

A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump's China-Related Political Discourses

Zhenxiao Pu¹

¹ College of Foreign Languages, Ocean University of China, Qingdao, China

Correspondence: Zhenxiao Pu, College of Foreign Languages, Ocean University of China, Qingdao, China.

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Abstract

Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper explores the concentrated focus of Trump's China-related political discourses as well as the covert ideology of the same. Based on corpus-driven text mining tools KH Coder and Antconc, the paper found Trump's concentrated focus on trade, Trump-Xi relationship and Korean Peninsula. Trump administration has taken a hard-line and cautious stance toward China. Trump administration's strategies toward China reflect isolationism and protectionism. This paper provides a new linguistic angle for studies on Sino-U.S. relations process.

Keywords: Donald Trump, political discourse, critical discourse analysis, text mining

1. Introduction

As the president of United States, Donald Trump's personality is unpredictable. He brings aggressive and sharp speech style to the audience. In many people's eyes, he is egocentric and crazy. At the same time, he gains great popularity in America, especially among the workers and farmers. He behaves like that he is not a politician. The name of his personal tweet account is @realDonaldTrump, which reveals his sense of humor and part of his personality. It is obvious that his personality doesn't suit his position of American president. However, he is the president of the United States. Thus, his discourses are not only a reflection of his ideology, but also a reflection of Trump administration's strategies. Besides, disputes between China and the U.S. sparked rounds of trade war in 2018.

The paper seeks to explore Trump administration's attitude to China and provide insightful reflections upon Sino-U.S. relationship by exploring the focus and ideology behind Trump's China-related political discourses.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis, also known as critical linguistics, critical language research or linguistic criticism, is a discourse analysis method emerging in recent years abroad. It is the study not only of what language is, but of why it is as it is; Interested not only in the meaning of words, but also in how words produce that meaning. It aims to reveal the influence of ideology on discourse and the counteraction of discourse on ideology through the surface language form, as well as how both of them come from the social structure and the

relationship of omnipotence, and how they serve it. CDA started from Fairclough (1989), but before that, Fowler et al. (1979) had proposed the concept of critical linguistics (CL). CL, to a large extent, rebelled against and supplemented the long-dominant structuralist linguistics. The linguistics represented by Saussure, Bronfeld and Chomsky regarded language as an abstract system of self-sufficiency and self-regulation. The structuralist linguistics of the United States also tried to build itself into an empirical science based on the natural science of the time. It argued that language could only be described in isolation on its own terms, without any reference to external facts. Including cultural tradition and present like. In the opposite direction, critical linguistics takes the function of language forms in communicative contexts as its core subject, and argues that the use of language is full of values, and we should practice a kind of linguistics aimed at understanding such values, which is critical linguistics (see Fowler, 1991: 5). The purpose of the CL and Cornell's said criticism of sociology basic consistent: the purpose of "criticism... Aimed at changing or even eliminating conditions that are considered to lead to unreal or distorted consciousness... Criticize... To bring to light what has been hidden before, and thus initiate a process of introspection within the individual or group to gain from the past repression and emancipation under domination" (Connerton, from Fowler, 1987: 483).

Compared with CL, CDA pays more attention to discussing the role of language in specific social issues. Therefore, it "provides theories and methods for studying the relationship between discourse and social and cultural development in different fields" (Fairclough, 1995: 30). Fairclough (1989) pointed out that CDA is not only analysis, but also criticism; Ideology through the natural process into common sense, and accepted by people and familiar, and CDA to do is reverse movement, namely to natural, through the special form of language to reveal the implied the relationship between language, power and ideology as well as how to use the language to ruling class. Exercising ideological control and maintaining one's position of power. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) propose three purposes for CDA: (1) To systematically explore the relationship between discourse practices, events and discourses and broader socio-cultural structures, relationships and

processes. The causal relationship between; (2) Study the relationship between these practices, events, and discourses and power; (3) Explore the role of the relationship between discourse and society in maintaining power and hegemony.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) deals with studying and analyzing written or spoken text to reveal the existence of power, dominance and inequality (Fairclough, 2009). The major research methods in critical discourse analysis are dialectical-relational approach, socio-cognitive approach, and discourse-historical approach (Fairclough, 2009; van Dijk, 2008). There are some limitations in traditional critical discourse analysis. One is the arbitrary selection of texts. The other is the small number of texts (Stubbs, 1994). The first one refers to the risk of 'cherry-picking', that is, the author 'picks a text to prove a point', leading to problems relating to representativeness and generalizability. The second one concerns the small data sets in discourse analytical studies, implying the risk of neglecting linguistic patterns that are less frequent.

