The Reaction of the U.S. President
To the Rise of China
A discourse analysis into the president of the United States’
reaction to China emerging as a competing hegemon.

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Abstract
The U.S. has enjoyed global hegemonic power for over 70 years and even more so after the fall of the Soviet Union. However, some political scientists argue that it is descending and the evidence lies in the increasing power of China. An imbalance of power in the international structure has the ability to result in different outcomes. The realist theory suggests that a conflict between the U.S. and China is unavoidable, the liberal theory suggests that the economic dependency between the two makes conflict less possible, while the constructivist theory suggests that the outcome depends on the reaction of the leaders and social change. This study asks what the reaction of the President of the U.S. is to the rise of China to find out the result of this hegemonic power imbalance. By using discourse analysis, this study has analyzed the remarks of President Trump from the period of January 2017 to November 2017 in search of his reaction to the rise of China. The results of this study show that President Trump divides the world in two parts making the U.S. the protagonist and the rest of the world, including China, the antagonist in his discourse as his reaction. Due to this reaction, Trump takes nationalistic and protectionist measures against China.

Keywords: hegemonic power, power balance, US-China relations, hegemonic stability theory, discourse analysis, constructivism, president xi, president trump
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1. Introduction

The discussion about the United States hegemonic power’s rise and fall has been around for about thirty years. With some theorists, arguing that the U.S. hegemonic power goes in waves, but ultimately never goes away. These theorists point to the uncertainty of the U.S. power as a hegemon in the 1980s after the 1970s economic and political turmoil and then to the 1990s where the U.S. experienced an increase in power after the fall of the Soviet Union. Others, such as Robert Gilpin, argued as early as 1980s that the U.S. decline in hegemonic power is troublesome (Gilpin 1981). Gilpin, a developer of the hegemonic stability theory, argued that the period between the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. saw an uncertainty in order due to economical, political, and military changes (Gilpin 1981:2). Gilpin meant that the U.S., being the hegemonic power, experienced a change in its order, which in turn reminds Gilpin of the unstable structure of the pre World War II period.

John Mearsheimer, a structural realist, is another theorist who argues that the U.S. hegemonic power is in decline. Mearsheimer discusses many scenarios the U.S. will have to face when the hegemonic power shifts to another state. As Mearsheimer (2010) writes in his article:

The United States has been the most powerful state on the planet for many decades… since the early years of the Second World War.

Mearsheimer means that the U.S. has been the hegemonic power in international relations for the past 70 years and although it may have won the Cold War, it has however experienced a decline ever since. Some theorists argue that this decline started with the Vietnam War, referring to it as a blowback to U.S. legitimacy, and the Iraq War of 2003, reducing the U.S. legitimacy once again. However, it was not until the 2008 financial crisis that the world realized that the leadership of the U.S. might have run its course.

Mearsheimer argues for a hegemonic power shift from the U.S. to China, and means that the shift will undoubtedly end in conflict between the two states and therefore supports Gilpin’s argument regarding a clash of hegemonic powers. Mearsheimer’s argument bases itself on structural realism that argues that states that increase its power in the international hierarchical structure will challenge the state that it replaces. Given that the intention of states, according to the realist view, is to accumulate more power and expand.
Liberal theorist John Ikenberry (Ikenberry 2008) agrees with Mearsheimer in a power shift leaning towards China. However, Ikenberry claims that China will rise peacefully to hegemonic power. Ikenberry means that capitalism made the Chinese and U.S. economy intertwined and thus a conflict between the two is less likely to happen.

Barry Buzan, a constructivist theorist, agrees with both Mearsheimer and Ikenberry that the hegemonic power is shifting from the U.S. to China (Buzan 2010). Buzan, however, discusses that the reaction of leaders of the two states will determine whether hegemonic power shift will result in conflict or not. He means that the reaction of leaders has a real possibility of changing the course of action of whether states engage in conflict or not, but not a structure.

Therefore, China is an emerging power expanding to an economic, political, and possibly military hegemon. China’s challenge on the global market is to compete against a superpower they economically depend on and who in turn is dependent on them. As Ikenberry lays out the reasons for an unlikely conflict with such economic dependency, China finds it more difficult to cater to its own interest without clashing with the Americans. China, a self-declared communist state, unlike the Soviet Union, plays the liberal capitalist global market game and successfully gains from it.

The U.S., having been the economical hegemon for over seventy years, sees any emerging superpower as a threat. The question in this predicament is what action the U.S. may take to combat the Chinese competitor without working against its own self-interest. By analyzing public remarks through discourse analysis, this research paper aims to answer what the reaction of the President of the U.S. is to China emerging as the new economical hegemonic power.

2. Background

2.1 Previous Research

Michelle M. Yang examines and analyzes the political discourse of the U.S. through “memory frames.” “Memory frames” is an analytical tool to determine how speech can frame a subject in a particular way. In her book (Yang 2017), Yang looks at the 2008 Beijing Olympic games, the 2010 U.S. midterm elections, the 2012 U.S. presidential elections, and the 2014-2015 Chinese cyber espionage controversy (Yang 2017:9). Yang claims that former Chinese politician and revolutionary Deng Xiaoping
sought a discrete role for China by focusing on developing and staying out of political leadership positions. The current president Xi Jinping, however, seeks an assertive Chinese position in global affairs (Yang 2017:3).

Yang argues that the US-China relations has been that of adversarial going back to the nineteenth century with racist stereotypes of Chinese immigrants threat to U.S. stability, to the creation of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949, their part in the Korean war and till today with an emerging power challenging U.S. authority. After declaring China a communist state, Yang means, the Chinese image changed to include anti-communism “otherness” with the Asian “otherness.” Yang claims that U.S. portrayed China as the Yellow Peril (Asian danger to the white race, viewed as a race that is able to surpass whites.), and the Red Peril (communist danger that is threatening to U.S. political leadership). Yet, when China is an ally to the U.S. in matters relating to military, democracy, or politics, China is a model nation in American political discourse.

Yang claims that the so-called vilifying and romanticizing of China in terms of Yellow Peril/Red Peril rings a familiar tone with Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism (Yang 2017:5-6). Yang concludes that this adversarial relation is still strong today as the previous president, Barack Obama, called China an adversary in the 2012 presidential campaign. This has continued by the candidates of the 2016 presidential campaign. Yang argues through “memory framing” and by analyzing the speeches of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on the subject of the economy, including China being a threat to U.S. interest (Yang 2017:12).

Chi Wang (Wang 2015) shares a similar point with this research paper when he described US-China relations as thus:

Now is the time to determine what path the relationship will take in the future, as US-China relations are at a crossroads (Wang 2015:1).

This point touches on the minds of the constructivists such as Buzan, meaning that the likelihood of a conflict between the U.S. and China depends on the actions and reactions of leaders and actors. Wang raises the point that the US-China relations could result in a conflict. Wang means that the tensions arise between the U.S. and China due to the teachings of scholars on the stability of the Asia-Pacific region. Wang claims that the U.S. teaches scholars that the American alliance supports the stability, while China teaches scholars that the American alliance is an outdated Cold War tactic. Wang argues that both sides believe the other side views the world in a
realist fashion, thus raising distrust between the nations and contribute to an eventual conflict (Wang 2015:2).

