

Reporting on Sino-Japan in *The New York Times*: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Xiaoxiao Chen
Beijing Foreign Studies University

This paper is a critical discourse analysis of the news reports on Sino-Japan conflicts in the *New York Times* from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2006. A critical discourse analysis is made to delineate the contrasting representations of China and Japan, locating some particular discursive strategies that harbor ideological inclinations. Findings indicate that the *New York Times* portrayed the Chinese government as aggressive, dominant, and repressive and the Chinese as a frightening and violent group of people, so that China was made to seem less victimized and less sympathetic in the reporting of Sino-Japan conflicts. In contrast, the Japanese government and its people were depicted as more rational and courteous, while their atrocities in World War II, their denial of history, and their military and political ambitions were played down or glossed over. In the concluding section, the author brings to light the underlying reasons for the ideologically framed news representations in the *New York Times*.

Development in Sino-Japan relations is a frequent focus in American media, because ties between East Asia's two major powers—China neither a friend nor a foe of the US and Japan a staunch US ally—will do much to define America's future relations with Asia-Pacific region. Sino-Japan relations, however, have experienced twists and turns since the normalization of the bilateral ties in 1972. A downward spiral in Sino-Japan relations came in August 1995, when Japanese conservatives protested against the Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's expression of his feelings of "profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad" of WWII (Japan). Thereafter, the situations appeared to go from bad to worse.

This paper is to examine how Sino-Japan conflicts were portrayed in the *New York Times* (hence abbreviated as the *NYT*) from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2006. I will discuss how Sino-Japan conflicts or disputes were represented in the news events and how China and Japan were depicted in their conflicts by the most prestigious American newspaper. This study will reveal how the American elites view China and Japan at the beginning of the 21st century and how the US positions itself in the triangular ties of the three big powers.

Trilateral Relations between China, US, and Japan

Sino-Japan relations are among the central factors in East Asian international politics. Some long-term disputes between China and Japan have led Sino-Japan relations toward increased strains and greater uncertainty. The troubled relationship between China and Japan is further complicated by these concerns:

Firstly, Sino-Japan relations are plagued by bitter argument over the World War II

history. Chinese people are still plagued by memories of the atrocities committed by Japanese troops in World War II: the Nanjing Massacre, Japanese chemical weapons, experiments on human subjects in North China, Chinese “comfort women,” Chinese labor, to name a few. On the other hand, Japan has refused to recognize and apologize for its imperial past, for instance, by revising history textbooks in the public schools, which had already ignited strong anti-Japan protests in China in April, 2005. In addition, Koizumi regularly visited the Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates Japan’s war dead including 14 Class A war criminals. Before that, Hashimoto’s visit in 1996 had provoked general rage among Chinese people. Many argue that, by downplaying or even denying atrocities like the Nanjing Massacre and underscoring events like the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese elites portray Japan falsely as the victim, rather than the victimizer, in World War II (Christensen, 1999, p. 53).

Secondly, Taiwan will be a dangerous flash point in Sino-Japanese relations. Ties between Tokyo and Beijing could experience serious political tensions if Japan supports Taiwan’s independence through steps such as allowing Lee Teng-hui to visit Japan or promoting Taiwan’s international profile. A military confrontation between Taiwan and the mainland would pose perhaps the greatest foreseeable threat to Sino-Japan relations as well as to the US-Japan alliance. It is likely that Japan will threaten drastic actions, for some Japanese have posited that if China takes control of Taiwan, China would be in a position to blockade sea lanes around Taiwan, which are critical for Japanese oil shipping, or would attempt to take over the Diaoyudao/Senkaku islands (Wang, 2000, p. 361). Some Japanese politicians even remarked that Japan would assist the US forces if military conflicts took place between the US and China, which alarmed Chinese people (Inoguchi, 1996, p. 38; Zhang, 1997, p. 6). From a geopolitical perspective, Japan does not really favor Taiwan’s unification with the mainland China.

Thirdly, the equalization of power as China gains economic strength and Japan plays a bigger political and military role could intensify Sino-Japanese competition and rivalry. China is wary of Japan’s military capability and desires to be a political power, for Japan has been increasing its defense budget and seeking military backing for its bid to become a political giant. The pace of Japanese technological development and weapons acquisition has also far exceeded that of China (Pollack, 1990, p. 718-719; Wu, 2000, p. 299). On the other hand, since Japan has long been accustomed to living with weaker neighbors, the prospect of China emerging as a strong power poses new challenges. Many Japanese politicians and media have stirred up an idea of China threat (Wu, 2000, p. 297).

Fourthly, Sino-Japan political strains are dampening bilateral trade, even though Sino-Japan economic and trade cooperation had been the most optimistic part of the bilateral ties. Trade between China and Japan is still growing, but there has been a slowdown in the growth rate. China-Japan trade accounted for 20 percent of China's total overseas trade in 1994, but the figure dropped to 13 percent in 2005. In 2004, South Korea surpassed Japan in terms of investment in China. Consequently, conflicts and disputes are not rare in Sino-Japan trade relations.

Fifthly, in wartime the Japanese army openly violated international conventions by using chemical weapons, which caused severe casualties among Chinese soldiers and civilians.

When Japan was defeated, large amounts of chemical weapons were buried and discarded on Chinese soil, with the purpose of covering up the evidence of their crimes. From 1989 to the present, China has been urging Japan to solve the issue. But until now Japan has failed to clear up and seal up these chemical weapons.

Sixthly, most of the lawsuits that were filed by Chinese victims of biological warfare, abandoned chemical weapons, the Nanjing massacre, the Pingdingshan massacre, and so on, have been rejected by the Japanese government. The deep scars left by the war on the Chinese people remain unhealed. According to Sino-Japan Joint Communiqué in 1972, the Chinese Government decided to waive the claim of war reparations against the Japanese government. However, as for those realistic problems left over by the war of Japanese aggression against China, the Japanese side should take them into serious consideration and handle them properly.

