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# Representation of Social Actors in *Financial Times* Report on China's Panda Diplomacy

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**Abstract:** Communicators have a range of referential options to represent individuals and groups, who in Critical Discourse Analysis are often termed “social actors” or “participants”. These choices allow communicators to place people in the social world and highlight certain aspects of their identity while downplaying others. Choosing one social category instead of another means foregrounding certain features and backgrounding others, leading to different views and interpretations of the persons represented. This paper takes a quantitative study of the social actors represented in Jamil Anderlini's article on China's panda diplomacy published in the *Financial Times*, identifying and analyzing referential strategies adopted in representing participants involved in the social practice, mainly focusing on the discussion of such representation means as inclusion/exclusion, assimilation/ individualization, association/dissociation and their indications for the revelation of the writer's attitudes, beliefs and political stance. The study reveals that the writer's representation of participants tends to be bi-polarized, holding sharply different attitudes towards the main social actors—China, foreign countries and zoos, researchers and FT, depicting China as a crafty, deceptive, and intimidating manipulator of panda diplomacy while other countries as innocent, ignorant and helpless victims. This difference can be partly explained by Teun van Dijk's “ideological square” in which China is a typical out-group, emphasized as a communist, authoritarian country in opposition to the democratic West to which the writer belongs.

**Keywords:** Representation, Social Actors, Ideology, Panda Diplomacy, Critical Discourse Analysis

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## 1. Introduction

Recent decades have seen rapid growth in China's economic strength. With its increasing presence in the international society, China is eager to enhance its “soft power”—a word coined by Harvard Professor Joseph S. Nye and defined as the ability to make other countries do what you want through your cultural appeal and political ideals [1].

How China enhances its soft power has become a hot topic in mass media [2-9]. From October 2017 to January 2018, the *Financial Times* (FT) published a series of 14 articles, claiming to explore President Xi Jinping's dream of boosting the country's charm [10]. The paper is a case study of an article taken from this series, entitled “How the panda became China's diplomatic weapon” [11]. This article, written by Jamil Anderlini, explains how pandas are the best representation of China's soft power, and how the Chinese government uses pandas to exert political and cultural influence. He argues that

while many see pandas as lovable animals worthy of conservation, the exchange of pandas between China and other nations is laden with symbolism, used today to seal important trade deals and alliances. In addition, he points out that while the population of captive pandas is increasing, threats to their natural environment is far from certain.

The paper will take a quantitative study of Anderlini's representation of participants involved in China's panda diplomacy, revealing its political stances and attitudes hidden in the representation under the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. The paper intends to address the following research questions:

- 1) How is China viewed by the rest of world?
- 2) How are China and China-related issues represented by western medium?
- 3) What are the political stance, ideological beliefs and cultural perspectives revealed by the writers and their represented organizations and groups?

## 2. Literature Review

Communicators have a range of referential options to represent individuals and groups, who in Critical Discourse Analysis are often termed “social actors” or “participants”. These choices allow communicators to place people in the social world and highlight certain aspects of their identity while downplaying others. Choosing one social category instead of another means foregrounding certain features and backgrounding others, leading to different views and interpretations of the persons represented. Reisigl and Wodak describe these naming options as “referential strategies”—means by which the writer manages to achieve his/her psychological, social or political purposes [12]. Therefore, social actor analysis is often considered a proper tool for analyzing texts for the purpose of addressing questions concerning ideology.

Van Leeuwen presents an inventory of the ways that we can classify people that allows a systematic analysis of the social actors in a text [13-14]. The paper will draw upon his inventory, listing the ways different participants are represented in the above-mentioned FT report.

Van Leeuwen based his inventory of social actor representation on Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). However, compared with other SFL-based analyzing tools, such as transitivity and modality, social actor analysis is far less frequently employed. Researchers in China mainly focus on social actor analysis in China-related journalist reports. Yan and Li make quantitative study of social actors and social actions represented in *China Daily*'s and CNN's report on Tiananmen Crash, accounting for the recontextualization of discourse and unveiling the hidden American ideology [15]. Zhang and Zhang examine online news articles selected from the websites of *The New York Times*, *The Pyongyang Times*, *The Strait Times*, *China Daily* and *The Korea Times* regarding Trump-Kim 2018 summit in Singapore, delineating news participants and identifying the strategies adopted to represent the key social actors in the online news discourse [16]. Meanwhile, researchers outside China are exploring the possibility of applying the tool to the analysis of participants in other scenarios (e.g. Courtroom). Chaemsaitong draws upon six opening addresses from three high-profile trials and examines how the use of names serves to accomplish the process of identity construction in institutional discourse, revealing that the prosecution and the defense differ starkly in how they use names to construct the identities of the characters, which in effect negotiates reality by (de) legitimizing guilt and responsibility claims and mediating jurors' perceptions [17]. In another study, Chaemsaitong integrates Halliday's concept of transitivity and van Leeuwen's inventory of social actor representation, scrutinizing representation strategies that opposing lawyers use to position social actors in their narratives, concludes that social actor representation constitutes an important contingency bearing on the outcome of this institutional discourse [18].

