DISCURSIVE 'OTHERING' OF CHINA IN THE US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to understand the role of identity discourses in US foreign policy towards China. It focuses on the foreign policy of Donald Trump to deconstruct his discourse on China as 'different' and, therefore, a 'threat' which eventually justified the trade war policies and non-cooperation on the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a continuation of similar identity based, foreign policy ventures under Joe Biden administration. Utilising the constructivist framework, it is argued that the relationship between identity and foreign policy is performative; identity is constructed through discourse, which consequently shapes the foreign policy of a state. To understand this relationship of performativity, Donald Trump's foreign policy towards China is analyzed by applying Lene Hanson's inter-textual critical discourse analysis model. It unfolds that the American mainstream newspapers constructed the events of trade war and COVID-19 in line with Trump's 'China threat' narrative. This inter-textuality between the official and unofficial discourse legitimized Trump's otherization of China as a threat and, consequently, his policies.

Keywords: *Deconstruction, Identity, Otherization, The US Foreign Policy, Donald Trump, China*

Introduction

American identity has never been a fixed phenomenon rather it is constructed through recursive discourse practices. The discourse is based on the process of linking and differentiating, where linking means the qualities that are claimed to be common in the 'in-group' while differentiating refers to the qualities that are attributed to the 'out-group', to "otherize" it from the self. Historically, the discursive othering of China

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was in terms of China being a 'communist regime.' Later, the otherization had different forms, such as China being 'non-democratic', 'totalitarian', 'illiberal regime', and 'revisionist power'.[1]

In the Trump era, the otherization was based on the discourse that China is a 'usurper state'[2] that commits trade abuses, and it is a 'fraudulent state'[3] that is responsible for the spread of the coronavirus. During the Trump administration, tariffs and non-tariff restrictions were placed on China. President Trump alleged that China was involved in intellectual property theft and espionage.[4] In May 2019, he banned the US companies from working with Huawei, a large Chinese multinational, telecommunications and electronics company, over concerns that it was stealing intellectual property and spying on companies and the government.[5] He stated that the US government was trying to find out if the virus originated at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. He accused the World Health Organization of acting like the 'public relations agency for China' and withdrew US funding from the institution.[6]

President Joe Biden accepted and propagated Trump's discourse of China as 'strategic competitor.'[7] Biden's foreign policy is regarded by most experts as 'old wine in new bottles.' President Trump's 'trade tariffs,' the 'Quad,' and 'the upgrade in Taiwan's protocol status' have been maintained by President Biden.[8] He referred the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping as a 'thug.'[9] According to interviews with more than a dozen of his advisers

1   Su-Mei Ooi and Gwen D'arcangelis, "Framing China: Discourses of Othering in US News and Political Rhetoric," *Global Media and China* 2, no. 3–4 (2017): 269–83.

2   Politico Staff, "Full Text: Trump Davos Speech Transcript – POLITICO," (January 26, 2018), https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/26/

3   "Donald Trump Speech 2020 UN General Assembly Transcript | Rev," (September 22, 2020), https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/.

4   Lorand Laski and Adam Segal, "A New Old Threat: Countering the Return of Chinese Industrial Cyber Espionage," Council on Foreign Relations, December 6, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/report/threat-chinese-espionage.

5   Brandon M. Boylan, Jerry McBeath, Bo Wang, "US–China Relations: Nationalism, the Trade War, and COVID-19," *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences,* (October 2020): 23-400.

6   Aljazeera, "*Trump Claims Coronavirus Came from Wuhan Lab,*" Aljazeera News , May 4, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/ 2020/5/4/

7   Cheng Li, "Biden's China Strategy: Coalition-Driven Competition or Cold War-Style Confrontation?" *Brookings*, May 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/ articles/.

