Discursive Strategies of China-Related News in Chinese and Western Social Media

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Abstract—With the development of social media, the landscape of international news dissemination has changed significantly. This research is conducted to discover the discursive strategies of Chinese and Western news outlets in China-related news reports on Twitter, one of the most widely used social media platforms. The key objective is to examine China-related news reports on Twitter to explore the different discursive strategies employed by Chinese and Western news media in reporting China. To achieve these objectives, the research data were collected from the Twitter accounts of People's Daily China, an official news outlet representing the Chinese media, and the New York Times, a leading American/Western news agency. Based on the data analysis, certain discursive strategies were identified in the practices of Chinese and Western media that are causing differences in constructing China's international image. These results might assist the international audience in gaining a more objective understanding of China and help Chinese news media sources improve their reporting strategies and international communication capacity.

Index Terms—China-related news, Chinese media, Western media, Twitter, discursive strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the internet introduced the world to social media platforms (SMPs), and some of these platforms have emerged as popular forums for people to socialize. Traditional media organizations have taken the opportunity to expand their digital news services to SMPs, and among these platforms, Twitter is the most popular because of its liberal freedom-of-opinion (FOO) and freedom-of-speech (FOS) policies (Tkacheva, 2013). In addition, as a social media platform, Twitter is equipped with the tools that any media house might find necessary to run its news broadcast. For this reason, nearly all renowned media houses have a notable presence on Twitter, and they manage their Twitter accounts (a unique Twitter username is known as a Twitter account) alongside their other news broadcasting platforms (Sharma & Goyal, 2018).

It is evident that the internet has made communication more robust, and it has promoted the globalization of information. Unlike news broadcasting means limited to certain geographical locations, the internet has blurred geographical boundaries, and media outlets can now publish their news and reach the entire global population (MacKinnon et al., 2014). Given that Twitter provides the basic tools for establishing an online news-broadcasting outlet and a global audience to read news updates Twitter appears to be an ideal platform for news publication; however, there is more to it (Ott, 2017).

Twitter started its operations in March 2006, and the Western media quickly realized its effectiveness and started using it as a news publishing tool. This approach enabled the first entrants to gain dominance on Twitter and build a loyal audience. If described otherwise, Western news outlets took advantage of being the pioneers in Twitter-based news broadcasts (Enli, 2017). Twitter has liberal FOO and FOS policies that empower Western media outlets (e.g., New York Times, ABC, BBC, and Daily Telegraph) to openly criticize the Chinese government's policies. This criticism has been supported by Western governments, in light of the ongoing trade war and political issues between them and the Chinese government. Chinese media organizations joined social media platforms later, and when Chinese media houses (i.e., People's Daily China, China Xinhua News, China News) eventually established a presence on Twitter, they experienced continual competition for viewers' attention (Zheng et al., 2014). In general, Western media outlets enjoy the benefits of being the first entrants to Twitter, which enabled them to gain unrivaled dominance (Guo et al., 2019). Given that the Chinese media was a late responder, it lost its competitive edge, and Western media houses have strengthened their roots by establishing their credibility (Enli, 2017).

The Chinese government has put great emphasis on building China's international image and its international communication capacity. It has allocated funds worth $1.3 billion per annum to mitigate the impact of Western

propaganda and to portray positive images of the country by increasing the global presence of Chinese media. These steps indicate that the Chinese government is aware of the importance of Twitter as a news-broadcasting platform (Enli, 2017; Nip & Sun, 2017).

The objective of this paper is to discover the discursive strategies that Chinese and Western media adopt in terms of China-related news reports on Twitter. This paper also analyzes the published content of two selected entities, @PDChina and @nytimes, to explore the image of China that Chinese and Western media present and the factors that support the success of Western news outlets and to identify and recommend suggestions for Chinese media to compete with Western media. Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the contents of China-related news reporting in @PDChina and @nytimes?

RQ2: What are the discursive strategies employed by @PDChina and @nytimes in the news discourse of China-related reporting on Twitter?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper focuses on two aspects of the study: China-related news reporting in social media and discursive strategies of news media.

A. China-Related News Reporting

Western media outlets often portray China in a similar manner, namely, from a hostile perspective; however, China has maintained a strategy of remaining neutral in response to conflict-promoting statements. In the 20th century, China modeled its social media channels and news sources to depict positive news related to China. In the 1960s, Beijing's attempt to launch a nuclear arsenal was officially revealed, further antagonizing the United States against China and building its image as an existential threat. However, after the Communist Revolution, Western media houses departed from the herd mentality and started emphasizing positive aspects of the country.

