

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background Overview**

The South China Sea has caught extensive national and international media attention lately. The significance of the sea is undoubted. In the geographical term, the South China Sea is the most comprehensive sea in the world. It is connected to the Indian Ocean by the Malacca Strait and separated by the islands of the Philippines, Taiwan, and Borneo. It surrounds almost half of ASEAN, with Vietnam and Thailand in the west, the Philippines in the east, Borneo, Brunei, and Malaysia in the South. Along with it, the reefs, islands, and atolls could quickly become one of the potential treasures in its water body. The location of the sea is a vital area of maritime trade routes across the globe.

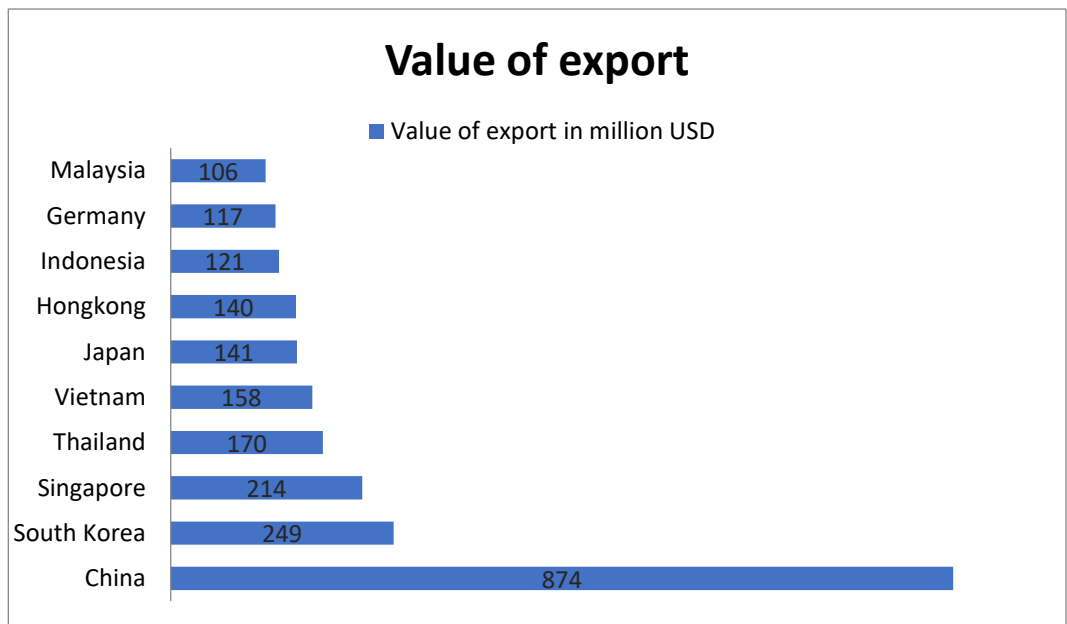
Moving on to the topic of the economy, the South China Sea has an immense commercial importance in the region. Huge quantities of valued products pass across the sea annually [see Table 1.1]. An approximate US\$ 5.3 trillion of global trade flows through the South China Sea per year, with US\$ 1.2 trillion originating from trade between China and the US (Fensom, 2016). However, the widespread quote of US\$ 5.3 trillion was debunked by the ChinaPower media, which reported that an estimated US\$ 3.4 trillion in trade had passed through the South China Sea in 2016 on the basis of the estimation of the amount of all bilateral trade passing through the port [see Figure 1.1]. In addition, approximately two-thirds of South Korea's energy reserves, approximately 60 percent of Japan's and Taiwan's energy

sources, and 80 percent of China's crude oil shipments distributed across the South China Sea (Kaplan, 2016). Globally, about 30% of global trade passes across the South China Sea to the population centers and commercial hubs of South East Asia. In shorts, access to strategic international trade routes clearly carries a number of potentials to encourage industrialization as well as contribute to economic acceleration to one country.

<b>Country</b>	<b>% Share of World GDP</b>	<b>Value of Trade across the South China Sea [in USD billions]</b>	<b>Percentage of total Goods Trade in South China Sea</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	2.37	77.3	23.4
<b>Canada</b>	2.02	21.8	2.67
<b>China</b>	14.8	1470	39.5
<b>France</b>	3.26	83.5	7.77
<b>Germany</b>	4.58	215	9.00
<b>India</b>	2.99	189	30.6
<b>Italy</b>	2.45	70.5	8.14
<b>Japan</b>	6.53	240	19.1
<b>United Kingdom</b>	3.46	124	11.8
<b>United States</b>	24.5	208	5.72

*Table 1.1* The worth of trade through the South China Sea, retrieved from <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/> copyright 2016 by CSIS China Power

From the table above, it is found that the South China Sea is a major maritime commerce cross road for many of the world's largest economies. However, given the impact of the South China Sea for trade, Canada and the United States are less reliant on it, whereas China relies on it for 39% of all the total trade in the region. `



**Figure 1.1** Top 10 exporters through the South China Sea, retrieved from <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/> copyright 2016 by CSIS China Power

It is noted that five of the country in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore, have become major exporter through the South China Sea and accounting for more than half of their entire trade on the sea. Among these countries, Malaysia and Vietnam are the claimants of the sea, while Indonesia maintains an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) dispute with China.

It is also remarkable that the potential of the South China Sea not only underlie above its water. It contains lucrative fisheries, which are very crucial for food security and livelihood of the people in Southeast Asia, as well as trillion cubic of the natural gas resources under its seabed. According to a report, the South China Sea is estimated to have eleven billion barrels of crude oil and estimated 5.3802 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (AMTI, 2018). According to the US Geological

Survey in 2012 estimated that there might be another 4.5307 trillion cubic meters of natural gas and 12 billion barrels of oil that had yet to be discovered in the bed of South China Sea. The area is also rich in manganese, copper, tin, cobalt, nickel, and other minerals, in addition to oil and gas deposits (Snyder, 1996). Thus far, China, The Philippines and Vietnam have dominated the hydrocarbon exploration in the South China Sea. Since the late twentieth century, China has been exploiting Vanguard Bank, which is much nearer to Vietnam than China's mainland. The presence of marine resources is critical for the neighboring countries, particularly Vietnam and the Philippines. The 06.1 block, which is part of the Nam Con Son project and is close to Vanguard Bank, provides about 10% of Vietnam's total energy needs. In the Philippines, the Malampaya gas field, which is expected to cease production by 2024, provides roughly one-third of the electricity for the country's main island of Luzon. Here, the Reed Bank becomes the only good option if there are no alternatives found. To overcome the issue, the Philippines will have to import a significant amount of natural gases with a greater amount of cost or swiftly integrate another source of energy; otherwise, they have to face a severe power shortage (AMTI, 2018). In essence, with this abundant biological resources and potential underwater energy sources, it is not surprising that the debate over the claimant becomes one of the subjects that receive intense attention internationally.

