

A Corpus-Based Analysis of Chinese and Western Newspaper Discourse on Xinjiang Cotton: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective

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Abstract

Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional and Van Dijk's "ideological square" model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this study is aimed to analyze a self-built corpus which is comprised of 29 news reports extracted from western newspapers and 48 news reports from Chinese newspapers under the approach of the discursive practice, power and ideology. To that end, the analysis is conducted from the comparative analysis of keywords and key clusters lists, and collocations of "China is, China, China's" and "US, U.S., western" portrayed in selected Chinese and western newspapers discourse. The findings demonstrate that both Chinese and western newspapers focused on Uyghur forced labor in Xinjiang cotton industry, with the exception that the keywords and key clusters in the western newspapers also include terms that were initially used to make claims about "forced labor" and "genocide" in Xinjiang. Under the guise of "human rights," they fabricated the "political correctness" surrounding the Xinjiang issue and words to express the frustration of the brands in the Chinese market with the government's actions and the newspapers' attempts to blame the government and media for some brands' decline in popularity, highlighting the state control in this case rather than the free choice of Chinese consumers. While the Chinese newspapers were mainly trying to debunk and dispel western countries' and newspapers' allegation of so-called "forced labor" on the one hand, find out and inform the audience of the facts and truth in Xinjiang cotton industry on the other hand. Adopting different discourse strategies when describing the two sides, the western newspapers clearly demeaned "the other" and portrayed China as the "enemy" of the U.S., while the Chinese newspapers sought to reveal the role of the U.S. and the true nature of Xinjiang Cotton Event, meanwhile presenting a strong condemnation and explicitly stating that there is no room for negotiation or compromise on the issue of Xinjiang.

Keywords

Xinjiang Cotton, Corpus-Based, Newspaper Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

Xinjiang Cotton Event of 2021, also known as Xinjiang Cotton Wave and Xinjiang Cotton Storm, is a domestic boycott movement that began in March 2021. It began with the controversy over a statement issued by Swedish fashion company H & M on March 24, 2021, in response to Western media reports and allegations of “forced labor” of Uyghurs, stating that it would not work with any garment manufacturing factories in Xinjiang and would not source products or raw materials from the region. Many apparel companies have issued statements not to use raw materials or products from Xinjiang for similar reasons, and this has led to a unanimous mobilization from the official media and private sector in China to support Xinjiang cotton and boycott companies that abandon it. The incident caused a number of mainland Chinese companies to withdraw from the Better Cotton Institute (BCI), which became a Chinese boycott of foreign goods, the largest boycott since 2012.

Xinjiang’s cotton output accounts for 87.3% of China’s cotton output, which is the important component of China’s textile industry. Xinjiang cotton was boycotted, foreign brands can use the upstream competitive position to prohibit the use of Xinjiang cotton products, so as to curb Xinjiang cotton production capacity. As a result, China’s textile industry chain will fracture and will be controlled by others because raw materials rely on imports. The incident will not only seriously affect the economic development of the Xinjiang region, but also seriously threaten the social development and stability of the Xinjiang region of China. Xinjiang Cotton Event is a premeditated attack against our country’s export trade and the unity of the whole nation. Xinjiang Cotton Event detonated by H & M has gone far beyond its brand’s own behavior to the level of national diplomacy. Xinjiang Cotton Event seems to be a commercial crisis, but the deep political view behind it and the contention with the international discourse power is the focus that cannot be ignored.

In any society, there is a link between ideology and the discourse structure of the media, and the mass media (newspapers) are the tools of ideological communication in society because they take different positions according to their respective interests when facing the same issue (Ghassemi & Hemmatgosh, 2019). Given the important influence of the news media in shaping the mindset of the people in society, it is of great practical importance to study Xinjiang cotton news between China and western countries. This study is to peer into how Xinjiang Cotton Event, which has become a wide-spread controversial issue and aroused public’s deep concern, was portrayed in Chinese and western news re-

port by exploring the following three questions: 1) How do the mainstream newspapers in China and western countries argue for the justification of their respective side's own behavior in Xinjiang Cotton Event? 2) How do the mainstream newspapers in China and western countries depict both sides in Xinjiang cotton news? 3) What are the ideological roots reflected in the news of Xinjiang Cotton Event in the mainstream newspapers of China and western countries?

2. Corpus-Based Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “a research framework devoted to the relationship among language, power, and ideology” (Fairclough, 2005), which reveals the dialectical relationship between social reality and discursive practices. CDA differs from other discourse analyses in that, in addition to describing discourse itself, it emphasizes linking language and society and exposing the ideology behind it through discourse features (Li & Zhang, 2015). The corpus-based CDA combines quantitative analysis with qualitative description by incorporating the advantages of corpus linguistics and CDA, consequently reducing the influence of researchers on the research results due to subjective factors, and improving the objectivity of the research (Hu & Li, 2015). In addition, through a large amount of authentic, valid and reliable materials in the corpus and in-depth analysis of textual data, researchers are able to uncover discourse phenomena and discourse features that are easily overlooked. Baker (2006) provided a landmark overview of corpus approaches in discourse research with case studies. Subsequently, Baker et al. (2008, 2013) proposed a corpus-based discourse analysis framework after a large number of empirical studies, marking the maturity of this approach.