News sources from China counteracted to respond to the media strategies and framing these Western news channels used and remained heavily consistent in projecting its positive image (Kiousis et al., 2015). China attempts to maintain its positive image across social media platforms; from this perspective, a study was conducted using discourse analysis to compare the sentiment of the news portrayed by Chinese and U.S. news media channels. The study revealed that China establishes its English-language pages across Facebook and similar news channels to divert the audience's focus from a negative view to a benign view (Frisch & Belair-Gagnon, 2018).

Not all the news portrayed by the Western media houses related to China is framed negatively. In the 1970s and 1980s, most American journalists showed a positive side of China. However, recently, particularly after the Strategic Competition Act of 2021, the New York Times started to portray China as a competitor. In addition, it has politicized many progressive actions assumed by China, such as agricultural initiatives and space programs. Most news items have appeared to blame China for anomalies in the ties between China and the United States, whereas the British media has remained fairly neutral in its portrayal of China, as it adopts an informative strategy to highlight the main events objectively (Seth-Smith et al., 2016). This narrative is, however, challenged by the researched studies some articles mention that the British media also uses a "ChinaThreat" frame to marginalize the Chinese nation. It also reports the news on the authority of an anonymous reporter, which puts its veracity into question. However, such studies are not numerous, and most of them present a view consistent with this particular study—that the British media adopts a neutral approach toward depicting events occurring in China (Lee & Chan, 2018). Not only does the Western media portray China as an enemy, but it sometimes goes to the other extreme of idealizing China, considering it to be like a fairyland. Therefore, a mixed review is gathered through the literature search in alignment with the framing analysis performed by this particular paper (Khan et al., 2016).

B. Discursive Strategies of News Media

Discourse analysis is both a theory and method that examines how social, cultural, and political perspectives and identities are embedded in language, including spoken and written forms (Gee, 2014). Compared with textual analysis, which is aimed at text structure, the objective of discourse analysis is to discover the sociopsychological characteristics of the user (Wodak, 2013; Fairclough, 2013). The central concern of discourse analysis is the social practices of talk and texts and the resources that enable those practices (Potter, 1996b; Potter, 2013). Research on discourse has examined how people handle pervasive issues of blame and responsibility, focusing on issues concerning stake and accountability (Augoustinos & Every, 2010; LeCouteur & Oxlad, 2011), and has analyzed how linguistic tools are combined to operate and manage accountability (Kent & Potter, 2014; Potter, 1996a).

For discursive psychologists, reality is constructed through discursive strategy, and an unlimited number of ways exist to present the world (Adjei, 2013). As a form of social practice of language use, discourse is textual or verbal communication composed of ideas or patterned ways of thinking that are placed in a wide social structure (Johnstone, 2017). Thus, discourse analysis is situated within social constructionism theory. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), discourse analysis examines how people use language to construct and make sense of social realities. For example, by employing different discursive approaches and linguistic devices, such as choice of words, metaphors, and

rhetorical styles, people can justify, explain, persuade, or even propagate the social practice of discourse (Ädel, 2010; Doudaki & Boubouka, 2019).

In the field of media research, discourse analysis has provided researchers with a different perspective on examining the interpretations and presentations of the media through critical and contextual insights. Media discourse refers to communications that take place on a media platform, both spoken and written, in which the discourse is targeted toward a non-present audience (O'Keeffe et al., 2011). Many previous studies have used different discourse analysis approaches to investigate media discourse, including linguistic studies of print media discourse (Mendzheritskaya, 2013; Permyakova & Antineskul, 2016), conversation analysis and corpus linguistic analysis of spoken media discourse (Ekstrom & Patrona, 2011; O'Halloran, 2010), and critical discourse analysis of both types of media discourse (Sari et al., 2018; Sriwimon & Zilli, 2017).