2.2 Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics has become the mainstream of language research. Corpus-based research is no longer the exclusive domain of computer experts. It is having an increasing impact on many areas of language study. This is a congratulatory message by J. homas et al. 1996. The opening remarks of Corpus Linguistics Research Collection published on the 60th birthday of G. Leech, the main founder and advocate of corpus linguistics. In recent years, similar comments on corpus linguistics are frequently seen in introduction and methodology books and textbooks. It is not only the self-reputation of corpus linguists, but also becoming the consensus of the whole linguistic circle.

Corpus linguistics adopts a bottom-up approach. "Down" refers to data from real language use; "Up" refers to linguistic theoretical abstraction. In short, all problem exploration begins with the observation and processing of data, which is embodied in the research process of "extraction—observation—generalization—interpretation". Specifically, researchers should first extract data about linguistic phenomena from the corpus, and then automatically or semi-automatically process the original data by

means of tools to obtain the necessary quantitative data distribution information. Then the overall characteristics and trends of the data are observed and described. Appropriate generalizations and interpretations are made after further examination of the contextual information, meaning, and functional features of specific linguistic forms. Because of this process feature corpus research is often called frequency-based study or probability-driven study. The reason for this approach is that frequency or probability information reflects important intrinsic properties of language system and language use. Corpus, the researchers believe that the high frequency of form, meaning and function are often reveals the core of language use and typical elements, reveals the most frequently used in the process of communication, most often in the form of realizing the significance and function of, from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic research closely related to many of the problems; The change of frequency information also revealed the dynamic changes of the language information and phrases or words, grammatical and other related concepts. This bottom-up approach is essentially inductive. The opposite of bottom-up is a top-down approach. Which is common in a variety of traditional linguistics: the exploration of language problems began in theory, driven by default theory framework or model research steps and links; Evidence appropriate to the theory is highlighted by the use of evidence that cannot be accommodated by the theory and discarded; The purpose of evidence is to be used to support or disprove a theory. Top-down research has strong characteristics of deductive methods.

Corpus Linguistics (CL) consists of various empirical methods of linguistic analysis using corpora as the primary data and starting point, with the aim of finding ‘probabilities, trends, patterns, co-occurrences of elements, features or groupings of features’ (Teubert & Krishnamurthy, 2007). CL techniques include cluster analysis, keyness analysis, and word frequency lists. And it is more common within CL to search for certain keywords and study them using, for example, collocation analysis (Pollach, 2012). In China, many scholars apply CL techniques into linguistic studies (Li Jing, 2018; Liu Ming & Chang Chenguang, 2018; Liu Xinfang, 2015; Xin Bin & Gao Xiaoli, 2013; Zhang Shujing, 2014).

As the corpus research team grows and the research field becomes more and more extensive, it is very necessary to re-discuss and emphasize the main methodological features and concepts of corpus linguistics. In short, the bottom-up approach is the main methodological feature that distinguishes corpus linguistics from other linguistics. In terms of the nature of the subject, corpus linguistics is the most transformative development of descriptive linguistics. Based on the constantly discovered new linguistic facts, with new descriptive means, with new descriptive systems and categories to describe the structure, meaning and function of a new, not should not be ignored but is particularly important. On the other hand, corpus linguistics does not exclude explanations, but all explanations should be based on scientific descriptions of facts. Corpus linguistics regards language as a social phenomenon and discusses the ways of form selection and meaning realization in the context of social culture. Strictly speaking, linguistics with different academic concepts and goals requiring different methods, and corpus data are not sufficient for the exploration of mind language or psycholinguistic language. The current use of corpus data for mental language problems. At best, some indirect speculative work is explored or expressed, which raises serious questions for the intersection of disciplinary methods. Based on corpus linguistics text evidence, deal with important issues of language ontology explore, puts forward data processing; It is based on the internal meaning of language research. Frequency-based phrasology is one of the core topics in corpus linguistics. Learning from and integrating traditional phrasology perspectives and concepts, and breaking through the technical bottleneck of word sequence extraction should be the important work of corpus research in the next stage.

