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**Confucian geopolitics: Chinese geopolitical
imaginations of the US war on terror**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract:

This thesis contributes to the literature of critical geopolitics. Based on the exploration of existing studies of critical geopolitics, in this thesis I first argue that this body of literature only presents a partial picture of the world from the perspective of political geographies. While it does offer a solidly critical stance in the investigation of how spatiality influences the exercise of power, it also has certain limitations from ontological and epistemological perspectives. Many studies in this literature suffer from three problems. First, many works have empirically and overly focused on Western states while neglecting both non-Western spaces/places and non-Western geopolitical theories. Second, this body of literature has paid too much attention to media texts rather than the audience who consume those media. In the small amount of audience studies, fans, who are considered to be the most passionate consumer, have always been equated with the audience, thereby ignoring other consumption forces, such as critics and occasional readers. Third, the majority of extant critical geopolitical studies have been concerned with constructionism, which emphasises the significance of human beings in creating a space and thus influencing the exercise of power, while much less attention has been paid to the materiality that underlines the being, or object, playing any of a set of active roles in a narrative.

Those limitations of critical geopolitical studies, in particular the lack of non-Western examples, provide new possibilities for the development of the current field of critical geopolitics. This thesis focuses on Chinese political geographies, a non-Western socio-political background. It indicates that the socio-political context of China has brought potentialities for investigating the complex entanglement between spatial practices and the exercise of power. Specifically, this thesis gives an overview of Chinese geopolitical traditions, *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism, that have had, and still have, a significant impact upon Chinese political cultures. At the same time, this

thesis also reviews the extant literature of Chinese geopolitics. On this basis, it argues that previous works of/in Chinese geopolitical studies have been intimately associated with Western dominance, in particular the classical geopolitical tradition in Western academia, and thus lacked the examination of internal geopolitical voices. These overviews have built two fundamental frameworks for this thesis: critical geopolitics and non-Western geopolitics. Critical geopolitics is the main theoretical framework for this thesis, while non-Western geopolitics is the primary empirical framework for this thesis, although its contribution is not limited to empirics.

Thus I argue that geopolitical space is seldom a pure space controlled by any single force or any single element, but rather a heterogeneous space influenced by a mixed range of forces and factors, including both Western and non-Western forces and values, ruling and ruled forces and values, and socially constructed and material factors. In particular for popular geopolitics, I argue that popular space usually strengthens cultural hegemony, but at the same time it also erodes authority. It is a space of difference and antagonism. Armed with the above perspectives, this thesis will use three chapters of empirical studies to explain how various spaces, forces and values are involved in the exercise of power. Three stories are narrated in this thesis:

(1) Two different – even opposite – Chinese newspaper writings of terrorism and the US war on terror, which can be read as an examination of how Chinese elites practice and perform their geopolitical identities.

(2) Audience imaginations of terrorism and the US war on terror through their readings of Chinese newspapers as mentioned above (1), which can be read as an investigation of how Chinese elitist views are spread and how geopolitical visions are established in Chinese society.

(3) Discussion of terrorism and the US war on terror in the Internet community, in which both Internet users and computer algorithms and bots have a significant impact upon the creation of public opinion.

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Preface:

To those who suffer from terrorist activities, those who suffer from military actions of counterterrorism, and those who are tricked in terrorist discourses, in the US, China, Europe, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Libya, and other areas.

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Author's declaration:

Hereby I confirm that this thesis has been composed by me alone. I can also declare that it has not been submitted for any other degree in the University of Glasgow or other academic institutions.

Ning An

April 2017



Signature.....

Date04/27/2017.....

Abbreviations:

BBC - The British Broadcasting Corporation

BC - Before Christ

CCP - Chinese Communist Party

CCTV - Chinese Central Television

CNN - The Cable News Network

CNNIC - China Internet Network Information Centre

DD/MM/YYYY - Day, Month, Year

ETIM - Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement

ETNC - Eastern Turkistan National Congress

EU - European Union

FGC - Form of General Collection, a designed software for the collection of
the Internet archives

IMDb - The Internet Movie Database

IR - International Relations

IT - Information Technology

JDAM - The Joint Direct Attack Munition

NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NBA - The National Basketball Association

NGO - Non-governmental organization

P(n) - The (n)th participant who takes part in this research

PS - Postscript

TV - Television

UK - The United Kingdom

UN - The United Nations

US - United States of America

WTC - World Trade Centre

WUC - World Uyghur Congress

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Imaginations of the US in post-9/11 China

What does ‘the US’ mean in China? For most ordinary Chinese people, this is quite a tricky question. After all, China is widely known as a socialist state that is considered to have a different political, economic and cultural system as well as — most importantly — a different ideology from capitalist states (Zizek, 2012). Numerous historical studies in China have argued that Chinese imaginations of the US have typically been characterised as capitalist, Western, tyrannical and hegemonic, and therefore absolutely opposite to China’s self-proclaimed status as a socialist, Eastern, harmonious and peaceful state (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008). Along with developments in media, such as TV and the Internet, different imaginations of the US that go beyond binary and antagonistic cognitions (to highlight e.g. democracy, freedom, equality and advancement) have increasingly emerged in post-Cold War China. However, such positive imaginations are not yet deeply engrained into Chinese people’s everyday imaginations of the US. On the contrary, the negative imagination of the US seems to be emphasised again and again. When I was about ten years old, I first learned of ‘the US’ from *People’s Daily*, an official newspaper that was always left at the back of the classroom in the junior high school in my hometown in a remote area in Northwest China. At that time, I witnessed how the US was depicted by official Chinese powers as an imperial force. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I was overwhelmed by

such voices. The negative imagination of the US as an imperial force was usually taken for granted by Chinese people and its socio-political significance was less well understood.

It was after the 9/11 incident that I began to have a clearer understanding of how the imaginations of the US were built up in China. A number of Chinese high schools (including one I attended to finish my high school education) often require students to watch the news broadcast on CCTV-1 from 7pm every evening. I still remember what happened in the classroom of my high school on September 11 2001. That evening, the news programme on CCTV-1 broadcast the US's calamity as a result of the 9/11 incident. However, what surprised me was my classmates' responses to this incident. The vast majority of my male classmates applauded, cheered and were elated, as if they had just won the lottery. Our head teacher, a middle-aged man who was teaching us a political course, also expressed his feeling of joy, relating to the event as revenge for the US's bandit-like foreign policies. Clearly, what these responses underlined was the evaluation of the image of the US from the perspective of terrorists, while less attention was given to the phenomenon of terrorism itself and its influence.

Similarly, the other Chinese media were also keen to depict the US war on terror as a form of new imperialism and hegemony in post-9/11 China. Rather than assessing the US's foreign policies for the war on terror in their own right, Chinese media seemed to focus more on constructing the US as a warmonger by emphasising the US's military actions in the war on terror. In an article that I occasionally read in *People's Daily* (21/03/2004), I found that the US's so-called

counterterrorist war in Iraq was described as a rigid process, a transplantation of the US's democracy into the Middle East, as judged by traditional Chinese values: '*planted in South Huai River, it will be a healthy orange; while on the contrary, planted in North Huai River, it will be a trifoliate orange*'¹. Such a voice is not only crystallised in the media at the national level (e.g. *People's Daily*), but also reflected in the media at the local level. In Guangzhou, one of the most open cities in China where I have spent over ten years in higher education, I have also seen many articles in the local media (e.g. *South Weekend*) depicting the US war on terror during the post-9/11 era as a false front for its ambition for global hegemony.

Beyond TV news programme and newspapers, issues of the US war on terror are also discussed in other channels and spaces. During fieldwork for this thesis, I spent several days at home where I was asked by my young cousin's parents to supervise his holiday homework. I was surprised to find that his homework was to write a personal judgement on the US war on terror in Iraq, even though he is only a ten-year-old child who is now a fourth-year primary school student. Moreover, when using the Chinese Internet (e.g. *Sina Weibo*) for social networks I was also deeply impressed by Chinese Internet users' discussions of the US war on terror. In the space of the Chinese Internet, Internet users can be regularly witnessed turning attention from the discussion of terrorism or the US war on terror to the discussion of the role of the US on the international stage.

This evidence shows that in China's everyday life the US war on terror is not

¹ This proverb is usually used as a metaphor referring that given things, values or ideologies should not be put in the wrong environments.

only an important theme for the mass media, but in the post-9/11 period it is also frequently discussed by ordinary people in diverse situations. These media discourses and daily narratives of the US war on terror play important roles in Chinese people's imaginations of the US. In this sense, I assume that a wide range of discussions of the US war on terror in *People's Daily*, *South Weekend*, *Sina Weibo* and other channels help to build up Chinese imaginations of the US. It is precisely the above experience that stimulated my interests in examining Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US through the lens of the war on terror.

The opening stories that I have told bring us to the first basic question that this thesis raises: why is the empirical research from the perspective of the US war on terror important? To engage with this question, we need first to understand the significance of the war on terror in the US's post-9/11 foreign policies. The 9/11 terrorist attack has resulted in notable changes to the international political situation and geopolitical patterns, urging a number of states to turn the foci of their foreign policies onto the issue of facing terrorism (Booth & Dunne, 2002; Mansbach, 2003; Brunn, 2004; Orfy, 2010). In particular for the US, since the 9/11 event the war on terror has been underscored as the top priority in its foreign policies and national security strategies (Pillar, 2003). To a significant extent, the US war on terror has become an important window through which the role of the US in the international arena can be observed and analysed. For example, Derek Gregory (2004) presents a large number of details about the US war on terror in the Middle East in his well-known book *The colonial present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*, within which the US who is self-claimed to be counterterrorist has been depicted as a form of colonial

forces. In this sense, to understand the US war on terror is a key way to understand the role of the US. Most importantly, the discussion of the US war on terror in post-9/11 China is also intimately related to Chinese imaginations of the US, as shown by the opening stories. Thus, it is necessary in this thesis to discuss how Chinese imaginations of the US are established from the perspective of the war on terror.

However, the body of works that has arisen on the popular geopolitics of the US war on terror are overwhelmingly conducted from a Western perspective. How geographical and political knowledges of the US are produced through discourses of terrorism beyond the Western lens is generally missing. This knowledge gap brings us to the second fundamental question for this thesis: what are Chinese views of the US war on terror? And why is a study from the Chinese perspective important? To engage with this question, we need to understand the special socio-political context of China in which Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US are built up. I have noticed that there might be different reasons why Chinese people prefer to make judgements about the US rather than discuss terrorism or counterterrorism themselves when they are concerned with the topic of the US war on terror. Under the influence of Chinese traditional values, in particular the Confucian values that put emphasis on harmony and diversity, these people usually evaluate international affair by judging whether a state can bring harmony or welfare to its people. In this regard, Chinese people always refuse to construct a binary and conflict frame inside and outside a boundary that relates the US as a form of counterterrorist force to the opposite side of terrorists. In contrast, Chinese people sometimes even look at the sameness between the US and terrorists, relating the origin of terrorism to the US's

bandit-like foreign policies and viewing the US war on terror as a form of hegemony. In this sense, for this thesis to investigate Chinese imaginations of the US through the lens of the war on terror is not just another empirical case study of discourses of terrorism, but a development of non-Western geopolitical discourse.

It merits noting that the aforementioned Chinese discourses of terrorism might be explicitly framed through notions of postcolonial geopolitics (Müller & Reuber, 2008; Slater, 2008), subaltern geopolitics (Sharp, 2011a; b) and non-Western geopolitics (Agnew, 2007). All of these three notions favour a perspective beyond the Western lens, but there are distinctions between them. Specifically, postcolonial geopolitics regards the drawing of boundaries between ‘own’ space and ‘other’ space as a decisive factor in geopolitical discourses, and so highlights a vigorously opposing dichotomous thinking (Müller & Reuber, 2008). On this basis, it suggests focusing on the power relations between own space (often to highlight the Western space) and other space and the geopolitical practices in other spaces, in particular in postcolonial contexts where reference is always made back to a prior phase of colonial settlement and rule. Making direct reference to postcolonial concepts and underlining the unequal power relations between ‘us’ and ‘other’, subaltern geopolitics suggests ‘a position that is not completely other, resistant or alternative to dominant geopolitics, but an ambiguous position of marginality’ (Sharp, 2011b, p.271). In so doing, this type of geopolitics suggests paying attention to the various geopolitical practices that are engaged with by these who have been marginalised by dominant geopolitics. Non-Western geopolitics, in John Agnew’s (2007) ideas, is a more general idea about forms of epistemology beyond the Western perspective,

which offer neither an opposing dichotomous framing nor underline a form of unequal power relations between the marginalised and the dominant.

As such, it is inappropriate to view the Chinese situation through either postcolonial geopolitics or subaltern geopolitics in this study as China (except Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) has never been colonised in history by powers from the West or Global North and thus has lacked the post-colonial context. Moreover, China has been usually playing an important role and is now playing increasingly important role on the stage of international politics, which reminds us that China cannot be situated in the subaltern context for research: it is in no sense a marginal, done-down geopolitical state. Therefore, throughout this thesis I focus on non-Western geopolitics as the primary framing that could theorise inquiry into Chinese discourses of the US war on terror.

On this basis, then, this thesis focuses on '*Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror*', aiming at investigating how the imaginations of the US are built up through Chinese daily understanding of the US war on terror in diverse situations, based in China's socio-political background. In so doing, the key objectives of this research can be summarised as below:

(1) To conduct a non-Western geopolitics and a Chinese geopolitics of the US war on terror, thereby extending the field of political geographies, in particular the subfield of geopolitics, into the Chinese academy. Previous studies have shed light on the significance of the Western perspective in the production of geographical knowledge about other space and how such perspectives enter into the making of world politics (Said, 1978; Gregory, 1994; Agnew, 2003). These studies have

illustrated the interrelationship between geographical knowledge productions and practices of world politics. However, the paucity of non-Western perspectives has often been lamented in political geographies. In most recent geopolitical studies, a number of scholars (Sharp, 2011a; 2013; Bachmann, 2013; Kuus, 2013b) have been concerned with geopolitical knowledge production from non-Western contexts, such as marginal space, subaltern space, or places of low rank, suggesting that there is an urgent need for non-Western research to displace Western-centric geopolitical imaginations. Nevertheless, both the empirical and theoretical explorations of non-Western perspectives are still immature. Based on empirical analysis of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror, this research will provide the opportunity to develop the emergent body of work on Chinese political geographies and, more specifically, Chinese geopolitics. In so doing, this thesis firstly attempts to fill the lacuna of non-Western studies in the field of political geography.

(2) To conduct a form of critical geopolitics (including formal geopolitics and popular geopolitics) of the Chinese views of the US war on terror. A number of studies have elaborated on the nexus between geographical knowledge production and the practice of international politics under the framework of ‘critical geopolitics’ (I will discuss this notion further in chapter 2). Adopting the approach of ‘critical geopolitics’, this thesis plans to develop this strand of geopolitical analysis in order to examine how Chinese geopolitical discourse of the US is established in Chinese formal and everyday discussions of the US war on terror. In this regard, the ways within which Chinese imaginations of the US are reached from the elites’ textual construction of the US war on terror, middle-level Chinese’s daily understanding of

such texts, and mass public opinions of the US war on terror on the Internet will be illustrated in the following empirical chapters. Through the empirical analysis, this thesis intends to explore how the special socio-political background of China makes us understand terrorism, the US, and even the geopolitical mechanisms in China, in different ways.

1.2 Voices from China: an analytical framework

As mentioned above, my intention in this thesis is to examine the geopolitical imaginations of the US from a Chinese perspective by exploring how the topic of the US war on terror is discussed in China. But what is a Chinese perspective? In order to answer this question, it is essential to first have a clear understanding of the ways in which we can examine voices from China. In sociology, the society is usually understood in two major ways, the top-down and the bottom-up channels, the former of which is concerned with the state voices enforced by the elites while the latter focuses on the non-state voices from the masses (Jobert & Kohler-Kock, 2008). In this regard, I believe a scalar imagination exploring both the state voices and the non-state voices would play an important role in the research of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US. Therefore, in this thesis I attempt to examine the state voices through the empirical case study of the elitist voice. For the non-state voices, I try to investigate them from two empirical aspects: the voices of the educated class (here I call them middle-level Chinese people; I will elaborate this notion more in chapter 4) and the voices from the masses. In this sense, the analytical framework of the empirical study on voices from China will be structured

in three parts: the elitist voice, the middle-level voice and the mass voice. On this basis, three research questions were formulated for this thesis:

- (1) What are Chinese elitist views of the US war on terror?
- (2) What are middle-level Chinese's views of the US war on terror?
- (3) What are the mass opinions of Chinese on the US war on terror?

In order to answer these three questions, I first collected archives related to the US war on terror published in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* (2001-2014). As the printed media in China is always considered to be under the control or at least under the guidance of Chinese political elites (e.g. the CCP) which may not reflect what Chinese elites actually think but, to a great extent, can reflect what they want to talk and want the mass Chinese to know (Zhang, 2011), the empirical analysis of the representations of the US war on terror in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* (I will elaborate on this further in chapter 5) would be attributed to the investigation of voices from Chinese political elites. Moreover, in order to explore how middle-level Chinese people are engaged in Chinese imaginations of the US, I recruited 58 middle-level Chinese readers with experience of reading *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* to explore their opinions of the US war on terror and Chinese newspapers. Conducting the 40-90-minute-long interview with each interviewee, I recorded and transcribed examples of how Chinese political voices reach them, and how their understandings of the US war on terror are shaped by their daily consumption of newspapers (this will be further discussed in chapter 6). In addition, in order to explore how the mass Chinese build up their imaginations of the US war on terror, I collected online archives captured from *Sina Weibo*, one of the biggest Chinese

Internet communities for social networking, to explore mass opinions on the US war on terror in China. The specific feature of the Chinese Internet — including the exponential expansion of information, its swift transmission through mobile terminals, and the new textual modes — means it has increasingly become the hottest space for shaping public opinion (Qiang, 2011). In this regard, the examination of *Sina Weibo* in the empirical study of this thesis (which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 7) could be read as a contribution to the investigation of non-state voices in China. The above mentioned processes are also described in detail in chapter 4.

A principle of organization also had to be found for the ensuing analysis. Each of the three questions requires a slightly different analytical focus. For the first question, which involved textual analysis and discourse analysis of narratives in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, I draw on the analytical framework of *critical geopolitics*, in particular its emphasis that texts play influential roles in producing geographical meanings and geopolitical knowledge (Müller, 2013), to develop the empirical analysis. For the second question, within which the middle-level Chinese people's reading experiences and their understandings of the US war on terror are examined in greater detail, I use techniques derived from *audience studies* to develop the empirical analysis. As an essential part of media study, the audience is usually viewed as a place where media contents are consumed and where media meanings are reproduced (Rose, 2012). In this sense, the analytical framework of audience studies plays an important role in developing the analysis of middle-level Chinese people's imaginations of the US war on terror. For the final question, I pay

attention to the exploration of spaces of geopolitics, in which the various dynamics of spatiality for understanding international relations is discussed. The nature of space is usually linked to the ways geopolitical knowledge is produced (Starr, 2013). The relations between technology (esp. the Internet) and geopolitics has been less touched upon in extant works of geopolitics, so the analytical focus on the case study of *Sina Weibo* in this thesis is not only an examination of non-state voices in Chinese society, but can also be read as an extension of the technology geopolitics, which makes us understand geopolitics in different ways. The above mentioned principles are also elaborated on in detail in chapter 2.

1.3 Structure of this thesis

This thesis develops its investigation of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror through seven further chapters. After this introductory chapter, the relevant literatures of this thesis will be reviewed in chapter 2. Specifically, in this chapter, I set up the theoretical framework for this thesis by using the notion of critical geopolitics, putting the emphasis on its intellectual roots as well as recent developments in the field of political geographies. In particular, I summarise how geographical knowledge is produced through texts and beyond texts, and how such geographical assumptions enter into the making of world politics. Underlining the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics, chapter 2 also describes three ongoing lines of debates in this field, to which I will turn in the following empirical chapters. To be exact, emphasising the hegemony of Western sights/sites of geopolitics, the paucity of the non-Western case studies, and the poverty of the non-Western voices

in existing literatures, chapter 2 suggests an examination of the geopolitical context underlying the socio-political context of China. Then, lamenting the shortcomings of audience research in existing studies of critical geopolitics, chapter 2 indicates that there is a need to examine the wider socio-political context of media-audience connection and the broader groups of audiences rather than just the group of fans. Finally, chapter 2 also points out the paucity of geopolitical analysis about the space of the Internet. In so doing, this chapter expects that more work still needs to be done to illuminate the diversity of the geopolitical analysis on spaces and relevant spatiality.

Chapter 3 relates the research context to the empirical analysis of this thesis. The non-Western background of China, including the internal Chinese geopolitical thinking, the existing geopolitical analyses of/in China, and Chinese understandings of terrorism, is analysed in chapter 3, providing a broader background for this thesis. I start this chapter by foregrounding Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US in traditional Chinese geopolitical thoughts - *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism - which is considered as a dichotomous Chinese imagination of 'the foreign' and 'us' in Confucian traditions. It is worth noting that such geopolitical framings still have impact upon current Chinese political cultures and are still unexplored in studies of geopolitics. Besides, this chapter also reviews other Chinese backgrounds that may impact upon Chinese geopolitics, such as the Communist context of China. In this chapter, I also give an overview of the existing studies of/in China. On this basis, this chapter identifies the dominance of Western scholarship in framing Sinophone geopolitics, and also indicates a limitation of the existing Anglophone studies of

Chinese geopolitics: the lack of the everyday understanding of geopolitics. In doing so, chapter 3 advocates a geopolitical analysis of discourses of the US war on terror from the perspective of everyday life in China. The final part of chapter 3 highlights the difficulty of defining terrorism and describes the situation of Chinese terrorism, which to a notable extent can be read as an essential background to the geopolitical analysis of the war on terror in China in this thesis.

Chapter 4 is an account of methodology and methods of this research. In order to connect the theoretical and empirical contexts set out in chapter 2 and chapter 3 with the empirical chapters that follow, this chapter elaborates on the research methods adopted to analyse geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror in China. Drawing on a review of research methods applied in existing literatures and seven-month-long fieldwork in China, three methods are primarily utilised to underpin this thesis: textual and discourse analysis of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 58 middle-level Chinese people, and online research of the archives from *Sina Weibo*. Moreover, chapter 4 also illustrates the ethical challenges that I faced during the fieldwork and the research process. Furthermore, in order to have a clearer understanding of the whole experience of the fieldwork, transform the collected data into a comprehensive and tight analysis, and prepare for the empirical analysis, chapter 4 also categorises, codes and analyses the fieldwork data using the text-processing computer software Nvivo 10. The results of the data organization are presented at the end of chapter 4.

The conceptual and theoretical setting established in chapter 2 and chapter 3 will be built on by three empirical-analytical chapters. Chapter 5 develops a detailed

textual and discourse analysis of the representations of terrorism and the US war on terror in newspapers *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. In this chapter, I primarily focus on how China's suffering of terrorist activities, the US's suffering of terrorist activities, and the US war on terror are narrated in Chinese newspaper articles, and in so doing how Chinese imagination of the US is built up. In sum, the newspapers *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* are often analysed as socially constructed spaces where geographical knowledge of the US war on terror is produced and then used for the construction of Chinese people's commonsensical understandings of the US and terrorism. In order further to understand the complexity of Chinese media representations, this chapter also pays attention to Chinese journalism. Specifically, two different styles of newspapers (*People's Daily* is widely considered to be the mouthpiece of the official forces, while *South Weekend* is regarded as the most radical and most liberal media, at least in China) are analysed as a comparative study in this chapter. The comparative study provides plentiful possibilities for the examination of Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US.

To understand how Chinese imagination of the US war on terror is established in Chinese people's everyday life and to understand the nature of media-audience connection, in chapter 6 I focus on how Chinese audiences read the two newspapers and how they practice their imaginations of the US war on terror. In this regard, chapter 6 shows a detailed investigation of Chinese audiences' relations to *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Most specifically, this chapter examines these audiences' understandings of terrorism and the US on the basis of in-depth interview materials. In so doing, this chapter points out the significance of *People's Daily* and/or *South*

Weekend in the constructions of Chinese audiences' imaginations of the US war on terror. The argument which guides the empirical analysis in this chapter is that media narrative of terrorism in China is not necessarily related to Chinese people's imaginations of the US. Specially, empirical observations in chapter 6 demonstrate that the audiences' geographical imaginations to a notable extent depend on their identities as avid readers, occasional readers or critics. Emphasising the audience's identity beyond the fan culture, chapter 6 suggests a research agenda extending the geopolitical analysis to the wider audience group that is often neglected in existing literatures of geopolitics, such as occasional readers and critics.

In chapter 7, the last empirical chapter, the focus of the analysis in this thesis is shifted to mass opinions of the US war on terror on the Chinese Internet. Drawing on observations of two online organisations' postings (online accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*) and most importantly relevant Chinese Internet users' discussions of terrorism and the US on the Internet community *Sina Weibo*, this chapter can be read as going some way to fill the knowledge gap about Internet discourses as well as contributing to investigation of mass Chinese imaginations of the US. On the one hand, chapter 7 explores how the topics of terrorism and the US are discussed on *Sina Weibo*, illustrates the result of the Internet discourses of terrorism and the US, and most importantly points out the mechanisms by which such discourses take shape in the space of the Internet. In so doing, the case study in this chapter provides an opportunity to explore how we understand geopolitics through the Internet. On the other hand, chapter 7 also depicts the nature of the Chinese Internet and thus indicates how such features impact upon Chinese

everyday imaginations of the US. It is precisely the particularity of the Chinese Internet on the technological level, including the utilisation of mobile terminals, its language limits, and its ways of transmitting information, that decides the difference in Chinese Internet discourses of the US war on terror compared to Chinese newspaper accounts. In this sense, this chapter can not only be read as an empirical observation of the mass of Chinese voices, but can also be read as a contribution to the focus of technology geopolitics that puts more emphasis on the significance of technology (as a form of materiality and objects) rather than the subjective nexus between knowledge and power (Shaw & Meehan, 2013).

As a conclusion, in chapter 8 I illustrate the primary findings, contributions, limitations, future directions and significance of this thesis. Most specifically, this chapter looks back to the primary findings observed in the empirical analyses of chapter 5, chapter 6 and chapter 7. In so doing, in this chapter I discuss discourses of terrorism and the general imagination of the US from the perspective of China. On this basis, chapter 8 highlights the idea of heterogeneous geopolitical space, through which it underlines the idea that geopolitical discourse in a state is not shaped by any single force and impacted by any single factor. On the contrary, through the case studies in this research, it can be seen that Chinese elites, middle-level Chinese and the mass of Internet users have all played their own roles and contributed to the production of Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US. Based on their opinions, it can also be concluded that quite a wide range of factors (e.g. the Communist context, Chinese nationalism and importantly Chinese Confucianism) have all contributed to the production of Chinese geopolitical

discourses. This conclusion reminds us that there is a Chinese style of cultural hegemony within which the various Chinese media, including newspapers, the Internet and other channels of information communication, are used to establish Chinese people's commonsensical knowledge of geography and politics. Beyond cultural hegemony, however, this research has also noted that the popular spaces may erode state power on some occasions. Though several limitations of this thesis are identified at the end, chapter 8 still highlights that the main findings in this thesis have contributed to both the previous and the future work of critical geopolitics.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide a critical review of the relevant literature in order to highlight the various gaps in existing studies of geopolitics and, in so doing, create a space and purpose for this thesis to fill and expand upon. More specifically, I will extend the theoretical framework of this study by underlining the notion of ‘critical geopolitics’ and examining relevant studies on this topic. Overall, this literature review will be structured by a general overview of the notion of critical geopolitics followed by more specific lines of inquiry and debate that the following empirical chapters draw upon.

In the first section of this chapter, I will be concerned with the notion of critical geopolitics by examining its intellectual roots and recent developments. Critical geopolitics, to a notable extent, is based on the criticism of the classical geopolitical traditions that underline the impact of the neutral and pre-given geographical reality upon world politics. In classical geopolitical traditions, geography is considered to be series of physical and material realities waiting to be discovered and, on this basis, geography is regarded as one of the most important factors to impact upon the exercise of power (Kelly, 2006). In contrast, in critical geopolitics, geographical knowledge is not merely limited to the neutral and pre-given physical geographical facts, but also involves a subjective production process (Agnew, 2003). That is, geography is also viewed as a process of ‘geo-graphing’ and ‘earth-writing’ that is conducted by political actors who attempt to ‘seize space and organise it to fit their

own cultural visions and material interests' (Toal, 1996a, p. 2). By emphasising the idea that geographical knowledge can be subjectively produced and can be used for the exercise of power, the text, which is viewed as the most significant channel for producing geographical knowledge, has been increasingly observed and studied in existing studies of critical geopolitics (Müller, 2013). As Martin Müller (2008, p. 328) points out, critical geopolitics focuses on the ways in which 'the autonomous subject has control over texts, knits them into narratives, and thus turns them into a vehicle through which it exercises power'. However, existing studies of critical geopolitics have been soon challenged for their elitism (Sharp, 2000b), and on this basis a new branch of geopolitical studies that weaves geopolitical writings and popular culture has been increasingly encouraged (Sharp, 2000a; Dodds, 2007a; Dittmer, 2010). Critiques of critical geopolitical theory are not limited to popular geopolitics. Along with developments in feminist geography (Dalby, 1994; Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001; 2004) and nonrepresentational theory (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Lorimer, 2005; 2008; Thrift, 2008) in human geography, the theory of critical geopolitics has been further criticised for its elite-centric, masculinised, and representation-based characteristics. Therefore, critical geopolitics has also incorporated 'things' beyond representation and texts, such as embodiment, affect, emotion, practice, performativity and object, into our understandings of geopolitics. In this sense, the theory of critical geopolitics, including the ways of investigating our geopolitical understandings in both representational and nonrepresentational frameworks, constitute the fundamental framework for the analysis in this thesis, and will be reviewed in the first section of this chapter.

Nevertheless, the theory of critical geopolitics does not outline a full blueprint for geopolitical research. It still has shortcomings and deficiencies. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on some more specific lines of inquiry and debate that the later empirical chapters draw upon. This part will be structured in three sections. The first strand of the review (*'Geopolitical contexts'*) pays attention to the location of the scholarship of geopolitics, relating the analysis of this thesis to its non-Western context. In underlining the hegemony of the Western sight/site of the practice of geopolitics, the lack of the non-Western examples and the paucity of endogenous Chinese voice, this strand of the review creates a space for this research to make its own intervention in Chinese geopolitics. The second strand of the review (*'Audience studies'*) considers the question of who is involved in geopolitical practices. In particular, by paying attention to how the printed media (newspapers in this study) and the audience are framed in geopolitical discourse, this strand of the review seeks to illuminate the significance and role of the audience (in particular the diverse audience that divides newspaper readers into avid readers, occasional readers and critics) in producing geopolitical discourse. The third strand of the review (*'Spaces of geopolitics'*) investigates spaces in which geopolitical discourses are produced at a more concrete level, such as physical space, media space, mental space and virtual space. In so doing, this review tries to situate the exploration of Internet discourse (analysed in chapter 7) in the framework of critical geopolitics.

2.1 Critical geopolitics

In this section, I will discuss the notion of critical geopolitics, its intellectual roots, and developmental trends in most recent studies.

2.1.1 The intellectual roots of critical geopolitics

The study of the impact of geography upon the conduct of politics has drawn on the notion of geopolitics (Agnew, 2003; Toal, Dalby, & Routledge, 2006; Dodds, 2007a). In conventional geopolitical studies, in particular under the framework of ‘classical geopolitics’, relevant studies have mainly explored the assumption that physical geographical facts would have a significant impact upon the exercise of international politics (Parker, 1998, p. 5). That is, geopolitics is often involved in the examination of how physical geographical facts, such as location, position, topography and resources, impact upon foreign affairs or strategic policies. For example, Halford Mackinder’s heartland theory, which is considered to be one of the classics of classical geopolitical thought, shows his anxiety for the position of Britain in European politics (Toal, 1996a). Karl Haushofer holds a firm standpoint highlighting the significances of ‘lebensraum’ (living space) and ‘organic state’ for the destiny of a state (Bassin, 1987, pp. 115-116).

For most observers, classical geopolitics emphasises a neutral, objective, and pre-given understanding of geography, by which geography is usually viewed as a discipline describing the objective realities of the physical environments around us. However, the physical geographical environment is not the only factor that would

impact upon the exercise of international politics. The imaginary geographies that are subjectively produced by politicians, statecraft intellectuals and institutions may also impact upon the making of foreign or strategic policies. For example, in Gerard Toal and John Agnew's (1992) study of the geopolitical reasoning of the Soviet-US rivalry in the Cold War, they emphasise the significance of imaginary geographies in influencing the making of foreign policies. Specifically, Toal and Agnew (1992) investigate George Kennan's (an American diplomat and historian) 'Long Telegram' and 'Mr. X' article in which the Soviet Union is depicted as an 'Orientalist' state, a 'potential rapist' and part of 'the red flood', and by so doing they suggest that such imaginary geographies of the Soviet Union helped 'codify and constitute central elements of what became Cold War discourse' and justify the US's foreign policy of 'containment' (p.199-201). In such situations, the notion of critical geopolitics is put forward and used to investigate the impact of socially produced geographical knowledge upon the exercise of politics. In this sense, critical geopolitics to a certain extent doubts the possibility of reaching 'objective and scientific knowledge' and suggests that the purpose of research is 'to recover the discourses governing the geography of political practice rather than searching for an ontologically independent "reality" beyond the limits of theorising' (Agnew, 1997, p. 2). That is, critical geopolitics can be regarded as the theory based on the critique of classical geopolitics, within which geography is no longer about a series of realities out there and waiting to be discovered, but is characterised by the process of geo-graphing, which emphasises the subjective process of knowledge production (Toal, 1996a).

Underlining the impact of socially produced geographical knowledge upon

politics, quite a large number of studies have explored how socially produced geographical knowledge enters into the making of world politics under the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics (Dodds & Sidaway, 1994; Toal, 1996a; Dodds, 2000; Agnew, 2003). For example, Simon Dalby (1988; 1990) investigates how the geographical knowledge of the Soviet Union was produced in American TV, newspapers and public speeches during the Cold War. By constructing the Soviet Union as a totalitarian and expansionist Other rooted in history, geography, economic conditions, political systems and ideology, Dalby (1988; 1990) argues that such knowledge offered the Reagan Administration a practical way to describe, explain and justify its foreign policies towards the Soviet Union, such as the doctrines of ‘containment’, ‘deterrence’ and the provision of national security. As Toal (1996a) summarises, world politics is always spatialised by political actors through their practices of geo-writings, through which political practice is bound up with spatial specificities.

Under the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics, it can be clearly seen that the notion of ‘geopolitics’ is closely involved with the notion of ‘discourse’, which links subjective knowledge production to the exercise of power (Dalby, 1988; 1990; Toal & Agnew, 1992; Toal, 1996a; Müller, 2008). Specifically, critical geopolitics intimately focuses on how the intellectuals and institutions of statecraft script spatial features and how they place such scripts into the exercise of power, which is closely related to the Foucauldian notion of ‘discourse’ that emphasises the nexus between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980). In offering this core concept, Michel Foucault is viewed as the single most influential scholar in critical

geopolitics studies (Dodds & Sideway, 1994). In Foucault's understanding of knowledge, power and spatiality, he suggests that the nexus of power/knowledge often operates in a geopolitical way:

The longer I continue, the more it seems to me that the formation of discourses and the genealogy of knowledge need to be analysed, not in terms of types of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology, but in terms of tactics and strategies of power. Tactics and strategies deployed through implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organizations of domains which could well make up a sort of geopolitics where my preoccupations would link up with your methods. One theme I would like to study in the next few years is that of the army as a matrix of organization and knowledge; one would need to study the history of the fortress, the 'campaign', the 'movement', the colony, the territory. Geography must indeed necessarily lie at the heart of my concerns. (Foucault, 1980, p. 182)

On this basis, it can be seen that Foucault looks at geography as a form of discourse and knowledge that is linked to power in terms of 'tactics and strategies of power' through the practices of 'implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organisations of domains'. In this sense, it might be suggested that one of Foucault's greatest contribution to critical geopolitics is his keen inspiration and insight in the understanding of geography as a form of discourse and knowledge,

and as having an intimate relationship with power, which provides the main point of inquiry for critical geopolitics.

In general, highlighting the role of the subjective process of the production of geographical knowledge and its nexus with world politics, critical geopolitics has provided a significant way to understand both the geographical environment around us and the global political environment. For example, compared to conventional geopolitics, critical geopolitics encourages us to read and understand world politics from texts, embodiment, emotions, affects, practices, performativity, and objects in which humanity rather than physical geographical facts play much more important roles in shaping world political maps. This type of worldview still plays an important role in understanding the environment around us, and this is also why I put this study in the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics. However, critical geopolitics is not a static theory about geopolitics, but also evolves in different ways in the previous several decades. In what follows, I will review relevant literature on how the theory of critical geopolitics evolves in most recent years.

2.1.2 Evolving theories of critical geopolitics

On the basis of the exploration of existing studies of critical geopolitics, it can be seen that critical geopolitical research has long been expanded upon through the assumption that world politics can be read through textual evidence (Müller, 2013). This viewpoint is mainly reflected in the understanding that texts are important ways to represent both geography (Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Dittmer, 2010) and international politics (Shapiro, 1989). In other words, representations and texts have

opened a significant avenue for geopolitics, regarding ‘global space as a malleable creation with political purpose and potentially multiple meanings’ (Müller, 2013, p. 50). On this basis, a great number of critical geopolitics studies have been involved in the examination of the various texts and their writings on geopolitics.

Owing to the conspicuous role of the elite (e.g. national leaders, military officers, think-tanks, strategists, experts, and scholars) in writing the environments around us, one of the most important sources of texts for critical geopolitics studies are texts manipulated by the elite. As Toal and Dalby (1998, p. 5) point out, critical geopolitics studies of texts from the elite (e.g. government files, specialists’ reports, national leaders’ speeches, and policy documents) are known as ‘formal geopolitics’ and ‘practical geopolitics’. Formal geopolitics is closely related to the spatialising practices conducted by authorities, such as experts and scholars; while practical geopolitics is involved in the spatialising practices related to practitioners of statecraft, such as politicians, policy-makers and military officers (Toal & Dalby, 1998). Both are tightly bound up with the manipulation of texts by elites for political purposes. For example, Toal (1992) explores how the Bush Administration depicted the Soviet Union and Europe in the *Department of State Bulletin* (from April to December, 1989) and the *Economist* (1991) after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Even though the Cold War geopolitical system collapsed, Toal (1992) highlights that the US political elites do not seem to have stopped their Cold War ideology, but have instead prompted a new emphasis on the danger of instability in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. On this basis, Toal (1992, p. 437) argues that the US political elites’ manipulation of texts plays a significant role in legitimating

the US's foreign and security policies of 'militarism', 'the Cold War alliance' and 'power projection in the Third World'. Formal geopolitics and practical geopolitics have done a good job of recording the role of national leaders, military officers, think-tanks, and academic authorities in producing and disseminating knowledges that help us in understanding the geopolitical around us. However, for the reason of their excessive attention to elitist texts, formal geopolitics and practical geopolitics have not done well in investigating the significance of popular culture in producing and disseminating geopolitical knowledges.

Lamenting the paucity of examination of voices beyond the elite, a great number of scholars in critical geopolitics have investigated text beyond high culture under the framework of popular geopolitics (Dodds, 2007a). Popular geopolitics refers to the investigation of 'the role and potential impact of popular geopolitical representations of territory, resources, identity politics' in the taking shape of people's understanding of the world and politics (Dodds, 2007a, p. 146). Given the strong capacity of popular culture to represent global space, a wide range of popular texts have been examined in studies of popular geopolitics in recent decades, such as magazines (Sharp, 1993; 1996; 2000a), journalist biography (Toal, 1996b), newspapers (MacDonald, 2006), films (Dodds, 2003; 2005; Crampton & Power, 2005; Carter & McCormack, 2006; Dalby, 2008), music (Boulton, 2008; Liu, An, & Zhu, 2015), comics (Dittmer, 2005a; 2007; 2011), and video games (Shaw, 2010). For example, Klaus Dodds (2008) investigates how the US's foreign policies find expression in Hollywood films following the 9/11 incident. Specifically, Dodds (2008) is concerned with how films are employed by certain cultural institutions as

a form of popular text to describe the terrorist as an immoral other and therefore used for legitimating the US's foreign policy and security strategy of the global war on terror. The examination of the role of popular texts in shaping geopolitical discourse is meaningful. Joanne Sharp (1993), who is considered to have offered 'the single most important voice in the creation of popular geopolitics' (Mickenberg, 2002, p. 181), argues that 'geopolitics does not simply "trickle down" from elite texts to popular ones' (p. 493). In contrast, popular texts interplay and inter-function with elite ones in geopolitical writings.

Nevertheless, most of early critical geopolitics (including formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics) studies seem to have paid too much attention to texts; whereas less attention has been paid to the significance of 'things' beyond text in producing our understanding of the geopolitical. Most specifically, critical geopolitics always limits the understanding of discourses to the realm of discursive, signifying, linguistic practices, considering that everything (especially geography and world politics) can be represented through symbol systems. However, it can be clearly seen that not everything can be grasped and represented through texts. For example, embodied experience and emotion, pre-cognitive affect, materiality beyond discursive systems and the flow of practice, which are usually highlighted by most recent human geographies, particularly in feminist geographies and nonrepresentational theory, cannot always be captured through symbols. The above mentioned 'things' beyond text also play critical roles in writing global space and world politics. In this regard, I will review recent developments in critical geopolitics by investigating how 'things' beyond texts function in producing our

understanding of the geopolitical:

Firstly, the most notable recent development in critical geopolitics is arguably related to the development of feminist geographies. Scholars of feminist geopolitics have argued that critical geopolitics, again, maintains an elite-centric view of agency that has masculinised and dematerialised geopolitics (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001). On the one hand, they have suggested that early critical geopolitical research builds a masculinised genealogy that focuses on ‘the politics of the production of global political space by dominant intellectuals, institutions, and practitioners of statecraft in practices’ (Sharp, 2000b, p. 361). As a result, most geopolitical writings are considered to have been written about men, by men and for men, while females are always silenced and excluded from the political sphere (Sharp, 2000b). On the other hand, scholars of feminist geopolitics have proposed that the earlier critical geopolitical research pays too much attention to geopolitical narratives at the larger scale (e.g. state) and ignores the embodied geopolitical experience at the smaller scale (e.g. the human body). In so doing, they have indicated that the emphasis of the notion of discourse in critical geopolitics to a significant extent dematerialises the ways we understand the geopolitical (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001; Sharp, 2009). On this basis, scholars of feminist geopolitics are attempting to rewrite women, or other silenced voices more widely, as well as the materiality, back into geopolitics through the examination of feminist and embodied practices of statecraft (McDowell & Sharp, 1997). For instance, Toal (1996b) explores the Irish journalist Maggie O’Kane’s reports on women’s personal misfortune of sexual violence, rape and embodied torture in Bosnia. Emphasising

the significance of the embodied experience of Bosnian females in the Bosnian war and O’Kane herself as a female observer in this study, Toal (1996b) suggests that females and their embodied experiences have been written back into the geopolitical reasoning of Western foreign policy. In this sense, it can be seen that feminist geopolitics to a notable extent has contributed to the corporation of ‘things’ beyond texts into the ways we understand the geopolitical.

Secondly, besides feminist geopolitics, the emergence and development of nonrepresentational theory in most recent human geographies has further involved ‘things’ beyond texts in geopolitics. This theory, in Kay Anderson and Susan Smith’s (2001, p. 9) words, is a non-constructivist perspective that is ‘associated with being and doing, with participation and performance, with ways of knowing that depend on direct experience more so than reflection, abstraction, translation and representation’. In this sense, nonrepresentational theory can largely be read as a direct critique of the textual/representational logics. In sharp contrast to the post-structural analytic framework that grants a privilege to understanding the world by way of cognitive, textual and visual experience, as in previous critical geopolitics works (Agnew, 1997), nonrepresentational theory puts more emphasis on capturing changing, inexpressible, ungraspable experience in order to understand the world (Lorimer, 2008). In this regard, affect and emotion (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Toal, 2003; Anderson, 2006; Pain, 2009; Sharp, 2009; Pile, 2010), material things/objects (Thrift, 2000; Shaw, 2013), practice and performance (Thrift, 2003; 2008; Lorimer, 2005; 2008), and assemblages (Dittmer, 2014), which are usually beyond the focus of texts, have increasingly entered understandings of the geopolitical in most recent

geopolitical studies.

In highlighting the nonrepresentational ways of understanding global space, recent geopolitical studies have primarily focused on investigating the significance of affect/emotion in shaping how we come to understand geopolitics. Affect is viewed to be a form of capacity of human bodies through which people and other posthuman objects are capable of influencing other people; and at the same time people are also capable of being influenced by other people or objects (Lorimer, 2008). Emotion is also regarded as a form of ‘cognitive, conscious and expressed’ human experience that offers a fluid perspective for understanding the world around us (Pile, 2010, p. 9). Based on these definitions, affect and emotion are considered to have extended the ontological and epistemological understanding of geography from ‘rational and predictable logics’ into the ‘visceral and instinctive’ arenas (Lorimer, 2008, p. 2). On this basis, affect and emotion have been widely involved in the production of geopolitical knowledges in nonrepresentational ways, as suggested in recent analyses of geopolitics. For example, Toal (2003) investigates an affectual and emotional geopolitical project of the US through the examination of the 9/11 event. Focusing on how affect and emotion (e.g. pain, fear, horror, grief, and patriotism) are projected through media networks, eyewitness experiences, spectacles, movies and music, Toal (2003, p. 858) suggests that the 9/11 event has become an ‘obsessive collective experience of trauma and loss’. In such affectual and emotional projects, the circulation of affects and the arousing of emotions are all enacted in the demarcation of the boundary between the US and terrorists, and finally used for the justification of ‘affect-fueled’ desires or/and actions for revenge,

such as a desire to ‘Fight Terrorism’ (Toal, 2003, p. 858). Moreover, based on the criticism of early critical geopolitics for its representation-oriented approach, an object-oriented approach for understanding the geopolitical has also been put into the geopolitical agenda in most recent years. Katharine Meehan *et al* (2013), for example, study a television series *The Wire* to investigate the role of objects in the exercise and constitution of state power. Emphasising the TV show as an object that unleashes real forces, stimulates our imaginations, and brings new possibilities of narrative, Meehan *et al* (2013) point that objects within *The Wire* matter for the understanding of the nature of power by moving beyond the representational realm and breaking human-centred narratives of state power. In addition, Jason Dittmer (2014, pp. 385-386) recently raises ‘assemblage and complexity theories’ in the field of geopolitics, arguing for a material return and posthuman turn in geopolitics that is trying to incorporate ‘animals, “nature”, and other objects into our understandings of the geopolitical’. Unlike the earliest critical geopolitics (including formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics) that underlines textual discourse as a form of geopolitical ontology, it can be seen that the recent feminist geopolitics and nonrepresentational geopolitics have gradually emphasised a form of new geopolitical ontology that moves far beyond the textual realm.

In summary, this section sketches the key sub-fields and arguments of critical geopolitics, including formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, feminist geopolitics, and nonrepresentational geopolitics. On this basis, it can be summarised that critical geopolitics is not a clearly delimited sub-field of political

geography. In contrast, it is always composed by a variety of works that are featured by the investigation of the complicated interrelations between political practice and geographical definition, both in representational and nonrepresentational ways. The evolving theories of critical geopolitics constitute the basic theoretical framework for this research to investigate various Chinese geopolitical views from different perspectives. However, the aforementioned theories of critical geopolitics have not made a perfect blueprint for geopolitical research without disadvantage. Drawing on several theoretical interventions with which this study will be engaged, I will next narrow down this review into some key lines of inquiry and debate for this thesis, situating my study into the framework of relevant literature below.

2.2 Key lines of geopolitical inquiry and debate for this research

2.2.1 Geopolitical contexts

This research is mainly situated in the geopolitical inquiry and debate of non-Western geopolitics, in particular Chinese geopolitics. In this sense, this section will firstly switch to look at ‘geopolitical contexts’. Geopolitical contexts are intimately related to the concept of the state. Most specifically, geopolitical writings have long been dominated by the territorial tradition that highlights the core role of territorial states in world politics (Dodds, 2000; Dalby, 2013). That is, the state, which is often used to divide the global political map into a series of spatial entities and thus to discuss how they interact with each other in a territorial system, is considered to play an irreplaceable role in geopolitical discussions. Such territorial assumptions

have ever been called into question for a time. For instance, as Agnew (1994, p. 53) indicates, these territorial assumptions, 'states as fixed units of sovereign space, the domestic/foreign polarity, and states as "containers" of societies', have led geopolitical analyses into the 'territorial trap' in which the state is even viewed as the only influence on international politics. On this basis, Agnew (1994; 2005; 2010b) has repeatedly criticised the geopolitical tradition of state-centrism, calling for researchers to go beyond the 'territorial trap' in geopolitical writings. In doing so, a number of critical geopolitical works have expanded their analyses into a wide range of institutions and social groups in the practice of geopolitics, including non-governmental organisations (NGO), international organisations, indigenous groups, journalists, artists, evangelicals, statecraft intellectuals, women and activists (Kuus, 2013a). Even though the critical role of the state in geopolitical practices has been gradually undermined in increasing studies of critical geopolitics, as mentioned above, the vast majority of extant works of critical geopolitics are still found to be in intimate relation to the discussion of the spatiality of the state, such as national identity and border practice (Kuus, 2010). It might therefore be summarised that the state has played, and is now still playing, an important role structuring geopolitical discourses.

