FRAMING THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER THE CROSS-STRAIT ECONOMIC COOPERATION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Hsiu-ching Ko

Assistant professor

Department of Mass Communication

Chang Jung Christian University

Tainan City, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

This study examines how frames were used in President Ma Ying-Jeou's political discourse in the ECFA debate with Tsai, the Chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party. Scholars portray framing as an optimal rhetoric strategy and weapon against a political opponent that can influence and shape public opinion. In the present study, President Ma Ying-Jeou's discourse in the ECFA debate with Tsai is analyzed with respect to diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. Results show that safety, responsibility, crisis, and incompetence frames are the primary strategies that Ma Ying-Jeou utilizes to gain public support for signing an ECFA with China during the debate.

Keywords: ECFA debate; frame; framing; rhetoric strategy; public policy debate

INTRODUCTION

Public policy debate involves conversations and other forms of communication conducted by political elites or political party members. This contact is mediated through the use of text and graphics to inform the public of policy-related strategies, philosophies, or grievances. Such a debate serves as a means of persuading the public to support and identify with the policy of interest. Nelson (2004) asserted that persuasive communication is aimed at altering the subjective beliefs that the audience hold towards a political issue or a policy. Burke is a renowned rhetoric theorist who has proposed that persuasion emphasizes a deliberate design, whereas identification focuses on the overall capability of the speech to be delivered and accepted by the audience. Therefore,

59

communication is considered to be effective when the speaker (communicator) uses language and visual aids that resonate with the audience, persuading them to accept that the speaker's viewpoints are genuine (Peng, 2007).

Tzang (1999) maintained that languages and signs comprise the structure of a frame. According to Entman (1993) and Tzang (1999), a frame is used "to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient". Thus, a frame is a mechanism through which selected aspects are restructured and represented. Applying this tool to policy debates involves selecting a topic or policy of contention and making its authenticity more salient. The salient dimensions of the issue or policy are then selected, emphasized, eliminated, and restructured (i.e., in a deliberate design) into the preferred form of communication (e.g., text and graphics). Subsequently, the debater communicates these restructured aspects to the audience in an attempt to persuade them to support and identify with these chosen characteristics. Past studies regarding the framing of public policy debates have revealed that applying deliberately designed framing strategies and tactics in public policy debates significantly influences public opinion and support (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997; Nelson, 2004; Williamson, McNamara, & Howling, 2003). Therefore, framing is considered to constitute the best rhetoric strategy (Riker, 1996; Simon, 2002) and device to be employed against an opponent, proving indispensable to political agendas (Jacoby, 2000; Nelson & Kinder, 1996).

Riker (1996) asserted that political candidates should emphasize and highlight the rhetoric advantages of their debating topic. Specifically, the underlying arguments should be beneficial to the audience members in order to build resonance with the proposed political assertions and win the debate. This is because a debate on public policy is shaped by political elites that have defined or established a system that proposes to resolve a social concern (Entman, 1993). According to Nelson (2004), a frame is defined as an alternative description and interpretation of the same information, problem, or solution. Therefore, issues and policies are proposed as a small way of solving a more significant larger problem, framing the judgments and opinions of the audience towards the selected perspectives (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Thus, framing critically influences public opinion and is crucial in public policy communications. Numerous studies around the world have investigated the framing of public policy debates. By comparison, because Japanese colonization and the imposition of martial law have historically influenced Taiwan, Taiwanese scholars have only focused on the study of public policy for the past three decades (Wu, 2002). Therefore, the rhetoric strategies of framing public policy debates have not been extensively studied in Taiwan. In light of novel developments in democracy, political party trends, and the advent of media technologies, public

policies (particularly those involving disputable national policies) should be disclosed to the public through the use of electronic media (specifically television), rhetoric strategies, and debates. This helps to safeguard the public's right to be informed. Such disclosure is a paradigm that democratic countries should establish for discussing the nations' public concerns. Therefore, elucidating how Taiwanese political elites should apply a framing strategy in public policy debates is necessary.

