Gatekeepers of Foreign Information: How China's State-Owned Media Uses Blocked Foreign Media to Reinforce State Narratives

by

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To my grandmother, whose unwavering love and support guided me to this milestone.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how China's state-owned media strategically utilizes content from foreign news outlets that are blocked from public access, such as *The New York Times* and *BBC*, for state propaganda. Using a staggered difference-in-differences design and prompt-engineering Large Language Model (LLM) classification, the study finds that the frequency of citations to foreign outlets often increases after they are censored, relative to foreign media outlets that are commonly cited by Chinese journalists and never blocked in China. These foreign sources are overwhelmingly cited as authoritative, rather than challenged, and their use becomes more ideologically driven after censorship – marked particularly by more frequent positive portrayals of China and negative portrayals of the United States. The paradox highlights the dual function of censorship and propaganda as complementary strategies of controlling state narratives and the inflow of foreign information, allowing journalists to act as gatekeepers of censored foreign content. The findings provide new insights into the complexity of authoritarian media strategies and the political implications of digital censorship.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Chinese government has been blocking foreign news sources from public access for years, emphasizing "cyber-sovereignty", arguing that the Internet needs to be regulated to protect the security and stability of the state from potential threats (Griffiths 2021; Lee and Liu 2012). The Internet censorship project, commonly known as the Great Firewall, blocks selected foreign sites from public access domestically through multiple methods such as IP filtering, DNS response poisoning, and content-analysis keyword filtering (Ensafi et al. 2015; Xu, Mao, and Halderman 2011; Hoang et al. 2021; Lee and Liu 2012). For instance, after *The New York Times* reported on wealthy relatives of a senior Chinese leader, China banned both English- and Chinese-language sites of the news outlet on October 26, 2012 (Bradsher 2012); News sites of *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian* were added into the Great Firewall censorship apparatus in early June 2019 following their coverage of a politically sensitive anniversary in China (Shih 2019; Waterson 2019; GreatFire.org 2024c; GreatFire.org 2024b).

Despite these restrictions, China's state-owned media paradoxically continues incorporating content from these banned foreign sources into domestic news coverage. For instance, on March 1, 2022, an official provincial newspaper of the Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCPC), *Gansu Daily*, referenced an article from *The Washington*

Post, which had been blocked for nearly three years, to echo its criticism of U.S. immigration policy:

移民政策摇摆不定、前后矛盾、罔顾人权, 是导致边境危机和移民境遇悲惨的主因, 折射出美国政府移民政策深受极端排外主义影响。华盛顿邮报网站 2021 年 8 月 22 日报道称, 美国的移民政策受到国内种族主义怨恨和反移民情绪的推动, 与国内政治恶斗纠缠在一起, 越来越倾向于采取武力和胁迫的方式对待难民移民。[The leading causes of the border crisis and the tragic plight of migrants are the inconsistency, contradictions, and disregard for human rights of U.S. immigration policy, which reflect the deep influence of xenophobia on the U.S. government's immigration stance. A report by *The Washington Post* on August 22, 2021, states that U.S. immigration policy was promoted by domestic racist and anti-immigrant sentiments, entangled with bitter domestic political struggles and increasingly leaning toward the use of force and coercion against refugees and migrants.]

At first glance, state-imposed censorship may be expected to substantially diminish the visibility and credibility of blocked foreign media in Chinese newspapers. However, as state censorship aimed to isolate the Chinese public from foreign sources that published politically sensitive narratives, journalists readily quoted a banned foreign news source to support their domestic messaging. Therefore, the persistent referencing of banned foreign media by China's state-owned newspapers raises an important question: *How does the government censorship of foreign media affect the frequency and framing of their mentions in China's state-owned media?* I propose two competing hypotheses:

On one hand, the censorship may lead to a decrease in mentions because of the technical difficulty and higher costs for the reporters to access these foreign media blocked by the Great Firewall. Also, the heightened political sensitivity related to banned foreign media could discourage state-owned media reporters from referencing them altogether, which

would result in reduced mentions of these foreign sources.

On the other hand, however, the blocking of foreign media sites can increase the mentions of these sources by Chinese media. By prohibiting public access to these foreign sources, the state gains the ability to filter their content and control the narratives presented to domestic audiences through state propaganda to serve political objectives. Chinese journalists act as gatekeepers for politically sensitive foreign information. Mentions can increase in two different ways:

1. State-owned media may selectively cite stories that align with China's state interest, such as negative news about foreign countries and positive news about China, to reinforce the governmental image while reducing citizens' evaluations of foreign countries. There are several advantages of citing foreign sources: First, leveraging the credibility of foreign outlets in their coverage, especially when a prominent foreign media like *The New York Times* criticizes its own government, enhances the perceived legitimacy and objectivity of state media reporting. Second, citing foreign sources can create an illusion of an open and globally engaged media environment, counterbalancing the reality of widespread censorship and fostering a perception of informational freedom among citizens.

2. The state-owned newspapers could increasingly frame censored foreign media as biased and hostile towards China to promote their own credibility. By emphasizing alleged biases in foreign media reporting, they can neutralize public dissatisfaction with the pro-government orientation of domestic news outlets, particularly as most citizens lack the means to independently verify the original contents of foreign sources.

To test the theoretical expectations, I analyzed a dataset of 62,807 articles from 57 Chinese state-owned newspapers published from 2012 to 2023, examining mentions of five foreign media outlets blocked by China at different times (*The New York Times*, *The*

Economist, *BBC*, *The Guardian*, and *The Washington Post*) and two outlets that were never banned (*Agence France-Presse* and *The Associated Press*). To assess the effect of foreign media blocks on the frequency of their mentions by Chinese papers, I applied staggered difference-in-differences regressions with time- and newspaper-fixed effects. In addition to the overall effect, I also interacted the treatment variable with foreign media to evaluate the effects for individual foreign media outlets.

Moreover, in order to further investigate the mechanisms driving these changes, I leveraged the natural language processing (NLP) technique to systematically study the content of foreign media references, focusing on the following question: *When journalists of Chinese state-owned newspapers mention a foreign news outlet, do they cite the outlet as an authoritative source or discredit it? What is the country being reported on, and is the country portrayed positively, negatively, or neutrally by the journalists?* I employed the Application Programming Interface (API) of OpenAI GPT-4o and GPT-4o mini models to efficiently classify mentions of foreign media, enabling a large-scale and consistent analysis of textual data. The automated classification process followed a structured, rule-based prompt engineering approach, where the GPT model was instructed in detail to read, interpret, and classify excerpts of mentions into one of the defined categories and re-assess its classification. To enhance accuracy and reliability, I validated model classifications against a randomly sampled dataset that was manually labeled. Through the semi-automated analysis integrating automated classifications and manual verification, I examined the distributions of China's state-owned papers challenging foreign media and citing them as authoritative sources, as well as the predominant country focuses and sentiments of the reportings.

Through these analyses, I showed that the censorship and propaganda sections of the government collaborate in the gatekeeping of foreign sources. Chinese journalists cite and interpret foreign media for the public, and the blocking of foreign media outlets does more than prevent access; it allows the state to selectively expose the public to these sources

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through Chinese state-owned newspapers. The staggered difference-in-differences results suggest an overall increase in mentions of foreign media outlets after they were blocked in China, relative to outlets never blocked, though fluctuations and noise were observed in some cases. Unsurprisingly, *Agence-France Presse* and *The Associated Press*, which were never blocked, were mentioned much more frequently than the blocked outlets, potentially reflecting a broader shift toward state-driven domestic content in Chinese media (Waight et al. 2025). However, the citations of these media outlets in the control group declined over time, while the mentions of blocked foreign media outlets, except the *BBC*, remained relatively stable or slightly increased after censorship.

Content analyses leveraging Large Language Model (LLM) classification suggest that most of the mentions are citing the foreign news outlets as authoritative sources of information or opinion, with only a small minority involving direct criticism or discrediting. The reporting on China or the United States take a significant proportions in all Chinese newspaper articles that mentioned the studied foreign media outlets, and for all blocked outlets, a clear shift occurred after censorship: Chinese journalists increasingly cited foreign media to highlight positive portrayals of China and negative portrayals of the U.S. This shift in sentiment provides clues about the mechanism behind the changes in citation frequency – namely, the strategic use of foreign sources to reinforce state narratives. The overall finding supports the theoretical expectation that because reporting from the foreign media outlets, particularly on U.S. failures or China's achievements, are valuable for state propaganda, Chinese journalists continued to access and cite these blocked foreign media despite the barrier of the Great Firewall and a decline in the usage of common foreign media sources in China's tightly controlled media environment.

Media censorship and propaganda are essential tools of political control by authoritarian regimes and have been widely studied. However, there is limited research examining the specific impact of foreign newspaper bans on domestic propaganda. This dynamic of

foreign media being simultaneously prohibited and utilized suggests the dual role of state censorship as both a repressive and a strategic instrument. By selectively utilizing content from banned outlets, the government not only shapes the domestic information landscape but also neutralizes criticism and enhances state legitimacy by co-opting the voices of these foreign sources in ways that align with its broader political goals.

1.1   Literature Review

1.1.1   Balancing State Propaganda Objectives with Revenue Pressures

In China, all general-interest newspapers are required to be owned by the national, provincial, prefectural, and county-level Committees of the Chinese Communist Party (CCPC) (Qin, Strömberg, and Wu 2018). Interviews and informal conversations with journalists in China revealed that journalists were primarily constrained by the governmental regulations and the values implanted by the Party, and even liberal journalists' agency in subtly shaping discourses in matters they care about through "language tricks" has diminished over the past two decades (Nyíri 2017). The Chinese state employs tactics directed at journalists, such as coercive means imposed on dissidents, institutionalized regulations and guidelines on the profession, and "ambiguous political signals" to control the narratives available to citizens (Stern and Hassid 2012). Vague and frequently shifting rules with "ad hoc" sanctions raise journalists' uncertainty regarding the boundaries of permitted stories, amplifying the other two tactics and leading to pervasive self-censorship (Stern and Hassid 2012).

The tight control of the government on media content means that the state's goals of effective propaganda and maintenance of information control shape media content. Based on leaked censorship directives secretly issued to media by China's propaganda institutions in the central government, the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) managed traditional media and often preferred to guide the content, extent, and tone of news coverage rather

than banning all negative news, while the State Council Information Office (SCIO), which regulated websites, was more likely to repress stories broke up online (Tai 2014). The state was more concerned about the breakout of negative news on Internet platforms, where information spread quickly among citizens and people could express their discontent and potentially communicate about collective action (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013; Tai 2014).

On the other hand, commercial needs and market competition also influence media content. The study by Stockmann and Gallagher (2011) suggests that the marketization and diversification of newspapers led to commercial pressures, so the state-owned newspapers needed to not only meet the political objective of positively portraying reformed legal systems but also bring attractive labor litigation stories for readership. Lower-level CCPC newspapers tend to be less biased than higher-level ones. Qin, Strömberg, and Wu (2018) reveal that, because of competition for audiences, local CCPCs had to balance political messaging goals with profit considerations when managing their official Party newspaper. Thus, after other CCPC newspapers were closed, the local CCPCs could increasingly concentrate on political propaganda in their Party newspapers and commercial content in their commercial newspapers. This product specialization enhanced the political bias readers receive from the CCPCs' Party papers, as the CCPCs no longer tried to reduce their bias to attract audiences from their competitors to generate more revenues. Similarly, Kronick and Marshall (2024) revealed that reduced market competition among televisions after RCTV's closure in Venezuela made its relatively pro-government competitors cover unfavorable news for the incumbent less frequently and show more positive sentiment toward the government.

Research into social media platforms highlights similar patterns of state influence. News media accounts on China's social media platform *Weibo* had a high selection bias in reporting protests, avoiding stories about protests against the government and focusing on reporting protests by underserved communities. These accounts show relatively moderate

bias in framing stories. In contrast, government news media accounts and official government accounts report on protests with greater positivity and downplay violence or policing (H. Zhang, Yao Lu, and Bai 2024). Propagandists in China also actively rely on entertaining or emotional content and practical daily tips to embed subtle political messaging on official social media accounts to enhance the popularity of the sources and the visibility of political propaganda. They also attract readership through clickbait headlines, which are structured to draw online users' interest in reading the entire content (Yingdan Lu and Pan 2021; Repnikova and Fang 2018).

To effectively disseminate political messages, the state must account for alternative information sources accessible to its citizens. Access to independent sources can significantly influence people's political attitudes in authoritarian states where media are strictly controlled. For example, access to the independent media NTV in 1990s Russia significantly reduced votes for the ruling party and increased voter support for opposition parties, both at the subregion- and individual level, and there was an exceptionally high proportion of audiences who were persuaded to vote against a party by NTV's negative message (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya 2011).

Studies have highlighted the impact of information sources available to citizens on state media propaganda strategies. In the early 2000s in China, when the general public lacked alternative information sources and labor litigation experiences after recent legal reforms, the state-owned media was able to enhance regime stability and legitimacy by selecting and framing litigation stories of laborers being unfairly treated but ultimately receiving justice through the reformed legal system (Stockmann and Gallagher 2011). In Venezuela, after then-President Hugo Chávez revoked the public broadcast license of Radio Caracas Televisi (RCTV), a popular television station critical of the government, the forced shift to pro-government outlets among voters who lacked access to alternative critical outlets led to a relatively strong persuasion effect of the pro-government content, compensating

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these voters' discontent of RCTV's closure (Kronick and Marshall 2024). Conversely, because Russian citizens could personally observe indications of the economic situation in their daily lives, politicians there did not ban or distort negative economic news; instead, they typically encouraged the media to frame economic downturns as the results of external factors, which would be difficult for citizens to verify (Rozenas and Stukal 2019).