Emphasising the important role of the state in understanding geopolitics, it can be seen that most of the existing studies of critical geopolitics have focused on Western states, in particular the US, as their research objects. As the US has played a significant role during the Cold War and the global war on terror, it has long been observed and researched by the most recent geopolitical works. As Agnew (2007)

suggests, many current geopolitical writings have been involved in the projection of the US context and US interests. For example, in early studies concerned with Cold War geopolitics (Dalby, 1988; 1990; Toal, 1992; Toal & Agnew, 1992; Sharp, 2000a) and subsequent works that pay attention to post-9/11 geopolitics (Toal, 2003; Dittmer, 2005a, b; Dodds, 2007b; 2008; Pain, 2009), geographers have examined how geopolitical discourses are produced in the US, by the US elites and popular culture, and from the US perspective. In addition, there has been a substantial literature of critical geopolitics broadening the geopolitical analysis into some European states. For instance, Dodds (2002) examines geopolitics related to Britain; Bassin (2003) investigates the traditions of German geopolitics; and Leslie Hepple (2002) discusses French radical geopolitics. In contrast, non-Western states have much less been touched upon in existing literature of critical geopolitics.

Nevertheless, the geopolitical contexts, in particular the non-Western contexts, in which geopolitical discourses are produced have gradually been noticed in recent critical geopolitics studies. Most specifically, the lack of non-Western voices, such as feminist geopolitics and subaltern geopolitics, has often been lamented in recent geopolitical studies. In feminist geopolitics, geographers not only write the women and materiality into geopolitical discourses at a 'finer' scale, but also focus on the unequal power relationship between hegemony and the silenced voice at a 'coarser' scale (Hyndman, 2001; 2004). In so doing, feminist geographers suggest unearthing the voices that are usually silenced in the Western hegemony of the practice of geopolitics (Dowler & Sharp, 2001). Calling for the unearthing of silenced voices in the practice of geopolitics is then further expanded upon through the notion of

subaltern geopolitics (Sharp, 2011b). Focusing on the interrogation of the unequal power relations between the hegemonic and the marginal, subaltern geopolitics turns to examine the sights/sites of geopolitical knowledge production and therefore calls for more attention to be paid to the marginalised voice (Sharp, 2011b).

Even though the lack of non-Western studies has been gradually lamented in existing critical geopolitics literature, as mentioned above, there are still very few empirical studies focusing on non-Western case studies. In those few studies of non-Western geopolitics, Sharp (2011a) investigates the geopolitical imagination of the US war on terror from a non-Western perspective in the Tanzanian newspaper *The African*. In so doing, Sharp (2011a) offers a completely different way to explain the US war on terror and therefore disrupts the hegemonic geopolitical imagination of the war on terror dominated by Western perceptions. Moreover, Sharp (2013) also tries to discuss non-Western geopolitical idea through Nyerere's pan-Africanism², which has a significant impact in challenging the dominant geopolitical imagination of Africa as the 'Third World', struggled over by superpowers. In this regard, pan-Africanism challenges the dominant imagination of Africa that is projected by Western powers, and at the same time it also supports the idea that the margin does matter in global politics (Sharp, 2013). In addition, Woon (2013) focuses on the geopolitics of the Global South, which he depicts as 'impoverished', 'marginalised' and 'Orientalised'. The negative geographical imagination of the Global South, in Woon's (2013) words, plays an influential role as a new-Orientalism serving strategy for the justification of the Global North's socio-economic interests in the

² Nyerere was the leader who led Tanzania to independence.

Global South. By paying attention to non-Western case studies, Sharp's and Woon's geopolitical analyses do contribute to the development of non-Western geopolitics. However, their studies are strongly located in specific socio-political contexts, such as pan-Africanism and the new-Orientalism, and thus have very little impact upon Chinese geopolitical research. The exploration of the Chinese context is still largely a blank space in non-Western geopolitical studies. In some economic and political discourses, China has been described as a low-rank and underdeveloped Global South state. This may not be true. In the past few decades, China has gradually become a super power playing an increasingly important role on the international political stage. In this sense, Chinese geopolitics should not be simply understood from the perspective of marginalised geopolitics or new-Orientalised geopolitics as the aforementioned, or from the perspective of postcolonial geopolitics or subaltern geopolitics as the introductory chapter has introduced. China has its special socio-political context, such as the Confucian geopolitical traditions of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism, which may have a great impact upon Chinese geopolitical visions. However, such background, as this section has reviewed, is still under-researched. This review highlights the hegemony of the Western sights/sites of the practice of geopolitics, the lack of non-Western examples and the blank space of examining China's special socio-political context; and the case study of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror in this thesis can thus be read as a potential contribution to non-Western geopolitics, especially Chinese geopolitics.

2.2.2 Audience studies

The case study in this research also touches upon the geopolitical inquiry and debate about audience research. Therefore, this section will focus on relevant literature on audience research in existing geopolitical studies. As illustrated above, critical geopolitics studies have long been involved in the examination of how text is used for geo-graphing and then further used for the exercise of international politics. However, the meanings of the texts are not usually static and unchangeable (Carey, 2008). In contrast, texts are always drawn into an on-going re-construction process that is associated with audience consumption (Carey, 2008). In other words, the meanings of texts are not only closely related to who produces those texts and what those texts are about, but also to how and by whom those texts are consumed (Rose, 2012). In this sense, the exploration of the audience has gradually become an essential part of critical geopolitics in relation to textual analysis. In particular, emphasising the great power of the audience in shaping popular opinions, audience studies have recently been embraced by ‘popular geopolitics’ scholarship (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013; Woon, 2014). As this research focuses closely on how Chinese newspapers, *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, are involved into the shaping of Chinese people’s imaginations of the US war on terror, I will primarily extend this strand of the review to exploring the notion of audience studies.

The audience as a constituent part of media texts has long been neglected in relevant studies of critical geopolitics. Most specifically, the audience is usually

considered to be easily stimulated, activated and agitated by media content. In this sense, the audience is always viewed as weak and conspiring with the interests of the elite under the framework of the 'propaganda model' (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Bratich, 2005). Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988, p. 15) have proposed the notion of 'manufacturing consent' to explain the propaganda model, particularly how the mass media works. In such a situation, Herman and Chomsky (1988) suggest that, through the control of ownership, advertising, news makers, news shapers, and the limits of debate and media texts, the mass media is often manufactured to reach a consensus with the elite. In this model, the audience is usually emphasised as 'unknowing and passive recipients' (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 15) and thus ignored in the analysis of geopolitical discourses. In most early studies in critical geopolitics, the role of the audience was greatly undermined and seldom mentioned. For instance, Toal and Agnew (1992) have mentioned the role of the audience in taking the shape of geopolitical discourses, emphasising the audience as a passive receiver where media content arrives. For these geopolitical analyses of the consumers of popular culture in past geopolitical debates, the audience is always described as passive recipients who are waiting for the injection of ideas from the elite (Toal, 1996a). The emphasis on the audience as passive recipients in the propaganda model does highlight the position of the audience as consumers of media, but, at the same time, it has also ignored the subjective, active and proactive reproductions of media meanings in the process of consumption, and therefore neglected the potentiality of involving the audience in the process of producing geopolitical discourses, particularly in proactive ways.

In contrast to the propaganda model, the most recent analyses of the audience in critical geopolitical studies have welcomed another model, the ‘active audience’ model (Dodds, 2006; 2007b; Dittmer & Larsen, 2007; Dittmer, 2008; 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013; Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Woon, 2014). Rather than viewing the audience as weak, passive or reactive recipients, the active audience model puts more emphasis on the audience’s creativity in the process of consuming texts, focusing on how the audience manages to understand media content in ways not anticipated by the initial producer (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008). In other words, the active audience model is involved in a process through which ‘we are shifting from an understanding of meaning as inherent to texts to an understanding of it as attributed to texts by its consumers’ (Dittmer, 2010, p. 112). In this sense, the audience’s reading of texts is often embedded into different contexts in which the audience is offered different interpretation frames in order to understand those texts, such as language, nation, class, religion, politics, and ways of life (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008). For example, Woon (2014) investigates Filipinos’ reading of the *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, arguing that Filipinos’ understanding of the portrayals of Mindanao in this newspaper is ‘intricately linked to readers’ vastly different experiences, positionalities and subjectivities’ (p.24). In this sense, it might be found that the active audience model always emphasises the audience as a strong, rather than a weak, power, producing meaning. However, it can also be seen that the active audience model, to a notable extent, has overemphasised the role of the audience in shaping geopolitical discourses. For example, at some times, it has overlooked the propagandistic audiencing process in certain socio-political contexts.

Besides omitting the wide range of socio-political contexts when discussing media-audience connections, there are also other shortcomings in existing active audience research. More specifically, the audience has sometimes been considered as an integral, coherent and consolidated group consuming media texts. As Dittmer (2010) suggests, it is quite difficult to present the general features of the entire group of the audience, or to identify the impact of specific media upon the audience as this group of people is often engaged with a variety of media sources. In this regard, an increasing number of geopolitical studies have narrowed down their interests and been concerned with fan subcultures (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013). In so doing, fans — who are regarded as the most enthusiastic group of supporters of media texts — are selected for audience study. For example, Dodds (2006) develops a nuanced study of the audience by examining James Bond fans' imaginations in the online community, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). In this empirical analysis, Dodds (2006) points out that the identity of the audience of 007 films as Bond fans plays an influential role in shaping their imaginations of global space and politics. The narrowed study of the fans in popular geopolitics is conceivably a neat way to crystallise the audience's connections with media content. However, fan research should not be strongly considered as equivalent to audience research. As Jonathan Gray (2003) argues, the research on fan subculture has often neglected the examination of other categories of audience beyond the group of fans, such as those audiences who are antagonistic or ambivalent to media texts but can equally exercise their agencies as audiences. On this basis, it can be seen that the existing works of critical geopolitics and audience research, to a certain extent, have

paid a little bit more attention to fan subcultures, while ignoring the wider (maybe bigger) group of audiences beyond fans.

In identifying the shortcomings of existing works of critical geopolitics above, this thesis seeks to make contributions to audience research from both the ‘coarser’ and the ‘finer’ perspectives. From the coarser perspective, this research will discuss the impact of the Chinese media environment upon Chinese audience imaginations. To be exact, newspaper publication in China is significantly under the censorship of Chinese political elite, which may make Chinese readers have different audience experiences. For example, some of the Chinese audience may be reliant on Chinese newspapers as the elite’s intervention might mean newspaper content carries authority for them, while others may question those newspapers because political intervention may mean that such voices are manufactured. On this basis, in chapter 6 this thesis will examine how Chinese audiences understand the roles of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, and how they interpret relevant content. In so doing, I am not trying to undermine the significance of active audience research or re-emphasise the importance of the propaganda model of audience study. In contrast, I am attempting to relate the media and its audiences to the wider socio-political context framing the discussion. From a finer perspective, this study will explore the audience in more detail rather than limit audience research to the arena of fan discussions. Specifically, this study will not only discuss the ‘avid readers’ of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* who invest a lot of money, time, energy and emotion into newspaper reading, but also focus on the ‘critics’ who are antagonistic to these newspapers and their relevant content, and on the ‘occasional readers’ who

do not care about these newspapers and their relevant content at all. In this regard, in chapter 6 this study will locate those audiences who are not fans but also exercise their agencies as audiences in their everyday life, as part of the process of shaping geopolitical discourses. In so doing, I am not trying to weaken the importance of the fan in the study of critical geopolitics, but attempting to broaden audience study into the 'barren lands' of people's everyday spaces.

2.2.3 Spaces of geopolitics

One of the case studies in this thesis also touches upon the geopolitical inquiry and debate over spaces of geopolitics. In elaborating the importance and dynamism of spatiality for understanding international relations, geopolitics has long been engaged in the examination of the various spaces in/through which geopolitical discourses are produced (Starr, 2013). In this sense, the nature of the space may be related to the ways in which geopolitical discourses are produced. That is, different spaces might be linked to the production of geopolitical discourses in different ways. Therefore, this strand of the review will mainly focus on the analysis of how various spaces make us understand geopolitics in different ways.

One of the most traditional types of spaces related to geopolitical inquiries is material spaces, such as the land, sea, air, and mountains. Specifically, as mentioned above (see 2.1.1), geopolitical studies have a long history focusing on the material geographical impact upon politics, under the framework of 'classical geopolitics' (Parker, 1998, p. 5). Highlighting the significant role of physical geographical facts in influencing the practice of politics, classical geopolitics is always read as a form

of geographical determinism that emphasises the absolutely dominant impact of material spaces upon politics (Sprout & Sprout, 1960; Agnew, 1997). For example, most of the early geopolitical writings (e.g. Mackinder's, Ratzel's, Haushofer's and Mahan's geopolitical writings) always stress that material spaces, such as land and sea, play a decisive role in determining the future destiny of a state (Parker, 1998). Even though geographical determinism, to a certain extent, appears to have been weakened since the blossoming of 'social constructivism' in the Western academia, it still impacts upon current geopolitical ideas. For instance, in Harvey Starr and Dale Thomas's (2005) discussion of the nature of territory and border, they suggest that the materialised territory and border have provided a spatial approach to global politics by setting out the location of states, which has significant impact upon inter-states human interactions.

Nevertheless, the core spaces of geopolitical inquiries have gradually moved from the most obvious and materialised arena into the most unnoticeable and social arena, such as printed media, music, films, comics and video games, under the framework of critical geopolitics (Kuus, 2010). Along with the reconsideration of the concept of space in recent studies (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996; Massey, 2005), space has gradually been observed from the perspective of 'social constructivism'. This changes the way that space impacts upon the exercise of politics. Taking Starr and Thomas's (2005) discussion as an example, it can be seen that, in their opinion, territory and border, which have a significant impact upon inter-state relations, are not only materialised spaces but also viewed as socially constructed spaces. To be exact, the textual, visual and virtual spaces within which the notions of territory and

border are used to build the identity of a certain group of people also impact upon the practices of international politics. In this regard, social space, which is closely related to geographical particularity, can also provide a spatial approach to geopolitics. In existing literature, it can be seen that the early analyses of critical geopolitics have been clearly and closely related to textual spaces. For instance, as mentioned above (see 2.1.2), an amount of geopolitical scholarship has examined how texts work with spatial identities (e.g. Oriental and Western, Other and Us, barbaric and civilised, freedom and oppression, security and danger) and therefore influence the practice of international politics (Agnew, 2003; Gregory, 2004). However, textual spaces, which are mentioned in the early literature of critical geopolitics, are usually criticised as elitist as a result of their position under the manipulation of political elites.

Breaking the elitism of critical geopolitical studies, quite a number of scholars have focused on the role of everyday space in shaping geopolitical discourses under the framework of popular geopolitics. Rather than stressing direct power projection from political elites, popular geopolitics pays more attention to ordinary people's daily lives, weaving everyday space to the practice of cultural hegemony (Sharp, 2000a). In Sharp's ideas (2000a, p. 31), cultural hegemony 'is constructed not only through political ideologies but also, more immediately, through detailed scripting of some of the most ordinary and mundane aspects of everyday life', through which everyday space is often employed to highlight geographical particularity and used for the operation of dominance. In this sense, magazines, TVs, films, pictures and people's affectual and emotional experience in their daily life are all considered to

provide a spatial approach to geopolitics (Sharp, 1993; Hughes, 2007; Pain, 2009). For example, Rachel Pain (2009) discusses the relations between emotions, politics and place, through which Pain suggests that everyday emotional topographies are always connected to the practice of politics through people's embodied experience. Additionally, Ian Shaw and Barney Warf (2009) examine the significance of video games in everyday geopolitics. Highlighting the way that spatiality is evolved from the two-dimensional world to the three-dimensional world in video games, Shaw and Warf (2009) highlight the video game as a transitional space in which players' sensory experience is exploited and manipulated by the game designers to create an understanding of the everyday geographies of violence, terror and warfare.

Along with the rapid expansion of Internet technology in most recent decades, geographers have been increasingly involved in the exploration of virtual spatiality and the matter of virtual geographies (Kinsley, 2014). Indeed, the Internet is an entirely different space from both materialised spaces (e.g. the land, sea, air and mountains) and socially constructed spaces (e.g. textual space, visual space, mental space and virtual space), as mentioned above. Owing to its special features — the use of a computer or smartphone, hybrid embodiments, emotions, texts, networks and technology, and its emphasis on limiting word usage³ and mass participation — the Internet notably changes how information is exchanged, in particular the way in which we communicate with each other. This reminds me of the 'material turn' in recent human geographies. Most specifically, under the flag of the material turn,

³ In the vast majority of Chinese Internet communities, online discussion has word limitations. For example, in the Internet community of *Sina Weibo*, Internet users must use fewer than 140 words to express their opinions.

a number of geographers have been concerned with the spatiality of the lived body, affect, emotion and practice (McCormack, 2003; Davidson, Bondi, & Smith, 2005; Wylie, 2005; Colls, 2007), while other geographers have focused on the practice during people's uses and encounters with material objects or/and environments (Thrift, 2000; Tilley, 2004; Edensor, 2005; Hill, 2007). As elaborated in the past section, there are evidently a small number of scholars in critical geopolitics focusing on how we understand the geopolitical from the perspective of materiality (Meehan, Shaw, & Marston, 2013; Shaw, 2013; Dittmer, 2014). For example, Meehan *et al* (2013) focus on an object-oriented approach for understanding the nature of power, drawing on the example of TV show; Shaw (2013) is concerned with the object of the drone and its geopolitical meanings; while Dittmer (2014) proposes a material ontology for geopolitical research. However, the exploration of the Internet geopolitics has not gained sufficient attention in existing works, albeit there are a number of studies being concerned with such forms of research (Woon, 2011; Ingram, 2012; Springer *et al.*, 2012). In existing works, for example, Woon (2011) explores how Chinese Internet communities are able to weave different ideas through the broad bandwidth beyond the purview of governments, drawing on the discussion of 2003 Iraq war in the Chinese internet community, *Qiangguo Luntan*; Ingram (2012, p.123) investigates how artists' behaviours in the Internet forge more 'practical, constructive and transformative modes of geopolitical intervention' via the prompting of the notion of 'experimental geopolitics'; and Springer *et al.* (2012) examine how the Internet technology helps ordinary people know about the nature of sovereign power and the violence of the state through the case study of Wikileaks.

These works have arguably contributed to the development of Internet geopolitics, and so that forged critical geopolitics into nonrepresentational realms through the examination of human beings' online practices. However, these works, to a certain extent, seem to have ignored the significance of nonhuman and posthuman elements of the Internet in the taking shape of how we understand the geopolitical. Drawing on the case study of *Sina Weibo*, one of the most well-known Internet communities in China, this thesis will focus on how the Internet impacts Chinese geopolitical discourses of the US war on terror (see chapter 7). In so doing, this research seeks to make a contribution to the understanding of how the Internet as a heterogeneous space with both human actors and nonhuman/posthuman elements impacts upon geopolitical discourses.

2.3 Conclusions

This chapter has summarised the notion of critical geopolitics and its recent developmental trends. Most specifically, the theory of critical geopolitics has been constantly involved in the critique of existing geopolitical theories. It begins with the critique of classical geopolitics, linking the exercise of power to geographical knowledge production rather than series of geographical facts. Based on the theory of representation, the earliest critical geopolitical studies have paid great attention to texts, weaving their productions of geographical knowledge with the exercise of international politics. However, for the reason of the conspicuous role of the elite in the realm of international politics, texts that are involved in geopolitical research have been limited into elitist texts for a time under the frameworks of formal

geopolitics and practical geopolitics. Due to the criticism of elitism in existing geopolitical works, critical geopolitics has been pushed into the realm of popular culture and everyday life in the name of popular geopolitics. Nevertheless, formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics seem to have been overly concerned with the significance of texts and representations in influencing how we understand geopolitics, while in contrast they have paid less attention to the role of things beyond texts and representations. Along with the development of feminist geography and nonrepresentational theory in human geographies, it can be seen that recent critical geopolitical research has gradually and increasingly criticised such representation-based geopolitical theories and thus related affects, emotions, practices, performances, and objects to how we understand the geopolitical. In this sense, it can be seen that critical geopolitics has formed a healthy mechanism keeping on exploring the difference among the ways we understand the geopolitical, but this theory does not seem to be impeccable. On the contrary, it has its particular deficiencies that this study will draw on and develop upon.

First, existing literatures of critical geopolitics have paid too much attention to Western geopolitics, studying Western geopolitical topics, using Western theory and conducted by Western scholars. This may result in the hegemony of the Western sights/sites of the practice/research of geopolitics, which may impact upon the way in which we interpret non-Western geopolitical phenomena. For example, as aforementioned, existing works in critical geopolitics have often neglected the role of specific socio-political context explaining relevant geopolitical phenomena. Therefore, this study focuses on Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war

on terror that are deeply rooted in the socio-political context of China, whose main objective is to develop a non-Western geopolitical theory drawing on Chinese examples. The highlighting of the lack of non-Western examples in this chapter also pushes the subsequent chapter (chapter 3) to explore the socio-political background of Chinese society, including its geopolitical traditions, its relevant geopolitical studies and its understandings of the notion terrorism. The non-Western perspective is also a theoretical entry point for all three empirical case studies in the following chapters.

Second, in existing literature of audience studies under the framework of critical geopolitics, most studies have two shortcomings. On the one hand, most studies have paid attention to either a propaganda model that regards the audience as passive recipients or an active audience model that considers the audience to be active producers, which mostly ignores the macro context of a society and its impact upon the media-audience connection. On the other hand, extant studies sometimes have treated the audience as an integral group of people or narrowed them as a subgroup, fans, which greatly neglects the diversity of this group and how they are involved in how we understand the geopolitical in the everyday realm. In this sense, this chapter argues that more work needs to be done to illuminate the role of the audience in the practice of geopolitics. This argument arguably offers a theoretical entry point for the analysis of Chinese audiences' geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror in chapter 6.

Finally, the existing literature of critical geopolitics seems to have paid too much attention to representational discourse as a form of geopolitical ontology and

things beyond representation as a new form of geopolitical ontology, while less attention has been paid to the discussion of spaces of geopolitics and how different features of different spaces impact upon the way we understand geopolitics. This literature review has found that the nature of a space would impact upon how we interpret the geopolitical in it. However, existing works of Internet geopolitics seem to have overlooked the study of the nonhuman and posthuman factors in this space. Unlike the materialised, textual and everyday spaces, Internet space should neither be simply viewed as a material space nor a media space, but a heterogeneous space that is under the impact of both human actors and nonhuman object. On this basis, this chapter suggests that more work still needs to be done to illuminate the diversity of geopolitical analysis on spaces, and thus provides a possibility for the theoretical intervention of the empirical case study in chapter 7, which focuses on Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror in the Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*.

Chapter 3 Confucianism, Chinese geopolitics and terrorism

3.0 Introduction

On 20 October 2015 when he was visiting Buckingham Palace, Xi Jinping (the Chairman of the current Chinese government) quoted an old Chinese speaking to depict the future Sino-UK relationship: '*geographic distance would never separate those who share the same ideas*'. This is not the first time that Chinese leaders have quoted ancient Chinese precepts to elaborate China's diplomatic views. In recent speeches by national leaders, it can be seen that traditional Chinese aphorisms, in particular Confucian values, have been frequently employed to deliver China's diplomatic strategies. At the same time, such Chinese ideologies have also been regularly used in China's mass media to understand the nation's diplomacy. For instance, an article from *People's Daily* (12/02/2014) attempts to employ Confucian values to evaluate the US's counterterrorist policies in the Middle East: '*those who plant terrestriis (a kind of plant with thorns) will only get stabbed*'. It can therefore be assumed that the inspection of the wider Chinese (especially Confucian) context is crucial and essential for understanding Chinese geopolitics. Therefore, this thesis argues for a reframing of Chinese tradition, especially the Confucian tradition that has been inscribed into the Chinese political system for more than two thousand years, within geopolitical studies. This would allow the use of theoretical insight from critical geopolitics to situate the Chinese Confucian tradition into research on China's geopolitical imaginations of 'Chineseness' and 'the foreign', as well as China's diplomatic views.

Nevertheless, such internal geopolitical analysis is still under-theorised in both Sinophone and Anglophone political geographies. To be exact, the absence of non-Western geopolitics has always been lamented by a number of scholars in this field of studies (Acharya & Buzan, 2007; Power, 2010; Sharp, 2011b). In this sense, this thesis may be read as an attempt at exploring a non-Western practice of geopolitical analysis. As this thesis tries to examine how Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US are produced in the non-Western socio-political context of China from the perspective of terrorism, this chapter is mainly concerned with a contextual analysis. In order to provide a much broader context for understanding Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror, and raise the key contributions of this research, the section that follows will present both the theoretical and empirical backgrounds of this thesis in three parts. First, this chapter employs the Confucian tradition of *hua-yi* distinction (华-夷之辨)⁴ and Sino-centrism (华夏中心主义) as a context to understand China's geopolitical imaginations of 'us' (Chineseness) and 'otherness' (the rest of the world). More specifically, the *hua-yi* distinction means a dichotomy between *hua* (Chinese nation) and *yi* (tribes from other nations), while the Sino-centrism means a cultural awareness of the superiority of *hua* over *yi*. Both notions can be viewed as part of the Confucian value system that has been used to describe China's diplomatic views through the ages and which is still having an impact upon current Chinese geopolitical thinking. Second, this chapter gives an overview of geopolitical analyses of China from both internal and external perspectives. This part indicates the dominance of Western scholarship in framing Chinese geopolitics

⁴ The Mandarin characters in the bracket are the direct translations.

from the internal lens within which the impact of the special socio-political context of China has long been neglected. In this part, it also gives an account of the existing Anglophone literature on Chinese geopolitics from the external perspective. In so doing, it points out the macro-level analysis of Chinese geopolitics that neglects the everyday spaces of Chinese geopolitics, and which is both a methodological and a theoretical entry point of this thesis. Finally, this chapter explains the notion of terrorism in the Anglophone context, as well as the peculiarity of Chinese terrorism in the socio-political context of China, in order to provide a wider context for the following empirical analysis of Chinese imaginations of the US war on terror.

3.1 Chinese Confucian geopolitical traditions

One of the most influential internal facets of Chinese geopolitical thinking is the Confucian tradition of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism fostered in feudal and modern China. However, the meanings of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism have been constantly changing along with the changing social and political contexts of China during its long history. Therefore, this section aims to show an evolving theory of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism in four parts, thereby providing a wider context for the empirical analysis of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US in this thesis. First, I will highlight *hua-yi* distinction as an ancient geographical hierarchy that frames a civilisation-based imagination of *hua* and *yi*. On this basis, *hua* is regarded as the centre of the world having superiority over *yi*, which fosters the ancient geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism. Second, I will underline a re-establishment of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism under the impact of both

internal ethnic conflicts and external crises in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and modern China (1912-1949)⁵. Third, I will explore how Confucian traditions of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism have expanded in the Communist controlled China (1949-), and how such traditions have been integrated with the ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’ (中国特色社会主义) and thus impact upon contemporary Chinese geopolitical views. Finally, as a recap, I will also illustrate the similarities and differences between Sino-centrism and Orientalism (Said, 1978), in order to highlight the key contribution of this research, which can to a certain extent be read as a response to Said’s (1978) Orientalism.

3.1.1 *Hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism in ancient China

Hua-yi distinction emphasises the spatial differences among different tribes in ancient China. Since the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC-771 BC), China has applied the word ‘*hua*’ to differentiate Han Chinese from the minorities and outsiders, labeling them as ‘*yi*’. However, based on its initial meanings, such differentiation does not entail a geographical or cultural hierarchy but a spatial discrepancy between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups. According to the Confucianism classic, *Book of Rites: of Kingship*, for example, *hua* and *yi* are used to depict the different natures and features of Han Chinese and ethnic minorities, respectively, with the former used to depict the central geographical location of the Han Chinese while the latter is employed to draw on the outlying positions of ethnic minorities:

⁵ This thesis defines modern China as the period from 1919 to 1949 when New China was founded and contemporary China as the era from 1949 to the present, according to the definition used in Chinese historical accounts.

Hua is located at the centre of the world, surrounded by yi from East, South, West and North. All people from five directions — whether hua or yi — have their inherent and unchanging natures. Those from the East are called yi having long hairs and tattoos and eating foods without fires; those from the South are named ‘man’ with bare feet and raw foods; those from the West are styled as ‘rong’ wearing leathers and never eating grains; those from the North are regarded as ‘di’ wearing feathers and living in caves. Hua and yi⁶ all have their own features of accommodation, taste, dress, skill and ware. (Zhang, 1995, p. 721)

On this basis, it can be seen that *hua* and *yi* are two non-discriminatory geographical notions that are used in the Chinese language to illustrate the various natures and features of different ethnic groups in different geographical areas.

The *hua-yi* distinction soon evolved into a form of geographical hierarchy at the end of the Zhou Dynasty. To be exact, *yi* is believed to lead a primitive and barbaric life because of their features of eating raw meats, tattooing and living in caves, while *hua* is believed to lead a much more civilised life for its mature socio-political system, advanced technology and affluent materials in the Zhou Dynasty (Qin, 2010). In this sense, *hua-yi* distinction has gradually become a form of cultural identity and awareness through which *hua* is considered to have cultural,

⁶ The ‘*yi*’ from the East, the ‘*man*’ from the South, the ‘*rong*’ from the West, and the ‘*di*’ from the North are collectively called the ‘four-*yi*’ and finally abbreviated as ‘*yi*’.

material, social, psychological, emotional and political superiorities over *yi* (Qin, 2010). As a result, *hua* and *yi* are no longer a pair of equitable geographical notions. In contrast, *hua-yi* has become a distinction between the civilised and the barbaric rather than a simple geographical notion of the spatial discrepancy between Han Chinese and ethnic minorities (Qin, 2001).

On this basis, *hua-yi* distinction fosters a Sino-centric imagination and builds up a *hua*-centred geopolitical structure in China. Three features of this geopolitical imagination and geopolitical structure can be summarised here. Firstly, the central status of *hua* is underlined in Sino-centrism. Most specifically, this structure suggests a hierarchical system to maintain the geographical, political and economic relationships between *hua* and *yi* (Zhao, 2008). In this system, *hua* is allowed to occupy the most populous lands in central China, while *yi* relies on pastures, deserts and jungles in the marginal areas; meanwhile, *yi* is considered to subordinate to *hua* in both political and economic realms, which is primarily reflected in the tribute system that requires *yi* to present tributes to *hua* at particular times for maintaining *hua-yi* relationships (Zhao, 2008). As *hua* has long been equated to the ethnic concept of *Han* Chinese, this system has therefore been named as *Sino-centric* thinking in China.

Secondly, Sino-centrism stresses civilisation (an all-powerful concept used for depicting the general feature of an ethnicity-based society) as a significant criterion dividing *hua* from *yi*. Specifically, the Confucian politicians suggest identifying *hua* from *yi* by judging whether their cultures are advanced or not, rather than by the simple investigation of their geographical locations or their ethnic identities (Wang,

2003). In other words, anyone who accepts and follows the advanced culture of *hua* (which usually refers to the mainstream Confucian ideology) can be viewed as *hua*; on the contrary, anyone who does not accept *hua* cultures would be viewed as backward *yi* (Wang, 2003). For example, *Chu* (楚) which is a former *yi* state located in the southern edge of China is in this way praised and viewed as *hua* for its virtue of helping other states and its benevolence to ordinary people in the Spring and Autumn and Warring states period (771 BC - 221 BC); while *Jin* (晉) which is a former *hua* state located in a central position in China is disdained as *yi* for its immoral behaviour of provoking wars around the same period (Wang, 2003).

Thirdly, Sino-centrism emphasises Confucian guidelines to maintain the order between *hua* and *yi*. To be exact, such Confucian guidelines are mainly reflected in a twofold moral rule that is used to maintain the order in *hua* and between *hua* and *yi*. The first rule is to create a harmonious *hua* society. For example, the Confucian guidelines emphasise that *hua* people must obey the ‘three cardinal guides and five constant virtues’ (三纲五常)⁷ in order to build a moral order and a stable political system in *hua* society (Jiang, 2003). This rule is a basis for the second rule that highlights the importance of building up a peaceful *hua-yi* relation. Specifically, on the basis of a moral *hua* state, the Confucian politicians expect that *yi* would realise the advanced nature of *hua* and *hua*’s cultures and therefore expect that *yi* would learn from *hua* rather than start a war with *hua*. *Hua* expectations and emphasis on peaceful *hua-yi* relationships are primarily embodied in the Confucian values of

⁷ The three cardinal guides are ‘ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife’, while the five constant virtues refer to ‘benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trust’.

‘changing *yi* by *hua*’, ‘governing *yi* by *hua*’, and ‘balancing *yi* by *hua*’ (Qin, 2010, pp. 15-16). As a consequence, it can be clearly surmised that harmony and peacefulness are the most important concepts in maintaining relations between *hua* and *yi*, Han and ethnic minorities.

3.1.2 Reconsidering *hua-yi* dichotomy in Qing and modern China

Owing to the limited knowledge of world geography in ancient China, *hua-yi* distinction has long been limited to the description of inter-tribe and inter-ethnic group relationships in China. However, the meanings of *hua* and *yi* gradually but dramatically changed in the Qing Dynasty and modern China. Due to internal debates on the notion of *hua* in China and the enlarged knowledge of the outside world (in particular the Western world) during this time, *hua-yi* distinction has soon changed from the depiction of the relation between Han Chinese and Chinese ethnic minorities to the description of the relation between the Chinese nation (a great unity of Han and non-Han Chinese) and the outside world. On this basis, the new version of *hua-yi* distinction has established a new geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism that emphasises the superiority of the Chinese nation over the outside world. Nevertheless, the new geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism soon faced great challenge from the frequent Eastern-Western encounter in military, political, economic and cultural realms. Owing to the inferior position of the Chinese nation (*hua*) during the Eastern-Western encounter, the new geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism collapsed in the later Qing Dynasty and modern China. This collapse has even had a significant impact on the political and popular understanding of

‘Chineseness’ and ‘the Western’ in current-day China. In the section that follows, I will elaborate on how the *hua-yi* dichotomy was reconsidered in the Qing Dynasty and modern China from two aspects: how the new version of Sino-centrism was built up on the basis of the new understanding of *hua* and *yi*; and how this new version of Sino-centrism is challenged by Western powers.

Firstly, a new version of Sino-centrism was built up on the basis of the changing and enlarging understandings of the notions of *hua* and *yi* in the Qing Dynasty and modern China. To begin with, during this time the meaning of *hua* dramatically changed from an ethnic notion often used to describe the tribes, ethnic groups or states constituted by Han Chinese, into a modern nation-state notion that is used to describe the great unity of the Chinese nation, including Han Chinese and non-Han people. Even though a great number of Chinese politicians have attempted to establish a grand unity in China, in which both Han Chinese and ethnic minority are unified into a great kingdom in the long, ancient Chinese history (Liu, 2011), none of them achieved their aim until late in the Qing dynasty when the closed agricultural country of China was gradually opened up by Western industrial states through military force. The humiliation by external powers, however, reinforced the concept of the whole of China as a unified unit. In that context, a large number of Chinese politicians and scholars began to reconsider the meaning of *hua* (Feng, 2011). In so doing, they employed the notion of nation-state that is widely used in the Western political system to rejuvenate the notion of *hua*, and thus attempt to build up a modern state of China. For instance, Liang Qichao, one of the most famous scholars and politicians during the period, created the nationalist notion

‘*Chinese nation*’ (中华民族) that includes all Chinese ethnicities (including both Han and non-Han populations) into a grand unity (Han, 2014). Since then, *hua* has been broadly used as a nationalist notion referring to China and the Chinese nation. It also merits noting that this change was not a sudden process but a long historical process lasting for hundreds of years.

In the Qing Dynasty, the meaning of *yi* also gradually changed from an ethnic notion usually employed to depict the non-Han minorities into a geographical concept used to describe the world outside China. Most specifically, the changing meaning of *yi* began with a political crisis within China. It is well known that Qing China was created and dominated by the ethnic minority of Manchu, which is a former *yi* ethnic group living in the northeast of China. According to Confucian values, a *yi* group is allowed to hold the dominant political position in cases where they accept the advanced culture of *hua* and become a part of *hua* (Qi, 2000). In other words, the barbaric characteristics of *yi* should be erased if a *yi* group wants to dominate the state. However, Manchu does not seem to have followed this Confucian value. In the process of Manchu’s occupation of China, its barbaric *yi* features did not change. For instance, the Manchu army slaughtered all the people in the cities they seized, such as Jiading and Yangzhou. After their occupation, they continued to kill and exile a large number of Han Chinese in the name of literary inquisitions, among whom the vast majority were arrested merely for using the word ‘*yi*’ to refer Manchu(s) in their poems (Zhang & Zhang, 2010). On this basis, Manchu is regarded as barbaric rather than civilised by Han Chinese. As a result, Han Chinese organised a series of fierce uprisings to resist against Manchu’s

governing. Accompanied with the conflict on the notion of *yi* within China, China also experienced a significant time during which political, cultural and economic communications between Qing China and the outside world were increasing (Liu, 2011). Inspired by increasing and enlarging world geographies, Manchu governors began deliberately and regularly to use the word *yi* to refer to the worlds outside of China in order to free itself of the defamed identity of *yi* and alleviate Manchu-Han tensions. Since then, the *yi* (character) has gradually become a geographical notion describing foreignness rather than an ethnicity.

On this basis, a new version of the geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism was established. However, this new Sino-centrism was not built on the basis of a renewed evaluation of *hua-yi* distinction, but a simple continuation of the tradition of the old Sino-centrism (Li, 2005). That is, the new version of Sino-centrism, as well as the old Sino-centrism, still emphasised the central status of *hua* and the harmonious relation between *hua* and *yi* through the tribute system. What is different in the new systems is that here *hua* means the Chinese nation rather than Han Chinese, while *yi* refers to foreigners rather than ethnic minorities in China. In so doing, in the new version of the geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism, China always imagines itself as the centre of the world with a large population, plentiful resources and advanced cultures, known as the '*celestial empire and superior state*' (天朝上国), while foreign countries are imagined as the barbaric, backward, and marginalised other, subordinated to China (Chen, 2015). In the new Sino-centrism, China even suggests maintaining Sino-foreign relations through tribute system (Chen, 2015). In the eyes of Chinese governors, the tribute means not only an

economic contribution but also a Confucian notion of rite that requires foreign countries to express admiration of, and subservience to, China in order to maintain a harmonious and peaceful order (Chen, 2015).

Secondly, it is worth noting that the new version of Sino-centrism that stresses the superiority of the Chinese nation over foreign states was soon challenged, destroyed and even reversed in the historical process of Eastern-Western encounters during the Qing Dynasty. This phenomenon, for example, is clearly embodied in the changing use of Chinese characters from *yi* (夷) to *yang* (洋) to describe the foreign. To be exact, as I have already mentioned, Chinese officials and people often used the Chinese word *yi* to depict foreign people, things and affairs before the two opium wars in the 1800s. However, this character, which is viewed as derogatory, was soon banned for diplomatic use by Britain in the *Treaty of Tientsin* following the two opium wars:

Terms Fifty-one: Official letters and other documents exchanged between China and Britain are to be banned from referring to British Officials and Subjects of the Crown by the character "夷" (yi), meaning "barbarian".

Since then, the Qing Chinese government abandoned *yi* and adopted the character *yang* (洋) that is viewed to be a more neutral or positive word to describe the foreign. At the same time, Chinese people have also realised the power of the foreign and adopted the word *yang* to depict foreign people, things and affairs in their everyday life (Liu, 2008).

Following this investigation, there are two reasons that can be put forward to explain why China's new version of Sino-centrism has been challenged, destroyed and reversed. On the one hand, China's national confidence has been greatly humiliated through the failure of a series of wars resisting foreign intruders and the subsequent treaties signed between China and those foreign powers during the late Qing dynasty. China's humiliation is clearly embodied in, for example, the failure of two opium wars with Britain (in 1839 and 1842, respectively) and the failure of the Jiawu war with Japan (in 1894). Upset by those failures, the Qing Chinese government began to wake up from the beautiful dream of '*celestial empire and superior state*' and rethink *yi* (Liu, 2008). In particular, after the failure of the war with Japan, which was viewed as a small Asian country armed with Western modernity, Qing China began to re-consider the fact that the foreign could be equal to the Chinese nation, or even more civilised than China. In so doing, Qing China even dispatched a number of students to learn from foreign nations at that time. On the other hand, beyond the realm of military conflicts, China has also realised its own limitations in other arenas, such as tools, technology and philosophy (Zhao, 2009). In the Qing Dynasty and modern China, three waves⁸ of Western learning have been highlighted as rushing into China, which have had a great impact upon the Confucian values of the *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centric thinking (Zhao, 2009). In the process of those three waves of Eastern-Western encounters, Chinese learning has gradually fallen into an inferior position because of the practicality of

⁸ Three waves refer to: Emperor Kang Xi (1654-1722) introduced Western learning into Qing China, the trend to learn Western technologies for resisting the Westerners after two opium wars, and the May Fourth Movement in 1919 that introduced the notions of freedom and democracy into China.

Western learning. Taken together, the humiliation of China's national confidence and the inferior position of China in the Eastern-Western encounters resulted in the new geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism perishing or even being reversed during Qing and modern China.

3.1.3 Confucianism in Communist controlled China (1949-)

On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. Since then, the CCP has become the only party in power in the state of China, and along with this development, Communist ideology has played an important role in social, political, cultural and economic realms in the Chinese society. As such, Communism has also had great impact upon contemporary Chinese geopolitical views. In accordance with China's geopolitical practices during this period, this thesis divides this era into two stages with various geopolitical practices that are marked by certain critical diplomatic events or certain key politicians (e.g. China's 'open and reform policy' (改革开放), Sino-Soviet split (中苏交恶) and Deng Xiaoping). In what follows, this section will elaborate on the features of these two stages.

The first stage was from 1949 to the 1970s during which Chinese geopolitical practices were shaped by classic Marxist/Leninist ideology, or to some extent by a form of 'radical' Communist ideology. Two main characteristics of Chinese geopolitical practices during this period can be generalised here. On the one hand, Chinese diplomacies have been endowed with strongly anti-Capitalism and anti-Western features, as the CCP during this period believed that the Communism was

the ultimate form of the human society and that Communist states with the most advanced Socialist system would finally strike down these Capitalist states (Zhang, 2008). In this regard, the Chinese state during this period always stood firmly in line with the world's premier Communist state — the Soviet Union — to resist Capitalist social norms, cultures and materials in its geopolitical practices. On the other hand, Chinese geopolitical practices during this period were also characterised by a form of anti-Confucianism that was mentioned in previous sections, such as *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism. Specifically, based on the classic Marxist/Leninist belief that, again, Communism is the ultimate form of the human society, the Communist also stands in an antagonistic position with respect to Feudalism. Because Confucianism was — and is regarded as — anchored in feudal customs, Confucianism therefore became largely excluded from Chinese political culture at that time. This anti-Confucianism characteristic of the Chinese political culture during this era was particularly reflected in the 'Cultural Revolution' that tried to distance all feudal elements from the present state of Chinese culture (Forsby, 2011). In so doing, it can be seen that Chinese geopolitical practices during this stage neither absorbed elements from Confucian values nor from Western values, but in contrast were characterised by a form of classic Marxist/Leninist or even radical Communist ideology.

The second stage could be viewed from the 1980s up to now, which might be marked by China's open and reform policy and a series of Sino-Soviet split events. Chinese diplomatic practices in this era are quite different from the aforementioned radical Communist geopolitical thinking. Under the influence of China's open and

reform policy and Sino-Soviet split events in the 1980s which have challenged both anti-Capitalism and anti-Feudalism, China's diplomatic practices in this stage to a significant extent can be summarised as the 'diplomatic views under Socialism with Chinese characteristics' (中国特色社会主义外交观). Most specifically, China has begun to erase its insistence on being anti-Western and anti-Capitalism (and to some extent it has begun to learn from the Western and Capitalist states) in the economic realm, albeit such impact may not only be limited to the economic realm but extend to others. For example, in this period, China has begun to bring into being a market economy in Chinese society. Moreover, there were a series of Sino-Soviet split events in this period, such as the Treasure Island Conflict and the Tielieketi Military Conflict, which challenged China's sovereign rights and thus pushed the Chinese state to reconsider its own diplomacies standing in line with the Soviet Union (Li, 1996). In so doing, the Chinese state has since begun to turn back to its own traditional culture, in order to find its own distinctive way of handling international affairs. As such, Confucian values have begun to be brought back into aspects of contemporary Chinese political culture. Taken together, it can be seen that to a significant extent current Chinese geopolitical practices cannot be theorised through classic Marxist/Leninist philosophy, but in contrast, they could be understood as extensions of Communist practices that are re-endowed with peculiarly Chinese features.

In this sense, this thesis argues that current Chinese geopolitical practice is neither a direct continuation of *hua-yi* distinction or Sino-centrism of any single era, nor a simple imitation of Communist or Capitalist ways. In contrast, it both absorbs

the Communist element and the traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism. On the one hand, unlike the idea of Sino-centrism that emphasises the superiority of *hua* over *yi* in Confucian values, current Chinese geopolitical practices have abandoned the geographical hierarchy between *hua* (Chinese nation) and *yi* (the foreign). Specifically, it embeds China into the modern political map of territorial states that divides the whole globe into different national states, and in doing so it emphasises constructing an equal rather than hierarchical inter-state relationship on the international stage. This notion can be clearly evidenced by China's basic foreign policy of '*Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*'⁹, raised by the former Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in his meeting with Indian delegations and then set up as a basic Chinese foreign policy (Keith, 2009). On the other hand, however, current Chinese geopolitical practices still suggest using Confucian philosophy to resolve inter-state conflicts and to inflect their handling of global affairs in the international community.

The impact of this is mainly reflected in the emphasis on the notions of harmony, diversity and peacefulness in the current Chinese diplomatic thinking. Most specifically, the current Chinese foreign policy is primarily embodied in three parts: to establish a harmonious image of China itself, to encourage a multilateral international community, and to judge other states in accordance with the Confucian morality. To begin with, the current Chinese government usually adopts a defensive strategy and underlines soft power rather than war to maintain international order,

⁹ This refers to: equality and mutual benefit, mutual respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, noninterference in other states' affairs and peaceful coexistence.

which are well known as ‘peaceful rising’ and ‘never seeking hegemony’ in Chinese discourse (Xu, 2004). Then, the Chinese state calls for building up a multilateral international community within which different political ideologies, cultures and religions are encouraged to coexist and be equally treated. This political concept is reflected in the foreign policy of ‘keep harmonious, keep diverse’ in Chinese discourse (Agnew, 2010a, p. 574; Chen, 2015, p. 70). Finally, the Chinese state also stresses the need for building a harmonious and peaceful international community within which barbaric and violent behaviours will be denounced while civilised and benevolent behaviour will be encouraged. This idea is well evidenced in Chinese government’s 2004 proposal of ‘establishing a harmonious society’ and its 2011 white book of ‘peaceful rise strategies of China’ (Liu, An, & Zhu, 2015, p. 620).

Moreover, this thesis further argues that the notions of harmony, diversity and peacefulness in current Chinese diplomatic views is an inheritance from Confucian traditions rather than a form of newly created social norms. Three clues might be contributed to this evidence. The first clue can be found in Chinese national leaders’ quotation of the Confucian classics when talking about China’s diplomacies. For instance, the former Chairman of the Chinese government Hu Jintao always quoted Confucian classics to express his political ideas for establishing harmonious society (Sun & Luan, 2013). The second clue can be found in China’s practices of the national project of cultural communication and cultural propaganda in the name of Confucius, who is enshrined as the founder of Confucianism. In total, about 358 Confucius Institutes in over 105 countries or regions have been established in order to propagate the Confucian culture since 2004 (Forsby, 2011). The third clue can

be found in the shared ideology between the Confucian geopolitical traditions and current Chinese geopolitical views. Exactly, both the ancient Confucian politicians and the current Chinese politicians emphasise the use of morality to evaluate the behaviour of a state. Morality here means building up an equal and just community in which benevolent behaviours are encouraged. This is exactly what the Confucian classic *The Analects of Confucius* (论语) emphasises as the perfect ‘*kingly way*’ (王道):

I have heard that rulers of states and chiefs of families are not troubled lest their people should be few, but are troubled lest they should not keep their separate places; that they are not troubled with fears of poverty, but are troubled with fears of a want of contented repose among the people in their separate places. For when the people keep their separate places, there will be no poverty; when harmony prevails, there will be no scarcity of people; and when there is such a contented repose, there will be no rebellious upsetting. So it is. Therefore, if remoter people are not submissive, all the influences of civil culture and virtue are to be cultivated to attract them to be so; and when they have been so attracted, they must be made contented and tranquil. (Chen, 2015, p. 67; Legge, 2010, pp. 441-442)

That is, a moral country should be a harmonious and equal society, and at the same time a moral country (here usually embodied as governors) should treat everyone who wants to be its citizen kindly and cultivate his/her moral behaviours.

In sum, this section discussed the Chinese geopolitical views in Communism controlled China (1949-). In so doing, this thesis suggests that current Chinese geopolitical practices are still under the influence of Confucianism, albeit Chinese geopolitics is not merely limited to such influence. That is, under the impact of the CCP and relevant Communist ideology in the current Chinese society, the influence of Confucianism upon Chinese geopolitics to a certain extent has been weakened. On the one hand, the current Chinese geopolitical practices have absorbed elements from the classic Marxist/Leninist philosophy, embedding China and its geopolitical practices into the modern political map with equal inter-state relations among different territorial states. On the other hand, however, the Chinese state still tries to absorb elements from the traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism to deal with global affairs. On this basis, the current Chinese geopolitical practices can be viewed as a form of geopolitics with particular Chinese features, which are both under and beyond the framework of Confucian geopolitics.