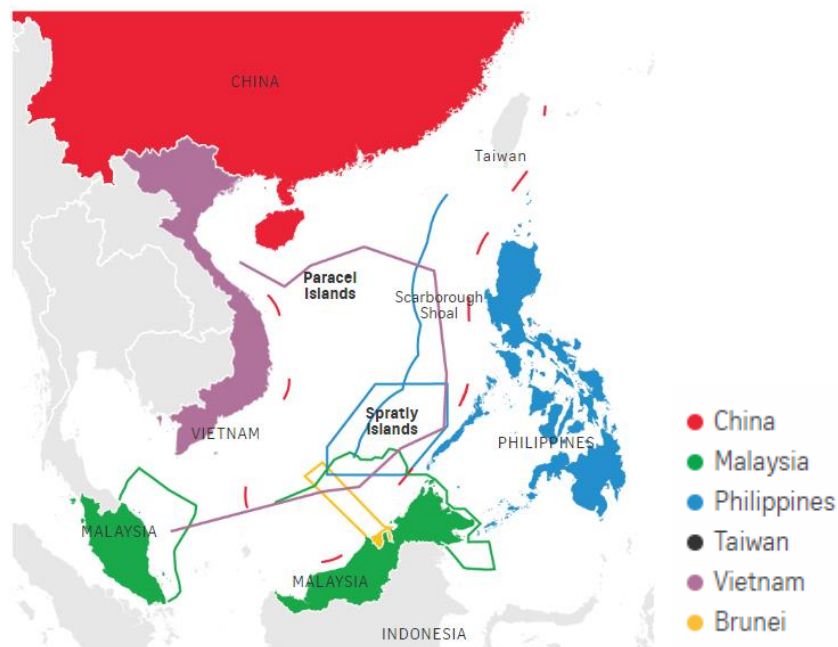
The territorial dispute over the South China Sea is one of Southeast Asia's longest-running conflicts. It has been going on for decades; however, it does not seem to be resolved anytime soon. The first episode of the conflict began in 1946 when China issued a national map, covering a part of the South China Sea as well

as two groups of islands; demarcated the national boundaries with a u-shaped assertion on the South China Sea, and depicted the Spratlys and Paracels islands as their territory in 1947 (Severino, 2011). China claims the whole sea area as their territory [see Figure 1.2], which is much discussed as its nine-dashed line territory. All of it, including the artificial islands which Beijing has built in disputed waters, and the economic resources that are hidden below the sea. Of all the reasons for China's claim over the sea, the most potent reason for China's claim is its historical base. This claim, however, is countered by the neighborhood country such as Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia. By 1994, the South China Sea conflict escalated into a more problematic issue when China, for the first time confronting the Philippines by occupying Mischief Reef. Since then, there are numbers of conflict happened between China and ASEAN member state. For example, the Chinese Central Military Commission decided in July 2012 to establish the Sansha garrison, which was afterwards challenged by the Philippines and Vietnam. On January 22, 2013, the Philippines filed a petition with the Permanent Court of Arbitration to claim sovereignty over 200 miles of Philippine EEZ and to challenge China's nine-dash line's legal standing. Later, on July 12, 2016, the PCA stated that China had no legal basis to assert historic rights to resources within the nine-dash line. The PCA then determined that China had infringed on the Philippines' sovereign rights (PCA Press Release, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, since China established the nine-dashed line and claimed the waters of northwest Borneo that overlap with Natuna Island, Indonesia has been inextricably entangled into the dispute.

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<sup>1</sup> Permanent Court of Arbitration. 2016.

Additionally, China has been at odds with Indonesian authorities over illicit fishing. On several occasions, Chinese fishing vessels have been intercepted in Natuna's waters. The latest one was in 2016 when the Indonesian patrol board seized a 300-tonne Chinese fishing boat for fishing near the Natuna Islands, where the nine-dash line overlaps Indonesian waters (Rose, 2018). Despite all of the claimants, the South China Sea dispute has much broader implications in geopolitical, maritime security, as well as prosperity through the region.



**Figure 1.2** The overlapping boundaries of South China Sea. From *Troubled Waters in South China Sea*, by The Strait Times, 2016, <https://graphics.straitstimes.com/STI/STIMEDIA/Interactives/2016/02/turf-wars-on-the-south-china-sea/index.html> Copyright 2016 by The Strait Times

In the security aspect, the conflict has raised tension between the parties involved. There are increased military activities on the sea. China is actively enhancing its maritime capabilities by modernizing its submarines, purchasing several sophisticated Russian fighter planes, and forming marine battalions on

Hainan Island for rapid deployment to the Paracels and Spratlys. Following China's movement, the other regional players, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines raising greater willingness to stake a claim towards the sea. It is noted that Vietnam is increasing 94% of its military spending since 2008-2018 (SIPRI, 2019). Vietnam also began to modernize its naval and air force. Malaysia also provides fighter aircraft operating from bases close to Spratlys. The Philippines, on the other hand, passed a bill authorizing USD 3753 Million for military expenditure in 2018, increasing 50% since 2009 (TradingEconomics, 2019). The construction of the military base and enhancement of military forces is one of the proofs of how each country tries to showcase its domination in the contested sea.

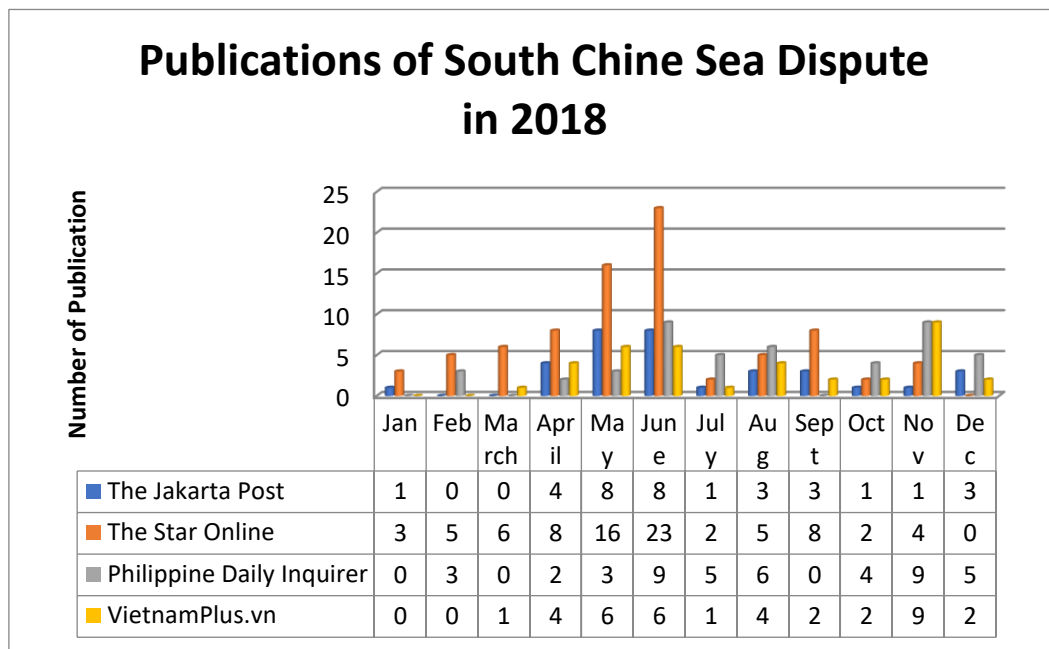
China has utilized diplomatic instruments in a variety of ways as part of the competition to assert maritime rights to the Sea. For example, China is requesting individual negotiations with each of the claimants rather than multilateral ones, which encourages the delaying strategy because China knows the claimants are hesitant to accept the terms. China may signal an open negotiation; however, this does not necessarily imply that the parties are discussing the subject. Instead, China postpones the resolution of the dispute in order to solidify its claim. So far, this diplomacy has played a significant role in China's South China Sea strategy. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) is in charge of assessing and qualifying technical applications from governments regarding claims to the continental shelf's outer limits beyond 200 nautical miles. However, if a land or maritime dispute occurs, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that the Commission "must not evaluate and qualify a proposal made by any of the

States implicated in the dispute". As a result, all claimants to maritime rights in the South China Sea have a high chance of contesting any continental shelf proposal that overlaps with their own claims.