1.1.2 State Control of Foreign Content

China exercises stringent control over domestic media but must also address the influence of foreign content and citizens' access to it. Previous research explored the impact of foreign media on public perceptions of domestic governance. Evidence from 1980s East Germany indicates that being exposed to West German television led to increased support of teenagers and young adults for their government and lowered exit visa application rates in the county level, compared to counties without access to the television. The finding suggests an "opium-like" effect of Western content on people that stabilizes the rule of an authoritarian regime (Kern and Hainmueller 2017). In China, a survey experiment of Internet users suggests that individuals with high evaluations of foreign countries tend to self-select reading Western media contents that are positive about foreign countries. However, the experiment also reveals that reading those positive but realistic content makes Chinese citizens have a more realistic view of foreign countries and higher domestic evaluations (Huang and Yeh 2019).

As discussed in the previous section, when regulating domestic media propaganda, states like China primarily guide content and seek to influence citizens through persuasive political messaging. In contrast, regarding foreign media content, which cannot be directly managed by state institutions, China adopts repressive strategies to control the flow of information to citizens. The Great Firewall prohibits the Chinese public from accessing blocked sites, compelling users to rely on Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) (Lee and Liu 2012;

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Griffiths 2021). This type of censorship operates primarily as "friction" −significantly increasing the costs of obtaining prohibited content to deter people unaware of circumvention methods or discouraged by the effort and expense involved (Roberts 2018).

Public reactions to the prohibition of foreign content vary. On one hand, the block of foreign content may lead to backlash or even increase access to sensitive information. Also, after the foreign sites that users were fond of visiting in the past were blocked, they may be incentivized to develop greater expertise in bypassing the Firewall, enabling them to view more prohibited information (Hobbs and Roberts 2018). On the other hand, individuals uninterested in foreign content may remain unaffected by the restrictions. For instance, because Chinese citizens were often previously unaware of politically sensitive information, they typically accessed Wikipedia's political and historical content unintentionally through homepage suggestions, while the information they would proactively seek out were typically entertainment or scientific (Pan and Roberts 2020). Consequently, after the complete censorship of the Chinese-language Wikipedia site, Chinese Internet users significantly lost their chances to incidentally reach external information related to politics and history through Wikipedia (Pan and Roberts 2020). Although circumventing this block is still technically possible, because of both the technical difficulties of bypassing the Great Firewall and citizens' unawareness regarding what information they are missing, the block is still effective in reinforcing state narratives and suppressing the broader public's political awareness without provoking widespread resistance.

Based on a field experiment of college students in China, providing students in the treatment group free access to the uncensored Internet did not increase their likelihood of obtaining politically sensitive information, such as articles from banned foreign news websites (Chen and Yang 2019). Nonetheless, the subset of students who were assigned incentives to view the banned foreign news tended to have a persistently higher demand for these news even after the free access and incentive period, and these students became more

trustful of foreign news outlets and skeptical of the Chinese government (Chen and Yang 2019). The findings of this study highlight that people unfamiliar with sensitive foreign news would not be interested in accessing the information anyway, while those individuals with exposure to foreign sites already would value the censored news and were willing to bear a higher cost to access it. Further research shows that individuals who bypass the Great Firewall are typically more resourceful, better educated, and have a higher interest in political expression (C. Zhang 2020).

Kuang and Wang (2020) examined how a party official newspaper and a non-party newspaper (*Xinhua Daily* and *Southern Metropolis Daily*, respectively) trans-edited foreign news articles, or foreign news articles that were translated, edited, and reprinted on Chinese news outlets. Through coding the framing of over 800 trans-edited international news published by the two newspapers in late 2014, they found that the most frequently incorporated frames were descriptions of conflict, responsibility attribution, and factual information, which are considered less politically sensitive for the Chinese government, and the non-party newspaper *Southern Metropolis Daily* uses relatively less official framings. The findings suggest the state maintains substantial control over international news, and non-party newspapers have slightly more editorial autonomy than official newspapers. However, this study had limitations, such as a narrow timeframe and a limited number of outlets in the analyzed data. Additionally, it did not differentiate between the trans-editing of foreign newspaper content and the reporting of general international news. Consequently, how Chinese state-controlled outlets selectively trans-edit or portray foreign newspapers still needs to be explored.

Furthermore, to control the flow of information, China has expelled foreign journalists (DeButts and Pan 2024). Employing the generalized synthetic control method, DeButts and Pan (2024) measured the trends of average aggregated effects of journalist expulsion on expelled outlets by month. They found no significant effect on the percentage of stories

originating from the Chinese regime or institutions, article sentiment and entity diversity, or the supply and engagement of relevant articles, suggesting international journalists' reporting resilience to China's expulsion.

In CNN international news, after technology advancements enabling live transmission of breaking events, there had been increased reporting of events not initiated or managed by institutional actors. However, despite this potential for more independent reporting, journalists were still likely to involve government officials in their framing of political content when reporting those events domestically. Reporters default to established authorities for legitimacy and framing, effectively reaffirming the governmental gatekeeping influence over potentially sensitive political content (Livingston and Bennett 2003).

It has been believed that regarding events originated outside China, where most of foreign information sources are banned from public access, the state plays a dominant role in reporting on the news, setting the agenda and framing the events, while Chinese citizens could still access some foreign information through unblocked foreign sources, circumvention technology like VPN, and transmission from people with access to others via social media (Yingdan Lu, Schaefer, et al. 2024). Yingdan Lu, Schaefer, et al. (2024) reveals that the flow of information from foreign countries to China has been facilitated by state-owned media primarily and also by individual social media users. They implemented a semi-automated approach that combines deep learning NLP and human verification to identify co-occurring content in popular discussions related to China and COVID-19 in English posts on Twitter and posts on the Chinese social media Weibo during the pandemic. While there is a leak of information through individuals in social media, the government proactively acts as gatekeepers to facilitate the importing the flow of information in digital cyberspace. In China, a context of highly restricted press freedom, domestic state-owned media proactively curate, import, reframe, and strategically deploy information from foreign media sources that are blocked by the government. The state extends beyond suppressing or

selectively permitting external information that are not driven by state institutions. Rather, the state plays a gatekeeping role – determining which foreign narratives to present and how to frame them for domestic audiences (Yingdan Lu, Schaefer, et al. 2024). State censorship and propaganda co-facilitate the flow of information in a complementary and coordinated process. Nevertheless, existing literature leaves open questions regarding whether blocking foreign news sources systematically changes how actively Chinese state-owned media reference these outlets. These questions remain not answered: Whether and how does the block affect the state-facilitated inflow of blocked information? Does state-owned media become more actively citing foreign sources after they were blocked in China?

1.2 Theory: State-Owned Media Response to Foreign Media Block

China's management of narratives related to foreign papers is an interaction of state-owned media with foreign media content, representing an intersection of persuasive and repressive media control strategies. In this section, I build theoretical arguments on how government censorship of foreign newspapers influences the portrayal and use of these sources by China's state-owned media. Drawing on insights from the literature on mass media behavior in non-democratic contexts, I propose how the interactions of political, informational, and commercial imperatives in shaping state-controlled media content apply to the research question. Whether guided or compelled by the government, mass media need to pursue the state's political propaganda objectives. To achieve effective propaganda and credibility, they must consider alternative sources of information citizens can access. Commercial pressures also influence state-owned media's choices of stories to cover, as state-owned outlets need to attract and maintain readership. Then, by blocking foreign content, the government limits people's ability to access alternative perspectives. The responses of citizens vary,

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but typically only a dedicated subset of the population would continue or strengthen their access to prohibited sources. Overall, foreign content censorship is expected to increase citizens' reliance on state-approved media for information, boosting the state's capacity to shape narratives.

Blocking foreign media creates a paradox: while restricting public access to alternative narratives, it enables state-controlled outlets to selectively engage with foreign sources. The state can gain leverage to frame foreign media in a way that aligns with its political objectives by reinforcing the state's authority, discrediting external criticism, promoting a curated image of China's place in the global narrative, or generating an "opium-like" effect to divert citizens's attention from domestic issues and stabilize state rule (Kern and Hainmueller 2017).

The total blocking of foreign media sites restricted the possibility of incidental political enlightenment among citizens who might otherwise unintentionally come across politically sensitive information, and China's state-owned media strategically fills this informational void by selectively providing Chinese audiences with carefully framed foreign stories which aligned with official narratives, thereby mediating the flow of foreign-origin information available to the domestic audience and shaping their political understandings.

1.2.1 Influence on Contents of Mentions

The censorship of foreign newspapers may lead to more ideologically and politically driven framing of foreign newspaper content and portrayal of foreign news outlets by China's state-owned media. Before the ban, the public could access foreign news articles without being blocked or discouraged by a higher cost (Roberts 2018). It would be challenging for state-owned media to manipulate information from foreign newspapers for political propaganda purposes because of the availability of the information sources to citizens (Rozenas and Stukal 2019; Stockmann and Gallagher 2011). On the other hand, the state-owned outlets

try to maintain their competitiveness in the news market. The difficulty in manipulating content from foreign newspapers and the commercial incentives to attract readers may make the state-owned media more likely to select a wider variety of neutral news content, such as entertainment, sports, and technology, to attract readership while maintaining legitimacy. By engaging audiences with less politically sensitive foreign content, state-owned media can expand their reach and indirectly enhance the visibility of state propaganda. Moreover, offering exposure to some entertaining or appealing foreign materials helps pacify citizens, making them feel satisfied with domestic life and thereby stabilizing state control (Kern and Hainmueller 2017).

Conversely, after the censorship of foreign papers, domestic citizens' information sources became more restricted. In response, Chinese state-owned media may adopt a more politically oriented approach in portraying and citing foreign outlets. The state-owned press could increasingly leverage foreign media for political propaganda while simultaneously attracting readership. Consequently, China's state-owned press may amplify negative portrayals of foreign governments or underscore global issues that underscore China's comparative strengths while avoiding or misrepresenting content critical of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This selective approach allows the government to balance the political goals of propaganda with practical considerations, such as saving editorial resources by citing readily available information. More importantly, citing foreign outlets, particularly when major Western newspapers criticize their own governments, can enhance the perceived credibility of negative news about foreign countries. At the same time, the state-owned media may become more likely to discredit foreign papers, such as accusing the foreign paper of being politically biased against China, to diminish the perceived reliability of alternative sources and reinforce the relative reputation of domestic media, when the majority of domestic audiences cannot view or verify the original sources themselves after the ban.

People dedicated to overcoming the barriers to accessing foreign papers tend to be

suspicious of Chinese state-owned media anyway. As a result, the Chinese official press would not expect the selective representation or criticisms of foreign papers to lead to the deterioration of Chinese newspaper reputation or draw backlashes.

In addition, before foreign media block, the government might be more likely to let Chinese journalists occasionally cite foreign news articles that are not favorable but not sensitive for the Chinese government from major foreign papers for reputational benefits and also to demonstrate acknowledgment and engagement with international perspectives within the boundaries of state information control. In contrast, the systematic censorship of foreign newspapers may consolidate the state's control over narratives while allowing state-owned outlets to exploit foreign content more effectively for political and commercial purposes.

The above arguments rest on the assumption that foreign newspapers hold sufficient influence to concern the state. For the government to take action, the audience for stories from these foreign outlets must be large enough to pose a perceived threat. This is supported by the government's consistent pattern of blocking foreign outlets soon after the publication of politically sensitive stories.

Another potential mechanism through which the exit of foreign newspapers impacts political bias is the reduction of market competition (Kronick and Marshall 2024; Qin, Strömberg, and Wu 2018). However, the censorship of one or a few foreign newspapers at a time is unlikely to significantly impact market competition. Thus, reduced competition is unlikely the primary mechanism through which such censorship directly influences propaganda. Instead, the long-term cumulative effect of blocking more and more foreign outlets over time may gradually contribute to the increase of political bias within China's state-owned media.

1.2.2 Influence on Frequency of Mentions

This dual approach of combining increased control over narratives with selective engagement may lead to a gradual rise in the visibility of foreign sources in official Chinese outlets, relative to those common foreign media that are nevered blocked in China. Before the ban, Chinese newspapers might cite more neutral news content from foreign papers to attract readership for commercial incentives. Then, in the short term after the block of a foreign paper, the Chinese state-owned media may avoid or not increase referencing that foreign paper because the ban raises uncertainty regarding whether the state permits the mention of the banned foreign newspaper, deterring journalists from mentioning the sensitive paper (Stern and Hassid 2012). However, over time, because of the prohibited public access to original foreign news sources, Chinese official media, under the pressure of the political objectives of the CCP and commercial incentives, may not only cite neutral news content but also frame political content from foreign papers for propaganda, because of their greater ability to shape intended narratives for political purposes while minimizing reputational risks. As a result, mentions of foreign newspapers in state media will likely increase in the long term due to the ban.

Chapter 2

Research Design

In this research, to examine the effect of foreign newspaper websites being blocked from access in China on how Chinese state-owned newspapers cite and portray the censored foreign papers, I analyze news articles from China's state-owned newspapers from 2012 to 2023 through a staggered difference-in-differences design with time-, Chinese newspaper-, and foreign media- fixed effects and computational text analysis. Specifically, I investigate the frequency of mentions of foreign papers by Chinese papers, whether the foreign paper is criticized or cited as an authoritative source of information or opinion, and the news contents and sentiments in articles in which the foreign paper is mentioned.