On April 25th, 2010, a 150-minute televised debate, referred to as the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) Debate, was held between President Ma Ying-Jeou and Tsai Ing-wen, the Chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This debate highlighted the importance of broadcasting, as well as improving the public's understanding and interpretation of such policies. In addition, this event reflected the significance of the democratic development in Taiwan. President Ma also claimed that this debate was the first of its kind to be held between the President and the Chair of the opposition party since the second change in ruling parties. The ECFA Debate comprised three parts: (1) statement; (2) interrogation; and (3) conclusion. In the first part, both sides had eight minutes to make their opening remarks. In the second part, they had five opportunities to interrogate each other. The debate was then concluded by both parties spending six minutes making their concluding remarks. Throughout the debating process and even afterwards, major mass media companies conducted public surveys regarding who had performed the best, despite the fact that this ECFA Debate was not about winning or losing. Although this survey was deemed to have distorted the focus of the discussion, the ECFA Debate demonstrates the importance of public opinion in policy implementation. Furthermore, both the opposition parties and the media have long questioned the integrity of the ECFA policy because they perceive Kuomintang (KMT) as a pro-China and pro-capitalist group that operates clandestinely. Therefore, the ability to persuade and acquire public resonance and support were one of the primary goals and challenges that Ma had intended to accomplish with the ECFA Debate. Excluding ideological differences, the strategic use and organization of the language and visuals conveyed by political debaters should be the key to determining whether mass public support can be successfully achieved via public policies that are explained during public debates.

More importantly, the signing of the ECFA profoundly influenced Taiwan at all levels, resulting in extreme concern among the citizens of Taiwan about the future negotiation and implementation of the cross-strait ECFA. The Sunflower Student Movement in 2014 is one of the significant after-effects of the ECFA. Since this was such an intense and significant political issue in Taiwan, the present study has adopted the arguments relating to the ECFA to analyze how political elites

frame major policies and political issues. This objective is particularly meaningful and necessary for observing and understanding Taiwan's major political discourses, specifically those regarding cross-strait issues proposed by political elites in Taiwan.

Specifically, this study sought to understand how political elites in Taiwan argue over public concerns or policy issues, and to ascertain how they employ framing strategies to achieve various political or policy goals. Therefore, we examined the language used by Ma in his discourse of the ECFA Debate on May 25th, 2010, to elucidate how he applied framing strategy using three research questions: (1) Did Ma implement a framing strategy during the ECFA Debate?; (2) What were the major frames that Ma used during the ECFA Debate?; and (3) How did Ma execute the framing strategy during the ECFA Debate?

FRAMING: A RHETORIC STRATEGY

Gamson et al. (1992) defined frame on two levels: (1) A frame represents a boundary, referring to the scope within which people acquire information on a particular issue when observing the world; and (2) a frame represents a framework, referring to people framing the meanings and central ideas of events and objects to form a worldview. In other words, framing is the behavioral model that focuses on constructing novel ideas of a certain event, issue, or object. Through framing, criteria and guidelines become available for people to understand, identify, and interpret a certain event or object. Tzang (1999) defined a frame as people or an organization's subjective explanations and way of thinking with respect to an event or object, asserting that such a frame involves the selection and restructuring of the key points of an issue. However, where there is selection, there must be elimination; thus, restructuring essentially involves emphasis and salience. Entman (1993) believed that framing emphasizes certain information of a communicated topic (selection) and strengthens such a topic by making it more salient. Salience refers to highlighting the selected part of information in a way that it attracts attention from the audience and becomes more meaningful and memorable to them (Entman, 1993).

Carey maintained that language reflects the truth and establishes the origin of the truth (as cited in Tzang, 1999). Nicholson and Howard (2003) stressed that framing is the process by which elites, news media, or other actors define the characteristics of an argument or dispute by emphasizing specific considerations and perspectives of an issue and making them more salient. Jerit (2008) further indicated that a framing strategy is advantageous because elites are required to only identify

62

and highlight considerations beneficial to them. Therefore, framers could simply convey arguments beneficial to them, eliminate social facts detrimental to them, and subsequently reorganize, sort, restructure, and emphasize the selected social facts to construct and re-present the truth. Hence, the core goal of framing is to select raw materials for a discourse, and then deliberately design and use the salient and restructured language and signs to construct and interpret the truth of a society. Furthermore, Hunt regarded a rhetoric discourse as an assertion that is intentionally expounded to influence others (as cited in Lin, 2000). Thus, applying frame theory in individual languages or textual discourses such as arguments and speeches is a form of rhetoric strategy. Reese (1991) stressed that frame users provide a discourse in public domains to vie for the dominance of constructing the truth or meaning of a fact. When a certain frame is selected, it reflects the approach to explaining a meaning and the power relationships implied within such a meaning. Consequently, a frame is not only a weapon for setting media topics (Campella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991) and a rhetoric weapon essential to political persuaders (Jacoby, 2000; Nelson & Kinder, 1996), but also an effective rhetoric strategy for gaining public support (Lakoff, 2003; Riker, 1996; Simon, 2002).