The news media influence the society at large through news coverage, manipulating and influencing people's thoughts and beliefs, such as their patterns of thinking about specific events, or their perceptions, attitudes and ideologies about important social events; indirectly, the aim is to control people's behavior, so that they act according to such emotional beliefs (e.g., voting, buying, marching and struggling, etc.) (Van Dijk, 2017). Van Dijk (2011) points out that one of the main strategies for ideological discursive control in discourse is the visualization of group relations in the ideological schema, how “I” and “the other” are depicted in discourse, and thus the model of “ideological square” is proposed. It is formulated in four ways: 1) emphasizing the strengths of “I”; 2) emphasizing the weaknesses of “the other”; 3) weakening the weaknesses of “I”; and 4) weakening the strengths of “the other”. In “ideological square”, “I” tend to glorify themselves and vilify “the other” (opponents, competitors, or dissenters).

Based on Fairclough's and Van Dijk's CDA theory, combined with corpus-based linguistic approach, this study aims to analyze the socio-cultural and ideological roots behind the different discourse characteristics of the public opinion war of Xinjiang cotton between China and western countries through a comparative analysis of the linguistic features of China and western countries. The news coverage of Xinjiang cotton by the mainstream newspapers in China

and western countries will be influenced by the economic and political environment of their respective countries, which affects how they report on “I” and “the other” in the opinion war, which in turn affects the public perception of “I” and “the other” in both sides, and even the normalization of economic and political relations between China and western countries.

3. Research Design

3.1. Data Collection

Western newspapers in this study were obtained from Google news report. “Xinjiang cotton” was used as the keyword to search the news reports limited exclusively from September, 2020 to May, 2023. Finally, 29 English-language news articles from several western mainstream newspapers including New York Times (12 articles), BBC (10 articles), the Guardian (5 articles), Financial Times (2 articles) were chosen to construct a self-built Xinjiang cotton subcorpus (XjCS) of western newspapers with 26,104 tokens. Likewise, 48 articles for XjCS of Chinese newspapers for this study were sourced from the websites of Chinese mainstream newspapers like Global Times (21 articles), China Daily (12 articles), Xinhuanet (8 articles), and CGTN (7 articles), with “Xinjiang cotton” being the search keyword. In order to reduce the size difference of the two subcorpora, XjCS of Chinese newspapers consisted of 48 English-language news articles of 27,303 tokens.

3.2. Research Methods

Corpus linguistic techniques can identify discourse strategies that are repeatedly used in news discourse to construct and perpetuate news value ideologies. This study uses a qualitative and quantitative approach with the help of the corpus analysis tool Wordsmith Tools 7 to explore how the Chinese and western newspapers justify their respective behaviors through statistical analysis of key words and key clusters, and then explore how the newspapers of China and western countries describe the two sides in Xinjiang Cotton Event by analyzing the words that go together with China and US to reveal the socio-cultural and ideological differences reflected behind them. Finally, we explore the ideological roots of the differences between China and western countries.

First, the BNC (English National Corpus) was used as a reference corpus to generate a list of keywords and a list of key clusters for Xinjiang cotton news in Chinese and western newspapers respectively. The keywords are the words that appear more frequently when comparing the text and the word list. Identifying words with high, low and statistically significant frequencies helps to identify and explore linguistic ideologies in the corpus. Key clusters are wordlists of cluster of words, rather than single words. Keywords and key clusters with high frequency of occurrence are important components of the messages that news media want to disseminate to the public, and they can reflect the focus and ideological characteristics behind the respective concerns of the Chinese and

western news media. Second, we used Wordsmith Tools 7 software to search for the concordance of “China is, China, China’s” and “US, U.S., western”, and then counted the subsequent epithets. We also analyzed how the media in both sides portrayed “the other” in the context of the “ideological square” model. Finally, the ideological roots behind the different discursive strategies of Chinese and western newspapers are explored.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Comparative Analysis of Keywords

Public opinion is the battlefield. In the course of Xinjiang Cotton Event between China and western countries, the newspapers of both sides use various discourse strategies in their news reports to propagate public opinion and to gain public support. How do the newspapers in China and western countries argue for the justification of their own initiatives in Xinjiang Cotton Event respectively? By examining the “keywords” of Xinjiang cotton news in both sides, we can understand what many Xinjiang cotton stories in both sides emphasize to the public and what kind of perceptions and attitudes they want to shape.

A “keyword” is a word that has a significantly higher frequency compared to a certain standard, and the degree of the higher frequency is the “keyness” of the keyword. According to this definition, the target corpus is compared with a reference corpus, and the words with high frequency in the target corpus are the keywords of the target corpus, and the measurement of keyword’s keyness is also based on the statistics of the reference corpus. Extracting keywords from a large amount of information can help us unravel the complicated surface to dig out the essence of the problem effectively. By using certain words repeatedly and frequently, the news media often allows these words to influence and shape the audience’s perception of an issue. In this paper, we analyze the meaning of keywords to explore the political and ideological meaning behind the Xinjiang cotton discourse in Chinese and western newspapers.

According to [Scott \(1997\)](#), keyword lists tend to turn up three categories of words: proper nouns, “aboutness” keywords, and grammatical words. In other words, a keyword analysis and an examination of the relationships between the keywords can be used to characterize the corpora’s overall aboutness. Concordance lines will be used in this article to facilitate the investigation of the keywords. Our goal in employing keyword analysis is to evaluate the aboutness of XjCS of western and Chinese newspapers.

