

CHINA'S POLITICAL NARRATIVE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF VICTOR GAO'S AL JAZEERA INTERVIEW WITH MEHDI HASSAN

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Abstract

Given the aspect of China's military strategies and governance system, this study covers the critical discourse analysis of Victor Gao's interview with Mehdi Hassan. Since the relationship between language and power is very significant, it aims to explore the China's political narrative about the internal and external tensions. Purposive sampling of Chinese premier Victor Gao's interview with Mehdi Hassan streamed on August 9, 2024 is done to investigate the contemporary perspective of China on the rising regional and global tensions using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The analysis is done at the text dimension, the discursive dimension, and the sociocultural dimension. Findings revealed that, at the description level, values of words through contrastive schemes represent specific ideologies associated with one China policy and the opponents of China. At the interpretation level, text and context indicate political opponents as the only force responsible for the chaos and China as the bearer of circumstances. At the explanation phase, the discourse seems normative as China projects its diplomatic role as a global power in sustaining peace and seems to defend China's interests. This study also has some theoretical and practical implications for the world politics and journalism, and limitations for the further improvements.

Key words: Critical discourse analysis, three-dimensional model, political narrative, China, Victor Gao, Al Jazeera.

Introduction

Al Jazeera is a famous news channel that was launched as a response to the western narratives regarding the world politics and social issues. Based in Qatar, Al Jazeera continues to grow and its correspondents are present in many countries. Looking at the needs and nuances of the modern world, it initiated many programs and interview sessions to interrogate the world politics and discourses. Among these top-picks, *Head to Head* is considered the most popular media program. It offers intellectual discourse, where one of the biggest critics of the western narratives, journalist Mehdi Hassan asks questions from influential individuals of various fields. Using pinching questions, Hassan explores the complexities of global issues that demand his interviewees to say their views and perspectives. This sort of discussions indulge people into exploring different perspectives and create specific ideologies. This study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model to a specific *Head to Head* interview where the Chinese Premier Victor Gao joins Mehdi Hassan to answer his questions and create a specific ideology. The analysis will be focused on Victor Gao's discourse with respect to China, its role in global politics, and the terms it has with the outside world. China, once under Japanese control, got its independence in 1911 after a great revolution. In January 1912, The Repulic of China was officially proclaimed and Sun Yat-sen became the first provisional president of the country. The Kuomintang's government was repulsed by the rise of the Communist Party which eventually declared the country as the People's Republic of China. The post independence journey of China is full of progress in

terms of economy, defence, technology, and international relations. The World Bank (2019) reports China as the world's second largest economy. The estimated military spending of China ranges from 330 to 440 billion dollars (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2025, as cited in Global Security Report, 2025). According to Reuters (2024), China's rapid growth in Artificial Intelligence and semiconductor technology is going to drive the future growth. However, the expansionist policies of China in the region stand it as a global power in opposition to other world authorities. China has been strict with the residents who had once been pro-Japan. The Uyghur muslim population of the Xinjiang province of China has been faced with tough policies and coercive strategies. China is committing genocide in Xinjiang (Blinken, 2024). China also took control of Tibet in 1950 and established its own government. In 1962, China and India delved into a war over a territorial dispute. Even in 2020, the relations between them became tense once again. The application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model to this study would enable it reveal the dynamics of power, rhetorical strategies, and the ideological position of the Chinese premier.

Fairclough (2001) views the relationship between language and power from a political angle. The three-dimensional model of him is a pillar of critical discourse analysis. According to Fairclough (1989) writing is one part of a large chain of systems and discourses with language being a form of social action. Discourse includes both written and spoken text. CDA stresses that meanings can not be fully understood by looking at the text only, rather the socio-political context in which discourse occurs is also of paramount importance. Three-dimensional model is selected for the study because it aims to reveal the implicit meanings of Gao Victor's discourse by looking at the vast socio-political context. This model increasingly gained an international academic focus and is considered a new tool for analyzing and interpreting emerging realities. The present study, however, is limited to the critical analysis of Victor's discourse which he built during the interview with Mehdi Hassan held on August 10, 2024 on Al Jazeera. It attempts to analyze the political rhetoric and persuasive strategies employed by Victor to sway people in China and across the world regarding the socioeconomic development and peace building. The social dimension of language is emphasized, and the claim wavered that language does not have value by itself. Sapir and Whorf (1929) suggested that language has no inherent worth. Sapir and Whorf (1929) argued that "language is a constructive force that serves a major role in creating and preserving social validity" (Siddiqui, 2014, p.5). Mayer (2001) and Wodak (2001) consider the term critical in CDA as an analysis of language use with respect to the social, cultural, political, and economic baggage it carries. So, the purpose of CDA is to look into the injustices with a pragmatic aspect and provide justice.

