

The Metaphor Construction of China's National Image by the Mainstream Media in English-speaking Countries: A Case Study on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

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Abstract—According to the theories of Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Constructivism, a country's image is constructed. As a crucial channel to construct and spread national images, media frequently adopt metaphor as a discourse strategy to construct national images. Based on a corpus of 147 reports on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) by the mainstream media in English-speaking countries, such as the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Malaysia, this study is guided by the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis to extract metaphors in the corpus. On this basis, this study discusses the metaphorical construction of China's national image by the mainstream media in English-speaking countries, and their attitudes towards China behind their use of metaphors.

Index Terms—China's national image, media discourse, metaphor, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

I. INTRODUCTION

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was initiated by ASEAN in 2012, and eight years later on November 15, 2020, it was finally signed by 15 members, including China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and ten ASEAN countries. A group whose total population, economy, and trade volume account for about 30 percent of that of the world. The 15 member countries signed an agreement that marked the formal establishment of the free trade area with the largest population, the largest economic and trade scale, and the greatest development potential in the world. This will influence the global economy and particularly China's economy in a large scale.

Decades ago, the construction of China's national image failed to keep up with its rapid economic growth and rising national power, and "the dissemination of its image also failed to portray a true picture of China or to serve the country's further development" [1]. This prejudice towards China usually puts China in a passive position in the international stage. Facing the adverse situations above, the study of national image has gradually become a popular topic in the academic circles, and domestic scholars have intensely discussed on how to build a positive nation image of China in the world [2, 3]. But correspondingly, few of them know

Manuscript received December 20, 2022; revised March 13, 2023; accepted May 17, 2023.

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enough about other countries' view and attitude towards China, and they seldom analyzed those of the whole English-speaking countries, thus failing to give a systematic review of China's national image in the eyes of foreign media. As for the relevant research on Critical Metaphor Analysis, the research corpus was limited and not that comprehensive. In this way, their findings are one-sided and less credible for the readers. Therefore, this study, based on the reports of RCEP by the mainstream media in English-speaking countries, such as the U.K., the U.S., Canada, and Australia, etc., uses the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis to interpret how these media construct China's image through the metaphor use. Also, this study will further explore their attitudes towards China, which are all hidden behind these foreign media's discourse.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

In order to make the research results more scientific, this study will discuss the metaphorical construction of China's national image by the mainstream media in major English-speaking countries in their reports of RCEP. The specific research questions are as follows:

Q1: What metaphors have been used by the mainstream media in the major eight English-speaking countries in reporting the RCEP?

Q2: What kinds of China's national images have been constructed by these metaphors?

Q3: What are the attitudes of the mainstream media in English-speaking countries towards China behind their use of metaphors?

B. Introduction to Critical Metaphor Analysis

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) is an interdisciplinary research framework. In 2004, Charteris-Black firstly raised Critical Metaphor Analysis in his book *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. In his view, CMA is "an approach to metaphor analysis that — as we have seen with critical discourse analysis — aims to reveal the covert (and possibly unconscious) intentions of language users" [4]. In other words, metaphor can evoke people's emotional reaction, and reflect the language users' attitude, stance, or idea towards certain things or subjects. Therefore, the study of metaphor should be associated with the specific context and take the intention of language users into consideration.

Charteris-Black expanded the applied range of metaphor analysis and came up with the corpus-based approach. His combination of the corpus-based approach and CMA perfectly solved the criticism that the conceptual metaphor relied too much on intuitive examples and was detached from the real context, and made the research results more representative rather than showing the individual characteristics of metaphor.

C. The Establishment of the Corpus

The “NOW Corpus (News on the Web)” of “English-Corpora” database is chosen in this study to collect relevant reports. Specifically, the keyword “Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership” and its abbreviation RCEP are used as the index items to search materials. As for the time range, since the RCEP agreement was officially signed on November 15, 2020, which has already attracted the attention of many media in its earlier stage, the starting time is set on November 1, 2020. Considering the delayed effect of the news event and the time required for corpus establishment, the deadline is set on January 31, 2021. Also, according to the Alexa global rankings for media and sites in the eight major English-speaking countries, i.e., the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Singapore, all the mainstream media has been selected. Moreover, since this study mainly focuses on the metaphorical construction of China’s image in relevant reports, only RCEP reports closely related to China are chose to form the final corpus.

