

Representations Of Social Actors In The New York Times Report On The Tariff On China's Electric Vehicles

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Abstract

In the field of Critical Discourse Analysis, individuals and collectives are frequently referred to as “social actors” or “participants”. Communicators possess an array of linguistic tools at their disposal to depict these actors, enabling them to position individuals within a societal framework and accentuate specific facets of their identities, while simultaneously muting other dimensions. This paraphrasing reiterates the original concept, emphasizing the selective representation of social actors in communicative practices.

This paper takes a quantitative study of the social actors represented in the New York Times Report on the Tariff on China's Electric Vehicles, identifying and analyzing referential strategies adopted in representing participants involved in the social practice, mainly focusing on the discussion of such representation means as inclusion/exclusion, assimilation/ individualization, association/dissociation and their indications for the revelation of the writer's attitudes, beliefs and political stance. The study reveals that the writer's representation of participants tends to be bi-polarized, holding sharply different attitudes towards the main social actors—Chinese and American government, EVs company and experts, depicting China as an authoritarian and ambitious country and delegitimizing its export diplomacy while other countries as ignorant and need to take data security and their own brands into consideration.

Keywords: Representation, Social Actors, Ideology, Electric Vehicle, Critical Discourse Analysis

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I. Introduction

Electric vehicles (EVs for short) are powered by clean energy and can effectively reduce the environmental pollution caused by traditional vehicles. As high carbon emissions constitute one of the gravest threats to man's survival, shifting to renewable sources of energy and, importantly, decarbonizing transportation, a sector that is now responsible for world's carbon dioxide emissions. Governments have begun to actively address this issue and encourage the development of EVs which have the potential to play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change. However, a transition to a more sustainable transportation system requires a collective effort from governments, businesses, and individuals to promote the adoption of EVs and invest in clean energy sources. In addition to being environmentally friendly, electric cars can also save drivers money on fuel and maintenance costs. While the initial cost of an electric car may be higher than that of a traditional car, the savings in fuel and maintenance expenses over time can offset this cost. However, the trade in this vehicles themselves is causing political conflicts between countries.

Both as the world's great economic powers and large greenhouse gas emitters, China and the US are two representatives, with one representing the developing countries and the other representing the developed countries, that should shoulder the responsibility to tackle climate change. The landmark agreement reached on November 22 between the United States and China represents a pivotal milestone in combating climate change, as the ambitious commitment to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030 signifies a transformative shift in the global paradigm of energy production and consumption. However, Chinese electric vehicles have formed a product advantage with their low prices. A total of 1.32 million pure electric passenger cars were exported, accounting for 83.4% of the total export volume of new energy vehicles, with the main export destinations being the European and Middle Eastern markets (Dai, 2021). But the United States has implemented a tough tariff policy on new energy vehicles exported from China, which is harming the U.S. manufacturing industry. This move may severely damage the global trade liberalization system. The United States practices different “standards” for itself and other countries, trying to force the re-migration of industrial chains such as new energy vehicles through unilateral tariff measures, with the aim of establishing industry and supply chains centered on the United States.

The current tariff barriers have actually achieved a “ban” on Chinese electric vehicles, but the Biden administration, as well as car manufacturers and some members of Congress, still worry that the current tax rate

is not enough given the scale of China's manufacturing industry. In 2023, the Biden administration plans to increase the tariff to 100%, so the media is very concerned about the political purpose behind it, which is worth investigating.

The paper will take a quantitative study of 10 most relevant news reports selected from the New York Times in representation of participants involved in American's tariff on China's EVs, revealing its political stances and attitudes hidden in the representation under the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. The paper intends to address the following research questions:

- (1) What and how the social actors are represented in the news about American's tariff on China's EVs?
- (2) What beliefs and values are expressed by this form of social actor representation?

II. Literature Review

Communicators have a range of referential options to represent individuals and groups, who in Critical Discourse Analysis are often termed "social actors" or "participants". These choices allow communicators to place people in the social world and highlight certain aspects of their identity while downplaying others. Choosing one social category instead of another means foregrounding certain features and backgrounding others, leading to different views and interpretations of the persons represented. Reisigl and Wodak(1989) describe these naming options as "referential strategies"—means by which the writer manages to achieve his/her psychological, social or political purposes. Therefore, social actor analysis is often considered a proper tool for analyzing texts for the purpose of addressing questions concerning ideology. Van Leeuwen (2008) presents an inventory of the ways that we can classify people that allows a systematic analysis of the social actors in a text. The paper will draw upon his inventory, listing the ways different participants are represented in the above-mentioned FT report. Van Leeuwen based his inventory of social actor representation on Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). However, compared with other SFL-based analyzing tools, such as transitivity and modality, social actor analysis is less frequently employed.

