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China in the Nordic Press:

A mixed-method analysis of Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter's editorial portrayals between 2012-2024

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Author(s):
Ines Söderström

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Author(s): Ines Söderström

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Abstract

This thesis investigates 379 leading editorials published between 1.1.2012-31.8.2024 in Finland's and Sweden's newspapers of record: Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter. The thesis project detects thematic representations and tonal biases that Finnish and Swedish news media produce and re-produce about China, and which are shifting along with geopolitical dynamics and trends of growing scepticism toward China in the West. The thesis explores how editorial narratives reflect and shape national perceptions of China in Finland and Sweden during the Xi Jinping presidency.

Adopting a social constructionist framework, this thesis uses thematic analysis and frequency analysis to identify recurring themes and tonal patterns in the editorial coverage. The mixed-method analysis reveals eight dominant themes of which economic, security, and political orientated themes emerge as the most prominently reported. The results show that both newspapers construct narratives shaped by their domestic political contexts and broader international developments, especially in the background of deteriorating China-West relations.

The findings indicate that Helsingin Sanomat largely reflects Finland's pragmatic and economically orientated relationship with China, while Dagens Nyheter adopts a more confrontational stance that aligns with Sweden's value-driven foreign policy. Despite Finland and Sweden's national differences, both newspapers increasingly portray China in a critical manner, particularly in the post-2017 period.

The thesis argues that the editorial representations of China are not merely descriptive, but socially constructed narratives that shape public opinion and political discourse. The identified media portrayals contribute to national understandings of China as a systemic rival, which corresponds with broader European and transatlantic narratives emerging out of the contemporary competitive geopolitical climate. By researching the evolution of China-related editorial coverage over a twelve-year period, the thesis offers new insights into the ever-changing narratives about China, the role of media in shaping international perceptions, and how editorial agendas align with shifting geopolitical realities.

Keywords: China, Finland, Sweden, media portrayals, narratives, editorials, news media, thematic analysis, frequency analysis, social constructionism

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Historical Background and Geopolitical context	7
1.1.1	Finland-China Relations	7
1.1.2	Sweden-China Relations	8
1.1.3	European Union-China Relations	10
1.1.4	Development of Contemporary US-China Relations	11
1.2	Research Questions and Main Argument	11
1.3	Structure	14
2	Literature Review	15
2.1	News Media As a Source of Information	15
2.2	News Media As an Influence	16
2.3	Media Representations of Foreign Nations	17
2.4	The Role of News Editorials	18
2.5	Western Media Portrayals of China	19
2.6	Finnish and Swedish News Media and Media Portrayals of China	22
2.7	Finnish and Swedish News Media	24
2.7.1	Helsingin Sanomat	24
2.7.2	Dagens Nyheter	24
2.7.3	The Changing News Media Landscape	25
2.8	Thesis Contribution	26
3	Theoretical Framework and Method	27
3.1	Social Constructionism	27
3.2	Thematic Analysis	28
3.2.1	Detailing the Method	28
3.3	Frequency Analysis	30
3.4	Data Collection	31
3.4.1	Time Frame	31
3.4.2	Selection Criteria	31
3.4.3	Data Retrieval	32
4	Results and Analysis	33
4.1	Predominant Themes in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter	34
4.1.1	China as an Economic and Technological Power	34
4.1.2	China's Global Relations	37
4.1.3	China's Centralised Governance and Authoritarianism	40
4.1.4	China as a Threat or Competitor	43
4.1.5	China's Territorial Integrity and Geopolitical Conflicts	46
4.1.6	China's Role in Global Governance	49
4.1.7	China's Human Rights and Social Issues	51
4.1.8	China's Information Control and Media Narratives	54
4.2	Comparison Between the Newspaper Editorials	56
4.3	Implications	59
5	Conclusion	63
5.1	Limitations and further research	65

References	66
Appendices	74
Appendix 1 List of newspaper editorials included in the data set	74
Appendix 2 Theme coding examples	102
Appendix 3 Results table	111

1 Introduction

Recent historical developments in the realm of international relations can be called eventful, as global affairs have been rocked by a pandemic, violent conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, as well as allies and foes being re-evaluated in the context of all the change. The tumultuous times in the 2020s have given space for protectionist and security-focused discourse and decision-making to emerge, not least in Europe. The global shift in China-West¹ relations, particularly the increasingly adversarial stance of the United States and the European Union, serves as an important focus point when trying to understand national media narratives in the contemporary age. As Mikael Mattlin and Shaun Breslin (2025) argue in their recent paper, European perceptions of China are shaped by a “projected threatening future image” that reinforces itself through cyclical narratives and policy decision (pp.201-202). Mattlin and Breslin propose that this process of what they call narrative diffusion, helps to explain how national discourses in Europe reflect contribute to the construction of China as a systemic threat. This thesis project aims to investigate the changes in European media representations of China to help understand the perceptual shift that has taken place across Europe and the West at large.

According to Pew Research Centre, unfavourable views of the People’s Republic of China (henceforth to be called just China or the PRC) have been rising among Western countries, especially since the year 2017 (Pew Research, 2022a). This can partially be explained due to the influx of Chinese investments into Europe in the 2010 and the security concerns accompanying them, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the insecurity brought on to by the onset of Russia’s war on Ukraine in 2022 (Mattlin and Breslin, 2025). Another possible cause is media coverage about China. Understanding the way in which, why and when China is represented in our media matters to a great extent, as the world we are surrounded by is under constant processes of construction and deconstruction of meaning. Researching media portrayals of China becomes especially pertinent in the context of rising negative China perceptions in the West.

News media serves as a crucial way through which the public is informed about events happening in the world around them. One can view news media as an ‘information

¹ When using the term West or Western, the author is alluding to the cultural and geographical construction attributed to Europe and Northern America.

environment' through which some narratives dominate over others, and which may ultimately influence public perceptions (Boomgarden and Vliegenthart, 2009). Written communication, such as news articles, can be seen as a practice through which the writer interacts with the reader in a range of different ways (van Dijk, 1988). When seen as practice, 'news-making' can be noticed to be presented in a diverse range of styles, and may be depicted in a manner that align with the interests of the journalists, the newspapers, the political elites, and so forth. (Van Dijk, 2009; Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008). This is important, as news media directly or indirectly shapes readers social realities by 'gatekeeping' information from them (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Viewing the news as an active practice of shaping the news environment merits the attempts to research the depictions of actors and events in the news sources that so many of us consume.

Narratives matter on both a domestic and international level as they "mediate between political processes and realities both as representations and as potent forms of shaping and affecting them" (Freistein, Gadinger and Groth, 2024, p. 17). In other words, stories like those found in news media articles hold an influential role in information dissemination as well as in shaping reality around us. This thesis project aims to investigate these stories told about China through news editorials by investigating the ways in which the country is represented in two widely-read newspapers. The thesis will offer an empirical contribution to the discussion on changing Chinese media portrayals and global narratives, as well as an insight into developments of news media trends that contribute in the shaping of public perceptions of China by representing selected thematic narratives and tonally biased stories of the country. This will be achieved with the help of thematic analysis and frequency analysis, which will help to reveal the main themes, or as put in other words, patterns of meaning, found in the Finnish and Swedish newspaper editorials.

Studying the predominant themes in China-related coverage within the editorials is important due to the changing geopolitical context and real-life implications that media narratives have. Especially in the light of rising protectionism and increasing negative perceptions of China in the West, this thesis aims to understand the essence and developments in Western media portrayals of China between the years 2012-2024, a time period shaped by Xi Jinping's presidency, by inspecting thematic China portrayals in Sweden's and Finland's newspapers of record: Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat. The collected dataset consists of China-

related editorials written in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter between January 2012 and August 2024.

As for the newspapers to be studied, the Finnish Helsingin Sanomat and Swedish Dagens Nyheter can be seen to have a similar readership being their countries' leading newspapers. Despite some differences in national and geographic reach, the two newspapers hold a similar standing in their respective countries, that also have similar cultural and political characteristics. The two Nordic paper have a background in co-operating with one another, for example in 2022 as a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Helsingin Sanomat, Dagens Nyheter and the Norwegian newspaper Politiken announced that they will henceforth publish articles in Russian as to promote independent journalism for Russian speakers (Helsingin Sanomat, 2023). As Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter newspapers are considered their countries' newspapers of record, with relatively large domestic readership, it helps to merit the choice of inclusion of these two newspapers and their comparison.

1.1 Historical Background and Geopolitical context

It is important to inspect Finland and Sweden's relationship with China as pieces of a larger geopolitical puzzle, in which two global superpowers - the United States and China - are setting the tone and rules through which the game is played. Finnish and Swedish news media coverage about China do not emerge in vacuum, but instead reflect both national diplomatic histories and evolving global power relations. To better help understand the meanings of the editorial representations uncovered in this thesis, it is important to understand the changes in the global political environment, especially from the perspective of shifting dynamics of EU and US relations with China, as well as the differences in Finland and Sweden's diplomatic relations to China during Xi Jinping's presidency.

1.1.1 Finland-China Relations

Historically, the diplomatic relations between Finland and China have been stable and commercially-motivated. Finland was relatively early in recognising the statehood of the People's Republic of China in 1950, and was the first non-communist state that signed a trade agreement with the PRC. Over the years, the two countries have held official state visits on several occasions, with the most recent ones being President Xi Jinping's visit to Finland in April 2017 and President Alexander Stubb's visit to China in October 2024.

Finland and Sweden have held distinct national priorities and challenges in their relationship with the PRC. Finland has generally adopted a pragmatic, trade-motivated, relationship to China (Aubié and Shen, 2024). In terms of trade, China constitutes the 5th largest trading partner of Finland (Finland Abroad, 2024). Finnish companies have actively sought out the Chinese markets by establishing production and export-driven activities on ground (Kallio, 2018, pp.46-47). During the 2010s, Finland received several significant Chinese investments, including in 2016 Tencent's acquisition of the gaming company Supercell, as well as NSIG's buy-out of silicon wafer manufacturer Okmetic. On a European level, between the years 2000-2022, Finland and Sweden were the fifth- and sixth-largest destinations for Chinese Foreign Direct Investment, ranking behind, economically-speaking, much larger states including the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France (Kauppila and Cappélin, 2023).

Yet, the past years have brought signs of a policy and discursive shift in Finland's approach to China. Recently in 2023, the Finnish Government published a report about Finnish trade dependencies on China, urging Finnish companies to diversify their production and supply chains, while simultaneously promoting exports in higher value-added and service products. This can be seen in line with the Finnish Government's 2021 Action Plan on China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021), in which the government for the first time called China a "systemic rival", in addition to being a "cooperation and negotiation partner, an economic competitor" (p.7). This positional shift has been furthered by Finland's NATO membership application in 2022, which can be seen as a clearer repositioning, at least in terms of security, towards a more opposing position vis-à-vis China. Finnish public opinion could be seen to reflect similar changes. A 2024 survey by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA found that 72% of Finns hold unfavourable views of China (Haavisto, 2024), which suggests a growing scepticism towards China in Finnish society at large.

Overall, Finland can be seen to have sustained calm and trade-focused relations with China, but with a shifting perspective of seeing China also as a strategic competitor.

1.1.2 Sweden-China Relations

While Sweden has had relations with China for centuries, especially through trade conducted by the Swedish East India Company, official diplomatic relations between the PRC and Sweden were established in 1950 with the early recognition of the PRC's statehood (Leijonhufvud, 2018, p.101). Similarly to other colonial powers in the 19th century, Sweden

signed an ‘unequal treaty’ with the imperial court of China, thus solidifying Sweden’s role in the colonial order (Leijonhufvud, 2018, p.103). In more modern history, Sweden was among the first Western countries to sign a trade agreement with the PRC in 1957 (Leijonhufvud, 2018, p.105). Similarly to Finland, the two nations bilateral relations have strongly been influenced by their commercial interests. For example, Swedish companies such as carmaker Volvo and unmanned helicopter producing Cybaero were sold-off to Chinese companies in the 2010s, however not without domestic criticism (e.g. SVT, 2023).

From a broader perspective, Sweden has come to be known for its ideologically driven Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) which was officially declared in 2014 and formally abandoned in 2022. Sweden’s FFP stood as “a normative reorientation of foreign policy that is guided by an ethically informed framework based on broad cosmopolitan norms of global justice and peace” (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond, 2016, p.323). However, Sweden’s 2022 application for NATO membership and its ultimate ascension to the defence coalition in 2024, can be seen to mark the change in Sweden’s traditional non-alignment and normative foreign policy agenda (Michalski, Brommesson and Ekengren, 2024, pp.153-156). How Sweden has shaped and conducted its foreign affairs more generally, has ultimately also played into its bilateral relations with China.

Despite China being a considerable trade partner, Sweden-China bilateral relations have experienced growing tensions as a result of several high-profile diplomatic incidents. In recent years - partially as a result of the kidnapping and detention of Swedish citizens Gui Minhai in 2015 and Peter Dahlin in 2016 - the Swedish state and media have raised opposing voices against China’s human rights violations. Swedish state officials have been subjected to rebukes from China’s so-called ‘wolf-warrior diplomacy’, a confrontational style of diplomacy, under the Chinese ambassador Gui Congyou between the years 2017-2021. In addition, in 2021 Chinese boycotts targeted Swedish firms such as clothing brand H&M, that was banned for some time on Chinese online shopping platforms after their announcement of them no longer sourcing cotton from Xinjiang due to forced labour concerns. Even Swedish pop-star Zara Larsson’s music was removed from Chinese subscribers of Apple Music, after ending a partnership with Huawei and criticising the Chinese government in 2020. These incidents have contributed to an increasingly adversarial political climate between the two states.

While the above examples do not fully capture the development of Sweden-China relations, they offer a small glimpse into the possible reasons why the percentage of Swedish people's unfavourable views of China has jumped from 40% in 2007 to 83% in 2022 (Pew Research Center, 2022b), which constitutes one of the steepest perceptual shifts in Europe. Swedish diplomatic relations can thus be seen to be considerably more confrontational when compared to the more stable bilateral relations Finland has with China.

1.1.3 European Union-China Relations

At the European level, attitudes toward China have also taken a step towards the worse during Xi Jinping's leadership. In 2019, the EU redefined China as a "partner, competitor, and systemic rival", in which the change reflects an increased concern towards China's political and economic practices (European Commission, 2019). European states can be seen to have become more cautious about Chinese investments in critical infrastructure, economic interdependencies, and China's partnership with Russia (Mattlin et al., 2023). The European Union's China scepticism has been fuelled by a perceived change in China's external behaviour becoming more assertive, and internal policy becoming increasingly authoritarian (Brinza et al., 2024). More specifically, in terms of its economic affairs and foreign policy, China's increased foreign direct investment in the 2010s into critical infrastructure and the overall securitisation of the technology sector, as well as China's strategic alignment with Russia amidst the War in Ukraine, has contributed in transforming European assessments (Brinza et al., 2024, pp.1-2). Moreover, China's perceived lack of transparency and oppressive management of its population during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with concern for state-led human rights violations in the Xinjiang Autonomous region, has also influenced the mood of the discussion about China in Europe (Brinza et al., 2024, pp. 1-2). In a similar line, according to Mattlin and Breslin (2025), European perceptions of China in the past decade have shifted towards the worse due to four underlying reasons, including Western disillusionment, China's statist authoritarian turn, the shift in relative power balance, and self-confidence of China's leaders (pp. 202-206). European worries about China can be seen to have resulted in new initiatives including the EU Critical Raw Material Act and the Anti-Coercion Instrument introduced in 2023, which demonstrates the tangible policy changes that accompany perceptual shifts. Both Finland and Sweden, as members of the EU, have been influenced by the EU's concerned discussions and policymaking related to China.

1.1.4 Development of Contemporary US-China Relations

The bilateral relations between the United States and China - being the world's largest and second-largest economies - play a significant role in the shaping of international affairs and the general mood in global political conduct. During the Xi Jinping leadership of the PRC between 2012-2024, the United States has had three different administrations, including Barack Obama's in 2009-2017, Donald Trump's in 2017-2021, and Joe Biden's in 2021-2025. Under President Obama's administration, the United States can be seen to have conducted a cautious engagement approach with China, which included both encouraging international co-operation while also remaining cautious of China's growing influence (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). The Trump administration's approach to China as a strategic competitor stands as an important turn in China-US relations, as the US shifted to an openly adversarial stance towards China. President Trump's first term was characterised by aggressive rhetoric about China's global intentions, tariffs on trade, as well as the introduced restrictions on technology and investment (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). An illuminating example of the deteriorated relationship emerges from annual Chinese investment figures into the US, which fell from \$46 billion in 2016 to less than 5 billion in 2022 (Rhodium Group, 2023). The Biden administration, while having been more 'mild' in its rhetoric about China, continued the policies brought on by Trump, and even furthered export controls and limitations to foreign investments, thus upholding the view of China as a strategic competitor to the United States (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). Chinese scholars have echoed sentiments about worsened China-US relations, pointing to Donald Trump's first presidential term in 2017 as the main catalysator for the negative turn (e.g. Wang, Hu and Zhao, 2024). Over the past decade, the relationship between the US and China has thus deteriorated significantly, and these developments have influenced how the EU, and countries like Finland and Sweden, view and handle affairs related to China.

1.2 Research Questions and Main Argument

The global shift in China-West relations stands as an important background for understanding national media narratives in the current age. With the help of a social constructionist framework, this thesis investigates whether Finnish and Swedish news media aligns itself with the broader geopolitical context by researching the specific representations that national newspapers convey about China. The newspapers Helsingin Sanomat's and Dagens Nyheter's editorials will be examined in their processes to construct and shape public discussion and

attitudes on China in the Finnish and Swedish contexts. In order to understand what the main portrayals are, how they have developed and how they differ from another, the thesis will aim to answer the three following research questions:

R1 What are the predominant themes related to China in Finnish and Swedish news media during Xi Jinping's presidency?

R2 How have the themes associated with China evolved over the course of the Xi presidency?

R3 What are the key differences in thematic representations of China between Finnish and Swedish media?

These three research questions help to explore the main themes across the data set, and they may uncover major focus points of media portrayals of China in Finnish and Swedish media. They also assist in the identification of plausible changes over time, revealing if and when specific themes may have gained prominence or declined in the news editorials. The last question investigates possible country-specific differences, providing insights into the ways in which Finland and Sweden thematically represent China. These questions will provide an avenue for further inquiry into how news media portrays China in alignment with national global political trends.

As for the selected methodologies, this thesis utilises thematic analysis and frequency analysis to help answer the research questions. The mixed-method approach serves to overcome the pitfalls generally found in qualitative and quantitative approaches. The thematic analysis helps to identify and construct patterned thematic categories, which reveals meanings conveyed through the newspaper editorials. The frequency analysis, on the other hand, offers a quantifiable approach to the thematic representations detected in the dataset. The objective with the mixed-method methodology is to detect the prevalence of thematic portrayals of China and to compare the results between the two newspapers. The analysis section attempts to answer the research questions to see what the key thematic representations of China are, whether they have changed over time, and what the differences are between Finnish and Swedish news media coverage of China.