This point by Wang is again, of a constructivist nature, claiming the ideas of leadership will determine the fate of the relationship. In his book, Wang analyses US-China relations, studies specific cases, and the reaction of former U.S. president Barack Obama since he took office in 2009. Wang outlines different policies in the US-China relations that the Obama administration had, administration’s goals, and the Chinese reaction to these policies.

The explanation for political results is understandable by observing the views of the study of Wang into the US-China relations. The president of the U.S. is a democratic representative of the nation, acting and reacting on behalf of it. Considering the described way the U.S. and China view international relations, this study believes that research of the U.S. President’s rhetoric can explain political results.

On that point, Fan Zhai argues that the results will be protectionist retaliation from the U.S. on China, more so now because of Trump. Zhai analyses the US-China economic relationship and discusses possible outcomes of tariff retaliation between the two states (Posen & Ha 2017). President Trump mentioned the rise of China throughout his entire campaign as a competing economy and a threat to U.S. interest. The election of president Trump proved to be an angered reaction to the emerging competition.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Hegemonic Stability Theory assumes that international politics and economy remains stable due to one state’s power, a hegemon (Mohd 2015:67). The theory pertains the roles of states in the international structure and claims that global stability is only possible with a single dominant power. To maintain this dominant power, the hegemon in question should punish a transgressor and challenger successfully as a sign of strength of the hegemon. (Mohd 2015:68).

The theory claims that the period between World War I and World War II was a period of an absent hegemon and therefore it resulted in international instability. Considering the U.S. exit out of the League of Nations in that period, Great Britain and France were not as strong and therefore not able to assume the position of the
hegemon. Only after creating and maintaining the United Nations did the U.S. assume the role of hegemon.

A related theory is the Hegemonic Transition Theory, and it assumes that in the event of the hegemon’s decline, and this is inevitable according to the theory, conflict will arise. As Nye and Welch writes regarding the theory: “A declining hegemon or states fearing a rising power will take desperate measures to protect their position, while a rising power will gamble to attain hegemony.” (Nye and Welch 2014:90).

Gilpin argued that the decent of the American hegemony did not risk a hegemonic war in the 1980s, as the Soviet Union was together with the U.S. a bipolar stability in the international system. Gilpin adds that the presence of nuclear weapons and the economic cooperation with Soviet reduced the risk of war further still (Gilpin 1981).

2.3. Research Question

As China shares the same conditions as Soviet did with the U.S. it grows more powerful, the question remains how an existing hegemon reacts to an emerging one. The previous research of Yang, Wang and Zhai explores the US-China relation with tensions arising, however, does not consider the Hegemonic Stability Theory. With Gilpin’s argument taken into consideration, and the constructivist perspective, that social reality is not pre-given (Bryman 2012:33), that discourse creates reality, the question this study aims to answer is:

*What is the reaction of president Trump to China emerging as an economical hegemon?*

3. Method

When approaching the remarks of the U.S. President to find out his reaction to China and the hegemonic transition, the method of use is a qualitative interpretation. (Bryman 2012:380). One could use the quantitative method with a collected database of the rhetoric of the American legislative branch about China with an operationalization of negative to positive remarks. However, such a study would factor out the constructivist argument of interpreting the remarks of the representative
of the hegemonic power to the emerging hegemon. Therefore, this particular study requires an interpretivist epistemology to analyze the reaction of Trump, and a quantitative method is therefore unfit.

This is a critical case study as it allows the researcher to test theoretical framework in the research and find out if it holds or not (Bryman 2012:70). In this particular case, this research paper originates from the Hegemonic Stability Theory and the theory of constructivism, in order to focus on what the reaction of the current hegemonic power is to the hegemonic shift.

The paper begins by selecting Trump’s remarks mentioning China in a chronological order since taking office in hope to find a cohesiveness pertaining to the US-China relations or the U.S. global influence and hegemony in Trump’s mentions of China in order for remark selection. After the selection of the relevant remarks, the analysis focuses on interpreting the meaning of Trump’s reaction to China before reaching a conclusion into what that reaction is. As the President speaks of numerous subjects in an average Presidential speech, the interpretation focuses only on the sections relevant and pertains to China and the hegemonic power balance.

3.1 Discourse Analysis

In order to interpret the remarks by the U.S. president, Discourse Analysis is necessary, since it is an analytical tool for “language-based approach” (Bryman 2012:383). Discourse Analysis, an operationalization of Discourse Theory, is analytical tools used for the interpretation of texts in a qualitative research, making it differentiate itself from Conversation Analysis based solely on analyzing talks. Discourse Analysis assumes reality to be socially constructed and thus it aligns itself more towards constructivism and is anti-realism. Discourse analysts note that there is not a real recipe to Discourse Analysis; it is rather an “analytic mentality” (Bryman 2012:530).

David Rear introduces the works of Laclau and Mouffe in his paper regarding Discourse Theory. Rear means that in their “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy” book from 1985, Laclau and Mouffe first introduce the ideas of the theory (Rear 2013). He claims that Laclau and Mouffe argued that the objective material reality that divides people into classes does not exist; it is rather by political discursive processes that people are divided into groups in society. Rear argues that external reality still has its
own independent existence and through discourse, we create the perception of that reality (Rear 2013:4).

Rear claims that Laclau and Mouffe’s first key concept is discourse, which Rear explains to be “is an attempt to fix a web of meanings within a particular domain” (Rear 2013:6). An objective word is a “signifier” and can have different meanings when located next to other words. Since words receive meaning from their relation to other words, the meaning of signifiers changes based on individual sentences (Rear 2013:6).

Charlotte Fridolfsson, a lecturer at the Political Science department at Linköping University, displays how to use discourse analysis to analyze political matters. Fridolfsson uses discourse analysis to analyze the events around the EU summit in Gothenburg and uses it to display how political actors surrounding the summit portrayed the protesters’ antagonism (Fridolfsson 2004). Fridolfsson claims that the political actors successfully cast the protesters, through their use of language, as outsiders and not legitimate political actors, stripping away the identity they initially wanted. Through her article, Fridolfsson demonstrates the importance of discourse analysis into how language creates reality of the speaker (Fridolfsson 2004). This research paper hopes to achieve the same perception of reality as Fridolfsson by analyzing and interpreting how President Trump, a representation of the U.S., views the emerging power of China.

3.2 Limitations

The limitations of using this method for this study is that discourse analysis can cause a result in systematic error, meaning a possible problem with validity (Does the theoretical term used by the researcher match what the researcher is researching?). Discourse Analysis is also inductive in nature, and this study is deductive in contrast.

An uncertainty in this research paper is the question of how much the remarks of the President of the United States actually represent his or her own administration or the legislative branch. The current President of the United States Donald Trump is controversial and faces many critics on the home front. Even with a membership in the Republican Party, he faces harsh criticism and backlash for his remarks on both sides of the aisle.

A possible issue for this research paper is the fact that there is an internal investigation by a special prosecutor into the Trump campaign’s alleged collusion
with Russia during the 2016 election. Making indictment a possibility for White House aides within the Trump administration, including Trump himself. This event would cause a reliability issue due to the unique leadership of Donald Trump and the importance of constructivist interpretation of his reaction.