3.1.4 Sino-centrism and Orientalism

The above elaboration points out that China has through much of its history established a geopolitical imagination of Sino-centrism within which China imagines itself as the centre of civilisation, while it regards the outlying or outside world as the periphery. On the basis of this dichotomous imagination, China has always considered itself to be superior over the peripheral others. Such superiority, moreover, has even been used to establish the social and political order in the name of Confucianism in China. The dichotomous imagination of core-periphery, the

superiority of *hua* over *yi*, and the Confucian order on the basis of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism all remind us that a similar theory originated from the Western world, namely Orientalism (Said, 1978). The theory of Orientalism also highlights a geopolitical imagination that writes the Oriental countries, nations, and tribes as the peripheral places and spaces in Western discourse (Said, 1978; Gregory, 1994). More specifically, in such discourse, the Oriental space is usually depicted as barbaric, tribal, backward and irrational, while the Western space is described as civilised, scientific, advanced and rational in order to fulfil Western colonial interests. Orientalism, as well as Sino-centrism, often reaches its political purpose through a hegemonic, soft and usually invisible way. Both geopolitical traditions, in my own view, might have influence upon current Chinese geopolitical views. Therefore, in order to provide a much broader context for this research on Chinese geopolitics, I will try to differentiate the two geopolitical traditions in this section.

It first merits noting that Sino-centrism and Orientalism do have something in common (see Table 3-1). Such similarity is mainly embodied in three aspects. First, both geopolitical imaginations stress a dichotomous identity of ‘us’ and ‘otherness’, within which the description of us is usually embellished and beautified while otherness is often vilified, defamed and belittled. Second, both ideas underline the superiority of us over the other, and in so doing such superiority is further used for fulfilling its specific political purpose. More specifically, Sino-centrism highlights the superiority of Han Chinese over ethnic minorities and thereafter the superiority of the Chinese nation over foreigners, and in so doing it aims to make others realise the superiority of Han and Chinese culture and thus subordinate them (Chen, 2015).

Similarly, Orientalism also highlights the superiority of Western societies over Oriental societies in order to legitimate the colonial interests of Western states (Said, 1978). Third, it can be summarised that both Sino-centrism and Orientalism can be considered forms of Gramscian hegemony and Foucauldian discourse that relate the production of (geographical) knowledge to the exercise of power. In Gramsci's (2000) view of hegemony, the culture of a society, its beliefs, values, perceptions, and more, is always manipulated by the ruling class, imposed with the ruling class's worldview, and so that become the accepted social norm for justifying the ruling class's interest. Foucault (1980) relates knowledge to the exercise of power, considering that power reproduces and is based on knowledge, and so that creates its own space of exercise through knowledge. In this regard, Sino-centrism and Orientalism can all be viewed as a form of Gramscian cultural system or a form of Foucauldian knowledge system through which power creates a field of practice.

Nevertheless, there are also big differences between the two notions of Sino-centrism and Orientalism (see Table 3-1). These differences are primarily reflected in three aspects: the object observed, criteria for judging, and scope of application. Firstly, it can be clearly seen that there is a difference in the object observed between Sino-centrism and Orientalism. Even though both ideas highlight establishing a dichotomous discourse of us and otherness, they clearly have different focal points. Specifically, Sino-centrism pays more attention to the embellishment of us and less attention to the depiction of otherness. For instance, in ancient *hua-yi* hierarchy and in Qing and modern *hua-yi* dichotomy, the superiority of Han or Chinese culture has been continuously emphasised in order to highlight the advancement, civilised

nature and attraction of Sino society. However, Orientalism has a totally different focal point. Orientalism puts much more emphasis on the depiction of otherness, here usually meaning Oriental places. In Said's (1978) opinion, Western discourses attempt to describe Oriental places as barbaric, tribal, backward and irrational, and therefore use such descriptions to mirror or highlight the advancement of the West, even though they have paid little attention to the depiction of the West itself.

Table 3-1 Differences between Sino-centrism and Orientalism

		Sino-centrism	Orientalism
Similarity		A Gramscian and Foucauldian discourse	
Differences	Object	Us	Other
	Criteria	Cultural identity, morality	Comprehensiveness
	Scope	Cultural particularism	Universalism

Secondly, it can be seen that the criteria for judging who is 'us' and who is 'other' in Sino-centrism and Orientalism are also different. Most specifically, Sino-centrism underlines civilisation, such as cultural identity and Confucian morality, as the main criteria for judging who is *hua* (i.e. the civilised) and who is *yi* (i.e. the barbaric). In other words, Sino-centrism is a cultural identity and a Confucian moral identity that usually employs cultural awareness and Confucian moral guidelines to identify *hua* (the civilised) from *yi* (the barbaric). In this regard, it also means that *hua* can allow, absorb and even accept the inferior position of itself in other realms. For example, Han Chinese can tolerate ethnic minorities, such as Mongolian and Manchu, governing Han Chinese once they have admitted the dominant position of

Han culture; China can accept the superior position of Western foreigners' industrial technology in Qing and modern China; even contemporary China can open its mind to learning from advanced Western systems, such as the market economy. On the contrary, Orientalism emphasises the superior position of Western states in the vast majority of social domains. In Said's (1978, p. 3) words, for instance, the Oriental is not only a cultural entity but also a historical and geographical entity that is 'politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively' produced for mirroring the reality and presence of the Western. That is, Orientalism not only highlights culture as a criterion for judging but also stresses a relatively comprehensive superiority of the Western over the Oriental, which comprises an all-inclusive criterion for judgement.

Finally, the above differences between Sino-centrism and Orientalism bring us to the third difference between them: the scope of application. More specifically, Sino-centrism is often regarded as a form of cultural particularism (Zhao, 2009) that can only be applied to explain Chinese politics because of its overemphasis of the Sino (Han and Chinese) cultures. Owing to the significant role of Confucianism that is usually used to arouse Chinese people's cultural and national identity in Sino-centrism imagination, I also call such explanations 'Confucian nationalism' in this thesis. By contrast, Orientalism is usually viewed as a universal theory for its wide application to explaining *otherness* in all-inclusive domains. The universalism, for instance, is also embodied in the wide application of Western ideologies and values (e.g. democracy and freedom) as the universalised ideologies and values in the contemporary international political world (Zhao, 2009). In this regard, it might be

concluded that we cannot ignore the impact of Western ideologies and values upon non-Western research, even though the non-Western context is also argued to be an essential part of non-Western study. That is, both Western universalism and non-Western particularism need to be put into context when considering a non-Western research agenda.

3.2 Geopolitical analyses of China

As already discussed, it can be seen that Confucian geopolitical notions, such as *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism, to a significant extent can be viewed to be historically-sedimented: widely shared but often implicit, taken-for-granted and not necessarily an explicitly ‘voiced’ basis for Chinese geopolitical thoughts and actions. They greatly impact upon contemporary Chinese geopolitical imaginations, albeit such imaginations are not only confined to the impact from Confucian values. However, the Confucian elements have surprisingly been ignored in extant studies of Chinese geopolitics. In order to clarify the contribution of the theorisation of such internal Chinese geopolitical thinking in this thesis, this section will present the wider context of existing geopolitical analyses on China from two aspects. In what follows, I will first investigate how studies of Chinese geopolitics have been expanded upon by scholars from inside China, and subsequently I will explore how such issues are discussed in Anglophone studies.

3.2.1 Sinophone analyses of Chinese geopolitics

This section provides an overview of existing Sinophone geopolitical studies.

Even though there is a long period (from the end of the Second World War to the late 1980s) in which geopolitics has been treated as ‘poison and pseudoscience’ in the Sinophone academe because of its close connection to Nazi Germany (Liu, 2009, p. 14), there are still a large number of Chinese scholars concerned with geopolitical analysis of China. Drawing on the investigation of existing Sinophone literatures, it can be clearly seen that there is a strong dominance of Anglophone scholarship in framing Chinese geopolitics. Such dominance is mainly reflected in three features.

The first key feature of Sinophone geopolitical analysis of China is the great energy in pursuit of translating and introducing Anglophone geopolitical theories into China. Most specifically, it can be seen that the vast majority of current Chinese geopolitical theories and methodologies are majorly translated and introduced from Anglophone works. Early in the 1930s, for example, Zhang Qiyun (1932) introduced the geopolitical concepts of ‘territory and boundary’ into modern China by translating Isaiah Bowman’s works into his serial books on geographical science. Moreover, Gao Yongyuan introduced Mackinder’s geopolitical idea of Heartland Theory in China in the 1930s in his translating work *Mackinder and His Political Geography Theory* (Quoted in (Wu, 2000, p. 123). The tendency of translating and introducing Anglophone geopolitical theories into China has further accelerated since the 1980s. At this time, for instance, Wang Zhengyi (1993) translated and introduced the Modern World System theory into China through his publication of *Modern Political Geography*. Moreover, the Chinese Institute of International Studies (2007) translated Zbigniew Brzezinski’s work *The Grand Chessboard* into

Chinese. This translated book also discussed Game Theory, which has suggested counterbalances among different great powers. Soon afterwards, Liu Congde (2009) systematically introduced Western geopolitical traditions into China by translating the Western textbook *Geopolitics: Past, Present and Future* (Parker, 1998). In addition, Zhou Qi (2010) has also translated one of the classic Western geopolitical writings, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Huntington, 1997), into Chinese among her most recent works.

The second key feature of Sinophone geopolitical analysis of China is the great enthusiasm in pursuit of developing empirical analyses on the basis of Anglophone geopolitical theory. This is mainly reflected in Chinese geopolitical scholars' preference for 'classical geopolitics' in their studies. That is, those Chinese scholars prefer to develop their geopolitical analyses on the basis of the assumption of 'geographical impact on policy' (Kelly, 2006, p. 26). For example, the vast majority of recent empirical studies on Chinese geopolitics have been established on the basis of this assumption. Liu Zhongmin (2009), for instance, mapped out a structure of current globalised sea powers and illustrated China's marine strategies. Taking the Western countries' trepidation of China's development of aircraft carriers as the entry point, Liu (2009) displayed the historical, economic and geographical conditions of developing sea powers, discussed how to handle the relations between rising and existing sea powers, and suggested that China should combine its strategy of developing sea power with its strategy of developing its overall national strength and peaceful rising policy. Moreover, Wu Shicun (2009) examined the role and importance of resources and waterways in the South China Sea in influencing

China's geopolitical strategies and foreign policies in Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia. In addition, Zhang Kang (2009) investigated the relations between petroleum and China's foreign policy. Mapping out the petroleum structures between China and other regions, Zhang (2009) discussed China's foreign policies and petroleum strategies and suggested that the geographies of oil-rich regions were gradually becoming centres for Chinese diplomacy.

The third key feature of Sinophone geopolitical analysis on China is the introduction of the Anglophone geopolitical theory of 'critical geopolitics', albeit such introduction is extremely limited within China. In contrast to the preference for 'classical geopolitics', it can be seen that fewer Chinese scholars have focused on critical geopolitics. Even in the few Sinophone geopolitical analyses on Chinese issues from the lens of critical geopolitics, it can be seen that their contributions are extremely limited. Most specifically, there have always been a small number of Chinese scholars in the disciplines of both politics and geography who attempt to introduce critical geopolitical theory into China (Liu, Kong, & Tu, 1995; Xu Q. , 2006; Pan, 2008; Ge, 2010; Hu & Lu, 2015). However, their endeavours are limited to simple translations or summaries of the notions, definitions, natures and histories of critical geopolitics, and thus lack the in-depth examination of how the theory of critical geopolitics can be localised in the Chinese context. Moreover, there are also few Chinese scholars trying to use the theory of critical geopolitics to build up their empirical analysis and arguments. Only two studies can be found in both Sinophone and Anglophone journals. For example, Chen *et al.* (2012) applied insight from critical geopolitics to investigate how authority over Antarctica was re-imagined

and interpreted through the discourses related to Antarctica. By examining how the concepts, symbols and knowledge of Antarctica were endowed with meaning, Chen *et al.* (2012) explored the significance of science, international organisations and NGOs in shaping the relations between the productions of geographical knowledge and the exercise of power. In addition, my earlier research with Zhu Hong, which focused on Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement's (ETIM's) terrorist activities in China, also gained insights from critical geopolitics (An & Zhu, 2015). Drawing on the Chinese Internet's coverage of terrorist activities, our research explained how the mass media produced negative geographical imaginations of Xinjiang, thereby causing the tense geo-relations between Xinjiang and other areas within China (An & Zhu, 2015). However, such fragmented studies seem to have made little contribution to the examination of internal Chinese geopolitical views.

In short, drawing on existing Sinophone literatures, it can be concluded that Sinophone geopolitical analyses are strongly framed by the dominance of Western scholarship. Such dominance, on the basis of the above analysis, is mainly reflected in Sinophone geopolitical analyses' great enthusiasm for introducing Anglophone geopolitical theories, in particular the theory of classical geopolitics. In so doing, it can be seen that in Sinophone geopolitical studies little attention has been paid to the examination of the socio-political context of China and the investigation of Chinese geopolitical issues from the lens of critical geopolitics. It can therefore be summed that there is a great paucity of work localising Chinese internal geopolitical notions into Chinese geopolitical analysis, and that there is a great paucity of work putting everyday space in China into Chinese geopolitical analysis from the lens of

critical geopolitics. Taken together, both limitations that are identified in this part have provided an academic context for this thesis.

3.2.2 Anglophone analyses of Chinese geopolitics

This section provides an overview of existing Anglophone geopolitical studies on Chinese geopolitical issues. In the previous decade, an increasing number of overseas scholars, including Western scholars, overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese scholars in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Singapore and the like, have paid attention to Chinese geopolitical issues. Drawing on an examination of existing Anglophone works, it can be summarised that Anglophone observations on Chinese geopolitics are primarily reflected in three aspects: geo-security issues, geo-economic issues and the perspective of critical geopolitics. To be specific, geo-security is considered to be a continuation of Cold War geopolitics that emphasises geographical position and political camp as one of the most significant elements influencing national security strategies. Moreover, geo-economics is also regarded as one of the most influential branches of geopolitical research that prioritises the investigation of the spatial and political aspects of national economies (Conway, 1994). In addition, a number of Anglophone scholars have also focused on China from the perspective of critical geopolitics, which underlines the significance of productive geographical knowledge in the understanding of geopolitical patterns (see chapter 2). In what follows, I will elaborate on how Anglophone scholars have developed their studies of Chinese geopolitical issues from the above three aspects.

First, drawing on China's particular geographical position at the eastern edge

of the Eurasian continent, a number of Anglophone studies have focused on China's geo-security issues. For example, William Overholt (2007) is concerned with the transformation of the geo-security patterns in the Asia-Pacific region. Examining the roles and the influences of both the US and China in this region, Overholt (2007) has indicated that the US's military-based foreign policies in this region have been weakening its economic presence but enhancing China's economic influence, thereby resulting in the bi-condominium geopolitical pattern here. Moreover, Paul Smith (2009) has mapped the geopolitical structure in East Asia on the basis of the examination of current Sino-Japan relations. Situating Sino-Japan relations in the historical context of territorial disputes, nationalism, mutual antipathies, China's increasing military and economic presence, and the US-Japan security alliance, Smith (2009) has argued that such historical contexts may create a miscalculation of Sino-Japan relations and have inestimable negative impact on the geo-security environment in East Asia. David Scott (2008, p. 1) has investigated the geo-security issues between China and India from 'the logic of geography'. Based on the realist assumption that underlines the 'zero-sum' relations (one gains and the other loses) among states with geographical proximities, Scott (2008) has suggested that China and India are in increased competition in the realms of military security, diplomacies and economies. Furthermore, David Babayan (2011) examines China's geo-security challenges in Xinjiang and Central Eurasia. Pointing to the challenges of pan-Turkish ideologies, the integrations of Turkic speaking populations, terrorist activities and separatist forces in Central Eurasia, Babayan (2011) suggests that China's national unity, national security and national influences in Xinjiang face

great challenges.

Second, there is also an increasing number of Anglophone geopolitical studies paying attention to China's geo-economic issues along with its increasing economic influence and presence in the previous decades. For instance, Pádraig Carmody and Francis Owusu (2007) have investigated the geo-economic relations between China, the US and Africa, based on the analysis of China's increasing capital investments and commercial exchanges in Africa, as well as the US's increasingly political and economic interventions in Africa. In so doing, they argue that the increasingly geo-economic competitions between the Western (the US) and the Eastern (China) have contributed to the re-working of the colonial trade structure, the strengthening of authoritarians and the fueling of conflicts in Africa (Carmody & Owusu, 2007). In addition, Jean-Claude Maswana (2009) has examined the geo-economic relations between China and Africa, under the background of China's increasing investments in Africa. Focusing on China's increasingly economic activities in Africa and the challenge that China has brought to other economic powers here, Maswana (2009) suggests that the China-Africa economic link has established a south-south dialectic, thereby breaking the monopolisation of the north-south geo-economic patterns. Furthermore, Scott (2007) has examined the geo-economic relations between China and Europe. Investigating China and the EU's common emphasis on economic development, multi-polarisation and balancing third parties (e.g. the US and Russia) in its long history (from 1957 to 2003), Scott (2007) points out that it was exactly their collaborative interests in geo-economics that result in a China-EU strategic partnership in the early 21st century.

Third, a great number of Anglophone scholars have also gained insights from critical geopolitics to explain Chinese geopolitics. On this basis, those studies have paid great attention to how productive geographical knowledge is produced within China and then used for political purposes. For example, Emma Mawdsley (2008) studies how UK newspapers represent China's diplomatic and economic relations in Africa that is driven by China's recent economic growth, and in so doing explores how such knowledge reflects on the West's anxiety of China's rise. Marcus Power and Giles Mohan (2010) investigate China's economic activities in Africa from the perspective of critical geopolitics. Based on the analysis over Chinese discourse of the evolving international system, they argue that China's 'meta-narratives and the emphasis on south-south co-operation' are used to moralise China's influences and presences in Africa (Power & Mohan, 2010, p. 486). In contrast to earlier studies on China-Africa geo-economic links (Carmody & Owusu, 2007; Maswana, 2009), Mawdsley (2008), and Power & Mohan (2010) are more concerned with the power of geo-writings rather than the simple description of geopolitical patterns. Moreover, Falk Hartig (2013) has focused on China's soft power drawing on the exploration of the material realm of China's foreign policy. More specifically, Hartig (2013) has discussed China's panda policy and analysed how China uses animal conservation as a political undertaking and form of soft power to gain political interest and global image. Most recently, Woon (2011) scrutinises Chinese Internet forum as a form of important cultural medium for (re)producing geopolitical affairs through the case study of a Mandarin bulletin board system, the *Qiangguo Luntan*. Focusing on the posted responses to the 2003 US-initiated war in Iraq in this Internet forum, Woon

(2011, p.131) suggests that ‘interconnected Chinese communities are able to weave alternative viewpoints and shape antiwar consensus through the broad bandwidth of networked technology beyond the purview of territorially based governments’. Mia Bennett (2015) has explored the Arctic narratives in China’s official discourse under the framework of critical geopolitics. In so doing, Bennett (2015) claims that Chinese official depictions of the Arctic not only stress the salience of intraregional powers in the Arctic Circle but also illustrate the Arctic as a form of global space. Such discourse links Arctic space to the entire planet, thereby legitimating China’s geopolitical status in the Arctic.

In sum, drawing on extant Anglophone works, it can be seen that Anglophone geopolitical analyses of China have largely been limited to macro-level analysis. For instance, the geo-security and geo-economic analyses in existing Anglophone literatures can be read as state-centred analyses which are always set in relation to the evaluation of Chinese statecraft or the simple summarisation of Chinese foreign policies. Even though there are some geopolitical studies which are framed by the theory of critical geopolitics, they are still limited to large-scale analysis, such as meta-narratives of Africa, the Arctic and the Middle East. Geopolitical writings and understandings in everyday spaces to a notable extent have still been ignored by the macro-level analysis of Chinese geopolitics in existing literature. In addition, even if there are some Anglophone scholars trying to explain Chinese geopolitics via the traditional Chinese geopolitical notions (e.g. Agnew (2010) and Park (2015) try to apply the concept ‘Sino-centrism’ to explain Chinese geopolitics, and Woon (2012) suggests to unpack the Mandarin-documented geopolitical narratives to understand

China), the localised Chinese geopolitical theory and action is still under-theorised in Anglophone scholarship. Therefore, the knowledge paucities in the examination of Chinese geopolitics in everyday space and localised Chinese geopolitical notions identified above can be viewed as another academic context for this thesis.

3.3 Understanding terrorism in different contexts

As the term terrorism is one of the most significant keywords in this research, this section will focus on the various understandings of this term in different contexts, in particular in Anglophone and in Chinese contexts, where this research focuses. Specifically, terrorism is usually considered to be a socially constructed concept that is closely related to the socio-political contexts in which it is used. Thus, it is both essential and important to investigate how this concept is used in different contexts. In order to provide a wide context for the following empirical analyses of Chinese everyday imaginations of the US war on terror, I will elaborate on how the term terrorism is understood in Anglophone and Chinese contexts in what follows.

3.3.1 Defining terrorism in the Anglophone context

The definition of the term terrorism is usually changing. Different people in different times may have different understandings of this term. In the Anglophone context, this term is initially associated with the abuse of governmental power over those being ruled (Hoffman, 2006). However, terrorism has gradually been used to depict those ethno-nationalist groups and their violent activities that emerged after

the Second World War. During the anti-colonialist movements at that time, these ethno-nationalist groups began to use assassination, murder, kidnap and torture to terrorise dominant and powerful powers in order to achieve their political purposes (Hoffman, 2006). Such extreme ethno-nationalist activities have then been widely labeled as terrorism. Unfortunately, such extreme activity was soon copied by other extreme religious, anti-social and anti-hegemonic groups in the later 20th and early 21st centuries, and evolved into a form of ‘postmodern terrorism’ (Gardner, 2013, p. 52). Postmodern terrorism is marked by ‘propaganda by deed’, which emphasises the ‘symbolic message and psychological effect’ of extremist violence rather than the actual casualties such violence has caused, such as the 9/11 attack (Gardner, 2013, p. 52). In the aforementioned evolving process, the term terrorism has always been gifted with a variety of changing meanings by the Anglophone scholars (Wilkinson, 1986; Hoffman, 2006; Held, 2008; Miller, 2009; Jackson, Jarris, Gunning, & Smyth, 2011). Some of them have related terrorism to the violence of target killing and indiscriminate slaughtering (Hoffman, 2006); some of them have stressed terrorism as a form of psychological warfare (Wilkinson, 1986; Gardner, 2013); some of them have highlighted it as a form of violence motivated by specific political aims (Miller, 2009); some of them have differentiated terrorism from the notion of ‘war’ (Hoffman, 2006); and others have explored its unjustifiable essence on the basis of ethical considerations (Held, 2008; Jackson, Jarris, Gunning, & Smyth, 2011).

Nevertheless, this study does not aim at providing an overview of definitions of the term terrorism, but tries to situate different understandings of terrorism in the

various contexts into the empirical case studies in this research. As this research is concerned with Chinese imaginations of the US war on terror, it becomes essential first to discuss how US society understands and explains the term terrorism. Indeed, the term terrorism has become an important geopolitical code that is widely used for the US foreign policy-making, in particular after the attack on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 (Agnew, 2003). It has usually been employed as a pejorative label marking the US's enemies in its national security strategies. To be exact, the term terrorism has not only been utilised as a moral and juristic marker to identify the immoral and illegal other, but also as a geographical tool to map the US's potential political dissidents in the post-9/11 era. For instance, the former US president George W. Bush adopted the term terrorism to mark Iran, Iraq and North Korea as the Axis of Evil in The Bush Doctrine (Heisbourg, 2003). In the US mass media and popular culture, this term has also constructed the US's potential political enemies (e.g. Iraq, Iran and North Korea) as terrorists in the post-9/11 era (Dodds, 2008a, b). In this regard, it can be summed that, in the US society, the term terrorism has often fallen in a form of moral and political trap. That is, as terrorism is usually associated with extremist activities of assassination, bombing, murder, kidnap and threats which are often considered to be unjustifiable from the perspectives of both ethics and law (Honderich, 2006; Miller, 2009), it is viewed as 'a highly pejorative label' that is subjective and highly adopted by politicians to mark their dissidents (Jackson, Jarris, Gunning, & Smyth, 2011, p. 101). To a significant extent, the term terrorism is a highly subjective and malleable word that is epistemologically viewed as a form of social reality which is socially constructed rather than an ontological

existence, as ‘there is nothing inherent or objective to the violence itself which makes it terrorism *per se*’ (Jackson, Jarris, Gunning, & Smyth, 2011, p. 35).

The US understandings of terrorism as a subjective, malleable and pejorative word have had great impact upon the use of this term in other states beyond the US for the reason of the US’s great geopolitical influence on the international stage. In a number of English-speaking states, the term terrorism has also been broadly used as a geopolitical label. For example, Margo Kleinfeld (2003) investigates the use of terrorism in the Sri Lankan context. In this research, Kleinfeld (2003) indicates that two parties of long-running conflicts — the People's Alliance Government and the Tamil Tigers of Tamil Eelam — both tried to use terrorism as a political discourse to mark their adversaries in order to legitimate their own legitimacy in Sri Lanka. Moreover, Woon (2014) has investigated the utilisation of the term terrorism in the Philippine context. Drawing on the case of a Philippine newspaper — *the Philippines Daily Inquirer* — and Filipinos’ critical readings of this newspaper, Woon (2014) points out that this newspaper’s representations of violent Mindanao activists as forms of terrorists have been widely used to justify and legitimise the Philippine government’s wars on internal extremists in Mindanao. In both cases, the term terrorism is heavily highlighted as a form of political discourse rather than extreme violence itself, which has further demonstrated that the term terrorism is a socially constructed social reality.

In general, it can be concluded that the term terrorism is a socially constructed reality with changing and evolving meanings. Even though the term terrorism has always been endowed with a number of different meanings, this term has often been

used as a subjective geopolitical code for marking political dissents in the US, or more widely in the Anglophone contexts. In other words, the meaning of terrorism depends more on the process through which terrorism is socially constructed than the extreme violence with which it is usually associated with. Such understanding of the character of terrorism provides an important basis for the empirical analysis of Chinese discourses about terrorism in this thesis. However, as this research is closely concerned with Chinese voices of terrorism, it may also need to elaborate on how the term terrorism is understood in the Chinese context. Therefore, in what follows, I will illustrate the context of Chinese terrorism.

3.3.2 The context of Chinese terrorism

The use of the term terrorism has its particularity in China. Such particularity is primarily reflected in the language change in use of this term in different periods in China. Specifically, the term terrorism is usually related to the extremist activities that have taken place and are taking place in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region¹⁰, China. However, such kind of extremist activities seem to have been described with different terms in different periods, in particular before 9/11 event in 2001 and after that. Before 9/11, such kind of extremist activities in Xinjiang have usually been explained with the term separatism rather than terrorism in China; while after 9/11, such kind of extremist activities in Xinjiang have gradually been written with the term terrorism in both Chinese official and popular discourses, albeit that this term is still sparingly utilised in such discourses. Drawing on the relevant works on the

¹⁰ Hereinafter referred to as Xinjiang.

Chinese Xinjiang issue and Chinese terrorism, it can be seen that the particularity of the use of terrorism in China has close relations to the Chinese socio-political context. On this basis, I will elaborate on two aspects of how Chinese terrorism is used at different times in the special socio-political context of China.

First, there was nearly no (official and popular) discourse that adopted the term terrorism to explain extremist activities in Xinjiang before 9/11 attacks. It is not because there were no extremist activities in Xinjiang at that time. There actually were a number of separatist activities through which these violent groups attempted to separate Xinjiang from Chinese territory in the 1990s. However, those extremist activities were not always labeled as terrorism but, in contrast, Chinese discourses preferred to call them separatist activities. For example, the former Chairman of China — Jiang Zemin — underlined such extremist activities as ‘separatist behaviours’ in a working conference on Xinjiang extremist affairs in 1992 (Zheng & Mada, 2004). Based on the examination of relevant studies, it can be seen that the non-adoption of the term terrorism for describing Chinese Xinjiang extremist activities is closely related to Chinese socio-political context or, broadly, the context of the Sino-Western relationship. On the one hand, Chinese government stresses such extremist activities as outside-agitated actions for separation which are attributed to Western forces’ agitations of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism (Zheng & Mada, 2004; Liu, 2004; Fan, 2013). In Chinese governmental ideas, the geography, history, tradition and discourse of both pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism have been fabricated by Western powers in order to fulfil their colonial interests. For instance, Chinese government points out that the Turkic nation had already

perished about 1,200 years ago in China, but Western colonialist powers have produced a species of Chinese Turkic knowledge and attempted to use such knowledge to expand their influence in China (Fan, 2013). On the other hand, however, Western powers look at extremist activities in Xinjiang as a consequence of the Uyghur-Han conflicts (Chung, 2006). A number of Western scholars have indicated that the grievance of non-Han Chinese in Xinjiang is the primary cause of Uyghur-Han conflicts and the agitation of a wide range of extreme activities around Uyghur nationalism (Yee, 2003; Clarke, 2007; Potter, 2013). In their opinion, the main reasons for the extreme Uyghur-Han conflicts in Xinjiang are due to the huge migrations of Han Chinese into Xinjiang and their subsequent effects on the increasing population proportion of Han Chinese, the widening usage of Mandarin Chinese, the gradual limitation of Muslim religious activities, and the rising economic disparities between Han and non-Han Chinese (Potter, 2013). The huge gap in the understanding of the Chinese Xinjiang problem between China and Western powers makes Chinese discourses pay more attention to the depiction of Chinese Xinjiang extremist activities as form of outside-agitated act rather than an ethno-conflict, or terrorism. In this sense, under the significant impact of political balancing between China and Western forces, understandings of extremist violence as a form of terrorism has been greatly neglected in China during this period.

Second, since the 9/11 incident in 2001, the term terrorism has gradually been employed in some Chinese official discourses to explain the extremist activities that have taken place and are taking place in Xinjiang. To a significant extent, the 9/11 event has provided China and Western states (in particular the US) an opportunity

to reach a consensus on the Xinjiang issue. As part of this, China has tried to build a link between Chinese Xinjiang extremists and international terrorism following 9/11 event, in order to free Xinjiang of ethnic problems. The former Chinese foreign minister, Tang Jiaxuan, for instance, openly stated that ‘East Turkistan *terrorism* is part of international terrorism’ just a few days after the 9/11 incident (Wang, 2008, p. 32). In an article released by the Chinese State Council Information Office¹¹, the close connections between East Turkistan organisations and international terrorist powers (e.g. Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda) are also emphasised in order to highlight the connections between Chinese terrorism and international terrorism. The changing language in use of the term terrorism in China is mainly based on the evaluation of the impact of the 9/11 incident upon Western states’ (particularly the US’s) attitudes towards terrorism. As Yitzhak Shichor (2005) argues, the Chinese government deliberately represents Uyghur separatist activities as threats linked to international terrorism in order to join the US-led global war on terrorism. Indeed, for Western powers, the 9/11 incident has also made them reconsider the situation of international security. Most specifically, as increasingly terrorists and terrorist bases are proved to be located in Central Asia, where they are regarded to be closely related to Chinese extremist groups, Western powers also intend to establish a form of counterterrorist cooperation with China in this area (Wang, 2008). On this basis, a number of extremist groups formerly viewed by the US as ethno-nationalist have been listed as terrorist organisations, such as the ETIM, the Eastern Turkistan

¹¹ East Turkistan terrorist force has difficulty escaping from guilt (21 November 2001). Source from: <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/3586/20020121/652705.html>.

National Congress (ETNC), and the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) (Wang, 2008). In this sense, the Chinese government and Western states to a certain degree have reached a consensus on the cognition of the Chinese Xinjiang problem on the basis of their new understandings of Xinjiang extremist groups and terrorism since the 9/11 incident.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the term terrorism has still been used sparingly in the Chinese context since the 9/11 in 2001, even though the Chinese government and Western forces have reached a consensus on the Xinjiang issue. This is mainly reflected in two aspects. Firstly, unlike the Anglophone use of terrorism, in China terrorism is merely emphasised as one of the most significant characteristics of the extremist activities in Chinese Xinjiang. Beyond terrorism, it also underlines the extremist as ‘outside-agitated’ and ‘crime’, which in Chinese discourses are as important as terrorism (Barbour & Jones, 2013, p. 95). In this regard, the extreme activities in Chinese Xinjiang are usually defined as ‘violent and terrorist activities’ rather than ‘terrorism’ in Chinese discourse. Second, in China it emphasises terrorist behaviours as a form of immoral and illegal activity used for political purposes, but it has never used terrorism as a geographical tool or map to outline the potential enemies of China, as in the US. In my earlier study with Hong Zhu on Chinese media reports on Xinjiang extremist activities, for example, we found that Chinese official media always attempted to avoid the production of negative geographical imaginations of Xinjiang (An & Zhu, 2015), which to a certain extent can be read as that Chinese discourses always avoid creating a geographical other through the language of terrorism.

In summary, it can be concluded that the character of terrorism in Mandarin is similar like the term terrorism in the Anglophone context. The similarity is mainly reflected in the big language change in use of the term terrorism at different times. However, the language change, including the non-adoption of the term terrorism before 9/11 and the sparing adoption of it after 9/11, is closely related to Chinese geopolitical situations and related political aims, rather than the extremist activities themselves that have taken place and are taking place in Xinjiang. In this sense, it can be proved that the term terrorism in China is also a socially constructed reality which is related to the socio-political context in which it is used. Therefore, in whatever the Anglophone context or the Chinese context, the term terrorism is more referred to a form of socially constructed reality rather than a form of violence in this research. On this basis, the analysis of the Anglophone and Chinese context in this section have provided a wider context for the following empirical analysis of how the key word terrorism has contributed to Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has provided a research context for the empirical chapters that follow. It first outlines two internal Chinese geopolitical notions — *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism — through which it draws out a notion of Confucian geopolitics that can be used for the conceptualisation of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror in this research. Specifically, Confucian geopolitics challenges Western geopolitics (that is mentioned in chapter 2) by

refusing a binary either/or, but instead sees sameness inside and outside of a boundary. For example, in *hua-yi* systems and the legacies of Sino-centrism in contemporary China, *hua* (i.e. Han or the Chinese nation) and *yi* (i.e. non-Han Chinese or the foreignness) are usually not viewed as a binary of either/or but, in contrast, they are often regarded as two labels underlining the sameness and difference of a variety of states under the framework of Confucian guidelines. In this sense, those Confucian guidelines, including being harmony, diverse and benevolent within a state or on the international stage, become influential criteria constructing Chinese geopolitical imaginations of other states. This research does not aim at gainsaying the significance of the theory of Western geopolitics in explaining Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror but, on the contrary, it tries to locate Chinese geopolitical phenomena into the local socio-political context of China (i.e. the political culture that is profoundly rooted in Confucianism) for understanding. In this sense, the following empirical analyses of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror will not only be related to existing theories from Western geopolitics, but also will be embedded into the special framework of Chinese political culture, in particular Confucianism.

In the second section, this chapter has given an overview of both Sinophone and Anglophone analyses of Chinese geopolitical issues. Drawing on existing literature, it can be seen that Sinophone analyses are strongly framed by the dominance of Western scholarship, including Chinese scholars' enthusiasm for the translation and introduction of Anglophone geopolitical theory, in particular 'classical geopolitics'. At the same time, it can also be found that Anglophone analyses of China have

to a great extent been limited to macro-level analysis, such as geo-security and geo-economic analyses based on state-centred or other macro-scale topics. Even though both Sinophone (Liu, Kong, & Tu, 1995; Xu Q. , 2006; Pan, 2008; Ge, 2010; Chen, Zhou, & Qin, 2012; An & Zhu, 2015; Hu & Lu, 2015) and Anglophone (Power & Mohan, 2010; Hartig, 2013; Bennett, 2015) works have attempted to introduce the theory of critical geopolitics to explain Chinese geopolitics, they have significant limitations and shortcomings. Specifically, most have simply tried to transplant the notion of critical geopolitics into the Chinese context; while others have rigidly introduced this theory-and-notion, attempting to provide reasoned explanations for Chinese geopolitics. In this sense, it can be clearly seen that Chinese geopolitical themes are often explained with the external/Western geopolitical theories at the macro-scales, while far too little attention has been paid to the examination of internal Chinese geopolitical views and the everyday lens. Such paucity creates spaces for both the exploration of the impact of the socio-political context of China upon the understanding of the geopolitical in Chinese society and the examination of Chinese people's understanding of the geopolitical in their everyday realms. Therefore, in the empirical chapters that follow, I will locate Chinese internal geopolitical views (as mentioned in 3.1) and the everyday perspective (e.g. the analysis of newspapers, audiences, and the Internet) into existing works of Chinese geopolitics, attempting to make up for deficiencies of Chinese geopolitical research.

In the final section, this chapter has examined how the key word of this study - terrorism - is understood and used in different contexts, including the Anglophone and Chinese contexts. Though the term terrorism has been used in the various ways

in different contexts, it can be summarised that this term has been widely used as a form of socially constructed reality that is closely related to certain political interest. For instance, in the Anglophone context the term terrorism is usually employed as a geopolitical code that is utilised by certain political forces to label their political dissents, so to justify their political demands; while in the Chinese context, there has been a language change in use of the term terrorism before 9/11 and after that, which is also proved to be closely related to the Chinese government's political interests in Xinjiang. In both contexts, the term terrorism can be viewed as a form of linguistic discourse that is used to produce geopolitical knowledge, thereby bridging such knowledge with political practices. In this sense, it can be concluded that terrorism is a significant geopolitical code that has provided a particular lens for observing how we understand the geopolitical, in both Anglophone and Chinese contexts. Therefore, in this thesis I will consider terrorism as a form of socially constructed reality rather than a form of violence *per se*, an important geopolitical code and a particular perspective observing how we understand the geopolitical in the following empirical chapters.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the methodology and research methods of this research. In order to establish a link between the theoretical and empirical contexts set out in chapter 2 and chapter 3 and the following empirical chapters, this chapter details the research methods used in this research to analyse Chinese discourses of terrorism and Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US. Specifically, three case studies are highlighted in this thesis, based on the review of research methods adopted in existing works and on seven months' fieldwork in China: Chinese newspapers, Chinese audiences and Chinese Internet community. In what follows, I will mainly focus on four aspects of the research methodology. In the first part of the chapter, I will examine the case studies, discussing why they were selected as samples for this research. In the second part, I will show the process of data collection, including for the textual and discourse analysis of Chinese newspapers (*People's Daily* and *South Weekend*), the interviews of Chinese audiences and the study of Chinese Internet discourse. In the third part, I will underline the ethical challenges that I faced during the fieldwork and research process. Finally, it will display the process of data organisation, which aimed to give a clear understanding of the whole fieldwork experience, arrange the collected data into a comprehensive and tight analysis, and prepare for the subsequent empirical analysis. To achieve this, the collected data were categorised, coded and analysed with the Nvivo 10. The result of the data organisation will also be presented at the end of this chapter.

4.1 Case studies: newspapers, audiences and the Internet

As clarified in chapter 1, this study is extended from an analytical framework for examining three types of Chinese voices: the elitist voice, middle-level Chinese people's voice, and the voice of the masses. It merits noting that in Chinese context the elitist voice can be broadly read as a form of state voice; while middle-level Chinese people's voices and the voice of the masses can be viewed as forms of non-state voices from different perspectives. More specifically, the 'middle-level' is a term with Chinese characteristics that is similar to the term middle-class in Western society. Both terms are used to describe and explain people in the middle of a social hierarchy. However, in China where it self-claims as a Communist society without class, the term class is always avoided in use, and so that the middle-level is usually employed to replace the term middle-class. The term 'the masses' in this thesis, on the contrary, is more in use to describe a much broader group of non-state Chinese people, including the middle-level, the grassroots and more. On this basis, three kinds of samples have been selected as the case studies for this research: Chinese newspapers, including *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*; middle-level Chinese audiences, referring to those who are between 18 and 45, living in urban areas, with middle-level incomes and well-educated (with college degree or above); and the masses in Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*.

There are two primary reasons why this thesis selects the above three types of case studies. On the one hand, they are viewed as three distinct but complementary modes of political communication. Specifically, influenced by the strict censorship

of Chinese journalism (Zhang, 2011), Chinese newspapers are often considered to be an important way to investigate top-down political opinions. The examination of the opinions of those who are between 18 and 45, living in urban areas, with middle-level incomes and well-educated (I will elaborate on why this selection criterion was established later) can be widely read as an investigation of the voice of middle-level Chinese people. In addition, focusing on the specificity of the Internet, such as its exponential expansion of information, its swift transmission via mobile terminals and its negotiated means of communication (Qiang, 2011), the exploration of the Chinese Internet community would be read as a bottom-up case study of Chinese voices from the masses. In selecting these empirical case studies, the research design may provide effective empirical evidence to answer the research question posed at the outset of this thesis.

On the other hand, the choice of the aforementioned cases is thoughtfully embedded into, and may well contribute to, the development of theories of Chinese geopolitics and critical geopolitics. Most specifically, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* are regarded as the most widespread printed media in China, and cover a wider range of audiences, including urban and rural, and old and young audiences. Examining these newspapers may contribute to the investigation of how Chinese geopolitical knowledge is produced nationwide. However, existing research has not looked at whether or not audiences read these newspapers. Therefore, I also pay attention to the middle-level audience groups of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, who are between 18 and 45, living in urban areas, with middle-level incomes and

well-educated¹². In so doing, this case study might also contribute to audience study in critical (in particular popular) geopolitics (see chapter 2). In sharp contrast, the case of *Sina Weibo* is a new burgeoning media genre in China (similar to *Twitter* in Western societies) that is an entirely different media-scape from traditional media and is having an increasing impact upon the Chinese society. This case study may contribute to the exploration of how the Internet community impacts the production of geopolitical views. In the section that follows, I will provide more detail of these case studies from three aspects.

First, the examination of Chinese newspapers is an important way to explore the elitist Chinese voice. This viewpoint is particularly reflected in the examination of *People's Daily* in this research. This newspaper was founded in Hebei province on 15 May 1946 in order to bridge political communication between official forces and ordinary people. In the middle of 1949, this newspaper moved to Beijing, becoming an affiliated institution of the CCP. Originally, it played a two-way role, presenting everyday stories, meeting the needs of ordinary people and propagating the ideologies and policies of the CCP and the Chinese government (Zhao, 1998). However, due to the frantic political struggles from the 1950s to the 1980s, during which *People's Daily* was widely used as a political tool for propaganda, this newspaper gradually lost the function of transmitting voices from the bottom-up (Zheng, 2011). As a consequence, it has changed into a pure propaganda tool

¹² Audience report of *People's Daily* sees: *Reports on the Audience of People's Daily* (2013). Source from: <http://www.haimeng.cc/newspaper/reader/44.html>; Audience report of *South Weekend* sees: *Reports on the Media Positioning and Audience Analysis of South Weekend* (2014). Source from: <http://www.126doc.com/p-47319038.html>.

disseminating political ideologies. Even under the influence of commercialisation and marketisation since the 1980s, it has not evolved into a bottom-up or two-way newspaper, but remained a top-down political communication tool in China (Zhao, 1998). To date, *People's Daily* is still an important part of the Chinese government and the CCP. Directly published and released by the CCP, *People's Daily* is considered to be the mouthpiece of the CCP and the Chinese government. For this reason, articles in this newspaper are often claimed to be weathervanes of the Chinese state (Wu, 1994). Moreover, as there is strict censorship in China, a number of Chinese organisations, agencies and individuals usually read *People's Daily* to judge China's official attitude towards certain things, due to its special role of being affiliated to the CCP. In addition, subscription to this newspaper is compulsory in a number of Chinese public institutions, such as governmental institutions, military systems, education systems and state enterprises, in order to ensure understanding of the policies of the Chinese government. In sum, it can be seen that *People's Daily* is of particular importance in transmitting Chinese official political ideologies in a top-down way, and so choosing *People's Daily* as a sample for this research will contribute to the investigation of the elitist Chinese voice.

Furthermore, the study of *South Weekend* in this study also contributes to the investigation of the elite Chinese voice. In comparison with *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* is a much more radical Chinese newspaper. Founded on 11 February 1984 in Guangdong province, *South Weekend* was first positioned as an extension and supplement of *Southern Daily*, an organ of the Guangdong provincial government. Though this weekly newspaper was endowed with an official character at the outset

on its launch, it soon paid attention to Chinese people's everyday lives rather than playing a propaganda role in disseminating official ideology. More specifically, it has gradually become the opposite voice to *People's Daily* under the influence of its location in Guangzhou (which is one of the most open areas in China), its market operation, its media supervision, and its journalists' radical writing styles. As a result, it has repeatedly experienced conflicts with the censorship of Chinese media. For example, the whole editorial team of *South Weekend* were removed from their positions in 2001 when the newspaper published the story of Liao Yiwu whose book (*Interviews of Chinese Subalterns*) was prohibited from publication by the official forces (Liao, 2011). Moreover, this newspaper has also used the method of 'opening a skylight'¹³ to protest against governmental censorship of its interview with US President Obama in 2009 (*United Morning Post*, 2009). It is therefore considered to be the most frank, outspoken and liberal newspaper in China and is highly praised by Chinese clerisy. Even though *South Weekend* is considered to be the most radical, frank and liberal newspaper, different from and even opposite to *People's Daily*, it is still limited by the broader socio-political context of China, such as censorship. Therefore, I chose this sample as a comparative case to investigate to what extent Chinese elites can intervene in Chinese journalism.

Second, I will elaborate on in more detail why middle-level Chinese audiences have been chosen as a case study for this research. The reasons are twofold. On the one hand, this research attempts to answer the research question posed at the outset

¹³ 'Opening a skylight' means leaving a blank space in a newspaper in order to show that something has been censored.

of this thesis. That is, this research needs to investigate how middle-level Chinese people build their imaginations of the US. But, how should middle-level people be defined in China? The Chinese Sociologist Li Cheng (2010) gives his opinion, in which he suggests that members of the Chinese middle-level might be divided into several clusters, such as the economic cluster (including those Chinese people who have middle-level incomes), the cultural cluster (including those who have had a rather highly education) and perhaps the geographical cluster (mainly referring to those living in urban rather than rural areas). Based on these selection criteria, this research intends to sample those living in urban areas, with middle-level incomes and who are well-educated. On the other hand, as chapter 2 has stressed, the study of texts should be extended into the examination of how the audience consumes those texts (Carey, 2008; Rose, 2012). In this regard, it appears to be essential to investigate how Chinese newspapers (i.e. *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*) are consumed by Chinese audiences. On this basis, this study explores audience reports on these two newspapers, and then tries to select the common audience groups of these two newspapers as a case study. As mentioned above, the common audience groups of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* are coincidentally those who are well-educated, with middle income, living in urban areas and aged between 18 and 45. For fulfilling both purposes (answering the middle-level question and the audience question), I have incorporated two questions into one case study.

Third, the case study of the Chinese Internet community (i.e. *Sina Weibo*) is an effective way to examine the bottom-up voice of the masses, and also provides the possibility to explore how different media impact the production of geopolitical

discourse. Most specifically, the emergence of the Internet has brought significant challenges to traditional media. *Sina Weibo*, an Internet enterprise, for example, has greatly changed how Chinese communicate with each other since its foundation in 2010. To date, *Sina Weibo* is viewed to be the biggest and most influential Mandarin Internet platform for social networking, with over 167 million active users¹⁴. Similar to *Twitter* in Western societies, *Sina Weibo* enables its users to send, read, repost and comment using messages of fewer than 140 words and up to 9 pictures, which are called ‘weibo’, through the website interface or mobile phones. On both *Twitter* and *Sina Weibo*, the ability to ‘read’ is available to registered and non-registered users, while the functions to ‘send’, ‘repost’ and ‘comment’ are accessible only to registered users. However, unlike *Twitter*, in which every user can comment on other users’ tweets only by posting new tweets on his/her own homepage, *Sina Weibo* provides a bulletin board for each weibo on which users can communicate with each other based on the theme of the weibo (Figure 4-1). In so doing, the interactions among users, such as those who post and repost weibos and those who comment on other users’ weibos, can be effectively recorded through the bulletin board system. Its timely information sharing, exponential spreading and discussion-based method of communication means that *Sina Weibo* (or broadly, the Internet) has greatly changed the manner of political communication. Specifically, through the Internet, Chinese political elites can hardly implant official ideologies into the media via the administrative means, as they have regularly done in traditional media (Gao, 2013). In contrast, they can only supervise and thus have

¹⁴ Statistical data up to 30 June 2014, see: <http://www.weibo.com/>.

limited control over public opinions on the Internet. Therefore, the example of *Sina Weibo* has potential for examining bottom-up Chinese voices from the masses and that how the Internet has impacted upon geopolitical discourses in this research.



Figure 4-1 A screenshot of 'weibo' (top) and comments (below) on *Sina Weibo*

4.2 The data collection process

On the basis of the above three cases, this research adopts multiple qualitative research methods to examine Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror. First, this research uses methods of archival, textual and discourse analysis to investigate how the US is literally constructed in Chinese newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, via the examination of their representations of terrorism, such as terrorist events in the US, terrorist events in China and US counterterrorist activities. Second, this research applies the method of semi-structured interview to discuss middle-level Chinese audiences' understanding of Chinese newspapers and their understandings of terrorism and the US. Third, this research adopts the method of online archival research to explore how the Chinese Internet and Chinese masses are involved in the production of Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US. In the section that follows, I will mainly focus on the process of how the abovementioned data was collected during the fieldwork.

4.2.1 Textual examinations of Chinese newspapers

On the basis of the review of previous literatures, it can be seen that studies of critical geopolitics have a long tradition of working with texts. In comparison to classical geopolitics, which highlights the impact of geographical realities upon the exercise of power, critical geopolitics claims that social elements are capable of representing geographical difference, and that social processes are able to produce spatial entities (Shaw, Dixon, & Jones III, 2010). In this sense, the examination of

how spaces are socially constructed, particularly how spaces are written or graphed by human beings, and how such 'geo-graphing' is interconnected with political activities, becomes one of the key missions in studies of critical geopolitics (Toal, 1996a, p. 2). For example, as introduced in chapter 2, a great number of geopolitical studies have paid attention to the various textual sources, such as leaders' speeches, policy documents, magazines, newspapers, films, comics and maps, discussing how they are linked to the production of geographical knowledge and thus related to the exercise of powers (Müller, 2013). On this basis, it may be concluded that critical geopolitics is closely related to a series of textual projects and, *vice versa*, text is usually viewed to be one of the primary objects of geopolitical studies. Therefore, in this section I will first illustrate the main research methods that are involved in the examination of texts in existing studies of critical geopolitics, including archival, textual and discourse analysis.

