
IS CHINA A THREAT TO INDONESIA: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MAJOR INDONESIAN NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE ON THE CHINA ISSUES

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Abstract

This study aims to find out how China's threat narratives are represented in the portrayal of Chinese issues in major Indonesian newspapers. The study found that some elements or themes of the Chinese threat theory are represented in four Indonesian major newspapers namely Republika, Jawa Pos, Jakarta Pos and Kompas. Mainland Chinese workers, infrastructure projects under China, and transnational drug trafficking appeared as the frequent themes of the China threat in these newspapers. However, the four newspapers were divided and took different public attitudes about the Chinese threat narrative. On the one hand, Republika and Jawa Pos tend to take the public side and are more inclined towards echoing Chinese threat narrative. On the other hand, the Jakarta Post and Kompas seem to take a government stance and neutralize the China issues from the threat narrative.

Keywords: *China Threat, Newspapers, Discourse Analysis Indonesia*

A. INTRODUCTION

China is of immense important to Indonesian foreign policy. Economically, China is the biggest trading partner to Indonesia. Data from Indonesian Central Board of Statistics (BPS, 2013) show development of Indonesia's exports to China from 2001 up to 2012 an increase from US \$ 2200.67 million to US \$ 21659.50 million. Even starting in 2008 the value of Indonesian exports to China above two digits is US \$ 11636.50 million. Similarly, the value of imports Indonesia from China has the same pattern with export value that is an increase from US \$ 1842.68 million in 2001 to US \$ 29387.10 million in 2012. This is indicating the importance of China's role as a trading partner in trade relations and in the establishment an Asian free market. But these trade developments also bring some negative ramifications on domestic economic situation in Indonesia. The inflows of cheap China's products hit the vulnerable small and medium local enterprises (SMEs). While the continuing influx of

migrant workers from China to Indonesia also has raised strong reservation from many quarters especially labor unions in Indonesia. So, in sum the rise of China is economically also perceived as a threat to ASEAN members in general and Indonesia in particular (Booth, 2006; Ravenhill, 2006).

Politically, the rise of China as global power in general and regional hegemon in particular draws a lot of attention from Indonesian policy makers and public as well. The south China sea, for instance, becomes a test for Indonesian diplomatic capability to genuinely deal with China's assertiveness on the issue (Acharya, 2003; Gindarshah, 2015). The growing military expenditure of China also gives an alarming to Indonesian policy makers on the potential China's threat to the regional stability (Bitzinger, 2007; Paryanto). The aforementioned issues and many others related to China have become one of the important coverages of major Indonesian newspaper for the last decade. China threat is perhaps most common theme of those media coverages.

As the fourth pillar of democracy media plays significant role in shaping public opinion and in turn, influencing policy making process. Indonesian newspaper plays a role as an intermediary between public aspiration and government response (Badara, 2012). In the China issue, major Indonesian newspapers serve as input mechanism for the government in grasping public resentment or reservation in one hand. On the other hand, major Indonesian newspapers also serve as output mechanism for government to shape or influence the public opinion. Furthermore, Indonesia newspapers also become a kind of 'battle field' for rivalry interests among ruling groups in the country with regards to China issues. In other words, major Indonesian newspapers are also divided into the so called binary opposition with regard to China issues (Ghafur, 2016). As Gramsci (1971) pointed out that media are among the key institutions of persuasion used by ruling or elite groups in modern society. Based on that, this study attempts to explore or elucidate theme, argumentation, and social context behind the coverages of some major Indonesian newspapers on the China issues. In so doing, the study employs the

China threat theory as a research framework and the discourse analysis model from Van Dijk as an analytical method or tool.

This study is set to answer one important question that is how is the China threat narrative being represented in the portrayal of China issues in the major Indonesian newspapers? Put it differently, whether the portrayal of the China issues in the major Indonesian newspapers reflected elements of the China threat theory?

