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**When Pericles Met Goujian:
Forestalling the Star-Crossed Future of Ancient Greek and Chinese “Traps”**

By:

Keith W. Benedict

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army

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by Keith W. Benedict

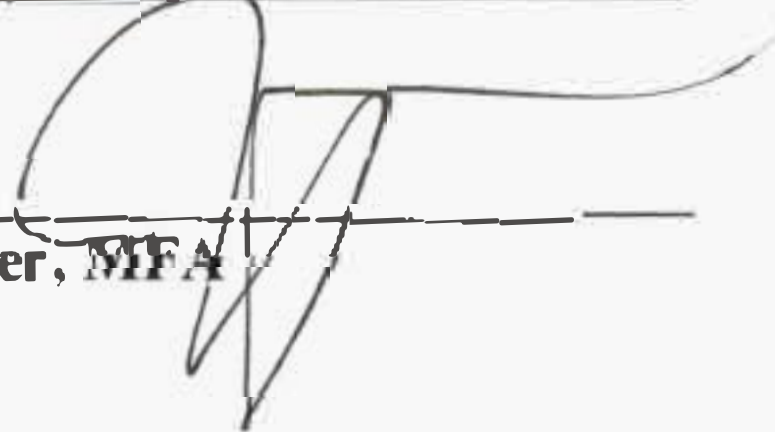
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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Abstract

As the United States reorients from its unipolar moment and returns to great power competition, the People's Republic of China has already entrenched along asymmetric axes prescribed within its "Three Warfares." A war of words is also well underway. Critical discourse analysis of the two great powers' recent strategic communique arguably corroborates Graham Allison's concerns. Still, his *Thucydides Trap* hypothesis offers insufficient explanatory power regarding the existential hazards of imminent East-West confrontation. US ethnocentrism, exacerbated by Allison's conjuring of Hellenic parallels, introduces biases that may overlook Chinese strategic culture and its underwritten narrative. Examining the documents and speeches as strategic internal communications directed at the Chinese population rather than as wholly international rhetoric reveals an even more ominous trajectory. Multifaceted critical discourse analysis of the ongoing Indo-Pacific dialectic reveals an influential and compelling historical Chinese narrative relating to the ancient conflict between Goujian of Yue and Fuchai of Wu that invokes deep allegorical power foretelling a vengeful quest. Recent bellicose rhetoric from the US has amplified the effectiveness and provided proverbial ammunition for the domestic Chinese narrative, but the United States can mitigate the risk of unwittingly triggering war and evading the Zhao Ye Trap by forging a path towards mutual understanding.

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Dedication

For my grandparents and all of those of the Greatest Generation loved and lost that endured the effects of the last time the world devolved into a tectonic conflict.

John William Benedict (US Army)

Yvonne LaTulippe Benedict

James Warren McClure (US Navy)

Lois Howe McClure

Merton Edward Ricker (US Army Air Corps, US Air Force)

May those of us contending with the tremors of the twenty-first century learn from and honor the sacrifice of our forebears by emplacing relevant seismic sensors and by building resilient structures and innovative devices to preserve life and liberty for generations that follow.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I want to conclude with a quote from Shakespeare: 'It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.' China and the United States can work together to avoid the so-called Thucydides Trap. There is no predestined fate for the world. The future of China-US relations, and the future of the world, depend on what vision we embrace and what choice we make. —PRC Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng, January 28, 2021¹

Where words lead, actions tend to follow. Influential minds spanning millennia and continents have espoused logic prescribing environment-thought-word-action symbioses. Whether deemed correlative or causational, such treatises ascribed to numerous authors and dignitaries have ultimately found reinforcement through modern science. Within individuals, exposure to stimuli drives the acquisition of *episteme*, knowledge, that informs internal rationalization of subsequent words and actions as they become habit. In a communal environment, an individual's cognition becomes further influenced by relationships and the perceived benefits of accessing socially constructed identity and power. The dynamic then allows those with the benefit of knowledge or a position of power to wittingly influence the cognition, knowledge, and habits of others.

In the expanse of international relations, such positional power resounds. Nations with access and influence can devise and induce acceptable behaviors, whether to consolidate power within one's in-group or, as necessary, to use power or force to expand markets, to coerce detractors, or to extinguish competition. Such power provides those that wield it the ability to constrain the autonomy of other groups, censure unwanted behavior within another nation's populace, and install incentives that ultimately reform the habits and, eventually, the socially constructed identities of others. In a globalized

¹ Le Yucheng, "Anything is Possible When China and the United States Choose to Cooperate" (speech, Vision China, January 28, 2021), http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1849233.shtml.

world, as in the Melian dialogue described by Thucydides, the strong often do “what they can,” relegating those with less power to “do what they must.”²

For the past seventy years, the United States has benefitted from placement atop an international system primarily of its design. At the end of the Second World War, as the sole possessor of atomic weaponry and one of few large economies intact, the US spearheaded the creation of the United Nations, NATO, the Bretton Woods agreement, and what eventually became the World Trade Organization, among other international organizations. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the outcome of the Cold War, President Bill Clinton’s strategy of “Engagement and Enlargement” sought to export liberal markets in anticipation that democratic principles and unalienable rights would germinate.³ The US then experimented with its self-conceived notion of indispensability, becoming increasingly involved with efforts to curb genocide, sanction unacceptable government actions, and, in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001, to induce regime change.

After almost two decades of expeditionary actions endeavoring to contain terrorism and rogue regimes with minimal success addressing its root conditions, the US now finds itself within what Graham Allison began marketing as a *Thucydides Trap* in 2015.⁴ Comparatively depleted from its unipolar burden, the US roused from the drone of prolonged conflict in the Middle East to find the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on an ambitious quest to develop domestically and, seemingly, to attain its self-perceived

² Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book V, Chapter XVII.

³ U.S. President, “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement” (Government Printing Office, February 1995), <https://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1995.pdf>.

⁴ Graham Allison, “The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?” *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>.

rightful status atop the world order. Based upon the Harvard Belfer Center's analysis of sixteen historic power transitions, twelve resulting in conventional war, Allison has suggested the two powerful countries risk following suit, succumbing to "power transition" tensions scholars have long identified as a hazardous inflection point.⁵

The so-called Thucydides Trap has helped proliferate analysis of how leaders in both nations could mitigate the likelihood, or at least contain the effects, of potential armed conflict. Beyond Allison's article and book published outlining his assessment, others like Stephen Chan, Dong Wang, Travis Tanner, and Alan Misenheimer have provided varying perspectives on the clash's purported "inevitability."⁶ Allison's harmonizing parable with probable promoted ominous, fearmongering clickbait, leading to wide publicity and debate in periodicals like *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The Diplomat*.⁷ The debate spurred by such a consequential prognosis also led several national leaders to choose to acknowledge its existence to interested audiences, albeit broadly discounting its overall determinism.⁸ While PRC President Xi Jinping dismissed the analogy as early as 2015, Graham Allison posted commentary that US Vice President

⁵ Graham Allison, *Destined for War. Can America and China Escape the Thucydides' Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2017).

⁶ Stephan Chan, *Thucydides's Trap? Historical Interpretation, Logic of Inquiry, and the Future of Sino-American Relations* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2020); Dong Wang and Travis Tanner, *Avoiding the 'Thucydides Trap' U.S.-China Relations in Strategic Domains* (London: Routledge, 2021); and Alan G. Misenheimer, *Thucydides' Other "Traps": The United States, China, and the Prospect of "Inevitable" War* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/casestudies/nwc_casestudy-3.pdf.

⁷ Adam Breuer and Alastair Iain Johnston, "Memes, Narratives and the Emergent US-China Security Dilemma," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32:4 (2019): 429-455, DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2019.1622083. Breuer and Johnston's work has highlighted the power of memes and the ability for divisive, "revisionist" multimedia to disproportionately influence the discursive environment.

⁸ Xi Jinping, "Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At the Welcoming Dinner Hosted by Local Governments And Friendly Organizations in the United States" (Seattle, 22 September 2015), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbcxlhgcl70znxlfh/t1305429.shtml.

Mike Pence's October 2018 speech amounted to a "de facto declaration of Cold War" harmonizing with his theory's ascribed Thucydidean rhythm.⁹

Though considerable research has evaluated the thought processes and the possible escalatory actions of these potential combatants, the war of ideas as it manifests within public discourse has received much less attention. Assuming a degree of causality—and even symbiosis—between thoughts and words and, eventually, words and deeds, discursive war may already be well underway. The confluence of discourse and tension surrounding power transition indeed risks polarizing the two great powers engaged in the competition. Other states projecting risk or seeking opportunities will also monitor discourse between the primary combatants and emit discursive entries to various audiences. As both great powers balance communicating to each other in front of other stakeholders, words assume increasing importance in the global commune, as they did in Thucydides' portrayal of the debates in Book I of *The History of the Peloponnesian War*.