## 3. Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches discourse study with the aim of revealing the hidden power, ideologies, institutions, etc., therefore, providing a different perspective for social reality critique [19]. It is typically applied to the analysis of news texts and political speeches for the purpose of exposing ideologies embedded in the seemingly common or normal expressions and finding out means by which activities and participants are represented for that specific purpose [20]. Therefore, the research will be conducted under the CDA framework with the aim of revealing the ideology of the writer and his in-groups.

As for the key concept “ideology”, the paper takes Teun A. van Dijk's definition of ideology as socially relevant beliefs, values, positions and resources shared by members of social groups, because drawing dividing lines between ingroups and outgroups, and associating positive or negative qualities with them are of great significance in expressing ideologies [21].

## 4. Data and Analytical Process

### 4.1. Data

According to the Global Capital Markets Survey, the *Financial Times* is considered the most important business read (36%) and regarded as the most credible publication in reporting financial and economic issues among the Worldwide Professional Investment Community audience.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, its series report on China's soft power has great influence on the world's view of China's growing presence and appeal.

The current study is a case analysis of one article taken from the FT China's soft power series, entitled “How the panda became China's diplomatic weapon” [11]. Its author Jamil Anderlini was the Asia editor of the *Financial Times*, a highly recognized political writer who was short-listed for the Orwell Prize in 2013. He is also the author of 5 of the rest 13 FT soft power series articles. Therefore, the article chosen for case analysis is reasonably representative of the mainstream western narration and representation of China.

### 4.2. Analytical Process

Van Leeuwen provides a comprehensive system network to describe how persons are identified and categorized and the possible ideological effects these naming choices have on the readers. The major categories are exclusion, role allocation, genericisation and specification, assimilation, association and dissociation, indetermination and differentiation, nomination and categorization, functionalization and identification, personalization and impersonalization, and overdetermination [12-13].

Based on Van Leeuwen's definition and categorization of social actor representation, I collected sentences with references to social actors and put them into different groups, explaining their means of realization with examples from the article. The analysis is shown in Table 1:

<sup>1</sup> Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial\\_Times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial_Times).

**Table 1.** Representations of social actors in the FT report “How the panda became China’s diplomatic weapon of choice”.

Representation of Social Actors	Means of realization	Examples from the text with brief analysis
Exclusion	Social actors are deleted through suppression or backgrounding	Today, there are 70 pandas in 20 countries outside China and several more loans <i>have been agreed</i> (By “whom” is not mentioned here or elsewhere in the text, thus exclusion through suppression) or are under negotiation. <i>Foreign zoos and governments</i> (activation realized by the grammatical participant role of Actor in the material process) send large sums of money to <i>China</i> (passivation realized by the grammatical participant role of Beneficiary) for “conservation”, and rely on this same optimistic picture from <i>the Chinese government</i> (activation realized through the propositional circumstantial “from”) to assess its success.
Role allocation	Social actors are endowed with active roles (activation) or passive roles (passivation).	If the pandas can’t get to each other because roads and <i>humans</i> (genericisation realized through the plural without article) are in the way, they will still disappear. China warned <i>President Obama</i> not to meet <i>the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet</i> . (specification realized through the specific reference to the person’s name and title).
Genericisation and Specification	Social actors are represented as classes or as specific, identifiable individuals.	According to <i>five people familiar with the matter</i> (assimilation realized through aggregation), <i>Chinese officials</i> (assimilation realized through collectivization) were livid about the decision and have been furiously lobbying for a reversal ever since.
Assimilation and Individualization	Social actors are represented as groups or individuals. If quantified, the groups are presented through aggregation; if not, collectivization.	Apart from Merkel, pandas have been photo-opportunity props for leaders ranging from former <i>UK prime minister Edward Heath to Michelle Obama, Justin Trudeau, Bill Clinton, François Hollande and the queen of Spain</i> . (association realized through parataxis).
Association	Groups of social actors are never labelled in the text, mainly through parataxis.	<i>Some</i> (indetermination realized through unspecified reference) have raised serious concerns about its viability and even suggested it could make things worse.
Indetermination and Differentiation	Social actors are represented as unspecified (Indetermination) or as specified (Differentiation)	<i>Father Jean Pierre Armand David</i> (nomination realized through proper noun and titled in the form of honorification), an avid <i>zoologist</i> and <i>botanist</i> (Functionalization) who, in 1869, became the first <i>westerner</i> (Identification) to “discover” the giant panda.
Nomination and Categorization a. Functionalization b. Identification	Social actors are represented in terms of their unique identity, realized typically by proper nouns (Nomination) or referred to in terms of what they do (Functionalization) or of what they are (Identification).	
Personalization and Impersonalization	Social actors are represented as human beings (Personalization). Social actors are impersonalized (Impersonalization), by means of abstraction and objectivation (mainly 3 types: spatialisation, utterance autonomisation, instrumentalisation and somatization).	<i>Ancient imperial China</i> (impersonalization realized through spatialisation) ruled vast swathes of Asia through cultural and political attraction. <i>Chinese state media</i> (impersonalization realized through utterance autonomisation) describe the giant panda as one of President Xi’s most “powerful weapons” in his effort to build soft power.
Overdetermination	Social actors are represented as participating more than one social practice at the same time.	Examples not found in the text.