8   Andrew J. Nathan, "Biden's China Policy: Old Wine in New Bottles?" *China Report* 57, no. 4 (2021): 387–97.

9   "Watch Biden Calls China's Xi a 'Thug' - Bloomberg," February 26, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2020-02-26/

and associates in foreign policy as well as his own statements, President Biden also considers China as the greatest strategic challenge.[10]

This study explicatesthe role of identity discourses in Donald Trump's foreign policy towards China. It addresses a main question that how did the constructed identity of China legitimize Trump's foreign policy of trade war and non-cooperation on the COVID-19 pandemic? The study employs Lene Hanson's critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework to understand the identity discourse of China in Trump's foreign policy in the following steps: . Firstly, it explains the main issue under consideration. Secondly, the time perspective, either focusing on a single moment or making comparisons across multiple moments. Thirdly, the number of events involved, whether it is one event, or several events linked by either the issue or time. Fourthly, the number of individuals or parties involved, which could be a single entity or a comparison of different entities surrounding the events or issues. Lastly, the inter-textual model, which involves combining four textual models (official discourse, wider political debate, cultural representations, and marginal political discourses) in various ways to conduct inter-textual analysis.[11]

By using Hanson's research design, this study investigates the "otherization of China" discourse. The temporal perspective considered is the period of President Donald Trump's tenure from 2017 to 2021. The events under scrutiny are the trade war between the US, China and the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study focuses on one main actor, namely Trump's foreign policy towards China. It analyzes the official discourse presented by President Trump regarding China and the marginal political discourse found in print media representations of China.

Literature Review

To explain this US-China quagmire there is a variety of theoretical models in contemporary International Relations. However, in case of the US-China foreign policy analysis, the realist and liberal theorists' analysis dominate IR literature. Realism focuses on fix material factors to explain the rise of China. Christopher Layne, in his paper "The US-Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana," [12] bases his analysis on realist assumptions. He argues for the decline of the West. Paul Kennedy, in his

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[10] Edward Wong, Michael Crowley, and Ana Swanson, "Joe Biden's China Journey," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2020, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/politics/biden-china.html.

[11] Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (Routledge, 2013).

[12] Christopher Layne,"The End of Pax Americana: How Western Decline Became Inevitable," *The Atlantic,* April 26, 2012, *https://www.theatlantic.com/ international/archive/2012/04/*

book "Rise and Fall of Great Powers," [13] also relies on realist assumptions in his analysis. He argues for an unpeaceful rise of China. John J. Mearsheimer, in his work "China's Unpeaceful Rise,"[14] similarly argues for the likelihood of conflict between China and the US. Graham Allison, in his work "Destined for War: How China and the US can Escape Thucydides Trap?"[15] argues for the likelihood of conflict between China and the US.

Liberal's theoretical literature on the rise of China in most cases has been less pessimistic.[16] In their study "Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide,"[17] David Held and Anthony McGrew assert that the US and China are economically intertwined. Charles Kupchan, Emanuel Adler, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Yuen Foong Khong, in "Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order,"[18] suggest that globalization has created forces of cooperation and trade. John Ikenberry, in his study "The Rise of China and Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?"[19] asserts that while China can surpass the US, it cannot overturn the western world order, as joining it is relatively easy but overturning it is difficult.

The above-mentioned discussions of realist and liberal scholars take interests of states as permanent and does not observe the role of identity discourse in defining those interests.[20] Some of them perceive structure of international system as deterministic and do not take into consideration the agency of actors. They do not consider culture, values, ideology or domestic politics, which may shape international structures. The role of discourses, knowledge production practices, identity politics and inter-subjectivities are downrightly ignored by realist and liberal theorists.

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[13]   Paul Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Vintage Books: 1989), 515.

[14]   John J Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," in *Realism Reader* (Routledge, 2014), 464–67.

[15]   Graham T. Allison,"The Thucydides Trap: Are US and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic,* September 24, 2015, *https://www.theatlantic.com/international/ archive/2015/09/*

[16]   Louise Fawcett, *International Relations of the Middle East (*Oxford University Press, 2013), 19-27.

[17]   David Held, and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization / Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide* (Wiley, November 2007), 103.

[18]   Kupchan A., Charles, Emanuel Adler, Jean-Marc Coicaud and Yuen Foong Khong with the assistance of Jason Davidson, *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order (*United Nations University Press, July 2001), 241.

[19]   John Ikenberry, "The Rise Of China And Future Of The West: Can the Liberal System Survive?" *Foreign Affairs*, (2008), 23-37.

[20]   Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, *Political Reasearch: Methods and Practical Skills* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 35.

