

A Comparative Study of Ideological Differences in News Reports on the US and China Trade War

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Abstract

This comparative study aims at examining the ideologies that are in play in the news coverage of the pressing trade conflicts between the US and China. Employing critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework and the tools of “othering” and “stance-taking”, this study surveyed the dataset comprising 40 news reports on the trade disputes of the two countries from August 2017 to January 2019, with 17 covered by The Washington Post and 23 appearing in China Daily. The findings of the study revealed the divisive ideologies regarding the trade war in the US and the unified and consistent ideologies in China, indicating the superficial language variations are caused by differences in ideologies as the hidden and driving forces behind the discursive discourse forms. This study further contextualized the trade conflicts within the nexus of the US hegemony, the increasing national power of China, and the concept of “China threat” to interpret the complex ideological differences hidden in the newstexts in the time of national conflicts.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, ideology, othering, stance-taking, US and China Trade War

1. Introduction

Starting from October 2017, the pressing trade conflicts between the US and China have resulted in a series of the imposition of tariffs from the US side on Chinese exports. Consequently, the Chinese government took steps for retaliation, including imposing tariffs on US exports, filing WTO disputes against US, and threatening retaliation on autos, aircraft, and agriculture (Bown & Kolb, 2018). This trade war has drawn news coverage from news outlets in the US, China, Hong Kong, the UK and many other countries. However, scant research has been done to examine the different perspectives employed by varied media in their coverage of this trade war and the ideologies as the hidden force that are in play in the news coverage. In order to uncover the ideological differences reflected in these news reports from the two countries, this study performed a critical discourse analysis of news reports on the trade war from both the US and China. As Fairclough (1992) stated that ideologies are also “means of legitimizing existing relations and differences of power” and they are “pervasively present in language.” (pp. 2-3), under the ostensibly varied news topics, contents, and tones on this trade war are the different ideologies pursued by the two countries. Furthermore, van Dijk (1998) pointed out, “Ideologies allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly” (p. 8). Therefore, ideologies are more fundamental than common knowledge or common sense to serve the material and symbolic interests of groups, including interests of power over other groups (Fairclough, 2003).

With the understanding of the crucial role that national newspapers play in reflecting, constructing, and representing national ideologies, and language as the main arena of dispute where ideologies clash, social struggles, and structural contradictions take place (Lacerda, 2014), this study employs “othering” and “stance-taking” as the useful CDA tools to explore the discursive dimensions of ideologies and how ideologies are expressed and covered up and reproduced in the news reports on the US and China trade war. Since one of the crucial social practices influenced by ideologies is language use and discourse, the focus of the study is on the discursive representations and cues about the relationship of language and power to decode and reveal the ideologies hidden in these news reports. This study argues that CDA tools of “othering” and “stance-taking” in combination with the contextualization approach are effective to probe into and interpret the ideologies in national newspapers in the time to national conflicts.

2. Literature review

2.1 CDA and news media

Pioneered by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teu van Dijk, CDA is “an approach that highlights the social, ideological, and political dimension of discourse”(Cameron & Panović, 2014, p. 67). As argued by Wodak (2011), CDA is used to analyze “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (p. 53). Furthermore, Wodak (1997), “this critical approach is distinctive in its view of (a) the relationship between language and society, and (b) the relationship between analysis and the practices analyzed” (p. 173). Because CDA’s starting point in social theory shows its intense interest in theories of power and ideology, Foucault’s (1977) formations of orders of discourse and power-knowledge, Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony, and Althusser’s (1971) concepts of ideological state apparatuses and interpellation are among the most commonly used social theories in CDA. Fairclough (1992) argued that all these social theories and concepts are projected upon discourse objects and communicative patterns to account for the relationship between linguistic practice and social structure and to provide linguistically grounded explanations for changes in these relationships.

As CDA’s preference for work at the intersection of language and social structure, media discourse has been a major site in CDA thanks to the large size of people that mass media can reach and its impact on shaping public opinions. In modern society, media discourse provides “the main channel through which politicians and government representatives communicate with the public” (Cameron & Panović, 2014, p. 67). News reporting, as a narrative genre in media discourse, is preoccupied with the representation of actions/incidents and the people involved in them. Moreover, Allan Bell (1991) pointed out, resembling other stories, news stories are structured and presented in a way that indicates what the point or angle of a story is, what information is more or less important, and what evaluative stance is being taken by the teller. Variations of language use in news reporting often constitute particular representations of the world.