Seventhly, the fire is added fuel by the 2002 Shenyang incident, in which five North Koreans who were dragged from the Japanese consulate in Shenyang on May 8 were permitted by Beijing to fly to the Philippines and on to South Korea on May 23. Japan accused Beijing of violating Japan's sovereignty and demanded an apology and the immediate return of the North Koreans to the Japanese consulate. China insisted that its officers had entered the consulate with the permission of a Japanese vice-consul in order to remove a potential "terrorist" threat to the Japanese staff.

Eighthly, dispute over natural gas or oil in disputed areas of the East China Sea strains Sino-Japan relations. Economic ties have grown tremendously between the two nations in recent years, but they remain in fierce regional competition. In early 2005 the East China Sea became a hotly-disputed area between China and Japan, for both were competing for the same undersea oil deposits. Two nations with hundreds of years of rivalry and a great need for oil with overlapping oil-field claims can create a highly volatile situation.

Ninthly, sovereignty of the Diaoyudao/Senkaku Islands is disputed. The Diaoyudao/Senkaku Islands, claimed by both China and Japan, are oil-rich and near key international shipping routes. According to China, Chinese historical records detailing the discovery and geographical feature of these islands date back to the year 1403. For several centuries they have been administered as part of Taiwan and have always been used exclusively by Chinese fishermen as an operational base. In 1874, Japan took Liu Chiu Islands from China by force. Diaoyudao, however, remained under the administration of Taiwan, a part of China. Taiwan (including Diaoyudao) was ceded to Japan in 1895 after the first Sino-Japanese War. After the Second World War, when US troops were stationed on the Ryukyu and Diaoyudao Archipelagoes, the KMT government which had received Taiwan did not immediately demand that the US give them sovereignty. Diaoyudao was returned to China at the end of World War II in 1945 based upon the 1943 agreement of the Big Three in Cairo. Japan, however, claimed the islands as official Japanese territory in 1895. From 1885 on, the Japanese Government had made surveys of the Senkaku Islands through the agencies of Okinawa Prefecture and by way of other methods. According to their surveys, it was confirmed that the Senkaku Islands had been uninhabited and showed no trace of having been under the control of China.

Tenthly, Japan's developing and deploying advanced TMD (theater missile defense) is a

source of tensions in Sino-Japan relations, because a US-Japan TMD could be part of a containment strategy aimed at China. Therefore, China could increase pressure on Japan not to go ahead with TMD. On the other hand, if Japan fails to go ahead with the program, the US will doubt Japan's reliability as an ally in the Asia-Pacific region.

Lastly, the US-Japan alliance could become a serious point of contention in Sino-Japan and Sino-American relations. American and Japanese efforts to redefine and strengthen the US-Japan alliance in response to the changing post-Cold War strategic environment have led Chinese civilian and military officials and think-tank experts to reevaluate the Washington-Tokyo security arrangement. Chinese become increasingly concerned if the alliance is aimed at "checking" or containing China (Christensen, 1999, p. 63). The situation will worsen if Tokyo colludes with the US to counter the rise of Chinese power and Beijing's assertion of its sovereignty over Taiwan, Diaoyudao, and Spratly islands.

Undoubtedly, the interaction between China and Japan as well as their relations with the United States will be critical in determining the future of the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century. Protracted tensions or conflicts between Beijing and Tokyo could destabilize the region and strain US bilateral ties with one or both countries. Efforts by the US to strengthen relations with one nation may strain ties with the other or between the two. This triangular dynamic is especially evident in China's reaction to steps taken by Washington to revitalize and reshape the US-Japan alliance for the postwar era and in Japan's uneasiness about improvements in Sino-American relations.

The trilateral relations among China, the US, and Japan is complicated by Washington's asymmetrical ties with Japan and China. Japan is a long-standing and close American ally despite chronic differences over trade and other issues. The US had sought to strengthen and broaden the alliance, maintain Tokyo's confidence in the US commitment to Japan's security, and operate closely with the Japanese on regional security issues, including mutual concerns about China's rising power. On the other hand, the US has long-term strategic and security interests in maintaining good working relations with China, including obtaining Beijing's cooperation on key international issues such as arms control, proliferation, and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Nevertheless, the revitalization of the US-Japan alliance—especially expansion of the scope of the alliance and enhancement of Japan's regional security role—are likely to exacerbate tensions in China's ties with Japan as well as with the US.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the regional stability and prosperity in the early part of the 21st century will likely depend more on relations among China, Japan, and the US than on any other factors, including multilateral security arrangements. In fact, The US is closely related to the conflicts and disputes between these two regional powers. It will yield meaningful results to investigate how the US views Sino-Japan conflicts and how the US positions itself between China and Japan. In response to the above-discussed trilateral relations, I will examine the reporting of Sino-Japan conflicts by the *NYT* in the past six years. Specifically, this article attempts to answer these questions:

1. What dominant themes in Sino-Japan conflicts are reported in the *NYT*?
2. How are the national images of China and Japan represented in their conflicts by the

NYT and why are they presented this way?

3. How are the news reports of Sino-Japan conflicts affected by the underlying ideological positions of the *NYT*?

Based on the background information about the triangular relations among China, Japan, and the United States, a critical discourse analysis of news coverage about Sino-Japan conflicts will yield a deeper understanding of news reporting in the *NYT*, and thus the above questions will be answered.

Research Methods

This study depends on 55 news reports on Sino-Japan conflicts in the *NYT* from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2006. I sampled these news reports from the results (everything about China and Japan in the *NYT*) yielded by Lexis-Nexis news search. The *NYT* was selected because it is the most widely read newspaper among elites both within and outside of American government (Weiss, 1974, p. 1), it carries higher volume of foreign news than other major US newspapers (Semmel, 1976, p. 61), and it is often used as a source of event data by researchers (Hopple, 1982, p. 73).

