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### Экологическая политика Китая в медиатекстах «Нью-Йорк Таймс»

Статья посвящена отражению экологической политики КНР в медиадискурсе США, прежде всего, в наиболее авторитетном качественном издании – газете «Нью-Йорк Таймс». Актуальность исследования определяется, с одной стороны, значимостью экологической составляющей во внешнем имидже КНР, с другой – скептическим, а то и негативным отношением американской общественности к экологическим практикам Китая. В статье рассматривается значимость экологической компоненты для современного восприятия государства как ответственного участника глобальных процессов. Дается характеристика динамики регулирования экологической политики Китая и в целом тенденций усиления внимания к вопросам защиты окружающей среды, уменьшения выбросов и т. п. Эмпирическая часть статьи содержит анализ текстов газеты «Нью-Йорк Таймс», посвященных экологии и экологической политике КНР за период с 1 сентября 2016 года по 31 декабря 2017 года. На основании применения методов контент-анализа и фрейм-анализа выявляются базовые характеристики освещения этой проблематики. Исследование показывает политизацию экологической повестки применительно к КНР и неполную релевантность представляемого газетой экологического имиджа Китая его реальным природоохранным практикам последнего времени.

**Ключевые слова:** экологическая политика, медиадискурс, имидж государства, КНР, «Нью-Йорк Таймс»

**Introduction.** It has been three centuries since the industrial revolution while the consumption of energy and various natural resources has only been increasing. Over century mankind attempts to place the human society on a sustainable development trajectory, however, there were plenty of efforts of developed countries, of the UN and of different kinds of international organizations, it still cannot be called a real success. A hidden and somewhat already obvious environmental threat continues to grow. With wide-ranging impacts, environmental issues emerged at the end of the 20th century as popular issues including desertification, drought, flooding, salinization of lands, dust storms, reduced biodiversity, etc. that recently acquire special urgency. Moreover, there are no national borders for environmental problems including air pollution, rising sea level, deforestation, ozone holes. All these are served as global factors negatively affecting the quality of human life. The rapid deterioration of the natural environment and the difficulty of predicting the negative changes of environment create a high uncertainty. Therefore, efficient spread of real-time information related to environment and the environmental policy of different countries is urgently required. In the information society, media are considered as a powerful tool for receiving and sending information. Mass communication through mass media plays an important role in the process of environmental education. Yet it is impossible to separate our

knowledge about environmental issues from the ways we communicate about these issues [6, p. 23]. In light of this, the most important task of the media is spreading the impartial and objective mass information related environmental knowledge and environmental policy. With a goal of shaping public opinion on environmental policy and condition, environmental facts and events, environmental aesthetics and research, environmental communication is occurring all around us and holding a response for enhancing the level of environmental awareness of the general public. What's more, environmental issues are regarded as integral parts of the diplomatic agenda that play important roles in shaping image of environmental policy and national image.

#### **Material and methods. Data collection.**

This study provides an analysis of *The New York Times's* coverage from September 1. 2016 to December 31 2017 based on a corpus of newspaper articles related to China's environmental issues. The corpus was built up with the considerations as follows:

1. Founded on September 18, 1851, *The New York Times* (hereinafter NYT) now is one of the most authoritative and credible media in United States even around the world, which means when *The NYT* indicates that an issue is newsworthy, other U. S. news organizations take note [10, p. 32]. According to researcher Goodman R., the U. S. president and *The New York Times* are important in setting the media agenda



for national issues, and real-world indicators are often not important [15]. In digital era, *The NYT* offers readers real-time access to coverage and began publishing on the website in 1996 and on smartphone in 2010 [2, p. 3].

2. The NYT in the last century contributed to the development of environmental journalism that can be seen as a pioneer in this sphere. 60s and 70s of the 20th century was the birth period of Western environmental journalism. Former editor John Oakes devoted a column to promote modern environmental movements and spread relevant new ideas. Since then, many media have imitated this practice. In addition, the 80th annual Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism was awarded to the news coverage relating to environmental issues published by *The New York Times* [1, p. 166–167].

3. During this period, the presidential election was held in U. S. On December 12, 2016, China and the U. S. signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, while it seems like the U. S. wants to evade this issue [17]. In late May and early June 2017, U. S. President D. Trump announced on his own Twitter that the U. S. would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Mr. Trump's decision has caused great discussion not only in the United States, but also around the whole world. The American media described his remarks as "openly shirk the duty on climate change" [11]. Moreover, during the period of analysis, important international conferences on climate change such like the UNFCCC COP 22 and COP 23 (hereinafter COP22 and COP23) were held. Therefore, the research of the news articles in *The NYT* within this period will explicitly show us how Chinese environmental actions climb up to the media agenda of U. S. and how the China's national image related to environmental issues was shaped by the U. S. media.