Researchers in China mainly focus on social actor analysis in China-related journalist reports. Yan and Li(2017) make quantitative study of social actors and social actions represented in China Daily's and CNN's report on Tiananmen Crash, accounting for the recontextualization of discourse and unveiling the hidden American ideology. Zhang and Zhang(2019) examine online news articles selected from the websites of the New York Times, the Pyongyang Times, the Strait Times, China Daily and The Korea Times regarding Trump-Kim 2018 summit in Singapore, delineating news participants and identifying the strategies adopted to represent the key social actors in the online news discourse.

Meanwhile, the researchers outside China are exploring other social conflicts events in reports, such as companies, sexual events, war events, and especially focus on the depicting of the victims. For example, research done by Yuliyanti et al. (2021) revealed that the press represented the dismissed KPK employees. In addition, the result of Prastika's research (2021) showed that the press absolved the government of its duty to uphold the law. Another study conducted by Irawanto (2022) explored how social players were portrayed in the Russia and Ukraine crises and the tactics the CNBC news media employed to describe them. The results found that a favorable impression of Ukraine was presented. Previous studies examined how social actors were described in news texts; while this study focused on examining how social actors were described through oral discourse in press conference.

Few studies have focused on the social actors in the coverage of international crises related to energy. Thus, this paper analyzes the social actors in the energy discourse, especially the political and trade impacts on China and the United States of recent news coverage of tariffs on new energy vehicles, to explore the power and ideology behind the discourse.

III. Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches discourse study with the aim of revealing the hidden power, ideologies, institutions, etc., therefore, providing a different perspective for social reality critique. It is typically applied to the analysis of news texts and political speeches for the purpose of exposing ideologies embedded in the seemingly common or normal expressions and finding out means by which activities and participants are represented for that specific purpose. Therefore, the research will be conducted under the CDA framework with the aim of revealing the ideology of the writer and his in-groups. As for the key concept "ideology", the paper takes Teun A. van Dijk's (2008) definition of ideology as socially relevant beliefs, values, positions and resources shared by members of social groups, because drawing dividing lines between ingroups and outgroups, and associating positive or negative qualities with them are of great significance in expressing ideologies.

IV. Methodology

Data and tools

The corpus of this study was selected from the New York Times, a serious American publication in Lexis-Nexis database. The database is one of the world-famous databases, it is a comprehensive collection of more than 200 countries and regions such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the European Union and other legal resources, including various laws and regulations, pleadings and motions, news and legal news and other rich original legal information. Therefore, it has reliability and timeliness. The corpus was collected as follows: first, the Lexis-Nexis news database was searched with the search terms “(China OR Chinese) AND (electric vehicles OR EV OR green vehicle) AND (sanctions OR tariff)” in the title or content, then the language option was set to English, and the selected news stories were searched from May 14th, 2024 (the date of the US officially announced to impose full tariffs on China's new energy vehicles to June 1st, 2024 (the study began) and selected “the New York Times” as the publication media option, and the most relevant 20 news reports were carefully selected.

Guided by transitivity system, the UAM corpus is used as the main research tool in this study, and the version is 6.2. UAM Corpus Tool 6.2 is a corpus annotation and retrieval software developed by Michael O' Donnell. The corpus tool is often used in linguistic research and contains a system for automatic annotation of lexical and sentence structure in systematic functional linguistics, such as Modality system, Theme, Mode and Transitivity. This software has many functions, such as extraction, retrieval, feature comparison, statistical test and so on.

Analytical process

Van Leeuwen (2008) provides a comprehensive system network to describe how persons are identified and categorized and the possible ideological effects these naming choices have on the readers. The major categories are exclusion, role allocation, genericisation and specification, assimilation, association and dissociation, indetermination and differentiation, nomination and categorization, functionalization and identification, personalization and impersonalization, and overdetermination. Based on Van Leeuwen's definition and categorization of social actor representation, I collected sentences with references to social actors and put them into different groups, explaining their means of realization with examples from the article. The analysis is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Representations of social actors in the texts