A final 147 reports are collected. Table I shows the basics of the corpus built. Based on the established-corpus, metaphors used in the corpus are collected. In order to ensure the reliability and accuracy of metaphor extraction, this study combines the corpus retrieval tool with artificial cognition together. Specifically, this study with the aid of AntConc 3.4.4w software to search key terms such as “China” in the corpus, and then uses the MIPVU procedure [5] to achieve the manual annotation. Ultimately, 411 metaphors are identified, interpreted, and classified into five broad categories.

TABLE I: SIZE OF THE CORPUS

	U.S.	Singapore	New Zealand	U.K.	Philippines	Malaysia	Australia	Canada	Total
Reports	42	22	22	20	15	12	9	5	147
Types	4492	2605	2121	1856	1878	1783	1390	1375	7396
Tokens	32,016	15,394	11,652	9113	8622	8084	5342	4231	94,454

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Metaphors Used in RCEP Coverage Reported by English-Speaking Countries

After identifying and classifying metaphors in the corpus [6, 7], this study finds that metaphors can be divided into five categories: (1) COUNTRY IS A PERSON; (2) THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME; (3) THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR; (4) THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY; (5) THE WORLD IS A STAGE. Each conceptual metaphor is analyzed in detail below, and Table II represents the number of these six kinds of conceptual

metaphors.

TABLE II: THE NUMBER OF EACH CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

NO.	Conceptual Metaphor	Counting
1	COUNTRY US A PERSON	182
2	THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME	112
3	THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR	74
4	THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY	25
5	THE WORLD IS A STAGE	9
6	Other Metaphors	9
Total Number		411

1) Country is a person

The conceptual metaphor COUNTRY IS A PERSON can be found everywhere in the corpus of this study, and due to the figurative effect of this conceptual metaphor, China is endowed with characteristics of human beings, such as actions and identities. As shown in the Table III, the conceptual metaphor COUNTRY IS A PERSON includes 10 subclasses, among which the number of “China is an agent” is the largest. These specific metaphors are used by the mainstream media in English-speaking countries to express their mixed attitudes towards China in RCEP event. Some media believe that China initiates this agreement and accelerates its process, while some media think that the signing of the RCEP just results from China’s coercive practices.

TABLE III: SPECIFIC METAPHORS UNDER THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR COUNTRY IS A PERSON

Specific Metaphor	Counting	Specific Metaphor	Counting
China is an agent	115	China is a neighbor	3
China is an agent (negative)	21	China is a thief	3
China is a recipient	9	China is a sinner	2
China is a recipient (negative)	16	China is a bullied	1
China is a speaker	6	China is a despot	1
China is an interlocuter	5		

With regard to China’s performance and intention in the settlement of China-led RCEP agreement, the media in English-speaking countries come up with the following construal. Some reports construct a positive China’s national image. In example (1), as the agent of a series of actions, China’s accession to the new agreement facilitates the smooth running of this agreement. Also, China is a neighbor who helps other countries to develop their own economies. In example (2), China is described as one of the neighbors of ASEAN states, and RCEP unifies its member states and benefits their economic development. While in example (3), the U.S. is the perpetrator who usually ignores and bullies other countries, and China is the bullied because the negative outcome may endanger China in the future and China would become the victim of American hegemony.

(1) It is crucial that partners like China, as they *enter into* new agreements like this, *deliver* not only on the detail of such agreements, but *act* true to the spirit of them, he said. (*The Age* (Australia), Nov. 15, 2020).

(2) “Through the RCEP, Asean states may realise that getting closer to their northeast *neighbours* China, Japan and South Korea and South Pacific neighbours Australia and New Zealand not only makes economic sense”. (*New Straits Times*

(Malaysia), Nov 20, 2020)

(3) If the U.S. continues to ignore or **bully** the countries there, the ***influence pendulum will swing toward China***. (*MSN* (The U. S.), Nov 5, 2020)

Meanwhile, some descriptions of China’s actions involve negative meanings. For example, in examples (4) and (5), Biden does not want to be friends with China and Trump repeatedly accuses Beijing’s predatory behavior toward American industries. Also, China is described as a person full of crime, and one of the crimes is to accelerate the sigh of RCEP. In example (6), the U.S. official even lists seven deadly sins of China, which makes it a sinner. Moreover, China’s performance is more like a despot during the process of carrying forward RCEP agreement. In example (7), the report expresses that China is even more despotic, indicating that the successful signing of RCEP is the forced product of Chinese power.