The method of archival study is particularly useful for collecting textual data. It entails 'a search of historical documents' and thus is used to collect the systematic recordings of certain phenomena (Dittmer, 2010, p. 38). In existing works of critical geopolitics, this method is usually adopted to collect the textual materials that are closely related to geo-graphing, and thus used to understand the relations between geo-graphing and geopolitics. For instance, Sharp (2000a) has adopted this method to collect historical data on the US's literal construction of the image of the Soviet Union in the magazine *Reader's Digest*, in order to examine the relations between popular culture and geopolitics.

Moreover, textual analysis is considered to be an effective method to deal with

textual data. Most specifically, textual analysis entails ‘going slowly and thoroughly through the material a line or sentence at a time and attempting to think about what is meant and why’ (Hannam, 2001, p. 193). It usually involves the process of semiology, which ‘is intent upon uncovering the meaning of texts by dealing with what signs are and how they function’ (Aitken, 2005, p. 243). The analysis techniques of metaphor, metonym and intertextuality are involved in this process (Aitken, 2005). Metaphor is a semantic tool that stresses the rhetorical effect of certain languages. To be exact, it usually links two or more different things together through the emphasis on their similarities (Fass, 1997). For example, in an article of *People’s Daily* (21/03/2004), the newspaper uses the metaphor ‘planting orange’ to describe the US’s inopportune foreign policy in Iraq: ‘*planted in South Huai River, it will be a healthy orange; while in contrast, planted in North Huai River, it will be a trifoliate orange*’. Metonym is another semantic technique by which things are not named by their original names, but by the names of other things sharing nearly the same meaning (Fass, 1997). For instance, the US is not always named as ‘the US’ but as ‘dog owners’ on *Sina Weibo*, as some Internet users sarcastically call US fans ‘faithful dogs’. Intertextuality is a method of interpreting the meaning of one text by drawing on the meanings of other texts, and understanding other texts by drawing on more texts (Barnes & Duncan, 1992). The abovementioned tools for textual analysis have been regularly used in existing studies of critical geopolitics. For example, Toal and Agnew (1992) employed the method of textual analysis to explain George Kennan’s two geopolitical writings, ‘*Long Telegram*’ and the ‘*Mr. X*’ article. In so doing, they suggested that George Kennan’s metaphor and metonym

of the Soviet Union as ‘Oriental’, a ‘potential rapist’ and part of ‘the red flood’ helped ‘codify and constitute central elements of what became Cold War discourse’ and directly resulted in the US’s tough foreign policy towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Toal & Agnew, 1992, pp. 199-201).

In addition, discourse analysis is also an important method for dealing with textual data. Unlike textual analysis, discourse analysis is not only concerned with the meanings of texts, but also focuses on how social realities are constructed through those texts (Gee, 2005). On this basis, discourse analysis is considered to be more concerned with revealing the socio-psychological nature of certain individuals or institutions rather than the exploring the textual structure of certain expressions (Gee, 2005). This method is also widely applied in studies of critical geopolitics. For instance, Toal (1992) used this method to explore the significance of government recordings and leaders’ speeches in shaping geopolitical discourses. Focusing on texts of the US president George W. Bush’s speeches, and *Department of State Bulletin* and *Economist* articles on the Soviet Union and European affairs during the post-Cold War period, Toal (1992) claimed that these texts have shaped the social realities of the Soviet Union and Europe as a continuation of the Cold War in the post-Cold War era, and so argued that such socially constructed realities have continued legitimating the US’s foreign policies of ‘militarism, Cold War alliance and power projection in the Third World’ in Europe (p.437).

Drawing on previous literatures, it can be seen that textual examinations have played significant roles in the methodologies of critical geopolitics. Therefore, this research follows this tradition and uses this method to explore Chinese geopolitical

imaginings of the US from the perspective of terrorism. Specifically, this research mainly uses methods of archival, textual and discourse analysis to examine how terrorism is represented in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and thus how the realities of the US are literally and socially constructed in the Chinese context. Among these methods, archival research was mainly used for collecting the textual data, while the methods of textual and discourse analysis were mainly used for data analysis, which will be presented in the section on 'data organisation' and the empirical analysis (see chapter 5). In the section that follows, I will mainly focus on the data collection process. It merits noting that I only pay attention to the post-9/11 Chinese archives on terrorism and the US in this study. As mentioned in chapter 1 and chapter 3, the 9/11 event has been regarded as the most influential geopolitical event which marks an obvious transformation of the US's geopolitical strategy and at the same time marks a transformation of Chinese understanding of terrorism. In this sense, the post-9/11 Chinese context provides the potential for the study of both Chinese discourses of terrorism and Chinese imaginings of the US. To be exact, I select the archives from 11 September 2001 (the date of the 9/11 event) to 30 June 2014 (the day I started archival work during the fieldwork) as the sample for this study. The process of my archival data collection is mainly divided into three parts, as follows:

The first part of this collection process was systematically and chronologically to collect newspaper articles on the themes of terrorism and the US in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* through key word searches. Working in the library for several months, I first identified those articles (there are also some cartoons in *South*

Weekend) that are about ‘the US’ through key word searches for ‘the US’ (美国) in *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*. As part of this process, I chronologically scanned the titles and contents of these newspaper texts to make sure they were related to the theme of ‘the US’. Once the samples had been extracted, they were replicated with a camera, then removed and saved onto a laptop. As a result, 4,455 and 835 items (including 197 cartoons) were collected from *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* respectively, among which the topics of US terrorism, the US’s international image, the US’s social events, and the US’s activities in the polar regions and outer space were identified. As this research focuses more closely on the angle of terrorism, I also carried out a second round of key word searches. Using the database created in the first round, I re-scanned the titles and contents of the collected texts by key word searching for ‘terrorism’. In so doing, I identified texts related to both ‘the US’ and ‘terrorism’, and created a new database of Chinese representations of US terrorism. As a consequence, 460 and 83 items (including 13 cartoons) were collected from *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* respectively, and then saved for further analysis.

The second part of the collection process was to collect newspaper articles on the theme of Chinese terrorism from *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*. As this research is concerned with discourses of terrorism in the socio-political context of China, and at the same time China itself is also facing issues with terrorism, it is important to examine Chinese representation of its own terrorist problems in order to provide a wider context for its representation of US terrorism. Consequently, this research also investigated how China’s own terrorist problems are represented in

People's Daily and *South Weekend*. Therefore, I also analysed archival records on the theme of Chinese terrorism in the two newspapers. Specifically, focusing on the key words 'terrorism' and 'China' (in particular Xinjiang), I scanned the titles and contents of the newspaper texts. In so doing, I collected 56 and 9 articles related to the theme of Chinese terrorism from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* (from 11 September 2001 to 30 June 2014), respectively. Similar to the above database, this data was also replicated and saved on a laptop in a new file, Chinese representations of Chinese terrorism, for further analysis.

The third part of this process was to collect secondary materials for discourse analysis. As mentioned above, discourse analysis is not only involved in the textual interpretation of the meaning of certain texts, but also engaged with an investigation of the wider contexts of these texts. In this sense, the collection of contextual knowledge is also an important step in discourse analysis. Secondary data is usually viewed to be an important data source for contextual analysis in human geography (Clark, 2005). Therefore, I also collected secondary data in this research in order to detail the broader socio-political context of China for contextual analysis. The collected secondary data was mainly from two sources. On the one hand, I collected secondary data to analyse the role of Chinese media, such as *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* and *Sina Weibo*, in the Chinese context. These materials include reports, brochures and surveys about purposes, founders, organisers, sponsors, editors and audiences of these media. Moreover, I also paid attention to secondary materials from government channels, such as The Central Propaganda Department and State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's

Republic of China, in order to assess media-government relations. On the other hand, I searched and collected secondary materials about Chinese official attitudes towards the US on the Internet. Focusing on documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China¹⁵ and speeches given by Chinese national leaders¹⁶, this research details the wider socio-political context of Sino-US relations. The above secondary materials were then classified for further contextual analysis.

4.2.2 Interviewing Chinese audiences

This thesis adopts the method of interview to examine middle-level Chinese audiences' understanding of the role of Chinese newspapers and of terrorism and the US, as part of the second case study. More specifically, as elaborated in chapter 2, studies of critical geopolitics seem to have overemphasised the significance and role of texts in shaping geopolitical discourses. However, the overemphasis on texts may ignore other dynamic ways of thinking about geography in critical geographies (Adams, 2009). For example, in their most recent studies, an increasing number of critical geographers have pointed out that working with texts may have its own limitations for explaining affect (Shaw & Warf, 2009; Toal, 2003), embodiment (Dowler & Sharp, 2001), emotion (Pain, 2009; Sharp, 2009), performativity (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000) and practice (Müller, 2008). Along with the development of nonrepresentational theory, feminist geography and audience research in recent

¹⁵ The majority of the textual materials are available online: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/.

¹⁶ Including both formal and informal speeches about the US or/and Sino-US relations. Some of these texts are available online: <http://www.gov.cn/>.

human geographies, a growing body of literature of critical geopolitics have been concerned with these notions, and thus rethought the ontology and epistemology of the geographical and geopolitical. In these literature, it can be seen that one of their common characteristics is a call for the investigation of people's everyday lives. In so doing, critical geopolitics has recently been calling for a form of methodological innovation in order better to study people's everyday lives (Dittmer & Gray, 2010).

As a result, methods of ethnography and interview have gradually become important ways effectively to facilitate the exploration of people's everyday lives in recent critical geopolitics. For example, Nick Megoran (2006) used the method of ethnography to find out the influence of the partial closure of the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley boundary in 1999–2000, and in so doing he suggested that the ethnographical observation of people's everyday experiences of boundaries was very different from political elitist geographical imaginations. Moreover, Anna Secor (2001, p. 191) adopted interview as a method to examine how Islamic women participated in 'the daily production and contestation of Islamist politics' in Istanbul, and in so doing she argued that women's daily activities, such as voting behaviour and informal social events, were deeply embedded in Islamic political practices and discourses at both national and local scales. Precisely, the method of ethnography refers to 'the immersion of the researcher into a community, within which social practices are not only witnessed, but participated in, by the researcher' (Dittmer, 2010, p. 43), while the method of interview offers an effective way to collect individuals' everyday information in order to gain insights into how individuals make sense of their inhabited spaces and their lives (Phillips & Johns, 2012). It is

apparent that ethnography is a method that is more suitable for research on a community, while interview seems to be a method that is more suitable for carrying out a formal and serious discussion with individuals on given topics. In this regard, the method of interview seems to be a more suitable method to examine Chinese audiences in this thesis. In the section that follows, I will show how the interviews with Chinese audiences were conducted in two steps.

The first step of the interviewing was to recruit participants for interview. Two methods were mainly adopted in this recruiting process. First, I used ‘gatekeepers’ to get close to participants. This method emphasises the importance and the role of a mediator between the researched and the researcher. To be exact, I first ‘got close’ to those who may be familiar to potential participants, such as friends or key figures in certain (e.g. media, cultural, governmental) institutions. I then selected those who could act as gatekeepers to provide information about potential participants. It is worth noting that while gatekeepers may have lots of information about participants, they themselves may not be involved in, which is different from the method of ‘snowballing’ for recruitment (which I will discuss later). Once a participant was selected according to the given information, I could easily and directly get close to that participant. However, the participants recruited by way of gatekeepers may be limited to my (or a certain individual’s) personal relations networks, and thus may not reflect a broad group of participants. Therefore, this research adopted another recruiting method, ‘snowballing’. This method reflects a form of dynamic and repetitive recruiting process: ‘informants [participants] refer the researcher to other informants [participants], who are contacted by the researcher and then refer

her/him to yet other informants [participants], and so on' (Noy, 2008, p. 330). In so doing, the researcher can easily and comfortably get close to participants who are provided by other participants.



Figure 4-2 The geographical distribution of participants recruited in China

It merits noting that, as mentioned above, this study chose those who are both middle-level Chinese people and audiences of Chinese newspapers (i.e. *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*) as a case study. More specifically, this group of people has been characterised as those who are aged between 18 and 45, living in urban areas, with middle-level incomes and well-educated. In Li Cheng's (2010) opinion, this group of people is mainly distributed in Chinese metropolitan areas, such as the Bohai Rim, the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River Delta. According to the geographical characteristic of these people, and taking consideration of my ability to access them, the participants of this research were primarily recruited in Beijing (which is located in the Bohai Rim); Shanghai (which is located in the Yangtze River Delta); Guangzhou, Foshan, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau (which are located in the Pearl River Delta) and Xi'an (another Chinese inland city) through

the methods of 'gatekeepers' and 'snowballing'. As a consequence, 58 participants were recruited for this research. For the geographical distribution of the participants, see Figure 4-2 below.

The second step was to conduct interviews with recruited participants. Before each interview, I first needed to do some preparation work, such as sending research introductions and the reading materials to participants. Most specifically, I sent the electronic version of the informed consent and information forms to the participant by e-mail in order to give them a clear understanding of this research. Moreover, 12 newspaper articles, randomly selected from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* (all participants were given the same reading materials), were also sent to the participants by e-mail before the start of each interview. I then had a phone call with the participants and arranged a suitable time and comfortable space (e.g. offices, cafes, tea houses or quiet restaurants) for the interview. During the interview, participants were first asked to sign the informed consent and information forms, stating that they knew the purpose of this research and were willing to take part. Then, under my guidance and using an interview structure (see Table 4-1), the participants talked about their in-depth understandings of terrorism, the role of the US and the role of the Chinese media (*People's Daily*, *South Weekend* and more). It merits noting that the vast majority of the interviews were one-to-one discussions, while a small number of the interviews were focus group discussions because some participants were recruited together and expressed the willingness to work together. Based on the above procedures, 47 interviews with 58 participants were conducted. In order to ensure the reliability of the data, each interview was recorded with

permission. Following this interviewing process, the samples were then stored in a passworded computer and transcribed into textual documents for further analysis.

Table 4-1 The interview structure

Sections	Questions
Understandings of terrorism	Q1: Do you know anything about terrorism?
	Q2: Do you often connect terrorism with particular places or states?
	Q3: Where do you get information about terrorism?
	Q4: What are your opinions on terrorism in the US?
	Q5: What are your opinions on terrorism in China?
	Q6: What kinds of factors influence your ideas of terrorism?
Understandings of the US	Q7: What are your opinions on the image or the role of the US?
	Q8: What kinds of factors influence your opinions of the US?
Understandings of the given materials	Q9: What opinion of terrorism do you get from the given materials?
	Q10: What opinion of US counterterrorism do you get from the given materials?
	Q11: What opinion of the US do you get from the given materials?
	Q12: Are there any differences between the opinions in <i>People's Daily</i> and in <i>South Weekend</i> ?
	Q13: Are there any newspaper articles influencing your opinions on the US or/and terrorism?
Understandings of the role of the Chinese media	Q14: How often do you read <i>People's Daily</i> ?
	Q15: What do you think about the role of <i>People's Daily</i> in China?
	Q16: How often do you read <i>South Weekend</i> ?
	Q17: What do you think about the role of <i>South Weekend</i> in China?
	Q18: Do you think <i>People's Daily</i> , <i>South Weekend</i> or other Chinese media would influence Chinese people's opinions of the US and terrorism?
	Q19: Which media is your most reliable information source?

4.2.3 Studying the Chinese Internet community

This thesis uses the method of Internet archival research to examine Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US in the third case study, on *Sina Weibo*. Most specifically, the use of the method of interviewing in studies of political geographies has its own limitations, particularly in Chinese socio-political context. Considering the political sensitivity of specific topics in political geographies in China, the

method of interviewing might face significant challenges in accessing participants. For example, a few potential participants who worked in government institutions and state-funded organisations refused to participate in this research when I sent the information form to them and contacted them to introduce this study. They realised that this research involves the discussion of political and media issues, both of which are considered to be sensitive topics in China. Moreover, there are also potential challenges for obtaining sufficient information from participants through the method of interviewing because of participants' nervousness and even fear of being identified. For instance, when I introduced this study to a civil servant (P-54) who was working in a state institution, he expressed his willingness to take part in this project. However, he flatly refused to take part in the interview when he heard that the interview would be recorded. He explained to me that the recording may make himself identifiable and cause trouble for him. Therefore, to address this issue of concern, I also used the method of Internet archival research in order to explore Chinese people's everyday understanding of geopolitics.

Internet research is an innovative qualitative research method that engages with the use of Internet environments for research in most recent studies (Madge, 2007; Dwyer & Davies, 2010; Morrow, Hawkins, & Kern, 2015). Given its ability to examine virtual spaces, Internet research particularly focuses on the Internet as a medium for academic study. For instance, Clare Madge and Henrietta O'Connor (2002) argued using the Internet as a research medium by highlighting the methods of 'web-based questionnaire survey and online synchronous web group interviews' (p. 92). Though there are a few limitations for the use of the Internet as a research

tool (e.g. the authenticity of samples), Madge and O'Connor argued that the Internet can benefit research on some formerly unapproachable groups and previously unobtainable information. Moreover, Christine Hine (2008) also proposed an online research method termed 'virtual ethnography' in which the researcher(s) is/are required to immerse himself/herself in Internet communities, chatting and doing interviews with Internet users. In recent geopolitical studies, Dodds (2006) also employed the Internet as a research tool to investigate geopolitical reasoning in the arena of people's everyday lives. Focusing on online communication among James Bond fans on the Internet community *Internet Movie Database*, and participating in their discussions on serial James Bond films, Dodds (2006) made a thorough inquiry into how everyday entertainment was engaged in geopolitical discourses from the perspective of online fan activities. However, existing studies of Internet research has sometimes underlined the Internet as a medium and a research tool, rather than a research object. That is, the Internet is overly considered to be a special space in which questionnaires, interviews and observations can be conducted, while a number of archives from the Internet are ignored in existing works. In contrast, I adopt the method of Internet archival research to discuss Chinese people's everyday understanding of the geopolitical, drawing on the case study of the Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*. In what follows, I will show the Internet archive collection process from three aspects.

In the first step, I needed to set up a range for the collection of Internet archives. In other words, I needed to decide what time period and what kinds of content should be included before the start of the data collection process. As the sample

Sina Weibo that I have chosen was founded in September 2009, I set the time range of this case study from 1 September 2009 (the date of the foundation of *Sina Weibo*) to 30 March 2015 (the date that I completed my fieldwork). For the question of what kinds of content should be included in this study, I focused on the data released by the online public accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and relevant comments from the wider Internet users. Specifically, weibos that were themed on terrorism and the US from the online public accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, as well as relevant comments received on the bulletin boards, are all included as research objects in this case study. The reason for such selections is twofold. First, the Internet archive on the themes of terrorism and the US on the Chinese Internet is too large to collect, and therefore I needed to narrow down the research object. To be exact, it has been reported that there were approximately 167 million active users in Chinese weibo communities by the end of 2014, and each active user posts or reposts nearly 10 weibos and comments on about 8 other users' weibos per day¹⁷. It would seem impossible to collect all archives related to terrorism and the US on such a big database. Second, there would be lots of intractable ethical challenges if I insisted on choosing private rather than public weibos for this research (I will elaborate more in the section on 'ethical challenges'). Therefore, I planned to focus on public online accounts, which is much less problematic in terms of ethics. If I chose weibos released by individuals as the research objects, for example, it would be quite difficult to make the participants aware that they were involved in research on the Internet, where the

¹⁷ Development report on weibo users in 2014 (Bai Jianrui). Source: <http://t.cn/RZmbNOU>.

boundary between the public and the private is often blurred (Morrow, Hawkins, & Kern, 2015). It would also be difficult to get informed consent from individual Internet users if I used online materials released by sporadic individual users. As a result, I focused on two online public accounts, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, and their bulletin board systems where terrorism and the US are discussed and where Internet comments are received and recorded as the targeted research object in this study.

The second step of this collection process was to write the computer software for the collection of large-scale Internet data. In order to collect every detail of the weibos and relevant comments from the Internet community *Sina Weibo*, the software 'Form of General Collection' (FGC) was designed by the researcher with C++, under the technical guidance of some computer technicians. The FGC is designed according to the nature and the features of the *Sina Weibo* website, including browsing habits, hardware facilities and web structures. Moreover, the FGC is designed with the function of key word searching. In other words, as long as the researcher imports information from certain websites (e.g. homepages of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* on *Sina Weibo*), such as website addresses and website cookies, and enters the key words and then continues the process for searching through the software of FGC, the textual content related to the key words will be systematically and orderly exported and saved as txt or word documents. In accordance with its design, this software hence collects and categorises information about who releases and who comments on the weibos, when the weibos are released and commented on, the content of the weibos and their relevant comments, and

from which cities the weibos and relevant comments are released.

Following the design of the FGC, the final step of this collection process was to carry out the collection of Internet archives through the FGC. Most specifically, I first imported the address and cookies for the website of *People's Daily* on *Sina Weibo* into the FGC. Then, I imported the key words 'the US' and 'terrorism' into the FGC and began key word searching. Once the results were captured and exported as txt documents, they were given orderly names and saved in a password-protected laptop. After collection from the Internet archives of *People's Daily*, I used the same process to collect from the Internet archives for *South Weekend*. These texts were kept in different files: 'the Internet discourses of terrorism and the US for *People's Daily*' and 'the Internet discourses of terrorism and the US from *South Weekend*'. In order to retain their original meanings, they were all stored in Mandarin for further analysis, and those quoted in the empirical analyses were then translated into English.

4.3 Ethical challenges

Before the commencement of academic research, ethical clearance is usually required by a professional academic institution (e.g. Economic and Social Research Council or British Sociological Association in the UK¹⁸) and this is particularly emphasised in geographical studies (Hopkins, 2007; Phillips & Johns, 2012). In the light of such considerations and based on the three different methods that are applied in this thesis, I will illustrate a critical reflection on the ethical challenges

¹⁸ See: http://www.britisoc.co.uk/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx#_rel.

of this research and make an ethical statement from three aspects as follows.

The first ethical consideration of this research is related to the accessibility of textual materials, including both newspapers and the secondary materials. The main ethical issue here is to get approvals to access and copy the textual materials. Such archives are always stored in libraries or particular governmental institutions, all of which demand certain permissions for accessing and copying in China. As I made contact with an academic institution, Centre for Social and Cultural Geography, South China Normal University, in China for research support before the start of the fieldwork, I could obtain permissions to access and copy the newspaper archives from the library of South China Normal University. For the collection of secondary materials, I obtained some of them from public channels, including the websites of the official homepages of government institutions. At the same time, I also e-mailed relevant institutions, The Central Propaganda Department, State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* and *Sina Weibo*, asking for information disclosure. On the condition that the materials can only be used for academic research, I obtained a number of contextual materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* and *Sina Weibo*.

The second ethical consideration in this thesis is closely related to the method of interview. In the interviewing process, the primary ethical issue is to guarantee the participants' voluntary participation. Therefore, all interviews of this research were carried out on the basis of the participants' voluntary participation and their

understanding of full information about the goals, procedures and methods of this study. To support this, I made informed consent and information sheets for each participant, in which the objectives and methods of this research, the statement of voluntary participation and the rights of participants (e.g. participants have the right to quit at any time) were emphasised in Chinese before the start of each interview. Moreover, the comfort of interviewees is also required in the interviewing process in order to guarantee the reliability of the collected data. Under this ethical consideration, selecting comfortable venues for each interview and controlling the time of each interview seem to play important roles. Therefore, I usually chose cafes, offices, quiet restaurants and tea houses in universities as venues for interviews, and often kept the time duration of each interview to be between 40 and 90 minutes.

Furthermore, there is another significant ethical challenge for the method of interviewing, which is the strong requirement to do no (mental or physical) harm to either the researcher or the researched when conducting interviews (Hopf, 2003; Phillips & Johns, 2012). Considering the restriction of academic freedom in China, a large number of academic topics are still claimed to be politically sensitive and thus forbidden for discussion (He, 2002). Therefore, there may be potential dangers for the recruited participants taking part in my interviews. For example, they may lose their jobs, lives or freedom if they are identified as having said something perceived to be critical of the state. As a result, I pay careful attention to protecting the safety of participants in this research. First, I adopted the method of one-to-one (with a few one-to-two) interviews, rather than group discussions to avoid the risk of ‘secret police’ who might lurk in the group discussion. Second, all interviews

were conducted in safe spaces and in the daytime to prevent the researcher and participants from being harmed in workplaces. This safety is partly guaranteed by the support institution, South China Normal University, as the vast majority of interview venues were provided by this university, which itself is a safe and secure place. Here it merits noting that the university in China is a much safer space than other spaces, and in which the aforementioned sensitive topics (e.g. Tibet and Taiwan issues) to a much greater extent can be discussed. Third, all identifiable information about participants, including the names, addresses, telephone numbers and emails in the recording documents, transcriptions and translated texts, are confidentially kept in a password-protected computer and anonymously used in any kind of report, in order to avoid harming participants' physical safety due to political persecution.

The final ethical consideration of this thesis is related to the Internet research on *Sina Weibo*. In contrast to the emphasis on 'Internet-mediated research or online research practice' in previous works (Madge, 2007, p. 655), the Internet research in this study uses data-mining of existing online archives. In this regard, the first ethical challenge that the online data-mining process might face would be invasion of the privacy of Internet resources (Madge, 2007; Morrow, Hawkins, & Kern, 2015). Oona Morrow *et al* (2015) emphasised that Internet technology has already blurred the boundary between the material and the virtual, and between the public and the private, and they thus argued that Internet researchers needed to open themselves and their research projects to Internet participants under conditions of transparency. Madge (2007) also claimed that the binary division of public/private

has blurred through the use of the Internet. In so doing, she expressed concern that while Internet information was usually publicly available and justifiably used for academic research, Internet information which was used for private consumption may also be viewed as publicly available. In this context, she doubted the legitimacy of the method of online data-mining from individual websites. I do admit that data-mining from individual websites without permission is an unethical way to collect data. Therefore, in the data collection process, I mainly attended to Internet resources from two public accounts as abovementioned, which are all publicly accessible, in order to avoid invasion of privacy. For those weibo comments from individual Internet users, I asked them for permission through online chatting before quoting their comments and ensured the use of pseudonyms in the reports. Only those comments for which I received permission to quote are quoted in this research.

The other ethical challenge that the Internet research method might face would be concern about the authenticity of Internet samples (Madge & O'Connor, 2002; James & Busher, 2006; Dwyer & Davies, 2010). For example, Nalita James and Hugh Busher (2006) have discussed the difference between face-to-face and virtual methods, and in so doing they argued that holding asynchronous conversations on the Internet might affect the credibility and trustworthiness of samples from online participants. Moreover, Claire Dwyer and Gail Davies (2010) have discussed the possible impact of Internet participants' uncertain identities on the authenticity of online samples. Drawing on their experiences of online research, for example, Dwyer and Davies (2010) suggested that one online participant might use two or

more virtual identities, which would have negative impact upon the authenticity of online samples. However, their anxieties are based on a consideration of the virtual feature of the Internet, based on which participants believe that their real identity cannot be identified. The case study of the Chinese Internet community in this thesis has an entirely different experience. This research suggests that the anonymity of Internet research can to a certain extent be considered an advantage. Specifically, online participants may be more inclined to speak their real opinions, rather than giving performative words, as they may not realise that they are taking part in an academic project. For instance, as one of my recruited participants (P-3) told me, ‘this method (interview) is unlike the Internet discussion within which you can talk about whatever you want to. Nobody knows who you are here [on the Internet]. So, I cannot speak something critical of the government to you.’

4.4 The data organisation process

Data organisation is a key process in professional academic research. It mainly entails ‘working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157). In order to present the whole fieldwork experience of this study and transform the collected data into a comprehensive analysis of Chinese geopolitical imaginings of terrorism and the US, all the qualitative data from the field were analysed with the computer software Nvivo 10, through a strict coding process.

Generally, analysing collected data entails a process of building up a theory.

In this thesis, a methodology based on grounded theory has been widely employed for data coding, data analysis and building up theories. Grounded theory is claimed to be ‘a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed’ which involves ‘a *way of thinking about and conceptualising data*’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, pp. 273, 275, italics in original). More specifically, the methodology of grounded theory refers to a process in which the collected (qualitative) data are made into a series of abstract notions, and then these notions are made into more abstract concepts, and so on until a theory can be built (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To do this, the researcher first needs to generate substantive codes from collected data by using an inductive approach. These codes are usually marked by the original words from the raw materials, or sometimes summarised by the researcher’s descriptive words, or sometimes employed from previous literatures. After that, the researcher needs to enter into a more focused coding process, in which similar codes in the first coding process are coded into bigger and more abstract concepts by summarising their shared features. In so doing, a series of integrative and tight concepts are built up and prepared for theory development. The final step is to write up the theory by integrating the coding work with existing literature. On the basis of grounded theory, Nvivo 10 is exactly designed for qualitative data analysis. This is exactly why this research uses Nvivo 10 to handle collected data from the fieldwork in China, and in so doing builds up a theory of Chinese geopolitical understanding of terrorism and the US.

The Nvivo coding and analysing process is mainly divided into two parts. The first part involves a process of preliminary coding. In this process, all collected data

are sorted and saved in different files on the laptop in accordance with different data sources. For example, the data collected from *People's Daily*, *South Weekend*, *Sina Weibo*, and the interviewing and secondary materials are saved in 'file of *People's Daily*', 'file of *South Weekend*', 'file of *Sina Weibo*', 'file of interview' and 'file of contextual data', respectively. Within each file, the textual documents or recorded audios (these recorded audios were transcribed into texts for this process) were renamed in a specific order for better identification. For instance, the documents collected from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* were renamed by their genres, issue date and contents (e.g. 'TEXT in *People's Daily*, 2009-05-15, *Invariant core of the US's counterterrorism*' and 'CARTOONS in *South Weekend*, 2007-09-13, *9/11-Six years later*'). In this way, a systematic database of Chinese geopolitical understandings of terrorism and the US was established for further analysis.

The second part of the Nvivo coding and analysing process is to break the raw materials into pieces, to summarise them into abstract concepts, and then to build up theories. At this stage, I first imported the collected data into the software Nvivo 10. After that, I tried to break the data into pieces. This breaking process was mainly achieved in two ways. On the one hand, I read previous works on terrorism and the US, and in so doing tried to obtain inspiration from them. For example, some of the first-step Nvivo codes in this thesis are employed from Sharp's (2011a, p. 300) study of postcolonial discourses about the US war on terror in Tanzania. On the other hand, I summarised the Nvivo codes by asking key questions, which is often considered to be a crucial tool in breaking the raw material into pieces in the process of developing grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In order to keep the

knowledge gained from the collected data related to the themes of this research, I asked some key questions trying to break the collected data into pieces, including how Chinese media describes terrorism, how Chinese media depicts the US war on terror, how Chinese media writes about Chinese terrorism, how Chinese people look at terrorism, how Chinese people evaluate the US, how Chinese people assess Chinese media, and the like. These questions, as well as the existing codes from previous literatures, constitute the fundamental framework of the first-step Nvivo coding process. The first-step Nvivo codes in this study are shown in the left-hand columns of Table 4-2, Table 4-3, Table 4-4, and Table 4-5 below. These units were then integrated into much more integrative, tight and abstract concepts (the second-step Nvivo codes or the third-step Nvivo codes) according to the key themes of this study, all of which are also illustrated in the right-hand (and central) columns of Table 4-2, Table 4-3, Table 4-4, and Table 4-5.

Table 4-2 Nvivo codes summarised from *People's Daily*

First-step codes	No.	Second-step codes	No.
Impacts of terrorism on US society	26	Comments on terrorism in the US	79
Victims of terrorism in the US	18		
Terrorism as a result of US hegemony	11		
Impacts of terrorism on international community	10		
Terrorism as a universal issue related to all humankind	8		
Condemnations of terrorism	6		
Victims of terrorism in China	34	Comments on terrorism in China	56
Impacts of terrorism on Chinese (ethnic) unity	8		
Emphasis on terrorism in China as outside-agitated crimes	7		
International support defending terrorism in China	4		
International support conspiring with terrorism in China	3		
Innocents killed in the US's war on terror	71	The humanitarian crisis led by the US's war on terror	111
Abuse scandal in the US's war on terror	12		
Wiretapping scandal in the US's war on terror	9		
Impacts of the US's war on terror on American people	7		

Refugee problems caused by the US's war on terror	6		
Impacts of the US's war on terror on heritage	3		
Impacts of the US's war on terror on ecologies	3		
Attributing increasing terrorists to the US's war on terror	44	Global disorder led by the US's war on terror	146
Antiwar protests and polls	26		
Support for opinion the US leads to instability of other states	22		
Tense relations between the US and Middle East	17		
Impacts of the US's war on terror on the global economy	12		
Widespread hatred of the US	9		
The US as harming the authority of the UN	7		
The US's violations of the sovereignty of other states	6		
The US's exit from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty	3	The US's ambition and self-interests in the name of the war on terror	124
Increasing military presence of the US	51		
Increasing political influence of the US	27		
The US as taking unilateral actions	17		
Support for international cooperation for war on terror	15		
The US as only interested in oil/profit	14		

Table 4-3 Nvivo codes summarised from *South Weekend*

First-step codes	No.	Second-step codes	No.
Impacts of terrorism on the US's societal order	10	Comments on terrorism in the US	29
Impacts of terrorism on the US's security	6		
Terrorism as a result of the US's tough policies	4		
Explanations for terrorism in the US	3		
Impacts of terrorism on the world order	2		
Impacts of terrorism on the US economy	2		
Clash of civilizations as the root of terrorism in the US	2		
Victims of terrorism in China	3	Comments on terrorism in China	9
Emphasis on terrorism in China as outside-agitated acts	3		
Emphasis on terrorism in China as part of global terrorism	2		
Impacts of terrorism on Chinese society	1		
The US uproots political dissents through its war on terror	15	Comments on the US's war on terror and the US	54
The US's violations of civil liberties	9		
Attributing increasing terrorists to the US's war on terror	8		
The US's arrogance to Islamic culture	5		
The US as taking unilateral actions	4		
Neutral or approbatory attitudes to the US's war on terror	3		
Support for opinion the US leads to instability of other states	3		
Humanitarian crisis led by the US's military behaviour	3		

The US's as undermining of the authority of the UN	2		
The US as a new imperial power	2		

Table 4-4 Nvivo codes summarised from interview transcriptions

First-step codes	No.	Second-step codes	No.
Being interested in <i>People's Daily</i> and <i>South Weekend</i>	3	Audience identities of <i>People's Daily</i> and <i>South Weekend</i>	55
Disliking both <i>People's Daily</i> and <i>South Weekend</i>	4		
Occasionally reading <i>People's Daily</i> and <i>South Weekend</i>	26		
Being interested in <i>People's Daily</i> but disliking <i>South Weekend</i>	2		
Being interested in <i>South Weekend</i> but disliking <i>People's Daily</i>	5		
Fan of <i>People's Daily</i> but occasionally reading <i>South Weekend</i>	3		
Fan of <i>South Weekend</i> but occasionally reading <i>People's Daily</i>	4		
Occasionally reading <i>People's Daily</i> but disliking <i>South Weekend</i>	1		
Occasionally reading <i>South Weekend</i> but disliking <i>People's Daily</i>	7		
Feel 'happy' about the US's suffering due to 9/11 or other terrorism	10	Understandings of terrorism	97
Terrorism is a result of the US's hegemony	24		
Terrorism as a universal issue related to all mankind	27		
<i>'I do not care about terrorism'</i>	20		
Terrorism as far from (but soon near to) daily life	16		
The US is rebuked as an origin of humanitarian crisis	15	Understandings of the role of the US	121
The US is denounced as an instigator of world disorder	12		
The US is an arrogant state and an objectionable police force	29		
The US is crazily seeking economic and political interests	32		
The US is imagined as 'good' and advanced	33		

Table 4-5 Nvivo codes summarised from *Sina Weibo*

First-step codes	No.	Second-step codes	No.	Third-step codes	No.
To use dirty words (e.g. <i>the US dog</i> , <i>Han traitors</i> , or <i>the floor-washing party</i>) to attack pro-US forces	55	To use language to construct the anti-US identity	55	The anti-US discourses	111
Slogans supporting Bin Laden	25	To shout anti-US slogans	46		
Slogans defaming the US imperialism	21				
Dissatisfaction with China’s IR policy	54	The militaristic fantasies	80		
Appreciations of Putin’s IR policy	26				
Support for terrorism against the US	116	To support the US’s enemies	192		
Sympathies for terrorists (Bin Laden)	67				
Terrorism as revenge against the US	9				
Blaming Chinese media sympathies on the US because of the US’s Chinese embassy bombing incident	101	To recall histories for constructing anti-US identity	163		

Blaming Chinese media sympathies on the US because of China-US aeroplane collision incident	62						
Blaming the US's double standard on defining terrorism	139	To defame the US and pro-US forces	336				
The US is only interested in political and economic interests	116						
Mocking the US's wiretap scandal	44						
Mocking the US's abuse scandal	23						
Mocking the US's political ideologies	14						
The US's hegemony in handling IR	117	To give moral judgements on the US and its war on terror	239	The pro-US discourses	21.		
The US's hypocrisy in the war on terror	58						
The US is the root of terrorists	40						
The US is stopping violence with violence	24						
To use dirty words (e.g. <i>the broken brain</i> , <i>the US sprayers</i> , or <i>patriotic thieves</i>) to attack anti-US forces	51	To use language to construct an anti-US identity	74				
To express sympathies for the US's suffering of terrorism	23						
Appreciations of the US's tough policy of the war on terror	61	To advocate the superiority of the US	140			Regime-challenge discourses	13.
Appreciations of the US's openness	53						
Appreciations of the US's humanism	26						
Chinese media and people should pay more attention to inside problems	86	To expose the dark side of Chinese society	134				
Defining inside violence as terrorism	48						
Condemning all kinds of violence	110	—	—				
The illogical features of terrorism	15						
Requiring harsh policies against terrorism	9						

Following the Nvivo coding and analysing process, this study used these codes alongside more focused codes or concepts which were summarised from the coding process to structure the empirical analysis in the following chapters. It is worth noting that all materials appeared in Mandarin in the process of data organisation to ensure their original meanings. Only those quoted in the empirical analyses have then been translated into English.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter outlines the methodology and research methods that were applied to collect and to analyse primary and secondary data about Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US. In short summary, I have worked in a number of locations in the field in China, including in the library of *South China Normal University*, in eight large cities where I recruited interview participants, and in the Internet community of *Sina Weibo*. Here, the various voices of Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US have been explored through textual and discourse analysis, interviews and Internet archival research, using the case studies of *People's Daily*, *South Weekend*, middle-level Chinese audiences and the Internet community *Sina Weibo*. All of the primary data were coded and analysed with the qualitative analysis tool Nvivo 10, which is based on the methodology of grounded theory, and in so doing are used for further analysis in the following empirical chapters.

The multiple qualitative research methods in this study can not only be read as a basis for the following empirical analyses, but also contribute to the methodology of both Chinese geopolitics and critical geopolitics. As illustrated in chapter 3, the exploration of Chinese geopolitical views in everyday spaces has been generally overlooked, even though there are a number of works that are related to Chinese geopolitical issues in both Sinophone and Anglophone literatures. In this regard, the textual examinations of Chinese newspapers, the interviews with Chinese middle-level audiences and the research on the Chinese Internet community in this

research can be clearly read as a contribution to the discuss of Chinese geopolitical views in the spaces of people's everyday lives. Specifically, in existing literatures, the method of interview (or ethnography) is often considered to be one of the most efficient methods to understand the relationship between the everyday and geopolitics. However, the method of interview (or other face-to-face methods more widely) might not be such perfect methods for investigating everyday details. As I have mentioned above in this chapter, interview entails a formal discussion between the researcher and the researched. Such discussion may unconsciously create a formal, strict and rigorous situation which may influence the data. For example, participants may not be willing to express their real opinions as they are always reminded of being involved in a formal academic project by the stringent interviewing environment. The method of online research, to some extent, usefully complements the drawbacks of interviews. Specifically, Internet users may not be aware that they are taking part in a research project because of the invisibility of the researcher in virtual cyberspace. They therefore would not express their ideas purposely and cautiously on the Internet, which might make the data collection process much smoother.

Chapter 5 Chinese discourses of terrorism: a geopolitical analysis of Chinese newspapers

5.0 Introduction

The terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001 significantly changed the international political situation and geopolitical patterns, motivating a number of states to turn their attention to the issue of facing terrorism (Booth & Dunne, 2002; Mansbach, 2003; Brunn, 2004; Orfy, 2010). In particular, the global war on terror has been stressed as the highest priority in the formulation of foreign policies and the deployment of national security strategies in the US since the 9/11 incident (Pillar, 2003). As mentioned at the end of chapter 3, terrorism has been widely used as a form of socially constructed reality and a form of geopolitical discourse by the US to vilify its enemies and to justify its policies of a war on terror. However, in Anglophone research on terrorism, the vast majority of researchers have paid attention to Western or US voices (Coleman, 2003; Flint, 2003; Dodds, 2007b; 2008; Pain & Smith, 2008). In contrast, how geographical and political knowledges of terrorism are produced beyond the Western perspective is generally missing from existing literatures. This knowledge gap offers the possibility of investigating the discourses of terrorism in the socio-political context of China. Chinese geopolitics, as discussed in chapter 3, has been lamented for not examining people's everyday realms, such as newspapers. In this sense, the examination of Chinese newspapers for the study of Chinese geopolitical views in this research could also be regarded as filling a blank space. Taken together, this chapter will therefore explore Chinese

discourses of terrorism, drawing on the empirical studies of Chinese newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. This research may be widely read as an attempt to examine Chinese discourses of terrorism from a non-Western perspective, and in so doing it may contribute to both non-Western geopolitics more generally and Chinese geopolitics more specifically.

In emphasising the role and significance of texts in producing geographical knowledge and geopolitical discourse, this chapter will be fully embedded in the framework of 'critical geopolitics'. As an important media genre and micro space within which geopolitical issues are often discussed, newspapers play a critical role in shaping geopolitical discourses (McFarlane & Hay, 2003; Dittmer, 2005a; Sharp, 2011a). Therefore, this chapter will be developed on the basis of the examination of Chinese discourses of terrorism through case studies of Chinese newspapers. Most specifically, this chapter will first discuss how Chinese discourses of terrorism are established in one of the official newspapers in China, *People's Daily*. In order to understand to what extent Chinese elites can intervene in Chinese media voices, as mentioned in chapter 4, this study will also investigate how Chinese discourses of terrorism are produced in a much more liberal and radical newspaper, *South Weekend*. In so doing, this chapter tries to investigate the complex relations between Chinese discourses of terrorism and Chinese imaginations of the US from the perspective of terrorism in these two newspapers.

The analysis that follows has five parts. First, it recaps the knowledge 'gap' of the geopolitical analysis on Chinese discourses of terrorism. On this basis, this part will contribute to the legitimization of the research design relevant to this chapter.

Second, this chapter provides a brief statistics of the representations of terrorism in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, illustrating a general picture of discourses of terrorism in the two newspapers. In the third and fourth parts, this chapter explores how the themes of terrorism are represented in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively, including their depictions of 'terrorism in/of the US', 'terrorism in/of China' and 'the US's counterterrorism'. Based on the comparative study of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, this chapter finally argues that Chinese newspapers play a significant role in shaping Chinese geopolitical discourses, and in so doing this chapter empirically supports the hypothesis that the Chinese Confucian geopolitical tradition does matter in shaping Chinese geopolitical imaginings.

5.1 A critical reflection on Chinese geopolitical voices

Prior to commencing the analysis of Chinese discourses of terrorism, it might be useful to first explain why the empirical case studies of Chinese representations of terrorism in newspapers are so important. This section will focus on the empirical and theoretical significance of the investigation of Chinese discourses of terrorism. Indeed, based on the review of previous literatures, it can be seen that this study on Chinese newspapers' descriptions of terrorism may contribute to the empirical and theoretical developments of Chinese geopolitics and non-Western geopolitics from a variety of angles.

Firstly, from the empirical perspective, it can be seen that there is a blank space in extant works related to the empirical study of Chinese geopolitical imaginings of the US through the lens of terrorism. Specifically, the majority of existing studies

have linked Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US with Chinese nationalism, relating Chinese people's imaginations of the US to the expression of nationalist sentiments. Such nationalism is usually embodied in Chinese people's responses to specific diplomatic events, such as the Chinese embassy bombing incident and the China-US aircraft collision incident¹⁹. For instance, Randy Kluver (2001) pays attention to Chinese people's responses to the China-US aircraft collision incident, and in so doing argues that the diplomatic event played an influential role in igniting mass Chinese anti-US sentiment, mobilising their anti-US actions, spreading anti-US information and building negative imaginations of the US. In this regard, the case study of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US through the perspective of terrorism in this thesis might provide a special perspective on the US and may help us to understand the international role of the US in entirely different ways.

Secondly, again from the empirical perspective, it can be seen that previous works on Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US have always been embedded in the Communist context of China or the framework of a new Sino-US relationship. In contrast, the traditional political ideologies that are deeply rooted in and inherited from Confucianism (see chapter 3) have usually been ignored in the explanation of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of foreign states. More specifically, Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US have always been understood in the Communist

¹⁹ The Chinese embassy bombing incident refers to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia with three JDAM bombs dropped by NATO's air force on 7 May 1999, killing three Chinese journalists. This directly resulted in the deterioration of the Sino-US relationship and provoked widespread anti-US sentiment in Chinese society. The China-US aircraft collision incident refers to a mid-air collision over the South China Sea between a US Navy EP-3 surveillance aircraft and a Chinese J-8II interceptor fighter jet on 1 April 2001, which caused the death of the Chinese pilot, Wang Wei, and resulted in Sino-US tension, especially among the Chinese public.

context of China. For example, the US has usually been constructed as a capitalist, Western, tyrannical and hegemonic image of other which is absolutely opposite to the communist, Eastern, harmonious and vulnerable image of China itself during the Cold War and the early post-Cold War period (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008). Moreover, a small number of studies have also suggested that Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US are influenced by the broader political and economic context of current Sino-US relationship. For instance, drawing on the case study of online opinions of the Chinese public, Zhou Yongming (2005) suggests that these are dominated by anti-US voices and that such anti-US identity is built on the basis of the new framework of Sino-US relationship, under which the Sino-US relations are considered to be framed by the mutual competition formulated in the past two decades, rather than the mutual antagonism inherited from the Cold War and early post-Cold War period. However, the limitation of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US to the frameworks of Communism or current Sino-US relationship may foreclose other explanations of Chinese understandings of the US. In this sense, the attempt to use endogenous Chinese geopolitical thoughts to understand Chinese geopolitical imaginations in this research may offer an entirely different way to look at the US.

Thirdly, from a theoretical perspective, it can be clearly seen that the majority of current geopolitical studies have been completed by Western scholars, while non-Western arenas have been less theorised. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, a considerable number of studies on the issue of terrorism have been overly inclined to the exploration of Western voices (Coleman, 2003; Flint, 2003; Dodds, 2007b;

2008; Pain & Smith, 2008), while non-Western voices have been neglected. Beyond the topic of terrorism, as mentioned in chapter 2, it can be seen that the majority of studies in critical geopolitics have also focused empirically on the geographical spheres of North America and Europe, while little attention has been paid to the margins and subaltern spheres (Dodds & Sidaway, 1994; Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Sharp, 2013). For example, Agnew (2007) suggests that the majority of current geopolitical writings have been involved in the projection of the US context and interests due to its hegemonic global role in the exercise of international politics. At the same time, there have also been a number of geographers attempting to broaden the interest of critical geopolitics into European states, such as Britain and Germany (Dodds, 2002; Bassin, 2003). However, such geopolitical analyses are often limited to the geographical spheres of the Anglophone or, more broadly, the Western world. In contrast, non-Western geopolitics has always been ignored. Even if there are a small number of recent empirical studies that focus on non-Western geopolitics, such as Sharp's (2011a) study of the postcolonial security in Tanzania, and Woon's (2013; 2014) analyses of the Global South and terrorism in the Philippines, non-Western geopolitical theories have still been less explored. In this sense, the geopolitical analysis of Chinese newspapers in this thesis, particularly its attempt to study Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism from the endogenous Chinese geopolitical tradition of Confucianism, might contribute to the theoretical development of non-Western geopolitics.

Fourth, the analysis of Chinese geopolitical voices through the case of Chinese newspapers may contribute to building an agenda for Chinese geopolitical analysis

on everyday spaces. As shown in chapter 3, existing Chinese geopolitical analyses have been strongly framed by the dominance of Western scholarship, such as the enthusiasm for the introduction of Anglophone geopolitical theory, in particular ‘classical geopolitics’. That is, the majority of existing Chinese geopolitical studies have been concerned with the geopolitical assumption that physical geographical environment has a significant impact upon foreign policies-and-actions. In contrast, little attention has been paid to how geopolitical discourses are produced in Chinese everyday spaces, such as newspapers. In this sense, there seems to be a great paucity of research putting Chinese everyday spaces into geopolitical analysis through the perspective of ‘critical geopolitics’. Therefore, the empirical analysis of Chinese newspapers in this study can largely be read as an attempt to establish a new agenda for Chinese geopolitics, which may help us to understand Chinese geopolitics from different perspectives.

On this basis, it can be seen that the empirical analysis of Chinese geopolitical voices through the case study of Chinese newspapers is essential to the theoretical development of Chinese geopolitics and non-Western geopolitics. At the same time, from an empirical perspective, the case study of Chinese newspapers in this thesis is also important, as it may provide different voices that might help us to understand terrorism and the US in different ways. Drawing on the case study of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, in what follows, I will mainly pay attention to how terrorism is understood in different ways and in a different context (the Chinese context), and in turn I will investigate how Chinese discourses of terrorism contribute to the theorisation of both Chinese geopolitics and non-Western geopolitics.