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Critically analyze Victor Gao's discourse to know how his position of power controls his rhetoric in the interview.
- 2) Utilize CDA to examine the impacts of language on the power structures in China and across the world.

Research Questions

The investigation will be guided by the following questions:

- 1) How does Victor Gao's discourse constructs and represents the dynamics of power in the perspective of China and its political position?
- 2) In what way does the perspective of China depicts power imbalances and the control of agency?

Literature review

Critical Discourse Analysis is incomplete without considering the socio political context in which discourse is created. Political leaders, and politicians in general, use certain linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies to foster their world views. From ancient Greeks and Romans to the modern world, certain authorities have been using language in the desired ways to achieve specific aims. Whether it's political, cultural, religious, or media discourse, the use of particular words prove effective in achieving the aims of the discourse creator. Speech encompasses both written and spoken discourse made by politicians, government officials, or any other authorities. An interview is also a type of spoken discourse where the concerned person delves into the discourse of their own choice and purpose. Thus, it's significant to critically analyze the interview as it's important for the speakers as well as the listeners and observers.

Applying Fairclough's Three-dimensional model, Sabir and Kanwal (2018) investigated Robert Frost's Fire and Ice. Their study focuses to develop a deep interpretation of the poem. Zahoor (2015) researched the power language has over people's thinking and sentiments, and most importantly on the governance. The narratives made about the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and the 9/11 attacks were used to analyze this phenomenon. The study found that the subtle use of the framed narratives neutralized and naturalized these happenings. Ahmad, Bilal, and Gohar (2012) investigated the manipulative language used in media talk shows applying Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach. The study highlighted the impact of political party agendas and media framing of news on the voter preferences. It aimed to reveal the ideological foundations of political discourse. Using a combination of discourse-historical approach, corpus-assisted approach, and framing analysis, Junchen Zhang (2011) analyzed how Chinese president Xi Jinping constructed the "Chinese Dream" narrative (2012–2022) through his political speeches. It looks at four themes: National Rejuvenation, CPC's Legitimacy, Interests of Chinese People, and Interests of the world. It also illustrates the strategic application of nomination, argumentation, prediction and perspectivization to make a China-centric narrative. Such political statements are intricately linked to power, ideology, and hegemony. Language is the instrument of power, and is central to politics. According to Van Dijk (2004) ideologies are explicitly expressed and formulated. In other words, political discourses do not just reflect ideologies rather they reproduce and shape them.

Fairclough (2000) says that discourse is the battleground on which power is realized and fought over. Showing alternatives, judging alternatives, and choosing the best available option is called politics, says Martin (2014). Politicians, officials, and government servants use discursive practices to establish authority, shape identities and consolidate social relations. The global research throws light on the importance of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) with a critical lens. Researchers and scholars have long analyzed political discourse both in writing and speech. Bhatia (2006) commented on the multidimensionality of political discourse, and Dijk (1995) put forward that political discourse should be analyzed through the study of political communication in governance at local and global levels. Political discourses are examined through conversation analysis to reveal their hidden meanings and to interpret language style. The study conducted by Huang Wenjie (2019) looks at the power dynamics in Chinese TV news interviews using Fairclough's framework. The study finds that the interviewers hold the ground which indicates their greater power across questioning and control of the topic. It also reveals that social factors like age and profession can empower interviewees.

Sravani et al. (2021) analyzed the language used by political figures. The data collected for the purpose of analysis were the political speeches of Telugu. Findings of the study showed that the politicians used Telugu dialect to build strong connections with Telugu people, but English dialect proved more effective while communicating with the CBC politicians. The study of Anggraeni et al. (2021) critically analyzed the language used by French President Emmanuel Macron in the news broadcasting where he stood with a teacher who was accused of performing some bad acts. The study revealed that the news was loaded with certain ideology that represented the boycott of Muslims with French products.

Choices made about the language use convey deeper meanings. Speakers often employ assertions, euphemism, and appeal to the emotions of the audiences. The linguistic choices that shape political rhetoric configure the ideological message that is to be communicated as well as the image that is to be sketched. Rhetorical strategies of such types are not random but are highly context-driven. Fairclough (1992) describes three stages in discourse analysis: the first is to focus on the speaker's knowledge, experiences, and beliefs; the second is to look at the effects of interpersonal relations on the discourse development; and the third is to know about the identity and perception of the speaker. Fairclough (1989) put forward that discursive practices and sociocultural practices authorize hegemonic control over society through the use of language. Political language, however, is used to reproduce dominative practices in hegemonic cultures. Discourse, he explained, is "the whole process of social interaction, of which a text is just a part" (Fairclough, 1989).

