

# Analyzing the Translation Strategies from the Perspective of Distanciation: A Case Study of Chinese National Defense Discourse

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the translation of Chinese national defense discourse from the perspective of Distanciation Theory (DT), integrating Wiczeorek's framework with Cap's Proximizaition Theory (PT) to propose the Spatial-Temporal-Axiological Distanciation (STAD) model. Using China's National Defense in the New Era and Ministry of National Defense press conference transcripts as the corpus, it examines how spatial, temporal, and axiological Distanciation strategies in the source text are represented or modified in the target text. The analysis reveals that TT often amplifies Distanciation effects through "shift" and "free" translation, while "literal" translation effectively preserves ST strategies; in contrast, "omission" or certain "free" translations may weaken them. Findings demonstrate the STAD model's explanatory power in identifying symbolic distance adjustments in translation and highlight the translator's role in shaping discourse effects. The study underscores DT's applicability to translation studies and suggests integrating PT and DT to refine theoretical and practical guidelines for translation practice.

**Keywords-** Distanciation, Chinese national defense discourse, translation strategies, STAD model.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, China's national defense discourse has repeatedly been questioned, misunderstood, rejected, distorted, and vilified by Western governments, military circles, media outlets, and even academic communities. The "China Threat" theory continues to retain a certain degree of influence (Shi Xu, 2016:1; Shi Xu & Mei Zhaoyang, 2021:73). On 24 July 2019, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China issued its tenth national defense white paper, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, to articulate the country's defensive national defense policy in the new era and to foster global understanding of China's defense strategy. As an authoritative discourse statement of national defense policy directed toward the international community, the white paper exhibits both cross-cultural communicative characteristics and dialogic transmissibility. Its aim is to promote conceptual common ground and value recognition, thereby fostering mutual trust and cooperation in international military affairs (Zhao Xiaoyan, 2021:130).

As a carrier of information, discourse is disseminated through print, electronic, and digital media, shaping individuals' cognition, attitudes, and value judgments towards specific issues. In the national defense domain, discourse embodies a nation's defense philosophy and ideology, reflects its values, and plays a vital role in resisting foreign ideological and cultural infiltration, shaping its national image, and enhancing its persuasive power, appeal, and soft power. Consequently, national defense discourse has increasingly become a key arena for discursive power, discursive systems, and political contestation, constituting an "organic component" of national defense (Shi Xu, 2016:2) and "directly affecting national security and stability" (Liang Xiaobo & Xiao Rong, 2020:78).

Existing research on national defense white papers has primarily focused on analyzing discursive features at the linguistic level, while the cognitive mechanisms underlying such discourse remain underexplored (Lu Yan, 2022:65). This

study takes *China's National Defense in the New Era* and the bilingual transcripts of Ministry of National Defense press conferences as its research corpus. Integrating Distanciation Theory (DT) (Wieczorek, 2009a; 2013) with Proximization Theory (PT) (Cap, 2013), it develops the STAD (Spatial-Temporal-Axiological Distanciation) model to conduct textual analysis. From the perspective of Distanciation cognition, it examines the discursive strategies employed in the source text (ST) and analyzes how different translation approaches influence the reproduction of the original discursive effects in the target text (TT), with the aim of providing a reference for the scientific and appropriate expression and effective international dissemination of China's national defense discourse.

## II. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework: The STAD Model

Wieczorek (2009a; 2013) proposed, as a complement to PT, a new discursive strategy termed “Distanciation”, which frames ODCs (outside-the-deictic-center entities) in a speech context either as being spatially, temporally and axiologically distant from the IDCs (inside-the-deictic-center entities), or as spatially, temporally and axiologically receding from the IDCs and the deictic center (Wieczorek, 2013:183). It was primarily discussed as a legitimization strategy (e.g. Wieczorek 2009a, 2009b). Although its mechanism contrasts with that of proximization strategy (Chovanec, 2019:51), which enables the speaker to shorten symbolic distance along spatial, temporal, and axiological dimensions, Distanciation shares with proximization the same discursive goal—self-legitimization and other-delegitimization—achieved through similar means, including negative other-representation, responsibility attribution and enhancement of dissimilarities between the two opposing groups. Legitimization is the socio-linguistic process, in which a speaker discursively constructs their entitlement to be obeyed by an audience (Chilton, 2004), while delegitimization, is the discursive process of undermining, denying, or removing the entitlement from others.

