

## Stance in News Discourse: Analysis of Two News Reports in Daily Newspapers in China and the US

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### Abstract

The recent Sino-US trade disputes add to the long list of economic and political conflicts between the two largest economies in the world. However, although a trade war is now put on hold with the two countries continuing their negotiations, a different war is fought by major news and business press in both countries to justify the actions taken by each side and gain support from the international community. It therefore becomes a topic of interest as to how the news media make deliberate language choices to influence their readers with their stances and attitudes. This study compares two news reports in daily newspapers in China and the US on a significant trade dispute between China and the US: US imposing safeguard duties on tires from China in 2009. Through Transitivity and Modality analysis, this study aims to demonstrate how news media from rival countries make language choices to help reconstruct events and how different stances and attitudes are implied so as to manipulate the readers to interpret information in an intended way.

**Key words:** Stance; News reports; Transitivity; Modality

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### INTRODUCTION

On 22 March 2018, the Trump administration announced an intent to impose tariffs of up to US\$60 billion on

Chinese goods in an attempt to address the US's trade deficit with China. In response Beijing immediately announced plans to introduce retaliatory tariffs on main US exports including agriculture, automobiles and aircraft. Although a possible trade war is 'put on hold' with two countries continuing trade negotiations, this event certainly adds to the long list of frequent trade frictions between the world's two largest economies since China's first bid for WTO accession in 1986.

With its entry into WTO in 2001, China has participated more fully into the world economy and deepened its bilateral trade and investment relationship with the US. However, while there has been increasing interdependence between the US and China, rapid shifts in their economic relationship have sparked frequent conflicts (Hufbauer & Woollacott, 2010). Since 1986, both the volume and imbalance of US merchandise trade with China have continued to increase significantly: in 2009, the US imported \$296.37 billion and exported \$69.5 billion and the absolute dollar gap between imports and exports was \$226.87 billion, while in 2017 the numbers have respectively reached \$505.6 billion and \$130.37 billion and the gap has widened to \$375.23 billion (Statista, n.d.).

The cumulated trade flows between the US and China have created many trade disputes, for example safeguard duties imposed on imports of certain steel products from China in 2002, antidumping duties imposed on coated free-sheet paper from China in 2007, safeguard duties imposed on certain tires from China in 2009, etc. These trade disputes not only led to political frictions between the two countries, but also triggered a "war" between major news and business press in the US and in China, with frequent coverage debating rising US trade deficit with China. This makes an interesting topic for discussion in terms of how the war in newspapers is fought through representations of the same event.

In this study, the researcher intends to focus on *The New York Times*' and *China Daily*'s reports of a significant

trade dispute between China and the US: US imposing safeguard duties on Chinese tires in 2009. The content of two texts by China and US newspapers will be analyzed in an attempt to understand how, through deliberate language choices, the press can provide the readers with a view of the event as seen or understood by the writers and subtly lead the readers to accept their side of the story.

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## 1. US DUTIES ON CHINESE TIRES AND THE TWO NEWS REPORTS

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In September 2009 US President Barack Obama made a decision to impose safeguard duties of up to 35 percent on tire imports from China. This action evoked a stronger than usual reaction from China and was reported by major English newspapers around the world.

Two news reports covering this trade dispute are chosen as samples to study how language choices can influence the representation of an event. Text A (Andrews, 2009) is from *The New York Times* and Text B (Xinhua, 2009) *China Daily* (Appendix 1).

*The New York Times* (NYT) and *China Daily* (CD) are both national newspapers ‘in which and through which national agenda is articulated and disseminated’ (Li, 2009). NYT is widely regarded as one of the most well-respected newspapers in the US and is considered to influence the contents of other mass media in the US (Gitlin, 1980). CD is the primary national English-language newspaper in China, which is a principle representative of the Chinese press to non-Chinese speaking consumers of Chinese media. It is interesting to explore how NYT and CD can recount the same event differently.

Text A focuses on informing the public of the US decision (imposing tariffs on imported tires from China) with 23 sentences and 590 words while Text B presents to the world China’s reactions to this act with 22 sentences and 594 words. They are quite similar in their readers and their relationship with readers in that they both target people who read English newspapers, although NYT’s target readers include most US citizens while CD focuses more on overseas Chinese and the international community. They are both written articles. All the above factors make the two newspaper reports perfect samples for comparison.