B. CHINA THREAT THEORY: A CRITICAL REVIEW

1. Origin

The extraordinary economic development of China in the late of twentieth century and its inevitable rise to the global power status has caused diverse responses from academic circles, policy makers and public as well. One of the important subsequent themes of debate that emerged is the idea of "China Threat". The very basic question behind this idea is the nature of China's rise as whether China can rise peacefully or not. The question implies two interrelated notions. The first is related to China's leadership capability to assume global power status, and the second, most importantly is about China's intention behind its global power projection. Based on the premise that while China has relative gained global power capability, yet its real intention is dubious, the proponents of China Threat theory argue that China cannot rise peacefully. It means that China's economic rise and military prominence poses a dire threat to its regional neighbors and the world as well. According to Paulo Ribeiro (2015), China threat theory is hypothetically construction or diffusion of fear of China's economic and military rise which is based on complex images and factors. The theory basically proposes that China's economic growth will lead to an economic threat as well as power growth that will lead to a military threat to its neighboring Asian countries and the United States (Wu, 2006). The theory generally referred to the interpretation of China's

economic and military emergence as a threat to the national security interests of the United States and Asian-Pacific security (Broomfield, 2003).

The China Threat theory originated in the early 1990s in the United States and Japan and re-emerged, perhaps reproduced, again and became a worldwide debate in 2005 (Haque, 2013). The theory which argues that China cannot rise peacefully originally can be traced back to the neo-realist camp of IR school of thought. Many realists such as John Mearsheimer (2001) argue that since China may not rise peacefully, it is highly possibly China's rise poses/poises a direct challenge and even threat to the United States (US) in particular and the rest of the world in general. Their arguments are based on the power structure transformation analysis which simply says that when any state becomes wealthier and more powerful, it will inevitably seek greater regional and then world-wide political influence and thus transforms the power structure of the world. In long run this situation, will pose a danger to the regional and global security. Whilst, politically the China threat narrative may also be traced back to the writings and publications of the right or conservative political wing in US. It initially emerged in the early 2000s as there was a growing concern about China in US and also as critiques to some policies of the Clinton administration which were considered as pro-China and giving China more economic and technological advantages (Broomfield, 2003).

2. Themes

The proponents of the China threat theory come up with many different themes or forms. Emma Broomfield (2003) elaboratively categorised them into three themes or forms namely ideological, economic and military threat. The first theme is China as the Ideological threat to the United States and the world. There are many arguments behind such as follows. *First*, with the demise of the Soviet Union, China is seen as the new ideological leader of the communism and thus, by nature of the East-West rivalry, an ideological competitor of the United States. *Second*, China's rise is also seen as projector of the revisionist posture and agenda to the international system and values. *Third*, the concerns

from the Southeast Asian countries about the large number of the Chinese ethnic (Gertz, 2000). *Fourth*, the new Chinese nationalism which is considered dangerous because it is both populist and military-led. It is also considered dangerous because the resurgence of Chinese nationalism was based on anti-American nature (Miles, 2001). *Fifth*, the basic nature of communism threatens America and its means of existence (Timperlake and Trimplett, 1999). *Lastly*, the proponents of China threat theory argue that it is a threat to The US and the world because communist China violates the human rights and thus attacks the principle of universal values.

The second theme of the China threat is the economic threat. China's extraordinary economic growth for the past three decades made many quarters nervous about its implications on the global economy and the US economy in particular. There are some reasons behind this idea such as follows. *First*, concerns about a large number of Chinese diaspora or the overseas Chinese network that will give China significant long-term edge in the competition (Roy, 1996). *Second*, what makes the United States worried about the growing China's economy is the continuing US trade deficit with China (Bernstein and Munro, 1997). *Third*, the China's economic development also poses an environmental threat to the world (Kristof, 1995). *Fourth*, Bernstein and Munro also argue that China uses its economic strength as a diplomatic tool to pursue its interests against the US. *Fifth*, China's economic growth is considered as a threat because it allows China to become more assertive in the region and in its interaction with the US (Roy, 1996). *Sixth*, China's economic strategy is directed towards obtaining high and dual-use technology. This is also feared that its economic strength is oriented to finance PLA modernisation.