Role of Identity Discourse in US Foreign Policy towards China: A Constructivist Perspective

Constructivism believes that reality does not exist independent of the observer. Reality is a subjective or an inter-subjective phenomenon.[21] In other words, the subjects construct reality through the discursive and sociological processes of interaction and shared understanding. Constructivism draws a distinction between natural kinds and social kinds, based on time-specificity, inter-subjective variability, and the dependence of social facts on practice.[22] ***Moreover,*** constructivism resolves the agent-structure debate by proclaiming that structure and agents are mutually constitutive.[23] Agents make structures, but structures in turn shape agents.[24]

Furthermore, constructivism argues for multiple logics of anarchy. There can be a *Hobbesian Culture* of *Anarchy (Enmity)*, as existed in state of nature or there can be *Lockean Culture* of *Anarchy (Rivalry),* in which states currently exist or states can move to a *Kantian Culture* of *Anarchy (Friendship)* based on the four master variables that Wendt has suggested in his work; interdependence, common fate, homogeneity and self-restraint.[25] Lastly, they claim that our knowledge of the world is socially produced, and knowledge production has an important correlation with hegemonic consolidation.

Discourse plays a central role in social life. People engage in discourses, but discourses also shape individuals. Many social concepts such as power, interests, identity, and foreign policy are constructed through discursive practices. Language holds power. It is through language that objects, subjects, actors, and their identities are constructed, and consent is obtained. The term 'discourse' derives from Latin, word 'discursus' meaning "to run" or "to flow," referring to the flow of conversation.[26] In this study, "discourse" refers to the system of meaning creation, attachment, and generation. Discourse studies involve analyzing text and its context to understand how the meanings are attributed to specific words and how these are influenced by power dynamics and establish power relationships.

Applying the elaborated theoretical assumptions of constructivism, this study shows that identity and foreign policy are processes of social

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[21]   Halperin and Heath, *Political Research,* 41.

[22]   Ibid*.,* 67-77.

[23]   Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 139-156.

[24]   Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society:Out Line of the Theory of Structuration (*University of California Press, 1986)

[25]   Wendt, *Social Theory*, vol. 67., 343-363.

[26]   Richard Nordquist, "What Is the Meaning of 'Discourse'?" in *ThoughtCo*, January 30, 2020, https://www.thoughtco.com/

construction. Firstly, identity and foreign policy are constructed through discourses. For instance, how the US defines China or vice versa or how their mutual identities emerge as a result of the linguistic and sociological process of interaction significantly influence their behavior towards each other.[27] Secondly, identity and foreign policy are social kinds. The US identity of China is inter-subjectively produced, dependent upon time and space and refined by certain human practices. Thirdly, identity and foreign policy are structures constructed by actors, but these structures in turn constrain or enforce actions of actors. Thus, in the case of US-China, both states have more agency to form their political realities, but the realties constructed then have a limiting or enforcing effect on their relationship.

Furthermore, the rivalry between US and China should not necessarily be seen under the *Hobbesian Culture of Anarchy*, but there are other possibilities too. Relationships of conflict, cooperation and competition are socially produced and reproduced and thus there is possibility of new relationships. Lastly, power or cultural hegemony necessitates the acquisition of consent, and discourse plays a crucial role in generating consent. Power relationships are established through discourse, with those who dominate language also dominating power. Discourse functions to normalize, naturalize, legitimize, and idealize certain social practices. It contributes to the existence, growth, and dominance of specific practices over others. For instance, China mostly has tried to avoid the rise of China discourse; they avoid terms like 'Chinese century' or 'New Asian Century'. Why? Because it leads to their otherization, but their epistemic communities are not as strong as the US. That is why we are observing the otherization discourse as dominating. Framed in other words, the US is able to unleash an epistemic violence on China, which rarely is a subject of concern for mainstream International Relation theories.

The current study adopts a constructivist lens to understand the role of identity discourses in the US President Donald Trump's foreign policy towards China. President Trump's trade war policies and non-cooperation on the COVID-19 epidemic were justified throughout his administration by the identity rhetoric that China is 'different' and hence a 'threat.' It begs on questions like, what is the role of identity discourse in understanding the US foreign policy behaviour vis-à-vis China under the President Trump administration? And how this role of identity in the US foreign policy can be systematically analyzed? Examining the discursive US foreign policy behaviour towards China, therefore,is the main contribution of the present study.

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[27]   Wendt, *Social Theory,* 113-125.

Deconstructing China's Otherization in Trump's Foreign Policy

There has been a considerable rise in China discourse during President Trump's era. Most American citizens thought that China was rising, and China's power and influence posed threat to the US. According to the Pew Research Center survey conducted in March 2020, the negative view of China has increased in the US.[28] Roughly two-thirds had an unfavorable view of China. It was and still is the highest since the center started to ask this question in 2005. It has multiplied by 20% since the beginning of Trump administration. These statistics indicate that the discourse of 'otherization' of China as a revisionist power and hence, a threat became common-sensical during Trump adminstration and prevails in the post-Trump period as well.