In this study, I will first use quantitative content analysis to give a general description of the themes in Sino-Japan conflicts which were covered in the *NYT* from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2006. I will then focus on critical discourse analysis in order to find out instances of ideological discourse in the news coverage concerned and to show how they are embedded in a much larger, but less transparent structure of power and ideological discourse in the trilateral relations among China, Japan, and the US. Further, I will discuss the reasons China and Japan were portrayed that way in their conflicts by the *NYT*.

Quantitative content analysis, which has been a most popular research method in media studies, will only be touched upon in this article. This content analysis is based on a theme or topic analysis. As a result, the major themes in the coverage of Sino-Japan conflicts in the *NYT* will be revealed.

Critical discourse analysis (hence abbreviated as CDA), the focus of this study, is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Dijk, 2004, p. 67).

CDA emerged in the late 1980s as a programmatic development in European discourse studies spearheaded by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun Van Dijk, and others. CDA stems from critical linguistics, a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. Critical linguistics is a branch of discourse analysis that goes beyond the description of discourse to an explanation of how and why particular discourses are produced. Generally, CDA builds from three broad theoretical orientations. First, it derives from poststructuralism the view that texts have a constructive function in forming up and shaping human identities and actions. Second, it develops from Bourdieu’s sociology the idea that actual textual practices and interactions with texts become “embodied” forms of “cultural capital” with exchanged value in particular social fields. Third, it draws from

neoMarxist cultural theory the view that these discourse are produced and used within political economies, and that they thus “produce and articulate broader ideological interests, social formations, and movements within those fields” (Hall, 1996, p. 156). What is crucial to CDA practices is the systemic-functional and social-semiotic linguistics of Michael Halliday, whose linguistic methodology offers clear and rigorous linguistic categories for analyzing the relationships between discourse and social meaning (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 23). Next to Halliday’s three metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, textual meaning), systemic-functional analyses of transitivity, agency, nominalization, syntax, information flow, register, and others, have been adopted by CDA.

The purpose of CDA is to analyze “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995, p. 204). While most forms of discourse analysis intends to provide a better understanding of social-cultural aspects of texts, CDA aims to provide accounts of the production, internal structure, and overall organization of texts. One crucial difference is that CDA aims to provide a critical dimension in its theoretical and descriptive accounts of texts.

The word “critical” is a key theoretical concept in CDA that requires some explanation here. “Critical” indicates the need for analysts to decode the ideological implications of discourse that have become so naturalized over time that we begin to treat them as common, acceptable, and natural features of discourse. That is, ideology has become common belief or even common sense. Adapting “critical” approach enables us to “elucidate such naturalizations, and make clear social determinations and effects of discourse which are characteristically opaque to participants” (Fairclough, 1985, p. 739).

Ideology plays a vital role in CDA. According to Wodak (1996), “ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation” (p. 18). Fairclough (1992) explains ideology as “an accumulated and naturalized orientation which is built into norms and conventions, as well as an ongoing work to naturalize and denaturalize such orientations in discursive events” (p. 89). For Widdowson (1990), “all discourses of theory, including those of linguistics, are ideologically loaded” (p. 39). Newspapers, which claim to be politically neutral and ideology-free, have to choose their discursive representations in line with their institutional policies which are ideological themselves because they are not nameless and neutral but have a history and a politics (Cameron, 1993, p. 316).

In sum, the approach in this study is a critical, multidisciplinary approach to discourse analysis which focuses on issues of ideology, power, dominance, prejudice, and hegemony, as well as the discursive processes of their enactment, reproduction, concealment, and naturalization in news reporting.

The analysis of the newspaper discourse is done in three stages. A brief content analysis is first used in order to find out the major themes in the 55 news reports. Then a detailed characterization of the selected news reports is made, with a focus on some particular discursive strategies that are likely to harbor ideological meanings. I will concentrate on the 51 ideologically-loaded reports, excluding the 4 relatively neutral news reports dated on November 13, 2004, April 20, 2005, April 23, 2005, and July 10, 2005. It is predicted that how the national images of China and Japan are portrayed in the news discourse will be

revealed in this part. Finally, I will probe further into the workings of the media industry, the national interests of the US, and the American ideological heritage in order to find out the reasons for the portrayals of China and Japan that were depicted this way in the *NYT*.

Major Themes in the News Reports

Table 1 is about the major themes covered in the 55 news reports.

Some topics are not only themes in some reports, but also recurring topics in other reports, including Japan's historical textbooks, shrine visits, Taiwan, and the US. Compared with what is covered in Sino-Japan conflicts in the previous text, the news reporting of *NYT* includes all the major themes concerned. Particular stress (14 out of 55) is laid on Chinese people's anti-Japan protests in 2005, while only two are about Japan's revised historical textbooks and only one is about wartime Chinese laborers' lawsuit. Four reports focus on Japan's "apology" toward China and other Asian neighbors, even though Japan has never officially apologized to China until now. Five reports are given to Sino-Japan disputes about North Korean refugees. The frequent appearance of the third party, the US, also implies that America has its own role to play in Sino-Japan conflicts. The following table is about the mention of the US in the reports.

From table 2, it can be inferred that the US is more or less involved in almost all Sino-Japan conflicts. Sino-Japan military rivalry is of great concern to the US because it will affect the US-Japan Alliance and the security pattern in the Asia-Pacific region. Yasukuni Shrine visits and Taiwan remain sensitive issues in Sino-Japan relations and a focus of attention for the US in Asia. Chinese people's anti-Japan protests in 2005 had also drawn their attention because deteriorating bilateral ties between China and Japan will do harm to the interests of the US in Asia in the long run. Besides, the *NYT* had shown its concern for North Korean refugees' disputes and had highlighted Japan's expression of regrets or apology for its WWII atrocities. The voice of America could also be heard in Sino-Japan territory and resources disputes, trade argument, Japan's bid for the UNSC permanent seat, and Sino-Japan mutual dislike or distrust.