By adopting WordSmith Tools 7, 332 keywords from XjCS of western newspapers and 391 keywords from XjCS of Chinese newspapers were extracted by comparing these two self-built subcorpora with the British National Corpus (BNC) in turn. The keywords lists were compared in order to uncover the main issues discussed in the western press and China’s press regarding Xinjiang cotton from September, 2020 to May, 2023. This required more in-depth qualitative analyses of individual keywords via providing concordance lines in order to determine why they occur in the XjCS of western and Chinese newspapers respec-

tively. The focus of keywords analysis in this study will be on the proper nouns and lexical words, which are more significant. 25 most frequent keywords occurred in these two subcorpora are listed in **Table 1**.

As shown in **Table 1**, the first column (N) simply number the keywords in the order that they are presented (they are ordered here in terms of keyword strength). The second and fifth columns list each keyword in XjCS of western and Chinese newspapers. The third and sixth columns (Freq.) give the frequencies of each keyword as it occurred in the XjCS of western and Chinese

Table 1. Keywords list of two XjCSs when $P < 0.000001$.

N	XjCS of western newspapers			XjCS of Chinese newspapers			P
	word	Freq.	Keyness	word	Freq.	Keyness	
1	Xinjiang	408	6310.81	Xinjiang	417	6,420.67	0.000000
2	cotton	298	2938.86	cotton	486	5,204.60	0.000000
3	labor	168	2223.49	China's	126	2,012.17	0.000000
4	Chinese	166	12.74.09	labor	124	1,571.10	0.000000
5	China	174	1246.73	China	210	1,568.35	0.000000
6	forced	186	1241.69	percent	112	1,202.34	0.000000
7	brands	119	1214.88	Uygur	55	828.80	0.000000
8	Uyghur	52	823.94	Xinjiang's	51	803.56	0.000000
9	Esquel	39	613.38	Chinese	116	794.42	0.000000
10	apparel	48	605.10	global	98	665.62	0.000000
11	Uyghurs	38	597.18	forced	108	590.27	0.000000
12	China's	33	516.20	textile	65	582.50	0.000000
13	region	101	513.44	region	111	577.52	0.000000
14	Nike	41	505.33	US	193	474.66	0.000000
15	chains	61	480.16	brands	52	434.80	0.000000
16	rights	99	436.99	Mu	35	361.50	0.000000
17	supply	22	417.35	autonomous	47	341.49	0.000000
18	companies	104	407.73	Yuan	38	308.99	0.000000
19	ban	54	313.43	mechanization	26	286.13	0.000000
20	suppliers	46	299.70	planting	40	268.07	0.000000
21	Adidas	28	286.52	products	68	264.94	0.000000
22	global	50	269.11	industry	83	261.05	0.000000
23	products	64	245.91	prefecture	21	240.76	0.000000
24	said	202	235.98	apparel	22	237.88	0.000000
25	Uighurs	17	230.65	domestic	54	226.85	0.000000

newspapers. The fourth and seventh columns assign a keyness value to each word; the higher the score, the stronger the keyness of that word, whereas the final column gives the P value of each word in these two subcorpora. Nearly every number in this column is 0.000000 since P is set so low here. In light of this, the keyness value provides a more gradable representation of the strength of each word in the table. Keywords in two subcorpora can be categorized into following three groups as shown in **Table 2**.

Obviously, **Table 2** shows that the first group is the common keywords that shared in XjCS of western and Chinese newspapers: *Xinjiang, cotton, labor, Chinese, China, forced, brands, Uyghur (Uyгур), apparel, China's, global, products* and *region*. These common keywords indicate that both subcorpora focus their attention on forced labor of Uyghur in Xinjiang cotton industry of China in both western and Chinese newspapers. There is no doubt that on behalf of China and US, the western and Chinese media are disputing with each other on whether or not Uyghurs are used as forced labor in the process of cotton plantation and picking in Xinjiang region.

While a keyword, *brands*, appears in both corpora with a significant difference in frequency-119 times in western newspapers and 52 times in Chinese newspapers. Further investigation reveals that western newspapers devote a large portion of the coverage to how and why some well-known international apparel brands, like H & M, Nike, and Adidas, took a stance to support the exclusion of cotton produced in northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region amid widespread concerns about the use of forced labor in Xinjiang, and how they struggled to ensure their supply chains are free of raw material from Xinjiang or how they have been forced to perform to ensure they are not complicit with human rights abuses in Xinjiang while maintaining a commercial presence in China, embellishing the report with stories about how these international brands and companies made themselves a target of widespread condemnation by Chinese consumers, influencers, celebrities and governments, and how Chinese governments led the boycott campaign against these brands and how other government-backed groups and state news outlets fanned the flames. For this reason, such keywords as *Nike, chains, rights, supply, companies, ban, suppliers, Adidas, Esquel, Uyghurs, said*, and *Uighurs* were found in the XjCS of western newspapers.

Table 2. Classification of keywords in XjCS of western and Chinese newspapers.