2.3 Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis

With the development of corpus linguistics and the progress of corpus analysis techniques, the use of corpus linguistics to conduct discourse analysis has gradually been widely concerned and favored by the linguistics field. The combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis moves from mutual learning at the initial stage to a deeper level of “joint”. “Corpus assisted discourse study” is a new methodology proposed on this basis. Different from the traditional corpus-based or corpus — driven

research methods, it emphasizes the corpus linguistics analysis methods of quantitative and qualitative discourse analysis method in the analysis process of the balanced combination of this, it can better serve the language analysis of large-scale corpus, which represents a new idea and a new trend of the integration of two disciplines.

It has gradually become a consensus that corpus linguistics and discourse analysis can cooperate and benefit from each other. Corpus linguistics takes computer stored natural language as the research object. Essentially, it can be combined with any linguistic research. Discourse analysis mainly focuses on the use of natural language. It is not limited to specific research methods, but draws on and absorbs all methods that can help it achieve its research objectives. Corpus linguistics can make up for the shortcomings of traditional qualitative discourse analysis based on a small number of texts, make large-scale discourse analysis possible, ensure the accuracy and repeatability of the analysis process, and “triangulate” the analysis results to avoid “over-interpretation” or “under-interpretation” of specific linguistic phenomena. Corpus linguistics can also benefit from discourse. For the social issues concerned by analysis, such as power, ideology, identity construction, etc., corpora can not only be regarded as a “black box” recording linguistic data, but also need more knowledge about context and theoretical perspectives on the relationship between language and society. Discourse analysis can just make up for the deficiencies of corpus linguistics. Prentice (2010) pointed out that in his book *Analyse automatique du discours* published in 1969, the French scholar Michel Pecheux has already begun to combine corpus linguistics and discourse analysis attempt. In the UK, the experiment began mainly in the mid to late 1990s.

Mautner (2009) pointed out that there are two main problems in using corpus linguistics in discourse analysis: First of all, current corpus analysis software is mainly good at vocabulary and word cluster analysis. If discourse analysis focuses on things at the lexical and grammatical level, this method is very effective, but if it focuses on things at the discourse level, its significance is very limited. Secondly, traditional discourse analysis focuses not only on text analysis, but also on socio-cultural context analysis. Therefore, knowledge of socio-cultural

context is particularly important. It is obviously not enough to rely solely on corpus linguistics to conduct discourse analysis. Baker et al. (2008) Systematically reviews the current practice of using corpus linguistics to conduct discourse analysis, and points out that the current researchers using corpus to conduct discourse analysis mainly come from two groups. The first group is mainly from the field of discourse analysis. They have received systematic training in discourse analysis, but do not know much about the theories and methods of corpus linguistics. Therefore, in the process of their analysis, they are usually unable to clearly explain the methods they use its quantitative methods are poorly understood. The second group mainly comes from the field of corpus linguistics. They are familiar with the theories and methods of corpus linguistics, but they are not familiar with the theories and methods of discourse analysis, so they tend to dabble in the description and interpretation of analysis results. Therefore, to fully tap the potential of the combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, it is necessary to combine the two in a balanced way in the analysis process, namely “synergy”, which not only helps to better serve large-scale corpus analysis, but also helps to promote the two disciplines. This requires researchers to be familiar with and master the theories and methods of the two disciplines at the same time, and combine them in a balanced way in the analysis process, so as to explore the best way to combine the two.