### 5. Findings

#### Patterns of Representation of Social Actors

To address my research questions of ideology in the article “How the panda became China’s diplomatic weapon of choice”, I will limit myself to observations concerning patterns of representations most relevant to ideological revelation:

Exclusion/Inclusion, Assimilation/Individualization and Association/Dissociation [12-13].

To find out patterns of these representations, it is necessary to group the more than 100 social actors into main categories for the convenience of further discussion. Based on their difference in identities and social functions, I group these social actors into the following categories as shown below in *Table 2*:

**Table 2.** Main categories of social actors in the FT text.

Main Categories of Social Actors	Identities or Functions Represented	Social Actors Included in the Category
China	People or organizations representing China’s governance, position, voice and actions	China’s central government, Chinese officials, state media, etc.
Local governments	Local governments and companies	local governments, logging companies, etc.
Foreign governments	Countries who have panda loans from, economic cooperation with or political conflicts/coalition with China	Foreign governments, diplomats, Germany, Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Spain, Mexico, Taiwan, Canada, America, the UK, Australia, the Soviet Union, North Korea, etc.
Foreign zoos	Foreign zoos involved in the panda loan	Berlin’s Tierpark Zoo, the SanDiego Zoo, a US zoo, foreign zoos, etc.
Panda/panda policy Experts	People with good knowledge of the pandas or panda-related policies	Chinese and foreign panda researchers both as individuals and groups; people involved in panda policy-making; SFA, Mohurd; authors of

Main Categories of Social Actors	Identities or Functions Represented	Social Actors Included in the Category
FT	People who work for the FT newspaper	panda books FT, I (the author)
Political leaders	Individually and collectively named political figures	Xi Jinping, Angela Merkel, Donald Trump, Wu Zetian, Dalai Lama, Obama, etc.
Conservationists (organizations and individuals)	Organizations devoted to wilderness preservation and the reduction of human impact on the environment	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Greenpeace, etc.
Other individuals	Individuals in relation to the discovery, smuggling or introduction of the panda; soft power theorist	Jean Pierre Armand David, Ruth Harkness, Kermit and Teddy Jr Roosevelt, Heini Demmer, Joseph Nye, etc.
Humans	Humans or people generally referred to	Humans, ordinary people

### 5.1. Exclusion and Inclusion

Participants of social practice can be clearly referred to (inclusion) or deleted (exclusion) by the language users for the realization of particular purposes or interests [12]. Exclusion can be realized by suppression when there is no reference to

the social actors and backgrounding when the social actors are not referred to in a given context, but mentioned elsewhere in the text. Table 3 displays the pattern of inclusion and exclusion in the text in both the observed numbers of instances (N) and their percentage in representation.

Table 3. Inclusion and exclusion in "How the panda became China's diplomatic weapon of choice" text.

Social Actors	Included %	Backgrounded %	Suppressed %
China (N=81)	88% N=71	7% N=6	5% N=4
Local government (N=3)	33% N=1	67% N=2	0% N=0
Foreign countries (N=45)	96% N=43	4% N=2	0% N=0
Panda researchers (N=31)	97% N=30	0% N=0	3% N=1
Conservationists (N=13)	92% N=12	8% N=1	0% N=0
Humans (N=12)	75% N=9	0% N=0	25% N=3

As the above table shows, most suppressions take place when the deleted social actors are the generally referred "humans". This kind of "suppression" is usually "innocent", made in consideration of the irrelevance of the social actor to the readers. As shown in Example 5.1.1, the purpose of this statement is to inform the readers of the facts of the pandas' habitat, with no intention to specify who really found them.

#### 5.1.1. The Oldest Extant Species of Bear, the Panda Is Found only in a Small Strip of Mountainous Terrain on the Eastern Edge of the Tibetan Plateau

As Table 3 shows, China's central government and local governments are most backgrounded in the text. However, the deletion is made not always out of the consideration of irrelevance, but the deep-rooted political prejudice and propaganda purpose as reflected in the following example.

