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Taking sides: Analyzing news of the US September 11 incident in the Chinese and Taiwanese press

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Taking sides:

Analyzing news of the US September 11 incident in the Chinese and Taiwanese press

This study examines news reports of the US September 11 incidents in the Chinese and Taiwanese press. In the Chinese press, the party newspaper (People's Daily) and the new mass-appeal tabloid (Nanfang Daily) were studied. In the Taiwanese press, the traditional top circulation newspaper (United Daily) and the emerging pro-Taiwan independent newspaper (Liberty Times) were chosen. Based upon a content analysis of news reports, supplemented with Chinese and Taiwanese government documents, the study found that the Chinese and Taiwanese press tended to report the incident along with the government stances and each represented its own side even after the economic reform and ruling party shift. However, the mass-appeal tabloid in China moved slightly toward the pattern found in capitalist countries, without violating the government policy severely. The pro-Taiwan independent newspaper showed more loyalty to the ruling party, but both Taiwanese newspapers covered diverse topics apart from the government stance. To what degree did the press follow the government stances? This study provided the preliminary answer that business interests might influence the press not to follow completely the government stances.

The US has played an important role in cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan since 1949. Especially after the 1972 Shanghai communiqué and 1979 diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, the US has played an important role between the two entities. In order to understand the complex interactions it is necessary to examine the two governments' positions and other voices in the two countries toward the US. In 1991, the Gulf War drew the attention of the world, especially the mass media. Media battles reached their peak, however, the pro-United States stances were criticized by many communication researchers (Pan et al., 1994; Peer, & Chestnut, 1995; Winter, 1991). Taiwan's media

were criticized for their imbalanced reports and high reliance on the Western news agencies (Chen, 1993; Lo, 1994). Meanwhile, China claimed a neutral position with a skeptical attitude toward the US, and perceived the Gulf War as a fight between big and small countries (Nicholas, 1991; James, 1991). The media in China served as a mouthpiece to reflect the government stance. Overall, in reporting the Gulf War, the Chinese and Taiwanese press took their sides due to long-term diplomatic relationships and government stances.

Ten years later, the United States was attacked on September 11, which caused thousands of deaths and tremendous property loss. Consequently, the Bush government launched the "anti-terror" war against Osama Bin Laden and Afghanistan's ruling Taliban government. This situation is similar to that of the Gulf War in that it was a conflict between the US and a Muslim country. So, does the news coverage present similar points of view as for the Gulf War ten years earlier? In those ten years, Taiwan underwent the privatization and liberalization of their media industries. New media, such as cable television, brought severe competition and led to different media perspectives (Lo, Neilan, & King, 1998). China also went through economic reforms and the replacement of old leaders (Hong, 1998; Shichor, 1991; Yu & Sears, 1996). According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), there are influences on news content from outside of media organizations, such as news sources, government control and so on. Thus, this study proposes to examine whether the "September 11 Incident" news differs from Gulf War news in the Chinese and Taiwanese press, in terms of their perspectives and stances. This study chose four newspapers, two from China and two from Taiwan. Two newspapers were chosen from each country in order to see the different positions within the individual country's press. In the Chinese press, the party newspaper, *People's Daily* and newly emergent mass-appeal tabloid (Guo, 2000), *Nanfang Daily*, were chosen. In the Taiwan press, the tacit pro-Taiwan independent newspaper (Wang, 1998; Wu, 2001), *Liberty Times*, and the traditional, largest circulation newspaper, *United Daily*, were chosen.

There are three key elements differentiating this study from previous research. First, the September 11 incident was the first time the US was the victim of an attack on its native soil since the attack on Pearl Harbor. Second, China has undergone economic reform and Taiwan has faced media liberalization, globalization and the first shift of the ruling party. Third, China has had tense relations recently with the US because of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia and the collision between a US reconnaissance plane and a Chinese

fighter. After economic and political reforms in the two countries, would the relations between international news and the governments change from that reported in previous research? Did the Chinese government take a neutral or adversarial role? Did the current Taiwanese (Democratic Progressive Party) government take a similar stance as its counterpart (Kuomintang)? The Chinese and Taiwanese governments' positions need to be addressed. This current study, supplemented with Chinese and Taiwanese government documents, used content analysis to analyze news reports from the two countries to determine whether they are parallel with the governments' stances.