These discourses are expressed in oft-repeated political jargons like 'Power transition', 'Neo Cold War' or 'Cold War II' or 'Cold War 2.0' or 'trade war' which construct threat for the US 'self'. Threat is the most common foundation for identity construction. The 'other' is radically differentiated from the 'self' and then constructed as a threat to the survival of 'self' but the 'other' is required for existence of the 'self'. Since other's identity is based on threat hence, threat of the 'other' is required for the existence of 'self'. Discourses of danger create identity of state. In the context of US-China, discourse of danger/threat of the rise of China constitutes US identity as a status quo power and, consequently, its foreign policy behaviour.

The rise of China discourse has exacerbated the process of otherization. 'Rise' is always in relation to something or someone else. In the context of China, the rise is in relation to the West (existing power). The discourse of ascendency of China has created an identity for the West that is one of a declining power and an identity for China of a rising power. It creates an identity divide between existing power and rising power. Rising power is perceived to pose a threat to the existing power, which creates an anxiety and fear of decline for the later, as encoded in the term 'Thucydides Trap' by Graham Allison.[29] However, Graham Allison believes the two powers are naturally caught in such a trap, rather they are being discursively put into it. In other words, Allison takes otherization as a natural condition of the two powers rather than a process which is continuously produced and reproduced.

Lene Hansen's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework

Lene Hanson's critical discourse analysis framework investigates five areas of a problem: 1) The issue at hand 2) The temporal perspective:

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[28]   Kat Devlin, Laura Silver and Christine Huang,"*U.S. Views of China Increasingly Negative Amid Coronavirus Outbreak," Survey*, (Washington, D.C, US: Pew Research Center, April 21, 2020) https://www.pewresearch.org/

[29]   Graham T. Allison,"The Thucydides Trap."

one moment or comparative moments 3) The number of events: one or multiple events related by issue or time 4) Numbers of selves involved: single or comparison around events or issues 5) The inter-textual model: Hansen in her theoretical framework provides four textual models which can be combined in different orders to carry out inter-textual analysis. These textual models are a) official discourse b) wider political debate c) cultural representations d) marginal political discourses.[30]

Based on this research design, the issue examined in this study is the otherization of China discourse. The temporal perspective deliberated over is President Donald Trump's era from 2017-2021. The events studied are a) trade war between US and China b) the COVID-19 Pandemic. The number of selves involved in this study is one, which is Trump's foreign policy towards China. The discourse analyzed, contains the official discourse of President Trump on China and the marginal political discourse of the print media representations of China.
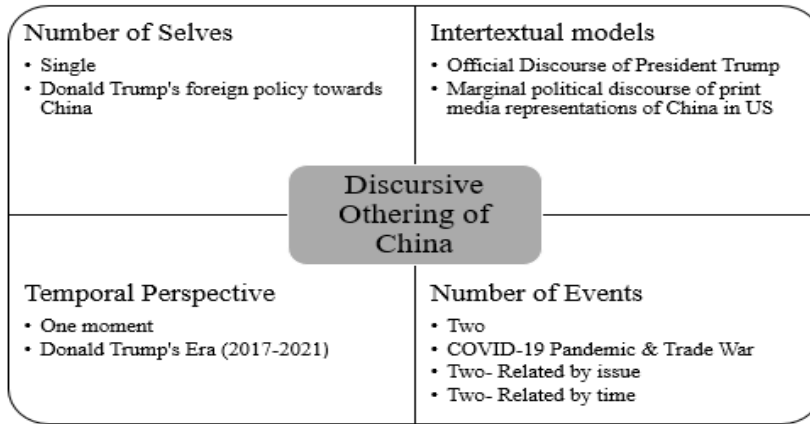
Figure1: Lene Hansen's Elaborated Research Design for