#### 5.1.2. They have No Say over Where Their Money Goes and Hardly any Idea How It Is Actually Spent

Although who spent the money is untold here, readers can tell from the context that the hidden agents are the Chinese government and state research centers. As these agents are frequently mentioned and morally judged throughout the text, readers have no difficulty in identifying who are spending the money without the knowledge of the givers. Deletion of the agents suggests the writer's confidence that there is a

solidarity between him and the readers with regard to the implicit wrong-doers.

What's more, passive voice sentence with omitted agents often highlights the effects, consequence or state as a result of actions, while playing down the process and participants involved. In this case, the backgrounded agents and specified large sum of money ("\$1m per pair of pandas per year" in the previous sentence) contrast sharply and conspire to suggest that money is not transparently and properly used and the panda conservation program is a huge financial waste, a cloak for the alleged embezzlement and corruption of the Chinese government and state research centers. Backgrounding Chinese government in this context helps create a sense of secrecy, concealment and mistrust.

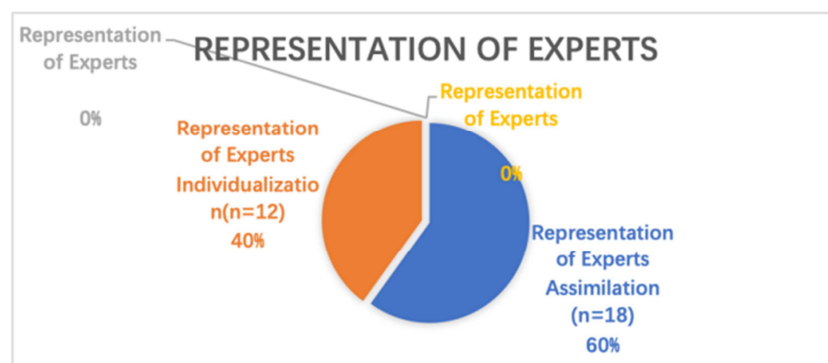
### 5.2. Assimilation and Individualization

Individuality is greatly valued in today's society, therefore, to name people as individuals or as groups has great significance in Critical Discourse Analysis [12]. Here I shall take an in-depth analysis of the representation of panda/panda policy experts, as they are most diversely represented in terms of assimilation and individualization. Attitudes expressed or associated with different means of representation will be analyzed as well. Except for one case of suppression, there are 30 included references to the experts as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Assimilation and individualization of panda/panda policy experts.

E.g.	Reference to the panda/panda policy Experts	Assimilation	Individualization	Attitudes expressed by the Social actors about the panda policy or suggested by the writer about the social actor
1	people familiar with the matter	Yes		Neutral
2	Chinese and western experts	Yes		Neutral
3	Professor Wang Dajun, a wild-panda expert at Peking University		Yes	Negative
4	neurologists	Yes		Neutral
5	five people familiar with the matter	Yes		Neutral
6	one of the five people familiar with the government's reaction		Yes	Neutral
7	top Chinese scientists	Yes		Negative
8	scientists, who asked not to be named for fear of angering the authorities and jeopardizing their careers	Yes		Negative
9	scientists	Yes		Neutral
10	Henry Nicholls, author of <i>The Way of the Panda: the Curious History of China's Political Animal</i>		Yes	Negative
11	several people with knowledge of the process	Yes		Neutral
12	people involved	Yes		Neutral
13	Paul Jepson, a senior research fellow at the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at Oxford University		Yes	Neutral
14	11 Chinese and international scientists	Yes		Negative
15	Fan Zhiyong, a scientist working for the WWF in China		Yes	Negative
16	Scientists and conservationists	Yes		Negative
17	Peking University's Wang		Yes	Negative
18	Wang		Yes	Negative
19	Nicholls, the author and panda expert		Yes	Negative
20	Kati Loeffler, a panda expert who worked full-time in China from 2005 until 2011		Yes	Negative
21	Chinese scientists	Yes		Negative
22	one scientist who asked not to be named because they did not want to lose their job for speaking about politically sensitive matters		Yes	Negative
23	the scientists	Yes		Neutral
24	artificial insemination and husbandry experts at the San Diego Zoo and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC	Yes		Neutral
25	Chinese scientists	Yes		Negative
26	the SFA and Mohurd	Yes		Neutral
27	a handful of approved scientists	Yes		Neutral
28	Several people who have worked in China's breeding centres	Yes		Negative
29	Loeffler		Yes	Negative
30	Ron Swaisgood, a panda expert at the San Diego Zoo who also chairs the IUCN's giant panda expert team		Yes	Negative

Figure 1 below presents the observed numbers of instances and corresponding percentages of assimilation and individualization in the representation of panda/panda policy experts.