Table 1 Major Themes Covered in 55 News Reports

Themes	Frequency
anti-Japan protests in 2005	14
Yasukuni Shrine visits	8
mutual dislike/distrust	6
disputes about North Korean refugees	5
disputes over territory and recourses	4
Trade argument	4
Japan's apology	4
Taiwan issue	3
Japan's historical textbooks	2
military display	2

Japan's bid for UN seat	2
wartime Chinese laborers' lawsuit	1

Table 2 US Involvement with Sino-Japan Conflicts

Theme of the Report	Date of the Report	Mention of the US
Military Display	September 11, 2005	16 times
Taiwan Issue	February 21, 2005	14 times
	February 6, 2006	2 time
North Korean Refugees	May 10, 2002	7 times
Japan's Apology	October 4, 2006	5 times
Territory Dispute	July 10, 2005	4 times
Anti-Japan Protests	April 15, 2005	4 times
	April 11, 2005	1 time
	April 16, 2005	1 time
	April 18, 2005	1 time
Shrine Visits	June 24, 2006	2 times
	August 5, 2006	2 times
	August 15, 2006	3 times
Trade Argument	June 27, 2005	3 times
Japan's Bid for the UNSC Permanent Seat	April 1, 2005	3 times
Resources Dispute	November 3, 2004	2 times
	April 14, 2005	1 time
Mutual Dislike	January 19, 2005	2 times
	August 3, 2005	1 time
	October 9, 2006	1 time

Characterization of the Newspaper Discourse

The frequently used discourse strategies in the news reports under discussion are lexicalization, transitivity, thematization, passive voice, subjective commentary or judgment, vagueness, omission, information focus, rhetorical figures, and quotation patterns. In the following text I hope to uncover the underlying meanings and motivations behind particular linguistic realizations by focusing on these discourse strategies.

Lexicalization refers to “choice of words that imply negative (or positive) evaluations” (Dijk, 2004, p. 119). Deliberate choice of words often has a pejorative or laudatory effect as it reflects perceptions and judgments from the biased standpoint of certain cultural norms or social expectations.

The news text on April 15, 2005, the headline reads “China **Pushing And Scripting** [bold added] Japan Protest.” The use of two verbs “push” and “script” presents an image of China which is aggressive, impulsive and manipulating. In the report of April 16, 2005, the Chinese government was reported to “tolerate” and even “help” the anti-Japan protests. If

“tolerate” sounds acceptable, “help” carries the personal judgment of the journalist who had a biased view of the Chinese government. In the headline of April 17, 2005 “Chinese Government **Permits** [bold added] Protests Against Japan” and the headline of April 21, 2005 “By Playing At ‘Rage,’ China **Dramatizes** [bold added] Its Rise,” the Chinese government was reportedly supporting and taking advantage of the protests, which can be seen in the attribution of “allow” to the Chinese government’s attitude toward the protests in the report of April 23, 2005. In addition, a series of verbs are used when describing the protestors: “rally,” “attack,” “overturn” (cars), and “smash” (storefronts). The use of such verbs as “smash” (its windows) and “deface” (its walls) is found in the report dated on April 21, 2005, while in the report of April 23, 2005 the two verbs “threw” (bottles) and “vandalized” (Japanese business) are used in the same vein. These verbs depict Chinese protestors as irrational and violent.

Japanese officials, however, were portrayed as rational, polite, and eager to ease the conflicts in the headline of April 21, 2005: “Mollified By China’s Move To End Protest, Japan Urges Talks” and the lead “Japanese officials **softened their tone...and urged** [bold added] its leaders to meet with Chinese leaders ” In the same report, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reportedly “responded **favorably** [bold added]” to calls by Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing. The adverb “favorably” corresponds with the tone in the headline and the lead. Thus a more positive and rational image of Japanese government is presented in contrast with the Chinese in the conflicts.

In a June 26, 2001 report about the shrine visits, Chinese Prime Minister Tang Jiaxuan reportedly “**barked** [bold added] what sounded like an order to Japanese reporters” The attribution of this humiliating verb to the Chinese Prime Minister reflects the reporter’s ideological intentions embedded in the news discourse.

In the reports about trade, China seemed to be domineering in the trade dispute on June 20, 2001, as seen in the lead “China has placed **high** [bold added] duties on imported Japanese cars...**in retaliation for** [bold added] duties Japan put on,” while Japan appeared to be doing what it should do, as in “Japan raised tariffs on Chinese leeks...**in an effort to** [bold added] protect farmers from cheap imports.” Besides, China was described as an aggressive partner who looked down upon Japan in the lead “China’s recent **slights and snubs** [bold added] of Japan” (June 20, 2001).

In the reports on the disputes over North Korea refugees, the reporter used “drag” and “wrest” to describe what Chinese police officers did to the refugees on May 10, 2002. In the report one day later,

Table 3

Types of Doing	Examples
<i>Material</i>	
Action	The lion caught the tourist.
Event	The mayor resigned.
<i>Behavioral</i>	breathe, dream, sleep, smile, laugh
<i>Mental</i>	
Perception	see, notice, stare at, ect.
Affection	like, dislike, hate, feel angry, ect.

Cognition	think, know, understand, interpret, ect.
Verbal	John said he was hungry.
Relational	
Attribution	Sarah is wise.
Identification	Tom is the leader.
Existential	There was a storm.

more forceful or violent verbal phrases are applied to the Chinese policemen, as in “**knocking over** [bold added] a 2-year-old girl, **wrestling** [bold added] her mother **into submission** [bold added] and **dragging away** [bold added] her pregnant aunt.”