#### Methods and methodological procedure.

We choose the quantitative analysis to conduct an exploration on the peak of the news articles by *The NYT* related to air pollution in China. To expound how *The NYT* set media agenda, we compare causes of these peaks. In addition, using quantitative analysis, we divide all the news articles into three periods with three explicit peaks of publication. According to clarification of periods, we conduct an in-depth exploration on the dynamic trend of U. S. media's attitude towards China's environmental policy. Then choosing a qualitative research methodology – content analysis, we select from database "General OneFile" 44 articles as samples containing 155 coding units (semantic units) to examine

how articles about China's environmental policy are presented in the NYT, in particular, the media frame and the attribute agenda-setting. Each of the 155 coding units could be a phrase or a sentence that straightly represents China's environmental condition and policy. In this paper, the 155 semantic units were coded according to several kinds of variables, among which major variables are frequently mentioned and concerned environmental topics. Meanwhile, information source, the level of conflicts or topics, aspect of focus (Chinese environmental achievement or measure), negative/positive meaning are also served as categorical variables.

#### Results and discussion.

1. New trend of attitude towards China's environmental policy in *The NYT*.

Using key words "environmental policy" or "sustainable development" as filtering, we selected 180 and 16 news articles published by *The NYT* during the period of analysis, excluded those articles without relationship with China, through the whole filtering procedure, we produce a corpus of 44 articles related to China including news stories and editorials. Analyzing the statistic, we divided the articles into 3 periods: a) September 2016–January 2017; b) March 2017–June 2017; c) October 2017–December 2017. In addition, it is vertical to examine the reason why there is a peak in November 2016 (Figure): a) COP 22 was held in November 2016 which is the first UNFCCC after the Paris Agreement came into force. The conference has aroused people from all walks of life to concern about smog and other environmental issues in China; b) the presidential election was held in the U. S. during this period. In November 2016, Donald Trump won the election, while his attitude toward climate change was in stark contrast to former President Barack Obama's, which once again caused everyone's concern about China's attitude towards environmental issues.

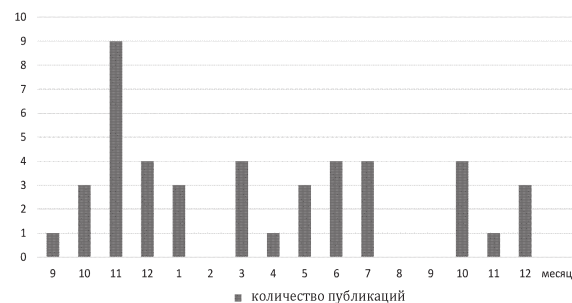
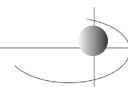


Figure. Dynamic trend of 44 articles in *The NYT* from September 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017

Рисунок. Динамика 44 публикаций в газете «Нью-Йорк Таймс» с 01.09.2016 г. по 31.12.2017 г.



Within 3 periods, author takes an overall elaboration on the dynamic trend of *The New York Times'* attitude towards China's environmental policy:

a) September 2016–January 2017.

28 % of these 155 coding units are selected from this period. In November 2016, Mr. Trump took office as President of the U. S. His attitude towards climate change have caused widespread discussion and criticism, people from all walks of life have begun to worry that China will also be shaken in this situation. *The NYT* well delivered and illustrated this concern and doubt. *"International diplomacy will become more difficult as China and India weigh their own energy policy commitments in the light of the possibility that the United States will walk away from its promises"* [19]. The speech of Mr. Xi given on the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in January 2016, which is about that the determination to reduce emissions in China will not be shaken, was mentioned again in this period several times;

b) March-June of 2017.

