

Polarization and Negative-Other “China” Presentation in US President Trump’s COVID-19 Tweets: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

Social media plays a significant role in shaping political discourse nowadays. Many political figures are currently using various social media platforms as new means of political communication (Kreis, 2017). They use them to propagate their political agendas, legitimize their political actions, attack their competitors, and enhance their public image. Although social media began to be utilized in politics during the US 2008 presidential campaign, it was not until 2016 that it became a central stage for political communication during the 2016 US Presidential campaign (Ott, 2017).

Former US President Donald Trump is well-known for his extensive use of twitter to convey his messages to the public. He employs twitter as an instrument of political control (Kreis, 2017). Stolee & Caton (2018) state that Trump’s unprecedented extensive use of twitter as a central medium to serve his political agenda, in the 2016 US Presidential campaign has marked a shift in political discourse. Trump used twitter in an unorthodox manner that led many political analysts to claim that his new twitter rhetoric was one of the main pillars in his winning the 2016 US presidential elections (Johnson, 2016). Some media observers claim that his tweets represent a window to his unfiltered thoughts (Tsur, Ognyanova, & Lazer, 2016).

Many of Trump’s tweets depend on the dichotomy of the self and the other (Shane, 2018). On the one hand, Trump portrays a positive-public-image of himself and his administration and on the other hand, he creates a negative-other image of his political opponents. This other category includes any groups or individuals that threaten his political agenda, such as the News Media, the World Health Organization (WHO), members of the Democratic Party, like Nancy Pelosi, his rival in the US 2020 elections, Joe Biden, Russia, etc. In Trump’s

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Cairo Studies in English – 2021(2): 145-163. <https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/>
DOI: 10.21608/cse.2022.48320.1079

tweets, the other is de-legitimized (Khan et al., 2019). Gounari (2018) states that Trump demonizes the other category. This binary opposition between the two categories is employed for two reasons: First, to tarnish the opposition's reputation and second to accentuate his positive-self presentation in an attempt to get more votes for the re-election in 2020. Kreis claims the following:

His particular communication style and his use of a participatory web platform as a major tool of communication further index how he views himself in relation to the people: the leader who, on the one hand, returned sovereignty to the people and, on the other hand, protects the nation and homeland from the dangerous "Other." (2017, 9)

In 2020, with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world and with a high number of deaths in the US, in addition to being the election year, Trump starts deflating the blame he gets from the opposition regarding his administration's handling of the COVID-19 in the US by making an interesting set of tweets to attack China to deflect the blame on China as *the other*.

Former US President Donald Trump is known for using social media, especially twitter to give important announcements, give his opinion on current affairs, but most importantly to counter political threats and gain public appeal by defaming those in opposition. The present study aims at adopting CDA and specifically Van Dijk's (1998) concept of Ideological Square to examine Trump's discourse strategies on twitter that are employed to create a dichotomy between the self (Trump and his administration), and the negative other (China) to unravel his political ideologies. The study attempts to answer the following research questions: 1) How does US President Donald Trump represent himself and his administration in contrast to China in his tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in the US? 2) What are the discourse strategies employed by US President Trump in his tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in the US to create a negative-other out-group presentation of China?

1. Literature Review: Discourse Analysis

1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Van Dijk (2000) states that texts derive their meanings from their social actors' ideologies. Language is not a neutral tool for communication, but rather a powerful instrument that reflects social actors' ideologies through lexical, syntactic and discursive choices. A paradigm that examines these processes is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It explores the linguistic tools used by

powerful social actors to impact social opinions, values and beliefs (Van Dijk, 1993) in an attempt to uncover the implicit ideological prejudices and power relations in texts. Van Dijk defines CDA as:

[A] type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (2001, 352)

Van Dijk (1998) argues that CDA is founded on the assumption that discourse plays a significant role in consolidating bias, oppression and prejudice in society, and therefore, it sets to unravel hidden discourse ideologies through exposing the tools manipulated by social actors to achieve this goal. It highlights how power and dominance are shaped and reshaped in social practice through discursive and rhetorical features. This approach is convenient when the analysis involves examining bias in political discourse, as presented in the present study.