(4) Two decades later, Biden, now president-elect, **sounds less** like he wants to **be friends with China** and more like he’s ready for a new Cold War. (*Chicago Tribune* (The U. S.), Nov 24, 2020)

(5) But Trump, experts note, has successfully shifted the debate on China by **repeatedly accusing Beijing of predatory policies** that gutted American industries, even if few companies have relocated back to the United States. (*NPR* (The U. S.), Nov 18, 2020)

(6) When Trump Trade Advisor Peter Navarro was engineering the Trumpian strategy against China, he released and promoted a list called the **7 deadly sins of China**. (*Forbes* (The U. S.), Dec 1, 2020)

(7) China has gotten **even more despotic**. (*NPR* (The U. S.), Nov 24, 2020)

2) The world economy is a game

According to the Oxford Dictionary, game is defined as “an activity or a sport with rules in which people or teams compete against each other”. Therefore, a game is followed by certain rules, and each participant of the game wants to win. In the corpus of this study, the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME is used in large quantities. As shown in Table IV, this conceptual metaphor involves 14 subclasses, among which “China is a partner” owns the largest number. Through the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME, the mainstream media in English-speaking countries conceptualize “world economy” as “a game among countries”, which is full of risks and competitions. And by observing the specific metaphors under this conceptual metaphor, it is obvious that China is constructed as the dominant player and the rule-maker in this game, and this is explained in detail below.

TABLE IV: SPECIFIC METAPHORS UNDER THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME

Conceptual Metaphor	Counting	Conceptual Metaphor	Counting
China is a partner	31	China is an initiator	2
China is a player	21	China is a champion	1
China is a dominator	14	China is a governor	1
China is a leader	11	China is a stakeholder	1
China is a winner	11	China is an investor	1
China is a rival	8	China is a sponsor	1
China is a competitor	8	China is a manipulator	1

Generally, a competition involves factors like partners, players, rivals and competitors, and media construct different China’s images. In examples (8)–(9), China is “a partner for other member countries of the RCEP”: the member countries of RCEP are totally regarded as a league; China is a partner to oppose unilateralism and protectionism, which has a positive effect on the global economy; China owns certain economic influence because it is the trade partner of many nations. And in examples (10)–(11), China is “a player in the world game”: the ball is in China’s court and China becomes a player in this ball game; as an important player, China should abide by the international rules. Moreover, China is “a rival or competitor for the U.S.”, such as examples (12)–(13): China rivals with the U.S. during the period of post-pandemic economic recovery and in promoting new governance models; China is a competitor in the global trade arena, and the former president of the United States also views China as one of the competitors.

(8) **China and its partners’** efforts to support free trade and the multilateral trading system will send a strong signal against unilateralism and protectionism. (*The Star* (Malaysia), Dec 14, 2020)

(9) The RCEP would not be a **game changer** for China because the country was already the biggest or second biggest **trade partner of every nation** in the region. (*Philippine Star* (Philippines), Nov 17, 2020)

(10) The **ball** is very much in China’s court to come to the table for that dialogue. (*The Age* (Australia), Nov 15, 2020)

(11) China “is **an important player in the global economy** that we need to try and include and get to **play by better international rules**”. (*The Star* (Canada), Nov 20, 2020)

(12) And tackle plans for a post-pandemic economic recovery in a region where **US-China rivalry** has been rising. (*Reuters* (The U.K.), Nov 15, 2020)

(13) China has, in the words of the European Union, emerged as a “**systemic rival (to the US)** promoting alternative models of governance”. (*MSN* (The U.S.), Sep 14, 2020)

In the process of playing a game, its rule is highly emphasized by all the players, and the same goes for international economic games. Therefore, whoever sets the rule holds the initiative in the world economic game. Based on the successful signing of RCEP, China is described as the dominator, leader, and winner of this game. In example (14), China firmly supports the signing of RCEP, which expands China’s international influence and makes China become the dominator in this trade game. In example (15), RCEP is a trade agreement led by China, and China may be the leader in promoting economic and trade cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region in the future. And in example (16), due to the formal signing of RCEP, China becomes the winner of the game with the United States, which helps China own its right of speech and be in the ascendant in the trade war.