**Figure 1.** Representation of experts in terms of assimilation and individualization.

Figures 2 and 3 below present the proportion of different attitudes expressed by the experts towards panda policy in relation to assimilation and individualization.

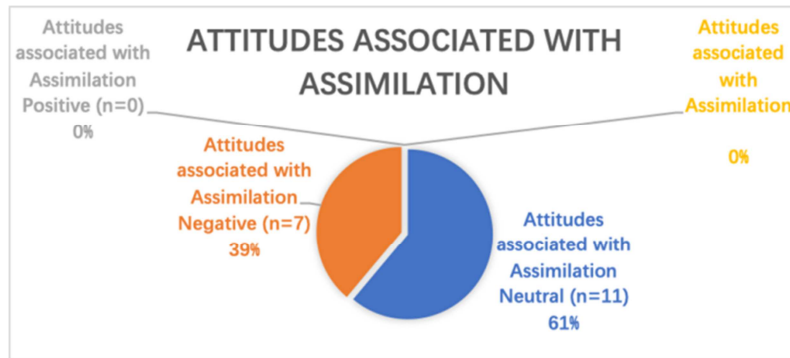


Figure 2. Attitudes expressed by experts represented as collective social actors.

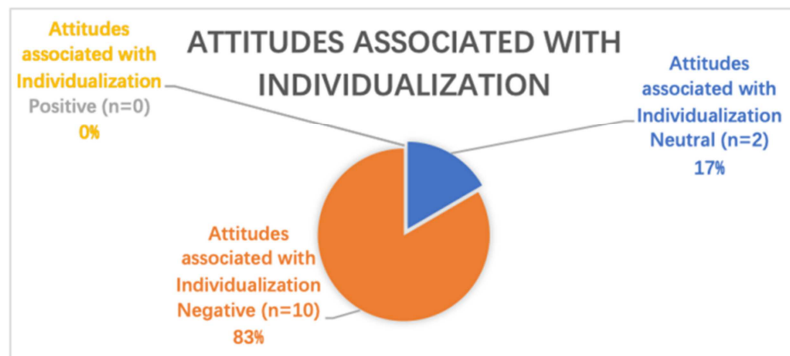


Figure 3. Attitudes expressed by experts represented as individual social actors.

As we can see from Table 4 and Figures 2 and 3, representation of experts through assimilation or individualization is greatly associated with their/his attitudes towards the panda policy. Among the 18 collectively represented social actors, 61% (N=11) express neutral stance, 39% (N=7) express negative attitudes. However, with the 12 individualized researchers, attitudes expressed or suggested by them are overwhelmingly negative—about 83% (N=10) individualized experts have shown their disapproval of the panda policy.

As shown in Table 4, the assimilated social actors—groups of people who are familiar with the government’s panda policy—are mentioned five times (E.g. 1, 5, 6, 11, 12), three times (E.g. 5, 6, 11) realized through aggregation. Van Dijk (1991), cited by Machin and Mayr [20], argues that statistics can be utilized to give the impression of objective research and scientific credibility. Therefore, by quantifying these people, the author indicates credibility and accuracy of his information source as well as consensus among these group members. What’s more, since none of these policy informers is referred to by Nomination, it is also suggested that they are afraid of being known by the public for revealing the government’s decisions and reactions. So, it is not surprising to find out that their attitudes towards panda policy are all expressed as neutral.

Different from the panda policy experts, research experts have more divergent attitudes. It is interesting to note that when “scientists” stand alone, they generally express neutral attitudes (as shown in Examples 4, 9, 23). However, when they are referred to in association with foreign organizations or researchers (as shown in Examples 14 and 16), their attitudes are mostly negative, the reason of which will be discussed in the next section. An even more interesting finding

is that when “scientists” are referred to with additional identification showing their ethnicity as “Chinese” (as shown in Examples 7, 21, 25), it is not the scientists’ attitudes that are expressed, but the author’s detestation for these group of people. As shown in the following Example 7, it is full of sarcasm that “top Chinese scientists” do not provide top-quality “scientific” numbers, but the “political” ones. Also, in Example 21, “Chinese scientists” are trouble makers instead of problem solvers. Again, in Example 25, the practice of the “Chinese scientists” is in fact damaging pandas in the wild for the mere fulfillment of political tasks.

*Example 7. Even the official population of pandas in the wild — a ludicrously precise 1,864 according to a 2015 census — is described as a “political number” by top Chinese scientists.*

*Example 21. China has conducted four censuses over the past 40 years but Chinese scientists involved in the process raise troubling questions.*

*Example 25. At the time, there were only about 100 pandas in captivity, and Chinese scientists would frequently snatch pandas from the wild to boost the number.*

Combining two means of categorization — Identification (“Chinese”) and Functionalization (“scientists”)—in the naming strategy, the author has successfully illegitimized and ridiculed panda researches in China.