The tension of the South China Sea dispute itself is seen differently by the media and journalists in the region. Each of the media in four ASEAN member states (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) set different framing and gives a different portion of attention in portraying the issue. There are various means of how the media try to shape the reality from the subject; some of the media tend to lean on peace reporting while the other tends to lean into the war frame. In the peace context, media is viewed as an opportunity for the search of a new agreement between two conflicted parties by the process that does not have to be developed into a war. While in a war context, media used by the state authorities to enhance the national image and influence global opinions to win greater support. The media differentiate the two parties as 'their' side and 'our' side. Although the idea of how global journalism ethics should be identified is still debatable, journalists agree that the practice of journalism should work against narrow ethnocentrism or patriotism. Under this value, journalism in times of conflict, should not worsen the conflict by using broadly diverse sources and perspective and should not be blinded by silenced criticism. Hence, journalists ought to seek a coherent framework of values and guidelines for journalism in news coverage related to the conflict.



**Figure 1.3** Number of publications related to the South China Sea conflict in 2018



*Note.* Data of publications related to the South China Sea Dispute compiled from The Jakarta Post (2018), The Star Online (2018), The Daily Inquirer (2018), and VietnamPlus.vn(2018).

It is seen that from the chart above, the Star Online from Malaysia has published a significant number of articles in 2018 compared to other ASEAN member states. However, there were found several numbers of disproportionate coverage of the South China Sea conflict. For instance, the news dated December 17, 2019.

*"China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than US\$3.4 trillion worth of goods is transported every year. As a result, Malaysia said in its submission dated December 12 that there were areas of potential overlapping claims. China said Malaysia's submission had 'seriously infringed on China's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the South China Sea.'" (The Star Online, 2019)*

Among numbers of news coverage posted in The Star Online, the media is biased and accentuates China's perspective while marginalizing Malaysia's, as it appears that the Malaysian foreign policy tilt is implicitly leaning towards Chinese

side. However, the news coverage is changing accordingly depends on the strategic interests of the two states. In addition to that, Malaysia seems to be leaning towards elite orientation, which is portrayed by the frequent citing source used on their news, mentioning the Prime Minister, Ministry of Defense officials, and several elites. It is also noted that Malaysia does not want to disrupt the bilateral relationship with China.

*"When the Premier made repeated reference to Admiral Zheng He (or Cheng Ho), he reiterated that the prominent navigator had embarked on his voyages with friendship and peace in mind.*

*...China wishes to assure its neighbors that its rise as a superpower in the realms of politics, economy, and military should not be seen as a threat." (Yi, 2015)*

Nonetheless, in recent publications related to the South China Sea dispute, Malaysia seems to be less assertive towards the sea and started to engage more bilateral relations with China.

*"China and Malaysia have agreed to set up a joint dialogue mechanism for the disputed South China Sea, the Chinese government's top diplomat said on Thursday after meeting Malaysia's foreign minister.*

*... Malaysia had been critical of China's South China Sea position, but has not been excessively outspoken recently, especially after China pumped in billions of dollars into infrastructure projects under its Belt and Road Initiative." (Birsal, 2019)*

The Jakarta Post, on the other hand, seems to serve unbalance report about the South China Sea conflict. The media also arguably cover the issue merely based on the government's policies and standpoint. Hence, it is seen that there are inconsistencies of reports regarding Indonesian's political stance in the South China Sea dispute. For instance, in a coverage dated January 5, 2020, President Joko Widodo, through his spokesperson, said that there would be no compromise on

territorial integrity, while at the same time, Indonesia will prioritize pursuing peaceful diplomacy in dealing with China. Nevertheless, two days later, there are a number of reports found in The Jakarta Post, which indicates that the Indonesian government tends to be untethered regarding the conflicted sea. For example, a coverage dated January 7, 2020, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investments Minister has urged the public not to be concerned about the gravity of the escalating tension with China.

*"We should not be too quick to say that we are selling out our sovereignty [to China]," Luhut told reporters in Jakarta on Monday evening. "Let me be clear that the EEZ [exclusive economic zone] has to do with the economy and not sovereignty – these are two very different beasts." (Septiari, 2020)*

To sum up, those inconsistencies of the report plausibly resulting in sending a mixed signal to the public, both national and international regarding the diplomatic stance of Indonesia.

Other media, The Daily Inquirer from the Philippines, focus on the fact that China has violated the Philippines' sovereignty rights and leaning on the portrayal of 'our' side from the country. One of the headlines in the Daily Inquirer on August 1, 2019, mentioned:

*'The Philippines has "position" and "possession" of the West Philippine Sea, and China is merely "squatting" in those waters, the Department of National Defense said, as it sought to clarify President Rodrigo Duterte's controversial remarks in his State of the Nation Address.'* (Mangosing, 2019)

Another publication dated November 21, 2019, found that President Duterte insists on the sovereignty right over the sea.

*'President Rodrigo Duterte insisted Wednesday Manila's sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea despite his decision to allow China to fish in the country's*

*exclusive economic zone (EEZ). "As far as I am concerned, I'm the owner, and I'm just giving the fishing rights," Duterte told Pastor Apollo Quiboloy'*

Based on the news published by The Daily Inquirer, it is noted that President Duterte addresses the issue seriously and puts a critical concern regarding the conflict of the sea. As it could be seen in a reportage dated January 25, 2020,

*"President Duterte is not just afraid that a war in the South China Sea would crush the country—he is also wary that American troops would take advantage and the conflict would spiral out of control. Reiterating that he will not make a reckless move in the dispute, the President admitted his fears that an intervention by the United States might push the conflict in an unforeseen direction."*

While in Vietnam online news media, it is found higher usage of the term 'East Sea.' than 'The South China Sea' or 'West Philippine Sea.' The media tried to showcase Vietnam sovereignty on South China Sea dispute. Vietnam has established national mythology around the two island groups—Paracels and Spratlys, which are called Hoang Sa and Truong Sa. The media often positioned Vietnam as an 'abused' country and seek help from the international institution to solve the problem.

*"...Carl Thayer, Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales, Australia, said Vietnam should also make the most of the ASEAN chairmanship in 2020 to take the lead in raising voices against China's unsuitable actions in the waters. Thayer said China is promoting its nine-dash line claim in an attempt to unilaterally conquer the South China Sea to serve its ambition to become a rising power in Asia."*

Vietnam also seems to be very assertive regarding their possession over the sea. The Vietnamplus.vn mostly focus on their country rather than reporting the conflict through international framework. As we could see in a reportage dated April 19, 2020:

*“Vietnam strongly protests the establishment of the so-called ‘Sansha city’ and related acts as they seriously violated Vietnam’s sovereignty, the spokesperson of Vietnam’s Foreign Ministry Le Thi Thu Hang said on April 19.” (VNA, 2020)*

The problems of the South China Sea conflict have a considerable impact in terms of politics, security, economy, and international relations between countries. Undeniably, each nation also has its own way and agenda to portray the conflict of the South China Sea. This ongoing conflict has brought the researchers to the urgency of this research, which put the complex nature of media as significant support and plays a crucial role in resolving conflict as arguably that the practice of professional and balance journalism itself is a form of conflict resolution. Therefore, this research aims to know how national interests are framed through media outlets in Southeast Asia. For a clearer understanding of how the online media in four ASEAN member states portrayed this issue, the researcher will use a framing analysis to figure out whether the media are oriented toward war, peace, or remain neutral.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

For the last decades, the South China Sea conflict has been one of the biggest flashpoints in the region. With the powerful military force, China undoubtedly becomes the 'superior' actor in the dispute compared to other Southeast Asian involved parties. The significance of the sea is very crucial that it affects several aspects, such as economy, geopolitical, and maritime security within the region. In recent years, China has put its history and domestic law to occupy the maritime claim over the sea; this act developing an ambiguity in the disputed sea. The fact that China has abused the international law of the territorial boundaries, has enraged

number of countries internationally and put the neighboring countries at disadvantage.