Many discourse analysis researchers have employed CDA approach to unravel the ideologies embedded in national newspapers and reveal the significance of understanding ideology in the time of international conflicts. For example, Li (2009) utilized CDA to examine the discursive construction of national identities in news reports published in *The New York Times* and *China Daily* on NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999 and the air collision between a US military airplane and a Chinese fighter jet in 2001. He and Zhou (2016) probed into the lexical choice of six news reports published respectively in *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* on three safety accidents in China and explored the different ideological standpoints and national interests. Their research effort and findings have proved that analyzing news media discourse from a critical perspective is efficacious to explore the relationship between language and ideology and to understand the national identities, ideologies, and positions constructed and represented in the news media.

2.2 Ideologies in news media

Van Dijk (2006) connected ideology with discourse analysis and asserted that “ideologies are socio-cognitively defined as shared representations of social groups, and more specifically as the ‘axiomatic’ principles of such representation” (p. 115). In addition, CDA scholars such as Bell (1991), Fowler (1991), Fowler et al. (1979), Fairclough (1989), Richardson (2007), and Teo (2000), have claimed that news is never a value-free space, but an ideological social practice.

Following this vein, many scholars have employed CDA to analyze and interpret ideology hidden in the news reports on social, political and economic issues, concerns and conflicts. Tian (2018) focused on how the *Guardian* reports China’s military parade to celebrate the victory of World War II by using Fairclough’s Three - Dimensional Mode of CDA as the theoretical framework and applying Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as the analytic tools. Her findings indicate that the *Guardian*’s reports overemphasize and over-interpret the negative influence of parade. Feng (2017) analyzed 120 news reports on the Occupy Central Movement (the biggest protest in Hong Kong in decades) by the employment of the Attitude framework. His findings revealed that the pattern of attitudes in the four major Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong reflected the ideological divergence in Hong Kong society and the news reports exacerbated such divergence by reinforcing the attitudes of their readers. Apart from Chinese scholars, scholars in other parts of the world have displayed intense interest in studying the ideology in news discourses as well. For example, Garyantes and Murphy (2010) used computer-assisted textual analysis to discern the ideological cues in the news coverage of the Iraqi’s 2005 elections and the divisive ideology expressed by two news organizations of CNN.com and Aljazeera.net despite their claims of maintaining journalistic objectivity. Yazgan and Utku (2017) examined the discriminatory aspects of two online news articles by the newspaper *Politiken* and the news quoted from the same newspaper covering the gang warfare in Copenhagen. They devoted special attention to concepts of “racism”, “exclusion”, “marginalization”, and “negative social capital” and uncovered the forms of anti-immigrant bias in the news coverage.

Despite their focus on varied social, economic or political issues and their uses of different analytical tools, all these scholars have demonstrated that ideologies are both cognitive and social, and news discourse is shaped not only by social values but also by power/elite ideology (van Dijk, 2006).

“Othering” and “Stance-taking” as the analytical tools

In order to uncover the ideological differences reflected by the two major newspapers in the US and China, I draw on the framework of ideological discourse analysis as one branch of CDA suggested by van Dijk (2006). Van Dijk (2006) assumed ideological discourse is generally organized by a general strategy of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other presentation (derogation). Because this general polarizing principle when applied to discourse operates at all levels, the meanings, forms and actions expressing ideologies in the discourse can be traced to investigate how newspapers construct nationalist ideologies during the moments of economic and political conflicts between the nations. To achieve this goal, I resort to the theoretical notions of “othering”, and “stance-taking” as analytical tools to investigate and unpack the associated symbolic and indexical meanings, and the hidden ideologies in these newspaper discourses.

“Othering” occurs when an individual or a group of people is denied a clearly defined status: an example could be, when an individual or a group is designated as “anomalous”, “peculiar”, or “deviant”, or is objectified, stereotyped, naturalized, or essentialized (Hall, 1997; Riggins, 1997). The term “Othering” denotes the process of “heteronomization” or discursively constructing a common denominator for collective identification of a group that is seen as different from the constructed ‘ingroup’ and depicted as a threatening (Wodak et., 1999). Lams (2017) pointed out that “critical discourse analysis uncovers how a polarizing discursive activity highlights the negative aspects of the ‘Other’ and the positive attributes of the ‘Self’ while marginalizing the positive features of the ‘Other’ and the negative actions or characteristics of the ‘Self.’” (p. 2). As such discursive formation of polarization corresponds with the term “ideological square” coined by van Dijk (1998), “Othering” deserves our attention in the process of identifying ideology building in the news media.