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## 2. TRANSITIVITY AND MODALITY

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Halliday’s systemic functional theory (1994) views language as a rich resource people use to accomplish their purposes by expressing meaning in context. It claims that people choose from a variety of options in order to create a text, written or spoken, and these choices made by language users decide the meaning of

the text. Thompson (2014, p.30) mentions three primary functions or meanings of language: using language to talk about the experiences of the surrounding world, or experiential; using language to interact with other people, or interpersonal; and organizing language to fit with other messages and its context, or textual.

### 2.1 Transitivity

According to Thompson (2014), the experiential perspective sees language as ‘a set of resources for referring to entities in the world and the ways in which those entities act on or relate to each other’ (p. 30). Transitivity is a key analytic component of the experiential function. It looks at how meaning is represented in the Text and shows how language users encode in language their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them (Halliday, 1994, p. 106).

Thompson (2014, p.92) labels the ‘contents’ of clauses in terms of ‘processes’, which are the core of the clause and are typically expressed by verbal groups; ‘participants’, which are involved in processes and realized by noun phrases; and ‘circumstances’, which are associated with the process and expressed by adverbial and prepositional phrases. The ‘processes’ or the verbal groups are at the heart of the clause and they could be further classified into Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioral and Existential processes according to whether they represent physical actions, states of mind, saying, or states of being.

Fowler (1991) suggests that when alternative patterns are permitted in the language, different values come to be associated with different language choices that have ideological implications. In this paper, Transitivity analysis is chosen as an analytical tool to offer insights into how the two texts represent the agents and thus uncover motivation, interpretations and/or bias of the newspapers.

### 2.2 Modality

The interpersonal metafunction is about using language to interact with other people. Modality as an analytical tool can help to identify how writer’s own views on things in the world are expressed and thus influence others’ behaviors. According to Halliday (1994, p.75), “modality means the speaker’s judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying.” According to Verscheuren (1999) “Modality . . . involves the many ways in which attitudes can be expressed towards the ‘pure’ reference-and-prediction content of an utterance, signaling factuality, degrees of certainty or doubt, vagueness, possibility, necessity, and even permission and obligation” (quoted in Fairclough, 2003, p.165). Fairclough (2003, p.165) sees “modality in terms of a relationship between speaker or writer, and representations”.

Modality is seen as what the writer commits himself to with respect to what is true and what is necessary (Thompson, 2014, p.70). Epistemic modality expresses degrees of confidence towards what is being said, indicating the truth of a proposition or the possibilities of something taking place or having taken place. Deontic modality is concerned with attitude about what people should do or are allowed to do, which varies on a scale of strength in terms of obligation and permission.

In this study Modality is also used to compare and contrast the two texts, particularly about the part on the influences and possible consequences of the US decision. With Modality analysis, we can see how the writers convey their attitude to their readers with their language choices.

For the convenience of analysis, I have first numbered the ranking clauses as well as embedded ones in both texts, which generate 64 clauses in Text A and 66 clauses in Text B (as can be seen in Appendix 1). Then processes, participants and circumstances for transitivity analysis and markers of modalization have been labeled.

### 3. TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS

**Table 1**  
**Process Types**

Process type	Text A	(%)	Text B	(%)
Material	35	(53.1%)	29	(40.9%)
Verbal	15	(23.4%)	24	(36.5%)
Relational (identifying)	5	(12.5%)	4	(12.1%)
Relational (Attributive)	3		4	
Mental (emotive)	1		1	
Mental (cognitive)	5	(11%)	3	(7.6%)
Mental (perceptive)	0		1	
Mental (desiderative)	1		0	
Existential	0	(0%)	2	(3%)
Total	64	(100%)	66	(100%)

### 3.2 Participants

In this part, participants in both texts are grouped, counted and analyzed (Table 2). What needs mentioning is that some participants are omitted because they only represent a very small proportion of the roles and are considered not significant for this analysis.

A Study of Participants in Both Texts Starts With Similarities.

Firstly, both texts show a high frequency of participants including *US*, *China*, *tariffs*, *tires from China*, and *the decision*, which is quite understandable because

### 3.1 Process Types

Table 1 below provides a preliminary insight into some general similarities and differences between the two texts.