FRAMING AND PUBLIC POLICY DEBATES

Framing is considered to be an important rhetoric strategy in public debate that permits speakers of both sides to elaborate and emphasize aspects of the major issues that work to their advantage (Jerit, 2008). The ultimate goal of framing is to gather identification and support from the public for maintaining the interests of their parties or organizations. Using different discourse frames, political elites have an incentive to influence the perception, judgment, and interpretation of the audience on events or issues through conveying their deliberately constructed message to the audience via the media. Thus, political elites intend to shape or create the core beliefs of the public on issues, plans, or policies. The intention is that once the audience relates to a particular social or political problem, their perspectives, attitudes, and decisions toward these issues or policies will be affected (Tversky & Kahneman, 1982; Zaller, 1992). The process of achieving this goal is defined as a framing strategy. Thus, Jacoby (2000) argues that "politicians will attempt to define, or frame issues in ways that maximize support for their positions" (p. 750).

Reviewing the literature on the link between framing and public policy debates yields studies that have mainly focused on examining how framing is used in public debates (e.g., Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007; Winter, 2006), as well as others that have analyzed the effect of framing on

public attitudes or support (e.g., Jacoby, 2000; Williamson et al., 2003; Borrelli & Lockerbie, 2008). These studies examine the discourse or perspectives of governmental officials, parties, or political elites on specific public issues or policies. Such debates include the U.S. war in Iraq, social security reform, and migration policy. Data were collected from media sources, governmental or general websites, and opinion poll centers.

One study examined how the Dutch parliament and media framed the issues of migration and integration between 1995 and 2004. Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007) asserted that multicultural, emancipation, restriction, victimization, and Islam-as-a-threat frames were the five major frames used within the political realm from 1995 to 2005. In addition, Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007) found that newsworthy frames dominated the majority of the media attention between 1995 and 2004. In contrast, the political realm was dominated by frames based on policy-related considerations. Therefore, the Islam-as-a-threat frame dominated the media debate from 1995 to 2004, whereas other frames dominated the political realm during the same period. Remarkably, following the 9/11 attack, both political and media arenas focused on the Islam-as-a-threat frame to accentuate Islam as a threat to Dutch identity and value. This finding demonstrates that while there is a conflict between global trends (e.g., multiculturalism) and interests in national security regarding a policy, the wisdom and foresight of a leader become essential.

Another important study conducted by Tynkkynen, Lehto, and Miettinen (2012) found that rational reasoning, pragmatic realism, promoting diversity among providers, benefits for the municipalities, and advantages for the local people were the five top frames dominated by Finland's politicians and civil servants on the decision to out-source elderly care and primary health care services. Their findings indicate that of the five frames, four emphasize the benefits relevant to the municipality rather than concerning the interests of the local people. The results suggest that, in this case, the interests of the public do not seem to be the priority for political elites or governments formulating public policy.

In exploring the effect of framing on the public's attitude or support, some studies have found that the reason framing can change the public's perspective is because, in general, people are unable or unwilling to think deeply on politically-related issues (Lau, Smith, & Fiske, 1991). Others argue that the public shows little concern about facts and value related to political issues, resulting in support or agreement with issues that are specifically framed by political elites to attract their attention (Zaller, 1992). Notably, Nelson (2004) argues that a "successful frame must consider the public's existing values and emphasize the particular importance of a given value for a given issue"

(p. 584). Thus, in a laboratory and survey-based experimental study of adoption reform, Nelson (2004) examines three specific frames to understand the effect of framing on public opinions and judgments about adoption reform: (1) goal ranking; (2) issue categorizations; and (3) institutional role assignment. The results show that using goal ranking as a rhetorical strategy to select and emphasize a particular value and individual power was found to affect the receiver's opinions on adoption reform. Additionally, it also impacted the public's judgment of the relative importance of the goals of the adoption reform policy. Nelson (2004) further contends that frames will not change the public's opinions and attitudes toward adoption reform if the tactical strategy of using a goal ranking frame is removed. Therefore, this study suggests that frames emphasizing the particular importance of a policy goal can shape the public's perception of priorities regarding a policy or issue (Nelson, 2004).