Discursive strategy is a fundamental means of representing diverse points of view and ideologies in media representations (Bennett, 2019). In the contemporary world, reality is constructed by media narratives. Daily events are presented by media with certain ideological implications that aim to produce "empowered readers" (Carpentier, 2011). By employing discursive strategies such as narratives of who "we" are, the media intentionally position the audience by separating "us" from "them" or "others" who do not understand or share the same belief or value (Coleman & Ross, 2010; Mendes, 2012). Social issues, such as conflicts, are also constructed by media organizations under the power and influence of particular parties or forces for their own interests (Hussain & Munawar, 2017). According to Fairclough (1995), the reality presented by the media is created in the interest of its producers, and this reality plays an important role in shaping and influencing the perception and opinion of the public, and Johnson and Milani (2010) argue that media are involved with power and ideology in an elaborated manner.

By employing discursive strategies in news reporting and operating to control causality, agency, and readers' opinions, media accumulate power and generate effects among the public (Fairclough, 2013). Among all the media players, news media are considered the most successful and influential actors, as they produce massive content consistently and construct realities based on events worldwide that are worth noticing. By selecting information with an agenda and using various rhetorical devices, news discourse presents the writers' understanding of events and their ideologies (Catenaccio et al., 2011).

As an important tool, language is utilized by the news media in an "inevitably structured process," which could reveal the ideologies, values, and "implicit propositions" of the media if analyzed properly (Fowler, 2013). Previous research on discursive strategy and linguistic features of news media have provided evidence of subjectivity in news media discourse on a wide range of issues, such as racism (Chaudhry & Gruzd, 2020; Vidra & Fox, 2014), discrimination and bias (Krzyżanowski, 2019; Samaie & Malmir, 2017), and framing (Allan et al., 2010; Doyle, 2011).

III. METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, this study adopted a combination of approaches that included content analysis and discourse analysis (Creswell, 2011). It was designed within a social constructivism paradigm, with qualitative analysis as the main research method. For gathering data, the Twitter accounts of two news organizations were selected from China and the West—namely, People's Daily China representing Chinese news media and the New York Times representing American news media.

A. Research Procedure

Given that the research questions address news content, content analysis of the Twitter accounts of the two selected media organizations was piloted at an early stage. With the purpose of observing and establishing patterns, an open-ended, inductive, and descriptive approach was applied (Babbie, 2020). In phase 1, content analysis was deployed to answer research question 1. As part of the content analysis, tweets from the specified time frame were identified and collected. Data coding was performed, and the coding categories were adjusted according to the nature of social media news items, including the nation or nations involved (whether it concerned China or not); the main theme; the nature of the news item (positive, negative, or neutral); the usage of multimedia (whether it had image or video or none); and the source (whether it was from an authority, social elites [such as experts or scholars], common citizens, or it is not mentioned). Research question 2 was then answered using discourse analysis. Data from the selected texts and news reports were used. As part of the process, linguistic units and specific words and phrases were studied. In addition, discursive strategies, the assumed interpretations, stereotypes, biased descriptions, and linguistic features in the text were identified.

B. Data Collection and Data Analysis

Diverse units of analysis are usually unutilized in content analysis, such as single words, sentences or paragraphs, items, symbols, themes, and characters. According to Barbara, the unit of analysis in most cases includes words, phrases, paragraphs, sentences, or the whole text, such as interviews, diaries, or books; topics (entire themes or thoughts); and the amount of space and time of a subject (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Krippendorff, 2018). In social media, one single tweet represents one news item, which includes text, image or video, and comments. In this study, the single tweet was the unit of analysis, and the comments from the audience were

excluded from the content analysis because comments are concerned with the audience's reaction, not the characteristics of the news.

The data collection consisted of two stages aligning with the research questions. The first stage was content analysis, (research question 1), and this phase of data collection was quantitative. In her discourse analysis, Zhang (2013) constructed three weeks of content by representing each day of the week equally with samples taken from every fifth day of the output of CCTV Africa programs. The method of constructed weeks was also adopted by Marsh (2018) in her study of CCTV and BBC's news program, but the frequency of sampling was raised to every third day, which was considered sufficient for reflecting changes in the news world, as "only the biggest news event runs for more than two days" (Marsh, 2018). The principle of constructed weeks was retained in this study, with a frequency of every third day for the same reason mentioned above. The data were selected from January 1, 2019, to June 30, 2021, and the range covered more than two years, making it a longitudinal study. Using Twitter's advanced research allowed news items from @PDChina and @nytimes from one complete day to be obtained and analyzed. The results were weighed to determine what needs to be explained in more detail in stage 2.