Using former U.S. President Brack Obama's political speeches as examples, Wieczorek (2009a; 2013) demonstrated the lexical-grammatical patterns of Distanciation strategies at the discourse level. Chovanec (2019), taking euphemisms as examples, analyzed how Distanciation strategies increase the symbolic distance between the signifier and the signified, addressing both the discourse and contextual levels. Gao Xin & Sun Dongyang (2024) integrates both proximization and Distanciation into a theoretical framework of symbolic distance adjustment, which provided a more inclusive theoretical perspective for critical cognitive discourse analysis, and apply it to the analysis of the proximization and Distanciation discursive strategies in Kazakhstan's 2022 State of the Nation Address. Xin Huiyi (2025) examines English-language reports on “Chinese poverty alleviation” from both Chinese and Western media, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Drawing on proximization and Distanciation theories, this study conducts a contrastive analysis of differences in the narrative strategies adopted by Chinese and Western outlets, focusing on the selective presentation of discourse and the adjustments of symbolic distance in reporting China's poverty alleviation policies. This study innovates Distanciation framework and applies it to translation analysis.

Borrowing the STA model from PT, Figure 1. illustrates the STAD (Spatial-Temporal-Axiological Distanciation) model.

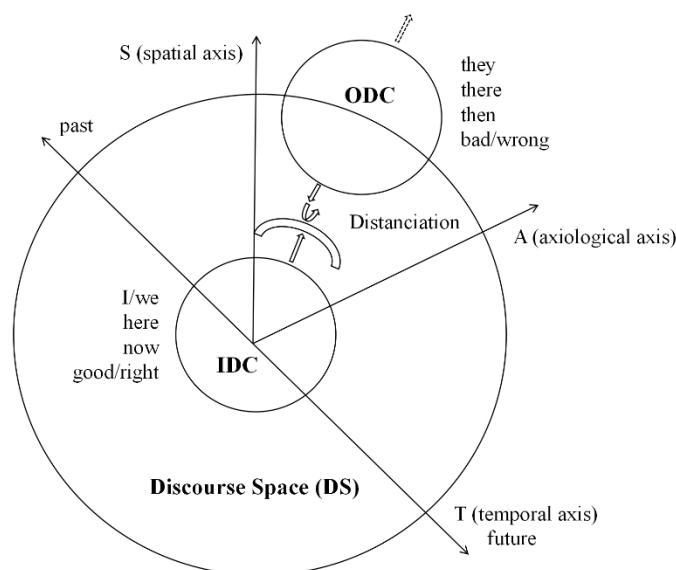


Figure 1. The Spatial-Temporal-Axiological Disntanciation model

Spatial Distanciation is defined as a discursive strategy that functions in two ways: first, it enables the speaker to symbolically represent an IDC/ODC as growing increasingly distant, both physically and geopolitically (Wieczorek 2013:185); second, it allows the speaker to present an IDC as symbolically warding off an approaching or threatening ODC, maintaining a symbolic distance between the two. Based on the marker types in spatial proximization (Cap, 2013:108), the categories of lexico-grammatical markers employed in spatial Distanciation are as follows:

1. Noun phrases (NPs) and pronouns (Ps) construed as entities inside the deictic center of the DS (IDCs).
2. Noun phrases (NPs) and pronouns (Ps) construed as entities outside the deictic center of the DS (ODSs).
3. Verb phrases (VPs) with a proactive sense, construed as markers indicating increase in ODCs' symbolic distance from IDCs or from the deictic center.
4. Verb phrases (VPs) with a defensive connotation construed as markers indicating the maintenance of symbolic distance between ODCs and IDCs.
5. Adverb phrases (APs) of degree, construed as markers indicating limits to ODCs' movement toward IDCs or the deictic center.

Temporal Distanciation refers to a discursive strategy that frames discourse entities as temporally remote from "now", the midpoint of the time axis within the context (Wieczorek 2013:185), through symbolic means that either increase or maintain the temporal distance between entities. This study identifies two categories of lexico-grammatical markers in temporal Distanciation:

1. Verb phrases (VPs) involving auxiliaries, construed as expressing an infinite expansion of distance from the "now".
2. Adverb phrases (APs) involving temporal dimension, construed as markers indicating the increase of symbolic distance between ODCs and IDCs.
3. Adverb phrases (APs) involving temporal dimension, construed as markers indicating the maintenance of symbolic distance between ODCs and IDCs.

