



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Navigating Apocalyptic Environmental Discourse: A Comparative Media Analysis Study of Beijing's Air Pollution

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 31, 2024	Media narratives and discourse play a pivotal role in shaping public opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. Media outlets usually influence how the individuals interpret events, issues, and societal norms. In this sense, China has been portrayed to be known as one of the largest countries to transmit pollutants and has witnessed the most severe air pollution in the world, often referred to as "air-pocalypse". This paper investigates the way media shapes and depicts eco-environmental discourse on Beijing's air pollution. It explores how global and Chinese media shapes public attitudes, policy measures, and governmental action. To achieve this aim, the study adopts a comparative mixed-method approach to comprehend the nuanced ways in which global media outlets and Chinese media outlets frame and/or present Beijing's air pollution concerns to the public. The findings highlight several discrepancies between Chinese and global mediatic discourse, in which narratives are politically and culturally charged. Moreover, it sheds light on the interplay between different media narratives underscoring for media literacy for an informed public engagement with media content to mitigate undue influence and to foster well-rounded understanding of the societal issues. It also provides a good contribution to the existing literature on media narratives about air pollution in China and its role in global ecopolitics.
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INTRODUCTION

In the realms of politics and environment, apocalyptic rhetoric has drawn criticism and controversy from sceptics as well as supporters. For the latter, addressing apocalyptic environmental discourse is a pressing concern and a crucial step in completing the communal transition towards a green movement. As a result, fostering symbolic awareness and civic engagement may result in stances and in both social and political reactive measures. Doubters, on the other hand, claim that the public is apprehensive and is demoralized due to the ongoing apocalyptic discourse. They argue that the discourse itself nurtures a sense of uncertainty and fear with the intention of reaching planned political objectives. In other words, dispute between the two narratives is a healthy attempt to delve deep into the two points of view and decide this apocalyptic discourse is a by-product of existing political agendas or it marks the outset of a potential green future. In this stance, it is important to note that we live in a time in which the confrontation of reality with reason requires us to ask apocalyptic questions... What makes the raising of these questions rational and necessary, today, is that scientific research is consistently telling us that if current trends continue, even for a century, the results for the earth and its inhabitants will be a collapse of the world as we know it (Foster,

2009). Therefore, it is only relevant to address environmental apocalyptic questions to assess how apocalyptic environmental discourse and rhetoric play a role in shaping green ideologies, utopian alternatives, movement insurgency, institutionalization, and social & political movements. The apocalypse, whether justified by religious beliefs or scientific studies and facts, encodes the end of the world in its aftermath, either as a gradual surrounding of despair or an end-point event. In the late 14th century, apocalypse emerged from the Greek “apokalyptein” to refer to “uncover, disclose, reveal”. There is a quasi-agreement that its original meaning was religious and prophetic, implying revelation by a divine entity. In theory, apocalypticism has always predicted that the world is inevitable, accompanied by the extinction of civilization, the destruction of life, and the collapse of humanity.

This paper delves into China’s air pollution during specific time frames, namely Beijing’s smog crisis from 2013 to 2017. The motivation for focusing on China as a sampling population stems from its critical position in driving the global environmental agenda and its significant impact on ecology and health. The research focus is to assess the mediatic discourse surrounding Beijing’s smog crisis both on international and national levels. To achieve this aim, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. By addressing China’s air pollution crisis, the study hoped to uncover discursive implications embedded in Media discourse, and how they can influence governance and public attitude. This paper tries to find potential for innovation and collaboration, paving the way for sustainable development paths. The study aims to answer the following :

- How does Media discourse shape Beijing’s air pollution?
- How is China’s smog crisis portrayed in Global and Chinese Media?
- How does Mediatic discourse impact public perception and governmental policies?