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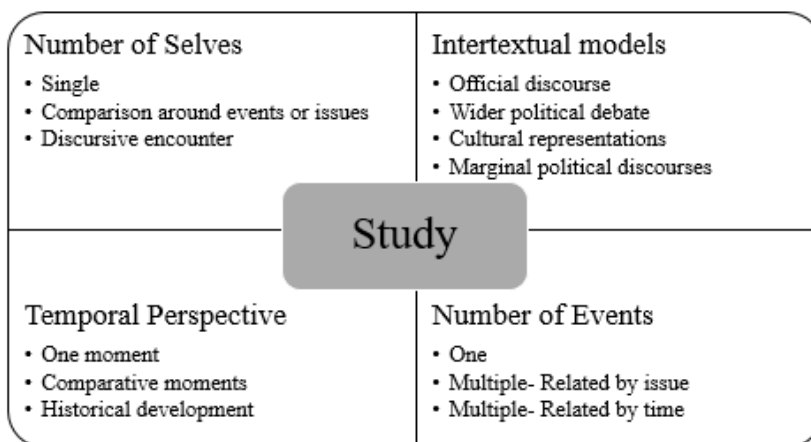
[30]   Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*.

Figure 1.1: Research Design for Discursive Othering of China in Donald Trump's Foreign policy

Number of Selves	Intertextual models
• Single • Donald Trump's foreign policy towards China	• Official Discourse of President Trump • Marginal political discourse of print media representations of China in US

Discursive Othering of China

Temporal Perspective	Number of Events
• One moment • Donald Trump's Era (2017-2021)	• Two • COVID-19 Pandemic & Trade War • Two- Related by issue • Two- Related by time

Issue: Discursive 'Othering' of China in President Trump's Foreign Policy

Discursive othering is a political process that leads to legitimization and acceptance of certain policies over others. The discourse on rise of China in the US foreign policy can lead to the legitimization of policies like containment or engagement of China, based on what identity discourse dominates. The engagement discourse is to integrate China to rule-based, institutionalized, normative international system.[31] While the containment discourse has its roots in the Cold War. It is to contain the spread of communism by containing China.

President Trump, in his National Security Policy (NSP), designated China as a 'revisionist power' that tries to overturn the liberal economic order. He stated that "China [and Russia] challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."[32] Hence, making it necessary for the US to respond to such challenges. In his presidential tenure, the containment discourse was dominant,therefore, foreign policy of a trade war, disengagement and non-cooperation were legitimized, to stabilize identity with policy.

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[31] David Shambaugh, "Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses," *International Security*, (1996): 180-209.

[32] National Security Committe, *National Security Strategy of United States of America*, National Security Document, White House Washington DC, 2017, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/

Temporal Perspective: President Trump's Administration

Otherization of China in Western discourse is not novel. It existed in the pre -Trump era and in the Biden administration as well. Nonetheless, the temporal perspective this study investigates, is restricted to President Donald Trump's tenure from 2017 to 2021. There are three major reasons for this choice: first, there has been a disproportional increase in the discourse of 'trade war,' the 'new Cold War,' 'Cold War II,' and American's negative views of Chinese, as evidenced by the Pew Research Survey.[33] Second, during its term in office, the Trump administration brought about a clear shift in American policy towards China. From the time of Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 through the administration of George W. Bush, the US pursued an engagement strategy in various forms in the hope that allowing China to join the current US-dominated international order would enable it to at the very least become a 'responsible stakeholder,' if not necessarily a liberal democracy.[34] Third, the dispute over the origins of COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the discourse of otherization during Trump's tenure.[35]

Number of Events: The US-China Trade war
and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Number of events this study undertakes to analyze the discourse of otherization are two: Firstly, the trade war between US and China that resulted in tariffs and counter tariffs and was legitimized through otherization discourse. Secondly, COVID-19 pandemic, in which the otherization discourse was made operational to turn down cooperation. The purpose of this study is to understand how in both these events, the representation of China as 'other' constituted the US foreign policy.

Most economists argued that the economic tariffs on Chinese products were not a viable policy option.[36] It resulted in counter-tariffs and consequently a trade war, but President Trump's representation of China as an economic-threat where Chinese products have been dominating the US markets, which placed it at a relatively advantageous position vis-a vis the US resulted in constructing such policies. In this context, President Trump categorically declared that "the United States will no longer tolerate economic aggression or unfair trade practices."[37]

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[33]   Kat Devlin, Laura Silver, and Christine Huang, "Amid Coronavirus Outbreak, Americans."

[34]   Robert B. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" *NBR Analysis* 16, no. 4 (2005): 5.

[35]   Kat Devlin, Laura Silver and Christine Huang, "*U.S. Views of China Increasingly Negative Amid Coronavirus Outbreak*."