This thesis offers an empirical contribution regarding Chinese news media portrayals in the most widely-read Finnish and Swedish newspapers. With the help of thematic and frequency analysis, the thesis identifies eight different thematic representations of China and showcases

their prevalence over the twelve-year period. In addition, the thesis offers insights into biases detected in the editorials by considering the evaluative tones of each article. The main findings consist of locating the difference in thematic focus and their changes over the studied time period in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter. Helsingin Sanomat's editorials on China reflect Finland's pragmatic and economy-driven relationship with China, while Dagens Nyheter's editorials align with Sweden's human rights-focused and adversarial stance. The employed social constructionist reveals how the predominance of such thematic representations may play into the shaping of public attitudes and policymaking about China towards in a more negative direction. The negative bias detected in the China-related editorials in both newspapers can be seen to contribute to worsening China perceptions in Finland and Sweden, and the thesis offers a significant effort to understand how and when this happens. The findings will be discussed in relation to the global political context in which the newspapers' stories emerge in, in order to highlight the changing representations of China emerging from a transforming geopolitical landscape rather than from a static 'black box'.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that these two newspapers' portrayals of China are shaped by Finland's and Sweden's national and global political contexts and diplomatic histories, thus leading to distinct thematic and tonal biases in their editorial coverage. The editorial representations laid out by Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter are not only reflective of international events or journalistic objectivity, but are socially constructed narratives shaped by each country's unique political, economic, and diplomatic relationship with China. The thematic and tonal biases found in the editorial coverage contribute to the shaping of national perceptions of China as well as aligns with larger trends in Western geopolitical discourse and decision-making, that increasingly view China through a lens of strategic competition and ideological rivalry. Thus, in addition to the empirical contribution on changing media portrayals of China that the research offers, this thesis also offers important insights into how news media contributes to and amplifies wider geopolitical developments.

The analysed editorials published over the past 12 years can be seen as examples of changing Western portrayals of China in recent history, thus offering a new contribution to the extensive corpus on malleability of Western narratives about China. Moreover, the thesis demonstrates when such turns in media 'storytelling' about China take place, and highlights the context in which certain thematic representations of China prevail over others. The main findings when observed together with the geopolitical context evidences the fluctuations in

China's portrayals, which have taken a significant step towards a more competition-orientated, securitised and threat-based narrative since the latter part of the 2010s.

1.3 Structure

The thesis is divided into five main chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the next chapter presents the literature review, which includes discussions of relevant scholarship about the role of news media in shaping public opinion, with a specific focus on the role of editorials. It also presents previous findings on studies regarding Western media portrayals of China and give consideration to the Finnish and Swedish media narratives. The literature review further examines the background of Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter, and their role in the changing news media landscape to understand how they might play into the formation of current day China attitudes.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. The section introduces the social constructionist perspective that guides the analysis, which is followed by a detailed explanation of the thematic analysis and frequency analysis methods. In addition, this section describes the data collection process.

Chapter 4 includes the results and analysis sections of the thesis. The findings are organised according to the identified themes, which are first discussed individually for each newspaper, and after in a combined manner through a comparative analysis of Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter. The implications are discussed in the wider context of Finland and Sweden's bilateral relations with China and geopolitical changes, and how the findings relate to the global developments between the years 2012 and 2024.

Lastly, chapter 5 summarises and concludes the thesis by showcasing the identified key insights, discusses the limitations of the research, and offers suggestions for future research.

2 Literature Review

This section discusses existing scholarship regarding the definition of news media, its role as an information disseminator and an influencer of public opinion, as well as the role of international news in shaping understandings of foreign nations. The section delves into theoretical perspectives on media influence, the specific role of news editorials, and different patterns that emerge in Western media portrayals of China. In addition, the section offers an insight into previous studies on Finnish and Swedish media coverage of China and discusses the overall developments of the contemporary news media landscape. Lastly, the section addresses the overall research contribution of the thesis project by situating it in the academic discussion on media representations of China and international relations.

2.1 News Media As a Source of Information

According to van Dijk (1988) written communication, such as a news article, is a form of ‘sociocultural practice’, in which the writer engages with the reader in multiple ways. When seen as practice, news-making can be presented in a diverse range of styles, and may be depicted in a manner that align with the interests of the journalists, the newspapers, the political elites, and so forth (Van Dijk, 2009; Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008). In their seminal study on news dissemination, Galtung and Ruge (1965) created a conceptual map showing how events are transformed into information which the audience recognises as news. One of their findings include that news tend to be elite-centred, which means that powerful states, will inevitably receive more attention in the news media (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p.68). Moreover, they found that news media tends to prefer negative stories about non-people, over positive ones (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p.69, 83). News media can thus be defined as a practice that aims to convey certain meanings about the surrounding world to a target audience.

Importantly, when seen as a practice, the manner in which news are presented can shape human attitudes, cognition and actions (e.g. De Vreese and Boomgarden, 2006). An example of this is Boomgarden and Vliegthart (2009) study about news influence on anti-immigration attitudes in Germany, which shows that the tone and frequency of a news piece covering immigrants notably impacts public attitudes and perceptions. The authors see news media as an ‘information environment’, where in certain narratives and interpretations dominate over others, and that these influences can result in changes in public opinion. The

malleability of news production, its elite-centred nature, and the preference for negative narratives highlight its influence in shaping human existence.

2.2 News Media As an Influence

The relationship between news media and public opinion, while not as straightforward as one may think, is one of influence, where journalists and news organisations have considerable capacity to shape their audiences perceptions and understandings. Scholars like Robert Entman (1989) suggest that news reporting directly influences public opinion in a given context. According to Entman's research, news media both inadvertently and advertently influences audiences' opinions owing to the fact that news offer much of the information for people to process and form the way in which to think about that very information. Other scholars have also argued for the significant influence that news media has in swaying public opinion and political decision-making (Page, Shapiro, and Dempsey, 1987; Oskamp and Schultz, 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006). Another highlighting factor is that newspaper coverage has been found to be more influential than TV news coverage when it comes to informing the public (Druckman, 2009).

Additionally to influencing public perceptions, news media also has a direct impact on political agenda setting. Such understandings of news media influence has been showcased in McCombs and Shaw's (1972) seminal study on mass media's impact on the public agenda. Their findings include that the media plays a central role in deciding what issues constitutes as important, and thus shaping the public's attention towards certain directions. Moreover, research evidences that news media has a significant influence on the publics' political voting behaviour (Ladd and Lenz, 2009). These studies indicate that media representations are highly relevant in the field of media studies due to the found link between news production and public opinion as well as agenda setting.

However, it is important to note that there are contending views regarding the extent of news media effects and the extent of political agenda setting. McCombs and Shaw (1972) remind us in their research that the public has its own agency and interests, which therefore may or may not limit the way in which media can influence them. Jerit et al.'s (2013) controlled experiment found that there is little evidence on changes in their research subjects attitudes and knowledge after reading a newspaper. Moreover, scholars have noted the difficulty in fully investigating the extent of media effects, due to the complexity and methodological

obstacles (Kinder, 2003; Zaller and Chiu, 1996). The full extent to which the audience accept and adopt the portrayals conveyed to them remains of mixed opinion in scholarly discussion.

Similarly, some scholars have argued for the limited influence of mass communication such as newspapers, for example by stressing how people resist information that counters their beliefs (Axelrod, 1973; Nyhan and Reifler, 2010; Pennycook and Rand, 2021); or by finding that news consumers may become psychologically overwhelmed from news exposure (Holton and Chyi, 2012; York, 2013); and by arguing that the persuasion, if any, received from such communication only lasts for a short duration (Hill et al. 2013). Others argue that it is in fact the consumer that shapes news coverage by directing their purchasing power towards news sources which conform to their own ideological biases (Mullainathan and Schleifer, 2005). Additionally, the flux of digital news sources on the internet and social media channels call into question the clear connection between conventional news media and public opinion, due to the transformed media landscape in the 2010s-2020s (e.g. Schröder, 2015). Such findings highlight the complexity of fully understanding the extent to which news media may influence public opinion and vice versa. News media seems to be able to persuade its audience, but it is not by any means an all-powerful tool of mind control.

2.3 Media Representations of Foreign Nations

As the research topic concerns a foreign nation from the perspective of Finland and Sweden, this merits us to further inspect the role and influence that foreign news plays in our consumption of news. An interesting concept in foreign news studies is that of ‘gatekeepers’, where journalists, the media organisations behind them, and the social institutions in which they operate, are seen to determine the selection of news (Shoemaker, 1991; Nossek, 2004). The nature of news coverage has been shown to be influenced by domestic contexts and may thus differ in style depending on whether the news concerns an internal or external affair (Liebes, 1992; Nossek, 2004). As expressed by Nossek (2004) “journalists and editors ‘wear a pair of domestic glasses’ when dealing with foreign news” (p.349). Such critical approaches in news media studies aim to highlight the way in which domestic interests and biases play into the production of news. These studies show that news media is highly malleable and subject to influences from different actors and contexts, especially from the news organisations’ domestic environment. However, the diversified news media ecosystem along with the rise of social media have most likely altered the channels and ‘gatekeepers’ profiles in the past two decades.

News coverage of foreign countries play an important role in informing the public about international affairs. News media can be seen to be as one of the main “international image-formers”, meaning that the way in which news media depicts a nation will both be shaped and simultaneously shape the social reality in which states have to navigate in (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p.64). To support such argument, Brewer, Graf and Willant’s (2003) findings suggest that the media can impact how people evaluate foreign countries, especially when they are exposed to stories that directly connect an issue to a specific nation with an evaluative implication. Exploring the impact of media coverage on public opinion in the global context, Paul Brewer (2006) examined the ways in which national interest framing in the media influences public opinions on foreign affairs. The results showed that when news articles portrayed China as a rival to the United States, it resulted in less favourable opinions of China among readers. Conversely, articles highlighting shared interests between China and the United States induced more favourable opinions of China. Interestingly, as research suggests, a noticeable correlation exists between negative news coverage of a foreign nation and unfavourable public perceptions, whereas positive coverage does not seem to generate similarly heightened positive perceptions (Wanta, Golland and Lee, 2004). These studies reveal a connection between media narratives, public opinion, and foreign affairs, which underline the important role played by media in shaping perceptions and highlights its susceptibility to external influences.

2.4 The Role of News Editorials

News editorials are an exclusive format for newspapers, whereby an opinionated piece is published under the newspaper’s name and not any individual journalist. Julie Firmstone (2019) calls editorial journalism as a “unique practice with opinion-leading intentions” (p.1). Editorials differ from conventional news articles, as it remains the only avenue through which the newspaper’s organisational voice is directly heard. Hence, the editorials can be seen to manifest the news organisations and their journalist’s ideologies and beliefs (van Dijk, 1992). News editorials aim to persuade and provoke discussion amongst the audience, as well as draw attention to affairs that may otherwise go unnoticed (van Dijk, 1992; Marques and Mont’Alverne, 2021). Editorials are usually written by leading journalists, and the articles are published daily, usually in the initial pages of the newspaper. Editorials are thus an essential avenue through which the newspaper’s own stance is directly conveyed, thus increasing the

importance for the further understanding of news editorial portrayals, which the present study aims to contribute to.

Similarly to other news articles, editorials also contribute to the shaping of the public agenda and the audience's opinions, but do so in an explicit fashion as the meanings conveyed are represented by the newspaper's 'collective' voice (Firmstone, 2019, pp.7-8). Moreover, at times, editorials directly address certain authorities like the government or private sector to establish dialogue between the two (Firmstone, 2008). Furthermore, op-eds, referring to the texts published by different experts on the editorial page, have been found to have a significant and lasting impact on public opinion and their policy attitudes (Coppock, Ekins, and Kirby, 2018). Interestingly, it seems that the persuasiveness of op-eds are not limited by the identities of the readers, be they of different political opinions or part of the elites or general public (Coppock, Ekins, and Kirby, 2018) Such findings suggest that editorials hold an important role in shaping the audience's views about ongoing affairs.

In terms of the extent of editorial's readership influence remains undetermined. In 1994, a study in the United States found that the editorial page was looked at by 79% of newspaper readers (Hallock, 2007). Similar studies, and especially more recent ones, have not been conducted to understand the Finnish and Swedish newspaper readership. The aforementioned statistic does not probably hold true in the current transformed media landscape, and there has been little research overall regarding the readership of editorials (Firmstone, 2019). Due to the changes in media consumption and the competition for readers attention in the media ecosystem it becomes difficult to fully know the extent to which editorials are being read in the 2020s (Marques and Mont'Alverne, 2021). Although the general consensus still seems to suggest that editorials still hold a key role in both representing their newspaper's organisational voice and shaping public discussions.

2.5 Western Media Portrayals of China

China, or topics related to 'Chineseness' have harboured interest in Western media ever since the initial contact between Europeans and the Chinese empire. Ever since the first Jesuit missionaries wrote back to their European counterparts about their encounters in China in the 16th century, ideas about China in Western social thought have oscillated between sinophilic and sinophobic accounts (Blue, 2002). The narratives of China have ranged and between positive stories of China as a great progressive civilisation, and negative stories of China as a

subaltern Other or a potential adversary (Blue, 2002). Gregory Blue (2002) contends that historical narratives regarding China have been significantly subjected to changes in global power structures as well as central elite interests at a given time.

Similar findings to Blue are also present in the study of Chinese media portrayals, where academics have pointed to the changing discourse in Western media in more modern history. For example, Fengyuan Ji (2017) has noted the different and changing representations of China in the West over time. A similar assessment is made by James Mann (2001), who rejects the one-dimensional 'frames' that are assigned to China in the United States news media at given times in history. He points to the contradictory and media narratives of a rapidly changing and a slow-moving changeless China. The changes and inconsistencies of media representations of China point to the malleability of these portrayals, and they also highlight the ways in which China's image is being shaped from 'outside'.

Pan Chengxin's book (2012) *Knowledge, Desire and Power in Global Politics: Western representations of China's rise* argued that in Western social thought China is frequently portrayed through a bifocal lens of 'China opportunity' and 'China threat'. According to Pan's lens paradigms, China is observed as either threat based on its different capabilities and assumed hostile intentions or then as an opportunity where China is assessed through its economic benefits and international partnerships. Pan sees the bifocal paradigm as manner through which Western self-representations and interests are channelled through, while disregarding the actual truth or falsehoods of these narratives. In his line of argument, Pan asserts that the bifocal lens constitutes both a way to view reality as well as active process of socially constructing it. Pan's book offers an important contribution in the scholarship of China representations in Western thought, which this specific thesis also aims to offer its input to.

Additionally, Western news coverage of China has also been analysed by using critical discourse analysis methods. Liu Lihua's (2012) research on Chinese media representations in the New York Times shows that the newspaper directs its audience through various discourse strategies in its reporting on China. The article highlights several key tactics that are used to depict China in a certain light, including the use of dichotomies, multiple voices, an appearance of balanced voices, detailed reporting, and the negative portrayal through eyewitness accounts. Despite appearing objective in its reporting, Li argues that at closer examination of China-related news reveal a potential negative bias. Supporting such

arguments, comparative discourse analyses between Chinese and Western news media on the same topic, reveal the differences in coverage tone and emphasis, often with Western news media highlighting negative or mixed aspects of the news event (e.g. Liu and Li, 2017; Zhang and Wu, 2017).

In terms of national image research, Peng Zengjun's (2004) article on news representations of China in the New York Times and LA Times in 1992 and 2001 offers a valuable account on the development and nature of the newspapers' China-related coverage. Peng's article offers a snapshot of four different images of China during the 20th century in American news representation, which help highlight the changing nature of news images of China. These images are (1) The Red China (1949-1979), an image that conveys the US' ideological biases against of the newly established Communist China; (2) The Green China (1979-1989), a more positive media image of possibilities associated with developing China; (3) The Dark China (1989-1992), a more pessimistic image of China fuelled by the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre; and (4) The Grey China (1992-Present), a mixed image of both ideological pessimism and hopefulness when it comes to economic issues. Peng notes that news coverage of China has tended to mirror the main political interests and ideologies of the United States government at a given time (pp.57-58). His findings demonstrated a large increase in reporting about China over the studied time period, and a consistent negative tone to all reporting, except on reporting on economy frames.

Another contribution to the study of Chinese media perceptions include Huang, Cook and Xie's (2021) analysis using a natural language model based on 267 907 China-related articles in the New York Times between 1970-2019. Their findings show how media influences public perceptions about foreign nations, by showing that New York Times' coverage of China in a given year accounts for 54% of the variation in American public opinion on China in the following year. Such findings further highlight the influence that news media portrayals play in the shaping of readers' attitudes.

Notably, Huan Changpeng (2023) criticises the overly Anglo-American focus of academic news studies about media perceptions of China, and makes an attempt to analyse Australia's media discourses on China, in order to allow for analysis of a "Western middle-power" perspective. His findings include that China is positively represented in the Australian media when the topic concerns China as a facilitator of economic opportunity, however, at the same

time, China is negatively represented as potential security threat in terms of weaponised economic interdependence and military intimidation.

Interestingly, the Chinese Communist Party has put a lot of effort in its public diplomacy in the recent decades, in order to increase China's attraction and soft power abroad (Hartig, 2016; Zhang and Guo, 2017). While states may try to influence their national image abroad, the perception from the outside is what matters. Scholars have previously found that Western media tends to portray China both in critical and harsh manner (e.g. Willant and Luo, 2011). Therefore, it becomes interesting to study the representations of China which Finnish and Swedish news media portray, as it can reveal whether such efforts have come to fruition in the news making sphere.

The discussed studies collectively emphasise the complex and negatively tinged news discourse surrounding China, as well as illustrate the possible influence they may have on public perception of China amongst Western audiences. This review also demonstrates the need for further inspection of the ever-changing perceptions of China, especially from a European angle, as the narratives about China has been demonstrably malleable and ever-changing.

2.6 Finnish and Swedish News Media and Media Portrayals of China

While there are no journal publications regarding Finnish and Swedish news media narratives about China, there are a few graduate and doctoral theses that offer a valuable contribution to media studies and China portrayals in the two countries.

In terms of studies about the news media landscape in Finland, one contribution is offered by Klaus Hietala's (2023) study on Helsingin Sanomat and Finland's national broadcaster Yle's news publications about the 2022 Chinese Communist Party's National Congress, which reveals a highly critical discourse in the news organisations' stories about China's politics. The findings suggest that China is portrayed as an enigmatic actor who raises concern and fear in the West. Interestingly, Hietala did not identify any major differences in in the private-owned Helsingin Sanomat's and the publicly-owned Yle's news media discourses regarding China. Such findings could potentially suggest that this thesis' result could corroborate such a finding if compared to the Finnish state-owned news media.

Another Master's thesis with important historical findings is Otto Europaeus's study on Finnish newspaper portrayals of China at the turn of the 20th century, where the main finding includes that Finnish news media largely held a demeaning attitude towards China and its people in its reporting. In addition, Iida Salokorpi's (2022) Master's thesis on media representations of the Hong Kong democracy protests in *Ilta-lehti*, a well-known Finnish tabloid newspaper, reveals how the Chinese government is latently depicted as the enemy and the Hong Kong protesters as sympathy-worthy heroes. What the above three theses have in common is that their findings reveal that Finnish news media hold negative bias against China in its reporting. The author is curious to see whether such findings will correspond to the thesis results regarding news editorials, which have not yet been specifically studied from such an angle.

As for Swedish studies, Kennet Nyberg's (2001) PhD thesis offers a comprehensive overview of Swedish China portrayals between 1749-1912. According to Nyberg's study, there is a major increase in interest and publication counts regarding materials about China over the centuries. His findings include a major shift in Sweden's critical perspectives towards China, which coincides with the Western reckoning of its 'superiority' towards China through Sweden's imperial conquests in the 19th century.