LITERATURE REVIEW:

According to Hall (2009), the apocalyptic encompasses a broad range of beliefs, actions, and social processes centered on cultural disjunctures concerned with the end of the world and thereafter. In religious doctrines, the apocalypse is frequently connected with doomsday and redemption, moments when a heavenly force intervenes to wipe out the evil, bad, and corrupted, thus establishing a permanent utopian and flawless afterlife. Regardless of the various ideologies and religious interpretations, religion and spirituality have helped believers by fostering in them a coping mechanism to deal with distress and unavoidable death with the promise of an idealistic hereafter. As such, religion and spirituality may assist people in developing positive emotions and mental resilience in the face of tragedies and the ecological apocalypse. However, can religion and spirituality stymie environmental initiatives, or imbue ideals that endorse environmental stewardship and justice?

Giddens (2009) argues that “doomsday is no longer a religious concept, a day of spiritual reckoning, but a possibility imminent in our society and economy”, this stems from the fact that apocalyptic scenarios are not just pre-written scripts, but also scientifically substantiated claims in reaction to objective environmental crises. Indeed, climate change science contends that unchecked manmade global warming and other related environmental degradations pose hazards to the ecosystems that sustain humankind, potentially leading to the collapse of these systems (IPCC, 2014). The former endangers both human and non-human life on Earth, as well as economic systems and interstate relations (Stern, 2007). For all these reasons, there is an overwhelming urge to fundamentally reconfigure the nature-society relationships. Therefore, it may be argued that apocalyptic rhetoric serves as a mediating frame for engaging with ecological and green political issues. If we are to discuss the politics of fear regarding eco-apocalypse, one could argue that in some circumstances, it would be agenda-pleasing and profitable to keep the populace in a perpetual state of anxiety and dread. There are many intricately entwined and nuanced concerns amidst evaluating the complex and

varied issues surrounding politics. The former ranges from measurement of risk, financial threats, evolutionary psychology, risk management leadership and governance, and risk regulation to democratic discussions. We may introduce the concept of “crisis denial” here, which is a form of defense mechanism employed in politics to address unnecessary secondary crises rather than primary crises that threaten human survival. In other words, it is a type of fear-based politics that amplifies public concerns about secondary issues, diverting attention away from more serious primary hazards.

Now that the eco-apocalypse has been widely publicized and researched, the public and the media have succeeded in pressing legislators and governments to begin a transition to green ecology, with a special call for governance to properly implement urgent ecological measures while also promoting other social and economic priorities that endanger the public. The former is more challenging for democracies to achieve because they must demonstrate how they will navigate this intrinsic problem to achieve broader well-being outcomes, regain public trust, and take environmental action regarding the economy and budgeting. In today’s world, media does not only convey its traditional role in disseminating information and building trust. It can play a crucial political role in shaping public perception, policy, and collective action. When it comes to apocalyptic environmental concerns, the media has been known to amplify environmental crises and contribute to a narrative of imminent ecological collapse. According to Manzo (2010), the rise of eco-apocalyptic narratives in the media is not merely about reporting environmental facts but about constructing a sense of impending doom. This is often done by using dramatic, vivid imagery and severe apocalyptic discourse to create a sense of urgency and appeal to public response. Boykoff (2008) argues that the media’s framing of climate change issues can create a balance a “balance as bias effect”, in which the urgency of the crisis is either amplified or downplayed. It can be implied that the media uses eco-apocalyptic discourse to emphasize the tragic nature of environmental issues whilst failing to address positive developments or optimistic sustainable policies. This can have a drastic impact on public perception and attitude. The apocalyptic discourse used by the media does not only influence public perception and behavior, but it can also drive policy and action. The media can therefore be a catalyst for change as it pressures the government to act concerning environmental disasters. Over the years, China has gained significant media attention regarding air pollution. The former emanated from China’s rapid industrialization and urbanization which induced severe levels of air pollution, presenting serious consequences on the social, economic, and political levels. Being one of the world’s largest pollutants, China has been under scrutiny by global experts who focused on China’s environmental policies to resolve eco-apocalyptic crises.

