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Carmen Rodríguez-Wangüemert
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5903-3913
crodrigu@ull.edu.es
Universidad de La Laguna

Vanessa Rodríguez-Breijo
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9749-8444
vrbreijo@ull.edu.es
Universidad de La Laguna

José Manuel Pestano-Rodríguez
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5313-4489
jmpestano@gmail.com
Universidad de La Laguna

The framing of China on Spanish television

Abstract

The media participates in the creation and reinforcement of mental models, through which people interpret social realities, especially those that are distant and unknown. News making involves the use of certain frames that highlight some aspects of the information and downplay or silence other elements. In this context, the objective of this article is to analyse how China is portrayed on the Spanish news, and identify the organising ideas and value judgments that are used in the frames used in this process. Based on the application of the content analysis technique, the results show that the portrayal of China, its institutions and citizens, on television is carried out through four main frames: "Capacity, potential, development;" "Gloom, shadow and darkness;" "Dangerous environment" and "Exotic organisation." From the Western perspective, Chinese economic growth is accepted, but at the same time China is presented as a problematic country in which natural disasters, accidents, and criminal acts abound, highlighting its systemic political deficiencies and systemic deficiencies. This mostly negative image of China does not correspond with its current and historical relationship with Spain, nor with the relevant position that this emerging power has reached on a global scale.

Keywords
Television, news programmes, Spain, framing, China, international news.

1. Introduction

Television is one of the main sources people use to develop their conceptions of reality and create shared notions of what is happening in their environment (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Gerbner, 1969; Roda Fernández, 2001; Humanes, 2001; Noelle–Neumann, 1995). Especially when audiences have no direct experience of certain social issues or groups, the way in which this medium represents these realities contributes to the creation of mental models about the "other" (Martínez 2014; 2016).

However, the way things are portrayed in the media do not usually reflect reality in a comprehensive and unbiased way. The narratives presented by the media on a daily basis, about "others" and distant realities, tend to be limited to a small number of stereotypical subjects and frames that often emphasise the difference, deviation from the perceived norm, and threat that they may represent, even though one could refer to a great number of different issues related to these people (van Dijk, 2006).

This biased representation of otherness, embodied by other countries and their citizens, has been widely studied. In the field of international news, the world-systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) has shown that this type of information offers a symbolic representation of countries, with a frequency that is proportional to their hegemony (Sreberny & Paterson, 2004). The countries with the largest number of appearances in the news are those with more economic, political and cultural power. Wu (2000) identifies the trade and news agencies that a country has, as the main predictors of their presence in the news published by another.

For Curran *et al.* (2017), the existence of only a few international news agencies, markets and common interests among nations are the factors that influence this type of news, while for Golan (2010), the presence of a country in the media of another is connected to geographical, cultural and hierarchical factors.

The frequency with which they appear in the media decreases from the hegemonic centres to the peripheral ones. The countries located at the centre mention each other and are also mentioned in their peripheries, but those that are located in the periphery are hardly mentioned by the centre and by each other (Penalva, 1999). While hegemonic countries are overrepresented, peripheral countries only "receive coverage when they experience events of great impact" (Penalva, 2002, p. 403), such as crises, conflicts, accidents or catastrophes, which project gloomy and negative images of these countries.

Television participates actively in the creation of our social reality through a continuous flow of information products. These products are generated by news editors and organisations through systematic, structured, and controlled processes at all levels (Becker & Vlad, 2009). News making processes involve the use of frames that highlight certain approaches and aspects of the reported news event and downplay or silence other elements (Igartua, 2006). In addition, the prevalence of these frames varies according to the ideology of the medium and its business model (Igartua, Muñiz & Cheng, 2005). Framing simplifies the way the world is represented, reinforces stereotypes and provides meanings in messages, which promote certain ideas and reactions in people (Entman, 2007). In this sense, the study of news framing is a fruitful place where to make the analysis of media contents (Borah, 2011).