5.2 A brief statistics for *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*

As mentioned above, the empirical analysis of Chinese newspapers in this research is designed under the methodological framework of critical geopolitics, which emphasises the key role of texts in producing geopolitical discourses (Müller, 2013). This chapter is therefore based on the analytical framework of a comparative case study analysis of texts from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Owing to the special significance of the 9/11 event in shaping contemporary geopolitical patterns (Agnew, 2003), this research involved collecting Chinese newspaper texts on the theme of 'terrorism', released from 11 September 2001 to 30 June 2014, in order to discuss post-9/11 Chinese discourses of terrorism. On this basis, this study collected 516 and 92 items of newspaper articles from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively. Those texts constitute the basic research subjects of this chapter.

Before going into the analysis of Chinese discourses of terrorism, based on the textual and discourse analyses of the texts, this section will first offer a statistical analysis of them in order to give a general picture of the Chinese media's reporting strategies when it comes to terrorism. Based on the statistical analysis of 516 and 92 items of newspaper text from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* with the help of the software Nvivo 10, this study finds that Chinese newspapers' depictions of terrorism are primarily constituted by three sub-themes: terrorism of/in the US, counterterrorism by the US, and terrorism of/in China (see Table 5-1). On this basis, two findings might be concluded here.

Table 5-1 statistics of article themes in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, 2001-2014

	Terrorism in/of the US (N/%)²⁰	Counterterrorism by the US (N/%)	Terrorism in/of China (N/%)
<i>People's Daily</i>	79/15%	381/74%	56/11%
<i>South Weekend</i>	29/31%	54/59%	9/10%

Firstly, Chinese newspapers seem to focus more on terrorist issues that are related to the US, while they pay less attention to terrorist issues in relation to China. To be exact, the statistical analysis shows that 460 items of text from *People's Daily* are closely related to the topic of terrorism and the US, with a share of around 89% of the total coverages of terrorism. Similarly, 83 items of text from *South Weekend* are found to be in relation to the US, occupying about 90% of the total reports in *South Weekend*. In sharp contrast, terrorist issues related to China occupy merely 11% and 10% of all coverage of terrorism in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively.

Secondly, Chinese newspapers seem to focus more on US policies-and-actions of counterterrorism, in particular its war on terror, rather than discussing the topics that are related to terrorists or terrorist attacks. More specifically, the vast majority of Chinese newspaper texts (approximately 74% and 59% of those articles from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively) are found to be related to the US war on terror, while less attention has been paid to terrorist phenomena. This might further demonstrate that terrorism, in particular the US's counterterrorism, is always considered as an important window for other states to observe, supervise and assess the international image of the US. In other words, rather than talking about terrorism,

²⁰ "N" refers to the quantity of newspaper articles related to given issues, while "%" refers to the percentage of given issues shared in all articles.

I would prefer to suggest that Chinese newspapers are paying much more attention to the description of the US through the perspective of terrorism. For details of how terrorism is depicted in Chinese newspapers, how the US is evaluated through the perspective of terrorism, and how Chinese newspapers make us have a different understanding of terrorism and the US, this chapter will elaborate on more in the following two sections.

5.3 Representations of terrorism in *People's Daily*

This section will look at the feature of Chinese newspaper's representations of terrorism, mentioning relevant archival data from *People's Daily*, published from 11 September 2001 to 30 June 2014. Specifically, drawing on the key question of how terrorism is discussed in Chinese newspapers and based on the Nvivo analysis of 516 articles from *People's Daily*, this section will be concerned with *People's Daily's* discourses of terrorism and how such discourses function in Chinese society. In what follows, I will firstly present *People's Daily's* discourses of terrorism in three parts: *People's Daily's* discourses of 'terrorism in/of the US', its discourses of 'terrorism in/of China' and its discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism' (see Table 5-2). Then, I will focus on *People's Daily's* strategies of producing geopolitical knowledge and in so doing discuss how *People's Daily's* discourses of terrorism function in Chinese society.

Table 5-2 Key themes in *People's Daily's* coverage of terrorism, 2001-2014

Key themes	No.	Main sub-themes	No.
Representations of	79	Impacts of terrorism on US society	26
'terrorism in/of the		Victims of terrorism in the in the US	18
US'		Terrorism as a result of the US's hegemony	11

		Impacts of terrorism on the international community	10
		Terrorism as a universal issue related to all humankind	8
		Condemnations of terrorism	6
		Victims of terrorism in China	34
Representations of		Impacts of terrorism on Chinese (ethnic) unity	8
‘terrorism in/of	56	Emphasis on terrorism in China as outside-agitated crimes	7
China’		International support defending terrorism in China	4
		International support for conspiring with terrorism in China	3
		Innocents killed in the US’s war on terror	71
		Abuse scandal in the US’s war on terror	12
Representations of		Wiretapping scandal in the US’s war on terror	9
‘the US’s war on	111	Impacts of the US’s war on terror on American people	7
terror’ (humanitarian		Refugee problems caused by the US’s war on terror	6
crisis)		Impacts of the US’s war on terror on heritage	3
		Impacts of the US’s war on terror on ecologies	3
		Attributing increasing terrorists to the US’s war on terror	44
		Antiwar protests and polls	26
		Support for opinion the US leads to instability of other states	22
Representations of		Tense relations between the US and Middle East	17
‘the US’s war on	146	Impacts of the US’s war on terror on global economy	12
terror’ (global		Widespread hatred of the US	9
disorder)		The US harms the authority of the UN	7
		The US’s violations of the sovereignty of other states	6
		The US’s exit from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty	3
		Increasing military presence of the US	51
Representations of		Increasing political influence of the US	27
‘the US’s war on	124	The US as taking unilateral actions	17
terror’ (magnification		Support for international cooperation for war on terror	15
of war on terror)		The US as only interested in oil/profit	14

5.3.1 *People’s Daily’s* discourses of ‘terrorism in/of the US’

In *People’s Daily’s* articles, one of the most commonly mentioned opinions about terrorism is the representation of terrorist phenomena related to the US or that take place in the US. As mentioned in the previous section, 79 articles from *People’s Daily* were concerned with ‘terrorism in/of the US’. Those articles, including 52 newsletter articles and 27 reviews, underline the victims of terrorism, the feature of terrorism as a form of universalised public enemy, the moral judgement of terrorism,

and the origins of terrorism.

First, in such coverage, the victimhood of terrorism has often been highlighted. For example, 18 articles from *People's Daily* depicted detailed information about the victim of the US, such as '*more than three hundred firefighters and hundreds of policers killed on duty*' (14/09/2001), '*a journalist killed in Karachi*' (23/02/2002) and '*three people confirmed dead and more than a hundred people injured in the attack on Boston Marathon*' (17/04/2013). Beyond the description of the victim of human bodies, *People's Daily* is also concerned with the impacts of terrorism upon US society. For example, 26 newspaper articles from *People's Daily* discussed the serious impacts of the 9/11 event and other terrorist threats upon US society, such as the destruction of the US entertainment culture (27/12/2001), social disorder (05/05/2002), the decline of the US aviation industry (21/08/2002) and harm to the US national security (09/02/2003). Moreover, 10 articles from *People's Daily* also focused on the impacts of terrorism on the international community, including the 9/11 event's disastrous influence on '*foreign trade*' (17/10/2001), '*East Asian economies*' (29/10/2001), '*international relationship adjustment*' (29/12/2001) and '*the EU passport policy*' (30/01/2002).

Second, in *People's Daily* articles, terrorism has been usually described as a universal issue for all humankind, rather than a political phenomenon for a specific state. In general, 8 newspaper articles from *People's Daily* have supported this idea. For example, an article quotes Jiang Zeming's (the former Chairman of the Chinese government) speeches in order to express the Chinese government's and Chinese people's attitudes towards the 9/11 event, within which it underlines that '*the 9/11*

event is not only the US's and American people's disaster brought by atrocious terrorists but also a challenge to all humankind who are longing for peace' (13/09/2001). In the other article that pays attention to the terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon, *People's Daily* shows similar opinions:

From Munich to Boston, the terrorists are more ruthless than 40 years ago, shifting their targets from professional athletes to the ordinary people ... Although the sport still cannot be separated and isolated from the existence of politics today, it, after all, carries the visions and the aspirations of all mankind for a better life. The core spirit of the sport is to be indomitable and struggle to forge ahead. All humankind who love sports and advocate freedom will never be intimidated by blood and death. (19/04/2013)

On this basis, the definition of terrorism has to a certain extent been enlarged to a much broader scope, through which not only the US's suffering of extremist activity can be used for the legitimization of its foreign policy, but also other states' (including China's) suffering of extremist action can be used to justify their foreign policy.

Third, *People's Daily* also contributes to representations of terrorism as a form of brutal, barbaric and inhuman violence that violates the fundamental moral value of humanity. Most specifically, terrorist activities are often rendered as anti-human and immoral in such writings, and therefore should be condemned. For example, 6 articles in *People's Daily* directly reveal the evil nature of terrorism and express their anger toward terrorists. In two articles' titles, the word '*condemn*' is used to

express *People's Daily's* anger about the 9/11 attack and the terrorists who planned and executed it: *'the barbaric action is universally condemned'* (12/09/2001) and *'all parties condemn the terrorist attack on the US'* (13/09/2001). In one piece of recent coverage concerned with the terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon, the word *'condemn'* is also used to highlight that this newspaper blames terrorists' antihuman, 'brutal and frenzied' behaviours:

Based on the platform of an athletic event, the terrorists did attract worldwide attention. However, their brutal and frenzied natures have also been enlarged through the athletic event, and in so doing an increasing number of people will clearly see their nature as evil. On this basis, people's willingness and determination to outroot terrorism will also be strengthened. In general, behaviours that trample innocent lives will be strongly condemned and powerfully fought against. (19/04/2013)

Fourth, *People's Daily* not only focuses on what terrorism brings to the US and the whole world, but also pays attention to the origins of terrorism. For example, 11 review articles from *People's Daily* suggest that the root of the US's suffering of terrorism is associated with the US's hegemony and tough foreign policies. Based on these texts, it can be seen that the US's hegemonic behaviour, such as *'economic exploitation in oversea states'* (20/12/2001), *'military strikes against terrorists'* (18/06/2004) and *'the cultural arrogance to other civilisations'* (24/02/2014) are considered as the roots of on-going terrorism. Two articles from *People's Daily*, for

instance, directly suggest the similarity and the connection between hegemony and terrorism:

For Bin Laden and other terrorist forces, it is an undeniable fact that they are gifted with the feature of certain cultures. Their cultural identities to a certain extent are inherent and inevitable for all humankind today, but we also should avoid heading for absoluteness, narrowness, extremeness and exclusiveness. In the contemporary world, the extremist cultural identity is always considered as the root of civilisation clash. For those with stronger cultural identity, it results in hegemony and cultural arrogance, while for those with weaker identity, it brings a desperate mindset of 'destruction of you and me alike' thereby leading to the germination of terrorism. Though there is strong and fierce conflict between hegemonic and terrorist forces, they are intricately interlinked with each other from the cultural dimension.
(11/09/2003)

Recognition is a form of mutually interactive process, and so is the process of refusing to recognise. It not only works for interpersonal relationships, but also for inter-state, inter-national and inter-cultural relationships. It is obvious that the toughness and arrogance of Washington that is reflected in the processes of selling its values have aroused the resentment of many 'vulnerable groups'. Terrorist forces, such as Al-Qaida, take the resentment as a perfect opportunity to obtain new living space. (24/02/2014)

5.3.2 *People's Daily's* discourses of 'terrorism in/of China'

The analysis indicates that 56 articles from *People's Daily* are concerned with 'terrorism in/of China'. Similar to the descriptions of terrorist issues in relation to the US, those 56 articles also emphasise the victimhood of terrorism and the nature of terrorism as a universalised enemy.

According to the statistics, there are only three terrorist incidents reported in relation to China in *People's Daily*, including '*the July 5 event*' in 2009, '*the March 1 Kunming railway station terrorist event*' in 2014 and '*the May 22 Urumqi violent and terrorist event*' also in 2014. As mentioned in chapter 3, terrorist incidents in China have always been endowed with other features, such as criminality, violence and outside-agitation. In this context, I focus in this section on those incidents which have been described by the word 'terrorism', and which have been officially defined as terrorist activities by the Chinese government. These 'so-called' terrorist activities, according to *People's Daily* articles, are considered to seriously impact upon Chinese people and Chinese society. More specifically, the vast majority (34 items) of those articles were concerned with emphasis on the victimhood of terrorist attack in Xinjiang. For instance, one of them depicts terrorists' frenzied violence against innocent people:

On the street, several extremists surrounded a passer-by, overthrowing and beating him. Then, one of them who was wearing a red T-shirt approached

the victim stabbing his neck with a knife. Immediately, the victim bled, with appalling bloody scenes. Another group of frenzied extremists continued to pound this man's head with stones and bricks. (07/07/2009)

Moreover, 8 articles examine the great impact of terrorism upon Chinese society, such as terrorist impacts on ‘*the interests of the Xinjiang people*’ (08/07/2009), ‘*the social stability of Xinjiang*’ (10/07/2009), ‘*China’s national unity*’ (15/07/2009) and ‘*Uighur-Han ethnic unity*’ (24/05/2014).

In addition, a considerable number of newspaper articles from *People’s Daily* paid great attention to including Chinese terrorism as part of universalised terrorism. As terrorist incidents in China always take place in Xinjiang, a Uygur and Muslim region, those events are often considered by the Western political forces as ethnic or religious conflict rather than terrorist attacks (Yee, 2003; Chung, 2006; Clarke, 2007; Potter, 2013). On this basis, *People’s Daily*’s articles, which are often viewed as a top-down voice from the Chinese political elite, may be read as a response to the challenge of Western forces. The statistical data indicates that four articles from *People’s Daily* employed other states’ or other governments’ diplomatic languages to construct Xinjiang extremist incidents as terrorist attacks. For example, just two days after ‘*the July 5 event*’, a newsletter article from *People’s Daily* soon presented the international community’s attitudes toward this event. In this article, diplomatic languages from the Afghan, Russian and Vietnamese governments are employed to describe the nature of ‘*the July 5 event*’, in which the term ‘terrorism’ is repeatedly emphasised, such as ‘*we feel displeasure towards the terrorists and strong support*

for Chinese strikes against those terrorists' (09/07/2009). Similarly, in the other article from *People's Daily* that is concerned with '*the May 22 Urumqi violent and terrorist event*', the international community's opinions of this incident are also employed to define Chinese terrorism as a form of universalised terrorism. This article quotes diplomatic languages from the UN, the EU, the US, the UK, France, Canada, Australia, India, Belgium, Syria and Djibouti to depict the extremist group in Chinese Xinjiang as terrorists, in which the word 'terrorism' is also highlighted, such as '*the terrorist attack in Urumqi is absolutely a part of international terrorism that is a threaten to all humankind*' (24/05/2014).

Furthermore, *People's Daily's* attempts to establish terrorism in China as a part of universalised terrorism are also reflected in its debates with the Western media on the definition of terrorism. In three cases, this newspaper criticises the Western media's 'double standard' in defining terrorism. For instance, a review article from *People's Daily* strongly criticises the Western media's emphasis on the political, ethnic and religious values of '*the July 5 event*' while neglecting the most fundamental phenomenon — the spilling of innocent people's blood — in their reports. In the same review, *People's Daily* argues that the double standard in the definition of terrorism will be a pampering of terrorism:

In this event, rioters crazily beat, smash, loot and burn in the city of Urumqi.

Women and children are not spared in this riot. Their violence is appalling

and heinous, which is reminiscent of a definition: any behaviours that

cause civilian deaths or serious injuries to their health for the purpose of

coercing certain populations, certain governments or international organisations, are acts of terrorism. ... However, some Western media and individuals have ignored the suffering of the victims and their families, publicly or semi-publicly standing at the side of the rioters, justifying their crimes, spreading their fallacies and showing bloodthirsty excitement. This undoubtedly would strengthen the confidence of the violent terrorists who aim at obtaining wide influence through terrorist actions, which motivates them to go farther and farther away on the road of terrorism. (16/07/2009)

The other article criticises the Western media's hypocrisy and ruthlessness for their miserly uses of the word 'terrorism' in their coverage of China's '*March 1 Kunming railway station terrorist event*', including *CNN*, the *Associated Press*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (03/03/2014). In the Western media's coverage, *People's Daily* argues that rioters who indiscriminately kill innocent people in Chinese Xinjiang are depicted as '*officially asserted "so called" terrorists rather than terrorists*', which cannot be tolerated (03/03/2014).

Nevertheless, unlike the depiction of 'terrorism in/of the US', *People's Daily's* articles about Chinese terrorism are often entangled with an emphasis on them as outside-agitated. In other words, Chinese terrorism is not only viewed to be a form of terrorism related to indiscriminate slaughter, psychological warfare, unjustifiable and politically motivated activity (Hoffman, 2006; Held, 2008; Gardner, 2013), but also gifted with a particular feature with which terrorist behaviour is underlined as outside-agitated crimes. Specifically, 7 articles from *People's Daily* highlight this

feature, in which the words ‘*violence*’, ‘*crime*’, ‘*outside-agitated manipulation*’, ‘*separatist*’ and ‘*destroying national and ethnic unities*’ are more mentioned than the word ‘*terrorism*’. For example, one article in *People’s Daily* directly relates the origins of ‘*the July 5 event*’ in Urumqi to some outside organisations and individuals, such as WUC and Rebiya Kadeer:

It is said that the WUC which is led by the ethnic separatist, Rebiya Kadeer, is currently inciting riots through the Internet and other means, calling out ‘to be brave’ and ‘to do some big acts’. It turns out that ‘the July 5 beating, smashing, looting and burning event’ is remotely controlled outside of China, with specific implementation from inside China, and premediated and purpose-organised violence and crime. (07/07/2009)

Based on the examination of *People’s Daily*’s discourses of ‘terrorism in/of the US’ and ‘terrorism in/of China’, it can be clearly seen that there appears to be no significant difference between these two. Both discourses highlight terrorism as a form of universalised problem that brings victimhood to all humankind. However, *People’s Daily*’s discourses of ‘terrorism in/of the US’ focus more on its origins, relating terrorism to the US’s hegemonic behaviour and tough foreign policies; in contrast, *People’s Daily*’s discourses of ‘terrorism in/of China’ focus more on its Chinese features, trying to relate it to other characteristics such as crime, violence, separatism and outside-agitated manipulation. On this basis, it might be concluded that *People’s Daily*’s discourses of terrorism side neither with terrorists nor the US,

which is leading the war on terror. In this regard, *People's Daily's* discourses of terrorism should be put in the context of both the Sino-US relationship and Chinese Confucian cultures to understand. Most specifically, *People's Daily's* constructions of terrorism in the US and China as a universalised issue, as well as its emphasis on Chinese terrorism as outside-agitated violence and crime, should be understood as Chinese elites' responses to Western interventions in the Xinjiang problem in China. Establishing the connection between Chinese terrorism and universal terrorism in *People's Daily's* discourses, the Chinese elite to a certain extent free the Xinjiang problem from the ethnic and religious conflicts. Moreover, through emphasis on the illegal features of extremist activities in Xinjiang, the Chinese government can also justify its own policy in this area. However, *People's Daily's* emphasis on the victimhood of terrorism in the US and China, as well as its denouncements of the US's hegemonic and tough foreign policies as the origins of terrorism, may need to be put into the wider background of Confucianism to understand. Based on the Confucian values that those who bring harmony and welfare to the international community is morally praised, while those who bring the instability and insecurity is denounced, both terrorists and the US are depicted as negative and uncivilised images in *People's Daily's* discourses. In this sense, it might be concluded that the special socio-political context of China, such as its special experience of terrorism and culture of Confucianism, result in a different understanding of terrorism.

5.3.3 *People's Daily's* discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism'

The statistical data indicate that the vast majority (around 74%) of *People's*

Daily's writings are concerned with the US's counterterrorism. Based on the Nvivo analysis of these articles, it can be clearly seen that the US is depicted as negative and boorish through the depiction of its counterterrorist actions-and-policies, rather than the moral and legal image that is stressed in the US's own political and popular discourses (Heisbourg, 2003; Dodds, 2008a, b). The negative and boorish image of the US in *People's Daily* is mainly constructed by emphasising the humanitarian crisis and the global disorder caused by the US's counterterrorism, and by stressing the US's magnification of war on terror for its own political and economic purposes.

Firstly, *People's Daily* emphasises the humanitarian crisis resulting from the US's counterterrorism. Specifically, 111 newspaper articles from *People's Daily* are concerned with the US as a maker of humanitarian crisis, including emphasis on civilian casualties, artwork and ecological damage, refugee problem, destruction of American people's welfare and violation of human rights during the US war on terror. As shown in Table 5-2, such a crisis is mainly reflected in the civilian casualties created by US military personnel. For instance, 71 texts discuss civilian casualties resulting from the US war on terror, such as '*civilian casualties caused by US carpet bombing*' (20/11/2001), '*a cameraman killed by US troops during his interview outside of a prison in Iraq*' (19/08/2003) and '*the US drone assassination of civilians*' (16/07/2010).

Moreover, such a crisis is also reflected in the emphasis on damage to artwork and ecological systems during the US war on terror in *People's Daily*. 3 newspaper articles highlight the damaging impacts of the US's gunfire upon Afghan artworks (01/11/2001) and the Bamiyan culture (15/11/2001). The other 3 articles argue that

the US's bombings have had a disastrous impact upon the local ecological system.

As one of them puts it:

Currently, the US's carpet bombings on Afghanistan from the south to the north have led to catastrophic consequences for the surface environment here. After the bombings, the earth surface has scorched, and the vegetation has disappeared. This is particularly the case for cluster bombs, their degree of damage is several times larger than general-purpose bombs. To some extent, the essence of 'carpet bombing' is 'carpet damaging' the earth's surface. (10/12/2001)

The depiction of the humanitarian impacts of the US's counterterrorism upon the international world is also reinforced by *People's Daily's* descriptions of the refugee problem brought by the US war on terror. 6 articles from *People's Daily* mention this idea. One of them, for example, represents the shocking scene of refugee flows from Afghanistan to Pakistan after the US launched counterterrorist actions in Afghanistan in 2001, and points out the great pressure on the Pakistan government to settle refugees (25/10/2001). More specifically, this article points out that the US's strike against Afghanistan 'adds 1.5 million refugees for Pakistan and brings great societal, security, food and economic pressure to the Pakistan government' (25/10/2001). The other newspaper article, which is concerned with Afghanistan refugees who attempt to enter Pakistan with weapons, directly suggests that 'the refugee flows from Afghanistan to Pakistan might bring new security

problems to both Pakistan and the US (12/12/2001).

Additionally, *People's Daily* also notes the impact of the US war on terror on ordinary American people. In 7 articles, *People's Daily* tells stories of American people, relating their distress as a result of the US's counterterrorism. One of them, for instance, tells a short story of the mother of a Mexican American soldier who died in the Iraq war, through which *People's Daily* illustrates how '*the American dream*' becomes a '*nightmare*' because of the war on terror:

Ms. Sumner, who lives in Orange County, Los Angeles, is busily doing her housework on a gloomy morning. Suddenly, she notices three US Marines come to the front yard of her house, and then plant an American flag and a Mexican flag on both sides of the main gate. Ms. Sumner thinks they must have mistaken the door and asks them whom they are looking for. Those three soldiers respectfully answer whom they are looking for is exactly Ms. Sumner. When the old mother with poor English understands that her only boy has been killed in the south of Iraq, she is almost petrified. ... After a long-long time, Ms. Sumner cries in Spanish: 'My heart is broken. I hope the war that has taken my son's life will soon stop'. She recalls, her son decided to join the US army merely because of he wanted to become an American citizen soon; her son planned to be a policeman after his military service; he had many unfulfilled dreams, but now he has gone. (30/03/2003)

Furthermore, the humanitarian impact of the US's counterterrorism is also

reflected in the US's breaches of human rights in the name of counterterrorism. From 2005 to 2006, 12 articles from *People's Daily* exposed and criticised the US's prisoner abuses in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo, which were all committed in the name of counterterrorism. For example, one of them exposes details of the US army's prisoner abuses in Afghanistan by quoting an investigative report released by the *New York Times*, including how '*prisoners are beaten to death or forced into water until suffocated*' (12/03/2005). Beyond the prisoner abuse scandal, 9 articles also expose the US's wiretapping scandal, which was also executed in the name of counterterrorism. These articles suggest that such actions go far beyond the purpose of counterterrorism and strongly violate the human right of free speech. For instance, drawing on evidence from the EU, the Nordic countries and Germany, one article explains how the US justifies its wiretapping in the name of war on terror, in which it indicates that the US's wiretapping is not only used for counterterrorism but also in other realms (27/08/2013). On this basis, this text says that '*wiretapping in the name of war on terror is pale and weak*', and therefore it strongly criticises '*the US's suppressions of free speech in the name of the war on terror*' (27/08/2013).

Secondly, *People's Daily* highlights the global disorder resulting from the US's counterterrorism. Most specifically, 146 newspaper texts from *People's Daily* focus on the constructions of the US as the origin of global disorder, including trampling the UN's authority, destroying other states' social and economic stabilities and worsening terrorist situations. As illustrated in Table 5-2, the impact of the US's counterterrorism on global disorder is first reflected in the US's trampling of the authority of the UN. For instance, 7 texts from *People's Daily* have noted the US's

international behaviour of trampling the UN's authority, and they suggest that such behaviour would lead to worldwide disorder. One of these articles directly indicates that the authority of the UN is '*a symbol of world order and international rules*', that '*it is a violation of the world order for the US to ignore the UN Security Council when handling Iraq affairs*', and that '*the UN Security Council's authority is not allowed to be impaired by any states, including the US*' (28/02/2003). The other article soon reinforces this opinion, and this newspaper article writes: '*in the context of the US's neglect of the authority of the UN, the US's so-called counterterrorist war in Iraq can only be read as an attempt to construct a unipolar world, a world ruled by hegemony, and a world under the influence of military power*' (24/03/2003).

The impact of the US's counterterrorism on global disorder in *People's Daily* is also reflected in the US's destruction of other states' social and economic stability. To be exact, 34 newspaper articles from *People's Daily* contribute to this idea. One of the articles that focuses on the social order in post-Iraq war Baghdad, for example, strongly denounces the US's counterterrorist war as the root of Baghdad's disorder:

After the US's air strike, you can see the destroyed houses and broken walls everywhere in Baghdad. The security environment here is appalling. You need to worry about the US's missiles if you walk on the street in the daytime. In the night, women are afraid of going out. Before this war, they [women] could still go out wrapped in scarves. But now, nothing can fend off the danger. During the past week, over two hundred people have died, and the food and oil were all in shortage. All of this disorder, undoubtedly,

is rooted in the US's invasion. (09/03/2004)

Moreover, *People's Daily* also suggests that the US war on terror brings worldwide economic disorder. Overall, 12 articles from *People's Daily* are involved into this idea. One of the newspaper articles that pays attention to the post-Iraq war global economy, for instance, worries about the negative impact of the Iraq war on the global economy:

*The Iraq war will have great impact on the US's and global economies ...
If this war continues for three months, the US's economic development will stagnate; if this war continues for three to six months, the global economic downturn will continue into 2004. Due to the US's invasion and occupation of Iraq, the tourism industry in the Middle East will also crumble, and global oil supply will temporarily be in disarray. (25/03/2003)*

In addition, *People's Daily's* emphasis on the impact of the US war on terror on global disorder is strongly reflected in its evaluation of the efficiency of the US war on terror. Most specifically, a larger number (44 items) of articles from *People's Daily* suggest that the US war on terror brings increasingly terrorists rather than improving the international terrorist situation. Most of these newspaper articles, for example, support the statement that the deteriorating terrorist situation is led by '*the US's military actions that create unstable soils within which terrorists can survive*' (12/08/2004), '*the US's ignorance, arrogance and neglect of Islamic culture that*

create hotbeds for terrorists' (24/02/2014), *'the US's close connection of the war on terror with the touting of the value of democracy'* and *'the US's neglect of the great wealth gap between the Global North and Global South'* (05/05/2005). In one article, *People's Daily* shows several ordinary American people's opinions of the US's counterterrorist policies: *'our government always steps in at the wrong point, paying great attention to finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq while leaving Osama Bin Laden making trouble elsewhere'* (18/06/2004). This article equates the worsening terrorist situations to the US's misguided counterterrorist policies. The other newspaper article from *People's Daily* directly and bluntly illustrates a group of statistics showing that US-led counterterrorist actions-and-policies make the international terrorist situations much worse: *'the amount of terrorist attacks and the amount of terrorist casualties have greatly increased from 190 and 307 in 2003 to 651 and 9,321 in 2004, respectively'* (05/05/2005).

Thirdly, in *People's Daily's* discourses, the US's magnification of war on terror for its own political and economic purpose is also underlined. The Nvivo analysis shows that 124 texts from *People's Daily* are concerned with the US's magnification of counterterrorism. That is, *People's Daily* insists that the US's counterterrorism not only aims at eliminating terrorists but also aims at achieving its own political and economic interests in the name of the war on terror. This idea is mainly reflected in *People's Daily's* rendering of the increasingly military presence and political influence of the US through the name of war on terror. Specifically, 51 and 27 articles from *People's Daily* have rendered the rising military presence and political influence of the US, respectively. Those articles indicate that the US often makes

use of discourses of the war on terror to enhance its military presence and political influence in ‘*Central Asia*’ (05/12/2002), ‘*Africa*’ (16/10/2009) and ‘*the Middle East*’ (05/04/2014). After the US’s war against terrorists in Afghanistan in 2001, for example, one article in *People’s Daily* indicates that the US attempts to increase its military presence in Central Asia under the guise of counterterrorism, in order to seek military supremacy:

At the end of this February, the US claimed that it would send 200 military advisers and military helicopters to Georgia, in the name of assisting this state to fight against Al Qaeda and Chechen terrorists who have attempted to infiltrate into Georgia. Located in the centre of Eurasia, Central Asia is an important strategic position with rich oil, gas and mineral resources, where great powers often compete with each other for abundant resources. The US expanded its military presence into Central Asia when it launched the attack against Afghanistan. Along with the increasing military presence of the US in Central Asia, the domination of Russia in this area to a great extent will be challenged. (22/03/2002)

Moreover, after the US-initiated war in Iraq, one article in *People’s Daily* suggests that ‘*the US tries to use the Iraq war and the rising military presence accompanied with this war to build up a geopolitical and geo-economic bridgehead in the Middle East, thereby obtaining political interests here*’ (27/03/2003). In most recent articles, *People’s Daily* is also concerned with the US’s involvements in African affairs in

the name of counterterrorism. For example, one of the articles suggests that '*the US has dispatched troops into thirty-five African countries in 2013 in order to fight against Al-Qaeda terrorists*' (07/01/2013). However, the same article adds that '*the purpose of the US's military intervention in African affairs, through some loose or non-existent links between Al-Qaeda and Africa as excuses, is to make some military preparations for its political interests in Africa*' (07/01/2013).

People's Daily also underlines the US's unilateral actions-and-policies and its lack of international cooperation in the process of counterterrorism, building up a negative and boorish image of the US. More specifically, 17 articles from *People's Daily* indicate that the US's unilateral and preemptive actions-and-policies create different understandings of the US. For example, the arrogance that is embodied in such actions-and-policies make us consider the US's counterterrorism as the cradle of US hegemony. One article in *People's Daily* that focuses on the US's war against Iraq and the US's preemptive policies, for instance, points out that '*the preemption is undoubtedly a flag of the US who is arrogantly using this flag to brandish its own super power; however, what the US needs to do after the war is not only to rebuild Iraq but also free the image of the US out of the abyss of hegemony*' (29/03/2003). Moreover, 15 texts in *People's Daily* indicate the lack of international cooperation in US counterterrorism, and thus call for building up an international cooperation for counterterrorism. For example, one of them argues that '*counterterrorism does not belong to any single state, and it also cannot be used as an excuse to achieve the political purpose by any state; by contrast, it needs a multilateral cooperation mechanism*' (19/10/2002). In this sense, the US's unilateral and preemptive policies

of counterterrorism are also constructed in *People's Daily* as self-interested political behaviours.

Emphasising the US's magnification of counterterrorism for its own purposes, a small number (14 items) of *People's Daily* articles are also concerned with the US's economic interest in the name of counterterrorism. For instance, one article indicates that '*the US's Iraq war is greatly suspected as parts of the US's economic strategy for controlling the oil resources in the Middle East*' (09/04/2002). Similarly, another article criticises the US's global economic dominance:

The US accuses Osama Bin Laden for making the 9/11 incident, but now it becomes entangled with Saddam. I do not think the US's war on terror can be explained through pre-emption. Why did the US start the Iraq war? Is it to protect worldwide security, or to control oil? ... When 5% of the world population have emitted 25% of world greenhouse gases, you cannot make a conclusion that this war [Iraq war] is for the welfare of all humankind, but for the right of American people to indulge in abundant oils ... There is a Chinese proverb: 'an innocent man gets into trouble only because of his wealth'. Today, the strategic resource, oil, has become the trouble of Iraq. (14/02/2003)

Investigating *People's Daily's* discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism' in this section, it can be found that the US and its counterterrorism can be read in different ways from the Chinese and non-Western perspective. In comparison to articles

about ‘terrorism in/of the US’ and ‘terrorism in/of China’, *People’s Daily* seems to have focused much more on writing about ‘the US’s counterterrorism’. However, in such discourses, the US’s counterterrorism has not been represented as a form of moral, justified and legitimated political and military action against terrorists, as it has been constructed by the US’s political and popular discourses (Heisbourg, 2003; Dodds, 2008). In contrast in *People’s Daily*’s discourses, the US’s counterterrorism has been described as a form of immoral behaviour bringing humanitarian crisis and global disorder, and which is targeted for the self-interest of the US. That is, *People’s Daily* discussions of terrorism pay more attention to constructing the US as negative and boorish, rather than giving comment on the problem of terrorism. Such negative imaginations of the US from the perspective of terrorism, however, cannot be understood from the nationalist context, as they are not built up on the basis of nationalist events (Kluver, 2001); nor the Communist context, as they are not formulated through Communist ideologies (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008); and nor the context of new competitive Sino-US relationship (Zhou, 2005), as China and the US to a certain extent have to build up cooperative rather than competitive relations on the issue of counterterrorism. In this sense, *People’s Daily*’s discourses may be explained through Confucian geopolitical traditions. That is, the evaluation of the international image of a state depends on whether this state can bring security, stability and welfare to its people and the whole world. If a state can contribute to a harmonious international community, it will be highly appraised; while in contrast, if a state can only bring insecurity and instability to the international world, it will be denounced. On this basis, as mentioned above, the US as well as terrorists are

all criticised in *People's Daily's* discourses, as they have all damaged the harmony of the world.

5.3.4 How *People's Daily's* discourses function in Chinese society

As illustrated in the above sections, *People's Daily's* discourses clearly offer different understandings of terrorism and the US. However, the constructed realities of terrorism and the US in *People's Daily*, which are viewed as different from Western voices, seem to have been produced through similar ways of knowledge production as in the Western media. On the basis of the investigation of the writing style of 516 items of newspaper articles in *People's Daily*, it can be seen that the characteristics of 'authenticity' and 'authority' are emphasised in *People's Daily's* discourse in order to convince the mass population to believe what *People's Daily* has written is true and real, which is also often highlighted in the Western media, in particular in US journalism (Sharp, 2000a, pp. 45-47).

First, 'authenticity' is highlighted in *People's Daily's* discourses in order to persuade the public. As mentioned in the above sections, there are primarily two types of newspaper articles in *People's Daily*, newsletter articles and review articles. The newsletter article often plays the role of conveying information, while the review article is mainly used for giving opinion. Specifically, newsletter articles usually present a number of personal details about correspondents in the main body of articles, and in so doing they would expect to reinforce the 'authenticity' of their contents through such evidence-based details. Drawing on the analysis of 302 newsletter articles collected from *People's Daily*, it can be seen that *People's*

Daily's editorial staff always highlight details of the personal experience of *People's Daily's* overseas correspondents, including their names, workplaces, working times, and victimisations they have witnessed. In this way, *People's Daily's* readers would be further convinced that what they learn from *People's Daily* has been witnessed by 'real' correspondents, and thus believe what *People's Daily* writes is 'reality'.

Second, 'authority' is always emphasised in *People's Daily's* discourses of terrorism. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are also a number of (214 items of) review articles in *People's Daily* that are related to terrorism. Those review articles are often entangled with the practice of intellectuals of statecraft, including experts from government institutions and universities (Toal & Dalby, 1998; Dalby, Routledge, & Toal, 2006). Drawing on those 214 review articles from *People's Daily*, it can be seen that authors' identities as experts, such as government officials, think-tanks, public figures or famous scholars, are always stressed in review articles. On this basis, their expertise and influence in the relevant fields are used by *People's Daily* to produce 'professional' and 'authoritative' knowledge. Such 'authority' is also expected to make *People's Daily* more authoritative and thus convince the mass population to believe what *People's Daily* says is 'reality'.

The abovementioned correspondent newsletter articles may be structured on the basis of correspondents' real personal details, and the abovementioned review articles from 'experts' may also be produced on the basis of experts' professional knowledge. However, this does not mean that the coverage of terrorism in *People's Daily* is objective and authoritative. On the contrary, the newsletter articles may be more concerned with fragmented information rather than displaying a panoramic

view for the readers; while the ‘experts’ are also not necessarily required to write reviews on the basis of their professional knowledge. For example, in a number of newsletter articles from *People’s Daily*, some details are usually neglected, such as the purposes of the US and UK’s military strike; and other details tend to be overemphasised, such as the military strikes launched by the US and the casualties caused by the US’s military actions. Moreover, in a number of review articles, authors may attempt to use some straightforward words to guide the public opinions. As one of the articles focused on the explanation of the US’s preemption illustrates:

Considering that the US can use a ridiculous reason to start a war against Iraq, it may frequently use preemption as an excuse to get rid of more of its enemies. (07/06/2006)

It can be seen that such reviews are obviously not based on professional analysis, but on personal and subjective speculation. In this sense, it might be concluded that *People’s Daily*’s discourses of terrorism are subjectively constructed on the basis of correspondents’ ‘authentic’ information and experts’ ‘authoritative’ knowledge. On this basis, *People’s Daily* tries to produce a set of widely accepted commonsensical knowledges of terrorism and the US among the mass population, which can also be read as a mass foundation for legitimating China’s own international image.

Nevertheless, it also merits noting that *People’s Daily* articles should not be regarded as individual voices from certain correspondents or experts, but should be read as a form of institutional and top-down voice from the Chinese political elite.

Even though *People's Daily* articles are all written and released by individual journalists or experts, their opinions are to a certain extent decided by the media institution of *People's Daily* as the mouthpiece of the CCP. As Jonathan Mermin (1997) suggests, journalists do matter in producing media content, but the media institution seems to play a much more important role. The media institution decides, to a notable extent, how to frame stories, when to cover events and how much to report them. This is particularly true for *People's Daily*. As Zhang Xiaoling (2011) points out, in the context of Chinese media censorship, *People's Daily* particularly faces much more pressure from censorship because of its special role as the mouthpiece of the CCP. In other words, the significance of journalist and expert writing in *People's Daily* is further weakened. On this basis, it may be concluded that, by employing correspondents' personal details and experts' professional knowledge, *People's Daily* has embedded the Chinese elitist voice in authentic and authoritative newspaper articles, constructing this voice as 'reality'. In so doing, *People's Daily* has made such a reality into commonsensical knowledge, which can in turn be used for legitimating Chinese official actions-and-policies.

5.4 Representations of terrorism in *South Weekend*

This section will look at the nature of Chinese newspaper representations of terrorism, mentioning the relevant archive from another newspaper, *South Weekend*, from 11 September 2001 to 30 June 2014. As mentioned in chapter 4, the selection of the case study of *South Weekend* as a comparative analysis in this research is not random in order to add another case study to this thesis, but a careful selection in

order to examine the extent to which the Chinese elite can intervene in the voice of the Chinese media. Most specifically, drawing on the Nvivo analysis of 92 articles (including 13 cartoons) from *South Weekend*, this part will discuss *South Weekend*'s discourses of terrorism and how such discourses function in Chinese society. A little surprisingly, *South Weekend*, which is widely considered to be opposite to *People's Daily*, is found to be closely related, with similar discourses to *People's Daily* (see Table 5-3). In what follows, I will firstly present *South Weekend*'s discourses of terrorism in three parts, and then I will focus on how *South Weekend*'s discourses function in Chinese society.

Table 5-3 Key themes in *South Weekend*'s coverage of terrorism, 2001-2014

Key themes	No.	Main sub-themes	No.
Representations of 'terrorism in/of the US'	29	Impacts of terrorism on the US societal order	16
		Terrorism as a result of the US's tough policies	4
		Explanations of terrorism in the US	3
		Impacts of terrorism on the world order	2
		Impacts of terrorism on the US economy	2
		Clash of civilizations as the root of terrorism in the US's	2
Representations of 'terrorism in/of China'	9	Victims of terrorism in China	3
		Emphasis on terrorism in China as outside-agitated	3
		Chinese terrorism as part of universal terrorism	2
		Impacts of terrorism on Chinese society	1
Representations of 'the US's war on terror'	54	The US uproots political dissidents via its war on terror	15
		The US's violations of civil liberties	9
		Attribution of increasing terrorists to the US's war on terror	8
		The US's arrogance to Islamic culture	5
		The US as taking unilateral actions	4
		Neutral or positive attitudes to the US's war on terror	3
		Support for idea that the US leads to the instability of other states	3
		Humanitarian crisis led by the US's war behaviours	3
		The US's destruction of the authority of the UN	2
		The US is a new imperialism	2

5.4.1 *South Weekend's* discourses of 'terrorism in/of the US'

South Weekend's articles have an entirely different writing style to *People's Daily* (I will elaborate on this later) and have much less coverage of terrorism than *People's Daily*. As shown in Table 5-3, there are only 29 articles in *South Weekend* that are related to the theme of 'terrorism in/of the US'. However, different writing styles and a lower quantity of coverage do not mean necessarily different discourses. Investigating those 29 newspaper texts from *South Weekend*, it is surprising to see that *South Weekend* has nearly the same discourses as *People's Daily*, even though *South Weekend* is widely viewed to have been given more flexibility for the critical writing and more relaxed writing styles. Such similarity is mainly reflected in *South Weekend's* emphasis on the impact of terrorism upon US society, its construction of terrorism as a universalised problem and its representation of the origins of the US's sufferings from terrorism.

Most specifically, one of the most commonly mentioned opinions of 'terrorism in/of the US' in *South Weekend* is its emphasis on the victimhood of the US people and US society. As illustrated in Table 5-3, 20 newspaper texts from *South Weekend* are found to be related to rendering the impact of terrorism upon the US's societal order, such as the US's security environment and its economic and social stabilities. For example, one of the articles which focuses on the US's security environment and economic stability in the post-9/11 period illustrates that '*the impact of terrorist attack on the US has been greatly and overly magnified through American people's sentiment of horror, as a result of which the US has to spend a large amount of*

funds to improve its security environment (12/09/2002).

Moreover, similar to *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* also depicts terrorism as a universal issue rather than a form of political discourse established by a certain state. To be exact, 3 articles in *South Weekend* have constructed terrorism as an international human-made disaster challenging the morality of all humankind. One of the articles concerned with the explanation of terrorism in the post-9/11 period, for example, suggests that:

In the 9/11 incident, the terrorists used civil aeroplanes as attack weapons, which had written the bloodiest page in the contemporary history of terrorism. It had trampled humanitarian and international ethics, and ignored tens of thousands of innocent lives. This was a challenge to all humankind, not only to the US. To be on guard, to prevent and to eliminate terrorism have now become urgent jobs for all mankind. (20/09/2001)

In addition, *South Weekend's* discourses of 'terrorism in/of the US' also focus on the analysis of the origins of the US's suffering of terrorism. In *South Weekend's* opinion, the root of the US's suffering of terrorism is primarily related to the US's tough foreign policies and the US's clashes with other civilisations. As shown in Table 5-3, 6 newspaper texts from *South Weekend* supported this idea. One of those articles, for example, directly quotes Samuel Huntington's (1997) ideas about 'the clash of civilisations' and argues that '*it is exactly the irreconcilable contradictions between the modern Western civilisation and the Islamic civilisation that leads to*

the 9/11 incident' (18/10/2001). The other article that is concerned with increasing terrorist activities in postwar Iraq also attributes the root of terrorism to the US's strong position and tough foreign policies:

The US has proved its strong position with the undisputed victory of the Iraq war, while Iraq has proved its very weak position with its fragility during this war. However, the law of violence will soon play a role in accordance with its own logic, once the clear pattern between the strong and the weak is shaped. The result will be that as the conventional war exits, terrorism soon debuts. To a certain extent, it can be said that it is the US's overwhelming victory that gives birth to the terrorism in Iraq. (15/04/2004)

5.4.2 South Weekend's discourses of 'terrorism in/of China'

Focusing on *South Weekend*'s representations of 'terrorism in/of China', it can be seen that *South Weekend* establishes similar discourses to *People's Daily*. That is, the victimhood, universal nature and the outside-agitated feature of terrorism in China are all highlighted in *South Weekend*. In general, as Table 5-3 has shown, 9 newspaper texts from *South Weekend* are found to be related to the issue of terrorism in China, among which 4 have emphasised the impact of terrorism upon the Chinese people and Chinese society, 2 have underlined the connection between terrorism in China and global terrorism, and the remaining 3 have discussed the outside-agitated feature of terrorism in China.

Most specifically, in 3 cases, *South Weekend* illustrates the details of the victim of terrorism in Chinese Xinjiang area in the same ways as does *People's Daily*. For example, one of the 3 articles records the victimhood of '*the July 5 event*':

In this [the July 5] terrorist incident, 156 people were killed, over 260 cars were destroyed, and over 200 houses were burnt by terrorists. ... A Han father lost his daughter who was killed by terrorists after school. A Uighur father lost his daughter, and now he still dares not see her photographs. A Muslim father also lost his son, being left with tears all day. (09/07/2009)

Moreover, similar to *People's Daily*, *South Weekend's* reports of terrorism in China mention the impact of terrorism on Chinese society. For instance, an article explores the serious impact of terrorism upon the Chinese social order: '*the terrorist activity will greatly damage China's national unity, Chinese ethnic unity and Han Chinese imaginations of Xinjiang and Uighur people*' (09/07/2009).

In addition, *South Weekend's* discourses of 'terrorism in/of China', as well as *People's Daily's* discourses of Chinese terrorism, have built up a strong connection between Chinese terrorism and universalised terrorism. Such connection is built through both the geographical connection and linguistic power. For example, an article from *South Weekend* pays great attention to the ins and outs of the ETIM, in which it indicates that '*the ETIM is a part of global terrorism, as a part of the ETIM membership is often found to have been trained by the terrorist organisation in Central Asia and the Middle East (e.g. Al-Qaeda) or found to have been arrested*

by *US troops in those regions*' (09/07/2009). Another article builds the connection, linking Chinese terrorism to universal terrorism via linguistic power (06/03/2014). In this article, *South Weekend* suggests that '*there is no middle way for any forms of terrorist activities*', in which it uses the English words '*terrorism*' and '*global war on terror*' as a tool to explain Chinese terrorism in order to make a connection to universal terrorism (06/03/2014).

In the same way as *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* also highlights the feature of Chinese terrorism as outside-agitated. However, rather than emphasising the characteristics of '*violence*', '*crime*', '*outside manipulation*', '*separatism*' and '*undermining the national and ethnic unity*' that are often embraced by *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* pays more attention to contextual knowledges of individual terrorists (e.g. Rebiya Kadeer) and terrorist organisations (e.g. the WUC, the ETIM) who plan and implement terrorist acts from outside, including the history, origin, measure, target and aim of those activities. For instance, an article from *South Weekend* talks about '*the outside decision centre and the key figures of "the July 5 event"*' (09/07/2009). In this article, *South Weekend* connects '*the July 5 event*' with '*other terrorist attacks on Chinese embassies in the Netherlands and Germany*', and in so doing points out that '*"the July 5 event" is an outside-agitated terrorist act rather than a so-called internal ethnic conflict*' (09/07/2009). The other article explores the history and the background of the Chairman of the WUC, and indicates that '*it is exactly because of Rebiya Kadeer's special background (her experience of crime) in China that leads to her revenge psychology against the Chinese government and thus results in the on-going terrorist attacks by the WUC, which is*

led by Rebiya Kadeer (09/07/2009).

Based on the investigations of *South Weekend*'s discourses of 'terrorism in/of the US' and 'terrorism in/of China', it can be seen that *South Weekend* has built up almost the same discourses as *People's Daily*. That is, in *South Weekend*'s writings, the victimhood and universalised nature of both the US's and Chinese terrorism are underlined; moreover, the US's terrorism is also emphasised as rooted in its tough foreign policies-and-actions and its arrogance (particularly Huntington's (1997) idea of the 'clash of civilisations' has been quoted here) while Chinese terrorism is also endowed with the feature of being outside-agitated. In this sense, it can be seen that it is not only *People's Daily* that puts terrorism into the wider Sino-US political and the broader Confucianism contexts to explain, for *South Weekend*, it also puts terrorism in such contexts to aid understanding.