METHODOLOGY:

To provide a thorough analysis of how Beijing’s air pollution is portrayed in Media discourse, this paper adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The initial method used is qualitative, with a focus on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Framing Analysis to capture the narratives, the imagery, the language, and the ideologies within media discourse. The goal behind using these qualitative methods is to comprehend the nuanced ways in which global and Chinese media outlets frame and present Beijing’s air pollution concern. As previously stated, CDA constitutes the basis for this study, which enables a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between language, ideology, and power representations in Media discourse. Furthermore, to support the development of narratives, a variety of linguistic elements namely rhetoric and framing strategies have been analyzed. These linguistic features and narratives have been compared across Chinese and international media outlets to reveal the underlying power dynamics and ideological stances that influence discourse on environmental concerns. Besides CDA, Framing Analysis was used to determine how media outlets arrange their narratives about Beijing’s smog. Using this method, prevalent frames utilized in media coverage were identified and

investigated to display how they shape public perception. Following that, framing tactics were contrasted in Chinese and international media to reveal disparities in how Beijing's smog was portrayed to various audiences.

The study uses a quantitative approach throughout content analysis. The former was used for systematic classification and assessment of key themes and frames within media discourse. Content Analysis served as a tool to quantify the frequency of themes and provided factual data thus providing validity and reliability for the study. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches emphasizes the mixed-methods strategy adopted for the study and provides a comprehensive understanding of media discourse. Using a comparative approach has enabled us to strengthen our findings and reveal patterns of resemblance and variation between global and Chinese media outlets. This helped shed light on how diverse cultural and political motives and circumstances shape environmental discourse.

Concerning data collection, the study selected numerous news headlines from both Chinese and global media outlets. The focus was on a specific timeframe from 2013 to 2017 during which, significant and challenging events took place. When it comes to global media [8], The Guardian, CNN, and BBC were selected due to their international reliability and credibility. Besides which, Global times and China Daily were chosen for their reputation and influence in Chinese media.

A convenience sampling strategy was used to select articles that discuss Beijing's air pollution and smog.

Data Analysis & Findings:

The table below (see Table 1.) organizes and analyzes the imagery and framing employed by five assorted media outlets to cover Beijing's smog crisis in the years of 2013, 2015, and 2017.

Table 1: An analysis of the Global Media Depictions on Beijing's smog crisis

Media Outlet	Headline/Title	Imagery	Framing/Context	CDA Insights
CNN (2013)	Living with Beijing's "Airpocalypse"	Imagery of fortitude and adaptation in facing a persisting environmental crisis.	There is a normalization of acute pollution in which citizens adjust to live in hazardous conditions.	The discourse normalizes the continuous environmental calamity and suggests "new normal" living conditions for the citizens of Beijing. It also highlights a lack of action to address the problem, thus portraying the populace as victims of environmental regulation and governance.
The Guardian (2015)	Beijing's Smog "red alert" enters third day as toxic haze shrouds City	Vivid and sharply-etched imagery of a city consumed by lethal conditions suggesting an	The framing emphasizes the urgent and serious nature of the alert.	The use of certain key terms such as "red alert", "toxic haze", "shroud" depicts a discourse of crisis, threat, and urgency. The language used emphasizes the smog being perilous to public

		urgency and crisis.		health and a serious concern to be addressed.
The Guardian (2015)	Beijing Smog makes City Unlivable, says Mayor	Imagery of a city that has deteriorated to the point where it is “unlivable” because of the smog.	The framing displays the smog as a significant threat to public health and standards of living, with the mayor acknowledging the alarming situation.	The mayor’s statement is a significant discursive event, for it acknowledges the lack of governance and infrastructure to ensure a habitable and sustainable environment, thus denouncing the state’s response to environmental challenges.
The New York Times (2015)	“Airpocalypse” : Beijing smog red alert on social media	Imagery evoked by using the term “Airpocalypse”, suggesting a threatening and apocalyptic scenario.	The framing draws attention to the public’s response on social media, highlighting public’s perception on a local and a global scale.	The use of “Airpocalypse” expresses hyperbolic discourse to frame the smog as not only a crisis, but rather an existential threat to the public. Further, the emphasis on social media demonstrates how environmental issues are perceived and magnified in digital spaces, prompting public opinion and policy debates.
BBC (2017)	Beijing pollution: Police Force to Combat Toxic Smog	Imagery of law enforcement being the response to environmental concerns. The former implies the use of a militarized and authoritarian approach to address the smog crisis.	The framing presupposes a sharp, potentially overreaching state response to the smog crisis, favoring enforcement rather than prevention.	This discourse indicates a deviation towards the securitization of environmental issues, in which air pollution is viewed as a security concern rather than a public health one. This can point to a narrative of force and authority where collaboration and prevention are not considered.

