and those who have been infected are referred to as "cases" or "infections."

The articles bear witness to the growing number of members of this collective by reporting on the new additions to the official count. But other than by health condition, few distinctions are made within this collective. The only individualized reference is to an Indian woman (in the first article from the sample, SD1), who is said to be "possibly the first foreigner under observation," something that is not confirmed in later articles.

References to Chinese authorities are mainly impersonalized ("China," "the government") or generic ("authorities," "health authorities," "government experts"), although there are frequent references to the National Health Commission as well as individualized references to officials ("one expert, Gao Fu," "Zhong Nanshan, an expert at the commission" in SD2), as well as to Xi Jinping.

References to Indian authorities are more specific ("the embassy of India in Beijing" in SD6), sometimes individualized ("Foreign minister S Jaishankadeer," "India's ambassador to China Vikram Misri" in the same article), and frequently concern the embassy. References to Indian people in Wuhan and Hubei are mostly collective and generic ("Indians in Wuhan"), although they provide some basic details about them, such as the fact that they are mostly university students. There is an article, SD9, about a group of 58 Indian employees of a Chinese company, which provides an exception to the usual generic references.

2.5.   Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

The statistical findings outlined above showed that Chinese authorities are the main social actors in the coverage by The Guardian's correspondent. A closer look at the

discursive strategies used to refer to authorities shows they tend to be generic, anonymized, and neutral.

Chinese authorities are usually referred to as "authorities," "government officials," or just as "officials," and there are abundant references to the "Chinese government" and less often to "the country's leadership" or "Beijing." Occasionally, there are specific references to individual bodies of the Chinese administration, frequently to China's National Health Commission, but references to individual officials —other than President Xi Jinping— are sporadic. The exceptions are articles LK18 and LK20 about the dismissal of officials in Wuhan and Hubei, where details about both the fired officials and the new appointments are given neutrally.

Another aspect that catches the eye when it comes to Chinese authorities is how they are presented as agents of the actions described in the texts. In this regard, LK6 is a good case in point: The topic of the article is that authorities have locked down ten cities, suspended festivities in Beijing, and adopted other restrictions, so authorities are often presented as agents, while people affected by the lockdowns are the objects of their actions. This is brought to the extreme when authorities are said to be building a new hospital, ignoring the construction workers who are doing the hard work.

Most representations of Chinese authorities are in negative terms due to the actions attributed to them. As early as LK3, the correspondent reports that "researchers worry the number of infections has been severely underestimated," that authorities have not moved quickly enough to contain the spread of the virus or educate the public, and that observers and residents worry about the possibility of a cover-up worsening the outbreak as was the case with SARS in 2002-2003. In LK6, measures introduced by China's government are questioned because of their uncertain effectiveness and their impact on people's freedoms: "While sweeping measures are typical of China's communist government, large-scale quarantines are rare around the world, even in deadly epidemics, because of concerns about infringing on people's liberties, and the effectiveness of such measures is unclear."

In the early articles of her coverage, the correspondent notes Chinese authorities' keenness to avoid repeating mistakes with their handling of SARS. In LK6, she claims: "China has been credited with sharing information rapidly, and President Xi Jinping has

emphasised that as a priority." However, as the coverage advances, a more critical view takes hold. In LK11, the correspondent reports on Chinese leadership's acknowledgment of shortcomings in its handling of the outbreak and confirms the view previously defended by the correspondent (slow response, underreporting of cases, lack of information, history of prior mishandlings). From then on, the coronavirus is said to be a "manmade disaster," in the words of a critical resident in Xuzhou (LK15), directly blamed on Xi Jinping by "outspoken academic" Xu Zhangrun (in LK17: "Xu describes the outbreak as a 'national calamity' that involves politics, the economy and 'nation's ethical fabric' making it 'more perilous than total war itself'") and as "a Chernobyl moment" by Chinese politics expert Victor Shih (LK21).

Specifically about Xi Jinping, LK13 claims the president's authority may be at risk due to the potential political consequences from the crisis: "Xi, who has aggressively centralised power and made himself the core of the Communist party, may be more at risk to the political fallout of the coronavirus." In LK20, it is said that he is using the crisis to project a sense that he is in control of the situation, and LK32 presents the containment of the epidemic in Wuhan as a "propaganda opportunity."

In LK7, it is said that the Chinese leadership under Xi enjoys "broad support from the public." That claim is not backed up by evidence, and all the voices cited in the article seem to suggest just the opposite. In LK15, many Chinese are said to mistrust official statistics as they are "aware of the government's inclination to withhold information in the interest of maintaining social stability and already angry over the delay in reporting the current outbreak." Subsequent articles echo critical voices toward Chinese authorities from individuals like citizen journalist Chen Qiushi in LK16, academic Xu Zhangrun in LK17, or ordinary citizens. Many experts cited, like political economy professor Ho-Fung Fung in LK25, also share this view: "'One thing for sure is that the social stability contract that has worked for so long – that the people tolerate the authoritarian rule so far as the government warrants economic prosperity and provides good governance – is broken in a big way,' he said."

Although some ordinary citizens are represented as criticizing authorities, in general terms, there is a trend to resort to nominalizations when it comes to actions carried out by the Chinese society or significant parts of it. Thus, articles like LK8 and LK9 note

"paranoia and frustration," "public anger," criticism and mistrust," "fury," a "growing wave of anger," "an outpouring of sympathy and donations of supplies." Perhaps not surprisingly then, when in LK30, the reporter seeks to explain how China got to grips with its coronavirus outbreak, the authorities seem to be the only agents. The adherence to the restrictions to curb the spread of the virus is attributed to extensive monitoring of citizens as well as "various methods of punishment and rewards to encourage adherence to such measures." Similarly, in LK31, Chinese society is the object of authorities' monitoring —deemed as "excessive" in the headline—, and agent of complaints against such monitoring. Chinese society is generally presented as the passive object of authorities' actions, and the only agency of ordinary citizens is to criticize the government.

The second most important social actor in the coverage by this correspondent is people affected by the virus. Although many references to this collective are statistical and anonymized, there are efforts to explain individual cases to help humanize the crisis. Whenever there is a case worth highlighting, the correspondent seeks to provide additional detail, like for a woman infected in Thailand who was the first confirmed infection outside of China in LK2. In LK4, there is an individualized reference of a person identified by his surname, Huang, who explains the story of his mother's death to illustrate how coronavirus cases might be underreported.

Perhaps the best example of this correspondents' efforts to depict people affected by the virus is LK14. This is a very well-sourced story to convey the voices of coronavirus patients, as promised by the headline. Coronavirus patients are not a number or a statistic here: they have names, experiences, feelings, and a story to tell. The piece achieves that perfectly. Article LK22 also illustrates this. Even though most references are aggregated, statistical, and anonymized, the text does start with an individualized case, a young Wuhan doctor who died from coronavirus, which is also addressed in the first two paragraphs. While there is no further reference to him afterward, this individualized reference and details provided about this doctor contribute to giving a human face to the crisis.

2.6. Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

For The Telegraph's correspondent, Chinese authorities are the main social actor in her coverage, followed by foreign governments and people affected by the government. Regarding the authorities, the overwhelming majority of references are generic and impersonalized.

References to "Chinese authorities," "Chinese officials," "the government" or just "China" dominate, and only occasionally specific bodies (like the foreign ministry) are referred to and even less frequently specific officials or leaders, except for Xi Jinping, who is introduced both as China's president and as the leader of the Chinese Communist Party.

While criticism and discontent against the Chinese government, officials, and the Communist Party are reported, most references to the authorities are neutral. Particularly in the early part of her coverage, this correspondent notes efforts by Chinese authorities to improve transparency, although their shortcomings are also mentioned. In SY11, for instance, it is said: "The government is providing more frequent updates now than it did in 2002, when officials suppressed news, exacerbating the spread of the disease and creating panic and confusion. Still, there is growing evidence that the official numbers released may not paint the full picture just yet."

That lack of transparency in the initial response to the coronavirus outbreak is attributed by Wuhan's mayor, Zhou Xianwang, to the Chinese state's central information management systems in SY9: "But Mr Zhou also appeared to blame the state's information management systems for lack of transparency, arguing his hands were tied by party rules." The Chinese central government's admission of its mistakes in the handling of the coronavirus outbreak is reported in SY15: "On Monday, China admitted "shortcomings" in its response to the virus, a rare admission of fallibility from the country's Communist leadership."

Chinese authorities' censorship is referenced in SY17, an article that looks at popular anger against the government following the death of Li Wenliang: "CHINESE citizens

yesterday hailed the doctor who blew the whistle on the coronavirus as a martyr, amid an unprecedented wave of criticism of the Communist Party from within the country." A first-person account in SY19 mentions constant monitoring and lack of privacy in everyday life in China. In SY20 and SY24, the use of propaganda by Chinese authorities is highlighted. This fragment of SY24 illustrates it: "China has stepped up its propaganda efforts in recent days to re-frame the narrative around its handling of the outbreak after a botched initial response, potentially exacerbating the global spread and leading to public outcry after Li Wenliang, the whistleblower doctor, died from the virus."

Foreign governments are another important social actor in the coverage by this correspondent. References to them tend to be even more impersonalized than those of Chinese authorities, as foreign officials are hardly ever individualized. It is worth noting, however, that in SY10, measures adopted by Hong Kong and other governments to protect themselves against the viral outbreak in China are reported. In the case of Hong Kong, attention is paid to the agent of the central action —introducing new restrictions— but not so much to the objects of that action —residents in mainland China—, whereas in the case of the U.K. and other governments working on evacuation plans to get their citizens out of Wuhan it is the other way around: the focus is on the objects of the action —Britons and other foreign nationals stranded in Wuhan and Hubei province— and not so much on the agents behind the action —governments preparing their evacuation—. With regards to restrictions against mainlanders in Hong Kong, article SY18 acknowledges that "long-simmering xenophobia in the city against mainland Chinese is being amplified amid the health crisis."

Coronavirus patients and victims, who are the second most important social actor in the coverage by this correspondent along with foreign governments, are generally referred to in an anonymized way or aggregated as statistics. Most of those references are nominalizations as "cases," "case count," or "deaths," but with exceptions. When there are patients that stand out, they are highlighted and mentioned by name with more details than for the rest of the collective of patients. In SY1, coronavirus patients are generally referred to in an aggregated and statistical way, but the first foreigner to have contracted the disease is mentioned by name. In SY6, the first medical worker to die

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from the coronavirus or the youngest patient to date (a two-year-old girl) are highlighted.

Moreover, in SY7, there are individualized references to specific coronavirus patients and their relatives, which helps to relay a more comprehensive picture of the difficulties the outbreak is creating for ordinary people. At the same time, this helps to humanize the collectivity of people affected by the virus by putting faces behind the numbers and goes beyond the statistical references to the number of victims to give a more detailed account of who they are, how they got infected, what problems they encountered to get diagnosed and treated and, in some cases, how this lead to their death. This article cites the cases of two coronavirus patients (one died and one survived). Both help to illustrate the amount of pressure the Chinese healthcare system is under, particularly in Wuhan, and points to potential shortcomings in how some doctors are handling the outbreak. It also questions the way higher-ups of those doctors are proceeding: "The swift disposal of Mrs Chen's body raises questions about the scale of the problem."

Article SY11 explores how Chinese society is coping with new restrictions, prevention measures, and difficulties created by the coronavirus outbreak and related government response to curb it. To do that, several individual specific cases are explained through interviews with their protagonists, which helps to put a human face over the abstract suffering of millions of people. In SY23, to talk about economic challenges ahead for China, the correspondent cites an individual case, Ding Huansen, which contributes to humanize and make the general, abstract economic problems that the article is addressing easier to comprehend.

2.7.   Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

The coverage by The Straits Times' correspondent of the coronavirus crisis has Chinese authorities and people affected by the virus as its two main social actors.

Referential strategies used to refer to Chinese authorities are primarily generic, anonymized, and impersonalized. There is a degree of geographic specification in some cases, while in others, the text specifies that it is "health officials" that are being referred to. There are also occasional references to individual leaders like Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, and lower-level officials like ministerial spokespeople.

In some articles, like DW3, authorities seem to perform every action mentioned in the text: they adopt measures, warn of the virus's stronger ability to spread, and work on developing a vaccine and using certain drugs to treat patients. In DW7, this is taken one step further: authorities from China's central government are presented as agents of actions such as "importing over 56 million masks in a week and producing eight million a day."

In that article, DW7, China is presented as having "a top-down, authoritarian model." According to the correspondent, that allows the central government to order draconian measures like pulling off "the largest quarantine exercise in history when it put Wuhan and nearby cities under lockdown, isolating over 50 million people" and to do it "with little overt opposition from its citizens." As the correspondent puts it: "That Beijing could do all this, and be praised by the World Health Organisation and others for its formidable political will, organisation and execution, comes primarily down to its top-down, authoritarian model." That article also refers to the construction of two new hospitals in ten days as "a propaganda opportunity." In DW 16, the Chinese government's actions are equated to the handling of the SARS epidemic: "The instinct to cover up, the compulsion to control information, the pattern of scapegoating local officials and a fragmented bureaucratic system plague this viral outbreak as they did the one 17 years ago." She also reports in DW9 that China's top leadership acknowledged "shortcomings and deficiencies" in their handling of the coronavirus crisis.

Article DW11 reports on "Beijing's growing anger at its increasing isolation" on the international stage. However, this reference to international tensions comes after two articles, DW9 and DW10, which emphasized international cooperation and help received by the Chinese government.

Regarding people affected by the virus, the second social actor in importance in the sample from this correspondent, there is a distinction to be made. Articles published early on in the crisis tend to refer to this collective using generic, collective strategies aggregating them as statistics, and often via nominalizations like "cases," "infections," and "deaths." However, as the coverage advances, more individualized references emerge: there is one story, DW17, which explains how Ding Hui, a Wuhan native, got infected with coronavirus. Ding Hui's account serves as a personalization of the collective of coronavirus patients, although it is not explicitly presented as such.

Article DW15 tells the story of Zhang Jie, a Wuhan volunteer who is driving doctors and nurses to hospitals to help in the fight against coronavirus. Zhang Jie is presented as the agent of actions like volunteering and helping others, providing a positive side of the coronavirus story. It must be noted that the article focuses exclusively on him: the article does mention that employees at his company are volunteering to drive medical workers to hospitals, but they are not even named. The same occurs in DW22, an article that focuses on Singaporean businesses in China but which offers the view of business owners only, not their workers. Whenever employees are mentioned, they are collectivized and referred to in generic, aggregate terms.

Chinese society is often presented as passive and as the object of the government's actions. Agency in actions carried out by ordinary Chinese people is often omitted through nominalizations like in article DW12, which looks at the fallout from Li Wenliang's death: "the outpouring of grief and anger online," "the call for freedom of speech," "another demonstration," "online anger," or "a flood of sympathy."

Hubei and Wuhan's people are represented as victims twice, in DW2 and DW19. DW2 explains the effects of the lockdown in Wuhan upon the population of the city, combining generic references to them ("Wuhan residents" in the headline and lead, for example) with other references to some individuals who have been interviewed (freelance photographer He Li, Wuhan University student Song Jingan), and some others citing state media ("a desperate woman interviewed on state television") or social media ("one frustrated Wuhan native, with the handle imikiya"). DW19 portrays Hubei's population as the victim of "excessive policing" by community workers.

The last article of the sample, DW27, is about HIV patients and helps to understand the suffering of indirect victims of the coronavirus pandemic. The article focuses on a specific group of people who have been particularly vulnerable during the coronavirus epidemic, without being necessarily coronavirus patients. There are specific examples of members of this collective: one is interviewed, as are volunteers who have helped them. This allows readers to identify themselves with the suffering of this collective.

2.8. Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

For the South China Morning Post's correspondents, Chinese authorities are the main social actors of her coverage. A review of her texts reveals that a great variety of referential strategies have been employed.

 In her case, generic and impersonalized references to "China," "Chinese authorities," or "the government" alternate with individualized references to specific officials or to institutions in particular: several ministries, the National People's Congress or the State Council, to name a few, are mentioned. References to the Communist Party, and different party bodies like the Politburo or its central committee, abound too. There is a great degree of granularity and specificity in the references to Chinese authorities.

References to individual officials also evidence that. It is not just Xi Jinping that is singled out. One of the articles included in the sample focuses on Chen Yixin (JC3) and describes him as an official carrying "the emperor's sword," but as a "protégé of Xi Jinping" and the "president's man," among other labels. Subtly, by resorting to the literary figure of the honest official with a sword from the emperor, the article is implying that Xi Jinping is China's emperor.

Another article (JC7) centers on the role played by women in the frontline of China's efforts to combat the epidemic, and Vice Premier Sun Chunlan draws considerable attention. She is described in that article as "the only woman in the ruling Communist Party's 25-member Politburo" or "stern face of the Politburo in the crisis."

Although people affected by coronavirus are not the main focal point for this correspondent, there are several references, which tend to be statistical and generic. The one exception is Li Wenliang, who in JC4 is defined as a "hero of the people – but not the party," a "national champion" or "a hero in a country where heroes are usually minted in the image of the Communist Party."

The article implies there is contraposition of interests between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people and takes the case of Li Wenliang's death and public grief as an illustration: "the doctor has been almost universally described by the public as a hero in a country where heroes are usually minted in the image of the Communist Party."

That article attributes agency to the Chinese public for the action of forcing the government to recognize Li Wenliang as a hero, and that he is being used as a symbol for broader demands: "While there have been questions online about whether Li qualified as a hero, given that he alerted only his friends to the disease, his case is being used to argue for transparency, forcing state media and even officials to recognise Li's contribution." China's government is described as Xi's "authoritarian government" in JC9, and it is represented as the agent behind the action of censoring information in JC4.

3. Identity/Otherness

3.1. Macarena Vidal Liy – El País

The coverage of the coronavirus crisis by El País's correspondent includes mentions of several cultural traits, as well as other references that can be interpreted as marking identification or differentiation.

The first articles of her sample note the consumption of exotic animals in China. In MV1, a scientific study that links the origin of the new coronavirus outbreak to snakes is cited, and this serves as a peg to introduce a reference to the consumption of snakes by Chinese people. The text also reminds that the origin of SARS was linked to a feline. MV4 builds on the idea of a taste for exotic animals in China. The consumption of wildlife is linked to the SARS epidemic and the current coronavirus outbreak, and is said to have grown since 2003. Health risks from this practice are also associated with lack of hygiene and legal irregularities. However, both in MV1 and MV4, the link between wild animals and the people eating them is somewhat hidden because Chinese consumers of wildlife are objectified by the result of their actions ("demand," "consumption").

References to SARS are frequent in the early coverage by this correspondent. They are used to introduce a disclaimer about the past behavior of Chinese authorities. While MV3 conveys the message being transmitted by Chinese leaders that "this time around is different" compared to SARS and a distinction is made between the approaches to the epidemic by local and central authorities in MV7, the correspondent adopts an increasingly critical tone with regards to authorities. By MV11, the tone of the coverage toward authorities has become negative, as they are presented as hiding the severity of the crisis.

As early as MV3, this correspondent is quoting experts saying the coronavirus crisis will hurt China's international image. The theme of China being left alone on the international stage is addressed in greater detail in MV8, where China is presented as being isolated by the whole world in the headline ("The world isolates China[13]"). However, the text makes it clear that it is not the whole world. It cites some countries that have introduced restrictions as well as generic "different countries," individual companies that have suspended flights. At the same time, it is acknowledged that some other countries have aligned with China, but these are said to have "a large economic reliance on China." MV10 shows China's discomfort at the restrictions introduced by the U.S. government and presents this within the broader context of the rivalry between the two countries —also addressed in MV14— and the economic challenges facing China.

To put in context the economic hit that awaits China, MV6 cites the dampening of the Lunar New Year celebrations due to the epidemic. In this article, Chinese New Year is compared to Christmas or Black Friday in the West —although the closest Chinese equivalent to Black Friday would be Single's Day, also known as 11/11—. These parallelisms imply the correspondent assumes her readers do not have previous knowledge about the Chinese New Year. Similar efforts to look for Western equivalents for features of Chinese everyday life are seen in MV12, MV13, or MV15, where WeChat is presented as "Chinese WhatsApp" and Weibo as "the Chinese Twitter."

MV13 includes the first reference to a coronavirus patient identified by name in the coverage of this patient: Li Wenliang. The preceding articles contained many references to patients, but mostly referred to them as an anonymous collective or aggregated as statistics.

The characterization of the reaction of the Chinese public to Li's death is also worth looking at. In previous reports, it had been stated that the Chinese public viewed positively the reaction of China's central government and criticized Hubei's authorities. MV13 portrays the Chinese public as one-dimensional in its criticism of the government, which is said to be putting social stability at risk. However, the text also acknowledges that the Supreme Court itself criticized the treatment Li Wenliang

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[13] In Spanish in the original: "El mundo aísla a China."

received from Wuhan's authorities. Articles MV15 and MV16 follow up on this, while MV18 pays attention to demands for freedom of speech.

In MV26, the correspondent cites Xi's metaphoric reference to a "popular war" against coronavirus to refer to the efforts to contain the epidemic. That war-like language finds its way to the coverage by this correspondent again in MV32 to signal that China's president believes the battle against the virus has been "almost won."

There are sporadic references to Spain in the coverage by this correspondent, but not particularly prominent. Two Spanish professors who work in China are quoted in MV28 to talk about problems of online education as schools remain closed. The main difference in the way they are presented, compared to Chinese students mentioned in the same text, is that the Spanish professors are identified by name.

3.2. Pablo M. Díez – ABC

The coverage by ABC's correspondent highlights some cultural traits of China, as well as historical events, which are worth looking at. His reports also contain a few examples of discourse polarization in the way they represent certain social actors.

The critical portrayal of Chinese authorities has been addressed in detail in the section about the representation of social actors. It follows from what has been stated there that Chinese authorities are the clearest example of other "they" in van Dijk's (2011) terms.

About the Chinese society more generally, the fact that it celebrates the Lunar New Year is flagged in several articles, including the first five. These references seek to raise the alarm about the potential risks of the massive travel that usually comes associated with that holiday. Thus, in PD2, the correspondent refers to Lunar New Year travel as "a dangerous exodus that could trigger a pandemic."

The lunar year that began on January 25, 2020, was a "year of the rat," according to the Chinese zodiac. This correspondent used this to represent Wuhan's lockdown

metaphorically as a "rat trap" in PD4. The rat-trap metaphor is picked up again in the following article: "Maybe for starting under the sign of the rat in the Chinese horoscope, Wuhan has become a rat trap for its eleven million inhabitants due to the closure of its transports and roads[14]."

From the beginning of his coverage, the historical precedent of SARS is used to question data provided by the Chinese government. References to SARS are frequent, particularly in the early part of the coverage.

In PD6, the first mention of "war" appears. War-like vocabulary is also used and assumed by the correspondent in PD17, but when the correspondent reflects the use of war-like by Chinese authorities, he tries to distance himself. In PD31, he notes that China's government considers Hubei as a "war zone." PD33 goes even further as this article offers a critical view of the way Chinese authorities have been referring to their efforts to curb the epidemic as a "popular war." The correspondent compares China's methods to stop the spread of the epidemic to the Cultural Revolution.

That parallelism is also used in PD20 to say that a new Cultural Revolution is being waged against people from Hubei. This victimized collective is nevertheless represented in generic terms or aggregated as statistics, without individual examples. A traumatic episode of Chinese history is used to portray measures to trace and isolate people from Hubei in other parts of China in a negative light. In that article, those supposedly stigmatizing people from Hubei are presented in derogatory terms ("sneaks," "crowds"). PD21 reports on a strike by medical workers in Hong Kong to demand the closure of the border with China to avoid the expansion of the disease, and none of the Cultural Revolution paraphernalia is mentioned there.

Chinese people are presented as having the habit of eating exotic food and having low hygiene standards in article PD15 to explain why there is a growing "anti-Chinese" sentiment around the world. The idea of China being put under quarantine by the rest of the world is present in PD12 too, without linking it to a wave of sinophobia.

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[14] In Spanish in the original: "Quizás por empezar bajo el signo de la rata del horóscopo chino, Wuhan se ha convertido en una ratonera para sus once millones de habitantes por el cierre de sus transportes y carreteras."

PD16 also notes a contrast between the way Chinese people behave and what foreigners in China do. Chinese are presented as being locked in their homes, afraid of the neighbors, and paranoid. Meanwhile, foreigners in the French Concession of Shanghai do not seem bothered at all.

However, in other articles, the correspondent seems to identify himself with Chinese people. In PD3, he uses the first-person plural ("find ourselves") to describe the situation at the time. PD17 identifies with Chinese coronavirus victims and describes curations as victories in the "trench war" against the virus. Sometimes, the correspondent inserts himself in the story, like in PD4, to describe what he has seen at Shanghai-Pudong airport or in PD23 to say that the death of Li Wenliang has generated a "wave of criticisms like never had been observed by this correspondent in his 15 years in this country." In PD25, the correspondent's identification with a population that suffers the government's authoritarianism is made explicit through the use of a first-person plural: "The same does the regime with dissidents and activists, but this time it is not a political, environmental, economic or labor issue. It is health-related and concerns something that touches us all: life[15]."

In general terms, there is a tendency to provide little detail on Chinese people referred to in the articles, which, in van Dijk's (2011) terms, contributes to their "othering." That is particularly true of the people affected by the virus, who tend to be referred to merely in a generic, anonymized way or aggregated as statistics. However, when the infected are out of China, the representation changes: greater detail is offered of a Chinese man who died of coronavirus in the Philippines or of another Chinese tourist who passed away in France than of any other —save for Li Wenliang— victim of the epidemic.

When this correspondent talks about Hong Kong and Macau in PD21 and PD22, these cities are represented as former British and Portuguese colonies —not as special autonomous regions of China—. Macau, moreover, is said to be "Asia's Las Vegas." Similarly, when mentioning popular Chinese internet applications like Wechat or Weibo, they are compared to Western equivalents blocked in China, as in PD19: "(…) "In Wechat as in Weibo, copies of the censored Whatsapp and Twitter."

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[15] In Spanish in the original: "Lo mismo el régimen hace con los disidentes y activistas, pero esta vez no es asunto político, medioambiental, económico o laboral. Es sanitario y afecta a algo que nos toca a todos: la vida."

3.3.   K J M Varma – PTI

PTI China correspondent's focus on the Indian community in Wuhan and Hubei and the different attempts by Indian authorities to evacuate them offer some instances of relative polarization. Even in articles not focused explicitly on Indians, there are references to the Indian community in Hubei, and measures adopted by the Indian government or Indian companies are cited.

Article KV28 is a good case in point of this relative polarization. The article conveys the view of the Indian ambassador to China that the first evacuation of Indian citizens from Hubei was a "logistical nightmare." There is mild criticism toward China by stating that "the most difficult part of the operation [was] to get approvals from China's central, provincial and local governments as the city and province were locked down from January 23."

Strategies of identification and differentiation are present beyond the India-centric articles as well. For example, Tibet —a region currently under Chinese sovereignty but with strong historical links to India— deserves considerable attention: KV7, KV11, KV35, and KV42 are about this region. No other Chinese province —not even Hubei, excluding the articles about Indians there— receives the same degree of attention. Tibet's first coronavirus patient has two articles dedicated to him (KV11 and KV35), whereas this correspondent only dedicated one article to the death of Li Wenliang.

The India-Pakistan rivalry also finds its way into the coverage by this correspondent. In KV38, he echoes criticism toward the Pakistani government, citing the daily Dawn, for not evacuating its citizens from Hubei. In KV57, Pakistan is defined as a "cash-strapped country," and the correspondent expresses doubts about Pakistan's handling of its citizens in Wuhan.

Not many references to Chinese society as a whole can be found in the coverage by this correspondent. He does highlight, however, the fact that viral outbreak began in the run-

up to the Chinese New Year —also referred to as Lunar New Year and Spring Festival, as it is known in China—. References to this festival, seen in multiple articles, are associated with the tradition of traveling, as in the articles about the Indian students in Wuhan, and to mention the cancellation of events due to the epidemic or the extension of the holiday to contain the outbreak.

Moreover, article KV44 highlights that traditional Chinese medicine is being used to treat half of the coronavirus patients in Hubei in combination with Western medicine. In the same article, the correspondent claims that "the announcement about the use of TCM for COVID-19 patients is significant as the virus has no standardised cure yet." Traditional Chinese medicine is mentioned in subsequent articles about an expedition of international experts supported by the WHO.

Furthermore, most references to people affected by the virus are generic and statistical, contributing to their othering. It must be stressed, nevertheless, that similar strategies apply to refer to Indians evacuated from Hubei.

3.4. Saibal Dasgupta – Times of India

In the coverage by The Times of India's correspondent, one aspect that catches the eye is the extent to which the Indian community of Wuhan and Hubei draws the reporter's attention.

Within this collective, even some subgroups like the Indian employees of Chinese company TCL are looked out for in article SD9, where it is said that their local managers did not allow them to leave and, as a result, they are "desperately pleading" for evacuation from Wuhan.

There is no significant difference in the ways Indian and Chinese common people are represented. His reporting on the Indian community of Wuhan and Hubei allows readers to sympathize with the suffering of residents in the province at the center of the

coronavirus outbreak, but only from the lens of Indian residents. At the same time, article SD13 looks at problems facing Chinese people who have traveled abroad, following the declaration of global health risk by the World Health organization and, to some extent, allows readers to understand this collective, although voices from the people suffering are not included and references to them are generic, without explaining any individual case.