4. Material

President Trump uses Twitter as a platform to express his personal opinions regarding personal relationships and official policy and relations. However, due to it being Trump’s own opinions, it is not representative of the official decision-making process made by the rest of the administration or the legislative branch. This research paper will only focus on official remarks made by the President. In this fashion, the remarks made reflect the opinion of the entire administration and the current U.S. position on certain issues regarding US-China relations and the U.S. as a hegemonic power.

The remarks collected contain discussions or remarks directed at China and/or the US-China relation. The analysis of the message of the remarks pertaining China and the power balance, will avoid repeating the same message more than once by selecting one speech pertaining the same message. These remarks will not include anecdotes regarding the country of China or brief mentions that do not pertain the power balance of US-China relations. Such mentions of China do not reflect the entirety of the opinion of the Trump administration and/or official U.S. foreign policy, and is not helpful for this research paper in its ambition to collect useful information. The dates of the remarks will stretch from President Trump’s first day of taking office, January 20th 2017, until November 10th 2017, the day President Trump holds his speech at the APEC CEO summit.

The sources of the transcripts of the remarks comes directly from the White House official website, in order to avoid misinformation and/or misquotes. The White House website is a primary source for the President’s remarks as it is required to present unedited transcripts of the President’s remarks.

The chosen remarks made by President Trump that includes China are as follows:

President Trump meeting with the Aviation Industry on February 9th 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., President Trump and Prime Minister Abe
of Japan Joint Press Conference on February 10th 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., President Trump Meeting with Manufacturing CEOs on February 23rd 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., President Trump Listening Session with the National Association of Manufacturers on March 31st 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., President Trump and Vice President Pence at CEO Town Hall on Unleashing American Business on April 4th 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., Remarks by President Trump After Meeting with President Xi of China on April 7th 2017 in Palm Beach, Florida, Joint Press Conference of President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg on April 12th 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord on June 1st 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., President Trump at American Leadership in Emerging Technology Event on June 22nd 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., Remarks by President Trump Before Bilateral Meeting with President Xi of China on July 8th 2017 in Hamburg, Germany, President Trump and President Macron of France Joint Press Conference on July 13th 2017 in Paris, France, President Trump at Made in America Product Showcase on July 17th 2017 in the White House, Washington D.C., Remarks by President Trump on Tax Reform on August 30th 2017 in Springfield, Missouri, Remarks by President Trump, President Moon of the Republic of Korea, and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Before Trilateral Meeting on September 21st 2017 in New York, New York, President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea Joint Press Conference on November 9th 2017 in Seoul, South Korea, President Trump at Business Event with President Xi of China on November 7th in Beijing, China, President Trump at APEC CEO Summit on November 10th 2017 in Da Nang, Vietnam.

5. Analysis

5.1 Remarks by President Trump in meeting with the Aviation Industry (February 09th 2017)

In his remarks to the aviation industry, President Trump starts by distancing himself from previous administrations stating that his administration received a “big mess” upon taking office, inherited from previous administrations. He means that the
results of political and economic policies achieved by former presidents are not acceptable, implying a contrast with the current administration. Additionally, Trump means that the current administration takes a different stance when it comes to these issues, proposing that they are the solution to the supposed mess. President Trump continues by saying:

I think they know, I think they understand (The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump implies that his audience is aware of these issues and agrees with his definition of a mess. Trump explains that the problem lies in the American infrastructure and public transportation, more specifically rail and airways, comparing the U.S. with such competing market as China and Japan. He suggests the U.S. is failing while trying to keep up with Chinese and Japanese infrastructure, portraying these states as adversarial. Lastly, Trump is proposing a solution - an economic policy where he would lift regulation on the aviation industry by previous administrations and therefore allowing it to beat the competition.

Trump then discusses competing global market and sympathizes with the American aviation industry in the received pressure from foreign markets, stating that although the industry brings big investments from abroad, it is by other governments. Trump describes aviation equipment issued by the government as “obsolete,” and talks about how government spending in the U.S. has been excessive for the wrong kind of equipment in the past by that treating an important industry such as the aviation industry wrong by not investing in its improvement. Trump then refers to air travel as a very important means of transportation for the American people suggesting a future with:

…minimum delays and with great convenience all at the lowest possible cost.

(The White House, 2017).

Next, President Trump mentions China for the first time in an official remark since becoming a president. Trump talks about fast trains in China and Japan, in difference to the U.S. not having one, as well as better airports. Trump continues by referring to the airports, railways, and roads in the U.S. as “bad” and “obsolete,” meaning they are worse than other competing states. Trump means that there are better modes of transportation and infrastructure in competing markets, making a clear distinction that the U.S. is losing. Here, President Trump is indicating that China, together with other states, is beating the U.S. in the field of aviation and railways in the global competition, making a remark regarding the U.S. economic
decline. By comparing the U.S. to China and Japan, Trump is identifying these two states as a competition that the U.S. needs to surpass to hold its power, the antagonist.

By distancing the Trump administration from the Obama and Bush administrations, President Trump creates an instant “us” and “them” factor in his remarks, protecting his position from criticism when it comes to former policy regarding the aviation field, and opens up the possibility to present his own ideas and future plans by presenting a problem he did not inflict. Trump is simultaneously portraying former administrations in the same light as “other” states, the antagonist.

5.2 Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference (February 10th 2017)

In a joint press conference with the Japanese Prime Minister, a Japanese journalist asked President Trump about China. The journalist mentioned the Obama administration’s willingness to focus on Asia, and the concerns of Asian states to the U.S. commitment to Asia considering China’s activities in the South China Sea and the China Sea, as well as North Korea’s nuclear weapons development. The journalist asked President Trump how his administration views this difficulty in Asia, and how President Trump views the Chinese tactic of currency manipulations, previously mentioned by Trump during the campaign. Journalist’s question regarded the questioning of a future U.S. leadership considering Chinese and North Korean economic and military threats to its allies, such as Japan.

President Trump responded by mentioning a telephone conversation he had with the president of China the day before. He describes it as:

…very good conversation…very, very warm conversation.

(The White House, 2017).

In this context, warm paired with conversation implies a close tie with the person in question. This indicates that the conversation was a part of a process of making China and the U.S. closer, benefitting the U.S., China, Japan, and other states in the Asian region and implies that the future looks positive with closer ties, eventually benefitting allies.

Trump criticizes the Chinese currency manipulations. He indicates that the competition between the U.S. and China is a fair play and that the U.S. will catch up and get on “…a level playing field.” What Trump means, is that the U.S. will have to retaliate to be able to compete on the global market. He says:
And we will make it fair… (The White House, 2017).

Trump means that the Trump administration is willing to retaliate to Chinese actions on trade. Trump implies that he is building the U.S. to be strong and competitive, willing to retaliate against economic adversaries. However, the President is also indicating that the US-China relations are improving the more his dialog with the Chinese President continues. Again, the President indicates that his administration will solve flaws unmanaged by previous administrations when it comes to U.S. policy in Asia. Trump directly recognizes the fall of the U.S. hegemonic power and blames it on previous leaderships, while at the same time indicating a rise in U.S. hegemony due to his administration.

