A1. Additional Figures and Tables

Table 3. Article Count by Country

Country	Total Article Count	Articles per Year
United States	67207	2240.23
Japan	32422	1080.73
Russia	23401	780.03
United Kingdom	17891	596.37
France	16382	546.07
Germany	15130	504.33
Taiwan	15032	501.07
South Korea	14129	470.97
India	9976	332.53
Vietnam	7518	270.57
Italy	7932	264.40
North Korea	7518	250.60
Thailand	7504	250.13
South Africa	7309	243.63
Iraq	6781	226.03
Pakistan	6746	224.87
Egypt	6623	220.77
Israel	6563	218.77
Brazil	6189	206.30
Australia	5724	190.80
Spain	4854	161.80
Iran	4849	161.63
Canada	4302	143.40
Singapore	4187	139.57
Mexico	4064	135.47

Country	Total Article Count	Articles per Year
Greece	3888	129.60
Afghanistan	3784	126.13

Table 3: Article Count by Country (continued)

Country	Total Article Count	Articles per Year
Belgium	3660	122.00
Mongolia	3333	111.10
Malaysia	3206	106.87
Turkey	3191	106.37
Philippines	3088	102.93
Argentina	3066	102.20
Cambodia	2960	98.67
Kazakhstan	2807	93.57
Netherlands	2767	92.23
Laos	2596	86.53
Ukraine	2572	85.73
Indonesia	2550	85.00
Sweden	2538	84.60
Poland	2532	84.40
New Zealand	2340	78.00
Switzerland	2084	69.47
Myanmar	2059	68.63
Austria	1983	66.10
Chile	1810	60.33
Qatar	1797	59.90
Denmark	1717	57.23
Nigeria	1488	49.60
Peru	1462	48.73

Country		
Hungary	1440	48.00
Norway	1262	42.07
Czech Republic	1213	40.43
Kyrgyzstan	1170	39.00
Sri Lanka	1167	38.90
Kuwait	1016	33.87
Bangladesh	976	32.53
Saudi Arabia	857	28.57
Angola	757	25.23

Table 3: Article Count by Country (continued)

Country	Total Article Count	Articles per Year
Oman	488	16.27
United Arab Emirates	320	10.67
DR Congo	189	6.30

Table 4. OLS Regression Results

Indep. Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> |z|
Second Term	-61.4915***	21.8423	-2.82	0.007
Xi	-203.4745**	82.5638	-2.46	0.017
SecondTerm#Xi	-62.9529**	29.4672	-2.14	0.037
Hu	-94.0624**	45.1368	-2.08	0.041
log_GDP_lag	27.1381*	15.8053	1.72	0.091
FTA_lag	-11.2153	33.7745	-0.33	0.741
log_Import_lag	45.0758	31.0715	1.45	0.152
log_Export_lag	-3.0162	11.0197	-0.27	0.785
president_visit	61.3113***	19.4741	3.15	0.003
premier_visit	2.5803	24.1770	0.11	0.915
BRI_lag	72.1606	49.1406	1.47	0.147
MID	500.9234**	198.1405	2.53	0.014
TIES	27.2166	99.3996	0.27	0.785
CSP_lag	-28.2534	50.6665	-0.56	0.579
G8_lag	443.1089***	151.328	2.93	0.005
BRICS_lag	90.5590	68.0681	1.33	0.188
Distance	-0.0032	0.0078	-0.41	0.686
VDem	-39.4415	60.7652	-0.65	0.519
Olympics	-0.0058	0.0050	-1.15	0.254
_cons	-1312.8769**	546.1158	-2.40	0.019
Note:		**p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

A2. Content Analysis of Zhongsheng Editorials

Note: The methodology references are listed prior to this appendix, followed by footnotes within Appendix A.1 offering further details.