Granted, cross-cultural communication poses interpretative challenges that Athens and Sparta did not need to surmount as their rhetoric escalated. Yet, the English language's propensity to serve as the *lingua franca*, thanks to protocols within the international order, offers a window of opportunity. The considerable percentage of global leaders educated at English-speaking institutions in the US and the United Kingdom, as well as improving translation technology and digitization of media around the world, enables unprecedented opportunity to analyze discourse of varying origin. The prevalence of Allison's hypothesis and English-language correspondence within a global environment charged by power transition prospects ultimately poses the research

⁹ Graham Allison, "The US is Hunkering Down for a New Cold War with China," *Financial Times* (October 12, 2018), <https://www.ft.com/content/666b0230-cd7b-11e8-8d0b-a6539b949662>.

question: Does critical discourse analysis and automated content analysis substantiate the Thucydidean Trap narrative or suggest the US is unwittingly mired within an alternative dilemma? Specifically: What are the timeless markers of antebellum discourse found between Athens and Sparta, and does the US-PRC global debate exhibit similar indicators, reinforcing Allison's hypothesis? Finally: What does the nature of the utterances within this competitive environment suggest regarding US decision-making as senior leaders seek to interpret and influence the strategic environment?

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), a multidisciplinary approach that evaluates communication within an environment characterized by power asymmetry, provides a flexible methodology for evaluating US and PRC discursive strategies amid potential power transition. The research suggests the US can glean valuable insights from an enhanced awareness of its biases and of those within the PRC and other Indo-Pacific (hereafter *regional*) stakeholders as it produces future communique intended to serve as cross-cultural signaling. Employing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to conduct CDA, enhanced by automated content analysis (ACA) software techniques, yields some indicators reinforcing Allison's hypothesis, namely quantitative findings that suggest the US is employing emotive language contrary to its espoused strategic objectives and hampering its ability to build discursive power with allies and partners. However, reorienting the interpretation and explanation of qualitative and quantitative findings, specifically towards an alternative hypothesis based upon the ancient Chinese allegory involving the conflict between the Kingdoms of Yue and Wu, yields essential supplementary understanding. By illuminating how US signaling might be interpreted and leveraged by a potential adversary fundamentally influenced by the Yue-Wu parable,

US strategists can more purposefully earn support from partners and allies without fueling PRC's dangerous trajectory towards recompense for colonial humiliation.

Chapter 2: Background, Theory, and Methods

There is great potential for conflict when people from cultures having different orientations must deal with one another. This is particularly true when people who value universal rules deal with people who think each particular situation should be examined on its merits and that different rules might be appropriate for different people.

—Richard Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought*¹

After almost three decades atop an international system moderated by a world order it helped devise, the 2017 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) adjudges that China’s rapid rise requires the US Government reorient its priorities towards great power competition.² The NSS and subsequent strategic documents indicate that the US needs to prevent the PRC from becoming a regional or global hegemon capable of undermining US influence abroad or, worse, supplanting the current world order.³ The Department of State has stressed the need to preserve a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” and, more recently, the need to “secure freedom” to address the “Elements of the China Problem adequately.”⁴ Meanwhile, as the US prepares to contend with evolving power dynamics, its leaders seek to deter the PRC from escalatory actions that might propel either nation towards war.

Part of that deterrence entails shaping strategic discourse with other political entities to constrain PRC freedom of action. Many nations, particularly those in the Indo-

¹ Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 24.

² U.S. President. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 27.

³ Elbridge Colby and A. Wess Mitchell, “The Age of Great-Power Competition: How the Trump Administration Refashioned American Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 99 (Jan./Feb. 2020), 118.

⁴ US Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* (Washington, DC: 2019), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>; Policy Planning Staff of the US Department of State, *The Elements of the China Challenge*, (Washington, DC: 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-02832-Elements-of-China-Challenge-508.pdf>.

Pacific, must weigh the stated intentions of the PRC as well. President Xi Jinping conveyed his vision at the 19th Chinese Communist Party National Congress in 2017. Subsequent strategic documents like the 2019 white paper, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (hereafter “New Era”), offer further indicators of the CCP’s intent.⁵ As in Thucydides time, while monitoring both great powers’ dialectic, third party actors will make decisions relative to their interests and ambitions. Hence, analysis of discourse between the contending great powers and the impact of those exchanges on the words or actions of other attentive political entities may illuminate the state of Thucycidean destabilization. It also may suggest best practices for subsequent interactions by US leaders seeking to accrue influence and promote peace. Discursive power thus plays a significant role in understanding and shaping power transition outcomes.

Discursive Power

Power serves an indelible role in politics. Robert Dahl defines power based on relationships whereby “*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do.”⁶ The strength of that coercive influence, he argues, is founded on the *base* (source), *means* (instruments), *amount* (probability), and *scope* (range) between two political entities.⁷ Michel Foucault similarly viewed power as *omnipresent* and “found in all social interactions.”⁸ Importantly, however, Foucault encapsulated his empirical observations through a composite term, *power/knowledge*,

⁵ The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s National Defense in the New Era.” 1st ed (2019), <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/whitepaperonnationaldefenseinnewera.doc>.

⁶ Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (January 17, 2007), 202-203, <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Richard A. Lynch, “Foucault’s Theory of Power” in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. Dianna Taylor (Durham: Routledge, 2011), 15.

because “the expression of each term, power and knowledge, are at every point implicated with one another.”⁹ Hence, knowledge as power enables political entities to wield influence to coerce and establish reinforcing hierarchy.

Political science recognizes several forms of power relevant to a competitive global environment. Certainly, depictions of *hard power* (military and economic) and *soft power* (ideological and normative) apply, as delineated by Joseph Nye, among others.¹⁰ Characterizations of *sharp power* also pertain to evolving dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region, given the PRC’s increasing propensity to “cut into the fabric of a society, stoking and amplifying existing divisions.”¹¹ Yet, an analysis of discourse as the means through which competing political entities supplement displays of hard power short of armed conflict must focus principally on *discursive power*, namely an ability to “introduce, amplify, and maintain topics, frames, and speakers” to dominate the discourse with a story that “sells.”¹² By amassing the ability to shape the debate, a power can position itself to employ knowledge or cultural tendencies to persuade others without expending hard power or risking retribution. Viewing discursive power in this manner allows researchers to evaluate how political entities wield knowledge and access to media platforms to reinforce or upend norms or hierarchies established within geopolitical constructs.

⁹ Ellen K. Feder, “Power/knowledge,” in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. Dianna Taylor (Durham: Routledge, 2011), 63.

¹⁰ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5. Whereas hard power consists of “inducements” or “threats” intended to coerce, Joseph Nye describes soft power as the means of “getting others to want the outcomes that you want.”

¹¹ Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, “The Meaning of Sharp Power: How Authoritarian States Project Influence,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2017).

¹² Andreas Jungherr, Oliver Posegga, and Jisun An, “Discursive Power in Contemporary Media Systems: A Comparative Framework,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 2019 Vol. 24, 4 (2019): 404–425.

Power-Transition Theory and Allison's Trap

Shifts in perceived or actual power entail increased risk as political actors contend with the reordering of structured relations or influence. A.F.K. Organski introduced a *power transition theory* to international relations research that suggests there is a propensity towards war due to the destabilizing dynamics associated with rapid transitions between rival powers.¹³ Broadly, under the realist tradition focused on power as the ultimate ends for political entities, the theory asserts that the preeminent nation will seek to “manage the global or regional system with a coalition of stable, satisfied supporters . . . [but that] dynamics of growth alter power relations and generate potential challengers that, when dissatisfied, can seek to challenge the existing status quo.”¹⁴ Theorists generally view the dominant entity as a *status quo state* because it seeks to preserve the international order by preventing the relative rise of the dissatisfied *revisionist state*. As the two states contend for power and influence, they potentially create a polarity within the international system by espousing or inferring expectations for other, smaller states to gravitate towards or align their activities.¹⁵

In 2015, Allison published a foreboding hypothesis that the US and China would soon approach the precipice of what he previously coined “the Thucydides Trap.” He later launched a highly-marketed book in 2017 and found various platforms to publicize

¹³ A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968). Of particular relevance for this research is Organski's considerations of the impact of the international order on power transition, as well as the stages of power transition outlined in Chapters 13 and 14.

¹⁴ Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, and Douglas Lemke, “Foundations of Power Transition Theory,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (October 26, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.296>.

¹⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World." *Daedalus* 93, no. 3 (1964): 881-909. <http://www.jstor.org.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/stable/20026863>. International relations theories often involve polarity within debates about balance of power or balance of theory. Waltz, among others, argues that a “bipolar” system (dyadic, as in the Cold War) presents a much more stable system, when compared with historical instances of “unipolarity” or “multipolarity.”

his theory, with response articles in dozens of major news publications in the years since. Allison's Thucydides Trap is based upon the namesake's conclusion from the Peloponnesian War, namely, that an established power will likely become compelled to pursue preventative or preemptive military action to curtail efforts by an emergent rival. Generally depicting the US as the status quo power and China as an emergent revisionist, Allison's premise catapulted a seemingly esoteric academic debate into a volatile political context that cast a shadow of imminent conflict over future engagements involving either the US or PRC. The effect of Allison's efforts directed attention to an issue that concerned many within the national security arena. Yet, his theory's publicity has altered perceptions of narratives, inciting public angst and polarizing positions, potentially incentivizing those benefitting from mobilizing military-industrial bases and fueling proliferation efforts.

Towards a Discursive Power-Transition Theory

Viewing discursive power's ability to influence perspectives amid a power transition then warrants a hypothesis regarding their presumed convergence. Thucydides assessed that fear induced by Athens' prolific ascent necessitated Sparta standing up for beleaguered allies despite the potential risks of armed conflict with a peer power.¹⁶ Athens, in turn, proved unwilling to permit Spartan attempts to arbitrate from a structurally advantageous position, leading Athenian leaders to evoke impediments to matters of "fear, honor, and interests."¹⁷ Their public debate, outlined in Book I of Thucydides' landmark work, involved discourse from both primary city-states and select allies, chiefly Corcyra and Corinth. In these forums, parties publicly expressed their

¹⁶ Thucydides, Book I.