The presentation of Chinese as aggressive or violent in the *NYT* can be also found in the August 9, 2004 report about China’s soccer loss. After the use of such verbs as “bellow,” “yell,” and “shout,” the writer termed the reaction of Chinese fans as “**insults** [bold added] aimed at the Japanese team.” The reporter showed his or her disapproval of Chinese fans when he wrote: “The Japanese national anthem was drowned out by **sustained hisses and boos** [bold added].” In the report on January 19, 2005, the mere mention of this incident reads “(Chinese fans) **aggressively harassed** [bold added] Japanese fans.” The use of these verbs, nouns, and adverb, tainted with personal feelings, are powerful enough to manipulate the readers into turning against the Chinese side.

Transitivity, for Halliday (1985), “specifies the different types of processes that are recognized in the language and the structures by which they are expressed” (p. 101). It is a useful analytic tool that probes the way language represents reality in terms of how the primary or dominant agents are constructed, what they do to whom and with what consequences. To do a transitivity analysis it is necessary to identify every verb and its associated process. It is then of necessity to study the system of transitivity in the clause proposed by Halliday (1985, p. 117) in table 3.

Let’s look at the report about the Sino-Japan protests on April 15, 2005. The second paragraph reads: “Yet the police **herded** [bold added] protesters into tight groups, **let** [bold added] them take turns throwing rocks, then **told** [bold added] them they had ‘vented their anger’ long enough and **bused** [bold added] them back to campus.” The police were depicted as “actors” and “sayers” who seemed to be puppeteering or manipulating the protesters by the use of the verbs of material types “herded,” “let,” and “bused” and the verbal process “told.” On April 24, 2005, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi “**delivered** the most public apology in a decade over Japan’s aggression in Asia, allowing the Chinese to accept the meeting with Mr. Koizumi.” The use of the material verb “deliver” impresses the readers with an image of repentant Koizumi and “allow” puts China in a passive role in the reconciliation process. In trade, China was reported to be somewhat aggressive, as in the lead of the report on December 6, 2002: “China **is using** its new economic power to **outmaneuver** Japan” and the sentence “China **slapped** emergency tariffs on steel imports from Japan.” The criticizing tone was sharp in the depiction of Chinese government which dealt with “a Japanese human rights advocate” in the North Korean refugees’ dispute on November 8, 2002. In a news report of 79 words, five material verbs were used to describe what the Chinese police did to the Japanese:

A Japanese human rights advocate expelled from China for working with North Korean refugees said the Chinese police had **held** [bold added] him incommunicado for six days, **subjected** [bold added] him to harsh interrogations lasting through several nights, and **forced** [bold added] him to sleep handcuffed to a small chair. The man, Hiroshi Kato, 57, said the Chinese had **refused** [bold added] to contact Japanese authorities about his detention and had **threatened** [bold added] to hand him over secretly to North Korea.

Thematization looks at the organization of information within a clause. The positioning of a piece of information in a clause tells the kind of prominence or foregrounding the reporter wishes to attribute to it. Examining the reasons behind the motivation of organizing information in a certain way can therefore provide a glimpse into the ideological meaning embedded within a text.

In a April 21, 2005 report about Sino-Japan protests, the reporter wrote “**Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi responded favorably** [bold added] to calls by the Chinese foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, to protesters to stop the sometimes violent marches” The thematic foregrounding of Koizumi’s response draws the reader’s attention to the move on the part of Japan, while playing down the efforts made by China. In the May 25, 2005 report, when depicting the anger of Japanese, the reporter wrote “**In a land where courtesy is prized** [bold added], Japanese ministers made little effort to mask their anger at the abrupt departure on Monday of Wu Yi” By thematizing “in a land where courtesy is prized,” the writer suggests that the sudden departure of Wu Yi was even intolerable to Japanese who were raised in a land of courtesy. Let’s observe this sentence in the same report, “If **China’s aim** [bold added] is to discredit Mr. Koizumi and other conservative nationalists like Shinzo Abe, who is seen as a likely successor in 2006, she added, ‘that will very likely backfire and help ensure that the strongly anti-China Shinzo Abe succeeds Koizumi.’” The foregrounding of “China’s aim” shows that China itself should be responsible for the possible succession of Shinzo Abe. Therefore, China shouldn’t shift the responsibility to Japan if it feels unhappy about the succession of Abe as prime minister.

In the disputes about territory on March 26, 2004, an expression goes “**an island that the Japanese call Uotsui-Jima** [bold added], the largest of a chain **known in Japan as the Senkaku Islands** [bold added] and **in China as the Diaoyu Islands.**” The thematization of Japan’s naming of the islands reflects the writer’s tilt for Japan in this issue. When talking about the mutual dependence of China and Japan on each other, a professor was quoted as saying “China needs Japan and Japan needs China.” The subtle tilt in the positioning of the two pieces of information is not hard to be located. In the report about Japan’s claim of China’s military threat dated on December 23, 2005, a sentence reads “**Although Mr. Koizumi said he prayed for peace at the shrine** [bold added], most Asians regard it as a symbol of Japanese militarism.” The thematic foregrounding of Koizumi’s remarks underscores his glorified intentions of visiting the shrine.

The use of *passive voice* also manifests the ideological implications which seemed to be naturalized in the news discourse. In an April 11, 2005 report, when talking about Japan’s growing nationalism, two sentences read “Green Day...will almost certainly **be renamed**

[bold added] ‘showa day’ soon to commemorate the birthday of the late emperor Hirohito, who led Japan during its conquest of Asia and who is a revered symbol of Japanese rightists” and “the previously named emperor’s day **was changed** [bold added] to Green Day in 1989.” The agent or the doer who renamed “Green Day” and later changed the date for it is not told from the use of passive voice. Another typical use of passive voice is found in a May 25, 2005 report, where there is a sentence that reads: “anti-Chinese feelings **were inflamed** [bold added] after a series of protests in China.” The use of passive voice stresses that such “anti-Chinese feelings” didn’t exist before, but was stirred up by anti-Japan protests in China. Generally, the application of passive voice to the actor or doer will put the agent in a subdued or even invisible role in something unpleasant the agent should be responsible for.