5.4.3 *South Weekend*'s discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism'

The statistics point out that *South Weekend*, similar to *People's Daily*, has paid more attention to 'the US's counterterrorism', with about 59% of articles focusing on the US's counterterrorist actions-and-policies. However, rather than representing the US as entirely negative and boorish through the lens of counterterrorism, which is embraced by *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* seems to try to present a diversified image of the US from the lens of counterterrorism. This idea is primarily reflected in the neutral and even positive comments on the US and its counterterrorism. As shown in Table 5-3, it can be seen that in 3 cases *South Weekend* presents a neutral or positive attitude towards the US's counterterrorism. One of them describes '*the*

feature of war on terror', suggesting that *'the targets for attack in counterterrorist wars are highly dispersed and greatly uncertain, and thus much harder to handle with than guerrillas'* (20/09/2001). The other article focuses on the details of the US war on terror drawing on *'how the US is deploying army in Iraq'* (26/09/2002). The third one discusses how the US responds to terrorist attacks from a positive angle. This article highly praises the US's strong crisis management capability that is reflected in its responses to terrorist attacks (20/02/2003). Nevertheless, this does not mean that *South Weekend* has an entirely different discourse from *People's Daily*. Indeed, the neutral or positive evaluation of the US's counterterrorism is only a very small share of coverage in *South Weekend*, while a large percentage of its writings still depict the US in a negative and boorish image. Based on the analysis of 54 articles and cartoons from *South Weekend* related to the discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism', it can be found that *South Weekend* is also concerned with depictions of the US as a maker of humanitarian crisis and global disorder, and as an ambitious state aiming for self-interests under the guise of counterterrorism.

Firstly, similar to *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* emphasises the humanitarian impact of US counterterrorist actions-and-policies. 3 texts discuss the catastrophic consequences of the US's counterterrorist actions in the Middle East. For example, one article, which is titled *'The catastrophe of Babylon'*, exposes the killing of Iraq civilians by US military personnel (03/04/2003). This article tells the story of an Iraqi in which sympathy is expressed for *'his personal witness of the deaths of his wife and four children resulting from a US air raid in Iraq'* (03/04/2003). The other 2 articles are concerned with the significant impact of large-scale modern wars on

human health, the environment and human civilisation, including '*the damage to human bodies and environments caused by depleted uranium shells*' (20/03/2003) and '*the destructions of cultural relics stored in Iraq museums*' (27/03/2003).

Secondly, similar to *People's Daily's* discourses, *South Weekend* also stresses that, to a certain extent, the US's counterterrorism brings global disorder. According to the Nvivo analysis, it can be seen that 27 articles and cartoons from *South Weekend* contribute to this idea, including emphases on the US's destruction of the authority of the UN, the US's damage to other states' stability, the US's contribution to rising numbers of terrorists, the US's arrogance towards Islamic culture and the US's violation of American liberties. For instance, 2 articles from *South Weekend* focus on exposing the US's pressure on the UN's weapon inspections in Iraq. One of them indicates that '*the US's pressure on the UN's weapon inspections in Iraq, especially the infiltration of US spies into the inspecting group, will destroy the authority of the UN and so result in international disorder*' (21/11/2002). Moreover, 3 articles are concerned with the post-Iraq war order in the Middle East. One of them directly suggests that '*the on-going unstable situation of postwar Iraq, or widely the disorder in the Middle East, are all rooted in the US and its waging of the Iraq war*':

The Iraq war has opened a Pandora's Box in the Middle East, releasing the devils of terrorism and extreme violence, and activating endless mutual retaliation between Shia and Sunni. In this situation, the deep-seated contradictions in this area are increasingly intensified. Taking advantage

of this gap, ISIS establishes 'a state within a state' in Fallujah and soon captures tens of cities, becoming the most serious threat here. (26/06/2014)

In addition, 8 articles attribute increasing numbers of terrorists to US tough foreign actions-and-policies. These articles insist on that the US's counterterrorism brings disorder rather than order. As one piece of coverage, for example, puts it:

Since the 9/11 event, the ideology and actions of the US have been destined to change. Unfortunately, the US has abandoned the spirit of Copernicus while stubbornly raising the unwise banner of Ptolemy viewing itself as the centre of universe since its commencement of the global war on terror. The Americanised counterterrorism to a certain extent intensifies the Western-Islamic relationship and so increases the number of terrorists. (20/01/2005)

Furthermore, 5 articles relate the US's arrogance to Islamic culture to the disorder in the Middle East, and 9 articles relate the disorder in American society to the US's counterterrorism. One of them which pays attention to the postwar situation of Iraqi society, for example, suggesting that *'it is the arrogance of the US, especially the US's lack of respect towards Islamic culture and the US's self-proclaimed role as godfather of democracy, that causes the disorder in Iraq'* (18/12/2003). The other article that is concerned with the US's violation of civil liberties indicates that *'the US's actions of counterterrorism to some extent also bring disorder to US society'* (15/09/2011).



在被布什列为“邪恶轴心”的伊朗，有人在墙面上将美国国旗画成了一支枪，认为美国的武力才是对世界的威胁。

Figure 5-3 What the ‘Axis of Evil’ speech intends to do (authored by Zhang Guoqing)

Thirdly, in the same way as *People’s Daily*, *South Weekend* also illustrates the US’s ambitions for its self-interests in the name of counterterrorism. This is mainly reflected in *South Weekend*’s depictions of the US war on terror as a special way to uproot its political dissents. As illustrated in Table 5-3, 15 articles and cartoons contribute to this idea. For example, an article from *South Weekend* condemns the fact that ‘*the US can arbitrarily beat its dissidents, occupy strategic positions in Afghanistan, ignore the authority of the UN, and use counterterrorism as a diplomatic bargaining chip when discussing bilateral relations*’ and thus ‘*the US can use counterterrorism as an excuse to maintain its hegemonic role in the globe*’ (07/02/2002). In the same article, *South Weekend* even reproduces a photograph from Iran, which George W. Bush depicts as the ‘*Axis of Evil*’, in which someone has painted the US flag as a pistol, exposing the US’s ambitions to uproot political

dissidents (see Figure 5-1). The magnification of the US's counterterrorism is also reflected in the emphasis on the US war on terror as 'a form of new imperialism' in *South Weekend's* discourses. For example, one article released from *South Weekend* looks at 'the US's subversion of the Iraqi regime and its lowering of the threshold of nuclear weapons as the most obvious practices of new imperialism' that aim at 'governing order in the former colonial countries' (18/12/2003).

Investigating the discourses of 'the US's counterterrorism' in *South Weekend*, as analysed above, it may be concluded that *South Weekend's* discourses, as well as *People's Daily's* discourses, are more or less under the impact of some Confucian elements. To be specific, the political stance of *South Weekend* (e.g. its liberal and pro-US orientations) might make sense in representing the image of foreign states. As this section has indicated, what most distinguishes *South Weekend's* discourse from *People's Daily's* discourse is its depictions of a neutral or positive image of the US. However, the vast majority of *South Weekend's* representations of the US's counterterrorism are considered to be similar to *People's Daily's* ideas, such as their common emphasis on constructing the US as a maker of humanitarian crisis and global disorder, and as an ambitious state aiming for its self-interests under the guise of counterterrorism. In this sense, it may be concluded that the different writing styles and even opposite political positions of *South Weekend* and *People's Daily* matter very little in shaping different discourses, while in contrast, as elaborated in the previous section (which is concerned with *People's Daily's* discourses), this section further indicates that Chinese newspaper discourses of terrorism are more or less under the influence of the Confucianism.

5.4.4 How *South Weekend's* discourses function in Chinese society

Even if *South Weekend* and *People's Daily* have established similar discourses of terrorism, as mentioned above, those discourses are not built up in same ways. As elaborated in chapter 4, *South Weekend* and *People's Daily* are considered to be different Chinese newspapers with different writing styles. Based on the exploration of 92 items of articles and cartoons from *South Weekend*, it can be seen that *South Weekend* primarily focuses on background analysis and an 'illustrated storytelling' way of writing, which is quite different from *People's Daily's* emphasis on authority and authenticity.

Firstly, in comparison to *People's Daily's* attempts to construct 'authentic' realities of certain events by underlining correspondents' fragmented information, *South Weekend* pays more attention to the in-depth interpretation and panoramic view of such events. Two reasons for this might be summarised here. On the one hand, unlike *People's Daily*, *South Weekend* does not have its own self-reliant reporter stations in foreign states. In this regard, it largely has to depend on second-hand materials from other news agencies, such as the Xinhua News Agency, BBC, CNN and Reuters, rather than correspondents' first-hand materials. On the other hand, *South Weekend* is a weekly rather than a daily newspaper, and on this basis it has to pay more attention to in-depth analysis of the background to news, rather than emphasising the timeliness of its news. Taken together, it can be seen that one of the most obvious writing styles of *South Weekend* is its emphasis on background analysis. For example, in order to provide a detailed context for understanding

terrorism and the US war on terror, one article from *South Weekend* focuses on the exploration of the relations between Bin Laden and the Taliban shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attack (20/09/2001). In this article, the complicated interrelations between the US, Bin Laden and the Taliban are offered to readers. Similarly, another article from *South Weekend* examines the socio-political context of Iraq before the US's military strikes (19/09/2002). In doing so, this article gives an in-depth elaboration of the social foundation of the Saddam regime and thus provides background knowledge for readers to understand the US war on terror in Iraq.

Secondly, *South Weekend* is also well-known for its 'illustrated storytelling' ways of expression that are completely different from *People's Daily's* emphasis on 'authoritative' constructions of realities. This writing style is firstly reflected in the use of informal language in *South Weekend's* commentaries on global events. For instance, in one article from *South Weekend* which is concerned with the discussion of the 9/11 event, the author employs a number of informal analogies and metaphors to construct the geographical imagination of the US:

There is a well-known joke in some Western countries. A man is looking for his glasses under the street light. Someone asks him: are your glasses lost here? He answers: no! The questioner feels strange and continues to ask: since they were not lost here, why are you looking for your glasses here? That man also continues: because they will be visible under the street light. This joke is obviously a mockery of Westernised thinking. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are typical behaviour of looking for glasses under

the street light. The US has not found any evidence proving that al-Qaeda planned and implemented '9/11' and that Iraq has owned weapons of mass destruction. However, their unpardonable images as the US's enemies make al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein exposed under the street light.

(18/09/2003)

In contrast to establishing a series of 'authoritative' realities for the readers, it can be seen that *South Weekend* tries to structure its viewpoints by way of telling interesting stories or using easy, simple and unprofessional words. Moreover, *South Weekend's* writing style is also reflected in its employments of cartoons or pictures for expressing (geo)political opinions. For example, after the US's fatal shooting of Bin Laden in 2011, *South Weekend* (12/05/2011) released a cartoon (Figure 5-2), vividly ridiculing the Obama government's failures of foreign policy in Israel, Iran, Libya, Syria, Russia and Egypt.



Figure 5-4 Dead shot (reprinted from *The Washington Examiner* (06/05/2011))

The emphasis on background analysis in *South Weekend* might mean that it is much more convincing, and the ‘illustrated storytelling’ way of expression in *South Weekend* might also mean that it is much more popular and easier to read and accept for the masses. However, such writing styles do not mean that this newspaper’s contents are not influenced by official powers. As mentioned in chapter 4, *South Weekend*’s writings are also under the supervision of the Chinese government. For example, its editorial teams have previously been removed from positions because of its ‘inappropriate’ content (Liao, 2011), and it has in the past left a blank space on a whole printed page because of the pressure from government (*United Morning Post*, 2009). Moreover, the official supervision of *South Weekend* can also be further explained through the analysing result in this chapter. That is, the similar discourses across *South Weekend*, widely known as a liberal newspaper, and *People’s Daily*, the mouthpiece of the CCP, can also be read as evidence to prove Chinese official supervision of *South Weekend*. In this sense, it can conclude that *South Weekend*, with its emphasis on background analysis and its ‘illustrated storytelling’ way of expression, is also under the influence of Chinese elitist voices.

5.5 Conclusions

Based on the theoretical and methodological framework of critical geopolitics, this chapter has investigated representations of terrorism and imaginations of the US in Chinese newspapers. Drawing on comparative analyses of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, this research has examined the complex relations among Chinese newspapers, their discourses of terrorism, and their imaginations of the US. On this

basis, the main argument of this research suggests that Chinese newspapers can be viewed as important spaces where modern Chinese geopolitical imaginations of terrorism and the US are constructed. This study also suggests that such discourses of terrorism and the US in Chinese newspapers are, to a notable extent, under the influence of Confucian elements, albeit Chinese discourses of terrorism are not only limited to such influence, but also extended to other elements.

More specifically, as the outset of this chapter has mentioned, existing works have suggested that Chinese nationalism (Kluver, 2001), the Communist context (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008) and the competitive framework of the Sino-US relationship (Zhou, 2005) play significant roles in shaping Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US. Through the empirical case study of Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US in this thesis, which is underlined as a knowledge gap in the previous research on Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US, this research has further demonstrated that current political environment between the US and China, such as Chinese nationalism, Communist context and the competitive framework of Sino-US relations, does matter, to a certain extent, in shaping Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US. For example, *People's Daily's* and *South Weekend's* writings of Chinese terrorism as a universalised issue may be read as a contribution to understanding the significance of the much wider political context of the Sino-US relationship in shaping newspaper discourses. As the Chinese terrorist problem in Xinjiang is usually viewed as an ethnic and religious issue by Western or the US (Yee, 2003; Chung, 2006; Clarke, 2007; Potter, 2013), the universalised writing of the terrorist issue can contribute to the legitimisation of China's own actions-and-

policies on the terrorist issue.

Beyond the emphasis on the impact of current political environment between China and the US on Chinese newspaper discourses, however, this study argues that the majority of *People's Daily's* and *South Weekend's* representations of terrorism are under the impact of the frame of Confucian geopolitics. As mentioned in chapter 3, Confucian geopolitics attempts to see sameness inside and outside of a boundary and therefore refuses a binary either/or, so that it challenges Western geopolitics. The case study in this chapter has empirically supported this idea. More specifically, both *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* refuse to construct a binary between the US and China, between terrorists and those who are self-claimed as counterterrorist in their representations of terrorism. Under the impact of the socio-political context of Confucianism, particularly its emphasis on harmony, pluralism and people's welfare in the construction of international community in Chinese political culture, it can be found that *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* see more sameness inside and outside of the boundary between terrorists and those who are counterterrorist, between the US and China. Such a Confucian geopolitical view is mainly reflected in *People's Daily's* and *South Weekend's* rebuke of both terrorists and the US as a counterterrorist power. For instance, in both newspapers terrorists who bring instability, victimhood and insecurity to the world are denounced as they violate the Confucian geopolitical legacies that put emphasis on people's welfare and social harmony. In addition, in both newspapers the US is also constructed in a negative and boorish image, because US counterterrorist actions-and-policies are almost regarded as violations of the harmony and the order of the international community,

which is also encouraged by those Confucian values. On this basis, this chapter has empirically supported the idea that those Confucian traditions do matter in shaping Chinese geopolitical views.

To a wider extent, this chapter can also be read as a contribution to the broader literature on non-Western geopolitics, and in particular Chinese geopolitics. Sharp (2011a; 2011b; 2013) has called for attention to be paid to geopolitical voices from marginal, subaltern and even non-Western contexts in her recent studies. Following her arguments, this paper upholds a viewpoint that geopolitical writings also have spatial differences that are deeply rooted in the wider socio-political context of both the physical and the material world. That is, geopolitical discourses should not only be understood through a universal but also a particular rule. In other words, Chinese geopolitical discourses need to be interpreted in more detail from the particular socio-political perspective of Confucianism.

Nevertheless, as chapter 2 has mentioned, the empirical study of Chinese texts in this chapter has its shortcomings, such as its lack of examination of the audience who is involved into the consumption process and how this group impacts the way in which we understand the geopolitical. Therefore, the next chapter will move to the discussion of Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US.

Chapter 6 Reading terrorism and the US in Chinese newspapers: a geopolitical analysis of audience imaginations

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the various writings about terrorism and the US in two different Chinese newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Drawing on the analysis of these Chinese newspapers, it empirically supported that Chinese geopolitical imaginations of terrorism and the US from the elitist lens are not only under the impact of current framework of Sino-US relations, including the Western elements, the Communist elements and the nationalist elements, but also under the influence of the framework of Confucian geopolitics that is historically-sedimented but often implicit, taken-for-granted and not necessarily explicitly 'voiced' basis for Chinese geopolitical thoughts and actions. However, the previous chapter does not provide a comprehensive examination of Chinese media as it fails to investigate the role and importance of media audience in the taking shape of geopolitical discourse. As James Carey (2008) has argued, the meanings of media texts are not always static, but also drawn into an on-going reconstruction process that is associated with audience consumption. Therefore, this chapter will study another aspect of Chinese geopolitical discourse of terrorism and the US: audience imaginations of terrorism and the US through their readings of two Chinese newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Most specifically, this chapter will focus on how Chinese audiences interact with *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, and on this basis it will examine how Chinese audiences help in producing Chinese geopolitical discourse about

terrorism and the US.

In highlighting the power of the audience in producing geopolitical discourses through their consumption of media texts, this chapter will be fully embedded in the frameworks of ‘critical geopolitics’ and ‘audience study’. Indeed, as has been mentioned in chapter 2, there have been a number of critical geopolitical studies focusing on how the audience is involved in the process of producing geopolitical discourses in existing works (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013; Woon, 2014). However, some of the existing studies (e.g. (Woon, 2014)) have treated the audience as an integrated, consolidated and coherent entirety; while some have excessively focused on the subculture of audience study, such as fan subculture (see (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013)). They might neglect the research interests outside their particular interests, such as treating the audience as a group of dispersed, fragmented and incoherent people, and paying attention to diverse audiences that go beyond the conventional dualistic model of ‘fandom’. In media studies, in contrast, the audience is often differently understood. As Jonathan Gray (2003) has suggested, the audience can be categorised into three sub-categories for discussion, including fans, anti-fans and non-fans:

Fans live with in-built, intricately detailed memories of their text(s), and fan research therefore allows us to ask incisive questions about the fan's actual viewing environment, responses and/or use of the text(s). (p.67)

What of anti-fans? This is the realm not necessarily of those who are

against fandom per se, but of those who strongly dislike a given text or genre, considering it inane, stupid, morally bankrupt and/or aesthetic drivel. (p.70)

By non-fans, I mean those viewers or readers who do view or read a text, but not with any intense involvement. Non-fans likely have a few favourite programmes and are fans at other times (for these are neither essentialist nor exclusive categories), but spend the rest of their television time grazing, channel-surfing, viewing with half-interest, tuning in and out, talking while watching and so on. (p.74)

In the existing studies of critical geopolitics, fandom is always considered to be an important space where people respond similarly to textual stimuli, where people have similar geopolitical idea and where geopolitical meanings are produced in the act of textual consumption (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008). It remains under-researched whether anti-fans or non-fans are related to the production of geopolitical discourse. In this regard, this chapter will not only be located in the discussion of fans' but also anti-fans' and non-fans' productions of Chinese geopolitical discourses.

In emphasising the knowledge gap in existing literature as mentioned above, this chapter will provide a geopolitical analysis of Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US. Most specifically, this chapter will be concerned with how Chinese audiences help in producing Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US through their reading of newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*,

in their daily life. Drawing on interviews with 58 interviewees recruited in China, this chapter will not view Chinese audiences as an entirety, but look at them as diverse audiences constituted of avid readers, occasional readers and critics. It merits noting that Gray's (2003) notions of fans, anti-fans and non-fans are mainly based on the investigation of TV and films. In order to elaborate a much clearer explanation of the relationship between newspapers and the audience, I use a group of different notions 'avid readers, occasional readers and critics' to describe such relations. On this basis, this chapter will explore how the various Chinese audiences are involved in the production of Chinese geopolitical discourses in different ways, in particular through their different ways of textual consumption.

The following analysis in this chapter will be structured in four parts. First, it begins by presenting the data of the 58 interviewees, identifying their relationship to *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. This chapter then goes on to look at the data from the interview materials, focusing on how Chinese audiences understand terrorism and the US through their reading of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* in their everyday life. In assessing the various audience imaginations of terrorism and the US in different ways, the third part of this chapter gives a thorough explanation of how Chinese audiences help in producing Chinese geopolitical discourses via different methods of consumption. In so doing, this chapter argues that the audience in both media studies and studies of critical geopolitics should neither be viewed as simple and passive recipients nor as absolute active audiences. In contrast, audience imaginations, to a great extent, depend on their different ways of consuming as avid readers, occasional readers or critics. As a conclusion, the final part of this chapter

summarises how avid readers, occasional readers and critics of Chinese newspapers contribute to the process of producing Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US, and in so doing highlights the significance of investigating diverse audiences in studies of critical geopolitics.

6.1 Chinese audiences: avid readers, occasional readers and critics

In seeking to analyse how Chinese audiences are involved in the production of Chinese geopolitical discourses through their readings of Chinese newspapers, it may be useful first to look at the identities they practice and perform in the process of their readings. Drawing on the critical question of how Chinese audiences think about the role of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* during the interviews, this section will closely focus on the identities of the audience.

As was reviewed in chapter 2 that existing audience studies have particular shortcomings being viewed as an entirety or being narrowed down and equaled with fan subculture studies, this research does find that Chinese audiences should not be viewed as an entirety but as a group of dispersed, fragmented and incoherent people. Most specifically, drawing on the key question of how people think about the role of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* in Chinese society among the 58 interviewees, this thesis finds that different Chinese audiences have different understandings of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* in accordance to their various features, such as profession, media environment, multivariate media experience, political stance, cultural geographical particularity, geographical proximity and personal experience. Such qualities may make the audience regularly read and be loyal to *People's Daily*

and *South Weekend*, or make the audience dislike *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, or make them like or dislike either of the two newspapers.

For example, about 5% of the interviewees (see the first line in Table 6-1) in this research showed their great enthusiasm for supporting *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* during the interviews. They have strong reliance, great trust and high reading frequencies of both *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, regarding these two newspapers as the most authoritative, reliable, trustworthy and regular channels from which to obtain information. Based on the investigation of the collected data, it can be seen that such kinds of audiences are closely related to their identities and professions as government employees. As one such audience member, P-43 (*male*, 32, *government employee*²¹), puts it:

I always read People's Daily and South Weekend. As you know, I work for the government, and I need to know how my government and the masses think. People's Daily is not a simple newspaper about what is going on, but a reflection of the will of the government. South Weekend is both a reflection of the will of the government and a reflection of the solicitude of the masses. Those two newspapers, for me, are reliable information sources.

In contrast, around 7% of the interviewees (see the third line in Table 6-1) in this research showed their distrust of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, and even

²¹ (A, B, C) refers to (gender, age, job occupation) throughout.

the majority of Chinese newspapers. Based on examination of the collected data, it can be seen that this phenomenon is closely related to the particular Chinese media environment, which is under the strict censorship of the Chinese government. More specifically, a part of Chinese audience regard *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* as monopolistic and unreliable information sources for the Chinese government's intervention through media inspection. This is widely considered as a '*Tacitus trap*' in Chinese society (Zhao & Luo, 2013; Wang, 2014). The '*Tacitus trap*' is used to describe public distrust of the media in which the government intervenes (Zhao & Luo, 2013; Wang, 2014). That is, it will be considered as a form of manufactured reality, whatever it is in essence, once it has been intervened in by the government. As one of the interviewees, P-24 (*female, 33, private entrepreneur*), elaborates:

I basically do not read People's Daily or South Weekend. They apparently fall into the 'Tacitus trap'. We cannot find any reason to believe them. As you see, the newspaper writings within China look as if they come from the same mold. I am a free person, and I do not like being brainwashed with something by others.

Owing to the strict media environment in China, these interviewees in this research even expand their incredulity to the vast majority of Chinese newspapers. As P-29 (*female, 26, foreign enterprise*) points out:

I never read Chinese newspapers, including what you have given to me,

such as People's Daily and South Weekend. They [Chinese newspapers] usually shout slogans, use emotional words and give labels to others in their writings. I never believe them!

The examination of Chinese audiences of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* also finds that there are a larger number of (about 45%) audiences who neither show their great enthusiasm by supporting these two newspapers nor show a high degree of distrust of them (see the second line in Table 6-1). Based on the exploration of the collected data, it can be seen that such kinds of audience identity are first closely related to gender identity. As P-20 (*female, 26, media worker*) and P-23 (*female, 42, nurse*) elaborate:

I occasionally have a look at People's Daily and South Weekend, but that does not make any sense. As a young girl, I usually pay attention to the information on shopping, travelling or cosmetics rather than the political stories. (P-20)

When I was bored, I would pick up People's Daily or South Weekend killing time. But I am really not interested in reading such kind of formal and serious stories. As you know, what a woman is really interested in is the gossip. (P-23)

Moreover, drawing on the interview materials, it can be seen that the disinterest in

People's Daily and *South Weekend* among Chinese audiences is also related to their multivariate media experience. To a significant extent, this phenomenon is also a positive response to Dittmer's (2010) judgement of audiences as being influenced by the aggregate impact of a variety of popular sources. Specifically, a number of Chinese audiences in this research consider *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* as simply part of insignificant media channels rather than reliable information sources. In a highly information-oriented society, in particular in the Internet-based society of today, the Internet and other mobile applications have gradually and increasingly replaced traditional media, becoming the dominant information sources. As one of the interviewees, P-39 (*female, 28, university staff*), indicates:

Can you tell me who reads People's Daily and South Weekend in such an information era? It [reading a newspaper] is too old-fashioned! Now, we all use the Internet or a mobile app! That's right, sometime I would read People's Daily or South Weekend when I want to understand government policies or some in-depth materials about hot events. But I do not treat such readings as my everyday diet.

There are also approximately 12% interviewed Chinese audiences who have great enthusiasm for supporting one of these two newspapers (i.e. *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*) but at the same time distrust and even dislike the other one. Based on the examination of the data collected from the interviews, it can be seen that such kinds of audience identity are always related to the individual political

positions of the audience as well as the political stances of the newspapers. As existing literature on the relations between journalism and geopolitics has suggested, journalists do not always work objectively but often work closely with specific political stances in deciding when to report, how to report and to what extent to report (Mermin, 1997; Pinkerton, 2013). In particular, *People's Daily* is widely viewed as a typical leftist newspaper which focuses on Communist ideologies and national interests (Li, 2013), while *South Weekend* is commonly viewed as a liberal newspaper that pays more attention to universal values, such as freedom, equality and humanism (Lu, 2003). In this regard, a similar political position between a newspaper and the audience would mean the newspaper resonates with the audience and is supported by them. On the contrary, a conflicting political stance between newspaper and audience would make the audience distrust and even dislike the newspaper. For instance, one of the interviewees, P-38 (*male, 28, real estate worker*), who views himself as a critic of *People's Daily* and a loyal fan of *South Weekend*, illustrates:

People's Daily definitely is our Party's [the CCP's] voice, and what this newspaper tells us is entirely what our Party wants to tell us. It [People's Daily] always responds to the demand of national interests. On the contrary, South Weekend is relatively a liberal newspaper. What I understand about this newspaper is that it tries its best to be objective in the existing mass voices. For myself, I choose to stand in line with the liberal camp.

While in contrast, P-51 (*male, 37, reporter & researcher*) who regards himself as a fan of *People's Daily* and a critic of *South Weekend*, shows a diametrically opposed opinion:

There are two mainstream media voices in China. One is the disseminator of the official ideologies, such as People's Daily; the other is this form of media that is influenced by Western ideologies, such as South Weekend. Undoubtedly, the former is national interests-based, while the latter is based on universal values. Personally, I respect the interests of our country rather than inane 'so-called' universal values.

In addition, around 12% interviewees show their enthusiasm in reading one of these two newspapers but display their disinterest in the other. This phenomenon is closely related to the geographical proximity between the audience and the location of these two newspapers. Specifically, the particularity of specific media is usually considered to be related to its geographical features, such as the cultural geography of where it is located (Shao & Yang, 2010). In particular, *People's Daily* is usually endowed with the cultural geographical characteristics of North China as it is located in Beijing, while *South Weekend* is often gifted the cultural geographical characteristics of South China for its location in Guangzhou, even though both newspapers are viewed as widespread media on a national or regional level. Under such a framework of cultural geography, geographical proximity is often employed

as an important principle by Chinese audiences to establish their audience identity.

For instance, P-50 (*male, 28, reporter*) who lives in Beijing puts it:

I read People's Daily nearly every day, and I believe it. I am quite familiar with how People's Daily is produced, because I live here [Beijing] and I have many friends working there [People's Daily]. For South Weekend, it is too far for me to understand how it is produced. So I do not read it regularly.

On the contrary, four other interviewees, P-9 (*female, 29, state enterprise worker*), P-16 (*male, 24, media worker*), P-19 (*male, 41, designer*) and P-22 (*female, 25, tourism worker*), who are not in the same gender, age and profession but from the same place, state that they regularly read *South Weekend* but rarely read *People's Daily*, just because of their geographical proximity with Guangzhou where *South Weekend* is located.

Furthermore, there are also about 14% interviewees who do not regularly read these two newspapers but for unique and personal reasons dislike one of them. For instance, P-8 (*male, 42, university staff*) describes his personal reason for becoming a detractor of *South Weekend*:

To be honest, I seldom read People's Daily and South Weekend. We now all tend to get information from the Internet. I would read People's Daily when it is essential because it is on behalf of the interest of the mainstream

ideologies. While for South Weekend, I regularly read it when I was a university student, but not now. It [South Weekend] has changed a lot! At that time [the interviewee's student time], South Weekend was very courageous. But now, it tries too much to meet the mainstream ideologies. For this reason, I can even say that I dislike this newspaper.

Another interviewee, P-18 (*male, 35, NGO worker*), who is largely disinterested in reading *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, finally became a detractor of *People's Daily*. Due to work requirements, P-18 has been required to collect some archives from *People's Daily*. In this process, he found that one piece of coverage in *People's Daily* was entirely inconsistent with the facts of what he had experienced. He felt very angry and then became a detractor of this newspaper.

The collected interview data from the fieldwork and the above analysis have responded to existing literatures as mentioned at the outset of this section, and have further analysed that the audience cannot be viewed in its entirety and that audience study cannot be equalled with fandom study. Drawing on the collected data from interviews, this chapter focuses on the notion of 'diverse audiences' and argues that Chinese audiences of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* should be further divided into series of sub-categories for discussion. As already discussed, this chapter is inspired by Gray's (2003, pp. 67, 70, 74) notions 'fan', 'anti-fan' and 'non-fan' and thus uses notions 'avid readers', 'occasional readers' and 'critics' to sum different categories of readers of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. In accordance with their various reading behaviours, such as the investment of money, time and emotion, I

classify those who spend money on the subscribing to *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend*, who read them every 1-7 days and who are loyal to them as 'avid readers'; those who do not cost in subscriptions, who do not regularly read but occasionally look at what is happening through those two newspapers as 'occasional readers'; and those who are strongly antagonistic to texts or media institutions of those newspapers as 'critics' (see Table 6-1). From Table 6-1, it can be clearly seen that fandom (avid reader), which is often focused on by existing studies of critical geopolitics (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013), is merely a small part of the audience. On the contrary, the vast majority of the audience, such as occasional readers and critics, are usually ignored. In the following sections, this chapter will be concerned with how the diverse Chinese audiences, including avid readers, occasional readers and critics, are involved in the production of Chinese discourses through their readings of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*.

Table 6-1 Audience identities of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*

Avid readers	P-5, P-12, P-31, P-36, P-43, P-44, P-50, P-51	P-2, P-3, P-5, P-9, P-12, P-15, P-16, P-19, P-22, P-38, P-43, P-52
Occasional readers	P-4, P-6, P-7, P-8, P-9, P-10, P-11, P-13, P-16, P-17, P-19, P-21, P-22, P-23, P-26, P-27, P-30, P-33, P-34, P-37, P-39, P-41, P-45, P-46, P-48, P-49, P-53, P-54, P-55, P-57, P-58	P-1, P-4, P-6, P-7, P-10, P-11, P-13, P-14, P-17, P-18, P-20, P-21, P-23, P-26, P-27, P-30, P-31, P-32, P-33, P-34, P-36, P-37, P-39, P-41, P-45, P-46, P-47, P-48, P-49, P-50, P-53, P-54, P-55, P-56, P-57, P-58
Critics	P-1, P-2, P-3, P-14, P-15, P-18, P-20, P-24, P-29, P-32, P-38, P-40, P-42, P-47, P-52, P-56	P-8, P-24, P-29, P-40, P-42, P-44, P-51
	<i>People's Daily</i>	<i>South Weekend</i>

6.2 Audience imaginations of terrorism and the US

This section will look at the features of audience imaginations of terrorism and the US, mentioning relevant interview data from the 58 interviewees. Drawing on the key interview questions of how Chinese audiences understand the phenomenon of terrorism and how they understand the international role of the US, this section will focus on different audience imaginations of terrorism and the US from the diverse audiences. Most specifically, based on the Nvivo analysis of materials from 58 interviewees, in what follows I will present the results of the analysis of relevant interview data in two parts (see Table 6-2).

Table 6-2 Key themes in recruited interviewees' understandings of terrorism and the US

Key themes	No.	Main sub-themes	No.
Understandings of terrorism	97	Terrorism as a universal issue related to all humankind	27
		Terrorism is a result of the US's hegemony	24
		<i>'I do not care about terrorism'</i>	20
		Terrorism as far from (but soon near to) daily life	16
		Sarcasm about the US's suffering of 9/11 or other terrorism	10
Understandings of the role of the US	121	The US is imagined as 'good' and advanced	33
		The US is crazily seeking economic and political interests	32
		The US is an arrogant state and an objectionable police force	29
		The US is rebuked as an origin of humanitarian crisis	15
		The US is denounced as an instigator of world disorder	12

6.2.1 Audience imaginations of terrorism

For Chinese audiences, as illustrated in Table 6-2, one of the most commonly mentioned perceptions of terrorism is that it is treated as a universal issue related to all humankind. It can be found that around 28% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' understandings of terrorism show Chinese people's responsibilities as universalised world citizens, regarding terrorist activities as worldwide public nuisances. As P-

42 (male, 29, government employee) and P-43 (male, 32, government employee) express:

Terrorism is a form of very bad behaviour. Whatever your starting point is, in my opinion, terrorists cannot do such kinds of things on the basis of hurting innocent people. (P-42)

I think, one of the biggest impressions of terrorism is its extreme cruelty and barbarousness, without principle and humanity towards the ordinary people. (P-43)

Moreover, Chinese interviewees' opinions of terrorism are also engaged with the discussion of the origins of terrorism, by which their imaginations of terrorism are shown to be tangled with Chinese audiences' identification with Confucianism. To be exact, the Confucian legacies, such as 'harmony being the most precious' (以和为贵), 'harmony without uniformity' (和而不同) and 'benevolence aims for harmony' (以仁求和) have been extensively instilled into both Chinese political ideologies and current Chinese society (Chen, 2015, pp. 66-70). As a consequence, Confucian ideologies are always employed as a special cultural identity by Chinese people and used as the primary principle to make sense of the world, particularly to make judgement of other states' behaviour on the international stage. As Table 6-2 shows, in this research nearly 25% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of terrorism suggest that worldwide terrorist activities, especially those against the US,

can be attributed to the US's restless military, political and economic interferences into other countries' affairs, and it is exactly the US's tough behaviour, which goes against Chinese Confucian ideologies, that results in their suffering from terrorism. For example, as one of the interviewees, P-54 (*male, 58, government employee*), puts it:

Why are terrorists usually against the US rather than China? Because it [the US] plays a tough, hard and hegemonic role on the international level, but for China, we [China] follow[s] the Confucian ideology of 'harmony being the most precious'. For instance, Zheng He, a Chinese explorer living in the Ming Dynasty, sailed to other countries for trade, or precisely not trade but propagating the national image of China. While in nearly the same period, the Westerner Magellan opened a door for the colonial acts with the help of the navigation technology. Through this example, we can see how different our Confucian tradition and Western colonialism tradition are!

Nevertheless, Chinese people's understandings of terrorism are not necessarily related to elements of the universal nature or/and their Confucian identities. In the exploration of Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism, there are also about 21% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of terrorism that show little concern about the topic of terrorism. This section of interviewees consistently displayed the attitude of '*I do not care*' even when I presented them with a newspaper article

about terrorism. In such situations, they often indicate that they are more interested in things that are much closer to their everyday life, such as income, education, the economy, technology, real estate, medical hygiene and TV shows. As one of the interviewees, P-9 (*female, 29, state enterprise worker*), points out:

I have no interest in getting any information about terrorism. I am just an IT worker. What I want to obtain from newspapers or other media should be something about IT. Even though I want to entertain myself, I would not choose to read terrorism for entertainment. In sharp contrast, I would rather choose to have a look at 'I Am a Singer' or 'The Voice of China'²².

Based on the analysis of the collected interview data, it may be concluded that these interviewees' disinterest in the terrorist issue in their everyday life can, to a certain extent, be attributed to their geographical and psychological distance from terrorist events. In the investigation of Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism, it can be seen that approximately 16% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of terrorism point out that terrorist incidents are far away from Chinese people's everyday life, both geographically and psychologically. Due to China's strict media censorship, under which the vast number of terrorist events outside China are exposed while the vast majority of terrorist events inside China are often invisible, an invisible wall is built excluding terrorism from Chinese people's daily lives.

²² 'I Am a Singer' and 'The Voice of China' are two popular TV shows in China which are warmly welcomed by mass Chinese audiences.

However, along with increasing terrorist activities in most recent years in China, these people's understandings and attitudes of terrorism have changed a lot. As P-12 (male, 28, government employee) describes:

I have considered terrorism as a new form of war, but I have not had any clear ideas about it because of the geographical estrangement from terrorism. They [terrorist activities] are too far away from us! However, China has also been involved in terrorism in most recent years, such as the Kunming railway station incident. As you see, we can feel the horror, both geographically and mentally! It is really challenging all humankind and their civilisations! In this sense, I think we should firmly stand in line with counterterrorism, as South Weekend suggests, there is no middle way for counterterrorism!

In addition, Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism also revolve around its connection with the geopolitical vision of the US, with approximately 10% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of terrorism thinking that terrorism is a result of the US's tough foreign policies and that it is the US who causes its own problems. Based on the exploration of their ideas, it can be seen that the sarcasm of Chinese audiences about the US and its suffering of terrorism is closely related to their nationalist sentiments. For instance, this type of Chinese audience always links the US's suffering of terrorism to the conflicts between the US and China, such as the Taiwan Strait Crisis, Chinese embassy bombing and China-US aircraft collision

incident²³, albeit that it sounds a little strange. In such kinds of diplomatic incidents, this type of Chinese audience think that China's national interests are jeopardised by the US. Therefore, through the recalling of those events, they often view the US as the potential enemy of China. On this basis, they look at their enemy's (i.e. the US's) pains due to terrorism as their own exaltations. As one of the interviewees, P-5 (male, 28, government employee), elaborates:

The first time I was impressed by the word 'terrorism' would be from the 9/11. When it [9/11] happened, I believe the vast majority of Chinese people would have said: 'it is good, ah!' or 'the US deserves!' Who is it asking the US to intervene in the Taiwan Strait affair? Who is it asking the US to bomb our embassy in Yugoslavia? Who is it asking the US to send the aeroplane into the South China Sea? It [the US] really deserves [terrorism]!

In this sense, it can be seen that Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism are partly related to Chinese people's ideas of revenge and their venting of nationalist moods rather than their understanding of terrorism itself.

In general, this section has investigated 58 interviewees' opinions of terrorism. On this basis, it can be concluded that Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism are closely related to their attitudes to terrorism, the origins of terrorism, terrorist

²³ The Taiwan Strait Crisis refers to the political crisis between China and the US caused by the US's increasing arms sales to Taiwan in the 1990s; on the Chinese embassy bombing incident and the China-US aircraft collision incident see note 19.

experiences (e.g. Chinese terrorism) and specific terrorist incidents (e.g. the 9/11 incident), even though a small number of interviewees seldom care about terrorism. To a notable extent, this has demonstrated that audience imaginations of terrorism in China are potentially related to the elements of Chinese nationalist sentiments, the Confucian identity and interviewees' everyday settings.

6.2.2 Audience imaginations of the US

The vast majority of Chinese interviewees in this study not only focus on the phenomenon of terrorism itself but also pay attention to the international role of the US through the discussion of terrorism. Most specifically, Chinese audiences often show their harsh evaluations of the US's counterterrorist policies-and-actions when they are talking about terrorism. Based on the analysis of collected data from the interviews and drawing on the key question of how these interviewees talk about the US war on terror, it can be seen that one of the most dominant perceptions of Chinese audience imaginations of the US is a negative image. As it shows in Table 6-2, a large number of (around 73%) Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of the role of the US are closely related to the US as a negative image, among which nearly 27% Nvivo codes describe the US as a political community that aims for economic and political interests under the guise of the war on terror. These codes suggest that the US is using counterterrorism as a flag to justify and legitimate its pursuit of both economic and political interests. In this sense, the US, on the one hand, is imagined as a political community who determinedly seeks economic interests in the name of war on terror. As P-5 (*male, 28, government employee*),

who gives a critical evaluation on the US-initiated war in Iraq, suggests:

There are so many countries that are involved in terrorism. Why does the US select the Middle East region as the main base for counterterrorism? Why does not the US help other countries to defend terrorists? Why does the US select Iraq? Because the US needs this! Because the US needs to control the petroleum market in Iraq and in the Middle East, in order to keep its own interests. You cannot find a better reason than this to explain why the US starts a war in this area. This is the mainstream opinion from People's Daily and South Weekend, and I agree with their opinions.

On the other hand, in this group, some other interviewees emphasise that the US war on terror mainly aims at achieving its political interests. For example, P-44 (29, male, university student) depicts his imaginations of the US's political interests by assessing the US's counterterrorist actions in Afghanistan and Iraq:

The US's two wars on terror in the Middle East, the Iraq war and Afghanistan war encircle Iran - the imaginary enemy of the US - in the middle. For those two places [Iraq and Afghanistan], one is the sphere of influence of Russia while the other is China's hinterland. For China, the north is Russia, the east is the ocean with weak navy, and the south is a group of troublesome countries, such as India and Vietnam. If the west of China is not stable, China would be in a very bad geopolitical

environment. The US intervenes in Afghanistan affairs under the name of counterterrorism, which equates to cutting the key channel of Sino-European links. Therefore, I would not believe that it [the US's counterterrorist action] is a simple and pure war on terror in this area.

On this basis, it can be seen that the Chinese audience often relates the US and the US war on terror to the US's economic and political interests. In this sense, the US war on terror, in Chinese audience imaginations, becomes a guise for the US to seek its own interests.

Drawing on the Nvivo analysis of relevant interview materials, it can be seen that approximately 24% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' understandings of the role of the US denounce the US as an arrogant and threatening image. Owing to the US's unilateral policies-and-actions for counterterrorism read from *People's Daily* and/or *South Weekend*, such as Edward Snowden scandal (2014), this section of interviewees look at the US as an arrogant power. One of those interviewees, P-56 (male, 49, business manager), for instance, speaks his mind:

I do not like the US! It is always arrogant, making you feel it is superior over others. Sometimes, it is hegemonic. Taking the Snowden scandal that I have read from People's Daily as an example, the US explains, the prism programme is mainly used for counterterrorism in order to monitor the potential terrorists. Bullshit! It sounds like I put you in a house full of monitors, telling you this is for your safety. Will you believe that?

P-56's denouncement of US counterterrorist policies and actions probably helps to build an arrogant image of the US. Meanwhile, there is also a certain percentage of interviewees in this group who regard the US as a violent international police force for its military provocations worldwide. As P-7 (*female, 39, university staff*), puts it:

On the basis of the mainstream media's ideas, I prefer to view the US as a troublemaker who easily provoked this country in this area, or criticised that country in that area. It is absolutely a meddling 'international police'.

In this regard, it may also conclude that the Chinese audience always relates the US to an arrogant and threatening image through their discussion of terrorism.

Beyond the depiction of the US as self-interested and an image of arrogant and threatening international police, Chinese audience imaginations are also involved in the construction of the US as the origin of the global humanitarian crisis because of its killing of innocent people in its counterterrorist actions. Around 12% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of the role of the US contribute to this opinion. As one of the interviewees, P-12 (*male, 28, government employee*), denounces:

If the US had not started the Iraq war, those civilians living in Baghdad would have remained alive. But, the US did! Now US troops are still

deployed in Baghdad. That is one of the primary reasons why terrorists continually use car bombs as a form of attacking weapon, and that is why those civilians are bombed to death! So, who has led to the deaths of those civilians? Terrorists, the US troops, or the Iraq war?

P-12's understanding of the US war on terror, to a great extent, helps to divert attention from the topic of terrorism to the imagination of the international status of the US. However, the imaginations of the US as a negative other are not necessarily related to the interpretation of the US as the origin of the humanitarian crisis as well as the self-interested and arrogant image as the aforementioned. Such imaginations are also related to the understanding of the US as the originator of world disorder, drawing on recruited Chinese interviewees' discussions of the US war on terror. Specifically, approximately 10% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' perceptions of the role of the US in this thesis relate the US and its 'bad' counterterrorist policies-and-actions to the disorder of the world. As an interviewee, P-44 (29, male, student), who doubts the effectiveness of the US's counterterrorist actions, elaborates:

I doubt the effectiveness of the US war on terror. I cannot understand why there are increasing terrorists along with increasing counterterrorist activities. Moreover, there is a sharp comparison between the pre-war and post-war Iraq. Before the US militarily intervened in Iraq, the ordinary people there lived and worked peacefully; after the intervention, however, ordinary people soon live in hard times with flying bombs and increasing

terrorists. Post-war Iraq is totally in a mess!

Nevertheless, Chinese audience imaginations of the US from the perspective of terrorism are proved to be not entirely related to the imagination of the US as negative, arrogant, threatening and interests-based. In sharp contrast, about 27% of Nvivo codes in interviewees' understandings of the role of the US focus on a 'good' image of the US. Drawing on relevant interview materials, it can be seen that such 'good' imaginations are usually enabled via interviewees' imaginations of effective state organisation, robust models of economic development, healthy social systems, high-quality environments, advanced technologies and cultural values, video games, Hollywood films, national basketball game (NBA), food security, global leadership, fun entertainment programmes, transparent elections and independent educations. As one of the interviewees, P-6 (*female, 25, university student*) explains:

The majority of my high school classmates, nearly half of them, are now living in the US, as undergraduates or postgraduates. I am also looking forward to studying there, because it [the US] is a wonderful and colorful world with cultural prosperity and technological advancements. We have to admit that many things in the US are much better than here [in China], such as the education.

In summary, drawing on 58 Chinese interviewees' opinions, this section has examined audience imaginations of the US from the perspective of terrorism. In so

doing, it can be seen that terrorism does play an important role in observations of the international status of the US. Specifically, from the perspective of terrorism, and in particular the US war on terror, a number of Chinese audiences have depicted the US as a negative, boorish, threatening and interest-based image of other, as well as what Chinese newspapers have done in the previous chapter. Such depictions are also in relation to Confucian elements that are historically-sedimented in Chinese society, albeit they are not merely limited to such influence. Most specifically, as mentioned in chapter 3, under the impact of Confucianism, the Chinese government and Chinese people often refuse a binary framework to discuss terrorism, to explain the relations between terrorists and those who are counterterrorist and to construct the relations between China and the US when dealing with international affairs. To be exact, both terrorists and the US as counterterrorist are denounced because they are all regarded to be against Confucian ideologies. Moreover, this section has also proved that audience imaginations of the US are not necessarily related to the US war on terror, but, in contrast, Chinese audience would sometimes turn attention to other aspects of the US even though the interviews were strictly framed by the topic of terrorism. For instance, the ‘good’ imagining of the US was also depicted in the interview process in this research.

6.3 ‘Propaganda model’ or ‘active audience model’?

This section will pay attention to the complicated relations among the diverse Chinese audiences, the various audience imaginations as discussed in the previous section and Chinese newspaper writings mentioned in chapter 5. Most specifically,

drawing on the 58 interviewees' audience identities, which are categorised into avid readers, occasional readers and critics, this section will investigate how the diverse audiences help in producing Chinese geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US, perhaps in different ways.

As reviewed in chapter 2, the nature of media-audience connections has been investigated in existing literatures of both media research and critical geopolitics, primarily revolving around two models: 'propaganda model' and 'active audience model'. The propaganda model underlines the audience as unknowing and passive recipients of media who are easily stimulated, activated and agitated by media content, thereby play important roles in co-producing media meanings (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Bratich, 2005); while, on the contrary, the active audience model emphasises the subjective, active and proactive roles of the audience in producing media/geographical/geopolitical meanings (Fish, 1976; Radway, 1991; Livingstone, 2005; Bratich, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Adams, 2009; Dittmer & Gray, 2010). Specifically, in the active audience model, the audience is often viewed as a space in which active meaning-making takes place when readers encounter media texts. Rather than viewing the audience as passive recipients, the active audience model puts more emphasis on the significance and subjective role of the audience in the process of meaning-making. However, both models seem to have certain blemishes. For example, the propaganda model seems to have overemphasised the weakness of the audience in producing meanings, while neglecting the audience's subjective, active and proactive production of meanings in the process of consumption. On the contrary, the active audience model has overemphasised the role and importance of

the audience in actively reproducing meanings, while it may have overlooked the existence of the weak audience and media's influence on this group of people. In this sense, this study argues that the nature of media-audience connections perhaps should not be simply put into either propaganda model or active audience model to understand but, in contrast, it might be under the impact of the audience's different identities. In the following section, drawing on the various audience identities of 58 interviewees, this research will examine how audience identities impact audience imaginations in different ways.