de Vreese, der Brug, and Hobolt (2012) examined the effects of culture and economic frames on public attitudes towards Turkey's bid to join the European Union. The results provide evidence that both economic and cultural frames are important, but framing economic arguments is more practical than cultural issues. This research was conducted during an economic crisis across Europe in 2012, a situational factor that is critical to influence political elites or the media's framing strategies on specific issues. Furthermore, this climate provides ample opportunity to affect the public's attitudes towards those subjects framed by political elites or the media. Jacoby's (2000) analysis of the effects of general and concrete frames on American public opinion about government spending found that both general and particular frames impacted the public's views and attitudes towards this issue. Importantly, the results of this study demonstrate that certain frames (e.g., mentioning specific recipients of federal outlays) receive greater support from the public for government spending over others. Thus, Jacoby (2000) argues that "issue framing has an extremely powerful impact on the ways that citizens react toward the stimuli of the political world" (p.758).

In summary, framing has a critical effect on public opinion of civic policies. Therefore, framing constitutes a powerful political tool (Jacoby, 2000) and a rhetorical arsenal of political persuaders (Nelson, 2004). Thus, frames "activate certain types of thinking among the people who are exposed to those interpretations" (Jacoby, 2000, p. 758) and "guide the public's understanding of the origins of a problem and offer suggestions about how to evaluate solutions" (Nelson, 2004, p. 582). However, frame effectiveness is influenced by the various environmental, situational, and strategic factors that are employed. Consequently, to develop a successful framing strategy, a political persuader should fully understand and analyze the interests of the policy's stakeholders. This is

achieved by thoroughly evaluating the impact of policy construction or change on the public's belief systems or values. Additionally, the external environment and cultural orientation of a nation or race are important factors that should not be neglected.

METHODS

A.   *Research Subject and Scope*

In the present study, we conducted a discourse analysis of the language used by Ma during his discussion in the 106-minute interrogation section at the ECFA Debate to address the research questions of this study. The research scope and subject were selected for the following reasons: (1) opposition parties and parts of the media had vigorously attacked the ECFA since it was proposed; (2) the ECFA had triggered public disorder because signing the agreement did not require approval from the Legislative Yuan; and (3) a large amount of attention was given to this 106-minute question-and-answer section, in which people in Taiwan sought to understand more about the ECFA from Ma's discourse. In addition, the ability to persuade the public to consent to, and support, such policy through the ECFA Debate and to mitigate discord within Taiwanese society was the key to successfully promoting and enacting public policies.

Data were collected in the form of the English transcripts of the 106-minute question-and-answer section. These transcripts were obtained from the Taipei Times (i.e., Mo & Loa, 2010; Ko, Chao, & Mo, 2010), a Taiwan-based English newspaper. The English transcripts serve to improve the validity and reliability of the study.

B. *Discourse Analysis*

To achieve the objectives of this study, a discourse analysis of Ma's discourse in the ECFA Debate was conducted. This study adopted discourse analysis for the following reasons: (1) This method can effectively analyze the languages used in a dialogue or communicating text. Moreover, it can provide insight into the mechanisms and processes through which discourse, power, and knowledge interact (Smart, 1985). It also elucidates how the use, sequence, and organization of languages can regulate individual actions and thoughts (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). (2) Foucault (1998) believes that a discourse implies the power relationships in a society as expressed through languages that can be arranged, manipulated, and used. (3) Discourse analysis is used to examine the consistent use of textual characteristics (Brown & Yule, 1983); furthermore, Foucault (1972) described a discourse as a form of discursive practices and discursive formation. (4) Discourse

66

analysis focuses on the semantic structure, predetermined standpoints, associations, and strategic use of meanings implicitly implied in a content (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Therefore, through a discourse analysis, the languages used in Ma's discourse during the ECFA Debate could be analyzed to explore the core concept of his arguments, as well as the appropriateness of his framing strategy.

C. Analytical Instrument

To adequately identify and analyze the frames within the scope of the research, this study followed the framing processes proposed by Benford and Snow (2000), and referenced the analytical framework constructed by Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007) for frame identification.