52 % of these 155 coding units are selected from this period, which are generally divided into three kinds. 1. Coverage about America's national interests, for instance, *"The risks of withdrawing from the Paris deal include not only diplomatic ill will, but also the possibility of trade reprisals... The European Union currently charges polluters fees for carbon emissions, while China, Mexico and Canada are in the process of carrying out such programs"* [9]. 2. Media articles about the adjustment of relationship like competition and cooperation or conflict between powers, e. g. *"...pressure China to cut back on fossil fuels... state-owned energy companies, will try harder to push back against officials putting limits on coal"* [21]. *"California's leading, China's leading. ... China would now become a global leader on climate change"* [22]. 3. Media texts about problems caused by China's environmental action. E. g. China's construction of coal projects in Latin America's rainforests was also mentioned as damage: *"A true climate leader would invest in the Preservation of areas of global ecological simplicity rather than destroy them"* [14]. All three kinds of media texts reflect the politicization of environmental communication in NYT. At the end of May 2017, D.Trump announced that the U. S. will withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which will break the balance of national power in Climate Change. In June 2017, an in-depth analytical article "China's Role in Climate Change, and Possibly in Fighting It" [5] was published in *The NYT*;

c) October 2017–December 2017.

In the last period, *The NYT* again focus on China's environmental policy itself. Expectations for China's achievements become higher, for instance *"The government did not issue a hard timeline, and regulations and other details still have to be worked out"*, *"China's announcement could also disappoint those who were hoping the long-promised emissions market would cover the country's broader economy"* [4].

2. Media frame and national images of China shaped by *The NYT*.

In this part, we explored how mass media lexically construct the connection between the U. S. and Chinese environmental policy by analyzing high-frequency words. This conscious constructed connection can be seen as media frame. Among the 44 text samples, the word "hoax" was mentioned 17 times in 12 news articles. All the 17 coding units shared the same conceptual content, which is related to the Tweets of Donald Trump: *"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U. S. manufacturing non-competitive. -Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) November 6, 2012"* [8]. What's more, Mr. Trump delivered a speech in South Carolina, claiming more than once that "global warming is China's hoax". Besides, "California" and its governor, "Jerry Brown" are also high-frequency words. The coding units related to "cooperation between China and California" frequently appeared in news articles. The word "California" appeared 90 times in nine articles, three of the nine articles used word "California" in title. "Jerry Brown" or "Mr. Brown" was mentioned 49 times. What's more, the authors directly quoted his words in 44 articles 12 times. Environmental policy of China and China's attitude toward environmental issues are appropriate topics for constructing China as "other". The "other" involved in the conflict between American presidential administration and state governments like California that was represented in the U. S. media text in different ways than before. In light of this, it makes sense to explore how China is interpreted within these two contexts.

In light of this, we examine the influence of these high-frequency words from a view of cognitive science. According to Lakoff's theory of conceptual metaphor, "entailment" is what people can infer from a linguistic expression under normal circumstances; "preferred entailment" is more dominant and implicit entailment [12, p.122–128]; in this sense, "hoax" is a conceptual domain. Polysemy of each domain relies on the diverse of entailments of this conception.



Media tend to consciously highlight one of the entailments of domain “hoax” and turn this implicit entailment to an preferred entailment. This process is contextualization by nature. Here are some examples that represent how media articles in *The NYT* construct the connection between the U. S. and environmental policy of China (table 1).

Table 1

## Quotations about “Mystification”

Таблица 1

## Цитаты о «мистификации»

“Mr. Trump had <u>made statements consistent with climate change denial</u> , including <u>calling climate change a hoax created by China</u> ” [21]
Please <u>revisit your claim</u> that climate change is a hoax... This is no hoax [13]
Mr. Trump <u>has repeatedly denied the science of human-caused climate change</u> , incorrectly calling it “fictional” and saying it was a hoax created by the Chinese [22]
He <u>has mocked</u> climate change as a hoax <u>perpetrated by China</u> [7]
He saw <u>Mr. Obama’s environmental policies as a threat to the economy</u> and <u>dismissed climate change as a hoax perpetrated by China</u> [3]
Meanwhile, there’s Mr. Trump, who has <u>repeatedly called climate change a hoax</u> and <u>has suggested that it was invented by China to hurt U. S. competitiveness</u> [18]
He said of climate change at a 2015 rally in South Carolina: “A lot of it’s a hoax. It’s a hoax” [8]

Media enable readers to develop a picture or meaning in mind which can be achieved through color of the words in news articles. “Had made statements” and “has suggested” are neutral discourses, while “dismissed”, “has mocked”, “perpetrated by”, “was invented”, “created by” showed the negative attitude of Mr. Trump towards China. Meanwhile, it presented the negative attitude of *The NYT* towards D. Trump, such like “*has repeatedly denied the science of human-caused climate change*”. The image of China related to Climate Change and even other environmental issues interpreted by *The NYT* will be positive. There is a mapping from source domain “Chinese hoax” onto target domain like “participate in”, “responsible country” and etc.