Based on the analysis of audience imaginations of terrorism and the US in the previous part, it can be seen that there are both differences and similarities between Chinese newspaper writings and Chinese audience imaginations (see Table 6-3). For example, both newspaper discourses and audience imaginations have depicted terrorism as a result of US hegemony, described terrorism as a universal issue, and made moral judgements about terrorists. Both have highlighted the US as a negative image, through the representation of the US war on terror, including the description of the US as the cause of the humanitarian crisis, the maker of global disorder and the hypocrite who seeks political and economic interests under the name of war on terror. However, there are also differences between these two voices. For instance, on the topic of terrorism, Chinese newspaper discourses pay more attention to the depictions of terrorism as a form of outside-agitated activity and to debate with Western voices on defining terrorism, while Chinese audiences sometimes show disinterest in the terrorist problem or talk more about their everyday experiences of terrorism. Moreover, on the issue of the imaginations of the US, a number of

Chinese audiences show a positive attitude towards the US, which is quite different from Chinese newspaper discourses. This result empirically supports that audience imaginations of the US and terrorism, based on their readings of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, should not be simply understood through either a propaganda model or an active audience model. It also merits noting that I am not attempting to say that the consensus between newspaper discourses and audience imaginations results from the propagandistic model, while the disagreement between them is led by the active model; in contrast, I am trying to explain the different ways in which the diverse Chinese audiences help in producing Chinese geopolitical discourse. Dividing the recruited interviewees in this research into three sub-categories (avid readers, occasional readers and critics) and according to their different consumption processes, the following section is concerned with how they help in producing geopolitical discourses in different ways.

Table 6-3 Similarities and differences between Chinese newspaper representations and Chinese audience imaginations

themes	Chinese newspaper discourses	No. ²⁴	Chinese audience imaginations	No.
Terrorism	Terrorism is a form of immoral behaviour	107	Terrorism as a universal issue related to all humankind	27
	Terrorism is a result of US hegemony	31	Terrorism is a result of US hegemony	24
	Terrorism is a universal problem	10	'I do not care about terrorism'	20
	Terrorism is emphasised as extreme and outside-agitated violence in Xinjiang	10	Terrorism as too far from (but soon near to) daily life	16
	China employs international discourse to universalise its suffering of terrorism	7	Sarcasm about the US's suffering of 9/11 or other terrorism	10
	China debates with the Western media on the definitions of	3	—	—

²⁴ Nvivo code numbers in this column combine the statistics of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*.

terrorism				
The US	China emphasises global disorder led by the US war on terror	146	The US is imagined as ‘good’ and advanced	33
	China emphasises the US’s ambition for self-interests in the name of the war on terror	141	The US is crazily seeking economic and political interests	32
	China emphasises the humanitarian crisis led by the US war on terror	123	The US is an arrogant state and an objectionable police force	29
	—	—	The US is rebuked as an origin of humanitarian crisis	15
	—	—	The US is denounced as an instigator of world disorder	12

First, on the basis of the examination of avid readers’ imaginations of terrorism and the US, it can be seen that, to a notable extent, avid readers’ understandings reach a consensus with *People’s Daily*’s or/and *South Weekend*’s representations. In this sense, I would argue that avid readers’ connection with Chinese newspapers in this research follows a propaganda model. In existing studies, scholars in critical geopolitics tend to use the concept ‘interpretive communities and performativity’ and the model of active audience to theorise fan studies (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008, p. 446). Specifically, as discussed above, geopolitical meanings are considered to be primarily determined by the fans’ interpretive communities and their special performativity, both of which have substantial impact upon their readings. However, the avid readers of *People’s Daily* or/and *South Weekend* seem to have different stories. Rather than subjectively and actively interpreting the content released from *People’s Daily* or/and *South Weekend*, avid readers are usually understood as the subjects who passively receive information from newspapers. As *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* are endowed with special significance in transmitting political information in Chinese society (Zhang, 2011), avid readers of *People’s Daily*

or/and *South Weekend* often regard these newspapers as reliable and authoritative information sources. As one of the interviewees, P-12 (*male, 39, the government employee*), who is an avid reader of both newspapers, notes:

Why am I interested in People's Daily? It is not because it is interesting, but because it is important. Especially for the coverage on important events, the comments on People's Daily is particularly significant. It is on behalf of the Chinese government and the CCP.

In such a situation, it can be seen that avid readers' interpretation of newspaper content tends to be a passive and reactive act of hearing and receiving rather than an active act of reading. To a significant extent, the identity as an avid reader of *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* in this thesis does not refer to the audience's material or emotional investments, but instead relates more to the audience's loyalty to given newspapers. In this regard, it is not so difficult to explain the consensus reached between the audience imaginations of the avid readers and newspaper representations. As one avid reader of *People's Daily*, P-31 (*male, 36, high school teacher*), suggests:

I do not know so many things about international affairs. As you know, it is totally a mess on the Internet. I would not believe them [the Internet]! So, I think that People's Daily is good, with authoritative and convincing messages. Not to mention, the majority of what People's Daily says is so

patriotic. So, why not believe it [People's Daily]?

In sum, it can be concluded that *People's Daily's* or/and *South Weekend's* writings on terrorism and the US have been injected into their avid readers' minds and thus help them establish their imaginations of terrorism and the US. In so doing, elitist Chinese geopolitical ideas reach and are rooted in avid readers' minds. On this basis, avid readers become part of the Chinese discourse where elitist voices are finally located and justified.

Second, on the basis of the investigation of critics' imaginations of terrorism and the US, it is surprising to find that critics' understanding of terrorism and the US also reaches a consensus with *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend*. On this basis, I would argue that critics' connection with Chinese newspapers follows the active audience model. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the critics are often considered to be the section of the audience who are antagonistic and even strongly dislike the given media genres or texts (Gray, 2003; Giuffre, 2014). In this sense, the critics of *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* should be expected to be in disagreements with *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend*. However, the vast majority of the critics still reach a consensus with, rather than disapproval of, the newspaper writings in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Specifically, through the examination of the relevant interview material, it can be seen that critics' audience imaginations of terrorism and the US in this research are mainly established on the basis of the particular socio-political backgrounds of China and the performativity of these backgrounds, rather than their readings of newspapers. For instance, the

Chinese national identity, the cultural identity of Confucianism and other personal interests may all have a significant impact upon their interpretations of newspaper content. As one of the critics of *People's Daily*, P-2 (male, 28, university student), notes:

I am a big fan of politics, but not People's Daily. To be honest, I have seldom read People's Daily, until you gave me those articles. Interestingly, I find that my opinions are nearly the same as People's Daily's writings, even though I clearly know that it [People's Daily] is brainwashing. I wonder it may be because I am Chinese and that the US war on terror, in particular its war behaviour, is seriously against our Confucian tradition of 'harmony being the most precious'.

P-2's self-identities as '*a big fan of politics*', '*Chinese*' and '*our Confucian tradition*' here are similar to the notion of interpretive communities (Fish, 1976; Livingstone, 2005; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008), by which similar reading strategies, such as preexisting identities as big fans of politics, Chinese and Confucianism in this study, are applied by the reader to interpret newspaper representations. In this regard, writings about terrorism and the US in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* are no longer reliable information sources, but the narration of the Chinese nation can still stimulate Chinese audiences' national sentiment (see Bhabha (2013)). In so doing, compared with the avid readers, the critics play a different role in shaping Chinese geopolitical discourses. That is, the avid readers build up their imaginings

of terrorism and the US by reading *People's Daily* or *South Weekend*, while, on the contrary, the critics do not regard *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* as reliable information sources. The critics establish their imaginings of terrorism and the US when they encounter the writings through their special identities, such as national identity as Chinese and cultural identity as Confucianism.

Third, on the basis of the investigation of occasional readers' imaginations of terrorism and the US, it can be seen that there is both consensus and disagreement between audience imaginations and newspaper writings. Therefore, I would suggest that the occasional readers' connection with *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* in this study follows the active audience model. As defined at the beginning of this chapter, the occasional readers' reading is not regular but an accidental act (Lembo, 2000; Gray, 2003). It means that the occasional readers do not rely on *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* as their regular information sources. There are two instances when this occurs: occasional readers who are interested in politics but rely more on other information sources, such as the Internet, and occasional readers who are not as interested in politics. On the one hand, the readings of those who are interested in politics fall into the interpretive communities of Chinese nationalism or/and Chinese Confucianism when they encounter the given newspaper, by which their national identities as Chinese or Confucian usually hold the dominant role in determining their acts of reading. For instance, one of the occasional readers of both *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, P-4 (male, 25, university student), puts it:

Indeed, I am interested in politics. But I often choose TV or the Internet

rather than the printed media as stable information sources. Even though I seldom look at Chinese printed media, I find that I agree with their opinions when you gave me those newspaper articles about terrorism and the US. Those materials [newspaper articles selected from People's Daily or South Weekend] remind me what an evil the US is! We always see the US launching a military strike on this country and turning to another in a while on TV!

In such a situation, the occasional readers' reading of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and their understandings of terrorism and the US can be considered as a performance of their preexisting identities. That is, for occasional readers, the contents of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* make little sense, but play the roles of 'blasting fuses', igniting readers' opinions.

On the other hand, for occasional readers who are not as interested in politics, their reading of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and their understanding of the US and terrorism are not always related to their national identity but closely related to their everyday settings. In this regard, the section of the occasional readers may display the attitude of '*I do not care*' towards the issue of terrorism and may express their '*good impression*' of the US because of their good experiences of the US in their everyday settings. As one of the occasional readers of both *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, P-27 (male, 27, advertising worker), indicates:

I find that there is an interesting phenomenon in China. When we talk

about the US, those who are interested in politics would surely give voice to describe how evil the US is. However, the US would have an absolutely different image if you talk about economy or culture, especially when you talk about American TV programmes or iPhones. In particular, those who do not care about politics would 100% have a good image about the US. I am exactly that kind of person!

In brief summary, on the basis of the investigation of both the similarity and the difference between Chinese newspaper discourses and audience imaginations, this section has examined how the diverse Chinese audiences build up their various imaginations of terrorism and the US through their reading of *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend*. In so doing, this section argues that Chinese audiences' perceptions of terrorism and the US through their reading of Chinese newspapers should not be simply put into either a propaganda model or an active audience model. On the contrary, Chinese audiences' interpretations of terrorism and the US through their reading of newspapers depend on their different ways of reading. Specifically, for those avid readers of *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend*, their imaginations are, to a notable extent, impacted by *People's Daily's* or/and *South Weekend's* opinions; while for those occasional readers and critics, their imaginations are, to a significant extent, uninfluenced by *People's Daily's* or/and *South Weekend's* ideas, but rather by their personal experiences or their broader socio-political backgrounds, such as Chinese nationalism and Confucianism. Furthermore, this part has also explained that the consensus between newspaper discourse and audience imagination is not

necessarily related to the propaganda model, but also related to the active audience model. This is especially reflected in the critics' imaginations of terrorism and the US, which are similar to newspaper discourses but did not result from them.

6.4 Conclusions

Based on frameworks of critical geopolitics and audience study, this chapter has examined Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US. Specifically, drawing on the interview materials with 58 Chinese interviewees recruited in China, this chapter has discussed their audience identities in accordance to their relations with *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, investigated their perceptions of terrorism and the international role of the US, and analysed to what extent the aforementioned newspapers impact Chinese audience imaginations. On this basis, this study argues that the logic of Confucian geopolitics not only matters in state geopolitical voices (as argued in chapter 5) but also matters in non-state and people's everyday realms, albeit Confucian geopolitics is not the only logic that impact upon Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US. From the lens of audience research, this study suggests that the audience should neither be viewed as a coherent, consolidated and integrated entirety, nor simply narrowed into a specific subculture, but, in contrast, this section of people should be regarded as a diverse group for discussion.

Drawing on the analysis of 58 interviewees' imaginations of terrorism and the US in this research, it can be seen that terrorists and the US as counterterrorist are not constructed in the binary relationship of either/or. On the contrary, the sameness between terrorists and the US is highlighted in Chinese audience imaginations of

terrorism and the US. For example, in the empirical analysis of Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US, terrorists are written as evils harmful to all humankind, and the US who is self-claimed as counterterrorist is also described to be negative, arrogant, threatening and interest-based, which is quite similar to the newspaper representations about the US in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, as the previous chapter mentioned. Such imaginations which are beyond the binary framework are found to be closely related to Chinese special socio-political context, including Confucianism, Chinese nationalism and Chinese people's daily settings which, to a certain extent, can attribute to the framework of Confucian geopolitics. As the 58 interviewees in this thesis are mainly constituted of middle-level Chinese people, the audience imaginations presented in this chapter, to a significant extent, can be read as forms of non-state voices. In this sense, this study has potentially but partly supported that Confucian geopolitics not only impacts elitist geopolitical views in China, but also extends its influence into the non-state and everyday realms.

Moreover, based on the concept of 'diverse audiences' that divides Chinese audiences into avid readers, occasional readers and critics, and based on the diverse audiences' different connections with media content, this chapter has also examined how the diverse audiences are involved in the production of Chinese geopolitical discourses in different ways. In so doing, this research suggests that the audience imaginings of terrorism and the US through their readings of *People's Daily* or/and *South Weekend* should not be simply put into either the propaganda model or active audience model. In contrast, Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US depend on their different ways of reading. Most specifically, avid readers' acts

of reading may perhaps best fit into the propaganda model, in which they are viewed as loyal recipients passively and reactively hearing and receiving information from the newspapers. For occasional readers and critics, their acts of reading are often involved in active practices and performances in which their interpretations are usually determined by their preexisting identities, such as their national identity as Chinese, their cultural identity of Confucianism, or their apolitical personalities. In so doing, this thesis argues that the non-state geopolitical views in Chinese society are under the influence of both a propaganda model, a form of top-down ideology instilling process, and an active audience model that is always viewed as a form of cultural self-awareness in Chinese everyday life. In addition, this study also argues that audiences' interpretative process, which enables the production of geopolitical meanings, is not a single, pure and simple pattern fitting the propaganda model or active audience model, but a complex and superimposed pattern that depends on the audience's different ways of reading.

The analysis of Chinese audience imaginations in this part contributes to the push of the investigation of Chinese geopolitical views from the elitist perspective to the everyday realm. However, the examination of geopolitical views through the analysis of 58 recruited interviewees may have its deficiencies and limitations in interpreting how the mass Chinese, a much wider group of people, understand terrorism and the US in their everyday life. Therefore, the subsequent chapter will move to the discussion of Chinese Internet discourses on terrorism and the US.

Chapter 7 Geopolitical visions from the mass Chinese? Internet discourses of terrorism and the US

7.0 Introduction

This thesis has first examined geopolitical visions from the state view through the empirical study of newspaper articles in *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* in chapter 5, and then investigated parts of the non-state view under the framework of audience research in chapter 6. However, the issue of whether there are any different geopolitical visions from much wider non-state forces, such as the voice from the mass Chinese, is still unexplored. If there are, do such kinds of geopolitical visions make sense? And how do they make sense? Indeed, as elaborated in chapter 5, in the strict media environment in China, there is almost no healthy space or channel for the mass Chinese population to discuss or negotiate political topics with the elite, in particular through mass media or popular culture. The rise of the Internet, in particular its revolutionary changes to the methods of communication, provides the possibility and potentiality for the Chinese to express their political opinions and to negotiate with the elite in the public arena. Therefore, this chapter will look at the other aspect of Chinese imaginations of the US and terrorism, a perspective from the mass Chinese, through a case study on the Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*. Nevertheless, the Internet is not pure space for the mass Chinese population to express their opinions; and at the same time it is not a purely textual space like the printed media, in which the text is employed as the critical tool for constructing geopolitical visions. On the contrary, the Internet is a 'heterogeneous space' which

both the state forces and the non-state forces attempt to occupy as an important public opinion position, and in which both texts and more-than-texts play influential roles in the shaping of Internet discourses. In this sense, this chapter not only seeks to make contributions to the investigation of geopolitical visions from a much wider non-state views, but can also be read as a contribution to study how different spaces make us understand the world around us in different ways.

Drawing on the above aims, this chapter will focus on the investigation of the complex Internet discourses in the Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*. Most specifically, as elaborated in chapter 4, this chapter will be concerned with those weibos themed on terrorism and the US from two official accounts, *Weibo Account of People's Daily* and *Weibo Account of South Weekend*²⁵, investigating how they describe terrorism and the US. Most importantly, as mentioned in chapter 4 again, this chapter will also investigate mass Internet users' comments on those weibos, examining how issues of terrorism and the US are discussed by the mass Chinese population.

In what follows, this chapter will be structured in four parts. First, drawing on existing studies of the Chinese Internet, I will begin by looking at the nature of the Chinese Internet in order to examine to what extent the Chinese Internet is under the control or the guidance of official forces. Second, I will go to an overview of existing studies of Chinese Internet discourses, and in so doing create a space for this empirical case study. Third, I will present the results of the Nvivo analysis on

²⁵ Which are referred to as *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* in this chapter. Their differences from the printed media of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* will be elaborated in the following sections of 7.1 and 7.3.

relevant data collected from *Sina Weibo* and related bulletin boards. In so doing, this part will broadly display three types of Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US, including anti-US discourses, pro-US discourses and the regime-challenging discourse. Finally, this chapter will end with a short recap of Chinese geopolitical visions of terrorism and the US in the complicated space of Internet, and at the same time discuss how the heterogeneous space of *Sina Weibo* (or, more widely, the Chinese cyberspace) creates different understandings of the US and terrorism.

7.1 The nature of the Chinese Internet

The Internet is a particular space about more than texts, which makes it entirely different from conventional media, specially the printed media this thesis analysed in chapter 5. Most specifically, it creates a space in which Internet users can express their opinions through texts and ‘things’ beyond texts, such as emotions. As a result, it bridges texts and the nonrepresentational factors and thus enhances the Internet’s capability of information exchange, specially its interactive and exponential ways of communication. In this way, the Internet is regarded to play a more influential role than the conventional and one-way communication media. Exactly, even if the public opinions in Chinese Internet communities and in particular in *Sina Weibo* are all established on the basis of the use of texts, it can be seen that there are obvious differences between them. As elaborated in chapter 5, the printed media always try to keep their writings as rational, authoritative and objective as possible, and thus they often offer enough word space for authors to express their opinions. However,

for the Internet, there is strict word limitation for Internet users. As a result, Internet users usually have to use less words to express their ideas, which may make them express their opinions in hasty, affectual or emotional ways. In this regard, it can be seen that the Internet is a different space with the printed media. As such, in seeking to investigate Internet-based geopolitical discourses of terrorism and the US in this study, it may be useful first to explore the features of the Chinese Internet. Therefore, this part will mainly focus on the elaboration of the nature of the Chinese Internet.

Different people may have different understandings of the Internet. Underlining the revolutionary ways of transmitting, receiving and communicating information, which are totally different from conventional media (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000), the Internet is now and increasingly regarded as a space where users may be better informed via heightened information flows and rich information resources. For example, Zhou Yongming (2005) emphasises the informational quality of the Internet, praising the highly efficient and the diversified channels for obtaining information through the Internet. However, the Internet is not always considered to be related to information quality. There is also a large body of studies telling us that the access to the Internet is often uneven and that Internet-transmitted knowledge is usually embedded in local norms, practices and even prejudices. For instance, Wen Gong *et al* (2007) suggest that Internet use and access are also uneven across different states despite its global reach. Barney Warf (2012) argues not only that access to the Internet is uneven across the globe, but also that various Internet phenomena in various regions are considered to be engraved with obvious spatial differences. Such unevenness and differences are generally considered to impede

the flow of information rather than promote the informational quality of the Internet.

It is a similar story for the Chinese Internet. That is, various people may have varied and even opposing understandings of the Chinese Internet. On the one hand, a number of scholars have suggested that the Chinese Internet could be regarded as an informational space because of its facilitation of civil society and its tolerance of dissenting voices in Internet communities. In this regard, they support the idea that the Internet has encouraged the maturation of Chinese civil society, unlocked public space and provided the opportunity for regime challenging. For instance, the introduction and application of broadband in Chinese society have been viewed as ‘political liberalisation’ (Zheng, 2007, p.167) and ‘the social revolution that is expanding citizens’ unofficial democracy’ (Yang, 2009, p.61). Some scholars even regard the Chinese Internet as ‘a platform for bottom-up information and public debate’ (Zhou, 2009, p.1006) and ‘a new channel for expression’ that underlines ‘interactive and reciprocal communication’ rather than ‘one-way communication between politicians and citizens’ (Zheng & Wu, 2005, p.510), which might ‘play a supervisory role in Chinese politics’, ‘introduce new elements into the dynamics of protest’ (Yang, 2003, p.453), ‘promote political openness, transparency, and accountability’ (Zheng, 2007, p.429) and ‘erode the CCP’s ideological and social control’ (Shirk, 2010, p.223). In this regard, the Chinese Internet is potentially viewed as an open and unlimited space where people can freely speak their minds and obtain increasing information.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, there are also a number of scholars supporting the idea that the virtual experience of the Chinese Internet is as much manufactured

and guided as the printed media. They have argued that the Chinese Internet is still under the influence of state power. Generally, their opinions are primarily reflected in three issues. First, China's state interventions in the Internet are reflected in its IP blocking of foreign web sites and search engines (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Google) under the project 'the Great Firewall'. Such kinds of state interventions, in Evgeny Morozov's (2011) notion, empower the state and disempower the masses, rather than give impetus to democratisation and the promotion of civil society through the cyberspace of the Internet. Second, China's state interventions in the Internet are also embodied in the strict censorship of online expression (MacKinnon, 2009; Bamman, O'Connor & Smith, 2012). For example, David Bamman *et al* (2012) note the Chinese state's interventions in the Internet opinions through the deletion practice. They therefore expand upon a study discussing how such deletion practices happen, and suggest that such practices are usually achieved under the requirement of Chinese state power. Similarly, Rebecca MacKinnon (2009) focuses on Chinese Internet companies' (e.g. *Sina* and *Tencent*) self-censorship systems. In fear of the administrative interference from the official powers, MacKinnon (2009) indicates that Chinese Internet companies usually start a proactive process of self-censorship before state censorship, deleting those blogs which are harmful to state interests. Third, China's state interventions in the Internet are also reflected in the Chinese government's equivocal and informal methods of guiding public opinions. For instance, the Chinese government has been accused of employing 'Internet mercenary' (网络水军), in particular the 'fifty cent party' (五毛党), to guide public opinions (Yang, 2011). 'Internet mercenary' refers to those Internet users who are

full-time or/and temporarily hired by specific companies or institutions to help others to create certain public opinions (Leibold, 2011; Yang, 2011). The ‘fifty cent party’ is a term originating from an exposed official document from the Hunan Provincial Government in 2004, which shows that there is a special fund for hiring Internet commentators to delete sensitive posts and to post pro-government posts, thereby guiding online public opinion (Hung, 2010; Han, 2015a; 2015b). As each post deleted or posted by each commentator earns fifty cent yuan, government-hired Internet commentators are then cynically labelled as the ‘fifty cent party’. From this perspective, it can be seen that some information on the Internet is still blocked or misrepresented, and thus to a certain extent the Chinese Internet can be understood as a particular informational space with state interventions.

Based on the above examination of existing studies of the Chinese Internet, it can be seen that the Internet might be neither a form of censored space under the control of state powers nor a rather open space with freedoms. In contrast, it is more like a ‘heterogeneous space’ in which both the state forces and the non-state forces attempt to persuade and debate with each other. In sum, it can be seen that the nature of the Chinese Internet as a heterogeneous space, as well as its feature as a form of more-than-text space as mentioned at the outset of this section, would be expected to impact on Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US. As such, the next section will be concerned with a brief overview of Chinese Internet discourses in existing literature in order to create a space for the following empirical analysis.

7.2 Chinese cyber-nationalism

There have been a number of studies focusing on Chinese discourses on the Internet. One of the primary interests in those studies has been concerned with how Internet users build up their imaginations of specific foreign states on the Internet. On the basis of the examination of relevant studies, it can be seen that one emphasis is Chinese cyber-nationalism relating Internet users' imaginations of foreign states to their nationalist sentiment. For instance, Christopher Hughes (2000) investigates the role of the Internet in establishing mass Chinese Internet users' imaginations of Indonesia after the Indonesia riots in May 1998. In reaction to atrocities committed against ethnic Chinese during that riot, Hughes (2000) points out, the Internet has been used as an effective channel to disseminate information, to mobilise political action and to express dissatisfaction by Chinese Internet users, and in so doing the Internet is considered to be an important space for the mass Chinese population to promote the nationalist claims and anti-Indonesia identity. Similarly, Randy Kluver (2001) focuses on the Chinese Internet discourse of the China-US aircraft collision incident²⁶ in April 2001. In so doing, Kluver (2001) indicates that the Chinese Internet has been heavily applied as an important means and space to ignite mass Chinese Internet users' anti-US sentiments, to mobilise offline anti-US actions at US embassies in China and to spread anti-US information. Moreover, Li Mingsheng (2009) and Xu Guangqiu (2012) have been concerned with Chinese Internet users' responses to the Western pro-Tibet attitude that happened during the 2008 Beijing

²⁶ See: note 19.

Olympic Games. These two studies have focused on Ségolène Royal's (a French politician) claim of the boycott of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the disturbance during the Olympic torch relay in France by Western activists who support Tibetan independence, respectively which, to a notable extent, have angered Chinese people. In such a situation, the Internet is viewed to be an important space for both domestic and overseas Chinese to vent their dissatisfactions towards the French, to mobilise anti-French demonstrations and to voice their nationalist concerns. Based on the examination of the above empirics, it can be seen that the Chinese Internet is often used to build an anti-foreign (e.g. anti-Indonesia, anti-US and anti-French) identity through the discussion of certain diplomatic incidents, which I name as Chinese cyber-nationalism. However, Chinese cyber-nationalism appears to focus too much on how Internet users reacts to certain diplomatic events and therefore establishes their imaginings of certain foreign states. Such diplomatic incidents always pre-set a hostile context between China and foreign states. This would notably impact upon Internet users' practice and performance of their nationalist identity. Would other themes, which are beyond these hostile contexts (e.g. terrorism), produce different discourses in Chinese Internet communities? To date, studies of this kind are still a blank space, and this would be one of the entry points of this research.

Another noticeable strand of studies, more relevant to this chapter, has looked at how ordinary Chinese people construct their imaginations of the US. For a long time, particularly during the Cold War and early post-Cold War period (i.e. the early 1990s), Chinese people's imaginations of the US have often been contextualised by Communist ideologies. At that time, the US has been depicted as a hostile, capitalist,

Western, tyrannical and hegemonic other which is exactly opposite to the socialist, Eastern, harmonious and vulnerable image of China itself (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008). Such anti-US identities, however, unlike the anti-foreign identity mentioned above, are top-down reflections of the Chinese state views rather than spontaneous expressions of the non-state opinions. As Zhang Xiaoling (2011) writes, political communication in China has long been guided by one voice — the voice of the CCP — at least before the emergence of the Internet. In this sense, the knowledge of the US accessible to ordinary Chinese people via their everyday media is potentially manufactured and guided by Chinese official powers. It is exactly because of the strict media censorship in China that the study of the Chinese Internet becomes a possible and potential channel to look at Chinese geopolitical visions from the mass non-state voices. This strand of review provides another entry point for this research.

The emergence of the Internet changes how ordinary Chinese people obtain information about the US. Even though the Chinese Internet is more or less subject to the intervention of state power, as the previous section has mentioned, it cannot be denied that the Internet brings increasingly opportunities for Chinese people to know about the US than the one-voice media. However, the Internet seems not to have evidently changed the anti-US discourse that was carved into Chinese society during the Cold War and the early post-Cold War period. This may be evidenced in extant studies on Chinese Internet discourses about the US, albeit that such studies are very limited in quantity. For example, Zhou Yongming (2005) explores Chinese Internet users' online discussions of world politics through the empirical case study

of the Chinese website, *Tiexue Forum* (铁血论坛)²⁷, where military fans gather and discuss with each other. Based on the analysis of Internet users' discussions on this website, Zhou (2005) argues that Chinese Internet users' cognitions of the US tend to be a form of cyber-nationalism as this webpage seems to have become one of the biggest public forums giving vent to anti-US sentiment. In Zhou's (2005) words, such anti-US discourse is shaped under the influence of a new framework of Sino-US relations, understood in recent decades as mutual competition rather than the mutual antagonism inherited from the Cold War and early post-Cold War period. Zhou's (2005) study does make sense for the study of Internet discourse, as it has more or less contributed to the filling of the blank of geopolitical study on Chinese Internet discourse of the US, particularly through the lens of Internet geopolitics. However, Zhou's (2005) study also has deficiencies. For instance, this study seems to have overemphasised the significance of the competitive Sino-US relationship in establishing Chinese anti-US discourses, while ignoring the particularity of Chinese political culture in shaping such discourses. At the same time, the case selection in this study appears to pay too much attention to a few dedicated websites rather than to some more inclusive Internet forums or online communities. There is an obvious nationalist bias on *Tiexue Forum*, which is a gathering place/space for military fans and Chinese nationalists rather than more ordinary Internet users, which may make Zhou's research on Chinese Internet discourses biased in turn.

Underlining the above paucities or shortcomings in existing studies of Chinese Internet discourses and Chinese imaginations of the US, this chapter is concerned

²⁷ See: www.tiexue.net.

with how the space of the Internet is engaged in the shaping of Chinese geopolitical discourses of the US. Most specifically, unlike existing studies that are concerned with how Internet users produce anti-foreign discourses through their responses to specific diplomatic incidents, this chapter will primarily focus on how the discourse of the US is constructed from the perspective of terrorism. In comparison to existing studies that focus on the top-down reflections of the opinion of the US in Chinese society, this study will also examine the Chinese Internet as a heterogeneous space where both the state forces and the non-state forces debate with each other, and in so doing investigate how Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US are debated and negotiated in such a space. Finally, unlike existing studies that draw on a biased Internet sample, this study will pay attention to the case of *Sina Weibo*, which is not a specialist Internet community with a special purpose but a general and normal Chinese Internet space, in order to investigate the mass opinion of the most ordinary Chinese people.

7.3 Chinese Internet discourses from *Sina Weibo*

Before going into the main body of analysis, I will first explain why the cases of Internet, in particular the Internet community of *Sina Weibo*, weibos from two official accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and relevant comments from Internet users (as mentioned in chapter 4), are selected as samples in this research. According to the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC)²⁸, there are about 641 million Internet users in China in 2014, over 46% of the total population

²⁸ See: <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/>.

of China and comprising nearly 22% of Internet users worldwide. These statistics mean that the case study of the Internet, to a notable extent, than the case study of interviews (see chapter 6), can contribute to the examination of the non-state visions from the perspective of the mass Chinese. In this regard, this thesis selected *Sina Weibo*, one of the biggest Chinese Internet communities for social networking, as a sample for observing Chinese Internet discourses on terrorism and the US. However, as just argued in section 7.1, the Chinese Internet is not a pure space for the masses, but a heterogeneous space and a platform for both state forces and non-state forces to practice, perform and promote their ideologies and cultures. In order to examine to what extent state forces can intervene in mass opinions, this chapter is concerned with weibos of two official accounts, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, studying their interaction with the masses on the Internet. It merits noting that the official web accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* are not the same as the printed media of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, at least in content, even if they belong to the same media institution as the printed media. That is, these web accounts tend to give some short, caricatured, affectual and emotional talking, while the printed media tend to release some authoritative and authenticity-based papers.

On this basis, I need to do more clarifications on the Internet data collected in this research. As elaborated in chapter 4, *Sina Weibo* is like *Twitter* where anyone can start a discussion. Technologically, it is hardly to observe millions of *Sina Weibo* users' discussion of terrorism and the US. Considering the research aims of studying the opinions of the mass Chinese and how state forces and non-state forces debate in the Internet space, this research narrows down its concerns to the bulletin board

systems of two official web accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. The bulletin boards underneath each weibo provide spaces for Internet users to discuss related topics with each other and even with the state voices (i.e. *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*). In this sense, the Internet data collected in this research is not a collection of the spontaneous discussions from the mass Chinese Internet users, but more like a collection of the public opinions that are expressed in response to weibos (usually in forms of small articles or statements less than 140 words) released by the official web accounts of two newspapers.

Drawing on the Nvivo analysis of related data collected from *Sina Weibo*, this section will look at the feature of Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US. As illustrated in the methodology chapter, I collected all weibos on the theme of terrorism and the US from two official accounts on *Sina Weibo* posted between 1 September 2009 (the date *Sina Weibo* founded) and 30 March 2015 (the date my fieldwork completed), as well as Internet users' comments underneath those weibos. In so doing, I collected 35 and 16 weibos from the accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively. In addition, I have collected hundreds of or thousands of comments from Internet users underneath each weibo. In this sense, it can be seen that the Internet discourse of terrorism and the US in this case is primarily composed of two aspects: weibos released by the web accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* and Internet users' comments under those weibos. Drawing on this data, this section is both concerned with the textual analysis of these 35 and 16 weibos and with the Nvivo analysis of related comments. In so doing, the following analyses will first give a general idea of Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism

and the US in the online community on *Sina Weibo*, and then display the particular features of them in three parts.

7.3.1 State voices or non-state voices?

On the basis of the textual analyses of 35 weibos from the account of *People's Daily* and 16 weibos from the account of *South Weekend*, it can be clearly seen that the *Sina Weibo* accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* have different kinds of writings about terrorism and the US compared to the printed media of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. Unlike the printed media in which 'anti-US' discourses are firmly and stably produced (see chapter 5), these weibos released from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* clearly illustrate a mixed range of opinions. For instance, weibos from these two web accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* have displayed both anti-US and pro-US opinions²⁹. From the webpage of *People's Daily*, 15 weibos among the collected 35 weibos have shown obvious anti-US positions, such as:

(22:10 14/09/2012) ***People's Daily***: *Who ignites the anti-US wave in the Middle East?*

(11:10 30/06/2013) ***People's Daily***: *How can the US be authorised to engage in the double standard of the war on terror?*

(19:26 06/11/2013) ***People's Daily***: *The CNN encourages the arrogance*

²⁹ Both the anti-US and the pro-US opinions are identified by the researcher in accordance with their political positions, the former of which refers to those sentences which criticise, ridicule and mock the US, while the latter refers to those sentences which show an appreciative, enjoyable or positive attitude toward the US and its war on terror.

of terrorism!

Meanwhile, there are also 10 weibos from the webpage of *People's Daily* displaying pro-US orientations, such as:

(13:17 26/05/2013) ***People's Daily***: *American athletes lift Chinese flag and American flag in memory of the terrorist victims.*

(07:26 11/09/2013) ***People's Daily***: *9/11, you cannot heal the pain!*

Similar stories are placed on the webpage of *South Weekend*. Exactly, 4 among the 16 weibos collected from *South Weekend* have shown an anti-US position. As two of those weibos put it:

(09:52 16/04/2012) ***South Weekend***: *Oil? What do the US's frequent military activities in the Middle East aim for?*

(09:30 03/06/2013) ***South Weekend***: *Discussion of the US drone killings in the Middle East.*

Similar to the web account of *People's Daily* in *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that there are also 3 weibos from *South Weekend* that have shown preference towards a pro-US stance. As two of them propose:

(10:09 09/09/2011) ***South Weekend***: *New York cannot believe the hatred!*

Moreover, based on the investigation of the mass Internet users' comments on the weibos from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, as mentioned above, this study has paid significant attention to mass opinions about terrorism and the US. Most specifically, employing Nvivo 10 as an analysis tool, this research divides Internet users' comments into 'instances'³⁰ in order to summarise their political positions. Those instances are first summarised into a series of codes in order to generalise their common understanding of terrorism and the US (the right-hand column of Figure 7-1). These codes are then sub-categorised into several more abstract notions (the middle column of Figure 7-1) and further used to explain the Internet discourses. On this basis, as Figure 7-1 illustrates, the mass Internet users' opinions of terrorism and the US can be primarily generalised into three types of discourse: anti-US discourses, pro-US discourses and regime-challenging discourse. Among them, nearly 76% of Internet users' comments (with 1,111 instances) focused on anti-US discourses, including '*to use language to construct the anti-US identity*' (with 55 instances), '*to shout anti-US slogans*' (with 46 instances), '*the militaristic fantasies*' (with 80 instances), '*to support the US's enemies*' (with 192 instances), '*to recall history to construct anti-US identity*' (with 163 instances), '*to face-slap the US and the pro-US forces*' (with 336 instances) and '*to give moral judgements on the US and its war on terror*' (with 239 instances). Around 15% of Internet users'

³⁰ 'Instances' usually mean shot sentences or paragraphs that are identified by the researcher from Internet users' comments and that can be representative of the given user's opinion.

comments (with 214 instances) were concerned with pro-US discourses, such as ‘*to use language to construct the pro-US identity*’ (with 74 instances) and ‘*to advocate the superiority of the US*’ (with 140 instances). Beyond those two discourses, nearly 9% of Internet users’ comments (with 134 instances) were in relation to a regime-challenging discourse, such as ‘*to expose the dark side of Chinese society*’ (with 134 instances). In this sense, it can be seen that Internet users’ comments also show a mixed range of opinions.

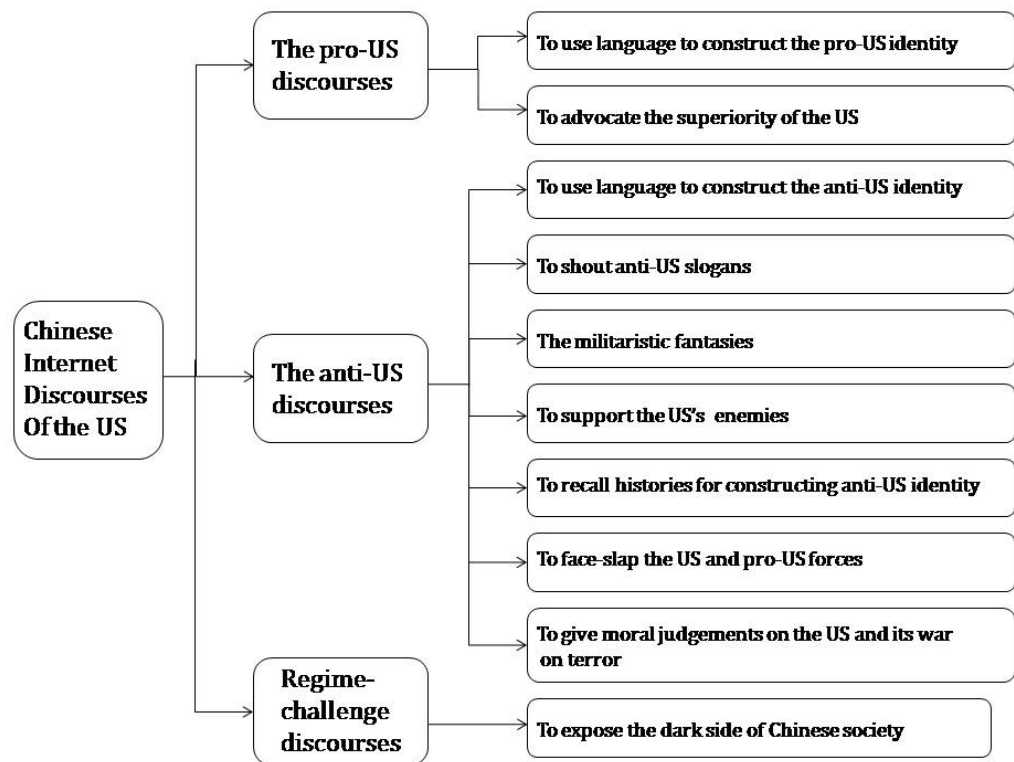


Figure 7-1 Nvivo tree of Chinese Internet discourses of the US

Nevertheless, the mixed range of opinions on terrorism and the US among the mass Internet users does not mean that they resulted from mixed opinions from the accounts of *People’s Daily* or *South Weekend* in the online community *Sina Weibo*. Even though the official web accounts of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* do not have the same writings about terrorism and the US as the printed media, these two

accounts can still be viewed as forms of state voices as they are still affiliated to the printed media of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*. They use the same names, work for the same purposes and play the same roles in Chinese society. However, the online accounts of *People's Daily* and *South Weekend* do not work in the same ways as the printed media. They seem to have played a weaker role than the printed media in the Internet community. This is mainly reflected in that they cannot guide public opinions in the Internet community of *Sina Weibo*. For example, underneath these weibos posted by both *People's Daily* or *South Weekend* with either anti-US, pro-US or non-political stances, a mixed range of opinions from Internet users can be expected on relevant bulletin boards, as shown by a weibo posted by *People's Daily* and part of the comments received on the bulletin board of this weibo:

(07:26 11/09/2013) ***People's Daily***: 12 years ago, the US was attacked by terrorists, resulting in the destruction of six buildings (including the twin-towers of WTC) and the deaths of over 3,000 civilians. Today, the high-rise buildings have been erected from the rubble, but time can never heal the pain in people's minds. Lighting a candle for the innocent killed in this event. This is also a warning: the hatred and violence will make everyone feel insecure, and only respect and communication can bring peace.

(09:07 11/09/2013) ***Guo Songmin***: Incomprehensible words with vague political stance!

(10:52 11/09/2013) **Damo Nanyou:** Rarely, @³¹**People's Daily** speaks a decent word.

(11:10 11/09/2013) **Limited Sunshine:** 12 years has passed, but the funny thing is that there are still a number of stupid 'fifty cent party' in China. God bless the dead rest in peace! God bless for world peace!

(11:55 11/09/2013) **Never Been Tired of Garden Parties:** Why not talk about the US's bombing of our Embassy in Yugoslavia! I guess a lot of Chinese have forgotten it!! The evilest state would be the US.

(13:03 11/09/2013) **Shining Moon Cici:** Disgusting! Can you [People's Daily] change a name first and then embrace the big-leg of your American mum?

(17:54 11/09/2013) **Have You Been Harmonious Today:** I support @Guo Songmin, had you [People's Daily] felt pain when our Chinese Embassy was bombed in Yugoslavia?

(21:05 11/09/2013) **Love China, Love Family:** The US has never viewed the ETIM as terrorists, why should we look at Taliban and Al-Qaida as terrorists? If the US cannot feel pain, they will never know others' pain. 9/11 is a memorable day! We salute these sacrificed heroes who fight for national independence and liberation!

(22:11 11/09/2013) **Boat on the Blue Creek:** The US should introspect its own behaviour//@Love China, Love Family

³¹ The symbol '@' in a weibo means to mention somebody or somebody's words in his/her own words.

(18:57 12/09/2013) **Mr. Six-Half**: *Lighting a candle for those innocents killed in wars in the sovereign states of Afghanistan and Iraq.*

In this example, it can be found that there are both anti-US and pro-US opinions underneath a weibo that shows sympathy for the US's suffering in the 9/11 incident. Specifically, some Internet users have blamed *People's Daily's* sympathy on the US, such as *Guo Songmin*, *Shining Moon Cici* and *Have You Been Harmonious Today*; some Internet users have recalled the US's hostilities to China to show their attitude towards the US's suffering in terrorist attacks, such as *Love China*, *Love Family*, *Never Been Tired of Garden Parties* and *Have You Been Harmonious Today*; some have doubted the US's tough behaviours in the international arena, including *Mr. Six-Half*; others have condemned the US's double standards on defining terrorism, including *Love China*, *Love Family* and *Boat on the Blue Creek*. Through the above discourses, the mass Internet users have constructed and practised a strong anti-US identity underneath this weibo. On the opposite side of the coin, there are also some Internet users who relate their understandings of terrorism and the US to a pro-US identity. For example, some displayed their 'appreciations' of the Chinese media's sympathy for the US, such as *Damo Nanyou*; while some have attempted to use language to attack anti-US forces, such as *Limited Sunshine*. In this sense, this example to a certain extent can be used to explain the nature of the Chinese Internet as a heterogeneous space in which a mixed range of users (including both the state and non-state forces) try to display, practice and perform a mixed range of opinions.

It merits noting that such a mixed range of opinions on terrorism and the US

in the Internet community of *Sina Weibo* does not take shape in the same way as in the printed media. Owing to the technology of the Internet and the word limit in the community of *Sina Weibo*, the public opinions in Internet space are always shaped via brief, emotional and interactive ways of communication. Unlike the emphasis on authenticity and authority in the printed media, the Internet puts more emphasis on openness and diversification for information exchange. In this regard, Internet users often apply the methods of verbal ‘wars’ and emotional expressions with short sentences to construct and perform their identities. As a weibo released by *People’s Daily* and relevant comments put it:

(12:02 03/03/2014) **People’s Daily:** *Doubting the US media: Are you talking about human rights? Have you seen these innocent lives fallen in blood? Have you shown even a little bit of concern to the victims in your words? If such things [the terrorist attack in Kunming railway station] happen in the US, would you be so mean as to use the character ‘terrorism’? Double standards!*

(19:05 03/03/2014) **Bending Creek:** *Hmmm, why do you so care about what the US media says? The media in the US is free. It does not like China where there are same-toned news drafts for everything. Can the US media stand for the viewpoint of the US government?*

(19:36 03/03/2014) **Long Tail Cat under the Moon** replies to **@Bending**

Creek: *Are you a 'US cent party'³²? Is there anything wrong with going against the US? As a hegemonic state changing ways by bullying others, there is no logic to speak of. I would doubt every word of the hegemonic country!*

(19:46 03/03/2014) Bending Creek replies to @Long Tail Cat under the

Moon: *Huh, Hegemony? For terrorists and dictatorship, such as Gaddafi and the Kim dynasty, I think 'hegemony' is good!*

(20:01 03/03/2014) Long Tail Cat under the Moon replies to @Bending

Creek: *But hegemony sometimes intervenes in other states' affairs, finding faults, sowing dissent and stabbing in the back. It is really hateful!*

PS: Please do not forget that, the victims in Kunming are our compatriots!

In this example, it can be seen that both *Bending Creek*, who has a pro-US identity, and *Long Tail Cat under the Moon*, who has an anti-US identity, try to debate and verbally fight with each other in order to uphold their pro-US or anti-US stances in the Internet space. More broadly, it can be seen that such interactive and discussion-based ways of communication play a key role in constructing Internet discourses in *Sina Weibo*. In stressing the open and diversified characteristics of the Internet, the following sections are concerned with how the mass of Internet users constructs anti-US, pro-US and regime-challenging discourses, in turn.

³² The 'US cent party' (美分党) refers to Chinese Internet users who appear to be in favour of US ideologies or values. In contrast to the 'fifty cent party' who might be evidenced to be unofficially employed by the government, however, the 'US cent party' is merely a symbol of offline pro-US ideology rather than real agents hired by US forces (Li, 2010; Chang, 2013).

7.3.2 The anti-US discourses from *Sina Weibo*

Drawing on the key question of how Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US are established by the mass Internet users, this chapter also investigates how Internet users build up their imaginings. Based on the Nvivo analysis of related data from *Sina Weibo*, this study finds that Internet users' different perceptions of terrorism and the US are usually produced through the various sub-discourses that connect people's Internet experience to the exercise of their specific identities or political stances. Most specifically, the Nvivo analysis of Internet users' comments in this research shows that there are seven, two and one sub-discourses that are related to anti-US, pro-US and regime-challenge discourses, respectively. In this part, I will firstly focus on these 7 sub-discourses of anti-US discourses. These sub-discourses usually share an affective, emotional and irrational feature, a nationalist concern and a Confucian cultural identity. In what follows, I will pay attention to how these 7 sub-discourses contribute to the construction of anti-US identity and anti-US perceptions in the Internet space.

(A) To use spiteful language to construct anti-US identity. In the space of the Chinese Internet, it is common for Internet users to express their opinions or to construct their identities by using spiteful words. For example, Han Rongbin (2015a) pays attention to how Chinese Internet users defend the Chinese regime in Internet communities. He suggests that those Internet users who defend the Chinese regime are usually verbally attacked by other Internet users through the use of malicious words, such as '*US cent party*', '*dog-food party*' and '*road-leading dogs*'. However,

this is clearly not a special phenomenon that is applicable only to regime defenders; in contrast, it is also widely adopted in the community of *Sina Weibo* in which a large body of Internet users attempts to use spiteful words against those Chinese who support the US, and therefore to construct their anti-US identity. Based on the Nvivo analysis of Internet users' comments underneath weibos from *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, it can be seen that about 55 instances are related to the anti-US identity. In those instances, a number of spiteful words are used by Internet users, including: 'US cent party', 'US/foreign/Western dogs' (美狗/洋狗/西狗 i.e. those who beg the US/foreign/Western powers for benefits like dogs), 'US fans' (镁[美]粉/哈美 i.e. those who are deeply fascinated by US technology, culture and political power), 'Han traitors' (汉奸 i.e. those Han Chinese who betray their motherland and assist foreign invaders to invade China), 'US/Western slaves' (美奴/西奴 i.e. those who treat the US/Western forces as their masters) and 'floor-washing party' (洗地党, a network language originating from a famous Chinese comedy movie *Kung Fu* and then extended to refer to those who do menial work, in particular bad things, for others). For instance, as some *Sina Weibo* comments selected from the Nvivo codes illustrate:

(15:02 03/03/2014) **Backless hedgehog:** *I despise the US cent party on the bulletin board ~ Such a catastrophe [Kunming railway station terrorist attack] there is in our country. Under such a situation, are you [the 'US cent party'] still wagging your tails and ignoring the blood of your compatriots?*

(06:52 04/03/2014) ***Walking Alone:*** *Are there so many US dogs? I have heard that there are many Han traitors, and I did not believe it, till now!*

(07:20 04/03/2014) ***Kop zhb:*** *I am wondering why are there so many floor-washing party members? Maybe because the weibo pokes the most sensitive part of the US dogs!*

(10:15 06/03/2014) ***Xiaoqiao's Zhoulang:*** *In careful packages, the core values of the US are still interest-based. Those US fans, you should wipe your eyes and use your brains!*

Even though such spiteful words are usually highlighted on the bulletin boards underneath the weibos about terrorism, it can be seen that they are not necessarily related to the theme of terrorism. On the contrary, these words are more like pure vents of anti-US sentiment. More specifically, these who name other Internet users as *the US cent party*, *US dog*, *Han traitors*, *floor-washing party* or *US fans* cannot always give persuasive evidence to support their opinions. They just use lots of short words to attack those Chinese who support the US, in impolite and emotional ways, in order to express their own political positions.