This field has several approaches, definitions and operational challenges derived from its complexity (Matthes, 2009), but it stands out for its ability to reveal internal communication dynamics (De Vreese, 2005), through connections and bridges between disciplines, techniques and differing areas (Reese, 2007). Despite its heterogeneity, the paradigm has proved useful so far, although it is yet to prove its adaptability to emerging forms of communication (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

These studies have shown that television often offers portrayals of distant peoples and situations that are not very realistic, only showing certain parts of these realities, and that it tends to link certain groups to problems and conflicts. Through this way of "portraying the other," television transmits value judgments about diversity and, at the same time, teaches viewers what is reliable and enriching, and what is a threat or a problem. While television is not the only source through which people obtain information to create their image of social reality, its portrayals are offered as objective realities, as if they were the dominant and most widespread way of perceiving the world. Television programmes are also the point of reference which people of all social classes use to find their bearings, and are a common source of knowledge about the local environment. Due to this capacity to influence, television conditions the image that people have about distant realities and people, with their acceptance of them, opinions and perceptions being affected by their media representation, which in turn affects the relationships between these distant peoples and the societies that believe the media portrayals.

When it comes to realities as distant as that of China, this media influence is justified precisely by the ignorance of the Spanish population regarding this country and its citizens.

In 2018, there were 183,491 people of Chinese Nationality (INE, 2018) in Spain, which represents 0.4% of the total population, so the interaction between Spaniards and Chinese people is very low. In addition, the direct experience of Spaniards visiting China is not significant either, as only 155,564 Hispanic people visited the Asian country in 2017, and the figures from previous years were very similar (World Tourism Organization, 2018). As a result, the main reference point that we have of China and its citizens, are the media images, which are fuelled by the continuous flow of news broadcasts.

The peculiarities of the China-Spain relationship, in comparison to ones it has with other Western countries, increases our interest in knowing what the current image of this distant country is, in the Spanish media. There have been no major conflicts or relevant wars between Spain and China, unlike what has happened with other European countries. There is a long tradition of commercial contacts that go back to the Spanish colonial times in the Pacific, and several decades of political distancing during the Franco regime (Palacios, 2013). In that period, Spain's official media hardly mentioned China, which was considered more of a systemic enemy, although with different nuances, compared to the Soviet Union.

The audio-visual reference of that time were the cinematographic newsreels and documentaries, which were projected in cinemas along with the main film. The few occasions on which China appeared in these spaces it did so in an incidental way, as an unknown country, a source of millenary culture, with scarce mentions of the news of that country (No-Do, 1971). The mutual recognition agreements between Spain and China were signed in 1973, with considerable delay compared to other European countries, due to the Cold War and ideological differences (Snyder, 2009). These agreements hardly changed the institutional mistrust, although some superficial images of China were offered (about landscapes, monuments and customs), but without dealing with sensitive questions (No-Do, 1973). For the Spanish population, the transition to democracy also meant changes in the images coming from China. Although the official media system was clearly devalued, it captured the visit of the Kings of Spain to China and showed the moments in which they offered a wreath to the memory of Mao Zedong, a sign that the relationship between the countries had changed (No-Do, 1978). China was subsequently treated as a developing country, until its economic growth changed this. In 2005 Spain and China established a strategic partnership that consolidated Spain as "China's best Friend in Europe" (Higueras, 2015, p. 10).

Today, the relationship between the two countries involves areas that go beyond mere commercial interests, to include political and cultural interests, among the most important ones, according to Ríos (2012). Moreover, in the years this study was carried out, characterised by a deep recession, the presence of Chinese citizens in Spain is "counter current in the sense that the volume of its population has not stopped increasing, like the number of its companies" (Beltrán & Sáiz, 2015, p. 145). However, according to the "Elcano Report 24. Relationships between Spain and China" (Esteban, 2018), Spain's policy towards China continues to undervalue the other areas of the relationship, focusing instead on the opportunities offered by the Asian giant as a production platform and as a source of funding, even though exports to that country only represent a minimum percentage of the total (2.3%), and that Spain occupies only the seventh place of the Asian giant's investments in Europe. Meanwhile, China is less interested in these exchanges and more interested in the political influence Spain has in Europe and Latin America, although Greece and Hungary are much more akin to it.

Despite these asymmetries, it is most probable that the relationship between China and Spain will continue to intensify in all areas, driven by the continued growth of the Asian country (Esteban, 2018). That is why it is convenient to analyse the representation of this country and its population in the Spanish media, as well as the frames most commonly used in the news when referring to China.