In both texts, material and verbal processes outweigh other processes, which are typical of the news report register. The two texts also have similar amount of relational processes, but what this suggests may require a more detailed look into the clauses. (See discussion on Participants)

In terms of differences, firstly, Text B strikingly outnumbers Text A in verbal processes while Text A has proportionally more material processes. This may indicate that Text A has a greater focus on doing while Text B focuses more on saying. This difference confirms what we already know about the Field of the two texts: Text A is about US actions with regard to the tariffs and Text B about China's opinions and reactions to these actions. Besides, Text A has more mental processes, especially with the cognitive sub-category which indicates the US initiative in making the decision. The absence of existential processes in Text A also deserves attention, which will be analyzed later.

both reports are about the decision made by the US to impose special tariffs on tires imported from China.

Besides the high frequency participants mentioned above, we can also find other participants that are influenced by or have an influence on this event, most of which are groups or people engaging in verbal processes and play the role of Sayer (11 instances in each text). This may indicate that both texts intend to show their objectivity by quoting from different parties to support the actions of the US (Text A) or opinions of China (Text B).

**Table 2**  
**A Comparison of Participant Roles (Text A VS Text B)**

Roles	Initiator	Actor	Sayer	Sensor	Token	Carrier	Value	P	B	Existent	Verbi	Target	Goal	Total
US	1/0	5/4	0/1	0/1										6/6
Obama	1/0	9/0	3/0	2/0		1/0								16/0
China		1/3	0/8	1/1										2/12
Tariffs		2/1			0/1							2/1	8/1	12/5
Tires from China		3/4			0/1				4/0				3/3	10/8
The decision		1/7			2/2	1/0	1/0	2/3				2/0	2/0	9/15
Workers		5/0					1/0					3/0		9/0
ITC			4/0	1/0										5/0
TIA			2/0											2/0
USI			2/0											2/0
Senator			3/0											3/0
Leaders		0/1											0/1	0/2
LAT report			0/1											0/1
Economists/researchers			0/4											0/4
US distributo				0/7										0/7
American consumer		0/4		0/1					0/1				0/1	0/7
Protectionism					0/1		0/3			0/1	0/1			0/6
Price		0/1											0/1	0/2
Interests of China													0/2	0/2
Interests of US													0/1	0/1

Note.

- ITC: The International Trade Commission
- TIA: The Tire Industry Association
- USI: United Steelworkers International
- LAT: Los Angeles Times
- P: Phenomenon
- B: Beneficiary
- Verbi: Verbiage

The objectivity of both news reports can also be identified through the fact that no writer role can be found in both texts, which seems to suggest that the newspapers only do their job by faithfully reporting what's happening without imposing what they think on their readers.

However, what's worth examining is the differences between the two texts, which tell us whether these reports are truly objective as they appear to be.

### 3.2.1 US, China, Tariffs, Tires From China, and the Decision

The first difference lies with *Obama* as a major participant role which appears frequently in Text A but is absent in Text B. This is probably because although *NYT* as a national newspaper makes the difference between the country in general and the person who speaks for the country, *CD* sees President Obama as a representative of the US and thus includes it in the role *US*. This reveals the influence of different stances on participant roles.

If we put *Obama* and *US* in the same group in Text A, we'll have 22 instances of *US*, which makes it the dominant participant in the *NYT* report. In these instances, *US* is used as Initiator, Actor, Sayer and Sensor which are all roles that potentially involve greatest impact on events (Initiator causing another entity to engage in a material process, Actor impacting on a Goal, Sayer

showing opinions toward phenomenon and Sensor in Text A making decisions). *China* in Text A, in contrast, only appears twice. The same pattern can be identified in Text B, in which *China* is used most frequently as a role that imposes influence on other roles, with 12 instances as Actor, Sensor and Sayer, while *US* is mentioned only 6 times.

This difference in the dominant participants as compared to their counterparts in the two texts leads us to further confirm that although newspapers claim to be objective, they represent happenings and thus influence the readers to see these happenings from a certain perspective in line with the stance they take: in this case, *NYT* taking the US side and *CD* China.

### 3.2.2 Other Participants

If we look at the rest of the participants in Table 2, we can find another distinctive difference: there are more participants in Text B (10 with 27 instances) than in Text A (5 with 21 instances). Unlike Text A, participants in Text B do not involve Chinese companies or Chinese people, which seems to suggest that *CD* may have provided a more all-rounded and unbiased view from different parties influenced by or have an influence on this event. However, does this mean that *CD* is more objective than *NYT*?