The third theme of the China threat theory is the military threat. Some reasons behind this perception of China threat are such as the China's ambitious program of PLA modernization, its proliferation of weapon of mass destruction and arms sales to rogue states (Gertz, 2000), and its increasingly assertive posture and seeks to impose regional hegemony. China assertive

attitude toward the South China Sea and the disputed island of Senkaku/Diaoyu is the case in point.

3. Appraisal

The vast volumes of the China threat theory are not without critics. It in fact invites many critics who have been questioning the validity and reliability of the argument. Those critiques might be categorised into following themes. *First*, The power-structure analysis of the China threat theory still poses some limitations when scrutinized against the changing international system caused by the globalization trend (Jiang, 2002; Broomfield, 2003). They argue that China's economic engagement with the world and its involvement in regional and international security agenda will help China to adopt more responsible posture and position. *Second*, the critics also argue that the proponents of the China threat theory are mistakenly equate China's possession of worldwide scale economic resources with its intention to threaten others. According to them, this line of argument was based on exaggeration and misidentification of the reality, and the continuation of this rhetoric will only deepen mistrust between China and the global community. *Third*, since China gains more benefits for its internal development as well as international position within the existing international order, the argument of China as a revisionist power has no solid basis on the reality (Haque, 2013). *Fourth*, from internal China academic and government circles' perspectives, China threat theory is a cultural prejudice and part of the United States' containment strategy against China (Ribeiro, 2015). AS Chengqiu Wu (2006) also claims that the China threat theory exists in people's minds as a master narrative, which is similar to an "ideal type", and therefore it does not necessarily accord to the reality.

Lastly, perhaps the strongest counter-argument to the China threat theory is the "China peaceful rise" theory which was formally coined by Hu Jintao in a meeting with Obama in 2005 and since then bombarded by China's government (Wang, 2009). Wang argues that the main reason behind the China threat narrative is the so called problem of "superiority complex" among the

existing global powers such as the US, Europe and Japan. It is due to their uneasy responses and adjustment to the fact of a new rising global power, China. The US is also uneasy about the shift to a more multipolar world, in terms of influence and power (Westad, 2018). What China needs to do accordingly is to convince global communities especially the US as status quo super power that its rise will pursue a peaceful path. But, the problem of the peaceful rise theory is that it by and large projects the "Chinese exceptionalism" narrative. Many studies point out that this Chinese self-perception as a peaceful nation in fact has significant correlation with inclusiveness and aggressive tendency. Alastair Johnston (2018), for instance, found that putting more emphases on the Chinese exceptionalism argument will likely deepen the perception gap between the Chinese and the people outside. Therefore, the China peaceful rise theory to some extent is less effective and even counter-productive to the China's foreign policy interests.

Is the China threat theory really a by-product of realist writers and the right wing propaganda? If we look at the recent development and perception trends at the societal level, we might find that to some extent the threat theory also has some empirical bases. Some surveys conducted in the United States indicate American public has increasingly perceived China as a threat (Richardson, 2010). According to a 2005 poll, 54 percent of respondents believed that China as a superpower would represent 'a threat to world peace' (Johnson in Richardson, 2010). Apart from public perception, there is also growing concerns from government officers and policy makers about China's notorious intention and its increasing assertiveness. President Trump's rhetoric of punishing China's violation on the intellectual property rights represents such concerns. There is also increasing suspicions among Southeast Asian leaders that China wants to dominate and control the region, while forcing solutions to regional issues through economic influence and military power (Westad, 2018). Now strong nationalism and anti-China sentiment as its important element are rampant in many countries in the region.