The findings for research question 1 are used to explain and draw conclusions about the noteworthy variations that exist between the two Twitter accounts and to generate variables for the data collection for stage 2. To observe the most distinctive feature of each media and their attitudes towards China, news discourses from each media will be analyzed in stage 2 using qualitative methods. As the statistics from this preliminary study show, the agenda of news coverage concerning China in the Western media was focused mostly on its politics and economics, and the biggest difference in reporting lay in the nature of reporting on political news items. Thus, the next investigation of discourse analysis will be conducted by collecting data in a qualitative manner from specific events regarding key issues, such as politics and economics. Data collection in stage 2 will also utilize Twitter's advanced research as a tool by searching for keywords in each specific news event.

IV. FINDINGS

A. China-Related Reporting on @PDChina and @nytimes

This section discusses the content analysis of China-related news reporting on the Twitter accounts of @PDChina and @nytimes. The table below provides an overview of the number of tweets published by the two accounts. It is clear that @PDChina's volume of reporting on China-related news was much larger than that of @nytimes.

TABLE 1
TWEETS OVER TIME PUBLISHED BY NEWS MEDIA

Year	Jan-Dec 2019	Jan-Dec 2020	Jan-Jun 2021
No. of Tweets by @*PDChina*	2386	2303	1464
No. of Tweets by @*nytimes*	356	501	155

The following section classifies the tweets according to their relevance to the theme and determines their impact on China's image among the global audience. To preserve simplicity in the analysis process, the tweets' nature was scaled on three levels (i.e., positive, negative, and neutral). For instance, if a particular tweet promoted a positive image of China on an international level, it was categorized as positive, and similar merit was used to determine a negative or neutral category for the other tweets.

The graph below provides an overview of the trends of People's Daily China's Twitter account. This overview suggests that @PDChina focused on neutral reporting the most, followed by Tweets representing a positive image of China to the international community. The least reported (a negligible number) were news updates that could be considered negative.
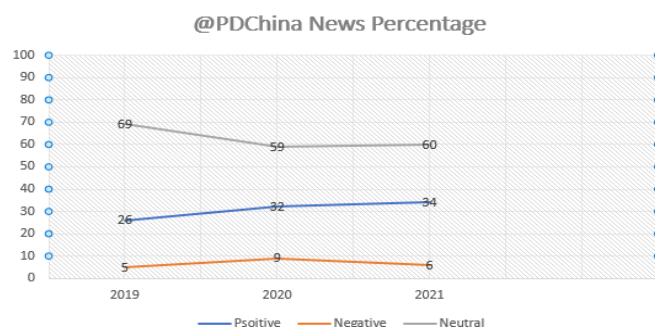

Figure 1. Percentage Volume of Tweets Published by *PDChina*

On the other hand, the New York Times reporting has been recorded to be containing content that could promote a negative perception of China in the international community(Pavlićević, 2018).
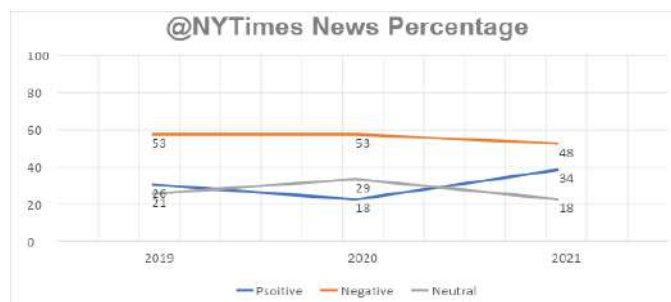
Figure 2. Percentage Volume of Tweets Published by *NYTimes*

The following table provides an overview of the tweets published by the Twitter account of People's Daily China (@PDChina) from January 2019 to June 2021. It is important to note that redundant tweets were removed during this phase of the analysis. It was ensured that each tweet only accounts as one during the analysis process to guarantee reliable and precise outcomes. The tweets were then divided into positive, negative, or neutral based on the kind of impact that they could have on the international image of China among the global audience.