(14) Backed by China, the sprawling Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is seen as a coup for Beijing in extending its influence across the region and marks its **dominance** in Asian trade. (*CNA* (Singapore), Nov 15, 2020)

(15) While some claim RCEP is a “**China-led**” trade agreement, the reality is it reflects the interests of all economies in the region. (*The Canberra Times* (Australia),

Nov 11, 2020)

(16) The formal signing of the RCEP agreement is seen as a “**victory**” for China over the United States, as it certainly gains an advantage over the latter in their ongoing trade war. (*The Straits Times* (Singapore), Nov 21, 2020)

3) *The world economy is a war*

The history of human society has been filled with various wars. Therefore, war has already become one of the basic schemas of people’s cognition of the world of experience, and war-related metaphors are frequently used in language. In order to highlight the conflict, contradiction, and confrontation in international economic issues, reports about RCEP also use many war-related metaphors and regard the world economy as a war. Table V just shows 11 subclasses and their frequency of occurrence of the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR, and “China is a supporter” is the most-used one.

TABLE V: SPECIFIC METAPHORS UNDER THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR

Conceptual Metaphor	Counting	Conceptual Metaphor	Counting
China is a supporter	22	China is a threatener	2
China is a fighter	17	China is a guardian	1
China is an enemy	14	China is a gangster	1
China is a negotiator	11	China is a intruder	1
China is an avenger	2	China is a defender	1
China is an advocator	2		

War is a situation in which two or more countries fight against each other, and they mainly aim to achieve certain political, economic, territorial, and other purposes. The mainstream media in English-speaking countries map the following features of source domain “war” to the “world economy”: a war needs the support of allies; a war involves fighters and guardians; the purpose of war is to destroy the enemy; a war is started to achieve predetermined aims. And in the corpus of this study, China is described as different roles in the global war, such as “China is a supporter”, “China is a fighter”, “China is an enemy”, and “China is an avenger”. By using the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR, media in English-speaking countries cognize RCEP as a way for China to fight against the U.S. and to consolidate its position in the world. Therefore, China and other countries in RCEP are regarded as the enemy of the U.S., and these two camps both want to gain the upper hand in the trade war.

For example, in example (17), China supports countries in RCEP and advocates this agreement for setting new economic and trade rules. Because China has increasing economic interdependency on its trade partners all over the world, it actively supports this multilateral trade agreement. In example (18), China is a fighter in its battle with the U.S., and RCEP is its weapon to counter the economic influence of the U.S. in this region. Examples (19) shapes China as an enemy of the United States and its allies. Washington and some of its closest allies even object to the use of Chinese telecommunication equipment, because they regard China as their biggest enemy and want to reduce China’s international influence in this way. What is more, China bans the imports of key Australian goods after its government calling for an

investigation into the origin of coronavirus, and Australian media believe that this is China’s revenge against Australia. In examples (20) and (21), *The Age* reports that China’s economic revenge and reprisal threaten the exports of Australian copper, coal, and timber. It describes China as an avenger who unreasonably suppresses other countries’ economy for the sake of its own economic development.

(17) It mainly matters because it sets new trade rules for the region — and has **China’s backing** but does not include the United States. (*CAN* (Singapore), Nov 15, 2020)

(18) The idea of RCEP, hatched in 2012, was seen as a way for China, the region’s biggest importer and exporter, to **counter** growing US influence in the Asia-Pacific. (*RNZ* (New Zealand), Nov. 17, 2020).

(19) **Washington and some of its closest allies** warn that to even use Chinese-made telecommunication equipment risks national security. (*The Star* (Canada), Nov 19, 2020)

(20) At the same time, China appears to be enacting a form of **economic revenge** against Australia for its policies. (*The Age* (Australia), Nov 14, 2020)

(21) Copper, coal and timber exports are also being threatened by **China’s reprisal**. (*The Age* (Australia), Nov 14, 2020)

4) *The world economy is a journey*

Metaphor related to journey is a common conceptual metaphor used in various discourses, therefore, the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY also appears frequently in the corpus of this study. Since each reader has a personal experience and perception of journey, the features of the source domain “journey” are naturally mapped to “world economy”. For instance, travelers start a journey with their own goals, and they are the subject of a journey; at each stage of the journey, travelers need to make judgments on different factors, and every step may have an impact on the outcome of the journey; the journey will not be all plain sailing, therefore, travelers may take a step back when they meet difficulties or obstacles. As shown in Table VI, there are 3 subclasses of the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY, including “China is an advancer”, “China is a backslider”, and “China is a traveler”, among which the number of “China is an advancer” is the largest.