¹⁷ Thucydides, Book I.

interests and expectations, with Thucydides' portrayal serving as a holistic rationalization of the irreconcilable differences that precipitated war.

In a modern, globalized context, myriad communique and public engagements could influence or indicate discursive power. The fray for a discursive contest for this research appears foremost within Southeast Asia, where alternative perspectives on sovereignty appear to set a stage for Thucydidean sinuosity. As the two rivals pursue the means of military overmatch, they also must contend for international influence. The pursuit of discursive power ultimately consists of three symbiotic efforts. First, Clausewitz's Paradoxical Trinity suggests that the application of political pressure backed by hard power will depend upon domestic support if war follows. Though autocratic regimes arguably benefit from less domestic accountability, they still must evoke "primordial violence, hatred, and enmity" to produce an enduring national will.¹⁸ Second, depending upon assessed capabilities and nationalistic fervor, the contending power may seek to entice or coerce other parties to invoke tacit consent or active support for initiatives designed to accrue additional power abroad. Third, when deemed appropriate, a rival will likely align national and international words and deeds to demonstrate capabilities and coerce decision making within a rival power or on a global stage, leveraging discursive power or demonstrating its willingness to pursue "policy by other means," as required.¹⁹

Methods

The research employs qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA) and quantitative automated content analysis (ACA) techniques to evaluate security discourse

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On war* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press: 1984), 89.

¹⁹ Clausewitz, 87.

within the midst of a power transition in the Indo-Pacific region. The mixed-methods approach demonstrates the convergence of the qualitative information and the quantitative data to provide a more “complete understanding of the research problem” and to “understand the data on a more detailed level.”²⁰ Specific to CDA, Paul Baker and Erez Levon have similarly demonstrated the benefits of triangulation, “combining close qualitative readings with a corpus linguistics approach that uses computer software to identify frequent and salient linguistic patterns over large amounts of data.”²¹ Through such mixed methods, the research identifies opportunities, hazards, and potential strategies for the US to optimize future security discourse regarding the PRC.

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA uniquely considers the employment of language within its social context. Whereas discourse analysis broadly appraises language employment and linguistics on their own accord, CDA more directly views communication as a social construct by not isolating the examination of the text from “institutional and discursal practices within which texts are embedded.”²² An increasingly multidisciplinary field, CDA evaluates the way “social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context,” thereby rejecting notions of discourse as a “value-free” practice.²³ Influential groups, for instance, may benefit from asymmetrical access to platforms or employ linguistic techniques to assert dominance.

²⁰ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018). 126-7.

²¹ Paul Baker and Erez Levon, “Picking the Right Cherries? A Comparison of Corpus-Based and Qualitative Analyses of News Articles About Masculinity,” *Discourse & Communication* 9 (2), 3.

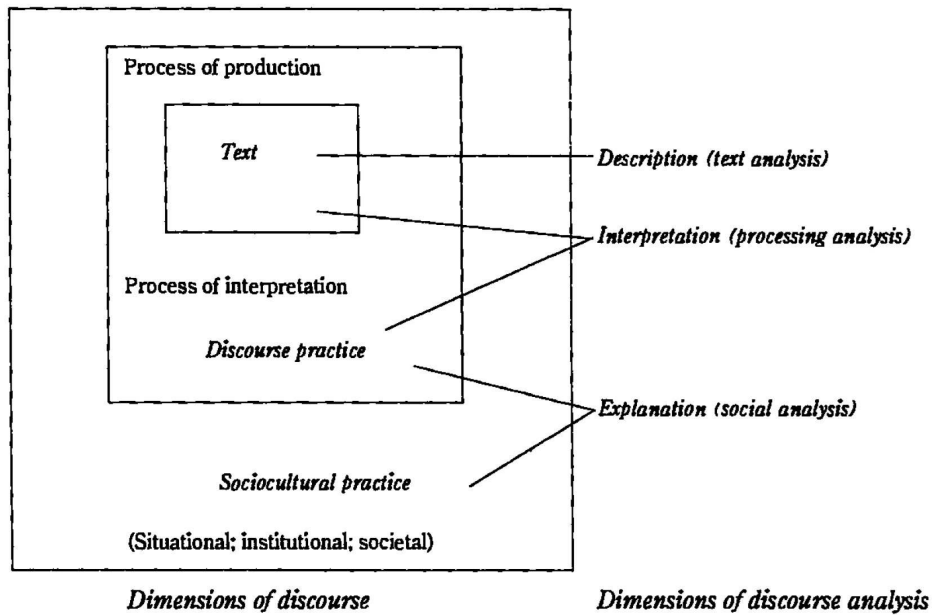
²² Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 9.

²³ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* ed by Deborah Schiffrin et al (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 352.

CDA practitioners emphasize and evaluate the intentions behind the inception and reception of communique and the resultant impact on political power dynamics.

Norman Fairclough, one of the originators of CDA, offers a three-dimensional approach to account for communication's social aspects. He assumes that grammar simultaneously serves “ideational, interpersonal and textual functions.”²⁴ Hence, as depicted in Figure 1 below, his first dimension, *description*, entails linguistic evaluation of a text.²⁵ Though the utility of CDA derives primarily from the interpretation of text within its social context, comprehensive description of the delivered message serves as a precursor to subsequent situational analysis.

Figure 1: Fairclough’s CDA Dimensions



Source: Representation from Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 98.

²⁴ Fairclough, 10.

²⁵ Fairclough, 10.

The second dimension, *interpretation*, examines the “relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text.”²⁶ In the dimension, the researcher considers the context and how the author and audience likely will intend or interpret the message, respectively. Finally, in the third dimension, *explanation*, a researcher analyzes relationships between discursive practices and the social processes, identifying the extent to which “existing hegemonies” influence the production and interpretative methods surrounding the text.²⁷ In concert, a review of all three dimensions necessarily considers power’s impact on what M.A.K. Halliday assesses as the socially semiotic or symbological component of communication.²⁸

Automated Content Analysis

ACA is a broad field of analytics that employs digital methods for evaluating text within media as data. Combined with the qualitative dividends of CDA, ACA techniques offer complementary, quantitative explanatory power regarding linguistic tendencies as one potential indicator of current sentiment and, perhaps, a leading indicator of future action. Leah Windsor cites that computational “text-as-data” techniques have become established practices in political science research, enabling methods to understand issues like “censorship in social media, crises in authoritarian regimes, foreign policy in state media, and leaders’ resolve.”²⁹ By vastly increasing the volume of media analyzed, digital content analysis can identify correlational relationships often overlooked through

²⁶ Fairclough, 97.

²⁷ Fairclough, 97.

²⁸ M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

²⁹ Leah Cathryn Windsor, James Grayson Cupit, and Alistair James Windsor, “Automated Content Analysis across Six Languages,” PLOS ONE 14, no. 11 (November 20, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224425>.

qualitative research alone, offering further evidence for how political arguments may influence perspectives or outcomes.

Emergent practices within ACA present opportunities to enhance critical discourse analysis regarding security studies. For instance, Jordan Becker and Edmund Malesky have employed ACA to evaluate strategic defense documents to discern the “relationship between strategic culture and disaggregated defense spending,” ascertaining the degree to which espoused values manifested in defense burden-sharing.³⁰ Coding language and software like NVIVO also enable “web scraping” of online content to amass large bodies of real-world text, *corpus linguistics*, offering methods to identify changes in sentiments and text mirroring. Considering Teun Van Dijk’s view of power in terms of wielding forms of public discourse to influence people’s minds and actions, ACA provides additional means for assessing the impact of political persuasion on intended or bystander audiences.³¹

Various tools enable viewing text-as-data to discern meaning as related to Fairclough’s three-dimensional model. At the text level, software like the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) calculate the density of various categories of words to evaluate how specific language’s prevalence reveals sentiment, confidence, and motivation.³² LIWC2015, the current version of the software, analyzes “target” words based upon a 6,400-word dictionary comprised of words, word stems, and emoticons to determine, among other indices, the prevalence of linguistic indicators associated with

³⁰ Jordan Becker and Edmund J. Malesky, “The Continent or the ‘Grand Large?’ Strategic Culture and Operational Burden Sharing in NATO,” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, October 7, 2014), 163-180, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2536447>, 167.

³¹ Van Dijk, 355.

³² LIWC, <http://liwc.wpengine.com/>.

temporal references or myriad psychological marks or impacts.³³ Though requiring iterative scrutiny regarding observations gleaned from large bodies of real-world text, research has found increasing utility in LIWC identifying “linguistic patterns, threatening language and deception, gendered language, social meaning and personality, and hierarchy and status in opaque political groups.”³⁴ Leah Windsor, et al. have also contributed to research that corpus linguistics techniques can even cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, reinforcing “encouraging results using machine learning for automated sentiment analysis for multilingual corpora.”³⁵ Their study demonstrated the statistical insignificance of deviations based upon LIWC sampling of human- and machine-translated works, indicating that automated processes combined with syntactic and semantic analysis can identify intuitions regarding “political language phenomena.”³⁶

Other software offers potential insights relevant to the implementation of Fairclough’s second and third dimensions, including NVIVO and the Coh-Metrix Text Ease and Readability Assessor (TERA). NVIVO is a qualitative data analysis software tool produced by QSR International, which offers the ability to manually or automatically code, categorize, and evaluate text within and across documents or speakers.³⁷ Depending upon the degree of fidelity or specificity desired, tailored queries yield text excerpts, relational tables, and visual diagrams surmising potential conclusions within text viewed

³³ This text-level analysis yields ninety output variables, several of which could offer conclusions related to motivational drivers and how nations would seek to evoke affective responses from a global audience. “the ways people use words in their daily lives can provide rich information about their beliefs, fears, thinking patterns, social relationships, and personalities.” Arizona State University and the University of Memphis.