To avoid above risks in research, corpus linguistics are integrated into CDA by some scholars. That is Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). CADS mainly focuses on qualitative examination of the collocational environment of certain words and description of salient semantic patterns, for example, computing frequencies and related statistical significance of certain words. Firth (1957) points out that meaning by collocation is an abstraction at the syntagmatic level. Thus, in CADS, the meaning of a word is best understood by the company it keeps, in other words by its associations. These associations are meaning by ‘collocations’ (Sinclair, 1991). Although applying methods associated with CL is perhaps not yet central within mainstream CDA research, awareness of the potential of these methods seems to be growing and there have been a range of recent CDA studies using methods

from CL (Cheng, 2013; Partington, 2006; Stubbs, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

3. Theoretical Framework

The relationship between discourse and ideology cannot be severed. Purvis and Hunt (1993), by focusing on the practice of discourse, believed that the theory of ideology is a supplement to the theory of discourse. Ideology has the effect of discourse. Although there are no ideological markers in the general attributes of language and discourse, discourse analysis is a powerful tool for studying the structure and

function of “latent” ideology (van Dijk, 2006).

4. Data and Procedure

4.1 Data Collection

The corpus for this study is extracted from Fact base (<https://factba.se>). In fact, this website collects all the interviews, speeches, tweets and remarks of Donald Trump since 1980. With “China” as the searching word, the author sets the time from January 20, 2017 to December 31, 2018 and collects all Trump’s China-related political discourses during that period.

Table 1. Genres of China-related political discourses

Discourse genre	Speech	Remarks	Weekly Address	Press Conference	Interview	Twitter
Quantity	193	291	4	180	153	100
Proportion	21.6%	31.6%	0.434%	19.5%	16.6%	10.9%

The corpus consists of tweets, speeches, remarks, weekly addresses, interviews, and press conferences related to “China” between Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2017 and December 31, 2018. In total, the corpus contains 921 documents. The following table displays different genres and their ratios in the corpus.

4.2 Research Procedure

The research takes three steps: Initially, with “China” as the searching word, the research builds a corpus of Trump’s China-related political discourse from January 20, 2017 to December 31, 2018. Secondly, assisted by unstructured text analysis software, KH Coder,

the research queries the co-occurrence network of high-frequency nouns in the corpus. Thirdly, assisted by Antconc, the research explores the collocates information of related word clusters under these topics. Finally, based on the co-occurrence network and features of word collocation, the research identifies the focus and ideology of Trump’s administration from the perspective of critical discourse analysis.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Research Results

Assisted by KH Coder, the co-occurrence network of high frequency nouns in the corpus is generated (see Figure 1).