5.3 Remarks by President Trump in Meeting with Manufacturing CEOs
(February 23rd 2017)

In his meeting with American manufacturing CEOs in February, President Trump starts the meeting by praising his audience. Trump emphasizes that the issue of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. is of so high importance enough; it got him elected into office. Trump argues that his campaign promise to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. during the election was the reason.

Trump presents a statistic regarding the loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S., stating:

The United States lost one-third of our manufacturing jobs since NAFTA. (The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump locates the problem of so much loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. being the North Atlantic Trade Agreement. Trump continues to explain that since China joined the Word Trade Organization, the number of closed manufacturing factories in the U.S. is 70,000, which baffles the President himself (A point he mentions again but says 60,000 on February 28th on his joint address to Congress, and on March 15th at the American Center for Mobility.).

President Trump is indicating that there was a gain and loss situation in play here with China. First, Trump is emphasizing the importance of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. Trump then points to a statistic in which the U.S. loses these important jobs, indicating that the importance is so high, it got him elected into office because of his campaign promises regarding them. Lastly, Trump draws a direct link between recent losses of manufacturing factories in the U.S. to China joining the World Trade
Organization (WTO). Trump’s language is very clear in making a distinction to what is important for the American voter and who is to blame by making this direct link between cause (China joining the WTO) and effect (70,000 U.S. manufacturing factories closes).

President Trump continues by talking about American corporations that has intended to invest in the U.S. and which he views as very positive. One of the corporations mentioned in Trump’s speech is Carrier, which he states is bringing back jobs to the U.S. from Mexico due to dialogs he had with the company. Trump indicates that he is the sole reason this is happening by saying that

I got involved very late, almost like by two years late – but many of the jobs that were leaving for Mexico, they’re bringing back… (The White House, 2017).

A pattern where Trump indicates that former administrations have failed to focus on the “us” factor, in this case manufacturing jobs in the U.S., and instead giving it to “them”, meaning other states such as China and Mexico. However, Trump indicates that his administration is focusing on the “us” factor and he presents another direct cause and effect in the matter.

President Trump discusses the U.S. trade deficit with other states. He admits of the trade deficit with Mexico of $70 billion and China of $500 billion, which he deems to be unacceptable. He implies that his administration will work on reducing the deficit. President Trump then says:

But I actually said to my people: Find a country where we actually do well. So far, we haven’t found that country. It’s just losses with everybody, and we’re going to turn that around. (The White House, 2017).

Trump’s language paints a picture in which the U.S. economic hegemony experiences a decrease where the U.S. loses their profit to other states. Trump states that his administration is not satisfied with their position on the global market and has a goal of changing the outcome. Trump states that a loss in the market is due to “other” states taking advantage of the U.S. good nation, and is changeable through retaliation. Trump means that the U.S. has lost in trade, and with that, there has to be a winner or somebody who has gained on this loss. According to President Trump, this is everybody else in international trade the “other”, pitting them against the U.S. as he announces future retaliation.
5.4 Remarks by President Trump in Listening Session with the National Association of Manufacturers (March 31st 2017)

In the meeting with the National Association of Manufacturers, President Trump begins by setting a positive tone to the meeting and announcing that there are:

…some really good news today that’s really fantastic -- these numbers.

(The White House, 2017).

Trump then talks about his administration’s ambitions to lift regulations on manufacturers and work towards the implementation of policy. Trump links a recently signed executive order regarding coal, to upcoming executive orders regarding manufacture policy in the U.S.

Trump presents the results of a survey of the National Association of Manufacturers, which shows that 93 percent of manufacturers are being positive for the future, compared with 56 percent a few months ago during the Obama administration. Again, Trump starts by explaining the issues at hand and presenting his administration as the solution. The issue in this case being too many regulations on manufacturers and the solution is to lift these regulations. With that, he presents proof of the approval his administration receives with such future ambitions by presenting a survey regarding outlooks of the future. With these remarks, President Trump is primarily focusing on the domestic politics of growing jobs in the U.S. within the manufacturing business.

Next, Trump makes a connection between growing manufacturing jobs in the U.S. and the international global market:

The field has not been a level field. Jobs have been leaving our country, going to China and Mexico and lots of other places. (The White House, 2017).

Trump means that the global market is not fair and with that, Trump indicates that one side of the market has an unfair advantage over another side of the market. When Trump says “our country” and mentions China and Mexico, he creates a reality with “our” and “others.” In this sentence, Trump is emphasizing that “our country” is losing jobs and “others” are taking them. Therefore, to gain against the “others”, the administration has to “level the field”, meaning retaliate, to gain an advantage back. By removing regulations on manufacturers, the Trump administration hopes it will create jobs that will reduce the advantages of the global competition.
5.5 Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence at CEO Town Hall on Unleashing American Business (April 4th 2017)

In his town hall with CEO’s regarding American business, President Trump talks to business leaders regarding the future of the U.S. economy. Vice President Mike Pence introduces the President and the interviewer Cordish starts by listing accomplishments of the Trump administration up to that point. This according to Cordish includes the growth of the stock market, confidence from the manufacturing sector, large investments into the private sector, removing regulations on business, strengthened the borders, strengthened the military and the nomination of the Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. Cordish then asks Trump how it feels accomplishing all of that. Trump proceeds to answer, by claiming that the administration is receiving a great amount of credit, not including the mainstream media. Trump continues and means that these accomplishments continue further on to the real estate, mining and farming industry. Trump then says that he was happy to read that (“our”) the U.S. trade deficit with “others” has gone down lately, which he credits to the positive confidence received by his administration.

Trump mentions the meeting that is occurring between him and the Chinese President and says:

…We’re having -- and I think we’re going to have a very interesting talk…have a lot of respect for him…But we have to do better, because our deficit with China, as you know, $504 billion. (The White House, 2017).

With this, President Trump is not only talking about President Xi Jinping, but he is also talking about the nature of US-China relations in general, because Trump almost said “we’re having” but changed his mind and made the sentence more personal as he was going to meet the President in person. President Trump mentions having respect for the Chinese President, meaning he recognizes the position of power China is in, however the trade deficit with China is at $504 billion, which Trump deems to be negative. “We” pertains the U.S., and “have to do better” again meaning gain in global economic competition. President Trump indicates that the U.S. will have to retaliate economically to change the outcome of the global market to create a gain for the U.S. against China.

Next, Trump claims:

So we’re going to have a great meeting. I’m sure we’re going to have a fantastic meeting. (The White House, 2017).
This indicates that President Trump knows that the outcome of the meeting will be positive, even though he intends to demand an advantage for the U.S. at the cost of disadvantaging China, in his meeting with China. This is possible according to Trump due to a change in leadership between him and Obama. Trump displays a belief that leaderships can change the outcomes of international relations.

President Trump then states that North Korea will be discussed in the meeting adding:

…including, of course, North Korea, a problem. And that’s really a humanity problem. (The White House, 2017).