Throughout the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we can draw several key insights into how different narratives have shaped discourse on Beijing’s air pollution:

1. **Apocalyptic Imagery:**

Some articles, notably “The New York Times” and “CNN” reference to “Airpocalypse”, use apocalyptic imagery to describe the crisis. This choice of language is significant for several reasons:

- **Totalizing Crisis:** Apocalyptic terminology alludes to a global disaster that impacts every facet of life in Beijing. It suggests that the smog issue is not just temporary, rather an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to the city's future.
- **Public Perception and Anxiety:** The use of extreme and sharp terminology could amplify public fear and anxiety, which can lead to a powerless or fatalistic attitude. The latter can induce public pressure on the government to intervene. However, it could also cultivate a sense of resignation to bring about change.

2. Government Accountability and Failure Narrative:

- **Official Acknowledgement:** It can be said that the narrative has shifted towards one of the government failure and accountability when public officials such as “The mayor of Beijing” label the city as “unlivable” because of the smog. This uncommon acknowledgement forms a government official, alarms the public about the severity of the situation and signals that the government's attempts to control it have been insufficient.
- **Framing of Government Response:** The use of law enforcement to combat air pollution suggests the adoption of an authoritarian approach rather than a preventive one. This framing might be interpreted as a criticism of the government's failure to address the smog's underlying source and favoring the use of enforcement and control. The latter could fail to address the underlying environmental issues and foster a sense of fear among the public.

3. Normalization and Adaptation Narrative:

- **Living with Smog:** Claims about citizens getting used to living in an “Airpocalypse” reveal a worrying and troubling normalization of environmental catastrophes. The former indicates a degree of societal and governmental acquiescence to the problem, implying that the excessive and life-threatening air pollution in Beijing has become a normality.
- **Implications:** The normalization narrative entails that the public may cease expecting momentous changes in air quality and fixate on coping mechanisms and individualized strategies. This poses a threat as the crisis becomes less of an urgent concern for the government to act upon, and more of a background condition to be normalized as a part of daily life.

4. Global and Social Media Amplification Narrative:

- **Social Media's Role:** Since the “Airpocalypse” has proliferated on social media platforms, it has become a global issue that has heightened awareness throughout the world. Social media is undoubtedly a tool for rapidly disseminating information, but also dramatizing events. This can increase public awareness and draw serious attention to the issue. It also impacts how locals regard their environment since global attention can validate their concerns and fears.
- **Shaping Policy and Action:** The international amplification of Beijing's air pollution throughout social media platforms and global media coverage has presumably had an impact on the Chinese government's response to the issue. The need to uphold a positive global image may motivate durable and effective environmental policies. Thus, certain domestic policies may be viewed as responses to external pressure and international image.

Therefore, it appears that Beijing's air pollution discourse is multifaced, with differing emphasis on crisis, public perception, government accountability, normalization, global influence, and social media amplification. This plays a role in shaping public perceptions and decision-making. Moreover, it appears that although the crisis is acknowledged and the government's policies are being closely examined, there is a concerning inclination that could jeopardize long-term efforts to address the concern—namely, the normalization of harsh environmental living conditions. However, by means of social media outlets, Beijing's smog has gained significant international attention, which pressured the Chinese government's environmental policies.

Moreover, the table below (see Table 2.) organizes and analyzes the imagery and framing employed by two Chinese media outlets to cover Beijing's smog crisis in the years of 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017. The narratives analyzed in Table 2. provide a nuanced and a comprehensive understanding of Beijing's smog crisis. Each narrative contributes to a larger discourse that shapes the perception and the management of the crisis. The discursive patterns display the need for a persistent, an undisguised, and a durable environmental strategy.