TABLE VI: SPECIFIC METAPHORS UNDER THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY

Conceptual Metaphor	Counting
China is an advancer	20
China is a backslider	3
China is a traveler	2

In example (22), it is obvious that China is a traveler who embarks on a new journey with its partner of RCEP. And *Otago Daily Times* believes that this new journey may strengthen the cooperation among these countries and serve the common interests of mankind. The main part of world economic journey is the country, therefore, the economic actions taken by different countries may influence this journey. In examples (23)–(25), the image of China is an advancer who moves forward in its journey, and its initiatives such as RCEP and the Belt and Road Initiative are seen as two steps in the world economic journey for Chinese

government. In this way, all these steps and actions taken by China enhance its economic influence and intensify its advantages in global economy. However, some countries become the stumbling block in China’s journey, because they want to hamper the globalization of China’s economy and impede the impact of China’s economy on other regions. For example, in example (26), Biden administration wants to expand its alliance and pull China back on the journey.

(22) As both China and New Zealand **embark on a new journey**, we could continue lending each other a helping hand and collaborate for the common good of mankind. (*Otago Daily Times* (New Zealand), Nov. 26, 2020).

(23) On Tuesday China and Japan agreed to **move forward** negotiations on a free trade deal between only the three countries. (*Reuters* (The U.K.), Nov. 24, 2020).

(24) China’s economic influence-building **took another big step forward** with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative. (*MSN* (The U.S.), Nov. 14, 2020).

(25) These, if signed, would **mark another move for China** to mitigate risks from slowbalization, and sustain its advantages in global supply chains. (*CNBC* (The U.S.), Nov 23, 2020)

(26) The Biden administration will probably want to bolster relations with Southeast Asia to create a broader coalition to **push back** some of Beijing’s actions. (*New York Times* (The U.S.), Jan. 3, 2021).

5) *The world is a stage*

The word “stage” is originally a theatrical term, referring to a raised area where actors, dancers, etc. perform, and THE WORLD IS A STAGE is also a frequently-used conceptual metaphor in news reports. As shown in Table VII, in the corpus of this study, the mainstream media in English-speaking countries adopt three types of sub-metaphors to construct the world as a stage where countries have different roles to play, and “China is a character” is the most-used one. In their point of view, the setting of the world stage is always changing with the occurrence of new issues. For instance, example (27) believes that the U.S. election changes the backdrop of world stage; example (28) points out that the digital economy comes to the spotlight on the world stage; and example (29) states that the signing of RCEP enables enterprises in that region to stand out on the world stage. Therefore, China is just one of the characters on the stage, and its behaviors and actions are closely associated with changes in the international environment.

TABLE VII: SPECIFIC METAPHORS UNDER THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THE WORLD IS A STAGE

Conceptual Metaphor	Counting
China is a character	4
China is a leading actor	4
China is a performer	1

Characters are necessary factors in a play, and according to their status and importance, they can be divided into leading roles and supporting roles. It is extremely important for a country to play the leading role in global economy, but some of the important issues may lead to the reversal of roles on the world stage. In the past, the U.S. could play the leading role on the world stage, and other countries played the supporting roles. However, with the signing of RCEP

agreement, China will play a leading role on the world economic stage in the eyes of media in English-speaking countries. Just like example (30), it says that the establishment of the world’s largest free trade region may cement China’s dominant role in regional trade, and the U.S. would be left behind at the same time.

(27) In the meantime, the **backdrop** to the world’s trading order has changed with the US election. (*Gisborne Herald* (New Zealand), Nov 14, 2020)

(28) This development trend has brought “digital economy” to **the spotlight on the world stage**. (*PR Newswire* (The U.S.), Dec 6, 2020)

(29) RCEP would strengthen the integration of local companies in the global value and supply chain to become more competitive **on the international stage** and become global companies. (*The Sun Daily* (Malaysia), Dec 17, 2020)

(30) The U.S. Chamber of Commerce said on Monday it was concerned the United States was being left behind after 15 Asia-Pacific economies on Sunday formed the world’s largest free-trade bloc, cementing **China’s dominant role** in regional trade. (*Reuters* (The U.K.), Nov 17, 2020)

