Ambivalence in China’s Quest for “Soft Power”: A Case Study of CCTV-America’s Multiple News Standpoints

by

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Abstract

The emergence of China Central Television-America (CCTV-America) can be seen as a significant landmark for China’s media globalization and “soft power” projection strategy. This paper analyzes the political and ideological orientation of CCTV-America’s news reporting as a way to understand China’s “soft power” drive. What are the station’s news standpoints? Are they consistent with each other in terms of reflecting a coherent political or ideological perspective? What political economic imperatives does the station’s news discourse reflect? In order to answer these research questions, I will describe CCTV-America’s institutional set-up, conduct newsroom observations at the station, as well as analyze its coverage of selected issues ranging from poverty in the U.S, the corruption in China, and the 2014 BRICS Summit, to the MH17 accident. In addition, I will also compare the news coverage of CCTV-America to CNN-International on events such as the death of Nelson Mandela and the Kunming terrorist attacks. The study not only provides evidence on CCTV-America’s progressive news standpoint, but also reveals its ambiguity, tension, as well as its ongoing negotiation of conflicting news values and perspectives in its news coverage. It explains this phenomenon in terms of CCTV-America’s conflicting political economic imperatives, its hybrid institutional identity, as well as the highly ambivalent nature of China’s “soft power” drive.

Keywords: CCTV, CCTV-America, news standpoint, soft power
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this essay to my parents Aiwu Liu and Yanwei Zhang. There is no doubt in my mind that without their continued support and counsel I could not have completed my study.

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1. Introduction

The overseas expansion of Chinese media as part of China’s “soft power” drive has emerged as a hot topic in media studies in the past decade (Zhao, 2013, p. 6). The launch of China Central Television-America (CCTV-America) can be seen as a significant step in China’s mainstream media globalization strategy. This is the first time for a Chinese state TV station division to be located in a North American country targeting the North American population. It thereby represents a new stage in China’s “soft power” drive by reaching the overseas media market.

This paper unfolds by analyzing previous studies on and the current broadcasting of CCTV-America. I further discuss CCTV-America’s various viewpoints reflected in different news stories and news production process on the basis of observations I made during an internship I had with the CCTV-America newsroom. The various news values, which interact, assimilate and contradict with each other in these different news stories, blur CCTV-America’s position on the global media stage. This is why we need to find out what kind of news values are displayed in CCTV-America’s news stories and news production process. What are the tensions between these different standpoints? How do they interact with each other and how do they blur CCTV-America’s position on the global stage? Based on these questions, I explore the political and economic imperatives behind CCTV-America’s multiple news standpoints, where CCTV-America stands in relation to power elites and dominant values on the global stage. What is the fundamental influence of the market structure and bureaucratic official media logic in relation to CCTV-America being a state owned commercial enterprise? What breakthroughs and limitations can be identified in CCTV-America as a “soft power” strategy? Based on the following analysis of CCTV-America, I will explain the ambiguity of China’s pursuit of “soft power”. Furthermore, this media transformation and China’s quest for “soft power” can be seen as a “microcosm” (Zhu, 2012) of China’s evolving state-society relationship. The negotiation between conflicting news values and tensions
manifested by CCTV-America indicate an open-ended social exploration process of the unique "China Model" which shows the complicated integration of inherited socialist legacies and a wide spread market oriented social transformation. (Zhu, 2012)
2. **Background of CCTV and CCTV-America**

In order to acquire a better understanding of CCTV-America, we need to first consider CCTV’s historical and institutional background and examine how it presents itself on the global media stage.

As Yuezhi Zhao concludes in her book *Communication in China*, CCTV, as a party-state media, is a mirror of the “ongoing state-led development and social transformation in China” (Zhao Y., 2008, p.75). CCTV-America, as one of CCTV’s oversea’s media branches, is an important component of CCTV, which inherited and developed CCTV’s institutional background and media structure. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the development and transformation of CCTV before we turn to CCTV-America.

The history of CCTV closely parallels that of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). CCTV initially launched as the party-state’s only media outlet in 1958 was called Beijing Television. In 1978 its name changed to the China Central Television. As the mouthpiece of the China Communist Party, CCTV is censored by and controlled by the Chinese central government. Therefore, CCTV is different from private and commercial media as it is state owned and state controlled. As a party-state media, CCTV-America operates under the supervision of “the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), which in turn answers to xuānchuán (Publicity) department of the Chinese Communist Party”(Nelson, 2013, p.11). This hierarchical structure is in accordance with the organizational structure of China’s government department, both led by an un-elected department director and holding broadcasting principles which parallel with those of the Chinese Communist Party. This un-elected institutional structure, is often criticized by the Western media for its lack of democracy and the isolation between the masses and bureaucratic organization leaders.
However, with the commercialization and market-oriented industrial restructuring of China’s social reform, CCTV has also experienced industrial reform. This market-driven reform helped CCTV become an excellent generator of advertising revenue, due to its special status as both the “government mouthpiece” as well as “a powerful conglomerate”. (Wang Jing, 2008. p.247) With CCTV’s industrial reform, the “mixed impact of state regulations and capital entry on China’s media” (Wang Jing, 2008. P.247) has aroused scholars’ attention. Under this social transformation context, China’s exploration for a “Chinese model” (Zhu, 2012) decides CCTV’s complicated and transforming nature, as a hybrid state controlled commercial media enterprise in China.

With the launching of China’s reform and opening up strategy, China is facing an increasing need to “spread China’s voice to the world” and “advocate… on behalf of China and Chinese culture overseas” (Zhu, 2012, p.169) so as to reduce the misunderstanding of China on the global stage and build a positive image of China. In order to achieve this goal, China’s Publicity Department has called for a “going out” strategy in order to express China’s voice on the global stage. (Zhu, 2012) Accordingly, this strategy consists of three steps. The first step is to launch a Chinese satellite TV channel, which is available to global audiences who can understand Chinese. This step mainly focuses on China’s overseas population of approximately 50 million people. The second step is to establish an English channel in order to enter Western mainstream society and reach Western mainstream audiences. The final step is to further develop this English channel into multiple multilingual channels to be made available to a wide range of global audiences. (Liang, 2013)

In accordance with the first step of the state’s plan for going global, CCTV launched its first satellite channel, CCTV-4 in 1992, which was made available to diasporic Chinese around the world. As CCTV’s former president Yang Weiguang described, “if the 1980s were a golden era for CCTV’s domestic development, then the 1990s should be a golden era for CCTV’s global expansion.” (Zhu, 2012, p.170) After four reforms and in order to better fulfill the goal of promoting Chinese culture to global Chinese heritage audiences, CCTV-4 developed as a comprehensive news channel which focuses on Chinese news and cultural events. (Liang, 2013, p.24) From 1992 till now, CCTV-4 has worked to become China’s first global satellite channel, which has
“infiltrated local cable networks in many countries and regions in Asia, Africa, North America, Europe and Oceania.” (Zhu, 2012, p.171) However, because the lack of firsthand news resources and International news professionals, the initial launch of CCTV-4 relied heavily on news formats and news footage from Western mainstream media like CNN and the BBC.

After the launch of CCTV-4 and completing step one in China’s going global strategy, CCTV launched its first English news channel. In 2000, CCTV-9, China’s official English language channel (which later changed its name to CCTV-News) began broadcasting to the public. CCTV-9 focuses on global English speaking audiences rather than Chinese speaking diaspora audiences who were targeted by CCTV4. CCTV9, a domestically based English language channel, can be explained as a new move to “help the world to understand China and the world to understand itself.” (Zhu, 2012, p.173) This move can also be understood as China’s drive “to take the initiative in presenting itself through its own media worldwide” (Wang, 2013, p.2). Besides using a different language and targeting different audiences, another difference between CCTV9 and CCTV4 is that, CCTV9 was built as a news channel rather than a comprehensive channel like CCTV4. From this aspect, CCTV-9 focuses more on political and economic news issues.

Besides launching a domestically based foreign language channel, CCTV has also successfully expanded globally with “CCTV-Africa and CCTV-America in 2012 in Kenya and the United States respectively, highlight[ing]...China’s ‘soft power’ and determination in managing its own voice toward global foreign audiences.” (Wang, 2013, p. 2) Establishing CCTV-America and CCTV-Africa reflect the second step of CCTV’s globalization strategy, which focuses on reaching mainstream Western audiences. (Liang, 2013)

Led by the second and third steps of going global and becoming multilingual, CCTV-America, the second of CCTV’s overseas locations was launched in Washington DC in February 2012. During the two years following its establishment, CCTV-America’s daily broadcasting time has rapidly expanded from one hour in 2012 to five hours by the end of June in 2014. The station’s main goal is to provide news and journalistic
commentary “related to American and global audiences in China and other Asian countries” (Wang, 2013, p. 3). The aim of CCTV-America is to provide Western mainstream audiences with a Chinese perspective in contrast to that delivered by Western media.