³⁴ Windsor, 1.

³⁵ Windsor, 3.

³⁶ Windsor, 4.

³⁷ NVIVO Software, QSR International, <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>.

as data. TERA specifically analyzes text via dozens of measures designed to evaluate comprehensibility. These measures offer five overall indicators—narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep (causal) cohesion—that become components for a “z-score” calculation approximating a text’s formality.³⁸ Importantly, Leah Windsor, among others, has also found correlational relationships between the use of formal language and the longevity and security of government administrations.³⁹ Combined with LIWC2015, NVIVO and TERA can provide complementary or supplementary perspectives that can inform attempts to infer meaning concomitant with the CDA approach.

A Security Discourse Analysis Approach

This research employs a mixed-methods evaluation of the impacts of security discourse within a perceived Thucydides Trap paradigm (see Appendix A for a diagrammatic depiction). It employs the CDA and ACA techniques outlined above to answer the research question based upon the evaluation of discourse from government officials in US, PRC, and Indonesia (IDN) since Vice President Pence’s “de facto declaration of Cold War” in October 2018.⁴⁰ By comparing indicators within Thucydides’ antebellum debates with those involving US-PRC power transition in the research timeframe, it ascertains to what extent the two countries are discursively enmeshed within a Thucydides Trap and talking themselves towards an irreversible security dilemma. The research then considers whether an alternative allegory in Ancient

³⁸ Arthur Graesser, et al, “Coh-Matrix Measures Text Characteristics at Multiple Levels of Language and Discourse,” *The Elementary School Journal* 115, no. 2 (December 2014): 210–29. <https://doi.org/10.1086/678293>.

³⁹ Windsor, 6-8.

⁴⁰ Graham Allison, “The US is Hunkering Down for a New Cold War with China,” *Financial Times* (October 12, 2018), <https://www.ft.com/content/666b0230-cd7b-11e8-8d0b-a6539b949662>.

China, written by Zhao Ye depicting the war between Yue and Wu in the Spring and Autumn period, yields additional correlative indicators and insights warranting consideration.

The research employs Fairclough's three dimensions to discern meaning from texts obtained via web research (see Appendix B for corpus selection criteria). A selection of strategic documents (Tier 1) and public speeches (Tier 2) from the three countries related to security and diplomacy in the Pacific region comprised the text analyzed through Fairclough's first dimension, description. Qualitative techniques supplemented by NVIVO tools discern themes and objectives within strategic discourse emanating from the three countries, as well as indicators of rhetorical strategies or instances of intertextuality, where text within one source suggests a reference to or relationship with a previous discursive entry.⁴¹ Quantitative techniques then yield additional data for consideration. Analysis via TERA and LIWC2015 will offer a host of indices regarding the formality (z-score), narrativity, analytic character, clout, authenticity, tone, affiliation, power sensitivity, and temporal focus (see Appendices C and D for details on these metrics, among others considered).⁴²

⁴¹ Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior, *What Writing Does and How it Does It* (Routledge, New York, 2009), 84. According to Bazerman and Prior, intertextuality examines statements within its surrounding context, identifying relationships between the use of select language based upon that employed elsewhere. This serves as perhaps one indicator of discursive power, namely how one author employs language likely associated with another. Interestingly, the New Era even outlines its claims in the South China Sea as "inalienable," a word choice that seems almost specifically equivalent to the well-known employment of the use of "unalienable" word in US founding documents regarding individual rights.

⁴² Arthur C. Graesser et al, succinctly describe the metrics: "(1) Narrativity: Narrative text tells a story, with characters, events, places, and things that are familiar to the reader. Narrative is closely affiliated with everyday oral conversation. (2) Syntactic simplicity: Sentences with few words and simple, familiar syntactic structures are easier to process and understand. Complex sentences have structurally embedded syntax. (3) Word concreteness: Concrete words evoke mental images and are more meaningful to the reader than abstract words. (4) Referential cohesion: High-cohesion texts contain words and ideas that overlap across sentences and the entire text, forming threads that connect the explicit textbase. (5) Deep cohesion: Causal, intentional, and other types of connectives help the reader form a more coherent and deeper understanding of the text at the level of the causal situation model," 215.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the research evaluates discourse from each of the countries under consideration using Fairclough's three dimensions. The analysis begins with a review of the country's strategic culture and rhetorical traditions to identify the extent to which proclivities may bias a baseline text-level analysis. Though not deterministic, strategic culture, which Russell Howard defines as "a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievements, and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems," offers a lens through which one country can better anticipate another country's unique tendencies within the dialectic of diplomacy and force.⁴³ Just as Sun Tzu emphasized the need for generals to know themselves and their enemy, an appreciation for balancing domestic, regional, and global communication becomes central to interpreting competitive discursive strategies.⁴⁴ After outlining the strategic tendencies and rhetorical traditions, each of the chapters follows Fairclough's approach by describing the qualitative and quantitative findings within the corpus selected for that country relevant to the research question. A qualitative overview then describes the themes and discursive tendencies identified within the texts, considering the likely primary audience (global, regional, or domestic) and context surrounding the strategic utterances.

The quantitative evaluation follows both for the corpus as a whole and, importantly, within sub-divided categories based upon primary audiences. Though timing certainly matters in concert with specific events relative to global and regional dynamics, for this research, the corpus for each country is considered as sequential events from

⁴³ Russell Howard, *Strategic Culture*, Joint Special Operations University Report 13-8 (December 2013), 2.

⁴⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84.

October 2018 to February 2021, treating each event as a distinct entry into a symbiotic discursive environment. Rather than focusing on the specific timing or context of one event, the initial quantitative analysis seeks to identify general trends over time and variance within the subject country's semantic and syntactic indicators when communicating in select forums. These deviations yield explanatory power regarding Fairclough's second dimension (interpretation), offering understanding regarding the processing and interpretation practices between the producer and primary audience within specific context. The observations then contribute to findings through Fairclough's third dimension (explanation) relating to Allison's Thucydides hypothesis and the degree to which discourse emanating from the country of interest correlates with its Hellenic equivalent (Sparta for the US, Athens for China, or Corinth/Corcyra for IDN).

In Chapter 6, findings relevant to Allison's hypothesis are compared to an alternative supposition that the Ancient Chinese conflict described by Zhao Ye may offer critical discursive insights. Based primarily upon Fairclough's second dimension, interpretation, and using the same qualitative and quantitative data from Chapters 3 (US) 4 (PRC), and 5 (IDN), the research portrays the extent to which the prevalence of Allison's prognosis may introduce biases into how the US and China prepare and perceive discourse. If the US is in a predicament more like Wu in the Spring and Autumn Period, yet perceives itself as a Sparta in Hellenic contexts, ethnocentric parallels may guide strategic leaders towards misguided discursive strategies at odds with forestalling future PRC aggression.

Chapter 3: Status Quo State Discourse

I reject the notion that we're living in an age of inevitability, that some trap is pre-ordained, that CCP supremacy is the future. Our approach isn't destined to fail because America is in decline. As I said in Munich earlier this year, the free world is still winning.
—Michael Pompeo, July 22, 2020¹

Thucydidean Hypothesis – Sparta

In Thucydides' depiction of the Hellenic struggle, an entrenched Sparta expresses concern regarding aggression towards its Peloponnesian League allies and determines that it must curb further antagonism by the Athens-led Delian League. In antebellum discourse, Archidamus, the Lacedaemonian (Spartan) king, known as “a wise and moderate man,” acknowledges transgressions by Athens, yet calls for restraint and preparation for potential war.² Citing Athens' advantages with allies, population, and naval supremacy, Archidamus stresses diplomacy “in a tone not too suggestive of war, nor again too suggestive of submission,” while acquiring Hellenic or “barbarian” allies and “perfecting our own preparations.”³ He stresses that honor, wisdom, and ensuring a decisive armed contest necessitates “rest[ing] our hopes not on a belief in [Athenian] blunders, but on the soundness of our provisions,” and trusting established arbitration mechanisms to curb further wrongdoing in the interim.⁴ Despite his calls for restraint, Sthenelaidas, an ephor, cites the damaging behavior of Athens and invokes a sense of duty to their allies to combat “further aggrandizement of Athens.”⁵ They thus declare

¹ Michael Pompeo, “Communist China and the Free World's Future” (speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California, July 23, 2020).
<https://www.state.gov/communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future/>.

² Thucydides, Book I.

³ Thucydides, Book I.

⁴ Thucydides, Book I.