According to Benford and Snow (2000), diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing are the core framing tasks of a particular issue. Diagnostic framing involves problem identification and attribution, prognostic framing entails the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, and motivational framing describes the rationale for the engagement. Therefore, these framing tasks were used as the three major elements for frame identification. Referencing Roggeband and Vliegenthart's research (2007, p. 530), this study established a set of questions for each component to facilitate the encoding process and frame identification. Diagnostic framing pertains to the problem, who induced the problem, who should handle it, and the causes of such a problem. Prognostic framing emphasizes problem-solving methods, planned goals, and how such goals should be achieved. Motivational framing refers to the construction of appropriate vocabulary, highlighting the people with the right to make recommendations, and deciding who should carry out the recommended action. This analytical tool is the core of the three framing tasks and enables researchers to systematically categorize the philosophy, opinions, and perspectives presented by Ma during the ECFA Debate into distinct frames (Benford & Snow, 2000; Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data identified four primary frames as the rhetoric strategies that Ma adopted in response to Tsai's questions in the question-and-answer section of the ECFA Debate: (1) safety; (2) responsibility; (3) crisis; and (4) incompetence.

The main concerns that Chairperson Tsai posed to President Ma during the 106-minute question-and-answer section were: (1) the transparency of the ECFA; (2) China's conceded benefits to Taiwan; (3) signing an ECFA with China as a presumptuous policy; (4) the ECFA decision-making process; and (5) the detrimental effects of the ECFA on Taiwan. This study reports

and discusses the results of our data analysis in a qualitative and interpretative approach following the concerns mentioned above.

A. *The Transparency of the ECFA*

President Ma used the safety and responsibility frames to respond to the issue of the transparency of the ECFA's negotiations. First, he adopted a safety frame to emphasize that "information should not be made public during negotiations" in an attempt to explain why Ma's administration did not provide the details of the ECFA to the public. Then, the responsibility frame was utilized to highlight his credibility and to blame the DPP for refusing to attend meetings regarding the ECFA reports held in the Legislative Yuan. As he stated,

> In the two formal cross-strait negotiations, we reported to the Legislative Yuan before and after the negotiations. The DDP refused to attend the session, and you blamed it on us. When we hold the third formal cross-strait negotiations, please ask the DPP legislative caucus members to listen to our report, OK? It is not very rational if you don't attend the meeting.

Regarding Tsai's challenges about the transparency of the "early harvest" list, he stressed that he is responsible for making ECFA negotiations transparent, but asserted that "the process of negotiation needs to be kept secret" from the public. He further emphasized that the results of the cross-strait negotiations will be made available to the public, and promised that "the list of early harvest will be announced before the result of the negotiation is presented to the Legislative Yuan".

Therefore, in response to the challenges on the issue of ECFA transparency, the most important concern of Taiwan citizens, President Ma emphasized the "need to keep it a secret", utilizing the frame of safety to obtain the rhetorical edge. This frame has two side effects: (1) it was used to address the importance of ECFA security; and (2) it proclaimed the accountability of President Ma. Additionally, he selected the fact that the DPP did not attend the legislative hearings on the ECFA issue to highlight DPP's lack of responsibility. Making use of this responsibility frame, Ma skillfully sidestepped Tsai's challenges.

B. *China's Conceded Benefits to Taiwan*

In response to Tsai's question about why China granted benefits to Taiwan, Ma emphasized that "it is not conceding benefits, but is rather mutually beneficial because both sides will gain". By using this statement, he adopted the frame of security to make the public feel more protected if the ECFA was signed. Moreover, he claimed that the heightened tourism opportunities from China's tourists brought more than $NT 400 billion dollars to Taiwan. Furthermore, he also pointed out that "China needs us too" because Taiwan creates many employment opportunities and investments that result in

increased revenue for China. Ma additionally asserted that the negotiation will be processed under the principles of "protecting Taiwan's sovereignty" and "Taiwan's dignity", and that he will endeavor to defend Taiwan's benefits. Therefore, he repeated his use of the safety frame in an attempt to gain trust from the public.

C. ECFA is a Presumptuous Approach

To explain that the ECFA is not a hasty policy, Ma adopted the incompetence frame stating that the "DPP has stalled the process（of ECFA） for eight years", thereby influencing Taiwan's exporting market. He also stated that the DPP's careless attitude resulted in Taiwan's slipping global trade status. Additionally, he used the frame of responsibility to condemn the fact that the DDP's legislative caucus continued to hold joint legislative committee meetings after the KMT tried to explain the ECFA to them and attempted to boycott the ECFA plan. On the other hand, he stressed that "as a responsible government, shouldn't we take precautions?" and stated that "I must plan ahead, and that is exactly what I am doing". In highlighting his responsibility, Ma stressed that it is important to "lay the groundwork, and when the time comes, it will take us no time to push ahead step by step". Ma also later stated that "this is what I call a responsible government, and that is what I think a president should do".