Throughout his coverage, attention is paid to what happens in Hong Kong and what authorities from the city do. This is evident, for example, in SD8, where restrictions there and progress made by scientists in developing a vaccine are reported, as well as in other articles. In SD10, in addition to Indian students stuck in Wuhan, the correspondent cites the cases of two Australians and a Pakistani student —both Australia and Pakistan share a colonial past with India— in the city. Tibet, another region with historical ties to India, is also mentioned in that article to say that it "has so far been the only province that was unaffected."

There is a more noticeable difference when authorities of India and China are represented. References to Indian authorities tend to be more specific, and Indian officials tend to "speak" more in the reports written by the correspondent of The Times of India.

Furthermore, article SD5 questions the veracity of the data provided by Chinese authorities: "New concerns have emerged about the extent of the challenge which may be much larger than reported. There are possibly thousands of undiagnosed patients across the country, besides many in foreign locations." In SD12, the correspondent reports on Xi Jinping's calls on the military "to treat the coronavirus epidemic as a battle that must be won at all costs." Going further, the reporter interprets the call to the military as being motivated by more than health reasons: "His call to the military suggests that the armed forces would be put into action not just at the medical level but also to avoid any chance of social instability." However, other than that, the portrayal of Chinese authorities tends to be in neutral terms.

References to Chinese culture do not abound in the sample. Article SD7 reports on health issues potentially created by Wuhan residents who left amid the Lunar New Year holiday before the city was locked down, and SD13 explains problems facing Chinese

people who have traveled abroad during the holiday. Article SD5 cites scientific research that suggested that snakes and bats, which were eaten in Wuhan, may be reservoirs of the disease and notes that the government has tightened control over wet markets.

In SD2, places are positioned geographically by mentioning other cities: "Shenzhen which borders Hong Kong," "Zhejiang, which neighbours Shanghai." This implies that knowledge about Shenzhen or Zhejian is not presupposed, but that Hong Kong and Shanghai are presumed to be known.

3.5. Lily Kuo – The Guardian/The Observer

The coverage by The Guardian's correspondent of the coronavirus outbreak in China offers many cultural references, as well as strategies of identification and othering to analyze.

Relatively early on in the coverage by this correspondent, in LK4, there is a personalization of the collective of coronavirus patients, which contributes to humanize the viral outbreak and helps readers understand the struggles of people suffering from it. This identification is even more intense in LK14, a feature that allows the reader to sympathize with the sense of hopelessness of coronavirus patients and their relatives. Their stories are heartbreaking and paint a grim picture of the state of Wuhan and Hubei's healthcare system, overwhelmed by the coronavirus outbreak. When it comes to the overwhelming of hospitals, this represents a clear example of "show, do not tell," as it is the people suffering the problem who explain it, rather than the journalist in her own words.

Since Hong Kong registers its first coronavirus patient, a fact reported in LK5, the evolution of the epidemic in this former British colony receives attention from this correspondent. The first death from coronavirus in the city is prominently reported in LK11, and references to Hong Kong's patients and its government's decisions, as well

as quotes from experts based in the city, appear throughout her coverage. Even some articles like LK23 and LK30 have a Hong Kong dateline. Macau, a former Portuguese colony, does not receive similar attention, which suggests that there is a greater identification with Hong Kong.

For example, LK27 explains how parents across East Asia have adapted to school closures. Hong Kong parents speak for the positive side: they have had problems, but they have adapted to online classes and have flexibility at work while being able to take the kids to the playground or the beach. Meanwhile, Japanese parents are said to be horrified by school closures and to prefer leaving their children home alone because of rigid work practices, and Chinese parents are said to be complaining online about having their children at home.

LK12, which has four authors, is the only article in the sample that has a British topic and claims that the departure of British citizens from China would hurt some Chinese citizens: "Any exodus would have inevitable knock-on effects for Chinese citizens who work for or with British nationals, take classes from them or rely on them for medical care or other services."

In the early coverage by this correspondent, references to the Lunar New Year — occasionally called spring festival, as it is known in China, and less often Chinese New Year— are constant and prominent: it is mentioned in the headline of LK1 or the lead of LK3 and LK6. References to the Lunar New Year are sometimes accompanied by mentions of China's internal migration. In LK15, the reporter reflects how coronavirus lockdowns have reunited families for much longer than they are used to: "Families, used to seeing each other only a few times a year, have been hemmed in together for more than two weeks." In the context of a viral outbreak, those references are justified by the concerns about a possible spread of the disease.

Another constant theme in those early stories is the SARS epidemic. References SARS usually seek to provide a comparison of the number of victims caused by that epidemic and to recall a cover-up by Chinese authorities, which then serves as a peg to question the government's version of recent developments.

References to the Lunar New Year and SARS and other health scandals that occurred in China combine in LK7, which offers an incursion into China's political system against

the background of the coronavirus outbreak. The fact that the outbreak has ruined the most important holiday of the year for millions of people is used as a peg to look at the potential social and political consequences of the epidemic. It is said, without supporting evidence, that the Chinese leadership under Xi enjoys "broad support from the public." It then follows that people have experienced years of public health scandals, and an expert is cited to say that the CCP has historically not handled epidemic and large-scale disasters well, due to its lack of transparency. Quotes from unidentified Weibo users and ordinary citizens are given to show that people who previously believed their government are starting to question it. Another expert then says that this is a test for Xi's leadership because he has centralized decision-making. However, the government's purpose of amendment is also cited.

In subsequent articles, a critical portrayal of Chinese authorities which has already been observed in articles like LK4, LK6, and LK7 continues, while critical voices from ordinary citizens are reproduced. In LK9, Chinese authorities are said to have covered up the coronavirus outbreak, while growing anger is also mentioned: "Citizens blame officials for claiming for weeks that the virus was manageable and ignoring as well as covering up obvious signs that the outbreak was serious." In LK15, many Chinese are said to mistrust official statistics as they are "aware of the government's inclination to withhold information in the interest of maintaining social stability and already angry over the delay in reporting the current outbreak."

The coronavirus crisis is, in the words of Chinese politics specialist Victor Shih in LK21, paralleled with Chernobyl's nuclear accident. In that article, there are also references to the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong, and China's reform and opening up, symbolized by KFC's restaurants, historical precedents that are used to provide context for the Communist Party leaders' promise to win the "people's war" against the virus. Authorities' war-like vocabulary to refer to the epidemic is cited by the reporter but not assumed. Chinese government's use of battle-like language to refer to the virus is also echoed in LK14.

The story line "Chinese are angry at their government" is one of the most important in the coverage by this correspondent, and article LK25 sheds light on the social actors behind it. Part of China's society is shown as the agent of the acts of criticizing the

government and being angry, frustrated, and distrustful with regards to authorities. The agents of those actions so often nominalized in her coverage come to the fore here, and detail is provided on their personal lives as well as on their motives for being angry at the government, allowing readers to sympathize with them. The reporting on criticisms of authorities continues in LK28. The focus of the story is the protests staged by Wuhan residents during a visit to the city by Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, but the article gives almost the same importance to the fact that Chinese state media have covered those protests.

LK30 and LK31 continue the trend of only giving voice to those who are critical of the Chinese government. In LK30, even though the article notes that the WHO acknowledged an "exceptionally high degree of population understanding and acceptance" of measures introduced by Chinese authorities was key to containing the outbreak, the article highlights that some Chinese citizens criticize the government. Likewise, in LK31, the article gives more weight to those who oppose measures adopted by the Chinese government to contain the epidemic, even though the reporter implies that many citizens are not too bothered by them: "Many Chinese residents see the extra layers of public monitoring as additional bureaucratic hurdles, more frustrating than sinister, that further demonstrate the government's ineffectiveness in handling the outbreak." No favorable opinion is cited.

The only opinions from ordinary citizens who are not opposed to the Chinese government appear in LK34, where some internet users who adhere to conspiracy theories spread by Chinese propaganda are cited. In that article, it is mentioned that some officials in the U.S. "have continued to use the terms "Chinese coronavirus" or "Wuhan virus," despite the World Health Organization's discouragement." However, the following sentence implies that the Chinese Communist Party may be to blame for the coronavirus outbreak and that its finger-pointing of the U.S. government may seek to deflect blame: "This campaign is aimed at distracting the public from the party's delayed response."

In article LK19, the correspondent reported on the World Health Organization's decision to name Covid-19 the disease caused by the new coronavirus: "[WHO's director-general Tedros Adhanom] Ghebreyesus said the goal of the name was to avoid stigma. For

weeks some have called the outbreak the 'China virus' or 'Wu flu,' for Wuhan where the virus was first detected." It should be noted, by the way, that "China virus" appeared in the headline of LK6.

3.6.   Sophia Yan – The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph

The coverage by The Telegraph's correspondent features some cultural elements, as well as strategies of identification and othering that are worth looking at.

In her early coverage, references to either the Lunar New Year or Chinese New Year — both denominations appear relatively frequently— are recurring. In SY1, for example, the holiday is mentioned as a factor that could contribute to spreading coronavirus due to mass travel. The traditional tile game mahjong is also cited in two articles, SY14 and SY12.

In SY1 and SY2, Chinese patients are represented as othered: they are mere statistics without identity, name, or voice. Meanwhile, in SY1 there is a differentiation in the treatment of Chinese patients in the first foreign patient, and in SY2 there is slightly more detail on the first patient confirmed in the U.S. than on those of other countries. However, in both cases, the greater granularity of the description of non-Chinese patients could be attributed to the newsworthiness of these patients and, when there are Chinese patients that stand out, they are highlighted and mentioned by name with more details than for the rest of the collective of patients, which helps to humanize this collective.

Article SY7 also helps in that regard. This article chronicles the spread of coronavirus and helps to put a human face behind the numbers. At the same time, the article casts doubt on the transparency of Chinese authorities and on the capacity of China's healthcare system to deal with the outbreak. It is also acknowledged that the Chinese government has improved its transparency even though concerns remain.

Critical opinions of the Chinese authorities start to appear in SY2 and are constant throughout the coverage by this correspondent. Some articles, like SY2, also refer to the Chinese government's attempts to avoid repeating the mistakes it made in the SARS but as the coverage advances, skepticism and critical views gain prominence. In SY4, one of the experts cited, policy expert Jeremy Konyndyk, compares Wuhan to New York due to its size to highlight the difficulty of the lockdown.

Article SY5 is an analysis that addresses the rise of China on the international stage and its effects on the behavior toward China of international institutions such as the WHO. The view defended by most experts cited in the article —including a U.S. State Department official who is said to be in charge of countering China's "malign influence" on international institutions— is that China's growing influence put the WHO under pressure not to declare an international emergency over the coronavirus outbreak.

In SY16, Chinese authorities are also questioned: "Despite official insistence that life outside the main quarantine zones is "normal," Chinese people across the country interviewed by The Daily Telegraph have complained they are subject to severe restrictions on their movements." That article includes a mention, at the bottom of the story, of restrictions on foreign journalists accredited in China, which directly affects the professional collective to which the correspondent belongs. The identity and voice of the correspondent are even more present in SY19, a dispatch written in the first person. This offers a glimpse of some of the correspondent's concerns:

> "And I've been quite enjoying going incognito - face masks can be a bit uncomfortable, but they thwart the facial recognition technology deployed in China.
>
> So, despite movement restrictions, even to get home, I'm actually quite relieved it appears I have a bit of privacy back - at least for now."

The use of propaganda by the Chinese government is emphasized in SY20 and SY24. In SY20 it is linked to its efforts to curb the epidemic: "Reframing the narrative is crucial for the Chinese government, tasked with curbing the outbreak and getting the country of 1.4billion, many of whom tired of staying at home, to keep following quarantine

directives." However, a more critical view is offered in SY24: "China has stepped up its propaganda efforts in recent days to re-frame the narrative around its handling of the outbreak after a botched initial response, potentially exacerbating the global spread and leading to public outcry after Li Wenliang, the whistleblower doctor, died from the virus." The fact that that propaganda is, among other formats, placed in banners is also mentioned in several articles.

A substantial portion of the coverage from this correspondent focuses either on Britons in China or on Hong Kong, a former British colony. Even when neither Britain nor Hong Kong are the focal point of the article, mentions to their governments, people or experts appear in many other articles.

There are two articles with Britain-related topics: SY8 reports on the complaints of Britons stranded in Wuhan against the British Foreign Office, while SY22 looks at how the epidemic and coronavirus lockdowns are hurting businesses founded by British "expats" in China. The headline and lead of SY8, an article with four authors, centers on the Foreign Office recommendation to British citizens in Wuhan to leave the city. Still, the article ends up paying more attention to the complaints of Britons who live there and who feel the Foreign Office is not helping them. One British resident in Wuhan is interviewed and cited in the article.

SY22 gives voice to one particular collective: British "expat" entrepreneurs who have founded businesses in China. The article interviews several of these "expats"—not immigrants—, who explain that they are having a bad time because of the economic difficulties created by the epidemic. The article centers on British nationals only, and within them, on business owners only, not one salaried person is cited by name even though some of these businessmen —they are all men— mention salary cuts for their employees. Similarly, in SY15, Western companies like Ralph Lauren and Royal Caribbean are mentioned as well as Taiwan's Foxconn —described in the article as "the Taiwanese manufacturer of the iPhone"— to talk about the effects of the epidemic on, presumably, the Chinese economy. That point is not made clear, as the article refers just to "economy" and later mentions factory closures in China, but also to "the virus's impact on the global economy."

This trend to reflect mainly Western viewpoints is somewhat mitigated in SY23. There is an individual case, Ding Huansen, which contributes to humanize and make the general, abstract economic problems that the article is addressing easier to comprehend. The fact that a large proportion of China's workforce is made up of migrants is noted, as is the fact that China's economic problems predate the coronavirus pandemic. All the expert voices cited, however, are foreign. And most of the companies cited are foreign too.

Moreover, there are three other articles about Hong Kong-related topics: SY10 explains that Hong Kong and foreign governments are adopting restrictions and precautions against people arriving from mainland China due to the outbreak; SY14 reports that Hong Kong hospital workers are pushing the government to close borders with mainland China, and SY18 informs that Hong Kong's government has decided to put people arriving from mainland China in isolation.

Starting from the topics chosen, these articles show a degree of attention toward Hong Kong that is greater than the attention drawn by any other city in mainland China, with the exception of Wuhan. The amount of coverage that this correspondent dedicates to Hong Kong is not matched, for example, by her attention to Macau, another former European colony which is currently under Chinese sovereignty. This could indicate that there is at least some degree of identification with Hong Kong, although no significant difference is observed in the treatment of the social actors represented in these articles compared to those from other places.

While articles SY10 and SY14 focus on restrictions toward people from mainland China in Hong Kong and calls from the city's hospital workers for more severe restrictions in the context of the epidemic, SY18 references xenophobia against mainland Chinese in Hong Kong. Two specific examples of this xenophobia are cited: shops refusing to serve those who speak Mandarin and thousands of mainland students being shunned.

3.7. Tan Dawn Wei – The Straits Times

The sample from The Straits Times' correspondent refers to several cultural elements with regards to China and Chinese people. There are also some instances of discourse polarization that deserve a closer look.

The fact that the coronavirus outbreak has taken place in the run-up to the Chinese New Year is highlighted since the first article, and references to Chinese New Year are recurring in the early part of her coverage. This holiday is linked to travel and, therefore, to fear of infection. To give an idea of the exceptionality of the circumstances, it is said that mask producers are offering their workers up to four times their wages to work over the holiday to restock emptied shelves. Suspension of Chinese New Year events and delays of movie releases are also mentioned.

In DW3, the correspondent reports on a ban on wildlife trade, which is linked to the origin of the epidemic. That article reports that a potential delay of the annual joint session of Parliament and its advisory body in early March is already being contemplated in January, according to an anonymous source. The importance of this event is not explained, presuming that there is previous knowledge about it. The same happens when mahjong is mentioned in DW12 or DW19 when "red packets" are alluded but not explained in DW15, or when a Lantern Festival TV show is cited in DW16. Similarly, references to famous Chinese companies like Didi or Weibo are not accompanied by references to equivalents from other countries.

In DW4, at the bottom of the story, there is a reference to a conflict between a Danish newspaper and Chinese authorities and diplomats: the newspapers published a satirical cartoon depicting the Chinese national flag with the coronavirus instead of the usual five golden stars, and the Chinese government demanded an apology. The correspondent cites the cartoon and the reaction from a spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Copenhagen.

Another article, DW11, focuses on the frictions and tensions between China and other countries over the suspension of flights to and from China. However, DW9 and DW10

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echo international cooperation. DW9 underscores explicitly the fact that China has received help from Japan because "the two countries have had a strained bilateral relationship."

Article DW7 attempts to put Chinese authorities' response to the coronavirus epidemic, and particularly their decision to lock down Wuhan and surrounding cities, in historical perspective. The article characterizes this decision as a mass mobilization, which is said to be a feature of Communist China: some historical precedents are cited, from Mao Zedong's mass movements to more recent crises such as the Sichuan earthquake of 2008 and the SARS epidemic. It is unclear if the efforts described in the article are attributed to Chinese society as a whole —after all, the "mass mobilization" mentioned in the headline requires a mass of people— or to authorities alone as other fragments ("compel companies," "Beijing could do all this") seem to imply.

The views from experts cited in the text of DW7 are also worth looking at. Political scientist Lynette Ong from the University of Toronto claims that China's actions "will not be possible in a liberal democracy," and therefore introduces a "them vs. us" dichotomy. A later quote from the same expert insists on China's difference with respect to other countries: "It has essentially taken over a lot of functions performed by civil society organisations and civic associations in most countries." Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute in London, also weighs in, although it is not clear that health policy is his area of expertise: "If a lockdown was deemed essential, it should have been locking down China as a whole, not just Wuhan or Hubei." Finally, Chinese bureaucracy professor John Yasuda offers a more nuanced view: "When a clear problem has been identified, Beijing does a remarkable job mobilising resources to provide a solution. The main issue is that the system is not effective in identifying emerging problems before they cascade into national crises."

Chinese authorities' use of war-like vocabulary to refer to the epidemic is also adopted in some articles like DW13 and DW16, but making it clear that it was Xi Jinping's metaphor. DW16 looks at the use of propaganda by the Chinese government "to turn the tide of public opinion." In addition to propaganda, references to Chinese censorship appear throughout her coverage. DW12 defends that the death of Li Wenliang is unlikely to become a watershed moment for freedom of speech in China: "Instead, the

likely outcome of the investigation would be disciplinary action against local officials, particularly the Wuhan public security bureau; and a confirmation of Dr Li's contribution in trying to sound a warning about the fast-spreading virus."

While Chinese authorities are one clear example of social actors being otherized in the sample of this correspondent, other actors are represented but are nearly invisible, another instance of othering. This occurs in DW15, DW19, and DW22. In all three articles, there are distinctions between elite actors (business owners in DW15 and DW22, authorities in DW19) and working-class people (employees in DW15 and DW22, and community workers in DW19). In DW15, all the attention goes to businessman Zhang Jie while his employees do the same task and are neglected.

The pattern is repeated in DW22. In DW19, community workers are presented in derogatory terms by a Hubei resident cited in the text, while there seems to be a greater understanding toward authorities: "Sometimes, the policy from the top may seem well-meaning, but these people at the bottom go to extremes to implement them. They are given a bit of power now and they just let it get to their heads."

DW22 and DW24 are the clearest examples of Singapore-focused stories. These articles seem to ignore social actors of other nationalities altogether. DW22 explains the hardship businesses in China owned by Singaporeans are going through —although presumably many other businesses in China, regardless of the nationality of their owners, are having a hard time—, while DW24 represents a laudatory exercise of Singapore foreign ministry's officials who coordinated flights to evacuate citizens from Hubei.

Singaporean officials are represented as the agents of positive actions, a stark contrast with the representation of Chinese authorities in articles like DW7 or DW16. In earlier articles, there are mentions to Singapore (like the city-state's first case in DW1; or its repatriation of citizens from Wuhan in DW11), but these are not necessarily prominent, nor do they receive a markedly different treatment.

3.8.   Jane Cai – South China Morning Post

The coverage by South China Morning Post's correspondent is very rich in cultural references, as well as cross-cultural references. To start with, one aspect that catches the eye in her articles is that China is referred to as "the mainland," as she works for a Hong Kong-based newspaper.

The first article of her sample (JC1) has a heavy cultural component. It explains that some Chinese people love eating exotic animals and wildlife, and this trait is linked to the origins of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. The coronavirus outbreak is implicitly blamed on some Chinese people's eating habits. One expert cited, a researcher with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, claims that "the real problem rested in people's behaviour, rather than with the animals" as, in his opinion, the simplest way to prevent infectious diseases is to stay away from wildlife.

The article explains that those who like wildlife are a minority of Chinese people (30% of people in cities had eaten wildlife between 2005 and 2006, according to a 2006 survey) and that the popularity of this food is declining due to previous epidemics such as SARS. This taste for exotic animals is said to be particularly intense in Guangzhou, which is said to be "a city known for adventurous diners."

One of the experts cited, political economist Hu Xingdou, links this taste to past food deprivation due to China's poverty in the 20th century. This expert also makes a comparison between Chinese and Westerners, implying they are different: "While the West values freedom and other human rights, Chinese people view food as their primary need because starving is a big threat and an unforgettable part of the national memory."

In JC2, an article that focuses on Wuhan's lockdown, this city is compared to London and New York because of its size —to underscore the difficulty of putting such a big city under lockdowns— and Wuhan is said to have "the unofficial title of China's Chicago" because of its waterside setting and lakes. Although it is not directly related to the topic of the article, JC2 also gives some historical background about the city, characterizing it as a transport hub, as well as a trade and intellectual center a century

ago: "As the Yangtze River brought trade and prosperity to Wuhan, it also made the city a centre for the free flow of information - more than 100 years ago it was a centre for revolutionary ideas and thinkers advocating democracy."

Article JC3 uses a metaphor from China's folk tradition to introduce the appointment of Chen Yixin as deputy head of a central government group to guide the epidemic control work in Hubei province. Just the fact that this profile-like article has been written illustrates the degree of granularity when it comes to Chinese authorities offered in the coverage by this correspondent. The same article also references Chinese censorship and propaganda.

In JC5, an article about the imminent passing of a new biosecurity law in China, Chinese legislation is compared to those of the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand by different experts cited. To explain the urgency of passing a new law, a former official with China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment cites recent scandals like fake flu vaccines and gene-edited babies and the spread of African swine fever. Biosecurity professor Andrew Robinson is quoted as saying China, like many other Asian countries, remains vulnerable to zoonoses —diseases that cross from animals to humans— but that "it is not clear at present whether there is something systemically different about China that makes it uniquely vulnerable to zoonoses or whether other factors such as high population density play a role."

JC6 chronicles the slowdown of the expansion of the epidemic in China and its acceleration in South Korea. No significant difference has been observed in the treatment of coronavirus patients in the different countries mentioned. In the final part of the article, however, different experts weigh in on the need for China to share its experience with Covid-19. Chinese scientist Zhong Nanshan is quoted as saying China has much to share with other countries in fighting the epidemic and offers himself to personally help in that regard. His justification of the offer is interesting: "After all, it's a disease of mankind, instead of one country." It is also worth noting that Zhong notes that there have been three coronavirus outbreaks in China in the first two decades of the 21st century, which reinforces claims in previous reports by this correspondent that China is prone to suffering healthcare scandals.

By highlighting the role of several women in China's efforts to contain the epidemic, JC7 offers a positive angle of the coronavirus story while denouncing that China is a male-dominated society at least under Communist rule. China's position in a World Economic Forum gender gap report is compared to that of "similarly populous neighbour" India and that of Iceland, which takes the No 1 spot. This article allows identification with women in the frontline of China's efforts to contain the coronavirus epidemic, by explaining individual cases of women in that position.

From the headline of JC7 ("Women in the firing line"), the use of war-like by Chinese authorities is reproduced and assumed by the reporter, although presented as the authorities' metaphor ("in Beijing's war on the coronavirus"). War-like vocabulary is also used in JC9.

Building on the notion of Chinese differences with respect to other countries, JC8 portrays China as a differentiated country within the international community because it has controlled its coronavirus outbreak, which leaves it in a position to help other countries. However, the reporter says the Communist Party wants to use this to boost its clout over other countries and defend its political system: "Nonetheless, the country's Communist Party is keen to promote its success in managing the crisis and validate its one-party, absolute rule political system." One of the experts cited, Wang Yiwei, insists on the idea that there are different political systems and peoples: "And political systems vary. People are different. While Chinese are used to doing what the authorities say, people in other countries value personal rights and freedom."

In JC8, there is a mention to Xinhua, which is identified just as "Xinhua" without characterizing it as China's official agency or state agency. This presupposes that Xinhua is well-known enough to make a description of it redundant.

The debate about the uniqueness of China's political system and its importance in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic continues in JC9: "Having come under heavy criticism from overseas initially, Beijing is now portraying its containment efforts as a heroic fight showcasing the people's spirit as well as the strength of the country's unique political system." According to international relations expert Shi Yinhong, Xi's visit is intended to send a message to developing countries: "It also tells developing countries that China's experience, if not its governance model, is worth learning or using as a

reference." Experts cited in the article note that the Communist Party wants to highlight the role of Xi Jinping in China's efforts to contain the epidemic.

III.   Comparative Analysis

The first approach to a comparative analysis of the coverage of the coronavirus crisis by the eight correspondents studied may come from looking at who did what and when. The "heat maps" provided in Tables 6, 7, and 8 illustrate the frequency of publication by each correspondent during January, February, and March, respectively. A more intense color indicates a greater number of articles published on a given day.

As these "heat maps" show, the timing of publication diverges for each correspondent. All correspondents were particularly active in the late part of January. January 24 —the day after the introduction of Wuhan's lockdown— is the only day when articles all eight correspondents considered for this dissertation wrote articles. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw further conclusions beyond noting the disparity in the temporal distribution of publications.

Table 6: Heat map of articles published by each correspondent in January

	MV	PD	KV	SD	LK	SY	DW	JC
7					▨			
8				▨				
9								
10								
11			▨					
12								
13								
14					▨			
15								
16								
17								
18								
19			▨					
20			▨	▨				
21		▨		▨	▨	▨		
22		▨		▨		▨		
23		▨			▨	▨		▨
24	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
25	▨	▨	▨			▨		
26	▨	▨	▨	▨		▨		
27	▨	▨	▨	▨			▨	
28	▨	▨		▨	▨	▨		
29		▨	▨	▨		▨	▨	
30	▨	▨	▨	▨		▨		
31		▨	▨	▨			▨	

Source: Own elaboration

Table 7: Heat map of articles published by each correspondent in February

	MV	PD	KV	SD	LK	SY	DW	JC
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
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25								
26								
27								
28								
29								

Source: Own elaboration

Table 8: Heat map of articles published by each correspondent in March

	MV	PD	KV	SD	LK	SY	DW	JC
1			▨		▨			
2		▨	▨		▨		▨	
3			▨			▨	▨	
4			▨		▨			▨
5		▨						
6	▨		▨		▨		▨	
7	▨	▨	▨					▨
8	▨		▨					
9	▨		▨		▨			
10		▨	▨		▨		▨	
11	▨		▨		▨	▨	▨	▨
12			▨					
13	▨	▨	▨		▨			

Source: Own elaboration

The busiest days —in terms of articles published, as this analysis is based on their output— for a given correspondent are not necessarily so for others. Indeed, many correspondents did not publish anything on days that were the busiest for the correspondents of El País, PTI, The Guardian, or The Telegraph. Among these correspondents, their busiest days did not coincide either. This lack of correlation is noteworthy but suggests there is not much else to squeeze out of the temporal distribution of their coverage.

The following pages offer a comparative analysis of the six categories previously examined individually for each correspondent: social actors, sources, story lines, topics, representation of social actors, and identity/otherness. This exercise tries to establish where the coverage by the eight correspondents studied converge and where they differ from each other.

1. Social Actors

When it comes to the social actors highlighted in the coverage by the correspondents included in the sample, a divergence is observed between, on the one hand, the two Indian correspondents and, on the other, the rest of the sample. Chart 23 shows the weight of three key social actors —authorities, coronavirus patients, and Chinese society— across the whole sample of correspondents.

Chart 23: Comparative of key social actors in correspondents' coverage

Source: Own elaboration
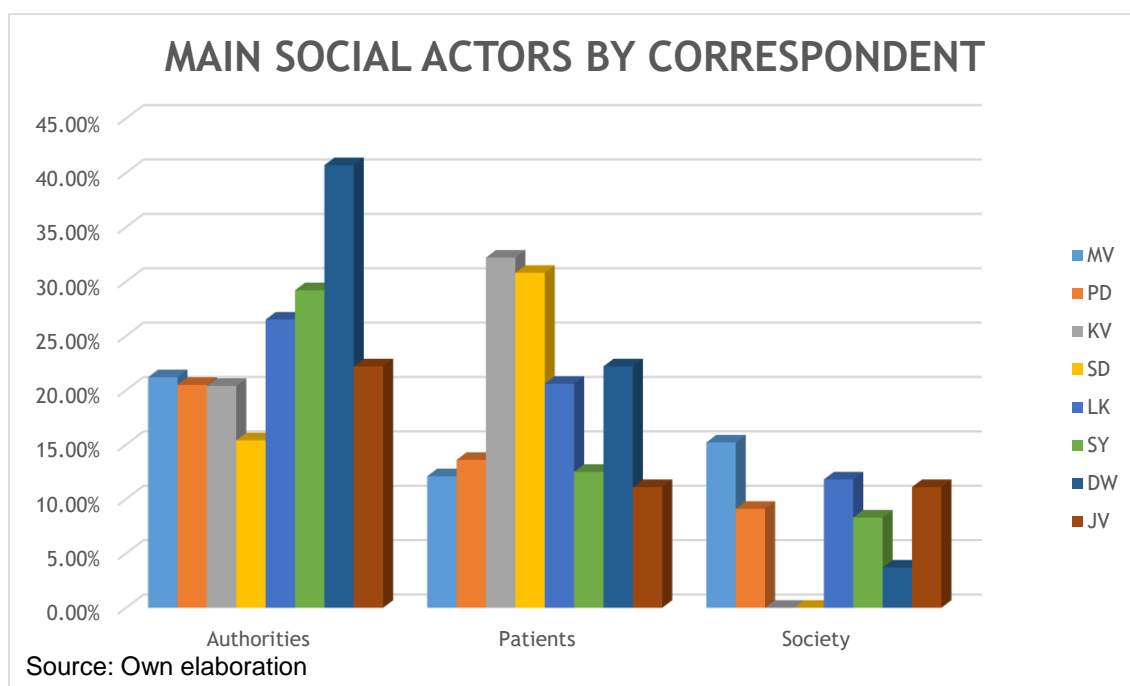
While the correspondents from El País, ABC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and the South China Morning Post place Chinese central authorities under the spotlight, those of PTI and Times of India pay attention predominantly to coronavirus patients.