Axiological Distanciation is a discursive strategy that construes conceptual ODCs as contradictory to and opposed to conceptual IDCs (Wieczorek, 2013:186), and enables the speaker to represent such ODCs as either forcibly increasing or maintaining their distance from the IDCs. Drawing on PT (Cap, 2013:121), the categories of lexico-grammatical markers used in axiological Distanciation are as follows:

1. Noun phrases (NPs) and gerunds (Gs) construed as conceptual IDCs embodying positive values or values sets (ideologies).
2. Noun phrases (NPs) and gerunds (Gs) construed as conceptual ODCs embodying negative values or values sets (ideologies).
3. Verb phrases (VPs) involving axiological orientation, construed as maintaining the symbolic distance between conceptual IDCs and ODCs.
4. Verb phrases (VPs) involving axiological orientation, construed as increasing the symbolic distance between conceptual IDCs and ODCs.

## 2.2 Analytical Framework

The discourse system, also termed discourse practice, comprises elements such as the discourse subject, discourse purpose, discourse space, and discourse strategies (Zhang, 2016: 28). Within Distanciation research in translation studies, the discourse subjects: original speaker and the translator. The strategies employed by these subjects operate across three dimensions—spatial, temporal, and axiological—and are directed toward the ultimate discourse goal of forced persuasion or legitimization.

Figure 2. presents the analytical framework for Distanciation in translation, adapted from Zhang's (2016:28-29) model of relational elements in political discourse systems. In this framework, the speaker first engages in discursive practice within the discourse space, employing various Distanciation strategies to achieve the intended purpose, resulting in the production of the ST. The translator then interprets the ST by analyzing the speaker's intent and the strategies used, before selecting translation strategies, methods, and techniques to render the discourse in a way that reproduces equivalent effects and fulfills the same communicative purpose in the TT.

However, the translator's subjectivity, shaped by factors such as cultural background, ideological stance, translation approach, and translation purpose, may lead to differences between the strategies used in the ST and those in the TT. Consequently, the original discourse effects may be attenuated or intensified in the translation. This variability, reflecting linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural influences, constitutes the primary focus of this study due to its significance research implications.

Given the ongoing absence of consensus in translation studies regarding the classification and definition of translation strategies, methods, and techniques, the present research adopts Xiong's (2014) framework as a key reference point for the Distanciation analysis of translation.

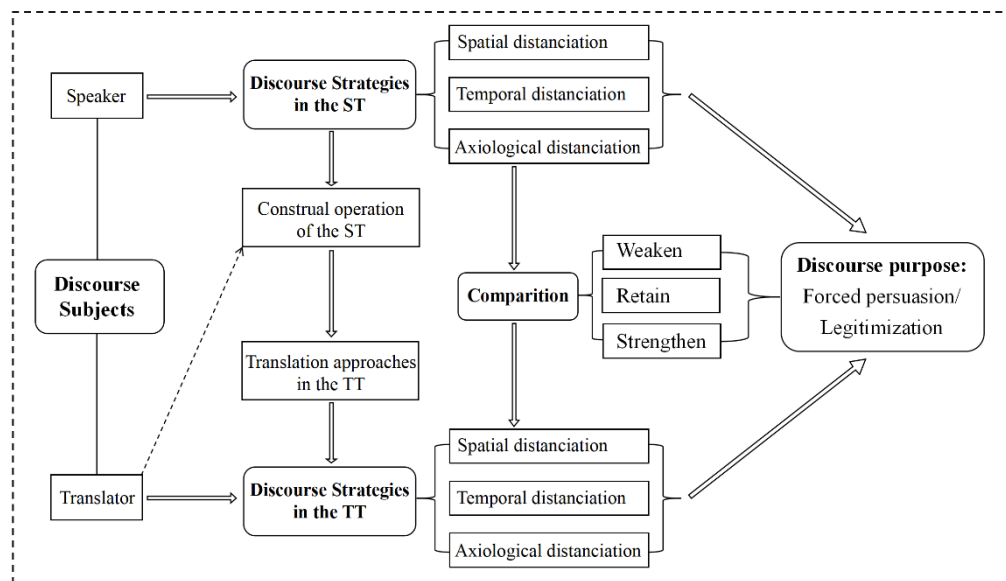


Figure 2. Analytical framework for Distanciation analysis of translation

### III. CASE STUDY

This section conducts a textual analysis of the selected excerpts and their translations, mainly from the white paper China's National Defense in the New Era, using the theoretical framework of Distanciation. The analysis focuses on identifying the Distanciation strategies in the ST and the specific translation strategies, methods, and techniques employed to reconstruct the discourse strategies of the ST in the TT, as well as evaluating the effects produced by these translation choices.