To further explore the substance of this shift, the authors employ a topic analysis using the TF-IDF (Term-Frequency/Inverse-Document-Frequency) algorithm to examine the content of these news reports. TF-IDF is a machine learning technique for topic extraction that calculates the significance of a word within a document relative to a collection of documents. The importance of a word increases with its frequency in a specific document and decreases based on its frequency across the entire document collection, thereby highlighting terms that are more distinctive. This technique has proven to be highly effective in analyzing social media content and identifying

trends.[1] In this paper, the method is applied to calculate the importance of words in all *PD*'s articles authored by Zhongsheng during Xi Jinping's two terms. The difference in word importance values between Xi's first and second terms is used to gauge the extent of thematic changes in the Zhongsheng column. A higher value indicates that a word was more distinctive in Xi's first term, while a lower value suggests greater importance in Xi's second term.

Table 5. Topics of Importance in Articles Authored by Zhongsheng between Xi's

2nd Term Key Topic	Difference	1st Term Key Topic	Difference
美国 (The U.S.)	-0.0738677	日本 (Japan)	0.03555292
美方 (U.S Side)	-0.0403158	亚洲 (Asia)	0.02624669
疫情 (Pandemic)	-0.0328426	南海 (S. China Sea)	0.02079842
香港(Hong Kong)	-0.0309978	金砖 (BRICS)	0.01861117
政客 (Political Hack)	-0.0227836	安倍 (Abe)	0.01519885
人权 (Human Rights)	-0.0220231	东盟 (ASEAN)	0.01126185
病毒 (Virus)	-0.0207649	和平 (Peace)	0.01036045
新冠 (Covid)	-0.0176496	叙利亚 (Syria)	0.0102736
一些 (Some)	-0.0159613	合作 (Cooperation)	0.00990805
抗疫 (Anti-Epidemic)	-0.0145736	发展 (Development)	0.00850044
关税 (Tariff)	-0.0132557	历史(History)	0.00821944
溯源 (Origin Tracing)	-0.0128171	关系(Relations)	0.00795927
民主 (Democracy)	-0.0126085	改革(Reform)	0.00768671
新疆 (Xinjiang)	-0.0122152	杭州(Hangzhou)	0.00735219
台湾 (Taiwan)	-0.011674	靖国神社(Yasukuni Shrine)	0.00726386

[1] Lubis, A. Ridho, et al. "The effect of the TF-IDF algorithm in times series in forecasting word on social media." *Indones. J. Electr. Eng. Comput. Sci* 22.2 (2021): 976.

As Table 5 presents the top 15 topics during the two terms in comparison, it becomes evident that during Xi's first term, diplomatic efforts were largely focused on interactions with Asian countries, with particular emphasis on Japan, the South China Sea, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[2]

Although the editorials address conflict-related issues, especially the controversies surrounding Japan and the Yasukuni Shrine,[3] the dominant narrative remains one of cooperation, highlighted by terms such as "Peace," "Cooperation," "Development," and "Relations." [4] This signals a cooperative tone, prioritizing engagement with neighboring countries and asserting China's influence as an emerging regional power.

In contrast, during Xi's second term, Zhongsheng's focus shifted markedly, with the United States emerging as the primary rival.[5] The COVID-19 pandemic became another major theme of significant importance. The virus was highly weaponized in criticism directed at the United States, particularly through the topic of "origin tracing," which refers to China's counterattack against the United States' investigation of the origins of COVID-19.[6] Contentious issues related to China's sovereignty claims, including "Hong Kong," "Xinjiang," and "Taiwan," also gained prominence.[7] Meanwhile, debated over topics of "Human Rights," "Democracy," and "Tariff," which also intersected with the sovereignty issues, saw their importance increase as well.[8] These heated topics reflect the growing tensions in Sino-American relations, with a more aggressive and confrontational tone, including the characterization of Western politicians as "Political Hack," which also constitutes one of the most important topics.[9]

The transition from the outward-facing diplomatic language of Xi's first term to the more confrontational rhetoric of Xi's second term in the *PD*'s coverage reflects the changing political

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[2] In Chinese: 日本 [Japan], 亚洲 [Asia], 南海 [South China Sea], and 东盟[ASEAN].