According to Johnstone (2008), “stance-taking has to do with the methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they give voice to and the people they interact with” (p. 137). Early works on stance-taking examined the textual features that signal the source of the speaker's knowledge and their degree of certainty (evidentiality), as well as their attitudes about the proposition they utter (Biber & Finegan, as cited in Johnstone, 2008). Later explorations of stance-taking by Hunston and Thompson focused on evaluation and attitudes of speaker: “the attitude may be related to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values” (as cited in Johnstone, 2008, p. 5) and the evaluation has three functions of expressing the opinion of the speaker/writer vis-à-vis the propositions being expressed, manipulating the hearer/reader/s attitude vis-à-vis these propositions, and organizing the discourse (Johnstone, 2008, pp. 6-13). Therefore, understanding stance-taking supports the interpretation of relevant ideological and social meanings associated with particular patterns of language use.

3. Methodology

To find out the ideological differences in these news discourses, I used “US and China trade war” as the keyword to firstly collect 57 news reports respectively published by *The Washington Post* (26) and *China Daily* (31) from the online database of Nexis Uni. The timespan of these news reports starts from August 24, 2017 to January 19, 2019 in order to cover some events that lead to the official start of the trade war on July 6, 2018. January 19, 2019 marks the date when I finished collecting all data. Then I manually examined all these news reports and eliminated 17 reports which either had no themes regarding US-China trade war throughout the content or were overlapping with others. Consequently, the final dataset comprises 40 reports with 17 reports covered by *The Washington Post* and 23 reports appeared on *China Daily*.

I used Nexis Uni as the database to construct the small corpora for the news reports on the US and China trade war, because it is a rich resource offering access to both print and online journals, television and radio broadcasts, newswires and blogs, local, regional, national and international newspapers and many more. *The Washington Post* is chosen for the reason that it is a major American daily newspaper with an emphasis on national politics and the federal government. *China Daily* (US edition) is selected as it has been the most influential national newspaper published in English with branch offices in several cities outside of China, including New York City and Washington, D.C. In addition, it is also considered as the English version of *People's Daily*, which is the most important newspaper in China and dubbed the “voice” of the Chinese Communist Party.

I applied the analytical tools of “othering” and “stance-taking” to code the data in order to extract the ideologies reflected in the specific themes and patterns of the language use in these news reports. Specifically, I developed the following coding scheme based on definitions of the two analytical tools and offered the examples from the dataset as illustrations of the coding definitions.

Code name: othering.

Definition: Othering occurs when the language use from the US side or Chinese side indicates negative aspects of the ‘Other’ (Lams, 2017). Such **negative** aspects can be traced by obvious use of words or phrases carrying unwanted, unpleasant, or even awful descriptions of the country.

Example for “othering”: Larry Kudlow, director of the White House's National Economic Council: "I'm not a tariff guy," Kudlow said. "I don't like to use them, but sometimes you have to use tariffs to bring countries to their senses." (*The Washington Post*).

Code name: stance-taking

Definition: Stance-taking takes place when the character, speaker, or writer in the US news reports or the Chinese news reports expresses **an emotive reaction, an attitude, or a standpoint** about US-China trade conflict, or about the other country (Strauss and Feiz, 2013).

Example for “stance-taking”: Now we've added another \$200 billion. And I hate to say that, but behind that, there's another \$267 billion ready to go on short notice if I want. That totally changes the equation (*The Washington Post*).

In addition, to differentiate the action performer of “othering” and “stance-taking” in the two news outlets, I also coded “agent” in these news reports with definition and an example below.

Code name: Agent

Definition: Agent refers to the character, speaker, or writer in the US news reports or Chinese news reports who takes the stance or othering strategy in the narration or utterances.

Example: Some US agricultural companies worry about the impact of the US-China trade disputes on farmers and agriculture (*China Daily*).

With these analytical tools of “othering” and “stance-taking” in use, this study aims to answer the following two questions:

1. How did the US and China employ the strategy of “othering” to legalize and justify their own actions in this trade war?
2. What stance did the US and China take toward the trade war?

4. Findings

5.1 “Othering” as the strategic language use to justify and legalize actions

In the time of conflict, “othering” is used by the event players to justify and legalize their actions against their counterparts. Table 1 (see appendix) shows that othering has been employed more often in *The Washington Post* (35 times) than in *China Daily* (24 times). Interestingly, both countries other the other in terms of economic practice, political practice, and ideological practice. In *China Daily*, US is mostly negatively considered in terms of its ideological practice; while in *The Washington Post*, China is most frequently criticized for economic practice.