4. Is China A Threat To Indonesia?

The increasing assertiveness of China's behavior in the region has ignited the anti-china sentiment of public and the leaders alike, no least those in Indonesia who underwent the tragic ethnic conflicts in the past, especially related to Chinese ethnic in Indonesian economic, political and social development. Anthony Smith (2003) has excellently summarized China's important role in Indonesian long history, right from its independence to the current social, economic and political development. If we look back at the history of Indonesia, we could find that the Indonesian perception of China threat has been deeply rooted in three-fold. *First*, the perception of china threat is ideological in nature. The anti-China sentiment in Indonesia dated back to the era of Soekarno regime who was seen a pro- communist (China) and facilitated the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to gained a dominant position in the hitherto political landscape. The 1965 allegedly PKI-led Coup and its subsequent human tragedy became the peak point of anti-China sentiment in Indonesia. This traumatic memories of communism led the conclusion of ideological debate that communist is simply incompatible to the national values of Indonesia which are enshrined in the national Five Principles of Indonesia (Pancasila). Following the Soekarno's fall from the presidency, the new administration of Soeharto imposed the permanent ban on any kind of communist activities and organizations through the issuance of a decree from the People's Consultative Assembly (TAP MPR No. 25 Tahun 1966). Resultantly, throughout the new order regime under Soeharto until the late 1990s China had been perceived as a ideological threat to Indonesia.

Second, the historical root of Indonesian perception of China threat is economic. The anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia is partly due to the economic dominance of small number of the Indonesian Chinese who control a larger portion of economic activities and resources of the country. The ethnic Chinese who only account for 5% of the population, but control 75% of the national wealth (Broomfield, 2003). Most often this favorable economic position

of the Chinese ethnic resulted from the unholy collusion between them and the political elite. This economic disparity caused the ethnic resentment and consequently conflict from the indigenous Indonesian community. With the economic rise of China, recently there has been fears of the economic potential of "Great China" in which the wealthy overseas communities have been at the center of a dramatic expansion of economic ties to China (Bernstein and Munro, 1997). Similar to that idea, Smith (2013) argues that fear of the Chinese market could become fused to the indigenous Indonesian community's (imagined) fear of the economic dominance of Indonesian Chinese. He also argues the other perceived economic threat of China to Indonesia is that the structure of trade with China could be the death knell for an array of Indonesian firms.

Third, the historical root of Indonesian perception of China threat is political in nature. The aforementioned economic threat led to the fear of China's possible involvement in Indonesia domestic affairs on behalf of domestic ethnic Chinese. Since Soeharto regime ethnic Chinese or anyone who is allegedly related to communist party are formally deprived of political rights. Backed by the Military, especially Army who has been naturally a fierce rival to the PKI, the government makes many efforts to prevent the communist to stage a comeback to the Indonesia political life. Since 1980s, there has been a debate between the military and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DOFA). The Military, which considered China as a threat, urged Soeharto not to restore the relationship, while DOFA argued otherwise. DOFA won the debate, but Indonesia's military establishment is still uneasy and nervous with an emerging China (Smith, 2013).

At the end of 1990s things began changing in Indonesia. In the aftermath of 1998 *reformasi* (revolution), Indonesia began to reshape its perception and position towards China. Confronted with economic crisis and the westerns (the US) pressure on its human right violation issues, Indonesia found China as a desirable alternative (Yee and Storey, 2002; Wahyudi, 2007). It was initiated when president Gus Dur launched the so called policy of seeking active re-

engagement with China (Sukma, 2003). In the era of SBY administration from 2004 until 2014, it marked the new phase in the Sino-Indonesia relations. China has become an opportunity as well as a challenge, if not a threat, to Indonesia (Yudhoyono, 2005). China become the top trading partner of Indonesia surpassing Japan in 2010 (BPS, 2010). But at the same time, the growing China's assertiveness in many regional issues poses a challenge, even a threat, to Indonesia which is considered as natural leader in the Southeast Asian region (Gindarshah, 2015).