Then again, the media has vast responsibilities to society on the aspect of how they should report the right information for the public. In the context of global journalism, journalists have a vital role in shaping public perception. In conflict situations, reporters should report the news without sparking more conflict. Instead, journalists ought to apply the practice of journalism that reconciling their readers. However, despite all of the idealistic hypothesized traits about how journalists should cover their stories (such as being independent, committed to telling the truth, and balanced in addressing subjects), the media is run to serve the interests of a small group of elites. This also applies to the media outlets in Southeast Asia on how they cover the issue in the region, explicitly that of the South China Sea conflict. These media outlets have their own agenda and interests in reporting the South China Sea dispute.

In response to this problem, this study proposes a framing analysis method as a tool to gain the full understanding of how the media within four ASEAN member states (Indonesia - The Jakarta Post, Malaysia – The Star Online, The Philippines-Philippine Daily Inquirer, Vietnam – VietnamPlus.vn) covering the news regarding the South China Sea conflict. The critical question is what aspect that will be emphasized in each of the media and how they give attention to this specific issue. To examine the elements of peace and war journalism, the following research questions are posed:

How the media outlets in Southeast Asian countries construct reality in this issue? What is the dominant frame used in online media outlets in Southeast Asia? How the media in Southeast Asia reflect their story based on war/peace journalism?

### **1.3 Objectives**

This study aimed to provide an understanding of how the media in Southeast Asia frame the issue related to the South China Sea conflict. To obtain this objective, the researcher will specify the objective as follows:

- a. To analyze which aspect will be highlighted in the media from each of particular countries; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam regarding the South China Sea conflict.
- b. To understand the dominant framing used by the four media outlets in Southeast Asia based on peace and war journalism.

### **1.4 Significance of the research**

#### **1.4.1 Academic significance**

This study is expected to develop an understanding of mass media communication. Furthermore, this study can be used as a reference for further studies in the field of communication, particularly as one source of knowledge regarding media framing on the case of the South China Sea Dispute.

#### **1.4.2 Practical significance**

The practical significance of this study is how the media carry out the portrayal of framing. The results of this study are expected to bring some input to the media in

maintaining the objectivity of reporting as well as maintaining a neutral position in delivering an issue.

#### **1.4.3 Social significance**

The social significance of this study is to show the public about reality construction carried out by the media. With the result that the public does not just consume the news as it is, but rather sort and select the news and provide a critical assessment of the events covered by the media.

### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

#### **1.5.1 Research Paradigm**

In this study, the researcher used the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm originated from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's and other German philosophers' hermeneutic studies of interpretive understanding (Manrtens, 2005). This paradigm is critical to this research because it establishes a loose association of logically connected assumptions, notions, or propositions that guide thinking and study. Reality is socially produced, according to the constructivist perspective. This paradigm is based on the participants' perceptions of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2003). The main question raised by the constructivist paradigm is how the events or reality being constructed and how the media shape the reality (Eriyanto, 2002). Therefore, according to the paradigm, the study will be referred to as the constructivist point of view in processing and analyzing the data.



### **1.5.2 State of the Art**

a. *Indonesian Mainstream News Coverage of the South China Sea Disputes: A Comparative Content Analysis: Media Reviews*

Lupita Wijaya and Cheryl Bensa's study reflects on how the Indonesian media presented the problem of the South China Sea throughout Joko Widodo 's administration on 20 October 2014-2015. It contains 192 news reports from five major media sources, including Kompas, Jakarta Post, Jakarta Globe, CNN Indonesia, and BBC Indonesia. The general analysis reveals that four media in Indonesia have discussed the South China Sea as a core topic, based on a variety of influential players, including China , the United States and Indonesia.

The research by Lupita Wijaya and Cheryl Pricilla Bensa explores how propaganda affects the press inside the context of national interests of politics, particularly when it comes to the global problem affecting their home countries. Nine propaganda techniques are being used to analyze the media, which are name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, everyday folks, card stacking, bandwagon, the frustration of scapegoat, and fear.

This research uses the comparative content analysis of Indonesian and Chinese state-run networks, such as ANTARA and Xinhua, as well as the three most popular news websites: China Daily, People's Daily, and Kompas. The analysis showed that the media carries out propaganda which portrays a friend-enemy relationship in compliance with their best interests structures.

b. *Framing Analysis of Online Media Coverage on the South China Sea Conflict between China and the Philippines*

The 2015 study by Veejay V. Calutan poses questions on how online media in South East Asia see maritime conflict between China and the Filipinos, especially the Daily Inquirer, Brunei Times, The Jakarta Post, The Borneo Post, The Strait Times, The Nation as well as Thanh Nien Daily. Driven by the Transnational Comparative Framing Model, a methodology in Framing Theory, Peace and Conflict Journalism, the study found that few attention has been paid to the disputed south china sea.

The difference of this study and previous studies mentioned above is that this study examines online media outlets in Southeast Asia, namely, The Jakarta Post, The Daily Inquiries, The Star Online, and VietnamPlus. Other than that, although the previous study also examines the conflict of the South China Sea, this study uses a different approach and focuses compared to the previous studies.

### **1.5.3 The Constructionism**

The main idea of constructionism is that reality refers to the subjective experience of everyday life, how the world is understood rather than the objective reality of the natural world. The concept argues that all knowledge, including the most basic common-sense knowledge of reality, is derived from the social interaction. Constructionism emphasizes the importance of the different character of the communication content. Different kinds of issues are interpreted differently by the media and the public (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). Constructionists believe that knowledge and truth are made rather than expressed by the mind (Schwandt, 2003). They consider knowledge to be established through the interactions of individuals throughout community. Primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary socialization provides the feeling of community as a subjective reality (Andrews, 2012). Similar

to Berger and Luckmann's idea, Burr (1995) proposed that human identity emerges from the social environment rather than the individual.

Ontologically, the constructionism takes the view that things and meaning do not exist independently. It is preferably being constructed by the human to create their meanings. Constructionism primarily considers how social reality is an ongoing process of social actors. Bryman (2008) in his book of *Social Research Methods*, states:

"Constructionism is an ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meaning are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision."

In short, the ontological assumptions of constructionism give rise to how meanings are developed and socially constructed.

Further, constructionism, in relation to the nature of knowledge of the social study and epistemological consideration, invite us to reflect upon the continually changing meanings, and that it shifts as well as contested. In this position, we have to accept that there is no such objective, pre-existing meaning. It is constructed and not objective. Thus, based on the framework of constructionism, what is meant by reality is a result of social construction created by humans themselves. The socialization that occurs through the media and the significant others helps the individual to objectify the meaning of reality in society. This way, it affects a person's idea to digest reality and render it in a meaningful way. In the context of this study, it will be seen how the media try to frame a specific issue related to the

conflict. The constructionism framework then will be used as a guide to see how social reality is formed and manifested through the concept of the social construction of reality to see how reality is shaped.

#### **1.5.4 The Social Construction of Reality**

The social construction of reality assumes that knowledge that lives and develops in society (such as the concept of public awareness and public discourse) is a form of social reality. The social construction of reality stipulated by Berger and Luckmann holds that reality is composed of subjective and objective dimensions. The central thesis of their opinion is that humans and society are dialectical, dynamic, and plural. The dialectical process is composed of three stages, which are *externalization*, *objectivation*, and *internalization*. They also present the idea of institutionalization, which occurs whenever there is the reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). *Externalization* is an attempt of humans to express them into the outside world, both physically and psychologically. *Objectivation*, on the other hand, is the process through which externalized products of human action are objectivized. Objectivation is resulting in an objective reality which separated from the individual. While *internalization* is the point at which the individual interprets actual events into subjective consciousness in the course of socialization.

In connection with the social construction of reality, the media plays an essential role in the creation of a reality. The media creates a reality called the reality of the media. In doing reportage, journalists perform as the one who constructs the

reality, where journalists interpret the facts based on the interaction between themselves and the facts. An event is viewed and absorbed by journalists and subsequently expressed as a form of reality. The media, in this case, actually plays a special role in influencing certain cultures through the dissemination of information. This role is considered necessary because it displays a way how audiences view a reality.