Furthermore, he utilized the frame of security to state that he would integrate expert opinions and proceed with caution regarding the ECFA. To explain the urgency of the ECFA, he made use of the frame of crisis by stating that "you will lose big if you think you can wait another two years" and pointing out that Taiwan will be at an even greater disadvantage if the market is seized by someone else. He further stressed that he would not be able to solve the most severe problems that Taiwan's businesses will encounter in the future if he does not take action now. Similarly, he revealed his concern about Taiwan's future by stating that:

> Countries around the world are seeking to sign FTAs. In Asia, South Korea signed seven, mainland China signed nine and Singapore fourteen. Countries around us are signing FTAs and Taiwan is the only country that is not signing. Can we keeping waiting? We can't.

In summary, it is clear that to respond to this issue, Ma first placed emphasis on the DPP's inefficiency by using the frame of incompetence. This frame highlighted the fact that the decline of Taiwan's status in the global market resulted from the DPP's closing Taiwan to international intercourse in the hope of postponing the signing of the ECFA with China. The frame of responsibility was utilized to show a contrast between the KMT and DPP parties by stressing that as president, Ma must have the responsibility of foresight, boldness, and determination. He further

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

condemned the DPP by asserting that they lacked vision and the ability to take action. Sharp contrasts of images of vision vs. nearsightedness, responsibility vs. irresponsibility, and capability vs. incompetence between the KMT and DPP were established via various framing strategies. Moreover, to demonstrate that signing the ECFA with China is an urgent, but not an irresponsible or rushed policy, he used the safety frame to increase the confidence and security of the public. This was achieved by telling the public that he will proceed with the negotiations of the ECFA with care and consider integrated expert opinions. Associated with the frame of safety, the crisis frame was used to make the public believe that Taiwan's future success was tied to signing the ECFA with China.

D. *How is the Decision-making of the ECFA Formed?*

In responding to this question, Ma made use of responsibility, safety, crisis, and incompetence frames to defend his leadership and to attack the DPP's irresponsibility and failure throughout their eight years in power. He first stated that he was aware of the importance of the ECFA when he attended an Asian economic summit conference held in Singapore in 2003. Next, he used the frame of incompetence by stating that the "DPP just turned a blind eye to the development of the Asia-Pacific region, pretending nothing happened. Therefore, we have the responsibility to move Taiwan forward because growth remained stagnant during the eight years that the DPP was in power". As he stated,

> The topic I presented on was "Why not 10 plus 4", but the DPP government carried on as if it was not important and during the eight years （of DPP in government）, there was no breakthrough, making us feel very worried and concerned.

He further tried to evoke the fear of the public about the future by adopting the frame of crisis to convince the public that "Taiwan will not have another eight years" if we do not sign an ECFA, and emphasized that "it is a matter of life and death" for Taiwanese small businesses. In contrast, he also attempted to reduce public anxiety about Taiwan's economy. To do so, Ma used the frame of safety in promising that "I will not accept the results if the agreement does not benefit the entire Taiwanese economy".

To remove the doubts that the ECFA would only help a few large consortiums, he simultaneously used the frames of safety and responsibility to explain that his decision-making was based on the consideration of both large and small businesses, and to accuse the DPP of lacking responsibility. He noted

> You say we want to sign the agreement for a few large corporations, but many of the small business [owners] I have met, their export orders are reliant on the lowering of [Chinese] tariffs…. We have heard the cries from grassroots

70

movements: it's not just for the big CEOs. This agreement, if passed, will benefit both large and smaller companies. You mentioned you attended some legislative briefings. Why don't you just hold a few hearings in the legislature to discuss an ECFA? We will ask our ministers to attend these hearings and tell the truth. Chairperson Tsai, I don't think you have been sincere. Lawmakers have the right to question officials. Why give up that right, only to complain that we don't talk. I think the legislature is the channel for proper communication, yet you boycott the meetings and even unnecessarily use violence. After using those methods, how do you expect people to see you are a reasonable party that uses reason when questioning the government?

The above analysis indicated that Ma had two purposes when he adopted the frames of responsibility and incompetence in response to the question of the ECFA decision-making process: (1) to establish the image that the DPP lacked action, vision, and foresight throughout the past eight years, resulting in economic stagnancy and recession in Taiwan; and (2) to inform the public that Ma has the proficiency required to plan and construct the development of Taiwan's future. Most importantly, he used the frame of crisis to address the relationship between Taiwan's future and the ECFA to gain support for signing the ECFA by building the crisis consciousness of the public.