1.2. Political Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

Van Dijk states that critical political discourse analysis deals with “the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance” (1997, 11). It examines the strategies, discursive tools, rhetorical devices and structures that function in a political context. These tools, devices and structures could be employed in phonology, graphics, syntax, meaning, speech acts, style or rhetoric. It also explores whether specific discourse structures are more or less typical and especially more or less effective for the political functions they may have, or even, more specifically, in the specific political contexts in which they might be used.

One of the features that is typical of political discourse and that is relevant to the current study is evaluations. Opinions and attitudes of political figures, organizations and their actions are coated with political agendas and ideologies. In political discourse, these evaluations are polarized through the positive evaluation of *us* and negative evaluation of *them*, while de-emphasizing our bad actions:

Whereas WE are democratic, THEY are not, and whereas Our soldiers, or those who share our cause, are freedom fighters, those of

the Others are obviously terrorists. The same is true for our policies and political decisions, which will invariably benefit the country and all citizens, whereas those of the Others will not. This semantic and ideological polarization is well-known. (Van Dijk, 1997, 28)

1.3. Political Discourse and Social Media

The media is not a neutral mediator of social and political events, but an ideologically-coated means of reproducing these events with the ideology of its user (Van Dijk, 1988). Ott (2017) argues that social media has not only changed the way social actors use language, but also the way they do politics. Many day-to-day verbal political communication has shifted to various social media platforms. Social media has been an effective political instrument for the past few years.

Twitter, specifically, is increasingly employed by many prominent politicians as a central tool to serve their political agendas (Ross and Rivers, 2018). Maireder & Ausserhofer (2014, 306) define Twitter as “an awareness system that allows for an immediate, fast, and widespread dissemination of information” which “contributes to a broadening of public debate” (Larsson and Moe 2011, 741) as the language employed in Twitter is mostly short, fragmented, and decontextualized due to space constraints. It is a language that tends to reduce human communication to 280 characters. Therefore, it nurtures simplicity, promotes impulsivity, and fosters incivility (Ott, 2017). As politics is basically a communicative activity, twitter became the preferred medium of communication for many politicians.

In her book, *Trump Effect*, Korostelina (2016) states that what is widely-known as the “Trump effect” or the impact of Trump’s discourse on the US society and international relations is immense. The central element of the Trump Effect is his domination of social media, and more specifically, Twitter, which he achieves through his controversial rhetoric. Trump’s controversial political discourse used in influencing the public opinion has attracted the attention of several linguists who examine how he employs it to achieve power and dominance.

1.4. Previous Studies on Trump’s Tweets

Anspach (2020) carries out a survey experiment to examine the impact of Trump’s racist tweets on US subjects’ racial attitude. It was found that both explicit and implicit racist tweets make subjects more comfortable and inclined to use racist language, demonstrating the powerful impact of Trump’s racist tweets on the US public. Ross and Rivers (2018) holds a corpus analysis of

Trump's Twitter discourse against US mainstream media. The study adopts CDA to examine Trump's most frequently used words and word clusters used to attack what he calls "fake news" or "fake media" in comparison with tweets given by other politicians. The study shows that his tweets aligned with Lakoff's (2017) pre-emptive framing, diversion, deflection, and trial balloon strategies. Shane (2018) examines the key authenticity cues employed by Trump during the 2016 US election to produce an authentic self on twitter. The study concludes that Trump's authenticity relied mainly on the use of indexes, signs and tags. The study reflects how politicians use social media to appear more authentic for the public and therefore gain more votes.

Crockett (2016) studies 2,500 tweets by Trump from 2015 to 2016 and concludes that Trump's discourse on Twitter is characterized by three features. First, the use of simple, monosyllabic, and repetitive vocabulary, like "bad" and "sad" is evident in his rhetoric to the extent that his language is criticized for resembling that of a fourth or fifth grade student (Kayam, 2018). Second, the study highlights Trump's tendency to use aggressive, degrading, and abusive language to insult and smear his opponents' reputation. Winberg (2017) claims that Trump's discourse has replaced attack politics with offence politics. Finally, he was found to intensify negative emotions in his tweets through the use of all caps words and exclamation points. Ott (2017, 64) states that Trump's lexicon is simple, repetitious and 'relying heavily on monosyllabic words while "he makes frequent use of exclamation points and all caps"'.