Table 1 Othering in China Daily and The Washington Post

Othering in terms of:	<i>China Daily</i>		<i>The Washington Post</i>	
	Othering US	Times	Othering China	Times
Economic practice	Protectionism; Unilateralism	10	Currency manipulator; Cheap product producer; Improper economic practice pursuer; Weak economy; Threat to national security;	23
Political practice	Nationalism; Hegemonism	3	Sanction violator; State-led economy; Unfair advantage owner	3
Ideological practice	Aggressor; Accuser; Ignorant	11	Misfortune; Senseless; Retaliator	9
Total	24		35	

5.1.1 Othering in China Daily

The following four extracts from *China Daily* exemplify how othering strategy has been employed to distance US as negatively different from China.

E.g. 1. Unilateralism and trade protectionism will inevitably harm others without benefiting oneself as the global economy is deeply integrated, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said last week.

E.g. 2. Washington must put aside its old hegemonistic mindset and adjust to new international realities.

E.g. 3. The Trump administration should not be so quick to underestimate China.

E.g. 4. It is therefore ironic that the US administration is waging a trade war at a time when the largest potential consumer market in the world is open for business.

Example 1 shows US is othered in terms of economic practice. The message is delivered by Hua Chunying, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson on April 28, 2018, about two months prior to the official start of the trade war. As the representative of China's government, she labels US's trade and economic practice as unilateralism and protectionism and further points out the consequence of such practice is going to hurt both US and others. After China joined the WTO in 2001, reducing trade barriers such as tariff and pursuing a more open economy has been its main commitment to fulfill its obligations to WTO and to integrate more into the world economy. The use of unilateralism and protectionism depicting the US shows that China believes the economic ideology behind this trade wars is the US's intention of protecting its own industry. Such an act is in disregard for other trade players and opposes China's advocacy of pluralism that asserts the benefits of participation from many parties.

In example 2, US is othered and represented as hegemonic power, indicating its old dominant role in East Asia and the rejection from the journalist against the its hegemonic mindset. Obviously, the journalist is challenging the US hegemony and stressing the declining of the American world order. Interestingly noted, the journalist and author of this news report is an educator and a former senior professional staff member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and he has taught at China Foreign Affairs University. The intention for *China Daily* to publish this author's contribution may be inferred as asserting the destructive effect of hegemonic power and the need for constructive nation relations.

The analysis of othering in the ideological practice shows that the US government is accused of being ignorant of the significance of China in the world economy in example 3 and at the same time is portrayed arbitrary in judging China.

A quotation from Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba in example 4 describes the US administration as being aggressive to China. In addition to being othered as ignorant and aggressive, the US is also blamed as the accuser to China. The othering tactics utilized in the ideological practice indicate that US is mostly alienated as the aggressor who threatens China with tariff imposition, showing that China is in the legal position to defend open and free markets while the US is in the wrong and illegal position of resorting to protectionism.

Moreover, abstraction characterizes the othering strategies seen in *China Daily*. As is shown in Table 1, such othering terms as hegemonism, protectionism, nationalism, and unilateralism represent the mindset, doctrines and principles advocated by the US thought unacceptable to China. The implications of the othering rely on the readers' background knowledge to understand. Another interesting fact is that such othering expressions are mostly seen in quotation or comments from economists, journalists, or official spokesperson other than from the Chinese national leaders.

Othering in the Washington Post

The next three examples elucidate the othering tactics deployed in *The Washington Post* and demonstrate the othering of China by the US in terms of its economic practice, political practice, and ideological practice.

E.g. 5. Robert E. Lighthizer, the U.S. trade representative, said in an update this month that China "has not fundamentally altered its unfair, unreasonable, and market-distorting practices" despite U.S. complaints.

E.g. 6. China has often disputed this, but other countries have also complained that China should do more to open its markets and stop subsidizing key industries in a way that gives the country an unfair advantage.

E.g. 7. White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow cast doubt Tuesday that President Trump will agree to a cease-fire in the U.S.-China trade war when he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping later this week, calling Beijing's response to Trump's demands "disappointing" and "unsatisfactory."