Apart from the identification of “Chinese”, “scientists” are post-modified by attributive clauses, as shown in Examples 8 and 28 – “scientists, who asked not to be named for fear of angering the authorities and jeopardizing their careers” and “several people who have worked in China’s breeding centres”. Different from the above-mentioned more generally

referred collectivized scientists, they are referred to, although still collectively, with extra introductions to their research backgrounds and manifestation of their political fears. Readers can tell from the post-modifications that these scientists are the insiders who know the truth and whose revelation of the truth may result in political persecution. Therefore, their opinions are valuable and authentic—all expressing negative attitudes towards the panda policy. These post-modified “scientists” together with the assimilated “panda policy experts” conspire to reinforce the western stereotypes of China's political terror, lack of freedom of speech, lack of independence in scientific research and China's efforts to conceal the fact that panda diplomacy is harming the species rather than protecting them.

In contrast to the collectively referred experts, the majority (83%) of the individualized experts expressed negative attitudes towards the panda policy. These experts are mostly individually referred to by means of nomination and functionalization. Their names are first expressed in a semi-formal manner (given name and surname, as with “Henry Nicholls” in Example 10), when later mentioned again in the text, in the more formal manner (surname only, as with “Nicholls” in Example 19). They are never addressed in the informal manner (given name only), which shows the writer's serious respect to them. In addition, these individualized experts are all referred with a brief introduction to their expertise in panda research, either as scientists or writers on panda politics (e.g. “a panda expert who worked full-time in China from 2005 until 2011”). Representing these individuals through Functionalization serves to positively evaluate them as legitimate and “decent” members of a social community [20], whose opinions and attitudes—in this case, their unanimous disapproval of China's panda policy— shall be held in high regard by the readers on account of their expertise,

integrity and credibility. These respectable professionals are in sharp contrast with the previously satirized “Chinese scientists” whose behavior disgraced the “decent” name of “scientist” and reduced them to tools of politics.

Van Leeuwen indicates that middle-class oriented newspapers tend to individualize elite persons and assimilate “ordinary people” [12]. *Financial Times*, the broadsheet targeting at the elite and upper middle classes [22], has shown its Asia editor's differentiation in representing those experts. The assimilated Chinese scientists and policy experts who do not dare to criticize the government's panda policy are “ordinary people”, while the individualized scientists and writers who dare to expose their names to the public, challenge government policies and reveal the truth of panda politics are the “elites”.

### 5.3. Association and Dissociation

As discussed in 5.2, when “scientists” are represented on their own, they generally express neutral attitudes towards the panda policy. However, when they are referred to in association with foreign organizations or researchers, they become courageous enough to express disapproval of the policy. Therefore, association of social actors signals alliance-formation, with the shared beliefs, attitudes and interests of the members strengthened and the otherwise silenced or weak voice heard. It is formed and unformed (“dissociation”) as the text proceeds, along with alliances built or disintegrated by different parties in interest for various political, economic or social reasons. Table 5 below shows associations formed in the text with observed instances. Categorizations are made on the basis of similar reasons/purposes of association (Association 10 is an exception and reserved for later discussion).

*Table 5. Associations formed in the text.*

Association Categories	Instances of Social Actors Represented in Association
1. Political leaders of panda recipient countries (n=3)	leaders ranging from former UK prime minister Edward Heath to Michelle Obama; Justin Trudeau, Bill Clinton, Francois Hollande and the queen of Spain; the foreign head of state — the queen of Denmark, Angela Merkel herself the US, the UK, Japan, France, Germany, Spain and Mexico;
2. Panda recipient countries (n=4)	Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Indonesia; Australia, France and Canada; Britain and the USSR
3. China and the recipient country (n=2)	China and the recipient country Xi and Merkel, leaders of the world's first and third-largest trading nations Chinese and western experts;
4. Chinese and western research fellows and centers (n=5)	11 Chinese and international scientists; scientists and conservationists; Chinese and western experts (2 <sup>nd</sup> time); the SFA and Mohurd foreign zoos and governments; zoos and the public;
5. Foreign zoos and governments (n=6)	western zoos and governments that manage to secure panda loans; foreign zoos and governments; foreign zoos and governments that borrow pandas; many zoos and governments
6. China's old ally (n=1)	North Korea and the Soviet Union
7. China's politically worrying areas (n=1)	Tibet and democratic, separately governed Taiwan
8. Panda hunters (n=1)	the sons of the first President Roosevelt, Kermit and Teddy Jr

Association Categories	Instances of Social Actors Represented in Association
9. Photo caption (n=3)	Angela Merkel with Xi Jinping; Former US president Richard Nixon with premier Zhou Enlai; Michelle Obama with her mother and daughters;
Association 10 (n=1)	most western zoos, conservation groups or the Chinese government

As the above table shows, association formed most frequently by “foreign zoos and governments” (n=6). It is interesting to note that while other association categories include associations formed by similar but different social actors, this category has shown alliance formed consistently

between foreign zoos and governments. Before we make a further study of this alliance, it is necessary to have a look at the contexts under which such alliance is formed, as “alliance exists only in relation to a specific activity or set of activities” [13].