2.1 Data

The dataset used in this research consists of 62,807 articles from 57 Chinese newspapers, including provincial daily Party papers and other national or local state-owned papers, collected through daily web scraping.[1] The major stakeholders of all newspapers are legally

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[1]This research extracted news stories mentioning foreign media from the same Chinese newspaper database employed by Waight et al. (2025). Due to legal restrictions, raw news article data required for replicating this study cannot be made publicly available. More detailed descriptions of the database are available in the Appendix of Waight et al. (2025).

required to be state assets, which had been transformed to Party assets in 2001 (Stockmann 2012; Hu 2003)

To address occasional errors in the 12 years of article collection due to technical web scraping issues, observations in months when the total number of news articles suggests potential anomalies were dropped. Using a filtering approach similar to Waight et al. 2024, for each Chinese newspaper, when the total article count of a month is three standard deviations below the average of monthly total counts across time, the month is considered an aberration from normal collections of this Chinese paper. After abnormal months were removed, the total article counts over time for each Chinese paper are plotted in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2.

There are seven foreign media studied in this research. The five banned foreign media are U.S. media, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and British media, including *The Economist*, *British Broadcasting Corporation* (*BBC*), and *The Guardian*. Also, two foreign media that were never banned during the studied time range, *The Associated Press* and *Agence France-Presse*, are included as control groups. The timeline of foreign paper bans is organized based on reports by authoritative news sources and the *GreatFire* website, which monitors the block of websites by the Great Firewall of China (GreatFire.org 2024). The Chinese news articles are extracted based on a specific set of possible keywords indicating the foreign papers (Table **??**). Table 2.1 provides details about the banned foreign media. The keywords used to identify mentions are included in Table A.1.

Though the internal communication within the government is unknown, the bans followed quickly after publication, the blocking decisions were likely reactive, made in response to politically sensitive reporting by the foreign media. The censorship event was triggered externally (e.g., a foreign reporting of political scandals). Journalists in Chinese state media would likely not know about the censorship in advance. As specified below, the

reason that the websites of the foreign media, with the exception of *BBC*, were blocked was the publication of articles that were politically sensitive for China. Therefore, it is plausible to believe that the assignment of the treatment is independent of the outcome, i.e., how the foreign media is mentioned by Chinese papers. China's domestic media were not reporting on those politically sensitive stories or the blocking of these media anyway.
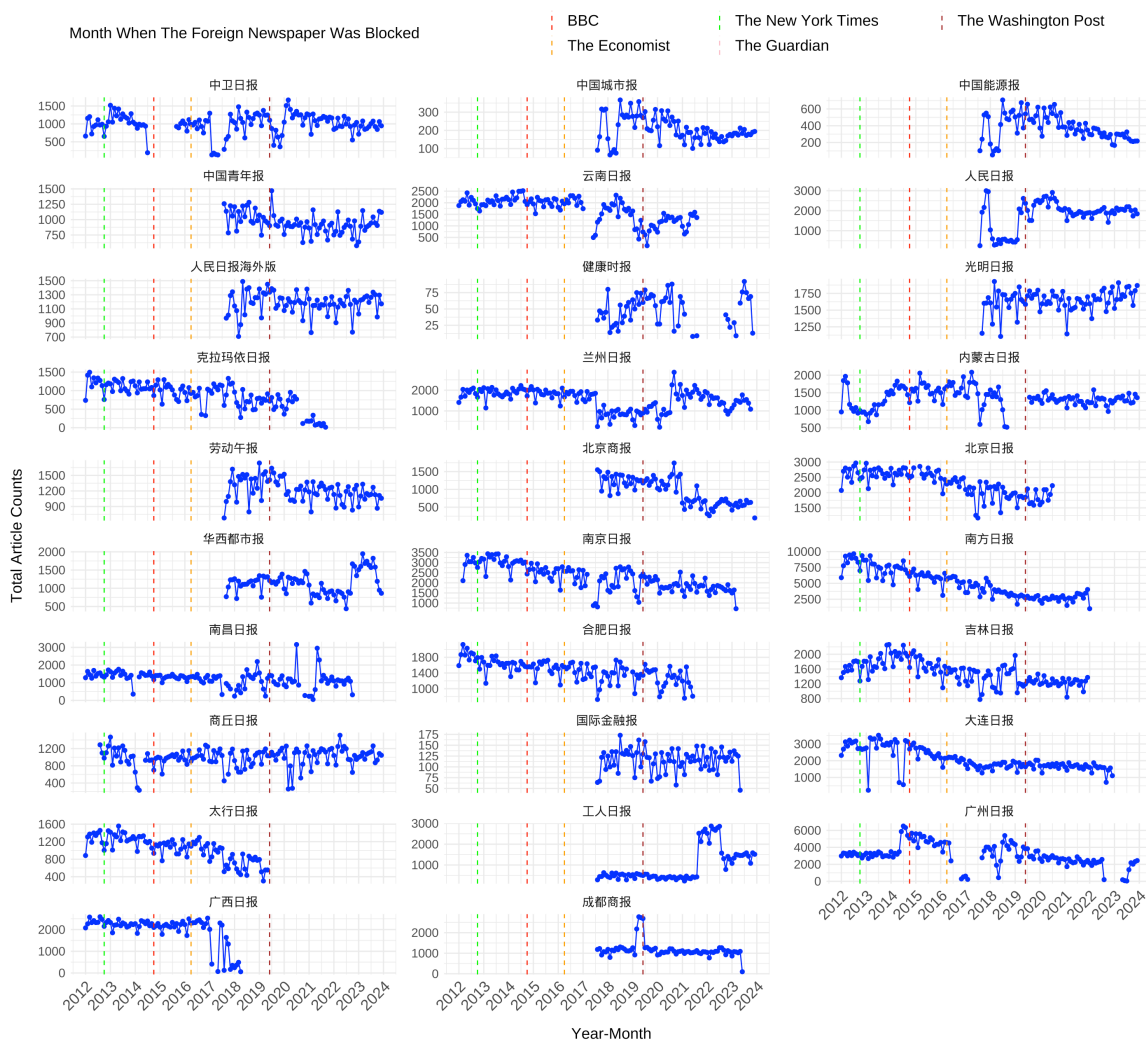

Figure 2.1: Total Article Counts Over Time for Each Chinese Newspaper (1st List)

Table 2.1: Blocked Foreign News Sites

Media Outlet	Block Month	Blocked Media Type/Platform	Reason for Block
New York Times [纽约时报]	October 2012	Chinese- and English-language sites	Published an sensitive article about China's senior political leader (Bradsher 2012; GreatFire.org 2025b; GreatFire.org 2025f)
The Economist [经济学人]	April 2016	Website, cover article, mobile app, and WeChat public accounts	Published an sensitive article about China's senior political leader (Feng 2016; GreatFire.org 2024a)
BBC [英国广播公司]	July 2018	Chinese- and English-language site	BBC changed all web connections from "http" to the more secure "https", which had been blocked by the Great Firewall of China (BBC 2018; GreatFire.org 2025d; GreatFire.org 2025g; GreatFire.org 2025e)
The Washington Post [华盛顿邮报/华邮]	June 2019	Site added to "Great Firewall" censorship apparatus	Suspected to be related to coverage on the 30th anniversary of a sensitive political event (GreatFire.org 2024c; Shih 2019; Waterson 2019)
The Guardian [卫报]	June 2019	Site added to "Great Firewall" censorship apparatus	Suspected to be related to coverage on the 30th anniversary of a sensitive political event (GreatFire.org 2024b; Shih 2019; Waterson 2019)
Associated Press [联合通讯社]	Not Blocked (GreatFire.org 2025a)	N/A	N/A
Agence France-Presse [法国新闻社]	Not Blocked (GreatFire.org 2025c)	N/A	N/A

BBC was also temporarily blocked in October 2014 (BBC 2014). Thus, the data from this month is excluded from the analysis.
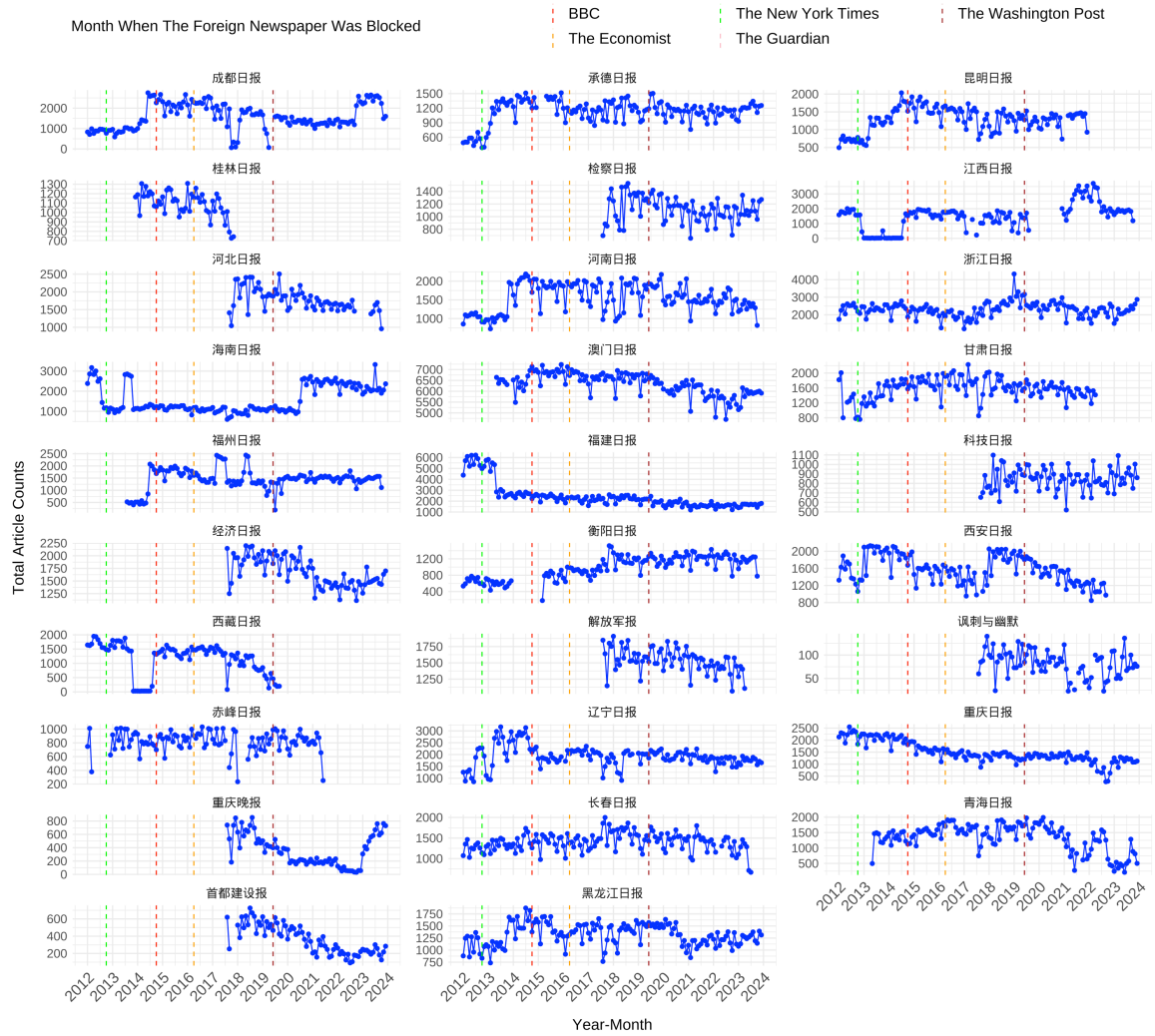
Figure 2.2: Total Article Counts Over Time for Each Chinese Newspaper (2nd List)

2.2 Staggered DiD Design with Time- and Media Outlet-Fixed Effects

I investigate the causal effect of foreign media bans by the Chinese government on how China's state-owned newspapers mention the blocked foreign media through the staggered difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis with time-, Chinese newspaper-, and foreign media-fixed effects. Fixed effects allow the control of unobserved variables that are constant within time periods, Chinese media outlets, and foreign outlets (Huntington-Klein 2022). The difference-in-differences with fixed effects method has been applied in studies of media propaganda and censorship in authoritarian contexts, such as to assess the impact of independent media availability on election outcomes in Russia (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya 2011), the effect of ratio propaganda on public support for the Nazi rule in Germany (Adena et al. 2015), consequences of selective broadcast censorship on voter behavior in Venezuela (Kronick and Marshall 2024).

In the dataset, each observation/row is the number of mentions of a foreign newspaper by a Chinese newspaper in a specific month. The dataset consists of the following variables: time (year-month), Chinese newspaper name, the number of total articles published by the Chinese paper in this year-month, foreign media name, the year-month when the foreign media website was blocked from access in China, a binary indicator of whether the website of the foreign media mentioned in Chinese newspaper articles has been banned from access by the Chinese government in this year-month, which is the independent variable (IV), and the number of Chinese newspaper articles mentioning the foreign media in the year-month, which is the dependent variable (DV). The observations in months within which the foreign media sites were banned were removed from the analysis to avoid partial-month confounds.

Let Y_{ijt} denote the number of mentions of the foreign newspaper j by the Chinese

newspaper i at time t. Let $blocked_{jt}$ denote whether the foreign newspaper has been banned. The IV "blocked" is coded as 0 when the month is prior to the month of the foreign media ban, and 1 indicates that the official censorship, or the Great Firewall, has fully been in effect for the foreign media j in `year_month` t. Denote β_0 the baseline level of mentions and denote β_1 the coefficient, or the average effect of the censorship of the reference foreign media (*The New York Times*) on the number of monthly mentions of this media outlet by a Chinese paper. The coefficient β_2 captures the baseline difference in mentions across different foreign media outlets relative to *The New York Times*. The coefficient β_3 of the interaction term $blocked_{jt} \times foreign\_newspaper_j$ reflects how the block effect for a specific foreign paper differs from the effect for *The New York Times*. β_4 is the coefficient for the control variable of the total number of articles published by the Chinese paper in that month. δ_t and γ_i represent time-fixed effects, which are common event shocks for all papers in a given month, and Chinese newspaper-fixed effects, which are time-invariant differences across Chinese papers, respectively.