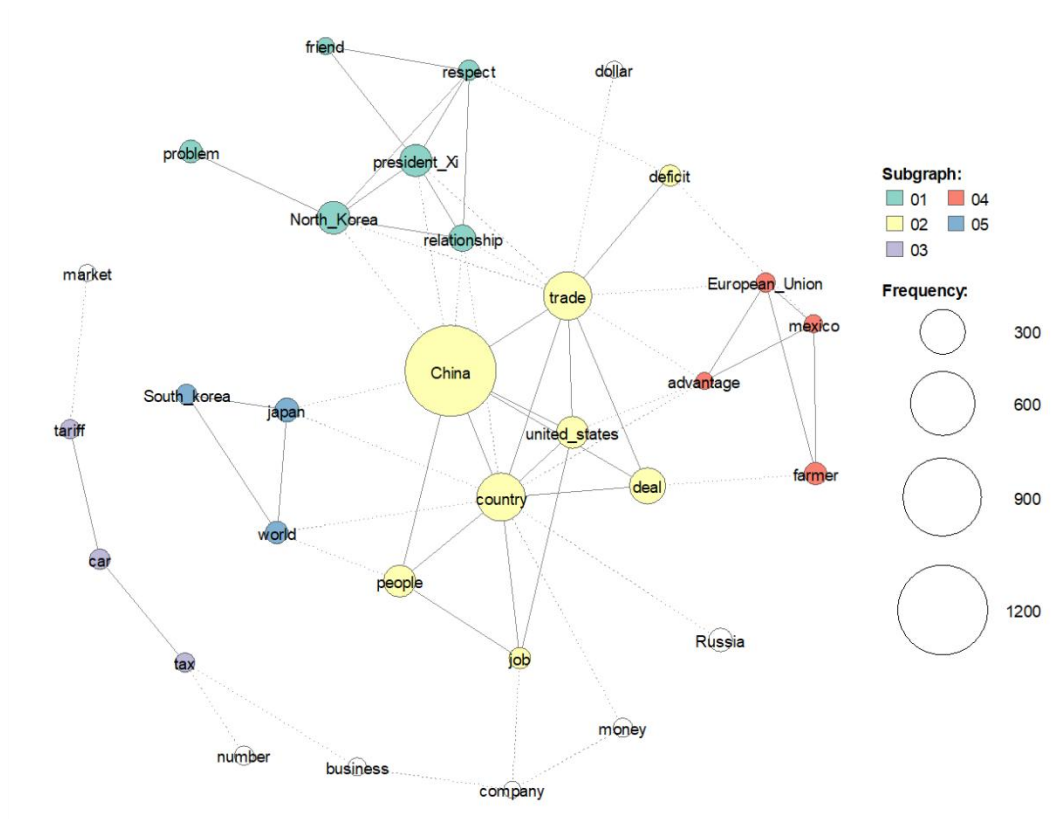


Figure 1. Co-occurrence network of high-frequency nouns in Trump's China-related political discourses

Bubble size indicates word frequency. The larger the bubble size is, the higher the word frequency is. The solid line between connecting bubbles indicates a strong co-occurrence relationship between words, and the dotted line indicates a weak one. Under the guidance of critical discourse analysis, the entire semantic network can be divided into three parts at macro level: trade, Trump-Xi relationship and Korean Peninsula. Then the research identifies the ideology behind these topics with the help of Antconc.

The research takes the topic "trade" as an example. Under the topic "trade", there are several trade-related word clusters in figure 1: trade, deal, tariff, advantage, farmer, etc. The author searches for related word information under the topic "trade" with the help of Antconc.

Table 2. Word list of Trump's China-related political discourses

Rank	frequency	word
1	1843	and

2	1649	we
3	1628	the
4	1539	to
5	1406	a
6	1331	I
7	1265	China
8	1047	of
9	1039	it
10	969	that

Initially, the author uses the Wordlist tool to produce the frequency list (see Table 2). In the corpus, the total number of word types is 2898, and total number of word token, namely, the size of the corpus, is 54382. Of those, 1649 are "we", and 1331 are "I", which reflects Trump's "I-talk style". To a degree, this particular style in his discourses reflects his personality. The author infers that Trump is an egocentric politician and he overemphasizes patriotism and nationalism.

The author uses concordance plot tool to search for "trade". There are 344 hits. The number of

hits shows that “trade” is one of Trump’s major concerning topics. Then the author uses clusters tool to search for “trade”. With searching word on the left in position, the result shows that “trade deficits with China” is the most frequent phrase. Going down on the list, other countries like Mexico are mentioned in “trade deficits” cluster. Thus, in the corpus, “trade deficits”, especially “trade deficits with China” are most concerned by Trump under the topic “trade”.

The author searches for “farmer” by using cluster tool. The result shows that “American Farmer”, “American worker”, “Hurt American farmer” are most frequently used phrases in “farmer” cluster.

5.2 Analysis

According to figure 1, “European Union”, “Farmer”, “Mexico” and “Take Advantage Of” are connected to form a strong co-occurrence relationship. It reflects that President Trump views both traditional allies like Europe and Mexico, and trade partner China as rivals. To support the hypothesis, the author takes “trade” as the retrieval term in the corpus and randomly selects related sentences in different genres. In the related word clusters under the topic, “China”, “United States”, “Trade” and “Deal” have a strong co-occurrence relationship.

(1) “...But the United States, in its trade deals, has lost, on average, almost \$800 billion a year. That’s dealing with China, dealing with European Union, with everybody. Japan, Mexico, Canada—everybody. And we’re not going to allow that to happen...”

(Remarks - May 22, 2018)

(2) “...We’ll take it from China. We’ll take it from the European Union, who has taken advantage of us for years....”

(Speech - October 2, 2018)

(3) “...We are the piggybank to the world. We have been ripped off by China. We’ve been ripped off by—excuse me, Mr. President—the European Union, of which you’re a part of.... I want to protect the American worker, the American farmer, the ranchers, the companies. And we’re not being ripped off....”