Most correspondents who focus on Chinese authorities have coronavirus patients as the second most important actor in their coverage. Except for El País's correspondent, the other five correspondents have patients as the second actor: for ABC's, The Guardian's and The Straits Times' correspondents, patients are their sole second actor in importance; for The Telegraph's foreign governments and patients are the second most important actor, and for the South China Morning Post's correspondent a series of seven actors who appear as the most important in one article each come after authorities.

Continuing with this group of correspondents, the third most common social actor in importance in their coverage is Chinese society as a whole. ABC's correspondent has Chinese society and the World Health Organization; The Guardian's correspondent, Chinese society and critics of the Communist regime; and The Telegraph's correspondent has Chinese society alone in the third position. Chinese society is also one of the social actors on which the South China Morning Post's correspondent focuses in one article of her sample.

For The Straits Times' correspondent, Hubei's residents are the third most prevalent social actor in her coverage. In El País's correspondent case, she places Chinese society as a whole as the second most important actor in her coverage, with coronavirus patients as the third.

Meanwhile, for PTI's correspondent, Chinese authorities are the second most important social actors, and Indian officials are the third. The Times of India's correspondent has Chinese authorities and Indians in Wuhan as the second most important actors, and a series of five social actors take the spotlight in the remaining articles. Thus, not only are Indian correspondents the outliers of the sample of correspondents for their emphasis on coronavirus patients and their de-emphasis on Chinese authorities in their coverage, but they also stand out for their preoccupation with social actors of their own nationality.

Among the other six correspondents, there are divergences regarding the presence of social actors from the country where their media outlet is based. In the coverage by El País's correspondent, for example, no Spanish actor appears as the main one in any of her articles, and the coverage by the South China Morning Post's correspondent does not have any Hong Kongese as the top actor in any of her articles either.

The correspondents of The Telegraph and The Straits Times have two articles dedicated to social actors from Britain and Singapore, respectively. The Telegraph's correspondent has one article focused on Britons in Hubei and another about British entrepreneurs in China. Social actors from Hong Kong or related to that city, a former British colony, are important in a further three articles: the Hong Kong government —along with other foreign governments—, Hong Kong hospital workers and people from mainland China arriving in Hong Kong. For the correspondent of The Straits Times, one article has Singaporean businesses as the main social actor, and Singaporean diplomats are the main actor in another article.

For ABC's correspondent, the Spanish government is the main social actor in one article, and The Guardian's correspondent has one article focused on Britons in China. It must be noted that ABC's article which has the Spanish government as its main social actor is a short one, and The Guardian's has a collective byline.

A final way to compare the social actors featured in the samples from the correspondents analyzed is through the perspective of the diversity of social actors. This can be observed in Chart 23 as well.

As could be expected given the size of his sample, the correspondent of PTI is the one that fits a greater variety of social actors in his coverage: 28. However, despite this diversity, the top social actor in his coverage alone, patients, accounts for 32.2% of his articles. Given that the second most important actor in his coverage, authorities, appears in 20.4% of his articles, more than half of his coverage is focused on these two actors. Although the correspondent of the Times of India pays attention to fewer social actors, eight, the predominance of the main social actor of his coverage reaches a similar proportion to that of his fellow PTI correspondent: patients are the main actor in 30.8% of his articles.

ABC's and El País's correspondents are second and third by the number of different social actors highlighted, with 19 and 14 different main actors in their coverage, respectively. In the coverage by ABC's correspondent, the top social actor (authorities) takes the spotlight in a fifth of the articles. For El País's correspondent, authorities are the main focus in 21.2%.

With 13 and 12 different social actors highlighted in their coverage, the Telegraph and The Guardian correspondents are fourth and fifth among the correspondents studied, judging by the number of different predominant actors. For The Telegraph's correspondent, Chinese authorities are the main actor in 29.2% of her articles. For The Guardian's correspondent, authorities take the spotlight in 26.5% of her articles. This means that, for the correspondents of U.K. newspapers analyzed, their dominant social actor is not as dominant as for Indian newspapers' correspondents, but that they pay more attention to Chinese authorities than the correspondents of Spanish newspapers studied.

The Straits Times' correspondent puts 11 different actors in the focal point. However, authorities are the main social actors in 40.7% of her articles, the highest proportion of all the correspondents analyzed. Finally, the South China Morning Post's correspondent highlights eight different social actors, with the top one (authorities) taking the spotlight in 22.2% of her articles.

The one common thread that unites all correspondents is the overwhelming dominance of collective social actors over individual ones. South China Morning Post's correspondent has the highest proportion of individual actors: three (Chen Yixin, Li Wenliang, and Xi Jinping) out of nine articles, and The Guardian's correspondent also pays attention to a considerable number of individual actors: seven in 34 articles.

2. Sources

Sourcing varies significantly among the correspondents' coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China analyzed for this dissertation. Some correspondents cite more sources than others, and the type of sources privileged by each correspondent is also different. The following lines seek to outline the main points drawn from a comparative analysis of the sample.

Chart 24 shows the average of sources per article cited by each correspondent analyzed. Since the number of articles included in the sample for each correspondent goes from nine for the correspondent of the South China Morning Post to 93 for PTI's correspondent, the average of sources per article offers the best comparative illustration of their sourcing practices.

Chart 24: Comparative of average of sources cited by each correspondent

AVERAGE SOURCING BY CORRESPONDENT

Source: Own elaboration
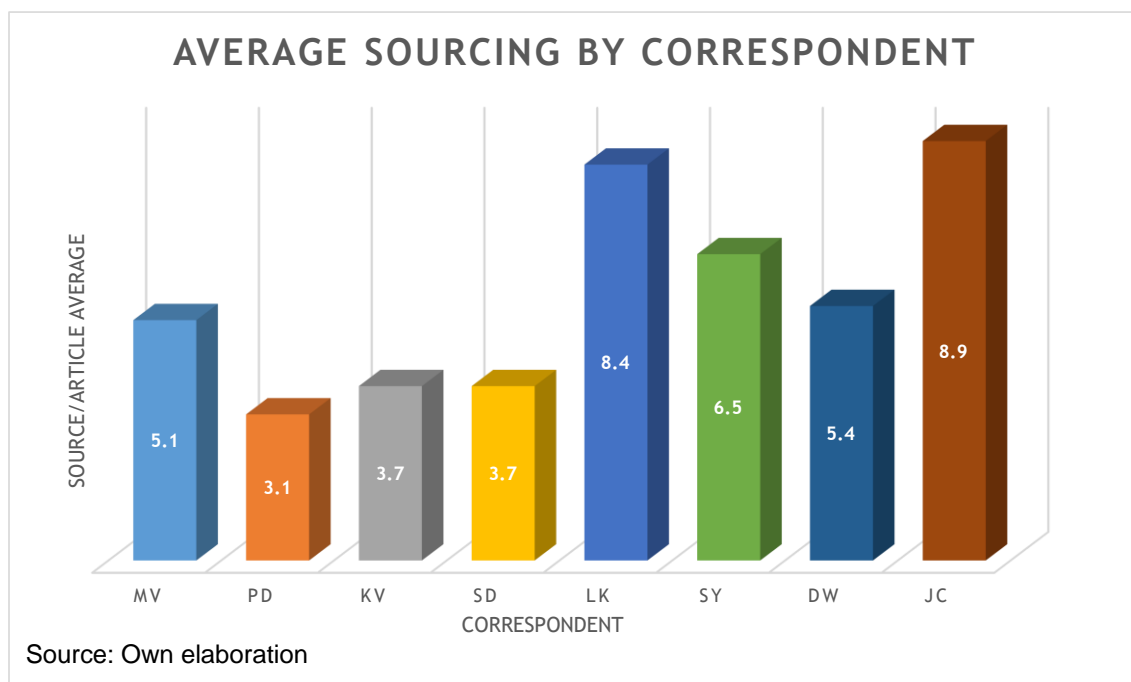
As shown by the chart, the South China Morning Post's correspondent has the highest average of sources cited per article, 8.9, and ABC's correspondent has the lowest figure, 3.1 sources per article. In between, there are the correspondents of The Guardian (8.4 sources per article), The Telegraph (6.5), The Straits Times (5.4), El País (5.1), and those of Times of India and PTI (both with an average of 3.7 sources per article).

Another aspect that is worth looking at is the type of sources cited by each correspondent. Chart 25 shows each correspondent's reliance on their main type of source of information.

Chart 25: Comparative of main sources cited by each correspondent

Source: Own elaboration
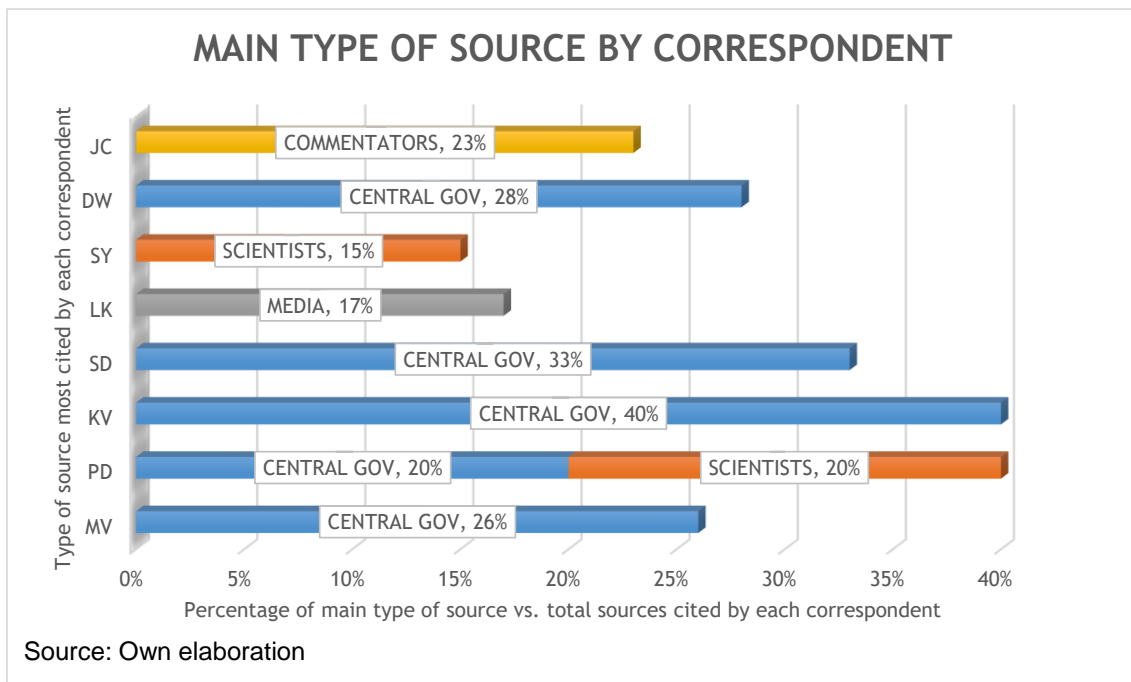
Chinese central authorities are the primary source of information found in the samples of the correspondents of El País, PTI, Times of India, and The Straits Times. For ABC's correspondent, scientists and doctors, and Chinese central authorities are the top sources. Meanwhile, The Guardian's correspondent has media as her top source; scientists and doctors are the main sources for The Telegraph's correspondent, and commentators are the top source for the correspondent of the South China Morning Post.

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The percentage of citations of the main type of source versus the total sources cited by each correspondent can be used as an indicator of sourcing diversity. However, a more accurate picture emerges if, instead of considering only the primary sources, the top four types of sources cited by each correspondent are contemplated. Chart 26 offers that data.

Chart 26: Comparative of four top types of sources cited by each correspondent

Source: Own elaboration
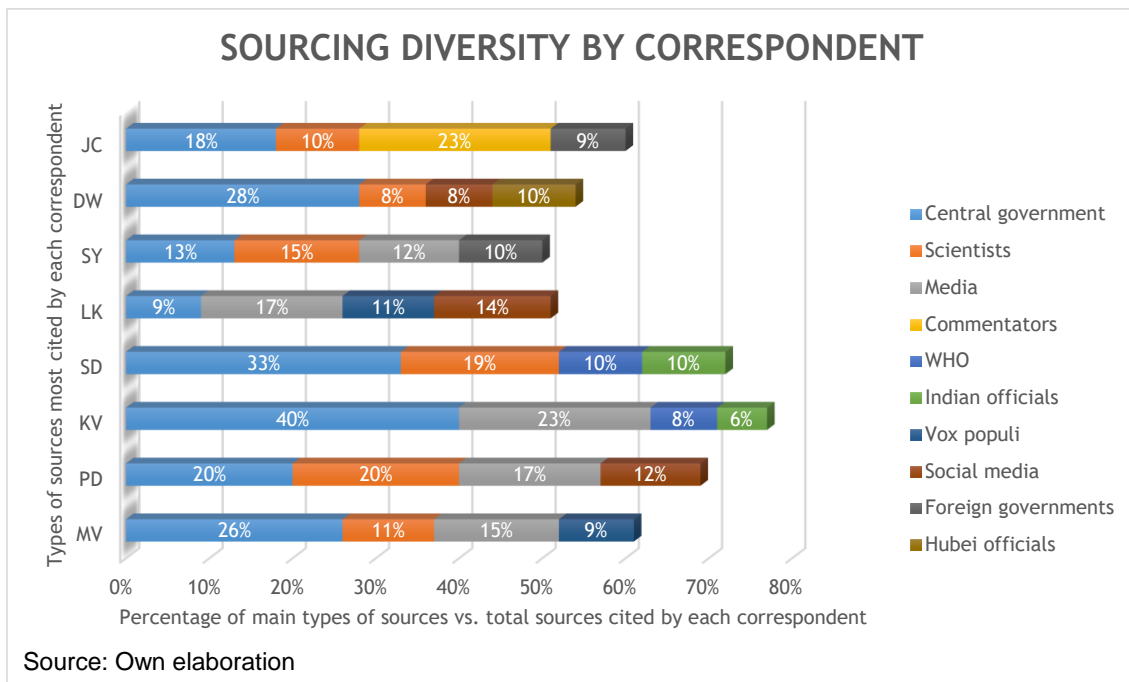
Thus, The Telegraph's correspondent has the most diversified sourcing spectrum, as her four top sources only account for less than half of the total sources found in her sample. The correspondent of PTI lies at the opposite side of the range, as his sourcing is heavily reliant on his four top sources, which account for more than three-quarters of the total —his top source alone, the Chinese central government, accounts for 40%—. The Guardian's correspondent has the second most diversified sourcing range, followed by the correspondents of The Straits Times, the South China Morning Post, El País, ABC, and Times of India.

Considering the main types of sources of all correspondents, Chinese central authorities are the most frequently cited source: all eight correspondents have them as one of their

four top sources. Scientists sources are the second type, as six correspondents have them among their four main types of sources; media are the third, with five correspondents using them among their top four sources, and social media is the fourth, as it features among the four top sources for three correspondents.

3. Story Lines

With regards to story lines, the first point that needs to be made is that no story lines were identified in the coverage by the two Indian correspondents studied here. The rest of the correspondents analyzed did introduce them in their coverage. Thus, what follows focuses only on the story lines found in the articles written by the correspondents of El País, ABC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and South China Morning Post.

Among the correspondents that use story lines, El País's and the South China Morning Post's each refer to seven different story lines. The correspondents of ABC, The Guardian, and The Telegraph introduce six story lines each, while the correspondent of The Straits Times uses five.

Chart 27 shows the story lines found in the coverage by these six correspondents. As seen there, the story line "China lacks freedoms" is the only story line referenced by all six correspondents. However, when considering the sample in its entirety, the story line that appears with the highest frequency is "China lacks transparency."

STORY LINES BY CORRESPONDENT

Source: Own elaboration
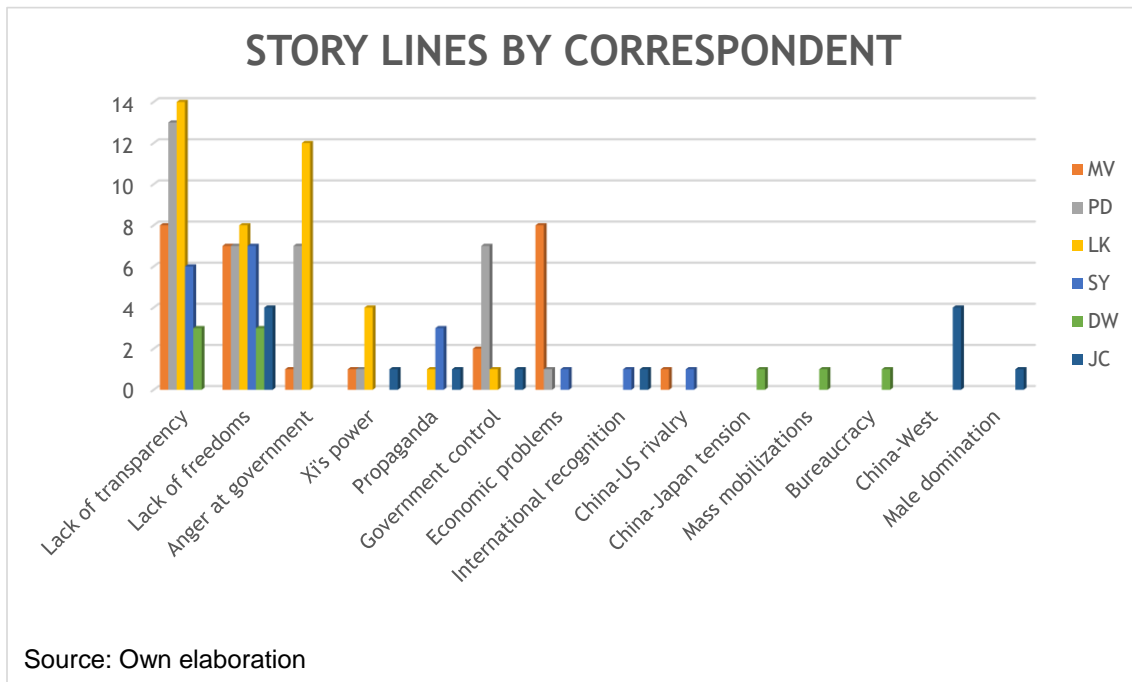
Indeed, for the correspondents of ABC and The Guardian, "China lacks transparency" is the most frequently used story line, while the correspondents of El País and The Straits Times have it as their top story line tied with another one —"China faces economic problems" for El País's correspondent and "Lack of freedoms" for The Straits Times'—. The correspondent of The Telegraph has "China lacks freedoms" as the main story lines in her coverage, with "China lacks transparency" in second place. By contrast, the transparency story line has not been identified in the sample of the correspondent of the South China Morning Post. For this correspondent, the top story lines are "China lacks freedoms" and "China and the West are different."

The story line "China lacks freedoms" is the second by the number of references, considering all correspondents. As just mentioned, this is the top story line for The Telegraph's correspondent. For the correspondents of the South China Morning Post and The Straits Times, this is their top story line along with another one —"China and the West are different" for the South China Morning Post's and "China lacks transparency" for The Straits Times'—. For the correspondent of El País, the lack of freedoms story lines comes in the second position, as well as for ABC's correspondent —along with the story lines "Chinese are angry at their government" and "Government controls

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people"—, and for The Guardian's correspondent this is the third story line. Thus, there is broad consensus to point to China's transparency shortcomings and the absence of freedoms in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis.

The third story line by frequency of citations in the whole sample is "Chinese are angry at their government." This is the second most important story line for the correspondent of The Guardian and one of the second story lines —along with "China lacks freedoms" and "Government controls people"— for the correspondent of ABC. El País's correspondent also introduces this story line, but only once.

Another story line, "Government controls people," is introduced by four correspondents, those of ABC, El País, The Guardian, and South China Morning Post. There are some other story lines cited by at least three correspondents: "China faces economic problems" by the correspondents of El País, ABC and The Telegraph; "Xi has accumulated power" by those of El País, ABC and The Guardian, and "China resorts to propaganda" by The Guardian, The Telegraph and South China Morning Post.

A further two story lines are mentioned by two correspondents: "China wants a larger international recognition" by the correspondents of The Telegraph and the South China Morning Post, and "China and the U.S. are rivals" by those of El País and The Telegraph. The remaining story lines are only used by one correspondent: "China and Japan have a strained relationship" (The Straits Times), "China resorts to mass mobilizations" (The Straits Times), "China is a bureaucratic country" (The Straits Times), "China and the West are different" (South China Morning Post) and "China is a male-dominated society" (South China Morning Post).

4. Topics

The topics addressed in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China by the correspondents included in the sample are broad-ranging and differ from one correspondent to another. Nonetheless, some common patterns can be established, and the first part of this section explores the coincidences identified after an analysis of the topics found in the coverage by each correspondent, followed by an overview of the main differences.

Due to the great variety of topics touched on in the samples from the correspondents analyzed, a thematic coincidence is defined here as the topics on which at least three correspondents turn to. The first topic that fits that definition is the confirmation by Chinese authorities that the new coronavirus spreads from human to human, the focal point of reports written by the correspondents of Times of India, The Guardian, and The Telegraph published on January 21 (SD2, LK3, and SY1, respectively).

The next topic that drew the attention of several correspondents was the introduction of lockdowns in Wuhan and other cities of Hubei province. This is also the topic that attracted the broadest coincidence among correspondents, as seven of the eight analyzed had Hubei's lockdowns as the central topic of articles they published on January 24 (all except El País's). However, it must be noted that there was no coincidence with regards to the specific lockdowns to which the correspondents were referring. For example, the correspondent of the South China Morning Post highlighted the logistical difficulties of putting Wuhan under lockdown in JC2 and ABC's correspondent also directed his attention to Wuhan in PD4, but PTI's correspondent reported on lockdowns in 13 cities in KV4, The Times of India's correspondent centered on the lockdown of Huanggang in SD4, The Guardian's correspondent mentioned ten cities locked down in LK6, The Telegraph's correspondent talked about the isolation of 20 million people in SY4 and The Straits Times' correspondent focused on five cities in DW1.

Another two topics that caught the eye of various correspondents, although at different points in time, were the restrictions adopted by different foreign governments toward people arriving from China and the evacuations of foreign nationals from Wuhan and Hubei. ABC's correspondent was the first among the analyzed correspondents to report on the evacuations of foreigners from Wuhan, on January 27 (PD7), and again on January 30 (PD12). The topic was picked up by Times of India's correspondent on January 29 (SD9), by PTI's correspondent on January 31 (KV14). The correspondent of PTI would go on to dedicate multiple articles to the back and forth of the evacuations of Indian citizens from Wuhan. The Straits Times' correspondent also addressed the topic of evacuations of Singaporeans much later, on March 6 (DW24), in an article that emphasized that Singapore's foreign ministry officials prepared exhaustively to evacuate Singaporean citizens from Hubei during the lockdown.

Regarding international restrictions to people arriving from China, The Telegraph's correspondent was first among the studied correspondent to report on the topic on January 29 (SY10) and would follow up on February 2 (SY13). ABC's correspondent also touched on this topic on January 30 (PD12) and on February 1 (PD15), as did on February 2 the correspondents of El País (MV8) and PTI (KV18). The correspondent of PTI wrote some follow-up articles in February too. The Straits Times' correspondent reported on China's criticism toward these measures on February 7 (DW11).

From the very beginning of her coverage, the correspondent of The Guardian is trying to reflect critical views on the authorities' handling of the crisis. Her first article that has this as its central topic was LK7, published on January 28. Similar articles were published on February 1 by the correspondents of El País (MV7) and on February 4 by ABC's correspondent (PD19).

As early as January 30, El País's correspondent was already warning on the impact the coronavirus crisis would have on the Chinese economy (MV6), a topic that would resurface several times throughout her coverage. For other correspondents, this economic theme only appears much later, as in the case of The Telegraph's correspondent on February 19 (SY22) and again on March 3 (SY23), on March 2 for The Straits Times' correspondent (DW22), and on March 6 for the correspondent of PTI (KV81).

Everyday life under coronavirus-related restrictions is examined by the correspondent of The Telegraph on January 30 (SY11) and again through a first-person account on February 13 (SY19). On February 2, the correspondents of The Guardian (LK8) and ABC (PD16) pay attention to this topic, and El País's correspondent followed suit on February 9 (MV17).

ABC's correspondent on January 31 (PD14) scrutinizes how doctors and patients are suffering during the coronavirus outbreak due to the shortcomings of China's healthcare system. The correspondent of The Straits Times reports on February 4 (DW8) on shortages of medical equipment, while The Guardian's correspondent on February 6 (LK14) explains that Wuhan's healthcare system is overwhelmed. PTI's correspondent reports that China has welcomed the arrival of support and supplies from BRICS countries to combat the epidemic on February 12 (KV36) and has more articles about both the scarcity of equipment in China and the arrival of aid from abroad.

The death of a coronavirus patient in the Philippines, the first outside of China, was reported by PTI's correspondent on February 2 (KV17). The correspondents of ABC (PD17) and The Guardian (LK10) reported it a day later.

On February 5, the correspondent of The Guardian offers an analysis of Xi Jinping's involvement in the handling of the coronavirus crisis (LK13). The correspondents of El País and ABC both touch on this topic later on, on February 17 (MV24 and PD32, respectively).

The death of doctor Li Wenliang represents another landmark moment for the coverage by most correspondents, as six of them report it and some even dedicate more than one article to the topic. PTI's correspondent noted it on February 6 (KV24), the first among the analyzed correspondents. El País's and ABC's correspondents are the two that pay more attention to Li among those included in the sample. They have articles dedicated to him on February 7 (MV13 and PD23) as well as several follow-ups echoing widespread anger at Chinese authorities in subsequent days. The correspondent of The Telegraph looks at it on February 8 (SY17), while The Straits Times' correspondent addresses this story on February 9 (DW12) from a markedly different angle: her article claims that Li's death is unlikely to be a watershed moment for freedom of speech in

China. The correspondent of the South China Morning Post portrays Li as a hero of the people, but not the Communist Party in a February 15 article (JC4).

The return to work after an extended Lunar New Year vacation was reported simultaneously on February 11 by the correspondents of El País (MV20), ABC (PD27), and The Straits Times (DW13). Another development that received wide simultaneous coverage was a surge in cases after a change in the method used to diagnose coronavirus patients, which was reported by the correspondents of El País (MV22), ABC (PD29), The Guardian (LK20), and The Straits Times (DW14) on February 14, and a day before by the correspondent of PTI (KV37). The firing of a Hubei official, as well as the appointment of their replacements, are covered by the correspondents of the South China Morning Post (JC3), The Guardian (LK18 and LK20), and The Straits Times (DW14).

The use of propaganda campaigns by Chinese authorities found its way to the coverage by some correspondents. The correspondents of The Telegraph (SY20) and The Straits Times (DW16) both reported it on February 16, ABC's correspondent did so a day later (PD33) and The Guardian's correspondent on March 31 (LK34).

Toward the end of February, several correspondents report that the epidemic is beginning to slow down in China. The correspondents of PTI (KV62) and The Straits Times (DW20) covered that trend on February 23, while those of ABC (PD28) and South China Morning Post (JC6) followed suit on February 28. El País's correspondent reported on March 9 (MV31) that Chinese authorities were optimistic about the crisis. Interestingly, at a time when many of her peers were talking about a slowdown of the epidemic, the correspondent of The Guardian insisted on February 24 on the idea that Chinese authorities were struggling to contain it (LK23).

The last news story that attracted widespread attention among the correspondents analyzed was Xi Jinping's visit to Wuhan on March 10, which was reported by the correspondents of PTI (KV90), The Guardian (LK32), El País (MV32), The Telegraph (SY24), The Straits Times (DW26) and South China Morning Post (JC9).

Having analyzed the coincidence of topics among all the correspondents analyzed, it is worth looking at how the topics covered by the two correspondents of each cultural group compare against each other. Here, striking parallelisms can be observed in the

topics addressed by the two Spanish correspondents. There is some overlap in the topics covered by the two Indian correspondents during the time in which they were both covering the coronavirus crisis. Moreover, the correspondents of newspapers from countries with a Confucian culture have in common that some of her stories have a positive angle, but that applies to the correspondent of PTI too. No significant similarities —other than those which attract broad-based interest from all correspondents— have been identified between the two correspondents of U.K. newspapers.