Newsletters	Keywords
both western and Chinese newspapers	Xinjiang, cotton, labor, Chinese, China, forced, brands, Uyghur (Uyгур), apparel, China's, global, products, region
western newspapers	Nike, chains, rights, supply, companies, ban, suppliers, Adidas, Esquel, Uyghurs, said, Uighurs
Chinese newspapers	percent, Xinjiang's, textile, US, Mu, autonomous, Yuan, mechanization, planting, industry, prefecture, domestic

From the keywords in Chinese newspapers, *percent*, *Xinjiang's*, *textile*, *US*, *Mu*, *autonomous*, *Yuan*, *mechanization*, *planting*, *industry*, *prefecture*, and *domestic*, it makes clear that Chinese newspapers provide the public with abundant reports on large-scale mechanization of cotton production and continuous mechanization services from spring sowing to harvest in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, personal experiences of cotton growers and workers from the textile and garment industry in the Region, and cotton-related enterprises in the region expressing confidence in the development of local cotton textile industry as they have recorded improving businesses, because *Mu*, units for measuring an area of land, are used to calculate cotton yield per *Mu*, and combined with *Yuan* to measure the earning and income of farmers per *Mu*; *percent* is used to inform the degree of mechanization in Xinjiang, the rate of Xinjiang textile company's revenue increase and farmers' income increase, share of Xinjiang cotton output in the world, etc. Therefore, based on facts, reasons and evidence, Chinese newspapers have successfully debunked and dispelled allegations of "forced labor" in the region and denounce groundless sanctions imposed by some western countries led by US, presenting a thriving Xinjiang with great political, economic and social achievements in these decades to the public, disclosing the fact that although western brands claim to have no political affiliation, in reality they have been used as a political tool by the US and western countries to intimidate them into leaving Xinjiang and attempt to forcibly exclude Xinjiang from the global supply chain.

4.2. Comparative Analysis of Key Clusters

In news reports, in order to emphasize their own position, some words in the news will appear frequently, causing some fixed impression retention to the audience. Intentional voice use and selective content presentation can guide the audience to produce different views. Using Wordsmith Tools 7, it is possible to derive wordlists of clusters of words, rather than single words. Word clusters refer to multiple word units that occur continuously in a text. By looking at word clusters, researchers can identify both words that frequently co-occur with nodal words and clusters of words that recur in the text, which helps researchers better reveal the attitudes and ideologies behind the words. 26 most frequent key clusters occurred in these two subcorpora are listed in **Table 3**.

Table 3 shows that the top concerns for western newspapers are forced labor, Xinjiang cotton, supply chains. The issue is crystal evident at this point. A number of anti-China organizations from the US and the West are launching a broad, all-encompassing "coercion campaign" in response to the alleged using Uyghur forced labor in Xinjiang cotton industry. Such key clusters as *rights violations*, *Uyghur forced*, *Uyghur labor*, *right abuses*, *rights groups*, *Muslim minorities*, and *minority groups* occurring so frequently in western media, reveal that some western countries use their habitual "human rights", "religion" and other words to attempt to cause a series of chain reactions with the Xinjiang

Table 3. Key clusters list of two XjCSs.

N	XjCS of western newspapers		XjCS of Chinese newspapers	
	Key clusters	Freq.	Key clusters	Freq.
1	forced labor	135	Forced labor	95
2	Xinjiang cotton	72	Xinjiang cotton	81
3	supply chains	59	China's Xinjiang	45
4	United States	30	cotton field(s)	43
5	forced labour	27	autonomous region	40
6	Xinjiang region	25	supply chain(s)	39
7	Chinese government	21	Human rights	38
8	supply chain	20	China's region	38
9	rights violations	16	Uygur region	37
10	Uyghur forced	15	Uygur autonomous	37
11	Uyghur labor	15	Xinjiang Uygur	36
12	right abuses	14	Xinjiang's cotton	27
13	Apparel brands	13	China's autonomous	25
14	Chinese consumers	13	China's Uygur	25
15	Tommy Hilfiger	13	called forced	23
16	rights groups	13	percent year	22
17	Muslim minorities	12	cotton production	21
18	clothing brands	12	Northwest China's	21
19	UK government	11	anti-China	20
20	Trump administration	10	textile industry	20
21	labor prevention	10	cotton output	20
22	using forced	9	cotton industry	19
23	raw material	9	labor prevention	15
24	minority groups	9	million tons	15
25	cotton industry	9	Uygur forced	14
26	rights consortium	8	Chinese consumers	13

Cotton Event, transferring their own crisis and interfering with China's internal affairs. From the accounts of western newspapers, especially the frequent use of key clusters, like *United States*, *Xinjiang region*, *Chinese government*, *Chinese consumers*, *UK government*, and *Trump administration*, indicates that we can see Xinjiang cotton public opinion war as the political and economic game between China and the United States, especially between US and Chinese government. Through above discourse analysis combined with key clusters like *apparel*

brands, clothing brands, and raw material, the common points existing in the selected foreign newspapers can be summarized: mainly for the frustration of the brands in the Chinese market and the behavior of the Chinese government and the media. This shows the impact of the foreign media's attempts to attribute the lost popularity of some brands to the Chinese government and media propaganda behavior, highlighting the state control rather than the independent choice of Chinese consumers.