Based on the information derived from the content analysis, it can be observed that PDChina has been following a trend that the number of neutral tweets is rising, whereas a significant decline in the negative tweets is apparent. These attributes serve as supportive elements to promote a positive image of their country. Nonetheless, it is important to note that no activity on the Twitter account of PDChina was recorded during the months of February 2020 and July 2020; therefore, those rows of the table have been left blank, whereas the other ones have been analyzed normally.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF TWEETS PUBLISHED BY PDCHINA OVER 30 MONTHS

Serial	Year	Month	Total Tweets	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1		January	200	21	11	168
2		February	154	4	0	150
3		March	212	12	2	198
4		April	202	6	3	193
5		May	196	4	1	191
6		June	200	2	2	196
7		July	227	7	3	217
8		August	222	9	0	213
9		September	171	13	4	154
10		October	22	23	17	186
11	2019	November	381	14	3	364
12		December	199	29	7	171
13		January	214	20	4	190
14		February	-	-	-	-
15		March	170	10	2	158
16		April	210	30	3	177
16		May	223	25	7	191
18		June	229	15	12	202
19		July	-	-	-	-
20		August	261	19	5	237
21		September	237	17	9	211
22		October	253	35	10	208
23	2020	November	258	31	5	222
24		December	248	27	6	215
25		January	243	35	10	198
26		February	219	39	7	173
27		March	281	45	9	227
28	2021	April	237	17	2	218
29		May	250	20	4	226
30		June	236	15	12	209

The following table provides an overview of the tweets published by the Twitter account of the New York Times. The content analysis of the tweets reveals that very few news updates posted by the news agency's social media account could be categorized as positive or neutral in terms of their impact on China's international image. Nonetheless, the researcher documented that most of the tweets were negative in their nature and apparently followed a targeted approach to sabotage the image of China in front of the international community. An important aspect worth considering is that very few tweets were identified that could be helpful for the promotion of a positive image of the country; however, the negative reporting remained dominant overall.

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF TWEETS PUBLISHED BY NYTIMES OVER 30 MONTHS

Serial	Year	Month	Total Tweets	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1		January	31	3	26	2
2		February	15	3	3	9
3		March	24	2	16	6
4		April	25	3	16	6
5		May	40	4	30	6
6		June	32	1	24	7
7		July	24	3	19	2
8		August	38	0	34	4
9		September	25	3	22	0
10		October	38	7	24	7
11		November	36	3	29	4
12	2019	December	28	3	22	3
13		January	53	7	30	16
14		February	87	17	48	22
15		March	58	5	22	31
16		April	49	6	28	15
16		May	55	5	37	13
18		June	32	4	23	5
19		July	49	6	40	3
20		August	27	3	23	1
21		September	23	2	17	4
22		October	23	7	13	3
23	2020	November	18	3	13	2
24		December	27	5	17	5
25		January	26	3	17	6
26		February	17	6	8	3
27		March	27	1	18	8
28		April	34	7	20	7
29	2021	May	32	14	10	8
30		June	19	4	6	9

In addition to understanding the nature of posting that is taking place on Twitter accounts of Western and Chinese media outlets, it is also important to consider the issues that have been repeatedly discussed and posted by the outlets.

Given that this study focuses on identifying factors that may or may not have affected the image of China in the global community, it is important to understand the nature of the issues that have been a part of media reporting. Another factor that adds to the significance of this study is that repeated reporting of certain issues often results in the development of a perception toward a specific entity.

China is among the world's emerging leaders, and the Chinese economy has experienced groundbreaking development through the modernization of industrial and supply chain practices. China has made significant advancements in areas such as artificial intelligence, supercomputing, 5G networks, and quantum computing, among others. Chinese tech giants, including Huawei, Tencent, and Alibaba, are leading innovators in their respective fields and are increasingly expanding their reach globally. Although this development is positive, it has made China appear as a competitor in the eyes of Western countries. China's rapid economic growth and increasing technological capabilities have led to concerns in the West that China could threaten the West's economic and technological dominance. China has become a major player in global trade and is increasingly investing in research and development, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence, supercomputing, and 5G networks. This shift has led to concerns in the West that China could overtake them in certain technological domains, potentially leading to a shift in global power dynamics. A common assumption exists that Western countries have been using their media houses to undermine Chinese accomplishments in the domains of science and technology by promoting stereotypes about China. The United States and other Western countries have accused China of engaging in unfair trade practices, such as requiring foreign companies to share their technology with Chinese partners to do business in the country. This perception has led to concerns that China is using unfair means to acquire foreign technology and gain a competitive advantage. Concerns also exist in the West about the potential security risks posed by Chinese technology companies such as Huawei. The United States and other Western countries have raised concerns that the Chinese government could use Huawei's technology for espionage, leading to calls for restrictions on the use of Chinese technology in critical infrastructure and other sensitive areas.