[36]   Ryan Hass and Abraham Denmark, "More Pain than Gain: How the US-China*."*

[37]   National Security Committe, *National Security Strategy of United States of America.* National Security Document, White House Washington DC, 2017.

The Chinese economic aggression discourse that President Trump propagated, facilitated in overlooking the pitfalls of the US economy.

Similarly, cooperation on COVID-19 pandemic between the two powers may have resulted in better responses to curb the pandemic.[38] Nevertheless, President Trump, in order to hide his own mishandling of the crises, took a competitive edge over China by starting a blame game. He labelled the virus as 'Foreign Virus,' 'Chinese Virus,' and 'Wuhan Virus.'[39] Such discursive tactics exacerbated the 'self' and 'other' divide and reduced the utmost needed cooperation. In other words, the identity discourse of otherization legitimized Trump's foreign policy of non-cooperation with China on COVID-19 pandemic.

Number of Selves: One; President Trump's Foreign Policy

This is a non-comparative study, which means it looks into one single case. It only takes Donald Trump's foreign policy vis-a-vis China. Nonetheless, it is cognizant of the fact that otherization discourses existed prior to Trump and continues to grip US foreign policy under Joe Biden as well. Despite being a single-case study, it covers two significant events: trade war between US and China and the COVID-19 pandemic. It does not compare but projects that a similar discourse of otherization dominated in both these events which constituted Trump's foreign policy.

Inter-Textual Discourses Analysis

Discourse analysis of foreign policy is an inter-textual process. It is not only about analyzing the official documents but also understanding their link with the wider political debate and marginal discourses. It may include studying wide genres and their relationship, including policy speeches, interviews, journalistic reporting, editorials, academic analysis and literary non-fiction etc.

Inter-textual discourse analysis helps us identifying the function of multiple texts in constituting foreign policy. Different texts like a biography or a memoir, which are not considered directly relevant with foreign policy, can have a significant influence in foreign policy formulation.[40] For instance, Hanson mentions in her work that when President Clinton read a travelogue, he changed his policy towards Bosnia. Similarly, George Bush administration's foreign policy intertwined with the apocalyptic evangelical left behind discourses of good and evil.[41]

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[38] Thomas J Christensen, *A Modern Tragedy? COVID-19 and US-China relations.* Policy Brief, Brookings, May, 2020.
[39] Jerome Viala-Gaudefroy, and Dana Lindeman, "Donald Trump's 'Chinese Virus': the Politics of Naming," *The Conversation*, April 2020. https://theconversation.com/
[40] Hansen, *Security as Practice,* 53.
[41] Ibid., 50.

Understanding otherization of China in Trump's foreign policy discourse also requires an inter-textual study. It requires studying the broader official discourse: including President Trump's speeches and National Security Strategy document and the marginal political debate: including print media representation of China.

Official Discouse

Official discourse directly centers on words/statements of political leaders with official authority to sanctify foreign policy. To understand the discursive othering of China in Donald Trump's foreign policy, the text of official National Security Strategy (NSS) document released in December 2017 and two of Trump's prominent speeches: one at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland in January 2018, and the other to the United Nation General Assembly in September 2020 are analyzed.

NSS Text

National Security Strategy, December 2017 document reflects how the US 'self' is understood vis-a vis China.[42] In defining the US 'self' the emphasis is on the 'other'. It means that the 'self' is vis-a vis the 'other'. To put it differently, the 'self' is defined in juxtaposition to the 'other'; China. The NSS text mentions, "We are a nation of laws…our founding principles have made the United States of America among the greatest forces for good in history." While the 'other' is given an identity of a usurper, who does not play by the rule; "We stood by while countries exploited the international institutions we helped to build. They subsidized their industries, forced technology transfers, and distorted markets." 'Other' is the one who steals our jobs and commits economic aggression against us; "Unfair trade practices had weakened our economy and exported our jobs overseas…We have also continued to make clear that the United States will no longer tolerate economic aggression or unfair trading practices."[43]

Here, an identity of 'other' in juxtaposition to 'self' is created, which is expressed in the language of 'aggressor, usurper, exploitative, unlawful and a force for evil'. On the basis of these representations, China is portrayed as a threat to the US. The NSS text reaffirms the threat to the US coming from China in the following words:

> *The United States faces an extraordinarily dangerous world, filled with a wide range of threats that have intensified in recent years…Rival powers [are] aggressively undermining American interests around the globe…China and [Russia] challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They*