Table 1. An analysis of the Chinese Media Depictions on Beijing's smog crisis

Media Outlet	Headline/Title	Imagery	Framing/Context	CDA Insights
China Daily (2013)	China Smog chokes 600 million in 2013	The use of the sentence "chokes 600 million" is a powerful image that effectively portrays the pervasive suffering and the debilitating impact of smog.	The framing emphasizes the gravity of the environmental issue by portraying how this national emergency impacts a sizable population.	The narrative underlines tremendous scale of the smog, which could help raise awareness among the public and promote further governmental changes. It displays the smog concern as a national emergency that affects a substantial percentage of the populace.
China Daily (2014)	Smog becoming Key Test for Chinese Officials	The smog being a "key test for Chinese officials" portrays a leadership and governance challenge, with implications for competence.	The framing has certain political ramifications, implying that the effectiveness or failure to address the issue could impact government and leaders.	The discourse connects environmental management to political accountability, in which Beijing's smog is framed as a litmus test for governance. The implication would be that poor handling of the smog crisis could undermine the government's authority while successful

				management could enhance their standing.
China Daily (2014)	Beijing to Adopt Strict Air Quality Plan for APEC	Adopting a “strict air quality plan” suggests stringent, potentially short-term measures to improve living conditions.	The framing emphasized an event-driven, proactive approach to managing air quality. The former implies that international criticism rather than prospective policy objectives might prompt the undertaken measures.	The narrative illustrates that maintaining environmental policy is subordinated to maintaining one’s reputation on an international scale. It suggests that international pressure, rather than public health concerns, is prompting environmental policy measures.
Global Times (2015)	Govt claims to have taken Effective Measures as Hazardous Smog hits Beijing	“Claims to have taken effective measures” indicates an averting position, where the government is responding to criticism.	The framing is portrayed as defensive. It focuses on government reassurances and guarantees rather than external validation.	The discourse reflects a disparity between government narratives and public perception. It draws attention to the government’s need to endorse and justify its actions, implying probable skepticism or critique from the public or the media.
Global Times (2017)	China Focus: Acting Mayor of Beijing vows to Tackle Smog	It conveys a sense of resolve and initiative.	The framing portrays the government’s resolve to address the smog issue, with the mayor positioned as adopting a proactive approach.	The discourse promotes the government’s image as being competent and reactive. It implies the adoption of a top-down strategy in which the authorities are viewed as a catalyst for change, bolstering leadership and accountability.
China Daily (2017)	UK, China experts come together to	The phrase “experts come together” implies international collaboration and	The framing highlights global cooperation, suggesting that Beijing’s smog	The discourse emphasizes the global aspects of environmental concerns and the

	Battle Smog	Beijing's cooperation evoking an image of joint action against a common threat.	requires a level of expertise and assets that exceeds China's own capacities.	importance of joint collaboration. Further, it portrays how Beijing's smog issue is one that requires international cooperation and pooling of resources.
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Throughout the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we can draw several key insights into how different narratives have shaped discourse on Beijing's air pollution. The analysis of the table reveals intricate narratives that shape public discourse and reflect underlying power dynamics, governance challenges, and societal responses. The narrative often portrays Beijing's smog crisis as an aptitude test for the government's leadership, focusing on authorities' responses and political ramifications. The government is usually depicted as proactive and dedicated to resolving the crisis. The former can be beneficial in giving the public reassurance and a sense of safety. However, it also enacts significant pressure on government officials to honor their claims and act upon them. Further, it positions leaders as central figures of change, whose credibility might be affected by poorly tackling or effectively tackling the smog situation. The emphasis on leadership reinforces the ideas that decisive governmental action is the key to resolving Beijing's air pollution issue.

Moreover, criticism is in accordance with the public's developing mistrust and discontent with the authorities' capability to handle environmental concerns. The government is often viewed as being reactive rather than proactive, which raises the possibility of institutional inefficiency. The former could heavily undermine public trust and lead to cynicism. The "Beijing to adopt strict air quality plans for APEC" demonstrates how global affairs can influence environmental regulations and policies. The implication is that improvements in terms of the environment are frequently achieved in response to the outside demands and external pressures. This showcases that not much is done in terms of a continuous, long-term strategy to resolve Beijing's smog situation. Following that, it can be implied that the Chinese government prioritizes maintaining a positive worldwide reputation, especially during significant events such as APEC. This calls into doubt if long-term commitment to environmental sustainability can be achieved.