There are also a few Swedish master's thesis that have considered the Swedish news media landscape in relation to their China portrayals. Sonia Ruyter (2023) found that between the years 2012 to 2022, four Swedish newspapers' - including *Dagens Nyheter* - editorial pages have a significant presence of threat frames in their reporting of China. Ruyter detected a significant statistical leap in ideological threat frames in all newspapers from 2019 onwards. She argues that in Swedish newspaper editorials, China is mostly conceived as an ideological threat to the liberal international order, and not a direct threat to the Swedish people. Another effort to illuminate the Swedish context is offered by Sofie Aste's (2020) Master's thesis on China's dual 'threat' and 'opportunity' image in Sweden. Her research demonstrates how three Swedish state entities since 2015 have represented different and sometimes contradictory images of China, which she traces back to the complex relationship between Sweden and China. The Swedish studies help to highlight the context, the negative undertones and the contradictions present in the Swedish narratives regarding China.

These theses highlight, in the case of both studied countries, that depictions and discourses regarding China hold a negative bias to them. This research project touches upon similar topics, and investigates whether such findings hold true in the context of leading newspapers' editorials in Finland and Sweden between the years 2012-2024. Moreover, the thesis will offer a novel approach by investigating thematic representations of China in newspaper sources from both Finland and Sweden. The intended research will grapple how China portrayals have evolved in both countries and whether there are any major differences between the two newspapers editorial reporting on China.

2.7 Finnish and Swedish News Media

The following part introduces the background of the two studied newspapers: Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter. The section also touches upon the changing news media landscape and the continued relevance of newspapers in modern day Finland and Sweden.

2.7.1 Helsingin Sanomat

Helsingin Sanomat was first published in 1904 by Sanoma, who remains its owner to this day (Sanoma, 2025). In 1954, Helsingin Sanomat became Finland's most-read newspaper, and it is the largest Nordic subscription-based newspaper (Sanoma, 2025). Helsingin Sanomat describes itself as an independent and responsible Finnish daily newspaper that aims to strengthen democracy, societal justice, and the freedom of opinion (HS, 2020; HS, 2024). It is read all over the country, but being a Helsinki-based newspaper, also justifies the newspaper's partial focus on topics related to the Finnish capital. The editorials published in Helsingin Sanomat are produced by the editorial team, and they define the newspaper's standing on different issues (HS, 2024).

2.7.2 Dagens Nyheter

Dagens Nyheter has been published since 1864, and is Sweden's most-read morning newspaper (DN, 2024). The newspaper has been owned by Bonnier Group since 1909, and is now formally owned under the conglomerate's company Bonnier News since 2019 (Bonnier News, 2024). In terms of its ideological standing, Dagens Nyheter's describes itself as 'independently liberal', and highlight that they remain free from any party, organisation, or from any sort of economic control (DN, 2025). Dagens Nyheter states that their aim is to

allow for people from different backgrounds to be able to follow and participate in the debate on important societal issues (ibid).

2.7.3 The Changing News Media Landscape

Since the rise of visual and broadcasting news, print media has lost some of its former influence. Philip Meyer's (2009) book "*The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*" argued that because of the new 'scarcity of attention', there is a need to rethink the business models around print news, as they are increasingly challenged by the influx of new technologies and forms of media. While the newspaper industry has lamented the decreasing importance of the traditional newspaper, researchers such as Picard (2014), have pointed to the evolving nature of news consumption. Newspapers have responded to the changing times by publishing online versions of their daily prints and creating alternative platforms through which to engage with the public.

When it comes to the transformation of news consumption in Sweden and Finland, it seems that there has been a decline in traditional printed newspaper subscriptions, but also a rise in digital ones. A study of Swedish newspaper subscriptions between the years 2000-2019, shows that there has been a decrease from an around 70% subscription rate of printed newspaper to around 50% in both online and paper subscription 2019 (Andersson, 2020). Simultaneously the number of readers who consume their news online have risen from 14% in 2010 to 34% in 2019. This trend has partially been explained by individuals choosing to consume free news content online or on other media forms as on TV or the radio (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017). In Finland newspaper subscriptions have fallen with 29,5% between 2009-2019, from around 2,9 million in 2009 to 2,1 million in 2019 (Hellman, 2021). Interestingly, Finland scores the highest in the proportion of people who believe that they can trust most news most of the time with 69 percentage points, and Sweden's score stands at 50 percent, which is comparatively better to most other countries included in the study. While these figures inform about changing news consumption patterns, they still demonstrate that Swedish and Finnish people in considerable fashion read and trust newspapers to learn about current affairs.

More specifically, both Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter have managed to uphold their leading stance amongst news organisations in Finland and Sweden. Despite the newspaper industry having its troubles in face of the changing media landscape, the Finnish newspapers

have remained at a high subscription rate (Heikkilä, Hellman and Ovaska, 2023). Helsingin Sanomat averages 549 900 individual readers for the print version a day, and a total of 1 996 300 individual readers when digital subscription readers are included (Media Audit Finland, 2023). While the Swedish newspaper industry is more splintered compared to Finland, Dagens Nyheter, totaled 1 112 000 digital and print subscriptions in 2022 (Orvesto Konsument, 2022). When compared to their respective populations in 2022, the percentage of Helsingin Sanomat subscribers stands at around 36% of the Finnish population, and Dagens Nyheter at 11% of the Swedish population. Despite the decline in newspaper subscriptions, the media form seems to hold on to a relatively high level of influence in the daily lives of people residing in Finland and Sweden. Therefore, the further study of the leading newspaper and their media portrayals, along with the potential influence they exert, still need to be continuously addressed and researched.

2.8 Thesis Contribution

While there is extensive literature regarding news studies and news media's influence, there is only a moderate amount of attention given to the topic of changing China portrayals in the West in the past decade. This thesis offers a contribution to the existing literature by offering a comparative analysis of how China is represented in Finnish and Swedish news editorials during Xi Jinping's presidency. As shown in the literature review, the topic of media portrayals of China has been mostly studied through conventional news articles, but this thesis project aims to study how leading editorials participate in the construction of specific narratives about China.

Also, by situating the news media portrayals of China within the evolving bilateral relations between Finland, Sweden, and China, as well within the context of changing Western attitudes toward China, this thesis contributes to several different fields, including media representation studies, foreign news studies, and international relations, more specifically referring to the Nordic, European and Western relations with China. Ultimately, the thesis adds to the relatively limited discussion on Nordic media representations of China by offering a novel comparative view to understanding contemporary Finnish and Swedish media perspectives on China.

3 Theoretical Framework and Method

In this section the social constructionist theoretical framework is introduced, along with the methods of analysis including thematic and frequency analysis, as well as the detailing of the conducted data collection.

3.1 Social Constructionism

The thesis adopts a social constructionist viewpoint in the analysis of Finnish and Swedish news production. The social constructionist perspective sees humans as social actors constructing and assigning meaning to objects through linguistic and representational systems (Hall, 1997, p.25). Through such an understanding, news media can be seen as an arrangement of representation, which is constructed through language and signs. This line of thinking is shared by scholars such as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) who claim that “News is a socially created product, not a reflection of an objective reality” (p.121). In media studies more generally, social constructionists theorists highlight the way in which news makers control the alternative news perspectives, thus shaping the audiences’ information receipt and the construction of social reality (Van Gorp, 2007; McCullagh, 2002). Thus, news media not only report about the social world, but actively constructs narratives that shape social and political realities. Understanding news production as an act helps us to detect the ongoing construction of meanings stemming from the media landscape.

News media allows for a nation to become ‘real’ to the audience, as various meanings and cultural products related to a country are conveyed through the news medium (Anderson, 1991, pp.24-36). When considering Chinese news media representations in Finland and Sweden, the coverage can thus be viewed as an active construction of social reality, instead of representing an already existing actuality. Such perspective merits the way in which we can detect biases and underlying power structures shaping media discourses.

This thesis has chosen to explore thematic representations of China in news media, as they can assist in the revealing patterns of meaning disseminated through the editorials. In this study, a theme can be seen as a recurring patterns of meaning that emerge in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter’s editorial coverage of China. These themes are constructed through the selection of specific topics, narrative angles, and tonal emphasis in the editorials on China. By inspecting the editorials through thematic analysis and frequency analysis, the

author aims to uncover the prevalent meanings behind Finnish and Swedish news media's China representations during the Xi Jinping presidency.

3.2 Thematic Analysis

One of the selected methodologies for this thesis is thematic analysis, which is a popular method in both qualitative and mixed-method positivist studies. Braun and Clarke's (2006) article "Using thematic analysis in psychology" has become to be highly influential source in the shaping of the discussion and practical elements of the method, as their six-step thematic analysis framework has clarified the methodological process to students and the research community alike (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). According to Braun & Clarke (2006, 2013) thematic analysis a highly flexible method to use in qualitative studies, as it not strongly tied to any particular epistemological or theoretical frameworks. The aims of the method is to identify themes, meaning finding patterns in the data set that convey important knowledge, and then to utilise the identified themes to answer and interpret to answer the proposed research questions. Thematic analysis helps to detect the predominant thematic representations of China Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter's editorials, which ultimately helps to most directly address Research Question 1.

The chosen method for this particular thesis is based on Muhammad Naeem, Wilson Ozuem, Kerry Howell and Silvia Ranfagni's article "A Step-by-step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research", which was published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* in 2023. In this article, the authors makes an attempt to develop Braun and Clarke's (2006) method into a systematic approach to thematic analysis in qualitative research. The study aims to enhance the replicability and rigor of thematic analysis, which the thesis' author wishes to contribute to by subscribing to their methodological roadmap.

3.2.1 Detailing the Method

The way in which Naeem et al's (2023) framework for thematic analysis is used and adapted in this thesis is described followingly:

Step 1: Transcription, Familiarisation With the Data, and Selection of Quotations

The first step ensures that the collected editorials are noted down in a spreadsheet and saved in a pdf format that is fit for analysis. The full list of all collected editorials can be found in Appendix 1. In this step, the author reads through all of the editorials while collecting the data

set, and picks out and notes down initial impressions and patterns. While reading the editorials, the author begins to select quotations that encapsulate the editorials portrayals of China.

Step 2: Selection of Keywords and Sentences

The second step consists of systematically selecting keywords and sentences from the editorials and writing them in the spreadsheet. The identification of keywords is achieved through the identification of normative language and moral assessment in the editorials. These keywords range from terms and phrases such as “Chinese influence” and “economic threat” to more nuanced expressions such as “authoritarian” and “strategic partnership”. When selecting these keywords, the author has taken into consideration the country and language-specific context in which they are used in.

Step 3: Coding

The third step involves inductively coding the editorials, by assigning two codes per editorial based on the text’s core message about China. The first code is a descriptive one, where the given code is determined by the editorials main message about China, for example “economic growth”, “human rights violations” and “territorial dispute”. The descriptive codes are derived directly from the data and presented through the author’s own phrasing in English, as the source data is in either Finnish or Swedish.

The second code is an evaluative one, where the given code is determined by the normative language and moral assessment used in the editorials, the possible codes are “positive portrayal”, “critical portrayal”, “neutral portrayal”. Similarly to Peng (2004, pp.60-61) who is building upon Budd et al’s (1967) modified index, this thesis includes an element of favourability evaluation, in order to take into account the tone way in which news are reported. This tonal range consist of positive stories, which reflect meanings that create a favourable portrayal of China. The neutral tone is employed in stories which offer a balance of positive and negative portrayals of China. The negative stories convey meaning that create an unfavourable portrayal of China. Examples of the coding process can be found in Appendix 2.

Step 4: Theme development

The fourth step includes the grouping of related codes to broader themes. The collected themes aim to reflect wider patterns in the portrayal of China in the newspaper editorials. In this step the author attempts to create a more conceptual interpretation of the codes in order to help answer the research questions effectively.

Step 5: Conceptualisation Through Interpretation of Keywords, Codes, and Themes

The fifth step includes the consideration of keywords, codes and the themes, and the author aims to assess, define and refine them further as to help address the main research problems. At this stage, any possible reworkings before the presentation and final analysis are made.

Step 6: Development of Conceptual Model

The sixth step includes the creation of a conceptual model which helps to tie together the insights gathered from the editorials. In this final stage, the themes are organised and represented to help answer the research questions. This also involves addressing the theoretical framework to help understand the derived themes to ultimately present the findings of the research. In this thesis, the developed conceptual model is presented in both the collection of graphs representing the frequency of China portrayals and themes, as well as the social constructivist analysis of the thematic representations of China in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter.

3.3 Frequency Analysis

The thesis also includes a frequency analysis as a method to help complement interpretive results stemming from the thematic analysis with a descriptive angle by investigating the patterns emerging out of the quantifiable data. Content analysis, which includes frequency analysis, can provide valuable insight through the ‘quantification’ of data, which conventional methods of thematic analysis do not provide (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). Frequency analysis serves as tool to quantify qualitative data and helps to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods (Rack, Zahn, Mateescu, 2018). It is often used to deepen or further the analysis of research, to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the data (Rack, Zahn, Mateescu, 2018).

Regarding the implementation of the analysis, after the identification of themes in the data, the frequency of occurrence for each themes in the collected dataset is counted, as well as their spread of their occurrence over time. The developed themes with the help of the

evaluative codes helps to reveal the patterns in the tonal messaging the editorials. The quantification of the themes, the time of their occurrence, as well as their respective evaluative codes highlight prevalent similarities and differences between the two newspapers editorials. The inclusion of frequency analysis assist in understanding how Finnish and Swedish media construct representations about China, by tracking changes in media attention and narrative emphasis. Ultimately, the inclusion of frequency analysis as an addition to thematic analysis helps to answer Research Question 2 and 3, as it offers answers to how the themes have developed over time and what the main differences are between Finnish and Swedish editorial reporting on China.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Time Frame

The selected time period for the study is 1.1.2012-31.8.2024 to account for the emergence of the Xi Jinping presidency. President Xi was inaugurated as the Chairman of the Communist Party in November 2012, and was officiated as China's president in March 2013. In order to capture possible discussion around the new leader, the author has chosen to include the whole year of 2012 to serve as the datasets starting point. In order to account for the more contemporary portrayals of the China, the end point for data collections is chosen to be 31st of August 2024. Thus, the total time period for data inclusion accounts for 12 years and 8 months.

3.4.2 Selection Criteria

The starting point for data selection is that publication type needs to be an editorial, which is specifically authored by the editorial board. Other types of articles or editorials with named authors are excluded from the data set. Secondly, the editorial must discuss China-related content for at least half of the length of the editorial. This criteria helps to ensure that the collected data captures more substantial discussion of China, rather than any occasional mentions. Editorials that simply mentioned China in passing were excluded, as to allow for more substance and higher relevance in the data set.

Furthermore, editorials that indirectly referenced China, but still involved it to a great extent in the editorial's discussion are also included. Examples of such topics include the US-China trade war, global climate negotiations, and East Asian affairs.

3.4.3 Data Retrieval

The chosen data sources both have an online archive that could be fully accessed through paid newspaper subscriptions. The search tools differ to the extent to which one can narrow down the search. Helsingin Sanomat's search tool allowed for narrowing down by date and type of article, while Dagens Nyheter only allowed narrowing down by date.

The starting point for data gathering was using the search word "China", and then manually combing through the editorials to see which of them were suitable in terms of the selection criteria. The search using the word "China" (in Finnish "Kiina" and Swedish "Kina") rendered numerable results, as the mere mention of China was evident in a wide range of editorials. Thus, narrowing down the data to be included in the thesis is utmost important. The author does not consider the mere mention of China as sufficient to merit the inclusion of an editorial into the data set, nor will the data set be large enough if only China-focused articles are considered. Instead after careful screening of the editorials, the author chose to include articles that discussed China-related content for at least half of the length of the article. After locating a relevant editorial, information regarding the title, topic, publication date, and webpage link were inserted into an Excel spreadsheet.

The abovementioned search strategy for Helsingin Sanomat yielded over thousands of articles, of which 231 editorials were deemed to be suitable according to the data selection criteria. As for Dagens Nyheter, the search also yielded over thousands of articles, of which 148 editorials were deemed to be suitable according to the data selection criteria. The full list of the 379 collected editorials can be found in Appendix 1.

4 Results and Analysis

After the collecting and coding of all the relevant editorials, and using both the descriptive and evaluative codes as basis, eight main themes emerge from the dataset that capture the essence of China representations in the data. By main theme the thesis refers to the most prevalent content presented in the editorial. For the purposes of this thesis each editorial was only coded once as belonging to a main theme, despite editorials often containing multiple themes in their reporting. This main theme was identified by looking at the text in its entirety, and by then noting down the identifiable themes and then selecting the most prevalent one of each editorial. The developed themes “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82). Thus, to be able to understand what and when different portrayals of China are depicted in the editorials, the themes are devised in a way that reveal the main representations of China.

After careful reworking and synthesis of the themes, the main identified themes are:

1. China as an economic and technological power
2. China’s global relations
3. China’s centralised governance and authoritarianism
4. China as a threat or competitor
5. China’s territorial integrity and geopolitical conflict
6. China’s role in global governance
7. China’s human rights and social issues
8. China’s information control and media narratives

As a reminder, the research aims of this thesis are to find out what the main themes about China in Finnish and Swedish news media during Xi Jinping’s presidency, how they have evolved, and what the key differences are between Helsingin Sanomat’s and Dagens Nyheter’s representations of China. The analysis sections will aim to meet these research goals with the help of the theoretical framework and the results generated from the method. Using the social constructionist perspective the analysis will present a cohesive argument about the nature of China representations in reporting, and the similarities and differences found between the Finnish and Swedish newspapers.

The thematic analysis and frequency analysis of the collected editorials have helped to lay the groundwork for further inspection of Finnish and Swedish mainstream media representations. By revealing the main thematic portrayals of China and their respective tonal evaluation, the thematic analysis allows for the most prevalent meanings and attitudes conveyed about China through the two newspaper's lens to be revealed. The frequency analysis in turn, allows for a comprehensive view of data patterns that can help uncover trends in the newspapers' China representations.

4.1 Predominant Themes in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter

The following part discusses the eight identified themes in detail and highlights the similarities and differences in how the newspapers convey the specific themes. The themes are examined through examples from the editorials, theme frequency counts, and their evaluative tones to showcase the way in which each theme is represented. Each theme's temporal and tonal developments over time are presented with a bar graph, which helps to reveal the evolution of each theme, highlighting any changes and trends in their reporting. Translated examples of phrases used in the editorials are also provided. The detailed tables containing the number of articles and their tonal evaluations, along with graphs indicating the percentual representative size of each theme can be found in Appendix 3. As mentioned earlier, examples of the editorials thematisation and coding process in each theme category and newspaper can be found in Appendix 2.