The study conducted by Sarfo and Agyeiwaa (2010) compared the rhetorical strategies used by George Bush and Barack Obama in their national speeches. The findings revealed that both leaders used precise words and phrases when talking about Al-Qaeda and counter-terrorism. Specific linguistic choices like certain verbs and nouns were used interchangeably by both leaders in discussing terrorism and counter-terrorism. The study focused on the term 'terrorism', how its meanings changed through the years in the English language, and the way it's used in political rhetoric. According to Halliday (1971), language links people together and with their environments. The written or spoken words enable communication. Discourse analysis is not only a

linguistic analysis of the textual units such as vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, but the textual coherence and cohesion. Fairclough (1992) used the term 'intertextuality' to explain the way a text draws on elements from other texts. Manifest intertextuality directly quotes other texts, while constitutive intertextuality reinterprets ideas to create new texts. Fairclough proposed the analysis of text as crucial to theorizing the role of language in social domination.

K. Ashraf et al. (2022) applied Fairclough's three dimensional model of CDA to analyze the political speech of the former Pakistani premier Imran Khan. The study was qualitative in nature and aimed to analyze the word choices of the premier to reveal his political objectives in a political situation. The findings of the study showed that Imran Khan employed rhetorical and linguistic devices to attract his supporters in Pakistan and abroad.

Hu Zhanglin (1988) studied that linguistic mechanics convert sentences into associated texts to deliver meanings. With the progress, sentences may be spread across the ideas interpersonally. Van Dijk (1993) provides insights into how the elite shapes and spreads their ideology in the media, which becomes a technology to rule. Ruth Wodak (2001) and Meyer (2001) explained the term 'critical' further, emphasizing that language is interwoven with the political, economic, and social aspects of society. Language has been a pivot for scholars across Europe, including members of the Frankfurt School, connecting politics with culture. British linguists like Fowler et al. (1979) and Kress and Hodge (1993) molded critical linguistics into a modern approach called critical discourse analysis. In the 1980s, cognitive linguistics dealt with the relation of language and cognition, examining conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending, which had much to reveal about creative thought. This text touches a variety of fields including rhetoric, generative linguistics, and critical theory. Blending language and politics, this framework forwards a theory of political language that incorporates linguistic and cognitive dimensions. The study is influenced by this outlook, seeking to further explore the relationship between language and politics.

Methodology

The research methodology section is described under the following points.

Research Design

This research is a qualitative study shown through critical discourse analysis. Qualitative research, according to Kothari (2004), refers to the analysis of a qualitative phenomenon. According to Cresswell (2007), qualitative research is a method of studying research problems related to the meanings individuals assign to a set of circumstances around them. The research is based on transformative paradigm that speaks volumes about the politics in research.

Research Participant

According to the need of the study, purposive sampling was done to select the data for the analysis. Purposive sampling technique is used in the situation where the researcher has some prior knowledge about the people or events undertaken for the research purpose and selects them with an intention that they would produce the most valuable results, says Denscombe (1998). Therefore, the interview of Victor Gao with Mehdi Hassan that was broadcasted on Al Jazeera on August 9, 2024 is selected and subjected to Fairclough's model of CDA to evaluate China's political narrative.

Theoretical Framework

Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1989) is applied to the study. However, the study focuses only on the analysis of lexical items without examining the grammatical structures. The three-dimensional model consists of three stages of analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation. Since this study is limited to the analysis of lexical items, selective parts of the model are explained below.

Description

The description stage deals with the analysis of the text only. It involves analyzing the value of words at three levels: experiential, relational, and expressive. Experiential value refers to the experience and knowledge of the discourse producer about the social world. According to Fairclough (2001), the analysis of words is significant as they have ideological importance. The experiential value of words include classification schemes, collocations, over wordings, synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy. The relational

values look at the relationship text creates between the discourse producer and consumer. The relational values of words show how euphemism and formal elements help in supporting or challenging an existing set of beliefs. The expressive values deal with the behavior of the text. At the level of words, expressive values include the analysis of persuasive or aggressive language use to maintain power and support or oppose a particular ideology, as proposed by Fairclough (2001).

Interpretation

The link between discourse and society is maintained by interpretation. This stage looks at what the discourse is about and how it is absorbed by the interpreters according to their background knowledge. Members' resources (MRs) or prior knowledge of the text absorbers play a significant role in understanding the text. Fairclough (2001) divides the interpretation stage into six levels. The interpretation of text involves four levels; surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence, and global coherence. The interpretation of context is done at two levels; situational context and intertextual context.