⁵ Thucydides, Book I.

war, Thucydides surmises, “because they feared the growth of the power of the Athenians.”⁶

If viewed as a modern Sparta and a status quo state, power transition theory predicts that the US would seek to reinforce existing diplomatic mechanisms while striking a balanced tone with its potential adversary and amassing allies. Qualitatively, power transition theory likely predicts that, as required, the US would also employ discursive power to reinforce established norms, decry PRC failure to adhere to those norms, and leverage existing arbitration mechanisms to constrain its ability to accrue power and allies. Quantitatively, the US would also likely exude semantic indicators of high sensitivity to power (LIWC *power*) and a desire to affiliate (*affiliation*) with allies, particularly at least in the region in contention. Importantly, this would likely necessitate communicating in an even tone (*tone*) regarding the PRC. Simultaneously, it would predict that the US will appeal to prospective partners through a positive tone and use highly confident (*clout*), authentic (*authenticity*) arguments that invoke varying appeals to a shared past (*focuspast*), a present exigence (*focuspresent*), and a shared future (*focusfuture*) while the favorable outcome of a prospective war remains uncertain.

US Strategic Culture

The US strategic culture and way of war have primarily shaped the existing world order. Centered around the universality and unalienability of individual rights and the championing of human agency as the means of pursuing *agathon*, or collective good, the US defined its strategic approach as “principled realism” in the NSS.⁷ The balance

⁶ Thucydides, Book I.

⁷ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1.

between pursuing enduring interests and cohering a liberal ideology with pragmatic deeds drives a strategic culture that Jeffrey Record describes as unabashedly apolitical, astrategic, ahistorical, and culturally ignorant, yet optimistic and idyllic.⁸ Principles serve as the preferred means to justify crusade-like wars defined by clear boundaries, initiated by declarations of war, befitting victory obtained through large-scale, firepower-dependent, and logistically demanding engagements, and concluding with codified relations.⁹ Despite its prolonged military involvement in the Middle East in recent years, the US generally orients policy and practice away from the protracted, ambiguous “Gray Zone” of coercion and cooption.¹⁰ Finally, the military, though subordinate to civilian leadership and one of four instruments of national power, is decidedly non-partisan, swears an oath to the Constitution, and is dependent upon support from elected legislators for funding.

US Rhetorical Traditions

Rhetorically, the US tends to view diplomacy through the lens of Western traditions focused on straightforwardness and public debate. Richard Nisbett’s work *The Geography of Thought* highlights Western thinking’s origins centered around objective analysis, individual agency, and public debate.¹¹ The US arguably typifies the traditions, championing Classical and Enlightenment philosophies enshrined in its founding

⁸ Jeffrey Record, *The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency*, CATO Institute Policy Analysis No. 577 (2006).

⁹ Record, 3.

¹⁰ Kathleen H. Hicks et al, *By Other Means Part II: Adapting to Compete in the Gray Zone* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019), 2. The Center for Strategic and International Studies defines the “Gray Zone” as “an effort or series of efforts intended to advance one’s security objectives at the expense of a rival using means beyond those associated with routine statecraft and below means associated with direct military conflict between rivals. In engaging in a gray zone approach, an actor seeks to avoid crossing a threshold that results in open war.” <https://www.csis.org/grayzone>.

¹¹ Richard Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought : How Asians and Westerners Think Differently--and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

documents. Indeed, the three branches of government whereby elected and appointed leaders outline their rationale for optimizing *agathon*'s pursuit mirror Aristotle's characterization of the three "species" or venues for rhetoric.¹² Inspired by Founding Fathers that debated governing principles, US public discourse assumes like-mindedness in others, which arguably shaped its approach to establishing arbitration mechanisms in international institutions. When conflict between states arises, the US tends to precede deployment of conventional forces with candid, direct language intended to influence potential adversaries to heed accepted norms or face delineated consequences. This tendency mirrors Carl von Clausewitz's view that war is "just another expression of...thoughts, another form of speech or writing" with its own distinct "grammar."¹³

US Discourse – Qualitative Description

Before and since Vice President Pence's remarks in October 2018, the US has published several key government documents outlining its intended strategy for great power competition with China.¹⁴ The NSS serves as the umbrella document outlining the Trump administration's position regarding the hazards of the CCP's intentions, describing "A Competitive World" wherein the CCP and Russia seek to "shape a world antithetical to US values and interests."¹⁵ It cites intellectual property theft and China

¹² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: Theory of Civic Discourse*, annotated and translated by George A. Kennedy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20. Discussions of possible injustice occurs in the judicial branch, the determination of a just body of laws is openly debated within the legislative branch, and the executive branch primarily presides over ceremonial or epideictic messages.

¹³ Clausewitz, 87. Both Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom serve as quintessential examples of how the United States employed escalatory and calculated discourse in an attempt to coerce Saddam Hussein and, when those efforts failed, to then initiate large-scale combat operations.

¹⁴ Veronica Stracqualursi, "10 Times Trump Attacked China and its Trade Relations with the US," ABC News Online (November 9, 2017), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/10-times-trump-attacked-china-trade-relations-us/story?id=46572567>.

¹⁵ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 25.

“expand[ing] its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others,” as demonstrated in the militarization of the South China Sea, as actions reflective of non-compliance with established mediation mechanisms.¹⁶ The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* further highlights the CCP’s “predatory economics” and efforts to undermine “the international order from within the system by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously undercutting its principles and ‘rules of the road.’”¹⁷ The Department of Defense’s June 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* overtly employs power-transition theory dogma, even labeling the PRC as a “Revisionist Power” in Chapter 2 while highlighting the CCP’s economic and military efforts to subvert the US-led system by coercing countries in the region.¹⁸ Further, the November 2019 Department of State publication *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* champions human rights and free markets in opposition to the CCP’s autocratic methods, stressing protection of the “maritime domain” in defiance of militarization of the South China Sea.¹⁹

The contentious narrative within official publications has become increasingly piercing. In July 2020, Defense Secretary Mark Esper published *Implementing the National Defense Strategy: A Year of Successes*, which lists the “review, update, and approv[al]” of existing “China and Russia plans” and “focusing” the Department of

¹⁶ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 25.

¹⁷ Jim Mattis. “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy,” (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, 2.

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, June 1, 2019), <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>, 7-10.

¹⁹ US Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>, 23.

Defense on China as its number one and number seven priorities, respectively.²⁰ The Indo-Pacific Command’s 2020 investment plan, entitled “Regain the Advantage,” cites the “erosion of conventional deterrence” emboldening the CCP to “take action in the region to supplant US interests.”²¹ The Policy Planning Staff of the Office of the Secretary of State then published *The Elements of the China Challenge* in November 2020, citing China’s intentions to not only achieve preeminence within the world order but to fundamentally redesign it to serve “Beijing’s authoritarian goals and hegemonic ambitions.”²² And, in the waning days of the Trump administration, National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien declassified the *US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific*, initially composed in December 2017. The disclosure informed global audiences regarding how the Trump administration framed the national security challenge of “maintain[ing] US strategic primacy in the Indo-Pacific region and promot[ing] a liberal economic order while preventing China from establishing new, illiberal spheres of influence, and cultivating areas of cooperation to promote regional peace and prosperity.”²³ In so doing, Fairclough’s second and third dimension might argue, the Trump Administration made a final broadcast to all audiences in an attempt to

²⁰ Mark Esper, *Implementing the National Defense Strategy: A Year of Successes* (July 2020), <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Jul/17/2002459291/-1/-1/1/NDS-FIRST-YEAR-ACCOMPLISHMENTS-FINAL.pdf>, 1. Out of ten total priorities listed, Esper references China directly in two, with the one mention of Russia serving as the only other mention of another nation. China is further mentioned a total of 8 times in the document, compare with Russia being mentioned four times and Iran once.

²¹ US Indo-Pacific Command, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2020 Section 1253 Assessment Executive Summary: Regaining the Advantage, 8.

²² Policy Planning Staff of the US Department of State, *The Elements of the China Challenge* (November 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-02832-Elements-of-China-Challenge-508.pdf>, 47.

²³ The White House, *US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific* (Declassified January 5, 2021) <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>, 1.

substantiate its strategy and highlight the hazards of a policy reversal in anticipation of change by President Biden and his team.

Public diplomacy has also amplified the risks inherent within great power competition. In the waning days of the 2020 election campaign, O'Brien published a compilation of eight speeches collectively outlining "the most significant United States foreign policy shift in a generation."²⁴ The document, *Trump on China: Putting America First*, seeks to cohere the administration's discursive effort to "no longer [turn] a blind eye to the PRC's conduct," starting with the "groundbreaking" speech by Vice President Michael Pence in October 2018 and sealed by President Trump's 2020 speech at the 75th United Nations General Assembly.²⁵ In a culture more accustomed to straight talk and emboldened by seventy-five years atop the existing world order, the Trump administration punctuated the relatively benign discursive equilibrium.

Those speeches, among others, exhibit a significant shift in the tone and directness of US senior leaders challenging PRC intentions and methods. Vice President Pence's "de facto" address at the Hudson Institute, a domestic think tank, emphasized the CCP's employment of all national power instruments to pursue a whole-of-government strategy to propagandize within the US.²⁶ Over eighteen months later, in the immediate swell of COVID-19, Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger offered remarks in Mandarin Chinese at the University of Virginia intended to urge the Chinese citizenry to embody democratic origins within the May Fourth movement of 1919.²⁷ In

²⁴ Robert C. O'Brien et al, "President Trump on China." Washington, DC, October 9, 2020. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trump-on-China-Putting-America-First.pdf>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

the summer of 2020, the National Security Advisor, the US Attorney General, and the FBI Director offered complementary portrayals of CCP ambition, espionage, and unfair business to instill a sense of urgency within the US domestic audience. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo then portrayed the scope and scale of the threat the CCP poses to liberty and democracy and outlined a “trust but verify” strategy designed to increase reciprocity, transparency, and accountability.²⁸ Finally, Trump’s May 2020 speech at the White House and his remarks at the 75th United Nations General Assembly sought to align perceived domestic and international support towards mounting pressure on the PRC to contain how it operates within the existing world order.