[3] In Chinese: 历史 [History], 靖国神社 [Yasukuni Shrine].

[4] In Chinese: 和平 [Peace], 合作 [Cooperation], 发展 [Development] and 关系[Relations].

[5] In Chinese: 美国 [United States], 美方 [U.S. Side].

[6] In Chinese: 疫情 [Pandemic], 病毒 [Virus], 新冠 [Covid], 抗疫 [Anti-Epidemic], and 溯源 [Origin Tracing].

[7] In Chinese: 香港[Hong Kong], 新疆 [Xin Jiang], and 台湾 [Taiwan].

[8] In Chinese: 人权 [Human Rights], 民主 [Democracy], and 关税 [Tariff].

[9] In Chinese: 政客 [Political Hack].

context of Xi's leadership. In other words, from Xi's first to second term, the substance of the *PD*'s editorials has experienced a shift toward more politicized and confrontational content. It should be noticed that this growing politicization is not limited solely to Zhongsheng editorials. When the TF-IDF method was applied to all of the PD's foreign coverage during Xi's two terms, the distribution of topic importance displayed a consistent trend. Taking this trend alongside the increasing volume of Zhongsheng articles, the authors find substantial support for the third hypothesis.

A3. Article Length in Second Term

To illustrate the evolution in the length of internationally focused *PD* articles that mention Chinese leadership, a subset of the corpus was filtered to include only those articles explicitly mentioning the name of a Chinese leader. The average length of the articles was computed annually, revealing a discernible increase in article length during the second term of each of the three post–Deng Xiaoping leaders.

Figures 5–7 illustrate the annual trends in the length of international *PD* articles corresponding to the tenures of Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, respectively. These findings substantiate the hypothesis that the focus and scope of China's international *PD* efforts have expanded significantly in recent years.

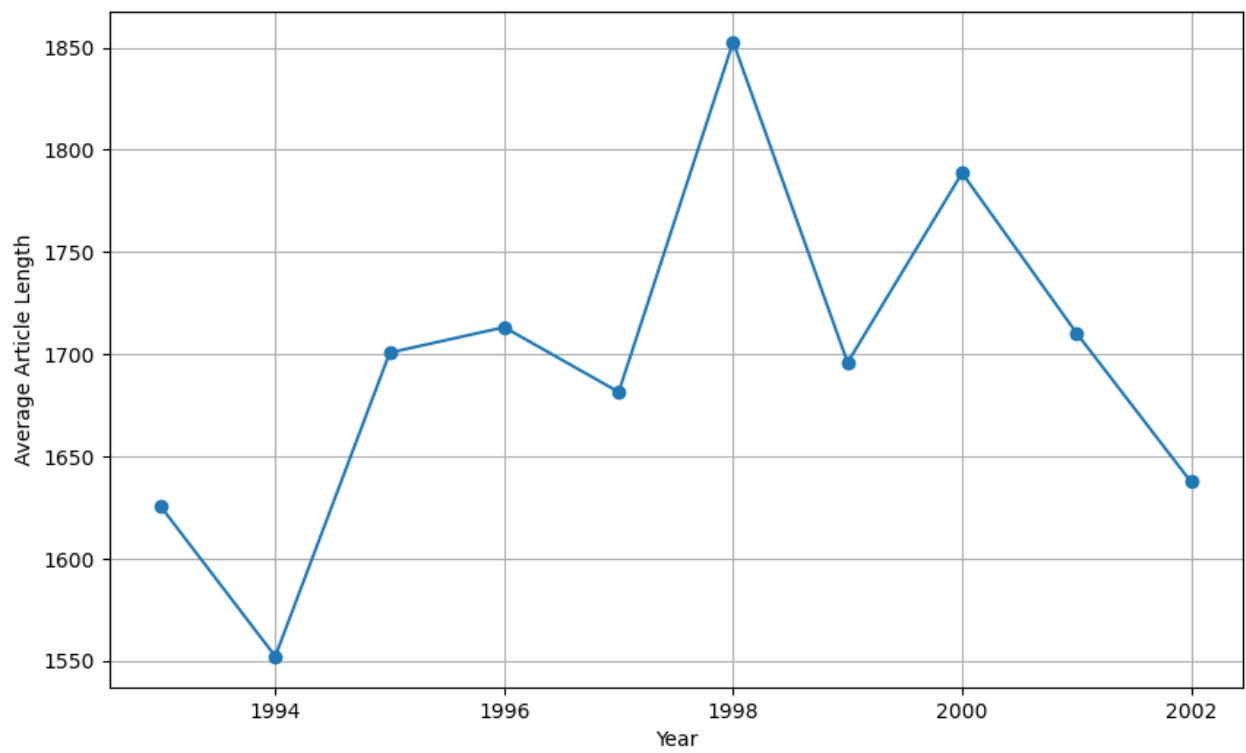**FIGURE 5.** International-focused *People's Daily* article length under Jiang Zemin