#### 3.1 Distanciation Analysis of the Translation of National Security Discourse in Spatial Dimension

Example 1<sup>1</sup>

ST: 慑止和抵抗[SD-4]<sup>2</sup>侵略[ODC1], 保卫国家政治安全、人民安全和社会稳定[IDCs1], 反对和遏制[SD-4] “台独” [ODC2], 打击[SD-3] “藏独”“东突”等分裂势力[ODCs3], 保卫国家主权、统一、领土完整和安全[IDCs2]。

TT: to deter and resist[SD-4] **aggression**[ODC1]; to safeguard **national political security, the people's security and social stability**[IDCs1]; to oppose and contain[SD-4] “**Taiwan independence**”[ODC2]; to crack down on[SD-3] **proponents of separatist movements such as “Tibet independence” and the creation of “East Turkistan”**[ODCs3]; to safeguard **national sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security**[IDCs2];

Example 1 illustrates aspects of the missions of China's national defense. Guided by a peace-oriented ideology, China's national defense policy is defensive in nature, which determines that the primary tasks of Chinese armed forces are also defensive. This is reflected in the ST, where most of the verbs used fall into the second category of spatial Distanciation—defensive actions, such as “慑止” (“deter”), “抵抗” (“resist”), and “反对” (“oppose”). Moreover, the IDCs being defended are all in-group ones (e.g. phrases labeled as IDCs), indicating that the military does not aim to intervene abroad or pursue objectives beyond China's territory and legitimate jurisdiction. As for the two verbs connoting a proactive sense, “遏制” (“contain”) and “打击” (“strike” or “crack down”), they are used for distanciating in-group ODC entities, namely “台独” (“Taiwan independence”), “藏独” (“Tibet independence”) and “东突” (“East Turkistan”). There is, however, a notable difference between these two verbs. Given that the People's Republic of China does not currently exercise direct governance over Taiwan, it is more appropriate to “contain” separatist activities within and without the region in an effort to weaken their ability to threaten IDC interests, rather than to strike them with force. In contrast, Tibet

1 Excerpted from The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2019-07-24), 《新时代的中国国防》白皮书, URL: [http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2019n/202207/t20220704\\_130617.html](http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2019n/202207/t20220704_130617.html) (Access date: 2025-07-20); the white paper *China's National Defense in the New Era*, URL:

[http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2019n/202207/t20220704\\_130616.html](http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2019n/202207/t20220704_130616.html) (Access date: 2025-07-20).

2 Words in bold refers to “entity” with “ODC” as ODC entity while “IDC” as IDC entity, and the number behind them marks the sequential order of different entities' appearance; words underlined refers to other lexico-grammatical items; “D” shorts for “Distanciation”, “P” for “Proximization”, “S” for “spatial”, “T” for “temporal”, and “A” for “axiological” with the number behind them indicating their category in section 3.1.

independence” and “East Turkistan” forces are closer internal ODCs located within mainland China. The threats they pose are more immediate and pressing. To safeguard national security and territorial integrity, it is considered necessary for China to expel or even eliminate them by force, thus creating a spatial Distanciation effect that increases the symbolic distance between the ODCs and the IDCs. These spatial Distanciation strategies and their intended effects are largely retained in the TT by employing “literal translation” while partially specified regarding to the definition of “Tibet independence” and “East Turkistan” forces by adopting “free translation”. Such semantic specification facilitates the identification of in-group ODCs. The employment of spatial Distanciation strategy in both ST and TT helps legitimize China’s assertion that its national defense is defensive in nature.

Example 2<sup>3</sup>

ST: 中国军队[IDC1]严密防范[SD-4]各类蚕食、渗透、破坏和袭扰活动[ODCs], 维护边防安全稳定[IDC2]。

TT: China’s armed forces[IDC1] maintain a rigorous guard against[SD-4] encroachment, infiltration, sabotage or harassment[ODCs] so as to safeguard border security and stability[IDC2].