The emphasis on international collaboration captures the broader spectrum of environmental concerns and how they transcend national borders. One might argue that working with global experts is a calculated attempt for China to portray itself as a competent contributor in the battle against pollution. This approach presents the Chinese government's efforts from a global perspective to seem more legitimate. Moreover, throughout this initiative, China shares accountability with the UK and delegates responsibility for future smog developments. There is a significant focus on displaying the utter scope of the smog crisis throughout the Chinese media. It serves as a cautionary alert to the public to underscore the severity of the situation, but also to incite governmental intervention. In discourse, the use of certain dramatic language, such as "chokes", serves as a mobilizing incentive for public support. However, it could also negatively impact the public's attitude and create a sense of fear and helplessness.

Across these narratives, several discursive patterns emerge. First, the Chinese government is perceived as the sole actor in addressing the smog issue. This displays a top-down approach to environmental leadership and governance. Second, there is a dispute in narratives, some criticize the government's approach to enacting change, and others offer optimism and point out opportunities

for change. Third, the fact that international events and collaboration can drive environmental policy draws some criticism. It raises questions about the sustainability plans for environmental issues. Last, the focus on the urgency and scope of the smog issue in Beijing can be a catalyst for change. However, it could also create a sense of inevitability.

Based on the results and the interpretations of the findings in Table 1. and Table 2. , we can draw significant disparities and similarities between environmental media discourse in global and Chinese media (see Table 3.). This could be portrayed throughout themes and could be analyzed using Content Analysis.

Table 2: A comparison between the Chinese and the global media using CA.

Aspect	Chinese Media Outlets	Global Media Outlets
Government Role	Proactive and Defensive	Critical and Analytical
Scale of Beijing's Smog	National Emergency	Global and International Crisis
Cooperation and Collaboration	Global Cooperation	Motivated Collaboration
Event-Driven Actions	Justification of Measures	Criticism of Temporary Plans
Public Perception and Attitude	Supportive/Defensive	Skeptical/Concerned

Regarding the first aspect, in the Chinese media outlets, the government is often portrayed as adopting a proactive approach to dealing with the crisis. It showcases the government's leadership, commitment, and reactivity. It offers an optimistic stance for sustainable plans to address Beijing's smog issue. Moreover, the government is depicted as defensive, trying to justify its actions, and responding to criticism from the global media. Whereas in the global media outlets, the emphasis is purely critical of the Chinese government, with a focus on their drawbacks and failures to address the smog issue. China is heavily criticized for insufficient responses and policies. The claim is that China's lack of responsiveness could have serious health implications for the future.

In terms of the second aspect, both the Chinese and the global media outlets emphasize the severity and the seriousness of the smog issue, and few discrepancies appear. Chinese media focuses on Beijing's smog as a national emergency that affects a large number of the population. The former serves as a means to justify adopting authoritative measures to solve the issue. Global media, on the other hand, views Beijing's smog as an international crisis situation that could have serious environmental health repercussions on a broader scale. In fact, the smog issue is viewed as a threat to humanity, and perhaps the beginning of a global "airpocalypse".

In the third aspect, Chinese media outlets present international cooperation and collaboration as a necessary step to fight air pollution. Thus, China plays a central cooperative actor in a positive and responsive alliance for joint efforts and sustainable development. Meanwhile the global media outlets acknowledge international cooperation in the fight against air pollution. However, it often questions the true motives of the Chinese government. The claim is that international cooperation does not

come from a genuine place, rather an agenda-pleasing one. In other words, global media assumes that China's true incentives are to maintain a positive international image, or because of external pressures.

For the fourth aspect, the Chinese media outlets often justify strict governmental policies as necessary measures for certain events like APEC. The claim is that these measures constitute considerable efforts to improve air quality during international events. The global media, on the other hand, denounces China's event-driven policies because they are viewed as temporary responses to a long-term crisis. There is a critique that China prioritizes holding a positive global image rather than working on a sustainable and long-term solution.