4.1.1 China as an Economic and Technological Power

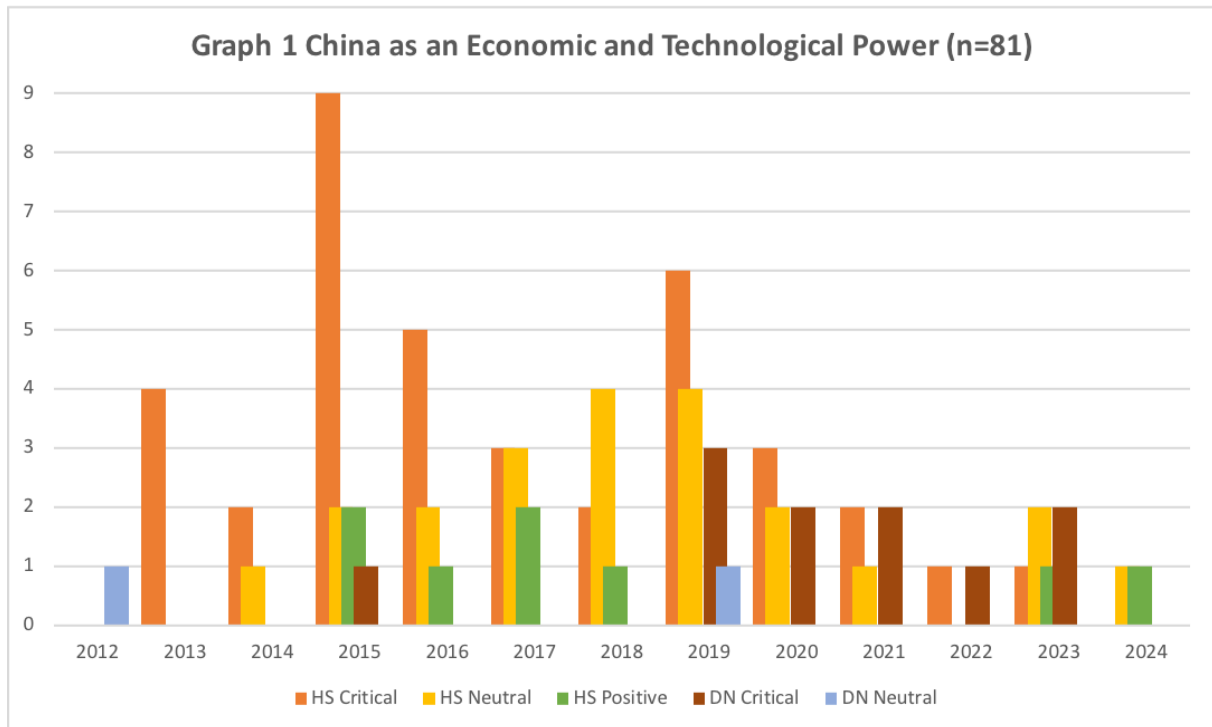
The theme of China as an economic and technological power includes editorial discussions of China's economic influence and its technological development. This theme contains a diverse range of portrayals where China is at times depicted as a crucial trade partner, a potential risk factor in global supply chains, a nation with an unsustainably built economy, and a global economic powerhouse. Some of the main editorial topics relating to the theme include China's economic growth, Chinese international investments, the 'true' situation in China's domestic economy, China as an industrial hub, and the influence of Chinese technology companies.

To offer a few examples, Helsingin Sanomat has describes China's economic growth using terms like 'stunted growth', 'deceiving', and 'predetermined'. In its discussions on Chinese

investments, Helsingin Sanomat uses phrases such as ‘the new investment plan awakens a lot of joy’, ‘ethical issues related to China are covered under the flow of money’, ‘it would be surprising if all projects become reality’, and ‘Chinese money has a weird smell, but it is still money’. When considering Chinese technology companies the Finnish newspaper employs expressions like: ‘innovative companies’, ‘We need to protect ourselves from the risks of the Chinese network equipment supplier’, and ‘there is a thin line between the money of Chinese companies and the money of the government’. These examples indicate the varied account that Helsingin Sanomat has in discussing China as an economically powerful actor yet an untrustworthy one at that.

Similarly, Dagens Nyheter’s portrayals of China’s economic growth include: ‘stagnation can cause political instability’ and ‘empty highways do not generate a dynamic economy’. In its consideration of Chinese investments, Dagens Nyheter uses following expressions: ‘China cannot be allowed to have a shopping spree at the Covid-sale’, and ‘Chinese investments have been uncritically encouraged’. When discussing Chinese companies in the editorials, these are some of the words that have been used to describe them: ‘Chinese companies are obliged to obey Beijing’s orders’, ‘According to the Communist Party, H&M is Sweden in the same way that Huawei is China’, ‘the threat is serious’ and ‘receive illegal state subventions’.

The following Graph 1 offers an insight into the publishing trends and their tonal representation over the studied time period.



Graph 1 China as an Economic and Technological Power theme development

The difference in the number of publications between the two newspaper serves as noteworthy aspect to point out from the dataset. In Helsingin Sanomat the theme on China's economic and technological power stands out as by far the most published theme category with a total of 68 articles, accounting for 29% of all China-related editorials during the selected time period. In contrast, Dagens Nyheter published only 13 editorials on the same theme, constituting just 9% of the total published editorials.

In a similar fashion, Graph 1 indicates a major divergence in terms of the temporal patterns of this theme. In Helsingin Sanomat the theme on China's economic and technological power receives constant attention throughout the researched time period, especially between the years 2015-2019. Dagens Nyheter consideration of theme could be considered sparse, with most attention given between the years 2019-2023. Notably, in Dagens Nyheter, only six years out of twelve feature one or more editorials on contents the theme. What such findings show is that Helsingin Sanomat has a much deeper and consistent interest in China as an economic and technological power than Dagens Nyheter.

Differences in tone distribution within the theme can also be seen from Graph 2. Helsingin Sanomat offers a moderately balanced distribution in critical, neutral, and positive tone in its

depictions of China as an economic and technological power. While the critical tone remains the dominant tone in Helsingin Sanomat's editorials within the theme, the newspaper also offers positive representations of China in 2015-2018 and 2023-2024. Dagens Nyheter, in turn, features mostly a critical tone in its portrayals of China, but also a few neutral ones. The frequency of critically toned editorials increased between the years 2019-2023. These findings demonstrate that both papers' editorials generally have a critical portrayal of China as an economic and technological actor, however Helsingin Sanomat offers much more nuance in its representations of China.

In terms of peak year coverage, both newspapers have a peak in publication frequency in 2019, but Helsingin Sanomat has another more prominent peak in 2015. Upon closer inspection, the editorials in 2015 show a focus in discussions about the increasing instability of the Chinese economy, the volatility of the Chinese stock market, and the devaluation of the yuan. During the publication frequency peak in 2019, Helsingin Sanomat's editorials mainly concerned themselves with the topics of the US-China trade war, the risks posed by Chinese technology companies such as Huawei, and the questioning of the current state of the Chinese economy. In turn, Dagens Nyheter's publication uptick in 2019 consists of editorials discussing the security threat posed by Huawei and the US-China trade war. These publication peaks in both newspapers indicate that topics related to China's economy and technological capabilities that have a 'securitised' angle to them, seem to garner more editorial interest overall.

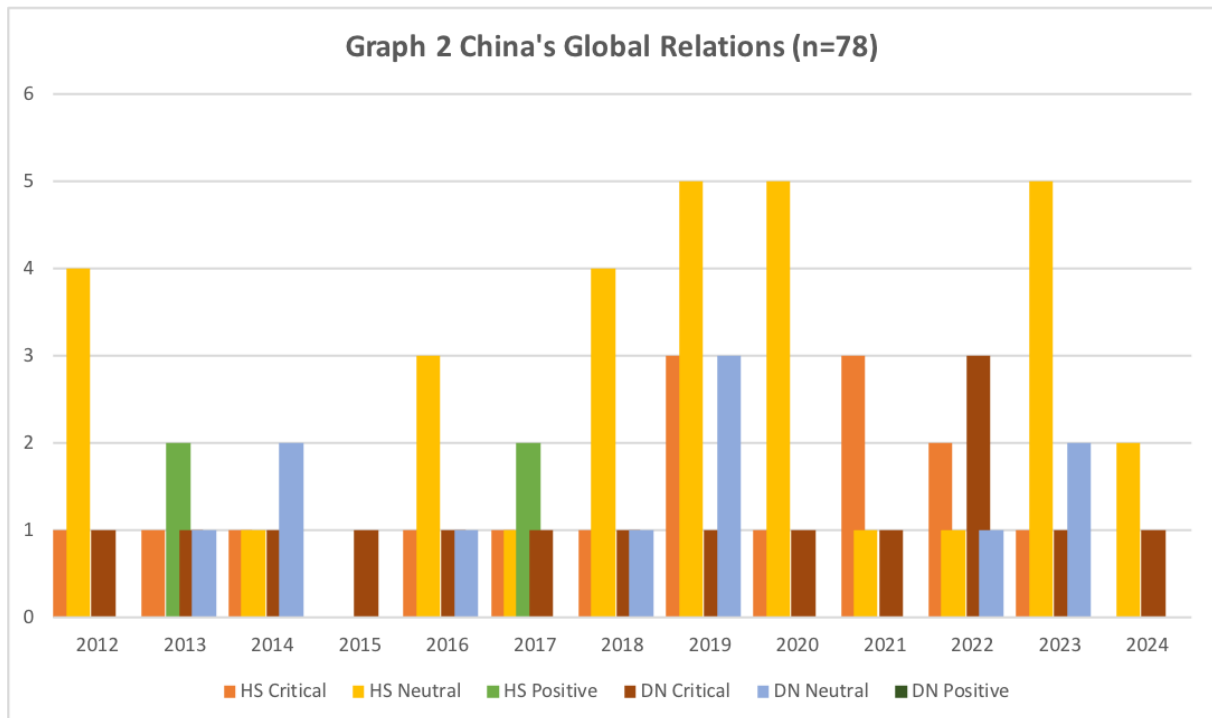
4.1.2 China's Global Relations

This theme contains editorials that discuss China's relations with other states, its foreign partnerships, rivalries and diplomatic tensions. In addition to considering China's international relations with other big actors such as the United States or the EU, this theme also encompasses China's bilateral relations with smaller actors, including states like Finland and Sweden. Some of the key patterns identified in the theme include: China's involvement in great power competition, China's trade disputes, China's deepening relationships with non-Western powers, China's diplomatic inaction, China's relations with the United States, diplomatic scandals. The editorials included under this theme demonstrate the portrayals of China's involvement and handling of foreign affairs in both Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter.

In depictions of China and its relationship with the United States, the editorials and Helsingin Sanomat describes China with words like ‘the new Asia-Pacific trade deal winner is China – and the loser is the United States’, ‘despite Covid threatening everyone, the United States and China are focused on benefitting from the crisis and highlight each other’s weaknesses’, and ‘the most likely reason for a war between the United States and China would be a crisis concerning Taiwan’s situation’. When discussing the bilateral relations between Finland and China, the editorials uses phrases such as ‘By attending the Beijing Olympics the Sport Minister is bowing to China’, ‘Finland is a side plot in the great power logistics competition’ and ‘the Chinese President’s visit to Finland was by all accounts a significant event’. Furthermore, Helsingin Sanomat’s China representations in relation to its affairs with Russia include: ‘Strengthening economic ties with China would not benefit Russia’s long-term needs’ ‘China is frighteningly strong for Russia’, and ‘China supports Russia both politically and economically’.

In Dagens Nyheter, China in its relationship with the United States is described as: ‘openness is better than hypocrisy’, ‘Trump and Xi are playing for their home audience’ and ‘there are multiple and complex conflict topics, yet the Presidents still need to cooperate’. When describing and assessing China’s relations with Sweden, the newspaper uses phrases like ‘Gui Minhai, like other political prisoners, has been taken hostage in a brutal power game against his family, against another country and against human rights’ and ‘the business sector in Sweden and abroad often stress the importance of close relations to China, even if the price is the silencing of criticism’. As for China’s relationship and affairs with Russia, Dagens Nyheter has represented China as ‘a regime that is secretly arming an invading power’, ‘Russia and China – a despotic alliance without a future’ and ‘China and Russia still have the same goal – a globally less influential USA and a weakened, divided West’.

As for the inspection of the China’s global relations theme’s thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation, Graph 2 offers an insight into the publishing trends and their tonal representation over the study’s time period.



Graph 2 China's Global Relations theme development

There is a major difference in the number of published editorials in the theme category with Helsingin Sanomat totalling at 52 and Dagens Nyheter totalling 26 leading editorials within the studied time period. Yet the proportional representation of the theme category holds a similar size, 22% of all published China-related editorials in Helsingin Sanomat, and 18% in Dagens Nyheter.

Graph 2 indicates a continued interest over the researched time period towards the theme on China's global relations. Helsingin Sanomat's data shows a frequent publication rate over the years, with the exception of no related editorials in 2015. The biggest peaks in reporting occur in 2019-2020 and 2023, and the least reporting takes place in 2014-2015. Dagens Nyheter also shows a consistent yet smaller number of published editorials in the theme category. Each year has one to three published editorials, with the exception of 2019 and 2022 that had a total of 4. In terms of frequency, these findings demonstrate that Helsingin Sanomat covers China's international affairs more extensively than Dagens Nyheter, which can thus be seen as a greater interest towards the theme.

In terms of the editorials' tonal evaluation, Helsingin Sanomat presents a mixed picture, with neutral tones being the most represented throughout the time period. There is an increase of critical representations in 2019 and 2021 and few positive editorials in 2013 and 2017. As for

Dagens Nyheter, the editorials present a mostly neutral tone in its reporting throughout the time period, with the exceptions of 2020 and 2019. There is a small jump in critical tones in 2023, and there were no identifiable positive editorials in Dagens Nyheter's editorials in the theme. These findings show that Helsingin Sanomat offers a more diverse tonal approach to the theme on China's global relations, while Dagens Nyheter offers a less nuanced one.

In terms of editorial peaks, Helsingin Sanomat has a peak in publication frequency in 2019 with a total of eight editorials published in relation to the theme. In a similar manner, Dagens Nyheter also has a peak in 2019, but also another one in 2022, with four published editorials in both years. The Helsingin Sanomat 2019 editorial peak can be explained by the increase in publications on the topics relating to the US-China trade war and China's efforts in developing its relationships with non-Western powers, for example through the BRICS or with different African countries. In turn, Dagens Nyheter's publication peak in 2019 can be traced to discussions on the Trump administration's trade disputes with China, as well as the scandal surrounding Swedish Ambassador to China Anna Lindstedt's private meetings with Chinese officials in relation to the detainment of the Swedish citizen Gui Minhai. The second peak in 2022 can be traced to the editorial focus on the developments in China's relations with Russia, especially in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as China's inaction against North Korea in the United Nations Security Council. The relative consistency in reporting on the theme on China's global affairs shows a clear interest and concern for China's international actions from both newspapers.

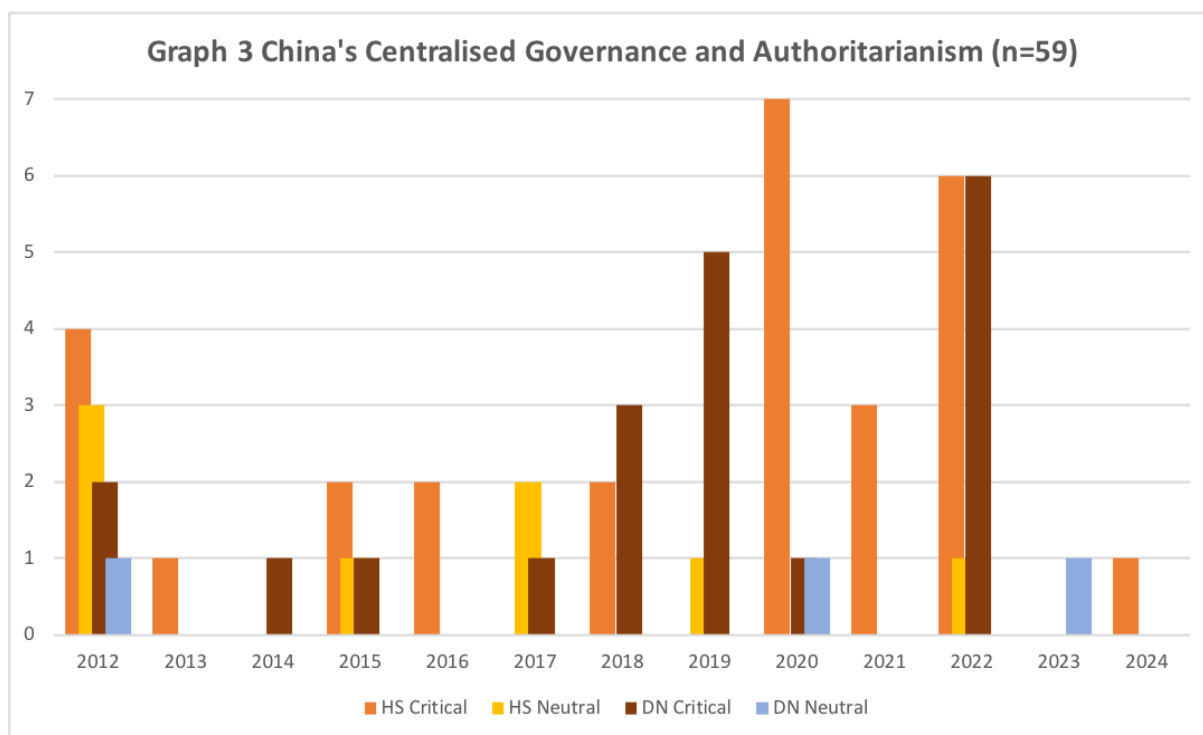
4.1.3 China's Centralised Governance and Authoritarianism

The centralised governance and authoritarianism theme contains portrayals of China's political system and its inner operations. The editorials included in the theme discuss the politics and internal political structure of the Chinese Communist Party, as well as the nature of its rule. Many of the editorials in this theme revolved around the topic of the emergence of Xi Jinping as the new leader of China and his growing power within the Chinese political system. Some of the main editorial topics in the data include the Chinese Communist Party's political leadership, Xi Jinping's consolidation of power, and the nature of the China's political system.

In its representations and descriptions of China's political leadership and the Communist Party, the editorials in Helsingin Sanomat uses terms such as 'authoritarian', 'autocratic', 'mercantilist', 'returning to the past', 'control state', and 'a stale bureaucracy'. In describing China's leader Xi Jinping Helsingin Sanomat uses phrases such as 'strongest leader since Mao Zedong', 'Under Xi China has marched towards totalitarianism', and 'Xi's despotism'. When evaluating the nature of the Chinese political system, Helsingin Sanomat uses words such as 'coercive', 'successful', 'competitive' and 'bureaucratic'. These varied portrayals helped to form the theme that captures China as a concentrated bureaucracy, that is operating through authoritarian control.

Dagens Nyheter's editorials frequently uses words such as 'dictatorship', 'Communist dictatorship', 'authoritarian', 'totalitarian', 'maoist', 'regime', 'monopoly of power', when describing and discussing the Communist party rule or the leadership of China. As for depictions of China's leader Xi Jinping, Dagens Nyheter often directly addresses Xi as a 'dictator', 'authoritarian leader', and 'ruler'. Additionally, when evaluating the nature of the Chinese political system, Dagens Nyheter uses adjectives such as 'repressive', 'dominating', and 'scary'. Such portrayals of China's political system contribute to creating an image of China as a monolith, where power is centralised in the hands of a few select people, leaving no or little space for opposing opinions or forces for change.

To inspect the centralised governance and authoritarianism theme's thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation, Graph 3 below offers an insight into the publishing trends and their tonal representation over the studied time period.