Facing the western newspapers' smear, in particular allegations of "forced labor" in Xinjiang region and groundless sanctions of western newspapers, Chinese newspapers uses above key clusters to effectively make following points, firstly using key clusters like *China's Xinjiang, China's autonomous, China's region, China's Uygur, and Northwest China's* to swear China's sovereignty over Xinjiang region, secondly using *Autonomous region, Uygur autonomous, and China's autonomous* to emphasize that Xinjiang is an autonomous region where Uyghurs are the master of the land, thirdly using *cotton fields, cotton production, textile industry, cotton output, cotton industry, and million tons* to provide the public with hard evidence of facts and statistics about the development and achievements of cotton industry in Xinjiang region which can convince the public of no use of so-called forced labor at all in Xinjiang cotton industry. Xinjiang isn't in the midst of a so-called "genocide", but a historically unprecedented socio-economic revolution for the purpose of sustainable development. Starting from the whole, Chinese newspapers use the latest official statistics to directly show the economic and social development and achievements of Xinjiang in recent years, in the hope that the audience can draw the same conclusion as their own. In their reports, they use factual evidence, films and data related to Xinjiang's development achievements in the last decade to strongly counter Western newspapers' unsubstantiated reports and groundless slanders, in particular US newspapers.

4.3. How to Describe Each Other of the Two Sides

From **Table 1** and **Table 2**, it can be found that *China* is a keyword both in XjCS of Chinese and western newspapers, while *US* is a keyword particular for XjCS of Chinese newspapers. Moreover, Xinjiang cotton public opinion war is the game between China and the United States, therefore the news coverage of Xinjiang cotton in the Chinese and western newspapers mainly revolves around US accusation of the forced labor in Xinjiang against China, and applies language strategies that are in line with their own interests to portray the other side of the accusation. How do the mainstream newspapers in China and western countries portray the other side of Xinjiang Cotton Event and how do they construct the image of the other side to influence the perception of the public? To find the answer to this question, we need to compare the newspapers' portrayal of "the other" and compare the language strategies used by both sides. Therefore, the following is an analysis of what words are used to describe "the other" and what linguistic strategies are used by the western and Chinese mainstream newspapers.

4.3.1. Collocation Analysis of “China is, China, China’s”

In this study, we take “China is, China, China’s” and “US, U.S., western” as nodes, and use the Concordance function of Wordsmith Tools 7 to extract the words appearing before and after the aforementioned nodes to analyze how the Chinese and western newspapers portray the two sides in Xinjiang Cotton Event. By observing the content on the left and right side of the node words, we can understand the attitude tendency shown by the semantic prosody of the discourse, and analyze the attitude of the two sides’ newspapers toward each other and the ideological roots behind. Firstly, we take “China is, China, China’s” as the node, select the Concordance function in Wordsmith Tools 7, and classify the contents appearing to the left and right of “China is, China, China’s” in western newspapers, shown as **Table 4**.

In western newspapers, the words “China is, China, China’s” occur 10 times, 172 times, and 30 times respectively, due to the space limit, the concordance lines of “China is, China, China’s” are extracted as shown in **Table 4**, it can be concluded from the above lines, the words and phrases highlighted in bold type in particular, that China is depicted as a leading producer of cotton, the source of nearly half of cotton fabric exported around the world, an important marketplace for a lot of internal brands, and an export colossus (lines 1 - 11), as being implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the implementation of China’s campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor and high-technology surveillance against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other members of Muslim minority groups (lines 12, 13, 25 - 32), as the causation of the loss of international apparel companies and the enemies behind the scene who launch Chinese customers’ boycott of international apparel brands (lines 14 - 20); as someone who stands in the way of foreigners to visit Xinjiang (lines 21 - 24).

To sum up, prior to exploiting their discourse power to speak with “unanimous voices” in Western and US public opinion, western newspapers initially made assertions about “forced labor” and “genocide” in Xinjiang. They created the “political correctness” surrounding the Xinjiang issue under the guise of “human rights”. By taking advantage of so-called “political correctness”, they were able to pressure international public figures who supported an unbiased and fair stance on the Xinjiang-related issue as well as multinational corporations that insisted on conducting regular business with Xinjiang, resulting in a “chilling effect” on the general public and the business community. The essence of the Xinjiang cotton public opinion war is an economic and political war, and a political and economic game between China and the United States.

4.3.2. Collocation Analysis of “US, U.S., Western”

Secondly, we take “US, U.S., western” as the node, select the Concordance function in Wordsmith Tools 7, and classify the contents appearing to the left and right of “US, U.S., western” in Chinese newspapers, shown in **Table 5**.

In Chinese newspapers, the words “US, U.S., western” occur 184 times, 26 times and 52 times respectively. By analyzing the concordance lines in **Table 5**,

Table 4. The role of China's identity in western newspapers.