ϵ_{ijt} represents the error term. Below is the equation:

$$
\begin{aligned}
Y_{ijt} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1\, blocked_{jt} + \beta_2\, foreign\_newspaper_j \\
&\quad + \beta_3\big(blocked_{jt} \times foreign\_newspaper_j\big) + \beta_4\, total\_counts\_Cpaper_{it} + \delta_t + \gamma_i + \epsilon_{ijt}.
\end{aligned}
$$

The null hypothesis $H_0 : \beta_1 + \beta_3 = 0$ posits that the block of a foreign paper does not affect the frequency of mentioning the foreign paper by Chinese papers, controlling for omitted time-invariant differences across foreign papers and across Chinese papers, as well as omitted period-specific characteristics that affect all papers simultaneously (Angrist and Pischke 2009). The alternative hypotheses are $H_A : \beta_1 + \beta_3 > 0$ and $H_A : \beta_1 + \beta_3 < 0$, which means that banning promotes or suppresses the mentions of foreign papers, respectively.

In R, a staggered difference-in-differences estimation was implemented to compare

the trends between foreign media outlets that have been treated and those that have not been banned. Foreign media-fixed effects was added to the equation when the blocked*foreign media interaction term was not included. Then, to implement the regression models, I used the "fixest" package to run the ordinary least squares (OLS), Poisson, and Negative Binomial regression models in R (King 1988).

This method presumes that the effect of the ban is linear and addictive (Imai and Kim 2021). This model assumes no unobserved time-varying variables that affect a subset of the papers regarding the mentions; the fixed effects would contribute to the outcome independently, without interacting or modifying each other's impacts. Also, the effect is assumed to be constant over time, after controlling the previously mentioned time- and newspaper-invariant differences (Angrist and Pischke 2009). However, the mentions might gradually increase after the ban. Because the foreign papers were banned at different points, t, which indicates the actual year-month, would not take into account the relative time since the block. Moreover, as discussed in the Literature Review section, the political sensitivity right after the ban would possibly create a chilling effect that journalists of Chinese state-owned newspapers not increase or even avoid mentioning the banned foreign media, but they could later increasingly cite or discredit the media for strategic propaganda. In addition, reporters' habits of citing articles might take time to adapt a new way to use sources after the governmental block of foreign media. In this case, the initial significant drop in mentions after the ban and the gradual increase later may not be reflected in the model.

To observe the possible delayed effects, I created time-series plots of mentions by month with block intervention lines and implemented the dynamic difference-in-differences model for robustness. The dynamic difference-in-difference also provided a placebo test, where the pre-treatment coefficients for each period were estimated (Huntington-Klein 2022).

In addition, the systematic reprinting of articles from a Chinese news source, which

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has been an increasing trend, could make the mentions of a certain foreign seem particularly high (Waight et al. 2025). This should not be an issue because the massive reprinting of an article indicates the importance of the content.

2.3   Content Analysis

2.3.1   Framing of Foreign News Outlets

To further examine whether the changes in mentions by China's state-owned newspapers are related to the frequency of journalists citing foreign media as authoritative sources of information or challenging the reliability of these foreign media, I implemented the NLP automated text classification on 12568 texts randomly sampled from the full dataset. I selected the OpenAI GPT-4o mini model, with a balance of the ability to understand contextual nuances, efficiency, and costs for this classification task. Specifically, the model was instructed to assign each mention of a foreign newspaper into one of the three categories [2]:

(1) **Challenge**, where "the credibility, reliability, motives, or a specific reporting of the foreign news outlet (not any other entity or subject in the article) is either implicitly or explicitly challenged, questioned, criticized, or portrayed negatively in the article, regardless of whether this foreign news outlet is treated as a source of information";

(2) **Source**, where "based on the context, the foreign newspaper is either implicitly or explicitly treated as a source of information/opinion/commentary";

(3) **Neither**, where "the above two categories do not apply".

To implement this classification, I integrated the GPT-4o mini model API into a structured text processing pipeline. The pipeline first extracted sentences containing foreign news outlet mentions and the sentences before and after from the dataset of Chinese state-owned newspaper articles. Each extracted excerpt was processed through an API re-

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[2]The full prompt used in calling the GPT API can be found in Appendix B.

quest, where the GPT model, with a predefined temperature setting of zero to minimize randomness for deterministic responses, categorizes the mention according to the specified criteria. To mitigate classification errors, the prompt also includes explicit contextual verification steps, preventing misclassification due to superficial keyword matching. Moreover, due to the skewed distribution of categories, I integrated human checks of texts categorized as "Challenge" with the natural language processing (NLP) technique to prevent systematic over-prediction of this category.

For validation, 150 observations were randomly sampled from each of the foreign media in the full dataset, totaling 1050 observations. They were manually labeled based on the definitions of categories. As presented in Table 2.2, the distribution of the actual labels of categories is highly skewed: The vast majority (85.2%) of mentions are referencing the foreign news outlet as a source of information or commentary; only 11, or 1.0% of texts, are "Challenge". Therefore, given the contextual differences between citing and challenging foreign media and the highly imbalanced distribution of the two categories, it would be difficult to train traditional supervised machine learning classification models, which would have likely led to biased predictions favoring the majority class. Using hand-coded data to train supervised machine learning models for large-scale text classification has been a common approach in political science research (Gohdes 2020; Park, Greene, and Colaresi 2020; Barberá et al. 2021). However, Large Language Models (LLMs), such as GPT-4, have also been applied to perform classifications, on textual data such as newscasts (Kronick and Marshall 2024).

Then, the GPT-4o mini model was instructed to classify the human-labeled texts. The prompt had instructed the model to distinguish between the foreign news outlet being challenged in the text, which should be labeled as "Challenge", and the foreign news outlet being cited as a source to challenge something else (e.g. the statement made by a foreign government), which belongs to the "Source" category. A self-checking mechanism

is added, where I asked the model to always re-assess whether its classifications are correct and justified, considering the full, nuanced context and language. However, the model still had difficulty reaching full accuracy in classifying mentions where the foreign media was used as an objective source to criticize something else. The model performs well in classifying the "Source" category, and over-predicted the "Challenge" category. I addressed this issue through designing a prompt that errs on the side of caution, over-including potential "Challenge" mentions, even if some were actually "Source" or "Neither"; then, after automated labeling of the full dataset, I manually verified all texts that the model had labeled as "Challenge" to address the over-prediction. Because of the small size of the "Challenge" category, the manual review was cost-effective, and it provided accuracy for the most sensitive misclassification cases. Moreover, in the full dataset coded by the GPT model, after checking all texts categorized as "Challenge", the proportion of "Challenge" mentions in the full dataset was 1.2%, similar with the 1.0% observed in the hand-coded sample, which suggests a low likelihood of false negatives for "Challenge" cases.

As shown in Table 2.2, the model correctly identified all true "Challenge" mentions, but occasionally misclassified other cases as "Challenge", leading to a low Precision.

The performance in identifying mentions human-labeled as "Neither", with 73 "Neither" cases misclassified as "Source", is expected given its ambiguous nature. Unlike "Challenge" and "Source", which have clear distinctions, the Neither" category represents a broader and more middle ground. Some texts human-labeled as "Neither" could reasonably be categorized as Source, as the boundary between Neither and Source is inherently flexible. For instance,

卡特的助理当时回应, 防长确实存在过失, 但他已经 "收手" 了。美联社和美国有线电视新闻网等主流媒体则" 信息自由法为依据," 求五角大楼" 开卡特涉事邮" 内容。时隔 3 个月, 这些邮件才得以公开。[At that time, Carter's assistant responded that the defense secretary did make mistakes, but

he had "stopped doing it". Mainstream media such as the Associated Press and CNN invoked the Freedom of Information Act to demand the Pentagon release Carter's emails. The emails were not made public until three months later.]

In this excerpt, the author did not cite any reporting from *The Associated Press* or challenge the reliability of the outlet, so it was human-labeled as neither "Challenge" nor "Source". However, since it was identified as a mainstream media outlet that engaged in legal efforts to demand government transparency, it was reasonable for the GPT model to classify it as "Source". In such cases, the mentions may not explicitly use foreign media outlets as sources of information, but it can be inferred from the context that the media outlets were regarded by the author as authoritative actors. Thus, the inaccuracy in the "Neither" category is not a significant concern.

Table 2.2: ChatGPT API Classification Accuracy

Actual Label	Predicted Label (ChatGPT API)			Total	Recall
	Challenge	Neither	Source		
Challenge	11	0	0	11	1.00
Neither	5	66	73	144	0.46
Source	14	4	877	895	0.98
Total	30	70	950	1050	
Precision	0.37	0.94	0.92		

Note: The rows represent the actual human-assigned labels, and the columns represent the labels assigned by the GPT-4o mini model. Recall is calculated as $\frac{\text{True Positive}}{\text{True Positive}+\text{False Negative}}$, and Precision is calculated as $\frac{\text{True Positive}}{\text{True Positive}+\text{False Positive}}$.

2.3.2 Country Focus and Sentiment Analysis

In order to compare the distributions of countries reported and how the countries were portrayed in the Chinese newspaper articles that mentioned foreign media, I also employed the

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OpenAI GPT-4o model for the content and sentiment identification task. For content classification of the excerpts, I asked the model to identify the primary subject being reported on in the excerpt is which of the following:

(1) **United States**; (2) **China**; (3) **Other country**; (4) **None**, which means the content is not related to any countries.

For sentiment classification, I instructed the model to decide how the primary subject being reported on in this excerpt is portrayed:

(1) **Positive** (2) **Negative** (3) **Neutral**

For example, when the excerpt discusses achievements of the primary country being discussed in economics, technology, or other fields, or achievements of individuals，they are categorized as Positive portrayal:

村民人均月收入超过 5000 元。全球著名杂志经济学人对军埔村作了专题报道: 一个曾经名不见经传的小村庄登上了世界关注的大舞台。军埔"星星之火"在揭阳迅速形成"燎原之势"。[The average monthly income of the villagers exceeds 5,000 Yuan. The feature report on Junpu Village by the globally renowned magazine *The Economist* states: a once little-known village has now stepped onto the world stage. The "spark" of Junpu has quickly turned into a "prairie fire" across Jieyang.] – *Nanfang Daily*，October 27, 2014 (China|Positive)

法新社报道, 全球多家航天机构先前累计 43 次尝试把飞行器、探测器送上火星, 过半以失败告终。"洞察"号登陆火星前, 美国航天局已有 7 次成功经历。[According to *AFP*, space agencies around the world had previously made a total of 43 attempts to send spacecraft or probes to Mars, with more than half ending in failure. Before InSight's landing, NASA had already succeeded seven times.] – *Chengdu Economic Daily*, November 28, 2018 (United States|Positive)

作家与法学家跨界似乎是何家弘永不停息的一种尝试, 他的五部小说《血之罪》《性之罪》《X 之罪》《无罪贪官》《无罪谋杀》被称作"三罪二无", 这些作品被翻译成法文、意大利文、西班牙文、英文等多国语言。[Crossing the boundaries between writer and jurist seems to be a persistent pursuit for He Jiahong. His five novels —*Crime of Blood*, *Crime of Sex*, *Crime of X*, *Innocent Corrupt Official*, and *Innocent Murder* —are collectively referred to as the "Three Crimes and Two Innocents." These works have been translated into multiple languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, and English.] – *Procuratorate Daily*, February 9, 2018 (None|Positive)

When the excerpt is only reporting on affairs of the country without notable positive or negative portrayal, it is categorized as Neutral:

双方当天没有发生冲突。美联社报道, 在"亚伯拉罕·林肯"号航母行经霍尔木兹海峡期间, 战斗群直升机升空盘旋, 侦察可能敌情。数十架 F/A-18 型战机和其他型号军机部署在甲板上, 一些美军士兵武装待命。[There was no confrontation between the two sides on that day. According to The Associated Press, as the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln passed through the Strait of Hormuz, helicopters from the carrier strike group took off and circled overhead to scout for potential enemies. Dozens of F/A-18 fighter jets and other military aircraft were stationed on the deck, with some U.S. soldiers standing by in full combat gear.] – *Dalian Daily*, February 16, 2012 (United States|Neutral)

近年来, 民族团结政府与国民代表大会形成割据对峙之势, 国民代表大会方面屡次试图推翻民族团结政府未果。法新社 28 日援引当地媒体和专家的话报道, 这是巴沙加 3 个月内第二次尝试夺取首都失败。[In recent years, a standoff has developed between the Government of National Unity and

the House of Representatives, with the latter repeatedly failing in attempts to overthrow the Government of National Unity. *Agence France-Presse* reported on the 28th, citing local media and experts, that this marks Bashagha's second failed attempt in three months to seize the capital.] – *Chengdu Economic Daily*, August 30, 2022 (Other country|Neutral)

Negative indicates that the excerpt reports negative news about the country:

近日联合早报网引述英国卫报报道称, 研究发现中国劳动者年均工作 2000 至 2200 小时, 文章号召英国人向亚洲经济体学习。不过本报记者采访发现, 国内劳动者更多是吐槽"被迫勤劳", 有了微信后工作更是不分昼夜。[Recently, *Lianhe Zaobao* cited a report from *The Guardian* stating that research has found Chinese workers work an average of 2,000 to 2,200 hours per year. The article calls on British people to learn from Asian economies. However, our reporter found in interviews that domestic (Chinese) workers mostly complain about being "forced to be diligent," and work day and night with the advent of WeChat.] – *Guangzhou Daily*, October 10, 2015 (China|Negative)

美国一些人的对抗性思维值得警惕, 国际社会共同面临的一个重要课题是: 如何防止美国肆意借强力维护自身霸权地位, 给国际体系的平稳运行带来更多冲击。[The confrontational mindset of some people in the United States needs to be cautioned. An important issue faced by the international community is how to prevent the U.S. from recklessly using its power to maintain its hegemonic position, which will cause further disruption to the smooth functioning of the international system.] – *People's Daily*, June 18, 2019 (United States|Negative)

For the categorization of countries primarily mentioned and how the countries are

portrayed in Chinese newspaper articles, the GPT-4o model, which performs better in understanding contextual nuances, has classified the randomly sampled 150 texts with high accuracy (Table 2.3 Table 2.4).