Differing from the former connection with “hoax” which contains a contrast effect, the connection between “Mr. Brown” and “China’s environmental policy” represented in media discourses created a win-win situation. This point was confirmed by Gary Locke, the Washington’s governor and the former U. S. Ambassador to China, that “*Mr. Brown’s endorsement may also serve as a buffer against critics who say that China is moving too slowly to curb emissions*” [16]. Current win-win situation is created due to the positive reputation of Mr. Brown. “*Mr. Brown*

*was considered a “strong leader” on climate change and a critic of Mr. Trump*” [16]. This cognition (or knowledge) is contained in the conceptual system of American readers. It is more easily for American audiences to map the source domain “China” onto target domain “cooperator” with strong leader of the U. S. even directly onto domain “strong leader”.

Apart from the implicit images of China created in the audiences’ mind by media discourses, there are also explicit national images directly shaped by writers in the news articles, which are served as labels of China. Labeling stems from stereotypes in cognition and simplified attribution of unclear truth, results in cognitive biases and a more biased understanding [20]. Through content analysis of the 44 news samples, we explored 4 national images of China related to environmental issues as following:

A. “Big emitter” was mentioned 8 times in articles to refer to or to describe China. The authors tend to use the following adjectives such as “big”, “major”, “key”, “biggest”, “largest”, and “huge” to indicate that China’s total emissions are huge. B. “No. 1 polluter” was mentioned 9 times in news articles to refer to or describe China. While author used a different adjective to portray the situation of China: “*As well, China still holds the awkward status of being the world’s biggest carbon dioxide polluter*” [5].

C. The “Climate Leader” was mentioned 20 times in 44 articles. Among them, the words were used seven times to refer to China. It is worth noting that the author tends to express this image in terms of question sentences and virtual sentences: *what more could it do if it wanted to become a global leader in fighting climate change? ...Could China become the global leader in fighting climate change?* [5]. It showed the skeptical and ambiguous attitude of *The NYT* towards China’s environmental policy and action.

D. “Defender” was mentioned twice in two articles. Two articles were published in May and June 2017 when the U. S. President Trump just announced that the U. S. decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. This image is the freshest interpretation of China’s image concerning environmental issues shaped by American mainstream media. It is positive and widely accepted.

3. Media agenda and attributes of media agenda

In this part, to expose media agenda and attributes of these media agendas in *The NYT*, we exclude the units about the “Hoax” from the total 155 coding (semantic) units and choose content analysis to conduct an in-depth explo-



ration on the media agenda-setting and attribute agenda-setting of *The NYT*. Firstly to examine the way in which media agenda and attribute agenda were set, the environmental issues were coded and clarified as: “Climate change and air pollution”, “biodiversity”, “the Paris Agreement”, “ecosystem”, “new energy and technologies”; all of the 5 categories of environmental issues further were coded into two aspects as environmental achievement or environmental measures. There are 27 units about China’s environmental achievement which are divided into 5 categories of the environmental issues as above, accounting for 51,8; 29,6; 11; 18,5 и 18,5 % of the 27 coding units. There are 70 units about China’s environmental measures which are clarified by 5 categories of the environmental issues as above, accounting for 57; 5,7; 35,7, 15,7; 14,3 % of the 70 coding units. So we founded that “Climate change and air pollution” is the most concerned topic regarded as a media agenda in *The NYT*. *The NYT* tends to highlight the achievement of this topic. As for the topic “new energy and technologies”, *The NYT* tends to focus on the achievement. In addition, *The NYT* tends to focus on environmental measures of the topic “Paris Agreement”.

Among them, we highlight one of the most concerned China’s environmental issue – air pollution. To examine the cause for “air pollution in China” to climb the media agenda of *The NYT*, we use key word “smog” or “PM2.5” as content filtering to select article samples. During the period of analysis, there are 8 stories concerning air pollution in China published by *The NYT*. 7 of these 8 stories were published at the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, only one story published in June 2017. In the winter of 2017, there is no story published by *The NYT*. Comparing with the same period of previous years, the last peak period was the winter of 2012–2013. In that time *The NYT* highlighted China’s poor air quality in details. Between the two peak periods, each year *The NYT* published 3 stories concerning Chinese air pollution in average. Second peak period was the winter of 2016–2017 when D. Trump announced that he would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Differing from the first peak period, in the second peak period, U. S. mainstream media *The NYT* focused on the achievements and measures of Chinese environmental governance, emphasized the conflict between China’s environmental policy and the America’s, which was used by *The NYT* to denounce the president’s decision.