US Discourse – Quantitative Description

Thematically, US diplomatic discourse has principally centered around economic concerns. Within a corpus of forty-six speeches deemed relevant to the subject and timeframe for this research, NVIVO auto-coding of speech text-as-data revealed trade as the principal topic highlighted by US speakers from October 2018 to February 2021, followed by people, rights, military, and security. The *topoi* arguably correlate with the US founding principles based upon the “unalienable rights” of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and enshrined in its Declaration of Independence.²⁹ Indeed, the Department of State even created a commission and published a report on “Unalienable Rights,” citing China’s efforts to establish a “wholly-surveilled” society as a threat to

²⁸ Robert C. O’Brien et al, “President Trump on China.” Washington, DC, October 9, 2020. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trump-on-China-Putting-America-First.pdf>.

²⁹ Thomas Jefferson et al, *The Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia, PA: 1776), <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

universal rights on both sides of the “Great Firewall.”³⁰ Contextually, the United States demonstrates minimal thematic fluctuation regardless of its primary audience.

Semantically and syntactically, the computer-assisted analysis yields several insights regarding general trends within US public discourse (see Appendix E for an overview, Tables 1 and 2 below for a US overview, and Appendix F-Q for individual trend charts). Basic regression (trend) analysis, though admittedly with a consistently high standard deviation and correspondingly low R-squared values that minimize suggestions of causality, does yield observations regarding evolving tendencies. Leah Windsor’s text-as-data analysis of United Nations General Assembly debates generally found that established speakers “perceive[ing] themselves as having an in-group identity with shared values, culture, experiences, and referents,” use less formal language.³¹ Hence, leaders more comfortable in their position tend to employ more story-like (*narrativity*), concrete (*concreteness*), and simple arguments. Trends depicted in Appendix G-I suggest that the US is using increasingly formal language in regional and domestic forums, yet exuding informality in global settings. The use of much less concrete (i.e., more abstract) language domestically potentially offsets an increasing use of story-like language conveying actors and events (*narrativity*). Contrarily, principally in regional forums, the US is employing more concrete, less story-like prose, contributing to increasing formality in those contexts.

Regarding the nature of arguments (see Appendices I-L), US discourse is broadly consistent with its confidence, with slightly decreasing clout in regional and global

³⁰ US Department of State, “Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights” (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Report-of-the-Commission-on-Unalienable-Rights.pdf>, 51.

³¹ Windsor, 6.

forums. It also employs increasingly analytic arguments (*analytic*) regionally, yet less so domestically. Concerningly, the use of language in regional settings exudes significantly decreasing indicators of authenticity, though it has contrarily increased in global settings and, to a lesser extent, in domestic contexts. As far as sentiment and drivers (see Appendices M-N), US discourse indicates notably decreasing tendencies to evoke emotions reflecting a desire to affiliate (*aff*) in regional settings, decreasing sensitivity to power (*power*) in all settings, chiefly domestically, and using a less positive tone with external audiences, especially in global settings. Temporally (see Appendices P-R), the US is increasingly harkening the past in global settings, while trending towards using it less regionally and domestically, and is decreasingly orienting audience’s cognition towards the present or the future in almost all environments.

Table 1: US Discourse Trends (Coh-Metrix TERA)

		Coh-Metrix TERA		
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Narr	Concr	Form
USA	Global			
	Regional			
	Domestical			

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on US discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

Table 2: US Discourse Trends (LIWC2015)

		LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Anlt	Clout	Auth	Tone	Aff	Power	Past	Present	Future
USA	Global									
	Regional									
	Domestical									

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on US discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

US Thucydidean Interpretation and Explanation

Analyzing the indices mentioned above based upon the Thucydidean hypothesis yields several observations and potential ramifications. Viewed as the status quo power, the United States should wield discursive power to reinforce existing structures and prevent further empowerment of a witting revisionist. Qualitatively, aspects of the US narrative echo Spartan consternation. The drive to “regain the advantage” in the Indo-Pacific budget strategy expresses an expectation of favorable military terms, presumably towards comparatively advantageous ends. The regional approach affirming a desire to “maintain strategic primacy” echoes the same.³² While the NSS emphasizes “principled realism” as its guiding premise, published and spoken word topoi suggest a desire to retain the preeminent position of power in the region and an unwillingness to permit unrestricted PRC aggrandizement. Assertions related to the uneven economic practices and burden-sharing for global leadership responsibilities also reflect frustration with the PRC's exploitative efforts to pursue internal development at the expense of sovereignty or opportunity elsewhere.

A critical qualitative difference between Thucydidean expectations and the US's security discourse in public forums pertains to the cultural and values dissonance between the two powers. Little justification for war by Sparta pertained to cultural misgivings related to Athenian ascendance. The two city-states shared traditional practices and had recently engaged in conflict as allies facing a common enemy, Persia. Whether a means of hiding hard-lined realism behind espoused beliefs or a fundamental expressed discord

³² Robert C. O'Brien et al, “President Trump on China.” Washington, DC, October 9, 2020. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trump-on-China-Putting-America-First.pdf>.

between US and PRC, values-related incompatibility does not necessarily conform to Thucydidean comparisons. Accusations of PRC human rights transgressions or of overt attempts to supplant a liberal world order with an autocratic regime and tiered suzerainty provide an ingredient unique to the East-West divide not otherwise relevant to hardline realpolitik or found in the Thucydidean hypothesis.

The quantitative results yield several differences with the Thucydidean comparison. As with US discourse, text-as-data analysis using LIWC and Coh-Metrix demonstrate the Spartans similarly employed informal language, suggesting comfort with their being part of an “in-group” atop the Hellenic power structure at that time. Yet, globally, though the US thematically champions the existing international order, its negative tone and evoking the past may conflict with its increasing informality. Similarly, whereas power transition theory suggests that the US needs to strengthen relationships with allies and partners to improve burden sharing, as the Department of State ascribes in *The Elements of the China Challenge*, the US is potentially delivering caustic discourse to regional partners.³³ Increasing formality and negativity, combined with decreasing authenticity, narrativity, and emphasis on a shared future, presents a dour outlook unlikely to build discursive power within regional settings. Finally, domestically, increased narrativity and decreasing word concreteness may indicate sensitivity to power dynamics and the need for additional formality to garner support. Holistically, CDA across all three dimensions indicate that the syntactic and semantic tendencies the US exudes conflict with its espoused strategy.

³³ Policy Planning Staff of the US Department of State, *The Elements of the China Challenge* (Washington, DC: Department of State, November 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-02832-Elements-of-China-Challenge-508.pdf>, 47.

Chapter 4: Revisionist State Discourse

There is no such thing as the so-called Thucydides trap in the world. But should major countries time and again make the mistakes of strategic miscalculation, they might create such traps for themselves. —Xi Jinping, 22 September 2015¹

Thucydidean Hypothesis – Athens

In Thucydides' portrayal, Athens expresses its enduring interests in domestic, allied, and potential adversary forums before it ultimately chose to deploy forces to Potidea in defiance of Sparta's "red lines." In Book I, Athens asserts that it has acquired its empire "by no violent means" but through an unwavering commitment to conclude the "war against the [Persian] barbarian."² The Delian delegation asserts the Lacedaemonians have "used your supremacy to settle the states in Peloponnese as is agreeable to you."³ They attest that their empire, authorized by the arbitration mechanisms established following the previous Hellenic contest, has elevated Athens to a position they refuse to concede due to "pressure of three of the strongest motives, fear, honor, and interest."⁴ With Potidean revolts threatening to constrain the Delian League's further aggrandizement, an Athenian delegation challenges Lacedaemonian "rules and institutions incompatible with those of others" and urges Sparta not to intercede and to "consider the vast influence of accident in war."⁵

Viewing PRC as a revisionist state suggests that the CCP would use public discourse to substantiate their rise while undermining the existing international order. On

¹ Xi Jinping, "Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At the Welcoming Dinner Hosted by Local Governments And Friendly Organizations in the United States" (Seattle, 22 September 2015),

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbcxlhgcl70znlfh/t1305429.shtml.

² Thucydides, Book I.

³ Thucydides, Book I.

⁴ Thucydides, Book I.

⁵ Thucydides, Book I.

the precipice of power transition, theory suggests that the CCP's strategic documents and public remarks would seek to convince the US of the futility of armed conflict, the inevitability of changes to existing structures, and discount references to the merits of the Pax Americana. Recognizing the influence of allies as part of the US power base, PRC discourse would likely seek to sow doubt regarding US capacity and will to support allies and partners while showcasing the shortcomings of the existing order, globally and regionally. Domestically, the PRC would presumably galvanize support as Pericles did, setting the stage globally for a just conflict induced by paternalistic or a Cold War-like containment strategy chosen by a hegemonic US.