(B) To shout anti-US slogans. Based on the exploration of comments from Internet users in *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that some Internet users also attempt to construct their anti-US identity by shouting anti-US slogans. Shouting slogans is also an affectual and emotional way expressing opinions, which is usually achieved by speaking out short, affectual and emotional sentences. Different from the sub-discourse of speaking some spiteful words, shouting slogans is a form of personal

expressions with strong emotions rather than verbally attacking others. Through the Nvivo analysis of Internet users' comments on terrorism and the US in *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that 46 instances are found to be related to the practice of shouting anti-US slogans. Those anti-US slogans mainly include:

(11:01 05/09/2013) **Wang Yan:** *To overthrow US imperialism!*

(07:11 04/03/2014) **Mr. Ktler:** *The US's ambition of destroying us has never disappeared yet!*³³

(10:49 06/05/2011) **Wu Zheng:** *Bin Laden dies, but the hegemony is still alive! Worse than terrorism!*

(15:54 06/05/2011) **Bamboo Plum Pine:** *Long live the Laden, a good student of Mao! Long live the Laden, an anti-US hero!*

In these examples, it can be seen that the US is rendered as a negative image of imperialism and hegemony. More specifically, through the applications of critical words (e.g. *overthrow*, *destroying us* and *an anti-US hero*) and key figures (e.g. *Bin Laden*) which have an obvious anti-US position, these slogans sustain strong anti-US affects/emotions and contribute to the reinforcement of a strong anti-US identity

³³ This slogan originates from Maoist anti-US/Western ideology during the Cold War (Li, 2004) and now this tradition is still favoured by a number of online leftists.

in *Sina Weibo*.

(C) The militaristic fantasy. In order to establish the anti-US identity in the Internet space, as illustrated in Figure 7-1, a number of Chinese Internet users, who may have with no or little militaristic experience, are clamoring for wars against the US and its allies in *Sina Weibo*. I define such clamoring as a form of militaristic fantasy. Such kinds of fantasy can be read as a discourse that connects Internet users' online practices to their national pride and national identity. Through examination of these 80 instances concerned with Internet users' militaristic fantasies in *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that they are either related to the expectation of the power of China or to dissatisfaction with the Chinese government's weakness towards the US. For example, some Internet users think that China should learn from Russia and be tough on the US:

*(00:01 19/03/2013) **Gone with the Wind:** Military strength speaks much louder than rule.*

*(16:09 03/03/2014) **No Joy with Wine:** Handling the relationship with US imperialism, we [Chinese] should learn from the Great Putin!*

*(23:18 03/03/2014) **Notes of Henan People:** There is no truth but strength. Putin says: there are only two allies for Russia, the Russian army and the Russian navy. If tens of Chinese aircraft carriers were cruising in four oceans, they [the US media] would not report [the Kunming railway station terrorist attack] so 'rationally'!*

Besides the expectation of being tough to the US, other Internet users also express disappointment in the Chinese government, in particular the Chinese Foreign Ministry, because of their ‘weaknesses’ towards the US. For instance, some Internet users ridicule the attitudes of China and the Chinese Foreign Ministry towards the US and its allies:

*(00:20 28/08/2013) **Pretty Uncle:** The US kicks those whom it wants to kick. While turning to China, under pressure from the US, it cannot tread in Japan and Philippines. The Foreign Ministry, please do something our ordinary people can be proud of!*

*(01:55 12/09/2013) **I Have Just Changed a Vest** replies to @Terry: How China handles conflicts with other states? Good question! A forever turtle! [Implying being a coward]*

*(21:43 08/08/2014) **Yang at the Next Door:** ‘I kick whom I want to kick!’, ‘I...Hmmm, I condemn those who kick my ass!’—A Sino-US dialogue.*

Similar to the previous two sub-discourses, the militaristic fantasy is also a form of nationalist discourse that links Internet users’ discussions of terrorism and the US to their national pride and national identity. In the above examples, it can be seen that, even though these Internet users’ comments are underneath weibos on the issue of terrorism, they obviously go beyond this theme and use the Internet space as a place to express their national pride and national identity.

(D) To support the US’s enemy. A great number of Chinese Internet users in

Sina Weibo have expressed strong emotions about standing in line with terrorists. Based on the Nvivo analysis of relevant comments from *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that approximately 192 instances express a wish to support the terrorists. Through the investigation of those 192 instances, however, it can be seen that those Internet users focus more on terrorists' hostile acts against the US rather than their acts of terror. For example, these Internet users who have shown their sympathies for Bin Laden, are merely under the umbrella of their position against the US:

(10:37 06/05/2011) Luo OOX: Has Bin Laden, the so-called enemy of human civilisation, died? When is Laden becoming the enemy of human civilisation? I only know he is the enemy of the US, but not all humankind.

(19:53 24/06/2013) Sini Ximo: The US is our enemy! The enemy of enemy is friend! So, Bin Laden is undoubtedly our friend!

(13:52 03/03/2014) Buhou Buxiu: Those who are anti-US are heroes of the universe, so is Bin Laden! @The US Embassy in China

In the above examples, it can be seen that the discourse to support the US's enemies connects Chinese Internet users' understanding of terrorism and the US to their pre-set nationalist sentiment. In other words, they have pre-set the US as the enemy of the Chinese and thus employed terrorists, who are considered to be enemies of the US, as a discourse to construct their anti-US identity. To a certain extent, this group of Internet users may show no sympathy to the terrorists, but emphasise terrorists' anti-US positions as a form of anti-US discourse.

(E) To recall history to construct anti-US identity. Beyond the previous sub-discourses, there are also a number of Chinese Internet users trying to construct an anti-US identity by recalling specific historical events, in particular those related to the tense Sino-US relations. Specifically, there are about 163 instances found to be related to this sub-discourse. Drawing on the analysis of those 163 instances, it can be summarised that two key events are often involved in the practice of an anti-US identity *Sina Weibo*, including the ‘Chinese embassy bombing incident’ and ‘China-US aeroplane collision incident’³⁴. Through recalling those historical events that narrate a tense Sino-US relationship, Internet users establish an antagonistic political environment for understandings of the US. In turn, they often place things related to the US into this antagonistic environment in order to interpret them. This phenomenon is particularly reflected in the discussion of the 9/11 incident on the bulletin boards of the web accounts of *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend* on 11 September 2013, a memorial day for the 9/11 incident:

(10:13 11/09/2013) Intellectual Politician: @South Weekend, Sorry, who you are mourning for? Do you remember that the US bombed our embassy? It equates to throwing shit onto the face of our country! It [the Chinese embassy bombing incident] can never be wiped from the memory of our Chinese people, but now you are kissing the US’s ass!

(11:31 11/09/2013) Ran Di: @People’s Daily, lighting candles for your mum! [One of People’s Daily’s weibos is lighting a candle for the victims

³⁴ See: note 19.

of the 9/11] Do you still remember how Wang Wei [the Chinese pilot who died in the China-US aeroplane collision incident] sacrificed and who bombed our embassy?

*(11:46 11/09/2013) **Summer and Sunny Sleepier**: What a People's Daily!*

*Do not rape the opinion of people, please! //@NL **Sangqiyang**: On May 8,*

*@**People's Daily** mentioned nothing about the US's bombing of the*

Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia!

In the above examples, it can be seen that '*Chinese embassy bombing incident*' and '*China-US aeroplane collision incident*' have been widely employed to highlight Internet users' anti-US positions, even if these two events are not considered to be related to the issue of terrorism. To a notable extent, these two events can be viewed as a form of nationalist narration utilised to enliven Chinese people's nationalist sentiments. In this research, such narrations also play influential roles in shaping Chinese Internet discourses about the US.

(F) To face-slap the US and the pro-US forces. Face-slapping is viewed as a regular tactic for Chinese Internet users to express their opinions by 'ruthlessly and directly pointing out errors in logic, factual mistakes or discrepancies' made by other Internet users (Han, 2015a, p.1013). As this process is very impolite, like slapping someone's face, it is vividly described as face-slapping (打脸) by Chinese Internet users. Given the symbolic meaning of the face, which is equated with reputation in the Chinese culture, face-slapping is always considered a seriously antagonistic action to undermine others' reputations (Han, 2015a). In the case study

of *Sina Weibo*, face-slapping is regarded as a key sub-discourse to undermine the reputation of the US and pro-US forces, thereby establishing an anti-US identity. As the US and pro-US forces often highly prize the values of human rights, freedom and democracy, some Chinese Internet users always expose ‘convincing’ evidence to uncover instances where the US has trampled human rights, freedom and democracy, in order to slap the faces of the US and pro-US forces. On the basis of the Nvivo analysis of relevant data from *Sina Weibo*, it can be seen that around 336 instances are related to Internet users’ practices of face-slapping in *Sina Weibo*. On the bulletin board on which Chinese Internet users discuss a *People’s Daily*’s post about the US’s suffering from the Boston terrorist attack (06:55 04/16/2013), for example, quite a lot of Chinese Internet users try to slap the faces of pro-US forces:

(15:47 18/04/2013) **Plantain Root: @Sky of Tirol**, *When the US is under attack from terrorists, the US cent party cannot wait to talk about human rights. When the US’s B52s are flying over these unarmed civilians with depleted uranium bombs, where are the US’s human rights? You [the US cent party] are really slapping your own face!*

(22:32 18/04/2013) **Old Nest of Miao Zhuang Wang: @Wufatian**, *Are you talking about human rights?! It is really slapping their [the US’s] faces! What the US drones have done in Pakistan in recent years was the killing of 47 so-called ‘terrorists’ at the cost of 175 children, 535 civilians and 2,348 other lives. Is this the US’s human rights?*

Unlike the previous sub-discourses (i.e. (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E)) that emphasise the connection between Internet users' online practice and their nationalist concern, the sub-discourse of face-slapping focuses more on Chinese Internet users' cultural and political identity of Confucianism. As mentioned in chapter 3, the Confucian geopolitical traditions of *hua-yi* distinction and Sino-centrism still impact to a certain extent upon current Chinese political cultures. In other words, Chinese people's viewpoints of the imaginings on foreign states and their understanding of international affairs depend to a notable extent on the Confucian values that require a state to be harmonious, pluralist and peaceful in both international and domestic arenas. It is exactly the US's violation of Confucian values that makes the mass of Chinese Internet users slap the faces of the US and pro-US forces.

(G) To give moral judgements about the US war on terror. Face-slapping is obviously not the only sub-discourse that links Chinese people's Internet practice to their Confucian identity. Influenced by Confucianism, a considerable number of Chinese Internet users also apply the Confucian geopolitical tradition as a form of criteria to evaluate the US's policies and actions in the war on terror. In so doing, they criticise the US war on terror, especially its violation of international harmony, peace, security and order, which is considered to go against Confucian values. The Nvivo analysis in this research indicates that there are about 239 instances in *Sina Weibo* that connect Chinese Internet users' understanding of terrorism and the US (in particular their understanding of the US war on terror) to their Confucian identity. As illustrated by comments from a weibo discussing the US's air strikes on Iraq in August 2014:

(17:02 08/08/2014) **Octave Eagle**: *Under the guise of freedom, equality, and love, the Western forces often consider themselves as moral models. On this basis, they always think everything they do is right. It is a typical imperialist arrogance. Indeed, they have never changed their barbaric attitudes begun from colonial plundering. They keep speaking of human rights, but seldom look at themselves in the mirror. They hold the banner of human rights for killing. A fully sanctimonious 'hypocrite'!*

(11:24 08/08/2014) **Fish on the Drying Net**: *Occupying lands of others, killing the people of others and then claiming to be protecting the security of others, this is the virtue of the Western world!!!*

(21:39 08/08/2014) **Dezu Leshan**: *I am quietly watching how the world butcher [the US] is swaggering.*

(10:30 20/08/2014) **Xiongzhi Tiandong**: *Since the killing of Saddam by the global police [the US], Iraq has long been in an environment of terrorists, bombings, internal rebellions and an abyss of misery. So, what did the US's war bring to Iraq? An ancient Chinese person told us, 'even if it is a great state, the bellicose will finally make it perish'.*

Similar to the sub-discourse of face-slapping, in the examples just mentioned, it can be seen that this group of Chinese Internet users also use Confucian values as an important criterion to assess the imagining of the US and to evaluate the US war on terror. Most specifically, the US's '*holding the banner of human rights for killing*',

'occupying lands of others' and creating of *'an environment of terrorists, bombings, internal rebellions and an abyss of misery'* have been implied as strong violations of Confucian values, and so such discourse constructs a strong anti-US identity.

In general, it can be seen that a large number (around 76%) of Chinese Internet users in *Sina Weibo* have contributed to the production of anti-US discourse through their online practices. Specifically, through the sub-discourses of speaking spiteful anti-US language, shouting anti-US slogans, creating anti-US militaristic fantasies, supporting the US's enemies, recalling some historical events from the tense Sino-US relations, face-slapping the US and pro-US forces and giving moral judgements on the US war on terror, this section of Chinese Internet users has bridged a strong connection between their online practice and their anti-US identity. Based on the exploration of the aforementioned seven forms of anti-US discourses, it can be seen that anti-US identity is, on the one hand, related to the nationalist concerns; on the other hand, it is more or less framed in the historically-rooted but not so apparently-displayed cultural and political background of Confucianism.

7.3.3 The pro-US discourses from *Sina Weibo*

In contrast to my previous work on the Chinese newspapers in chapter 5 and existing works of Chinese imaginations of the US (Kluver, 2001; Niu, 2001; Zhou, 2005; He & Huang, 2008), both of which underline an absolute anti-US discourse, Internet discourses of terrorism in *Sina Weibo* have also appeared in a form of pro-US discourse. Examining relevant comments from Internet users, it can be seen that nearly 15% of Internet users (with 214 instances) in *Sina Weibo* have been related

to the pro-US discourse. The Nvivo analysis shows that such pro-US discourse is mainly composed of two sub-discourses: ‘to use spiteful language to construct a pro-US identity’ and ‘to advocate the superiority of the US’ (Figure 7-1). In what follows, I will pay attention to how these two sub-discourses contribute to the pro-US identity and imagination in the Internet space.

(a) To use spiteful words to construct a pro-US identity. Similar to those Chinese Internet users who practice their anti-US identity by using spiteful words, and to a notable extent as a response to those Internet users’ verbal attacks, a number of Chinese Internet users also practice their pro-US identity in the same way. The Nvivo analysis suggests that about 74 instances from Internet users’ comments are related to this sub-discourse. Most specifically, this group of Chinese Internet users try to direct dirty or harsh sentences at those Chinese with a strong anti-US identity, and therefore establish their own pro-US identity. Focusing on those 74 instances, it can be seen that the dirty labels mainly include: ‘*the fifty cent party*’, ‘*the broken brain*’ (脑残, i.e. a biased Internet word describing those who speak like abnormal, ridiculous and excessively nervous people, just like those with brain disorders (Qin, 2003)), ‘*the US sprayers*’ (美喷, ‘*the sprayer*’ is a Chinese Internet term referring to those who use vicious words to anger, stir up and insult their opponents in order to undermine their mental qualities (Qin, 2003), while ‘*the US sprayers*’ refers to those sprayers who speak vicious words to the US or pro-US forces), ‘*the patriotic thieves*’ (爱国贼, i.e. those who do evil things in the name of patriotism, which is now applied by Chinese Internet users to describe those who are brainwashed by the governmental forces) and ‘*the imperial specialists*’ (御用砖家, i.e. those who

specialise in talking nonsense, have no real and professional knowledge, but speak loudly pretending to be specialists, particularly with the purpose of defending the regime). For example, as some comments selected from the Nvivo codes illustrate:

*(08:07 16/04/2012) **Walking in the Snow**: @Do not Forget the Brother Sky F**k off! Brain broken patriotic thief! Are the American people not human?*

*(10:29 16/04/2012) **Zqm055**: All broken brains think that [the US's] Iraq war aims to get oil and that Korean War aimed for pickles. So, it must aim to waste oil or to join the CCP if the US starts a war with China. That is funny!*

*(14:04 16/04/2012) **Kidd_hou**: It was calculated that the US cannot cover its expenditure in Iraq even if Iraq gave all of its underground oil to the US. So, the claim that the US aims to get oil in Iraq is absolutely defaming the US, a claim made by the fifty cent party or imperial specialists.*

*(10:50 08/08/2014) **James_T_Guo** replies to @Dull Attitude: To my surprise, People's Daily gives voice to support the US war on terror. Undoubtedly, it lets the US sprayers fly into a panic!*

*(11:20 08/08/2014) **Northwest Squid** replies to @James_T_Guo: [It is a] Good article! The patriotic thieves must get antsy.*

*(12:22 08/08/2014) **GIS4Fun**: Come on, the fifty cent party! Embracing the big-leg of your ISIS dad!*

Similar to the anti-US sub-discourse of speaking spiteful language (A), this sub-discourse of speaking dirty language in pro-US discourses also goes far beyond the discussion of the topic of terrorism. In contrast, it is also like a pure vent of pro-US sentiment, connected to Internet users speaking their political and cultural identity. In the same way, those Internet users who speak dirty words to construct their pro-US identity are also unable to offer convincing evidence to support their opinions, and thus share an affectual and emotional feature in the practice of their identity.

(b) To advocate the superiority of US values. Beyond verbal attacks, the pro-US discourse is also established on the basis of Chinese Internet users' advocating the superiority of US values. About 140 instances from Internet users' comments are found to be related to this sub-discourse. Analysing those 140 instances, it can be seen that this part of Internet users always underlines values that are supposedly upheld by the US, such as the inclusiveness, openness, freedom and humanism. In so doing, they attempt to create a positive imagining of the US in the Internet space. This sub-discourse is first embodied in Internet users' positive appreciations of the US's responses to terrorist attack. For instance, on the bulletin board of one weibo from *South Weekend*, on which New York city's responses to the 9/11 incident are followed and discussed, some Chinese Internet users have highly praised the values favoured by the US:

(11:30 09/09/2011) Chaichai Loves New York: [I have] just read South Weekend. The biggest feeling is that I must go and take a look at New York. I like that it is full of freedom, openness, inclusiveness and charm.

(11:54 09/09/2011) **Li Sen is a CAFaman:** *'The American spirit of openness, acceptance and freedom is indelible'. This is a dream that tens of thousands of Chinese people are seeking! This is the label of a truly developed country! This is an excellent national characteristic!*

Such advocating is particularly obvious under pro-US weibos. For example, *South Weekend* posted a weibo in which it described how some American people held up Chinese flags in memory of the Chinese girl who died in the Boston terrorist attack (13:17 05/26/2013). The bulletin board of this post was soon flooded by a number of pro-US members with their strong appreciation of US values:

(13:33 26/05/2013) **Sunshinemiss:** *A country with true freedom!*

(13:33 26/05/2013) **Bragging Orange:** *Humanism~*

(19:19 26/05/2013) **Call this Bear Frank:** *This is something that only the US can make. I guess this is also the reason why so many people want to migrate to the US...*

(23:28 26/05/2013) **Carmen_Jianjian:** *The real value of the US. To be honest, [there is] no hypocrite, no affectation, but care. Except for respect, I have nothing to say.*

Moreover, the practice of advocating the superiority of the US is also reflected in some Chinese Internet users' admiration of the power of the US. For example, *People's Daily* posted a weibo delivering information about the US's air strike on

ISIS positions in Iraq (10:08 08/08/2014), under which a great number of pro-US members express their admirations of the US's strong military power:

*(13:03 08/08/2014) **The US Army is Coming:** It must be cool to be an American. Obama is really domineering!*

*(19:08 08/08/2014) **Nickname is not real Name:** The US is the natural enemy of these rogue states. What the world lacks is police.*

*(22:02 08/08/2014) **Weibo of Little Xixi:** Ah, I will give a thumbs-up to the US. If the US does not give a hand, there will be no way out for these Iraqi people when facing the arrogant and extreme terrorists.*

*(23:04 08/08/2014) **Get God Killed:** Without the US intervention, there would be a Rwanda genocide every day.*

In sum, Chinese Internet discourses about the US are not necessarily related to the anti-US discourse. Most specifically, Chinese Internet users' understandings of terrorism and the US are not necessarily related to Chinese nationalist concerns or Chinese Confucian political and cultural identities, which view the US as a pre-set enemy or a rogue state that brings disorder, insecurity and evil to the world. On the contrary, Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US are also related to the pro-US discourse. For example, many Chinese Internet users have connected their understandings of terrorism and the US to their antitheses to anti-US forces (a) or their appreciations of US spirits and power (b), which to a notable extent can be read as the practice of a pro-US identity. The existence of the pro-US discourse in

the Chinese Internet space in this case study reminds me of a trap for non-Western geopolitical research. That is, the non-Western background is surely important for the explanation of non-Western geopolitics, but it does not mean that the Western setting is no longer important. In contrast, as this section has investigated, in some cases non-Western settings still accept many Western values.

7.3.4 The regime-challenging discourses from *Sina Weibo*

On 9 September 2013, the Supreme People's Court of China and the Supreme People's Procuratorate of China have jointly released an enactment to explain how to handle criminal cases related to information exchange on the Internet space. This enactment explains that those which spread false information with over 500 reposts or over 5,000 clicks and which results in the defamation of other people, public incidents, societal chaos, religious conflicts, damage to the Chinese national image, international repercussions or damage to the interests of China, will be sentenced to prison³⁵. The promulgation of this enactment has demonstrated that the Chinese Internet to a notable extent is still under the censorship of the Chinese government. The Internet censorship in China, as mentioned in 7.1, also comes with the deleting practice, which may make some regime-challenging discourses be invisible in this space. However, it does not mean that all online regime-challenging discourses are invisible. The Chinese Internet censorship always aims at those influential figures or influential discourses, while in contrast, those speaking which are less influential are always neglected during the Internet censorship. Indeed, in this case, there are

³⁵ See: http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Db=lawexplanation&Gid=1090525172.

a certain proportion of Chinese Internet users attempting to expose the dark side of the Chinese society, which can neither be considered a form of anti-US discourse nor a form of pro-US discourse (Figure 7-1). As these comments always criticise the Chinese regime, I define such discourse as a form of regime-challenge discourse, which connect Chinese Internet users' online practice to their political aspirations in their everyday life. There are around 134 instances from *Sina Weibo* which are found to be related to such discourses, albeit this number may be much bigger than now it is for the reason of the censorship.

Most specifically, those instances are mainly divided into two categories. First, some Chinese Internet users require that the Chinese media should focus more on domestic affairs (e.g. corruption, food insecurity, environmental pollution, housing prices and health care) rather than to these topics of terrorism and the US. Around 86 instances among these 134 instances have contributed to this idea. For example, as some of these instances elaborate:

*(20:51 18/03/2013) **Old Dingding in Hangzhou**: Do not take pains for the US! There are quite a lot of food security and environmental pollution problems in China. Cannot you [the weibo] see them?*

*(08:39 17/04/2013) **Caterpillar & Pure Butterfly**: The city smog is continuing; influenza is raging; money is still being excessively released; prices of public resources are still rising; the congestion is even routinised; population growth is disordered; chicken and pork cannot be assured as safe for eating; and employment, health care, education and pension are*

*still empty promised; but you are f**king talking about the US!*

*(20:00 06/11/2013) **The Edged People**: People cannot afford housing and health care. The privilege is everywhere and the disparity of wealth is enlarging. Pay attention to the domestic affairs first, OK?*

Second, other Chinese Internet users have also focused on domestic affairs and redefined the notion of terrorism. Most specifically, there are around 48 instances that connect domestic violence in the Chinese society, such as house demolition, to the understanding of terrorism. Similar to Rachel Pain's (2014) understanding of terrorism, which extends the definition of terrorism from the international level into the domestic and everyday levels, this group of Chinese Internet users insist that the domestic violence from the Chinese government (e.g. the urban management department, demolition teams and police stations) is also a form of terrorism and should be given more attention. For example, as some of these examples put it:

*(08:41 16/04/2013) **Peng Xuefeng**: It is well known that [terrorist acts reported by this weibo] are far less horrendous and appalling than house demolition in China.*

*(11:48 16/04/2013) **Freedom without Me**: House demolition is also a form of terrorist act.*

*(09:51 05/07/2013) **Lyn_Qiu**: The largest terrorist organisations should be the urban management department, the demolition team and corrupt officials at present.*

(20:12 06/11/2013) **Gongxing Yingzhao** replies to **@Made by Compass**:

Do you know what terrorism means? Getting people killed in demolitions, torturing people for confessions in the police station, policer officers' shooting of a pregnant woman dead on the road and the governmental officials' raping of underage girls, all of these are terrorism!

In general, although it may be surprising, there are still a small number (nearly 9%) of Chinese Internet users who go beyond both anti-US and pro-US discourses in *Sina Weibo*. This proportion of Internet users clearly establish a form of regime-challenging discourse that links their understanding of terrorism and the US to their everyday life, and from where to their personal/domestic aspirations that go against the Chinese government. To a certain extent, the regime-challenging discourse may not mean that these Chinese people have different understandings of terrorism and the US. Unlike the anti-US or the pro-US discourses mentioned above, the regime-challenging practice has neither directly contributed to anti-US discourses nor pro-US discourses but, on the contrary, it can, to a notable extent, be read as an evidence of the Internet space as a space that offers the potentiality/possibility and a relatively healthy way for non-state forces, in particular bottom-up forces and the grassroots, to release their political opinions and to negotiate their political ideas with the elite in a rather strict media environment.

7.4 Conclusions

Drawing on how terrorism and the US are discussed in the Internet community

of *Sina Weibo* as a form of heterogeneous space, this chapter has mainly concluded three findings as follows.

First, the Internet space has to a significant extent provided different spatial experiences and therefore changed how we think about the geopolitical. Specifically, on the one hand, the Internet provides a form of discussions-based and negotiable method of communication, which often shares an affectual, emotional and irrational feature. This is quite different from geopolitical discourses produced in the printed media. Unlike the emphasis on the authenticity and authority in the printed media, the Internet space emphasises the speed and method of information exchange, the requirement of brief expressions and the use of smart phones or laptops, which means that weibos are quickly disseminated, “live” and built up in hasty, affectual or emotional ways. On the other hand, the different geopolitical experience in the Internet space is also reflected by the different geopolitical architecture built in the Internet space. That is, unlike the dominance of the anti-US discourse in the printed media, the Chinese Internet can even tolerate the pro-US and regime-challenging discourses that go far beyond the mainstream state voices (as mentioned in chapter 5), albeit such Internet discourses are still under censorship.

Second, the case study in this chapter has contributed to the development of non-Western geopolitics, in particular an understanding of Confucian geopolitics, from the non-state view. Even if the Internet space is emphasised as a form of heterogeneous space which both state forces and non-state forces try to capture, it can be seen that state forces seem not to have so greatly intervened in the non-state

views. As discussed in 7.3.1, the Internet space is dominated to a notable extent by mass opinions, albeit censorship is still admitted in this space. For Confucian geopolitics, this chapter suggests that Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US and terrorism in the Internet community of *Sina Weibo* are more or less impacted by the historically-sedimented context of Confucianism, even though such imaginings are not merely limited to this background. That is, Chinese Internet discourses about terrorism refuse and challenge the binary frameworks of ‘us’ and ‘other’ in existing works. They refuse to construct a binary relationship between terrorist and the US as counterterrorist, or between China and the US, but in contrast pay more attention to the sameness between terrorists and the US, or between Chinese society and the US. Most specifically, some Chinese Internet users (e.g. those who are involved in sub-discourses of face-slapping and making moral judgements) place the US war on terror into Confucian values while neglecting the discussion of the other side of the terrorism. Moreover, some other Internet users (e.g. those who are involved in pro-US discourses and regime-challenging discourse) also refuse to construct a binary between Chinese society and the US. They do not view the US and Chinese society as a set of opposing concepts, but on the contrary they look at both the positive and negative sides of these two societies. These geopolitical thoughts can be potentially and partly read as a form of Confucian geopolitics.

Third, the case study in this chapter has also reminded me of a trap for non-Western geopolitical research. That is, the non-Western context is clearly important for explaining non-Western geopolitics. For example, as elaborated in chapter 5,

chapter 6 and this chapter, Confucianism has more or less played a particular role in shaping Chinese geopolitical imaginations of terrorism and the US. However, it does not mean that the Western setting and Western geopolitics are not important. In a highly globalised world, Western values, which have been proposed worldwide, accompanied by some Western states' globalised political, economic and cultural activities, still have significant impact upon other states. Theories related to Western geopolitics, such as nationalism and national identity, also make sense in some non-Western contexts. As explored in this chapter, in some cases non-Western settings still and also accept many Western values, such as these sub-discourses in the pro-US discourse. Moreover, as some sub-discourses in the anti-US discourse (e.g. (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E)) have illustrated, the binary relations of China and the US still matter under the frameworks of the Capitalist-Communist opposition and Chinese nationalism which, to a notable extent, can be read as a form of Western geopolitics. In this regard, this research warns of a possible 'trap', and that the study of non-Western geopolitics should not be simply placed in the non-Western socio-political context.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

——*You Are Either With Us, Or With the Terrorists* (President George W. Bush, 2001)

Peacefulness is the essential attribute of the concept of harmonious world. It aims to harmonise the relations between the various states and political interests, which is based on the notions of peace, harmony, social stability, tranquility and order. This will be the main criterion for China's handling of domestic and international affairs.

——*Constructing Socialist Harmonious Society* (Chairman Hu Jintao, 2013)

8.1 Main findings

The first quote is from the former US President George W. Bush's address to a joint session of Congress at the launch of the US war against terrorism after 9/11, which mapped a binary imaginary geography 'either/or' between terrorist and those against terrorists. Since then, the war on terror has become the most significant code

in US geopolitical practices, with a strong dichotomous framework between terrorism and US as counterterrorism (Orfy, 2010). This dichotomous geopolitical architecture has been widely accepted by other states and thus applied in their own geopolitical practices, such as in Sri Lanka (Kleinfeld, 2003) and in the Philippines (Woon, 2014). The second quote is chosen from the former chairman of the Chinese government Hu Jintao in his speech on *Constructing Socialist Harmonious Society* in 2008, which summed the Chinese government's main criterion for the handling of domestic and foreign affairs. From this perspective, it can be seen that notions of peace, harmony, social stability, tranquility and order are highlighted in Chinese political culture, which might bring different geopolitical visions about the US and its war on terror. This is where this thesis has begun.

Putting this thesis in the theoretical and empirical background of non-Western geopolitics that has often been under-researched in extant knowledge of geopolitics, as reviewed in chapter 2 and chapter 3, this research attempts to theorise Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror through the perspective of non-Western geopolitics, particularly a variety of localised Chinese geopolitics. Specifically, this thesis examined the relations between Chinese discourses of terrorism and Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US in post-9/11 China. As elaborated in previous chapters, this thesis discussed Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US in articles from two newspapers (*People's Daily* and *South Weekend*). It examined middle-level audience imaginations of terrorism and the US arising through their reading of these two newspapers. Additionally, it explored Internet discourses of terrorism and the US through the case study of *Sina Weibo*.

On this basis, this thesis found that Chinese imaginations of the US war on terror, from both the state view and the non-state view, tend to refuse a dichotomous ‘either/or’ framework in their observations whereby a simple opposition is spied between terrorists and the US as counterterrorist force. These Chinese imaginations not only pointed out the difference but also looked at the sameness between terrorists and the US, which largely challenged the US’s ‘either/or’ geopolitical practices of the war on terror.

From the state vision, this thesis explored the representations of terrorism and the US in two Chinese newspapers, *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, in chapter 5, and in so doing concluded that Chinese journalism refuses a binary understanding of terrorists and the US as a victim. Most specifically, the universalised nature of terrorism was underlined in relevant articles in two newspapers, albeit the quantity of such articles accounted for a rather smaller proportion (around 26% and 42% in *People’s Daily* and *South Weekend*, respectively). Similarly, however, the remaining newspaper articles that were related to the representations of the US war on terror also depicted the US as a negative image as well as the terrorist. Both newspapers paid attention to the writing about the US war on terror, through which the US was repeatedly described as a rogue state bringing humanitarian crisis, global disorder and hegemony to the world. In this sense, it can be seen that the boundary between terrorists and the US was blurred, and on this basis the sameness between terrorists and the US was underlined.

From the non-state view, this thesis studied the middle-level Chinese people’s discussions of terrorism and the US through their readings of *People’s Daily* or/and

South Weekend in chapter 6, as well as the mass Chinese Internet users' discussions of terrorism and the US in the Chinese Internet community, *Sina Weibo*, in chapter 7. On this basis, this thesis concluded that the refusal of a dichotomous framework between the US as counterterrorist and terrorist not only made sense in state voices but also in non-state realms. For example, in the exploration of Chinese audiences in chapter 6, a number of the recruited middle-level Chinese people, as well as the Chinese newspaper representations, looked at the sameness between terrorists and the US, viewing terrorists as the universal enemy of all humanity and at the same time describing the US as a rogue state that brought humanitarian crisis, global disorder and hegemony to the world. Moreover, the empirical study of *Sina Weibo* in chapter 7 also found that the mass Chinese Internet users' imaginations of terrorism and the US were partly related to negative constructions of the US, albeit the Internet discourses were not merely limited to this negative aspect. These two empirical cases have explained that the refusal of 'either/or' in Chinese imaginings of terrorism and the US was not only a form of top-down voice, but also indeed a type of bottom-up self-awareness.

Taken together, this thesis hence promoted a localised geopolitical notion, Confucian geopolitics, to understand and explain Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US war on terror. Most specifically, as discussed in chapter 3, the Confucian philosophy so deeply historically-rooted in Chinese political culture appears to have significant impact upon Chinese geopolitical thoughts and practices, even in a contemporary China contextualised by Communist ideologies. That is, values of harmony, diversity, order and welfare are all still demanded in Chinese political

ideas and actions, in both domestic and international political realms (Jiang, 2003; Wang, 2003; Qin, 2010). In Confucianism, the ultimate rule to evaluate a politician or a state is to see whether he/she/it can build a harmonious world both in domestic space and in the international community through stable, peaceful and tranquil ways. Based on these Confucian values, the Chinese vision tends to see the sameness among the various political actors, rather than to look at their difference so as to justify certain political interests.

In the empirical analysis of Chinese imaginations of terrorism and the US in this thesis, it can be seen that responses to such Confucian values and visions can be found everywhere. For example, Chinese newspapers, *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*, tend to see the sameness between terrorists and the US, representing the terrorists as insecurity-makers, and at the same time they also describe the US as the maker of insecurity, disaster and crisis as well. In such Chinese visions, both terrorists and the US are regarded as going against the Confucian values of harmony and peacefulness. Similar ideas can be evidenced in Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US. Quite a number of Chinese audiences even pointed out that it was exactly the US's tough behaviour, going against Confucian values, that resulted in the calamity of terrorism. Moreover, the examination of Chinese Internet discourses of terrorism and the US has also found that, to a much wider extent in Chinese society, these Confucian values of harmony and diversity still impact Chinese people's evaluations of the US war on terror and their constructions of anti-US identity. On this basis, this thesis concludes that these Confucian elements, which are deeply sedimented in Chinese society and Chinese political culture but

often ignored or left implicit and assumed in extant knowledge, really do impact Chinese geopolitical imaginations, in particular of terrorism and the US. Therefore, this thesis suggests a notion of Confucian geopolitics to understand geopolitical imaginations of terrorism and the US without the ‘either/or’ binary framework.

In addition, Confucian geopolitics also provided a different way of observing the US from existing frameworks of Capitalism-Communist antagonism (Niu, 2001; He & Huang, 2008) and Chinese nationalism (Kluver, 2001; Zhou, 2005), refusing to depict US society as an opposite of Chinese society. This is particularly reflected in the empirical study of the audience space and Internet space. As aforementioned, Chinese discourses on the US appear not only limited to the depiction of the US as a rogue state bringing humanitarian crisis, disorder and hegemony to the world, but, at the same time, also paid attention to the positive aspects of the US, in particular in Chinese audience imaginations and Internet discourses. For example, in chapter 6, it can be found that audience space had created a foothold for Western values and thus built up a positive image of the US. Moreover, in chapter 7, this thesis found that Chinese Internet discourses about the US had also involved pro-US sentiments that went far beyond Chinese nationalism. These positive perceptions of the US, whether in the audience imaginations or in Internet discourses, were usually built on the basis of understandings of US environment, technology, democracy, social system, economic system, education system and entertainment, were closely related to the US society’s features of harmony, diversity, peace, welfare and order. In this sense, the refusal of constructing a conflicting and binary relationship between the US and China can also be read as a form of Confucian thinking, in particular under

the socio-political context of China.

As mentioned above, Confucian geopolitics does offer a different way to look at terrorism and the US beyond the ‘either/or’ binary framework in US geopolitical practices. However, it merits highlighting that Chinese geopolitics is *more than just* Confucian geopolitics, but that Confucian elements have been surprisingly ignored in extant works of Chinese geopolitics. This thesis therefore brings the Confucian elements back into Chinese geopolitical research. Indeed, this thesis also warned of a ‘trap’ for non-Western geopolitics. That is, this thesis admitted the importance and emphasised the significance of the Confucian elements for understanding Chinese discourses on terrorism and the US, whether by elites, middle-level actors, or mass publics, but, at the same time, it can be seen that Western elements made sense as well as Confucian elements. For example, the contexts of Communism and Chinese nationalism were still found to be related to Chinese discourses of terrorism and the US. In chapter 5, where *People’s Daily’s* and *South Weekend’s* writings of terrorism were discussed, the representation of terrorism as a form of universalised issue, to a significant extent, can be considered to be influenced by Chinese nationalism and so used for legitimating Chinese ethnic and religious policies in Xinjiang. In chapter 6, where Chinese audience imaginations of terrorism and the US were explored, it can be seen that parts of Chinese audiences also tried to use nationalist sentiments to construct and practice their imaginings about terrorism and the US. Similarly, in chapter 7, a number of Chinese Internet users tried to apply the Communist context and Chinese nationalism as an important way for understanding terrorism and the US. Some Internet users ‘shouted out’ Cold War slogans to support their anti-US

discourses; other Internet users even recalled tense Sino-US diplomatic events (e.g. the Chinese embassy bombing incident and Sino-US aircraft collision incident) to show their patriotic stances, construct their national identity and practice their anti-US imagination. In this sense, this thesis reinforced the idea of Chinese geopolitics as *more than just* Confucian geopolitics, but as a complex assemblage in which both Confucian elements and other possible elements came together.

In sum, just as the original term “critical geopolitics” which brought together two terms that were seen to be contradictory (Sharp, 2013), there seemed to be a contradiction in saying “Confucian geopolitics” as these two terms (i.e. Confucian and geopolitics) seemed to be two different, even contradictory terms: the former one underlined peace, harmony, social stability, tranquil and order, while the latter one emphasised the geographical impact upon politics, in particular violence and conflict. As summed above, however, it is exactly in that contradiction where a new way of thinking about geopolitics that refuses a binary inside-outside perspective can emerge.

8.2 Contributions

Based on the above findings, this research has made contributions to the wider literatures of critical geopolitics from a non-Western perspective, in particular from the Chinese perspective that is still unexplored in both Anglophone and Sinophone academies. In the following section, I will highlight the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis from at least three aspects.

First, this thesis has extended the study of non-Western geopolitics. Lamenting

the lack of non-Western geopolitical visions in existing literatures (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001; 2004; Sharp, 2011b), this thesis has explained that the socio-political context of China, in particular the culture of Confucianism, does matter in the producing Chinese geopolitical discourses about terrorism and the US. Specifically, as summarised in the previous section, this thesis has found that the various Chinese imaginations of terrorism and the US, whether by elites, middle-level actors or mass publics, are taking shape under the impact of Confucian values, which underlines the construction of harmony, diversity and order for the governance of international community. In so doing, this thesis has situated Chinese discourses about terrorism and the US in the historically-rooted but often implicit political culture of Confucianism, relating the analysis of Chinese imaginations of terrorism and the US to the inside Chinese geopolitical traditions that are usually silenced or misunderstood by outside voices. As mentioned in the main findings, such Confucian geopolitics has probably offered a rather different way of looking at terrorism and the US in comparison with US geopolitical practices of the war against terrorism, which refuses to view terrorists and the US as a form of counterterrorist forces in a binary and conflicting relationship and which refuses to look at China and the US in an opposite position. In so doing, this research has contributed to the theorisation of non-Western geopolitics, in particular Chinese geopolitics, through the proposal of the notion of Confucian geopolitics that refuses the difference between inside and outside in a socially-constructed boundary.

Second, this thesis has extended the theory of audience research in both critical geopolitics and cultural studies. Specifically, this contribution is primarily reflected

in two areas. On the one hand, previous works on audience studies have emphasised a ‘propaganda model’ in which the audience is often considered to be passive and unknowing recipients waiting for the injection of ideas (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Toal, 1996a; Bratich, 2005). The most recent studies have also developed an ‘active audience model’ that underlines the significance of audience creativity in shaping geopolitical meanings in the process of consumption (Dodds, 2006; 2007b; Dittmer & Larsen, 2007; Dittmer, 2008; 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013; Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Woon, 2014). However, existing literatures have neglected the broader context of media-audience relations. Based on the empirical case study of Chinese audience in this research, this thesis suggests that the audience should be put into a much wider context and their various identities in such context to understand. On the other hand, existing studies of audience research sometimes have narrowed the audience into the subculture of fan research (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013). However, to a great extent, fan research cannot be entirely equated with audience research. Here, I do not mean to critique ‘fan research’, but in my view the situation is much more complex. This thesis has studied the identity of Chinese audiences, and in so doing found that the audience does not equate with fans. Beyond fans (avid readers), this thesis has empirically argued that occasional readers, who do not usually care about the media, and critics, who are antagonistic to the media, also play important roles in shaping geopolitical views in the everyday space of Chinese society. Interestingly, avid readers, occasional readers and critics have been found to be related to the newspapers in different models, which, again, highlights that audience research should be put in the context of broader audience-

media relations.

Finally, from the empirical perspective, this thesis has largely contributed to Chinese knowledge of modern geopolitical imaginations of terrorism and the US, in particular based on methodologies of critical geopolitics. As reviewed in chapter 3, the vast majority of Chinese geopolitical literatures have been structured by the strong dominance of the Western scholarship, attempting to translate and introduce Western geopolitical theories into China or tightly focusing on classical geopolitical theories, such as the impact of physical space upon the exercise of power. Moreover, most Western voices have focused on Chinese geopolitical issues from state-centric or other macroscopic analyses, encompassing issues of geo-security, geo-economy and meta-narratives at the level of continents or regions. In general, geopolitical analyses that go beyond the lens of classical geopolitics or macro-level analysis are usually unexplored. Based on the investigation of Chinese newspapers (i.e. *People's Daily* and *South Weekend*), everyday space (i.e. Chinese audiences) and the Internet space (i.e. *Sina Weibo*), this thesis has largely filled the blank of Chinese critical geopolitics and added to the limited extant knowledge about Chinese geopolitical imaginations of foreign actors or/and foreign states. In so doing, this thesis provides a new and potentially different opportunity for us to understand Chinese opinions of terrorism and the US, and to know more about Chinese geopolitical visions from the empirical perspective.

8.3 Limitations and future directions

Though this conclusion has highlighted some key contributions as mentioned

above, it should be borne in mind that this thesis still has limitations. First, I should emphasise that the findings of this thesis are limited to the research focus on how Chinese modern geopolitical imaginings of the US are built up through the lens of terrorism. However, terrorism is always related to issues of violence, atrocity, war and military actions, which are usually denounced by Confucian values. In this sense, it may be concluded that a Chinese terrorism discourse is merely a small part of Chinese discourses about the international politics. It might be expected that the investigation of Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US from perspectives beyond terrorism would have different results. Considering this limitation, I think possible and potential areas for further studies on Chinese geopolitical imaginations of the US could expand beyond the scope of terrorism: research questions could ask, for instance, how Chinese people construct their imaginations of the US from the scope of popular culture (e.g. drama, sports games, Hollywood films, electronic science and technology); how Chinese people build their geographical knowledge of the US from the lens of tourism, natural and human environments and livelihood; and how Chinese people practice their ideas of the US from the perspective of their life stories (e.g. their desires for their children to be educated and born overseas in the US). Moreover, from a much wider lens, research questions could be extended beyond US geopolitical practices. For example, the research design of the Chinese geopolitical visions in the future could be embedded in a context of Occidentalism.

Second, I should highlight that this research has been primarily designed under the structure of critical geopolitics, which underlines how productive geographical knowledges are related to the exercise of world politics (Toal, 1996a; Agnew, 2003;

Dittmer, 2010). More specifically, the three empirical case studies in this thesis have to a certain extent been concerned with how Chinese geopolitical knowledges about the US are subjectively produced by human beings; although mentioned in chapter 7, they pay less attention to nonhuman, more-than-human and posthuman objects that also matter in changing our geopolitical opinions. The overreliance on subjective geopolitical knowledge in this research, or more widely in the field of geopolitical studies, may limit other ways of understanding geopolitics in the future. Recent human geography studies have gradually explored the role and significance of materiality, non-human, more-than-human and posthuman objects in shaping our understandings of the world (Jackson, 2000; Whatmore, 2006; Anderson & Wylie, 2009). More relevant to this topic, Ian Shaw and Katharine Meehan (2013) propose an object-oriented approach to political geography, arguing that ‘objects are engines of power, able to fully shape the contours of existence through the production of difference and affectivity in the world’ (p.216). On this basis, it might be expected that further and deeper exploration of how non-human, more-than-human and posthuman objects contribute to geopolitics would potentially provide new perspectives for future geopolitical studies. In this sense, I think possible areas for future research on geopolitics could be extended from the discussion of materiality and objects. For instance, research questions could ask how the Internet, computers and smartphones create new spaces of geopolitics; how the Internet, computers and smartphones impact the ways we think geopolitically; and how the exercise of power (e.g. the censorship and resistance) is achieved in an age of computer algorithms and bots.

Third, I should also make clear that, in the case study of *Sina Weibo* in chapter 7, it is technically difficult to form judgements on what kinds of Internet opinions are guided by the government by way of Internet commentators and on what types of Internet ideas are released with rather free will. Previous works have emphasised the Chinese Internet as either a rather liberal space (Zheng & Wu, 2005; Zheng, 2007; Zhou, 2009; Yang, 2009; Shirk, 2010) or a closed space under the control of government forces (Hung, 2010; Leibold, 2011; Yang, 2011; Han, 2015a; 2015b). However, they have paid less attention to the Internet as a heterogeneous space in which free expression and manufactured ideas coexist, as this research has argued in chapter 7. Highlighting the Internet as a heterogeneous space, this thesis seems to have failed to provide as much detail as possible on the heterogeneous nature of the Internet. On this basis, one avenue for future and further geopolitical analysis of Internet discourses, in particular Chinese Internet discourses, would be research on the heterogeneous feature of the Internet. For instance, from the technological perspective, research questions could ask how the deleting of messages in Internet spaces contributes to resistant discourses, precisely how censorship is being practised in Internet communities and how other forces beyond the state or non-state forces, such as interest-based Internet mercenary companies, play their roles in shaping Internet opinions.

8.4 Concluding remarks

As a final word of this final chapter, I want again to highlight the significance of this research. I remember during the fieldwork that some participants doubted

whether and how their everyday opinions of terrorism and the US made sense in academic research, and why the taken-for-granted ‘common sense’ of terrorism and the US in newspapers and weibos may be of interest to a geographer or political researcher. For example, P-1 (*female, 27, engineer*) and P-11 (*male, 27, worker in a state enterprise*) doubted and talked about the significance of my research at the end of their interviews:

***P-1:** Actually, in the end, I also want to ask you a question?*

***Me:** Sure!*

***P-1:** Why are you, a geographer, concerned with those small things, how the US is discussed and how terrorism is discussed in our daily life? Do our opinions make sense for your academic research?*

***Me:** Surely! It does matter! I want to ask you a question. Where does your knowledge of terrorism and the US come from?*

***P-1:** Hmmm, actually I’m not sure. Maybe [they come from] newspapers, the TV, and the Internet.*

***Me:** Huh, you see. You even do not realise that your mind is affected by those things. They [knowledge in newspapers, the TV, and the Internet] are embedded in your mind like ‘common sense’.*

***P-1:** That’s right. That knowledge seems like a taken-for-granted thing in our daily life just because it is shown in public areas.*

***P-11:** Can I ask you a question?*

***Me:** Sure!*

***P-11:** Why are you interested in our opinions of media, terrorism and the US, from an academic perspective?*

***Me:** To be honest, I want to examine how people are influenced by the media. Are your opinions of terrorism and the US influenced by the media?*

***P-11:** I think so! The long and continuous coverage on other states would absolutely influence our opinions of other states. I mean those reports of tens of years ago. They would take the shape of fixed and stable ways of knowing the world. As a result, we may think such kinds of knowledge are taken for granted.*

I have kept these questions in mind throughout. At the end of the research, I think I can answer their questions again, in a more formal and confident way. This research has investigated the relationship between Chinese discourses on terrorism and Chinese imaginations about the US in diverse situations, including newspapers, audiences and the Internet community, which is an important research agenda in recent political geographies. For participants in this research and even for myself, we may find that the most ordinary thing in our daily life, such as watching TV, reading newspapers and surfing webpages, can be influential in our understanding of the world around us, through and after this research. Here I want to go back to the opening stories of this thesis. Similar to what I illustrated at the outset of this thesis, the way Chinese people look at terrorism and the US are visibly and invisibly shaped, not only by newspapers and the Internet, as this thesis has investigated, but

also in other ways in Chinese society, such as TV and the education system. Under the influence of these channels (i.e. newspapers, the Internet, TV and the education system), knowledge of terrorism and the US might soon become taken-for-granted commonsensical knowledge in Chinese society. Commonsense would, undoubtedly, support Chinese political dominance in constructing a stable internal society (in particular regarding China's policies in Xinjiang) and building a harmonious image of China on the international stage. In this thesis, the mainstream ideologies that lead Chinese people's understandings are demonstrated to be heterogeneous and complex, including the Communist context, nationalism and, most importantly, the Confucian traditions. In other words, this research links taken-for-granted everyday Chinese life to Chinese political cultures and political dominance, bringing them to the field of political geography, and makes Chinese people re-evaluate their daily experiences of foreign affairs. In my view, that is why this thesis matters.

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