Since the current administration under Jokowi pursues massive infrastructure cooperation and investment with China, the debate about the China threat has been on the open again specifically for the last two years. The anti-China sentiment and concerns about the China threat has been circulating widely in the Indonesian social media. The most controversial one is concerning Mainland Chinese workers in Indonesia. There has been common perception that the inflows of Chinese workers to Indonesia represent a multi-dimensional threat to Indonesian, especially to the local workers (Leo, 2017). Some important think tanks within Indonesia and without has been conducting nationwide surveys to get more valid idea about the China threat issue in Indonesia. In 2017, there was the Indonesia National Survey conducted by Herlijan from the ISEAS under the title of Public Perceptions of China in Indonesia. According to Herlijan (2017), the survey found some important and interesting findings as follows. *First*, in general the Indonesian perception of China have remained largely consistent since the end of the New Order Period twenty years ago. *Second*, on the impact of Indonesian-China economic ties, Indonesians generally think that having close economic ties with China will benefit their country. *Third*, there was skepticism about the impact of the rise of China on Indonesia. *Fourth*, Unlike the negative views circulating on Indonesian social media, there are degrees of acceptance of Chinese migrant workers and of Chinese investment in Indonesia. *Fifth*, on the issue of disputed South China Sea, most respondents view Indonesia should mediate between China and SEA

countries. But more interestingly is respondents who are aware of the recent incidents involving Chinese and Indonesian vessels off the coast of the Natuna Islands regard it as a national security issue. So, in this matter, most respondents view China as a threat to national strategic and security interest of Indonesia.

To sum up, we could safely argue that some important premises or notions in relation to the China threat narrative in Indonesia. *First*, the perception of China threat has been deeply rooted in the mind of the Indonesian and it dated back to the traumatic memories of the communist tragedy and anti-Chinese riot or conflict in the history of modern Indonesia. *Second*, the old China threat perception has been naturally ideological, political and economic as well. *Third*, for the last five years, since the worldwide discussion on a rising China and the growing China's assertive behavior the Southeast Asia region, the public attention and concerns about the fear of China threat has been on the open again in the Indonesian discussion of academic, elite circles and the public as well. Some themes, forms, variants and types of the China threat narrative have been circulating widely in the Indonesian social media that in turn causing worry and concern from the public. *Fourth*, based on that nationwide public concerns and worriness the major national newspapers take them up into their coverages and hence facilitated channelling the public concerns to the Indonesian elite, especially policy makers and the government officers. The national media also facilitated the government to respond to the public concerns through issuing statements, clarification and information about government stance and policy on the issues.

The widely circulated important themes of the China threat narrative in Indonesia might be summarized as follows. *First*, in general there are public concerns and fears about the notorious China geo-strategic designs and agenda in Indonesia (Qomara, 2015; Kusumasomantri, 2015; Apriwan et al, 2016; Planifolia, 2017). The people worry about China's scenario to target and dominate Indonesia. *Second*, there are public concerns about the trade and

proxy war between China and other global powers, and Indonesia's involvement in or even become a target of such war (Pujayanti, 2018). *Third*, there are public concerns about the flooding of China's cheap products to Indonesian markets that which are widely seen as a direct threat to the local products and compativitiveness of the local Small and Medium Entreprises (SMEs) (Setiawan, 2015; Nuryanti, 2010; Bank Indonesia). *Fourth*, there are public concerns and especially from the Indonesian labor unions about the influx of Mainlander Chinese illegal workers to Indonesia amidst the high unemployment rate (Jazuli, 2018). This situation is seen a threat to the Indonesian local workers. *Fifth*, the issue of illegal Chinese workers is not only concerning the job opportunity, but more importantly there are also public worriness that China use those illegal workers as covert intelligent espionages that which are seen a dire threat to the Indonesia national security. *Sixth*, there are public concerns about the massive infrastructure projects and investment under China's companies which are considered unreliable and of less quality compared to the Japan (Ragimun, 2013; Badaruddin, 2017). Afterall, these newly finished and ongoing projects are suffering from damages and incidents that caused major casualties. *Seventh*, there are public fears about the inflows of million of tons of illegal drug and narcotics from China to Indonesia (Saputra, 2015; Iksan, 2016; Pamungkas, 2017). The poeple fear that Indonesia become a target market of the international trade networks of narcotics from China. *Eighth*, the free movement of commodities and poeple raise the public concerns about the human traficing issue from Indonesia to China or vice versa. The issue also mainly relates to the women victims and forced and child prostitution (Martiany, 2017).