The present study aims to add information to the present literature regarding how Trump structures his tweets through examining the presence of the self/ in-group and the other/ out-group presentation in his tweets about China and its role in the spread of the pandemic. The study assists in reaching an understanding of the meanings constructed through Trump's China tweets and whether or not it reflects the other literature.

2. Methodology: Tweets and Ideology

2.1. Data Selection: Donald Trumps Tweets

The data chosen for this study consists of thirty tweets taken from Donald Trump's personal Twitter account (@realDonaldTrump). All Trump's tweets that were tweeted about "China" between March 2020 and July 2020, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US are selected. The time frame was chosen to examine the self/ other presentation in Trump's China tweets during the pandemic and before the re-election campaign. All thirty tweets negatively portray China as the other. No positive tweets about China were found during

the selected time frame. The tweets reveal how politicians employ language in social media to pass on their political ideologies.

2.2 Analytical Framework: Van Dijk's Ideological Square

The present study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover hidden ideologies in political discourse. One structure of political discourse involves political actors giving evaluations. These evaluations are ideologically-based opinions. One model which highlights evaluations in discourse is Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square. It encapsulates how social groups are represented in discourse as *us* vs. *them* to assert group dominance. In this model, the speaker and his supporters are regarded as the *us* or in-group, while the opponents are framed as the *them* or out-group category. In this dichotomy, the in-group is shaped in a positive light, with the most positive attributes, while the out-group is portrayed from a negative perspective with the most negative ones. This twin strategy which heightens the binary opposition between both accentuate the impact of the in-group positive features in contrast to the out-group negative ones.

Several scholars (Adegoju and Oyebode, 2015; Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados, 2014; Mazid, 2008; Reynolds, 2018) emphasize that this model is suited for the analysis of political discourse where ideological conflicts are constructed in the self-other phenomenon. In this model, ideologically-loaded discourse is constructed by four moves that constitute the Ideological Square. First, the speakers emphasize the positive in-group information. Second, they stress the negative out-group information. Third, they suppress the positive out-group information. Finally, they de-emphasize the negative in-group information. Participants in these self-presentations are not categorized as individuals, but as social groups (Van Dijk, 1998). The ideological square can be examined across all linguistic features of a text. Van Dijk's Ideological Square equips the language users with a conceptual tool to determine choices between referential strategies.

3. Data Analysis: Trumps Tweets about China

Trump's tweets selected for the current study represent his stance towards China, an economic and political rival of the US. In his tweets, Trump emphasizes his in-group positive actions not just through highlighting them, but also by exposing the shortcomings and drawbacks of the other out-group (van Dijk, 2006b). He portrays his in-group; that is himself and his administration, in a positive light through positive self-presentation and tends to show China which is linked in most of his tweets to his opponents, such as the media, his political

opponents; the democrats like Joe Biden and Nancy Pelosi who are members of the out-group in a negative light through negative other-presentation. Preparing for his 2020 re-election campaign, Trump attempts to turn the US public attention to the other and channel all the voters' anger towards China, which becomes a new target in Trump's "out-group" category. Therefore, it is China and not his administration that should be blamed for the high number of covid-19 deaths in the United States.

In this regard, the salient strategies at work include presentation of the other out-group as incompetent, liar, lacking credibility, conspirator, manipulator and hated. While, the self or in-group is presented as a savior, powerful, tough, hard-working, loyal, courageous, and presented as unified with his nation.

3.1. Negative Other-Presentation

3.1.1. The "other" is incompetent and guilty of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic

Trump creates a negative image of China as the "other". In Trump's tweets, China is presented as guilty; first of causing the COVID-19 pandemic and second of being incompetent in containing the virus early on and therefore causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands not just in the US, but across the world. Trump achieves this effect in his tweets through several strategies. First, he uses lexicalization. As shown in Table (1), phrases like "its source, China," "from China," "China has caused" are employed to link the virus to China. As shown in Table (1), Trump also presents this accusation through repeatedly using the same modifiers, as he usually refers to the pandemic as the "China virus," instead of COVID-19, in an attempt to create an association between the virus and China.