To understand the nature of the issues being reported and discussed in Chinese and Western media, it is important to carry out this particular segment of the content analysis process.

TABLE 4
MOST DISCUSSED TOPICS BY MEDIA OUTLETS OVER 30 MONTHS

Ranking	Most Discussed Topic by @*PDChina*	Frequency
1st	Covid	438
2nd	Trade War	236
3rd	Technology	228
4th	Economy	213
5th	International Relations	198
Ranking	**Most Discussed Topic by @*nytimes***	**Frequency**
1st	US, China Relationships	219
2nd	Covid	217
3rd	Hong Kong	112
4th	Taiwan	66
5th	Uighurs	50

The @*nytimes* prioritized the bilateral relationships between China and the United States, which has been a focus of their reporting through the research data. During the analysis, it was discovered that *NYTimes* especially prioritizes topics such as trade and finance, and the majority of their tweets/updates have been indicative of certain scenarios/changes in events that could occur due to worsening China-US relationships. However, a fair share of their updates was also related to the internal issues of China, and although some of their tweets were neutral, a vast majority of their updates showcased a vendetta, as a notable volume of their tweets was found to be targeted at China, which could seriously hamper Chinese efforts to modify the perception of the international community to eradicate certain stereotypes that exist across the globe.

B. Discursive Strategies of News Discourse in China-Related News in @PDChina and @nytimes

It was discovered that @PDChina mainly employed four discursive strategies to build themes of the news events and gather the attention of audiences locally and internationally. These discursive strategies involved borrowing a professional voice to exert integrity in capturing of event, using reporting verbs, deploying supportive and positive adjectives and nouns, and using active verbs.

Through the use of different discursive devices and linguistic features, news media materialized different strategies in the discourse analysis. To represent the news of a trade event between China and the United States while strictly remaining in the nexus of the conflict frame to demonstrate the agreeability of China in response to American resistance, @PDChina reported the event by borrowing the voice of professionals, using reporting verbs such as "said WTO Chief." It is important to mention that using reporting verbs, along with referencing professionals' quotes, lends credibility to the portrayal of an event. @PDChina used this strategy because it had to resort to a defensive side to remove the blame exerted by Western media houses. At a textual level, @PDChina reported the event in the words of the WTO Chief of the United States to strengthen its own position in covering the event because American media houses are often more trusted and relied upon.

Excerpt: *"China will be **more willing** to participate in global trade reforms if it does not feel being targeted, said WTO chief as US, EU, and Japan are pushing for curbs on state support for industrial subsidies to address concerns about China's state-owned enterprises"* (April 28, 2021).

Since discursive strategies rely on discursive devices and linguistic features, different discursive strategies can employ the same devices to convey a broader meaning. @PDChina deployed the discursive strategy of framing by using the rhetoric device of active verbs to signify the conflict associated with the event coverage. In the following excerpt, the news channel built the event of US-China trade relations in terms of disagreement; however, the rhetoric of the active verbs "regrets" and "opposes" was deployed to exert the authority of the news channel. As opposed to the Western media houses, which tend to undermine China's position by exerting their ownership through the occasional use of active form, PDChina usually counters with active verbs to clarify the stance of the Chinese government on issues that are uncompromisable. This is why active narration is usually found in a lesser quantity when @PDChina presents the most contentious events of the US-China trade. However, some adverbs, such as "deeply," are used frequently by @PDChina to represent the depth of the narration.

Excerpt: *"China **deeply regrets and firmly opposes** #US withdrawal from the #INF Treaty, saying the withdrawal is a negative move by the US to pursue unilateralism in disregard of its international commitments: Chinese Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs on Tue"* (August 7, 2019).

Western media also often highlighted points of disagreement between mainland China and Taiwan. However, at the textual level, the discourse analysis of the tweets of @PDChina shows that it used certain nouns, such as "artists" to refer to Taiwanese talent and welcome this talent to mainland China. In addition, such news events were often reported on behalf of an unknown third person to make the news relevant to all audiences and introduce a human face into the conflict frame by minimizing the authority exerted by Western media houses, which often adopt a negative stance on China–Taiwanese relations. The use of this discursive strategy is visible below:

Excerpt: *"Chinese mainland on Wednesday voiced **support** for the participation of **artists** from the #Taiwan region in cooperation and exchange activities in the film and television sector in developing their careers on the mainland, a mainland spokesperson said"* (September 30, 2020).