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[42]   National Security Committe, *National Security Strategy of United States of America.*

[43]   Ibid.

are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence." [44]

Otherization in Trump's foreign policy is constructed to pursue a policy of non-engagement with China. Trump stated, "The United States will only engage industrialized democracies and other like-minded states to defend against economic aggression."[45]

The otherization of China narrative which was built in NSS-2017 constituted a stringent foreign policy: A trade war and a policy of non-cooperation. Such discourse continues to reflect in Trump's later speeches. Two of his speeches are analyzed here. Speech one is particularly relevant to the otherization discourses resulting in trade war, while speech two is relevant to the otherization discourse resulting in policy of non-cooperation on handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speech 1

Analysis of President Trump's statement at Davos, gives a similar echo of 'self' and 'other' cry as observed in the NSS document.[46] In describing 'self' he said, "American economy is by far largest in the world," "We have the best colleges in the world, we have the best universities in the world, and we have the best workers in the world." He consistently used superlative degree for defining the 'self'.

While the representation that he used for China was one of 'revisionist power': one who does not play by the existing norms of international system, hence poses a threat to US hegemony and current world order. President Trump labelled Chinese economic practices unfair; "The United States will no longer turn a blind eye to unfair economic practices including massive intellectual property theft, industrial subsidies, and pervasive state-led economic growth."

He invoked the temporal, spatial and ethical forms of identity. To temporally distinguish his regime from past, he said, "there has never been a better time to hire, to build, to invest and to grow in the United States." On America's ethical identity he expressed that "we are making historical investments in American security... to make the world safer from rogue regimes, terrorism and revisionist powers". Here a particular reference to China is made by using the term 'revisionist power.' In emphasizing American spatial identity, he believed that America is land of opportunities, but not everyone is welcomed here. "[We] select new

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Politico Staff, "*President Donald Trump, Full Text: Trump Davos Speech Transcript*," Presidential Speech, January 26, 2018, https://www.politico.com/story/

arrivals based on their ability to contribute to our economy, to support themselves financially and strengthen our country."

He asked to prioritize 'self' over the 'other' in his widely repeated "America-First" mantra; "As a President of the United States I'll always put America first just like the leaders of other countries should put their country first also." Resultantly, such discourse of otherization legitimized Trump's foreign policy behavior of being tough on China.

Keywords: *Unfair Economic Practices, Intellectual Property Theft, Pervasive State-led- Economic Growth, Rogue Regimes, Revisionist Power.*

Speech 2

Trump's virtual address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2020, was a manifestation of the similar theme of the US 'good' and China 'bad' binary.[47] He portrayed US as a responsible world leader while China as an aggressor. His description of the US was: a leader in human rights, bedrock of freedom and security, global peace maker and special worthy of God's blessings:

"America will always be a leader in human rights ... American prosperity is the bedrock of security and freedom all over the world ... America is fulfilling our destiny as peacemaker... God bless America."

His description of China was in the trope of a plague originator, a cheater who holds information on the virus and misinforms the world about it, polluter of the environment and abuser in trade who does not play by the rules. He stated that

"Seventy-five years after the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations, we are once again engaged in a great global struggle. We have waged a fierce battle against the invisible enemy — the China virus — which has claimed countless lives in 188 countries ... As we pursue this bright future we must hold accountable the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world: China, In the earliest days of the virus China locked down travel domestically while allowing flights to leave China- and infect the world ... China falsely declared that there is no human-to-human transmission ... every year China dumps millions and millions of tons of plastic and trash into the oceans...We stood up to two decades of China trade abuses."[48]

Keywords: *China Trade Abuses, China does not Play by Rule, Great Global Struggle, China Virus, China unleashed Plague onto the World.*

The key words tapped in the NSS document, and these two speeches indicate that the identity of China is constructed as the one who abuses trade, distorts market, does not play by the rule, one who is

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[47] "*President Donald Trump, Donald Trump Speech 2020 UN General Assembly Transcript*," Presidential Speech, Rev Transcript Library, 2020. https://www.rev.com/blog/

[48] Ibid.

revisionist in intentions and tries to alter status quo, one who is responsible for the spread of virus; hence has made the world an extraordinarily dangerous place. President Trump turned his back on the wider economic liberalization and open market discourse in the West to economic nationalization, mercantilism, and threat discourses. He constructed China as 'different' and on the basis of that difference a 'threat' to the US. It helped him to withdraw from several multinational treaties and adopt a rigid policy stance on China.