The last aspect sheds light on how often Chinese media portrays the support of the national public for the governmental actions and their understanding for the need to take drastic measures. In the global media, a narrative of public skepticism, fear, and concern is present. The media highlights how Chinese citizens struggle on a daily basis and struggle with future health implications.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

Throughout our analysis, we explore the ways in which the global and the Chinese media outlets frame Beijing's smog crisis in the years of 2013 to 2017, a time frame in which China knew its highest levels of air pollution. By means of analyzing media discourse in Chinese and in global media outlets, we could detect a number of disparities in narrative, in framing, in emphasis, in perception, and in discursive implications.

China has been closely looked over by global media concerning environmental crises, namely Beijing's air pollution. Global media offers a rather pessimistic and criticizing perspective towards China's leadership, governance, and policy implementation. Thus, painting a vivid image of an authoritative country with agenda-pleasing motives and event-driven policies. There is an emphasis on how China failed to balance between rapid development and environmental sustainability. The media hints at the fact that China focused more on becoming one of the most advanced countries in the world, forgetting that those advancements could have severe repercussions on the environment and the public health. Global media also condemns China's leadership approach towards environmental crises, portraying it as a country that employed war measures to fight the crisis. Moreover, sustainable policy implementation was deemed insufficient and probably undertaken under international pressure only. Global discursive implications depict China's environmental leadership as coercive and inadequate for Beijing's smog crisis. On the other hand, Chinese media outlets often highlight the government's efforts to combat Beijing's air pollution, thus "praising" China's governance and environmental concerns and implementations. There is a vivid portrayal of China's leadership as proactive and determined to allocate resources in the fight against Beijing's smog crisis. Chinese media uses an optimistic discourse and focuses on underlying developments, joint efforts, and justification of measures. The use of informed optimistic discourse and positive framing displays good governance and creates a positive public response. The former is often viewed as the key to fighting existential crises and coping with any future air pollution endeavors.

One could argue that the use of optimistic discourse in Chinese media outlets results from the authoritarian nature of the government that enacts certain restrictions on freedom of speech. Meanwhile, International media is less constrained and can express its viewpoints more openly. However, it could also be argued that the Chinese media outlets are governed by an effective crisis management leadership that focuses more on reassurance than dissemination of fear. Additionally, global media could have political motives behind criticizing China's governance and crisis-

management approaches. Ultimately, the way media frames environmental crises like Beijing's pollution shapes how these issues are understood and addressed on both local and global levels. By comparing the narratives from Chinese and global media, we gain an insight into how different perspectives influence public perception, policymaking, and the broader discourse on environmental responsibility.

To conclude, the study helped us shed light into how media plays an important role in shaping our understanding of environmental crisis, namely in Beijing, China. By comparing how Chinese and international media frame Beijing's smog crisis, we can gain insights into how narratives can be constructed, how they influence public perception, and how they can support or challenge governmental actions. The analysis of findings displays discrepancies in discourse between global and Chinese media outlets. Chinese media discourse focuses on portraying China as a responsible and proactive actor in the fight against air pollution, with an emphasis on government efforts, reassurance, and international collaboration. In contrast, global media pictures China as adopting a poor crisis management approach in the face of air pollution, using apocalyptic discourse, and emphasizing the failures of local policies. The difference in dynamics and framing highlights a broader politically charged discourse that requires further research.

Future research could explore environmental discourse in Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat, and global media platforms such as Reddit to gain insights into public perception that is not politically driven. The former could provide a more comprehensive understanding of public perception and attitude toward China's air pollution crisis.

Author's Contributions

All the authors have read and agreed to the version of the manuscript that has now been published. The authorship of this work involved the following contributions. El Jai Y. was responsible for conceptualizing the study and conducting the initial data analysis. They then proceeded to write the first draft of the manuscript. El Jai M. undertook data analysis efforts and used the findings to revise and refine the draft manuscript. Asmar K. provided critical feedback on the manuscript, which was then incorporated through editing and refining the work.

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