As a significant overseas division of CCTV, CCTV-America cannot avoid the complex influence of both state regulations and market orientated commercial motivations. However, previous studies on CCTV tend to focus on the liberating effect of CCTV’s commercial reform, and criticize the disabling impact of China’s state policy regulations regarding broadcasting media. For instance Jingxian Wang, author of *Global Expansion of China’s Broadcasting: A case study of CCTV-America* criticized that the reason why CCTV is held back from successful global expansion is because it is state owned and obliged to follow strict party regulations. This article further pointed out that this in turn limits China’s pursuit of “soft power” and limits China’s global communication effect on the global stage. However, it neglected the combination of party state regulations and commercial motivations, the attractiveness and imperial influence of neoliberal imperatives described by Western mainstream media during the process of China’s media commercial transformation. As Yuezhi Zhao articulates, this combination between party-state control and market orientation can be further explained as:

“media organizations and media managers developed a vested interest in sustaining the current political economic order by following the party line while pursuing financial gains. The media, in short, trade political obedience for the state’s sustenance of their monopolistic operations… Media commercialization has contributed to the entrenchment of state control in the media.” (Zhao Y., 2008 p.82)

As a significant step of China’s media going global strategy, the launch of CCTV-America drew much attention both domestically and globally. “It is the American production and broadcast arm of CCTV-News”. (CCTV-America, 2012) The goal of building CCTV-America in Washington DC is to provide an “alternative global coverage with China’s perspective.” (CCTV-America, 2012) This aim also decides the position of CCTV-America which is to offer an alternative voice to fill the blind spots in the Western dominated mainstream media market. CCTV-America’s programs focus on in-depth coverage in both North and South America, as well as on Central and Latin American
issues, which reflect news standpoints from China’s perspective, Asian American viewpoints, African American as well as Latin American standpoints. The launch of CCTV-America reflects a multi-national, multi-racial and multi-lingual as well as multi-territorial coverage characteristic, which is in accordance with the third step of China’s “going global” strategy. This diversified characteristic can be seen in CCTV-America’s news program contents, news professionals and its news production process.

CCTV-America’s programs include Biz Asia America (daily global business news), The Heat (Saturday talk show), Americas Now (Sunday news on Central and Latin America), General News (weekend in-depth news) as well as a local cultural magazine program Full Frame, which is located in Los Angeles. Among all the programs, General News and Biz Asia America are live shows. General News is a one-hour daily show, which focuses on both American news and offers one news hour to CCTV-News’ daily program. Biz Asia America is a daily business news magazine program. The Heat is a political daily talk show, which uses an Americanized talk show format to discuss hot political issues. It focuses on “penetrating interviews with internationally known guests plus segments presenting a vigorous exchange of views on topical subjects” (CCTV-America, 2012), which also delves into some politically sensitive and controversial issues. Americas Now is a unique news program, which focuses on Central and Latin America issues, with coverage of Cuban issues, which are rarely seen in Western mainstream media. Full Frame is an American cultural program. This program can be seen as an important program to attract American youth because it focuses more on cultural topics rather than serious political and economic issues like the other programs on CCTV-America.

From the human resource perspective, CCTV-America is the largest of China’s overseas state media outlets with 130 employees in 2012 and more than 300 employees in 2014. Two thirds of CCTV-America’s news professionals are non-Chinese. Most of the foreign news professionals formerly worked in CNN, Reuters, AP, APF and BBC as well as other world famous news media outlets. According to the employee profiles from CCTV-America’s official website, there are 43 famous news hosts and front line correspondents currently working at CCTV-America. Among all of them there are: four Chinese, three Indians, six white Americans, six African Americans, four from the Middle
East countries, four Hispanics as well as several African Americans, Asian American and Filipinos. (CCTV-America, 2012) This multi-national and multi-racial background is especially apparent in CCTV-America’s prime time news hosts, among the eight hosts of four programs, only three of them are white Americans. The others are African Americans, Iranian Americans and Asian Americans. This is a big difference with Western mainstream media, in which “network and cable news have long been a bastion for whitedom, with white hosts and commentators” (Grim, 2014) especially in prime time programs, while minority racial hosts are found on programs, which mainly focus on minority communities. The multiple nationalities and races of the news professionals shows CCTV-America’s diversified characteristic with many subaltern racial groups in U.S such as Asian and African Americans rather than just white American news professionals.

In CCTV-America’s news production, CCTV-America also combined multi-national news production styles and news production technologies together. As international media researcher and consultant Nelson described in her report, CCTV-America’s offices are “elegant expanses of glass and chrome that hum with an energy only found in thriving enterprises-increasingly rare in U.S newsrooms,” (Nelson, 2013, p.9) which reflect CCTV-America’s rich funding and its advanced hardware. Moreover, the equipment forming the backbone of CCTV-America’s news production system combines Associated Press’s ENPS system, with China’s Sobey news editing system along with Israel’s Asvon news recording system, which adds a material dimension to CCTV-America’s overall display of global diversity.

On the funding aspect, CCTV-America receives its funding from both the Chinese government and advertising revenue from CCTV’s domestic channels, which influences CCTV-America’s institutional nature of answering to the Chinese Communist Party along with its commercialized industrial nature. Therefore, considering CCTV-America’s hybrid nature, multi-cultural characteristic and its significance as a major step of China’s “soft power” strategy, it is necessary for us to look into what position CCTV-America holds on the global stage and what various news standpoints it shows during its news broadcasting.
Besides CCTV-America’s background, some problems have appeared during its initial two years of broadcasting. Regarding CCTV-America’s communication effect, there is a deviation between CCTV-America’s actual audiences and the audiences they expected to reach in the North America. (CCTV-America, 2012) CCTV-America defines its development strategy as “mainly focus[ed] on North American audiences” (Liang, 2013, p. 44) and this audience orientation directly influences CCTV-America’s market position, employee standards and its news content. According to CCTV-America’s deputy director Guo Chun, CCTV-America’s main audience are middle and upper class North Americans, as well as people who are interested in issues related to China. According to audience feedback collected by an international journalism scholar Yan Liang, although CCTV-America has reached some Chinese students and a small number of scholars who are interested in China issues, the recognition of CCTV-America among native North American audiences remains low. (Liang, 2013) Therefore, from this audience recognition perspective, CCTV-America has only partially succeeded in meeting the goals of its global development strategy.

Besides this audience deviation problem, CCTV-America is also facing a credibility problem because it appears as Chinese state official media, which is mainly funded by Chinese government. This official and national TV station identity has generated a trust crisis especially in the North American news market where Americanized news standards such as media freedom and objectivity are seen as “universal news standards”. That is also the reason why most research papers; especially from foreign researchers, tend to strongly criticize the media censorship of the Chinese government. This is also one of the stereotypes of previous studies on CCTV-America. I will further explain in the following literature review.
3. Literature Review of Previous Studies

According to data from the biggest Chinese academic paper database CNKI, Simon Fraser University library database and Google Scholar, there are six research papers focusing on CCTV-America, two of them are in English and four in Chinese. Among all six previous studies of CCTV-America, there are two case studies of CCTV-America, one academic report, two general global strategy studies and two specific studies of CCTV-America. Four of the papers analysed CCTV-America as an instance of China’s pursuit of “soft power” and measure this “soft power” drive according to Western values, such as audience ratings and the negative impact of Chinese government regulation on CCTV-America’s communication effect. On this point, most of the analysis in these papers takes a realist international relations perspective, taking American oriented “universal news values” for granted without questioning whose ideas and ideology they represent. Whether if this complex hybrid nature of CCTV-America fit these Americanized news standard?