Here President Trump is indicating by adding the “of course,” that North Korea is an obvious subject of discussion for US-China relations, and it is a problem. Trump also states that North Korea is a “humanity problem,” meaning it is a global issue, which threatens all of humanity. Therefore, President Trump presents this to his audience, in the meeting with the Chinese President regarding US-China relations, not only will the economy be of focus, but also the known North Korean threat.

5.6 Remarks by President Trump After Meeting with President Xi of China (April 7th 2017)

In his speech after the meeting with President Xi, Trump thanks the Chinese President and his representatives, stating:

I think we have made tremendous progress in our relationship with China. (The White House, 2017).

Trump is signaling a positive message about the meeting with the Chinese President. “We” again pertains to the U.S., and “tremendous progress” meaning that the Trump administration and the Xi administration agree progressively towards each other.

Trump indicates that the relationship with President Xi and himself has developed to the stage of “outstanding.” Trump then says:

We look forward to being together many times in the future. And I believe lots of very potentially bad problems will be going away. (The White House, 2017).

Trump claims that the two will continue the dialogue, as it is equally important for both parties, as well as he shows a strong belief that improved US-China relationship will help both countries to solve larger issues together in the
future. China is no longer the “other,” it has morphed into a “we” or “us,” removing the label of antagonist and portraying China together with the U.S. as a protagonist.

Trump projects a very mellow and positive tone towards China, as oppose to the previous remarks made earlier in his presidency. This indicates a shift in the US-China relations, when President Trump met President Xi, or that the positive tone is merely a formality for the meeting.

5.7 Joint Press Conference of President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg (April 12th 2017)

President Trump started the press conference by talking about the accomplishments and ambitions of the alliance. After both the President and the secretary general spoke, Trump received a question whether or not he has decided to label Beijing as a currency manipulator because of a possible new deal to combat North Korea.

When answering the first question, Trump first talks about the bad relationship between the U.S. and Russia, and that the secretary of state Rex Tillerson is in Russia attempting to change this reality. Trump then talks about his meeting with President Xi saying:

President Xi wants to do the right thing…I think he wants to help us with North Korea…And I said, the way you’re going to make a good deal is to help us with North Korea; otherwise we’re just going to go it alone…But I was very impressed with President Xi, and I think he means well and I think he wants to help. We’ll see whether or not he does. (The White House, 2017).

The first sentence with the words “want to” indicates that Trump believes that President Xi has good intentions when it comes to the issue. However, Trump hints that other aspects might change his mind. With “thinks he wants to help us…” Trump shows his hesitance whether President Xi will help the U.S. or not. In the next sentence, Trump bundles up both the North Korean threat and trade deals. His words “good deal” gives a positive undertone for the US-China relations in general. By finishing with “…otherwise we’re just going to go it alone,” Trump means that there might not be any good deals between the two countries, without the Chinese help in a matter with North Korea. Lastly, Trump says:

But I was very impressed with President Xi...he means well…he wants to help (The White House, 2017).
Since the sentences previous to this sentence indicated a negative undertone, the word “but” in this sentence conveys that Trump is positive to President Xi, which explains the next words being “very impressed” and “he means well…he wants to help.” Again, Trump believes President Xi has good intentions, but the word “think” indicates that Trump believes there are other powers at play than President Xi’s good intentions. The very last sentence indicates uncertainty in answering further.

The journalist asks again regarding a deal with China’s currency manipulation and if his views have changed regarding President Putin. President Trump answers with:

We’re going to see (The White House, 2017).

This means that Trump is awaiting actions from China and Russia before he can counter with a reaction that would be appropriate.

Trump receives another question regarding China abstaining the U.N. Security Council resolution to condemn the Syrian chemical attack on civilians Trump answered with:

I think it’s wonderful that they abstained. As you know very few people expected that. And, no, I was not surprised that China did abstain…So we’re honored by the vote. That’s the vote that should have taken place. (The White House, 2017).

Trump uses the word “wonderful,” indicating a positive attitude on a high level to China’s action. Although he describes Chinese move as unexpected, he claims it was not surprising. By saying that “…we’re honored by the vote,” Trump means that his administration is positive that China chose to abstain the vote, indicating that the U.S. and China share the same opinion on that matter and Trump deems China’s actions to be acceptable.

Later on in the press conference, President Trump receives a question about the continuing tensions from Russia on Europe. Trump responds by referring to what is going on in Ukraine, and then refers to North Korea for comparison:

We have very big problem in North Korea. And, as I said, I really think that China is going to try very hard…A lot of the coal boats have already been turned back…That’s a big step, and they have many other steps that I know about. (The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump shows concern towards the North Korean threat by describing it as “very big problem,” however he combats that concern with his belief in Chinese
efforts. Trump then claims that “coal boats” turning back from China, meaning that China is refusing North Korean resources, as a sign of disagreement with North Korea and as a sign of agreement with the Trump administration. Trump then describes Chinese actions as a “big step,” indicating that the action is a further development of the US-China relations. Lastly, Trump claims that: “they have many other steps that I know about.” Here, “many other steps” meaning other measures of which China will indicate a closer relationship with the U.S..

5.8 Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord (June 1
th 2017)

President Trump issues a statement to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord on 1
th June 2017. He starts by addressing the terrorist attack in Manila and offers his sympathies quickly changing the subject to talk about the American economy. Trump describes the economic progress as “tremendous” since electing him president and therefore signals the confidence in him becoming the president. Trump’s language indicates that the previous administration had a low confidence and handled the economy poorly in comparison, again distancing him from previous leadership.

Trump mentions the G7 meeting where he talks about the his administration’s demand for:

…fair and reciprocal trade that gives Americans a level playing field against other nations. (The White House, 2017).

When Trump says that the administration demanded fair and reciprocal trade, it means that it is not fair and reciprocal currently, and the administration demands a change. This also indicates that the Trump Administration is showing strength by “demanding” the change be made. Trump means when he says “gives American’s a level playing field against other nations,” that the “field” is not level. This means that Trump assumes that it is a known fact that other nations treat the U.S. unfairly and it creates a disadvantage for the U.S. Trump uses the word “against” when it pertains to other states, establishing reality with Americans being the “us” in question and every other nation is the “other” or “them”.

Later in the speech, President Trump mentions the wellbeing of American citizens and that it is his job as President to build policies around it. Trump describes the Paris Climate Accord as disadvantaging the U.S. and instead benefitting other
nations, leaving the U.S. with a “vastly diminished economic production.” (The White House, 2017).

By setting the theme for the speech in the beginning, President Trump focuses on that theme by criticizing the Paris Climate Accords’ fairness and reciprocation for the U.S. by giving the U.S. a disadvantage. Trump brings up China and India in his example of how the Paris Climate Accord benefits other nations in comparison to the U.S.:

…China will be able to increase these emissions by a staggering number of years -- 13. They can do whatever they want for 13 years. Not us. (The White House, 2017).

Trump means that this agreement allows China to increase its emissions in the future. When Trump uses words like “staggering number,” it indicates a shocking reaction to the information. Staggering is a shockingly high number, in this context 13 years. In the next sentence, Trump means that China can chose to do what they please with emissions and grow it’s economy in the best way it fits possible, however, the U.S. can not. Trump means that the agreement gives other nations the opportunity to act as they please.