Second, in his tweets, Trump employs intensifiers and loaded words to accuse China of being the reason behind not containing the virus and therefore portraying China, the other, as a villain that causes the "*plague*," "*killed hundreds of thousands of people*" and does "*great damage*" and "*mass world-wide killing*." The choice and the repetition of such loaded lexis insinuates that Trump, just like the rest of the world, is a victim of China's incompetence and therefore he, as president, and his administration can escape any blame or accusations of dereliction in handling this crisis, from not only his political opponents, but also the media. In other words, China, the "incompetent other," is the villain to be blamed.

Moreover, using past modals as in "They *could have easily stopped* the plague, but they didn't" and "it *should have been stopped* at its source, China"

are again employed to put the blame on China and portray it as incompetent. The repetition of China’s disability to “stop” the virus is used again to point a finger at China. He emphasizes that it was easy for China to stop the virus early on, but according to the image created by Trump, they did not because they are incompetent. This incompetence is sharply contrasted right away by Trump in the same tweet “but I acted very quickly and made the right decisions”. The sharp contrast between the incompetent other and the skillful self are used to improve Trump’s public image. Therefore, Trump turns the tables. He manipulates a situation that was used against him by the opposition that previously accused him of mishandling the crisis as a positive part of his re-election campaign. Thus, the negative-other presentation is used to frame his decisions regarding the virus as heroic and eventually gets voters support.

Table 1. Trump’s Tweets. N.B. All of Trump’s tweets were quoted from his Twitter Account, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump> before it was permanently suspended on January 8th, 2021.

Tweet	Date
<i>Some wacko in China just released a statement blaming everybody other than China for the Virus which has now killed hundreds of thousands of people. Please explain to this dope that it was the “incompetence of China”, and nothing else, that did this mass worldwide killing!</i>	20 May, 2020
<i>It all comes from the top. They could have easily stopped the plague, but they didn’t!</i>	21 May, 2020
<i>One person lost to this invisible virus is too much, it should have been stopped at its source, China, but I acted very quickly, and made the right decisions. Many of the current political complainers thought, at the time, that I was moving far too fast, like Crazy Nancy!</i>	26 May, 2020
<i>All over the World the Coronavirus, a very bad “gift” from China, marches on. Not good!</i>	28 May, 2020
<i>China has caused great damage to the United States and the rest of the World!</i>	6 July, 2020
<i>Why does the Lamestream Fake News Media REFUSE to say that China Virus deaths are down 39%, and that we now have the lowest Fatality (Mortality) Rate in the World. They just can’t stand that we are doing so well for our Country!</i>	6 July, 2020
<i>BREAKING NEWS: The Mortality Rate for the China Virus in the U.S. is just about the LOWEST IN THE WORLD! Also, Deaths in the U.S. are way down, a tenfold decrease since the Pandemic height (and, our Economy is coming back strong!).</i>	6 July, 2020
<i>New China Virus Cases up (because of massive testing), deaths are down, “low and steady”. The Fake News Media should report this and also, that new job numbers are setting records!</i>	6 July, 2020

Trump also uses the ironic metaphor of the virus as a “bad gift” from China to the whole world in a sarcastic tone again to hold China responsible for the COVID-19 consequences, in contrast to the US and the whole world which are portrayed as victims of the “great damage” that China has inflicted on them. In addition, Trump employs insulting language when talking about China, as in using terms like “wacko,” “this dope” and “stupidly” to refer to Chinese spokesmen. The negative presentation of Chinese spokesmen is sharply contrasted to the skillful Trump who “acted very quickly, and made the right decisions”.

3.1.2. *The ‘other’ is a liar and lacks credibility*

Trump also employs structures like the comparative to portray China, in his tweets, as a liar and as a country that lacks credibility. He depicts China as a country that lies; first about the COVID-19 situation in China, and second about respecting their trade deals. China, the other, is presented as lacking credibility. As shown in table (2), the immediacy in “China has just announced a doubling in the number of their deaths” is a direct accusation to the Chinese government that they misled the whole world by covering up the truth and by lying about the true number of COVID-19 deaths in China, for a long time. Besides, he uses the comparative structure “*It is far higher than that and far higher than the U.S., not even close!*” to refer to the new announced number of COVID-19 deaths in China as their new lie, claiming that the numbers are higher than the US numbers and way higher than the official numbers announced by the Chinese government at that time.

Table 2.