E. The Detrimental Effects of the ECFA on Taiwan's Industries

1). Agriculture

Ma adopted the frames of responsibility and crisis to answer the question about the impact of the ECFA on the agricultural industry. Using the frame of responsibility, he emphasized that Taiwan should not reject the ECFA with China based solely on the open rules of agricultural products set by the WTO. He used the frame of crisis by stating that "we can't wait another ten years and we can't commit the same error made by the DPP during their eight-year administration", in which the DPP adopted, evaded, and delayed the ECFA, choosing to avoid the problems resulting from their inability to lead Taiwan effectively.

Regarding the question of his promise not to open more than 600 items of agricultural products to China, Ma casually mentioned that the agricultural products were excluded during the first round of ECFA negotiations. He further stressed that "both sides understand each other's particular situation". It is obvious that Ma adopted an evasion strategy in responding to this critical issue.

2). Unemployment

Ma made use of the safety frame to answer the question of the ECFA's impact on unemployment. He promised that he would try his best to protect the interests of Taiwan, asserting that both sides have reached a consensus that will avoid causing a detrimental impact on Taiwan's traditional industries.

3). Traditional Industries

Ma answered the question about the effects of the ECFA on traditional industries via utilizing the frame of responsibility to assert that he is well prepared for the impact of signing an ECFA with China on weaker traditional businesses. As he stated,

> We will provide guidance and help them receive their business for those suffering little impact. The second type is those affected, but not serious hit, and the third are businesses that are hard hit…. We plan to set aside a total of NT$95 billion to deal with the problem and we are ready.

He further stated that it is important to have enough foresight to predict what might happen after five or 10 years. Similarly, he insisted that he must boldly meet the expectations of the public. Associated with the frame of responsibility, he utilized the frame of safety to respond to the concern about the products manufactured in China by China-based Taiwanese individuals being sold back to Taiwan. He did so by mentioning that various mechanisms had been designed to monitor and prevent such things from happening. He also stressed that "we also require businesses to provide the place-of-origin of products so that they can follow the requirements of international trade".

By using the frame of crisis, Ma warned the public that "we will have big losses if people in Taiwan still adopt a waiting attitude toward signing the ECFA because it is hard to catch up when countries around the world start to engage in FTAs". He further pointed out that "as our market share in many countries fell over the years, shouldn't we speed up and try to catch up?"

In this issue, Ma used the frames of responsibility, safety, and crisis. He attempted to establish the security of the public through the frame of safety by stating that he would follow the rules of international trade to implement necessary monitoring mechanisms and require certification of place-of-origin for all products. The crisis frame was used to emphasize the relationship between the current difficult situation of Taiwan's economy and the urgency of signing an ECFA with China. Furthermore, Ma sought to establish himself as a leader by presenting an image of boldness and foresight via using the frame of responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

This research investigated how Ma, as the president of Taiwan, employs framing on public policy debates. By utilizing the analysis instrument, this study identified that the responsibility, crisis, security, and incapability frames are four main frames that Ma adopted during the ECFA debate held on April 25th, 2010. Results of the study show that Ma makes use of these four frames to respond to

questions or issues raised by Chairperson Tsai. Table 1 presents the main questions and issues raised by Tsai and the responding frames employed by Ma.

Table 1. Frames Used By Ma for Different Issues Raised During the ECFA Debate.

Issues		Frames			
Transparency		Safety	Responsibility		
Conceding Interests		Safety			
Rushed		Safety	Responsibility	Crisis	Incompetence
Decision-making		Safety	Responsibility	Crisis	Incompetence
	Agriculture		Responsibility	Crisis	
Impact	Unemployment	Safety			
	Industries		Responsibility	Crisis	
Total		6	5	4	2