Graph 3 China's Centralised Governance and Authoritarianism theme development

Numerically, Helsingin Sanomat has published more extensively on topics related to the Chinese political system with its total 36 articles. Dagens Nyheter published 23 editorials that were included in the same theme category. Interestingly, this theme is proportionally represented almost equally with 15% and 16% of editorial publications in Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat respectively.

In terms of identifiable patterns over the selected time period both newspapers show a relatively consistent output of editorials that concern themselves with the theme. As seen from Graph 3, the editorials in Helsingin Sanomat show an increase in its reporting on China's political system between 2020-2022, and no published editorials in 2014 and 2023. Dagens Nyheter has quite consistent reporting on the theme, with the exceptions of 2013, 2016, 2021 and 2023 with no leading editorials on this theme published. Dagens Nyheter shows a peak in publication on the theme in 2018-2019 and 2022. These temporal patterns show that Helsingin Sanomat reports more consistently on China's political system than Dagens Nyheter, who seems to report more sporadically and reactively in certain years.

Both of the two newspapers tonal distribution is largely critical, with some neutral coverage on the theme. Helsingin Sanomat offers a mixture in its tonal evaluations, however only

between critical and neutral representations. The critical tone remains dominant in Helsingin Sanomat's editorials, with a decreasing trend of neutral representations over time. Dagens Nyheter's tone in its reporting on China's political system is predominantly critical, which indicates that the newspaper has quite a consistent stance on the theme. The tonal distribution in the newspapers suggests that both papers depict mostly a negative portrayal of China's political system, whereas Helsingin Sanomat also offers a more balanced coverage.

As for the newspapers peak year coverage, Helsingin Sanomat has frequency peaks in 2012, 2020 and 2022 with a total of seven editorials published during these years, and Dagens Nyheter has its peak in 2022 when it published six editorials related to the theme. Helsingin Sanomat's peak in 2012 can be explained with the emergence of Xi Jinping as the new leader for the PRC and the political ousting of Bo Xilai. When examining the peak in 2020, Helsingin Sanomat's editorial focus was on the events surrounding the Communist Party's handling of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Similarly to the previous peak, the 2022 frequency peak can be traced to the Communist Party's pandemic management, especially by critiquing the so-called 'Zero-Covid' policy. In turn, Dagens Nyheter's publication peak in 2022 can be explained with the editorials focus on the Chinese Communist Party's instable and oppressive rule and the Communist Party's Covid-19 pandemic management. The aforementioned publication frequency peaks show that the two newspapers share a similar concern for the Chinese government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, but that Helsingin Sanomat also offers more concern towards the reporting on Communist Party internal power shifts.

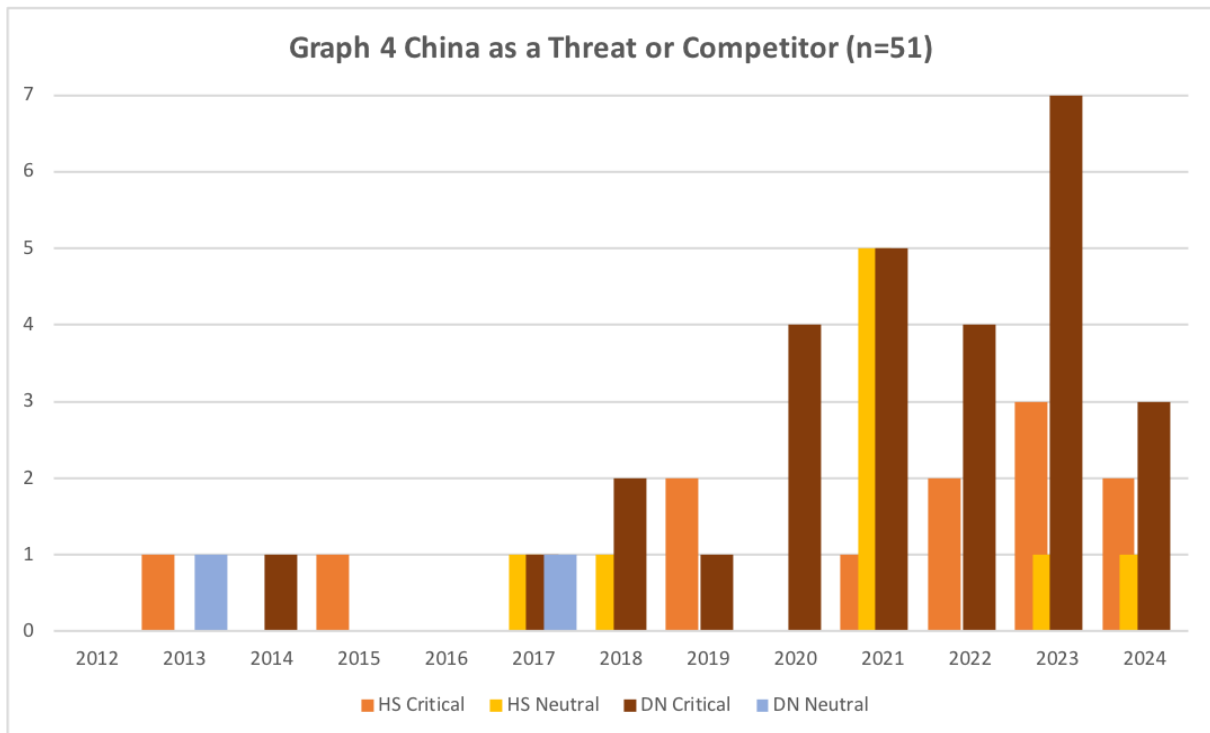
4.1.4 China as a Threat or Competitor

This theme depicts portrayals of China as a threat or competitor explicitly to the West. While some themes overlap with this topics considering China as a threat or competitor, it merits its own theme category due to the prevalence of narratives of China as an adversary. The theme captures editorials that discuss China as an economic competitor to the United States and the European Union, ideological rival to democracy, or military adversary to Western powers and their allies. Topics in this category include: China's international power, China re-shaping the world order, China's relations other adversary states, Chinese cyberespionage, and China's military build-up. The editorials' main topics of discussion in the category are China as an economic competitor, China as an ideological rival, and China as security threat.

In Helsingin Sanomat, when discussing China as an economic competitor, the editorials uses language such as ‘China is suspected to use large companies as political tools’, ‘China’s economic conquest of the world’, ‘in the new Cold War the fight is carried through the economy’. As for its depictions of China as an ideological contender, Helsingin Sanomat features the following language to describe China: ‘China is using its economic power to twist norms in its favour’ and ‘China’s rise demands Western allies to cooperate and move their own competitions to the side’. Further, in its representations of China as a security threat, Helsingin Sanomat uses the following expressions: ‘Cyberespionage from China has accelerated to point that can lead to an international security threat’, ‘Statistics will not tell what China is aiming for’, and ‘We will be likely to see Chinese military vessels in the Baltic Sea in the future as well’.

As for Dagens Nyheter’s portrayals of China as an economic competitor, the editorials discuss China in the following manner: ‘the conclusion that Huawei is not dangerous is impossible’, ‘Huawei and Chinese companies work as the dictatorship’s extended arm’, and ‘a consumer boycott orchestrated by the Chinese regime’. In its expressions on China as an ideological threat, the editorials features language such as: ‘the open society needs to win over communism’, ‘the regime has global ambitions’, and ‘pluralism, individualism, and democracy stands against standardisation, collectivism, and dictatorship’. Additionally, when representing China as a security threat, Dagens Nyheter portrays China as ‘conducting comprehensive cyberespionage all over the world’, ‘the dragon is over all a growing threat’, and ‘no one is safe in face of Beijing’s expansive ambitions’.

As found below, Graph 4 offers a closer insight into the development China as a threat or competitor theme’s thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation over the studied time period.



Graph 4 China as a Threat or Competitor theme development

There are a few mention-worthy similarities and differences when inspecting Graph 4. Between the years 2012 and August 2024, Helsingin Sanomat published a total of 21 editorials that were included in the theme. Dagens Nyheter published 30 editorials over the same time period. In terms of proportional representation, this theme is significantly more prevalent in Dagens Nyheter, where it accounts for 20% of the total China-related editorials, and stands as the most-published theme in the newspaper. Contrastingly, the theme occupies 9% of total China-related coverage in Helsingin Sanomat.

When inspecting the number of editorials over time, Helsingin Sanomat offers an occasional editorial on the theme between the years 2013-2018, but shows a major leap in both frequency and consistency from 2021 onwards. The newspaper experiences its peak in thematic representations in 2021 and holds zero coverage in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2019-2020. Dagens Nyheter has a similar leap in frequency and consistency starting already from 2017 onwards. The newspaper only reported one editorial on the theme in 2013 and 2014, and zero editorials in 2012, 2015-2016. Dagen's Nyheter has a peak in thematic portrayals between 2020-2023, in which 2023 constitutes as the year with most editorials published in relation to the theme. These findings showcase that Dagens Nyheter has a slightly more consistent editorial publishing trend on the theme than Helsingin Sanomat, but also that there is a similar rising

trend in the number of editorials on the theme in both newspapers, indicating a rising editorial prevalence of the theme.

There is also a considerable difference in the newspapers tone in its representations of the theme. Helsingin Sanomat offers a more balanced output of both critical and neutral tonal evaluations in its portrayal of China as a threat or competitor. After the year 2017, and along with the rising editorial interest towards the theme, Dagens Nyheter only offers critical depictions of China in relation to the theme. The trends evident in the tonal distribution show a shift in Dagens Nyheter's interest and increasingly critical tone towards the theme, and simultaneously shows that Helsingin Sanomat offers a more nuanced approach to the tonal coverage in its representations of China as a threat or competitor.

In terms of peak year editorial publications, Helsingin Sanomat has its top year in 2021 with five published editorials and Dagens Nyheter in 2023 with a total of seven published editorials on the theme. During 2021, Helsingin Sanomat's editorials on the theme discussed events pertaining to the developing global competition between China and the United States, for example the Biden administration's attempts to deepen ties to EU to balance out China's rise, US suspicions regarding Covid leakage from a Chinese laboratory, China's military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, and the US supplying new nuclear submarines to Australia. As for Dagens Nyheter's publications in 2023, the topics of discussions included the following: China posing as a threat to democracy and international norms, China weaponising its economic relations security-concerns related to Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok, the potential Chinese attack on Taiwan, and the growing threat of China in East Asia due to increased activity in South China Sea. These two peak years suggest a difference in publication scope on the theme, whereby Helsingin Sanomat's peak year is mostly concerned with the ongoing great power competition between China and the USA, and Dagens Nyheter focusing on a more threat-based perspective when discussing China.

4.1.5 China's Territorial Integrity and Geopolitical Conflicts

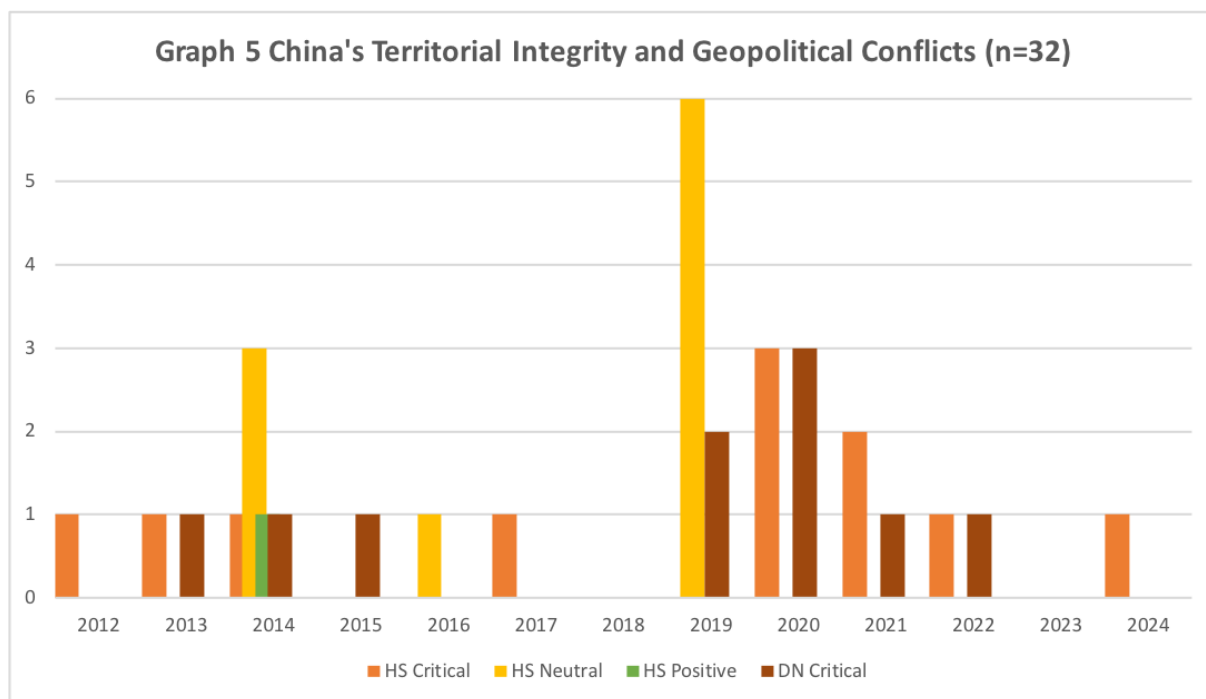
The theme on territorial integrity and geopolitical conflicts features editorials that discuss China's territorial claims and management of its special administrative regions. Key patterns in this theme include: China's control of Hong Kong, China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea, China's governance over Tibet, and China-Taiwan relations. Three of the key

topics included in the theme in both of the newspapers are China-Hong Kong relations, China-Taiwan relations, and China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

In Helsingin Sanomat's China's management and relationship to Hong Kong is described and assessed as 'strict', 'a tight grip', and 'a worsening crisis'. When describing China's part in the two-strait relations, Helsingin Sanomat uses expressions such as: 'should not succumb to China's blackmail', 'China is giving the impression that the election is about war or peace', and 'China is buying Taiwan's friends one-by-one'. As for depictions of China's actions and claims in the South China Sea, the editorials feature language such as 'a dangerous game', 'intensified actions', and 'the temptation for a demonstration of force is evident'.

In Dagens Nyheter China's relationship to Hong Kong and its affairs is portrayed through language such as: 'A peaceful resolution in Hong Kong demands Communist retreat', 'Xi Jinping needs to be reminded of the high economic price of drenching Hong Kong's freedom in blood', and 'China is transforming Hong Kong into a prison'. In the newspaper's reporting on China-Taiwan relations, the following words describe China's role and actions: 'Xi Jinping is not interested in multiple systems – he only wants one China, one party, and one leader', 'China devoured Hong Kong in a few years. Taiwan might be next in line', and 'Xi Jinping must be made aware that the price for an invasion would be skyhigh'. Furthermore, when discussing China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Dagens Nyheter for example uses the following expressions: 'China should not rule the seas', 'a forceful expansion', and 'China is marking an increasingly larger territory in the East Asian region'.

To inspect the China's territorial integrity and geopolitical conflicts theme's thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation, Graph 5 offers an insight into the publishing trends and their tonal representation over the study's time period.



Graph 5 China's Territorial Integrity and Geopolitical Conflicts theme development

The editorials concerning the theme on China's territorial integrity and geopolitical conflicts stand at a total of 22 editorials in Helsingin Sanomat and ten in Dagens Nyheter. The theme accounts for Helsingin Sanomat 10% of all China-related leading editorials and 7% of Dagens Nyheter's.

When examining the temporal patterns in the frequency graph, Helsingin Sanomat offers more frequent portrayals on the theme than Dagens Nyheter. Helsingin Sanomat discusses the theme in its editorials in all years except 2015, 2018 and 2023. There is a clear jump in the number Helsingin Sanomat's published editorials in 2014 and 2019, which coincide with the time of the Hong Kong democracy protests on both occasions. Dagens Nyheter's reporting on the theme is concentrated in two periods between 2013-2015 and 2019-2022. The two newspapers show a similar trend of concentrated reporting between 2019 and 2022. These findings show that Helsingin Sanomat is more interested in the theme on China's territorial issues more consistently than Dagens Nyheter.

The two newspapers show considerable differences in terms of tonal distribution. Helsingin Sanomat holds quite a mixed account in its reporting on the theme with eleven critical, ten neutral, and one positive tone detected. The most varied year in terms of tonal evaluations is 2014. The peak year for neutral portrayals is 2019, which after all published editorials are

evaluated as critical. Dagens Nyheter, on the other hand, exclusively holds a critical tone in all of its published editorials in this theme. The focus on only critically toned editorials shows that Dagens Nyheter portrays this theme more one-sidedly when compared to Helsingin Sanomat, who offers a less tonally biased account.

In terms of publication frequency peaks, Helsingin Sanomat published the most on the theme in 2019 and Dagens Nyheter in 2020. In 2019, Helsingin Sanomat's editorials concerned themselves with topics related to China's management of the Hong Kong protests and the increasing Communist Party control over Hong Kong. During Dagens Nyheter's peak year in 2020, the editorials related to the theme discussed the growing Chinese oppression and control of Hong Kong and China's role in shaping the development of Taiwan's politics. These editorial peaks indicate that both newspapers have a significant interest towards the development of Hong Kong affairs.

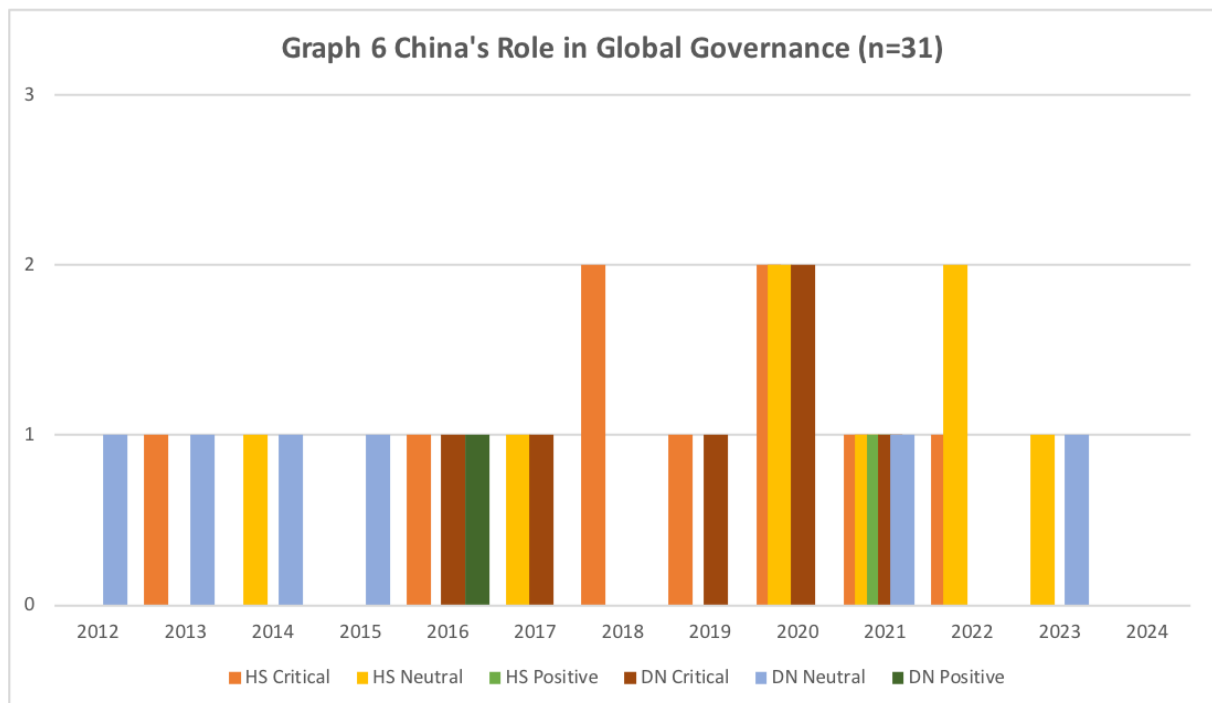
4.1.6 China's Role in Global Governance

This theme encapsulates editorials that discuss China's participation and influence in global organisations, international trade agreements, climate agreements, and its ambitions for global leadership. Some of the key patterns in the theme include: China's role in the United Nations, China's climate commitments, China's climate politics, China's leadership in BRICS, changing leadership in global governance. The main topics in the China-related editorials in this category are China's climate commitments and China's changing role in global governance.