This research focuses on the analysis of how these areas are represented in the international news, as offered by TV news programmes. The news they transmit goes through filtering processes, in which the editorial lines of the news stations and the personal traits of journalists who, "conditioned by news making routines and time and space limitations, start framing reality by deciding what will and what will not become news" (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015b, p. 425). News stories are the result of selection and emphasis, which are part of the framing process. For Entman:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (1993, p. 52),

Entman subsequently separated this concept from the functions it fulfils: "Framing is the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, p. 164).

The subject of the story and its approach determines the use of generic or specific frames (Borah, 2011), but hybridisation is common in the media (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015a), which leads us to try to overcome this theoretical dichotomy and substitute it with a spectrum that allows us to place the frames of a story at some point between generic and specific (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2016).

Based on this idea we aim to identify the specific discursive lines that predominate in Spanish television's treatment of China and its citizens, considering that these "frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001, p. 11).

The focus and value judgment of these frames also differ according to the studies conducted on China. In the international context, Griffiths (2013) analyses the news about China in three media organisations: BBC, *The Economist* and *The New York Times,* to conclude that more than half are political and economic pieces, but with an emphasis on aspects such as corruption and pollution. Willnat & Luo (2011) emphasise the predominance of political and economic news to the detriment of cultural and social information. Li (2012) has found that Australian television puts a negative emphasis on political information, a positive emphasis on cultural news, and a neutral one on economic news, which he believes is coherent with the beliefs and values of that environment. At a European level, Lams (2016, p. 146) has analysed the press of Belgium and the Netherlands and found relevant differences in terms of value judgments: 58.7% of the news had a negative component, while only 16.1% was framed positively, with situational oscillations. In the British documentaries, Plana (2014) has also detected positive and negative temporal variations, in synchronisation with political and economic phenomena. In Latin America, Ospina (2017, p. 11) notes that news reports on the Chinese economy, its international policy as part of the BRIC group, and its investment capacity, are becoming more positive in comparison to news on civil rights, freedom of expression and environmental actions.

The media representation of China involves different kinds of frames, some similar and some different. In the American press, Peng (2004) detected that the political, ideological and economic frames are prevalent, whereas Golan and Lukito (2015) found four differential frames depending on the medium: economic partner, internal struggles, economic threats and geopolitical threats.

In the Spanish media, García and Vicente (2014) reveal how in the international news about Asia, the presence of China prevails with respect to that of other Asian countries. In the Spanish press, Zhou (2013) has found scarce sources in the news about China, along with a dependence on very few international news agencies, which have similar approaches. In the

case of specific events, such as the XVIII Communist Party Congress, Qian (2014) shows how the media emphasise the challenges China will face in the future and their preference for negative prospects. Wang studied the coverage of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics and observed different value judgments depending on the issues, stating that "the issue with the most positive opinions is 'economy' and the issue with the most negative opinions is 'politics'" (Wang, 2014, p. 96).

Most of these studies relate to the press, but in Spain, television is the preferred source of information. During the study period, the number of daily newspaper readers descended from 38.4% in 2011, to 30.6% in 2014 (AIMC, 2014). According to a study carried out by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, 2013), at the end of 2013, coinciding with the completion of the study period, 71.4% of the population watched television news programmes on a daily basis. The degree of credibility of these programmes was very high for a large number of people, who identified what appeared on the screen with reality. However, so far, the main frames used in the representation of China and its people in Spanish television news programmes are unknown, and this research aims precisely to fill that gap in knowledge. For this reason, the objective was to describe the representation of China and its citizens in Spanish TV news programmes, the frames that are used, and their value judgments. The study period covered from 1 January 2011 to 1 January 2014.

The interest of the Spanish media in China is explained by the rise of its political and economic relevance (ICEX, 2017), and not by primary factors such as vicinity and shared culture. Since audio-visual media is a relevant reference point for the creation and maintenance of stereotypes, we will only deal with the news about China that Spaniards can watch on television. Accordingly, to identify the organising frames or principles promoted on the TV representations of China, and in order to determine whether these correspond to the international status of the country, the following research questions have been formulated:

Q1. What value judgments are made in the news about China and its citizens?
Q2. What frames are used by Spanish television in the news about China and its citizens?
Q3. What is the affective tone of these frames?