The two English research papers on CCTV-America include Anne Nelson’s research report *CCTV's International Expansion: China’s Grand Strategy for Media?* and Jingxian Wang’s case study, *Global Expansion of China's Broadcasting: A Case Study of CCTV America*. I will focus on Nelson’s analysis, since her report shows many differences with the Chinese research papers on CCTV-America. Nelson unfolds her analysis by comparing CCTV-America with the launch of CCTV-Africa, and then explains the development of CCTV-America from CCTV-America’s institutional background perspective. Nelson clearly points out the close relation between CCTV-America and the Chinese government’s political and economic agenda. (Nelson, 2013) Moreover, Nelson used a lot of CCTV-America’s news reports as examples, and interviewed some key producers and anchors on CCTV-America like Jim Laurie, in order to detect CCTV-America’s communication effect. In her article, Nelson argues that because of CCTV-America’s close affiliation with the Chinese government, CCTV-America enjoys enough
funding to be exempt from needing foreign advertising and worries about their actual audience ratings. (Nelson, 2013) Although Nelson covers some rarely discussed aspects about the issues, her report also shows a number of blind spots and biases, such as neglecting the conflicting news standpoints in CCTV-America’s news narratives because of its complicated structural and commercial background, and the imperial ideological influence of Western mainstream media on CCTV-America.

Alongside these two English research papers, there are some news reports and articles that mentioned CCTV-America, especially regarding the establishment of CCTV-American in Washington DC. For instance, in Bosco’s news report, *Why Voice of America is Losing to Voice of Communist China - At Home and Abroad* (Bosco J. A., 2012), the launch of CCTV-America is described as “international hostile forces in ideological and cultural fields which can be seen as a representation of China’s “soft power” and two-track media strategy.” (Bosco J.A, 2012) In the article, *India, China, and the New Public Diplomacy* (Hanson, 2012), the establishment of CCTV-America is explained as China flexing its “soft power” muscles and a new tool of China’s public diplomacy. The article *China as a persuader: CCTV-Africa’s First Steps in the African Mediasphere* (Gagliardone, 2013) described CCTV’s move to Washington DC as a tool of propaganda and public diplomacy. *The Clashes of Two Images, China’s Offensive in the United States* (Bu, 2013) took CCTV-America as an example of China’s image building strategy and an offensive move against North America. *Propaganda in China: Not a Dirty Word in China* (Birch, 2014) used an ironic tone to illustrate Chinese media as tools for propaganda, which further illustrated that CCTV-America is not an exception to this general practice. All of these reports show highly ideological critiques of the launch of CCTV-America as China’s media going global strategy. According to the survey made by Liang in his academic report on CCTV-America, among the 12 influential foreign media’s news reports on the launch of CCTV-America: three of them held positive attitudes, five of them showed neutral responses towards CCTV-America and four of the foreign media expressed negative even hostile tones towards CCTV-America. (Liang, 2013, p.68) According to Liang’s analysis in this survey, the most frequently appearing words in these foreign news reports on CCTV-America are ‘propaganda’, ‘censorship’ and ‘credibility’. (Liang, 2013) Liang concludes in his report that most of the the negative news reports on CCTV-America appeared during CCTV-America’s debut
time, centered on criticizing China’s “soft power” strategies. Most of the positive foreign news report on CCTV-America focused on CCTV-America’s news production, multicultural news staff as well as program content. (Liang, 2013) These foreign news reports on CCTV-America reflect a sensitive attitude towards China’s “soft power” strategy, which do not portray China’s quest for “soft power” as merely a cultural move, but as a political and strategic move.

Besides these English research papers, the four Chinese academic papers are A Study of CCTV-America’s Global Communication Strategies, An Analysis of International Employees in CCTV-America, The Dilemma and Improvement of CCTV-America as well as A Study of CCTV-America’s Communication Strategy from the Biz Asia America Program. Among these four research papers, A Study of CCTV-America’s Global Communication Strategies by Yan Liang is a comparatively comprehensive research. In his paper, Liang explains CCTV-America’s global communication strategy based on its historical background. Then Liang analyzes CCTV-America’s operations by probing into its different programs. In order to critically reflect on CCTV-America’s communication effect, Liang enriches his report by comparing CCTV-America with China Radio International and NHK World and further investigates CCTV-America’s problems and improvement. (Liang, 2013) Based on these comparisons, Liang further concludes there is room for improvement from the perspective of the station’s programing, production quality, and target audiences, as well as from CCTV-America’s new media potential. The whole paper is supported by data collected from CCTV-America and a questionnaire survey conducted by Liang in Washington. DC.

According to the brief illustrations of Nelson and Liang’s studies of CCTV-America, as well as several news reports on CCTV-America, we can conclude several basic characteristics of previous research papers:

Most of the previous research focused on general picture, on CCTV-America’s communication strategy and global influence. Only two of the previous research papers made detailed analysis on specific news stories from CCTV-America.

Western research reached more sensitive topics such as CCTV-America’s institutional and structural problems, but neglected the influence Western dominant
discourses have on CCTV-America’s news producers and news stories, as well as the multiple news standpoints apparent in CCTV-America’s news stories. Meanwhile, the news articles, which only mentioned CCTV-America in passing, show Western media’s highly politically sensitive response towards the launch of CCTV-America as well as dual standards regarding the Western cultural oriented interpretation of “soft power” and Western media’s response towards China’s “soft power” drive. With so much attention on the launch of CCTV-America as a “soft power” move, previous studies ignore the internal transformation of CCTV-America during this development, which also mirrors the social and communicative paralleled relations during the China’s social and media reform. I will focus on these blind spots of previous research on CCTV-America, developing my argument from a micro level, supported by specific news story analysis and my work experience with CCTV-America’s newsrooms.
4. Multiple News Standpoints in CCTV-America

In this part I will analyze several recent news stories, which shows different perspectives of CCTV-America in its news production or news stories. The reason behind choosing these specific news stories is that, this paper focuses on CCTV-America’s development through various individuals who are working on CCTV-America’s front lines of news production. The key point of emphasis for this paper is the heated discussion between different news standpoints in the newsroom, which is experienced in the production process. Based on those research focuses, it is necessary for us to look into the latest details, which reflected multiple viewpoints in specific news stories, rather than only focusing on general pictures of CCTV-America.

In order to show the complex relationship between CCTV-America’s news and those of Western mainstream media and showcase the consistencies and conflict in their news viewpoints, I will compare CCTV-America’s broadcasts with CNN’s on two news issues. The reason behind choosing CNN to make the comparison is because CNN has always been a significant reference to CCTV-America as a CCTV overseas English Channel. The former CCTV English Channel, CCTV-9’s developing goal was to “become China’s CNN”. However, CCTV-America’s developing goal is to provide an alternative voice to CNN, and become a “competitor of CNN”. This shifting goal of CCTV English channels not only reflects the importance of CNN to CCTV’s development, but also reveals that CCTV’s exploratory globalization strategy is changing from imitating Western news standards to realizing the dominant role of Western mainstream media in the global media system. Despite using CNN at the media strategic level, CCTV-America also uses the news network as a significant news resource for its own news production. CNN’s programs, especially its breaking news reports, are always closely watched by CCTV-America’s news producers on the small screen in the newsroom beside the producers’ main editing computers. That’s why I chose CNN to make this comparative study.
According to the above analysis, I chose seven news issues to provide further explanation. I have chosen the death of Nelson Mandela, for which I gained inspiration from Wang Weijia’s analysis on the domestic media report, the live broadcast of MH17, the news release on the American poverty issue, indigenous peoples issues, the news coverage on BRICS Summit, news reporting on the terrorist attack at Kunming Railway Station, as well as corruption at CCTV itself as main examples to analyse. Among them, I will make comparative study between CCTV-America and CNN on Mandela’s death and the terrorist attack in Kunming.

**Improvements of CCTV-America as China’s “soft power” drive**

I will explain what improvements CCTV-America has made through its news stories as China’s “soft power” drive. The economic program of CCTV-America, *Biz Asia America* has covered poverty issues and inequalities faced by African Americans in the run-down neighbourhoods of Washington D.C. This drew public attention to the dangerous living standards of African Americas and their unequal access to education and jobs. This news pitch was made by American journalist Andrea Arenas, who cares about the unequal living standard of African Americans in Washington D.C. Her news package includes several news stories, which altogether form a news report called “Re-examine the American Dream”. (Arenas, 2014) (See Appendix B) In her news package she revealed the current living standards of some African Americans who are living in slums in Washington D.C. She went on to make a comparison of their incomes, average educational level and career opportunities with white middle class Americans. This comparison reflected that, “white men have more opportunities to get a job even though they have the highest rate of alcohol and drug uses and the lowest rates of college attendance.”(Arenas, 2014) Hendrik Sybrandy also contributed to this news package by interviewing a working class family in Colorado. He found that the American Dream is hard to achieve because of its high costs, even for white working class people in Colorado. Based on these two interviews, the conclusion comes with a new examine of this “longstanding belief” (Arenas, 2014) is fading especially for marginalized groups and lower income people who are living in unequal situations in America.
However, the broadcast of this news package was postponed for a period of time because of a fierce debate between different news producers in CCTV-America. The program anchor, who is an Asian American, thought this news package was too “heavy”. He further explained that this news story indicates “a fading American Dream”, which is not the truth according to his experience. The anchor graduated from a famous American university and lived on a decent income in Washington D.C. As a well-established middle class news anchor, the American Dream for him is much easier to achieve than those with lower incomes. Some African American news producers and Chinese news producers, however, believed this package was newsworthy. They thought the unequal living situation of marginalized groups and those with lower income was a serious social problem in American society, and should be broadcasted by media. This debate mirrored the clash of different news values held by multiracial news staff and between middle-income Americans and lower-income Americans. The second interview of the working class Americans family also revealed that income gap is a widely existing transracial problem, which has often been neglected by Western mainstream media.