Tweet	Date
<i>China has just announced a doubling in the number of their deaths from the Invisible Enemy. It is far higher than that and far higher than the U.S., not even close!</i>	17 April, 2020
<i>As I have said for a long time, dealing with China is a very expensive thing to do. We just made a great Trade Deal, the ink was barely dry, and the World was hit by the Plague from China. 100 Trade Deals wouldn't make up the difference - and all those innocent lives lost!</i>	13 May, 2020
<i>The China Trade Deal is fully intact. Hopefully they will continue to live up to the terms of the Agreement!</i>	23 June, 2020

As shown in table (2), Trump makes use of metaphor in “dealing with China is a very expensive thing to do” comparing dealing with China to a risky transaction, a bad deal or a threat to depict China as the harmful other. Using the

deictic “I” in “As I have said for a long time ago” adds to the dichotomy between the other that is a liar and the self that has a leader’s insight who has seen this coming. A word like “*Hopefully*” at the beginning of “*Hopefully they will continue to live up to the terms of the Agreement!*” implies Trump’s doubts that China would respect the terms of the Trade Deal with the US. Again, Trump categorizes the other as a country that cannot be trusted, not just with handling the COVID-19 pandemic, but also with their trade deals, unlike the US led by Trump which has kept “*the trade deal fully intact*”.

3.1.3 The other is a conspirator

Trump also employs presupposition and lexicalization in his tweets to show victimization. By constructing polarizations of “us” and “them”, he portrays his administration and himself as victims of China and the Chinese government that is portrayed as a conspirator against them and against the welfare of the American people. Trump employs presupposition to achieve this binary opposition. The structural presupposition “what about China’s propaganda?” as shown in table (3) presupposes that China is on a campaign to disavow responsibility regarding the COVID-19 situation. It consolidates the idea that China is endorsing campaigns to improve their image. The use of “disinformation campaigns” and “propaganda” depicts China as marketing for a lie.

Trump also uses lexicalization and presupposition to accuse China of interfering with US politics by manipulating the public opinion to support his opponent in the 2020 presidential elections, Joe Biden. As shown in table (3), by describing China as “desperate” and wanting Joe Biden “sooo badly,” he does not only emphasize the negative other-presentation by portraying China as the conspirator, but also accentuates the positive self-presentation as he insinuates that his administration is regarded by China and the Chinese government as an obstacle, preventing them from getting “billions of dollars” from the US. China is portrayed as a conspirator against the US welfare by supporting Trump’s opponent in the upcoming elections, Joe Biden. The lexical presupposition “so they can continue to rip-off the United States” presupposes that they used to rip-off the US in the past, in an indirect attack to the Obama administration. The binary opposition between the negative other “They” and the positive powerful self “I” is very clear in “until I came along”. Trump portrays himself as strong, powerful, tough and even heroic. He is the one who managed to stand up to China, unlike the previous presidents and unlike Joe Biden who is referred to in a metaphor as “an easy mark” or China’s “DREAM CANDIDATE” to include him in the other out-group category. Trump, furthermore, employs the name

calling strategy when he refers to Joe Biden as “sleepy Joe,” just as he employs it with Chinese officials as shown in table (1) to make fun of him, to undermine his authority and to picture him as incompetent and unfit for the US office.

Table 3.

Tweets	Date
<i>China wants Sleepy Joe sooo badly. They want all of those billions of dollars that they have been paying to the U.S. back, and much more. Joe is an easy mark, their DREAM CANDIDATE!</i>	18 April, 2020
<i>China is on a massive disinformation campaign because they are desperate to have Sleepy Joe Biden win the presidential race so they can continue to rip-off the United States, as they have done for decades, until I came along!</i>	21 May, 2020
<i>Spokesman speaks stupidly on behalf of China, trying desperately to deflect the pain and carnage that their country spread throughout the world. Its disinformation and propaganda attack on the United States and Europe is a disgrace....</i>	21 May, 2020
<i>“The President has been targeted by Twitter.” @MariaBartirromo What about all of the lies and fraudulent statements made by Adam Schiff, and so many others, on the Russian Witch Hunt Plus, Plus, Plus? What about China’s propaganda? WHO’s mistakes? No flags? @foxandfriends</i>	29 May, 2020