The two Spanish correspondents, on many occasions, report not only on the same topic but on the same day or within days of separations. That is the case, for example, in articles about tracing efforts for people from Hubei in the rest of China, reported by El País's correspondent on January 28 (MV5) and by ABC's correspondent on February 5 (PD20), which are not replicated by other correspondents. The topic of China's isolation is first addressed by ABC's correspondent on January 30 (PD12) and followed up on February 1 (PD15), and a day later El País's correspondent reports it for the first time (MV7). These two correspondents are also the only among those analyzed to report about the recurring coronavirus patients, again within days: ABC's correspondent covers it on February 28 (PD36), and El País's correspondent follows suit a day later (MV27).

The coverage by the two Indian correspondents also has similarities during the time both correspondents are covering the coronavirus crisis. They keep their focus on the evolution of the epidemic, while other correspondents start to look at criticism toward Chinese authorities and the effects of lockdowns on Hubei's population. They also share a preoccupation with the Indian community in Wuhan, to whom they dedicate several articles. The correspondent of PTI writes many more articles about these topics, as his sample is larger and extends for longer in time than that of Times of India's correspondent.

With regards to the topics that mark differences among the correspondents analyzed, El País's correspondent distinguishes herself from the rest of the correspondents through her emphasis on covering economic issues. Some of her articles pay attention to the Chinese working class as well and to the problems of online education.

ABC's correspondent is the correspondent that focuses more on the World Health Organization and its views on the evolution of the epidemic. He also delves into the shortcomings of China's healthcare system and the social impact of the measures implemented by the Chinese government. However, these topics are also covered extensively by the correspondent of The Guardian.

The coverage by the correspondent of PTI is characterized by his attention to the evolution of the epidemic, which he follows almost daily, and to the Indian community in Wuhan. These concerns are shared by his fellow correspondent at the Times of India. Since the coverage by PTI's correspondent extends for longer, he also looks at the evolution of the epidemic in Tibet, moves and statements from the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, and at the collapse of a hotel that served as a quarantine facility in Fujian province.

What sets the coverage by The Guardian's correspondent apart is her preoccupation with conveying the views of people affected by the virus. She also centers on reflecting critical views of the Chinese government and on dissidents, but ABC's correspondent does that too.

For The Telegraph's correspondent, the topics that she covers and that are not found elsewhere are those related to the evolution of the epidemic in Hong Kong, and Britons in China. Similarly, the Singaporean-focused articles written by the correspondent of The Straits Times also distinguish her from the other correspondents studied.

Finally, the correspondent of the South China Morning Post differs from the rest of the correspondents analyzed in the degree of granularity with which she reports on Chinese authorities, on also on the intellectual explanations she provides to put Chinese peculiarities in context. This is analyzed in greater detail in the section about strategies to mark identity and otherness.

Before moving on to the next section, it should be noted that some topics covered by certain correspondents try to shed a positive light on the coronavirus crisis in China. That is the case in the articles about international cooperation written by the correspondents of PTI (KV36, KV41, KV52, KV58, KV69, and KV72) and The Straits Times (DW9 and DW10), an article by PTI's correspondent about a Bollywood star showing support for his Chinese fans (KV60), another article by The Straits Times'

correspondent about volunteers, or an article by the correspondent of the South China Morning Post (JC7) about Chinese women playing relevant roles in the fight against coronavirus.

5. Representation of Social Actors

An earlier chapter offered a first comparative approach to the social actors highlighted by the correspondents included in the sample from a quantitative perspective. The present section builds on that and, from a qualitative point of view, looks to compare how the main social actors in the coverage by the analyzed correspondents are represented.

The group of correspondents that had Chinese central authorities as the main social actors in their coverage —all except for the two Indian correspondents— tends to represent them critically. Correspondents like ABC's, The Guardian's, The Straits Times' and the South China Morning Post's call the Chinese government "authoritarian" or refer to the Communist Party's rule as an "authoritarian regime." However, rather than through negative referential strategies, the critical portrayal of the Chinese government occurs mostly at the predicational level —that is, through the actions attributed to them.

The correspondent of El País, in MV16, deems authorities' handling of the coronavirus crisis a "disaster" and talks about their "incompetence." ABC's correspondent refers in PD25 to the Chinese government as a "superpower that spends billions in pharaonic projects but neglects the health of its people." The Guardian's correspondent reports extensively on popular complaints against the way Chinese authorities managed the epidemic and, in LK9, echoes the perception among ordinary Chinese people of a cover-up of the epidemic: "Citizens blame officials for claiming for weeks that the virus was manageable and ignoring as well as covering up obvious signs that the outbreak was serious." The Telegraph's correspondent notes their use of propaganda, as shown by this SY24 fragment: "China has stepped up its propaganda efforts in recent days to re-frame the narrative around its handling of the outbreak after a botched initial response, potentially exacerbating the global spread and leading to public outcry after Li Wenliang, the whistleblower doctor, died from the virus." The Straits Times'

correspondent claims in DW16 that authorities have censored information, resorted to propaganda, and mishandled the coronavirus epidemic. The South China Morning Post's correspondent also notes Chinese censorship in JC4 and reports that its containment of the epidemic is seen by authorities as an opportunity to gain international influence.

From the beginning, the historical precedent of SARS is mentioned by these correspondents and used to question the Chinese government's version of developments. Particularly in the early part of their coverage, these correspondents note efforts by Chinese authorities to improve transparency and try to avoid the mistakes they made in the 2002-2003 epidemic, but at one point or another these references to the government's willingness to amend their past mistakes are dropped. By the time of the death of Li Wenliang's death, the portrayal of Chinese authorities is unequivocally critical.

Within this group of correspondents, there are some noticeable differences. ABC's correspondent is perhaps the most aggressive in his reporting among the analyzed correspondents. He suggests Hubei's authorities have intellectual deficiencies (PD9), accuses central authorities —in his own words— of hiding the outbreak and delaying their response (PD17), and portrays China's tracing and isolation policies as a new Cultural Revolution (PD20 and PD33). However, in the later articles of the sample, those criticisms ease somewhat, as the correspondent reports that fewer people are getting infected and dying in China and reproduce the praises for the government from the World Health Organization.

The Guardian's correspondent also offers consistently critical views of the actions of the Chinese government. In her case, nevertheless, this criticism is not offered through the correspondent's own words but through quoted speech from critical experts, ordinary people, dissidents, or activists. Even at the end of the sample, when the epidemic seems to be contained, the correspondent presents that as a propaganda opportunity for the Communist regime.

For the correspondents of El País, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and the South China Morning Post, there is a mixed picture. Their representation of Chinese authorities is negative in some articles, while in others more neutral references are used.

The correspondent of Times of India could also be included in that group, as he shows skepticism toward Chinese authorities in articles like SD5, where he questions the veracity of data they provide, or in SD12, where he suggests that the military may be deployed to avoid social instability instead of to contain the epidemic. However, his references tend to be neutral in the analyzed sample.

Meanwhile, PTI's correspondent overwhelmingly uses neutral references to Chinese authorities in the articles considered. In some articles, he presents them as agents of positive actions like thanking foreign governments for sending medical supplies and other aid (KV36 and KV41) or sending experts to other nations in need (KV72), but he also reproduces criticism of China by Indian or U.S. officials.

Where there is coincidence among all the correspondents analyzed is in their attribution of agency to Chinese authorities in performing all kinds of actions. PTI's correspondent, in KV72, portrays the Chinese government as the main social actor in a story about the arrival of Chinese experts to Iran, while the experts themselves —the ones going to Iran— are only secondary actors. The Times of India's correspondent focuses on Xi Jinping's call on the military to help contain the spread of the virus in SD13, not on the military. The Straits Times' correspondent presents Chinese central authorities as agents of actions such as producing masks in DW7, which looks unlikely to have happened. Similarly, The Guardian's correspondent reports in LK6 that authorities are building hospitals in Wuhan. In the coverage by the correspondents from El País, ABC, The Telegraph, and the South China Morning Post, Chinese authorities are also often presented as active agents.

The reverse side of the coin is that Chinese society is usually presented as passive, and as the object of authorities' actions in the samples of all the correspondents studied. This is particularly true in the articles about the lockdowns of Wuhan and other cities in Hubei. Some correspondents like those of El País, ABC, and The Straits Times present Wuhan and Hubei's population as victims of the actions of the Chinese government and their local authorities.

It also contributes to the passivization of Chinese society that not many individual cases of ordinary people are cited. In some articles of El País and The Guardian, the stories of ordinary Chinese are cited to illustrate the news being covered. This also happens, with

much less frequency, in certain articles by the correspondents of The Telegraph, The Straits Times, South China Morning Post, and PTI, who tend to privilege elite figures in their coverage. Here, it is interesting to note that, while El País's correspondent pays attention to the working class and dedicates MV17 to those known as *diduan renkou* or lowest group of society, the correspondents of The Telegraph and Straits Times center on business owners and ignore employees in SY22 and DW22 respectively.

There are exceptions to a generally passive representation of Chinese society. The Guardian's correspondent often presents ordinary Chinese citizens as agents of the verbal actions of criticizing the government, as do those of ABC and El País and, to a lesser extent, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and South China Morning Post. Despite these efforts to convey critical voices from Chinese society, The Guardian's correspondent says in LK7 that Chinese leadership under Xi enjoys broad support from the public.

Chinese coronavirus patients also tend to be presented in generic and anonymous terms, most commonly aggregated as statistics, to the extreme where they become "coronavirus cases" or a "death toll." This is particularly the case of the two Indian correspondents, who despite all the attention they pay to this collective, tend to offer an anonymized portrayal. The size of the sample from the correspondent of PTI means he does report on certain individual cases, offering a more humanized perspective of the epidemic, but these are the exception rather than the norm. For the correspondent of the South China Morning Post, coronavirus patients do not seem to be among the top priorities in her coverage.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, the correspondent for The Guardian is the one among the analyzed correspondent who tries the hardest to convey the voices of coronavirus patients. She has several articles explaining particular cases of people who suffered the disease or saw relatives die from it. LK14 alone, for instance, cites four coronavirus patients or relatives as sources, more than in the whole coverage by the two Spanish correspondents combined.

The correspondents of The Telegraph and The Straits Times also try to offer personalizations of the collective of coronavirus patients. They have one article each (SY7 and DW18, respectively) telling individual stories of people affected by the virus

and cite particular cases in other articles, but generic references to this collective social actor still dominate.

For the Spanish correspondents, their lack of attention to individual cases of coronavirus patients is somewhat mitigated by an emphasis on the death of doctor Li Wenliang, to whom they both explicitly refer to as a symbol of the crisis. El País's correspondent has three articles dedicated to Li Wenliang and the fallout from his death, while Li's death is a key element in a further three articles by ABC's correspondent.

These two correspondents link Li's death to demands for freedom of expression in China, as do those of the South China Morning Post and The Telegraph. However, the Straits Times' correspondent offers a dissenting view in an analytical article that claims that his death is unlikely to be a watershed moment for freedom of speech in China.

One final point that needs to be addressed about the representation of social actors is the difference between the representation of Chinese actors and those of other nationalities. Here, it must be noted that the correspondent of South China Morning Post offers greater granularity in general, but particularly with regards to Chinese authorities, than the rest of the correspondents analyzed.

For the two Indian correspondents, there is a difference in the way they treat Chinese authorities and Indian authorities, as references to Indian authorities tend to be more specific. They also pay greater attention than the rest of the correspondents analyzed to the community of Wuhan and Hubei residents of their same nationality. Indeed, Indians in Wuhan are one of the main social actors for both Indian correspondents.

Similarly, The Straits Times' correspondent has an article (DW24) focused on the Singaporean officials who worked on the evacuation of Singaporean citizens from Wuhan and Hubei, which portrays their actions positively. This correspondent wrote another Singapore-focused article to explain the economic challenges facing Singaporean-owned businesses amid the epidemic and lockdowns, DW22, which allows readers to sympathize with their hardship. An article with a similar focus and intention is found in the coverage by The Telegraph's correspondent, SY22, with the particularity that this one presents British entrepreneurs in China as "expats."

6. Identity/Otherness

Correspondents' strategies of identification and othering are the remaining element to be considered in this compared analysis of their coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China. In this section, cultural references, as well as examples of discourse polarization, are looked at.

The first point to be made from a compared analysis of the samples of the eight China correspondents analyzed is that a cultural dimension is present in the sample of all correspondents considered. That is, all of the correspondents studied refer to cultural elements when covering a major health crisis out of China.

References to Chinese New Year are found in the samples of all correspondents. Correspondents mention this festival in several articles, usually in connection with the tradition for China's internal migrants of traveling back to their places of origin, as the movement of people is seen as risky in the context of an outbreak of a highly contagious disease. El País's correspondent introduces a reference to the Lunar New Year in MV6 to give an idea of the potential economic impact of the measures implemented by the Chinese government and compares it to Christmas or Black Friday in the West.

Another aspect mentioned by several correspondents is that some people in China have a taste for eating wildlife, which has also been linked by scientists to outbreaks of contagious diseases. This receives the most comprehensive treatment in the sample of the South China Morning Post's correspondent, with JC1 offering a nuanced take on the topic. In that article, the coronavirus outbreak is implicitly blamed on some Chinese people's habit of eating wildlife, as one virology expert is quoted as saying that the simplest way to prevent new infections diseases is to stay away from wildlife. That article also explains that those who like eating wild animals are a minority in China and that wildlife trade has already been banned in many cities. An expert in political economy attributes the taste for wildlife to past food deprivation and says Chinese people view food as their primary need, while the West values freedom and other human

rights. This cultural trait also finds its way to the correspondents of El País, ABC, and The Telegraph, although their references are briefer than and not as thorough as that of JC1. In the case of ABC's correspondent, this taste for wildlife and low hygiene standards are linked to a growing wave of "anti-Chinese" sentiment around the world (PD15).

The correspondent of PTI pays attention to another aspect that is not found in the other samples analyzed: the use of traditional Chinese medicine to treat coronavirus patients in combination with Western medicine. This is highlighted in KV44, where the correspondent observes that "the announcement about the use of TCM for COVID-19 patients is significant as the virus has no standardised cure yet."

Chinese culture also serves as a narrative resource for some correspondents. The South China Morning Post's correspondent uses a metaphor taken from Chinese folk tradition ("Chinese folk tales often feature honest officials, with a sword from the emperor, enforcing law and justice during times of crisis) to report on the appointment of Chen Yixin, described as a protégé of Xi Jinping, as deputy head of a central government group to guide the epidemic control work in Hubei province in JC3. ABC's correspondent employs the Chinese zodiac to say, metaphorically, that Wuhan had become a "rat trap" because of its lockdown, ahead of the beginning of a new lunar year under the zodiacal sign of the rat in PD4, a metaphor that is also repeated in PD5.

ABC's correspondent also uses a famous episode from China's 20th-century history, the Cultural Revolution, to describe the government's tracing and isolation efforts for people who had left Hubei province before the lockdown, in PD20 (with another metaphorical headline alluding to a "human hunt") and again in PD33. Likewise, The Straits Times's correspondent puts Chinese history to use in DW7. She places the Chinese government's decision to impose a lockdown on Wuhan and other cities from Hubei province within a tradition of mass mobilizations in situations of national crises, citing the historical precedents from Mao Zedong's mass movements to more recent crises such as the Sichuan earthquake of 2008 and the SARS pandemic of 2002-2003. The historical precedent of SARS, by the way, is cited by all correspondents analyzed, particularly in their early coverage. Memories from another disaster, Chernobyl's

nuclear accident, are recalled by ABC's correspondent (PD24 and PD25) and, through quoted speech, by The Guardian's correspondent (LK21).

With regards to cultural presuppositions, there are some noteworthy differences in the knowledge of China or everyday Chinese life presumed by the correspondents analyzed. Take mentions to Chinese social media platform Weibo, for example. The correspondent of PTI describes Weibo as a social media platform "which is akin to Twitter." Both correspondents from Spanish newspapers describe it just by establishing an equivalence to Twitter: El País's says Weibo is "China's Twitter," and ABC's calls it "a copy" of the censored Twitter. The correspondents of the U.K. newspapers define what Weibo is (The Guardian's as a microblog and The Telegraph's as a social media site), but do not compare it to a Western equivalent. Meanwhile, for the correspondents of The Straits Times and the South China Morning Post, Weibo is just Weibo, and it does not need a description. It is also worth noting that the correspondent who mentions the Lunar New Year less is the correspondent of the South China Morning Post, which suggests that knowledge about the Spring Festival in her audience is presupposed.

Having examined the ways cultural references are represented, it is now time to look at the presence of discourse polarization in the samples analyzed. To begin with this task, several reports on what some correspondents call the "isolation" of China are compared.

Here, the strongest claims are formulated by the two Spanish correspondents. To report on many airlines which have suspended flights to and from China and foreign governments which have introduced restrictions on people arriving from China in their territories, the headline of article MV8 by El País's correspondent reads: "The world isolates China[16]." However, the text of the article makes it clear that it is not the whole world that the correspondent is talking about, but certain countries and companies, while others have voiced their support for the Chinese government and people. A similar idea is found in the coverage by ABC's correspondent in PD12 and PD15. The headline of PD15, the same article that reports on rising sinophobia around the world and links it to some Chinese people's taste for wildlife and low hygiene standards, reads: "The world puts China under quarantine due to the stigma of the epidemic[17]."

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[16] In Spanish in the original: "El mundo aísla a China"

[17] In Spanish in the original: "El mundo pone en cuarentena a China por el estigma de la epidemia"

The correspondent of The Straits Times mentions in DW11 "Beijing's growing anger at its increasing isolation" on the international stage, having reported in the preceding two articles on the arrival of aid from countries including Japan, which is said to have had historically a strained relationship with China.

The correspondent of the Times of India reports on plans for the evacuation of Indian nationals from Wuhan, and in SD13 that Chinese travelers face resistance in several countries due to coronavirus, an article that explores the problems experienced by Chinese people who have traveled abroad following the declaration of the coronavirus outbreak as a global health risk by the World Health Organization. None of these are said to represent the isolation of China. The correspondent of PTI reports extensively on the issues surrounding the evacuation of Indian citizens from Wuhan and Hubei, and not so emphatically on those of other nationalities. He also reports on the exchanges of accusations between governments and diplomats of the U.S. and China, but without representing that as China's isolation. The correspondent of PTI also dedicates several articles to international aid and cooperation in the context of the pandemic, with China both as a receiver and provider. Similarly, the correspondents of The Guardian and The Telegraph also report on the evacuation of foreign nationals, including British, from Wuhan and Hubei, but do not portray that as the isolation of China.

Meanwhile, the South China Morning Post's correspondent quotes experts who insist on establishing a distinction between China and "the West" in JC1, JC8, or JC9. In JC1, an expert claims that Chinese people value food as their primary need while Westerners value freedom and human rights. In JC8, the differences move to the political arena, and the fact that China has controlled its coronavirus outbreak is presented as an opportunity to promote its political system. The debate about the uniqueness of China's political system and its importance in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic continues in JC9.

In JC6, this correspondent quotes Chinese scientists Zhong Nanshan as defining Covid-19 as "a disease of mankind." This characterization acquires relevance in the context of racist references to the "Chinese virus." In that regard, ABC's sample includes a reference to "the Chinese coronavirus" (in PD13), and the headline of an article authored by The Guardian's correspondent (LK6) reads "China virus: ten cities locked

down and Beijing festivities scrapped." However, this correspondent later reported the World Health Organization's decision to name Covid-19 the disease caused by the new coronavirus to avoid stigma in LK19 and denounced that some U.S. officials continued to use the terms "Chinese coronavirus" or "Wuhan virus" in LK34. PTI's correspondent also noted China's criticism toward U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo for calling Covid-19 "Wuhan virus" in KV87.

As stated in the previous section about the representation of social actors, six of the eight analyzed correspondents (those of El País, ABC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, the Straits Times, and the South China Morning Post) have Chinese authorities as the main social actors in their coverage, and their representation of them is negative. Some of them call the Chinese government "authoritarian," and all of them present authorities as agents of negative actions.

Thus, the greatest degree of discourse polarization is observed when these correspondents report critically on Chinese authorities' actions. Articles like MV16, PD20, LK21, SY17, DW7, or JC4 are good examples. A series of social actors are presented by these correspondents as victims of Chinese authorities, like Wuhan and Hubei's population, Chinese society as a whole, and Li Wenliang, who is taken as a symbol of all the problems surrounding the coronavirus crisis in China. Furthermore, in two articles written by the Spanish correspondents, MV5 and PD20, people from Hubei are presented as victims of discrimination by the rest of the Chinese society, which in turn is presented as being instigated in that behavior by Chinese authorities.

For the two Indian correspondents, discourse polarization is observed in their reports on the evacuation of Indian citizens from Wuhan and Hubei or follow-ups on that topic in the case of PTI's correspondent, in articles like SD9 or KV28. While their portrayal of Chinese authorities is not as negative as those of the other six correspondents, these articles present Chinese officials in a negative light and Indians stranded in Wuhan and Hubei as the victims of those actions.

Coronavirus patients in the coverage by the correspondents of El País, ABC, and Times of India are anonymized. People affected by the virus are included in their stories but mostly anonymized, objectified as "infection cases" or "deaths," aggregated as statistics, hidden in generic references, and speechless. This happens too to a lesser

extent in the coverage by the correspondents of PTI, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and South China Morning Post.

The coverage by the correspondents analyzed also features some relevant examples of identification between the correspondents and the social actors they report on. Identification is evident in the reports by the Indian correspondents on the evacuation of Indian nationals from Wuhan and Hubei, as is in the two Singapore-focused articles written by the correspondent of The Straits Times and in SY22, the article by The Telegraph's correspondent about British expats entrepreneurs.

The identification strategies of the Spanish correspondents with Spaniard social actors is negligible, as is that of The Guardian's correspondent with British actors in her coverage. ABC's correspondent does, however, identify himself with people who suffer the actions of the Chinese government in PD25.

The correspondent of The Guardian does not identify herself with coronavirus patients. Nonetheless, by giving them a voice and allowing them to tell their stories, she reports the human side of the people affected by the virus and allows readers to sympathize with their suffering.

IV. Discussion

As the third part of the dissertation draws to a close, it is now time to summarize the main findings of the discourse analysis carried out and to establish links among them if possible. Finally, the results of the analysis are linked to the theoretical framework set out in the first block.

Six categories were the focus of the analysis model for this project: three —social actors, sources, and story lines— were looked at from a quantitative perspective while the other three —topics, representation of social actors, and identity/otherness— were considered from a qualitative perspective.

With regards to social actors, authorities, coronavirus patients, and the Chinese society as a whole were found to be the main actors represented in the analyzed samples, not always in that order and with a few exceptions. For six correspondents, those of El País, ABC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and South China Morning Post, Chinese central authorities were the main social actors of their coverage. For the other two correspondents analyzed, those of PTI and Times of India, coronavirus patients were the main social actors.

Sourcing-wise, the Chinese central government was the top source for half of the correspondents studied (those of El País, PTI, Times of India, and The Straits Times), while ABC's correspondent had authorities and scientists as their two main sources and the other three had different types of sources as the predominant ones: the media for The Guardian's correspondent; scientists for The Telegraph's correspondent, and policy commentators for the correspondent of the South China Morning Post.

The analysis of story lines led to the finding that none was identified in the coverage by the correspondents of PTI and Times of India. Among the correspondents who used story lines, China's lack of transparency was the most frequently highlighted, although the country's lack of freedoms was the only one referenced by all six.

By looking at the topics covered by the correspondents included in the sample, some parallelisms were found. There were several topics about which several of the correspondents wrote, including the introduction of lockdowns in Wuhan and other cities of Hubei province, restrictions by foreign governments on people arriving from China, evacuations of foreign citizens, criticism among Chinese people of the government's handling of the crisis, everyday life under coronavirus, the death of Li Wenliang, a change in a diagnostic method that led to a surge in the official count of coronavirus deaths and infections, or Xi Jinping's visit to Wuhan to signal that the containment of the epidemic was near. Alternated with these topics that attracter broad-based attention, each correspondent had articles with more original angles that were not replicated by their peers.

An analysis of the representation of social actors concluded that the correspondents that had Chinese authorities as the main social actor of their coverage were also the most critical in the way they covered them. This negative representation occurred mainly through predicational strategies, where authorities were presented as agents of negative actions like censoring, hiding information, or coercing people. All eight correspondents coincided in representing Chinese authorities as active agents, while Chinese society was usually presented as the passive object of the actions performed by the authorities. Often, when there is a critical representation of authorities' actions, Chinese people were also victimized. Coronavirus patients were often presented as collectivized, aggregated as statistics, and speechless, although there are exceptions in the form of specific articles that seek to give them a voice. The Guardian's correspondent was the most prolific in this kind of article.

When it came to considering the cultural dimension of discourse and the strategies of identification and othering used by the correspondents, it was observed that all of them made references to aspects of Chinese culture while covering a health crisis. The Lunar New Year was the most commonly mentioned element, but there were others. Furthermore, all correspondents made references to people from their own cultures, and there were some instances of discourse polarization. The clearest examples of discourse polarization were observed in criticisms of Chinese authorities. While this negative representation of Chinese society hardly ever was extended to the broader Chinese society, some articles blamed cultural traits of Chinese people for the viral outbreak, and

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other articles flagged instances of xenophobia suffered by Chinese people outside of their country.

All of the above suggests that the correspondents analyzed for this dissertation put Chinese authorities at the center of their coverage of the coronavirus in crisis. Authorities are, for most correspondents, the main social actors, dominate the topics covered, and most of the main story lines can be traced back to authorities. Sources affiliated with the Chinese central government are also the most frequently cited type of source of information in the analyzed sample and, even when other types of sources like the media, experts, or even activists are cited, it is to talk about authorities have done or might do.

This focus on authorities is accentuated by a certain degree of over-agenticization: authorities are made responsible even for actions they are not performing. This comes at the expense of presenting the society as passive, sometimes victimized. It also results in an invisibilization of coronavirus patients, who might have been expected to take a very prominent role during the coverage of a health crisis but are frequently in a secondary or tertiary position. They are indeed hidden in plain sight, given that many articles include at least a mention of the number of people affected by the virus, but hidden after all: their experiences are nearly always absent.

Multiple examples of representation of cultural elements have been identified in the analyzed sample. Arguably, this should increase cultural awareness in the audiences of the correspondents' news reports. At the same time, there are also numerous cases of representations of actors from the correspondent's own culture in a foreign context.

Cultural references are at times used to introduce discourse polarization, like when Chinese people are presented as having a habit of eating wild animals, and that is said to be the origin of the viral outbreak. In other cases, correspondents try to be sympathetic with the suffering of Chinese people or coronavirus patients, giving them a voice to vent their frustrations and criticisms of the government and officials.

The height of discourse polarization, nevertheless, is found concerning Chinese authorities. Chinese authorities are often represented critically, as might be expected given journalists' watchdog role. The story lines used by some correspondents to illustrate and give color to their coverage contribute to that critical portrayal too.

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Another point that is worth making is that this analysis looked at correspondents from different cultural backgrounds. While the analysis results included in this block laid bare many differences in their reporting, it is worth highlighting that many similarities have been found too, as the results also show.

To wrap up this discussion, the question at which the theoretical framework was left needs to come to the fore again. Are foreign correspondents intercultural communicators or constructors of foreign realities?

Based on the results of the analysis conducted for this research, the answer cannot be clear cut. To some extent, correspondents are intercultural communicators, as they arguably increase awareness of Chinese culture for their audiences, and they might have needed to resort to intercultural competence to produce their discourse —that will need to be checked with them in the following block—. But only to some extent. To assume that they are bridges between cultures that somehow facilitate an intercultural dialogue is perhaps going too far.

Throughout the analyzed sample, cultural references are present, but sometimes they seek to mark a difference and even blame Chinese people for what happened with the coronavirus outbreak. However, for the correspondents that seek a culprit for what happened in China, the biggest share of the blame falls on the authorities, their actions or omissions, and on the political system through which they rule.

Indeed, the correspondents analyzed seem to be more constructors of a foreign reality than intercultural bridges. They report China, its society and above all its authorities, as other. Moreover, most of the correspondents analyzed place their focus predominantly on the social actor they represent as "most other" of all: Chinese authorities. The majority of the story lines they use —that is, of course, those correspondents that do use story lines— seek to denounce authorities' shortcomings (lack of freedoms and transparency) or excesses (propaganda, accumulation of power by Xi Jinping or bureaucracy).

At this point, it should be noted that the two Indian correspondents analyzed do not have Chinese authorities as the main social actors of their coverage, but coronavirus patients. Their representation of Chinese authorities tends to be more neutral than that of the other correspondents studied, and the examples of discourse polarization found in

their coverage occur when there are simultaneously Indian and Chinese actors involved. Also, they do not reference story lines in their coverage.

What is said in discourse is only the tip of the iceberg. By interviewing the foreign correspondents directly, the next block submerges in the ocean of the context surrounding the production of discourse to try to shed a brighter light on their coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China, foreign correspondence in general, and intercultural communication.

PART 4: INTERVIEWS

I. Coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China

There is more to foreign correspondents' work than what is seen in their news stories. If the discourse analysis sought to explore the visible result of foreign correspondents' work, the present part tries to peek into correspondents' approaches to the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China, their understanding of their profession, and how they deal with intercultural communication. It presents the findings from a series of interviews with correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China and whose work was analyzed in the previous part. In other words, having already looked at the output correspondents produced, their processes, routines, and attitudes are in focus here.

Following requests for anonymity from an interviewee, the names of the interviewed subjects are not revealed here. Moreover, they will not be referred to as "he," "she," "him," or "her," but as "they" and "their," in an attempt to preserve anonymity. Going forward, the five interviewed correspondents are identified as Correspondent No. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. To make references shorter, they are cited as C1, C2, C3, C4, and C5.