In the end, the program’s supporters prevailed and the news story was broadcasted. The final successful broadcast of this news package reflected that, on this American poverty topic, CCTV-America chooses to speak for the marginalized and low-income people. This is significant to the extent that the news media, Chinese and Western alike, tend to ignore issues such as poverty and the perspectives of the lower social classes.

In addition to this American poverty issue, CCTV-America also aroused attention by broadcasting indigenous people’s issues. This topic not only focused on Native Americans, but also included transnational coverage on the inequalities of indigenous Brazilians, First Nation groups in Canada as well as the “Redskins” controversies of Native Americans. For instance, CCTV-America covered “Redskin” controversy by broadcasting the trademark problem of American National Football League (NFL), which claimed that this “Redskins” trademark “disparage[s] the native Americans”. (CCTV-America, 2014) The latest coverage on this marginalized group issue was in The Heat, which unfolded this indigenous people’s issue by interviewing three guests. These three
guests were, Grand Chief Edward John, a Hereditary Chief of the Tl’azt’en Nation; Paulo Sotero, the director of the Brazil Institute at the Wilson International Center and Simon Moya-Smith, a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation in South Dakota and a reporter, working with the Indian Country Today Media Network. (CCTV-America, 2014) This guests’ selection reflected CCTV-America’s effort to dig into hidden news perspectives and focus on marginalized groups in North America. The news anchor of the Heat is also an African American who has reported on a large amount of African American issues as well as marginalized people’s topics. During this interview, guests pointed out that the stereotyped image of Native Americans that is illustrated by American mainstream media is biased and untrue. These guests also emphasized that First Nations and Native Americans’ opinions in political arena are not always welcomed. For instance, the Native Americans are still taken as the “others” by White Americans on significant political agenda discussions. Although some indigenous groups have their political organizations, they cannot enjoy the equal political participation due to the established unequal political structure. (CCTV-America, 2014) This unequal political situation of native people does not only exist in America, but also remains as a common problem in Canada, Brazil as well as many other countries. It can be argued that this alternative angle should go well with CCTV-America, as a socialist state media outlet, which, after all, is supposed to fight for equality for a broad public, especially marginalized groups.

Alongside broadcasts of indigenous groups and the news coverage on American poverty issue, CCTV-America also showed developing countries’ position in the 2014 BRICS Summit’s reports. According to the video resources from CCTV-America’s official website, there are 26 video news about BRICS Summit from July 14 to July 21. (CCTV-America, 2014) Among all the video news, two thirds of them mentioned about the significant role of launching a new Development Bank for BRICS countries, which can be seen as a counterbalance move towards the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The establishment of new Development Bank can offer alternative fund by BRICS countries themselves. The goal of building this Development Bank in Shanghai is to “develop connections that could alter the global financial landscape.” (See Appendix D) (CCTV-America, 2014) CCTV-America’s reporter Stepen Gibbs, who focuses on South American news analyses in his live reports, claims the establishment of this bank also marks “the changing dynamics of the BRICS as a global force alongside more
established groups like the G20 and G7.” (Gibbs, 2014) Stephen Gibbs further explains in his report, “The BRICS is an unusual global grouping, neither a trading bloc, nor a political alliance. Its member has long been keen to stress that it is more than just a name.” (Gibbs, 2014) These news broadcasts on 2014 BRICS Summit represent a Global South tone by illustrating their struggles to counterweight the unequal global economic structure which is dominated by IMF and the World Bank.

Besides taking a global South standpoint in 2014 BRICS news report, CCTV-America made a great effort to broadcast this world financial event. The major three programs of CCTV-America, Biz Asia America, Americas Now and The Heat broadcasted this Summit in different news styles at the same time. One of the most creative news styles was in Americas Now, which imitated Buzzfeed’s news format to illustrate the important information of BRICS Summit. All the key information about the 2014 BRICS Summit is listed like questions and answers. For instance, the news article “5 Things You Need to Know about the BRICS Summit” (see appendix E) listed 5 key points. This news style is more digestable for audience because of its clearer structure. Meanwhile, this news format works better on social media channels like Facebook, which is more easily seen and shared by quick readers and especially by young people. In addition to CCTV-America’s new take on news style, it has also created a special column to concentrate all the news broadcasts from different programs of CCTV-America, in order to give audiences a clearer picture and better knowledge of this year’s BRICS Summit. All of these efforts on BRICS Summit reflect that CCTV-America has attached great importance to this global South countries’ event, which is different from Western mainstream media’s global North countries orientation. (See Appendix E)

If we take a closer look at CCTV-America’s broadcasts on China’s domestic news event, especially the Kunming train station terrorist attack, we can find a more apparent negotiation between CCTV-America’s multiple news values.
During CCTV-America reporting of violence perpetuated by Uighur militants from Xinjiang, the most frequently appeared nodal word is “terrorist attack.” By defining the perpetrators as terrorists, the network used an anti-terrorism tone and promoted China’s defense, safety, and unification. When defining these attacks, CCTV-America used the Americanized concept of “terrorism” in its news report, which was first created by the U.S. to describe the Middle East attacks. However, CCTV-America uses this Americanized concept in order to stand by its official statist values and protect national interest. As a state media outlet, one of CCTV-America’s basic principles is to broadcast news event without harming national interest. Faced with these separatists attack, like the Kunming train station attack, CCTV-America must hold China’s perspective clear to protect the national unification and state interest.

According to the news resources from CCTV-America official website, there are 8 news videos on China’s terrorists attack events in 2014. Among all these news broadcasts, five of them used the phrase “terrorist attack” or “anti-terror war” in their headlines. In the news reports of the Urumqi terrorists bombing attack, CCTV-America quoted Xinhua Agency’s information as “The group ‘took part in illegal religious activities, watched and listened to terrorist violence videos and audio materials,’ Terrorists and extremists will be hunted down and punished,” (CCTV, 2014) In the news report of the Kunming train station attack, CCTV-America depicts that knife-wielding militants have been accused of terrorist crimes, as “being involved in organizing, leading and participating in a terrorist organization, inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination.” (CCTV, 2014) CCTV-America’s reporting included a timeline of anti-terrorists activities in China.

Different from CCTV-America’s news discourse, CNN takes different standpoints in broadcasting China’s ethnic terrorist attack than CCTV-America did. In this Kunming event, CNN only produced 3 news reports about the Kunming’s attack. In CNN’s news discourse, it doesn’t use the phrase terrorist attack directly. In its March 2nd news report,

1 Among all the news reports, there are some “nodal point” words, which frequently appear in these comments and interview programs. The frequency appearance of these “nodal words” indicates the angle of those news stories, effect networks, linking scattered discourses together and mirrors the tone of news discourse. That’s why I will choose “nodal words” as key points in news discourse analysis.
CNN reported “China train station killings described as a terrorist attack” (Ellis, 2014) as a headline, and depicted the Kunming attackers as “Members of a separatist group from Xinjiang, in northwest China, [who] are believed to have carried out the assault, authorities said. The report referred to them as terrorists.” (Ellis, 2014)

At the end of this article, the author described this attack by quoting Xinhua’s account, but deceptively added their own commentary by adding quotation marks around the word terrorists, “Two weeks ago, 11 ‘terrorists’ died in the Xinjiang region, Xinhua reported.” (Ellis, 2014) The other two news reports headlines are “Report: All suspects in China train station killing arrested or killed” (Wang K. , 2014) and “Families reel, witnesses haunted after China’s deadly Kunming terror attacks “. (Jiang, 2014)