As is shown in example 5, the US mostly accuses China of the improper economic practice pursuer, indicating that China is marked not only different but even bad in its economic practice. The main disagreement brought up by the US focuses on China's practice in technology transfer, trade secrets, and intellectual property. Unlike the othering in *China Daily*, othering in economic practice used in *The Washington Post* is ethics-related and China is ethically degraded to "cheating" in trade and "pilfering" American technology. This type of othering has escalated to attack, showing the strong dissent and opposition held by the US toward China.

Furthermore, such othering comments on China's economic practice surpass exceedingly the other two categories of othering on China's political and ideological practices, revealing the focus of the trade dispute from the US side is on China's economic practice.

In terms of political practice, the US distances China for violating sanctions, enjoying unfair advantage, and pursuing a state-led economy. Example 6 cites complaints from other countries against China's policy of being conservative with the market opening and subsidizing key industries. Despite only three instances of such othering found in the news reports by *The Washington Post*, all of them are given by the journalists, implying the news writers have aligned their position against China with the other agents such as President Trump and his aids.

Ideologically, China is mostly considered senseless by the US as demonstrated in example 7; meanwhile, it is also othered as misfortune and retaliating. Further analysis reveals that Trump's economic adviser such as Larry Kudlow tends to label China as misfortune and senseless; however, other republicans including some journalists regard China as a retaliator. When considered as misfortune and senseless, China is considered as weak, which echoes the othering of China as a weak economy in terms of economic practice. However, when treated as a retaliator, China is thought of as a player of equal footing and strength, which corresponds to the othering of China as a threat to national security in terms of economic practice.

Concreteness features the othering strategy in *The Washington Post* with 11 more othering terms used than those in *China Daily*. China is specifically blamed for manipulating currency, producing cheap products, pursuing improper economic practices such as subsidizing and state-led economy, and threatening US national security as a senseless and misfortunate country.

In the meantime, a few othering terms including the threat to national security and retaliator indicate a slightly different othering perspective of treating China as an equally strong but threatening other.

Table 2 Stance-taking Moves in *China Daily*

Agents Category	Stance-taking moves in <i>China Daily</i>					
	China	Moves	Times	US	Moves	Times
Nation-State	Chinese government , Foreign Ministry Spokesman	Opposing to US's unilateralism and Protectionism; Reaching out to other countries; Retaliating; Protesting and denying accusation; Stressing old good relationship; Unyielding	13	President Trump and his aids	Threatening; Lacking interest to talk; Optimistic to win	19
Industry	Chinese industry		0	US industry; association; companies; Trade Groups	Trade war hurting consumers; Worrying about negative impact; Urging Trump to rethink	36
Individual	Entrepreneurs; Economists; Think tank experts	Opposing the harmful trade war to both US and China, and US's small businesses; Stressing the significance of China to the world	23	Economists; Analysts; US Senates; farmers; retailers; US's China specialists	Trade war hurting consumers, people, and the world; Serving US election purpose; Worrying about escalation; Blaming US for deficit; Opposing to Trump's idea of weak China	60
	Journalists	Protesting against US; Trade war harming US, third parties, and the world; Asking US to rethink about China	51			
Total			87			115

5.2 Stance-taking as the evaluation of attitudes of event players

Examining the stance-taking moves taken by varied agents in the news reports helps to reveal their emotive reactions, attitudes, and view of points toward the US-China trade conflict. In this sense, the analysis of stance-taking by agents is the key to unlock the ideologies behind the words and actions. Table 2 and Table 3 (see Appendix) summarize the stance-taking moves identified in *China Daily* and in *The Washington Post* at three levels of the nation-state, industry, and individual in the light of the agents who are taking such stances.

5.2.1 Stance-taking in *China Daily*

Table 2 (see Appendix) shows the stances taken by agents from China and the US toward the trade conflict in *China Daily*. In terms of numbers, the stances taken by US agents outnumber those taken by their Chinese counterparts by almost 30. On the Chinese side, journalists tend to take stances more frequently than agents of other categories; whereas, on the US side, individuals such as economists, the US senates, farmers, retailers, and the US's China specialists take stances more often than agents of other categories.

Agents on the Chinese side share common and similar stances toward the US and China trade war. All agents are opposing the trade war, thinking it harmful to not only the US and China but also the rest of the world; meanwhile, they stress the significance of China in the world economy. However, at the nation-state level, the Chinese government displays an unyielding, protesting, and retaliating stance to show the determination of not giving in in the trade war. At the same time, no agents at the Chinese industry level show any stance toward this trade war. The two examples below offer a glimpse of the stance-taking moves by the journalist and the Chinese government.