Wherever there is a coincidence or pattern in correspondents' responses, that is singled out. The same happens where there is disagreement among them. Those observations are supplemented and supported with a significant number of relevant quotes —which have been edited for clarity— that illustrate correspondents' thinking.

1. From "The Typical Story" to "A Personal Crusade": Approaches to Coverage

Foreign correspondents based in China approached their coverage of the coronavirus crisis in different ways. Many factors influenced their moves and decisions: where they were when reports of the first cases emerged, whether they had other plans or priorities at the time, whether they or their colleagues managed to get into Wuhan before it was locked down, the point at which they decided or realized that coronavirus was a major story, their negotiations with headquarters… This section takes a look at all those factors.

1.1. "Where Were You When…?"

Not everyone first heard about coronavirus at the same time, nor were they at the same place. C1 claimed that it was already known in November that a new virus was circulating in China, that by December it was a serious issue and that the situation exploded in January.

All the other correspondents became aware of the new virus later on. For C3, that was in late December. Others admitted that their initial reaction was influenced by the fact that they were on their Christmas breaks, or that they were more focused on other stories when the first reports of the new virus began to emerge. That was the case for C5, who first heard about the virus in early January when they got back to China from vacation after the New Year. The first stories about coronavirus published by C5's outlet —as for the vast majority of the outlets studied in this dissertation— were covered out of its headquarters.

C2 said they first heard about the virus on December 31, when the Chinese government informed the WHO about an outbreak affecting Wuhan city which was concentrated on the Huanan wet market. "I think it caught everyone off guard because of the date, just on New Year's Eve, and with most correspondents who cover China on vacation abroad," C2 said.

On their return after Christmas, C2 went straight to Taiwan to cover the presidential election which was held on January 11. From Taiwan, C2 went to Shanghai. There, C2 found a city that, despite rumors and preoccupation about the coronavirus, was preparing itself for the Lunar New Year:

> "Elections in Taiwan took place, I covered them, I was focused on that, and I came back to mainland China on January 16. The situation in Shanghai, from what I could see, was pretty normal. People were getting ready for the Lunar New Year. In fact, I went to the Yuyuan Gardens and there was plenty of people, without masks and enjoying the run-up to the Lunar New Year. That is how we lived the first week and that is how I took it at the beginning because I was thinking more about Taiwan."

C4 was also on vacation when they first heard about coronavirus and also carried on with plans to cover the Taiwanese election. Next, C4 went to Vietnam on a reporting trip and only got back to Beijing on January 22, just as the coronavirus story was speeding up.

1.2. "Is this the typical story?" Uncertainty and Comparisons

Many of the moves made by foreign correspondents in late December and early January can be attributed to the scarcity of information and the prevailing uncertainty at the

time. C5 recalled that, when coronavirus broke out, China was trying to recover from the swine fever that had wiped about half of its pig herd:

> "At the beginning I guess nobody realized how big this coronavirus would be. Also, unfortunately, China has a lot of these kinds of different diseases, there's something new all the time, so it's hard to know in the beginning how serious it might be."

C4 coincided in highlighting the difficulty of making calls about the seriousness of the disease in its early days and pointed to another factor: recent precedents of infectious outbreaks that had ended up being lighter than they initially seemed. At the risk of sounding false alarms, news of the new virus had to be viewed with a grain of salt. Indeed, C4 only started to pay attention to the new coronavirus on December 31:

> "That summer we had had a couple of cases of plague in Beijing and we had commented at the time: 'Let's see if we're going to have a problem there...' But it came to nothing, so when the first cases emerged in December, you say: 'This is going to be the typical story about a peasant who has caught something weird and stays there.' When on December 31, the WHO was warned, you say: 'Oops, this is going to be a bit more serious.'"

C4 explained that, even though they were on vacation and their newspaper was devoting little coverage to coronavirus, they did not want to push it any further. "At that time neither I nor anyone else thought that it was going to get so out of control. I believed that, at most, it would be a situation like MERS in South Korea a few years earlier," C4 said.

The historical precedent that C2 had in mind was SARS. In those early days, C2 regarded a situation like SARS as the worst-case scenario that, hopefully, would not materialize:

"At the beginning —at least I talk from my own experience— you have that fear that it could be something like SARS. In any case, the worst you can think of is that this is going to be like SARS. That is what I thought at first. But since during the first weeks China doesn't say that there are infections among humans, that it doesn't seem likely or that, if there are, they are very limited, I believe at the beginning we didn't give it the importance it later had, because we didn't see it with that information."

Indeed, things would soon take a turn for the worst. That meant that new decisions over how to proceed with their coverage of the unfolding crisis awaited foreign correspondents.

1.3. "Should We Go to Wuhan?"

Wuhan was undoubtedly the center of the coronavirus crisis in China in January 2020. Media organizations covering the story made different calls with regards to whether to send reporters there. Health concerns were an important factor to consider, as were logistical complications.

For C3, the decision was clear. "We took the first opportunity to send a reporter to Wuhan, even though at that time very little was known about the virus, and Chinese state media did not report on it at all."

Continuing uncertainty and lack of information made planning for the next moves difficult. As C3 puts it:

"Even in the first few weeks of January, we were keeping an eye on developments but unsure about what was going on, and that made it difficult to make editorial decisions [for example:] Should we have a reporter stay on in Wuhan? What more can we do in the face of a complete lack of information?"

C4 did not go to Wuhan, but a colleague did. On the day C4 came back to Beijing from the reporting trip to Vietnam, a colleague had been told to go to Wuhan, just before the city was locked down. Nevertheless, C4's colleague was evacuated from Wuhan days later, which meant that C4 had to take responsibility to cover Wuhan's lockdown from Beijing.

After some hesitation, C2 finally made up their mind to go to Wuhan, but it was too late. The lockdown of the city had already been announced, and C2 had missed the chance to get in. C2 recalled his experience:

> "When I woke up, I saw the news that Wuhan was to going to be shut down that January 23 at 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. My flight had been suspended, but I could find another flight also to Wuhan and I left in a rush for Pudong Airport, I got my boarding card and I was at the boarding gate about the get on the plane. That flight was canceled and I couldn't fly to Wuhan that January 23."

For C2, not being able to enter Wuhan represented a "failure." "This is the coverage I like the least […] because I couldn't make it to Wuhan the first time, and for that reason, it is a personal failure. Precisely because of all that, I strived to report the best information and to warn people of what was to come," C2 explained.

Something similar occurred to C5. "We didn't know how you got sick, we didn't know what kind of precautions would be necessary, and without knowing that it was difficult to make a call about whether or not to go because we also didn't really know how deadly it was," C5 explained. In the end, C5 and their editors decided that C5 would go to Wuhan, only to find the flight canceled because the city had been locked down. There were still trains, but C5 decided not to go.

C1 decided not to go to Wuhan and left China on January 3. "Toward the end of January, I thought it had become serious because Beijing was affected. First, it was Wuhan. Shanghai was not much affected, but Beijing was affected," C1 said.

1.4. *The Turning Point*

After a few uncertain weeks, C3 recalls how things changed radically around January 20. Human-to-human transmission of the virus had been confirmed by then, the first deaths had been reported, new cases emerged and the worst concerns began to take shape. "That was also when we devoted all our resources to covering the outbreak," C3 said.

C2, C4, and C5 agree on pointing to January 23, the day Wuhan was locked down, as the turning point. C2 was categorical in defining it as the day "when the world changed." C2 recalled how the perception of the situation in Wuhan shifted from then on:

> "Here in China, it became obvious that January 23. Everyone realized that what was happening in Wuhan was very serious. To shut down a city of 11 million, just on the eve of the Lunar New Year […] was something very serious. That morning I saw the change in Shanghai. The streets became completely deserted. Even though there was not an order from the government to stay home, people decided on their own to stay at their homes and not leave, and absolutely everything shut down."

Up until that January 23, the dimension of the crisis had not been clear for C4. Out of China for weeks, C4 had been reassured by the information given by the Chinese government, so that they did not think that the situation could get out of hand the way it did:

> "China until then had been giving reassuring messages: 'This is under control.' There were several days when they would say there had been no new cases. Everyone in Wuhan and outside had a feeling of false calm. [In Wuhan], authorities told people: 'Go on vacation.' Five million people left out of a population of 11 [million]. 'Go out, have

fun…' Here in Wuhan they organized a meal for 40,000 people. The feeling was that everything was controlled, that it was a cluster of a weird thing, but that it wouldn't go beyond that. So, when on [January] 23, they close after admitting three days earlier that it was contagious among people, you think: 'my, my, this must be really something for them to close a city of 11 million people.'"

C5 reasoned in similar terms. "I was like: 'the situation has to be much worse than we know or realize or maybe even the Chinese authorities know or realize.' It was a really big move," C5 said. Instead of traveling to Wuhan, C5 ended up going to Guangdong province, which had been the hardest hit in China by SARS, to continue their coverage there.

Once all correspondents realized the severity of the situation caused by the spread of the new coronavirus, it was time to address the coverage head-on. The next point looks at how they did it.

1.5. "A Personal Crusade": Shifting Approaches to News Coverage

Although all correspondents interviewed worked almost exclusively on covering the coronavirus outbreak from late January on, there were diverging approaches and different priorities. For C1, the priorities were to write about the coronavirus-related big story of the day but to pay attention to people from their own country as well, given that there was a sizable community in Wuhan. C1 sought to talk to people from their country, tried to interview them, and reported on what the situation was like in Wuhan based on the experience of that community.

C2, by contrast, acknowledged that they had been in a wait-and-see mode until January 23. From that point, C2 focused on following the news flow out of Wuhan, and on reporting the situation in other parts of China. The coverage took a heavy toll on C2. There were days when they had to file several stories until late at night and wake up

after a few hours' sleep the following only to check out the latest figures of infections and deaths. C2 evoked their experience during those days:

"I had covered some other epidemics here in Asia, and warnings about epidemics. But we hadn't covered an epidemic outbreak like this, which disrupted life as this one did. Everything was paralyzed. It was all about watching the news coming out of Wuhan and then also noting how it had affected the rest of China and our normal life here. I believe that, at the end of the day, this pandemic has affected us all. What happened in China during those first weeks has been repeated around the world. This affects you as a journalist not only because you have to write several stories a day, you have to be aware of everything that is going on, all the news out there, but also affects you in a personal manner. I have to admit that this has been a tough coverage for me, an anxious, worrying one, with a lot of fear."

C2 admitted that fear and uncertainty were part of the coverage as well. At that time, it was not known what the disease was like, how deadly it could be, and how people could get infected. "The truth is we were all very afraid, and that affected the approach to the news. It wasn't only about telling what happened, it was also about what happened to you and how your life had been blown up at that time," C2 said. That fear, combined with the frustration for not being able to get into Wuhan, made C2 strive to report on the crisis to the best of their abilities to warn readers at home of what was about to come. Reporting how life was like under coronavirus, as an advance of what awaited other parts of the world, was an objective for C2. "For me, reporting on coronavirus was a personal crusade," C2 said. That effort eventually had rewards for C2:

"From the beginning, I was very active in warning and telling the seriousness of what was known at the time, and warning people to be careful. Especially since coronavirus reached Italy at the end of February, I doubled down on my efforts to warn people not to go places where there could be crowds, to take precautions, and to think that it could happen there.

[…]

I have been reached out by people to thank me because, while governments downplayed coronavirus, thanks to the reports we filed from China, they could protect themselves. That is the greatest satisfaction that your work can give you, especially in such a tough coverage."

For C4, the last week of January was all about "putting fires out and patching things up," trying to understand the dimension of the crisis. That involved reading the local press —with a degree of skepticism— and talking to people, C4 explained.

Moreover, C4 had to coordinate from Beijing with a colleague who was in Wuhan. A division of labor between the two was implemented: C4 would focus on the more newsworthy aspects —like the building of makeshift hospitals in Wuhan, figures of infections and deaths, shortages of equipment, cases of discrimination against Hubei residents in other cities or censorship—, while the colleague explained the situation on the ground. According to C4, planning anything on the coverage was challenging:

"There wasn't much time to think or to plan anything because the accumulation of events was so big that we could barely report them. Doing that was enough. Planning big stories… was just not possible. A lot of things happened those days, and it all culminated with the death of physician Li Wenliang."

For C5, coverage of coronavirus was a combination of planning and following events as they developed. It was clear early on that the cases were coming out of Wuhan, but safety concerns meant that C5 did not go there. Nevertheless, C5 did travel a lot during the early days of coronavirus: to Guangdong province to get a sense of whether people there felt coronavirus was some kind of "SARS 2.0"; to Hong Kong to report on the closure of the border for people from mainland China; to the U.K. to get supplies; back to Hong Kong and, from there, back to Beijing. "Basically, what was happening in Wuhan was really happening elsewhere in China," C5 said.

C5 also explained how, when writing a story about the business impact of the coronavirus crisis, sought to reach out to foreigners running businesses in China, to try

to make the story more relatable to their audience. "It's most relatable if it's someone that's closer to who they are," C5 added.

Thus, foreign correspondents based in China reacted differently to the emergence of the health crisis caused by the new coronavirus and adopted diverging approaches in their coverages as well. A big factor in influencing when and how they began covering the story was whether they were on vacation or had planned coverage of other stories. Once they began paying attention to the story, there was uncertainty as to how serious the crisis would become, how much coverage it deserved, and whether it was worth going to Wuhan, the center of the outbreak.

By the time Wuhan was locked down, all considered coronavirus their top priority, but still adopted different strategies. C3 and C4 coordinated with colleagues who were in Wuhan. C1 had as a priority reporting on people from their country in China as important, C2 tried to warn the audience back home about the disease they could soon face, and C5 decided to visit Guangdong and Hong Kong to see how people there experienced the situation.

This section showed how the coronavirus virus was met by foreign correspondents. The next one will examine the challenges and difficulties they found in their coverage.

2. "People Were Afraid to Talk": Difficulties of the Coverage

What difficulties did foreign correspondents encounter while they were covering the coronavirus crisis? Did they have problems accessing sources? Did they find cultural barriers? The present section seeks to answer these questions. Lack of information and reluctance to speak to foreign journalists were complaints cited by most of the interviewed correspondents, but the stress caused by the uncertainty of the situation was also mentioned.

2.1. Lack of Information and Access to Sources

When asked about the main difficulties they encountered in their coverage of coronavirus in China, all interviewed correspondents identified lack of information as a key challenge.

C1 said lack of access to information is "the real difficulty in China." In any other country, according to C1, one would get briefings from hospitals, talk to local scientists, or have "real press conferences" to know what happens on the ground. "[In China] all that does not happen. What happens is the government does not talk to you often, the government talks to the official media, so you look at Global Times, China Daily, or CCTV," C1 said.

Given that lack of information, C1 said they were stuck between three parts: the government, official media, and their own reporting. Independent voices, like foreign business lobbies or international NGOs, have a very feeble voice in China, according to C1. C1 considered the information available on social media "unreliable." While

experts are another source that is very popular everywhere and particularly in China, C1 does not fall for them. "I talk to a lot of experts who have subject knowledge, but they are not on the ground, and they have their own reasons to say something or not say something," C1 said. C1 recalled that they managed to talk to two or three coronavirus patients, all of whom were from C1's home country.

C2 coincided in pointing to the lack of transparency of the Chinese government as a key obstacle. The government did provide official information about the balance of figures. Nevertheless, C2 never believed that the numbers of coronavirus infections of deaths from Wuhan given by authorities were accurate, and was frustrated by authorities' refusal to answer questions about that topic. Beyond that, C2 found difficulties to dig deeper. "It is very difficult that unofficial sources from the Chinese government talk to a foreign journalist," C2 said. Therefore, C2 resorted to scientific studies to try to get a more comprehensive understanding of what the coronavirus was:

> "The issue was to explain what was happening. We knew that the city had been shut down, that people were in hospitals. But what was the virus? How did it act? I focused particularly on trying to gather all the information I could about studies that warned of asymptomatic cases, whether they spread the disease or not, how long it took."

For C2, an important aspect of the coverage was to explain how China had adapted to the new circumstances brought about by the epidemic. To report how life was like under the coronavirus, C2 sought to talk to ordinary people in Shanghai and sensed their fear.

C3 had similar views. In addition to the complete lack of information, C3 also cited "getting stonewalled by the authorities" as one of the main difficulties in the coverage. There were problems trying to talk to officials and public institutions but not the general public, according to C3.

However, C5 considered that the main difficulty was the uncertainty as to how much risk there was with going to Wuhan and whether or not one would be able to leave once there. "We were all nervous about the physical risk," C5 said. C5's concerns were motivated by the historical precedents of handling of epidemic outbreaks by the Chinese government. "Anyone who knows anything about China and China's history about this

kind of event knows that they don't have a great track record," C5 said. "I guess I always was worried there was more to the story than they were saying. And, in retrospect, we know that to be the case."

Even though C5 decided not to go to Wuhan, covering its lockdown from a distance was not as hard as they expected because a lot of people from Wuhan were online talking about what was happening. "We were able to get a lot of people, to find a lot of color about what it was like, what they were seeing outside their windows, what the lockdown was like, do interviews that way. I guess it was in a way better than I thought it might be," C5 explained.

For C4, the main difficulty was not being able to access Wuhan. C4's colleague managed to get into the city before the lockdown was introduced, but was evacuated a week later, leaving C4 in charge of covering the crisis from Beijing. C4 recalled the hurdles that situation created:

> "The big problem was to be able to know what was happening, the fact that one couldn't get there and see by oneself, to have to rely on what was being said on Weibo, social media… Even if you talked to people here and they told you, you couldn't verify at 100%. You could get an idea, but… That was the main difficulty."

Moreover, C4 highlighted that, after a few days of relative freedom for Chinese media, authorities changed tack in the wake of Li Wenliang's death. According to C4, the public anger caused by that event triggered a fierce wave of censorship:

> "During the first days, Chinese media were able to report with relative freedom, but from then on that was cut. Everything moved to a much more benevolent narrative of what was happening, and it became more difficult to get people to talk to you, they started to be afraid to talk… As the situation improved and there were beds for the sick people, families that until then had been desperate and talked to anybody to see if anyone was able to help them get a bed was less willing to talk…"

The fact that the lockdown there became harsher from mid-February was another factor. "What people knew was little, only what they could see from their windows or what their friends told them via social media. It was difficult to access direct sources," C4 said.

C4 also referred to a spike in fake information, and to the difficulties of verifying what circulated on social media:

> "There was also a lot of fake information, from one side and another. Videos that you didn't know where they came from, to what extent they could be accurate, videos that talked about a terrible situation, people killing themselves… There was no way to know if that was Wuhan, if that was from a couple of days ago or from 20 years ago. In all that maze, trying to figure out what really happened was more difficult than it is under normal circumstances."

Lack of information, health risks and not being able to enter Wuhan, thus, were the main difficulties foreign correspondents encountered while covering the coronavirus crisis in China. When it came to those information gaps, correspondents tried to fill them by resorting to different sources: official media and people from their own countries like C1, scientific studies like C2, ordinary people like C3, or a combination of ordinary people and social media like C4. But even when they did talk to people, some correspondents still faced difficulties.

2.2.   *"There Is a General Paranoia of Scrutiny by Foreign Media"*

Either talking to authorities or ordinary people, correspondents claimed in the interviews that there were issues in their interactions while covering the coronavirus crisis in China. Lack of transparency from authorities and of candor from citizens were

the most frequently cited issues, but some also spoke about a rising hostility in the country toward foreign journalists.

For C1, Chinese people are reluctant to speak to journalists about stories that are perceived as negative. "It is not always the Communist Party which is behaving in this manner, it is a cultural issue as well," C1 said. "People not speaking is one thing, people not speaking to foreigners is a second issue. There is a cultural barrier against any negative story," C1 added.

C3 observed a "general paranoia of scrutiny by foreign media." However, C3 acknowledged that access problems occurred to them mostly with government officials and not with ordinary people.

C2 attributed that reluctance to propaganda disseminated by the Chinese government. "People on the street were also quite afraid to talk. There is a reluctance to speaking to foreign journalists, and this has grown over time because propaganda is taking this country backward and is making people more afraid of interacting with foreigners, especially journalists," C2 said. Another reason can be found in the differences between the way Chinese media operate and the way journalists in China from other countries work, as C2 explained:

> "This is a political issue. I have seen in the 16 years I have been here that it is increasingly hard to work for journalists. Chinese people have more reluctance, fear, and apprehension to Westerners and, obviously, to journalists because the regime's propaganda has labeled us as enemies of China, even if what we are is critics of a government, not enemies of any country. We are journalists and our mission is to report what happens, denounce things that aren't right so they can be fixed, and that is what we do in our own country as well. But that isn't understood here, because the media's mission is propaganda. Thus, we have been labeled as enemies of China, and journalists have those problems when we talk to people and people are very afraid of speaking to us. When they do speak to us, many don't say what they think, but what they think they should say. For instance, for this coverage, I had several assistants in Wuhan that went on their own to do interviews. They went, for example, when there were mass tests and talked to people. What a Chinese gets from another Chinese if there isn't a foreigner in front of them seems much franker than what they tell me as a foreigner."

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C4 also described tensions with authorities. "The moment you start to ask you are being negative, not helping, and 'this isn't about blaming anyone, but about rowing all together in the same direction to solve it,'" C4 said. But more nuances are found in C4's account. Official sources were initially relatively open but closed off as the situation became entrenched, and it was difficult to find alternative versions to the official one in Wuhan due to the harshness of the lockdown there:

"The official sources closed… or began to provide very self-censored information about what was happening in Wuhan. Suddenly it was all wonderful. It was only said that many volunteers were working and that people were getting cured… Finding people in Wuhan that told, with certain knowledge, what happened was difficult."

C4 coincided with C2 in pointing out that Chinese propaganda against foreign media did not help them in their coverage of coronavirus. C4 believes that has been years in the making:

"In the last few years, the Chinese government, from above, has conveyed to the population the idea that the foreign press lies, the foreign press is anti-China, and only wants to tell bad things about China. That played a role, there's no doubt about that. It happened —and keeps happening— that we found people that told us that they didn't want to talk to the foreign press."

To overcome that reluctance to speak to foreigners, having a Chinese fixer was crucial. As C4 put it:

"Chinese assistants are increasingly [fundamental] due to this reluctance to talk to foreigners. That is very noticeable. Maybe that isn't that big of a problem for me, because with the mask since I'm biracial, I seem Chinese, so I don't scare them. But

other foreigners who are completely Western are met by people with more wariness. By contrast, if the assistant goes on his own, it's easier that people open up."

Moreover, these issues seem to have accentuated since the worst of the coronavirus crisis in China in early 2020. C4 talked openly about discrimination against foreigners in the country due to fears they might be carriers of the virus. "We foreigners are being frowned upon, anybody can tell you ugly moments… as silly as getting in a taxi and, as soon as you get in, the taxi driver starts to roll down the windows to ventilate because we foreigners have the virus," C4 said.

The exception here was C5, who did not find problems accessing sources in the early days of the coronavirus crisis. "Surprisingly, it was easier than I thought it would be. Normally it's pretty hard. But because the whole city was affected in a way, it was like 11 million people complaining about life online," C5 said. However, C5 also recalled instances of discrimination against foreigners they have suffered.

Most foreign correspondents found issues in their interactions with potential sources, either with authorities or with ordinary people, due to lack of transparency and reluctance to speak to foreign journalists, particularly about negative topics. Besides these professional challenges, there were other difficulties of a more personal nature.

2.3. Epidemic Fatigue Kicks In

One issue that came up in some of the interviews was the emotional toll that the coronavirus crisis —that is, living in it, on top of reporting on it— left on foreign correspondents. Uncertainty, stress, worries about their health and that of relatives, and physical fatigue were all part of the coverage as well.

C2 was clear about their experience covering coronavirus in China. "Of all the stories I have covered here, this is the one I like the least because it has been the most anxious one, the one that has scared me the most, the one I have had the worst time with," C2

said. Having reported on several natural disasters and revolutions in Asia, C2 admitted that what worried them most about coronavirus was the fact that it could reach their own country, where C2 feared for their family. "It was very depressing and anxious."

Although Wuhan suffered the biggest coronavirus outbreak in China, C4 explained there so there were restrictions in Beijing too as well as concerns about whether things could complicate further. C4 recalled their experience during those days:

> "On top of the volume of work, the difficulty of reporting what was going on in Wuhan, you had to add the uncertainty about your own situation. The preoccupation about if this was going to blow up in Beijing, if they were telling us the truth, if the situation in Beijing was more serious than what they were telling us… Those were complicated times. And you have to add up fatigue as well. In my case, I spent 59 days in a row working without being able to take not even one day off. I only had three half-days off that I requested, to be able to go buy groceries. The rest was from 8 in the morning until 2 at night working, working, working... Fatigue accumulated."

Adding to the fatigue, C4 was left alone for months, as their relatives left China following advice from their home government. The family could not reunite until August. "We were separated for six months. That also contributed to the fatigue and the difficulty of the coverage. You lacked your closest circle," C4 said.

C5 also admitted to suffering personal stress. Normally friends and family at home would worry about them, but with coronavirus, C5 was also worried. Concerns about health risks were compounded by the scarcity of supplies of face masks and disinfectant products, according to C5. "There was nothing available in all of China," C5 added. In the end, C5 went to Hong Kong to look for supplies and, unable to find them there, traveled to the U.K. to stock up on masks, hand sanitizer, and wipes.

Finally, C1 did not talk specifically about the stress caused by the coronavirus situation, but their case is perhaps the most obvious as to the consequences it had on the coverage. As explained above, C1 decided to leave China at the end of January as they considered the situation was getting too serious.

Lack of information, difficult access to sources, complications in their interactions with them, and uncertainty, stress, and fatigue caused by the public health crisis were the main hurdles foreign correspondents had to clear to cover the coronavirus crisis in China. Despite these difficulties, there were some aspects they wished they had gone differently.

3. "The Biggest Regret of My Career": Criticisms and Self-Criticisms

As the previous section shows, covering the coronavirus crisis in China was a complex matter for foreign correspondents, with many difficulties of different natures. Having had time to reflect on their experience, correspondents expressed some regrets about the way they or their colleagues approached the coverage, but also about how it was received back home.

3.1. "I Wish I Would Have Booked a Flight to Wuhan": Personal Regrets

In hindsight, C3 said they might have pursued the coronavirus story in the early days more robustly. "But who would have imagined it would blow up in such a big way?" C3 wondered.

C1 also agreed that the perception of the crisis was influenced by information that emerged later, but that was not available in the early days of the coverage. "As the situation evolved, more information was available that the government did not respond or react fast enough. It was not initially known," C1 said.

C4 also wished they had known about the potential danger of the disease to warn it was more serious than SARS:

> "That was the model we had. We all thought that it would be a matter of a few months and it would stay limited to a geographic area more or less large but limited there, and

that by the summer this would be over. But we didn't know. I wish we had known at the time to be more categorical to warn that this was no joke."

On a more personal level, C4 said their stories would have been different if they had at the time the information they have now:

"If I had known what I know now, I would have put more emphasis on the danger of the virus, its capability of contagion, of spreading, and of taking precautions. Back then, we didn't know. The issue of masks, for example. I talked to Western experts that told me that masks were not decisive, so you report it like that. I wish I had known then how important masks were to put it in every deck, to raise awareness among people. I have lamented that very much. If I were able to do it again, I would highlight that much more."

For C2, the biggest regret is a different one: C2 wished they had booked a flight ticket to Wuhan earlier to be able to cover the city's lockdown from inside. The way C2 put it was categorical:

"That will be, I think, the biggest regret of my career. In fact, on January 20 or 21 I already thought that I should go, but I finally delayed the decision for reasons not related to work. When it went into lockdown and I couldn't get in, it was a big, big disappointment for me. It was a big professional failure because after 16 years I'm used to being one of the first ones to go when something happens and to stay out of Wuhan when such a big story was developing hurt me quite a lot, especially considering that other colleagues from the competition did go. In fact, when I was at the airport at that time, I started to think about these things and did see that we were in a really… Wuhan was being closed, China was paralyzed on January 23, and only then did I realize the transcendence of that moment."

However, C2 also reflected that it is unclear what would have happened if they had gone to Wuhan. In any case, covering the situation from a distance gave their stories a different angle that was eventually rewarded by C2's readers:

"Maybe because I wasn't able to go [to Wuhan], the coverage was quite intense. I focused more than on aspects of what was happening in Wuhan with the lockdown and that emergency. I focused on the disease, its effects, and how to try to control it. I think that gave a different angle to my reports that, precisely due to the fact that I wasn't close, it was later more important at the time of protecting oneself, because what happened then could happen in other places."

C5 had similar regrets about Wuhan. "In hindsight, if I had known that those government evacuation flights would be possible, I would have gone that morning instead of deciding not to go," C5 said. For C5, and going to Wuhan is what they would change about their coverage:

"Every reporter wants to go, but in this case, it's just not smart to go if you don't know how to protect yourself. I think if I had known then how you could fall ill, and that I could get evacuated at some point, I would have chosen to go. I don't think I would have changed anything about how we covered it."

This point reveals that the interviewed correspondents, in general, perceive they covered to the best of their abilities in light of the information and knowledge they had at the time. The only real regrets identified were C2 and C5's wishes to have gone to Wuhan before the lockdown, and even C2 defended that that ended up playing out well for their coverage.

3.2. "You Have to Be a Responsible Journalist": Criticism of Colleagues

While some misperceptions were unavoidable, C1 did have some criticism about the way some fellow correspondents, particularly European and U.S. media organizations, approached coverage at the beginning of the crisis. "Initially, the talk was about bats, and then people talked about snakes, and people talked about different animals, mostly animals that were eaten," C1 said.