It is not hard to tell the different perspectives between CNN and CCTV-America regarding this news event. While the key nodal word used by CNN is “terrorists” the meaning of this word does not correspond to CCTV-America’s use because CNN amended it with quotation marks or framed it as, “the described”. Although CNN was trying to show its condemnation of the attackers, their slight differences embody their different emphases on this event. The subtle difference of with or without the quotation marks in the portrayal of the victims to their framing of the Xinjiang separatists and the “so called/ described terrorists” reflects CNN’s mistrust of China’s analysis of the suspects, or that they do not want to demonize them in the same way. Faced with the same Kunming terrorists’ event, CNN acted as a gatekeeper of the “universal terms” such as “terrorism”. Western media uses “terrorism” freely to describe attacks, in which innocent civilians are victims. This terminology, “terrorism”, can arouse moral condemnations and worldwide sympathies. But Western mainstream media protects their privileged use of these “universal terms” especially against countries with different political ideologies, like China. In CNN’s initial news broadcast on terrorist attack in Kunming, they didn’t frame this incident as a terrorists attack, but they changed their news title after it aroused strong angry voices from China. This subtle switch exemplifies the actual existence of an ongoing contestation over the terms of discourse between CNN and CCTV. Specifically, this competition over the use of terms and power to frame events showed the tension between China’s statist news viewpoint and Western mainstream news standpoint that presents itself as universalist.
These four examples reflect CCTV-America alternative standpoints respectively, which are different from Western mainstream news discourses. CCTV-America’s broadcasts on the American dream and poverty issues showed a lower-income class and marginalized American social groups' perspective, which tends to be neglected by mainstream American media outlets. In indigenous people’s news reports, CCTV-America revealed the multinational unequal political and economic situations of indigenous people in Brazil, Canada as well as America. This cross-national problem showed the lack of representation of some social minority groups in Western’s elite dominated political arena. For instance, the “Redskin” trademark controversy indicated a historical disparage of Native Americans, which has been ignored for many years. CCTV-America’s great efforts on broadcasting the 2014 BRICS Summit represented global South standpoints, which called for a more equal and balanced global financial order. The last terrorists attack coverage reflected China’s statist perspectives of fighting against Western controlled terminology usage in order to express China’s perspective on political sensitive events. Therefore, CCTV-Americas as an overseas party-state media division, reached some blind spots of Western mainstream media by expressing these alternative viewpoints. These alternative viewpoints can be also seen as improvements of China’s quest for “soft power”, which reflected a counterbalance of missing voices in global media system and drew much attention globally.

**Limitations of CCTV-America as China’s “soft power” drive**

Although CCTV-America has made many eye-catching news broadcasts by providing alternative news standpoints and expressing China’s perspective in Western dominated media system, its news narratives still shows some limitations of unstable standpoints in CCTV’s pursuing of “soft power”. I will further explain these limitations through three news examples.

The following analysis focuses on CCTV-America and CNN’s coverage of Nelson Mandela’s death. This story is relevant for the current analysis because it is a political breaking news report, which drew the global media’s spotlight. Moreover, as an important political figure, Nelson Mandela has great political symbolic value all over the world. Every year, on the memorial day of Nelson Mandela, a large wave of news
reports on Nelson Mandela will come again. This is a political topic, and a consistently renewed news topic. Therefore, how global media interpreted his death can be seen as a sign of global media outlet’s political standpoint. As a significant historical icon, Nelson Mandela had many personal experiences, such as being a leader of a military fraction during the violent anti-apartheid movement; he has also been a symbol of peace, anti-violence, a tolerant leader who pursued freedom and emancipation for his whole life. Mandela himself represented different political positions over the span of several historical periods. Therefore, among the different roles he has played during various historical segments, the role which media has chosen to illustrate during their eulogy of him begets a hidden political direction, which can be extracted from the discourses formed by different media’s broadcasts.

As Wang outlined in his article, there tends to be two possible ways to broadcast a historical icon like Nelson Mandela. One is to use this historical icon as a tool to further some political and ideological ends. The other is to comprehensively illustrate his image through different historical moments and inspire the audience to rethink and discuss the meaning of this icon and these historical milestones. (Wang W. , 2013) According to Wang’s classification, the first way belongs to political propaganda and the second focuses more on illustrating events from a historical perspective, generating discussion by leaving audiences to make interpretations on their own.

In CCTV-Amercia’s broadcasting of Nelson Mandela, there are more than 30 reports in total during December 2013 according to CCTV-Amercia’s official website. (CCTV-Amercia, 2013) Among all the news reports in December about Mandela’s death, half of these are historical reviews and comments on Mandela’s life, Mandela’s influence and comments and memories from different points of view. CCTV-Amercia’s two most striking broadcasts on his death include a historical review of Mandela “NELSON MANDELA: 1918-2013”, which originally came from BBC and was broadcasted consistently for one week. The other eye-catching program on Mandela was based on profile interviews of Mandela’s friends and some other political figures.

In Wang analysis, Chinese domestic reporting on Mandela’s death was centered on the historical periods of his political leader’s life according to Western media’s
ideological preference and political requirement. (Wang W. , 2013) For the same neoliberal ideological and political consideration, Wang found that Western media hides Mandela’s revolutionary experiences in their news coverage and surprisingly, China’s domestic media’s reporting followed suit. Moreover, Wang also criticized China’s domestic media for taking the same news standpoint with Western media by internalizing Western media’s neoliberal news ideological standpoints. This can be seen as a clear reflection of the Western dominant tone in China’s domestic media discourse. (Wang W. , 2013)

In order to analysis CCTV-America’s standpoints, I took an in-depth interview from the Heat interview of Maya Angelou, who was a poet, author and also Mandela’s friend, as a representation of CCTV-America’s reporting of this event.

During this interview, Maya mainly focused on two historical periods to commemorate Mandela. She talked about when Mandela was elected as a leader of the ANC (African National Congress), and how her husband was one of the PAC (Pan African Congress), the rivals to Mandela. (CCTV-America, 2013) She compared the differences between the ANC’s and PAC’s fight for freedom, in order to show Mandela’s kindness as highlighted by his non-violence pursuit of racial equality and freedom in South Africa. The second memory she described was how generous and forgiving he was during his inauguration with Hillary Clinton after he was freed from prison, and how amazing he was to be remembered by both white and black people. Her last point shows that he was a perfect example of a “global citizen” to be followed as a model by the world leaders. These two historical moments of Mandela’s life demonstrate the reconciliation between the white and black races, and the compromises made by South Africa’s elite class of white people to finally recognize and address the racial problem in South Africa, which had lasted for half a century.

It is not hard to see the key point of The Heat’s interview was the same with which Wang criticized China’s domestic media for, propagating Mandela’s “reconciliation political” achievements and non-violence activity. (Wang W. , 2013) This interview also emphasized the compromise white people made but hides the marginalized people in South Africa’s hard fight for its equality and freedom. This news framing indicates that
both China’s domestic media and overseas media hide Mandela revolutionary activities, which inspired some significant socialist movements later. Those socialist movements can be seen as important socialist legacies. CCTV, a party state media outlet, should not ignore these revolutionary periods of Nelson Mandela. Therefore, this surprisingly highly consensus news viewpoints between CCTV and Western mainstream media, embodies imperial influence of neoliberal ideology on China’s media news narratives.

If we take a look on CNN’s reports on this event, during December 2013, there were more than 170 videos on Mandela’s passing. Among them, half of the news broadcasts were in-depth interviews and commentaries on this event. Similar to The Heat’s interview of Maya Angelou, CNN also conducted many in-depth interviews to unveil the political implications of Mandela’s death. CNN’s differences with CCTV-America’s reporting on this event begin with the far greater number of news reports produced by CNN in comparison to CCTV-America. CNN’s interviews mainly targeted presidential level guests, or featured the speeches made by presidents from many different countries at Mandela’s memorial. These interviews included Barack Obama, Tony Blair, David Cameron, and Jacob Zuma. Among all of CNN’s in-depth interviews, the nodal words are: ‘leader’, ‘freedom’, ‘conscience’, ‘generous’ and ‘forgiveness’. The specific historical segments that appeared most frequently in these news reports were also the same two historical periods highlighted in CCTV-America’s programming.