E.g. 8. The East Asian electronics industry supply chain is particularly vulnerable to the US tariff measures. (Journalist)

E.g. 9. In response, China threatened to put duties on \$60 billion of US imports. (Chinese government)

The journalist in example 8 directly expressed the concern over the impact of trade war on East Asia electronics industry supply chain and the reference to the other parts of the world stressed the detrimental effect of the trade war. In example 9, the stance taken by the Chinese government was decidedly unyielding, showing its intrepidity when facing the trade war. One more interesting point for attention is that Chinese leaders or their quotations were not cited in *China Daily* for stance-taking and the stances at the national state level were all taken by Chinese government or the Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

By contrast, agents on the US side tend to be divisive in terms of their stances toward this trade war. On the one hand, agents at the nation-state level, including President Trump and his allies, show aggressive, superior, and arrogant stance in this trade war. On the other hand, agents at both industry and individual levels exhibit the stance of worrying about the harmful impact of the trade war on consumers, people, and the world, and urging President Trump to rethink. At the individual level, agents such as economists, analysts, and US senates take the stance of doubting if the purpose of the trade war is to serve the US election. The following three sentences provide examples for these stances.

E.g. 10. "And we will protect American workers and American intellectual property, through strong enforcement of our trade rules." (President Trump)

E.g. 11. "First, there would be no winners from a global trade war. Even if the aggregate costs are modest and skewed toward more open economies, all countries would ultimately be worse off compared to the status quo," noted Neil Shearing, group chief economist at Capital Economics.

E.g. 12. He (Shiller, a Yale economist who was awarded the Nobel in 2013) described recent statements from US President Donald Trump as those of "a showman" who "obviously relishes" celebrity, noting that the recent escalation in trade rhetoric could reflect the proximity of US midterm elections in November this year.

The first-person pronoun "we" and the future tense in example 10 imply President Trump's stance of being proactive and protective to Americans. The modality "would be" in example 11 hint the economist's stance of being pessimistic over the effect of the trade war. In a similar line, the modality "could" in example 12 reflects the doubting stance taken by the economist.

5.2.2 Stance-taking in *The Washington Post*

Table 3 Stance-taking Moves in *The Washington Post*

Agents	Stance-taking Moves in <i>The Washington Post</i>					
	China	Moves	Times	US	Moves	Times
Nation-State	Chinese government, Foreign Ministry; President Xi; Premier Li; Other Chinese Officials	Ready to retaliate; Unyielding; Unwilling to engage in trade war; Angry with US; Criticizing US	19	President Trump and his aids	Wishing and forcing China to do more; Aggressive; Accusing China of political interference; Optimistic over result; Taking softening attitude after Nov; Claiming strong economic position	41
Industry	Chinese Commercial Industry; Chinese importers	Unwilling to involve in the trade war but ready to retaliate; Taking actions to deal with the situation	4	American industry; business groups; traders; growers	Pessimistic over trade war; Wanting to end it; Worrying about its impact; Opposing it	9
Individual	Chinese analysts	Ready to fight	1	China specialists; economist; tech experts; farmers; managers	Expecting more retaliation from China; Negative impact on US investors and market; Pessimistic over trade war; Worrying about national security; Skeptical over Trump's expectation;	36
				Journalists	Concerns over trade; Doubting the purpose of trade war	3
				Other republicans	Pessimistic over trade war; Criticizing President Trump	3
Total			24	Total		92

Table 3 (see Appendix) shows the stances taken by agents from China and the US toward the trade conflicts in *The Washington Post*. In terms of numbers, the stances taken by US agents exceedingly outnumber the stances taken by their Chinese counterparts by 78. On the Chinese side, the Chinese government and its representatives tend to take stances more frequently than agents of other categories. Similarly, on the US side, US President Trump and his aids take stances more often than agents of other categories.

Again, agents on the Chinese side share similar stances toward the US and China trade war. Agents at nation-state, industry, and individual levels all show the stance of getting ready to retaliate, though the nation-state and industry agents also show the stance of unwilling to involve in the trade war, whereas the nation-state agents express the emotive reactions of being angry and critical with the US. The following extracts from *The Washington Post* exemplify these stances.

E.g. 13. The United States and China dug in for a protracted trade war Friday, with the Chinese government saying it would "fight at any cost" President Trump's threat to slap new tariffs on \$100 billion in Chinese goods.

E.g. 14. "We do not want to fight, but we are not afraid to fight a trade war." (China's Commercial Ministry).