**Table 3**  
**Voices in Text A and Text B**

	Text A		Text B	
<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Against</b>
Manufacture	TIA	ITC	LAT report	Economists
ITC				The world/leaders
USI				US distributors
Senator				Americans
19 instances	2 instances	1 instance	1 instance	20 instances

To answer this question, we can further group these participants according to whether they are for or against the US decision as is shown in Table 3. An analysis of participant roles reveals that although both claim to be objective in reporting the same event, Text A quotes more from the “pro” side and Text B “con” side in an attempt to convince the readers of why the tariffs should or should not be imposed and win them over to their respective views or stances.

### 3.3 Protectionism

**Table 4**  
**Relational and Existential Processes in Text A and Text B**

Text	Clause	Token	Process	Value
A	5	The decision	Is	A major <b>victory</b>
B	1	US tire duties	(Are)	“Serious trade <b>protectionism</b> ”
B	9	(This decision)	Is	“Serious trade <b>protectionism</b> ”
B	32	The tire case	Is	An abuse of <b>protectionist</b> measures
Text	Clause	Value	Process	Token
B	4	A US decision	(Was)	To impose special <b>protectionist</b> tariffs
Text	Clause	Process	Value	
B	39	Is	Rising <b>protectionism</b>	

As we can see from clause 5 of Text A, *NYT* regards the decision as a major victory for the union of tire workers (United Steelworkers) as if they are fighting a war. Although not made explicit here, this relational process indicates how much pressure Chinese tire imports put on the workers and thus gives China an evil image.

In contrast, Text B constructs an understanding of the decision opposite to that in *NYT*, judging the tire duties as “serious trade protectionism”, “protectionist measures” and “protectionist” tariffs.

Without directly confronting each other, China and US have their evaluations and stances manifested in

The participant *protectionism* also deserves attention as it appears 6 times in Text B but is absent in Text A. To comment on this, we need to take a closer look at relational and existential processes.

Relational processes describe an entity in relation to another entity or an entity to a quality and signify the acts of classification and judgment (Thompson, 2014). The following clauses with identifying or attributive relationals allow us to see how each text establishes particular relationships among various participants (Table 4).

their respective newspapers by classifying each other in negative associations in relational processes.

An existential process in clause 39 of Text B has *protectionism* as a participant too, which suggests the mere existence of it and strengthens its “presentational” meaning. *CD* uses this process to simply announce the situation (rising protectionism) in the US with an attitude that this is not something that needs to be questioned or discussed.

### 3.4 Circumstances

To conclude the Transitivity analysis, we will look at Circumstances conveyed in the texts (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Degree and Quality Circumstantials in Text A and Text B**

Text	Clause	Circumstance: degree	Circumstance: quality
B	2	Strongly opposes	
B	10	Strongly dissatisfied	
B	25	2.2 percent	
B	37	More and more important	
B	24	Declined 16 percent	
B	65	Well beyond their useful life	
A	20	At less than their true cost	
A	31	To 16.7 percent	
A	50	To 30 percent and 25 percent	
B	29		Tires mainly go for
B	36		Will ultimately hurt
B	15		Firmly protect
A	20		Competing unfairly
A	28		Produce tires cheaply
A	50		Tariffs actually imposed

Two patterns can be identified. The first is the large amount of Circumstances of location in both texts that relate to *When* and *Where* of the happenings in both reports. The second pattern is the higher frequency of Degree and Quality circumstances in Text B (9 instances out of 40) as compared to Text A (6 instances out of 43). These two categories both answer the ‘*How*’ question and respectively describes ‘*How much*’ and ‘*In what way*’. This difference probably comes out of the need for more adjuncts about manners to show China’s reaction to the US decision, with ‘strongly’ describing how strong China reacts to the decision, ‘ultimately’ predicting the negative

consequences and ‘firmly’ indicating China’s resolution (Table 5).

#### 4. MODALITY ANALYSIS

Through various means of Modality, the speaker’s opinion or the validity of the proposition can be conveyed (Butt et Al., 2000, p.89).