In C1's view, that was a wrong way to frame the story, one that C1 specifically tried to avoid. "You have to be a responsible journalist. You don't overdo issues like eating bats or dogs because your purpose is to cover the disease and not to show Chinese people in a bad light. That is not your purpose," C1 defended. And C1 carried on: "The basic story is the disease, not whether you like people eating dogs or don't like it. If you want, you mention it, but don't overdo it." For C1, these are not minor issues, as they reveal cultural biases that might hinder the notion of media independence:

> "What many in Europe and the U.S. think —that the international media, the Western media, is the most independent of all media— is not true. A lot of cultural issues came up when they talked about bats and dogs and scorpions and snakes. Maybe not consciously, but maybe unconsciously, there was this hidden thing about the Chinese being stuck in […] in this 16th-century situation where they still eat those animals."

C1's commentary on their fellow correspondents is the only instance of collegial criticism that came up during the interviews. Other correspondents, nonetheless, had some regrets about something else: how their stories were perceived back in their home countries.

3.3.   *"Prejudice Played a Big Role": Correspondents Feeling Ignored*

During the interviews, C2 and C4 particularly showed a certain feeling of being ignored by their editors and audiences. C2 emphasized how they tried to sound the alarm in their stories about the severity of the disease and its potential danger, and how some readers eventually expressed their gratitude for that. At the same time, C2 believes not all the warnings were listened to. "At the beginning, we were accused of being alarmists for explaining what happened here," C2 lamented. C2 elaborated on that perception:

> "From the first moment, seeing how life in China had been interrupted, I was blunt and warned a lot about the danger of this disease. Because what I saw here […] People in the West at the beginning didn't understand that fear, and thought the Chinese were exaggerated, or fearful, or that in this country… [They thought] that that couldn't happen in the West. What this has shown is that that axiom of 'this couldn't happen here'… Of course, it can happen. And it has been much worse."

C2 insisted that they tried to relay a sense of urgency and to give the impression that the outbreak could reach their home country as well. That is something C2 learned throughout their career as a correspondent, which allowed them to see that even developed countries like Japan were vulnerable to catastrophes like the 2011 tsunami and subsequent nuclear accident at Fukushima. "You realize that, actually, people think catastrophes won't occur to them, but they can happen. This is what the coronavirus demonstrated," C2 said.

C4 explained how once Wuhan and Hubei were put under lockdown, they realized that the virus was likely to spread all over the world:

> "That is when we journalists in China started to say: 'Watch out.' The pity, and the frustration, is that those warnings fell on deaf ears. At that time, the feeling was: 'That is happening really far, it's not going to get here.'" I talked to senior editors and they were

like: 'Can you imagine that happening here?' 'No, that would be controlled quickly here.'

Maybe we all fell for a certain degree of cultural self-indulgence. Since this was in China… It was like: 'In China, this can happen, because people are Chinese, hospitals are worse, but we are the first world and we are going to control it well.'"

C4 attributed that "cultural self-indulgence" to a prejudiced perception according to which what happened in China could not be replicated in their home country. "It could happen. It is still happening," C4 said.

This section showed the foreign correspondents interviewed mostly attributed regrets about their coverage to lack of information at the time, but at the same time found instances of cultural prejudice in the way other colleagues reported or in the way their stories were received in their home countries. As revealing as the virtual absence of self-criticism, though, is the fact that those observations of prejudices only emerged when correspondents were talking about others but not about themselves.

II. On Foreign Correspondence

The second block of the interviews with foreign correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China centered on their views about foreign correspondence. The following pages compare the responses collated from those conversations.

Three sections form this chapter. The first one addresses correspondents' perceptions about the profession. Professional routines take center stage in the second section. The third section examines the difficulties of being a foreign correspondent.

1. Perceptions About Foreign Correspondence

The way a foreign correspondent views the profession might influence the way he or she exercises it. Thus, the interviews with correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China included a section of generic questions about foreign correspondence to gain a better understanding of the practitioners' perspective on the profession.

1.1. What Is a Foreign Correspondent?

When asked to define what a foreign correspondent is, the interviewees gave different answers. The lack of consensus on a definition of foreign correspondent was somewhat surprising.

For C1, a foreign correspondent is a person doing reporting on a country different from the one they come from in a periodical manner and licensed to practice in that country. C2 did not give a formal definition and, instead, said correspondents are no different from other journalists in that their job is always to go to the place where things happen and explain what they see and are told in that place. C3 defined foreign correspondents as journalists telling the story of the country where they are based to their primary home audience and increasingly an international audience. Meanwhile, C4 said a correspondent is a journalist interested in knowing other cultures, other points of view, other languages who tries to tell and to bring those cultures to one's own, in the most accessible and relevant way. And C5 said being a foreign correspondent means being the eyes and ears for a loosely defined audience back home, observing and finding things out to try to decipher a country for people who do not live there.

As the definitions above show, not even a group of foreign correspondents agree on what they are when asked individually about it. The way each definition is formulated, of course, reveals which traits each wants to highlight.

C1's definition emphasizes the country difference, the reporting task —as different from editing or photography—, periodicity, and the official recognition that comes with a license. That conception deemphasizes the topic a correspondent report on. "You report on a situation. You may report arts, you may not report politics, you may report on cars and arts, society, whatever, but you report on different places in a periodical manner. It could be monthly, daily, whatever… or hourly. That's it," C1 said.

By not differentiating foreign correspondence from general journalism, C2 downplayed the cultural elements involved in reporting from a different country:

> "For me, a correspondent, or a journalist, is a person who has to be, first of all, curious and has always the eyes open to tell what happens. It doesn't matter whether they are in China or Asia or they are [in their home country]. In my work for [a local edition of C2's outlet] I had to write about villages in the province, at that first stage of my work, three days a week I got on my car and went around the villages of the province to look for interesting stories. I do the same now, but instead of getting on a car I maybe have to get on a plane and go to Sri Lanka or Bangladesh or Thailand."

The definition given by C3 accentuates the storytelling feature of foreign correspondence. By telling the story of that country, it is implied, the correspondent does more than just reporting. C3's definition also hints at an increasingly blurred image of the audience, which is found not only in the correspondent's home country but in an international context as well.

That notion of a loosely defined audience also features in C5's definition. C5 explicitly explained that the loose definition is because, with the internet, correspondents do not only write for an audience back home, but for many people who might be interested in what they are covering. C5's definition also has an analytical inclination, as they refer to observing and trying to decipher a country for people who do not live there.

C4's definition of the foreign correspondent is perhaps the most complex one. It identifies correspondents as journalists "interested in knowing other cultures, other points of views, other languages" who then try to bring those different cultures closer to their own, in the most accessible and relevant way. C4's definition seems to suggest that foreign correspondents are, put shortly, intercultural bridges. That notion is explored further in the next chapter.

What is a foreign correspondent? Judging from the definitions provided by the interviewed correspondents, a correspondent can be viewed from different perspectives, so much so that extracting a common thread becomes challenging. While one puts intercultural bridging at the center of their definition, another downplays the cultural element by claiming that a foreign correspondent is no different than any other journalist. One emphasizes storytelling, another is more inclined toward analyzing the host country, and yet another one points to periodic reporting and the normative recognition that comes with a license. One believes that foreign correspondence is about bringing a different culture to their own, yet others suggest that the notion of home audience is getting blurred.

The next section seeks to clarify these somewhat contradicting views by analyzing the skills the interviewed foreign correspondents deem essential for their profession.

1.2. What Does It Take to Be a Good Foreign Correspondent?

Given the possibility of a non-conclusive answer to the question of what a foreign correspondent is, the interviews included a follow-up question on the skills needed to be a good correspondent, to elucidate further correspondents' views on their profession. Again, the range of answers to the same question was broad.

C1 circumvented the question somewhat, but ended up pointing toward the need for cultural self-awareness:

"I won't do a value judgment of what is the best, because you can say what it takes to be a good engineer because it's a very structured science. But you cannot say what it takes to be a good doctor, because the doctor is not in science: he is dealing with people, dealing with human beings. The doctor's personality is playing a role also, other than science. And that applies to a journalist. The journalist is not away from his upbringing."

In C1's opinion, some correspondents' lack of awareness of their own cultural biases helps to understand the Chinese government's criticism. "Chinese have a lot of criticism about Western journalists, because they come from a different environment, and they find it uncomfortable, so whatever is not Italian or German, or American they criticize without realizing that Asia is different," C1 said.

According to C1, foreign correspondents need to be open to the possibility that different peoples have different standards. These standards, in turn, are rooted in the people's physical conditions, not just in culture.

C2 cited curiosity and having the eyes open as two skills all journalists need. C2 also added that correspondents specifically need to have an open mind to be able to understand realities completely different from their own and to have a mindset that is not accommodating so that they are ready to jump on the news whenever is needed. C2 went on to say that foreign correspondence is, more than a job, "a way of life":

"With this job —which, more than a job, I believe it is a way of life— you can't plan your vacation, you can't make plans to go to the mountain on a weekend or to the beach. You can't do that, because everything can change from one moment to another. You have to be very spontaneous and adapt to the changes very quickly, and also adapt to tough things that can happen when, for example, you go to cover a natural catastrophe and you can spend one week sleeping on the floor, without showering and almost without food, seeing and hearing tragedies constantly. You have to be strong, both psychologically and physically to do that. Even if it's tough, it's a beautiful experience which humanizes a lot, because it helps you change your perspective of what the world is."

When asked about the skills needed to be a good foreign correspondent, C3 was more succinct. C3 alluded to "resourcefulness, having a good nose for news, street smarts, good networking skills."

C4 defended that there are different ways of being a good correspondent, in a response that echoes C1's ideas. Speaking the local language helps a lot, but one can be a good correspondent without speaking it, at the cost of losing some freshness, C4 said. Like C2 and C3, C4 argued that the skills that help foreign correspondents are not different from those of any other journalist, but C4 underscored the need to learn about the host culture and to try to avoid prejudices:

> "You need to have open eyes and to have a lot of curiosity for stories, to know where to scratch a little, to know that under every pillow, there can be a story, and be witty to tell it. But in that regard, the work of a correspondent is not that different from that of any other journalist. Having curiosity, trying to learn always about the culture of the host country, not taking anything for granted, having the mind open and not prejudging, trying to leave your prejudices in your country of origin, doing a lot of listening, and having a lot of patience..."

The preceding pages have shown that the interviewed correspondents have diverging views on the skillset needed to be a good correspondent, which perhaps is consistent with their contrasting definitions of the profession. Nevertheless, while it was hard to find common threads across their definitions, there is a greater room for agreement when it comes to the skills that make a good correspondent.

C1, C2, and C4 concur in highlighting intercultural skills: C1 emphasizes the need to be aware of one's own cultural biases, C2 talks about the advantage of having an open mind that allows one to understand realities different from their own, and C4 mentions the willingness to deepen one's knowledge about the host culture and to avoid prejudices. At the same time, C2, C3, and C4 all highlight the need for having eyes open to see stories or a good nose for news. Moreover, C1 and C3 cited the ability to deal

with people and of having good networking skills, whereas C2 and C4 both mentioned curiosity as an important skill for correspondents.

 While there is no universal consensus on what a correspondent is, a certain degree of affinity can be found regarding the associated skillset. According to the interviewed correspondents, a foreign correspondent is someone with intercultural skills that can keep an eye out to identify stories, has curiosity, and deals well with people. Another takeaway from this section —and not a minor one— is that the diverging ways to define a foreign correspondent suggest there is a plurality of understandings. Perhaps it would be best to abandon a singular conception of the profession in favor of the plural notion of foreign correspondents.

2. Professional Routines of Foreign Correspondents

To complement foreign correspondents' views on their profession and the skills it requires, looking at the professional routines they follow is another useful way to get a deeper understanding of how they approach and practice their job. This section explores how the interviewed foreign correspondents perceive their professional routines.

2.1. "I'm Tied to My Laptop": A Day in the Life of a Foreign Correspondent

C3 summarized their professional routines as identifying stories they want to pursue, doing research, identifying interview subjects, verifying all the facts, figures, quotes, and, of course, writing the stories. C1 claimed their routine as a correspondent was influenced by the fact that their main focus was on China's Foreign Ministry and the Embassy of their own country. In addition to that, C1 strives to be on top of what is being commented on social media and state media, to be aware of stories that are not publicly announced by the government.

C2 acknowledged that they struggle to establish daily routines. "It's complicated. Since there is so much information and so many things to do, work always accumulates and one always has many fronts open," C2 said. A normal day, for C2, is one in which they read in the news in the morning and, if there is an important story about China or Asia, write it up. C2 tries to combine those spot news stories for the online version of their publication, which can then go on print, with their own feature stories.

Working hours are, for C2, often long. "Not being in an office you end up working more than in an office. From the time you get up, you are taking a coffee seeing what news there is, and taking notes or gathering information," C2 said. Moreover, C2 endeavors to keep their social media profiles up to date. "[Social media] has become another basic

tool that is part of the routine and that needs to be fed from time to time to tell what is happening. That's good because it's a way to tell things that don't fit in a newspaper and that are closer to a reader, but of course, it entails an important slavery to work," C2 explained.

C4 noted that they follow a slightly different routine:

> "Mornings usually go by simply by catching up. After lunch, I work on stories, writing, doing interviews… gathering data and files for stories I work on. The first hours of the afternoon go by with daily stories, and from 5 pm or so, I work on longer-term stories, for weekends and the like."

C5 explained they are always consuming the news and thinking about new story ideas. Staying on top of what is going on, following news that is being reported out of China, and also about China occupies a big chunk of C5's day. "I'm like tied to my laptop," C5 said. C5 defined their typical day as a "constant sort of input-output scenario":

> "I'm always in touch with certain sources, about stories, I'm always thinking about new ideas. And I talk to a lot of people, you know, generally I try to just run through. You never really know when you might find a story idea. I talk to different academics a lot. Sometimes there's a topic I'm interested in and learning about, so I'll just find someone to talk to them."

Reading in, staying on top of social media —and, for C2, updating their own profiles as well—, talking to sources, researching stories, and, of course, writing them. The professional routines singled out by the foreign correspondents interviewed were rather similar. In the process of following those routines, C2 and C4 mentioned a certain tension that exists between covering spot news and doing reporting for more enterprise journalism. That tension is analyzed next.

2.2. Picking up Local Media vs. Enterprise Reporting

Indeed, time is a scarce resource and foreign correspondents often find themselves confronted with a dilemma over whether to cover important spot news stories they have read somewhere else or pursue enterprise reporting on their own. C2 illustrated that tension when they explained their work routine:

> "My work routine, when I'm not traveling, is to see what news there is out there in the morning and, if there is something important about China or Asia, to do the first story for the web edition. This, at the end of the day, makes us slaves of spot news, of the news that are in the wires or official media, but these are important topics that need to be covered. In Asia, every day, there are many of these stories that you could do for online, but I can't do all of them. Otherwise, I wouldn't get on the street to report my own feature stories. I try to combine important news for online, which can then go on print, with my own feature stories that demand more effort, more time, and to go somewhere to talk to people."

C2 added that the demands of covering spot news have recently been compounded by the requirement to cover stories in a multimedia format. That means that C2, has to shoot videos, in addition to writing stories and taking pictures.

C5 explained reporting trips used to take a significant amount of their time, although they have been put on hold partly because of the restrictions on movement introduced by Beijing's authorities and partly because there has not been an appetite for any other story but coronavirus. "I normally would travel at the very least half of my time," C5 said.

Coronavirus restrictions have become an extra impediment to moving around, according to C5. There is an element of discrimination against foreigners because the Chinese government is touting conspiracy theories about how the virus is coming from abroad, C5 indicated. "The biggest problem with reporting trips now is that even if there's no outbreak where I'm coming from and where I'm going because I'm a foreigner, I always get a test so that I can show I'm not sick," C5 said. "It's getting really tough to work

here. And Covid made it easier for thwarting the work of journalists. You can be threatened with quarantine, no matter where you go," C5 added.

On the other hand, C1 defended the importance for foreign correspondents of keeping an eye out on the stories reported by Chinese state media:

"[State media] tells you many things that are not publicly announced by the government. They are released in the state media, which often have more sources or more contacts, which are privy to information particularly defense-related information or sensitive information which the government wants to release selectively and the government doesn't want […] people to ask questions."

According to C1, the Chinese media landscape is moving constantly:

"All these years Xinhua was the only one which got the stories, but the inside dope is often missing right now. What Xinhua gets is the official statement: State Council wants to issue a press release and Xinhua gets it a few hours before anyone else as a news agency. But Xinhua doesn't get inside dope of strategic thinking in the government. Not only the military but also what the People's Bank is thinking. There's a lot of changes happening. And this is not... Our idea of China is that everything is disciplined and organized and structured. This is not how it always happens."

Newspaper Global Times seems to be emerging as the reference outlet for insights into the Chinese government's thinking, according to C1. However, C1 cautioned that they would take clues from Global Times, but not trust it at face value. In any case, lack of access to government officials means foreign news media outlets often have to quote Chinese state media, C1 explained. That is C1's case, but applies to the organizations with more resources and staff as well:

"Am I serving journalism or am I serving China? Even while I criticize the Chinese point of view, I have to first see what Global Times said and then criticize. The same is

happening when writers of AP or CNN pick up a story from the CGTN, the broadcaster, or Xinhua or whatever."

Following up on the tension between spot news and enterprise journalism, C4 also explained how their routine often was interrupted when bosses from headquarters of their outlet came up with an idea for a story or suggested that they pick up a story that editors have seen somewhere else. The relationships between foreign correspondents and the central newsrooms of their publications are explored in the following point.

2.3. Relationship with Headquarters

When asked about their relationship with their headquarters, all foreign correspondents responded that they were in regular touch with them. The level of immediacy of those communications, however, was dependent on their geographic proximity, and thus the time difference between their posting and that of the central newsroom of their publication. All of them highlighted their ability to work independently from their headquarters, with minimum coordination.

C1 said theirs was a daily relationship, and one of trust:

"It's very rarely that I need to actually get approval for a story. That is not necessary in my case. I go ahead and send it to them. There will be some occasions where they did ask for clarification or ask for additional information. But normally getting approval for writing is not needed. Now it's because I'm an experienced reporter, but in the beginning, also it was the same, but the reason was different. In the beginning, it was the same because nobody in my office knew China, so they had nothing to say about it."

C2 said when a big story comes up, they try to coordinate first thing in the morning to see how they are going to follow it up. Occasionally, when there is something important, they talk on the phone, but otherwise, emails are used to propose stories or trips or to get suggestions from the newsroom, C2 explained. "We have an epistolary relationship, based on the emails we exchange: letters of love and hate, sometimes," C2 said.

C3 defined their relationship with headquarters as "a very consultative one." "They trust our judgment given we are on the ground, but they would also often take reference from other news sources and suggest stories we can pursue," C3 said.

C4 said they work mostly independently from the central newsroom of their publication, as the time difference makes live communication complicated:

> "The advantage it has, on the other hand, is that it gives you a lot of independence to move. First, due to a lack of knowledge of the area, it isn't very common that in [the newsroom] there is someone with deep knowledge of the area. It is more expected that it is you who proposes stories than that they tell you. You are the one who decides what you want to do and what not. Maybe with the pandemic that has changed a bit. Since there is more focus on China, [HQ] is starting to ask for more stories that they've thought about."

C5 said they have a close relationship with headquarters, as they talk pretty much every day. "I pitch stories, like daily news stories, every day and once a week, we have like big weekly planning kind of meetings," C5 added. Although C5's experience with their current organization is positive, past experiences with other outlets have not been that way:

> "Sometimes HQ will have some ideas or they will have questions about what's going on, but most of the time they're happy for me to lead coverage where I think it should go. They really trust their people on the ground, to be finding and pitching stories. That's a really nice dynamic. It's often not that way. It can happen that somebody in London or somebody in New York are like: 'Where's Wuhan?' They kind of have no

clue about China and they come up with these harebrained ideas that aren't really stories."

Thus, judging from the responses received during the interviews, relationships between foreign correspondents and their central newsrooms is another area —in addition to skills and routines— where there seems to be coincidence among them.

3. Difficulties of Being a Foreign Correspondent in China

Even though the issue of difficulties in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China has been addressed already in the previous chapter, it was deemed interesting to question foreign correspondents further in the interviews about the difficulties or limitations they usually face with a longer-term perspective in mind. Their responses resemble the ones provided earlier, but there are some notable differences as well.

3.1. "I'm Not Getting Stories": Lack of Information

Lack of information and difficulty of access to sources was on top of most correspondents' minds when asked about the limitations they usually encounter in China, as was the case in the specific coverage of coronavirus.

"The main [challenge] is the difficulty to find information, to be able to speak with people, to speak with experts, with the government… The basic difficulty is the scarce transparency of this government and people's fear to talk," C2 said. "In any other country, it is much easier to pick up a phone, speak with someone, speak with experts, but that is very difficult here," C2 added.

C3 coincided in referring to the difficulty of convincing people to talk to them among the main problems in their work and added that trying to get any kind of information especially from "a very opaque bureaucracy" was a challenge. That was C1's case too, and they expressed it at length:

"I have been a member of the Foreign Correspondents Club, I was also an elected board member. And I hear from journalists —particularly European journalists and Japanese journalists and American journalists—, complaints that they are stifled; that they're unable to perform; when they travel, they're stopped, and that there is censorship in everything they do. My experience is that I'm simply not getting the stories, I'm not getting access. I cannot talk to a minister; I cannot talk to an official. If I want to do an interview, the best I can get is the PR person, and the PR person would be so pricey that you would need to send him the questions in advance. And I don't want a reply from the PR person anyway. There is no access to information sometimes. It's very difficult to access private companies or public companies, who should be more open. None of the news are available."

C4 and C5 did not mention lack of information as a key hurdle in the coverage of coronavirus, and neither did they allude to it when talking about the limitations of their work from a more general perspective. Instead, C4 and C5 pointed to the hassles the Chinese government gives to foreign journalists as the main problem. That issue is examined next.

3.2. "Police Immediately Show up": Tensions with Authorities

While C1 made it clear that censorship-related problems were not a concern to them compared to lack of information, C2, C3, C4, and C5 did single out occasional tensions with Chinese authorities as key difficulties for their work. For C4 and C5, that was their top concern.

C5 explained that they worry about security, the possibility of being compromised physically and digitally, and for sources. "People I talk to often get harassed after I meet them," C5 said. In any case, C5 went on, the risk is even higher for Chinese researchers. "I try really hard to keep [C5's assistant] off sensitive stories, because of those risks."

C3 said they tried to stay out of trouble with the authorities and stay safe, while C4 lamented that the Chinese government was "spreading this perception that foreign journalists want to slander China and to vilify China and that is even possible that we are spies for [each correspondent's] government."

C2 explained that, in the coverage of sensitive stories like revolts or social protests, authorities end up barring physical access to foreign correspondents. In C2's experience, whenever they try to access a hot spot, *baoan* (security guards) show up, or local people who sneak for the government warn them, C2 claimed. "Police immediately show up and kick you out. That's the biggest difficulty, it's very frustrating and has worsened over time," C2 said.

In that regard, C4 said their Chinese roots mean helps them to get into places. That is, C4 explained, part of the reason why some international media outlets are increasingly hiring people of Chinese origin as China correspondents. C4 explained that is particularly the case for Anglo-Saxon media:

> "U.S. media and Anglo-Saxon media —to include the U.K. too— are increasingly sending here Asian correspondents. Partly because they go more unnoticed and also because they have a better perception of the culture, or it is understood that they have a better perception of the culture, and they can play that role of being an intermediary between the alien culture and the culture of the receiver public."

C4's cultural reference paves the way for introducing the third and final recurring limitation cited by the interviewed foreign correspondents: language barriers. However, that issue is addressed in detail in the following chapter, which focuses on correspondents' views on intercultural communication.

This section has shown that most foreign correspondents interviewed see tensions with Chinese authorities among the biggest difficulties they find in their reporting. Nevertheless, that is not the case for all of them, as C1 regards lack of access to information as the main obstacle to perform their job.

III. On Intercultural Communication

As explained at length in the Theoretical Framework of this dissertation, working as a foreign correspondent has important cultural implications. This section reviews how the foreign correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China assessed those implications during the interviews.

Three aspects —cultural identity, relationship with the host culture, and language— are in focus here. The following three sections explain correspondents' views on them, as derived from the interviews.

1. Cultural Implications of Being a Foreign Correspondent

1.1. "I Want to Have a Global Vision": Perceptions on Cultural Identity

To induce the foreign correspondents to do some introspection about culture and interculturality, the third block of the interviews began with a personal question: "What is your cultural identity?" To help them, when needed, a clarification was added: "As in, what is the biggest cultural group you identify with or feel you belong to?" The range of responses, as in other parts of the questionnaire, was quite broad.

C3's response was very clear: "Ethnic Chinese." On the other side of the spectrum, C4 and C5 struggled to give a straightforward answer.

"My cultural background is so mixed," C4 said. And C4 elaborated: they were born and raised in their home country but left more than half of their life ago, so C4 has spent more than half of their life abroad in different places. The cultural mix does not end there. "My mother is Chinese-Cuban, we have also that part of Cuban culture and Chinese culture. I have that in my DNA, I've had it breast-fed. I married to a Briton, we've lived most of our marriage in the U.S., now in China," C4 added. That made C4 conclude: "Where I'm from or where I feel from, I wouldn't know what to say. I don't know." After being asked whether a citizen of the world would be an answer, C4 hesitated somewhat before going for it: "I'm not very [from the country where C4 was born], but here certainly I'm not Chinese. In the U.S., I'm an alien…. Who am I? I don't know. Citizen of the world, I guess, a bit from everywhere."

C5's story bears a resemblance with C4's. "I'm a bit of a mix," C5 said. Born and raised in C5's home country by immigrant parents, C5 recalled that they grew up with some parts of Chinese culture, which gave them exposure to some of the traditions and holidays. "But China is vast and it's different everywhere. I guess maybe I had a little

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bit more of an affinity for the culture and the language, than some other journalists coming here. But it's not quite the same as growing up in mainland China," C5 added.

None of that happened to C1, who identified with one part of their country. C1, however, reckoned that whether that country is only one country or more than that remains an open question. "[C1's country] is many nations within one country," C1 claimed.

Meanwhile, C2 gave multiple answers, which indicate a multi-layered identity or a feeling of multiple belongings to different cultural groups. But C2 added an important caveat: "After 16 years [in Asia], and before I had traveled a lot around the world, I want to have a global vision of society and of the world we live in. Of course, you are always marked by your culture and your education."

C2 explained that, in China, they felt like someone different. "Here, I know I am a Westerner in China. For being a Westerner in China, only by getting on the street, especially here in China that people are very curious, a Westerner is someone different, right?" C2 said.

However, C2 added that they already felt different in their own country. "I felt like someone different in my own society because I have always been a bit weird. That would be my cultural identity: being different," C2 said.

The range of responses received to the question about foreign correspondents' cultural identity is quite telling. It goes from the most specific, straightforward answers to those that perceive their cultural identity as so mixed, or so diluted, as to present themselves as "citizens of the world."

This raises the question of whether correspondents who have a more defined cultural identity are those who are more open to favor an intercultural dialogue or, on the contrary, they seek to mark cultural differences. Conversely, it will interesting to see whether those who claim to have a more global perspective embrace intercultural dialogue or, instead, have other priorities in mind.

1.2. *"Things Are Neither Black nor White": Relationship with Host Culture*

Having established, the interviewees' perceptions about their cultural identity, the next focal point is to address their relationship with their host culture and the people who embody it.

For C3, working as a foreign correspondent in China has helped them to understand Chinese culture better, although C3 acknowledged that they had a head start over other correspondents based in China thanks to their ethnic background. "I have gained a greater appreciation of the Chinese and Chinese culture, despite being ethnic Chinese," C3 said. While that background helped, C3 said there are still stark cultural differences between the country they come from and China. "And I try to understand things from the Chinese perspective at all times," C3 said.

C5's response was along those lines too. C5 said they have a personal interest in covering China because of their cultural background:

> "I find working in China really interesting, or in general in East Asia or any sort of part with a big Chinese diaspora because it's both familiar to me and also not. I can work fluently in Mandarin. I speak the same language as these people I interview, often, but we have very different backgrounds. I guess it's helped me understand China more."

C5 added that the West tends to think of Asia as one big bloc and that often there is not enough distinction between the different countries involved. Those nuances matter and C5 said they try to convey them in their coverage.

C4 explained that having a Chinese background has made adaptation to China easier. "Part of my family is Chinese, so there are cultural issues that are built in my DNA, so they don't shock me," C4 said.

Moreover, working as a foreign correspondent allowed C4 to be exposed to different cultures, changing their view of the world in the process. "For sure, that helped me to be open to the fact that things can be done in a lot of ways. There is no single solution or

one single response to things. Most often, things are neither black nor white, they have many nuances," C4 said. And that carried on:

> "Trying to explain those nuances is one of my obsessions as a journalist. That, for a newswire journalist, is good, because it forces you to be more neutral, but perhaps for a journalist of a print medium is more complicated, because perhaps your narrative is less colorful, less descriptive, and filled with facts and data. I don't know. That is one of the doubts I always have: to what degree trying to introduce so many nuances ends up making the text an unreadable mess, and whether it would be better to simplify but losing nuances that I consider necessary. That's an old debate that I've been having with myself for about twenty years."

For C1, covering China was not challenging from a cultural perspective. C1 did admit that they try to follow Chinese culture to the best of their abilities to avoid causing shock or surprise, which would be counterproductive.