3.1.4 The other is a manipulator of US Media and US politicians

Trump employs presupposition, metaphors, and similes to emphasize the dichotomy between himself and his administration, on the one hand, and China, on the other. Trump portrays China in his tweets as a manipulator of US media to fulfill its political agenda. As shown in table (4), he employs metaphors to attack mainstream media, like the New York Times, NBC News, CNN and CBS as he calls them “sick losers” and “Chinese puppets” in a comparison that not only undermines US mainstream media, which he calls “fake news,” but also portrays China in a negative light as a manipulator that pays a lot of cash to the media to improve their Chinese international image and direct the blame for COVID-19 or the “horrible virus pandemic” to Europe and Russia. The structural presupposition, “Can’t blame China because they need the cash?” presupposes that China and the US media work together, and that the US media tries to take the blame for the COVID-19 situation away from China as they are paid a lot of money by the later.

Besides, Trump uses the simile “They were thrown out of China like dogs and want back in” as shown in table (4) and compares US media practitioners to dogs, not only to show that they are greedy, materialistic and that all they care for is not reporting the truth, but “doing everything they can,” to “defend” China,

but also to show China as the evil other who is in full control of the US media. Through establishing this connection between the mainstream media and China, Trump places both in one group as the manipulative other.

Trump even employs a metaphor comparing China, in one of his tweets, to a “cash-cow,” as shown in table (4), to emphasize that China is not only manipulative of the US media, but also of his political opponents, the democrats who “don’t want to blame their cash cow China for the plague.” Trump also employs another metaphor, “the enemy of the people” to refer to China as the manipulative enemy.

Table 4.

Tweet	Date
<i>So now the Fake News @nytimes is tracing the CoronaVirus origins back to Europe, NOT China. This is a first! I wonder what the Failing New York Times got for this one? Are there any NAMED sources? They were recently thrown out of China like dogs, and obviously want back in. Sad!</i>	12 April, 2020
<i>Concast (@NBCNews) and Fake News @CNN are going out of their way to say GREAT things about China. They are Chinese puppets who want to do business there. They use USA airwaves to help China. The Enemy of the People!</i>	1 May, 2020
<i>.@CBS and their show, @60Minutes, are doing everything within their power, which is far less today than it was in the past, to defend China and the horrible Virus pandemic that was inflicted on the USA and the rest of the World. I guess they want to do business in China!</i>	11 May, 2020
<i>Here we go again. Fake News @CNN is blaming RUSSIA, RUSSIA, RUSSIA. They are sick losers with VERY bad ratings! P.S. Can’t blame China because they need the cash?</i>	30 May, 2020
<i>The Democrats are just, as always, looking for trouble. They do nothing constructive, even in times of crisis. They don’t want to blame their cash cow, China, for the plague. China is blaming Europe. Dr. Fauci will be testifying before the Senate very soon!</i>	3 May, 2020

3.1.5 The other is hated

In his tweets, Trump views China as the hated other. As shown in table (5), he reminds all Americans of the “tremendous damage” caused by COVID-19 which he attaches to China. The metaphor, “[a]s I watch the pandemic spread its ugly face all across the world,” compares COVID-19 to an ugly monster that is starting to take control over the whole world. The lexical presupposition, “Asian Americans are VERY angry at what China has done to our Country, and the World,” entails that China is the one responsible for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US and the whole world. Trump repeats loaded words like “angry” in “VERY angry,” “are the most angry,” and “I become more and more angry” to unite himself with Americans, Asian Americans, and the world against

China. Therefore, he includes Americans, including Asian Americans and the world in the “in-group” category that is angry at China, excluding China as the other “out-group” category to portray it as the hated other. In addition, the lexicalization in his tweet, “CHINA!” reflects the same amount of annoyance and anger.

Table 5.

Tweet	Date
<i>Asian Americans are VERY angry at what China has done to our Country, and the World. Chinese Americans are the most angry of all. I don't blame them!</i>	12 May, 2020
<i>As I watch the Pandemic spread its ugly face all across the world, including the tremendous damage it has done to the USA, I become more and more angry at China. People can see it, and I can feel it!</i>	1 July, 2020
CHINA!	29 May, 2020