Table 2.3: Country Theme Classification Accuracy

Actual Label	Predicted Label				Total	Recall
	China	None	Other country	United States		
China	22	0	0	0	22	1.00
None	0	39	3	1	43	0.91
Other country	0	3	43	0	46	0.93
United States	0	0	0	39	39	1.00
Total	22	42	46	40	150	
Precision	1.00	0.93	0.93	0.98		

Table 2.4: Portrayal Classification Accuracy

Actual Label	Predicted Label			Total	Recall
	Negative	Neutral	Positive		
Negative	45	3	0	48	0.94
Neutral	2	73	0	75	0.97
Positive	0	2	25	27	0.93
Total	47	78	25	150	
Precision	0.96	0.94	1.00		

Note: The rows represent the actual human-assigned labels, and the columns represent the labels assigned by the GPT-4o model. Recall is calculated as $\frac{\text{True Positive}}{\text{True Positive} + \text{False Negative}}$, and Precision is calculated as $\frac{\text{True Positive}}{\text{True Positive} + \text{False Positive}}$.

Chapter 3

Results

On average, the block on foreign media had a positive effect on the mentions by state-owned newspapers in China, relative to baseline unblocked outlets (*Agence France-Presse* and *The Associated Press*). China cited less foreign news sources, suggesting an overall changing environment with political propaganda (Figure 3.1).

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Based on the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results in Table 3.1, the block of foreign media increases the monthly mentions of the fodoesn'tedia in Chinese papers by 1.068 mentions per month. For foreign news outlets separately, the blocking of *The New York Times* (the reference category) has a significant increase 1.211 article mentions per month in a Chinese paper, and the treatment effect for *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* are not different from the reference. *The Economist* has a marginally significantly higher effect of 1.984 article mentions than blocking *The New York Times*. In contrast, blocking *BBC* doesn't seem to have a significant effect. Figure 3.2 presents the estimated effects.

Based on the Poisson regression outputs in Table 3.2, the percent changes in mentions were computed for overall or the reference foreign media using $\left(e^{\beta_1} - 1\right) \times 100\%$ and computed for other foreign media with interaction terms using $\left(e^{\beta_1 + \beta_3} - 1\right) \times 100\%$. The
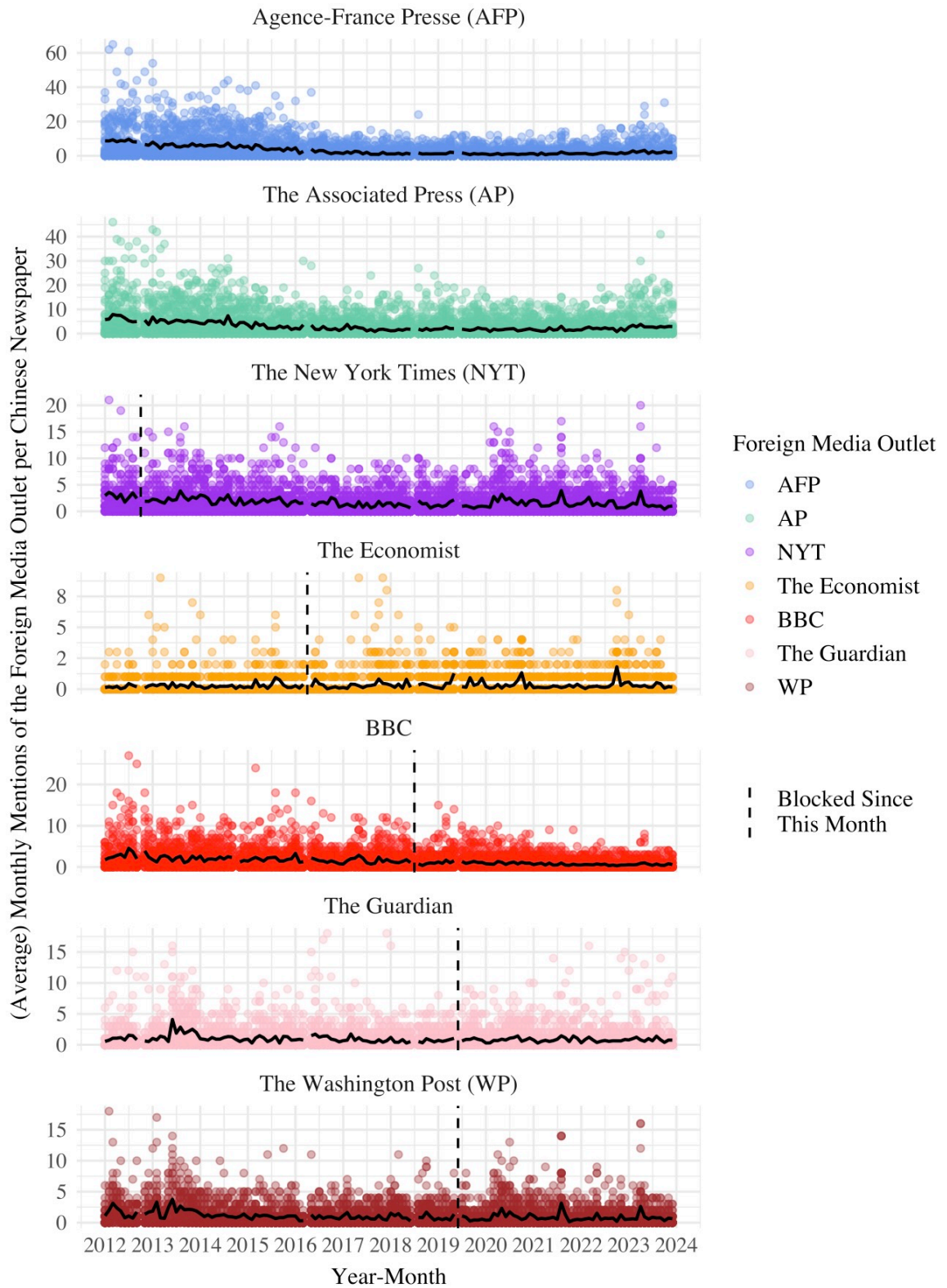
Figure 3.1: Monthly Mentions of a Foreign Media Outlet by a Chinese Newspaper

Colored dots: mentions by individual papers; black line: average mentions across all papers

results suggest that, overall, blocking foreign media is associated with a highly significant increase of 31.0% mentions. With interaction with foreign media, blocking *The New York Times* increases by about 44.5%, and the effects for *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* are not significantly different. *The Economist* has a significant effect of 206.4% increase, and *BBC* experienced a 15.0% decline in mentions.

The Negative Binomial regression results in Table 3.3 suggest that the overall estimated effect is 23.2% increase. With interaction terms, blocking *The New York Times* increases by about 36.5%, and the effects for *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* are not significantly different. *The Economist* has a significant effect of 205.5% increase, and *BBC* experienced a 25.6% decline in mentions.

Figure 3.1 compares the trends of the number of mentions for all the control and treated foreign media outlets to assess the plausibility of the parallel trends assumption. The mentions of the control media outlets (*Agence-France Presse* and *The Associated Press*) decreased slowly over time. Compared to *Agence-France Presse* and *The Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, which was blocked in October 2012, has similar flat average pre-treatment trends overall, with short-term fluctuations but no discernible upward or downward slope. *BBC*, *The Guardian*, and *The Washington Post* have similar gradual decreases in mentions over time like the control outlets, with some temporary fluctuations.

The Economist exhibits a relatively flat pre-treatment trend, while the control outlets (*AFP* and *AP*) show a slow but consistent downward trend. This introduces a mild deviation from the parallel trends assumption, as the controls may not perfectly represent the untreated counterfactual trajectory of treated outlets. However, the mentions of *The Economist* were close to 0 for most months before its block, so the divergence in trends is limited in scale.

Table 3.1: OLS Regressions: Mentions by Month Over Blocked

	Mentions by Month	
	OLS Model	OLS Model with Blocked × Foreign Media
Blocked	1.068**	1.211***
	(0.3219)	(0.3171)
Total Chinese Newspaper Articles Monthly	0.0014***	0.0014***
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
The Economist		-1.587***
		(0.2844)
BBC		0.6486**
		(0.2346)
The Guardian		-0.0601
		(0.2019)
The Washington Post		0.0965
		(0.1889)
Agence France-Presse		2.181***
		(0.5830)
The Associated Press		2.138***
		(0.5396)
Blocked × The Economist		0.7729*
		(0.3242)
Blocked × BBC		-0.9007***
		(0.2077)
Blocked × The Guardian		-0.1333
		(0.2186)
Blocked × The Washington Post		-0.2383
		(0.1925)
Observations	40,566	40,566
R^2	0.40145	0.40569
Within R^2	0.08928	0.17918
Foreign Newspaper fixed effects	✓	
ym(year_month) fixed effects	✓	✓
Chinese_newspaper fixed effects	✓	✓

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

Table 3.2: Poisson Regressions: Mentions by Month Over Blocked

	Mentions by Month	
	Poisson Model	**Poisson Model with Blocked $\times$ Foreign Media**
Blocked	0.2697***	0.3681***
	(0.0798)	(0.0763)
Total Chinese Newspaper Articles Monthly	0.0003**	0.0003**
	(9.62×10^{-5})	(9.62×10^{-5})
The Economist		-2.028***
		(0.1440)
BBC		0.1517**
		(0.0461)
The Guardian		-0.4238***
		(0.1162)
The Washington Post		-0.2734***
		(0.0522)
Agence France-Presse		0.8162***
		(0.0858)
The Associated Press		0.8002***
		(0.0768)
Blocked $\times$ The Economist		0.7517***
		(0.1313)
Blocked $\times$ BBC		-0.5308***
		(0.0829)
Blocked $\times$ The Guardian		0.0657
		(0.1350)
Blocked $\times$ The Washington Post		-0.0221
		(0.0882)
Observations	40,566	40,566
Squared Correlation	0.61926	0.62057
Pseudo R^2	0.43723	0.44039
BIC	115,190.8	114,599.5
Foreign Newspaper fixed effects	✓	
ym(year_month) fixed effects	✓	✓
Chinese_newspaper fixed effects	✓	✓

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.
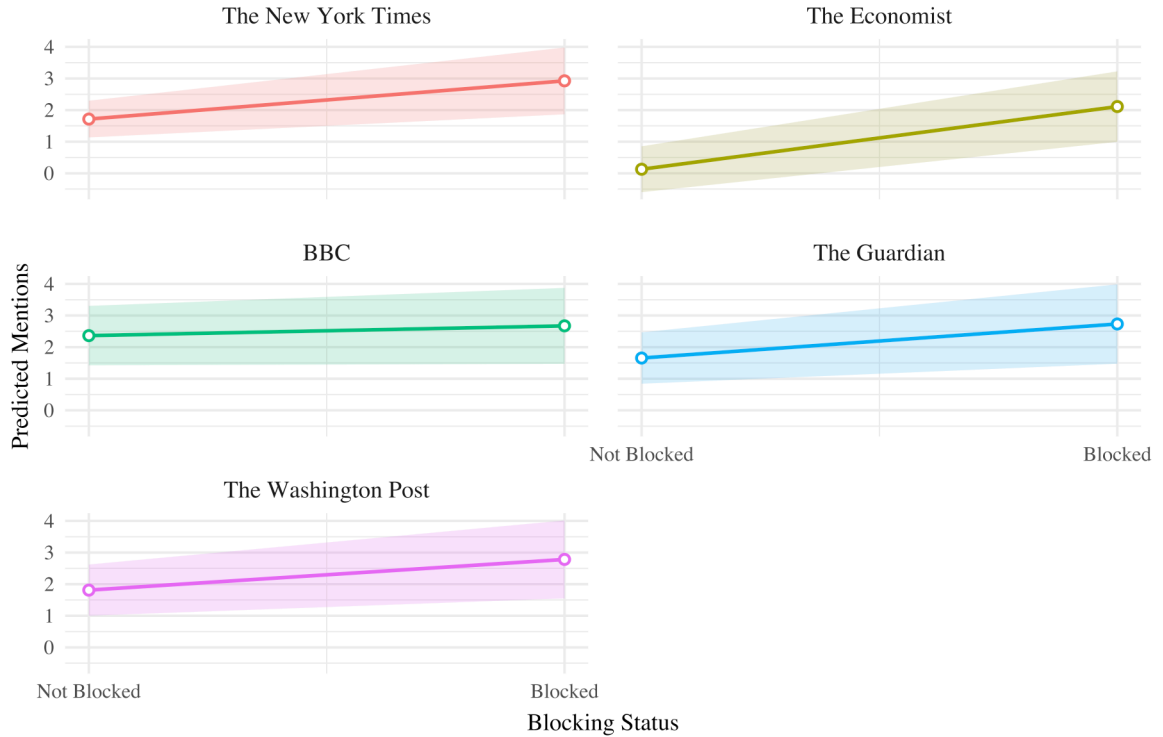
Figure 3.2: Effect of Blocking on Foreign Newspaper Mentions

Predicted mentions before and after blocking, with 95% Confidence Intervals

3.0.1 Robust Checks: Dynamic Difference-in-Differences

Figures 3.4 present the treatment estimates by quarter for the five blocked foreign media. The dynamic treatment effects were estimated for each period. Monthly mentions of foreign media were aggregated to quarterly mentions to ensure adequate data. Because of much less data used for estimations per period, some random noises are reasonably expected (Huntington-Klein 2022). To avoid partial-quarter confounds, I removed observations of quarters where the studied foreign media outlets were censored (i.e. Quarters 4, 18, 27, and 30).