Furthermore, Becker in Littlejohn describes the process as follows:  
"To be intelligible, events must be put into symbolic form... the communicator has a choice of codes or sets of symbols. The one chosen affects the meaning of the events for receivers. Since the language- every symbol-coincides with an ideology, the choice of a set of symbols is, whether conscious or not, the choice of an ideology" (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2016).

The media is seen as a conspiratorial agent who sorts facts to be presented to the public and consciously deceives audiences for the interests of the dominant group. In professional practice, journalists unconsciously contribute to strengthening the position of certain groups in society. Bungin (2008) explains that the social construction of mass media is a way of correcting the substance of weakness from previous theory and completes the social construction of reality by placing all the advantages of mass media as well as the effect of media in relation to the construction of reality. Furthermore, Bungin explains that the social construction of reality occurs through a series of stages as follow:

1. The Stage of Preparing the substance of construction

At this stage, the preparation of the substance is carried out by the mass media editors and distributed to the desk editor. There are three essential things in

preparing the materials, including the media alignments towards capitalism, society, and public interest.

2. The stage of the distribution

The basic principle of the distribution of social construction of mass media is that all information must reach the viewers as quickly and precisely as what the media has scheduled.

3. The formation stage of reality construction

After the news reaches the reader, the social construction of reality took place through three generic stages, which are; reality construction of justification, the willingness of construction by the mass media, and the third is making mass media consumption a consumptive choice.

4. The stage of confirmation

The confirmation stage is the stage where both the media and the viewer provide argumentation and accountability for their choices to be involved in the construction stage. For the media, this stage is assessed as part of giving arguments for the reasons for social construction. As for the reader, this stage is as part of explaining why they are involved and present in the process of social construction.

In this study, the concept of the social construction of reality, which occurs in the mass media, is essential to be used as it can explain how the presence of mass media is not only as information disseminator but also plays an active role in shaping social reality construction in the society.

### 1.5.5 Agenda Setting Theory

Scholars have long agreed that media's presentation of news and topics affects the public consciousness. One among the first writers who stipulated this idea was Walter Lipmann. Lippman argued that public responds not to the actual event, instead, to the '*pictures in our heads*', which then called '*pseudo-environment*'. Where individuals are unable to interpret the complexity of the world, the media present and offer a simple model by setting the agenda for us. When a particular news item is given more priority and attention than other news, the audience will instinctively see it as the most significant news and information are given to them. Thus, through a repeated attention projected by the media, it makes a certain issue prominent and influence individual thoughts towards the issue.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1972) postulated that there are two levels of agenda setting theory. The first level of the theory argues that media modifies and filters what the media are saying. It creates the general issue that are seen as important [*object agenda setting*]. This theory is commonly utilized by the researchers to examine media usage and its influence on individuals and their immediate thoughts when presented a particular news. The next level, this theory argues that the media focuses on how people should think about the nature of the issue. It assumes that the more attention the media gives, the more likely the public will consider that the issue is significant [*attribute agenda setting*].

The theory of agenda setting function in a three-part process. The first one, the media determine which agenda will be displayed [*media agenda setting*]. Second, the media somehow affects and influence what the public think, which then creates

the *public agenda setting*. Finally, both media and public agendas influence what policy maker consider important, which called by the *policy media*.

In this research, the theory is used to examine what are the main issue discussed by the media in the public sphere, as a complimentary to the framing theory as a second-level of agenda setting which also employed in this research. The theory is used to describes the ability of the media to influence and present the importance issue of the public agenda.

### **1.5.6 Global Journalism**

Globalization, which triggered by innovation in information technology, has led to a variety of definitions in various fields, one of which is in the world of mass media. Adaptation to this change has given rise to a new definition in the field of journalism, namely global journalism. The global journalism argues that international events, such as war, natural disaster, or epidemic disease, as the result of globalization, attract attention from the media around the globe. The term "global journalism" refers to a system of news gathering, editing, and distribution that is not bound by national or regional borders, and in which shared national or community citizenship is not expected to serve as a common ground for newsmakers, journalists, and audiences (Reese, 2008). Hemer and Tufte present an idea in their book 'Media and glocal change: Rethinking communication for development' that the rapid global changes that occur as a result of globalization processes, such as changes in the global cultural flows and the recognition and consolidation of global capitalism,



pose new challenges to almost all sectors of human society (Eriksen, 2005). The word 'glocal' itself means reflecting both local and global considerations. The global journalism creates lines between foreign and domestic news has become blurred. According to Nurmis (2014), we are now entering a period in which no news is foreign because the connections between people worldwide are so tight and instantaneous that nothing we do is confined inside the borders of a nation-state any longer. This tendency demonstrates how out of date it is to rely solely on the nation-state to comprehend foreign news and neglect the complexity of globalization. As Esser (2013) pointed out, scholars cannot understand a globalized world by investigating social processes through a national lens. Thus, the revolution of the media has brought changes in people's behavior, not only in accessing information but also in the practice of disseminating information by journalists.

Global journalism is a journalistic style that distinguishes itself from older traditional methods of reporting by actively connecting the local and global. According to John Herbert (2001), a journalism scholar, states that one of the responses to globalization is the localization of information and reporting. Further, global journalism requires journalists who practice journalism in the global context. He then defines the content of global journalism as follows:

"Practicing global journalism also means allowing for other attitudes, cultures, and other approaches. It means that there can often be many truths, not just one western certainty that western journalists have grown up with... The practice of global journalism also means not becoming too dependent on official sources; we should see ourselves, be there, judge, and reports the news by ourselves. News manipulation can be easy when reporters do not know the country, the people, and the politics run within the country. Journalists live in a world where they have to take risks. It is becoming so much worse now that there is an increasing danger that reporters will stop going unto the real trouble spots for fears of their lives". (Herbert, 2001)

Herbert's definition reiterates that global journalism is an impact of the phenomenon of globalization, changes in information technology, and patterns of humans in obtaining information. It is essential to realize that rapid development, especially in the field of journalism and globalization, has brought humanity to a new chapter of civilization in processing, analyzing, spreading, and obtaining information. Therefore, the theory of global journalism is applied to the disciplines of international and transnational communications, with a focus on assessing the role of mass media in globalized society from political, economic, and cultural perspectives.

#### **1.5.7 Peace and War journalism**

This research sees that the publication related to the South China Sea dispute is one of the coverages regarding conflict involving several countries. In doing the reportage over the conflict, journalists often use the principle of peace and war journalism. Johan Galtung first proposed the concept as two competing frames in conflict reportage. He compared war journalism to sports journalism, which often sees the object of publications as a zero-sum game in which winning is everything (Fong, 2009). Health journalism, he said, would be a better model. He used the example of a cancer patient to highlight not only the sickness, but also the various contributory causes. This technique would be more effective in conflict reporting than focusing solely on the violence and siding with one specific player. The model highlights four key differences between the two approaches: war journalism is violent, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented, and victory-oriented. War journalism

may contribute to the escalation of wars by supporting war and reproducing propaganda (Galtung, 2002). Furthermore, war journalism places conflict as an arena for conflicting parties into two different parties (them vs. us).

In contrast, peace journalism provides a fairer way of framing stories. It acknowledges the fact that the media plays a role in the propaganda war. Peace journalism bases on peace/conflict, people, solution, and truth. In short, Galtung (2002) peace and journalism taking four broad practice and linguistic orientation, which then categorized into the following orientations.