2. Methods

The Spanish media system is structured in two large blocks: the largest block, in terms of national reach and number of users, composed of large multimedia groups, and a smaller, atomised block, made up of small companies with local reach. All the newspapers and most radio and television networks are predominately private businesses, although there are also public radio stations and television channels.

According to the Media Research Association (AIMC, 2014), at the beginning of 2014, the completion date of the period of study, the medium with more daily followers in Spain was television (89.8%), followed by radio (61.3%). In addition, the average time spent watching television was of about 248 minutes per person and day, while the Internet and the newspapers were in third and fourth place, with 59.0% and 30.6%, respectively.

The channels analysed in this research were La 1 of Television Española, Antena 3 Televisión and Telecinco. Together, the three channels reached an annual share of 38.6% in 2012 (Barlovento, 2014). Through digital terrestrial television, these channels reach practically the whole Spanish territory. Their contents are of general interest and news programmes are considered an editorial identification and sign of quality of the networks. The most watched programmes on television are live sports transmissions and news programmes. The top 20 most watched programmes of 2013 include 4 news programmes from TVE, and the rest corresponds to football matches (Barlovento, 2014).

This study focused on the treatment that China and its citizens receive in television news programmes. An initial inquiry was carried out on TVE, to find out the frequency with which terms related to China or Chinese appear, and to identify and catalogue explicit elements that characterise the predominant organising ideas.

Using TVE's online search engine, it was found that China appeared between two and four times a week. This represented about 500 news item broadcasts in three years. Subsequently, it was found that TVE, between 2011 and 2013, broadcast approximately 42,200 news items, of which 520 corresponded to China and its citizens: 1.23% of the total, with a monthly average of 14 pieces (SD=7.12). In the same period, TVE dedicated 210 pieces (0.47%) to its neighbouring country of Morocco, which has five times more immigrants in Spain than China. This is another example that primary factors, such as vicinity and the presence of immigrants, do not determine the frequency of appearance of a country in the media of another.

The initial inquiry was extended to the other channels. Instead of using a pre-established list of variables, the pieces were qualitatively analysed to obtain the set of identifiers that construct the main organising idea underlying each message. In this phase, 150 pieces were analysed, and 18 typical identifiers were identified. These identifiers are more denotative than connotative, since in most of the information pieces they are explicit. The identifiers respond to the operational descriptions presented in the table below.

Table 1: Predominant identifiers in the news about China and its citizens in Spanish TV news programmes.

Identifier	Descriptors (emphasise or highlight)
China world power	External actions in international politics
China economy on the rise	Situation and prospect of economic growth
China education-culture	Activities in education and/or culture
China developed country	Manifestation of status as an advanced country
China and animals	Interest in animals: relationship and/or conservation
China international actor	Peculiarities of political decisions of international significance
China elects its leaders	Singularities in the system of representation and the election of leaders
China demographics	Population and peculiarity of rules regarding births
China land of catastrophes	Natural disasters with personal and/or material damages
China accidents	Consequences of non-natural events with personal and/or material damages
China negative consequence of excessive growth	Erroneous results of rapid growth planning
China pollution	Environmental changes
Chinese defraud and deceive	Refers to these types of offenses or crimes
China, dark side	Felonies against people; organised crime
China violence and conflict	Violent conflict resolution, aggression, revolt, armed confrontation
China represses dissidents	Repression of individual liberties (thought, movement, association)
Perverse china: purging, death penalty and executions	Political purges. Use and application of death penalty
China censorship	Coercive action limiting freedom of expression

Source: Own elaboration.

The study period covered from 1 January 2011 to 1 January 2014. In this period, Spain faced an economic crisis and China was considered as a relevant partner that could provide help. The information piece was taken as a unit of analysis. Based on the preliminary observation, the number of relevant pieces broadcast by the three channels over that time period was

estimated at 1,500. The number of units in the sample was set at 450. For a confidence level of 95%, the margin of error is about 4%.

Online resources were used for the search and retrieval of news broadcasts by the television channels. The searches were performed between January and June 2014, repeating them later, on different occasions, to check the consistency of the search engines in terms of number of retrieved entries, sort by dates and relevance. The keywords were *China, Chinese, People's Republic, China*.