During the speech, Trump announces plans for opening new coal plants in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and other states. He says:

They asked me if I’d go. I’m going to try.” (The White House, 2017).

“They” meaning the American people asked him if he would “go,” meaning open new coal plants. Since Trump always portrays his position as nationalistic with slogans such as “America first,” defying an agreement that limits the U.S. economy and the will of the people is unavoidable.

Trump summarizes his disagreement with the Paris Climate Accord with the following:

In short, the agreement doesn’t eliminate coal jobs, it just transfers those jobs out of America and the United States, and ships them to foreign countries. (The White House, 2017).

Trump states that the agreement will be directly responsible for the loss of coal jobs in one place and gain in another. He then describes the U.S. as America, and the United States, synonyms directed to his audience of a collective “we” when describing the country in two ways, the protagonist in question. Trump calls the states
that gain on the agreement as “foreign countries,” distancing them from his audience and creating an “other” in the process, the antagonist.

Trump claims that China’s carbon emissions would out shadow the U.S. reduction of carbon emissions till the year 2030, in only 14 days. By mentioning China, Trump means that the agreement allows the economic competitors of the U.S. to increase emissions, but limits the U.S. itself and in turn disadvantages the American economy. Therefore, by leaving the Paris Climate Accord, the Trump administration hopes to “level the field” and increase emissions if it helps grow the American economy as it would the Chinese and the Indian economies.

5.9 Remarks by President Trump at American Leadership in Emerging Technology Event (June 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2017)

President Trump talks to the American leadership of emerging technologies and starts by addressing the room in a positive manner. Trump mentions the importance of technology and the fact that technology is changing millions of lives. After mentioning his big speech in Iowa the day before and the problems his administration has with the Affordable Care Act, Trump addresses the issues in business.

Trump touches on the issues of governmental regulations on business and says:

…been so bad, so out of line that it’s really hurt our country.” (The White House, 2017).

Trump’s language of describing regulations transforms the image of regulations as a pain, making it necessary for the pain to vanish. To remove this pain on “our country,” meaning “us,” the Trump administration needs to remove regulations because they have crossed a line for the acceptable. He asks his audience to reach for the government to transform the U.S. and make it “number one in the field,” meaning the leader in the field of technology. Trump then quickly jumps to talking about China and says:

You see what’s going on in China and so many other countries…(The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump is indicating that China and “others” are catching up to the leadership of the U.S. in the field of technology. Finishing that thought meaning that he would like the U.S. to remain number one. Trump describes the field of technology
as very competitive and tells his audience that the Trump administration’s is going to hand them a competitive advantage to reach for number one in the areas where the U.S. is not.

This indicates that Trump and his administration is concerned with the loss of leadership that China will gain in the field of technology. Once again, Trump’s language is consistent with the hegemonic balance, it is a matter of loss and gain, and the loss of jobs in the U.S. is a gain of jobs in the “other,” such as China.

5.10 Remarks by President Trump Before Bilateral Meeting with President Xi of China (July 8th 2017)

In Hamburg, Germany, President Trump holds a speech during the G20 meeting with President Xi. Trump starts by thanking the Chinese President and says:

…It’s an honor to have gotten to know you. (The White House, 2017).

Trump indicates a friendly relationship with President Xi with that remark, while simultaneously placing him personally in high regard. Trump continues by supporting his last sentence with the fact that he has developed a positive relationship with President Xi. In the next sentence, Trump express his appreciation for the actions President Xi has taken to combat the North Korean threat. With this, Trump is indicating that the Trump administration approved China’s latest actions in the US-China relations. Further, Trump means that any issue at hand faced by U.S. and China will conclude successfully by both administrations. Trump’s language describes a relationship based on mutual trust and successful compromise.

Trump describes trade as a “very, very big issue” for the U.S., displaying his dissatisfaction with the current trade agreements the U.S. is currently in. He also shows disappointment with the work of previous administrations, meaning they did not have U.S. interests at hand. Trump makes this clear by calling trade policy in the U.S. has led to “trade imbalances.” He says:

And I know that China in particular, which is a great trading partner…(The White House, 2017).

The keyword in this sentence is “partner”; Trump singles out China and means that even with the existing imbalance in trade policy, China is still a great ally, recognizing the economic power of China. Trump’s language places China side by side with the U.S. as a hegemonic competitor:
…we will be able to do something that will be equitable and reciprocal, (The White House, 2017).

Trump means that the Trump administration will renegotiate the current trade policy of the U.S. with China and reach new agreement benefitting the U.S. Trump is therefore speaking with a positive undertone to open up for a compromise.

Trump then implies that the negotiations with China regarding the North Korean threat will reach a successful conclusion, which again sets a positive undertone for the new compromises with China. Trump then finishes his speech by showing personal gratitude and appreciation for the Chinese President Xi.

5.11 Remarks by President Trump and President Macron of France in Joint Press Conference (July 13th 2017)

Together with French President Macron in a press conference in Paris, France, President Trump receives a question from a journalist at the end regarding his work with China after the G20 meeting and what Trump personally thinks about regarding President Xi. Trump responds that the President is his friend and follows it up with several words of admiration about President Xi.

Trump follows this up with the words:

He loves China, I can tell you…He wants to do what’s right for China. (The White House, 2017).

This sentence regards the ongoing negotiations in US-China relations. The words love and right pertains to consideration and protection for the subject. President Xi has been considering and protecting the interest of China when the two have been negotiating. Trump attempts to negotiate with nationalistic intentions, and by saying that President Xi loves China, Trump means that he President Xi also had nationalistic intentions.

Next, Trump lists up several points of discussion during trade negotiations with China, saying that President Xi has been nice to include a few aspects up for negotiations with the U.S. This indicates that the U.S. is at a disadvantage during trade negotiations considering that China holds the power to include or exclude aspects in the negotiations.

But, President Xi is a terrific guy. (The White House, 2017).

The key word here is “but.” However, Trump finished the sentence saying that President Xi is terrific. The word “but” gives the previous sentence a new negative
meaning instead. This indicates that the result of the trade negotiations is not good, as Trump previously mentioned and Trump is holding his relationship with the President positive to try to change that reality.

5.12 Remarks by President Trump at Made in America Product Showcase (July 17th 2017)

In this speech to the several American CEO’s, President Trump mentions China in terms of opening up new aspects of trade. Trump mentions the CEO of Omaha Beef, Sonny Perdue and means that Sonny expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Trump upon meeting him. The reason for the gratification was that Trump had previously negotiated a deal to sell beef to China again.

…the other administrations couldn’t even come close.” (The White House, 2017).

With this, Trump is again distancing himself from previous administrations and showing disagreement with their approach to negotiations. Trump simultaneously indicates that the negotiations are an easier task for him than the others by saying “couldn’t even come close,” meaning that he accomplished a task that others could not, describing his actions as superior to other administrations.