1	an international trade association in Washington. China is	the source of nearly half of all cotton fabric exported
2	the statement, which did not mention Xinjiang. "China is	a very important market to us." Those
3	top source of cotton for international companies. China is	currently the world's leading producer of cotton,
4	and Chinese nationalist sentiment. For Intel, China is	both a major marketplace and a center
5	more than \$20 billion in retail sales. China is	also the world's largest tomato producer , with
6	about 85 percent of cotton grown in China is	produced in Xinjiang, amounting to 22 percent
7	from Bain & Company released last December, China is	expected to be the world's largest luxury market
8	percent of China's cotton comes from Xinjiang. China	provides one-quarter of the world's cotton," said
9	intrusions of unions. The brands have turned China	into an export colossus . They have also
10	not eliminate their exposure to Xinjiang cotton. China	exports unprocessed cotton to 14 countries ,
11	decades of the clothing Industry's expansion in China.	"That era is drawing to a close because of
12	commonly occur in recognized genocides . Rather, China	has relied on a combination of high-tech
13	sweeping crackdown on Xinjiang's minorities. China	denies the allegations and argues its policies
14	Wei Xiaopo, an analyst at Citigroup. The China	Consumers' Association, a government watchdog
15	speaking out might imperil their other China	operations and provoke officials to delay shipments
16	Adidas has shaken up the top management at its China	business after the sportswear giant lost market share to
17	a period before the recent outcry in China,	reflected diminished profit for a retailer still
18	it could lead to retaliatory actions from China,	as well as lower trade volumes. Which
19	backlash against international apparel brands in China	has coincided with a diplomatic row between
20	became public, and made it easier for China	to deflect criticism. "This includes, in particular,
21	supply chains as their access in China	was restricted by the communist government of Xi Jinping.
22	high commissioner for human rights, is finally in China	and travelling to Xinjiang nearly four years after
23	400 pages of leaked government documents from China	further revealed the extent of the crackdown in 2019.
24	some good can come from Bachelet's trip to China,	even if prospects are limited .
25	ginneries and spinners in other countries. China	has also defended its harsh policies in
26	said, according to the Reuters news agency. China's	repression of the Uyghur people is in
27	Boss had not sourced its cotton from China's	Xinjiang region, where forced labor is rampant.
28	flag. Forced labor is so pervasive in China's	far west region of Xinjiang- and government
29	violations and abuses in the implementation of China's	campaign of repression , mass arbitrary detention ,
30	and into military-style work training facilities. China's	treatment of the minority populations is including
31	its decision Monday is a protest against China's	" ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in
32	three children per household. "The nature of China's	atrocities against the Uyghurs, and specifically its

Table 5. The role of US's identity in Chinese newspapers.

1	Labor” and bans imports of them. This	US	accusation is pure fabrication and groundless slandering.
2	that both the report and the recent	U.S.	Customs order conform to similar, unsubstantiated variations
3	opinion on Xinjiang related affairs in the	US	and the West is highly distorted. Although
4	with which some politicians in the	US	and the United Kingdom have hyped up Xinjiang-related issues
5	those companies, he said. Lamenting the	U.S.	propaganda to portray Xinjiang as a subject of abysmal poverty
6	on disinformation. “The lies spread by	US	politicians to smear China will only damage
7	the West lack a factual basis. “The	US	strategy of curbing China with Xinjiang-related issues
8	strategy is an important part of the	US	containment of China and the Western discourse on Xinjiang
9	confessed that the best way for the	U.S.	Central Intelligence Agency to destabilize China would
10	of the country, analysts said. However, the	US	attempts to suffocate the economy of the Xinjiang region
11	in early April. Wang said that the	US	crackdown , not only wantonly wielded against China’s
12	to prevent their products from entering the	US,	which is racial discrimination against Uyghurs , analysts
13	is facing a nefarious crackdown from the	US	government and its allies, and at the
14	economic coercion. Analysts said that since the	US	takes the enforcement of the malicious law
15	that it was time to attempt specific	U.S.	transgressions into China’s matters of strict sovereign
16	indisputable evidence of how misleading the	U.S.	rhetoric against the region is. “China is
17	US. Wang said that for some time,	US	politicians, in collusion with some anti-China organizations
18	become an agent and accomplice of the	US	and its allies. The eagerness with which
19	has set a bad example of the	US	hijacking world bodies to advance its own
20	to true nature of hegemony The latest	US	bill on sanctions against China’s Xinjiang Uyghur
21	abound in recent years in terms of	US	abuse of “ long-arm jurisdiction ” as a hegemonic
22	and has affected hundreds of thousands of	US	importers, has been strongly condemned by China.
23	volumes of goods have piled up at	US	Customs and Border Protection depots pending documents
24	has dealt a strong blow to the	US	supply chains and the world economy. Eugene
25	as a “category 10 hurricane ” hitting the	US	apparel industry, because Chinese cotton and apparel
26	disrupts the global supply chains. True, the	US	ban will create new obstacles for Chinese
27	fact is, forced labor exists in the	US.	An article on the website of Denver
28	of a “modern serf system” in the	US,	and another half a million children are
29	of the Xinjiang region.” Questioning the	U.S.	track record of killing innocent people worldwide,
30	decipher. By banning Xinjiang cotton, some Western	forces are trying to strangle cotton businesses	
31	the Chinese people. “The American and Western	Politicians’ disinformation and smearing cannot hinder	
32	think tanks and dubious witness testimonies, Western	media and governments have smear ed and politicize	
33	as clear as the double-dealing of those Western	groups. Actually, Lawrence Wilkerson, the chief of	
34	bullying,” he said. He added that some Western	Brands’ blind decision to boycott Xinjiang cotton	
35	industry, but this approach is totally wrong. Western	companies should actually buy more of Xinjiang’s	