Example 2 presents one of the missions of China’s armed forces in the New Era, that is to “rigorously guard against all kinds of encroachment, infiltration, sabotage or harassment” “严密防范各类蚕食、渗透、破坏和袭扰活动”). Similar to example 1, the spatial Distanciation strategy employed here is categorized as type II, enabling the speaker to symbolically repel the ODCs’ detrimental movements towards the IDCs on the periphery of the deictic center (on the national border). The spatial Distanciation effect is reinforced in the TT through the use of “shift” translation. The verb phrase “严密防范”, which plays a crucial role in establishing the spatial Distanciation effect in the ST, is rendered as “maintain a rigorous guard against” in the TT. Although it is also a verb phrase, the translation shifts the semantic focus of the original, which might have been translated as “rigorously guard against” in a literal translation, from the immediate action of guarding to the sustained state of vigilance by changing the core word “guard” from a verb to a noun. Nominalization transforms processes and activities into states and objects (Fairclough, 1992:182). Therefore, this rendering introduces a temporal dimension, suggesting that China’s armed forces (an IDC entity) will never let its guard against the ODCs down, intensifying the spatial Distanciation effect. This interaction between the IDC and ODCs activates the steady-state FORCE schema (Hart 2014:116), as shown in Figure 3., in which the ODCs with an inclination to encroach upon IDCs are restrained or held in place by the comparatively stronger IDCs.

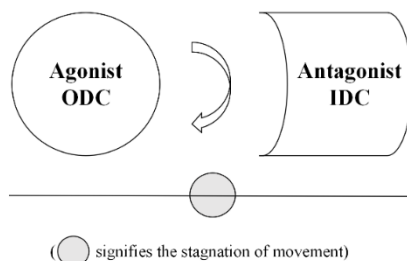


Figure 3. Steady-state FORCE schema (adopted from Hart, 2014:116)

Example 3<sup>4</sup>

ST:

中国[IDC1]有坚定决心和强大能力维护国家主权和领土完整，决不允许任何人、任何组织、任何政党、在任何时候、以任何形式、把任何一块中国领土从中国[IDC1]分裂出去[SD-3; TD-1&2]。我们[IDC1]不承诺[SD-3]放弃使用武力[ODC1]，保留采取一切必要措施的选项，针对的是外部势力干涉和极少数“台独”分裂分子及其分裂活动[ODCs2]，绝非针对台湾同胞[IDC2]。如果有人要把台湾从中国分裂出去[ODC3]，中国军队[IDC3]将不惜一切代价，坚决予以挫败[SD-3]，捍卫国家统一。

TT: China[IDC1] has the firm resolve and the ability to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will never allow the secession of any part of its territory by anyone, any organization or any political party by any means at any time[SD-3; TD-1&2]. We[IDC1] make no promise[SD-3] to renounce the use of force[ODC1], and reserve the option of taking all necessary measures. This is by no means targeted at our compatriots in Taiwan[IDC2], but at the interference of external forces and the very small number of “Taiwan independence” separatists and their activities[ODCs2]. The PLA[IDC3] will resolutely defeat[SD-3] anyone attempting to separate Taiwan from China[ODC3] and safeguard national unity at all costs.

<sup>3</sup> Same with “1”.

<sup>4</sup> Same with “1”.



Firstly, the opening sentence of the ST in Example 3 employs a powerful combination of spatial and temporal Distanciation strategies, which allows the speaker to significantly increase the symbolic distance from any potential attempt to separate Chinese territory—extending this distance almost infinitely across both spatial and temporal dimensions. Through the utilization of “literal translation”, this effect is retained in the TT, in which the spatial Distanciation is expressed through the perpetual refusal to allow any separation of Chinese territory by any entity, be it “individuals”, “organizations” or “parties”, and by “any means”, while the temporal Distanciation lies in the negative future tense construction “will never” and the time adverbial “at any time”. Secondly, the spatial Distanciation strategy in the second sentence has a dual function. It first positions the IDC entity as increasing its distance from the ODC entity by ruling out the possibility of renouncing the use of force with the aim to retain military deterrence. Subsequently, by preserving this deterrent posture, the IDC entity expands or at least maintains the distance from the ODC entities. However, the ST then clarifies that the use of force is “by no means targeted at the compatriots in Taiwan” (“绝非针对台湾同胞”). This clarification helps isolate the ODC entities in the same region (i.e. Taiwan separatists), thereby increasing spatial distance from them. The TT largely retains the original flavor using also “literal translation” method with a slight amplification via a “shift” translation technique: the verb phrase “不承诺” (literally “do not promise”) is rendered as “make no promise”, which conveys a more resolute and unequivocal tone than its literal version. Thirdly, the phrase “resolutely thwart separatists” (“坚决挫败分裂分子”) in the third sentence reflects a strategy of offensive defense against the ODC3 entity. Although the conditional structure is dropped and the IDC3 entity is specified as “the PLA” in the TT through a “shift translation”, the overall spatial Distanciation effect between the ST and TT remains largely consistent.