To analyse the informative pieces, basic descriptive elements were collected, such as network, date, headline or description, duration, theme, characteristic identifiers, tone and value judgment. The total duration of the 450 pieces was approximately 9 hours of broadcast time, with an average duration per piece of 1'20" in TVE and Antena3, and a little less on Telecinco.

The coding was initially made by one researcher. Subsequently, 72 units of the sample (15% of the total) were extracted, and a second independent analysis was carried out. Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which measures inter-rater agreement, was 0.84, oscillating between 0.78 for the value judgment of the pieces, and 0.90 for the identifiers.

3. Results and discussion

Q1. What value judgments are made in the news about China and its citizens?

Television uses substantive and emotional elements in its contents, to construct and project a certain image of Chinese citizens, Chinese institutions or China as a country. News making involves the use of attributes, which are used to evaluate the information and assign value judgments to it. The following categories were used in the identification of the affective tone: negative, when they indicated errors; systemic weaknesses or detrimental effects; neutral, when negative or positive components were not evident; positive, when they showed successes, advances or benefits (Cheng, Chen & Pérez-Cheng, 2010). A five-point scale was established, in which 1 was very negative, 2 negative, 3 neutral, 4 positive and 5 very positive.

The low frequency of high value judgments, in particular those corresponding to 5 (only 3 news pieces), was outstanding. Data was divided into three categories: negative, value judgments 1 and 2; neutral, 3; and positive, value judgments 4 and 5. In the whole of the three networks, 248 news pieces were negative (55.11%), 141 were neutral (31.33%) and 61 were positive (13.56%). This asymmetry is maintained in terms of broadcast time: of a total of 522 minutes, 278 (53.25%) are dedicated to news that projects a negative image of Chinese citizens, their institutions or China as a country, while neutral news accounts for 152 minutes (29.11%), and positive only makes up 92 minutes (17.62%). This high frequency of negative news is consistent with the journalistic practice (Túñez & Guevara, 2009, p. 1,036) and, in particular, with television, where contents that reinforce the negative predominate. In China's case, "the Spanish media are more focused on informing about the least pleasant facet of the country" (Qian, 2014, p. 65).

In the three networks, half of the news pieces are negative: TVE (50.76%), followed by Antena3 (56.00%) and Telecinco (58.67%). This 12-piece difference, of a total of 150, reflects the negative tone among broadcasters. Neutral news in the three channels represents about one third of the total broadcast, and there is a similar trend towards neutrality on TVE (30.67%), Antena3 (30.00%) and Telecinco (33.33%).

Table 2: Value judgment of the news about China and its citizens by television channel.

	TVE	%	Antena3	%	Telecinco	%	Total	%
Negative	76	50.67	84	56.00	88	58.67	248	55.11
Neutral	46	30.67	45	30.00	50	33.33	141	31.33
Positive	28	18.67	21	14.00	12	8.00	61	13.56
	150		150		150		450	

Source: Own elaboration.

Q2. What frames are used by Spanish television in the news about China and its citizens?

In order to reveal the different organising ideas or principles of the news (Reese, 2001), all the pieces in the sample were analysed by using the identifiers initially obtained by establishing their frequency of appearance and affective tone. Subsequently, the indicators were grouped together according to discursive affinity in four organising ideas, corresponding to other news frames. Most of the pieces, 97% of the total, responded to one of these categories. The identifiers and their prevalence are collected in Table 3.

Table 3: News frames and their predominant identifiers in the news about China and its citizens, broadcast by the sample of Spanish television networks (n=438).

	Identifier I	Frequency (n_i)	Frame
1	China world power	50	I. Capacity, potential, development
2	China economy on the rise	39	
3	China education-culture	25	
4	China developed country	19	
5	China and animals	14	
6	China international actor	29	II. Exotic Organisation
7	China elects its leaders	17	
8	China demographics	6	
9	China land of catastrophes	48	III. Dangerous environment
10	China accidents	35	
11	China negative consequence of excessive growth	22	
12	China pollution	5	
13	Chinese defraud and deceive	34	IV. Gloom, shadow and darkness
14	China, dark side	28	
16	China violence and conflict	23	
16	China represses dissidents	21	
17	Perverse china: purging, death penalty and executions	19	
18	China censorship	4	

Source: Own elaboration.