4.2. Positive-Self Presentation

4.2.1 *The self is the savior of the nation/ The self is one with his nation*

Trump uses the pronouns “he/ they” in contrast to “I/ we” in his tweets, to create a clear dichotomy between the other “out-group” and the self “in-group;” between his opponents, such as China and Joe Biden, on the one hand, and his administration, himself and his supporters, on the other hand. The out-group deictic “he/they” is used in Trump’s tweets as shown in tables (1) and (6). An example of this type of deictic tool can be seen in tweets such as “**They** could have easily stopped the plague, but **they** didn’t!”, “**They** took us to the cleaners” and “**they** wanted [...] rip-off Trade Deals” which depicts China in a negative image. This “out-group” deictic, “he/they” is contrasted with the “in group,” “I/we”. The “I” is widely used in Trump’s tweets as in “**I** always treated the Chinese virus very seriously,” “**I** have done a very good job from the beginning,” “including **my** early decision to close the borders from China,” “**I** acted very quickly, and made the right decisions,” “**I** rejected their advice on keeping our borders open to China early on,” “**I** got billions out of China,” “**I** gave much of it to our targeted farmers,” and “**I** am getting it all back.” The in-group is depicted as strong, powerful, skillful, tough and with leadership qualities with Trump as president as opposed to Joe Biden.

As shown in tables (1) and (6), Trump also uses “we/our” in “**Our** Economy is coming back strong!” “**We** are United in **our** efforts to defeat the Invisible China Virus,” “**We** will be giving that a good look,” “[...] **our** Economy was blowing everybody away, the best of any country, EVER.” and “**We** will be there again, and soon!” to give a message of national unity and to reach for a wider

audience of American voters. However, Trump tweets more often in the first person singular (I have, I can, etc.) rather than the collective we to insinuate that he is the source of actions, solutions, and ideas.

Table 6.

Tweet	Date
<i>I always treated the Chinese Virus very seriously, and have done a very good job from the beginning, including my very early decision to close the “borders” from China - against the wishes of almost all. Many lives were saved. The Fake News new narrative is disgraceful & false!</i>	18 March 2020
<i>Biden failed with China. They took us to the cleaners! I got \$Billions out of China, and gave much of it to our targeted farmers!</i>	25 June, 2020
<i>Nobody in 50 years has been WEAKER on China than Sleepy Joe Biden. He was asleep at the wheel. He gave them EVERYTHING they wanted, including rip-off Trade Deals. I am getting it all back!</i>	25 May, 2020
<i>The W.H.O. really blew it. For some reason, funded largely by the United States, yet very China centric. We will be giving that a good look. Fortunately, I rejected their advice on keeping our borders open to China early on. Why did they give us such a faulty recommendation?</i>	7 April, 2020
<i>Why is it that China, for decades, and with a population much bigger than ours, is paying a tiny fraction of \$’s to The World Health Organization, The United Nations and, worst of all, The World Trade Organization, where they are considered a so-called “developing country” and</i>	17 May, 2020
<i>....are therefore given massive advantages over The United States, and everyone else? Prior to the Plague floating in from China, our Economy was blowing everybody away, the best of any country, EVER. We will be there again, and soon!</i>	17 May, 2020
<i>We are United in our effort to defeat the Invisible China Virus, and many people say that it is Patriotic to wear a face mask when you can’t socially distance. There is nobody more Patriotic than me, your favorite President!</i>	20 July, 2020

In addition, Trump employs the comparative structure and lexicalization in his tweets to achieve this positive self and in-group presentation as in “There is nobody more Patriotic than me, your favorite President!” Using the structure “There is nobody more patriotic than me,” and the choice of “your favorite president” are used by Trump to emphasize his patriotism and the idea that he is one with the American people. Trump also employs the superlative as in “our economy [...] the best of any country EVER” to present his achievements and to echo his campaign promise to ‘make America great again.’

Again, Trump repeats “China Virus” and “Chinese Virus” and uses the metaphor “the plague floating in from China” to connect COVID-19 to China

and present it as the one responsible for all the negative consequences that are inflicted on the people's health and economy, not just in the United States, but in the whole world.

Trump also employs structural presupposition as in "Why did they (WHO) give us such a faulty recommendation?" to entail that China has deliberately given the US faulty recommendations to leave their borders open for travelers from China. Therefore, Trump questions the motives and actions of The World Health Organization (WHO) as he also labels it as "very China centric." Moreover, the structural presupposition, "Why is it that China, for decades, and with a population much bigger than ours, is paying a tiny fraction of \$'s to The World Health Organization, The United Nations and, worst of all, The World Trade Organization, where they are considered a so-called "developing country"" entails that China has a suspicious illegal connection with International Organizations such as The World Health Organization, The United Nations and The World Trade Organization. Trump employs these structural presuppositions to place these organizations along with China in the other-out-group category and portray them from a negative perspective.