E.g. 15. Beijing expressed anger at the arrest and accused the United States of targeting Huawei unfairly.

Example 13 explains the stance taken by the Chinese government toward the trade war is assertive to retaliate as evidenced by the modality "would" and the expression of "fighting at any cost." Further, China's Commercial Ministry as the head of China's industry demonstrates the unwilling but fearless emotive reactions to fight a trade war with the US. Regarding the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's CFO in Canada at the request of the US in this trade war, the Chinese government expresses the stance of anger and accusation in example 15.

Stance-taking moves on the US side appear to be more complicated in *The Washington Post*. Agents at the nation-state level show changes in their stance from being aggressive in the early stage to being softening after November 2018. In the meantime, agents at the industry and individual levels show a consistent stance of pessimism over and opposing the trade war and worrying about the negative impact of it. Different from journalists in *China Daily*, journalists in *The Washington Post* show their stances toward the trade war only three times in these news reports and most of the time they are reporting stances taken by other agents in the news reports and remain voiceless. The four sentences below offer examples of these stances.

E.g. 16. "And I hate to say that, but behind that, there's another \$267 billion ready to go on short notice if I want. That totally changes the equation." (Trump)

E.g. 17. BUENOS AIRES - President Trump took his first step back in his months-long confrontation with China on Saturday, agreeing to cancel a planned Jan. 1 tariff increase on Chinese products in return for purchases of what the White House called a "very substantial" amount of American farm, energy and industrial goods. (Dec 3, 2018)

E.g. 18. Increased tensions in the U.S.-China economic relationship will negatively impact their operations in China," he said (William Zarit, chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in China).

E.g. 19. The pivot has frayed Trump's relationships with fellow Republicans, who have publicly criticized his tariffs and continue to privately lobby his administration to water them down.

Example 16 and 17 show the changes of stance taken by President Trump toward China from being forceful, strong, and coercive to a more agreeable attitude. Interestingly, such attitude change took place after he completed his mid-term election in November 2018. Example 18 shows the typical stance taken by US industry or individuals who have close economic ties or interests in China. Example 19 reveals the opposite stance President Trump's fellow republicans take against him, showing their attitude of being criticizing and opposing Trump's proposal of tariffs.

6. Discussion

As for "othering", both the US and China employ the same strategy of disseminating national ideologies of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other presentation (derogation) (van Dijk, 2006). The othering strategy adopted by the news reports in *China Daily* described the US as the nationalist, protectionist, hegemonist, unilateralist, accuser, ignorant, and aggressor that is unacceptable and unwelcome by China. Because of this, China is justifying its action of rejecting, retaliating, and fighting with the US in this trade war. By contrast, in the US news reports on this trade war, the US national leaders described China as negatively different from the US in terms of economy, market practice, currency management, sensibility, etc. Such different China in the eyes of US national leaders poses threat to the US economy because its abnormal behaviors of stealing US intellectual property and innovation and manipulating currency hurt the US economy. The othering strategy employed by the national leaders rationalizes the initiation of the trade war by the US national leaders against China. At the same time, this othering strategy reflects the ideology of US national leaders of thinking the US as being normal, powerful, strong, correct, ethical, dominant, and knowing all the standard as opposed to China as being abnormal, threatening, weak, wrong, unethical, and violating the standard.

The analysis and findings regarding stance-taking moves in the news reports indicate unified ideologies pursued by China and divisive ideologies present in the US. In both *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*, agents on the Chinese side at the levels of nation-state, industry, and individual display unified and consistent ideologies of opposing the trade war, retaliating, protesting, and denying accusations from the US. In particular, the Chinese agents in *China Daily* tend to have an inclusive ideology by aligning China's national interest with the rest of the world to stress the critical role China is playing in the world arena.

In comparison, the different stances taken by American agents in both *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* imply the divisive ideologies prevalent in the US. Agents at the nation-state level, specifically, US President Trump and his allies hold the ideologies of protectionism, superiorism, and exclusivism because they take the stance of being aggressive to China, optimistic over the outcome of the trade war, and claiming a stronger economic position. But, agents at the industry and individual levels in the two news outlets exhibit the ideologies of conservatism and pessimism because they take stance of worrying about the impact of the trade war, opposing it, and doubting the purpose of it.