### 3.2 Distanciation Analysis of the Translation of National Security Discourse in Temporal Dimension

Example 4<sup>5</sup>

ST: 坚持永不[TD-2]称霸[ODC1]、永不[TD-2]扩张[ODC2]、永不[TD-2]谋求势力范围[ODC3]。这是新时代中国国防[IDC]的鲜明特征。

TT: Never[TD-2] Seeking **Hegemony**[ODC1], **Expansion**[ODC2] or **Spheres of Influence**[ODC3]. This is the distinctive feature of **China's national defense in the new era**[IDC].

Example 4 employs rhetorical parallelism through the repetition of three verbs “hegemonize” (“称霸”), “expand” (“扩张”) and “pursue” or “seek” (“谋求”) spheres of influence alongside the recurring use of “never” (“永不”). This structure generates a temporal Distanciation effect that symbolically increases the distance from these three actions laden by negative values (marked as ODC entities) almost infinitely across time, thus effectively presents the IDC entity's peace-oriented stance. The TT further strengthens the temporal Distanciation effect embedded in the original by applying nominalization (Fairclough, 1992:182) through a “shift translation”. In doing so, the parallel structure of three verbs is transformed into a single general verb followed by three abstract nouns—“hegemony”, “expansion”, and “spheres of influence”—which serves to extend the condition of already significant symbolic distancing.

Example 5

ST:

中华民族[IDC1]历来爱好和平[A-

IDC1]。近代以来，中国人民[IDC2]饱受侵略和战乱[ODCs]之苦，深感和平[A-IDC1]之珍贵、发展[A-

IDC2]之迫切，决不会[TD-1]把自己已经受过的悲惨遭遇强加于人。

TT: **The Chinese nation**[IDC1] has always loved **peace**[A-IDC1]. Since the beginning of modern times, **the Chinese people**[IDC2] have suffered from **aggressions and wars**[ODCs], and have learned the value of **peace**[A-IDC1] and the pressing need for **development**[A-IDC2]. Therefore, **China**[IDC3] will never[TD-1] inflict such sufferings on any other country.

In Example 5, the speaker adopts a narrative of historical suffering and a temporal Distanciation strategy expressed through the phrase “will never inflict” (“决不会...强加于人”)—to establish a moral position and construct the image of a peace-loving nation. This narrative invokes the Confucian principle of “Do not impose on others what you do not want others to impose on you”, which serves to dissociate China from aggression and warfare, while explicitly conveying its stance against hegemonism and the projection of its own historical traumas onto other countries. The peace-loving image this discourse projects to the international community emphasizes that, for China, peace is not a temporary tactic, but a cultural gene and a historical choice. In a broader context, the narrative articulates the deeper motivations behind China's commitment to peaceful development, counters the “China threat” theory, and seeks to dispel concerns about the belief that a stronger China will inevitably pursue hegemony. The translator(s) clearly grasp the original meaning and primarily rely on “literal translation” to retain the ST's intent. However, another translation technique “addition” is employed, as evidenced by the insertion of the logical connector “therefore”, which is otherwise implicit in the ST. By

<sup>5</sup> Same with “1”.

making this relation explicit, the TT enhances the causal logic and reinforces the reasoning behind the statement that “China will never inflict such sufferings on any other country.”

Example 6<sup>6</sup>

ST: 台湾[IDC1]是中国[IDC2]的一部分, 从来不是[TD-1]一个国家[ODC], 过去不是[TD-1], 今后更绝无可能[TD-1]。

TT: Taiwan[IDC1] is a part of China[IDC2]. It has never been[TD-1] and will never be[TD-1] a country[ODC].

In example 6, Taiwan as a part of China is recognized as an IDC entity, but Taiwan as a “country” is identified as an ODC entity. The speaker employs a “two-way” temporal Distanciation strategy that presents the ODC entity as growing increasingly remote in both past and future directions by strongly denying its “nationhood” in the past (“has never been”, “从来不是”) and in the future (“will never possibly be”, “今后绝无可能”), thus covering the “present”. The TT first adopts a “division translation” to render the initial clause in the ST as a separate sentence. It then applies an “omission” technique to drop “was not” (“过去不是”), likely because its meaning overlaps with “has never been”. Additionally, it simplifies the final clause “will never possibly be” to “will never be”. Overall, the TT rendering is formal, assertive, and concise. However, the emphatic nature of the future-oriented temporal denial in the ST—“今后更绝无可能” (literally, “it is even absolutely impossible”)—is weakened by translating it merely as “will never be”, which attenuates the general effect of temporal Distanciation. Crucially, whether considered practically or politically, future-oriented Distanciation carries greater significance than past-oriented Distanciation.