Several of CNN’s news headlines provide a clear image of the political implications hidden in the station’s reporting of Mandela’s death. For example, CNN’s broadcasting line-up on December 10th, “As a example for leaders, Mandela has no parallel” “Obama defies dictators at Mandela service” and “5 world leaders missing Mandela’s memorial” and December 14’s reports: “Even in death, Mandela unites the world “, “Give capitalism a chance to change Cuba”, “China’s Mandela problem”, “How Mandela shaped the conscience of the world?” These news headlines represented that, Mandela, as a model image of the kind of universal moral values used by America to criticize other countries with different political ideologies such as Cuba, and China.

If we compare CNN’s coverage of Mandela’s memorial to their coverage of Chavez’s memorial, it is not hard to identify CNN’s biased news standpoints. Both start
with the death of a political leader, but in describing Mandela, CNN used ‘giant’, ‘model’, ‘greatness’, ‘teacher’ and ‘leader’; on the contrary, to depict Chavez, CNN used ‘devil’ to the citizens, ‘iron’, ‘dictator’, ‘tyrant’; this is most likely because Chavez played the role of America’s “other” on the global stage who did not follow America’s steps politically and economically.

If we compare CCTV-America and CNN’s broadcasts on the obituary of Nelson Mandela, we can find some consistency between these two global media sources. CCTV-America shared many nodal words with CNN, regarding this story including" ‘forgiving’, ‘tolerance’, ‘freedom’, from this perspective, CCTV-America had almost the same tone with CNN. Further more, both CNN and CCTV-America selected the same two historical periods regarding Mandela’s nonviolent activities as well as his prison life. However, they did not mention his revolutionary activities and his participation in the national liberation movement. These revolutionary activities were important factors in the abolishment of South Africa’s apartheid policies, but have been removed by the Western dominant news framings for fear of arousing more revolutionary socialist implications. CNN did not mention these historical periods, which diverge from and conflicts with the story they were portraying of Mandela. On the other hand, the history they selected instead, showing his tolerance and forgiveness, which can be seen as a neoliberal communication strategy in CNN’s narrative framing.

This consistency between CCTV-America and CNN reflects the presence of Western neoliberal news standpoints in CCTV-America’s news broadcast. This presence of neoliberal news value also reflects that CCTV-America is not sensitive enough on some global events, which have profound political indications, such as this Mandela issue. This struggle of conflicting news standpoints in this case mirrors the still dominant position of neoliberal news standpoints on global stage, and the internalization of Western neoliberal ideology in China’s media system.

These conflicting news standpoints can be also seen from the CCTV corruption scandal broadcasts. Although compared with domestic official news outlets, CCTV-America is more open towards choosing news topics, even starts reaching some political and cultural sensitive issues. Its party-state media nature and institutional background
decides CCTV-America still has limitations on reporting some political sensitive issues, such as the media corruption scandal.

For instance, with China central government’s anti-corruption movements going on this year, many high ranking government officials have been exposed. CCTV-America has covered a series of anti-corruption events from Bo Xilai’s issue to China’s resources chairman Songlin’s corruption, and reached some senior party officials like Xu Caihou and Zhou Yongkang’s scandal, even to the China’s government’s adult corruption issue. These anti-corruption broadcasts have aroused much attention globally, which expressed China’s official interpretation of these corruption rather than just been illustrated by social media and Western reportings. The nodal words in CCTV-America’s descriptions are ‘under investigation’, ‘accused of bribery’, ‘serious violations of rules and disciplines’. CCTV’s official description of this anti-corruption event “beat tigers” action, was mean to “enhance’s people’s trust to the party and the legitimacy of party”. (CCTV-America, 2014) These news reports on corruption scandals of senior officials from Chinese millitray and the Communist Party reflect the improving transparency for China’s party state media, which started making self-criticism of the Communist Party’s problem. However, CCTV-America’s descriptonal news framing and nodal words also show the disciplinary principle CCTV-America, which shows a lack of depth in analysis of these scandals. For instance, in one CCTV-America’s program, a guest from International Relations Research Institute pointed out that there are some problems within the military, but he didn’t further explain what the problems are, what tensions exist within the central government and the miliarty system, and why this corruption appears.

With the further expansion of this anti-corruption movement, sereval famous CCTV directors and anchors were under investigation, such as Zhenxi Guo and Chenggang Rui. This CCTV’s inner corruption issue became an eye-catching issue worldwide. CCTV’s corruption news was flying over all kinds of social media and foreign media. However, as the most authoritative official media outlet in China, CCTV kept silent on this issue, even CCTV-America, who is targeting the overseas audience was not an exception. However, CCTV-America’s newsroom didn’t keep as silent as its appeared to public on this corruption issue, especially among those foreign news producers. This
CCTV corruption news issue has been brought up by non-Chinese news producers, but, in the end, could not get the approval to be broadcasted. This example shows the conflicting news standpoints between the official party state news value and the Western newsworthy value. CCTV-America’s silence on this corruption issue gave Western propaganda media an opportunity to describe this event only from the Western mainstream news perspective. The mass public, especially overseas audiences who can only get Western media’s interpretation, or social media’s information on this issue, would receive one sided or biased information as a result. This one sided news on China’s media corruption may exemplify the contradictions between Chinese government and public. It is understandable that CCTV-America doesn’t want to broadcast negative news about its mother station. However, this is an opportunity for CCTV-America to build up its global credibility and reduce the misunderstanding from over exemplified interpretations from Western media.

CCTV’s corruption also reflects its systematic problem. Since most of CCTV’s corruption is coming from advertising avenue and business channel which has a closer relationship with commercial companies, CCTV’s complicated commercial integration and hierarchical media structure becomes an important background of these corruptions. This corruption issue itself also reflects the “uneven distribution of wealth” (Zhao Y. , 2008, p.83) between social majority groups and the top officials in China. Therefore, this conflicting news standpoints in newsroom also represent China’s media’s attitude towards revealing inner tensions of state-social relations parallelled with the development of China’s society.

Another case represents CCTV-America’s ambivalent position by showing conflicting and multiple news standpoints is the broadcast of MH17. Reasons to choose this controversial issue are that, the investigation of MH17 event hasn’t reach a final conclusion till now. Therefore, under this controversial situation, open ended interpretations will more easily show their hidden news standpoints. Moreover, this accident was breaking news which happened suddenly without any previous indications, and left short preparation time for news professionals. Without adequate preparation, journalists personal viewpoints will be easily shown in news narratives, especially in live
interveiw programs. Finally, this news event is a latest news, which is more accurate and convincing in picturing CCTV-America’s unstable and multiple news standpoints.

I chose CCTV-America’s The Heat’s broadcast on MH17 accident as an example to analysis. The Heat is a program which is recorded at morning and broadcasted at night time 8:30-9:00 pm. (American Eastern Time) The topic for this program will be decided a week or several days before its recording. However, because of the unexpected nature of the MH17 accidents, The Heat newsteam cut off the already recorded program, and switched into a live show to broadcast this airplane accident. Because of the temporary change of broadcasting schedule, preparation time for news producers and anchors was shortened greatly. In CCTV-America July 17th’s program, the anchor, who is an Iranian American, interviewed two guests in this program. The Heat as a political talk show often invites guests from different perspectives in order to keep balanced and objective news analysis. In this interview, one guest is a research director for the U.S-Ukrainian Foundation who offered analysis mainly from Ukrainian perspective; the other one is a policy analyst from Voice of Russia Radio, who provided interpretations from Russia’s side. During the interview, the anchor firstly asked several questions to the researcher director,

“Is there any evidence that Russia offers weapons to the separatists? Do you think they could shot down the airplane without Russian’s support? Who controlled this area? What would Ukrainian like to say towards this conflict in order to get investigations into this area? What the Ukrainian government want the international community to do?”(CCTV-America, 2014)

These questions reflect a hidden agenda, which assumed the Russian support in this accident and highlighted Russia and Ukrainian separatists as suspects. This hidden judgement was consistent with American media’s interpretation, which has widely spread shortly after the outburst of this event, even without any consolidated evidence. The U.S-Ukrainian Foundation guest answered by “You are asking questions that make me think that you look at me as the very representative of Ukrainian government”, “This question should be asked to a military expert.” These questions and answers created an awkward situation during live interview. This situation not only reflected inadequate preparation on this interview, but also revealed the problematic information handover from news producer to the news anchor, because the frontline journalists and news
producers have done most of the research works on news topics, even include writing anchor’s scripts. Compared with frontline journalists and news producers, news hosts spend less time on researching news issues. This uneven work distribution may easily create a background knowledge gap between the news host and news producers and journalists, especially under limited time and lack of solid news materials. What’s more, based on the above two reasons, two results may appear accordingly. One is that the news anchor cannot completely steer the question and discussion direction during the air show, the other is that the anchor’s personal ideological and political preference and the dominated Americanized ideological interpretation may be amplified, which would be represented in the interview content. In this case, the two results might both happen, which directly leads to a representation of hidden Americanized prejudgement in this interview.