■ Research questions

Based on the discussion above, the research questions include:

- RQ1. What news sources reported on the 'September 11 Incident' in the Chinese and Taiwanese presses?
- RQ2. What are the stances held by China and Taiwan's press? Do the Chinese and Taiwanese press reflect the stances of their respective governments?
- RQ3. What are the differences between the party newspaper and the mass-appeal tabloid in China? What are the differences between the traditional newspaper and the pro-Taiwan Independent newspaper in Taiwan?

■ Two government responses

It is necessary to review and clarify the responses of both the Chinese and Taiwanese governments to the September 11 incident. Documents from the president, premier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and government news conferences of each government can help to provide this insight.

■ *China's government responses*

On the night of September 11, immediately after the incident, China's Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan sent a telegram to US Secretary of State Colin Powell to express his deep sympathy to "the American people over the huge human casualties and wounds caused by the severe attacks on New York and Washington D.C." (MFAPRC, 2001). This was the first reaction from China, which only expressed sympathy. Later that night, President Jiang Zemin sent a telegram to US President

Bush to express his sympathy and claimed "the Chinese Government always condemns and opposes any violent activities by terrorism" (MFAPRC, 2001). It could be seen as the base point of the Chinese government's stance on the incident—condolence for the US and condemnation for terrorism. The following week after the incident, President Jiang Zemin successively had telephone conversations with President Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and French President Jacques Chirac and reiterated his condolences and condemnation. In addition, President Jiang said "China is ready to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the United States and the international community in the joint efforts in combating all sorts of terrorist violence." Similar government stances were also reflected in official decrees (MFAPRC, 2001).

After the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 and the incident where the US reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese military jet, causing the death of a Chinese pilot in 2001, some angry Chinese citizens gloated over the US casualties through the Internet and some celebrated reports shown in the mass media. The Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China immediately ordered the media and the Internet Services Providers to get rid of the reports and comments that humiliated the US or took pleasure in their misfortune. This also provided a glimpse of the Chinese government's position.

When the US administration blamed Osama Bin Laden as the principal offender and while the possible attack and reprisal were being planned, China's government began to have reservations about cooperating with anti-terrorism efforts. On September 18, a regular press conference for the Foreign Ministry was held by Spokesman Zhu Bangzao. He answered the questions regarding how China would cooperate with the US on the possible attacks as follows (MFAPRC, 2001):

I wish to point out that terrorists are common enemies against the international community. They must be punished by law. At the same time, we hold that anti-terrorism measures should be based upon the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and other norms governing international relations... I wish to make three points: First, China opposes all sorts of terrorism and supports attacks on terrorists. Secondly, the attacks on terrorists should be built upon valid evidence. The action should have clear targets, without harming the innocent civilians. Thirdly, it should follow

the UN Charter and help strengthen the role of the UN and its Security Council. China is ready to discuss any proposals at the Security Council that will be conducive to the fight against terrorism.

China's government changed their definition of anti-terrorism under certain conditions. And further, China's government tended to ask the US to support China's anti-terrorism actions. Zhu Bangzao remarked at the same press conference (MFAPRC, 2001):

The September 11th Incident has demonstrated that terrorism has become a common challenge to the international community. China, like other members of the international community, opposes all sorts of terrorism. In this field, there should be no double standards. All terrorism should be cracked down. International cooperation should be enhanced. As Vice Premier Qian made it clear during the phone conversation with Mr. Powell, we always oppose all sorts of terrorism. We call for international cooperation against terrorism.