C2 —who singled out "Westerner in China" as one of their identities— explained that their condition of being culturally different has pros and cons:

> "That can create communication problems for you and has negative aspects, but it also has positive aspects. Being seen as someone different also generates curiosity and can generate a certain empathy with people that approaches you and wants to talk to you."

Similarly to C1, C2 claimed that cultural differences with host cultures in China and other countries they visit on reporting trips mean C2 has to adapt:

> "To be able to tell in the best possible way what happens here, you have to do all the things this society does, or even more. When there is a catastrophe and everyone leaves, you have to go to those places. That is another thing that differentiates the correspondent, or the journalist, in that he has to get completely involved in what is happening even though he is completely different. […] If you are in the jungle in

Borneo doing a feature about deforestation, if you have to stay for a day in a village with the tribal customs that may exist, you have to follow them as well. You are someone different who is more involved than other people in that society's life to be able to explain it as best as you can."

C2 defended that one gains humanity by being a foreign correspondent, a capability to understand different perspectives, and empathy. However, C2 argued that those are abilities all journalists need, regardless of where they work: "If you want people to talk to you, you have to be a forthcoming person, with empathy, able to win people's trust so that they tell you everything." According to C2, working abroad boosted those abilities:

"Since it's a different society, country, and language, you have to force that kindness or that empathy to talk to people. Oftentimes, you go someplace and the communication you have with people is your own expression, your eyes, your smile, what you show. It's non-verbal communication. Then you have a translator to say whatever you want, but first, come your face and your eyes, and I believe that is a very important part. Some people have an expression, eyes, and a curiosity that indicate something to other people, I believe journalists have to practice or develop that non-verbal empathy because it's very important when talking to people."

C2's reflection on cultural adaption has brought up language barriers. That issue is addressed fully in the next point.

1.3. "The Challenge Is Not as Big as It Appears": Language Differences

The issue of language was touched briefly in the previous sections when correspondents talked about what it took to be a good foreign correspondent. This point conveys correspondents' views on the issue of language differences more thoroughly.

For C1, language navigation works both ways: C1 reports in a language different from their mother tongue, and in China, they are surrounded by a third language. "Actually, the challenge is not as big as it appears because I've been a journalist in the English language all these years. I studied in an English medium school, so English has always been with me," C1 said.

Correspondents who speak the local language of the place they report on have an advantage, but knowing the local language is not all, C1 defended. As C1 put it:

> "[Local language speakers] have an advantage in understanding the connotations about what is meant when they try to say this, but we have to understand that your reporting language is different. So you are translating that connotation into your language. How much you can faithfully convey depends not only on the language but also on your capability as a communicator."

C2 also downplayed the importance of language differences. "The linguistic differences or differences that may exist can be easily solved with translators. That isn't a problem," C2 said. According to C2, what matters most is to be able to find interviewees and people who tell good stories. Then, it is important to be able to engage with them and establish a trust relationship, which in C2's opinion, is more often achieved through non-verbal means. "Those things are a matter of good luck, certain karma, and also of having that kindness or empathy that here in Asia, […] at least initially, are fundamental weapons to relate to people. It is part of that intercultural, non-verbal communication," C2 said.

C4 mentioned "the problem of language" as one of the key limitations for working as a foreign correspondent. Contrary to C1 and C2, C4 was not particularly enthusiastic about resorting to translators. "Simply due to vocabulary problems, just to interview a doctor about the subtleties of coronavirus symptoms you need a translator. You always lose some freshness by needing a third person, however good they are," C4 said. Meanwhile, C3 explained that their Chinese language knowledge played to their advantage when reporting in China.

This point about language differences showed a range of views from the interviewed correspondents, from those who have a native familiarity with the local language to those who regret the freshness lost in the translation by the mediation of a third person. Besides, those correspondents who did not speak the local language fluently enough to use it for their reporting pointed out to other factors: understanding connotations in the host language might not matter if one is not able to convey them to the reporting language, and speaking the local language might mean little if one is not able to find interviewees with powerful stories and be able to gain their trust.

This section represented a first approach to the overlap between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication. It has delved into foreign correspondents' perceptions about their cultural identity, cross-cultural adaptation, and language. Building upon those foundations, the next section turns to intercultural competence.

2. Foreign Correspondents and Intercultural Competence

The notion of intercultural competence was introduced in the theoretical framework of this dissertation. To be able to gauge foreign correspondents' role in intercultural communication, it was deemed important to question them about their perceptions of intercultural competence during the interviews. Two aspects are highlighted here: whether correspondents have acquired intercultural competence, and whether they use it in their assignments.

2.1. "You Try to Avoid Going Native": Adding Intercultural Competence

All foreign correspondents interviewed responded in the affirmative when they were asked about whether they had acquired intercultural competence as part of their job. However, correspondents' understandings of intercultural competence were diverse.

C1 went on to claim that, working as a journalist in a foreign country, had made them a better person:

> "Unless you're very biased and unless you go with a notion of bias —which some people do—, if you have an open mind, there is so much to learn every day, every minute. Not only in terms of perceptions, but of self-examination of our own belief systems: what we believe to be right and wrong. Besides being a journalist, even as a human being, you go through the whole process of correction and improvement, and of fine-tuning, you understand other people. Maybe there is an element of compassion, sympathy, understanding, a certain maturity. You don't have strong feelings of hatred or

likes and dislikes, you know that everything is in a certain context. Nothing is without context. On the whole, you are a better human being."

C2 believes working as a journalist made them a more social being. Humanity, an open mind to understand different perspectives, empathy, forthcomingness are qualities C2 claims to have acquired since they entered journalism in their home country and were boosted after moving abroad. C2 said that gave them a better understanding of the human condition:

"For good or bad, we're all the same and like the same things: to live well, material things obviously, money, and we all have the same passions for good or bad, but with different cultures which make that modulate in different ways. That helps you understand both where you come from and where you are, the excesses and flaws that may be in modulating all these passions and all these conditions of human nature. Being in contact with very different people makes you see, makes you understand, how each one of us handles their own human condition."

C3 concurred. "I think a large [part] of being a foreign correspondent isn't just in observing things and events passively, but to delve deep into the people's psyche and understand issues from their perspective so you can report more accurately, rather than apply your own lens to things," C3 said.

C5 said that working in China not only helped them improve their Mandarin, but also their interpersonal communication skills. "I meet lots of different kinds of people, from executives in suits to human rights dissidents, to the local grandpa down the road," C5 added. And C5 believes that diversity requires different approaches to communication:

"When you're covering like a whole country and covering all the kinds of news that could be involved, from science, to health, to arts, to history, to tech, whatever. The range of people that I meet is quite vast. I find that I have to talk to them in different ways, so I suppose these years that I've spent in Asia I learned to approach people differently, depending on the story."

C4 explained their multicultural upbringing meant intercultural competence was there almost from the crib. "I was raised in an environment of tolerance toward difference. In any case, being an international correspondent has fostered that feature that I had from the beginning. Of course, I've always been very keen on languages and I love to learn them," C4 expanded.

That keenness on integrating with host cultures made C4 learn more. However, C4 believes correspondents need to be cautious in their assimilation or they risk going native:

"Traveling around makes you keener on learning languages, and also wanting to learn everything about the culture of reception in different ways: go to eat local food, reading as much as possible about that place, try to adopt even hand gestures… […] But then comes the correspondent's perspective to try to avoid what is called 'to go native'—to assimilate yourself so much that you lose objectivity and you see everything from the local point of view, without paying attention to the problems of the nuances that that culture may have."

In that regard, C1 considers that contact with headquarters holds back correspondents' cultural assimilation:

"You want to reflect [what one learns about local culture] and you do reflect it, sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously. But don't forget the gatekeeper. You are writing not for the reader. You think you are writing for the reader but, actually, you're addressing the editor. Because your editor will edit the copy and clear it. Back home, some of the bias of the editor will come reflected in the final product. So what happens is that after —let's say— a few months of your copy, or your articles, being completely changed, you learn that you have to incorporate some of that bias in order to make sure that your article gets published. So what about press freedom and independence you talk about? In the ultimate analysis, your article must get published. And there is no way you can explain. We can, perhaps, fight the bias of the officials you

meet in Beijing, but you cannot fight the bias of your own editorial group. And bias is not always cultural, it's also marketing."

To sum up, all foreign correspondents claimed during the interviews to have acquired intercultural competence as part of their assignments. What intercultural skills have they acquired exactly? Having an open mind, being culturally self-aware, empathy, treating different kinds of people differently, curiosity about other perspectives, learning new languages came up. The next point seeks to explain how correspondents use those intercultural skills.

2.2. "You Go by Chinese Culture": Use of Intercultural Competences

All foreign correspondents responded affirmatively to the question of whether they use intercultural competence in their reporting. Again, the range of uses was diverse.

C1 explained that, in their interactions with Chinese people, they tried to behave as much as possible as a local. "You go by Chinese culture. Otherwise, you'll be seen as an upstart. Maybe unconsciously or subconsciously, you do all those things," C1 said.

C2 claimed that the intercultural skillset needed to be a foreign correspondent had been integrated into their personality. "It's not that I use skills, I think I'm like that. My job has turned me this way. That's another thing one learns over time and with maturity," C2 said. That, C2 added, has benefited their reporting as well:

"One learns that over time those life lessons, journalism lessons, lessons about oneself, learns how to behave as well. It's not that you use a tactic, or a technique, or a refuge, I think you become like that in the end, at least that's what happened to me. I prefer to be sincere, honest, and hearty with the people I come across because I believe that's the best way for everything. News also benefits from that, because the person talks with

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more trust than if they are afraid of saying something because of the attitude you may have shown at the beginning. To overcome barriers and defeat prejudices and fears, you have to be hearty and honest."

C3 considers their Chinese ethnicity plays to their advantage and tries to make the most of it:

"I often play the ethnic Chinese card, use my Chinese language abilities and be as respectful as I possibly can, as I'm acutely aware that I am just a guest in this country. But it doesn't mean I can't do my job in the most professional way possible, because there is an understanding over what we are meant to do here."

For C4, intercultural-communication competence is essential to go out to do feature stories, but may not be needed to cover breaking news. "In Hong Kong, if you go to report on the protests, you don't need them that much. But if you want to explain in depth why protests have come about in Hong Kong, and want to talk to people and want to win their trust, you need to use them. That's very clear," C4 said.

C5 added that part of correspondents' jobs is to "translate" references so that the audience would understand better. "I try to make an effort actually to refer to things in a way, in a context, that the audience will understand better," C5 said.

Therefore, all correspondents believed they use intercultural competence in their reporting, with one claiming that it is now part of their personality. They use intercultural competence mostly to win their interlocutors' trust and respect and to overcome barriers.

3. Foreign Correspondents and Their Intercultural Attitudes

To study the overlap between foreign correspondence and intercultural communication, one final point that needs to be addressed is the attitudes correspondents adopt toward intercultural communication. Do they think about intercultural communication when they work at all? If so, what approach do they take?

To get a sense of correspondents' views on these matters, the interviewed included two questions: "Do you try to favor an intercultural dialogue?" And "Which of these two options describes a foreign correspondent best: a constructor of foreign realities and an intercultural communication?" The final pages of this chapter review what correspondents replied to those questions.

3.1. Foreign Correspondents on Intercultural Dialogue

When asked about whether they tried to favor an intercultural dialogue with their stories, the foreign correspondents interviewed were divided. Some of them held views that could not be more contradictory.

"I don't think it's a journalist's mission. I think a journalist's mission is to tell what happens, to give as much information as possible, as many perspectives as possible, and let the reader act accordingly," C2 said. However, C4 replied to the same question by saying: "That's one of the pillars and the mission of a correspondent." With less assertive positions, but still in contradiction, C1 advocated a similar position than C2's, while C3 and C5 were closer to C4's.

C1 defended that a correspondent's top priority should be covering the news. "A reporter is a news reporter, so he's focusing on news. Whatever he's trying to do in terms of good things, he doesn't write an article about that, he tries to leave it within the article, because the focus is the news," C1 said.

C2 added that intercultural dialogue is not a correspondent's job, as there is a risk that for fear of reporting something that might not be taken well they miss important parts of the news, which would amount to self-censorship. "Almost all stories that we journalists publish are negative, which affect the image people have about a country. They affect the image people may have of China obviously, or of Asia... That's not something I can control," C2 said.

Even though C2 personally favors an intercultural dialogue, they do not believe that a correspondent's job is to foster it:

> "What we have to do is to tell what there is as best as we can, and then people can dialogue if that's what they want. Obviously, I'm personally in favor of that intercultural dialogue, and of knowing other countries and knowing other societies and accepting the differences. I'm for that and try that my work contributes to show something else. I hope that's the case, but can't take for granted that that's the case either."

Meanwhile, C3 suggested there is more to news than just reporting them, as the way a correspondent frames them matters too. "My priority is always how to inform and educate readers outside of China about what exactly is going on here, but framed in such a way that it is hopefully relevant to our readers, or important enough for them to know," C3 said.

C4 agreed with that. "We have a responsibility and a role in creating a narrative or an image, or allowing to understand the country we cover," C4 said. And C4 elaborated:

> "I think a correspondent's role is to build bridges and to facilitate that the readers' culture —that of the country of the medium you work for— can better understand the culture of the country or the continent you are covering. I think we play a paramount

role as the front line. When you are curious about a country, the first thing you do is check the news about that country."

Fostering an intercultural dialogue is C5's hope. "I hope that my coverage helps whoever's consuming it to better understand China," C5 said. For C5, an important part of their coverage is to try to convey a nuanced image of China that debunks the idea of it being a monolith:

"It's a very complicated country. Just like anywhere else, there's highs and lows and good and bad, and it's not like one size fits all. I try really hard to get that through my coverage. Because I think, a lot of times, people who aren't here just think of it as one thing when it's not that. It's like many shades of grey instead of black and white, and I try to get that across in my coverage."

To illustrate that nuanced reporting C5 attempts to practice, they cite the Chinese government as an example:

"There's a difference between the Chinese public, the Chinese Communist Party, and even the Chinese government. And I think that's an example of the kind of nuance and distinction that I try to make clear in what I report—even within the government, the different levels between local and central government, how that can impact policy, what people feel, and what they live and experience in China. It's not just one thing. It's a one-party state, but actually it's a very colorful one-party state. […] It's not a monolith."

Thus, correspondents' views on the issue of intercultural dialogue are not just different —as was the case in their definition of their profession—, they are contradictory. It is important, though, to look closely at the arguments that support those confronted views.

Those who are against the notion of foreign correspondents as facilitators of intercultural dialogue argue that news takes priority, and that news should aspire to reflect reality as best as a reporter can. Other considerations —that is, considerations

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other than news such as preoccupation with fostering an intercultural dialogue— entail a risk of missing parts of the news, thus misrepresenting reality.

By contrast, those who favor the view of foreign correspondents as facilitators of intercultural dialogue defend that the way stories are framed leaves scope to try to build bridges between cultures. Since all news stories are written from a given perspective, let that perspective be one that allows readers to understand the country that is being covered.

3.2. Do Foreign Correspondents See Themselves as Intercultural Communicators or Constructors of Foreign Realities?

Foreign correspondents' answers to the question of whether they see themselves as intercultural communicators or as constructors of foreign realities were consistent with their predisposition to favor intercultural dialogue. That means that responses were again divided into two opposing camps: C1 and C2 opted for the idea of foreign correspondents as constructors of foreign realities, while C3 and C4 went for intercultural communicators. This time, C5 was in an intermediate position: C5 understood their role as a mix of both but was more inclined to go with the notion of an intercultural communicator.

It is, once again, worth looking more closely at the detail of their answers. C1 said correspondents are supposed to be covering a foreign country. "While they do that, they can be good or bad communicators, but the priority is to report the news from that country." C1, however, was somewhat reluctant to describe correspondents as "constructors of foreign realities":

> "I'm not sure if the word construct is correct, the simple word is reporting what's happening. Construct and reconstruct are phrases that are used to explain analysis, but the first task is to report what really happened, as much as we understand or know

within the limitations of deadline. Within that, while covering the news, you are a good communicator. But if you are a communicator and the news is not important, then what are you writing about?"

C2 expanded on the idea of reflecting reality. "That's our mission: bear witness of what happens and tell it. That's been the case since people started traveling and writing chronicles," C2 said. According to C2, correspondents can be compared to chroniclers like Herodotus:

> "The mission of a chronicler is going to a place and telling what happens there. The more reliable and real it is, the better. Then, of course, there will be people who want to communicate with that reality, who feel attracted by it or like it, and those who won't. But we can't disguise or decorate reality to foster a certain dialogue. We have to tell things as they are, for good or for bad."

In the opposite camp, C3 proposed to view correspondents as sense-makers of countries that are not necessarily close to their readers. "As a journalist, you document and communicate what's already there and try to make sense of it to people who may not have the front-row seat, inside knowledge and political/social/cultural understanding of a country that you have," C3 said.

C4 argued that correspondents should explain things to allow for a better understanding of different peoples. "At the end of the day, covering international news, or describing the situation of a country, seeks to make it understandable and [to explain] why it is relevant to you," C4 said. C4 went even further to say:

> "Being some kind of ethnographer and mark the differences is precisely the opposite of what we should do. This is about highlighting that we are all equal and that we all have things in common, and that we may well be different, but the difference has an explanation."

For C5, foreign correspondence is a mix of both being an intercultural communicator and a reporter of foreign realities. "If I have succeeded in my job, then I will have done the first better, the intercultural understanding," C5 said. "I guess that's what I would hope I'm doing, fostering a better understanding between these countries and governments," C5 said.

C5 said references to cultural differences can enrich their coverage but need to be carefully managed. "I think it's important to get some of those cultural references in if it fits the story, but I try really hard to not make China too exotic. […] It's a different place and it's a foreign country, but there are people too," C5 explained. And C5 carried on:

> "I definitely think about that in my coverage, how to make it interesting and colorful and culturally appropriate, without kind of making these people sound like some: 'oh, the dog meat, like these weirdos.' I try really hard to avoid that kind of stereotype, because I just think that's really, really inappropriate."

One initial takeaway is that there is a correlation between correspondents' inclination to favor intercultural dialogue and their perception of their role as intercultural communicators.

There is, however, more to unravel here. Correspondents who perceive themselves as intercultural communicators justify that view by appealing to their role as sense-makers to help understand other cultures, whereas those who see themselves as constructors of foreign realities defend that their task is to reflect reality.

Those argumentations are interesting in light of the question raised in point 3.1.1. when reflecting on the potential ramifications of correspondents' perceptions over their own cultural identity. It was questioned there that it would be worth looking at whether correspondents who had a more defined cultural identity would be those who are more open to favor an intercultural dialogue or, on the contrary, they would seek to mark cultural differences.

The answer to that question is inconclusive. C4 and C5 did not have a clear cultural identity and saw correspondents as intercultural communicators and argued that they should favor intercultural dialogue. C1 was the opposite: they did have a clear cultural identity, saw correspondents as constructors of foreign realities, and defended they should not seek intercultural dialogue. Nonetheless, C2 and C3 did not fit into that correlation. C2 claimed to have multiple cultural identities as well as an aspiration to a global perspective, but did not favor intercultural dialogue and defined correspondents as constructors of foreign realities. Finally, C3 had a defined cultural identity but viewed correspondents as intercultural communicators and as facilitators of intercultural dialogue.

A conclusion to be drawn from this division of foreign correspondents' perceptions of their role within intercultural communication could be to underline the idea —noted in the previous chapter— that there is no singular foreign correspondence, but a plurality of foreign correspondents. That plurality applies to their perception of the profession, as well as to the intercultural implications of that profession.

IV. Discussion

The fourth part of the dissertation sought to reach out to foreign correspondents who covered the coronavirus crisis in China to better understand what influenced their coverage of that story, their general approach to the profession, and the intercultural implications of their work. It uncovered some relevant findings that are summarized in the next few pages.

The first chapter looked at foreign correspondents' experiences covering the coronavirus crisis in China. One initial finding was that not all foreign correspondents first heard about the new virus at the same time. Some of them joined coverage when the story was well advanced. Uncertainty as to the seriousness of the outbreak and historic precedents made assessing the severity of the situation challenging, and that led to hesitation over whether to go to Wuhan or not. For most correspondents, the turning point in their coverage when they realized the situation was indeed very severe was when Wuhan was locked down. From then on, correspondents adopted different strategies to cover the epidemic. None of the interviewed correspondents went to Wuhan initially, but those who had colleagues there opted for a division of labor, others put the focus on people from their home country who were in China, another traveled to other places to see the effects of the crisis there, and yet another sought to warn their audience about the danger of the virus.

Correspondents faced multiple challenges while covering the coronavirus crisis. For many, lack of information and access to sources was the main difficulty, but others lamented that they could not go to Wuhan or that there was not enough data available to make a call about whether it was safe to travel there or not. Some correspondents also complained about the behavior of Chinese authorities toward correspondents, and particularly about a reluctance among the Chinese public to speak to foreign journalists. However, one correspondent disagreed with the observation about the lack of access to

sources and claimed that a vast number of Wuhan residents were willing to share their experience during the lockdown. Health worries due to the virus, personal stress, fatigue, and scarcity of supplies of disinfectants and masks were other factors that weighed on correspondents' coverage of the crisis.

Self-criticisms were almost non-existent when correspondents were asked about what they would change about the way they approached the coverage. Some said they would have gone to Wuhan if they had known at the time what they learned later about the virus and the possibility to leave the city, but all seemed mostly happy with what they wrote. One correspondent did criticize fellow correspondents for trying to blame some Chinese people's eating tastes for the outbreak of the virus, while others lamented that their home audiences accused them of being alarmists or did not listen to their warnings for feeling that such a viral outbreak could only affect China and not developed countries.

The second chapter showed that foreign correspondents can hardly agree on a definition of their own profession, which suggests that there is a plurality of understandings of what their role entails. There is more agreement on the skills deemed necessary to be a good foreign correspondent: having a good nose for stories, curiosity, interest in different cultures, and being able to deal well with people were cited as skills that help correspondents to excel in their job.

When asked about professional routines, correspondents responded that reading in, staying on top of events, doing research for stories, contacting sources and writing were part of their routines. Some delved into the inherent tensions between reporting spot news stories and focusing more on enterprise journalism. And all claimed to have regular contact with headquarters, with many correspondents highlighting the trust they felt their editors deposit in them.

Most correspondents mentioned obstacles raised by Chinese authorities to their reporting as the main difficulty for being a foreign correspondent in China. One correspondent even reported that their sources are often harassed and that Chinese research assistants suffer more than correspondents. For another correspondent, the main barrier was not censorship or tensions with Chinese authorities, but lack of access to sources of information.

The second chapter was illustrative in the sense that, while correspondents responded similarly to questions about skills, professional routines, relationships with headquarters, and reporting difficulties, their definitions of the profession were very diverse. That implies that, even if they need roughly the same skills, follow analogous routines, interact with headquarters in a similar way, and even face comparable challenges, their understanding of what their role is and entails might still diverge.

As occurred with definitions of foreign correspondence, correspondents also held different views about the intercultural implications of their work. Some identified themselves clearly with a cultural group, some others had a more mixed notion of their identity, with one arguing they felt like a "citizen of the world" and another saying they aspired to have a "global vision." Thus, at least some correspondents have integrated their experiences in foreign countries into their identity and could be seen as instances of what Casmir (1997) called third-culture building. However, this did not lead to what Kim (2009) described as cross-cultural adaptation, given that correspondents need to maintain a strong identification with the country where their media organization is based due to the very nature of their work.

There was no agreement either on the question of whether correspondents were intercultural communicators or constructors of foreign realities. What is more, the results of the interviews suggested that having a strong identification with a cultural group is not a decisive factor as to whether correspondents are inclined to consider the intercultural implications of their work.

Nonetheless, correspondents did agree on saying that they have acquired intercultural competence, shown by having an open mind, being culturally self-aware, empathy, treating different kinds of people differently, curiosity about other perspectives, and improving their language skills. All claimed to use those skills in their reporting. Therefore, all dimensions contemplated by Chen's (2009) intercultural communication competence theory were observed in the responses provided by foreign correspondents.

Once again, this is a case where a shared set of skills and uses among the interviewed correspondents leads to very different understandings of the intercultural implications of their role. In fact, the responses obtained were contradictory. While the question of whether correspondents saw themselves as intercultural communicators or constructors

of foreign realities had a dichotomous formulation, it is worth noting that the reasonings correspondents gave to justify their answers were incompatible as well.

While it must be stressed that the fact that the sample of interviewees is reduced limits the extrapolation of these observations, this part of the dissertation is coming to an end, and it is time to conclude. Common patterns among correspondents were observed on the uncertainties and challenges they faced while covering the coronavirus crisis in China, although they did not begin covering it at the same time or with the same intensity and adopted different approaches as well. More broadly, correspondents also responded similarly when asked about the skills they need, routines they follow, or difficulties they encounter, but still gave diverging definitions of their professions. When it came to intercultural communication, all claimed to have acquired and used intercultural competence but were divided as to whether they should favor intercultural dialogue or not and whether they saw themselves as intercultural communicators or constructors of foreign realities.

Perhaps what this discussion suggests is that the only possible takeaway is that there is no clear-cut conclusion. That is, there is a variety of understandings of what foreign correspondents are and of what their role implies for intercultural communications. Perhaps there are as many understandings of the profession as practitioners the profession has so that the best way to view it is not in black-or-white terms but through multiple shades of grey.

Conclusion

This doctoral dissertation aimed to fulfill an ambition, meet two objectives, and answer a research question. The ambition was to put foreign correspondence and intercultural communication in dialogue. Analyzing articles about the coronavirus crisis in China written by the foreign correspondents included in the sample and understanding their professional practices constituted its objectives. And the research question that has been the backbone of this project was to what extent foreign correspondents could be considered intercultural mediators.

A double study case was conceived to pursue these goals, consisting of a discourse analysis of a sample of articles written by foreign correspondents about the coronavirus crisis in China and a series of interviews with those correspondents. Before tackling the case studies, though, it was necessary to develop a framework that would serve as theoretical grounding for that empirical research.

In that theoretical framework, it was observed that several studies have looked at the figure of the foreign correspondent. However, researchers like Hannerz (2004) and Self (2011) complained about the relative scarcity of these studies and their shortcomings. Adhering to Gross and Kopper's (2011) call to unite theory and practice to gain a deeper understanding of foreign correspondence, this dissertation used the perspective of intercultural communication to study correspondents.

None of the theories developed within intercultural communication was comprehensive enough to analyze the intercultural dimension of foreign correspondence in its entirety. As a result, this dissertation proposed a reformulation of the notion of intercultural communication from the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of the social construction of reality. Regarding the application of intercultural communication to the study of foreign correspondents, two areas were singled out: correspondents'

condition as producers of intercultural discourses and their participation in intercultural communication processes.

In particular, correspondents' use of discursive strategies of representation of identity and otherness and the deployment of what Hannerz (2004) calls story lines in reports were highlighted as areas that had potential when looking at their condition of producers of intercultural discourses. Van Dijk's (2011) Ideological Square model was considered the basis for analyzing identity and otherness.

Concerning correspondents' condition as participants in intercultural communication processes, another pair of aspects was suggested: correspondents' identity and intercultural communication competence. Kim's (2009) cross-cultural adaptation theory and Casmir's (1997) third-culture building theory would assist in the examination of correspondents' intercultural identities, while Chen's (2009) intercultural communication competence theory would help to consider their intercultural communication skills.

Having established the theoretical framework that would guide the study cases, the specific methods employed were outlined. A model for discourse analysis of correspondents' production was designed, adapting Richardson's (2007) proposal for the study of newspapers' discourse to the purposes of this dissertation and adding strategies of identity and otherness representation and story lines as categories to be contemplated. Similarly, the questionnaire prepared for the semi-structured interviews with correspondents included questions about identity and intercultural communication competence to explore their condition as participants in intercultural communication processes.

The discourse analysis that constituted the first study case for this dissertation examined 277 articles written by eight China correspondents from four cultural clusters. That exercise yielded many significant findings.

At the textual level, analyzing the topics of correspondents' articles led to the observation that some issues attracted the attention of several correspondents at the same time, such as the introduction of lockdowns in Wuhan and other cities of Hubei province, everyday life under coronavirus, the death of Li Wenliang, a change in the diagnostic method that led to a surge in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases or

Xi Jinping's visit to Wuhan to signal that the containment of the epidemic was near. This analysis of the topics addressed in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis in China by foreign correspondent confirms Adelman and Verbrugge's (2000) observation that newspaper coverage of disease has three stages: emergence, maturation, and decline. In the first, correspondents warned about the spread of the virus and reported the measures being implemented by authorities. Once the alarm had been sounded, they looked at what life under coronavirus was like and at the diverse impacts of those measures on the population. Finally, they noted the containment of the epidemic.

The focus on government-related stories observed in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis by China correspondents coincides with what Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008) found in a study of SARS coverage by newspapers from four media systems. Tian and Stewart (2006) observed that CNN and BBC centered on health-related issues while covering SARS, but that discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that their analysis was computer-based and might have missed some nuances.

While some degree of coincidence in the topics treated by the analyzed correspondents might have been expected given that they were all covering the same story, parallelisms were particularly accentuated in the case of the two Spanish correspondents included in the sample. The correspondents of El País and ABC, on some occasions, reported not only about the same topic but on the same day or within few days of separation. To a lesser extent, that happened with the Indian correspondents too, but not with the correspondents of U.K. newspapers.