C. METHODS

1. Research Method

In order to properly answer the research question, this study employs the discourse analysis as a method of investigation. According to Van Dijk

(1995), discourse analysis involves many fundamental notions such as meaning, interaction and cognition. While according to Schiffrin (1994) the discourse concerns with analysis of particular unit of language that is above the sentence. The similar idea was also proposed by Wodak (2001) who argues that discourse analysis is about the meaning of written language that is attached to the context. In sum, we could safely conclude that discourse analysis is a process of understanding text through its broader social context.

Whilst, according to Fairclough (1995), the discourse analysis mainly follow the model of a two-way interaction of encoding and decoding of media text. Encoding means the process through which producers input the meaning into the text. While decoding means the process through which readers take out the meaning from the text. He further explained that there are three dimensions of discourse analysis which in turn imply three simultaneous phases/processes of analysis: (1) Text as process of production, that requires description as textual analysis; (2) Discourse practice as process of interpretation, that requires interpretation as processing analysis; (3) Sociocultural practice that includes situational, institutional and societal process, this requires explanation as social analysis. Hence, the critical discourse analysis is essentially analysing these three dimensions of the discourse integrally and comprehensively and treating them as a single unit analysis which might not be separated from one another.

This study follows the discourse analysis from Van Dijk (2002) which is known as a sociocognitive approach. This approach proposes that discourse has three dimensions namely text, social cognition and social context. At the text level analysis, the study focuses on how the text structure and discourse strategies are used to assert a particular theme. And at the social cognition level, the study focuses on the process of producing a news or coverages that involves the author's individual cognition. While at social context level, it focuses on the discourse structure that develops in the society on a particular issue.

In practice, those three levels of analysis can be summarized into following schemes of analysis (Sobur, 2006):

Table 1
Levels of Analysis

| Structure | Method |
|--|--|
| Text: Text strategies to portray some events, actors or policies related to China issue | Critical linguistic focuses on the selection of naming and lexical choices |
| Social cognition: analyzing how is author's cognition in understanding specific events, actors or policies that he will write | Indepth interview |
| Social context: Analyzing the developing discourse in the society and the process of production and reproduction of events, actors and policies covered in the media | Literature review, historical tracing and interview |

The discourses are often related to mass media. It is due to the fact that media as the space or sphere in which various ideologies are presented. This means, on the one hand, media can be a means of spreading ruling ideologies, legitimacy tools, and control over public discourse. On the other hand, media can be also a proper channel for the public to insert influence to the elite. This study, therefore, is set to examine the ideological representation or stance of the elite concerning the China threat issue in the major Indonesian newspapers.

2. Data Collection

Since the study follows the qualitative approach, it deploys a purposive sampling mechanism in the whole data collection processes. Contrary to the random sampling technique in the quantitative approach, it practically implies that researcher selects the data sample or sources intentionally based on some criteria (Creswell, 2015). The data for this study is collected from the online version of four Indonesian newspapers namely the Jakarta Post, Republika, Kompas, and Jawa Pos. The reasons behind the purposive selection of these newspapers are many-fold such as follows. *First*, these newspapers represent the Indonesian elite through which their position on certain issues might be examined throughoutly. *Second*, in term of circulation size, they are among the largest media outlets in Indonesia, ranking top ten for long period of time.