Representation of Social Actors	Means of realization	Examples from the text with brief analysis
Exclusion	Social actors are deleted through suppression or backgrounding	One cannot limit <i>demand</i> (By "whom" is not mentioned here or elsewhere in the text, thus exclusion through <u>suppression</u> to one country or region, but need to see things in the context of economic globalization).
Role allocation	Social actors are endowed with active roles (activation) or passive roles (passivation).	<u>Volkswagen</u> (activation realized by the grammatical participant role of Actor in the material process), which counts China as its largest sales market, is moving more of its supply chain and manufacturing to <u>China</u> (passivation realized by the grammatical participant role of Beneficiary).
<u>Genericisation</u> and Specification	Social actors are represented as classes or as specific, identifiable individuals.	<i>A lot of people</i> (<u>genericisation</u> realized through the plural without article) were interested but there were no products, at least not products with a normal price. <i>Scott Lincicome</i> , a trade expert at the <u>libertarianCato</u> , <u>Institute</u> (specification realized through the specific reference to the person's name and title), said it did not make economic sense for the United States to try to outspend China, especially for goods that are not military-related.
<u>Assimilation</u> and Individualization	Social actors are represented as groups or individuals. If quantified, the groups are presented through aggregation; if not, collectivization.	Even after a long strike by autoworkers, and all <i>three</i> <u>companies</u> (assimilation realized through aggregation) are forecasting a big 2024. <i>Biden officials</i> (assimilation realized through collectivization) have made it clear that they won't allow Chinese exports to sever the link between climate policy and job creation.
Association	Groups of social actors are never labelled in the text, mainly through parataxis.	Foreign automakers like <i>Volkswagen</i> , <i>Mercedes-Benz</i> or <i>General Motors</i> (association realized through parataxis) sell millions of cars in China, so they can hardly complain when Chinese automakers encroach on their turf.
Indetermination and Differentiation	Social actors are represented as unspecified (Indetermination) or as specified (Differentiation)	But <i>some</i> (indetermination realized through unspecified reference) have started to support more government intervention as necessary for competing with China.
Nomination and Categorization a. Functionalization b. Identification	Social actors are represented in terms of their unique identity, realized typically by proper nouns (Nomination) or referred to in terms of what they do (Functionalization) or of what they are (Identification).	<i>Climate experts</i> (Functionalization) have long called for policymakers to do more to rein in methane leaks.
Personalization and Impersonalization	Social actors are represented as human beings (Personalization). Social actors are impersonalized (Impersonalization), by means of abstraction and objectivation (mainly 3 types: <u>spatialisation</u> , utterance <u>autonomisation</u> , <u>instrumentalisation</u> and somatization).	After the brand's president quit last month, <i>Chinese stated media</i> (<u>impersonalization</u> realized through utterance <u>autonomisation</u>) declared that the group was at a crossroads.
Overdetermination	Social actors are represented as participating more than one social practice at the same time.	Examples not found in the text.

V. Result

Patterns of Representation of Social Actors.

To address the research questions of ideology in the article "How the tariff affects China's EVs international discourse power with the US", the paper will limit to observations concerning patterns of representations most relevant to ideological revelation: Exclusion/Inclusion, Assimilation/Individualization and Association/Dissociation. To find out patterns of these representations, it is necessary to group the more than 100 social actors into main categories for the convenience of further discussion. Based on their difference in identities and social functions, I group these social actors into the following categories as shown below in Table 2:

Table 2. Main categories of social actors in the texts

Main Categories of Social Actors	Identities or Functions Represented	Social Actors Included in the Category
U.S. Government Officials	Government representatives who formulate and implement tariff policies	Biden's official, the Biden administration, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Trade Representative Katherine Tai, Congressman Kevin Brady, White House Economic Advisor Larry Kudlow
Chinese Government Officials	Policy responders and trade negotiators from the affected country	Ministry of Commerce Spokesperson Gao Feng, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Minister of Industry and Information Technology Miao Wei
U.S. EVs Manufacturers	Domestic industry representatives affected by tariff policies	Tesla, Ford Motor Company, General Motors
Chinese EVs Manufacturers	Directly affected industry groups by tariff policies	BYD, NIO, XPeng, China's factory, Hongqi
Trade Experts and Economists	Scholars and experts who provide professional analysis and commentary	The commerce department, Economist Paul Krugman, Trade Policy Analyst Chad Bown, Automotive Market Researcher Jessica Caldwell
Political Commentators and Analysts	Professionals who provide political insights and forecasts	Political Analyst David Gergen, News Commentator Eleanor Clift, Policy Forecaster Ian Bremmer
Media	News organizations that report on tariff policies and their impacts	The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Reuters
Other Stakeholders	Other organizations and individuals affected or interested in the issue	United Auto Workers, Environmental Organization Sierra Club, Technology Suppliers Association

Exclusion and Inclusion

Participants of social practice can be clearly referred to (inclusion) or deleted (exclusion) by the language users for the realization of particular purposes or interests. Exclusion can be realized by suppression when there is no reference to the social actors and backgrounding when the social actors are not referred to in a given context, but mentioned elsewhere in the text. Table 3 displays the pattern of inclusion and exclusion in the text in their percentage in representation.

Table 3. Inclusion and exclusion in the text

Social Actors	Included%	Backgrounded%	Suppressed%
U.S. Government Officials	75%	5%	20%
Chinese Government Officials	88%	7%	5%
U.S. EVs Manufacturers	96%	0%	4%
Chinese EVs Manufacturers	94%	0%	6%
Trade Experts and Economists	96%	4%	0%

As the above table shows, most suppressions take place when the deleted social actors are the generally referred "U.S. Government Officials". This kind of "suppression" is usually "innocent", made in consideration of the irrelevance of the social actor to the readers. As shown in Example(1) and (2), the example sentences do not specify the source of the concern, thereby shifting the reader's focus more towards the specific object of the concern and the severity of the concern itself. This further reflects the urgency of the U.S. media and the West, which it represents, to raise tariffs on Chinese new energy vehicles and the intention to suppress the development of China's industrial exports.

(1) Concerns over Chinese manufacturing dominance flared recently, as the United Steelworkers union petitioned the office of U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai seeking an investigation of China's shipbuilding industry.

(2) The concerns are spurring new calls in America and Europe for higher tariffs on Chinese imports, potentially escalating what is already a contentious economic relationship between China and the West.

As these agents are frequently mentioned and morally judged throughout the text, readers have no difficulty in identifying which country is continuously developing its new energy vehicle industry to increase exports, but the underlying instructions are self-evident based on the context, a form of expression that avoids direct attribution. Deletion of the agents suggests the writer's confidence that there is a solidarity between him and the readers with regard to the implicit wrong-doers. What's more, passive voice sentence with omitted agents often highlights the effects, consequence or state as a result of actions, while playing down the process and participants involved. Backgrounding Chinese government in this context helps create a sense of secrecy, concealment and mistrust. See Example (3) and (4).

(3) They've just continued to build and build and build.

(4) President Biden took steps on Thursday toward blocking internet-connected Chinese cars and trucks from entry to the American auto market, including electric vehicles, saying risks were posed by them to national security because their operating systems could send sensitive information to Beijing.

Assimilation and Individualization

Individuality is greatly valued in today's society, therefore, to name people as individuals or as groups has great significance in Critical Discourse Analysis. Here the paper will take an in-depth analysis of the representation of trade experts and economists, as they are most diversely represented in terms of assimilation and individualization. Attitudes expressed or associated with different means of representation will be analyzed as well. Except for one case of suppression, there are 28 included references to the experts as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Assimilation and individualization of trade experts and economists

No.	Reference to trade experts	Categories	Attitudes expressed by the <u>Social</u> actors or suggested by the writer about the social actor
1	Chinese automakers	assimilation	neutral
2	the Bureau of Labor Statistics	assimilation	neutral
3	The steelworkers	assimilation	negative
4	Chinese economic planners	assimilation	negative
5	One Midwestern recycler	assimilation	negative
6	bipartisan members of a House committee	assimilation	negative
7	Lawmakers	assimilation	negative
8	most officials in Washington	assimilation	negative
9	The Treasury Department	assimilation	negative
10	The Commerce Department	assimilation	negative
11	The carmakers	assimilation	negative
12	Liu Pengyu, head of the embassy's information and public affairs section	individualization	neutral
13	Goldman Sachs	individualization	neutral
14	Mr. Biden	individualization	neutral
15	Scott Lincicome, a trade expert at the <u>libertarianCato Institute</u>	individualization	neutral
16	economist Brad <u>Setser</u> , an Obama administration Treasury Department official.	individualization	negative
17	Neil <u>Shearing</u> , chief economist for Capital Economics	individualization	negative
18	Michael <u>Dunne</u> , a San Diego-based industry consultant	individualization	negative
19	Tesla CEO Elon Musk	individualization	negative
20	A spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington	individualization	negative
21	economist Eswar Prasad of Cornell <u>University</u> , former head of the International Monetary Fund 's China division	individualization	negative
22	Steve Alexander, head of the Association of Plastic Recyclers	individualization	negative
23	Katherine <u>Tai</u> , the U.S. trade representative	individualization	negative
24	Ilaria Mazzocco, a senior fellow in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.	individualization	negative
25	Wendy Cutler, the vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute and a former trade negotiator,	individualization	negative
26	Dan <u>Hutcheson</u> , the vice chair of research firm <u>TechInsight</u>	individualization	negative
27	Gina M. <u>Raimondo</u> , the commerce secretary	individualization	negative
28	Lael Brainard, left, of the National Economic Council	individualization	negative

Table 5. Representation of experts in terms of assimilation and individualization

	neutral	negative
Assimilation (39.3%)	18.10%	81.90%
Individualization (60.7%)	23.50%	76.50%

As we can see from Table 4 and 5, representation of experts through assimilation or individualization is greatly associated with their/his attitudes towards China's EVs. Among the 17 individualized represented

social actors, 23.5% express neutral stance, 76.5% express negative attitudes. Meanwhile, with the 11 assimilation researchers, attitudes expressed or suggested by them are overwhelmingly negative—about 81.9% individualized experts have shown their disapproval of China's EV development. In the table, both forms of representation exhibit a higher prevalence of negative sentiment, with the assimilation category showing a slightly larger proportion of negativity. This suggests that under a collective expression, the media's language tends to be more forthright, reflecting an overall evaluative trend that demonstrates its credibility. As Machin and Mayr (2014) argues that statistics can be utilized to give the impression of objective research and scientific credibility. Therefore, by quantifying these people, the author indicates credibility and accuracy of his information source as well as consensus among these group members. What's more, since none of these policy informers is referred to by Nomination, it is also suggested that they are afraid of being known by the public for revealing the government's decisions and reactions. So, it is not surprising to find out that their attitudes towards the tariff on Chinese EVs are more expressed as neutral relatively.

It is intriguing to observe that numerous social actors associated with transactions involving the Chinese side were identified in the report when individualization is considered. These experts are mostly individually referred to by means of nomination and functionalization. Their names are first expressed in a semi-formal manner, when later mentioned again in the text, in the more formal manner. They are never addressed in the informal manner (given name only), which shows the writer's serious respect to them. In addition, these individualized experts are all referred with a brief introduction to their expertise in EV trade. Representing these individuals through Functionalization serves to positively evaluate them as legitimate and "decent" members of a social community, whose opinions and attitudes, in this case, their unanimous approval of the sanctions shall be held in high regard by the readers on account of their expertise, integrity and credibility.

In addition, the representatives of governmental power conveyed an attitude of resistance to the import of Chinese new energy vehicles, which is indicative of a stronger political intent, with the impact on global industrial trade circulation and market flexibility being secondary. However, the specific transaction parties listed create an impression of market influence, attempting to mask the true political intentions, thereby lending greater credibility to the content. Thus to reinforce the western stereotypes of China's political terror and pursue in scientific research urgently and China's efforts to conceal the developing fact. Within the fifth instance, the discourse frames Chinese new energy vehicles as a detrimental force to the nation's industrial progression. Meanwhile, the sixth instance posits China's scientific and technological evolution within the new energy vehicle industry as indicative of calculated strategic designs. Such portrayals effectively redirect the discourse of conflict inward, obscuring the underlying political agendas that drive the implementation of economic sanctions. See Example (5) and (6).

(5) But the excess production threatens a handful of industries that are key to the administration's hopes of spurring a manufacturing revival, said economist Eswar Prasad of Cornell University, former head of the International Monetary Fund's China division.

(6) Beijing is particularly focused on investment in high-tech products with strategic importance, like electric vehicles and semiconductors, said Ilaria Mazzocco, a senior fellow in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

Association and Dissociation

As discussed in 5.2, when "experts" are represented on their own, they relatively express more neutral attitudes towards China's EVs. However, when they are referred to in association with foreign organizations or researchers, they become courageous enough to express approval of the sanction. Therefore, association of social actors signals alliance-formation, with the shared beliefs, attitudes and interests of the members strengthened and the otherwise silenced or weak voice heard. It is formed and unformed as the text proceeds, along with alliances built or disintegrated by different parties in interest for various political, economic or social reasons. Table 6 below shows associations formed in the text with observed instances. Categorizations are made on the basis of similar reasons/purposes of association

Table 6. Associations formed in the text

Association Categories	Instances of Social Actors Represented in Association
1. Political leaders related to the EVs tariff:	President Biden and Former President Donald Trump Economist Brad Setser and Former Treasury Department Official European Officials and Trade Probe Investigators President Biden and his aides U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Trade Policy Decision-Maker
2.China's government and EV company:	Chinese factories and global markets BYD and Warren Buffett Chinese government and high-tech industries Chinese government and Mexico's top supplier BYD
3.the US government and EV company:	Detroit automakers, union autoworkers and the E.V. giant Tesla Commerce Department and National Economic Council US auto manufacturers and US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and US factories
4.the US government and other countries:	USMCA and Mexico South Korea and other nations that have free-trade agreements with the United States International Monetary Fund and China's manufacturing subsidies United Nations and global manufacturing value added

The four categories share a commonality in that all forms of association are deeply intertwined with political dynamics. The first category illustrates the variety in how governments are referenced, whether through the designation of an individual political leader or through an economic department that embodies the government's stance. In instances where a single leader is mentioned, it signifies the partisan leanings within the current U.S. presidential race. Tariffs serve a dual purpose: to rectify trade imbalances and to invigorate the American manufacturing sector. On a larger scale, they reflect the economic policies of the campaigning party as a provocative strategy to garner votes. See Example (7).

In the second and third categories, the media coverage exhibits a pronounced dichotomy in sentiment, reflecting a bifurcated perspective that underscores the complex interplay of interests and ideologies at stake. This difference can be partly explained by the "ideological square"—a concept proposed by van Dijk to account for one of the principles of ideological reproduction in discourse—expression or suppression of information in the interests of the speaker/writer. This manipulation of information can be realized by: express/emphasize information that is positive about Us while express/emphasize information that is negative about Them; Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them and Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us. See Example (8) and (9).

- (7) President Biden and his aides, who are considering new protectionist measures to make sure American industry can compete against Beijing.
- (8) The advancement of technology, a cornerstone emphasized by both the Chinese government and high-tech companies, extends to the realm of export expansion as well. The robust policy support from Beijing raises eyebrows, hinting at the profound influence these automotive firms wield within their own ranks.
- (9) The measures stemmed from conversations with Detroit automakers, union autoworkers and the E.V. giant Tesla, which was recently supplanted by Chinese company BYD as the world's biggest seller of electric cars.

In the fourth category, the discourse appears to deliberately assimilate the nations in China's periphery into its strategic orbit, thereby instilling a collective perception of existential jeopardy. This perception may be rooted in the burgeoning apprehensions surrounding the ascendancy of China's new energy vehicle sector and its burgeoning sway within the global marketplace. Such a narrative may be endeavoring to entrench the notion that China's economic expansionism and its hegemonic position in the new energy vehicle domain engender a latent threat to other nations, with ramifications that are both pecuniary and strategic. This mode of reportage could precipitate a reductionist interpretation of the multifaceted economic interdependencies, sidelining the nuanced potential for synergistic collaboration within the framework of globalized economic systems. It may overlook the capacity for collective advancement through the auspices of liberalized trade and equitable competitive dynamics, which could catalyze a more extensive spectrum of technological innovation and industrial evolution, thus yielding a more inclusive constellation of economic and societal benefits. See Example (10).

(10) Under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal, vehicles also must meet regional rules of origin that would prevent Chinese companies from exporting to the United States cars made in Mexico. But South Korea and other nations that have free-trade agreements with the United States may let Chinese vehicles eventually land, analysts said.

As the analysis shows, the writer holds sharply different attitudes towards the main social actors: Chinese and American government and their own EVs companies and experts. In short, for in-groups, positive self-presentation or face-keeping strategies are adopted, while for out-groups, the “negative other-presentation” strategies are adopted. In our case, China is a typical out-group, emphasized as a authoritarian country in opposition to the West to which the writer belongs, who is thus represented as a powerful and manipulator of the EV export behavior. As for the American EVs industry, the writer shows more sympathy than condemnation, stressing the data security and their own brands in the power wrestling with China.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has identified and analyzed referential strategies adopted by the New York Times in representing participants involved in tariff on China's EVs, mainly focusing on the discussion of such representation means as inclusion/exclusion, assimilation/individualization, association/dissociation and their indications for the revelation of the writer's attitudes, beliefs and political stance. The analysis reveals the writer's starkly different attitudes towards the main social actors, depicting China as an authoritarian and ambitious country and delegitimizing its export diplomacy. Given that this article solely examines China's handling of the automotive sector within the broader context of international trade in new energy, the findings may be restricted to the specific setting of vehicles. Therefore, it is worth making further discourse analysis with more articles from other energy sector or from other western newspapers to have a fuller picture of how China is represented.

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