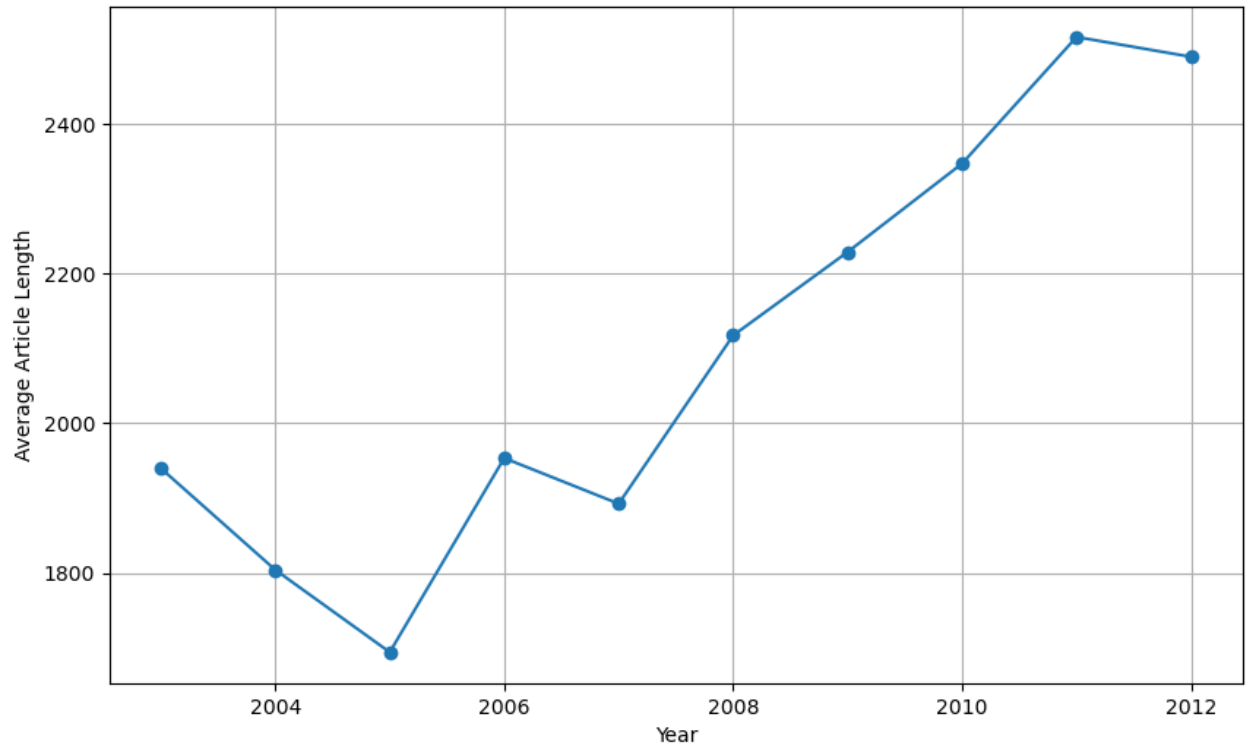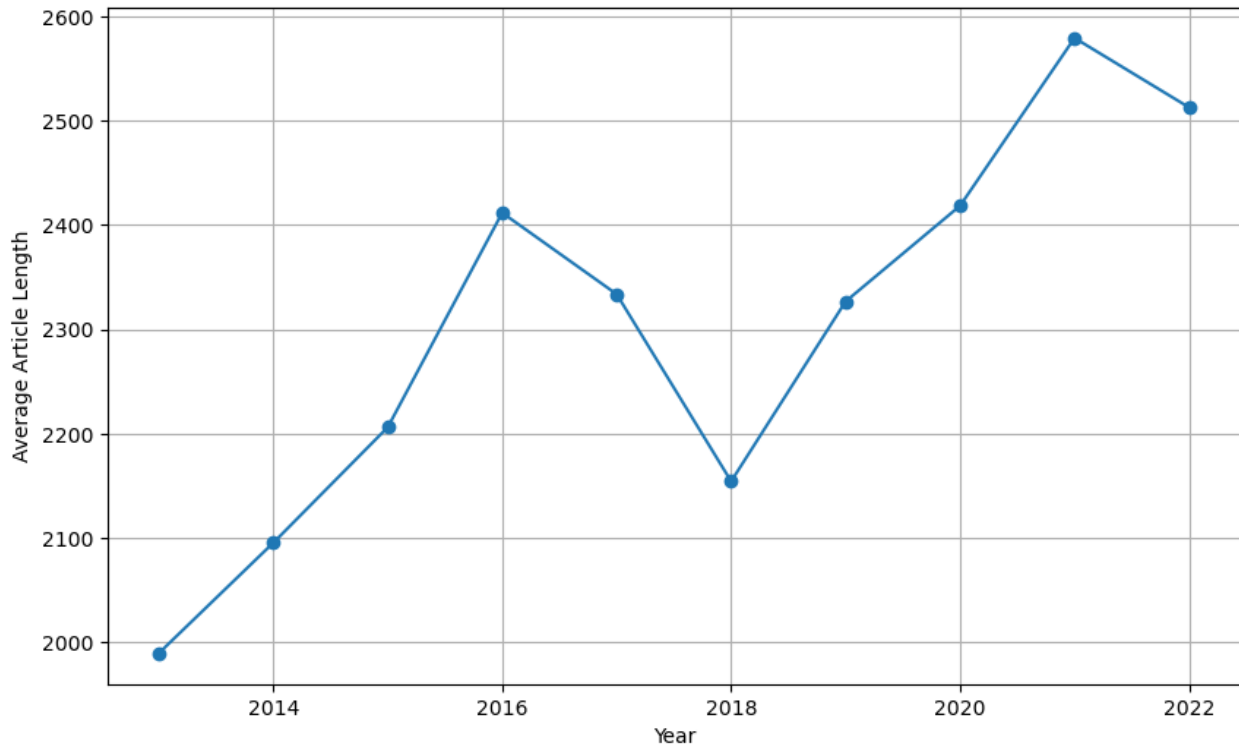FIGURE 6: International-focused *People's Daily* article length under Hu Jintao

FIGURE 7: International-focused *People's Daily* article length under Xi Jinping

Furthermore, the authors analyzed a shift in the narrative perspective of these articles—from reporting on the viewpoints of foreign countries to a more China-centric perspective. This was achieved by calculating the proportion of international *PD* articles that mention "中方" (The Chinese Side). The analysis indicates a higher frequency of "中方" mentions during the second terms of the post–Deng leaders, suggesting a strategic pivot toward emphasizing China's stance in its international *PD* initiatives.

The authors also examined that the focus of such international articles has shifted from the perspective of the other country to the perspective of China. We did this by simply counting the percentage of those international articles where "中方" is mentioned. Results showed that the

percentage of international *PD* articles where "中方" is mentioned is higher during the second term for all post–Deng leaders.