B. *The Construction of China’s National Image through Metaphors*

Through the analysis above, it is obvious that the mainstream media in English-speaking countries use five types of conceptual metaphors to describe China in their reports on RCEP: COUNTRY IS A PERSON, THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME, THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR, THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY, THE WORLD IS A STAGE. The ideologies and opinions of media are hidden behind these metaphors, thus reflecting China’s image in their minds. As shown in Fig. 1, the conceptual metaphor COUNTRY IS A PERSON constructs China’s image as a merciless person who abuses her power; China is defined as a competitor of the United States and the rule-maker of world game in the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A GAME; the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A WAR shapes China’s image as an enemy of the United States; the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY describe China as a traveler who makes progress together with other countries; and the conceptual metaphor THE WORLD IS A STAGE depicts that China has replaced the United States as the leading actor.

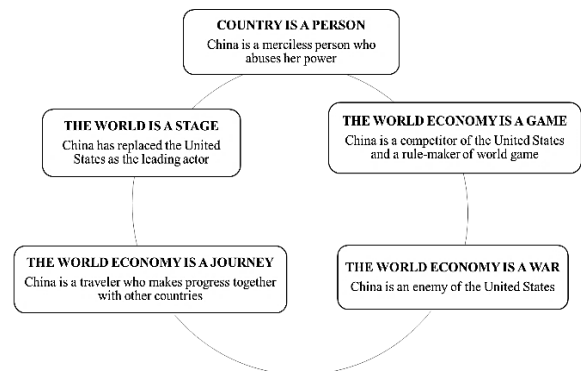


Fig. 1. The schematic diagram of the China’s image constructed by media in English-speaking countries through metaphor.

These images of China indicate different attitudes of the

mainstream media in English-speaking countries. The relevant reports of these media regard China as the ongoing traveler in the world journey who makes progress together with other countries, which shows that these media have made positive evaluation on China's performance in the RCEP event, and endorsed China's effect in the international affairs. Specifically, they think China facilitates the running of RCEP, unifies and benefits other member states, and supports the multilateral and reciprocal trade. However, they also construct China as the rule-maker and dominator in the world economy, the competitor and the enemy of the United States, and a merciless person. They believe that China merely focuses on its own economic development and suppresses other countries, showing that they hold negative attitude towards China. Therefore, the national image of China constructed by these metaphors is mixed but mainly negative. In the view of these media, China is an economic powerhouse that plays an increasingly important role in the global economy but attempts to control other countries and set new economic rules by itself.

In the post-epidemic period, economies around the world have been severely impacted, and China initiated the RCEP agreement in this rough time, which aimed to pull more countries out of the economic downturn. In this way, some media in English-speaking countries have a new understanding of China and hold a relatively positive attitude towards China, that is, China is a friendly and accommodating country in the world economic stage. However, attitudes of these media towards China are still mainly negative. Some reports construct China as the dictator and dominator in the economic field, which is related to the deeply-rooted ideologies of media in English-speaking countries. Under the background of global economic downturn and depression, China has initiated the RCEP agreement and China's economy has achieved steady growth. The rising China has scared and worried these countries; thus China has become the imaginary enemy of them. Such a hostile attitude towards China is naturally appeared in the media reports of relevant countries to lead the public opinion and constrain China's development.

IV. CONCLUSION

This thesis, based on the reports of RCEP by the mainstream media in English-speaking countries, uses the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis to interpret how these media construct China's national image through metaphors in discourse. Therefore, this study reveals the current image of China in the eyes of English-speaking countries in a more accurate way. According to these specific images of China, the mainstream media in English-speaking

countries construct China as an economic powerhouse which plays an increasingly important role on the global economic stage but attempts to control other countries and set new economic and trade rules by itself. Therefore, the attitude of these media towards China is still mainly negative: they are hostile to the growing China on the world economic stage and regard it as a potential threat. But at the same time, China has been constructed as an ongoing traveler who goes hand in hand with other countries, which reflects the improvement of China's national image and the tendency of recognition and acceptance of China by the media in English-speaking countries.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Liao Jiayi conducted the research, established the corpus, analyzed the raw materials, and wrote the present paper; Dong Junhong provided guidance and direction for this study, and polished this paper; all authors had approved the final version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Liao Jiayi would like to express her sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Dong Junhong, who taught a lot about the basic elements of a scientific thesis, and the details she should pay attention to. She would also extend her thanks to all her teachers in the School of Foreign Studies at Northwestern Polytechnical University.

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