This hidden personal assumption could also be seen in the follow interview with the guest from Russia’s side. The anchor asked the Russian guest

“This plane is shot down by whom? [...] If they have determined that it is the separatists shot down the airplane, where can they get these sophisticated weapons? [...] Any help from Russia, any technical help? [...] Why did the airplane go over the combat area?” (CCTV-America, 2014)

During the interview, the anchor responded differently towards the two guests. When she was asking the first guest from the American side, she added more comments and explanations after the first guest’s answer, but for the second guest from Russian side, the anchor almost made no comment or explanations at all. The anchor’s different attitude also reflected her personal judgement, which was agreed with the Americanized interpretation on this issue. However this assumption should not be shown in program before proved by solid evidence. In the end, CCTV-America’s position on this issue became more balanced with some new interviews and investigations went on. This example mirrored the ambivalence of CCTV-America’s news standpoint especially when faced with some unexpected breaking news and limited news resources. CCTV-America’s news perspective is more easily influenced by Western mainstream narratives in this situation. Also, the internalization of Western dominant viewpoint of some CCTV-
America’s news professionals is another reason why CCTV-America showed blurred position in its news broadcasts.

Based on the above analyses, we can see that CCTV-America’s news narratives in depicting Mandela, China’s corruption issues as well as the MH17 airplane accident reflected its ambivalent ideological representations, inner organizational tensions, as well as news professionals’ neoliberal mindsets. These are the constraints of CCTV-America to exert influence as one of China’s recent “soft power” project. These ambivalent positions and inconsistent tensions within CCTV-America impact CCTV-America’s credibility on the global stage. Meanwhile, its surprisingly consistent tone with Western mainstream media especially news issues with prolonged political indications also largely harms its influence in the global media system.
5. Conclusion: Reflections and Discussions on China’s Ambivalent Quest for “Soft Power”

Based on the above study, we can see the conflicts between CCTV-America’s different news values. CCTV-America, as a global media outlet, adheres to both statist news values as well as internalized neoliberal news values. The prioritizing of these different news standpoints and their interactions with each other changes according to the specific news event.

These conflicting news narratives within CCTV-America have led CCTV-America to an ambivalent position in the global media system. The above analysis indicates that the entire CCTV media system shares many similarities with the American media conglomerate, such as middle and upper class mainstream audience orientation, a commercialized media operation mode, as well as neoliberal news values reflected in some breaking news reports. This blurred media ideological position also reveals that, not only has China’s media organization been “increasingly remade in American media model” (Zhao Y., 2008, p.141), but a large number of Chinese media professionals have also internalized capitalist ideological mindsets. Those are the reasons why CCTV-America cannot find a clear position on global stage and struggles between conflicting news values in different news stories.

Of course CCTV-America has shown some breakthroughs in this Western dominated framework by maintaining some mass public and marginalized groups’ news standpoints, such as the American poverty report and its reports on Central America and Latin American areas. Its unstable news standpoints and inconsistent news position limits its ability to breakthrough the Western dominated news discourse.

Although CCTV-America has achieved fruitful success with its excellent production team, advanced news hardware, CCTV-America’s unstable news values and
inconsistent ideological representation have led to some contradictory communication problems. That is why we need to rethink China’s ambivalent “soft power” quest.

Firstly, we need to reflect on the concept of “soft power”. As Zhao pointed out, this is a U.S-oriented terminology, which is mainly used by the ruling class for its own interest. (Zhao Y., 2013) According to her analysis, under this U.S originated terminology, China’s contemporary “soft power” drive is moving towards a strategy of depoliticization, which means to “downplay or even explicitly suppress ideological differences in the global symbolic arena and focus on image building instead.” (Zhao Y., 2013, p.21) This depoliticalized approach explains China’s other “soft power” initiatives, such as building of Confucious Institutes and China’s “national image” advertising on Time Square LED screens. This depoliticization approach may also explain why CCTV-America doesn’t show a clear ideological orientation in its news perspective. On the contrary, the Western media always holds a highly sensitive ideological position towards China, including China’s media globalization, even though they claim objectivity in news reporting. This is the Western dual standard of “soft power” as I have mentioned above.

In Zhao’s analysis there are several imperatives as to why China launched its “soft power” strategy in a market-oriented, ostensibly depoliticised and culturally-centered way. These imperatives encompass the convergence of “state, industry, elite and popular interest.” (Zhao Y., 2013, p.22). While Chinese state has a geopolitical imperative, global expansion is more like a “business strategy of China’s state owned media companies” (Zhao Y., 2013, p. 22) This complex “capitalist integration and market-authoritarian” (Zhao Y., 2013, p. 26) pattern is the reason why CCTV-America’s news discourse sometimes will be led by transnational elites’ class interests.

Of course, CCTV-America shows some breakthroughs, although it is operating under this “soft power” framework. For instance, CCTV-America, as a globalized news organization, focuses more on political and economic news rather than culture; which reflects China’s attempt to discursively compete with Western media discourses on the interpretation of world events. After broadcasting in Washington DC for two years, it has been successful in covering some topics which Western mainstream media has been blind to. For instance, the Central and Latin America news issues, which include reports
on women’s rights issues in Mexico, guerrilla politics of Colombia’s left wing FARC, Brazil’s poverty and violence problems as well as on the political economic dilemma of Brazil’s Favela region, have become eye-catching issues not only to the target North American mainstream audiences, but also marginalized groups such as Latin Americans and African Americans who lives in North American area. Some North American traditional mainstream news media such as CNN and BBC have picked up CCTV-Ameria’s reporting of these Central and Latin American issues. (Li, 2012) One local TV channel also bought the broadcast rights to Americas Now because of its success in the North American market. Moreover, the news report on the “fading American dream” also reflected the news standpoint of lower income people. Moreover, CCTV-Ameria’s news professionals are also more diversified than Western mainstream media’s, with more African American, Asian American and Iranian Americans, who are more attractive than white professionals to marginalized audiences, which have been neglected by Western mainstream media. Some of the journalists who come from CNN and BBC come to CCTV-Ameria with the ambition to express a more balanced view. All of these examples represent the breakthroughs of CCTV-Ameria, which has offered a Chinese perspective and alternative voice in the global media system. These alternative viewpoints of CCTV-Ameria reflect that, China’s “soft power” drive starts focusing more on political area and begins challenging Western dominated discourses by reaching lower-incomed, marginalized as well as social majority groups’ unequal issues.

However, the conflicting news values in CCTV-Ameria’s discourse also reflect an unstable ideological and political power struggle behind its news discourse. CCTV-Ameria’s case shows the current structural and institutional problems of China’s media system. During the commercial reform of China’s media, the penetration of global capital and its integration with China’s media giant further spread an Americanized media model in China’s media system. Despite this, China’s media system still holds to its official party-state mouthpiece nature. This complex media institutional background has created an American styled as well as party-state controlled media system, which shows a conflicting hybrid structure inside.

Besides the structural problem, the ideologies of journalists are another barrier for China’s strategy of pursuing “soft power”. Lots of media professionals already have a
neoliberal mindset because of the dominant influence of neoliberal ideology and imperial penetration of Western culture in China, such as the anchor’s Americanized prejudgement in the MH17 interview.