Overall, there are mild noise and fluctuations for some outlets due to the limited data for quarterly estimates, there are no systematic upward or downward trends before treat-

Table 3.3: Negative Binomial Regressions: Mentions by Month Over Blocked

| | Mentions by Month | |
	Negative Binomial Model	Negative Binomial Model with Blocked $\times$ Foreign Media
Blocked	0.2089**	0.3108***
	(0.0728)	(0.0848)
Total Chinese Newspaper Articles Monthly	0.0004**	0.0004**
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
The Economist		-2.181***
		(0.1235)
BBC		0.0926
		(0.0620)
The Guardian		-0.5205***
		(0.1210)
The Washington Post		-0.3581***
		(0.0680)
Agence France-Presse		0.5087***
		(0.1083)
The Associated Press		0.5750***
		(0.1031)
Blocked $\times$ The Economist		0.8061***
		(0.1167)
Blocked $\times$ BBC		-0.6069***
		(0.0928)
Blocked $\times$ The Guardian		0.0356
		(0.1172)
Blocked $\times$ The Washington Post		-0.0728
		(0.0798)
Observations	40,566	40,566
Squared Correlation	0.48221	0.47647
Pseudo R^2	0.19542	0.19881
BIC	106,076.7	105,680.7
Over-dispersion	1.8467	1.8970
Foreign Newspaper fixed effects	✓	
ym(year_month) fixed effects	40 ✓	✓
Chinese_newspaper fixed effects	✓	✓

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

ment. The dynamic difference-in-differences plot for *The New York Times* shows mostly stable pre-treatment estimates. One of the pre-treatment coefficients shows a statistically significant estimate, with its confidence interval lying just below zero. However, this isolated deviation is consistent with random variation and does not pose a substantive threat to the identification strategy. Comparing the average monthly mention trends with trends of other unblocked media outlets before *The New York Times* was banned in China in 3.1, this estimate is not part of a broader trend, as no consistent pattern of increasing or decreasing mentions is observed in the pre-treatment quarters. The deviation is likely attributable to noise rather than a substantive violation of the identifying assumptions.

For *The Economist*, there is no consistent upward trend running up to the treatment. Pre-treatment estimates fluctuate, weakening the concern about effects occurring before the block. Quarters 13 and 14, which occur 4 and more quarters before the censorship, display statistically significant negative estimates. However, Quarter 15 is slightly positive, and Quarter 16 returns to a modest negative estimate, both with wide confidence intervals that overlap zero. These fluctuations suggest short-term volatility rather than a systematic pre-trend. As a result, while the placebo test is not perfectly clean, the absence of a monotonic trend in the pre-treatment period and the timing of the deviations (several periods prior to treatment) support the overall credibility of the design.

The dynamic DiD plot for *BBC* reveals volatile pre-treatment estimates, with no clear directional trend, despite that the estimates of Chinese newspapers mentions are significantly lower relative to the reference quarter in some quarters prior to the treatment. Among the four pre-treatment quarters, Quarters 23 and 25 show statistically significant negative deviations. However, these are interspersed with the significant positive estimate in Quarter 22 and the non-significant estimate in Quarter 24, resulting in an alternating pattern without a monotonic trajectory. The fluctuations could reflect irregular media dynamics or noise rather than structural violations of the identifying assumption. While the placebo test

here presents concerns that weakens the placebo test for *BBC*, because of expected noises in quarterly estimates and the consistently lower mentions in almost all quarters after the block, the lack of a coherent pattern across pre-treatment quarters helps mitigate concerns about bias in the post-treatment estimates.

The Guardian has a clean placebo test. Across the four pre-treatment quarters (Quarters 25–28), none of the coefficient estimates are statistically significant, with all confidence intervals overlapping zero. While there is modest fluctuation in point estimates, these are small in magnitude and show no consistent upward or downward trend. This result indicates that the model does not detect spurious treatment effects prior to censorship, strengthening the credibility of the design and the interpretation of post-treatment estimates.

The plot for *The Washington Post* reveals a notable upward trend in mentions during the pre-treatment period, raising concerns about the placebo test. Quarter 25 shows a large and statistically significant estimate, and Quarters 26 through 28 also have positive estimates, with the latter two quarters statistically significant. These findings suggest that the increase in mentions of *The Washington Post* by Chinese state-owned media may have begun prior to the official block. As a result, the placebo test for this case is not satisfied. While this pattern complicates strict causal attribution, it does not contradict the broader finding that censorship was followed by a sustained elevation in mentions relative to unblocked media.

3.1 Content Analysis Results

Figure 3.5 suggests that most of the mentions were Chinese state-owned newspapers citing the foreign media as authoritative sources. Comparing the percentage distribution of categories for each foreign media before and after they were blocked in China (Figure 3.6, though there are some variations, "Challenge" comprises only minor portion of mentions. As expected, the foreign media outlets that were never blocked – *AFP* and *AP*, were almost
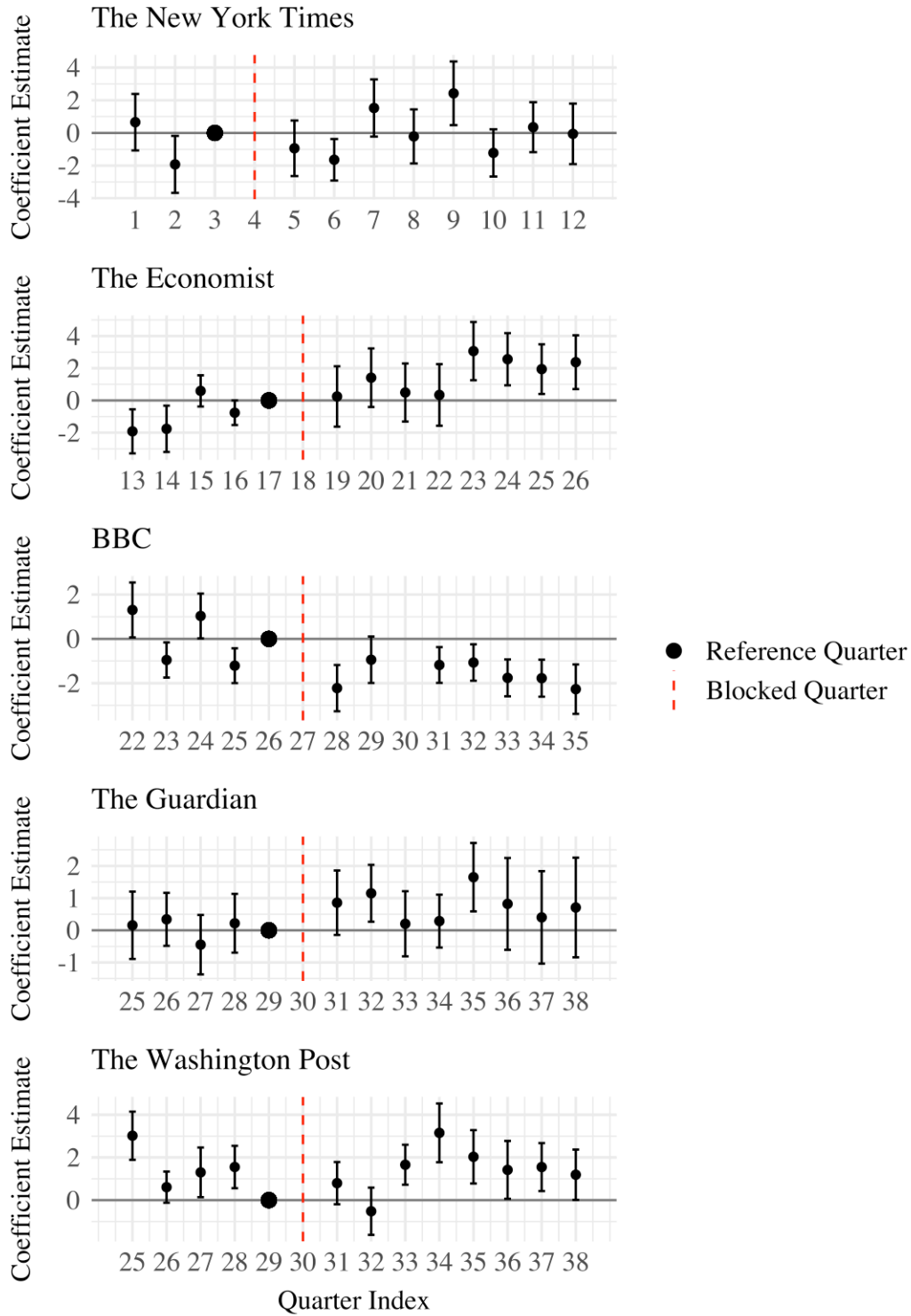
Figure 3.3: Dynamic DiD Estimates

Figure 3.4: The coefficient estimates for each quarter is relative to the Reference Quarter. The error bars present the 95% confidence interval.

never challenged by Chinese journalists. There are no notable differences in the distributions of outlets being challenged and cited as sources before and after blocks. Therefore, the content analysis results suggest that the relative rise in mentions of foreign media outlets after their blocks is very unlikely to be driven by Chinese newspapers increasingly criticizing or challenging these outlets; rather, Chinese newspapers continue to cite these outlets primarily as credible sources, even after they are censored.
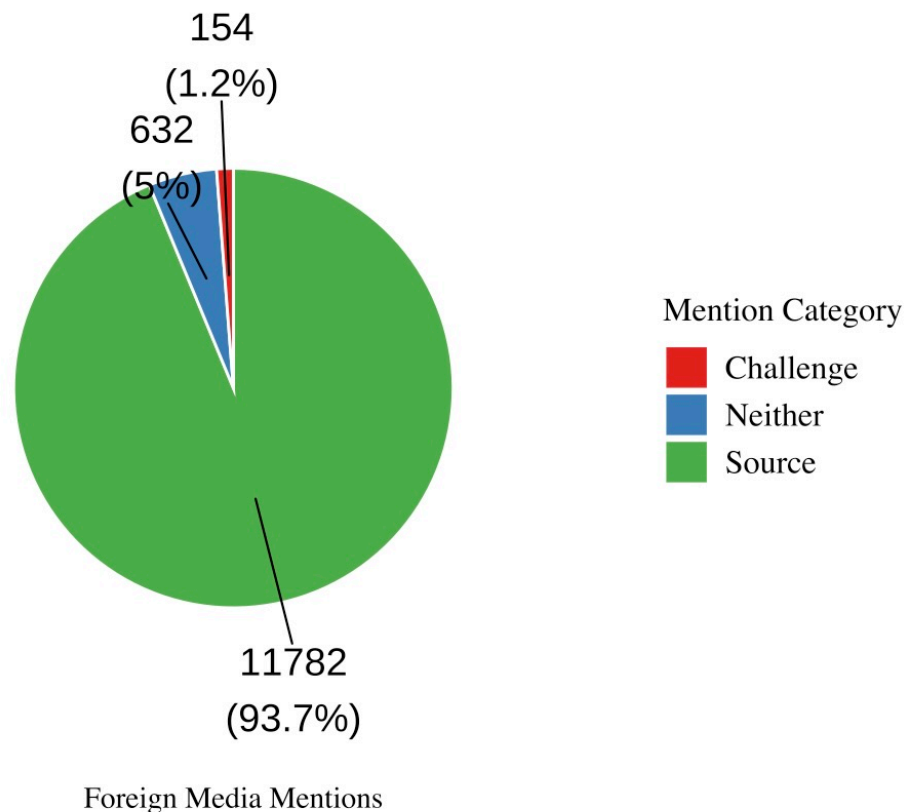

Figure 3.5: Percentage Distribution of Foreign Media Mention Categories

Figure 3.7 illustrates what countries are reported on and how they are portrayed in Chinese newspaper articles that mentioned foreign media. The United States alone is mentioned in 26% of the articles. Of these, a majority (57%) portray the U.S. negatively, while only 5% present the country in a positive light. In contrast, portrayals of other countries tend
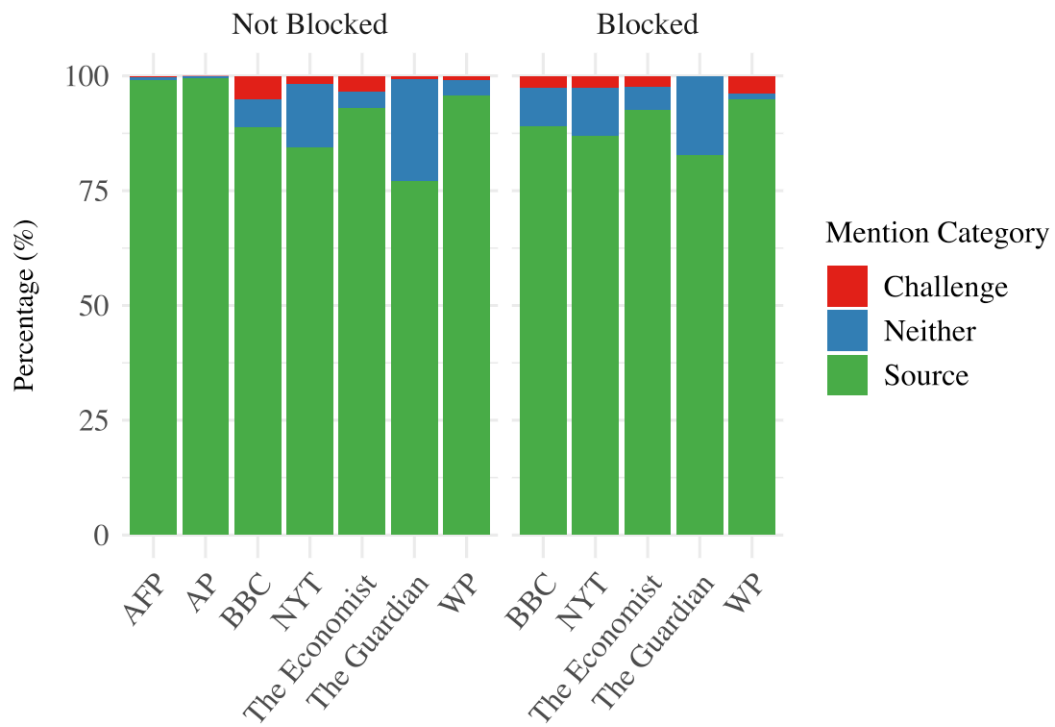
Figure 3.6: Distribution of Mentions by Foreign Newspaper and Block Status

to be more neutral, though 32% of articles covering these countries still contain negative framing.