Table 6. Associations formed by foreign zoos and governments.

Association-forming parties	Activity	Other Social Actors Involved
foreign zoos and governments	send large sums of money to China for “conservation” and rely on China for the proof of its success	China who presents optimistic report of pandas
zoos and the public	demand for rented pandas	China who desires to exploit the public’s goodwill
Western zoos and governments	manage to secure panda loans; claim they are making huge contributions to conserving pandas in the wild	
foreign zoos and governments	have no idea where the money goes	China (implicit)
foreign zoos and governments	borrow pandas like applying to host the Olympics	China
many zoos and governments	keen to make a deal with China to receive pandas	China

As Table 6 shows, foreign zoos and governments form frequent and consistent alliance in panda conservation and panda loans, which indicates that the panda is not only a species of rarity, but also a highly political animal. Renting pandas helps attract visitors for the zoos, and more importantly, serves as a touchstone of the bilateral relationship between China and the foreign recipient country. China, whether explicitly or implicitly referred to, is the constant powerful third-party in relation to these allied parties. Power, as Simpson and Mayr briefly define, is the privileged access to social resources which provides authority, status and influence, realized mainly through the domination, forcing and control of

subordinate groups and the latter’s consent to the former [23]. In this panda-loan relationship, China has the access to the resource of pandas and the privilege of giving or taking away them as a reward or punishment to foreign countries. Therefore, it has dominance in this relationship. On the other hand, foreign zoos and governments have to pay a large sum of money as required by China, along with a tacit consent to the One-China policy. Thus, a powerful, dominant China is represented in contrast to the powerless subordinate foreign zoos and governments. Their power relationship can be expressed in Figure 4 below.

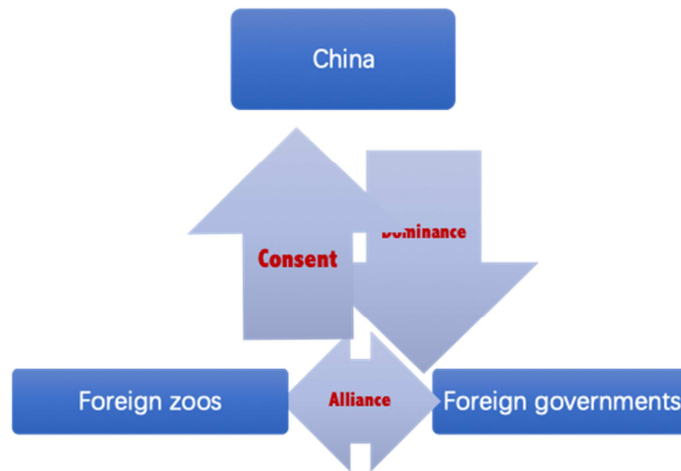


Figure 4. Power relationship represented in the association of “foreign zoos and governments”.

Apart from the most frequently formed associations, those formed only once are also worth noting, as these temporary alliances especially highlight the importance or necessity of the settings that contribute to the formation. I shall make in-depth analysis of Association 6, 7 and 10 in their contexts:

Association 6:

And after the communists came to power in 1949, Chairman

Mao Zedong resurrected the practice of gifting pandas to favoured allies — in his case *North Korea and the Soviet Union*.

Association 7:

Implicit in the granting of pandas is the understanding that the country receiving them accepts China’s cherished political positions — that only the *authoritarian Communist party* has



the right to rule the country, and that *Tibet and democratic, separately governed Taiwan* are integral parts of China.

Association 10:

In dozens of interviews with *Chinese and western experts*, as well as trips to reserves and zoos in China and abroad, *the FT* has uncovered a more complicated picture than that presented by *most western zoos, conservation groups or the Chinese government*.

Both Associations 6 and 7 are formed in relation to China, one being its old political allies, the other being its current political headache (Figure 5). It is interesting to note that in both cases, China is referred to as “communist”. The emphasis on China’s being “communist”, especially in sharp opposition to the “democratic, separately governed Taiwan”, suggests the author’s political stance—a resolute opponent of communism and ardent supporter of democracy. Different from the above mentioned “foreign zoos and governments” whose alliance is formed out of the participants’ common interest and benefits, associations of North Korea and the Soviet Union, Tibet and Taiwan are made on the basis of the author’s ideology—his understanding and differentiation of different polities, values and judgements he attached to them and his choice of political position.