It is also interesting to note that China's government put the blame on terrorism without an explicit statement. Even though the US government suggested that the principal offender was Bin Laden, there were no more comments about Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Afghanistan, or religious conflicts in the official documents. The vague stance led to suspicion from the US mass media. The *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* reported that China had very close relations with the Taliban. The Chinese government denied this. In the regular press conference of the Foreign Ministry held on September 15th, Spokesman Zhu Bangzao said (MFAPRC, 2001):

After the outbreak of the civil war in Afghanistan, China closed its Embassy in Afghanistan as early as February 1993, out of safety considerations. Till now, there are not any resident personnel there. It is baseless to claim that China has regularly sent diplomats to Kabul. The reports that China has provided advice on building dams and built telephone networks for the Taliban and that China has signed a MOU with the Taliban on economic and technical assistance are also groundless.

Also, the Chinese government did not mention the possible impact on domestic economics, politics, national security and other relevant

areas. Besides the high-level international cooperation issues and condolences, there were only a few issues related to the condition of "the staff of the Chinese institutions, Chinese students, overseas Chinese and Chinese compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan in the United States" (MFAPRC, 2001).

In a nutshell, the position statements of the Chinese government were: (a) offering condolences to the US, (b) condemning terrorism with vague statements about the offenders, (c) having reservations about possible attacks and reprisals, as well as conditional support and (d) considering the September 11 incident as an international event less relevant to domestic issues.

■ *Taiwan's government responses*

Unlike China, Taiwan's government did not make several announcements regarding the September 11 incident, and most of the statements served to explain government actions to the Taiwanese people. President Chen Shui-bian gave a television speech ten hours after the incident and said that he convened a National Security Council meeting at the presidential office, where he was briefed on national security, economic security, and social stability. Thus, he could respond accordingly, and called on the Taiwanese people to remain calm and unite in facing possible changes in the international situation. Taiwan's government offered condolences to the US and condemned the terrorist activities. Instead of giving vague statements of supporting anti-terrorism, President Chen Shui-bian in declaring Taiwan's position in support of the US said (OPROC, 2001):

Our government solemnly condemns this act of violence and conveys our deepest condolences. Where possible, our country will provide all available assistance to the United States... security organizations will strengthen investigation and control in order to maintain stability and prevent incidents from suspicious violent elements.

On September 13, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tien Hung-mao, further stated "Taiwan would stand with US firmly" which clearly demonstrated that Taiwan took the side of the US in this event (*United Daily*, 2001).

The Taiwanese government focused more heavily on the domestic impacts brought about by the September 11 incident. In President Chen Shui-bian's speech, he declared that these attacks had gravely influenced the economic and political well-being of the United States

and the world. Taiwan had to take actions to prevent possible future damage. He said (OPROC, 2001a):

Regarding the economic and financial situation, the Executive Yuan will closely monitor the stabilization of the domestic stock and foreign exchange markets and ensure a stable supply of energy and general commodities... all national police and military police agencies will strengthen patrols and protect all important facilities... we call on the Beijing authorities to join Taiwan in safeguarding security in the Taiwan Strait and the Asia-Pacific region after this startling international event.

The Taiwanese government's concerns were more about national security, and economic and social stabilization, which were totally different from the concerns of China's government.

In sum, the Taiwanese government's positions were: (a) offering condolences to the US, (b) condemning terrorism, (c) supporting the US fully and (d) taking the September 11 incident as an incident highly relevant to domestic issues.