The results of our analyses indicate that safety and responsibility are the most pervasive frames adopted by Ma during the debate. The frame of responsibility was primarily used in responding to issues of transparency, crisis, decision-making, and the impact of the ECFA on agriculture and traditional industries. From the perspective of frame theory, the frame of responsibility enables Ma to convince the citizens of Taiwan that he is a responsible politician through the use of appropriate language (e.g., "take precaution" or "act cautiously") and various rationales to support his arguments. It also allows Ma to establish his personal image as a visionary leader and further garner trust and support from the public. This result is consistent with Jerit's (2008) contention that "the strength of a framing strategy rests on the notion that elites need only identify the considerations that work to their advantage" (p. 2). On the other hand, the responsibility frame was also used to shape the public's sense of the DPP's inaction of signing the ECFA to attack the opposition's weaknesses. Similarly, the incompetence frame dominated in the responses to the issues of conceding interests and the urgency of the ECFA. Within this frame, Ma repeatedly emphasized the incompetence of the DPP while they were in power by deliberately articulating and accentuating the DPP's past indiscretions relating to policies involving China. These arguments were used in an attempt to convince the public that the ECFA is a policy that can correct past wrongs resulting from the DPP's bad political decisions. This finding is congruent with Kinder and Sanders's (1996) argument that supporters of a policy proposal often stress that it can correct a past indiscretion. Additionally, this result is also

consistent with Austen-Smith (1993) and Ricker's (1996) conclusion that political elites tend to talk over one another in policy debates. From the perspective of rhetorical strategy, Ma used the contrasting language style of the "lost eight years" and the "golden eight years" to profoundly shape the audience's impression that the DPP is an incompetent party. In contrast, KMT is accentuated as a competent party by selecting the deficiency of the DPP's eight-year administration, emphasizing the fact that the DPP closed Taiwan off to international dealings.

Regarding the frame of safety, the results indicated that it was the most dominated frame that Ma employed in answering the questions posed by Tsai. Specifically, the safety frame was used to combat issues about transparency, conceding interests, and the overall impact of the ECFA on unemployment and traditional industries. This frame acts as a defense employed to persuade the public that Ma will sign the ECFA with China for the objective of protecting Taiwan's sovereignty and interests. This finding suggested that although signing the ECFA is a decided policy, issues relevant to autonomy, people's interests, and industrial impact should be very carefully tackled. In particular, the DPP and KMT did not reach any consensus on signing the ECFA with China before the debate was held. Most importantly, the core inquiries and oppositions from people concerned with sovereignty, people's interests, and industrial impact are considerations that a ruling party should not ignore and with which it must carefully contend. Thus, emphasizing and claiming the security of signing the ECFA with China seems to be an imperative political strategy. Additionally, Ma adopted particular language and descriptions to convey this safety frame, such as "defend sovereignty", "take precautions", and "would rather have a breakdown". Through the use of this language, he intended to establish the people's belief in the security of signing the ECFA with China to facilitate the process of negotiations. Furthermore, he sought to eliminate the existing threats to gain public support and further enhance his administrative effectiveness.

It is important to note that Ma made use of the safety frame in one instance to remove the public's fear of signing the ECFA with China, but also induced fear by utilizing the crisis frame. Fear-related content was most evident when Ma was responding to the issues of ECFA urgency, and the decision-making process and its impact on agriculture and traditional industries. The specific language of "Taiwan cannot keep with Asia and the world" and "Taiwan will be marginalized" were used to induce the public's crisis consciousness about the development of Taiwan. In addition, this tactic served to gain public support for the signing of the ECFA with China. This finding suggested that Ma employed fear to induce potentially collective anxiety for achieving his political agenda. This finding is consistent with the arguments of Glassner (2004) and Altheide (2003). Glassner

74

(2004) states that politicians use and abuse collective anxieties for achieving specific political gains. Altheide further argues that the definition of "the politics of fear is that decision-makers' promote and use of audience beliefs and assumptions about danger, risk, and fear in order to achieve certain goals" (as cited in Castella, McGarty, & Musgrove, 2009).

Another important finding is that Ma adopted an evasion approach in facing the issues of China's political ambitions and wealth redistribution that were most relevant to the livelihood, social justice, and national security of Taiwan. Previous research suggests that political elites may take advantage of framing a political issue that most people view as contradictory. However, some studies indicate that adopting an engagement strategy in dealing with matters of public concern is more important (Zaller, 1992; Jerit, 2008). This is because people will examine whether political elites have the ability to establish their credibility on issues about which they are most concerned (Simon, 2002). Consequently, "failure to engage with the other side on issues which the public are concerned about can lead to a loss of credibility in the eyes of the public and ultimately a loss of support" (Jerit, 2008, p. 3).

Although this study focused on understanding how political elites employ framing strategies in debating a policy, we suggest that people who are in power (i.e., a president) should carefully approach doubts or inquiries regarding national security and public interest while implementing any important policies (e.g., signing an ECFA). Additionally, more concrete and active communication combined with supplementary measures should be taken to remove public threats and fears.

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