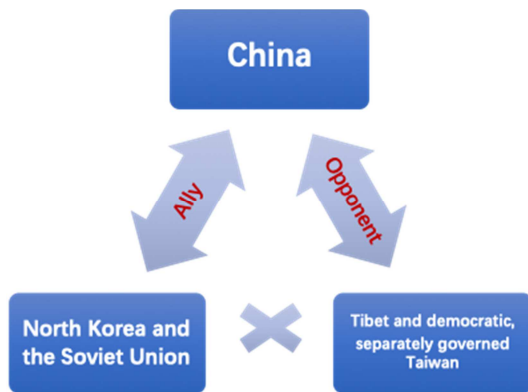


Figure 5. Relationship represented in the associations of “North Korea and the Soviet Union” and of “Tibet and democratic, separately governed Taiwan”.

Association 10 shows a very unlikely alliance formed by western zoos, conservation groups and the Chinese government. As shown in Table 5, in most associations, China or the Chinese government plays a third-party role, serving as the relational setting or background in alliance-formation. However, in this case, “the Chinese government” joins “western zoos, conservation groups” to set off FT’s superior authority on the panda issues—its access to the first-hand information (“interviews with Chinese and western experts), first-hand field work knowledge (“trips to reserves and zoos in China and abroad) and capability to reveal a “more complicated picture”. Privileged access to knowledge, as Simpson and Mayr argue, is one of the ways in which power is gained [23]. FT’s superior knowledge of the panda issues has secured it as an authentic and convincing source of information, giving it more power in relation to “western zoos, conservation groups or the Chinese government”. Again,

power relationship is revealed in the association (Figure 6). However, the purpose of the writer’s grouping these social actors is not to strengthen them through the alliance, but to satirize “western zoos, conservation groups and the Chinese government” who have consumed large sum of money, time and labor, but failed to draw a “complicated” picture of the pandas as FT did.

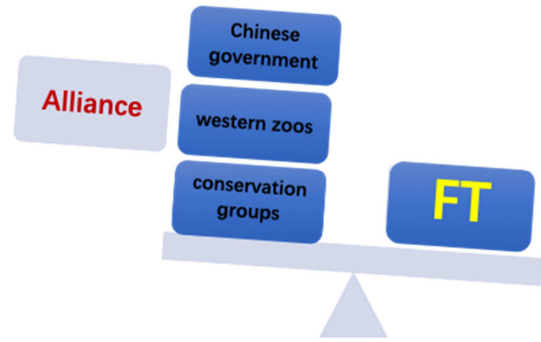


Figure 6. Power relationship represented in the association of “western zoos, conservation groups and the Chinese government”.

As the analysis shows, the writer holds sharply different attitudes towards the main social actors—China, foreign countries and zoos, researchers and FT. This difference can be partly explained by the “ideological square”—a concept proposed by Teun van Dijk to account for one of the principles of ideological reproduction in discourse—expression or suppression of information in the interests of the speaker/writer [24]. This manipulation of information can be realized by:

- 1) Express/emphasize information that is positive about Us.
- 2) Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them.
- 3) Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them.
- 4) Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us.

In short, for in-groups, positive self-presentation or face-keeping strategies are adopted, while for out-groups, the “negative other-presentation” strategies are adopted.

In our case, China is a typical out-group, emphasized as a communist, authoritarian country in opposition to the democratic West to which the writer belongs, who is thus represented as a crafty, deceptive, powerful and intimidating manipulator of panda diplomacy. As for the foreign countries and zoos, the writer shows more sympathy than condemnation, stressing their innocence, ignorance and helplessness in the power wrestling with China. It is worth noting that the writer has made clear referential difference between the collectivized Chinese scientists and the individualized foreign researchers, considering the former despicable politicized out-groups and the latter respectable professional in-groups. Finally, as the Asia editor of FT, Anderlini has expressed strong identification and affinity with his employer, depicting it as an independent, persevering and professional truth-seeker who knows and tells true stories.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has identified and analyzed referential strategies adopted by Jamil Anderlini in representing participants involved in China's panda diplomacy, mainly focusing on the discussion of such representation means as inclusion/exclusion, assimilation/individualization, association/dissociation and their indications for the revelation of the writer's attitudes, beliefs and political stance.

The analysis reveals the writer's starkly different attitudes towards the main social actors, depicting China as an unreliable and authoritarian country who bullies and cheats other countries and delegitimizing its panda diplomacy.

As this report is based on the analysis of only one of the fourteen China's soft power series articles, the findings may be restricted to the specific setting of panda diplomacy. Therefore, it is worth making further discourse analysis with more articles from the same series or from other western newspapers to have a fuller picture of how China is represented.

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