4. Discussion: Trump's Tweets and the Ideological Square

The analysis of US President Trump tweets through adopting CDA and Van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square has proved to be very beneficial in highlighting the dichotomy present in Trump's political rhetoric on twitter, a social media platform which Trump relies on not just to express his political views, but also to improve his public image while he attacks his opponents who are pictured and grouped as the other-out-group category. The polarization between the other-out-group category, in this case, China, and the self-in-group category, represented by Trump, his administration and his supporters, is evident in Trump's political rhetoric on twitter. In his tweets, the other is depicted negatively, while the self-in-group category is portrayed in a positive light.

On the one hand, China, the other in the selected tweets, is depicted as a guilty, incompetent, hated liar, conspirator, and manipulator. It is presented as "the enemy of the people" as Trump puts it. Trump, his administration and supporters, on the other hand, are presented as strong, powerful, skillful, and tough. Trump depicts himself as the people's "favorite president" who is on a mission to make America great again. He employs several linguistic and discursive tools to achieve this goal. First, he makes use of lexicalization. He uses words like "China Virus" and "Chinese Virus" to attach COVID-19 to China, and depicts China as being on "disinformation campaigns" and "propaganda" to improve its international image. China is portrayed as

“desperate” to get Joe Biden as the coming US president who is referred to by Trump as China’s “easy mark” and “dream candidate.” Trump also employs name calling and refers to the Chinese spokesman as a “wacko,” “this dope” and “stupidly” to insult China, which is portrayed as the illogical other.

Trump makes use of loaded lexis and hyperbolic expressions to refer to COVID-19 as a “*plague*” that caused “*great damage*,” “*tremendous damage*,” “*killed hundreds of thousands of people*,” and has caused “*mass world-wide killing*” to remind the US public of the horrors of COVID-19 which he exaggerates, after linking the virus to China, and therefore, blaming it all on China, the guilty and incompetent other. He employs repetition of previous lexical choices to emphasize the impact of his statements. He also employs presupposition, like structural presupposition as in “*What about China’s propaganda?*” and lexical presuppositions as in “*continue to rip-off the United States*,” to entail that China conspires against not just the US, but also the whole world, and therefore, view it as the “enemy of the people.”

Metaphors are also employed by Trump as in comparing China to a cash cow and comparing US media practitioners to Chinese puppets, in an attempt to depict China as a manipulator that collaborates with US traitors to conspire against the American people. Structures like Past modals “*They could have easily stopped the plague, but they didn’t*,” and “*it should have been stopped at its source, China*,” and the comparative, “*It is far higher than that and far higher than the U.S., not even close!*” portray China as an incompetent lying country that cannot be trusted. Trump also makes use of deictic tools like “I/we” in contrast to “you/ they” in an attempt to collect more votes in the US 2020 election. He presents himself as powerful and tough on China, as a savior of the nation and as the source of economic stability.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher examines the linguistic and discursive tools, in the tweets of the former US President, Donald Trump about “China,” during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US from March to July 2020. The study adopts CDA and Van Dijk’s Ideological square (1998) as a framework to highlight the dichotomy between the self-in-group category and the other-out-group category in Trump’s political rhetoric on twitter. The study concludes that Trump employs lexicalization, repetition, metaphors, presupposition, loaded words and deictic expressions, along with some structures like past modals to depict China, the other, as an incompetent country, a liar, a conspirator against the welfare of the American people and a manipulator of US mainstream media and the democrats. Trump and his administration, on the other hand, are

portrayed as strong, powerful, tough, and heroic. The strict dichotomy between the self and the other assists Trump in constructing a negative image of China and a positive image of his administration to prepare for his elections in November 2020. The significance of the study lies not only in understanding the ideology of the self vs. the other, embedded in President Trump's tweets, but also in highlighting the effect of COVID-19 on the social actors' discourse. Future CDA studies on political discourse, on social media platforms can contribute an understanding to the construction and reconstruction of power relations and dominance in discourse.

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