In order to account for the unified ideologies prevalent in the Chinese news reports, we need to revisit the argument over the waning US hegemony and the increasing national power of China. The end of World War II marked the end of the old global order with the UK as the leading economic power in the world since the nineteenth century and the advent of the new global order with the US replacing the UK as the world powerhouse in the twentieth century. Instead of simply being the dominant economic power with its highly developed capitalist economy, the US has even been able to exercise its political predominance across all capitalist countries. During the Cold War era, the US interweaved an economic interdependence framework with its major allies in both Europe and Asia within which the global economy functioned.

According to Gilpin (2001), the security interest and alliance cohesion characterizing the US hegemonic state provided political interdependence that held the world economy together and facilitated a compromise of important national differences over economic issues. However, history proves that global power never remains the same. With the end of Cold War, the US political leadership and close economic ties with its traditional allies waned partly due to the fact that former communist countries including China have transformed towards market-oriented economies, which altered the Cold War global capitalist economic system. Because of this, much of the debate has been centered on the sustainability of the US hegemonic state in managing the new global political economy. Some criticisms arose due to the rising power of China. Some neorealist scholars such as Layne (1993) and Waltz (1993) argued that the US hegemony would be temporary as they noted that in international politics there is an almost invariable rule that great powers balance, internally or externally, or both - against rising hegemons. They cited historical record regarding the fates of past contenders for hegemony and agreed that the US would suffer the same fate by attempting to maintain its post-Cold War hegemony. Therefore, China's rising power and US's waning hegemonic power may account for China's unified and consistent ideologies. Because China attributes its increasing national power to its policy of reform and opening-up adopted since 1978 and its entry into the WTO in 2001, China advocates free trade in line with the WTO's principle although it asks for special treatment and protection of its weak industries due to the position as a developing country. China also expresses its standpoint of embracing the multi-polar world (indicating that the west dominated by the US can no longer deal with the global issue) as its way of understanding of waning US's hegemonic power. China opposes the trade war, threatens to retaliate, protests, and denies the accusation from the US, because as a rising power China believes it is playing too the important role in the world economy and should not give in but stand firm facing the US's threat. Meanwhile, considering the US as the waning hegemonic power also explains that China others the US as nationalists, protectionist, hegemonist, unilateralist, accuser, ignorant, and aggressor because US still follows its old mindset as a hegemony and is ignorant of the multi-polar world that is taking shape.

The possible interpretation for the divisive ideologies embedded in the US news reports is associated with the concept of "China threat" within contemporary international relations. As argued by Song (2005), in recent decades, this notion of "China threat" has become a topical issue and taken on a more prominent role in Western political discourse, especially in the US (p. 147), as China is gaining the status as the emerging great power with its gross domestic product (GDP) worth 12237.70 billion US dollars in 2017, ranking the second largest world economy, or 19.74 percent of the world economy (Trading Economics, 2018). Journalists and other opinion leaders have introduced this notion into the public spheres and the domain of policy through the work of policy analysts and politicians. Their main concern centers on such essence that a rising China poses an increasing, imminent, and real threat both to its neighbors and to far-distant countries as well. This threat is "perceived to be comprehensive with security-related, military, economic, and environmental implications" (Song, 2005, p. 146). Despite diverging views held by scholars on the effect of the "China threat", the view of "China threat" has inevitably become substantial and US national leaders may avail it to serve the political purpose of standing strong, firm, and intrepid before any threat, protecting the national interest from any potential harm, and winning votes from nationalists. Maintaining the hegemonic power and addressing "China Threat" may explain the ideologies held by the US national leaders of protectionism, superiority, and exclusivism. However, agents other than US national leaders are more occupied by the other side of "China threat": the economic interests and opportunities emerge from rising demand of the rising China. For this reason, these agents exhibit the ideologies of conservatism and pessimism to the trade war. The divisive perception and understanding of "China threat" among varied agents in the US represent the disunited ideologies rooted in different stakeholders toward the trade war.

7. Conclusion

Employing van Dijk's (2006) ideological discourse analysis as the theoretical framework, this study compares news reports on the US and China trade war produced from the news outlets of *The Washington Post* and *China Daily* respectively. By using the critical discourse analytical tools of "othering" and "stance-taking", and agents, the study reveals the starkly different ideologies embedded in these news texts as the hidden force that drives the ostensible and discursive discourse forms, meanings, and interactions.

Contextualizing the discursive discourse forms and patterns within the nexus of the US hegemony, the increasing national power of China, and the concept of "China threat", the study discusses the possible interpretations to the divisive ideologies seen on the US side and the unified ideologies prevalent on the Chinese side.

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