The first group of discourses emphasises an image of China that follows its trajectory in the international context. However, although economic growth is undeniable, it is presented as the result of China's assimilation of Western values, whereas its internal and external development is not correlated with Chinese policies, although the contradictions of this are mentioned. The organising idea appears through the following indicators: emerging world power (n_1=50), which grows rapidly thanks to its rising economy (n_2=39); related effects in education, culture, science and technology (n_3=25) and its actions as a developed country (n_4=19), as well as the efforts made in the conservation of endangered animals (n_5=14). This

first frame, which we will call "Capacity, potential, development," is present in one third of the news (n_I=147, 32.6%).

This frame highlights the connection of Chinese socialism with western capitalism, such as the Chinese presence in banking systems, and the impact of its relationship with the Spanish economy: "The largest bank in the world opens its first branch in Spain" (Antena3, 2011.01.24); or its position in the international context: "China becomes the world's second economic power, ahead of Japan in 2010" (TVE, 2011.02.14). The press also presents the contradictions of a country that introduces itself as socialist, with mews that make reference to an emergent luxury: "How to Marry a millionaire… in China" (Antena3, 2011.04.18), or the extravagant behaviours of new rich people: "A Chinese man shatters his Maserati because he was unhappy with the after-sales service" (Antena3, 2013.05.15).

The second frame presents China's institutions and political system from a Western perspective, which conveys incomprehension and ignorance. This view depicts the organisation of the Chinese government and its institutions as "strange," but also as "surprising," or "from a distant country that is perceived as very different," as the Spanish Language Dictionary defines 'exotic' (*DLE*, 2014). After World War II, China became a hermetic, unknown country for the West for several decades, a country where a communism different to, and even opposed to, the one in the Soviet Union was being developed. It became a country where cultural traditions were mixed with the new systems of government, in devious processes that resulted in incomprehensible decisions and actions. Subsequently, China went from being a developing country to a hegemonic one, but as Dumbaugh and Martin explain (2009, p. i), the internal mechanisms remained "opaque and shrouded in secrecy, China's political system and decision-making processes are mysteries to many Westerners." This frame, which is called "Exotic organisation" (n_{II}=52, 11.5%), arises from the following indicators: China as an international actor that is governed by peculiar and difficult political decisions (n_6=29), which elects its leaders according to its own authoritarian system (n_7=17), and applies unique norms, such as demographic regulation (n_8=6).

This organising idea is manifested when dealing with aspects of Chinese society, such as the election of political leaders: "Extreme security in Beijing for the Communist Party's 18th Congress" (Telecinco, 2012.11.08); when it is emphasised that a single man controls the party, the government and the army: "Xi Jinping, appointed new leader of the ruling Communist Party of China" (TVE, 2013.01.08); in the references to the former leader: "Red tourism in Shaoshan, Mao's birthplace" (Telecinco, 2013.05.12); in its international decisions: "Russia and China veto the European resolution against Syria in the UN Security Council" (TVE, 2011.10.05) and when referring to the existence of regulations that, from a Western perspective, seem unacceptable: "In China, families begin to rebel against the one-child policy" (TVE, 2011.01.31).

The third organising idea revolves around the spectacularisation of misfortunes and tragic events, which highlights the intensity and frequency of these adverse phenomena. Although the news seldom contain explanations, in this case they can be used to attribute political or managerial responsibilities and to expose institutional inefficiencies. This frame, which we call "Dangerous environment" (n_{III}=110, 24.4%), is used to recurrently expose the disasters that occur in China, and responds to the following indicators: a land of catastrophes (n_9=48), accidents with consequences for people (n_{10}=35), lack of safety equipment for workers, linked to rapid growth without foresight (n_{11}=22), and the results of various forms of pollution (n_{12}=5).

All networks made references to these natural circumstances, such as "Typhoon Haikui strikes China and leaves two million evacuees" (TVE, 2012.08.08) and "Flooding in east of China caused by heavy rains" (Telecinco, 2013.05.31); accidents are common, even those related to technology: "Train collision leaves 35 dead and puts into question Chinese high-speed" (TVE, 2011.07.24), as well as work security failures: "Spectacular fire in a textile factory in China" (Antena3, 2012.04.06); while environmental deterioration and economic

development are associated: "Alert in Beijing due to high levels of pollution" (Antena3, 2013.01.15).