Subjective commentary or judgment, which is tinted with the reporter’s voice and judgment, are undoubtedly the most conspicuous cases of ideological manipulation. Such examples can be mostly found in the reports about Sino-Japan protests.

For instance, in the lead of the April 21, 2005 report “By **Playing** at ‘Rage,’ China **Dramatizes** Its Rise.” the use of the two verbs “play” and “dramatize” connotes the writer’s subjective judgment about the attitude of Chinese government toward the protests. Actually, this text is full of subjective commentary or judgment. Let’s observe the following sentences:

1. “talk was dominated by Chinese ‘feelings,’ a word repeated over and over, **as if no other feelings counted** [bold added].”
2. “the events of the weekend here and their aftermath show that **this country has barely changed at all** [bold added].”

In the first sentence, the writer apparently disapproved of Chinese “feelings.” In the second sentence, the writer had jumped to the conclusion about China. Another instance of subjective commentary is found in the April 25, 2005 report: “It was part of a broader curb on the anti-Japanese movement but **it also seemed the Communist Party had self-interest in mind** [bold added].” What is notable is that no subjective commentary or judgment about Japan or Japanese authorities can be found in the news reports under analysis. Japan, a country which is ideologically closer to the US than China, will not easily fall prey to subjective evaluations in the American media.

Vagueness is a type of implicitness which mixes with the factual reporting of events. Vagueness about some information but not the other shows the reporter’s ideological intentions. One telling example is the number of Chinese killed in the Nanking Massacre, which was reported as “100,000” to “300,000” in two news reports dated on April 11, 2005 and August 3, 2005. When talking about the causes for anti-Japan protests in China in the report on June 27, 2005, one of them was termed as dispute over “**narratives** [bold added] in Japanese textbooks.” The conspicuous vagueness about the disputable content in Japanese textbooks plays down the seriousness of the issue. On April 22, 2002, the reporter referred to the atrocities committed by the war criminals enshrined in Yasukuni as merely “their **role** [bold added] in World War II.” Glossing over the hideous crimes committed by the war criminals reveals the reporter’s intention to cover up something bad about the Japanese history. On October 19, 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi was reported to have visited “the

Yasukuni shrine, a **nationalist** [bold added] war memorial.” The vague use of “nationalist” shuts out the information about the nature of the shrine as the symbol of militarism in Japan during World War II.

Omission, in addition to vagueness, is another strategy that can be used to leave out some important information required in the news discourse. Omission, no matter whether it is done deliberately or unconsciously, reflects the reporter’s bias against or in favor of one or the other party involved. Let’s examine two examples. In a April 21, 2005 report, a paragraph reads as follows:

China also claims never to have seized territory from a neighbor, but China attacked India by surprise in 1962 and the details of other campaigns, from Korea and Xinjiang in the north to Vietnam and Tibet in the country's south and west, are also absent from textbooks.

China here was depicted as an aggressive country invading its neighbors, which was actually a reflection of the writer’s prejudiced view against China. The true causes of these wars or conflicts were absent from the text, leaving gaps in the readers’ knowledge of these events.

Nevertheless, in depicting the notorious Yasukuni Shrine, the report dated on April 22, 2002 reads “The Yasukuni Shrine is by far Japan’s most controversial religious site, because of its dedication to the 2.5 million soldiers who fell in wars since the mid-1800s.” The information about the soldiers enshrined, the wars they fought and the symbolic meaning of the shrine are missing from the text. It seems that the writer left out some important information just in order to gloss over the infamy of the shrine.

Information Focus is sometimes shifted by the writer in the middle of a text or approaching the end of a text, so that the presumed focus fades as a result. This strategy can be cleverly used to divert the reader’s attention from something the writer wants to play down to something else he or she intends to smuggle his or her own ideological connotations into. Consequently, readers’ evaluation or judgment about the event will be affected by the new focus. I have found that the reporters in the *NYT* tended to drag in some other issues when they reported the Sino-Japan protests. In the anti-Japan protests report of April 16, 2005, the reporter inserted a paragraph of quotation from “a leading campaigner for peasant rights and rural health care” who commented on nationalism as a “double-edged sword.” This paragraph is a backup statement to the proposition in the previous paragraph “Unrest of any kind could open the door for people to rally against government corruption and land seizures, or to complain about economic inequality or political repression.” Reading these arguments, the readers’ attention will naturally be diverted to the domestic issues in China. As a result, the patriotic significance of anti-Japan protests will be reduced. In the April 21, 2005 report, the reporter listed more information irrelevant to the focus of anti-Japan protests, such as “the Cultural Revolution,” “the policies of Mao Zedong,” “Chinese textbooks,” “China’s attack of India,” and “campaigns from Korea and Xinjiang in the north to Vietnam and Tibet in the country’s south and west.” Moreover, these events or topics were ideologically framed or transformed when they were represented in the news discourse. China’s image, undoubtedly,

was demonized in these ideologically-tainted expressions. In the anti-Japan protests report dated on April 25, 2005, “Falun Gong” emerged as the text approaches its end. In the textbook argument on April 17, 2005, oddly, the reporter dragged in “the postwar Great Leap Forward” in China, which has nothing to do with the topic. In sum, there is a tendency in the *NYT* to make China seem less victimized and less sympathetic in reporting of Sino-Japan conflicts.