<b>Peace Journalism</b>	<b>War Journalism</b>
<p><b>1. Peace and conflict-oriented</b>            *Explore dispute formation x sides, y aims, z problems, and overall win-win approach            *Open space, open time, causes and implications everywhere, including history/culture, clarifying disagreements.            *To give voice to both sides, to demonstrate sympathy, to understand, to see conflict as an issue and to concentrate on conflict creativity.</p>	<p><b>1. War Oriented</b>            * Focus on the field of dispute. Involving two sides, one aim (win), the war has created zero-sum orientation.            * Close space, close time            * Secretizing battles            *Us vs. them as a issue, emphasis on who would win in the battle 'dehumanization' of 'them.'</p>
<p><b>2. Truth oriented</b>            *Uncover falsehoods from both sides and reveal any cover-ups.</p>	<p><b>2. Propaganda oriented</b>            *Expose 'their' fallacy</p>
<p><b>3. People-oriented</b>            *Emphasis on suffering            * Give a name of all evil-doers            * Emphasis on those who make peace</p>	<p><b>3. Elite oriented</b>            *The emphasis is on 'our' misfortune, on able-bodied elite males            * Give the name of their evil-doers            * Emphasis on elite peacemakers</p>
<p><b>4. Solution-oriented</b>            *Peace means neither violence nor creativity            *Emphasize peace negotiations, even to deter further conflict            *Emphasis on the system, history and stable society            *Afterward, mediation, reconstruction, reconciliation</p>	<p><b>4. Victory-oriented</b>            *Peace means creativity and victory            *Keep peace initiatives hidden until success is nigh.            *Concentrate on treaties, organizations, and the controlled society.            *Leaving for another war, return if the old flame up again</p>

**Table 1. 2.** The comparison of Peace and War Journalism based on Galtung's categorization. Adapted from Peace Journalism – A Challenge, 2002, 259-270. Copyright Nordiskt Informationscenter 2002.

In understanding the peace and war journalism, Fong (2009) mentioned that there are several indicators to know whether the journalists are leaning towards peace or war practice.

### 1. *War journalism*

The context for war journalism is defined in particular as the media reports of individuals and/or incidents that contain the following indicators:

- Emphasis on *observable effects* and *graphic information*, including violence in the context of the conflict. following the description of violence in the clashes of the dispute. For instance, the usage of *chasing after ships, injured, etc.*
- *Here and now*: concentrating on who does what, who first causes confrontation
- *One-party orientation*: only giving voice to one faction or nation engaging in the conflict without presenting the other party's positions.
- *See 'them' as a problem and/or threat*: blame the other party for initiating the confrontations.
- *Partisan*: demonstrate greater support to 'our' side by highlighting the wrongdoings and activities of the other faction by not referencing or marginalizing 'our' self-benefit plans.
- *Elite-oriented*: citing political or military figures only.
- *Agreement and/or negotiation oriented*: depends on the ability of the party's willingness to resolve the issues.
- *Use one or more of the following linguistic styles.:*

- a. Demonizing (derogative marks such as *radical, fanatical, liar, thug, aggressor, criminal*. Demonizing adjectives such as *barbaric, mean, barbaric, violent, obvious, etc.*)
- b. Victimizing (words that are deliberately used to exaggerate and promote the suffering or loss caused on 'our' side, such as *victims, defenseless, pitiful, helpless, etc.*)
- c. Emotive (words that are qualitatively used to explain what has happened, exaggeratedly, to confuse the emotions of viewers, *such as massively offending, irrational rage, etc.*)

## 2. *Peace journalism*

The context for peace journalism is characterized as the reporting by the media of people or incidents, using at least five of these indicators:

- *Concentrate on the intangible consequences of violence:* exposing longstanding impacts that are hypothesized as a result of aggression and conflicts (such as destabilizing international stability, undermining relations between countries, blocking the free navigation route);
- *Causes and consequences:* describing the nature of a confrontation, why it occurred, why the parties concerned, what are the aims, what is the party's the role in the dispute;
- *Multi-party orientation:* to represent all opposing groups;
- *See conflict as a problem:* denouncing conflicts, defining violence as a wrong way to settle sovereign conflict;

- *Non-partisan/unbias*: consistency in comparatively making the same amount of truthful facts;
- *People-oriented*: giving voices of common people directly influenced by the dispute more room in the narrative;
- *Differences-orientated*: concentrating on the claims that the parties concerned throw at each other, the discrepancy in what each party conveys what they want;
- *Prevent using any of the following forms of language*: demonizing, victimizing, and emotive.

In this study, the Peace and War journalism concept will be used to see the framework of the practice of journalism in covering the South China Sea dispute.

### **1.5.8 Transnational Comparative Framing Model**

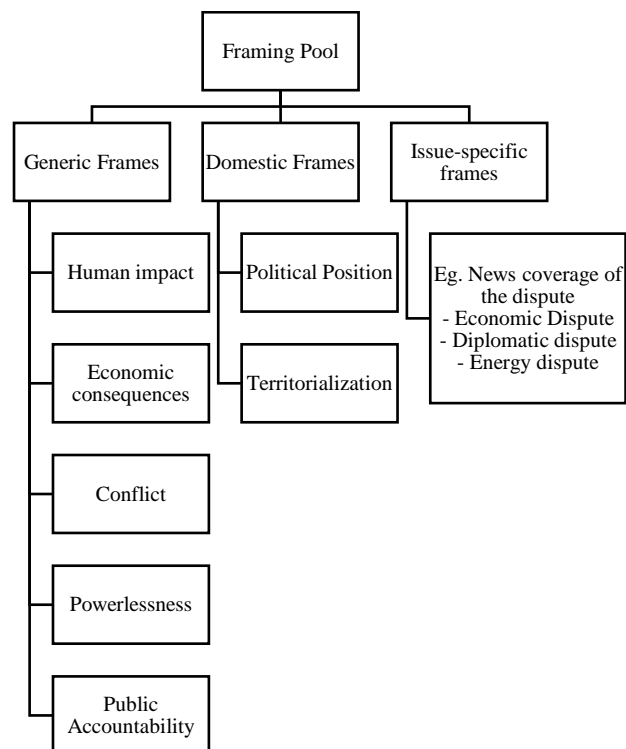
An approach called Transnational Comparative Framing Model suggested by Guo, Holton, and Jeong (2012) introduces a model for studying transnational issues and transnational news media framing. The theory proposes a combination of inductive and deductive methodologies for investigating the international news media framing. Transnational Comparative Framing Model proposes a three-dimensional framing matrix, which is; *generic frames*, *domestic frames*, and *issue-specific frames*. The same framework has been used in several studies. For instance, Zhang and Hellmueller (2016) who explore what has been termed as global journalism and compares two prominent online news media, Aljazeera English and CNN, regarding the ISIS threat, Sakurai (2015) who used the domestication framework of the Transnational Comparative Framing Model on his research of framing of trade

policy on the coverage of Super 301. In short, this approach could be one of the possible alternatives for the researcher to do the same study in the transnational context of framing.

Researchers postulated generic media frames that allow comparisons between frames, topics, and, presumably, framing methods in different nations, but they provide less opportunity for in-depth examination of an event's framing. The generic media frames have been used for a variety of issues and regions. For example, Neumann, Just, Crigler, Semetko, and Valkenburg present a list of generic frames that have been prevalent in news reports, which include human interest, conflict, attribution of responsibility, helplessness, morality, and economic implications. Nisbet, as said in Holton, Guo, and Jeong (2012), also has a comparable set of frames that emerge frequently in science policy discussions, such as societal progress, economic development/competitiveness, morality/ethics, and scientific/technical uncertainty. In addition, numerous scholars have applied, Entman's (1993) four frame functions in order to define the generic frame: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.