Because the GPT model categorizes articles focused on individuals within China as "None," the 13% of articles identified as reporting on "China" reflect only those that discuss the country as a whole. Aligned with the theoretical expectation, 82% of these portrayals are positive.
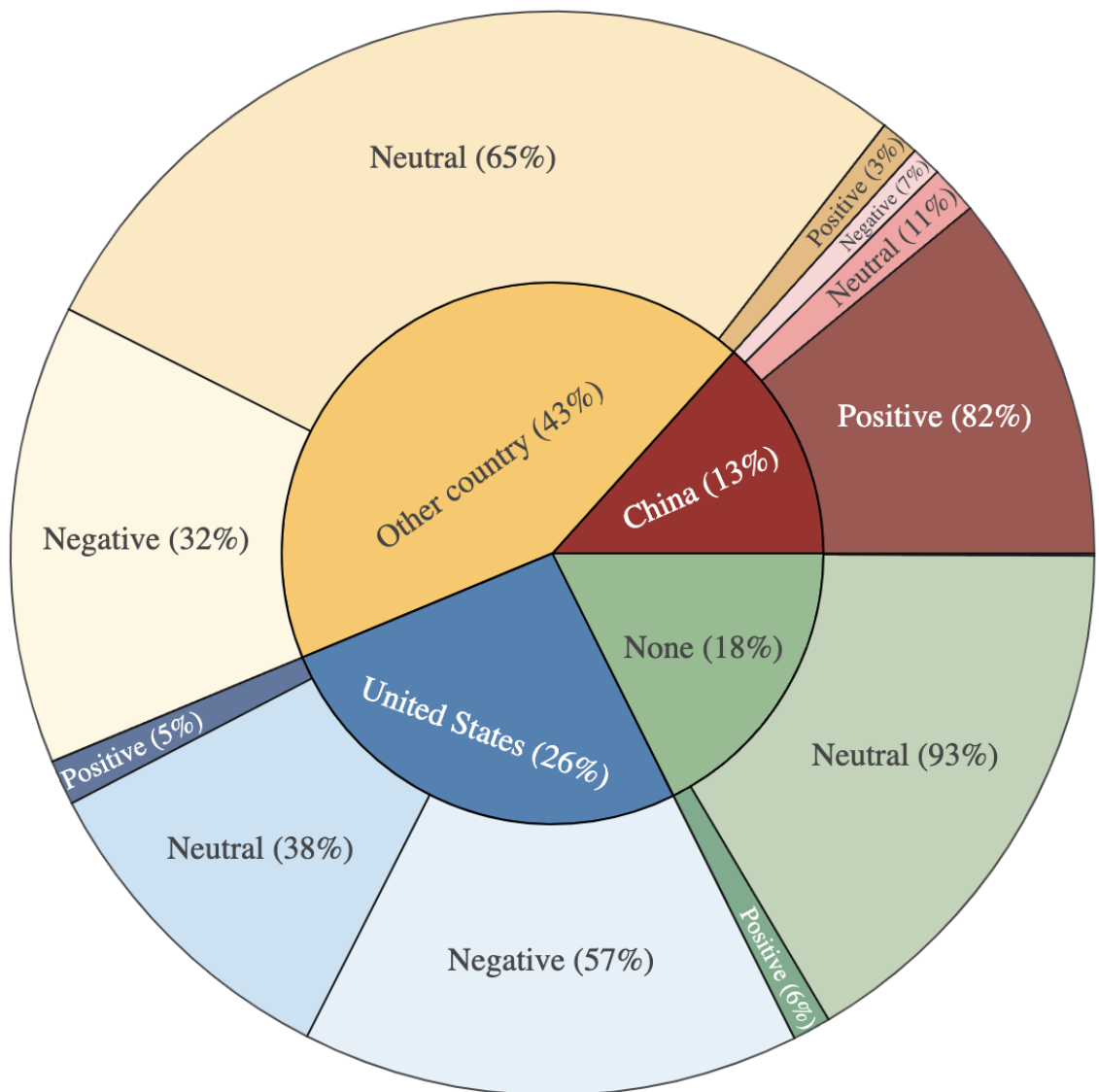

Figure 3.7: The Distribution of Primary Subjects Being Reported on and How They Were Portrayed in Chinese Newspapers

Figure 3.8 shows changes in portrayals before and after foreign news outlets were blocked in China. The proportions of articles reporting on China after blocks are higher than before blocks for all five treated foreign media outlets. Similarly, Chinese newspapers are more likely to cover the U.S. when mentioning any of the five outlets after they were blocked. Moreover, among articles mentioning a specific foreign outlet, the portrayal of China becomes more positive, while portrayals of the United States grow more negative. This pattern holds across all five blocked outlets. Notably, the distributions of portrayals associated with *Agence France-Presse* and *The Associated Press*, which are never banned in China, resembles those observed for the censored outlets, indicating similar thematic uses.
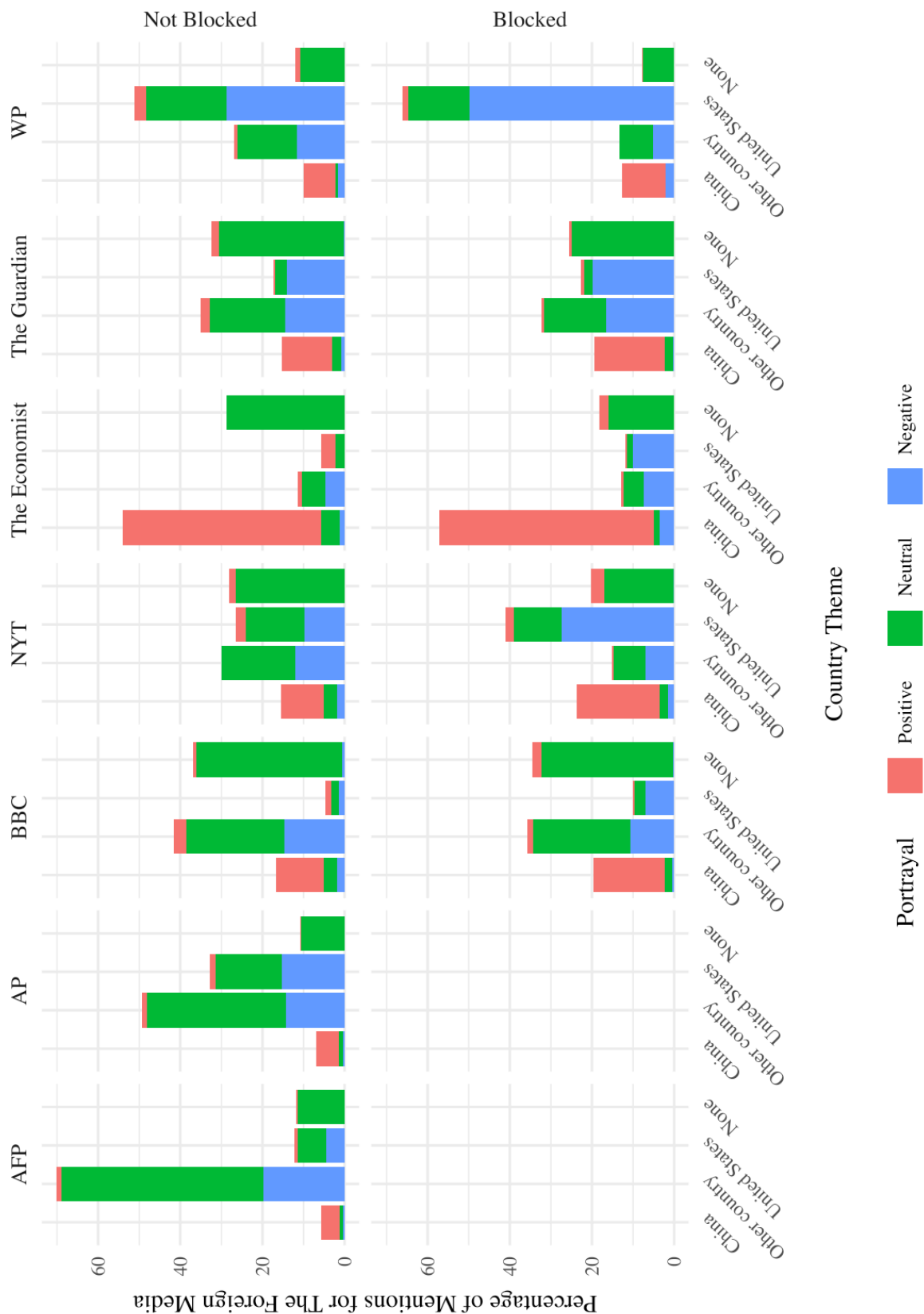
Figure 3.8: How Countries Are Portrayed Before and After Foreign Media Blocks

The y-axis indicates the percentage of articles where the country (or none of the countries) is its main theme, out of all articles that mention the specific foreign media outlet when it was blocked/not blocked.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The regression outputs suggest that for four of the five censored foreign media studied in this research, the block of the public from accessing news from the media sites did lead to an increase of Chinese state-owned newspapers mentioning the foreign media relative to unblocked foreign media, particularly citing them as sources of information or opinion. The empirical results align with the theoretical expectation of state strategic narrative control – foreign media being inaccessible to the public without using circumvention tools – allows state-owned propaganda machines to selectively utilize information from these foreign media that aligns with their messages. The information became more valuable after the block, so journalists were more likely to use non-sensitive reporting from these foreign news outlets. However, it is important to note the potential for time-specific political shocks or events to disproportionately affect either Chinese newspaper coverage or the output of foreign media, which would violate the assumption in this research. Additionally, limitations in pre-treatment trend alignment and mixed results in placebo tests for some of the blocked outlets – particularly *The Economist* and *The Washington Post* – should be acknowledged as constraints on causal interpretation.

Interestingly, the DiD results also reveal a deviation in the influence of blocks. *BBC* is the only foreign media that Chinese newspapers did not increasingly mention af-

ter its block. Further investigation is required to understand the exact factors contributing to this. However, there are several plausible explanations: First, different from *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, and *The Washington Post*, *BBC* is a general news broadcaster with more event-driven, straightforward reporting, while other foreign news outlets often publish in-depth investigative news with strong editorial perspectives. *BBC*'s reporting is more likely to be similar to those of *Agence-France Presse* and **The Associated Press** and, therefore, more replicable from alternative sources, or at least not more valuable after the block. Journalists likely had access to similar information already. In fact, as shown earlier in Table **??**, *BBC* was the only news outlet that was blocked because the corporation itself switched from HTTP to HTTPS encryption, and the latter type had been routinely censored by the Great Firewall, while other outlets were immediately blocked after reporting sensitive issues about China. Compared to a block due to technical restrictions, blocks due to political controversies may draw more attention from journalists.

Content analyses provide helpful clues about the mechanisms behind the relative increase in mentions after censorship. The GPT-based classification of texts had shown that a vast majority of mentions were Chinese state-owned media citing foreign news media as authoritative sources of news, rather than challenging their reporting, and the portrayals of countries became more ideological after block. Future research could build on these findings by modeling more specific dependent variables – such as the frequency of articles that positively portray China or negatively portray the U.S. – to test whether the shift in ideological framing is directly associated with foreign media censorship. This would provide additional insights into the role of censorship in shaping the content and tone of state propaganda.

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Appendix A

Blocked Foreign Media Keywords

Table A.1 presents the keywords used to extract mentions of foreign media studied in this research. To identify foreign media mentions as comprehensively as possible, I developed and refined a set of relevant keywords iteratively, verifying results through the third-party newspaper aggregator *WiseSearch*.