■ Hypotheses and operational measures

International news is beyond personal experience and involvement. Some research has found that media tends to report events in favour of government stances and interpretations, consistent with government interests (Bennet, 1990; Chang, 1988; Lee & Yang, 1995; Kim, 2000). By examining symbols in newspapers and government documents, Kim (2000) found that US newspapers reported the Kwangju and Tiananmen pro-democracy movements in a different manner, which coincided with US government attitudes toward these two events. Chang (1988) also found that the symbolic terms used in US newspapers also reflected the changing policy of the US government toward China from 1950 to 1984. The former research using framing analysis also found pro-government reports in terms of international news and foreign policy. There were some key turning points in US-China relations: in the 1970s, the Nixon administration's opening policy to China and forming diplomatic relationships; in the 1980s, the Tiananmen Square incident; and in the 1990s, economic reform. China's image of the US in the press has also changed from foe to friend, and back to adversary along with the government stances (Womack, 1990; Mann, 1999). Parsons and Xu (2001), studying the recent bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, found that the

US press tended to refer to "the accidental bombing". In contrast, the Chinese press described the bombing as "intentional", which was consistent with the views of the respective governments.

In previous research, newspapers which favoured government stances would use more official news sources or sources consistent with government views (Lo, Cheng & Lee, 1994; Kim, 2000). Because the September 11 incident was not domestic, the news sources included officials and individuals from all over the world. This study sought to determine whether the media tried to find news sources that shared their own stance. The stances were grouped into three categories: (a) pro-non-military action, (b) pro-military action, and (c) none. Pro-non-military action referred to non-military anti-terrorism activities; that is, addressing terrorism by negotiating, strengthening cooperation and dialogue with the international community, and in avoiding all manner of terrorist violence in advance. No immediate armed actions would be taken. Since Taiwan's government put forward views parallel to those of the US, Taiwan's press might make great use of the news sources in favour of military action by the US. On the other hand, China was ambiguous in their position and avoided referring to support of possible US reprisals. Therefore, these hypotheses were advanced:

H1a: Taiwan's press will have more pro-military action news sources to report the incident.

H1b: China's press will have more pro-non-military action news sources to report the incident.

The use of symbols is also a way to understand the position the media hold. According to Bennett (1990), symbols are the thematic terms used to describe the issues and news. There are two types: referential and condensational. "Referential symbols are economical, concrete, and not prone to attract emotional baggage. Condensational symbols, on the other hand, appear in contexts with abstractions that are often ambiguous or have powerful emotional concerns for the audience." This study examined two different aspects of the symbolic terms: (a) the nature of the incident and (b) the attribution of the incident.

The symbolic terms used to describe the nature of the incident fell into three categories: (a) a crime, (b) an act of war, and (c) none. The war terms might be considered as condensational symbols as they evoke emotional associations and rationalize the follow-up attack and reprisal from the US. The crime terms tend to be more specific to

define the nature of the incident and imply the future military attack on Afghanistan as not appropriate. Based on the previous research, Taiwan's press will be more likely to report this incident in line with the Taiwanese government stances, which are consistent with the US government positions. The following hypotheses were advanced:

- H2a: Taiwan's press will use more war terms to report the nature of the September 11 incident.
- H2b: China's press will use more crime terms to report the nature of the September 11 incident.

The symbolic terms used to describe the attribution of the incident fell into three groups (a) terrorism, (b) conflicts (including religious, ethnic, and national), (c) none. China's government tended to hold vague stances in this incident and did not become involved in the conflicts between the US and the Middle East. China's government also forbade gloating opinions and statements in any mass media. Thus, China's press would not put the blame on specific individuals or countries. The following hypothesis was advanced:

- H3: China's press will use more terrorism terms to report the incident.

In addition, this study would like to investigate the news supply from the Chinese and Taiwanese press respectively to examine whether they used many news sources from Western news agencies to the exclusion of voices from the Middle East, and whether there was any difference between the two countries or the individual newspapers.

■ Methodology

Content analysis is defined as a method of studying and analyzing communication, recorded information and context in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner (Kerlinger, 1986; Krippendorf, 1980; Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). This study employed content analysis to examine the news coverage in the Chinese and Taiwanese press, since it is an effective way to analyze the media content with statistical support. Four newspapers were chosen. Two were from China, the *People's Daily* and *Nanfang Daily*. According to the past research, researchers used the *People's Daily* from China to conduct content analysis since it has the largest circulation and official apparatus status (Chang, Wang, & Chen, 1994; Zhu, 1991). It goes without

saying that the *People's Daily*, as an institution under the Communist Party of China (CPC), would definitely transmit the policy makers' ideology through news reports. However, the newly emerged tabloids appeal to the people's interests and the circulation is growing rapidly.