Domestic frames, as opposed to generic frames, are used to investigate the domestication of media framing. There are four domestic factors that influence the framing process according to the analysis of transnational framing studies, which are; culture, ideology, political positions, and media systems. As for the culture factor, Hofstede's (1980) provides four cultural dimensions that can respectively be used to generate culture-specific, that is, domestic frames: uncertainty avoidance, collectivism vs. individualism, masculinity vs femininity and power distance. In

terms of ideology, it has the potential to develop domestic frames in many countries. Whereas ideology refers to broad and abstract concepts and views, a political viewpoint usually refers to a country's specific policies and attitudes. Hallin and Mancini (2004), as cited in Guo et al., identifies three models of media systems within the context of western democracies: the liberal model, the democratic corporatist model, and the polarized pluralist model. While in other non-western countries, different media system might as well exist. However, in this study, the framing pool will be modified into several categories; generic frame, domestic frame, and issue-specific frame, which will be divided into smaller subcategories. The figure below will provide a more precise map of the framing pool.



**Figure 1.4** Three-dimensional framing matrix proposed by Lei Gui, Avery Halton and Jeong, Sun Ho. From Guo, et al., 2012. *Transnational Comparative Framing: A Model for an Emerging Framing Approach*. International Journal of Communication, 1918-1941. Copyright 2012 by Lei Guo, Avery Holton & Sun Ho Jeong.



The generic frames consist of human impact/interest frame, economic consequence frame, and conflict frame. The *human-interest* framing seeks to explain the topic by depicting one or more specific individuals who are personally connected with the issue. Journalists utilize this framing to emphasize a larger societal issue and to add a personal touch to their reporting (Boukes, Boomgaarden, Moorman, & Vreese, 2015). As for the economic consequence, it refers to economical response with of the bottom line, profit, and loss affected by an event (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). The conflict frame, on the other hand, is frequently defined as a disagreement between individuals, institutions, or countries, emphasizing the points of disparity between disputing parties. Furthermore, the issue-specific frame is a frame that is assigned to specific issues. It enables the investigation of the framing of specific events with great specificity and detail. It consists of political position and territorialization in the domestic context. The political position of a country refers to the stance or policies of a country. While the *territorialization* it refers to the act of organizing the area as a nation's territory to achieve particular effects (Bassett & Gautier, 2014).

Transnational Comparative Framing Research suggests a three-dimensional framing matrix to categorize frames to a different dimension further. It also integrates two approaches to framing function and media package. The dimensions consist of framing function, context, & coding, and analysis. *Framing functions* which consists of problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation, can be used to define any frame, be it domestic, generic, or issue-specific (Guo et al. 2012). In other words, framing functions incorporated

within a single frame might generate various themes that refer to distinct events in specific stories, as opposed to frames involving patterns that persist across time. The TCFM framework was used to investigate whether the news media employs a global or domestic perspective. Chyi & McCombs (2004) offer a two-dimensional media frame measurement scheme. They define five levels of space, ranging from micro (individual) to macro (global).

Similarly, the TCFM divides context into three levels: individual, national, and global. Frames acquired at the national level, in particular, can be categorized into each particular nation under analysis—frames that have subsequently been placed into the corresponding level of context. The researcher may code units of analysis in the code and analysis dimension according to several sorts of frames, such as generic, domestic, or issue-specific frames.

Using the TCFM model, researchers may identify one or two broader frames for each newspaper article. The researcher then explores the article based on the theme that fall under the frame as defined by framing functions. For example, based on the transnational study done by Good (2008) as cited in Guo et al., the researcher categorizes the frames into the specific functions, as seen in the table below. However, Guo also notes that the table demonstrated below is based on how the potential TCFM analyses framing functions applied to Good's study.

Frame	Framing Function			
	Problem definition	Causal interpretation	Evaluate Morally	Suggest Remedy
Scientific debate	The article discusses climate change as a scientifically uncertain problem.	Natural factors such as greenhouse gases cause climate change		
Economic consequences	The article examines climate change from the standpoint of economic reasoning.			Economic measures should be taken to deal with climate change
Public accountability		Anthropogenic factors such as humans' use of fossil fuel cause climate change	The article morally judges the US governments' position on the Kyoto Protocol	-Humans should conserve energy or consider using alternative energies.

**Table 1.3** An example of Framing Functions analysis in TCFM. From Guo, et al. (2012). Transnational Comparative Framing: A Model for an Emerging Framing Approach. *International Journal of Communication*, 1918-1941. Copyright 2012 by Lei Guo, Avery Holton & Sun Ho Jeong.

It is important to note that researchers need not necessarily fill every cell in the framing matrix; it depends on the research project. Conversely, the researcher may identify more than one theme for each cell (as seen on the table, which suggested two remedies).

## **1.6 Research Assumption**

This research assumes that the media in Southeast Asia will cover their report based on these following frames; the economic consequence, human impact, political position, and more likely to practice the war journalism in reporting the news.

## **1.7 Operational Definitions**

### **1.6.1 South China Sea**

The South China Sea is referring to the geographic location of the sea, which is located in the south of China, east of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra through the Strait of Singapore, north of Bangka Belitung and Borneo Island, and west of the Philippines. The sea is currently the disputable territory. Southeast Asian countries have different terms to define the sea, such as the East Sea in Vietnam, the West Philippine Sea, or North Natuna Sea in Indonesia.

### **1.6.2 South China Sea Conflict**

South China Sea conflict is a dispute between several opposing nations in the disputable territory of the South China Sea. The term South China Sea conflict and the South China Sea dispute will be used synonymously in this study.

### **1.6.3 News coverage of South China Sea Conflict**

News regarding the South China Sea conflict means all reports regarding events related to the coverage on the South China Sea conflict, both in the title and the body of the news. This fact then conveyed to the public through the platforms on

the media in Southeast Asia, including The Jakarta Post, The Star Online, The Daily Inquirer, and VietnamPlus.

#### **1.6.4 Generic Frames**

The generic frame is a set of frames which commonly used in the news reports (Guo, Holton, & Jeong, 2012). These generic frames are used to answer research questions about which frames resonate with the international community in relation to the South China Sea dispute. The following frames will be used in the study; human impact, which is defined as a news story that discusses a person or people in an emotional way. In the case of the South China Sea conflict, this frame will include the articles consisting of individual's stories and emphasis on emotions resulted from the conflict. Conflict frame is defined as a news story involving opposition of people or forces, resulting in a dramatic effect (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). It will consist of the element which contains confrontations, disagreements, and tensions of the South China Sea issue, which might include the negligence of UNCLOS rule, violation of sovereignty rights, as well as territorial dispute between conflicting parties.

On the other hand, economic consequence defined as articles which emphasis on events from an economic perspective. The frame will include articles related to the consequences of the South China Sea conflict with an economic point of view. For instance, the impact of the sea on the economic security of one's nations or economic losses due to the preoccupation of the sea.

### **1.6.5 Domestic Frames**

The domestic frame is used to examine the domestication of media framing (Guo, Holton, & Jeong, 2012). Regarding the domestic frames, the frame that will be used are political position and territorialization. Political position examines how each country's news coverage reflected the nation's concrete policies and stance, whether the news in favor of a specific country or remain neutral. While the territorialization refers to how each of the countries uses the term to define their territory. In this frame, it covers how a country calls the territory of their country in a national context (e.g., the South China Sea, West Sea, East Sea, or North Natuna Sea).

### **1.6.6 Issue-specific frame**

The issue-specific frame is a frame that specifically highlights the issue regarding the dispute of the South China Sea (Vreese, Semetko, & Peter, 2001). This frame will be divided into economic disputes, diplomatic disputes, as well as a territorial dispute. The economic dispute frame includes tensions of economic aspect between conflicted parties related to the South China Sea conflict. The diplomatic dispute frames concerning political disagreement between parties, groups, or countries. While the territorial dispute refers to the conflict over the possession and control of the boundaries in the South China Sea.