China's Strategic Culture

A review of official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) security-related discourse similarly must consider China's strategic culture and rhetorical traditions. In a comparative assessment of studies regarding Chinese and Indian strategic cultures and behaviors, George Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham identified a consistent emphasis in both countries on "domestic development and integration with the global economy while seeking to avoid great power conflict."⁶ That said, they found that China showed particular predilection towards viewing international relations as an anarchic system based upon self-help, with strong tendencies towards what they call "veiled *realpolitik*" and the routinized employment of deceit with adversaries.⁷ Gilboy and Heginbotham also

⁶ George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 265; Thomas G. Mahnken, *Secrecy & Stratagem: Understanding Chinese Strategic Culture* (Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011.),

https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/pubfiles/Mahnken%2C_Secrecy_and_stratagem_1.pdf. Mahnken similarly highlights the predominance of deception rooted in Chinese Strategic Culture and vital to attaining the ability to "achieve a decisive victory against a superior adversary," 24.

⁷ Gilboy and Heginbotham, 25.

identified an “underlining adversarial focus on US forces” within China’s security planning and modernization efforts.⁸

Regarding military strategy, classic texts remain influential and accentuate the utilization of force in concert with duplicity. Military leaders continue to demand knowledge of Sun Tzu’s treatises, who famously stressed surprise, the indirect approach, and subversion.⁹ Chinese doctrine also remains heavily influenced by Mao’s “Three Stages of Protracted War” or “People’s War.” A sociopolitical movement, Mao directs, must exercise patience and follows a disciplined progression from primarily an asymmetric strategic defense to a hybridized strategic stalemate and, once adequate conventional forces coalesce, a strategic offensive.¹⁰ The “Three Warfares” outlined in the Political Work Regulations of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in 2003 similarly highlights sharp power techniques and the employment of information technology and control.¹¹ Whereas the US military is broadly apolitical and protects the US Constitution, the PLA remains a political force, sometimes referred to as a party-army, that serves the CCP. Since the 1950s, the PRC has also nationalized many sectors conducive to a contemporary military-industrial complex.¹²

⁸ Gilboy and Heginbotham, 266.

⁹ Fumio Ota, “Sun Tzu in Contemporary Chinese Strategy,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 73 (2014), 77. Sun Tzu’s “indirect approach” champions employing the element of surprise and, ideally, winning without fighting as the “acme of skill.”

¹⁰ Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 210-214.

¹¹ Michael Clarke, “China’s Application of the ‘Three Warfares’ in the South China Sea and Xinjiang,” Foreign Policy Research Institute (Spring 2019). The three techniques include “Psychological Warfare, Media Warfare, and Legal Warfare,” designed to exploit permeable boundaries within the liberal international order.

¹² Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell, eds., *PLA Influence on China’s National Security Policymaking* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

China's Rhetorical Traditions

The study of Chinese rhetorical traditions reveals notable similarities to and differences from Western practices. Much as Aristotle and Thucydides established consequential philosophical and historical treatises that now underpin many perspectives on diplomacy and force in Western thought, a host of Chinese scholars contributed to the “contention of one hundred schools of thought” within ancient China.¹³ During both the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, traveling strategists and persuaders, including Confucius, Youshui, the Mingjia, and others, established epistemological and strategic traditions that evolved into uniquely Eastern methods for influencing others by positioning words with deeds.¹⁴ While there are some similarities, for instance, the “School of Ming,” which emphasized more direct argumentation akin to Aristotelian *logos*, the differences are more pronounced.¹⁵ Confucius prioritized collective agency and harmony, buttressing Chinese cultural emphasis on unity, benevolence within dynamic contexts, and “the Middle” as drivers for morality.¹⁶ Consonant with Sun Tzu’s indirect military strategy, the “School of Dao” stresses non-contention in rhetoric and inaction while awaiting the optimal time to catch adversaries off guard.¹⁷ Chinese speakers also routinely employ historical allegories or classic proverbs in remarks, at times to justify *realpolitik* calculus retroactively.¹⁸ Chinese discourse also tends to build upon established authorities and traditions, which often inspired Mao Tse Tung to reference classic texts

¹³ Xing Lu, “Chinese Rhetoric: An Overview & Application” (Lecture, Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Online, December, 9, 2020).

¹⁴ Lu.

¹⁵ Lu.

¹⁶ Lu.

¹⁷ Sun Tzu, 79.

¹⁸ Lu.

and, increasingly, contemporary speakers to evoke Maoist techniques to appeal to honor and shame in the continued pursuit of his manifesto.¹⁹

CCP Discourse – Qualitative Description

Despite its domestic correspondence occurring in its official language of Mandarin Chinese, the CCP publishes documents and speeches translated into English on several official websites. Like the Department of State’s online publication of speeches, white papers, and press releases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC maintains a register of speeches, activities, and communique.²⁰ The documents on the official websites indicate a high degree of English language proficiency by those responsible for the translation, with exceedingly few typos or grammatical shortcomings that would impede meaning-making by even a discerning reader. Based upon years of public diplomacy in the UN and elsewhere, the PRC is very experienced with providing English-language communique for consumption by global audiences. That said, Dr. Xing Lu, a Chinese rhetoric expert that reviewed the New Era document and one of President Xi’s speeches, denotes subtle, albeit not entirely benign, differences between word selection in the Mandarin and English versions.²¹

Several public documents outline the CCP’s intentions regarding its vision and, more recently, the purpose behind domestic military development within an environment

¹⁹ Lu.

²⁰ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China,” Official Government Document Repository, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/.

²¹ Xing Lu, “Re: [EXT] A Draft Abstract!” Received by Keith Benedict, January 13, 2021. Through correspondence, Lu highlights that specific references to harmony, non-hegemonic ambitions, and peaceful coexistence within the New Era document link closely with Maoist foreign policy treatises. She deems that variations between the Mandarin and English versions highlights that the New Era document primarily serves as a document to inform the CCP’s domestic audience regarding the continuity of the current strategy with both classic and Maoist traditions and to assuage concerns regarding more bellicose US rhetoric.

charged by great power competition with the US. The 2017, 19th Party Congress session occurred after President Trump's inauguration, though before the US published its NSS.²² At the forum, President Xi's report emphasizes the CCP's governmental structure and its "original aspiration" to "secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects."²³ Central to Xi's vision is the proper adaptation of Marxism "to the Chinese context" and the party leadership's consolidation over a "people-centered" approach. Surprisingly, military defense and regional security principally fall under only two of fourteen listed priorities, numbers 10 and 11, the latter of which pertains to the party's leadership over the armed forces.²⁴ While the NSS delineates specific countries as potential adversaries, perhaps in line with Daoist rhetorical traditions of choosing "not to contend," the United States is never mentioned outright. Instead, Xi stresses win-win diplomacy and describes the South China Sea's militarization as an ongoing effort but not as the site of a future contest.²⁵

The New Era and a document entitled "Fighting COVID-19: China in Action" offer further insights into the CCP's framework for national rejuvenation, reunification, and focusing public diplomacy during the pandemic. Published in December 2019, two years after the NSS and a year after Vice President Pence's "de facto declaration of Cold War," the New Era contains subtle references that indicate intertextuality, suggesting a need to respond to US rhetoric. Consistent with other defense white papers, the New Era

²² The twice-per-decade Party Congress, most recently held in October 2017, serves as a framework event wherein the Politburo Standing Committee is unveiled and the leadership team devises and communicates their standing vision.

²³ Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (October 18, 2017), http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf.

²⁴ Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," 20-21.

²⁵ Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory."

describes an environment characterized by “growing hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism[,] and constant regional conflicts and war.”²⁶ Subsequent paragraphs allude to the US as the provocateur of intensified competition and primary perpetrator of unilateralism, explicitly citing the installation of anti-ballistic missile defense systems in the Republic of Korea as having “undermined the regional balance and the strategic security interests of regional countries.”²⁷ Confronted with the threat of a pandemic and international consternation regarding COVID-19’s origin in Wuhan Province, the “China in Action” document portrays the PRC’s structure for persevering through “A Test of Fire.”²⁸ Arguably a face-saving effort common within Eastern culture, the document appears to defensively refute accusations of minimally sharing information in the early days of the virus while outlining appreciation for international support and ongoing PRC efforts to contribute to global health during the pandemic.

CCP Discourse – Quantitative Description

An ACA review of CCP discourse since Vice President Pence’s October 2018 “declaration” indicates unity and consistency with internal development priorities, with subtle indicators of traditional narratives of interest to US policy makers. Thematically, NVIVO identifies within the corpus of 102 speeches particular emphasis on development, global dynamics, cooperation, shared interests, and security. True to the enduring interests expressed in the aforementioned strategic documents, PRC leaders consistently emphasize their commitment to internal development while citing the hazards of other

²⁶ New Era, 2.

²⁷ New Era, 2.

²⁸ “Full Text: Fighting COVID-19: China in Action - Xinhua | English.News.Cn.” Accessed February 17, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/07/c_139120424.htm.

actors disrupting supply chains or pursuing unilateralism or hegemony at the expense of a harmonious global economy.

ACA indicates that PRC leaders now employ less formal language than before the discursive competition arguably shifted in October 2018 (see Appendix E for an overview, Tables 3 and 4 below for PRC overview, and Appendix R-AC for individual trend charts). Basic trend analysis suggests that, despite CCP leaders using increasing narrativity domestically, decreasing concreteness and syntactic complexity have resulted in increased formality with internal audiences. Alternatively, CCP formality has slightly decreased in regional and global settings. Regarding the nature of arguments, CCP leaders use slightly less complex rationalizing (analytic or, within the Table 4, *anlt*) in all but regional settings. They also demonstrate increased confidence (*clout*) among both regional and global audiences, albeit with lower authenticity reflected in their word selection regionally. The tenor of PRC public discourse is increasingly negative (*tone*) with all audiences yet demonstrates an increasing desire to affiliate with regional and global audiences, the latter perhaps correlating with seeming increased sensitivity to power (*power*). Temporally, the language the CCP employs emphasizes the past less frequently within global and regional contexts, invokes the exigence of the present with all audiences, particularly domestically, and evokes the future more with global audiences, yet less with its domestic base.