Both texts report the influences and consequences of the US decision. The modality analysis only focuses on these influences and consequences and attempts to find out the writers’ attitudes conveyed to the readers (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Modality in Text A and Text B**

Text	Clause	Modality
A	9 But China is <b>certain</b> to be antagonized by the decision	Certainty
A	6 American companies or workers harmed by imports from China <b>can</b> ask the government for protection	Permission
A	5 arguing that they <b>will</b> not preserve American jobs	Probability – high
A	7 <b>will</b> instead cause manufacturers to relocate plants	Probability – high
B	5 China <b>would</b> reserve all rights to take responsive actions	Probability – median
B	34 It not only <b>hurts</b> the interests of China, but also those of the US	Absolute certainty
B	36 The protectionist move by the Obama administration <b>will</b> ...	Probability – high
B	42 the harm <b>will</b> be inevitably passed on to consumers	Probability – high
B	43 The US <b>must</b> stop taking decisions against China	Obligation – high
B	46 It <b>would</b> also send a wrong signal to the world	Probability – median
B	47 It <b>could</b> trigger a chain reaction of trade protectionist	Probability – median
B	48 (trade protectionist measures) <b>will</b> slow world economic ...	Probability – high
B	51 The restrictions <b>would</b> raise prices, hurting cash-strapped ...	Probability – median
B	53 Tariffs <b>will</b> not create manufacturing jobs in the United States ...	Probability – high
B	60 the biggest hit <b>would</b> be felt by American consumers	Probability – median
B	62 (consumers) <b>can’t</b> afford US brands	Ability

In both texts we can see the modal verb *will*, which indicates a high level of certainty and may suggest that both writers are very confident as to what will happen in the future as a result of the US decision. The adjective *certain* (clause 9) in Text A is used to indicate absolute confidence of China’s strong reaction to the decision, and what seems to confirm this assertion, is the absence of modality in clause 34 of Text B, in which the negative consequences on China and US interests are deliberately presented as a fact, rather than a possibility.

5 instances of modal verb *would* in Text B show less probability in that they are more hypothetical. This choice of modality marker regards the decision as a condition instead of a fact and may imply that China’s urging the US to think twice before actually taking the action.

The only word that shows high degree of obligation is *must* in Text B, demanding the US to stop such actions. This suggests a concrete attitude from China and demands actions to be taken by the US.

Through the careful choice of Modality, Text A, quite straightforwardly, shows that the US has all influences and consequences anticipated and put under control,

while Text B shows more complex attitudes: by being very certain about the negative consequences, it suggests China’s strong objection to this decision; by using *would* to indicate conditions, it invites the US to think twice whether they are ready to take the consequences; by employing the strong obligatory *must*, it states China’s concrete attitude and its demands for the US to take actions. Through the combination of modal markers, *CD* invites readers to think about the possible consequences while reading and tries to convince readers that this decision brings no good to any party involved at all.

#### CONCLUSION

Newspapers are not as objective as they might claim themselves to be. Instead they can report the same event quite differently as a result of the different stances they adopt.

This study has explored the reconstruction of the same event by news media from China and the US and how stance is suggested through deliberate language choices. Two news reports from *New York Times* and *China Daily* are examined and Transitivity and Modality analysis have

been conducted to study how they represent the special tariff event differently. This study demonstrates that the language choices made are goal-dependent and imply the stance and attitude that the writers of these newspapers take. It is also through language choices that newspapers not only provide information but also manipulate the readers to interpret information in a certain way.

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## APPENDIX 1: TEXT A FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES* AND TEXT B FROM *CHINA DAILY*

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### Text A

#### U.S. Adds Tariffs on Chinese Tires

Published September 11, 2009

WASHINGTON — In a break with the trade policies of his predecessor, President Obama announced on Friday night that he would impose a 35 percent tariff on automobile and light-truck tires imported from China. The decision is a major victory for the United Steelworkers, the union that represents American tire workers. And Mr. Obama cannot afford to jeopardize his relationship with major unions as he pushes Congress to overhaul the nation's health care system.

But China is certain to be antagonized by the decision, made less than two weeks before Mr. Obama will come face to face with Chinese leaders at a summit meeting in Pittsburgh for the Group of 20 industrialized and fast-growing emerging nations.

The decision signals the first time that the United States has invoked a special safeguard provision that was part of its agreement to support China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001.

Under that safeguard provision, American companies or workers harmed by imports from China can ask the government for protection simply by demonstrating that American producers have suffered a "market disruption" or a "surge" in imports from China.

Unlike more traditional anti-dumping cases, the government does not need to determine that a country is competing unfairly or selling its products at less than their true cost.

The International Trade Commission had already determined that Chinese tire imports were disrupting the \$1.7 billion market and recommended that the president impose the new tariffs. Members of the commission, an independent government agency, voted 4-2 on June 29 to recommend that President Obama impose tariffs on Chinese tires for three years. Mr. Obama had until this coming Thursday to make a decision.