The fourth and final frame combines the deviations from the established norms in which the Chinese appear as protagonists of different transgressions. In addition, as the regulations of reference are western, Chinese institutions are also blamed for systemic infringements on issues such as human rights, dissent and death penalty. This frame, "Gloom, shadow and darkness," appears in almost a third of the news ($n_{IV}=129$, 28.6%) with the recurrent idea of social danger. The frame is built based on the following indicators: Chinese people defraud and deceive ($n_{13}=34$), China's dark side, encompassing organised and non-organised crime ($n_{14}=28$), violence and conflict ($n_{15}=23$); as well as indicators that reflect the perverse component of the Chinese government, for its direct repression of dissidents ($n_{16}=21$), purging, death penalty and executions ($n_{17}=19$), and censorship ($n_{18}=4$).

This frame highlights organised crime: "This is how the Chinese mafia operated" (Telecinco, 2012.10.18), the violent resolution of conflicts: "Brutal aggression in China" (Antena3, 2012.09.26), and the crimes committed by Chinese citizens in their country and in Spain: "80 detained in a Chinese money laundering network" (TVE, 2012.10.16). In addition, the Chinese state represses the dissidents: "China forbids Ai Weiwei to leave his house" (TVE, 2011.06.23), China applies censorship: "Art or pornography" (Telecinco, 2011.11.21), maintains the death penalty and even uses it as propaganda: "Interviews with death" (Telecinco, 2012.03.13).

The "Dangerous environment" and "Gloom, shadow and darkness" frames show a clear preference for sensationalism and spectacularisation, which are consistent with the "threatening world," identified by Díaz Arias (2008, p. 376) in the international section of news programmes.

In the three networks, the "Capacity, potential, development" frame is the most frequent when referring to China and its citizens. This frame appears in 153 pieces (34.85%), followed by "Gloom, shadow and darkness," with 123 pieces (28.02%), and "Dangerous environment," with 115 (26.26%). Finally, and at a distance, is the "Exotic organisation" frame, with 47 pieces (10.71%). Pearson's Chi-square test shows that the percentage differences are statistically significant, χ^2 (6, N=438) = 43.67 p < .001. There are several asymmetries between the three television channels. The predominance of the "Capacity, potential, development" frame is greater in the private networks Antena3 and Telecinco, than in the public corporation TVE, and focuses on aspects such as economy, growth and businesses from the benefit-threat dichotomous perspective. The "Dangerous environment" frame, which evokes risk, damage and insecurity, is also more frequent in Antena3 and Telecinco. In contrast, the "Exotic organisation" frame is used more in the public TVE network, than in the private Antena3 and Telecinco networks, due to the political leanings of the public network. This also occurs with the "Gloom, shadow and darkness" frame, in which TVE stands out for its representation of the deviation from established norms and its consequences.

Table 4: Frequency and distribution of frames used in news about China and its citizens on Spanish television channels.

	TVE	%	Antena3	%	Telecinco	%	Total	%
I. Capacity, potential, development	37	24.67	64	43.84	52	36.36	153	34.85
II. Exotic organisation	31	20.67	6	4.11	10	6.99	47	10.71
III. Dangerous environment	26	17.33	43	29.45	46	32.39	115	26.26
IV. Gloom, shadow and darkness	56	37.33	33	22.6	34	23.78	123	28.02
	150		146		143		438	

Source: Own elaboration.

Q3. What is the affective tone of these frames?

The frames place the information in coordinates of reference. The value judgments expressed in the frames act on the media's image of Chinese citizens, their institutions and the country. Certain frames only admit negative readings, while others, with an apparently positive connotation, are presented as negative. This preference for negativity is recurrent in the media since it is easier to reach the public agenda and engage the public with negative news than with positive ones (Cheng, Chen & Pérez-Cheng, 2010). Although the editorial line of each network promotes perspectives and viewpoints that condition the positive or negative tones of the news, the particular treatment given to each of the news stories is also relevant.

The relationship between the frames and their value judgments is illustrated through a balance (Σ) between positive and negative value judgments collected in Table 5. The networks show different frame-value judgment relationships, but the frames with a negative value prevail. It is also observed that neutral news stories have a similar frequency in each of the networks.