A possible explanation for this coincidence might be that correspondents from media systems with fewer colleagues in one posting —like the Spanish and Indian systems in China— tend to imitate more what their national peers are reporting. Media systems with more correspondents —like the U.K.— might have a greater diversity of perspectives and fewer parallelisms in the topics reported. Other researchers like Zeng (2018c) have noted imitation among correspondents, linking it to technology, but the results from this discourse analysis suggests other factors are at play. Testing this hypothesis could be a possible future line of work.

Alternated with those stories that most correspondents covered, there were others where they focused on specific angles of the coronavirus crisis to differentiate themselves from

the competition. El País's correspondent emphasized the economic and social consequences of the crisis. ABC's correspondent gave voice to critics of the Chinese government and tracked the World Health Organization's assessments of the situation. The daily evolution of the epidemic, the Indian community in China, and the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry were the main focal points for PTI's correspondent. The Times of India's correspondent shared that preoccupation with the evolution of the epidemic and the Indian community. The Guardian's correspondent looked to give voice to people affected by the virus and to dissidents[18]. In the cases of The Telegraph's and The Straits Times' correspondents, what set their coverage apart was, respectively, their articles about Britons and Singaporeans. The South China Morning Post's correspondent distinguished herself by her in-depth reporting on Chinese authorities.

These choices of topics are consistent with the findings about the social actors represented in correspondents' discourses. Since the two Indian correspondents focused on tracking the evolution of the epidemic, the main social actors in their coverage are coronavirus patients. For the other six correspondents, Chinese authorities are the main social actors.

That focus on authorities marks a departure from how Covid-19 has been covered in other contexts. In their analysis of Spanish newspapers, Argiñano and Bilbao (2020) found that civil society was the main social actor of the coverage, followed by politicians.

The distinction between the social actors on which Indian correspondents focused while covering coronavirus, on the one hand, and everyone else, on the other, was also observed in the analysis of the way Chinse authorities were represented in discourse. Indian correspondents used mostly neutral representations, while the other six correspondents tended to represent Chinese authorities negatively. This critical representation was located more at the predicational level —through the attribution of actions like hiding information or coercing people— than at the referential level. This finding should not come as a surprise, given that Lewison (2008) already noted that,

[18] This emphasis on Chinese dissidents observed in the coverage by the correspondent of The Guardian is consistent with Zhang and Shaw's (2020) finding that The Guardian put human rights at the center of its coverage of China's handling of the crisis, in an analysis the coverage by three U.K. outlets of China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak.

when international media covered SARS, the single biggest risk they mentioned was the behavior of the Chinese government.

Criticism of China's authorities by these six correspondents during their coverage of the coronavirus crisis was anchored, especially in the early days, in mentions of the SARS epidemic of 2002-2003. The Chinese government's mishandling of SARS had been well documented. That discursive mechanism, referring to previous diseases to introduce new ones, had already been noted by Washer (2004).

These six correspondents, and particularly those of ABC and The Guardian, sometimes presented Chinese people and coronavirus patients as victims of the actions or omissions of the government. Thus, patients were portrayed as victims of the government's failure to protect the population or adopt measures promptly, not of the disease. The most apparent victimized representation was that of Li Wenliang, the ophthalmologist who died of coronavirus after being reprimanded by authorities for warning of the outbreak in its early days.

The fact that the correspondents of ABC and The Guardian were the most aggressive in their criticism toward Chinese authorities might seem somewhat striking, given that the former newspaper is usually categorized as right-leaning and the latter as left-leaning. However, in their analysis of U.K. media coverage of China's handling of Covid-19, Zhang and Shaw (2020) already argued that media organizations' political orientation is becoming blurred as a factor to explain the themes reported, which these researchers attribute to the general political climate in the U.K.

All eight correspondents analyzed in this dissertation coincided in representing Chinese authorities as active agents, with Chinese society being usually presented as the passive object of the actions performed by the government. With regards to coronavirus patients, most references presented them aggregated as statistics, anonymous and speechless. There were notable exceptions: the correspondent of The Guardian gave them a voice in a few articles and those of The Telegraph and The Straits Times as well, but to a lesser degree.

That anonymization of patients is not new, which points to a continuity in the journalistic practices during the coverage of infectious diseases. Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008) showed in their study of coverage of SARS that newspapers focused on

tracking the evolution of the disease across society and not on its impact on the individual. Reporting individual stories while covering disease is susceptible to lead to stigmatization —as studies of media coverage of AIDS as McAllister and Kitron (2003) showed—, but overlooking those individual stories is problematic as well. While the numbers of affected people give a sense of whether the disease is expanding or decreasing, framing health-related stories with individual cases helps to convey the seriousness of the disease and to create empathy with victims, Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008, p. 217) said. That empathy should not be taken for granted, as Joffe and Haarhoff (2002) found that lay readers in Britain perceived an Ebola outbreak as science fiction. In any case, Beaudoin (2007) observed in a comparative analysis of SARS coverage by Xinhua and AP over a 14-month period that human-interest stories reported by AP increased over time, and the sample for this discourse analysis only covered three months.

A look at the sources cited by the correspondents analyzed reveals that the Chinese central government was the top source for half of the correspondents studied: those of El País, PTI, Times of India, and The Straits Times. ABC's correspondent had authorities and scientists as his two primary sources. The most frequently cited source for The Guardian's correspondent was the media. In contrast, The Telegraph's and the South China Morning Post's correspondents resorted to scientists and policy commentators, respectively, as their main sources.

The finding that government sources dominated in the discourse sample analyzed for this dissertation corroborates what Houston, Chao, and Ragan (2008) observed in their study of SARS coverage by newspapers from four media systems. This underscores that governments are inevitably an essential source of information for journalists during a public health crisis, even when reporters do not fully trust authorities and include disclaimers about possible cover-ups or underreporting in their articles, as was the case in the sample of this dissertation.

Correspondents' sourcing is somewhat correlated to the topics addressed, and the social actors represented. For example, the sample from the correspondent of the South China Morning Post was distinguished by her insightful reporting on Chinese authorities, so

the main social actors in her coverage are authorities, and her top sources were policy commentators who were able to provide that analytical view.

As evidenced by the choice of topics explained above, some correspondents looked at how people from their media's countries were affected by the crisis to go beyond the main stories that everyone was reporting. An analysis of the cultural dimension of correspondents' discourses found that all made references to people from correspondents' own cultures. References to Chinese culture were identified as well, with the Lunar New Year being the most commonly mentioned element.

There were also significant differences in how cultural references were handled across the sample of correspondents' discourses. The correspondents from countries with a Confucian culture included many cultural presuppositions in their coverage — suggesting a shared cultural background— and those same references had to be explained by their Indian and Western colleagues. This was particularly evident in the case of the South China Morning Post's correspondent, whose cultural references and granularity of description of the Chinese political system were unparalleled.

Instances of discourse polarization in van Dijk's (2011) terms were found, both differentiation with out-groups and identification with in-groups. Examples of this "othering" include articles by the correspondents of El País, ABC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Straits Times, and the South China Morning Post highlighting the failures of Chinese authorities or articles that implied that the eating habits of some Chinese people were to blame for the coronavirus outbreak. It is remarkable the difference in the tone used by The Straits Times' correspondent to report on Chinese authorities when compared to her laudatory article about Singaporean officials who prepared the evacuation from Wuhan. Meanwhile, some articles by the Indian correspondents and a few by those of The Telegraph and The Straits Times offered greater granularity in references to people from their home countries than in similar mentions of Chinese counterparts.

Nonetheless, there were instances of identification with Chinese people too. ABC's correspondent used the first-person plural in an article to refer to the risks to public health posed by the Chinese government's delayed response to the crisis. The Guardian's correspondent wrote some articles about individual cases of coronavirus

patients that allowed empathy with the victims. The correspondents of The Straits Times and The Telegraph had similar articles, but fewer.

The negative representation of Chinese authorities by the six correspondents mentioned above —all except the two Indian correspondents— was reinforced by the story lines they used. China's lack of transparency was the most frequently highlighted story line, although the country's lack of freedoms was the only one referenced by all six. The story lines found in their coverage illustrate that these correspondents' coverage went beyond the immediate health crisis they were covering to include long-term trends about China's economy, society, or political system. What image of China did correspondents portray in their coverage of the coronavirus crisis? An analysis of the story lines found in their coverage —for those who used story lines— reveals that it was one of a country facing challenges on multiple fronts and evidencing its shortcomings.

This finding adds to a long list of studies that showed that the image of China portrayed by international media was eminently negative. Tang (2018), Peng (2004), Liss (2003), Kobland, Du and Kwon (1992) and Rodríguez Wangüemert, Rodríguez Breijo and Pestano (2017), to name a few, coincided in pointing out that China consistently received bad press. In any case, it is worth recalling that Leung and Huang (2007) concluded that, while journalists reported China in a negative light, they gave credit where credit was due and that coverage of the SARS in China and Vietnam by some English-language media primarily reflected the respective handling of the epidemic by the governments of those two countries.

Thus, this dissertation observed that foreign correspondents' coverage of the coronavirus in China continued a pre-existing trend of negative portrayals of China by international media. Those previous studies did not distinguish between correspondents and other media players, but this dissertation focused on correspondents and still reached a similar conclusion. This, in turn, could be seen as corroboration of De Swert and Wouters's (2011) finding that having a correspondent in China did not significantly alter the general portrayal of the country by Belgian television.

Interestingly, no story line was identified in the coverage by the correspondents of PTI and Times of India. This could be because their priority was to cover spot news about the epidemic and the Indian community in Wuhan, and they ignored longer-term trends.

Another aspect noted throughout the comparative discourse analysis was the marked difference between the coverage by the two Indian correspondents and the rest of the sample, evident in the topics addressed, main social actors, their representation, and lack of story lines. Mushtaq and Baig (2016) suggest the Indian media system has elements from all three models outlined by Hallin and Mancini (2004), but that it is closer to the liberal model of North Atlantic countries. However, this dissertation included two journalists from a liberal-model media system, the U.K., and their coverage was markedly different. If anything, this corroborates Zeng's (2018a) consideration that national journalistic cultures are important for how correspondents perceive their professional role.

To recap, this dissertation identified continuities in the way foreign correspondents' discourse about the coronavirus crisis in China with, on the one hand, how the media had previously covered health crises and infectious diseases and, on the other, prior media portrayals of China. This underscores the importance of considering previous practice and possible inertias when analyzing journalistic work, including that carried out by foreign correspondents.

Even though the correspondents included in the sample were reporting on a health crisis, they still covered China. And they represented China as other during their coverage of the coronavirus crisis. In the case of the Indian correspondents, the distinction between "them" and "us" became evident in the attention they devoted to the Indian community in Wuhan —part of their "us"— and anonymization of "them," ordinary Chinese people. For the correspondents of The Telegraph and The Straits Times, the same is true in the articles about Britons and Singaporeans, respectively, although these articles represent a smaller proportion of their coverage. These are instances of discourse polarization as contemplated by van Dijk's (2011) Ideological Square model.

The six non-Indian correspondents represent China as other too. For them, this other is mainly a political one. They all emphasize Chinese authorities' missteps and omissions, highlighting that China is a Communist regime, and their story lines remind readers about China's lack of freedoms and lack of transparency. Most of them include a

cultural element too: the othering occurs partly by blaming the origins of the outbreak on some Chinese people's eating habits.

Be it in terms of identification with nationals from their own countries, seeking to mark political differences, or underscoring cultural contrasts, the discourse analysis conducted in this dissertation found discursive strategies of othering toward Chinese people in the samples from all correspondents analyzed. There were a few instances of identification by some correspondents too, but the othering strategies dominated.

This finding could be interpreted as further corroboration of Ungar's (1998) conclusion that the discourse of U.S. and U.K. media on the 1995 Ebola outbreak in Zaire shifted from an alarming to a reassuring tone through a strategy of othering. Joffe and Haarhoff (2002), Washer (2004), and Joye (2010) also observed Western journalists deploying that reassuring interpretive package on other hot health crises originating from non-Western countries through strategies of othering toward the affected people.

The discourse analysis was just the first leg of the study case of this dissertation, and it was complemented by interviews with five correspondents whose work was analyzed. While not all correspondents accepted the interview requests, this is in line with previous research projects with correspondents based in China, as explained in the corresponding chapter of part 2. Furthermore, the request for anonymity by one of the interviewed correspondents posed an additional hurdle for presenting the results. For example, this meant that the classification criteria outlined in the theoretical framework could not be used as initially envisaged.

As for the findings from the interviews, correspondents explained how uncertainty about the seriousness of the disease and hesitation over whether to go to Wuhan or not dominated the early days of their coverage. For most of them, Wuhan's lockdown marked the point where they realized that the severity of the situation required all their efforts. They adopted different strategies: some had to coordinate with colleagues in Wuhan, one focused on covering people from their own country, another traveled to other parts of China, yet another tried to warn their home audience about the danger the coronavirus represented.

This diversity of strategies to approach the coverage was somewhat reflected in the topics seen in the discourse analysis. If the discourse analysis showed that there were

topics specific to each correspondent's coverage that allowed them to differentiate themselves from the competition —in addition to the top stories most correspondents covered—, the interviews demonstrated that these were conscious decisions.

Lack of information and access to sources was identified as the main difficulty in covering the coronavirus crisis by a few of the interviewed correspondents. This finding helps to understand why the story line "lack of transparency" was so prominent in the coverage of the coronavirus crisis by some of the analyzed correspondents.

Other correspondents cited uncertainty for deciding whether to go to Wuhan and the behavior of Chinese authorities toward reporters as crucial hurdles. Some correspondents also talked about health worries due to the virus, personal stress, fatigue, and scarcity of supplies of disinfectants and masks, although none of them mentioned these as top concerns.

All correspondents seemed mostly happy with how they covered the coronavirus crisis, although some said they wished they would have gone to Wuhan. One correspondent criticized the way some rival media outlets blamed the coronavirus outbreak on some Chinese people's eating habits, while two correspondents felt ignored by their home audiences.

In light of the virtually non-existent self-criticism the correspondents displayed in the interviews, one lesson that can be learned for future research based on interviews is that it might be more practical not to frame the questions in a personalized way. That is, perhaps journalists are more willing to point out shortcomings of their peers than their own to avoid getting exposed.

When asked about their views on the profession of the foreign correspondent, the interviewees could not agree on a definition of foreign correspondence. Tulloch (2004) talked about the heterogeneity of profiles among correspondents, and Zeng (2018c) documented it in the case of China correspondents. Still, the interviews conducted in this dissertation show diversity in the very same understanding of what a foreign correspondent is.

Reading in, staying on top of events, researching stories, contacting sources, and writing were part of the professional routines mentioned by the correspondents in the

interviews. This is broadly in line with the responses obtained by Tulloch (2004), who highlighted the importance of local media for correspondents as well.

For most correspondents, difficulties created by Chinese authorities were the main difficulty they regularly found in their job, although one saw the lack of access to sources of information as the biggest frustration. When asked about the coronavirus crisis specifically, obstacles created by authorities were not singled out, but some correspondents did complain about hostility against them instigated by official propaganda. These tensions with authorities are also the background against which the critical coverage of the Chinese government's handling of the coronavirus crisis by most of the correspondents included in the sample for this dissertation took place.

These complaints about the behavior of Chinese authorities toward foreign correspondents are in line with the conclusions of recent annual reports by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (2020, 2021) as well as with Mokry's (2017) findings, which detailed how journalists try to mitigate the government's restrictions by strategies like quoting Party-state media, turning to foreign experts when Chinese scholars refuse to talk to them, and protecting their sources. It also suggests that the correspondents interviewed for this dissertation had a more pessimistic view of their relationship with Chinese authorities than the Taiwanese correspondents interviewed by Cheng and Lee (2015).

With regards to the intercultural dimension of their work, all the interviewed correspondents responded in the affirmative to the question of whether they had gained intercultural competence while working as correspondents. Having an open mind, being culturally self-aware, empathy, treating different kinds of people differently, curiosity about other perspectives, and improving their language skills came up in correspondents' responses to the question. This evidences that they possess all of the dimensions of intercultural communication competence outlined by Chen (2009).

The issue of cultural identity led to more diverse responses. Some identified themselves clearly with a cultural group. Still, others had a more hybrid notion of their identity, with one claiming to be a "citizen of the world" and another saying they aspired to have a "global vision." One correspondent claimed to have integrated intercultural communication competence into their personality, which could point to the creation of a

new intercultural identity according to Casmir's (1997) third-culture building. None of the responses from the interviewees implied they had undergone what Kim (2009) calls cross-cultural adaptation, which was expected given that media organizations try to avoid that their correspondents go native.

However, correspondents did not agree on whether they should favor an intercultural dialogue, nor did they agree on whether a foreign correspondent is an intercultural communicator or a constructor of foreign realities. Having an intercultural identity was not a decisive factor to determine whether correspondents were inclined to favor an intercultural dialogue with their work or not. In fact, the correspondent who claimed to aspire to have a "global vision" and to have integrated intercultural communication competence within their personality argued strongly against favoring an intercultural dialogue and for considering correspondents as constructors of foreign realities.

It is worth noting that the very nature of the sample of correspondents considered for this dissertation is quite telling: none of the correspondents interviewed was born in mainland China, but some had Chinese origins. This illustrates how media organizations increasingly resort to reporters with mixed or hybrid identities as correspondents, mainly descendants of immigrants. If they are posted in their parents' country of origin, this allows them to have a blended perspective that combines both the point of view of the place where their medium is based and that of the country where they are reporting. In one of the interviewee's words: China was both a foreign place to them and not. This emerging feature of foreign correspondence is worth following and could be another object of future research.

Thus, the aspects that were singled out in the theoretical framework of this dissertation for the study of foreign correspondents in their condition of producers of intercultural discourses —strategies of identification and othering, and story lines— were included in the analysis model and led to significant findings. Similarly, the two areas highlighted to consider correspondents as participants in intercultural communication processes — identity and competence— were contemplated in the questionnaire for the interviews and resulted in some insights. The ambition that was stated at the beginning of this dissertation —to put foreign correspondence and intercultural communication in dialogue— has been fulfilled.

The results of the discourse analysis show the first objective of the dissertation —to analyze articles about the coronavirus crisis in China written by the foreign correspondents included in the sample— has been met, and the interviews paved the way for the achievement of the second goal —to understand the professional practices of those correspondents—. It is time to turn to the research question: are foreign correspondents intercultural communicators?

There were attempts to answer that question at three points during this dissertation: in the theoretical framework, in the discourse analysis, and in the interviews. The fact a different conclusion was reached each time should not be seen as a contradiction but rather as a sign that the question is not as straightforward as it seems.

There is no dispute about correspondents' conditions as participants in intercultural communication processes. They acknowledge it in the interviews and claim to have acquired intercultural communication competence.

When it comes to the intercultural dimension of their work, things are more complicated. From a theoretical point of view, if one looks at foreign correspondents from the framework outlined in this dissertation, they should be seen as constructors of foreign realities. The institutional order in which they operate puts correspondents in charge of making sense of a different reality than that of the place where their medium is headquartered. The discourse analysis found instances of identification strategies with people from correspondents' own cultural groups and of othering of out-groups. In the interviews, some correspondents said they see themselves as reporters of foreign realities and think they should not try to favor an intercultural dialogue.

However, as Giró (2004) points out, there are cracks in the informative walls built by the media system and, within the voices the media convey, there are alternative views. Indeed, the discourse analysis of this dissertation found a few instances of identification between correspondents and people from different cultural groups. The interviews supported that: some correspondents see themselves as intercultural communicators, and they aspire to favor an intercultural dialogue. Perhaps there are as many ways to understand foreign correspondence as there are foreign correspondents. After all, the correspondents interviewed could not agree on what a foreign correspondent is.

To conclude, to grasp the contributions from this thesis one has to bear in mind the existing literature on foreign correspondence and intercultural communication. On the one hand, other researchers (Tulloch, 1998, 2004; Zeng, 2018c) had already explored the routines and pressures of foreign correspondents. On the other hand, the link between intercultural communication and correspondents had been suggested, but not exploited to the full extent.

This dissertation, therefore, aimed to tap into an opportunity to combine perspectives from different fields —journalism studies, intercultural communication (which itself works at the intersection of communication and anthropology), sociology of knowledge, discourse studies— to couple foreign correspondence with intercultural communication. In doing so, it presented foreign correspondents as constructors of discourses with a heavy intercultural component which, in turn, originate —at least partly— from intercultural encounters. It resorted to a critical discourse analysis because it was concerned about whether correspondents might be dehumanizing foreign individuals through discursive strategies of othering. But it did not stop at the level of discourse analysis and sought to understand the viewpoint of foreign correspondents through interviews too.

This thesis can be read within the continuing and broader debate about globalization. If one expected correspondents to belong to a sort of cosmopolitan class that would promote a "globalization of consciousness" through foreign news reporting, as Hannerz (2004) did, the findings of this dissertation could surprise. Not only did it show that discursive strategies of othering and "us-versus-them" dichotomies can still be found in the realities constructed by foreign correspondents, but also that some of them do not even aspire to foster intercultural dialogues.

And one final note: correspondents might have the grandiloquent aspiration to be the eyes and ears of their home audiences in a foreign country, but begin covering one of the biggest stories of their career weeks after it has been unfolding because they were on vacation, or had other plans. Those things happen.

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KV12: Varma, K J M (2020, January 30). China allocates USD four billion to combat coronavirus. *PTI.*

KV13: Varma, K J M (2020, January 31). China to send charter flights to bring back residents of virus-hit Wuhan from abroad. *PTI.*

KV14: Varma, K J M (2020, January 31). Special Air India flight with stranded Indians from virus-hit Wuhan to leave for home on Saturday. *PTI.*

KV15: Varma, K J M (2020, February 1). Coronavirus death toll soars to 259 in China, thousands evacuated from Wuhan. *PTI.*

KV16: Varma, K J M (2020, February 1). Six Indians in China stopped from boarding special flight to India due to high fever. *PTI.*

KV17: Varma, K J M (2020, February 2). Coronavirus death toll rises to 305 as Philippines reports first casualty outside China. *PTI.*

KV18: Varma, K J M (2020, February 2). India temporarily suspends e-visa facility for Chinese nationals, foreigners residing in China. *PTI.*

KV19: Varma, K J M (2020, February 3). Death toll in China's coronavirus jumps to 361, confirmed cases soars to over 17200. *PTI*.

KV20: Varma, K J M (2020, February 3). Stranded Indian woman in China's virus-hit Wuhan city appeals for evacuation. *PTI*.

KV21: Varma, K J M (2020, February 5). China coronavirus toll soars to 490, total confirmed cases over 24000. *PTI*.

KV22: Varma, K J M (2020, February 6). Coronavirus: China lodges diplomatic protests over suspension of flights by international airlines. *PTI*.

KV23: Varma, K J M (2020, February 6). China denounces reports of higher fatalities as coronavirus death toll rises to 564. *PTI*.

KV24: Varma, K J M (2020, February 6). Chinese doctor who first warned about coronavirus outbreak dies. *PTI*.

KV25: Varma, K J M (2020, February 7). China's novel coronavirus toll soars to 636, total confirmed cases over 31,000. *PTI*.

KV26: Varma, K J M (2020, February 8). Coronavirus death toll in China rises to 722. *PTI*.

KV27: Varma, K J M (2020, February 9). China's coronavirus death toll climbs to 813 but new cases fall. *PTI*.

KV28: Varma, K J M (2020, February 10). Indian envoy describes evacuation of Indians from virus-hit Wuhan logistical nightmare. *PTI*.

KV29: Varma, K J M (2020, February 10). 10.59 million people tested for coronavirus in Wuhan: official. *PTI*.

KV30: Varma, K J M (2020, February 10). Chinese President confident about scoring victory over coronavirus outbreak. *PTI*.

KV31: Varma, K J M (2020, February 11). Coronavirus death toll in China crosses 1,000. *PTI*.

KV32: Varma, K J M (2020, February 11). Mother infected with coronavirus in China gives birth to a healthy baby. *PTI*.

KV33: Varma, K J M (2020, February 12). Death toll rises to 1,113 in China coronavirus; confirmed cases jump to over 44,000. *PTI.*

KV34: Varma, K J M (2020, February 12). Chinese foreign minister to make first visit abroad since coronavirus outbreak. *PTI.*

KV35: Varma, K J M (2020, February 12). Only coronavirus patient in Tibet discharged from hospital. *PTI.*

KV36: Varma, K J M (2020, February 12). China welcomes support from BRICS to its efforts to combat coronavirus. *PTI.*

KV37: Varma, K J M (2020, February 13). China witnesses deadliest day as death toll in coronavirus outbreak surges to 1,367. *PTI.*

KV38: Varma, K J M (2020, February 13). Coronavirus: Indian, Pakistani students in Wuhan panic as Chinese officials set up hospitals in campuses. *PTI.*

KV39: Varma, K J M (2020, February 14). Coronavirus outbreak death toll spikes to nearly 1,500. *PTI.*

KV40: Varma, K J M (2020, February 14). China rejects US charge of lack of transparency in sharing coronavirus info. *PTI.*

KV41: Varma, K J M (2020, February 14). China's appreciates India's offer of help to fight coronavirus epidemic. *PTI.*

KV42: Varma, K J M (2020, February 14). Tibet's Nyingchi discourages tourists amid virus control. *PTI.*

KV43: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). Death toll in China's coronavirus epidemic jumps to over 1,500. *PTI.*

KV44: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). More than half of coronavirus cases in Hubei treated with traditional Chinese medicine: official. *PTI.*

KV45: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). Baby and mother discharged from hospital after treatment for coronavirus in China. *PTI.*

KV46: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). China quarantines cash in coronavirus-hit areas to prevent spread of deadly disease. *PTI.*

KV47: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). WHO experts set to join battle against coronavirus in China as death toll crosses 1500. *PTI.*

KV48: Varma, K J M (2020, February 15). Several drugs against coronavirus already under clinical trials: Chinese official. *PTI.*

KV49: Varma, K J M (2020, February 16). China says significant drop in coronavirus cases; death toll climbs to 1,665. *PTI.*

KV50: Varma, K J M (2020, February 17). China mulls postponing annual parliament session amid coronavirus spread. *PTI.*

KV51: Varma, K J M (2020, February 17). WHO experts join field inspections in China as death toll due to coronavirus climbs to 1,770. *PTI.*

KV52: Varma, K J M (2020, February 17). India to send medical supplies, bring back Indians from virus-hit Wuhan: Indian Embassy. *PTI.*

KV53: Varma, K J M (2020, February 18). Death toll in coronavirus in China climbs to over 1860. *PTI.*

KV54: Varma, K J M (2020, February 19). Xi calls for greater protection of medical staff as coronavirus death toll crosses 2,000. *PTI.*

KV55: Varma, K J M (2020, February 19). China expels three Wall Street Journal correspondents. *PTI.*

KV56: Varma, K J M (2020, February 20). Media that smears, insults China must pay the price: China on expulsion of 3 WSJ journalists. *PTI.*

KV57: Varma, K J M (2020, February 20). Prez Xi says coronavirus won't have long-term impact on China's development; toll reaches 2,118. *PTI.*

KV58: Varma, K J M (2020, February 21). China's richest man Jack Ma teams up with Columbia University to find cure for COVID-19. *PTI.*

KV59: Varma, K J M (2020, February 21). Xi warns coronavirus yet to peak amidst its spread to Chinese prisons; Death toll over 2,200. *PTI.*

KV60: Varma, K J M (2020, February 22). Coronavirus: Aamir Khan urges Chinese fans to take precautions, follow instructions of govt. *PTI.*

KV61: Varma, K J M (2020, February 22). WHO team visits Wuhan city as death toll in China's coronovirus crosses over 2300. *PTI.*

KV62: Varma, K J M (2020, February 23). WHO team visits Wuhan city as China's coronovirus death toll jumps to 2,442. *PTI.*

KV63: Varma, K J M (2020, February 24). Indian, Chinese officials communicating over delay in grant of permission to IAF flight: China. *PTI.*

KV64: Varma, K J M (2020, February 24). Coronavirus-hit China postpones annual Parliament session for 1st time in decades. *PTI.*

KV65: Varma, K J M (2020, February 24). China's virus-hit Wuhan revokes order to partially ease lockdown; Death toll reaches 2,592. *PTI.*

KV66: Varma, K J M (2020, February 25). India prepares to evacuate remaining Indians from virus-hit Wuhan. *PTI.*

KV67: Varma, K J M (2020, February 26). Xi says situation in Wuhan remains 'complex and grim' as death toll climbs to over 2,700. *PTI.*

KV68: Varma, K J M (2020, February 26). Two Chinese nurses seek international help to treat coronavirus patients. *PTI.*

KV69: Varma, K J M (2020, February 27). IAF flight delivers medical supplies for virus-hit Wuhan; leaves with 112 Indians and foreigners. *PTI.*

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KV75: Varma, K J M (2020, March 3). Coronavirus death toll climbs to 2,943 in China, infected cases witness surge globally. *PTI.*

KV76: Varma, K J M (2020, March 3). President Xi calls for international collaboration to find cure, vaccine to halt coronavirus. *PTI.*

KV77: Varma, K J M (2020, March 4). Coronavirus shows signs of receding in China; infections surge past 3,100 globally. *PTI.*

KV78: Varma, K J M (2020, March 4). Out of over 6,700 inbound passengers, 75 test positive for COVID-19: Chinese custom officials. *PTI.*

KV79: Varma, K J M (2020, March 6). China's coronavirus death toll touches 3,042; confirmed cases rise to 80,552. *PTI.*

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KV91: Varma, K J M (2020, March 11). China allows gradual opening of Wuhan after Xi's visit to coronavirus epicentre. *PTI.*

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