Table A.1: Blocked Foreign Media Keywords

Newspaper	Block Month	Searching Keyword Set
New York Times [纽约时报]	October 2012	"纽约时报" OR "New York Times" OR "NY Times" OR "NYT" OR "NYTimes" OR "nytimes"
The Economist [经济学人]	April 2016	"The Economist" OR "经济学人" OR "economist.com"
BBC [英国广播公司]	July 2018	"BBC" OR "英国广播公司" OR "British Broadcasting Corporation" OR "bbc.com"
The Washington Post [华盛顿邮报/华邮]	June 2019	"华盛顿邮报" OR "Washington Post" OR "washingtonpost"
The Guardian [卫报]	June 2019	"The Guardian" OR "卫报" OR "theguardian"
Associated Press [联合通讯社]	Not Blocked	"美联社" OR "美国联合通讯社" OR "Associate" Press"uotedblright OR "apnews.com"
Agence France-Presse [法国新闻社]	Not Blocked	"法新社" OR "法国新闻社" OR "Agence France-Presse" OR "afp.com"

BBC was also temporarily blocked in October 2014 (BBC 2014). Thus, the data from this month is excluded from the analysis.

Appendix B

ChatGPT API Classification Prompts

Below is the full prompt I used to instruct the "gpt-4o-mini" model:

You are a text classification assistant who is good at understanding nuanced language, tone, and context. Follow these classification rules carefully and **exactly**:

Step 1: Identify the Foreign News Outlet: the excerpt from a Chinese newspaper article mentions a specific foreign news outlet from the following list: 1. "纽约时报" or its variations ("New York Times", etc.) 2. "BBC" or its variations ("英国广播公司", etc.) 3. "The Economist" or its variations ("经济学人", etc.) 4. "Washington Post" or its variations ("华盛顿邮报", etc.) 5. "The Guardian" or its variations ("卫报", etc.) 6. "Agence France-Presse" or its variations (" 法新社", etc.) 7. "Associated Press" or its variations (" 美联社", etc.)

Step 2: Categ "riz" the Mention: Determi "e the aut" orś mentioning of the foreign news outlet in the excerpt belongs to which of the three categories, which I have defined below: 1. Challenge It means that the *credibility, reliability, motives, OR a specific reporting* of **the foreign news outlet** (not any other entity OR subject in the article) is *either implicitly OR explicitly śhallenged, questioned, criticized, OR portrayed negatively in the article, REGARDLESS of whether this foreign news outlet is treated as a source of information. Importantly, note that citing a foreign news outlet as a source for a negative

news OR a source of negative opinion/criticism belongs to Source, NOT Challenge. For example: 20 年过去, 北约盟友跟着美国在阿富汗转了一圈, 出钱出枪出人, 最终落得一地鸡毛, 再次证明当美国的"小跟班"没有好果子吃。用法新社的说法, 阿富汗变天意味着"美国的形象散落一地"。美国可以一撤了之, 但留给阿富汗人民的痛苦无穷无尽。(The U.S. is criticized, and the foreign news outlet is not criticized, so the excerpt belongs to Source. In this case, the author and the mentioned foreign news outlet (AFP) are in the same position – negatively portraying the United States; the foreign news outlet is used as a source that echoes the authorś criticism of the United States. Therefore, the foreign"news outlet is NOT mentioned with Challenge.) 2. Source It means that, based on the context, the foreign newspaper is *either implicitly OR explicitly* treated as a source of information/opinion/commentary. 3. Neither It means the above two categories do not apply.

Step 3: ALWAYS Verify the Context 1. Justify your classification and AL-WAYS re-assess whether your classification is correct, considering the FULL, NUANCED context and language; 2. If categorized as Challenge, ALWAYS check whether you were really looking at **the foreign news outlet** itself, NOT any other entity OR subject in the article. You MUST prove that your choice of Challenge is NOT because the foreign news outlet was cited as a source to criticize something else, like "20 年过去, 北约盟友跟着美国在阿富汗转了一圈, 出钱出枪出人, 最终落得一地鸡毛, 再次证明当美国的"小跟班"没有好果子吃。用法新社的说法, 阿富汗变天意味着"美国的形象散落一地"。美国可以一撤了之, 但留给阿富汗人民的痛苦无穷无尽。". 3. Do not classify by matching keywords without deeply understanding the context; 4. Do not assume that a phrase containing a news outlet name always refers to the news outlet itself. Always verify the context. For example, " 美国纽约时报广场" refers to Times Square, not the news outlet, so you should ignore how the Square is mentioned.

Step 4: Output the Final Classification Use this **EXACT FORMAT**: Chal-

lenge/Source/Neither|Describe how **the foreign news outlet** (not any other entity OR subject in the article) is used and justify your classification. Example format: Challenge|description and reason for classification...

Here is the excerpt and the mentioned foreign news outlet: Text: (the excerpt is pasted here), Foreign Newspaper: (the foreign media name is pasted here)

Below is the full prompt I used to instruct the "gpt-4o" model:

You are a text classification assistant who is good at understanding nuanced language, tone, and context. Follow these classification rules carefully and **exactly**: **Step 1: Determine the primary subject being reported on in the content, choosing one from the following list:** 1. United States 2. China 3. Other country 4. None None means the content is not related to any countries.

IMPORTANT: You must distinguish between the country being reported on (the subject of the news), and the country from which this excerpt originates. The label must reflect which country the content is about —not who published it.

Step 2: Please decide how the primary subject being reported on in this excerpt is portrayed: 1.Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

Please refer to these examples for classification: -5 亿元, 村民人均月收入超过 5000 元。全球著名杂志经济学人对军埔村作了专题报道: 一个曾经名不见经传的小村庄登上了世界关注的大舞台。军埔 "星星之火" 在揭阳迅速形成 "燎原之势"。(China|Positive) -96‰。谎言 3 英国广播公司 (BBC) "新闻之夜" 爆料, 早木热·达吾提称其在新疆教培中心 "被强制绝育"。事实真相:□ 早木热·达吾提从未在教培中心学习过。......□2019 年 9 月 3 日至 7 日, 美国全国广播公司 (NBC) 记者赴新疆采访报道。□2020 年 12 月, 英国广播公司 (BBC) 记者赴新疆库车等地采访报道。谎言 20 联合国人权高专访问新疆会受到限制。(China|Positive) -第二天,《华尔街日报》的出版商道琼斯公司也称 "中枪"。而《华盛顿邮报》本月 2 日也加入了 "合唱", 称 2011 年的一次网络攻击可能是中国黑客所为。然而, 事实真的如美国一些媒体说的那样?

(China|Positive) -只是观众中, 不同的人善于根据自己的喜好或恐惧来丰富这场争议。2011 年 8 月 30 日,《英国金融时报》刊登了中国富豪黄怒波一亿美元投资冰岛的报道, 路透社、法新社、美联社、CNN 等外媒纷纷质疑, 曾经在中宣部工作过的黄怒波此举可能是政府行为, 目的是使中国在北大西洋获得一个战略立足地; 很多中国媒体却更倾向和自豪于黄怒波这场"诗意的冲动", 他们把"漂洋过海的毛衣"和"冰岛总统书橱里的诗集", 标签给一个"有情怀的英雄主义者"; 中坤则一直坚定不移和不厌其烦地向各路媒体解释, 这是一场纯企业行为的全球度假战略.. (China|Neutral) -同日, 中国银行业协会指出, 将坚定不移支持中资银行在境外的权益保护工作。三家银行均发声澄清据《华盛顿邮报》日前发表报道称, 三家中国大型银行拒绝执行美法院关于违反朝鲜制裁调查的传票, 将面临被切断美元清算渠道的风险。并根据案件细节, 猜测三家银行分别为交通银行、浦发银行和招商银行。(China|Neutral) -英国人"号召"向中国人学习勤劳专家:"被迫勤劳"应引起关注近日联合早报网引述英国卫报报道称, 研究发现中国劳动者年均工作 2000 至 2200 小时, 文章号召英国人向亚洲经济体学习。不过本报记者采访发现, 国内劳动者更多是吐槽"被迫勤劳", 有了微信后工作更是不分昼夜。...... 专家认为, 中国法定劳动时间已逐渐与国际接轨, 但随着社会竞争和压力加大, 过度劳动的问题更隐蔽, 应该引起关注。文/广州日报记者何颖思现象: 加班是家常饭手机不关机随时待命联合早报网引述卫报名为中国人工作有多努力? 的调查文章指出, 研究发现中国劳动者年均工作 2000 至 2200 小时。(China|Negative) -着陆时扬起的尘土附着在镜头上, 致使"自拍照"显得模糊, 却足以显现"洞察"号周围多沙、地势平坦, 仅一块大小可观的岩石。法新社报道, 全球多家航天机构先前累计 43 次尝试把飞行器、探测器送上火星, 过半以失败告终。"洞察"号登陆火星前, 美国航天局已有 7 次成功经历。(United States|Positive) -"双方当天没有发生冲突。美联社报道, 在"亚伯拉罕·林肯"号航母行经霍尔木兹海峡期间, 战斗群直升机升空盘旋, 侦察可能敌情。数十架 F/A-18 型战机和其他型号军机部署在甲板上, 一些美军士兵武装待命。(United States|Neutral) -在他们看来, 今日中国恰是美国的"理想敌人"。日前,《华盛顿邮报》就对华关系刊发评论文章, 标题是《直

到今天, 美国保守派冷战以来一直缺少一个合适恶人》, 淋漓尽致写出对华博弈的亢奋情绪。美国一些人的对抗性思维值得警惕, 国际社会共同面临的一个重要课题是: 如何防止美国肆意借强力维护自身霸权地位, 给国际体系的平稳运行带来更多冲击。(United States|Negative) -显然, 有些美国媒体没有在这次大考中过关, 他们无视中国为抗击疫情付出的巨大努力, 先是冷血旁观, 继而造谣中伤, 缺的不仅是专业, 更是道德。2 月 3 日,《华尔街日报》公然刊发带有严重种族歧视色彩的文章《中国是真正的亚洲病夫》, 诋毁中国政府和人民抗击疫情的努力, 严重伤害中国人民的感情;3 月 2 日, 美国福克斯电视台主持人沃特斯在节目中妄称新冠病毒起源于中国, 要求中国就疫情正式道歉, 荒谬的 "中国道歉论" 充分暴露了他满脑子的无知与偏见;4 月 14 日,《华盛顿邮报》记者罗金编造新闻报道称 "新冠病毒是从中国武汉一个生物研究实验室流出的", 随后美独立新闻网站 "灰色地带" 发文揭露了罗金与政府配合散布虚假信息的全过程.. (United States|Negative) -近年来, 民族团结政府与国民代表大会形成割据对峙之势, 国民代表大会方面屡次试图推翻民族团结政府未果。法新社 28 日援引当地媒体和专家的话报道, 这是巴沙加 3 个月内第二次尝试夺取首都失败。另据路透社报道, 几个支持巴沙加的武装组织似乎在这次冲突中失去位于首都的地盘, 另外几个支持他的武装力量也似乎停止向首都方向前进。(Other country|Neutral) -西方媒体近年来反复翻炒的所谓 "债务陷阱论" 是诋毁中国向发展中国家提供大量贷款, 这些国家无力还贷后便落入 "陷阱", 其资源乃至主权被中国控制。美联社最近就抛出这样一篇文章, 宣称非洲的肯尼亚、赞比亚, 以及南亚的巴基斯坦和斯里兰卡, 都是 "债务陷阱" 的 "受害者"。事实果真如此吗?......"我们希望外界关注到非洲债务更多来自西方国家机构和民间金融机构"。美联社报道称, 巴基斯坦等 10 多个 "对中国负债最重" 的国家 "发现偿还债务正在消耗越来越多的税收收入", "这些收入是维持学校开放、提供电力以及支付食品和燃料所需的"。"在巴基斯坦, 数百万纺织工人被解雇, 因为该国外债过多, 无力维持电力供应和机器运转。(Other country|Negative) -作为媒体, 不必过分解读; 作为媒体受众, 千万不可被误导。美国之音和英国广播公司越文网站称, 播放歌唱祖国后 "现场一片尴尬", 但在浏览现场视

频后, 从画面中的观众和越南领导人的表情看, 哪有丝毫"尴尬"的情绪? 不知西方媒体的"尴尬"等描述从何而来。(Other country|Negative) -"作家与法学家跨界似乎是何家弘永不停息的一种尝试, 他的五部小说《血之罪》《性之罪》《X 之罪》《无罪贪官》《无罪谋杀》被称作"三罪二无", 这些作品被翻译成法文、意大利文、西班牙文、英文等多国语言。第一部小说《血之罪》于 2007 年被英国《卫报》推荐为"亚洲十大犯罪小说"之一, 并于 2011 年在"第五届全国侦探推理小说大赛"中获得"最佳推理奖"。他还于 2016 年在"第六届全国侦探推理小说大赛"中荣获"特别贡献奖"。(None|Positive) -如果不是诺贝尔文学奖大名在外, 很多诺贝尔文学奖获得者的图书销量恐怕更加惨不忍睹。尽管获得了诺贝尔文学奖, 但莫言的作品仍存在很大争议, 比如法新社援引诺贝尔文学奖评委会主席彼得·英格伦的评价称, 通过讽刺手法的运用, 莫言让读者从书中阅读出社会的阴暗面, 因为这个原因, 莫言的作品被认为是粗俗而淫荡的, "莫言书中所写的故事是我听到的最恐怖的故事。"虽然《人民文学》杂志主编李敬泽称"《透明的红萝卜》学生看就非常好, 文字很绚丽, 能让十几岁的年轻人体会到中国文字之美。(None|Neutral)

Step 3: ALWAYS evaluate your labels and assess whether your justification makes sense. (1) **If the excerpt states that the country is criticized by someone and challenges their criticism, then the portrayal should be labeled as Positive. Reporting on achievements or recognitions should also be labeled as Positive.** (2) Verify the context before outputting the categories you decide; (3) ALWAYS re-assess whether your classifications are correct and justified, considering the FULL, NUANCED context and language; (4) DO NOT classify by matching keywords without deeply understanding the context.

Step 4: Return the final output in this **EXACT FORMAT:** Category 1|Category 2 Output example: United States|Negative

Here is the excerpt: