

US-China Trade War: Van Dijk Critical Discourse Analysis of Arabic News from *Sotkurdistan.net*

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ABSTRACT

The trade war between the United States and China has become a global focal point due to its impact on the stability of the world economy. However, how this conflict is represented by international media, especially Arabic-language media, has rarely been critically analyzed. This article aims to examine the reporting of the website *sotkurdistan.net* on the trade war using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method by analyzing three dimensions: text structure (macro, super, micro), social cognition, and social context. The main focus of the analysis is to reveal how language is used to shape public opinion and embed certain ideologies. The findings show that the media frame this conflict as an ideological battle between two global powers, rather than merely an economic issue. The article reinforces an antagonistic narrative through metaphors, personification, and suggestive diction. This study highlights the importance of critical literacy in understanding international media discourse and its contribution to uncovering the hidden ideologies behind news texts.

China; Critical Discourse Analysis; Trade War; United States; Van Dijk

Introduction

The U.S.–China trade war has become a defining issue in contemporary global politics, extending far beyond economic disputes over tariffs and trade balances (Fajgelbaum et al., 2024; Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal, 2022). It represents a broader struggle over ideological dominance, geopolitical influence, and the construction of a new global order, particularly in technology and economic sovereignty (Hlovor & Lord, 2024; Wang & Ma, 2021). In this context,

media discourse plays a strategic role in shaping public understanding of the conflict by framing actors, assigning blame, and legitimizing certain power relations (Husna et al., 2021). For Arabic-speaking audiences, media representations of the U.S.–China trade war are especially significant, as they mediate global economic narratives within distinct political, cultural, and ideological frameworks (Salma & Chotimah, 2025). Therefore, examining how Arab media discursively construct this conflict is crucial for understanding the circulation of global power narratives in the Arab world.

Previous studies on the U.S.–China trade war have largely focused on its economic impacts, including tariff effects, global supply chain disruptions, and international trade dynamics (Fajgelbaum et al., 2024; Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal, 2022). Other strands of research have explored the geopolitical and ideological dimensions of the conflict, highlighting competition over technological leadership and global influence (Hlovor & Lord, 2024; Wang & Ma, 2021). In media studies, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely applied to examine Western and Chinese media representations of the trade war, revealing ideological polarization, nationalism, and power asymmetries embedded in news discourse (Angela et al., 2023; Eriyanto, 2017). Additionally, CDA research on Arabic media has grown in recent years, addressing political conflicts, war reporting, and ideological framing (Cahyani & Gusfa, 2020; Mujianto et al., 2023). However, these studies have predominantly concentrated on security issues, regional conflicts, or Western–Middle Eastern relations rather than global economic geopolitics.

Despite the expanding body of literature, there remains a noticeable gap in CDA research that systematically analyzes Arabic-language media discourse on the U.S.–China trade war. In particular, Arabic news coverage of global economic conflicts has received limited scholarly attention, especially through Van Dijk’s multidimensional CDA framework (Van Dijk, 2015). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze how an Arabic article published on *sotkurdistan.net* discursively represents the U.S.–China trade conflict. Accordingly, this article aims to examine the reporting of the website *sotkurdistan.net* on the trade war using Teun A. van Dijk’s CDA approach. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method by analyzing three dimensions: text structure (macro, super, micro), social cognition, and social context (Van Dijk, 2015).

This study argues that the Arabic article on *sotkurdistan.net* does not merely report economic events but actively constructs ideological meanings that position the United States and China within a specific power hierarchy. Through selective framing, lexical choices, and narrative structures, the text reflects broader social cognitions and contextual influences that shape Arab media interpretations of global economic conflict (Ammar & Mas`adi, 2025; Cahyani & Gusfa, 2020). By applying Van Dijk’s CDA model, this research demonstrates that Arabic

media function as ideological actors in global economic discourse, contributing to the reproduction and contestation of dominance in international relations (Mujiyanto et al., 2023). Consequently, the study extends CDA scholarship by foregrounding Arabic-language economic journalism as a critical site for analyzing global power, ideology, and discourse.

This research aligns with several previous studies that applied Van Dijk's CDA model, focusing on text, social cognition, and social context. Salma and Chotimah analyzed Israel–Palestine ceasefire coverage on *Al-Arabiya*, emphasizing semantic background and rhetorical structure (Salma & Chotimah, 2025). Nuraini et al., examined ideological metaphors in *The Jakarta Post's* Forum R20 (Nuraini et al., 2024). Anam and Ghozali explored the reinterpretation of religious tolerance in Surah Al-Kafirun (Anam & Ghozali, 2022). Nahdi and Taufiq studied Hamzanwadi's nationalism through discourse dimensions (Nahdi & Taufiq, 2023). Fadilah et al., analyzed patriarchal ideology in childfree discourse (Fadilah et al., 2025), while Nofia Angela et al., used Van Dijk's model to examine news on Angelina Sondakh's release, focusing on female representation in corruption cases (Angela et al., 2023). Seylla Arifeni et al., used the same model to analyze responses to Indonesia's Ministry of Education's app policy in *Kompas* (Arifeni et al., 2024). Ammar and Mas'adi investigated how international Arab media, specifically *Indonesiaalyoum.com*, framed systemic corruption cases involving Riza Chalid's son, integrating all Van Dijk's dimensions to reveal power relations, ideology, and narrative construction in foreign Arabic-language media discourse (Ammar & Mas'adi, 2025).

Compared to these studies, this research differs in its object and analytical focus. While Salma and Chotimah emphasized international conflict (Salma & Chotimah, 2025), Nuraini et al., focused on political metaphors (Nuraini et al., 2024), Anam and Ghozali on religious discourse (Anam & Ghozali, 2022), Nahdi and Taufiq on nationalism (Nahdi & Taufiq, 2023), Fadilah et al., on social discourse in podcasts (Fadilah et al., 2025), Angela et al., on women and corruption (Angela et al., 2023), and Arifeni et al., on digital education policy discourse (Arifeni et al., 2024), Ammar and Mas'adi (2025) explored corruption framing in international Arab media, an area rarely examined with Van Dijk's model (Ammar & Mas'adi, 2025). To date, no study has specifically analyzed the representation of the U.S.–China trade war in Arab media texts using this framework.

Arabic-language media is central to this study because of its influential role in the global information landscape, especially in the Middle East, which remains a strategic intersection of global economic power and energy politics. The way Arab media represents global issues like the U.S.–China trade war is significant because media do not merely mirror reality; they construct narratives that shape the Arab public's perception of international power dynamics (Salma & Chotimah, 2025).

Literature Review

In modern Indonesian, discourse refers to utterances, conversations, or lectures (Julaeha et al., 2021). In the Western tradition, *discourse* comes from the Latin *discursus*, referring to the system of rules and conventions in spoken or written language. Discourse is more than a collection of words or sentences; it is a complete unit of meaning built through the relationship between linguistic elements (Muffidah et al., 2021). Discourse is the most comprehensive and highest unit of language, beyond the level of sentences or clauses (Artati, 2019).

In practice, discourse is studied through general discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Discourse analysis focuses on language units above the sentence level, maintaining unity of meaning and structural coherence within a social context, social context is important for fully understanding meaning (Aliah, 2014; Arifin et al., 2015). Thus, discourse analysis aims not only to describe language use but also to reveal power relations, ideologies, and social realities represented through language.

One of the most widely used CDA models is Teun A. van Dijk's framework, which divides discourse into three dimensions: text, social cognition, and social context (Van Dijk, 2015). The text dimension consists of macrostructure (main themes), superstructure (the organization of the text such as introduction, body, and conclusion), and microstructure (word choice, stylistics, sentence construction) (Astuti & Musfiroh, 2022). Van Dijk integrates these dimensions to examine how discourse structures and strategies highlight particular themes (Aliah, 2014).

The macrostructure captures the global meaning of a text, derived from its main theme. The superstructure relates to the framework that organizes discourse coherently, while the microstructure examines meaning at the smallest level; words, sentences, propositions, paraphrases, and images, considering sentence structure, diction, coherence, and rhetoric (Eriyanto, 2017). Together, these elements shape the discourse text to influence the reader's understanding and public opinion.

The social cognition dimension concerns how collective knowledge, attitudes, or ideologies shared by journalists and audiences influence the production and interpretation of discourse (Ammar & Mas'adi, 2025). Meanwhile, the social context dimension situates texts within wider relations of power, economics, and culture (Cahyani & Gusfa, 2020). By integrating these three dimensions, Van Dijk's CDA reveals hidden ideologies, structural biases, and domination strategies in texts (Mujianto et al., 2023; Rojudin & Ramdhani, 2022).

In the media context, news texts are clear examples of discourse embedded with ideology and power strategies. Fajar (2010) defines news as factual, important, and interesting reports presented to the public, while Wahjuwibowo (2015) argues that news does not merely inform but shapes public opinion according to specific interests. To ensure clarity, news texts follow the 5W+1H principle; What, Who, When, Where, Why, and How (Muffidah et al., 2021). From a

CDA perspective, however, news texts are not neutral; they serve as tools for framing reality through diction, narrative structures, and emphasis or omission of facts (Astuti & Musfiroh, 2022; Cahyani & Gusfa, 2020). Thus, CDA is essential for exposing power, ideology, and hidden interests in news discourse.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model as its analytical tool. This approach is chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of implicit meanings within the text and reveals power relations, ideology, and social practices embedded in media discourse (Arifeni et al., 2024). In this study, the researcher acts directly as the primary instrument (human instrument). This aligns with the nature of qualitative research, where the researcher not only collects data but also determines the study's focus, selects information sources, gathers and evaluates data, and conducts analysis, interpretation, and draws conclusions from the findings (Sugiyono, 2015).

The main data source in this study is an Arabic-language news text published on the news portal *sotkurdistan.net*, titled "حرب ترامب التجارية: من مواجهة شاملة إلى تركيز على الصين" (*Trump's Trade War: From Comprehensive Confrontation to Focus on China*), published on April 10, 2025, and accessible at <https://share.google/qHoYvMLgJ3qERmN9D>. This text was selected because it presents a discourse construction of the trade war between the United States and China.

Data were collected using documentation techniques by accessing, reading, and marking relevant sections of the text for further analysis. Documentation is considered appropriate in this context because it allows the researcher to examine published texts in depth (Muffidah et al., 2021). In addition, this technique enables systematic identification of linguistic features, discursive strategies, and thematic patterns that are central to CDA. By relying on documented textual data, the study ensures analytical rigor and facilitates a contextual interpretation of ideological meanings embedded in the news discourse.

The data analysis process in this study follows Teun A. van Dijk's CDA theory, which includes three main dimensions: text structure, social cognition, and social context. The text structure consists of three levels: macrostructure, which highlights the main theme of the discourse; superstructure, which relates to the framework and overall organization of the text; and microstructure, which examines the lexical, syntactic, and stylistic elements in the text (Aska et al., 2022). Social cognition refers to the mental processes of text producers and consumers in constructing and interpreting discourse. This aspect is crucial for tracing how perceptions and ideologies influence the production and reception of a text (Kirana, 2023).

Lastly, social context is seen as the social, political, and cultural background that shapes the text and how the text in turn helps construct the readers' social reality (Angela et al., 2023).

To strengthen the validity of the analysis, the data analysis technique in this study also follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles et al., 2018). This approach enables the researcher to filter essential information, systematically organize findings, and draw conclusions that are scientifically accountable.

Findings and Discussion

Van Dijk views a text as consisting of multiple structures or levels, with each part supporting the others (Angela et al., 2023). He divides these into three levels. First, the macrostructure, which refers to the overall or global meaning of a text and can be observed through the main topic or theme highlighted in a news report. Second, the superstructure, which is the discourse structure related to the framework of the text, how the parts are organized into a coherent whole. Third, the microstructure, which refers to the discourse meaning that can be examined in the smallest elements of a text, such as words, sentences, propositions, clauses, paraphrases, and images (Husna et al., 2021).

The macrostructure concerns the global meaning of the theme presented throughout the entire discourse text. The superstructure relates to the internal structure of the discourse, from the beginning of the text to its conclusion, showing how each part is connected. The microstructure involves the meanings found within sentences and paragraphs (Van Dijk, 2015).

Table 1. Summary of Data Analysis

No.	Text Structure	Structural Element	Data Description Summary
1	Macrostructure	Theme	The shift in U.S. trade strategy from broad confrontation to direct targeting of China as the main economic rival, with global impacts.
2	Superstructure	Title	Reflects the change in focus from a comprehensive approach to a specific emphasis on China.
		Lead	Explains the 125% tariff policy for China and 10% for other countries, which creates global uncertainty.
		Situation	Presents critical questions on negotiations, concessions, and U.S. trust in free trade.
		Commentary	Provides predictions of long-term conflict consequences that threaten the global economy.
3	Microstructure	Background	Presents a narrative background that the shift in U.S. policy is part of a deliberate economic-political strategy.
		Detail	Concrete facts and key questions related to U.S.-China tensions.
		Purpose	Indicates that the trade war is an ideological conflict, not merely an economic policy.
		Presupposition	Implied assumptions about China's strength and antagonistic intentions toward U.S. policies.
		Nominalization	Use of nouns like "نهاية التوافق" (<i>end of consensus</i>) to obscure agency and emphasize policy consequences.

	Sentence Form	Declarative and rhetorical interrogative sentences are used to shape opinion and invite reader engagement.
	Coherence	Logical links between paragraphs built through cause-effect, thematic questions, and implicit contrasts.
	Pronoun	Use of pronouns like "بكين" (<i>Beijing</i>) and "واشنطن" (<i>Washington</i>) to personify nations and build a neutral narrative stance.
	Lexicon	Diction such as "رسوم جمركية" (<i>customs tariffs</i>) and "صراع" (<i>conflict</i>) intensifies the conflict and tension atmosphere.
	Metaphor	The phrase "صراع على الهيمنة الاقتصادية" (<i>struggle for economic dominance</i>) depicts the conflict as a battle for global control.
	Expression	Predictive and suggestive language is used to instill urgency and fear of the conflict's impact.
4	Social Cognition	Builds the perception that the trade war is a clash of values and strategies between two global economic powers.
5	Social Context	The article reflects global, especially Arab world, concerns over the breakdown of the multilateral economic order.

Macrostructure (Thematic)

The macrostructure explains the global meaning of a text (Fayruza et al., 2021). The analyzed article presents a main theme focusing on the shift in the United States' economic policy under Donald Trump, from broad global trade engagement to a direct economic offensive against China. The core of this theme is how the U.S.-China trade war evolved into a conflict specifically targeting China's economy, with tariffs reaching up to 125% imposed on Chinese imports. This conflict not only disrupted bilateral relations but also had significant impacts on the global economy, creating widespread uncertainty.

The theme discussed in this article highlights the tension between the world's two largest economic powers: the United States and China. It illustrates how the protectionist policies adopted by the United States can affect global economic stability, alter international trade patterns, and influence prices and global supply chains.

Superstructure (Schematic)

According to Van Dijk, the superstructure represents an integrated whole that maintains coherence (Fayruza et al., 2021). The ideas presented at the beginning of the superstructure are then continued and reinforced by the subsequent sections of the news text (Rahman et al., 2024).

Title

The article's title, "*Ḥarb Trump Al-Tijariyah: Min Muwajaḥah Shamilah ila Tarkiz 'ala Al-Ṣin*" (*Trump's Trade War: From Comprehensive Confrontation to Focus on China*), reflects a significant shift in the U.S. trade war policy. The title not only grabs readers' attention by mentioning a globally relevant topic but also implies a major change in U.S. policy direction, leading to renewed tensions between two major powers.

Lead

The lead section of the article explains a significant development in the trade war: the U.S. government's decision to impose a 125% tariff on imports from China while maintaining a 10% tariff on goods from other countries. This part introduces the global economic uncertainty caused by this decision, hinting at its far-reaching impacts on both countries' economies as well as the global market.

Situation

The article then delves deeper into key questions about the future of this trade war, specifically, whether China will be willing to negotiate with the United States. This opens up discussion on China's strong economic and political position and the significant challenges both countries face in seeking a mutually beneficial resolution. This question provides space to analyze the complex geopolitical relations between the United States and China.

Commentary

The commentary in the article points to darker predictions if the trade war continues without any agreement being reached. It warns that if both countries continue to treat this as an existential conflict, the result could be disastrous for the global economy. The commentary offers insight into the long-term consequences of protectionist policies and emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and international cooperation to avoid the worst-case scenario.

Microstructure

In this news text, the discourse reveals various microstructures, including background, detailed information, purpose, presuppositions, nominalization, sentence forms, coherence, pronoun, sentence structure, lexicon, metaphor, expression, pronoun (Fayruza et al., 2021).

Background

The news text opens with a narrative describing the Trump administration's shift in economic strategy from multilateral confrontation to specifically targeting China:

في تطور لافت، تحولت حرب دونالد ترامب التجارية من نهج "الجميع ضد الجميع" إلى
استهداف مباشر للصين...

"In a remarkable development, Donald Trump's trade war has shifted from an 'everyone against everyone' approach to directly targeting China..."

This background frames the trade conflict not as a sudden phenomenon but as the result of a deliberate U.S. strategic policy. China is depicted as "العدو الاقتصادي الأبرز" (*the main economic enemy*), underscoring that this shift in focus is part of a long-term geopolitical calculation. The article connects Trump's tariff policy to efforts to reclaim global economic dominance and shows how these measures have triggered uncertainty in the global economic landscape.

Detail

Details are presented through key facts and critical questions posed in the text:

مع تعليق الرسوم الجمركية الانتقامية لمدة ٩٠ يومًا على عشرات الدول، ظلت الرسوم الشاملة بنسبة ١٠٪ سارية، لكن الصين تعرضت لمعاملة أكثر قسوة، حيث بلغت الرسوم المفروضة عليها ٢٥٪.

"With retaliatory tariffs suspended for 90 days for dozens of countries, the general 10% tariffs remained in place, but China faced harsher treatment, with tariffs reaching 125%."

The article explains that while many countries were granted temporary exemptions, China alone was subject to the highest tariff rates. This detail is further expanded through three central questions: (1) Is China willing to negotiate? (2) How much concession might it offer? (3) Does the U.S. still trust in free trade?. This narrative framework not only provides factual context but also shapes readers' understanding that this conflict is multidimensional, encompassing foreign policy, national identity, and economic ideology.

Purpose

The main purpose of the text is to demonstrate that the trade war is not merely about tariffs but about a broader ideological and strategic struggle:

ترامب لا يرى الرسوم الجمركية كوسيلة لتحقيق غاية فقط، بل كغاية في حد ذاتها
"Trump does not see tariffs merely as a means to an end, but as an end in themselves."

By stating that Trump views tariffs as the ultimate goal and not just a diplomatic tool, the text underlines that this policy is driven by the ambition to reshape the global economic order. In this context, the report serves as a warning that if this perception continues to dominate, the conflict will escalate into an existential struggle (صراع وجودي) that could ultimately threaten global stability.

Presupposition (Implicit Assumption)

In this text, there are several presuppositions implicitly assumed as facts without explicit proof. One example can be seen in the statement:

الصين ليست دولة عادية عندما يتعلق الأمر بالاقتصاد والسياسة
"China is not an ordinary country when it comes to economy and politics."

This sentence contains the presupposition that other countries are "ordinary" in economic and political matters, whereas China is an exception. This reinforces the framing that China has an unusually strong and closed economic-political system, positioning it as the primary "economic enemy."

Another presupposition appears in:

فقد تعتقد بكين أن لا شيء يمكن التفاوض عليه، وأن الحرب التجارية ليست مجرد خلاف اقتصادي، بل صراع على الهيمنة الاقتصادية.

"Beijing may believe that there is nothing to negotiate and that the trade war is not merely an economic dispute but a struggle for economic dominance."

This statement assumes that Beijing will inevitably interpret U.S. policy antagonistically, even before any negotiation begins. This presupposition frames China's stance as stubborn and resistant to compromise, even though no direct empirical evidence precedes this claim.

Nominalization

Nominalization is effectively used in this text to abstract processes into concepts, shifting the focus from the agent to the event or its consequences. For example:

تحولت حرب دونالد ترامب التجارية ...
"Trump's trade war has shifted..."

Here, "تحولت" originates from an active verb but is turned into a nominal form to present the change as a natural or logical process rather than the explicit result of Trump's political decision.

Another example:

نهاية التوافق القديم القائم على التعاون الاقتصادي العالمي
"The end of the old consensus based on global economic cooperation."

This phrase contains the nominalization "نهاية التوافق" (*the end of the consensus*), framing global geopolitical shifts as something natural and inevitable, rather than the outcome of unilateral policy actions.

Such nominalization effectively removes the agent from the sentence structure and instead emphasizes the consequences or phenomena as stand-alone entities, strengthening the impression of objectivity and inevitability.

Sentence Form

The text uses a combination of declarative and rhetorical interrogative sentences to guide readers' interpretation while fostering critical engagement. For example, the declarative sentence:

ترامب لا يرى الرسوم الجمركية كوسيلة لتحقيق غاية فقط، بل كغاية في حد ذاتها .
"Trump does not see tariffs merely as a means to an end, but as an end in themselves."

This sentence is assertive and contains an ideological judgment of Trump's policy, clarifying the text's position in critiquing his unilateral economic approach. Meanwhile, rhetorical interrogative sentences are used to provoke readers to think critically:

هل لا تزال أمريكا تؤمن بالتجارة الحرة؟
 “Does America still believe in free trade?”

This question is not meant to be answered directly but instead leads the reader to conclude that Trump’s policies have deviated significantly from the principles of classical economic liberalism.

Passive voice is also found in sentences such as:

إذا لم يتم التوصل إلى تفاهم ...
 “If no understanding is reached...”

Here, the passive form obscures the agent responsible for any potential negotiation failure and shifts the focus to the consequence (a prolonged economic conflict), creating an impression of systemic uncertainty rather than individual policy failure.

Coherence

Coherence in this text is constructed through sequential questions and the use of causal and contrastive conjunctions, which guide the reader to follow the logical flow of the conflict’s development. An example of a causal structure:

هذه الطلبات تصطدم بمصالح استراتيجية عميقة الجذور لدى الصين، مما يجعل التوصل إلى اتفاق شاملاً أمراً بعيد المنال .

“These demands clash with China’s deeply rooted strategic interests, which makes reaching a comprehensive agreement unlikely.”

The conjunction “...مما يجعل” (which makes...) shows a cause-effect relationship, clarifying that the U.S. demands are seen as contradictory to China’s core interests. This logically connects an argument with its consequence.

A contrastive structure is also effectively used:

في المقابل، تم استيراد النفط من الخارج بأسعار أعلى...
 “In contrast, oil was imported from abroad at higher prices...”

In this text, the contrast is implied through the phrase “في المقابل” (in contrast), highlighting the difference between Trump’s approach towards other countries (10% tariffs) and towards China (125% tariffs). This shift builds the narrative that China is treated as a unique, tougher exception.

Sequential questions like: (1) “هل ستقبل الصين التفاوض؟” (Will China agree to negotiate?), (2) “ما حجم التنازلات التي ستقدمها الصين؟” (How large will China’s concessions be?), and (3) “هل لا تزال أمريكا تؤمن بالتجارة الحرة؟” (Does America still believe in free trade?) function as thematic coherence devices. They keep the discourse focused on negotiation and economic strategies, providing a progressive framework for the escalating issue.

Pronoun

Pronouns in this text play an important role in grouping actors and shaping narrative distance.

For example:

فقد تعتقد بكين أن لا شيء يمكن التفاوض عليه...
"Beijing may believe that there is nothing to negotiate..."

The pronoun "بكين" (*Beijing*) personifies China as an active subject capable of interpreting and rejecting proposals. Likewise, other pronouns such as "واشنطن" (*Washington*) are also personified, representing state actors with specific policy stances.

The text does not explicitly use "we" (نحن) or "they" (هم), but still subtly distinguishes the parties: America, China, and the "المشهد الاقتصادي العالمي" (*global economic scene*). This provides distance and a tone of narrative neutrality while still emphasizing the confrontation between two major power poles.

Additionally, impersonal forms like: "قد تجد أكبر قوتين اقتصاديتين في العالم نفسيهما" (*The world's two largest economic powers may find themselves*) avoid directly naming the U.S. and China but clearly refer to them. The phrase "نفسهما" (*themselves*) creates a reflective effect: both countries become portrayed as victims of their own policies.

Lexicon

The choice of words in this article strongly reinforces the seriousness of the trade dispute between the United States and China. Key terms include "رسوم جمركية" (*tariffs*), "تفاوض" (*negotiate*), and "صراع" (*conflict*). These choices connote tension and the high stakes of the ongoing dispute. The term "رسوم جمركية" (*tariffs*) emphasizes the element of protectionist policy pursued by the U.S., while "تفاوض" (*negotiate*) highlights the crucial question of whether any dialogue between the two countries is possible. Moreover, the word "صراع" (*conflict*) frames the dispute as more than just an economic disagreement, it depicts a struggle for power and global dominance.

Sentence Structure

The sentence structure in this article predominantly uses declarative and interrogative forms. For example:

هل ستقبل الصين التفاوض؟
"Will China agree to negotiate?"

This question not only delivers information but also provokes the reader's curiosity about the potential escalation of tensions between the two countries. Such questions invite the reader to reflect, highlighting the uncertainty embedded in the diplomatic process and emphasizing the

broader conflict over global trade policies. Declarative sentences provide additional context about the events, such as:

مع تعليق الرسوم الجمركية الانتقامية لمدة ٩٠ يومًا على عشرات الدول، ظلت الرسوم
الشاملة بنسبة ١٠٪ سارية.

"With the retaliatory tariffs suspended for 90 days on dozens of countries, the general tariffs of 10% remained in effect."

This sentence directly informs readers about the policy implemented and its implications.

Metaphor

In this article, metaphors are used to deepen the depiction of the nature of the trade war. One prominent metaphor is "صراع على الهيمنة الاقتصادية" (*a struggle for economic dominance*), which portrays the trade war between the U.S. and China as a battle to gain greater global power. This metaphor emphasizes that the conflict is not merely about trade but about who will lead the global economy. In this context, the word "*struggle*" creates an image of competition that is not only economic but also geopolitical, involving influence and control over technology, markets, and global resources.

This metaphor frames the trade war as a "*battle*" for global supremacy, evoking connotations of power and influence that go far beyond tariffs or trade policies. The use of such a metaphor not only amplifies the intensity of the discourse but also helps the reader grasp that this conflict has far-reaching consequences that extend well beyond its surface appearance.

Expression

Expressions in this text heavily rely on suggestive and predictive language to build a sense of anxiety, urgency, and ideological awareness. For example:

هذا التوجه يترك المشهد الاقتصادي العالمي في حالة من الغموض.

"This direction leaves the global economic landscape in a state of uncertainty."

This expression reinforces a sense of global uncertainty, not merely as a result of a single policy but as a consequence of a major geopolitical shift. Another example with a predictive tone:

إذا لم يتم التوصل إلى تفاهم، قد تجد أكبر قوتين اقتصاديتين في العالم نفسيهما عالقتين في

صراع طويل الأمد ...

"If no understanding is reached, the world's two largest economic powers may find themselves trapped in a prolonged conflict..."

This sentence serves as a warning about the looming danger, using the phrase "*may find themselves trapped*" to construct a narrative of threat without sounding like overt propaganda.

At the conclusion:

فإن النتيجة قد تكون كارثية ليس فقط للبلدين، بل للاقتصاد العالمي بأسره.

"The outcome could be catastrophic not only for the two countries but for the entire global economy."

The expression *"catastrophic"* is strategically chosen to intensify the rhetorical effect, planting a sense of gravity in the reader's mind about what is at stake if this conflict remains unchecked.

Social Cognition

Van Dijk's CDA framework emphasizes social cognition. Beyond the linguistic dimension, Van Dijk considers how discourse is shaped and the various factors that influence authors when constructing it (Sriwimon & Zilli, 2017). Social cognition, in this context, involves several key indicators, including knowledge, cultural background, opinions, and attitudes (Rogers et al., 2016).

In the case of news text from *sotkurdistan.net*, it shapes the readers' collective perception of the U.S.-China trade war as more than just an economic issue, it is framed as an ideological battle between two major global powers. The article depicts China as a country with a strong and distinct economic-political structure, unlike any other nation. The statement "الصين ليست دولة عادية" (*China is not an ordinary country*) reinforces China's position as a special actor in the global system. On the other hand, the United States under Donald Trump's leadership is portrayed as a nation adopting extreme protectionist policies, treating tariffs not merely as a diplomatic tool but as a strategic goal to reshape the world economic order. The article invites readers to reconsider the U.S. commitment to the principles of free trade, as indicated by the rhetorical question "هل لا تزال أمريكا تؤمن بالتجارة الحرة؟" (*Does America still believe in free trade?*), which raises doubts about the direction of U.S. economic policy. Thus, the text constructs a cognitive framework suggesting that the conflict between the two countries occurs not only at the level of policy but also in the realm of values and ideology. This construction strengthens a critical stance toward global economic dominance and positions readers, particularly in the Arab world as affected parties who should remain alert to the conflict's implications.

Social Context

The social analysis examines how a text is connected to broader social structures and the body of knowledge that evolves within society through discourse (Fayruza et al., 2021). This article emerges from a global geopolitical and economic landscape undergoing significant transformation, where the dominance of multilateralism and global economic consensus is being challenged by rising protectionism and bilateral rivalries. As part of an Arabic-language

media outlet, *sotkurdistan.net* reflects Arab public concern about the impact of global economic conflicts on regional and international stability. Although Arab countries are not directly involved in the trade war, their deep integration in the global market makes this issue directly relevant, through imports, exports, and their dependence on energy and investment flows. The article asserts that Trump's policy of targeting China with high tariffs is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a broader shift in the world economic order, as emphasized in the statement "هذا السيناريو يعني نهاية التوافق القديم القائم على التعاون الاقتصادي العالمي" (*This scenario means the end of the old consensus based on global economic cooperation*) Furthermore, the text warns that if this conflict remains unresolved, it may usher in a new phase of "التنافس المطلق" (*absolute competition*), marked by risks and uncertainty. Thus, the narrative in this article does not merely explain an economic event but also signals a crisis of legitimacy and hegemony within the global system. Through this construction, the text contributes to shaping public opinion that is critical of major power dominance and calls for collective awareness of the shifting global dynamics.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Arabic-language media play a strategic role in constructing public perceptions of the U.S.–China trade war by framing it not merely as an economic dispute but as an ideological and geopolitical conflict. Through the application of Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, the analysis demonstrates that linguistic choices, narrative structures, and rhetorical strategies in the *sotkurdistan.net* article contribute to the reproduction of power relations and ideological meanings. The findings confirm that media discourse functions as an active agent in shaping how global conflicts are interpreted within specific social and cognitive contexts. This study confirms that international media reporting, particularly by Arabic-language outlets, plays a strategic role in shaping public perceptions of global issues such as the trade war between the United States and China. In an era of increasingly complex information flows and geopolitical interests, the media does not merely function as a conveyor of facts but also as an agent for the production of meaning and ideology. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how media texts are constructed and used to represent power and specific interests.

By employing a descriptive qualitative approach and Teun A. van Dijk's CDA framework, this research systematically analyzes three main dimensions: textual structure (macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure), social cognition, and social context. This approach enables the researcher to unravel the linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in the news text from *sotkurdistan.net* to frame the U.S.–China trade war as an ideological conflict rather than merely an economic rivalry. Through the use of conflict metaphors, personification of states, and

suggestive diction, the news article constructs a narrative that reinforces an antagonistic image of both nations. Methodologically, this study not only illustrates how the text is formed but also explains how it is produced and interpreted within a broader cognitive and social framework. In this regard, the main objective to reveal how language is used to reproduce power and shape public opinion in the context of the U.S.–China trade war, has been comprehensively achieved.

The contributions of this research span three key areas. Academically, this study enriches the discourse analysis literature on Arabic-language news texts, which remains relatively underexplored in the context of geopolitical economics. Socially, the findings encourage the public to develop a critical awareness of international media narratives and not accept information passively. Practically, this research provides concrete insights into how the media embeds ideology and shapes social reality through language. Looking ahead, this study is expected to serve as a foundation for further research in the field of critical discourse analysis, especially concerning the dynamics of international relations, global political economy, and the role of cross-cultural media. Moreover, this study can also be a valuable reference for the development of media literacy and global civic education that is both critical and reflective.

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