### 3.3 Distanciation Analysis of the Translation of National Security Discourse in Axiological Dimension

Example 7<sup>7</sup>

ST:

面对日益复杂的全球性安全挑战[ODC], 面对人类发展[IDC1]在十字路口何去何从的抉择, 中国[IDC2]坚信, 称霸扩张[A-ODCs]终将失败[TD-1], 安全繁荣[A-IDCs]应该共享[AP; TP]。

TT: Faced with global security challenges[ODC] that are becoming ever more intricate and choices that have to be made at a crossroads of human development[IDC1], China[IDC2] firmly believes that hegemony and expansion[A-ODCs] are doomed to failure[TD-1; AD-4], and security and prosperity[A-IDCs] shall be shared[AP; TP].

Example 7 begins by presenting a worsening plight faced by all (labeled as “ODC”) to evoke a sense of crisis, thereby rendering our response to it all the more urgent and essential for the future. Building on this, the speaker employs an axiological Distanciation strategy to position two sets of ideologies in opposition: one represented by “hegemony and expansion” (“称霸扩张”), symbolizing ODC values, and the other by “security and prosperity” (“安全繁荣”), reflecting IDC values. These contrasting concepts represent two competing visions of the future, and through this presentation, the addressees are prompted to make value judgement between them. Subsequently, the speaker applies a combination of temporal Distanciation strategy and proximization strategies, framing the former as temporally remote (“are destined to fail”, “终将失败”), and the latter as temporally and axiologically proximate to the deictic center. This framing is clearly designed to resonate with the addressees and solicit legitimization for the speaker’s proposals from them. The phrase “终将失败”, which plays a significant role in constructing linguistic conflict between axiological IDCs and ODCs, is rendered in the TT as “are doomed to fail” via “free translation”. Compared to the more neutral rendering “are destined to fail”, the choice of “doomed” introduces a stronger negative tone—one that conveys a sense of inevitable collapse, moral condemnation and possibly emotional undertones. This intensified rhetoric adds a further layer of axiological Distanciation to the phrase sharpening the opposition between the two sets of antagonistic ideologies. Moreover, also by using “free translation”, the modal verb “应该” (often translated as “should”) is rendered as “shall” in the TT. “Shall” carries a more formal and prescriptive tone than “should”, and may imply both a strong commitment and a moral imperative, which help construct the speaker as an advocate for shared security and prosperity.

Example 8<sup>8</sup>

ST:

中国[IDC]建设性参与朝鲜半岛问题、伊朗核问题、叙利亚问题等地区热点问题[ODCs]政治解决, 反对[AD-4]霸权主义、单边主义、双重标准[A-ODCs], 推动对话协商[A-IDCs]并全面认真执行联合国安理会决议。

<sup>6</sup> Excerpted from Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China (2025-06-26), 2025年6月国防部例行记者会文字实录, URL:

[http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/sy/tt\\_214026/16393572.html](http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/sy/tt_214026/16393572.html) (Access date: 2025-07-21); Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on June 26, 2025, URL: [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News\\_213114/NewsRelease/16395805.html?t=1751941694540](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/NewsRelease/16395805.html?t=1751941694540) (Access date: 2025-07-21).

<sup>7</sup> Same with “1”.

<sup>8</sup> Same with “1”.

TT: China[IDC] has played a constructive role in the political settlement of **regional hotspots such as the Korean Peninsula issue, the Iranian nuclear issue and Syrian issue**[ODCs]. China[IDC] **opposes**[AD-4] **hegemony, unilateralism and double standards**[A-ODCs], promotes **dialogues and consultations**[A-IDCs], and fully and earnestly implements UNSC resolutions.

The White Paper states that China unswervingly endorses the central role of the United Nations in international affairs, upholds multilateralism and advances democracy in international relations. Accordingly, it firmly “opposes” (“反对”) the values that contradict its own, including “hegemonism”, “unilateralism” and “double standards”. China believes that “dialogues” and “consultation” (“对话协商”) are the appropriate means to resolve issues (marked as “ODCs”). This stance pushes the ODC values away along the axiological dimension while promoting the IDC ones. The translation in Example 8 retains the effect of the axiological Distanciation strategy inherent in the ST by employing the approach of “literal translation”.