### **1.6.7 Context frame**

The context frame is a frame under the dimension of space that explores whether issues are framed with a global or domestic outlook. There will be three frame

contexts used in this research, which are the individual, national, and global context. Individual context is the frame used in the media based on the person or family. National context deals with news stories take place within a media host nation. The global context is a news story that involves more than five nations or an international organization such as the United Nations (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016).

## **1.7 Method**

### **1.7.1 Research Approach**

This study applied a framing analysis approach, specifically with Guo's method of the Transnational Comparative Framing Model. The approach was designed to assist the researcher in gathering more data on the global phenomenon and transnational study. Through this framing method, the TCFM laid out a systematic step for a researcher by exploring transnational news coverage and providing a comprehensive research framework applicable to analyzing globalized issues and media platforms (Guo, Holton, & Jeong, 2012).

The descriptive research method was used in this study. This research method was applied to create a comprehensive, factual, and accurate assessment of the facts and characteristics of a certain object's population. Text media analysis, specifically framing analysis, was used to dig deeper into the conceptual framework.

### **1.7.2 The Data**

The main subjects of this research were four online media outlets in Southeast Asia. The news reports on the South China Sea dispute in four online media in the Southeast Asian region, namely The Jakarta Post from Indonesia, The Star Online from Malaysia, The Daily Inquirer from the Philippines, and Vietnamplus.vn of Vietnam, were analyzed. The total sample of the study includes 40 articles from the period of April 1 - June 30, 2018. The sample of 40 publications was selected of which, ten from The Jakarta Post, ten from The Star Online, ten from the Daily Inquirer, and ten from VietnamPlus. The analysis excluded articles that did not have the South China Sea conflict as the central focus, such as article, which only mentions the case in passing. Further, the data also excluded the article from the Chinese online media because the researcher would like to focus on the impacted countries rather than depict the 'antagonized actor' of the conflict.

The reason why the period was chosen was that, based on the data from the media site, the news was vigorously published compared to the other months in the same year. Furthermore, in this period, the region in Southeast Asia and China had been actively discussed the issue of draft code of conduct to resolve the conflict in the South China Sea. Along with it, in this period of time, there have been found several cases involving the disputed sea. Thus, the conflict could be seen clearly from this period.

The selection of the four media was also based on several backgrounds. First, the four media are the English-based media, which gain the most popularity in the country and are frequently accessed by the public. Secondly, the media are also



known as a credible source of information in their country. Based on the data of Alexa Traffic Rank, The Daily Inquirer from The Philippines is ranked number 258 in the world. The online media is also estimated to have 506.135 unique visitors, and 1.159.049 page views each day. Further, The Jakarta Post is estimated to have about 58.521 unique visitors and 105.923 page views per day. The Alexa traffic rank estimates that The Jakarta Post is ranked number 630 in the world.

On the other hand, The Star Online from Malaysia is ranked in number 1.109, according to Alexa Traffic Rank. It is estimated to have around 46.303 unique visitors and 155.612 page views per day. As for VietnamPlus, it is estimated to have about 10.140 unique visitors and 22.714 pageviews every day. VietnamPlus also considered being the top three credible news sources in Vietnam. With this background, the researcher assumed that the news can be depicted in detail and in a comprehensive way.

### **1.7.3 Data Collection Techniques**

The data was collected through the keyword search on each of the media's official websites (The Jakarta Post, The Daily Inquirer, The Star Online, and VietnamPlus) search engine. This study employed non-probability sampling techniques, especially purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, according to Sugiyono (2016), is a data source sampling method with specific considerations. The reason for utilizing this sampling strategy was that not all samples contain criteria that correspond to the phenomenon under research. Therefore, this study employed

purposive sampling, which identified particular factors or criteria that were used in this study. As for the sample requirements, this research used the news coverage of the South China Sea conflict from April to June 2018, and was published by the following media; The Daily Inquirer, The Jakarta Post, The Star Online, and VietnamPlus.vn.

#### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

Data collection was carried out directly by collecting and identifying the articles in four online media outlets (The Jakarta Post, The Star Online, The Daily Inquirer, and Vietnamplus.vn) about the coverage of the South China Sea Dispute from April 1 – June 30, 2018. The result of the data identification was analyzed and coded with a three-dimensional framing matrix from the Transnational Comparative Framing model aforementioned before.

Data collection began with searches combining keywords 'South China Sea dispute/conflict', 'East Vietnam Sea conflict,' 'West Philippine Sea conflict,' and 'North Natuna Sea conflict.' Full texts of all the stories in the sample was downloaded from the four online news media (The Daily Inquirer, The Jakarta Post, The Star Online, and VietnamPlus). After that, the data was coded in the framing matrix under a specific frame. News articles were coded according to the following framework; *issue-specific frames, domestic frames, and generic frames*. The generic and specific frames of the issue followed the frame classification of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and Entman (1993). Through the framing model introduced by Entmant, the researcher analyzed articles in four basic functions, specifically;

- Problem definition

In this section this research determined what a relevant actor is doing and what the costs and benefits are, which were frequently assessed in terms of shared values and norms. The researcher investigated how the event/issue was perceived in this section of the analysis.

- Causal interpretation

In this section the research identified the factors which were underlying the situation. In this part of the analysis, this research explored what was the caused the issue? What was considered as the cause of the problem? And who were the actors considered to be involved and cause the problem?

- Moral judgments

In this part, this study examined causative agents and their implications. This study assessed the moral principles presented to explain the situation in this section of the analysis. What moral values were used to legitimize an action?

- Treatment recommendation

In this section, this study provided and justified treatments for the problems as well as predicted their potential implications. In this part, the study reviewed what solutions were offered to address the problem/issue.

Further, this research analyzed and categorized the frames utilized in online news sources based on various levels of context. The three-dimensional framing

matrix and coding method was used in this study to account for varied geographical levels of story framework. Thus, the matrix could link each of the news frames to a broad story context.

Function Context	Frame	Problem identification	Causal interpretation	Evaluate Morally	Suggest Remedy
Individual	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				
Nation	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				
Nation	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				
Nation	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				
Nation	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				
Global	Issue Specific/Domestic/General Frames				

**Table 1.4** Transnational framing matrix that is used in the research. Adapted from Guo, et al. (2012). Transnational Comparative Framing: A Model for an Emerging Framing Approach. *International Journal of Communication*, 1918-1941. Copyright 2012 by Lei Guo, Avery Holton & Sun Ho Jeong.

### 1.8 Scope and Limitations

While this study analyzed the reportage of the online news media of four ASEAN member states, it also has certain limitations. First, this study only covered four online news media from the four nations in Southeast Asia, excluding Brunei, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Singapore. These, due to the other five countries, are not the claimant of the sea. Although Brunei Darussalam is one of the claimants of the sea, the media from the country is excluded since researcher found

little news covering South China Sea dispute, and most of them were wired from the other international news media. Second, this study only analyzed online news coverage from April 1 until June 30, 2018. Third, the study only covered reportage in Southeast Asia.

### **1.9 Goodness Criteria**

The data obtained from the study determines the quality of the research. In seeing these qualities, it needs an examination of the data used in the study. To check the trustworthiness of the data in qualitative research, these following techniques could be applied to check the validity of research:

#### *1. Credibility*

Credibility is related to how reliable the research is conducted. The researcher should conduct a careful and detailed observation on the ongoing basis related to the prominent factors in the study. The researcher must be able to describe in detail how the discovery process could be carried out.

#### *2. Transferability*

This technique in research is used to show that the result of the research can be applied to other situations with a relatively same context or theme.

#### *3. Dependability*

To maintain the consistency of the researcher during the data collections, interpretations, until draw conclusions, it requires an audit of the entire research process. To accomplish this, repeated checking and observation is carried out with the research supervisor.

#### 4. *Confirmability*

Confirmability is related to the proof of the truth of research to get an objective result of the study. Prove of truth is done through comparing data and research references as well as conducting discussions and testing by research supervisor and examiners