In Helsingin Sanomat's depictions of China's climate commitments, the editorials uses phrases like: 'It is difficult to be angry at the climate-leader China', 'oozes confidence', and 'China promises good for the climate, but does bad'. When discussing China's involvement and changing role in global governance, Helsingin Sanomat has features expressions such as: 'For years, China has already constructed the UN to its liking', 'In the council, China aims to ensure that the projects it opposes do not proceed or succeed in securing votes', and 'China demonstrated that it wants to develop joint trade rules'.

Dagens Nyheter's representations of China in terms of China's climate commitments include: 'a renewable superpower', 'China is not the climate model country portrayed as in these embellished depictions', and 'beautiful words have been heard from dictatorships before'. In Dagens Nyheter's depictions of China's changing role in global governance the editorials include phrases such as: 'having changed into a great power that is not sufficiently satisfied with the status quo' and 'East Asia will feel worse under a communist umbrella than an American one'.

Graph 6 offers an insight into the publishing trends about China's role in global governance theme's thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation.



Graph 6 China's Role in Global Governance

The presented graphs show the frequency of editorial reporting, which in Helsingin Sanomat totalled at 18 editorials and Dagens Nyheter at 13. The newspapers' proportional representation of the theme out of all China-related editorials stands at 8% and 9% respectively.

There are some noteworthy similarities and differences in the temporal patterns in the theme in both newspapers. Helsingin Sanomat has consistently published China's global governance editorials over the years, with the exception of 2012, 2015 and 2024. Helsingin Sanomat's peak in this theme occur in 2020 and 2022. Dagens Nyheter offers a consistent output on the

theme throughout the studied time period, with the exception of 2018, 2022, and 2024 with no published editorials related to the theme. Both newspapers show a similar trend in consistent editorial publishing on the theme on China's role in global governance.

As for the thematic distribution of the global governance editorials, the Helsingin Sanomat portrayals within this theme offer a mixed account on critical, neutral and positive tonal representations over the years. Helsingin Sanomat's mixed tonal portrayals of China's global governance issues show a more balanced depiction of the theme. Dagens Nyheter, similarly, offers a variance in tone in its theme portrayals. The years where the theme has been most frequently published in Dagens Nyheter, including 2018-2019 and 2022, are all wholly evaluated as critical. Such a finding suggests that the theme gains more attraction from the newspaper when there is something critical to report on related to the theme.

In terms of the theme's peak year publication frequency, Helsingin Sanomat has its top year in 2020 with four editorials, and Dagens Nyheter in 2016, 2020 and 2021 with two published editorials each year. Topic wise, in 2020, Helsingin Sanomat's discussions about China's global governance revolved around China's new climate goals especially with announcing its target to be carbon-neutral by 2060, China's attempts to increase its influence in international organisations, and growing Chinese global assertiveness. Dagens Nyheter, in 2016, concerned itself with China's perspective on the proposed Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, and praise for China's efforts in climate research. As for 2020, Dagens Nyheter discussed China's climate politics and its new climate goals. Additionally, in 2021 Dagens Nyheter discussed China's role in global climate governance, and China as an international bully. By examining the peak year publications for the theme, both newspapers' topics are found to greatly revolve around China's climate policy and global efforts.

4.1.7 China's Human Rights and Social Issues

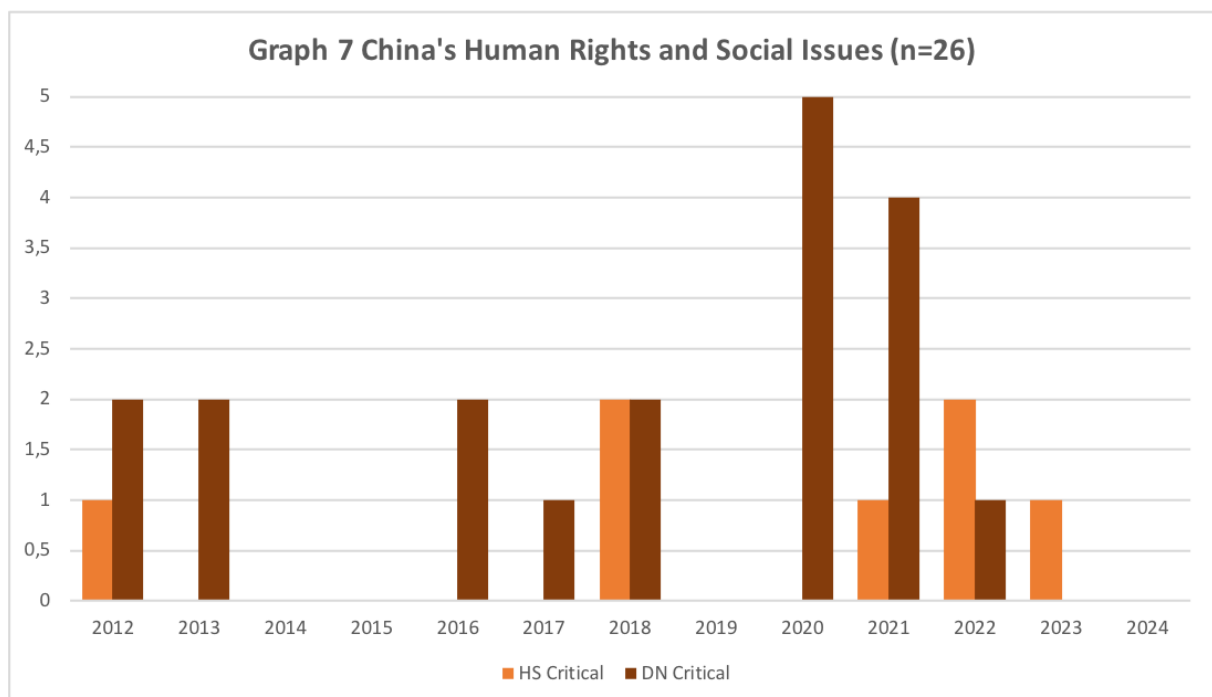
This theme focuses on portrayals of China's human rights issues, its infringements on freedom of speech, treatment of minority groups, as well as its repression of activists domestically and abroad. The editorials included in this theme touch upon topics such as repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, lack of freedom of speech, cultural genocide, restrictions on religion, detainment of activists, and forced confessions. The main topics in this category

include the repression of minorities, the infringement of religious rights, and the suppression of domestic and international activism.

In Helsingin Sanomat's representations of China's handling of its ethnic minorities, the editorials use, for example phrases such as: 'persecution of ethnic minorities', 'driven its Uyghur minority into concentration camps', 'China is using its growing power for large-scale espionage and oppression of minorities', and 'violent campaign'. In the editorials that concern China's actions against activists, Helsingin Sanomat's expressions include: 'Chinese activist deserves justice', 'no limits to the use of power', and 'freedoms are a faint memory'.

As for Dagens Nyheter, the editorials that discuss China's management and control of its minority groups, include phrases such as: 'brutal persecution of Uyghurs', 'hair-raising crimes against human rights', 'slave labour is routine in factories', 'genocide' and 'Beijings politics is morally reprehensible'. As for its discussion on China's oppression of activists, Dagens Nyheter feature wordings like: 'stomping on the freedom of expression', 'a sham process', and 'China is brutalising its citizens'.

Graph 7, as seen below, offers an insight into the China's human rights and social issues theme's thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation over the studied time period.



Graph 7 China's Human Rights and Social Issues theme development

The graph indicates a major difference in publication frequency in the Finnish and Swedish newspaper on the China's human rights and social issues theme. Over the studied time period, Helsingin Sanomat has published 7 editorials included in the theme, constituting only 3% of all published China-related editorials. Dagens Nyheter has published 19 editorials on the theme, which represents 13% of all editorial publications.

In terms of temporal patterns, Helsingin Sanomat publishes sporadically editorials on the theme. Helsingin Sanomat only discusses the theme in one to two editorials in the years 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021-2023. There is a long gap between 2013-2017 with zero editorials published on the human rights and social issues theme. Dagens Nyheter's coverage is quite consistent, only having missing editorial publications in 2014-2015, 2019, and 2023-2024. There is major jump in the number editorials between the years 2020 and 2021. The findings highlight that Dagens Nyheter has a much stronger focus on China's human rights and social issues than Helsingin Sanomat.

An interesting feature in the tonal distribution in the China's human rights and social issues theme category is that both newspapers solely portray the theme in a critical tone. Both Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter therefore seem to hold a significantly critically evaluative attitude when portraying China's human rights and social issues, but Dagens Nyheter to an even greater extent than Helsingin Sanomat based on the number of critical editorials published.

When considering the peak publication years, Helsingin Sanomat has two frequency peaks in 2018 and 2022 with two published editorials in both years, and in turn, Dagens Nyheter has its publication peak in 2020 with a total of 5 editorials published on the theme. The Helsingin Sanomat's published editorials in 2018 concerned themselves with the disappearance of the President of the Interpol Meng Hongwei, as well as the state-led repression in Xinjiang. In 2022, Helsingin Sanomat's editorials discussed China's various human rights violations taking place in the shadows of the Winter Olympics. During its peak year in 2020, Dagens Nyheter reported on the cases regarding the illegal detention of Swedish citizens Gui Minhai and Peter Dahlin in China, the various human rights breaches taking place in Xinjiang, and the increasing oppression and restrictions of freedoms of the Hong Kong people. While there are similarities in the topics in both newspapers peak year reporting, Dagens Nyheter's

comparable focus on the theme can possibly be explained by the relevance of Swedish citizens' rights having been abused by the Chinese state, thus meriting the greater attention of Swedish media.

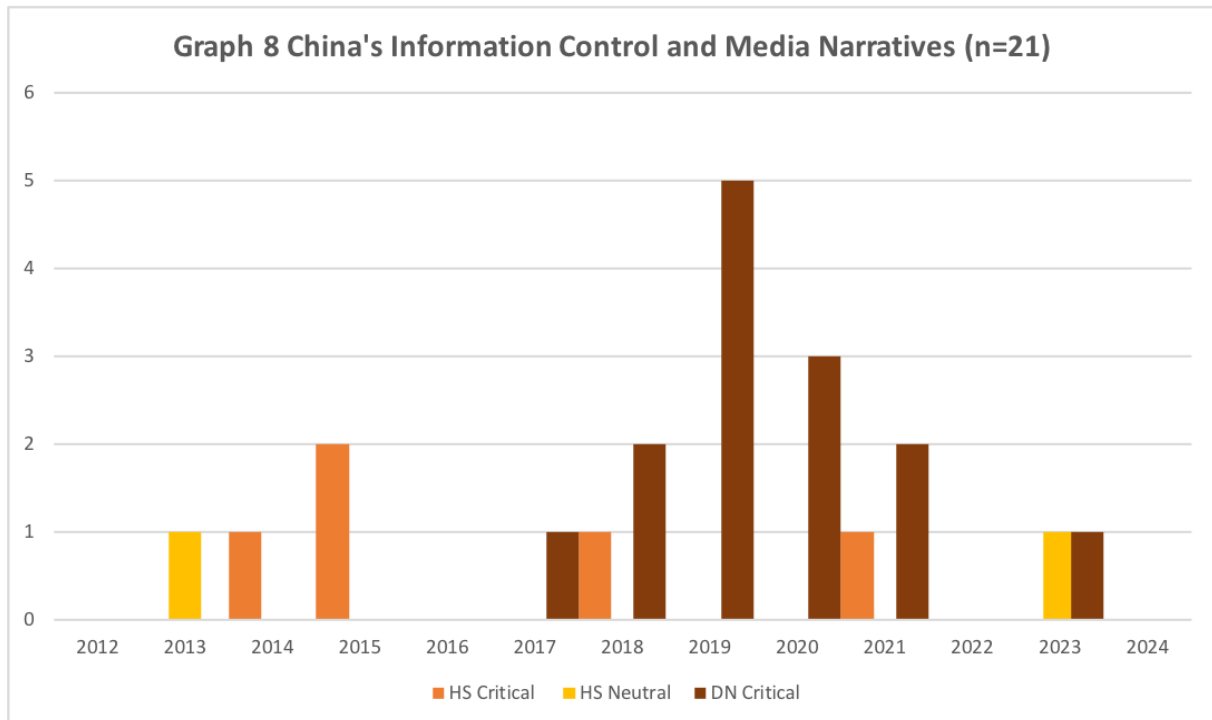
4.1.8 China's Information Control and Media Narratives

This theme covers editorials which focus on China's efforts to control information and narratives both domestically and internationally. Key patterns that can be identified in the included editorials are: China's domestic and international propaganda, censorship of sensitive issues, lack of media transparency, attempts to influence foreign media, and the dismissal of foreign media. The main topics featured in editorials in the theme are China's propaganda and media influence attempts, as well as censorship of sensitive issues.

When discussing China's propaganda and efforts to influence foreign media, Helsingin Sanomat uses language such as 'the propaganda machine will not save China', 'China is large, old, and very sensitive', 'it is not about Panda diplomacy, but propaganda' and 'China is buying freedom of expression'. As for its portrayals on censorship, the editorials discuss China's actions followingly: 'the leading Communist party has set strict standards on what is allowed or disallowed to speak about in the country' and 'the Chinese newspaper's rare protest resulted in a partial win for the journalists against the censorship officials'.

In its portrayals on China's propaganda and influence efforts, Dagens Nyheter's editorials feature phrases like: 'the risk is for the global internet freedom standards to become disrupted', 'it is time to stop the Chinese propaganda expansion', and 'they put a horror mask on top of journalism'. When describing and assessing China's censorship, Dagens Nyheter uses language such as: 'Beijing's unrestricted attack on the freedom of expression' and 'censoring attempts of foreign media companies simply gives an impression of desperation'.

Graph 8 allows for closer inspection of the information control and media narratives theme's thematic frequencies and tonal evaluation, by offering an insight into the publishing trends and their tonal representation over the study's time period.



Graph 8 China's Information Control and Media Narratives theme development

The graph presents a highly diverging trend in Helsingin Sanomat's and Dagens Nyheter's reporting the China's information control and media narratives theme. Helsingin Sanomat has published only 7 editorials accounting for a mere 3% of the total China-related editorials. In turn, Dagens Nyheter has released 14 editorials on the theme in the same time period, accounting for a proportion of 9%.

In terms of thematic representations over time, Helsingin Sanomat's coverage of the theme can be seen as sparse, with no editorials considering the theme in the years 2012, 2016-2017, 2019-2020, 2022, and 2024. The most frequent year for the theme is 2015, when Helsingin Sanomat published two related editorials. Dagens Nyheter indicates a concentrated interest in the theme, as the editorials are all published between the years 2017-2023. The peak year for publications in this theme is 2019. These findings suggest that the theme is not central to Helsingin Sanomat's editorial focus, and that Dagens Nyheter's concentrated focus on the theme seems to be a more orchestrated attempt to raise awareness to the issue.

As for the editorials tonal distribution, Helsingin Sanomat offers a more varied representation of the theme than Dagens Nyheter. Helsingin Sanomat offers a mixture of critical and neutral tones in its depictions of the theme, yet with a clear majority of the editorials being evaluated as negative. Dagens Nyheter offers a wholly critical tonal approach to the theme, thus offering

a clear representation of Dagens Nyheter's attitude towards the specific theme. The findings can therefore be seen to suggest that both newspapers hold a predominantly critical tonal stance towards the theme on China's information control and media narratives, however that the theme is not noticeably central in either of the papers.

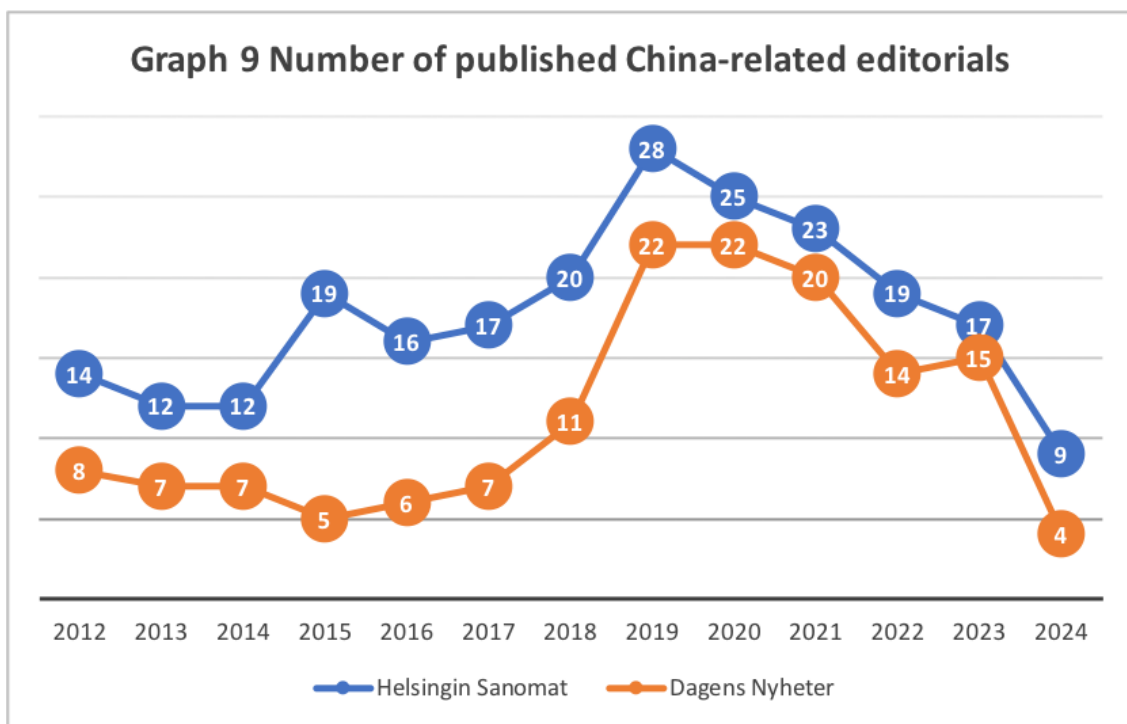
When inspecting the peak publication frequency for the theme, Helsingin Sanomat's peak is in 2015 with two editorials and Dagens Nyheter's peak occurs in 2019 with five published editorials. Helsingin Sanomat's editorials on the theme revolved around the discussions on Alibaba's purchasing of the Hong Kong-based newspaper South China Morning Post and China's international efforts to improve its image. In turn, Dagens Nyheter's peak year coverage in 2019 concerned itself with the following topics: the Chinese embassy's efforts to censor the Swedish state media SVT, the Chinese government's attempts to silence foreign, especially Swedish, criticism, and the Chinese propaganda backlash against the United States' National Basketball Association following a club executives tweet about Hong Kong. In terms of topics, Dagens Nyheter has a wider range of topics it has published editorials on when compared to Helsingin Sanomat. However, the difference in attention given to the theme could be plausibly explained due to Sweden's experiences media and diplomatic issues with China.