In contrast, @nytimes used the strategy of drawing from its own experience to generate the gist of a particular news event. This method is not strange because @nytimes usually glorifies the image of the United States while undermining the significance of events. In other words, the United States becomes the center, and events that are either directly linked or not to the United States are peripheral. For example, @nytimes never reported the progress of China's space initiative without first comparing it to the bright history of the United States in space endeavors. Other discursive strategies involve the use of emotive words, borrowing the voice of other entities, and making China the "subject" of conflict-promoting news.

The @nytimes account portrayed the launch of the Chinese rover on Mars from a personal narrative. Although it mainly made China the subject and spotlight of contentious events, it tended to cover the most benign news event of the space program. The narration of the events through personal experience typically adopts the first-person pronouns of "I" and "We" to reflect credibility, but @nytimes used this discursive strategy to shift the narrative of positive events to the United States without deploying first-person pronouns. In addition, these news events were reported on the authority of a third person or analysts qualified enough to present their views on a certain issue to achieve a conflict-framing strategy while remaining apparently neutral and critical in the portrayal of the event.

Excerpt: *"More than just China's pride is at stake in the launch of Tianwen-1. 'The Communist Party of China wants to prove to the world that they are actually a legitimate alternative to a U.S.-led space order,' one **analyst** said"* (July 20, 2020).

As established earlier in this paper, the New York Times mainly deployed active verbs to cover all the events of conflict between China and the United States on the matters of trade, China's space voyages, and Taiwan to grab the attention of the audience worldwide. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these words were usually emotive in tone, signifying an intense conflict. Although emotive words are also used by other media sources to achieve conflict framing, their use is mainly centered around agreement and peace rather than disagreement. In the following tweet, note the word "wrath," which is quite aggressive for portraying an event of China–Taiwan interaction.

Excerpt: *"Taiwan's president, on a visit to the United States, said her people would 'never be intimidated,' risking China's **wrath** and a further fraying of ties between Beijing and the **Trump administration**"* (July 12, 2019).

Some events were portrayed by making China the subject and simultaneously portraying other events that directly borrow the voice of China to achieve the discursive strategy. This technique renders @nytimes neutral. For instance, trade events were mainly reported on the authority of China, and the United States expressed some concerns. In this manner, the news media source achieved a conflict-framing strategy by showing a partial disagreement on the part of the United States while equally turning the news event toward the Chinese perspective.

Excerpt: *"Breaking News: China said it agreed to an initial trade deal with the US that would roll back some tariffs, a major de-escalation in the trade war. Initial China Trade Deal Defuses Tensions, but U.S. **Still Has Concerns**. The **agreement** includes a commitment by China to buy more agriculture products and to **strengthen** laws protecting foreign companies operating there"* (December 13, 2019).

V. CONCLUSION

The findings suggested that @PDChina used different discursive strategies and rhetorical devices compared to the Western media houses. It represented dismay at the US policies and actions in some instances; however, it remained very direct and clear by deploying adjectives and verbs and using direct quotes. On the other hand, Western news outlets remained seemingly objective; however, they used more subtle and shady adjectives to represent their bias and signify conflict.

All these strategies demonstrate that Western countries believe that China is their strategic rival and competitor. On that same note, active verbs were used by these Twitter news sources instead of other forms of verbs to cast doubt on Chinese initiatives. These findings are consistent with the literature review, which mentions that Western media houses rely on different rhetorical devices and linguistic units to remain objective at the surface and blame Chinese media for deliberately trying to improve China's image (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2015).

This study has several limitations. Firstly, to some extent, the data only present the period studied. Because the news content and discourse rely greatly on the relationship between China and the US. However, during the period studied, China and the US are experiencing a tough relationship. Secondly, the data only include the discourse of the news content, some other contents of news such as pictures, videos, audios, and links to websites are excluded. These elements of news content may generate different interpretations of the news content.

Despite limitations, this research has provided some contributions to the study of social media news discourse. Specifically, it has enriched the empirical studies in China-related news reporting to further understand China's international image. It has also provided some enlightenment for the Chinese news media in terms of the adaptation of social media platforms.

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