American imports of Chinese tires tripled between 2004 and 2008, and China's share of the American market grew to 16.7%, from 4.7%, according to the United States Trade Representative. Four American tire factories closed in 2006 and 2007, and several more are set to close this year.

The Tire Industry Association has opposed the tariffs, arguing that they will not preserve American jobs but will instead cause manufacturers to relocate plants to other countries where they can produce tires cheaply.

President George W. Bush received four similar recommendations from the trade commission, the most recent one involving steel pipe in December 2005, but he rejected all of those recommendations. Under the law, the president is allowed to accept or reject the commission's recommendations.

"The president decided to remedy the clear disruption to the U.S. tire industry based on the facts and the law in this case," the president's spokesman, Robert Gibbs, said in a statement Friday night.

Mr. Gibbs said the United States, which already imposes a 4 percent tariff on Chinese tires, would impose an additional tariff of 35% for one year. The tariff will be reduced to 30% in the second year and 25% in the third year. The tariff is to take effect on September 26.

The trade commission proposed higher tariffs than the president actually imposed, recommending an initial levy of 55%.

The president of United Steelworkers International, Leo W. Gerard, applauded Mr. Obama's decision, saying, "The president sent the message that we expect others to live by the rules, just as we do."

Senator Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat who had pressed for the tariffs, also praised the decision.

He said in a statement, "If American workers and manufacturers are going to compete in the global market, they need to have a government that uses trade enforcement tools."

(23 sentences, 590 words, 64 clauses)

### Text B

#### US tire duties "serious trade protectionism"

Updated 2009-09-12 17:00

BEIJING China strongly opposes a US decision made Friday night to impose special protectionist tariffs on tire imports from China, Ministry of Commerce (MOC) spokesman Yao Jian said Saturday.

Yao said China has held negotiations with the US over the case but the US still sticks to this decision, which is

serious trade protectionism, with which China is strongly dissatisfied.

The Ministry said the US had violated the WTO rule by this decision, and also its relevant commitments made on the G-20 financial summit.

Yao said China would reserve all rights to take responsive actions to firmly protect the interests of Chinese companies.

According to Los Angeles Times report Saturday, within 15 days, the US would add a duty of 35 percent in the first year, 30 percent in the second and 25 percent in the third on passenger vehicle and light-truck tires from China.

The report said the decision came after the US International Trade Commission determined that a surge of Chinese-made tires had disrupted the domestic market and cost Attribute thousands of jobs in the US.

The Ministry said on its website Saturday the US lacked bases for the case because tire products exported to the US from China had actually declined 16 percent in the first of this year, compared to the same period last year. China's tire exports to US in 2008 only rose 2.2 percent from 2007.

It said the business situation of the US tire producers has shown no apparent changes after the entry of Chinese products. There exists no direct competition between China's tire products and the US-made ones as China's tires mainly go for the US maintenance market.

Leaders from around the globe have reached consensus to oppose trade protectionism since the outbreak of the financial crisis. But the tire case, lacking factual bases is an abuse of protectionist measures. It not only hurts the interests of China, but also those of the US, the Ministry said.

The protectionist move by the Obama administration will ultimately hurt the US-China trade relations, which are becoming more and more important due to the global financial crisis, some economists warned.

"There is rising protectionism in the US purpose against Chinese goods," said Derek Scissors, a research fellow at the Heritage foundation's Asian Studies Center, noting that the harm will be inevitably passed on to consumers.

"The US must stop taking decisions against China, even small ones, without putting forth an explicit trade policy, which we have thus far failed to do," he told Xinhua.

It would also send a wrong signal to the world ahead of the upcoming Group of 20 nations in Pittsburgh Sept. 24-25, and could trigger a chain reaction of trade protectionist measures that will slow world economic recovery, according to the website statement.

The tariffs were also strongly opposed by US tire distributors and retailers, who said the restrictions would raise prices, hurting cash-strapped consumers.

"Tariffs will not create manufacturing jobs in the United States," said Jim Mayfield, president of Del-Nat Tire Corp., which sells private-label tires, including Chinese-made imports.

He said for the past 15 years, major US producers had focused on higher profit and better performing tires instead of what industry insiders call "tier three tires" that service lower end and second-hand automobiles.

With tariffs imposed, the biggest hit would be felt by American consumers who buy 50-dollar Chinese-made tires and can't afford US brands that cost upwards of 150 dollars, warned many distributors.

Some low-income consumers are stretching their tires well beyond their useful life, said Mayfield.

(22 sentences, 594 words, 66 clauses)