4.2 Comparison Between the Newspaper Editorials

The thematic analysis combined with the frequency analysis has helped to reveal important patterns in the two newspapers' portrayals of China. This section contains a discussion on the differences in Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat's coverage of China-related issues, as well as their thematic and tonal representations.

The Graph 9 below shows the trend in publications of all 379 China-related editorials in both newspapers over the studied 12 years and 8 months. It is important to note that the editorials for the year 2024 were only included up until the 31st of August, hence accounting for the year's noticeably smaller dataset, and also bearing in mind that it does not fully capture the discussion for 2024. Despite Helsingin Sanomat publishing 83 more leading editorials during the same time period, there is an identifiable similar trend in publication frequency over this time. With the exception of 2015, all other years seem to follow a similar rise and fall in publications on China-related editorials in the Finnish and Swedish newspaper. The graph helps to capture the 2019-2020 rise in editorial portrayals of the human rights and social

issues, China as a threat or competitor, and China's territorial integrity and geopolitical conflict. Such a rise can be seen to correspond to global media events like the Hong Kong protests, the emergence of the Covid pandemic, and global scrutiny of China's actions in Xinjiang. Another example can be found in the sudden increase in the China's centralised politics and authoritarianism theme in 2022, which could be explained with the controversial re-election of Xi Jinping for a third term as President of China. Such correlations could suggest that both newspapers react quite similarly to the same global events.



Graph 9 Number of published China-related editorials in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter

Based on the results from each theme category, Helsingin Sanomat can be seen to have a more diverse and frequent coverage across most of the themes when compared to Dagens Nyheter, which tends to focus on specific themes and in certain years. In terms of editorials focus in China-related issues, the findings suggest that Helsingin Sanomat has a broader scope of interest when it comes to reporting on China and Dagens Nyheter has a more selective approach that can be seen to reflect specific news events.

The differences in thematic focus are a noteworthy aspect in this study's findings. Helsingin Sanomat is predominantly interested in China as an economic and technological power, China's global relations, and China's centralised politics and authoritarianism. Dagens

Nyheter is mostly editorially interested in the themes of China as a threat or competitor, China's global relations, and China's centralised politics and authoritarianism. Major differences in editorial frequency can be identified in the China as an economic and technological power theme and China's human rights and social issues. This indicates that Helsingin Sanomat seems to thematically focus on a more practical economic and political editorial agenda, while Dagens Nyheter has a more ideologically driven agenda in its editorials.

In terms of Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter's editorials tonal distribution, the critical tone can be identified as the predominant one. Both newspapers significantly rely on critical tones in their editorial portrayals of China, which is especially evident in the theme on China's human rights and social issues. Dagens Nyheter is consistently critical across all of the eight themes, while Helsingin Sanomat offers a more mixed approach with more neutral, and even some positive tonal representations. Therefore, a significant finding in both newspapers remains the obvious critical bias that was found in the tonal evaluation across all of the themes, with the exception of Helsingin Sanomat's editorial portrayal of China's global relations.

Some of the peaks in thematic and tonal representations can be explained by inspecting important events throughout the selected time period. The difference in portrayals of China between the two newspapers can also be interpreted within the country-specific contexts in which the news representations emerge in. As discussed in the section on Finland and Sweden's relations to China, the countries have maintained noticeably different diplomatic relations to the PRC in the past twelve years. The consistently critical tone reflected in the findings on the various thematic portrayals in Dagens Nyheter could thus arguably be traced back to Sweden's diplomatic clashes with China, also having two of its citizens detained in China, and the country's overall emphasis on values such as human rights in its foreign affairs. Finland, on the other hand, has generally enjoyed more calm and economically motivated exchanges with China during the same time period, which could be seen to explain the more economic-focused and nuanced portrayals of China in Helsingin Sanomat's editorials.

4.3 Implications

The thematic and tonal representations of China identified in Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter raise further enquires of their relevance and wider implications. The news media portrayals of China in the two newspapers cannot be understood in isolation from the political and diplomatic contexts of Finland and Sweden. Instead, the editorial representations mirror each country's changing relationship with China, as well as the transforming geopolitical environment.

In the case of Finland, Helsingin Sanomat's editorial coverage initially emphasised China's role as an economic and technological power, thus reflecting Finland's historically pragmatic and trade-orientated engagement with China. During the early years of Xi Jinping's presidency, editorials often maintained a more neutral or even positive tone in their reporting, which can be seen to correspond to with Finland's economically-led diplomacy with China. However, from around 2015 onwards, Helsingin Sanomat sees an increase in reporting on, as well as an increase in negatively toned China-related editorials initially in 2015, and then a more consistent increase from 2017 onwards. This shift can be seen to align with heightened concerns about China's economic practices, events such as the Hong Kong protests, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the EU's growing concern over strategic interdependencies. The increasing prominence of themes such as China's centralised governance and authoritarianism and China's human rights and social issues, and China as a threat or competitor since around 2018 onwards can be seen to correspond with Finland's change in its China-policy, which is evident in its 2021 Action Plan on China that formally positioned China as a 'systemic rival'. Therefore, the development of Helsingin Sanomat's editorial reporting reflects Finland's adjusting stance vis-à-vis China, indicating a transition from economic pragmatism to strategic competition and caution in response to a tensing geopolitical climate. While there are no comparative survey results available for the Finnish attitudes towards China in the studied time period, the results of the 2024 EVA survey (Haavisto 2024) indicate a high-level of negative perceptions of China amongst the Finnish people. The increasing frequency and detection of a negative bias in editorial reporting that could be identified in Helsingin Sanomat since 2015, could therefore be seen as a contributing factor the current Finnish attitudes towards China.

The Swedish Dagens Nyheter's editorials can be seen to be much more consistent in its critical reporting with a clear rise in editorial-attention given to China from 2018 onwards. The increase in overall China-related coverage between 2017-2023 corresponds with the rise in Swedish negative perceptions of China as evidenced by the Pew Research Centre's study (2022b). As shown in the results, Dagens Nyheter's the increased publishing of China-related editorials are connected to an increase in negative portrayals of China. Such developments suggest that Dagens Nyheter's editorial coverage around China also reflect the broader attitudinal developments in Swedish society. The Swedish newspaper's thematic focus on China as a threat or competitor and on China's human rights violations and social issues reflects Sweden's value-driven foreign policy and its experiences with several diplomatic incidents with Beijing. Incidents including the detentions of Swedish citizens Gui Minhai and Peter Dahlin, as well as being the targets of China's 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy, have all contributed to the shaping of Sweden's political stance on China, which views it increasingly through an adversarial lens. Moreover, Dagens Nyheter's editorials not only reflect the deterioration of Sweden-China relations, but also actively reinforce a narrative of ideological opposition and strategic rivalry between the two states.

These findings show that while both newspapers China-related editorial coverage have changed towards a more sceptical and threat-induced perspective, the ways in which this is conveyed through editorials resonate with Finland and Sweden's diplomatic experiences with China and reflect the changes in the geopolitical environment at large. Finland, having generally enjoyed more calm and economically motivated exchanges with China during the studied time period, explains the more economic-focused and nuanced portrayals of China in Helsingin Sanomat's editorials. Dagens Nyheter's earlier and more ideologically driven consistently critical tone reflected in the findings can be traced back to Sweden's diplomatic incidents with China, and to the country's overall emphasis on values such as human rights in its foreign affairs.

More than just reflecting Finland and Sweden's diplomatic experiences, Helsingin Sanomat's and Dagens Nyheter's editorial representations are also shaped by the geopolitical climate and the ongoing changes that the West has experienced in its relations with China since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. At the beginning of the 2010s China was mostly discussed and viewed through a lens of economic cooperation and mutual benefit, yet as China has been seen to become more assertive in its international role under Xi's leadership, many Western

states, including small European countries like Finland and Sweden, began to reorient their outlook and policies about China. The critical bias in both newspapers' editorial coverage aligns with the trend of securitisation and economic de-risking that is evident in Western policymaking, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Efforts by the US and the European Union, such as openly calling China a systemic rival, and more tangibly, the different curbs on Chinese investments, stand as evidence of this changing reorientation at the latter part of the 2010s and beginning of the 2020s. This changing assessment can also be seen in the increasingly critical thematic and tonal trends identified in both of the studied newspapers.

The thematic and tonal representations identified from the studied editorials fit in with the geopolitical repositioning that the West, and the European Union more specifically, has undergone with its relations with China. The increased frequency of the editorials' focus on China's territorial assertiveness, the authoritarian political system, and human rights issues, reflects a wider narrative change in the West that portrays China as a strategic and ideological adversary. Helsingin Sanomat's more gradual turn towards more critical portrayals from the mid-2010s onwards is arguably emerging out of the escalating geopolitical competition between the United States and China, and the consequently increased insecurity experienced by many European states, as well as Finland's formal alignment with NATO. Dagens Nyheter's consistently critical, yet increasing, editorial reporting on China can be seen to reflect Sweden's open engagement with value-driven questions like human rights as well as the broader attitudinal developments in Swedish society.

Therefore, the editorial portrayals in both Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter are not arbitrary, but instead they reflect and reinforce socially constructed narratives about China that are shaped by their national and geopolitical context. The media portrayals identified in this thesis project can be seen as a part of a feedback loop in which news media reflects national sentiment and political interests, but simultaneously also reinforces and amplifies them. News editorials have normative authority, which is carried out in the shaping of public attitudes on China, the reinforcing of policy choices, as well as spreading perceptions of China as a rival throughout Western societies. By deciding which aspects and representations to present in the China-related editorials, the two newspapers exert a level of power in deciding what, how, and when to report. Thus, through such consideration the act of editorial

reporting can be viewed to hold an important role in the formation of national thinking about China in the Finnish and Swedish contexts.

Interestingly, the study found no editorials that discussed on China's cultural attraction or influence in terms of thematic representations in either newspaper. This finding can highlight Zhang and Guo's (2017) assessment that Chinese cultural products are not influential enough to generate interest outside of China despite large scale efforts. However, this may also be seen as an active choice by the newspapers to exclude alternative stories relating to China. The absence of cultural stories about China in both newspapers highlight a broader Western media trend of focusing on China as an actor in the realm of politics, economics and security rather than a cultural or societal one. By omitting coverage of China's cultural influence also shows how media silence on certain aspects can also shape perceptions, perhaps as effectively as through including those stories. The lack of thematic representation of 'softer' aspects related to China such as culture also influence reader's perceptions in their absence, thus amplifying the identified representations of an adversarial China.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to investigate thematic representations of China and their relative frequencies in the Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat and Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter. The selected time period for the study, 1.1.2012-31.8.2024, attempted to capture editorial discussion about China during the Xi Jinping presidency. Through a combination of thematic and frequency analysis, the study identified eight predominant themes of editorial representations of China, tracked their evolution over time, as well as revealed significant differences in their publications in the two newspapers between 2012-2024.

The social constructionist angle in the research process has helped to reveal how Finnish and Swedish news media actively participate in constructing representations of China. By prioritising economic, political and security-related themes, Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter construct narratives that impact how their readers understand China's role in the world. The critical bias detected in most themes, combined with the lack of representation of cultural features related to China, can thus be seen to shape predominantly adversarial or utilitarian views of China in both countries. The findings show that these editorial portrayals shape and are shaped by their respective Finnish and Swedish contexts, as well as by the larger geopolitical changes that have taken place between the West and China since the early 2010s.

The thesis has revealed significant similarities and differences in the ways in which the two newspapers portray China. Both Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter predominantly hold a critical tone in their editorials, particularly in themes related to China's human rights and social issues and China's territorial integrity and geopolitical conflicts. Such findings suggest that the newspapers hold a critical bias in their editorial reporting on China. Notable differences emerge in the newspapers' thematic focus. Helsingin Sanomat, reflecting Finland's historically pragmatic and trade-focused relationship with China, offers a broader and a more diverse coverage of China-related topics, with a strong focus on China's economic and technological affairs. On the other hand, Dagens Nyheter's thematic representations could be seen as more narrow, with its focus on themes portraying China as an ideological and strategic adversary, which can be seen as consistent with Sweden's more value-driven foreign policy and its experiences with the series of diplomatic tensions with China.

Both newspapers' evolving editorial focus correspond with broader geopolitical shifts. Since Xi Jinping's rise to power, Western attitudes have changed significantly, with the European Union labelling China as a systemic rival and the United States moving from its previously cautious approach towards an openly strategic competition-based approach with China. The increased overall editorial reporting over time and the growing proportion of critical portrayals of China, indicates that China's role has become more important and increasingly concerning over the course of the Xi Jinping presidency from Finland and Sweden's perspective. As parts of the European Union, and the so-called 'West', the findings about the two Nordic neighbours' news media representations stand as examples of the evolving and ever-changing narrative that is told about China in the current age.

Hence, the thesis argues that Finnish and Swedish editorial portrayals of China not only are shaped by their respective national contexts, but also take part in constructing larger Western narratives of strategic competition and ideological rivalry with China. From this perspective, the studied editorials stand both as the reflection of the geopolitical changes that have occurred since 2012 and as the very instrument through which public perceptions and political agendas are shaped through.

From a broader perspective, despite Finland and Sweden being small actors in the game of global politics, this thesis shows that even smaller Northern European countries are taking part of a larger trend of constructing China as an ideological and strategic 'Other' within Western social thought. The researched editorials can be seen as a microcosm for larger media sentiments and political discourse about China across the West in recent history, showing how media narratives correspond with and amplify transforming geopolitical realities. In terms of real life consequences that emerge out of the critical way in which China is viewed and discussed can be seen in the rise of protectionist policies being adopted across Europe and the US in recent years, as well as the documented attitudinal changes as shown by Pew Research Center's studies (2022a, 2022b).

The thesis offers a novel Nordic perspective to the research on Western media portrayals of China. This thesis provides an original contribution with its comparative analysis of China's editorial representations in Finnish and Swedish media during the Xi Jinping presidency. In terms of scholarly contribution, this thesis sheds light on changing narratives about China in recent history, and thus offers a new perspective to the discussion on changing China

perceptions. It also advances understandings of how national media narratives are shaped by their domestic political contexts and broader geopolitical changes. Moreover, the mixed-method approach combining thematic and frequency analysis within the social constructionist framework ultimately also contributes methodologically to media representation research.

5.1 Limitations and further research

While the use of editorials from Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter provided valuable insight into changing China portrayals in Finland and Sweden, the restriction of data collection from only two newspapers limits the generalisability of the findings. By including an expanded set of newspaper sources, the study could offer a more comprehensive view of the media portrayals and their development. Moreover, the temporal element of this study was not explored to the fullest extent. The data could be used for deeper investigation of when and why tonal changes have occurred, by further examining national context and ongoing events at the time. While attempts to include such discussion is included by noting the key discussion topics in peak frequency years, a deeper analysis of topics and their developments could help to explain more about why certain themes garner more interest than others over time.

The collected data set could also be utilised to a greater extent in further studies to investigate the causal relationship between tonal changes in reporting and China portrayals, where research could link certain events to changes in reporting frequency and tone. Moreover, a discourse analysis of the same data set could help in further revealing undertones and value orientated meanings conveyed through Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter's editorials.

Finally, a deeper exploration into how media narratives about foreign states contribute to public and policymaker attitudes could help to offer important insights, especially in the current geopolitically tumultuous times. More specifically, further insights into how Western and Chinese media represent one another, may offer us a better understanding of their evolving relations. Understanding the co-constitutive relationship between media narratives and international relations remains a crucial topic for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 List of newspaper editorials included in the data set

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Appendix 2 Theme coding examples

China's Centralised Governance and Authoritarianism theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
Helsingin Sanomat: Kollektiivisen johdon vaihe on takana, nyt Xi hakee ylivoimaa Kiinan johtajana (translation: Past the phase of collective leadership, now Xi is looking for dominance as China's leader) 18 September 2019	“fierce struggle for power positions precedes the party congress”, “A great exercise in dismissals and undermining is currently underway in China”, “Decisions are made under a strict veil of secrecy”, “preceded by a fierce struggle”, “Xi gained an exceptionally strong position already at the beginning of his first five-year term,” “, “This made publicly questioning him in China an even more dangerous move”, “what Xi intends to do with his power”, “focused on strict discipline, strengthening the Communist Party’s position in China, and strengthening China’s position in the world”	Communist party internal political quabbles	Neutral
Dagens Nyheter: Xi Jinpings långa marsch till monopol på allt (translation: Xi Jinping’s Long March to Monopoly Over Everything), 4 October 2021.	“The Chinese dictatorship is becoming totalitarian.”, “President Xi Jinping is trying to dominate not only politics and the economy but also people’s thoughts.”, “President Xi Jinping gladly draws on a dose of Maoism to reshape the dictatorship in his own form.”, “increasingly strict state control”, “erasing individual will”, “cementing his power”, “offensive against private enterprise”, “A more centrally controlled economy is the goal”, “Market signals have been silenced”, “Xi’s campaign leans heavily on the omnipresent surveillance state”, “insufficiently communist music is banned”, “The total lack of transparency and the rule of law”, “From a human perspective, the authoritarian is rapidly becoming	China increasingly becoming a totalitarian state	Critical

	totalitarian”, “For those who do not think like Xi Jinping, there is no freedom”.		
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China as an Economic and Technological Power theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
Helsingin Sanomat: Kiinan pörssikupla kasvaa (translation China’s stock market bubble grows), 8 June 2015	“China’s stock market bubble grows”, “a major threat to the global economy”, “overvaluation”, “prices just keep rising, and leverage is used without hesitation”, “China’s political leadership has found itself in the same position as the story of the magpie on a tarred roof. If the beak is lifted, the tail gets stuck”, “stimulus needs to be continued, and the national economy pushed forward with the help of a loose monetary policy”, “yet the stock market bubble keeps growing toward its bursting point”	Volatile and inflated stock market in China	Critical
Dagens Nyheter: Därför blåser Kina av lånefesten i tredje världen (translation: Why China is ending the loan party in the third world), 2 April 2023	“China has generously lent to developing countries, but not out of charity, rather to gain influence”, “The communist dictatorship China has been one of the most eager lenders, naturally in exchange for eternal friendship”, “Developing countries found themselves in financial trouble, partly due to Chinese loans.”, “Beijing sees itself as the highest-priority lender and, on average, demands more than twice the interest rate charged by the IMF”, “Chinese loans are attractive in the third world because they don’t come with difficult conditions about human rights or economic reforms”, “mega-project One Belt, One Road”, “massive infrastructure investments”, “China had a surplus of both capital and steel production, and it needed somewhere to put it”, “Loans from state-owned Chinese banks were distributed, primarily to poorer countries”, “The	China gaining economic power through vast international lending	Critical

	<p>economic dependence that arose could, of course, be converted into political dependence — a clear underlying intention”, “state-owned banks in China have encountered domestic problems”, “The flow of credit to foreign countries has slowed”, “Countries with minerals and other valuable raw materials still hold interest”, “Reasonably, this means China will make fewer bad deals”, “Beijing is running its own game with debt-ridden countries”, “unfortunately, this will sometimes end in chaos”</p>		
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China’s Global Relations theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
<p>Helsingin Sanomat: Kiinan heikkous ajaa maata liennytykseen: (translation: China’s weakness is driving it towards rapprochement) 16 November 2023.</p>	<p>“China’s weakness drives the country towards rapprochement”, “The meeting between the leaders of China and Unites States came at the rights time”, “Even if it did not produce concrete results the gestures were conciliatory”, “The meeting was therefore good diplomacy”, “Xi emphasised that China does not want war with anyone, it does not underestimate the US, nor intend to challenge it”, “China’s ‘internal affair’ often extend far beyond its borders in the view of the Chinese”, “The tone of Xi’s message reflects China’s weakness”, “The United States’ growth is accelerating, while China’s is slowing”, “China has come to realise that it needs the West more than it is willing to admit”, “It is in the interest of both countries, and since we are talking about superpowers, the entire world’s interest to pursue rapprochement.</p>	<p>China and US relations calming down due to a vulnerable China</p>	<p>Neutral</p>
<p>Dagens Nyheter: Sverige duckar när världen tränger sig på (translation: Sweden dodges as the world is</p>	<p>“The government’s foreign policy is contradictory. And it is cowardly and defensive when it comes to China”, “The kidnapping of Swedish publisher Gui Minhai “brings to mind the show trials of the cultural revolution”, “Wallström’s foreign policy declaration states that</p>	<p>Swedish state's response to China's kidnapping of Gui Minhai</p>	<p>Critical</p>

intruding), 14 February 2018.	Sweden's relationship with China is extensive", "The abuses against and imprisonment of Gui are passed over with the greatest possible silence, which has characterised Wallström's stance on the case", "China is not just any country. It is a rising superpower with increasing economic strength and ambitions globally", "It is also a communist dictatorship where repression is intensifying", "the slightest defiance against the regime results in imprisonment", "The courts are subordinate to the ruling party", "Sweden must not remain silent when the tentacles of dictatorship capture our citizens."		
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China's Territorial Integrity and Geopolitical Conflicts theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
Helsingin Sanomat: Merikiistat ovat tulenarkoja (translation: Maritime disputes are explosive), 3 July 2016	"Disputes over the islands in the South China Sea are escalating", "Territorial disputes in the South China Sea have been ongoing for so long that they may mistakenly be considered manageable", "The situation has become tense", "China could face a politically damaging humiliation", "also has domestic political implications", "the temptation to display power is evident"	Geopolitical situation in South China Sea becoming tenser	Neutral
Dagens Nyheter: Kinas diktatur använder viruset som vapen mot Hongkongs frihet (translation: China's dictatorship uses the virus as a weapon against Hong Kong's freedom), 26 April 2020	"China's dictatorship uses the virus as a weapon against Hong Kong's freedom" "Under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic, China's rulers are launching renewed attacks on democracy and freedom of speech in Hong Kong", "While the world fights a pandemic, the communist regime in Beijing sees a golden opportunity to more permanently subdue the troublemakers", "Beijing sees them all as criminals for committing the crime of criticizing the powerful dictatorship", "whisked away to Beijing", "The next destination could very well be the Chinese Gulag Archipelago for political prisoners", "essentially vague laws to imprison anyone", "Freedom of speech, a market economy, and judicial	Chinese government using Covid as a disguise to control Hong Kong	Critical

	<p>independence were guaranteed. Beijing, however, has long grown tired of this”, ”part of an offensive”, “For Beijing, the fact remains that when people are given a choice, they do not vote for the totalitarian system of communism”, ”A million Muslim Uighurs in the Xinjiang province have been placed in camps to learn to love the Party and deny Allah”, “Dedicated journalists would likely also be locked up indefinitely by the regime”, “”That's what happens when the Communist Party's word is the only law”, “Xi Jinping and his friends are using the pandemic to crush people's freedom”</p>		
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China’s Information Control and Media Narratives theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
<p>Helsingin Sanomat: Propagandakoneisto ei pelasta Kiinaa (translation: The propaganda machinery will not save China) 7 July 2014.</p>	<p>“The propaganda machinery will not save China”, “Xi wanted to appease skeptics who view China as an increasingly powerful threat”, “the statements feel contradictory”, “China constantly has territorial disputes with its neighbours and does not hesitate to send warships”, “China is spending more and more on military armament”, “a significant collection of nuclear weapons”, “China, however, is not aggressive”, “dissenters were escorted to remote areas and secret detention facilities”, “Part of China’s propaganda machine”, “an image-polishing operation”, “Changing China’s image may prove to be an impossible task”, “Repeated and blatant human rights violations cannot be glossed over with explanations”, “China’s public image has also been tarnished by environmental issues”, “fleeing the country due to pollution, “children cannot play outside”, “China cannot expect to improve its image until it does something to address its human rights or environmental issues over propaganda”</p>	<p>China's failed attempt to improve its image abroad</p>	<p>Critical</p>

<p>Dagens Nyheter: Kinas agerande mot SVT andas desperation (translation: China's actions against SVT reek of desperation), 22 Decemeber 2019</p>	<p>“China’s actions against SVT reek of desperation”, “The example of SVT shows that Sweden needs better preparedness to stand pressure from countries like China”, “Angry protests from China’s embassy and a campaign to smear Sweden”, “Beijing saw an opportunity to retaliate for Swedish protests agains the imprisonment of Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai”, “the counterreaction was intense”, “what resembled a synchronised troll attack directed at SVT and the ‘Swedish News’ editorial team”, “hate and death threats”, “digital overload attacks”, “letters sent to editorial members’ homes, and even feces in mailboxes”, “Power language is soon becoming China’s official tongue”, “Influence over other nations occurs on all fronts and with all means”, “Apparently Sweden needs to get used to pressure whenever China feels its toes have been stepped on”, “China taught SVT a lesson and the broadcasting company is expected to be more cautious to not offend anyone again”, “Attempts to censor foreign media companies only gives the impression of desperation”</p>	<p>China's attempts to silence foreign media</p>	<p>Critical</p>
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China’s Global Governance theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
<p>Helsingin Sanomat: Kiinan pyrkimys kasvattaa valtaa YK-järjestöissä näkyy myös WHO:ssa (translation: China’s attempt to increase its power in UN organisations is also visible in the WHO), 26 April 2020.</p>	<p>“China’s attempt to increase its power in UN organisations is also visible in the WHO “, “ The WHO has become a pawn in the power struggle between the United States and China”, “As in many other UN organisations, China has increased its influence in the WHO as well. Now we are seeing the consequences”, “China has been shaping the UN to its liking for years”, “The economic and military giant China wants to redefine the rules of international cooperation without the burden of Western democracies’ human rights policies”, “In the council the country often uses its power skillfully”, “Its position has been</p>	<p>China trying to take more authority in international organisations</p>	<p>Critical</p>

	strengthened through calculated moves and money”, “China is currently the second-largest financier of the UN and its peacekeeping operations after the United States”, “China has had a long-standing influence on the WHO”, “As the United States distances itself from the UN, China’s power only grows”, “China got what it wanted in the early stages of the crisis: the WHO held up a mask for China so that the country would not lose face”, “China’s goal is to weaken the voice of Western countries”, “How China has wielded power in the UN in recent years can be dangerous not only for international cooperation but also every person in the world during future pandemics and global crises”		
Dagens Nyheter: Sverige ska inte gratisåka på klimattåget (translation: Sweden cannot freeride the climate train), 17 December 2016.	“It is China that will show us how to transition to a renewable future“, “The initiative ‘Mission innovation’ aims to increase the amount invested in renewable energy research from 15 billion dollars to 30 billion dollars”, “That China is on its way to become a renewable superpower is evident”, “The country is set to increase its annual funding by the equivalent of 30 billion SEK by 2021”, “That China dominates does not seem like a coincidence”, “There is nothing as important as spreading knowledge and green technology”, “China has understood that research policy is climate policy”	China's efforts into climate research	Positive

China’s Human Rights and Social Issues theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
Helsingin Sanomat: Kiinalaisaktivisti ansaitsee oikeutta (translation: Chinese activist)	“The Chinese activist deserves justice”, “triggered panic”, “raises human rights to the political agenda”, “Chen, who had trained himself as a lawyer, with the help of his supporters, managed to escape from his home where authorities had effectively kept	Oppression of Chinese human rights activist	Critical

deserves justice), 1 May 2012.	him imprisoned”, “he does not want to leave China but only wants the persecution of his family to end”, “For the Chinese government, Chen’s escape is in any case a serious problem”, “it could worsen the power struggle”		
Dagens Nyheter: Glädjen grumljas av att detta OS är byggt på tvångsarbete och ett pågående folkmord (translation: The joy is overshadowed by the fact that this Olympics is built on forced labor and an ongoing genocide), 18 February 2022.	”The joy is overshadowed by the fact that this Olympics is built on forced labor and an ongoing genocide.” "Every TV broadcast is part of the political propaganda of a regime that is in the midst of genocide." "The simplest thing may be to turn a blind eye, at least temporarily. To not think about how China has put more than a million Muslims in re-education camps and introduced a totalitarian surveillance society in Xinjiang that could hardly be described in fiction – the oppression would seem too exaggerated to be believable." "Or how about a system with one police station per 500 residents, where ID cards and fingerprints are checked almost daily, biometric data is collected, and all phones are inspected?", “Being a devout Muslim is in itself seen as terrorism, and police raid homes, to seize Qurans and prayer mats”, “Parents are forbidden to name their children Mohammed, and gravestones with Persian or Arabic text are demolished”, “monitor them in their most private spaces”, “authorities set a goal for a third of all women in a childbearing age to be sterilised.”, “Add to this the testimonies of torture, brainwashing and systemic rape in the camps, and the picture of an ongoing cultural genocide becomes impossible to erase.”	Criticising the Olympics taking place in China due to domestic human rights abuses in Xinjiang	Critical

China as a Threat or Competitor theme examples

Editorial	Keywords and sentences (translated)	Code (descriptive)	Code (evaluative)
Helsingin Sanomat:	“The relationship between Europe and China consists of two parallel	Chinese trade and	Critical

<p>Kiina näkee Euroopan heikot kohdat ja käyttää niitä hyväkseen (translation: China sees Europe's weak points and takes advantage of them), 9 May 2024</p>	<p>narratives: one emphasizes cooperation, and the other highlights security threats”, “Both the hosts and the guest have exuded an air of deliberate calm”, ”underneath lies significant tension”, “Through the choice of destinations for visits, China drives a wedge between European countries”, “Xi avoids countries where he would face harsh criticism”, “Both France and Germany share concerns about China's aggressive trade policies”, “influx of cheap Chinese electric cars into Europe”, “EU does not have access to similar economic policy tools as authoritarian China”, “Risks related to dependencies on China”, “For economic reasons, China has a need to cool down a trade war with the EU”, “building a competing world order”, “China itself is not interested in nuclear disarmament”, “China is an enabler of Russia's military actions”, ” China considers itself a significant restraining factor by not openly supplying weapons to Russia”, “Europe and China are moving toward increasingly colder relations”, “China is seriously challenging the Western bloc with the support of Russia, Iran, and North Korea, and it does not hesitate to divide the EU from within”</p>	<p>international affairs aiming to destabilise European unity</p>	
<p>Dagens Nyheter: USA och EU ska inte kapitulera för Kina (The US and EU should not capitulate to China), 4 March 2019</p>	<p>”The criticism of China for manipulating the global market is accurate”, “he is correct in his criticism that China distorts the world with massive state subsidies, limited access to its domestic market, and theft of patent rights”, “In many ways, it is good if the conflict between the US and China cools down. Trade wars are extremely dangerous for the global economy”, “But there are also real problems with China”, “Under President Xi, state control over the economy has tightened”, “Europe fundamentally shares the same complaints about China as the US”, “The sensible course would be for the</p>	<p>Trump's trade war on China trying to constrain China's global influence</p>	<p>Critical</p>

	US, EU, and Japan to work together to pressure China”, “A campaign to exclude the telecom giant Huawei from building the new 5G networks”, “the threat of Chinese espionage is real”, “China's dubious trade practice”, “Next time, China will also be stronger”, “China is not just any country but a communist dictatorship that silences and locks up its citizens”, “Large corporations have a legal obligation to assist Xi Jinping with whatever he needs, including dominating global markets and thereby gaining political influence”		
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Appendix 3 Results table

Helsingin Sanomat

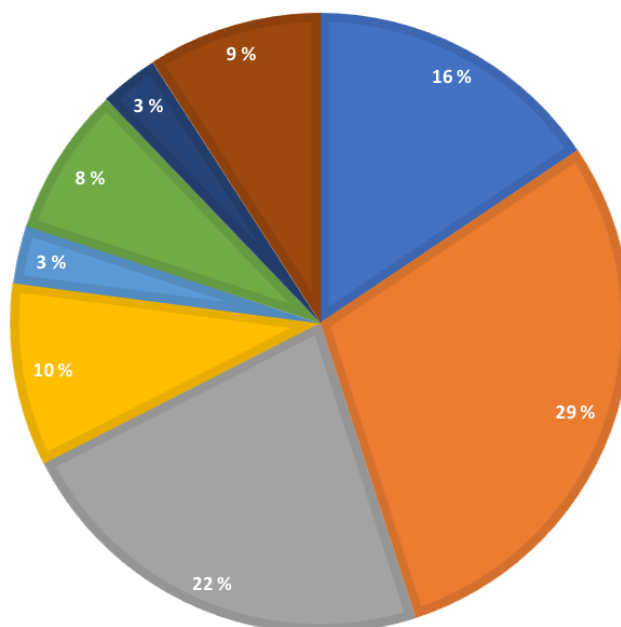
Final themes	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
China’s centralised politics and authoritarianism	36	28	8	0
China’s economic and technological power	68	38	22	8
China’s Global Relations	52	16	32	8
China’s territorial integrity and geopolitical conflict	22	11	10	1
China’s information control and media narratives	7	5	2	0
China’s role in global governance	18	9	8	1
China’s human rights and social issues	7	7	0	0
China as a threat or competitor	21	12	9	0

Dagens Nyheter

Final themes	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
China’s centralised politics and authoritarianism	23	20	3	0
China’s economic and technological power	13	11	2	0
China’s Global Relations	26	15	11	0
China’s territorial integrity and geopolitical conflict	10	10	0	0
China’s information control and media narratives	14	14	0	0
China’s role in global governance	13	6	6	1
China’s human rights and social issues	19	19	0	0
China as a threat or competitor	30	28	2	0

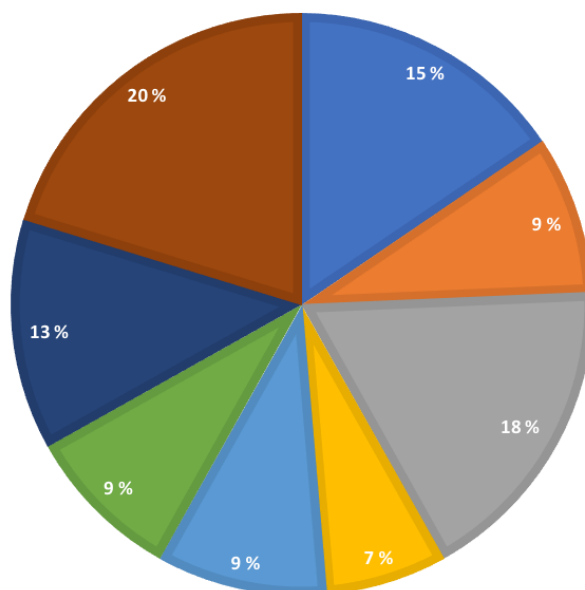
HELSINGIN SANOMAT DISTRIBUTION OF THEMES

- China's centralised politics and authoritarianism
- China's economic and technological power
- China's Global Relations
- China's territorial integrity and geopolitical conflict
- China's information control and media narratives
- China's role in global governance
- China's human rights and social issues
- China as a threat or competitor

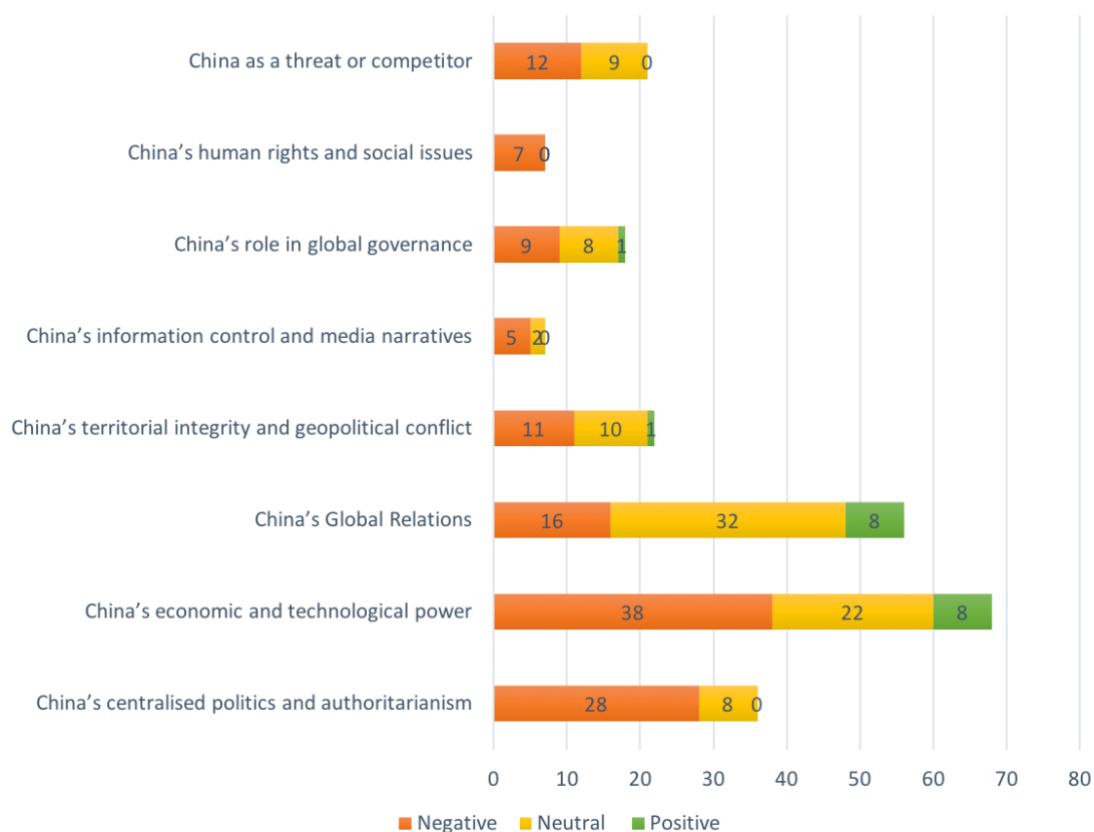


DAGENS NYHETER DISTRIBUTION OF THEMES

- China's centralised politics and authoritarianism
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Tonal distribution among themes in Helsingin Sanomat



Tonal distribution among themes in Dagens Nyheter