Furthermore, to examine the attribute of all media agendas as well as the way in which the

news was reported, each unit, after having its topic determined, was evaluated for 1) its level as “national” (N), “intergovernmental” (I), “global” (G) and for 2) its information source as either a) Government officials and representatives; b) business representatives; c) public; d) experts; e) representatives of international organizations; f) authors and g) the others (table 2).

Table 2

Data set of comments on China-related environmental issues in media discourses in *The New York Times*

Таблица 2

Сведения о комментариях на экологическую проблематику применительно к Китаю в медиадискурсах «Нью-Йорк Таймс»

Category	Variables	Positive meaning		Negative meaning	
		No.	%	No.	%
Information source	a	36	43,9	4	11
	b	2	2,4	0	0
	c	0	0	1	2,8
	d	9	10,9	5	13,9
	e	10	12,2	2	5,6
	f	20	24,1	21	58,3
	g	5	6,1	3	8,3
Level of the environmental issues	N	26	31,7	15	41,7
	I	14	17,1	5	13,9
	G	40	48,8	16	61,5

According to the statistic, a clear positive evaluation of China’s environmental policy was given in 82 units, accounting for 52,9 % of the total coding units, and the negative criticism was given in 36 units, accounting for 23,2 % of the total units. When China’s environmental policy was seen as a global issue, its positive evaluation is more than negative criticism. When it was regarded as a national issue, its positive evaluation is less than negative criticism. Totally, *The NYT* tends to positively evaluate China’s environmental policy. But when issues are of global level, it is most probably evaluated negatively. But when it is seen as a national issue, *The NYT* tends to negatively evaluate it. Authors prefer quote positive evaluation of government officials or representatives and representatives of international organizations. Authors tend to quote negative criticism of experts or directly express the negative opinion on China’s environmental policy.

**Conclusion.** At first, we explored a dynamic attitude of *The NYT* towards China’s environmental issues, which from doubtful to critical shows the politicization of China-related environmental communication in *The NYT*. As for media frame, considering the conceptual system, *The NYT* uses high-frequency words “D. Trump”

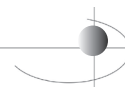


and “Mr. Brown” which are familiar to American readers to shape the China’s positive national images like “cooperator or strong leader against D. Trump” in readers’ mind. Except that, *The NYT* shaped 4 explicit images directly by using 4 words. It showed the labeling of China-related environmental communication in *The NYT*. In addition, neither “polluter” nor “leader”, the “defender” is the newest and wide accepted label (or image) of China in climate change. During the period of analysis, *The NYT* sets air pollution in China as media agenda to emphasize the conflict between China and the U. S. in environmental policy or highlight the adjustment of national power in climate change, for the

purpose of denouncing the U. S. president’s decision. The media agenda is intensively influenced by policy agenda concerning Climate change. *The NYT* tends to highlight the China’s environmental achievement as an attribute of this media agenda. In addition, authors prefer to quote positive evaluation of government officials or members of international organizations and quote negative criticism of experts or directly express the negative opinion on China’s environmental policy. It is worth mentioning that criticism of academic community may be used to hint that China’s environmental policy and action are facing a growing demand for scientific evidence.

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#### **Библиографическое описание статьи**

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#### **China's Environmental Policy in *The New York Times* Media Texts**

The article is devoted to the reflection of China's environmental policy in the US media discourses, which are primarily in the most authoritative high-quality publication, *The New York Times*. The relevance of this study relies, on the one hand, on the importance of the environmental component included in the China's national image and, on the other hand, on the skeptical and even negative attitude of the American public to China's environmental practices. The significance of the ecological component for the modern perception of the country as a responsible participant of global processes in the article is investigated. Further, we give the characteristic of the dynamics of the regulation of China's environmental policy and in general, tendencies of strengthening attention to the issues such as environmental protection, reduction of emissions, etc. Empirical research is based on analysis of *The New York Times* texts related to ecology and environmental policy of the PRC during the period September 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017. Applying the methods of content analysis and frame analysis, we reveal the basic characteristics of the problem coverage. The study shows the politicization of the environmental agenda in terms of the PRC and the incomplete relevance of China's environmental image to its real environmental practices in recent time. This article could be used to make international communication strategy.

**Keywords:** environmental policy, media discourse, national image, China, *The New York Times*

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