According to Guo (2001), the traditional "party newspaper and mass-appeal tabloids are locked in a divergent development under new monopolistically competitive market conditions." It is worthwhile to discover if there is any significant difference between those two kinds of newspapers in China. According to AC Nielsen (2002) and CWNC (2001), the Nanfang newspapers group is one of the most profitable of local newspaper groups in China. There are several specialty tabloids, such as *Nanfang Weekend* and *Nanfang City* within this group, which are popular alternatives to the official government line. Nanfang newspapers group had printed several articles critical of the local or central government and received several warnings from the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China. The editors and journalists responsible have been rotated or forced to resign (Asiademo, 2001), but Nanfang newspapers group still keeps its leading position (Muzi, 2001). Even though *Nanfang Daily* itself is not as controversial as *Nanfang Weekend*, it is also part of the Nanfang group and has a similar system of operation. Moreover, this study would like to examine the straight news on a daily basis; thus, *Nanfang Daily* was chosen.

In Taiwan, the *United Daily* and *China Times* used to be the main newspapers; however, after 1996, the *Liberty Times* became the third largest national newspaper (ROC Yearbook, 2000). The *Liberty Times* entered the market and was touted as the first newspaper launched by "native Taiwanese". The stance was different from those traditional newspapers. Therefore, this study examines one traditional and one new newspaper from each of the two countries, China and Taiwan.

News coverage of the 'September 11 Attack' was obtained from September 12 (due to the time difference), immediately after the incident, to September 18, which excluded the graphics, pictures, columnists and editorials since this study would like to see the daily operation of the Chinese and Taiwanese press, including news affiliations and choice of symbolic terms. Thus, only the straight news was studied. The coding unit was the article. To test the hypotheses, the chi-square test was used. Two coders coded the same 50 stories sampled from the total coverage to test intercoder reliability. Holsti intercoder-reliability (1969) was .96.

■ Results

■ Sources of news supply

The September 11 incident occurred in the US, therefore newsrooms needed more news outside their own countries. The Taiwanese press preferred the Western news agencies during the Gulf War period. The Chinese press remained loyal to their national Xinhua news agency. Table 1-a compares the *United Daily* and *People's Daily*, the two largest newspapers. The Chinese press received 69.7 per cent of its news from Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, The Taiwanese press had more news from their own reporters and correspondents (51.4 per cent) as well as the western agencies (48.6 per cent). The Chi-square test demonstrated a significant difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2=236.184$, $df=2$, $p<.000$). As a party paper, *People's Daily* followed the warnings of the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China and used the national news agency as a main source. In the case of the *United Daily* nearly half of the news was drawn from the Western news agencies. No Middle East news agencies or other regional news media was used by either newspaper.

Table 1-b shows the sources used by the two Taiwanese newspapers. As a newly emergent news outlet, *Liberty Times* depended more on the domestic news agency (Central News Agency) instead of having news coverage from their own employees (6.6 per cent, $\chi^2=21.455$, $df=2$, $p<.000$). Also, *Liberty Times* received their coverage of the September 11th incident mostly from Western news agencies. As for the party newspaper and mass-appeal tabloid, there was no significant

Table 1-a
News affiliation differences by newspapers (per cent)

Types of news affiliation	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> (N=315)	<i>People's Daily (China)</i> (N=33)
Correspondent/reporters	51.4	24.2
Domestic news agency	0	69.7
Western news agencies	48.6	6.1
Total	100	100

$\chi^2=236.184$, $df=2$, $p<.000$

Table 1-b
News affiliation differences by newspapers (per cent)

<i>Types of news affiliation</i>	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> (N = 315)	<i>Liberty Times (Taiwan)</i> (N = 196)
Correspondent/reporters	51.4	47.4
Domestic news agency	0	6.6
Western news agencies	48.6	45.9
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 21.455$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

difference. Both used the news coverage from Xinhua news agency. This demonstrates that both party newspaper and mass-appeal tabloid had to obey the orders of the government, and act as a mouthpiece.

□ *Types of news sources*

This study examined each news article to code the types of news sources. Unlike past research, this study did not code the affiliation of news sources, such as officials or governments. Instead, the stances of the news sources were coded when they reported the proposed responses to the event. Table 2-a showed that the *People's Daily* tended to use more news sources that supported non-military action (60.6 per cent). None of the articles used the pro-military action news sources, and 30.4 per cent of news sources mentioned neither one. Most news sources in the *United Daily* did not mention a stance (89.5 per cent). Unlike the *People's Daily*, for the *United Daily*, 2.5 per cent of news sources supported military action and eight per cent of news sources supported non-military action. The Chi-square test demonstrated a significant difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2 = 73.503$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$).

Table 2-b, compares the *People's Daily* and the *Nanfang Daily*, the two newspapers from China. The *Nanfang Daily*, the mass-appeal tabloid similar to Taiwan's press, had most of the news sources, which did not mention their stances as pro-non-military action or pro-military action. However, the *Nanfang Daily* published at odds with the CPC stance by running 3.8 per cent of news sources that supported military action, as well as 10.3 per cent that favoured non-military action. The Chi-square test demonstrated a significant

Table 2-a
News source differences by newspaper (per cent)

<i>Types of news source</i>	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> (N = 315)	<i>People's Daily (China)</i> (N = 33)
Pro-non-military action	8.0	60.6
Pro-Military attack	2.5	0
None	89.5	39.4
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 73.503$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

Table 2-b
News source differences by newspaper (per cent)

<i>Types of news source</i>	<i>People's Daily (China)</i> (N = 33)	<i>Nanfang Daily (China)</i> (N = 78)
Pro-Non-military action	60.6	10.3
Pro-Military attack	0	3.8
None	39.4	85.9
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 31.532$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2 = 31.532$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$). There was no significant difference between the *United Daily* and the *Liberty Times*, the two newspapers from Taiwan.

□ *Aspects of symbolic terms*

Symbolic terms were used to describe the nature of the incident. The *United Daily* evenly described the incident as a crime (19.7 per cent) and as an act of war (19.7 per cent). The *People's Daily*, however, tended to describe the incident as a mere crime (60.6 per cent), with none of the articles mentioning war. Unsurprisingly, there was a significant difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2 = 42.961$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$). As for the comparison between the party newspaper

and mass-appeal newspaper, there was also a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 31.532$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$). Most of the *Nanfang Daily* news articles mentioned this incident as neither a crime nor an act of war (85.9 per cent). Only 10.3 per cent of news articles described the incident as a crime. In contrast to the party newspaper, 3.8 per cent of news articles in the *Nanfang Daily* mentioned war (see table 3-a and 3-b).

□ Aspects of attribution of symbolic terms

The attribution of symbolic terms was used to code the attribution of the incident for the four newspapers. Table 4-a summarizes how the *United Daily* attributed the incident to terrorism (60.0 per cent), conflict (9.2 per cent), or did not mention an attribution (30.8 per

Table 3-a
Comparison of aspects of symbolic terms (per cent)

<i>Symbols of incident nature</i>	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> <i>(N = 315)</i>	<i>Liberty Times (Taiwan)</i> <i>(N = 196)</i>
Crime (Referential)	19.7	60.6
War (Condensational)	19.7	0
None	60.5	39.4
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 42.961$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

Table 3-b
Comparison of aspects of symbolic terms (per cent)

<i>Symbols of incident nature</i>	<i>People's Daily (China)</i> <i>(N = 33)</i>	<i>Nanfang Daily (China)</i> <i>(N = 78)</i>
Crime (Referential)	60.6	10.3
War (Condensational)	0	3.8
None	39.4	85.9
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 31.532$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

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cent). The *People's Daily*, as in the former case, tended not to arouse emotions and used a high proportion of referential symbols (terrorism) (84.8 per cent) and no condensational symbols. No blame was attributed for 15.2 per cent of articles. The Chi-square test again demonstrated a significant difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2=32.755$, $df=2$, $p<.000$). But, there was no significant difference between party newspaper and mass-appeal tabloid from China in terms of attribution of symbolic terms. In the case of the two newspapers in Taiwan there was a significant difference. *Liberty Times* tended to

Table 4-a
Comparison of aspects of attribution symbolic terms
(per cent)

<i>Symbols of attribution of the incident</i>	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> (<i>N</i> = 315)	<i>People's Daily (China)</i> (<i>N</i> = 33)
Terrorism	60.0	84.8
Conflict	9.2	0
None	30.8	15.2
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 8.489$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$

Table 4-b
Comparison of aspects of attribution symbolic terms
(per cent)

<i>Symbols of attribution of the incident</i>	<i>United Daily (Taiwan)</i> (<i>N</i> = 315)	<i>Liberty Times (Taiwan)</i> (<i>N</i> = 196)
Terrorism	60.0	83.2
Conflict	9.2	6.6
None	30.8	10.2
Total	100	100

$\chi^2 = 32.755$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$

attribute the incident to terrorism (83.2 per cent) more than the *United Daily* (60.0 per cent) did, and used less condensational symbols (conflict) (10.2 per cent) than the *United Daily* (30.8 per cent). The Chi-square test demonstrated a significant difference between these two newspapers ($\chi^2 = 32.755$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$).

■ Discussion and conclusion

This study found that the Chinese and Taiwanese press reported the September 11 incident in different, and often diametrical, ways. Each press took sides in line with the government stances. By analyzing the different stances of news supply, news source, and symbolic terms, it can be seen how the Chinese press portrayed the incident as a crime, and as a terrorist attack, and that the news sources they used tended to support non-military action as a solution. In addition, the Chinese press stuck to the news supply from the national news agency. The Chinese press aligned with the stances of the PRC government that media should not carry any gloating statements, that the incident was a pure terrorist attack, that no military action should be taken until evidence is produced, and that the incident should be regarded as an international event with a limited impact on China. The Chinese press did not mention religious conflict or the Middle East crisis at all. Terror was not presented as possessing an historical background, but simply a term. It is worth noting that China faces her own problems, such as Falun Gong and pro-independence terrorists from Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The government might be afraid that these problems could escalate to similar proportions. The other reason might be that China did not want to offend her allied Muslim countries.

There is a trend in the Chinese press which needs to be noted. Parallel to Guo's research (2001), the traditional "party newspaper and mass-appeal tabloids are locked in a divergent development under new monopolistically competitive market conditions." There is a slight significant difference between those two kinds of newspapers in China. The *Nanfang Daily* mostly followed the government stances. However, it did exhibit a few stances that could be considered inappropriate for the party newspaper. A few articles in the *Nanfang Daily* mentioned the possibility of military attack and described the incident as a war. Unlike the *People's Daily* (33 news articles), the *Nanfang Daily* carried more news about the September 11 incident (78 news articles) in terms of the same pages, and carried more news

about the influence the incident would have on the domestic situation, in addition to the national leaders' statements. This could explain the reason why there were a lot of articles that did not mention any stance in the *Nanfang Daily*. The paper carried more human-interest news and conflict news, which could have been a direct ploy to stimulate circulation by presenting different aspects than the party papers' rigid political news. This study further provided evidence that the *Nanfang Daily*, the mass-appeal tabloid, is moving a little toward the capitalist pattern, without violating government policy too severely.

The Taiwanese press portrayed the incident as an act of war and a crime simultaneously. The Taiwanese press not only attributed the incident to terrorism, but also to the conflicts between cultures, religions, nations and the US itself. In a nutshell, the Taiwanese press still holds its pro-US stances, but the press did not show the support as fully as the government's stance. The Taiwanese press also criticized long-term structural problems, such as the US's imbalance in diplomatic policy in the Middle East. There were a large number of news articles that focused on the domestic aspects of the influence of the September 11 incident, such as economic, military, Taiwan Strait security and human interest, which also explains the reason why many articles did not mention any stances as well.

The two Taiwanese newspapers, the *United Daily* and the *Liberty Times*, were identical in terms of reporting the September 11 incident. They both relied on western news agencies for nearly 50 per cent of their news coverage, tended to use news sources that support the military action, and tended to report the event as a crime and as an act of war simultaneously. There were two differences between the two papers. The first was that the *Liberty Times* used the domestic news agency for 6.6 per cent of the news; its counterpart did not use the domestic agency at all. There were two possible reasons for this: (1) The domestic news agency, The Central News Agency, is a national news agency. The *Liberty Times* supports the 'Native Taiwanese' which parallels to the ruling party stances. Therefore, the *Liberty Times* preferred to use the national news agency news since it might be similar to its own stance. (2) The *Liberty Times* is a newly emerged newspaper. The staff might not have the experience to handle this kind of big event and may have preferred to use the domestic news agency. The second difference was that the *Liberty Times* tended to blame the incident on terrorism more than the *United Daily*. The *Liberty Times* might tend to obey more government stances so as not to provoke emotions.

This study verified the findings of the past research, that mass media tended to report international news in conjunction with government stances. However, there is another power shaking this assumption. That might be capital power. Even though the Chinese government rigidly restricts the mass media to carry news stories in line with the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party, the news coverage by *Nanfang Daily* fell in a grey area and tried to stimulate audiences by using slightly different news from the CPC stances (Muzi, 2001). For example, the *Nanfang Daily* covered the incident as an act of war or reported possible military action. But *Nanfang Daily* did adhere to some important directions. It did not carry any report attributing responsibility for the incident, such as religious conflicts. As mentioned above, the Chinese government nowadays takes a rigorous stance against Falun Gong and other groups who might conceivably take similar action. Thus, the *Nanfang Daily* chose the less important topics to deviate from the CPC stances whilst adhering to the most important orders. To sum up, the political party ideology does not dominate in the mass-appeal tabloids to the extent it does in the party newspaper, but capitalistic thinking is slowly making its presence felt. As for the Taiwanese press, following liberalization, and with the forces of globalization and political change, because of competition the media cannot hold biased stances anymore (Lo, Neilan, & King, 1998). Audiences need diverse reports.

The study also provided a preliminary answer to how business interests have reshaped the relations between international news and the governments. In previous research, scholars worried about the commercial impact on mass media, including commercialized news and implied stances (Kellner, 1990; Bagdikian, 1997; Sutter, 2002). However, little research deals with the positive commercial impacts, specifically on relations between international news and governments. This research found that business interests might coerce the *Nanfang Daily* and the Taiwanese newspapers to cover the September 11 incident more with diverse and open-minded attitudes in order to improve circulation. It would be worthwhile to study newsroom operations in order to confirm the causal effect.

This study only gauged the first week of reports following the 11 September incident, and did not include the editorials and columnists which often show precisely the position of the respective newspaper. It is necessary to analyze more data and compare the differences over a longer period of time. Also, this study did not explore readers' perceptions, which might further prove the relationships between

media and audience's images. In addition, whilst content analysis calculated the amount of news sources and expression, there are still some things that numbers cannot describe. For instance, both the Chinese and Taiwanese press reported the reactions of Afghanistan. The former tended to cover Afghanistan civilians and the poor situation they faced, such as food shortages; the later tended to report the Taliban's provocative behaviours. The two press portrayed Afghanistan so differently. There might be some ideology transmitted through the news. Therefore, news framing and other qualitative research might be able to assist this study to uncover the real intention behind the news reports.

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