Rhetorical Figures is believed to be a bridge that enables us to cross the world of literal and factual meaning into the world of ideological persuasion. The most frequently used rhetorical figure in the news discourse under discussion is understatement. Let’s examine some examples. In the April 21, 2005 report about anti-Japan protests, Japanese textbooks reportedly “**deemphasized** [bold added] atrocities committed in China.” But according to the report about the textbook dispute on April 17, 2005, Japan was reported to have avoided the issues of “comfort women” and “Chinese laborers” in the new textbooks. The word “deemphasized” is far from strong enough to cover the fact. In the Taiwan dispute report dated on February 21, 2005, the reporter said “the **mention** [bold added] of Taiwan...drew a firm response from China.” Everybody knows that the word “mention” is surely an understatement for what the two allies (Japan and the US) had discussed about their major concern—Taiwan—in their new joint security statement, while later in the same report, it was reported to be “a **short, cautious mention** [bold added].” Thus what Japan and the US did say about Taiwan in their statement was further played down. In the February 6, 2006 report “Japanese **Remarks** [bold added] about Taiwan anger Beijing,” the word “remarks” is certainly an understatement because in the lead we read “Japan’s prime minister **praised** [bold added] his country’s past rule over the island.” Then the word “praised” does not suffice to depict the minister’s glorifying their evil-doings in Taiwan. In the headline of August 13, 2003 report “Japan Apologizes to China for **Injuries** [bold added] from Remnants of War,” the word “injuries” is too weak to tell what Japan did to China in World War II. In the April 21, 2005 report, Japanese officials were said to “have apologized **numerous times** [bold added] to China.” It is a universal truth that Japan has never directly, publicly, and sincerely apologized to China for their atrocities committed in World War II. Here “numerous times” does catch the readers by surprise. Apparently, the writer used this hyperbole to imply that China was demanding more than they should in spite of the countless apologies made by Japan. In short, the reporters in the *NYT* would turn to some rhetorical figures in order to restructure the readers’ thinking, causing them to perceive the reality in an intended light.

Quotation patterns in the news discourses also reveal the newspaper’s bias in favor of or prejudice against one or the other side in the conflicts. By giving voice to certain select people, quotation patterns serve to enhance the importance of those people, so that the readers are more likely to take in the intended ideological messages in the context. In contrast, those who are devoiced usually become the subjects of what others talk about, but are seldom given the opportunity to confirm or deny what others say of them. I have found that the *NYT* had a tendency to devoice China and the majority of its people when depicting the conflicts.

In the April 11, 2005 report “Tokyo Protests Anti-Japan Rallies in China,” three people were quoted: Japanese Foreign Minister Nobuta Machimura, Japanese Secretary General of Liberal Democratic Party Shinzo Abe, and South Korea’s ambassador to the United Nations,

Kim Sam Hoon. What is noted is that approaching the end of the text Abe—the anti-China advocator—was quoted as saying “Japan is an outlet to vent that anger” and the following direct quotation from him furthers his point that anti-Japan protests were used by the Chinese to demonstrate their anger against the government. The patriotic feelings of Chinese were lost in such malicious remarks about the movement. In the April 17, 2005 report “Chinese Government Permits Protests against Japan,” no voice from the Chinese government was heard. What could be heard were voices from the Japanese foreign ministry, and two unnamed Chinese who were quoted as saying that Chinese people were using the anti-Japan protests to demonstrate their anger against the government. That commentary fit in very well with Japan and US propaganda against the Chinese Communist Party. In the report on August 3, 2005 covering “ill will” between China and Japan, no voice from the Chinese government was heard, and the two quoted Chinese voices actually served to enhance the persuasion of the American ideological intentions in the context. One was saying that Chinese had “a victim’s mentality” and Chinese didn’t see “this much smaller country as being worthy of comparison with” China. The other was given six paragraphs to voice his opinion that anti-Japan mentality would resist as long as “an authoritarian government remains in place” and Chinese shouldn’t criticize Yasukuni Shrine because “we have Mao Zedong’s shrine in the middle of Beijing, which is our Yasukuni.” These extremely opposite voices in China were used to justify whatever Japan had done to China and Chinese people.

Discussion and Conclusion

The questions that arise at this point are why the *NYT* presented Sino-Japan conflicts in such a way and why it tilted towards Japan from time to time but never towards China. To answer this question, we need to probe more deeply into the working of the media industry, the national interests of the US, and the American ideological heritage.

We can approach the question by first understanding the workings of the “political economy” (Jakubowicz et al., 1987, p. 17) of the media. Within this paradigm, the media is seen to operate under an economic imperative so that the ideas and values communicated through the media are “commodified” and exchanged for financial or material support by the owners and controllers of the media industry. As these media owners and controllers are inevitably influenced by the Sino-Japan alliance, it accounts for the systematic exclusion of the voices from the Chinese government and the majority of its people. Hence, as we have seen earlier, mostly the Japanese or a few Chinese who opposed the government were given a voice in the news which was disadvantageous to China. The effect of using quotations, both direct and indirect, betrays a distinctively ideological purpose.

Moreover, patterns of foreign news coverage have been found to vary in association with a number of factors including “the apparent national interest of the United States” (Manheim, 1984, p. 644). As discussed in the previous text, the US-Japan alliance provides Washington with the cornerstone of America’s strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region. That accounts for the frequent ideological inclination towards Japan in the news discourses of the *NYT*. The perception that the alliance checks the emergence of Japanese militarism has been shared by China and nearly all other regional states. If the US-Japan alliance goes too far to be a force

containing Japan's militarism as it has been in the past, it will give rise to new fears and worries among the regional states. If the US and Japan are cooperating to thwart the emergence of China as a great and unified power, Beijing will take a range of countermeasures, including overt opposition to the US-Japan security treaty and to the US forward military presence in Japan. That would be highly damaging to the national interests of the US. In this case, while the US maintains close cooperation with Japan, it occasionally remains relatively neutral in Sino-Japan conflicts, which is evidenced in the news coverage dated on November 13, 2004, April 20, 2005, April 23, 2005, and July 10, 2005.