…you know how long it took? One sentence. (The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump is again indicating that his results were effortless due to his superiority over previous administrations. Perhaps previous administrations failed to utter the same sentence, meaning that they did not even try to help the U.S., which portrays them as the antagonist. Alternatively, their relationship with the Chinese President failed in comparison to Trump’s relationship with him, placing me on the outside as legitimate political actors in comparison. What Trump means is that his consideration for American business, especially meaningful in a speech regarding nationalistic economy, differs and his relationship with China are superior to his predecessors. With that, Trump is creating a positive undertone to his precedency with American business leaders indicating a care and superiority other precedency lacked to deliver them.
5.13 Remarks by President Trump on Tax Reform (August 30th 2017)

In his remarks on the upcoming American tax reform legislation, President Trump argues for lowering taxes in the U.S. During his support for a lower tax system, Trump briefly mentions China for international comparison. However, the brief mention was significant as Trump used it to argue for lower taxes by mentioning China.

Trump talks about the corporate tax cuts of the Reagan administration in the 1980s and claims that the tax cuts has significantly helped middle class families in the U.S. and improved the economy in general. Trump describes the tax cut as follows:

…under this pro-America system, our economy boomed. By “pro-America system” (The White House, 2017).

Trump means that cutting taxes for corporations would be positive for America and characterizing tax rise as a negative. The implication here extends that raising, or keeping the corporate tax as it is would be an anti-American move in the sense that it would affect the U.S. negatively and therefore, lowering the tax is necessary.

Trump then turns to the global market and argues that other states had observed the U.S. and understood the connection between low corporate tax and better economy. Trump argues that “other countries” quickly lowered their corporate taxes to be able to compete against the U.S. Trump’s language indicates that other states were able to compete with the U.S. only after learning how they can grow a stronger economy from the Reagan corporate tax cuts. This implies that the “others” are not able to surpass the U.S. economy without learning from the U.S. first. Trump is claiming superiority over “others” together with the Reagan administration, because that is how the U.S. improved its economy and how other states learned and can now compete against it. This also means that previous administrations either have failed to make the connection, or are working against benefitting the U.S. economy. Again, making them either the antagonist or illegitimate political actors.

By saying that “some countries have an unbelievable low tax”, Trump means that these countries have a significant advantage over the U.S. and continues:

…including, by the way, China and some others that are highly competitive, and really doing very well against us (The White House, 2017).
By recognizing China as a major competitor and issues an assumption that his audience is not only aware of the Chinese threat to U.S. power, but there also are other states challenging the U.S.

Trump concludes this argument by saying:

…we have no choice -- we must lower our taxes. (The White House, 2017).

This conclusion comes natural as a progression of his argument, as he announces to follow Regan’s strategy for corporate tax cut of the 1980s, which resulted in a stronger economy. Trump implies that this system has interested other states to imitate Regan’s actions and are no able to compete against the U.S. Since Regan’s tax system was “pro-American” and resulted in a stronger economy, succeeding administrations failed to serve U.S. interests in the same way and have therefore benefitted the “others”. The Trump administration is forced to lower the taxes to compete against the “others” to protect and serve the U.S. Therefore, the Trump administration’s idea of retaliation against competing markets is lowering corporate taxes.

5.14 Remarks by President Trump, President Moon of the Republic of Korea, and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Before Trilateral Meeting (September 21st 2017)

Together with the president of South Korea and the prime minister of Japan, President Trump announces a new executive order that restricts individuals, corporations, and financial institutions to trade with North Korea. Trump mentions that he addressed this issue to the United Nations General Assembly, as the U.S. finds the North Korean nuclear weapons development disturbing. Trump means that the hope of his administration is that a strained financial support for the North Korean regime will hinder their progress. For such an action to succeed, the U.S. needs support from some the larger financial supporters of North Korea, China, and Russia.

I’m very proud to tell you…China, their central bank has told their other banks…to immediately stop doing business with North Korea. (The White House, 2017).

Proud indicates that the one being proud off progressed to a point that is approval by the person being proud. Trump claims that he is very proud, meaning it is a large progress that has occurred of which Trump approves of. This also means that Trump implies that the action occurred due to him or his administration’s assistance. When
saying that, Trump displays his approval of China ambition to cut business ties with North Korea and implies that China is aligning more with the wishes of the U.S.

Later, Trump thanks President Xi for the action that China took, and claims that it was a “...somewhat unexpected move and we appreciate it.” Trump’s language is clear in this case as he displays a positive undertone to China’s actions. What Trump is implying is that the US-China relations are improving over the North Korean threat and it is progressing towards the interest of the U.S. and the approval of the Trump administration.

5.15 Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea in Joint Press Conference (November 7th 2017)

In his press conference with President Moon of South Korea, a journalist asks President Trump about China’s role in the diplomatic efforts of the U.S. with North Korea. Trump starts with complimenting President Xi:

…has been very helpful. We’ll find out how helpful soon. (The White House, 2017).

By calling President Xi’s actions helpful, Trump is portraying President Xi in a positive light, as he did not use the word useful pertaining a tool to reach his goal. Helpful means that the person capable of helping has the power to do so and with this Trump means that he approves the actions of President Xi and considers them to be of help to U.S. interest. Trump indicates that President Xi has shown willingness to compromise with the Trump administration. However, Trump is displaying an ambition to solve more issues between the two, and reach more deals in their negotiations that leans towards U.S. interests. Trump means that China has the power to help the U.S. in this predicament pertaining the North Korean threat, and it depends on Chinese help to change the course of actions for the U.S. or not. Since Trump is calling President Xi’s actions helpful, that means that China has chosen a positive road in the relationship. “how helpful soon,” means that China has the power to determine how close they would like the US-China relations to be through their actions. Either they compromise more with the Trump administration and “help” to form a more positive relationship, or they do not “help” and instead show a more nationalistic side which would affect the relationship negatively.
5.16 Remarks by President Trump at Business Event with President Xi of China (November 9th 2017)

Trump starts his speech with a positive undertone, making sure to express his gratitude and admiration for President Xi and China. Trump describes that his dialog with President Xi to include such aspects as common goals and shared interests. Trump describes the relationship with President Xi as:

…very good chemistry between the two of, believe me. (The White House, 2017).

As noted with Trump’s language, there is a frequent use of adjectives when describing something positive or negative to portray the picture dramatically. In this case it was used to portray his relationship with President Xi as positive when referring to “chemistry”, pertaining the understanding of each other no matter language barrier, as in this case.

Trump proceeds to mention the trade deficit between the U.S. and China, only this time it is to a Chinese audience:

We must immediately address the unfair trade practices that drive this deficit, along with barriers to market success. (The White House, 2017).

Trump is slightly modifying his language and adding words tailored to his audience that differs from his regular message of trade with China. In the first part of the sentence, Trump says “unfair,” meaning one side has an advantage and the other side has a disadvantage. However, Trump continues with “trade practices” rather then “trade deals.” “Practices” pertains the practicing of trade and not the trade deals. Trump says:

We really have to look at access, forced technology transfer, and theft of intellectual property… (The White House, 2017).