The "Capacity, potential, development" frame is the only one that has positive value judgments in all the networks, but the summations of negatives values judgments are different: +12 in the case of TVE, +8 in Antena3 and -4 in Telecinco. The "Exotic organisation" frame has a positive balance in TVE, +5, and a negative one in the other networks. The remaining frames present a negative value judgment on all television channels.

Table 5: Value judgments of the frames used in news about China and its citizens in Spanish television news programmes.

	TVE				Antena3				Telecinco			
	+	0	-	$\sum_{TVE}$	+	0	-	$\sum_{Antena3}$	+	0	-	$\sum_{Telecinco}$
I. Capacity, potential, development	16	17	-4	12	20	32	-12	8	11	26	-15	-4
II. Exotic organisation	12	12	-7	5	0	4	-2	-2	0	5	-5	-5
III. Dangerous environment	0	9	-17	-17	0	4	-39	-39	0	12	-34	-34
IV. Gloom, shadow and darkness	0	8	-48	-48	0	2	-31	-31	0	1	-33	-33
Positivity-negativity index		(46)		-48		(42)		-64		(44)		-76

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Conclusions

The media have the ability to influence the creation of mental models through which people build their images of the "other," especially when they have no first-hand knowledge, as is the case with geographically and culturally distant countries. China appears on Spanish television frequently, in line with its economic and political position, but the news treatment it receives reveals other issues.

The first research question was concerned with the value judgment made in the news about China and Chinese citizens. The results have made it possible to determine that this value judgment is mostly negative on all channels. The stark negativity of the news can promote and maintain mistrust and prejudice regarding its role as a relevant world reference.

With regards to the second question, regarding the frame used in the news about China and its citizens, 18 identifiers were obtained in the news sample and divided into four main frames, according to their affinity. In the most frequent frame, "Capacity, potential, development," China is regarded as an emerging global power, with high economic growth and the execution of a series of actions that are consistent with such growth. The second frame in order of frequency of appearance, "Gloom, shadow and darkness," highlights the idea of the danger of a country with dubious institutional morality and includes criminal, fraudulent and violent actions, as well as human rights violations, related to the Chinese government and its citizens. Then, the "Dangerous environment" frame is used to reflect the image of a hostile country, by making a spectacle of natural disasters, accidents and infrastructure failures, presenting them as adverse consequences of development. Lastly, the "Exotic organisation" frame emphasises China's differences with respect to the West, in political organisation and regulations. The use of these frames in the selected TV channels is not homogeneous: there is a greater incidence of the "Capacity, potential, development" frame in the private channels and of the "Gloom, shadow and darkness" frame in the public channel.

The third research question refers to the affective tone of each of the frames. The results also point towards a tendency to negativity in the use of each of the frames, being greater in Telecinco, followed by Antena3 and TVE. The prevalence of these television messages, together with the scant visibility of other discourses that highlight similarities rather than differences, create a representation of China and its citizens which is not very compatible with the exhibition, explanation and understanding of a complex social reality.

This media content represents the reality of the distant and unknown "others," in a selective and fragmented way, highlighting certain aspects, values and viewpoints. The three networks consider China as a centre country because of its political and economic position, but at the same time, they often use approaches that sow doubts and suspicions. Mutual disagreement is maintained through an emphasis on the exotic aspects of China and its systemic differences with the West. Finally, as if it were a peripheral country, half of the news about China conveys a sense of danger through violence, criminal acts, accidents, and disasters, which does not correspond with China's position as a world power. The final balance points to dynamic tensions in the media, between acceptance, anxiety and rejection, which creates the television image of China as a country that reaches the centre without leaving the periphery, in which its human rights violations are of fundamental importance.

This research does not exhaust the subject of the image of China and its citizens in the Spanish audio–visual ecosystem. Some of the most important limitations, which surpass the objectives of this work, are its focus on the news programmes of mainstream television networks and the exclusion of other media such as radio, cinema and other mainstream or thematic television channels, which can offer interesting readings about China in the form of documentaries, feature reports and fictional content. It would also be interesting to carry out studies on the population, to learn how these news frames reinforce previous mental

constructions and determine how they influence the construction of the social imaginary about China and its citizens.

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