Sino-US relations over the last century have been heavily affected by the ideological and cultural traditions of both sides. On the one hand, China wavers between seeking American support in China's economic development and diplomacy, and fear and resentment of American cultural influence. On the other hand, anti-communism entered the US foreign policy thinking ever since the Russian revolution. The ideological aspect of difficulties in Sino-US relations is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future, for the bilateral ties are characterized by the impact of ideological traditions of both sides. In the following I will describe the ideological heritage on the American side, for one of the purposes of this paper is to find out why the US view China that way in the context of Sino-Japan conflicts.

According to American historian Michael H. Hunt (1987), there are three core ideas relevant to foreign affairs influencing the US's view of other nations, namely, (a) quest for national greatness, (b) racial hierarchy in attitudes toward other peoples, and (c) "limits of acceptable political and social change overseas" (p. 17-18). Quest for national greatness is a sense inherent with the birth of the US. The thinking elites believed that America was a place to build up an ideal republic according to the philosophical ideas, religious beliefs, and moral values they had inherited from their homeland in Europe. The US, in their opinion, was born with the mandate to change the world in its own image. In its racial hierarchy, Asians of the yellow skin were put below Anglo-Saxon people. Americans were greatly concerned with their mandate to educate and change the inferior races besides conquering by force. Japan, which did best in learning from the West by the end of the 19th century, was regarded as "the good student" and China remains a promising student susceptible to change. This concept of racial hierarchy, to a certain degree, still exists implicitly among the Americans. Lastly, the American elites were somehow biased against radical revolutions in other countries even though they had gained independence by fighting against the British, because they wanted to maintain their overseas interests and they feared that those revolutions would impact the domestic social orders in the US. That could partly account for why the US has never truly befriended China, which was established after the revolution of the Chinese Communist Party against KMT.

These ideological traditions of the US are deeply embedded in the various aspects of its social life and foreign relations. Small wonder that China, which is led by the Communist Party, frequently falls prey to the demonization of American media, while Japan, which used to be a modest student of the West and a close ally of the US, is usually protected in portrayals of Sino-Japan conflicts in the *NYT*.

In summary, this study reveals that the dominant themes in the *NYT*'s reporting on Sino-Japan conflicts include China's anti-Japan protests in 2005, the Yasukuni Shrine visits,

disputes over about Korean refugees, disputes over territory and resources, trade arguments, and the Taiwan issue.

This article has attempted to delineate the contrasting representations of China and Japan by analyzing a variety of discursive strategies, which portrayed the Chinese government as aggressive, dominant, and repressive and Chinese as a frightening and violent group of people, so that China was made less victimized and less sympathetic in the reporting of Sino-Japan conflicts. In contrast, the Japanese government and its people were depicted as more rational and courteous, while their atrocities in World War II, their denial of history, and their military and political ambitions were played down or glossed over in the news reports discussed. A further discussion, in the end, brings to light the underlying reasons for the ideologically framed news representations in the *NYT*. A critical analysis of news reporting, in this case, inevitably becomes a critique of those responsible for the ideological smuggling and persuasion.

It is hoped that this critical analysis of news reporting on Sino-Japan conflicts will, to some extent, contribute to the field of CDA and stimulate further research to be undertaken in areas beyond the newspapers or even media, namely, all areas of discourse that harbor ideological persuasion, so as to make transparent the processes that go into the construction of social inequality and ideological injustice.

References

- Cameron, D. (1993). Style policy and style politics: A neglected aspect of the language of the news. *Media, Culture & Society*, 15, 315-330.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: Rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press.
- Christensen, T. J. (1999). China, the US-Japan alliance, and the security dilemma in East Asia. *International Security* 23(4), 49-80.
- Dijk, T. A. (2004). Principles of critical discourse analysis. In Michael (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis: Critical concepts in linguistics, II* (pp. 62-127). Toolan, NY: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1985). Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, 739-763.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hall, S. (1996). The meaning of new times. In D. Morley, K. Chen & S. Hall (Eds.), *Critical dialogues in cultural studies*. London: Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hopple, G. W. (1982). International news coverage in two elite newspapers. *Journal of Communication*, 32, 61-74.
- Hunt, M. H. (1987). *Ideology and US foreign policy*. New Haven and London: Yale University.
- Inoguchi, T. (1996). The new security setup and Japan's options. *Japan Echo*, 38-39.
- Jakubowicz, A., & Goodall, H. (Eds.). (1994). *Racism, ethnicity and the media*. Australia: Allen and Unwen.

- Japan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (1995, August 15). On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the War's end (Translation). Tomiichi Murayama. June 6, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html>
- Manheim, J. B. (1984, September). Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting. *The American Political Science Review*, 78(3), 641-657.
- Pollack, J. D.. (1990). The Sino-Japanese and East Asian Security: Patterns and implications. *The China Quarterly*, 124,.
- Semmel, A. K. (1976). Foreign news in four US elite dailies: Some comparisons. *Journalism Quarterly*, 53, 732-736.
- Wang, Q. K. (2000, Autumn). Taiwan in Japan's relations with China and the United States after the Cold War. *Pacific Affairs*, 73(3), 353-373.
- Weiss, C. H. (1974). What American leaders read? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 38, 1-22.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1990). Discourses of enquiry and conditions of relevance. In J. Alatis (Ed.), *Georgetown University round table on language and linguistics* (pp. 37-45). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Wodak, R. (1995). Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. In J. Verschueren, J. O. Ostman, & J. Blommaert (Eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 201-232). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Wodak, R. (1996). *Disorders of discourse*. London: Longman.
- Wu, X. (2000, March-April). The security dimension of Sino-Japanese relations: Warily watching one another. *Asian Survey*, 40(2), 296-310.
- Zhang, G. (1997, August 19). Japanese cabinet secretary talks wildly, claiming that Japan-US alliance cover Taiwan. *People's Daily*, 6.