Example 9<sup>9</sup>

ST:

中国[IDC]坚持在和平共处五项原则[A-IDC1]基础上发展同各国的友好合作·尊重各国人民自主选择发展道路的权利·主张通过平等对话和谈判协商[A-IDCs2]解决国际争端[ODC1], 反对[AD-4]干涉别国内政[A-ODC1], 反对[AD-4]恃强凌弱[A-ODC2], 反对[AD-4]把自己的意志强加于人[A-ODC3]。中国[IDC]坚持结伴[A-IDC3]不[AD-4]结盟[A-ODC4], 不参加[SD-3]任何军事集团[ODC2], 反对[AD-4]侵略扩张[A-ODCs5], 反对[AD-4]动辄使用武力或以武力相威胁[A-ODCs6]。

TT: China[IDC] is committed to developing friendly cooperation with all countries on the basis of **the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence**[A-IDC1]. It respects the rights of all peoples to independently choose their own development path, and stands for the settlement of **international disputes**[ODC1] through **equal dialogue, negotiation and consultation**[A-IDCs2]. China[IDC] **is opposed to**[AD-4] **interference in the internal affairs of others**[A-ODC1], **abuse of the weak by the strong**[A-ODC2], and **any attempt to impose one's will on others**[A-ODC3]. China[IDC] **advocates partnerships**[A-IDC3] **rather than**[AD-3] **alliances**[A-ODC4] and **does not join**[SD-3] **any military bloc**[ODC2]. It **stands against**[AD-3] **aggression and expansion**[A-ODCs5], and **opposes**[AD-4] **arbitrary use or threat of arms**[A-ODCs6].

Through the use of axiological Distanciation strategy in Example 9, the speaker frames the antagonism between ideological IDC and ODC entities, thereby increasing the axiological distance between the IDC entity (i.e. “China”) and various ODC values. The TT not only fully represents the discursive strategy used in the ST and those conceptual entities, both IDC and ODC, in the ST, but also enhances the axiological distanciation effect by shifting many of these entities from verb to noun form through the application of “shift translation”. This rendering redirects the semantic focus from actions that embody ODC values to abstract concepts that represent them, rendering these entities easier to either promote or object. This translation approach supports the speaker's delivery of two key messages. First, by highlighting the IDC values (labeled as A-IDC1 and A-IDCs2) as proper principles for dealing with international relations, while opposing the ODC values (marked as A-ODC1, 2, 3 and A-ODCs 5 and 6), the speaker makes it clear that China rejects the logic of hegemony and advocates for a world order in which all countries, regardless of size or strength, are equal. It further emphasizes China's commitment to peace by distancing itself from warfare and confrontation. Second, by expressing commitment to “partnership” rather than “alliance”, and asserting that it “will not join any military bloc,” the speaker challenges the traditional bias that “once a country grows strong, it will inevitably seek hegemony”. This reassures the international community that China will not follow the old path of “military expansion” or “bloc confrontation”, but instead will pursue a development model based on win-win cooperation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Building on Cap's Proximity Theory and Wicczorek's Distanciation Theory, this study proposes the STAD model and an analytical framework for Distanciation analysis in translation. It examines the Distanciation strategies in China's national defense discourse and their translations, as well as the translation strategies employed, thereby demonstrating the explanatory power of the proposed theoretical model. The findings indicate that the Distanciation effect in the TT is often stronger than in the ST. “Shift translation” and “free translation” are the most commonly used methods for achieving such enhancement, while “literal translation” can effectively reproduce the Distanciation strategies of the ST. In a few instances, in pursuit of greater formality and conciseness in expression, translators have adopted “omission translation” or “free translation”, which, intentionally or unintentionally, weakened the Distanciation effect of the ST. All

<sup>9</sup> Same with “1”.



in all, the ST effectively articulates the defensive nature of China's national defense policy and constructs a peaceful image of Chinese national defense through the use of Distanciation strategies. The TT strongly represents such effects through various translation approaches.

Translation can be viewed as a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic reconstruction of the symbolic distance embedded in the ST. DT is capable of accurately identifying, describing and explaining conceptual movements, making it highly applicable to translation studies. Translators need to recognize the symbolic distance patterns constructed in the ST and select equivalent strategies in the TT. Differences between the ST and TT can provide valuable insights into the translator's ideological stance or other influencing factors. Future research may further integrate PT and DT to establish a more comprehensive and inclusive theoretical framework for examining the dynamic increase and decrease of symbolic distance; deepen the integration of DT with translation theory to enhance its applicability and explanatory power in translation studies; and refine the identification of specific translation approaches to develop more effective guidelines for translation practice.

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