Here, Trump specifies what he means with trade practices that have made trade an unfair aspect of the U.S. economy. When Trump says “access,” he means actors who involved or who is a part of the trade process. This can be the involved parties such as states or corporations for instance. Forced in this context pertains to a criminal act, meaning U.S. corporations were robbed. Therefore, with that sentence, Trump is claiming U.S. corporations robbed which resulted in making trade unfair for the U.S. and labeling other involved actors of trade as illegitimate and the antagonist.

Trump proceeds with his argument regarding unfair trade with China and states:
Both the United States and China will have a more prosperous future if we can achieve a level economic playing field. (The White House, 2017).

When saying, “both” “will have” “if”, he means that it is currently not heading for a thriving future and will only do so if the circumstances change. Since there is an illegitimate actor tampering with trade, Trump means that there will be “prosperity” if the economic playing field is “level.” He states:

But -- I don’t blame China. After all, who can blame a country for being able to take advantage of another country for the benefit of its citizens? I give China credit. (The White House, 2017).

The word “but” in the beginning pertains the assumption that Trump blames China for taking advantage of the illegitimate situation, which is why Trump specifies Chinese leadership is not to blame. This statement indicates that Trump favors a state, which acts illegitimately, in order to benefit its own citizens, rather than to follow the reciprocal rules of the liberal free market, meaning that Trump favors nationalism. He continues to say:

But, in actuality, I do blame past administrations for allowing this out-of-control trade deficit to take place and to grow. (The White House, 2017).

What Trump is saying here is that the unfair nature of trade with China is due to the past administrations that have allowed the U.S. to reach a disadvantage.

On the issue of the North Korean threat, Trump claims that China can “fix this problem easily and quickly” (The White House, 2017), implying that China has the tools to solve the issue but choses not to. North Korea is partly dependent on foreign states such as China and Russia for survival. Trump recognizes China’s power of a possible denuclearization.

Lastly, Trump thanks President Xi for the recent Chinese restrictions on North Korean trade and for standing with the U.S. and “our coalition of responsible nations” (The White House, 2017). Trump implies that not standing with the U.S. and against North Korea is irresponsible and portrays the support for North Korea as a negative move for China.
5.17 Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit (November 10th 2017)

President Trump begins his speech by addressing the latest achievements of the U.S. Trump then talks about the history of the APEC organization and brief history of the U.S. with Asia to explain the connection between the U.S. and the individual Asian states. Next, Trump addresses the achievement of individual Asian states and specifying their growing economies and democratic progress. Trump mentions China’s recent achievements as a well-known growing economy and the progress of lifting their citizens out of poverty.

Referring to the entire Asian region, Trump argues that each individual state has developed modern society making it a “home.” Trump bases his argument on a nationalistic standpoint and describes each individual state in the Asian region’s achievement and means that every individual state has been responsible for itself:

You also understand that your home is your legacy, and you must always protect it.” (The White House, 2017).

By “legacy” Trump means accomplishments the individual states achieved and “protect,” in this sense, implies that these individual states have built by retaliation or resistance to threats. Trump builds a nationalistic argument with this particular sentence.

Trump’s point with a nationalistic argument is to portray his perspective to the audience. Trump then claims that trade has not been beneficial for the U.S. and the reason for that is that other states have not followed the rules of the World Trade Organization. Trump is calling foul play on other states and the WTO, stating that the organization allowed such practices to disadvantage the U.S.

Therefore, to fix this issue of foul play, Trump is suggesting a renegotiation of trade, so that it can benefit the U.S. and give it an advantage and “level the field” as it may. For Trump, the current trading deals are not working because other states are not following the rules of the WTO, and the WTO is allowing this to happen. Trump claims that this is the reason the U.S. is not benefitting from trade.

Trump mentions that his recent trip to China included a conversation with President Xi about these unfair practices to give the U.S. an advantage and that his administration wants “fair and equal basis”. Simultaneously Trump is promoting a nationalistic perspective, where breaking the rules and taking advantage of another state to benefit ones own state is favorable.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to find out what the U.S. President Donald Trump reaction to the emerging power of China is. The primary material used for this study contains selected political remarks mentioning China made by Trump during the period of his presidency between February 9th 2017 and November 10th 2017. The discourse analysis has been conducted where Trump’s remarks has been thoroughly analyzed on the establishment of his portrayal of a challenger to the U.S. hegemonic power.

The study has found that when President Trump took office, he recognized that the global influence of the U.S. has declined. To create space for his administration’s attempts at improving foreign relations and national economy, Trump consistently uses a deviation between "us" versus "them" in his remarks. Trump tends to use this strategy when it comes to differentiating between his administration and previous administrations, as well as the U.S. and China (other foreign states and international organizations). This mirrors the findings of Yang, whom when researching the US-China relations crossed the “otherness” portrayed by the Americans of China (Yang 2017). This particular portrayal is something that consistently comes up in Trump’s speeches. This portrayal is his reaction to the loss of hegemonic power and it is Trump’s defense mechanism against the loss of the U.S. influence. Yang mentions similar results of the U.S. using Red Peril/Yellow Peril in fear of China surpassing them (Yang 2017).

In order to justify his presidential decisions, Trump continuously distances his presidency from previous leaderships. He often implies that the strategies and methods used by previous leaders were ineffective, resulting in the decrease of U.S. influence, which in turn allowed foreign states to take the lead. Through this division, Trump shows strong disapproval of previous administrations and announces his ambition to change the course of action through the implementation of new policies that would help the U.S. restore its influence on the global market. According to Trump, if previous leaderships has gone one way and resulted in failure, in the hope of reaching success, the Trump administration needs to go the opposite direction.

When dividing the world between “us” – the U.S. and ”them” – China and the rest of the world, Trump defines “our” position in the global order by comparison to the “others” position. Trump establishes a reality where he portrays the U.S. as the
protagonist and the rest of the world as the antagonist. Throughout his remarks, Trump claims that China, together with other foreign states, is growing stronger and expanding at manufacturing and trade at the expense of the U.S. loss of jobs. Trump represents China as a powerful state that the U.S. should re-evaluate their relations with, portraying them as the great threat to Americans’ safety and wealth. Trump claims that China took advantage of the U.S. due to former weak leadership. By implementing new policy, China will not be able to take advantage of the U.S. anymore. This means that both states need to come to an understanding for a more prosperous relationship. Trump is very revealing in his language. When he says that President Xi loves China, he means that his attempts at renegotiation of deals and agreements between the US and China was met with resistance. Trump attempted to meet China with nationalism and received nationalism.

As the U.S. hegemony declines and Chinese hegemony emerges as a challenger, the U.S. needs to retaliate in order to sustain the international stability according to the Hegemonic Stability Theory. Considering Gilpin’s argument, the U.S., is unlikely to engage in a war with a nuclear power with which they have an economical cooperation. The findings of this study has indicated that the U.S. choses to retaliate against China challenging its global position, in the form of economic protectionism.

Trump views the world in a realist point of view in which the natural responds to the loss of power is nationalism and protectionism. The removing of governmental regulation on businesses, the lowering of taxes on corporations and the U.S. exit out of the Paris Climate Accords is the result of Trump’s reaction to the loss of power. The results of this study are similar to Zhai’s expectations, whom predicted that Trump will retaliate against China with protectionism (Posen, A. and Ha, J. 2017).
7. References