it can be summarized as follows: Firstly, US' and some western countries' accusation of using forced labor in Xinjiang cotton industry and sanctions against China lack a factual basis and is unsubstantiated, disinformation, pure fabrication and groundless slandering (lines 1 - 5). US is described as a country which colludes with western countries and companies to strangle cotton businesses (line 17, 18, 30), to smear, curb, and destabilize China, suffocate the economy of the Xinjiang region, contain China's development and attempt specific U.S. transgressions into China's matters of strict sovereign interest (lines 15, 31 - 32), to mislead the U.S. and the whole world rhetoric against China (line 16). U.S is also depicted as a country which suppresses foreign entities by abuse of "long-arm jurisdiction" as a hegemonic tool, interferes in other countries' internal affairs and subverts other countries' legitimate governments, even makes Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights an agent and accomplice of the U.S. and its allies, aiming to hijacking world bodies to advance its own agenda and protect its hegemony (lines 19 - 21), resulting in being strongly condemned by China, hitting the US apparel industry, disrupting the global supply chains, and dealing a strong blow to the US supply chains and the world economy (lines 22 - 26). Meanwhile, US itself is turning a deaf ear to the fact that forced labor exists in the US (lines 27 - 29), and what western groups did to China is double-dealing, blind decision and wrong (lines 33 - 35).

From the analysis of above words that go together with "US, U.S., western", it can be summarized that Chinese newspapers show a strong condemnation, present a strong concept of the enemy and the self, distinguish between each other, emphasize their positions, draw the red lines and allow no compromise, and use strong and fierce language to demonstrate that there is no room for negotiation nor compromise on the issue of Xinjiang.

4.4. The Ideological Roots of Chinese and Western Newspaper Discourse on Xinjiang Cotton

4.4.1. The Appearance of the Xinjiang Cotton Public Opinion War

On the surface, the fuse or the focus of the public opinion war is mainly centered on the two levels under the leadership of one organization. The group, BCI, suspended licenses to cotton farmers in Xinjiang in 2020 on allegations of alleged "human rights violations", and the erroneous decision affected the actions of its fellow members. The first of two levels is Swedish clothing brand H & M, which is the eye of the storm of public opinion, became the target of public criticism. In this public opinion war, our resistance to H & M is the biggest. On the basis of the public criticism of H & M, major domestic e-commerce companies removed their products and map App removed its location, the public opinion quickly spread from the new media field to the consumer field. The second level is the international footwear and apparel brands other than H & M that are involved with the BCI organization, which are among those affected by the BCI and H & M and have been subject to different degrees of denunciation and boycott.

4.4.2. The Backstage Manipulator behind the Xinjiang Cotton Public Opinion War

BCI, one of the centers of the controversy, declared on its website as a global nonprofit organization and the world's largest cotton sustainable development project, committed to "better benefit the environment for cotton growth and the future of the cotton industry." But is it really so simple? First, the BCI members must conform to the cotton professional standards set by the BCI. Data show that as of May 2020, the number of BCI members has reached 1,953, involving cotton and cotton yarn retailers, suppliers, manufacturers, growers' organizations, technology companies and related social organizations, basically monopolized the whole chain of cotton production.

Second, the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) is among the funding partners listed on the BCI's official website. USAID is a federal government agency responsible for US non-military assistance to the foreign countries. Under the banner of providing support to people in need of improving living standards, post-disaster reconstruction and getting rid of poverty, it essentially promotes US foreign policy and values around the world. According to media reports, the agency has been repeatedly accused of interfering in other countries' internal affairs. Under the framework of the US global strategic layout, it has aroused anti-government sentiment against some countries and regions which are non-US allies. The essence of the agency is a tool to safeguard the world hegemony of the United States. Accordingly, it can be basically inferred that the BCI in this Xinjiang Cotton Storm was a pawn only controlled by the United States.

4.4.3. Economic Dark War: Why Cotton?

Firstly, cotton is an important crop second only to grain, but also a material related to national strategy and livelihood, both as a living and industrial raw material with properties of dual production material. In the global context, China's and India's cotton production floating in the first and second position, the United States is generally in the third place, at the same time, China is also the world's largest consumer of cotton. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that Xinjiang has ranked first in the country for 26 consecutive years in terms of total cotton production, yields, planted area and commodity allocation. "Chinese cotton" and "Xinjiang cotton" in the global cotton production and consumption chain occupies a pivotal position, which seriously threatened the interests of the United States in the cotton industry chain.

Secondly, from the perspective of cotton as a financial product, cotton is a bulk commodity in the spot and futures market, and it is an important investment product. The international pricing power of cotton was earlier in the hands of the United States. Since more than 80% of the cotton in the United States is exported, it is crucial for the United States to facilitate cotton export and control the cotton industry chain. And China's cotton production, cotton consumption, cotton imports and cotton textile production are all one of the best in the world. Since 2000, China has taken a series of measures to win the cotton pricing pow-

er, and increasingly have a voice in the international cotton pricing power, which is something the United States is afraid to see.

4.4.4. Political Game: Why Xinjiang?

First of all, in the face of the two major events in the Hong Kong riots and the COVID-19 epidemic, the Chinese government has coordinated the overall situation, achieved a decisive victory in the handling of the above two events, and gradually calmed down the situation. This leaves the US side, which has arbitrarily intervened and deliberately smeared China, silent. The current public opinion related to Xinjiang is another public opinion topic that the United States has provoked and framed China after Hong Kong public opinion and COVID-19 public opinion have subsided.