Third, they are leading newspapers with regard to the coverage of international news, events and views, with far reaching segment of society as their readers. Especially with the Jakarta Post as the only full English newspaper in Indonesia, it represents the current trends and views in Indonesia to the rest of the world. It is simply a window to Indonesia news for foreign or non-Indonesian readers. Although, the other three are not English newspapers, their coverages of international news and issues are not less updated and competitive from the Jakarta Post. Even recently these three newspapers also incorporated the English version into their online coverages. *Fourth*, these major Indonesian newspapers serve an intermedia agenda-setting function for other news sources, in particular with regard to the coverage of international and national news and events. Each of these four newspapers has nation-wide outlets and local media branches which cover local trends and issues. These local media branches as an underbow of the major Indonesian newspapers also play significant role in local social, economic and political discourse. It is worth-mentioning here that Indonesia is a large country with huge population spreading over thirty-three provinces, meaning that local newspapers in Indonesia may be conceivably equal to those of national level in other countries. Because this case study of China threat issues in Indonesia is a broad topic to cover, it tries to narrow the focus of the study by using limited time-frame for only the past one year (January - December, 2017). Besides, the study also focuses on any two categories of news items namely editorial and/or commentary which appeared in these four newspapers during the aforementioned period. Because these two categories are conceivably representing a kind of sphere or platform for the interactive dialogue or discussion on a particular issue between the elite, especially from the government circles and the public. By narrowing the focus of the study through the limit of time-frame and the categories of coverage, it was feasible to conduct a thorough analysis. There are two stages of data selection process. *First*, since the volumes of news items about the China issues in these four newspapers are

huge, at the initial stage we use the RapidMiner databases to collect the data. *Second*, we purposively draw a sample of 40 pieces of any categories (editorial or commentary) from the aforementioned four newspapers.

3. Data Analysis

As stated earlier that in order to answer the question of whether the portrayal of the China issues in the major Indonesian newspapers reflected elements of the China threat theory, we employ the modified model of critical analysis of the text proposed by Van Dijk. We focus on the naming choices, lexical choices, and argumentative features of the editorials or commentaries. In addition to that, there are practically some schemes of a step by step data analysis. The first scheme was proposed by Cresswell (2015) which consists of four iterative steps; (1) reading through the data; (2) generating codes and themes; (3) interpreting the meaning of the themes; (4) validating the accuracy of the information. The other longer scheme was proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1988) which follows linear steps; (1) question; (2) sample selection; (3) collection of records; (4) coding; (5) analysis; (6) validation; and (7) report. Another simple scheme was designed by Wodak and Meyer (2001) consisting of four cycling steps; (1) theory; (2) operationalization; (3) discourse or text; and (4) interpretation. The last scheme which is likely more suitable for this study was proposed by Gläser and Laudel (1999). This scheme consists of several steps; (1) it begins with theory; (2) coding agenda from the text through the process of summary, explication, and structuring; (3) information; and (4) interpretation.

In this study, we use a combined or modified step by step data analysis as follows. *First*, we begin with the theory of China threat. *Second*, we generate codes and themes from the theory. *Third*, we use these themes as the premises to analyze the text of editorials or commentaries. In so doing, we focus on the naming choices, lexical choices, and argumentative features of each paragraph from the above text categories. We treat the paragraph of the editorials or commentaries as a unit of analysis. *Fourth*, we draw some interpretations from

the textual themes. *Finally*, we validate the accuracy of the information obtained from each and every single step.

D. FINDING

From the initial stage of textual analysis, the study revealed some preliminary findings as follows. *First*, all of these four newspapers' coverage of the China issues contains some elements of the China threat narrative. There is a high possibility that these national newspapers have tried to air up the public concerns and channel them to the elite for the respons. In this regard, the four mentioned newspapers have relatively served well as the new public sphere for initiating the public discourse on particular national issues.

Second, majority of the news categories that appeared in between January to December 2017, issues of the mainlander Chinese workers, the infrastructure projects under China, and the transnational drugs trafficking appear as the frequent themes of the China threat. The newspapers coverages might likely not correspond to the result of some surveys which points out that public perception about the china has more negative views on the Indonesia- China stand-off in the natuna island.