Explanation

This stage looks at the discourse as part of a broader social process that is determined by various social structures. Analysis is done with regard to the social determinants, ideologies (normative or non-normative), and the effect of discourse on the power relations. The three-dimensional model is used to investigate a discourse comprehensively. In this way, the hidden ideologies and power imbalances are dug out.

Data Collection:

The data collected for this study is based on Mehdi Hasan's Live interview of Victor Gao, who is a lawyer and spokesperson for the Chinese government, on Al Jazeera English on August 9, 2024. The interview, called "Is Xi Jinping's China on a Path to War?", was gleaned from YouTube.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed at three levels.

1. Description

At this level, China's political narrative is analyzed through the values of words in Victor Gao's discourse.

Values of words

Values of words are examined at three levels: experiential, relational, and expressive.

i. Experiential values of words

Experiential values of words indicate that different world views are established by the speaker. These world views are termed as classification schemes.

Classification Schemes

The discourse exhibited two opposite classification schemes. The first scheme referred to the right-wing ideological framework shown by words like "peace", "real", "aid", "unification", "independence", "true brothers and sisters", "human rights", "free speech", "well structured", "sovereignty", "democracy", "teamwork", "One China policy", etc. The second scheme, on the other hand, referred to the left-wing ideological framework shown by words like "war", "troops", "separatists", "extremists", "proxy", "detention", "agitating", "dictate", "monarchy", "rivalry", "bankrupt", "rampant", "merciless", "greater disaster", "surrendered", etc. This contrast in the classification schemes shows that the discourse under analysis contains opposing ideologies.

Collocations

Collocations like "territorial integrity", "ethnic land", "human rights", "true brothers", "constructive advice", "well structured", "huge respect", "big country", "free speech", "very carefully", "independent investigators", etc. seemed to support the right-wing ideology. Contrary to this, collocations like "unconditionally surrendered", "territorial dispute", "civil war", "mass injustice", "authoritarian rule", "completely

discredited", "mini budget", "greater disaster", "wrong and false", "false information", etc. seemed to uphold the left-wing ideology.

Overwording

The interview seemed to be loaded with overwordings like "push the edge", "very carefully", "unconditionally surrendered", "One China policy", "very swiftly", "frequently amended", "regularly", etc. The use of overwordings shows the ideological struggle of the two contrasting ideological frameworks. It helped the speaker to emphasize the subject of "war", "injustice", "extremis" and the need for unity.

Synonymy

Synonym relations in the right-wing framework were shown by the words "sovereignty" and "integrity", "brothers" and "sisters", "practices" and "traditions", "modernization" and "transformation", "positive" and "constructive", "legal system" and "constitution". However, support for the left-wing ideology is indicated by the synonyms like "extremists" and "separatists", "dictatorship" and "authority", "wrong" and "false", "imprisonment" and "detention".

Antonymy

The relation of antonym is the major point in evaluating China's political narrative. Antonyms like "democracy" and "dictatorship", "live" and "die", "teamwork" and "individualism", "centralized power" and "consolidated power" showed the equivalence with the ideological contestations present in the words of right and left ideologies.

Hyponymy

Several words reflect an ideology that stems from the generic terms. Words like "extremists", "separatists", and "invaders" were used as hyponyms. These words seemed to reflect broader concepts mentioned in the discourse, i.e., "war", "rulers", "greater disaster", "corruption", that are linked with the left-wing ideological framework. However, hyponyms like "reunification", "free speech", and "defense" seemed to reflect broader concepts of "peace", "human rights", "sovereignty", and "independence" that support the right-wing ideological framework. The difference in two hyponymy relations serves the purpose of ideological contestation that is the result of the fear arising from the agitation of the activists and the optimism in Gao's discourse.

ii. Relational Values of Words

Analysis of the relational values of words is done at two levels.

Formality

Gao's discourse revealed the use of formal but serious words and expressions. Expressions like "if you read very carefully", "if you do your homework", and calling the Chinese president "the guy for all", "a man of huge respect", show the formality in Gao's discourse.

Euphemistic Expressions

However, euphemistic expressions like "in terms of defending China's sovereignty and territorial integrity", "positive constructive proposal", were used instead of harsh words like "crushing the opposition", "control of the land", and "obedience to the king".

Expressions like "reunification", "One China policy", "transformation", "law will take the action" were also euphemistic and seem to serve specific ideological functions.

iii. Expressive Values of Words

Expressive values of words are looked at based on the purpose they were used for in discourse. Persuasion is the main purpose of expressive values of words.

Persuasive words

Victor Gao's discourse showed dichotomy in classification schemes. As the purpose of his discourse was to persuade people to support the right-wing ideological frame, words like "real", "aid", "unification", "independence", "true brothers and sisters", "human rights", "free speech", "well structured", "sovereignty", "democracy", "teamwork", "One China policy" were used. However, to show negative attitude about the left-wing ideological frame, words like "war", "troops", "separatists", "extremists", "proxy", "agitating", "dictate", "rivalry", "bankrupt", "rampant", "merciless", "greater disaster" were employed.

Larger structure of the text

At this point in the description, an attempt is made to analyze the structure of the interview, as discourse structuring is bounded by ideologies and agendas enclosed within it. Victor Gao's interview started with thanking Mehdi Hassan and introducing China's global positioning. After this, the defense strategies that China employed are mentioned and framed to make China's actions acceptable and legitimate. China's opponents are declared responsible for inciting war, and China is described as a sovereign state that can take every action to protect its integrity. However, the opposing forces are also shown to be affected by China's policies. The opposing powers of China are made responsible for the territorial disputes that they left behind. Then, China's efforts towards being a peaceful country are discussed. After that, bilateral talks to decrease tensions are described. Victor throws light on Xi Jinping's policies to provide everything possible and bring peace to the region. Next, China openly defends its actions against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province. Activists are portrayed as separatists and extremists who are responsible for the chaos and agitation. It also justifies the actions in Tibet and Taiwan, considering these territories as part of China. Xi Jinping is shown as a leader for all and the most respected leader whom no one can speak against; if they do so, they will be dealt with by law. By the end, China's narrative shows determination to bring peace and make the country unified. The structuring is based on the importance of the matter, as it describes the intense situation of political victimization, measures taken by China to calm the situation, followed by China's own perspective. Interpretation helps unveil how different stages are arranged in a specific order to show China's political narrative on the ongoing tensions between China and the West. It's apparent from the discourse how China presents its perspective and defends it.

2. Interpretation

Interpretation stage involves the analysis of discourse at six levels. The first four levels comprise of textual analysis followed by two levels of the contextual analysis.

i. Interpretation of the text

Fairclough (2001) divides the text interpretation into four stages: surface of utterances, meaning of utterances, local coherence, and global coherence. Each stage is described below.

Surface of Utterance

This stage holds limited importance as it focuses on analyzing words, and phrases in isolation. Fairclough downplayed its significance, noting that this analysis is done by the researcher during the initial description phase.

Meaning of utterance

The study is concerned with interpreting the meaning of the vocabulary elements during the description stage. The interview with the Chinese Premier addressed accusations of China inciting war, committing mass injustices, and suppressing political opponents. Gao's discourse contained words that revealed ideological contestations between right and left ideological frameworks. At the word level, many terms appear to directly oppose China's opponents and its own separatist movements. Words like "separatists", "extremists", "agitation", "greater disaster", "war", "proxy", and "dictatorship" are associated with the left ideological framework, portraying global opponents of China as responsible for destruction. These are countered by terms like "peace", "defence", "aid", "human rights", "careful", and "big country". China's perspective seemed to link every negative word with global opponent powers and internal separatist movements, while downplaying or omitting discussions of China's own mass injustices and enforced disappearances of political opponents. As the interview reached its climax, phrases like "One China policy", "you will be dealt with

swiftly", and "reunification will be achieved" clarified China's political stance on global tensions and internal uncertainties.

Local and Global Coherence

The analysis of local coherence reveals a deliberate pattern in Gao's discourse. In the first paragraph, he mentions China's military spending in the first sentence, immediately contextualizing it as a fraction of the United States' expenditure in the second sentence. The third sentence frames China's expenses as a necessary defense measure. In the fourth sentence, narrative shifts blame onto opposing forces, portraying them as responsible for tensions and war-like circumstances, aiming to gain sympathy. At the global coherence level, the discourse positions the US and the West as instigators of geopolitical tensions, with China as the affected party. Opponents are depicted as secondary sufferers, showcasing China's diplomatic stance. The narrative attributes peace initiatives to China, while urging opponents in the country to accept the "One China Policy". Overall, the structure suggests China is striving for peace, not responsible for tensions. However, upon closer inspection, it appears to align with China's narrative, presenting a biased perspective.

ii. Interpretation of Context

Context was interpreted at two levels: situational level and intertextual level. Context analysis at the situational level includes: what's going on?, who is involved?, what's the subject's position?, and what's the role of language? However, context analysis at the intertextual level includes how discourses within the discourse analysis are historically linked.

Situational Context

The analysis of the situational context is done at four levels described below.

What's going on?

In this portion, we analyzed the situation in which the discourse was produced. Chinese Premier Victor Gao gave the interview under analysis to Al Jazeera English where Mehdi Hassan interrogated him about the geopolitical dynamics and the regional role of China. Victor Gao came to defend the actions taken by China in this regard to maintain peace. Activity is the interview as it is delivered in the dialogue. This interview is delivered at a point where China's role in the region is questioned. The purpose of the interview is to inform the outcomes of the actions made by China to stabilize the national and international tensions.

Who is involved?

In this portion, we analyzed that Victor Gao is the answerer as the discourse under analysis is of China's political narrative, and it is a dialogue. Firstly, the subject position is derived from an activity type, the subject position of Gao is of guest speaker and informer to the world community about China's stand on the national and world order. Secondly, the institution ascribed him the social identity of the Premier, which confirmed the position of a Chinese representative to the world community. thirdly, his position as a guest speaker in the Interview is the one way, and it does not alter with listeners.

In what relations?

The Chinese premier's interview described the outcomes of the multilateral talks on the tensions. He seemed to minimize the public distance to convey the true perspective of China to the world community. Moreover, during the whole interview, his main focus was on "China's defence, defensive in nature, is not to fight anyone except those who want to fight or launch a war against China" Gao (2024), and the use of "China" many times seemed to him maintaining a major power share in the multilateral talks and seemed to maintain China's hegemonic position in the world.

What is the role of language?

Victor Gao's discourse depicted China's perspective. The use of negative terms, "separatists" extremists", proxy", "agitating", greater disaster", and "mass injustice" with opponents and "peace", "big country" ruling party", "one China policy", "sole legitimate government" with China, made China's stand clear in this regard. Moreover, discourse is shaped properly with the tactic to justify China's standing with its policies by

criticizing the violence spread by political rivals, ignoring the atrocities committed by China against its minority groups.

iii. Intertextual Context

As the interview was conducted on August 9, 2024, it addressed China's stance on global and regional tensions, its suppressive policies toward minority groups, and its claims over Tibet and Taiwan. The discourse referenced the history of China's repressive policies in Xinjiang, which international human-rights organizations have described as crimes against humanity, as well as longstanding rights abuses in Tibet. The statement, "It is not up to the people in Taiwan to decide about the One China policy" (Gao, 2024), illustrates this position. It also discussed China's military and diplomatic pressure against Taiwan's independence movements in 2024. Additionally, the interview highlighted China's relations with neighboring countries, particularly India's concerns regarding China's rising military expenditure and expansionist policies. This intertextuality enabled the interpretation of contemporary discourse as a response to opposing narratives and allowed the research to examine China's right-wing policy stance more critically.

3. Explanation

This stage is analyzed at three levels: social determinants, ideologies, and effects of discourse on power structures.

i. Social Determinants

Gao's discourse seemed fitting at the situational level, as the interview was conducted during a peak in China's geopolitical strategies and internal uncertainties. He displayed diplomatic behavior by arguing and informing about the severity of the crisis if opponents don't align with China's policies. Gao greeted Mehdi Hassan initially, answered questions diplomatically, and thanked him in the end. His discussion showcased China's hegemonic control, implicitly highlighting China's efforts over those of opponents. At institutional and societal levels, the discourse sustains China's image as a global power bringing peace. His explicit remarks on China's efforts evidence its leadership and key negotiator role. China's relationships with minority groups were portrayed as friendly and brotherly; he maintained China's supportive role, stating, "the Uyghurs, as far as I'm concerned, are my true brothers and sisters" (Gao, 2024).

ii. Ideologies

As indicated at societal and institutional levels, Gao's stance is rooted in shared cultural values. Different ideologies are invested in this discourse. Maintaining diplomatic relations is a key Chinese principle, evident in the premier's approach, allowing opponents to engage in talks. China's policy emphasizes sustaining global peace and reclaiming territories it claims. Amid regional tension, Gao comprehensively described China's efforts, stressing its peacemaking role. Gao justifies China's actions against those hindering unification policies, portraying the government as the sole legitimate authority and opponents as extremists aligned with Western powers and the USA.

iii. Effects

The discourse sustains power dominance at situational, institutional, and societal levels. Gao maintained a consolidated stance on the "One China Policy", upholding China's traditional perspective, supporting the government due to shared cultural values and interests. The discourse is normative, strengthening China's pre-existing narrative. It blamed separatists for destruction, positioning China as the authority to set policies, defining its role as a great negotiator. The discourse contributes to existing power relations, sustaining them by supporting the "One China Policy" and territorial integrity. Gao's remarks, "Be a staunch supporter of One China policy. Be a proud Chinese" (Gao, 2024), reinforce China's traditional perspective, confirming the discourse's role in sustaining power relations.

Findings

The findings of the study are given here.

1. Description Stage

Different elements in the interview are given in Table 1 which are analyzed at the word level in description stage.

Table 1

Values of words

Experiential values of words	Relational values of words	Expressive values of words
<p>(a) Classification scheme: Two classification schemes. Right ideological framework: "peace", "real", "aid", "unification", "independence", "true brothers and sisters", "human rights", "sovereignty", "democracy", "teamwork", "One China policy". Left ideological framework: "war", "troops", "separatists", "extremists", "agitating", "dictate", "monarchy", "rivalry", "bankrupt", "rampant", "merciless", "greater disaster".</p> <p>(b) Collocations: Used in two senses. Right ideological framework: "territorial integrity", "ethnic land", "human rights", "true brothers", "constructive advice", "huge respect", "big country", "free speech", "independent investigators". Left ideological framework: "unconditionally surrendered", "territorial dispute", "civil war", "mass injustice", "authoritarian rule", "completely discredited", "mini budget", "greater disaster", "false information".</p> <p>(c) Overwording: Ideological struggle visible from "unconditionally surrendered", "One China policy", "very swiftly", "frequently amended", "regularly".</p> <p>(d) Synonymy: Used in two senses. Right ideological framework: "sovereignty" and "integrity", "practices" and "traditions", "modernization" and "transformation", "positive" and "constructive", "legal system" and "constitution". Left ideological framework: "extremists" and "separatists", "dictatorship" and "authority", "wrong" and "false", "imprisonment" and "detention".</p> <p>(e) Antonymy: "democracy" and "dictatorship", "live" and "die", "teamwork" and "individualism", "centralized power" and "consolidated power".</p> <p>(f) Hyponymy</p> <p>Right ideological framework: "reunification", "free speech", and "defense" associated with broader concepts of "peace", "human rights", "sovereignty", and "independence".</p> <p>Left ideological framework: "extremists", "separatists", and "invaders" associated with "war", "disaster", "corruption".</p>	<p>(a) Euphemestic expressions: euphemistic expressions like "in terms of defending China's sovereignty and territorial integrity", "positive constructive proposal", were used instead of harsh words like "crushing the opposition", "control of the land", and "obedience to the king".</p> <p>(b) Formal elements: use of formal but serious words and expressions. Expressions like "if you read very carefully", "if you do your homework", and calling the Chinese president "the guy for all", "a man of huge respect"</p>	<p>(a) Persuasive words: "real", "aid", "unification", "independence", "true brothers and sisters", "human rights", "free speech", "well structured", "sovereignty", "democracy", "teamwork", "One China policy" were used.</p> <p>(b) Aggressive words: words like "war", "troops", "separatists", "extremists", "proxy", "agitating", "dictate", "rivalry", "bankrupt", "rampant", "merciless", "greater disaster" were employed.</p>

2. Interpretation Stage

Interpretations of different elements in the interview at the textual and contextual levels are summarized in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2

1. Interpretation of Text

Surface of utterance	Meaning of utterance	Local and Global coherence
Not of particular relevance as the words got separated at the description level	China's perspective seemed to link every negative word with global opponent powers and internal separatist movements, while downplaying or omitting discussions of China's own mass injustices and enforced disappearances of political opponents. As the interview reached its climax, phrases like "One China policy", "you will be dealt with swiftly", and "reunification will be achieved" clarified China's political stance on global tensions and internal uncertainties.	The analysis of local coherence reveals a deliberate pattern in Gao's discourse. At the global coherence level, the discourse positions the US and the West as instigators of geopolitical tensions, with China as the affected party. Opponents are depicted as secondary sufferers, showcasing China's diplomatic stance

Table 3

2. Interpretation of Context

i. Situational context
<p>Whats going on? Chinese Premier Victor Gao gave the interview under analysis to Al Jazeera English where Mehdi Hassan interrogated him about the geopolitical dynamics and the regional role of China. Victor Gao came to defend the actions taken by China in this regard to maintain peace</p> <p>Who is involved? US President Joe Biden Subject position is defined in two ways; (i) Speaker to the world community (ii) Representative of China's political perspective perspective</p> <p>In what relations? The Chinese premier's interview described the outcomes of the multilateral talks on the tensions. He seemed to minimize the public distance to; 1) convey the true perspective of China to the world community. 2) maintain China's hegemonic position in the world.</p> <p>What is the role of language? Language played important role in justifying China's standing with its policies by criticizing the violence spread by political rivals, ignoring the atrocities committed by China against its minority groups</p>

ii) Intertextual context

The discourse referenced the history of China's repressive policies in Xinjiang in 2024. It also discussed China's military and diplomatic pressure against Taiwan's independence movements in the contemporary time period. Additionally, the interview highlighted China's relations with neighboring countries, particularly India's concerns regarding China's rising military expenditure and expansionist policies.

2. Explanation Stage

The findings of the study at the explanation stage are given in table 4.



Table 4

Social determinants	Ideology	Effects
<p>(i) Situational level: Fit to the situation, as the interview was conducted during the peak in China's geopolitical strategies and internal uncertainties.</p> <p>(ii) Institutional and societal level: The discourse sustains China's image as a global power bringing peace. His explicit remarks on China's efforts evidence its leadership and key negotiator role. China's relationships with minority groups were portrayed as friendly and brotherly.</p>	<p>Different ideologies invested in the discourse.</p> <p>(i) Diplomatic relations.</p> <p>(ii) China's role of a key player in sustaining peace.</p> <p>(iii) Justifies China's actions against those hindering unification policies, portraying the government as the sole legitimate authority.</p>	<p>(i) Discourse sustains the power dominance at all three levels.</p> <p>(ii) The discourse is normative, strengthening China's pre-existing narrative</p> <p>(iii) Discourse contributes to the existing power relations, sustaining them by supporting the "One China Policy" and territorial integrity.</p>

Discussion

The present study examines China's political narrative and its role in rising global dynamics, analyzing Premier Victor Gao's discourse amidst geopolitical tensions and internal politics. It explores Gao's discourse descriptively, interpreting text and context, and applies Fairclough's model to examine social determinants, ideologies, and effects of China's leadership perspective. Gao's discourse constructs power dynamics, representing China's stance and portraying power imbalances. At a descriptive level, experiential word values reveal classifications between left-wing and right-wing ideologies. Right-wing associations include "peace", "real", "aid", "unification", "sovereignty", and "One China policy", while left-wing associations include "war", "extremism", "proxy", and "disaster". This division reflects Gao's agency exercise. Relational word values, through formality and euphemisms, propagate China's leadership perspective on global tensions and peace. Gao's discourse is rich in persuasive language, supporting China's agenda, associating left-wing ideology with opponents and right-wing with "One China policy". He portrays power imbalance as an exercise of agency, presenting a biased yet persuasive narrative. The interpretation depicts China's representative as persuasive and biased, highlighting power dynamics and agency exercise.

The current research is supported by various studies on critical discourse analysis. Khaled (2020) analyzed Benjamin Netanyahu's speech using Wodak's (2009) framework, revealing how he justifies Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip as "self-defense" while focusing on peace, security, and human rights. Similarly, Shaban and Gabdan (2021) found that Israeli political speeches employ language to persuade and propagate hidden ideologies. Sheba (2023) examined Biden's speech after Russia's Ukraine attack, showing how he asserted power and authority, positioning himself as a defender of the democratic world.

Further support comes from Khan and Fatima's (2022) study, which revealed Biden's use of language to promote a positive image of America and a negative image of the Afghan Taliban. Rabbani et al. (2021) analyzed Imran Khan's speech, demonstrating how language can create hope and control situations. Naem and Raffi (2019) examined Musharraf and Zia's remarks on Afghanistan, showing how politicians use language to establish power and legitimacy.

Additional studies reinforce these findings. Igbashangev (2024) analyzed Professor Patrick Lumumba's speeches, highlighting language use in cultural and social contexts to create hegemony and dominance. Khan (2022) applied Halliday's systemic linguistics model to speeches by Benazir Bhutto and Hillary Clinton, revealing language use to establish social standing and influence opinions. Quyen (2022) explored Hillary Clinton's language, demonstrating its role in creating power dynamics and exercising agency. While these studies focus on social contexts, our research addresses both social and global contexts, exploring China's political narrative and Premier Victor Gao's discourse amidst geopolitical tensions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study analyzed China's political narrative as presented by Victor Gao's discourse in an interview with Mehdi Hassan on Al Jazeera English. The analysis revealed that words associated with left-leaning ideology were linked to political opponents, Western powers, and the USA, whereas words belonging to the right-leaning ideology were associated with the "One China Policy". The interpretation showed that China's perspective blamed opponents for chaos, while overlooking China's own violence, indicating inclinations towards strict expansionist policies, evident in Gao's discourse. The explanation explored various ideologies, including global powers' diplomatic relations and their role in negotiating the issue. China's support for its policies was justified on the basis of shared cultural values and interests. Ultimately, this discourse consolidated existing power structures. This research paves the way for further studies to analyze specific perspectives and ideologies of countries regarding China's political stance and other international issues.

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