Last but not least, CCTV-America’s struggle for a coherent news standpoint mirrors China’s internal political and ideological tensions. According to the analysis of the unequal global media system and the internal political and ideological tensions, it is clear that without solving the internal market-oriented and class biased bureaucratic media structural problem as well as the neoliberal ideological mindset of media professionals, China cannot clearly exert influence and control its position on the global media stage. Therefore, the multiple standpoints reflected by CCTV-America are a microscope of China’s current state-social relationship and inner conflicts. These conflicting news standpoints showed the inner tension of the “fundamental conflicts between competing global economies and cultural imaginaries” and “a choice between [a] Confucius capitalist China” or a “renewed socialist China”. (Zhao Y., 2013, p.15) Along with the development of China’s society, CCTV’s globalization strategy is also in an exploratory and unsettled process. This exploratory characteristic can be reflected from the shifting goals of CCTV English Channels and CCTV-America’s multiple standpoints. Without figuring out the inner struggle and blurred standpoints of CCTV-America, China’s “soft power” drive will still struggle in an ambivalent state. Also, during the open-ended social development, CCTV-America’s breakthroughs and limitations need to be examined under China’s unique social model, rather than just judging them against a standardized and universalized American framework. That is why China’s quest for “soft power”, which should be understood and operated according to China’s current social, political and ideological situation, rather than just running along the track of Americanized “soft power”. This open-ended social development also explained why China’s previous “soft power” projects lack a clear political and ideological position and hardly achieved wide recognition on the global stage.
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Appendix A. Poet Maya Angelou reflects on Nelson Mandela

He is a very kind (freedom fighters) during 50 years, “others freedom fighters, they could shout, argue, but Nelson Mandela never shout.” She said, “He was very kind to everybody, he was just kind. (Mandela’s kind smelling face on screen) And he was so usual to me, because I was married to a shouted and screamed people. So I was impressed and involved with him, we became friends. It was amazing to say how generous he was to everybody. We went to the inauguration with Hillary Clinton; I was so impressed that he invited his white guard, who has guarded him for 27 years in prison. He invited him to his inauguration with his families. I learned a lot from Nelson Mandela. I learned how great it is to be generous and forgiving. And he has taught the world, how to be forgiving.” (CCTV-America, Poet Maya Angelou reflects on Nelson Mandela, 2013)
Appendix B. Stuck in poverty

The idea of the American Dream is that anyone in the United States can succeed through hard work and ingenuity, no matter what their background. But a new sociological study is challenging that longstanding belief.

Hendrik Sybrandy reports on how much the American Dream costs in the U.S. state of Colorado. We spoke with two people living their American Dream. Ebong Eka is a Consultant at Levyti and the author of Start Me Up, the No Business Plan, and Business Plan. Jennifer Streak is a Financial Columnist for the Motley Fool and BlackEnterprise.com
Appendix C. Preserving the culture of indigenous people

We know so little about them. Yet indigenous people live in every region of the world. Who are they and what can be done to preserve their culture and heritage in a world that seems to have left them far behind?

For many of us, the term “indigenous people” is not one we fully understand, let alone give much thought to. That’s part of the reason why the United Nations has set aside this Saturday to help educate and protect the rights of the more than 370 million indigenous people in 90 countries around the world. It’s a difficult challenge.

Indigenous people are defined by their ties to a particular territory and by their culture and history. That can often lead to exploitation and oppression and a struggle against abuse and poverty while trying to preserve their culture.

So when one of the estimated 100 indigenous groups living with virtually no interaction with the outside world recently chose to make its first contact — many indigenous rights advocates grew concerned.

Groups in remote regions live in a delicate balance with the environment. The natural world is a valued source of their food, health, spirituality and identity.

And as CCTV’s Sean Callebs reports history has shown progress has not been kind to them.

Grand Chief Edward John is a Hereditary Chief of the Tl’azt’en Nation — located in northern British Columbia. He also serves as the Vice-Chairman of the United Nation’s Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He joined us from New York.
Appendix D. BRICS: Working to Create a New Development Bank

Creating a new development bank for the BRICS countries is one of the big goals of the five-nation summit underway in Brazil.

It’s a way for developing nations to complement — but also counterbalance — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund with their own alternative fund. CCTV’s Paulo Cabral reports from the host city of Fortaleza.

For almost seven decades, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have been the keys to world financial stability and also to funding infrastructure projects. They also play a role in international politics.

The United States is by far the largest shareholder in both institutions, ahead of the five BRICS countries put together: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Over the last few years, China has significantly increased its shares in the World Bank, and to a lesser degree the other BRICS nations have done the same. Observers hope the leaders at the summit in Fortaleza will be able to announce the creation of their own development bank.

The former chairman of Brazil’s National Development Bank believes that trade and investment are the best way to create connections among the BRICS countries.

Trade among the BRICS countries has already increased nearly ten folds in a decade, up to more than $270 billion in 2012 from $27 billion in 2002. With a new bank, these nations hope to develop connections that could alter the global financial landscape.

The proposed development bank is designed to be a counter-weight to the World Bank. The bank will be headquartered in Shanghai, China and will be presided by a President who will be from India. CCTV’s Su Yuting reports with details on the plans by BRICS leaders to start a new bank.

For more reaction, Marc Weisbrot joined CCTV. He’s the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington. For the very latest on the BRICS summit, CCTV turned to Stephen Gibbs in Fortaleza.

The Development Bank was one of the key issues that were on the agenda, as the BRICS countries finally decided to place the headquarters in Shanghai. The BRICS organization carefully avoided describing themselves as a political alliance. CCTV’s Stephen Gibbs reports from Fortaleza.
Appendix E. 5 Things You Need to Know about the $100 Billion BRICS Bank

The emerging economies that call themselves BRICS have created a development bank to challenge the dominance of western lending institutions and the U.S. dollar. They have pledged a $100 billion to accelerate the shift global financial power away from longstanding economic powerhouses such as the U.S. to developing nations like China. Here’s what you need to know:

1. What is BRICS?

BRICS is an acronym for the original four nations in the group—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill coined the term for a paper he published in 2001 titled: “Building Better Global Economic BRICs.”

O’Neill wanted a quick way to identify and remember the developing world’s “trillion dollar club.” The BRIC were, and still are, the only emerging economies with annual GDPs over $1 trillion U.S. The Chinese call them jinzhuan siguo—the four “golden bricks nations.”

The group added the capital “S” in BRICS when South Africa joined in 2010. The question was what did South Africa join? Unlike the EU or Eurozone, BRICS has been more of a concept than an institution until this historic summit in Fortaleza, Brazil. At the Fortaleza summit, the group’s sixth, the BRICS nations not only created their own bank, they organized a rotating presidency, starting with India.

While designated emerging markets, the original four are all ranked in the world’s Top Ten economies by GDP. The World Bank predicts China will overtake the United States this year as the world’s number one economy—a position the U.S. has held since 1872. Together these five nations alone account for just over 42 percent of the world’s total population and make up around a fifth of world’s GDP.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and South African President Jacob Zuma are all attending the 2014 BRICS summit.

2. Why does the world need another development bank?

In 2013, the BRICS decided they would establish a new development bank. Why? In part, because emerging market economies have long criticized the “strings attached” to economic aid from the western-led International Monetary Fund (which is always headed by a European) and World Bank (which is always headed by an American).

Both the IMF and World Bank are headquartered in Washington, D.C. The BRICS nations have been especially critical of their limited voting rights between the
188-member World Bank and IMF. Like the U.S. Electoral College, which in U.S. presidential elections assigns more votes to states with larger populations, the World Bank and IMF give more voting power to already-developed economies like the U.S. and the UK.

The BRICS signed the “New Development Bank” (NDB) into existence Tuesday with an initial capitalization of $50 billion. Each of the BRICS will contribute $10 billion. They also created what it calls the Contingent Reserve Arrangement—$100 billion buffer against any economic instability that could result when the U.S. finally winds down its massive economic stimulus program called quantitative easing.

According to the BRICS press release, the bank will help developing nations avoid “short-term liquidity pressures, promote further BRICS cooperation, strengthen the global financial safety net and complement existing international arrangements.”

The bank’s mission is twofold: it will provide contingency funds to limit disruption from any financial crisis (similar to the role of the IMF). By lending money for infrastructure projects such as bridge and road building, the NDB will provide the BRICS, and other emerging economies and developing countries, an alternative to World Bank financing. The World Bank acknowledges a need for at least $1 billion more than what the world is currently spending on infrastructure projects in low and middle-income countries.

Based on preliminary discussions in Fortaleza, China will make the biggest contribution to the bank’s capital reserve, around $41 billion. Brazil, India and Russia will contribute $18 billion each, and South Africa will provide $5 billion.

3. Where will the New Development Bank be located, and when will it start operating?

The headquarters of the NDB will be in Shanghai and an African regional center for the bank will be set up in South Africa. If all goes according to plan, it will be open for business in 2016, according to Reuters.

4. What’s next?

The first NDB president will be from India with the presidency rotating every five years. After India, the presidency goes to Brazil, Russia, South Africa, and then China.

5. A Multipolar World

Ahead of the Fortaleza summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping said a number of complex factors remained impediments to a more robust global economic recovery. He said he expected decisions taken at the summit to provide “positive energy” that will spur more economic growth and promote peaceful development.
The New Development Bank is a concrete expression of that goal, as the BRICS each strive towards parity with G7 nations in power and influence. Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for a “multipolar world” with diminished U.S. power.