Third, we take the inflows of Chinese workers to Indonesia as a specific case to figure out the element of threat narrative and the political position of these four newspapers. The result is quit interesting, in term of the political position we found the Republika and the Jawa Pos by and large tend to echo public concerns about the China threat narrative. While, the Jakarta Post and the Kompas, although they took up the issue, they seem to neutralize the elements of China threat. More interestingly is whilst the Republika and the Jawa Pos seem to take side with the public, the Jakarta Post and the Kompas most often took up the government stance to dismiss the public concerns on the China threat.

The study also found that the Chinese workers threat narrative is not only raised by the public especially from the Indonesian labour Unions, but also

by the government circles. From these major news items we found that the threat narrative about Chinese workers is also triggered by the field-investigation or onsite-inspection of high ranking officers and even ministers which is known as *blusukan* (adopted after the president Jokowi's style of grassroot leadership). It thus seems that the government gives a contradicting message to the public, while dismissing the threat narrative by issuing statements, those media coverages of the *blusukan* incidents continue to fuel the narrative.

Fourth, in term of the infrastructure projects under China or Chinese companies, the four newspapers are still divided, although with lesser intensity. From their major editorials we found that the four newspapers took the same stance as demanding the government to evaluate the reliability and safeness of the projects since there have been many incidents causing major casualties. But the four newspapers differ in term of continuation of the projects. Again, the *Republika* and the *Jawa Pos* tend to echo the argument that the massive infrastructure projects under China are unreliable, not visible and need not to continue. While, the *Jakarta Post* and the *Kompas* tend to take government's stance that although the projects need to temporarily halt, but China still may resume them after the evaluation.

Fifth, in term of the transnational drugs and narcotics trafficking from China, the four newspaper take the same stance that China-based drug networks pose a threat to Indonesia. The elements of the China threat are present in this issue because there has suspiciously been a well designed plan from the Chinese drug networks to target Indonesia as a drug heaven market. Some news items noticed that millions of ton of the drugs and narcotics have been sent-in to Indonesia, some of them, along with the infrastructure project's component from China.

E. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

1. Conclusion

From the findings, the study may reach a conclusion that some elements or themes of the China threat theory are represented in the four elite Indonesian newspapers. The the mainlander Chinese workers, the infrastructure projects under China, and the transnational drugs trafficking appear as the frequent themes of the China threat in those newspapers. Nevertheless, the four newspapers are divided and take different public stance on the China threat narrative. On the one hand, the *Republika* and the *Jawa Pos* tend to take the public side and lean more towards echoing the China threat narrative. On the other hand, the *Jakarta Post* and the *Kompas* are seemingly to take the government's stance and dismissing the China threat narrative. These findings are only based on the way these newspapers present the China issues from different angle, perspective, and public or political position. We are not concerned on whether the news or issue is accurate or not.

2. Limitation

Discourse analysis suffers from several weaknesses as follows. First, as it is also acknowledged by Wodak and Chilton (2005) that many critics raise the rational criticism of the procedures of the discourse analysis. The critics raise questions about the objectivity of the textual descriptions and interpretations produced by critical discourse analysis. Second, when analyzing a discourse, it is necessary to have high intelligence and skill in order to understand the meaning of the discourse producer. We must be able to digest the meaning of each of the words and sentences of the discourse so that in the end we can understand the meaning or content of the discourse. Third, in interpreting a discourse is not only confronted with the language problem, but also faced with social problems. Fourth, the meaning is more complicated because as part of the social research method with the qualitative approach, the discourse analyst also uses the research paradigm. Thus the process of research is not only trying to understand the meaning contained in a manuscript, but often explore what is

behind the script according to the research paradigm that is used. Fifth, discourse Analysis takes more political discourse in its research. Sixth, discourse analysis does not provide a definite answer, but will produce insights or knowledge based on continuous debate and argumentation. Seventh, as Chilton (in Wodak and Chilton, 2005) points out that despite some interest in (mental) representation, the discourse analysis has by and large not paid enough attention to the human mind.

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