Second, issues such as minorities and religious disputes have long been sensitive topics that the vast majority of the world cannot properly handle. In the United States, African minorities such as Latinos and Asian are long-term victims of racial discrimination. In China, Xinjiang was plagued by terrorism, religious extremism and ethnic separatist forces, many of which were controlled or directed by foreign black hands. However, after unremitting struggle, Xinjiang has now realized the social stability and harmony by basically eliminating the above three forces. The Western countries represented by the United States do not want to believe that China has properly resolved the minority and religious disputes that they have not been well handled for a long time. Therefore, they have deliberately slandered the status of human rights in Xinjiang, maliciously attacked the Chinese government's policy of governing Xinjiang, and violently interfered in China's internal affairs.

Therefore, the topic of Xinjiang cotton is clearly one subject for discussion carefully chosen by western countries, led by the United States. By reversing black and white in China and exaggerating, the U.S. tries to provoke domestic disputes, undermine China's stability and development, and achieve the purpose of maintaining the global political and economic hegemony.

5. Conclusion

Based on the corpus approach, using Wordsmith Tools' keywords and key clusters list function, we examined the focus of the newspapers in China and some western countries, and the results show that both China and western countries focused on forced labor of Uyghurs in Xinjiang cotton industry, with the difference that the keywords and key clusters in the western newspapers also include words that they initially used to make assertions about "forced labor" and "genocide" in Xinjiang. They created the "political correctness" surrounding the Xinjiang issue under the guise of "human rights", and words for the frustration of the brands in the Chinese market and the actions of the Chinese government and the newspapers' attempts to attribute the lost popularity of some brands to the Chinese government and media propaganda behavior, highlighting the state control in this case rather than the independent choice of Chinese consumers.

While the Chinese newspapers were mainly trying to debunk and dispel western newspapers' allegation on the one hand, unfold the authenticity of Xinjiang cotton industry's status quo and introduce the development and achievements of Xinjiang cotton industry from the perspective of mechanization, cotton production, and farmers' income on the other hand. Using the concordance function of Wordsmith Tools 7 software, this paper examined the collocations of "China is, China, China's" and "US, U.S., western" and found that the Chinese and western newspapers adopted different discourse strategies when describing the two sides. The western newspapers clearly demeaned "the other" and portrayed China as the "enemy" of the U.S., while the Chinese newspapers aimed to disclose the true nature of Xinjiang Cotton Event and unfold the real status quo of Xinjiang cotton industry, meanwhile presenting a strong condemnation and using strong and fierce language to express that there is no room for negotiation or compromise on the issue of Xinjiang. Due to the space constraints, adopting corpus-based CDA theoretical framework, this study has mainly taken a holistic view to analyze Xinjiang cotton news reports in Chinese and western newspapers under the approach of the discursive practice, power and ideology. The author plans to take a micro-narrative approach in future studies to focus on lexico-grammatical patterns of stance markers, nominalization, metaphor, intertextuality, transitivity, etc.

The Xinjiang Cotton Event is a representative war of public opinion. Western countries use the common attributes in their historical and cultural attribution to mobilize public opinion with words such as "forced labor" and "racial struggle". With non-governmental organizations as the perpetrators of their speech, through the information power and values and other soft power category to attack, it will have a real impact on China's politics and economy. Although the weight of Chinese culture in the world cultural pattern is increasing, compared with the United States, China still has shortcomings in the cultural industry, international communication capacity and cultural innovation, and its own potential of rich cultural resources has not been fully tapped.

Xinjiang is the starting point of China's Belt and Road initiative and an important part of China's territory. In this Xinjiang Cotton Event, western countries have used their power to create "standards" and "truth" to provoke China's interests. It should be vigilant that the western discourse has a "domestication" effect. The dilemma of China's external publicity is not that China has no ability to find out and inform the audience of the facts and truth, nor is the audience trapped in their own positions and emotions. The fundamental problem is that the West has long constructed issues for various international events, which subtly makes the recipients agree with their statements, thus causing inertia and obedience.

In order to shift from a manufacturing country to a manufacturing power, China attaches great importance to technology, meanwhile China also need to solve the problem of standard identification. In this Xinjiang Cotton Event, Good Cotton Development Association in Switzerland uses its non-quantitative

industry standards to determine Xinjiang Cotton does not conform to the industry norms, and the western countries behind it once again borrow the incident of “Xinjiang cotton” to spread to the outside of “forced labor” in Xinjiang, trying to use the discourse of “nation” and “human rights” with western value to interfere in China’s internal affairs. Therefore, from Xinjiang Cotton Event, we should clearly see the underlying issue of discourse power. We should take the initiative in international discourse, instead of being a “firefighter” when international public opinion is ignited in western countries, but rather build our discourse power in the international public opinion.

China has always assumed the responsibility of a major country in its own development, However, the actual lack of international discourse power makes China still in the passive situation of “the other” molding to some extent, leading to the gap between China’s international objective image and subjective impression. Therefore, it is necessary to further establish China’s discourse power in the international public opinion field, break the discourse order system established by the West, and ensure the balance of the international public opinion field. Only by ensuring that the truth and facts are heard and respected can we cope with the potential opportunities and challenges arising in our future development with a real image of a great country.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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