Next, we study how the official discourse of otherization of China was reproduced in the unofficial marginal political discourse of print media.

Marginal Political Discourse

Marginal political discourse analysis investigates a text different than the official discourse, which can influence foreign policy. Its object of analysis can be newspapers, websites, books, pamphlets or academic works.[49]

Jianxin Yang and Haimei Wang conducted a study in 2020.[50] They took three papers: the New York times, the Guardian and the Times as their subject matter and studied the coverage of China related COVID-19 news as the data to examine how a global epidemic is reported. They quantitatively analyzed the keywords and collocations and qualitatively examined the discursive strategies used in these papers.

The study outlayed that China's image was constructed as an epidemic paralyzed country that adopted ineffective epidemic prevention measures. Headlines were used as mini-narratives, and a moral lecture-the commonly adopted discursive strategies. The negative mini-narratives in the headlines included statements like 'Virus Spreads as World Pays for Dictator Xi' and 'China's Coronavirus Has Revived Global Economic Fears' while the mini moral lectures included statements like 'China must share all it knows about this mystery virus' and 'The government needs to communicate with the public clearly, honestly and often about the coronavirus,' ; also 'Beijing must be called to account after this crisis for its lies about the spread of coronavirus, West can no longer turn a blind eye to China.'

Keywords: *Economic Fear, China's Corona Virus, Can no Longer turn a Blind Eye to China.*

In brief, the American mainstream newspapers constructed the events of trade war and COVID-19 pandemic in line with the Trump's

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[49]   Hansen, *Security as Practice,* 55-56.

[50]   Jianxin Yang and Haimei Wang,"Discursive Othering in the Fighting Against COVID19: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the China Related Coverage of COVID-19," *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Researc,* vol.537, 2020.

'China threat' narrative. President Trump capitalized on such discourse and further exacerbated it. The otherization discourse projected by Trump in his official speech acts—China's unfair trade practices, deviating from international rules, and a rival power responsible for the spread of the Coronavirus—is reflected in the representation of China in the US print media: 'China's unfairness and corruption,' 'China's virus,' 'China created global economic fears,' and so on. The inter-textuality between the official and unofficial discourse legitimized Trump's otherization of China as a threat and consequently his policies of trade war and of non-cooperation on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explicate the role of identity discourses in US President Donald Trump's foreign policy vis-a-vis China. Premised on the constructivist assumption, it argued that identity discourse constitutes foreign policy. It explored the idea that discourse is not a passive mode of communication, but it rather performs several functions. One of its key functions is the constitution of identity. Identity is a discursive practice, which in turn constitutes the foreign policy of a state.

The study explored how the role of identity discourse in foreign policy can be analyzed. For this task, it investigated the core tenets of constructivist theory and applied the critical discourse analysis model. The different features of constructivist theory— structuration, constitutive theorizing, social construction of reality and discursiveness of structures— provided a non-essentialist understanding of identity and foreign policy, while Lene Hanson's critical discourse analysis model provided a systematic way for studying the constitutive role of identity discourse in foreign policy.

The study of identity discourses in the US foreign policy unfolded that the US identity is not something given or fixed but constituted through discourse practices over a longer period of time. The discourse that essentially constructs the US identity is otherization discourse: self-good and other-bad discourse, where the 'self' assumes the duty of a policeman to discipline, order, and civilize the 'other'. This identity discourse shaped US foreign policy at various points in time, from Amerindian to the current Chinese other.

The case study of Donald Trump made clear that identity discourse was central to his foreign policy pursuits. He constructed an identity of radical other for China. In return, it not only constructed the noble US 'self' vis-à-vis an 'ignoble' and, therefore, a 'threatening' China but also legitimized his policies of trade war and non-cooperation on COVID-19. Application of Lene Hanson's model revealed that multiple texts—not only President Trump's official discourse but also the marginal print media representation—reproduced Trump's otherization discourse and, consequently, his foreign policy towards China. The study provided a

critical scrutiny of Donald Trump's foreign policy towards China. It elucidated the discursiveness of Trump's foreign policy. It showed that discourses of otherization did not vanish, when President Biden took over the office, but continued to manifest, though in subtle forms. The study thus questions the given-ness, fixity, and structural compulsions of foreign policy, as propagated by most IR scholars, and opens ways for building new relationships based on alternative discourses.