(Press Conference- September 18, 2018)

Initially, Trump opposes globalization and embraces America’s “Isolationism”. In the first two example, he repeatedly uses the word “everyone”, and the phrase “We’ll take it

from...”, this promising style highlights Trump’s tough attitude toward other countries, including China, and his determination to fight for American interests. In example (3), Trump compared the U.S. to “Piggybank” and believed that its interests were being shamelessly ripped off by other countries. He also repeatedly uses “we have been ripped off by....”, which reflects that he thinks that all these countries including China are stealing money from America’s pocket.

Therefore, Trump administration no longer overemphasizes the consistency of ideology. Instead, it puts American interests first, which reflects the concept of “American First” that Trump has been claiming.

(4) “If the U.S. sells a car into China, there is a tax of 25%. If China sells a car into the U.S., there is a tax of 2%. Does anybody think that is FAIR? The days of the U.S. being ripped-off by other nations is OVER!”

(@realDonaldTrump, Sep,11,2018)

Secondly, due to the large U.S. trade deficits against China, Trump administration is under strong domestic pressure to take a tough stance toward China. According to the related word groups in figure 3, “China”, “United States”, “Trade” and “Deal” connect each other with solid lines, which reflects a strong co-occurrence relationship. Obviously, China is regarded as an important trading partner of the United States. In addition, there is a strong co-existing relationship between “Market”, “Tariff”, “Car” and “Tax”. Market, Tariff, automobile and Tax are important issues in Sino-U.S. trade. In example (4), “Fair” and “over”, are all in capitals. The capitalized words reveal Trump’s strong dissatisfaction with the U.S. trade deficits against China. According to above examples, Trump’s repeated use of the sentence “being ripped off by other nations” reflects Trump administration’s belief that other countries are taking advantage of U.S. interests. Based on the above analysis, the author infers that the traditional isolationism and protectionism in the U.S. rise again, which will inevitably affect Trump administration’s trade policy towards China, and the United States will adopt more stringent trade policies towards China.

(5) “...And I want to thank our farmers, our farmers are true patriots. Because China and others have targeted—China and others, remember this, have targeted our farmers. Not

good, not nice. And you know what our farmers are saying? It's OK, we can take it. These are incredible people, we can take it..."

(Remarks - July 31, 2018)

(6) "...Our farmers, our incredible agriculture and related industries, have lost one million jobs in the last 20 years. Now China is going after our soybean farmers in the hopes we will surrender our intellectual property...And our farmers are patriots. Remember that: our farmers are patriots and they're saying the president is doing the right thing..."

(Speech- June 28, 2016)

Thirdly, Trump attaches great importance to the status of farmers in Sino-U.S. trade and the demands of grassroots. Farmer remains a relatively high in the corpus. Farmer issue is of great significance in Sino-U.S. trade. In examples (5) and (6), the collocation or strong semantic co-occurrence relationship between "Farmers" and "Our" reveals that Trump intends to build a positive president image in American people's mind. In other words, Trump regards himself as one of the grassroots who always stands with American farmers. In example (5), repeated use of "Not good, not nice" reveals that Trump administration puts great emphasis on China and other countries' exploitation for American farmers. Trump repeatedly mentions that "China and others have targeted - China and others, remember this", which is not only a reflection of Trump's capricious discourse style, but also his attempts to comfort the grassroots and arouse the public dissatisfaction with China and other countries. As one of the main forces of the grassroots, American farmers' interests were badly affected by the 2018 trade war with China, which is bound to affect Trump's domestic supporting rate. As in example (5) and (6), "our farmers are patriots", "our farmers are true patriots", Trump constantly talks about patriotism of American farmers. In example (5), he praises American farmers' great sympathy with words like "these are incredible people", which reflects Trump administration attitude towards American farmers. On the one hand, the Trump administration is under strong pressure from farmers and other grassroots groups to avoid a trade war with China. On the other hand, Trump administration is faced with the domestic demand of politicians to take a tough stance toward China. Under the circumstances, Trump puts great emphasis on the patriotism of

American farmers.

6. Conclusion

Under the guidance of Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper explores the concentrated focus of Trump's China-related political discourses as well as the covert ideology of the same. Based on corpus-driven text mining tools KH Coder and Antconc, trade, Trump-Xi relationship and Korean Peninsula constitute the priority focuses of Trump. Under the topic "trade", the research suggests that Trump administration is taking a hard-lined stance toward China; Trump administration's strategies toward China are full of isolationism and protectionism.

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