Table 3: PRC Discourse Trends (Coh-Metrix TERA)

		Coh-Metrix TERA		
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Narr	Concr	Form
PRC	Global	Yellow	Yellow	Orange
	Regional	Light Green	Light Green	Orange
	Domestical	Green	Orange	Light Green

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on PRC discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

Table 4 PRC Discourse Trends (LIWC2015)

		LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Anlt	Clout	Auth	Tone	Aff	Power	Past	Present	Future
PRC	Global	Orange	Light Green	Yellow	Orange	Light Green	Light Green	Orange	Light Green	Light Green
	Regional	Yellow	Light Green	Orange	Orange	Light Green	Yellow	Orange	Light Green	Light Green
	Domestical	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Light Green	Light Green	Orange	Light Green	Orange

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on PRC discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

CCP Thucydidean Interpretation and Explanation

Examining the trends in light of a hypothesized Thucydidean parallel offers several reinforcing observations. Athens’ choice for war pertained to matters of “fear, honor, and interest” in opposition to perceived Spartan efforts to constrain Athenian development. Based upon qualitative analysis of recent strategic utterances, PRC leaders highlight that they have never initiated war and seek win-win solutions instead of conflict. They also, however, imply irrevocable matters of honor and interest, often surrounding the non-negotiable island chains within the Nine-Dashed Line, to national rejuvenation and reunification. Though the US receives minimal attention outright,

consistent decial of unilateralism and hegemonic intentions are routinely employed to evoke fear of hegemony in global, regional, and domestic contexts. Discourse on platforms where CCP leaders might influence global leaders pointedly caution a return to a “Cold War mentality” and veil threats within rhetoric indicating a desire not to contend, for now, but a willingness to confront, if challenged.²⁹

ACA analysis reveals that the CCP exhibits several discursive tendencies indicative of a revisionist power. Chinese leaders consistently employ words reflective of highly analytic and authentic speech compared to UNGA averages (see Appendix E). Traditionally, the tendency to use positive, logical discourse may derive from the PRC proclivity towards hierarchy and collective action, compared to US emphasis on equality and individual agency. It also could be interpreted as befitting low confidence in speaking to audiences; alternatively, it may originate within rhetorical traditions that emphasize harmony and Daoist teachings to “not contend” or provoke discord publicly. Since the onset of the post-October 2018 US narrative, however, the PRC has used increasingly negative tones across all audiences.³⁰ LIWC also indicates a significant increase in perceived clout within PRC speakers, perhaps based upon increasing confidence to communicate from a powerful position, particularly in regional and global contexts.

Though its leaders espouse a desire to work within the existing world order rather than replace it with an authoritarian or hierarchical model, as declared by multiple US speakers, the CCP has tailored how it communicates to specific audiences. The negative

²⁹ Wang Yi, “Upholding Multilateralism and Moving in the Right Direction of Human Progress,” Keynote Speech at the International Seminar on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations (New York, NY, September 1, 2020), http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1811308.shtml.

³⁰ Le Yucheng, “Reviving the Cold War Is Anachronistic” (speech August 12, 2020), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1805747.shtml.

shift in formality for global and especially regional audiences, combined with increasing clout and power sensitivity in those forums, suggests the PRC is becoming comfortable wielding discursive power in the settings. Increasing emphasis on discussing the present and the future, combined with increasingly negative tones within the external environments, may further suggest an intent to influence prospective allies or partners of the US to heed CCP priorities. The combined increase of PRC hard power in recent years and the relative inaction of international organizations in combatting COVID-19 effects may indicate that the CCP feels less compelled to employ highly logical and nuanced positions in global settings. Indeed, the PRC's emphasis on the present, particularly among domestic audiences, may indicate an increasing effort to induce a sense of urgency amid great power competition and COVID-19 to acquire affiliative support for future action. Increasing use of narrativity, formality, and present semiotic focus may also indicate that the PRC seeks to galvanize domestic support for future ventures by promoting harmony and unity in response to stressors introduced by the confrontational US narrative and amplified by the effects of the pandemic.

The PRC's word choices indicate a subtle desire to amass influence and increased sensitivity to power differentials. Based upon Allison's hypothesis, though the CCP discounts the utility of rigid alliances and balks at decoupling towards a return to Cold War blocs—likely due to interconnectedness of critical supply chains—the current discursive environment reflects PRC interest in evoking support from other entities. The significant drive for affiliative efforts in all environments reflects concerns about isolation induced by US rhetoric or, more concerningly, an emboldened effort to

galvanize continued support domestically while pursuing discursive power to subvert US influence globally.

Chapter 5: Third-Party Stakeholder Discourse

We hope that through communication we will build mutual understanding. The diplomacy that [IDN Defense Minister] Prabowo conducted in many countries including the countries of the region is to ensure our efforts are not trapped by the Thucydides Trap. The simple answer is that Indonesia's stance must be in accordance with our constitution which says we have a responsibility to create world order based on eternal peace. That's the choice that Indonesia makes at this moment.

—IDN Defense Ministry Spokesman Dahnil Simanjuntak, June 18, 2020¹

Thucydidean Hypothesis – Corinth/Corcyra

In Thucydides' historical account, allies play a crucial role in influencing both lead city-states' antebellum decisions that precipitated war. In Book I, Corinth and Corcyra, allied with Sparta and Athens respectively, appealed to their respective league's leadership based upon matters of redress related to fear, honor, and interest. Evolving alliances since the Hellenic-wide endeavor to oppose Persia twenty years prior increasingly contributed to the kind of combustible environment that Organski and Allison describe. Shifts in support by third parties based upon perceived outcomes of power differentials ultimately amplify systemic instability. The alliance structure, combined with Athens' relative rise and city-state level grievances, allowed an issue in Potidea, arguably on the periphery of the Peloponnesian League and of minimal hard power value, to trigger the existential conflict that followed.

Though the current international order serves some functions similar to the alliance structure and arbitration mechanisms that existed before the Peloponnesian War, this research considers the sentiment of a non-aligned third party. Certainly, existing alliances between the US and Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and Thailand,

¹ Muhammad Iqbal, "US vs China is getting hotter in the LCS ,what is Prabowo Subianto's attitude?" CNBC Indonesia (19 June 2020), <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20200618233922-4-166442/as-vs-china-kian-panas-di-lcs-apa-sikap-prabowo-subianto>.

among others, could prove critical if systemic instability induces choices for those countries or the US regarding fulfilling its duty on a public stage, as it did for Sparta. Yet, tacit support or presumed aloofness by consequential, traditionally non-aligned countries in the Indo-Pacific, specifically India and Indonesia, may ultimately sway the US or PRC decision-making towards preemptive or preventative armed conflict. For this research, the Thucydidean power transition-centric hypothesis would suggest that system-level stress could compel un-aligned political entities to emit their interests and inclinations. Qualitative review of strategic documents and texts likely would find the former, while the latter may be expressed even unsuspectingly far before they choose to do so intently. Under systemic pressure, IDN leaders may invoke leadership and security in global forums, attempt to conjure consensus or exert leadership within regional contexts, and invest in domestic support for when a consequential decision becomes necessary.

Indonesian Context, Strategic Culture, and Rhetorical Traditions

As the most populous Muslim nation and the world's third-largest democracy, IDN's strategic proclivities and geopolitical weight may prove critical to the future balance of power in the Pacific. A central member of ASEAN, IDN serves as a vital polity inevitably influenced by the discursive environment shaped by US-China discourse. The United States benefits from its broadly positive relations with IDN over the past two decades. President Obama's administration identified as early as 2010 "a moment of great optimism in a relationship not always characterized by hope," as later manifested in the US-IDN Strategic Partnership signed in 2015.² Chinese culture and economics have long influenced IDN, though diplomatic relations between the two were

² Abraham M. Denmark et al, *Crafting a Strategic Vision: A New Era of US-Indonesia Relations*, (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2010), 17.

suspended following the military coup in 1967 and, more recently, became strained following anti-Chinese riots that fueled the transition to democracy in 1998.³ Yet, the two countries have increased economic partnerships through the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative, despite disagreement regarding the CCP's Nine-dashed Line and in the face of military conflicts regarding President Joko Widodo's vision for IDN to become a maritime power.⁴

Regarding its strategic culture, *Pancasila* principles—faith, humanitarianism, unity, consultation, and social justice—predominate IDN government and society.⁵ As it did during the Cold War, IDN has consistently emphasized non-alignment in its diplomacy, implemented a “hedging strategy to deal with the changing trends in the regional and global strategic security environment,” while seeking not to sacrifice regional stability or aspects of sovereignty to serve as a proxy for contending powers.⁶ Since its democratic reformation following the 1999 protests and, later, the attacks on September 11, 2001, IDN has balanced religious connections with the Islamic world and democratic ideals inviting a strong relationship with the US. Given its geostrategic location and potential economic strength, however, it has also pursued an economy “positioned between progressive capitalism and new socialism” that balances globalization and digitization with national interests, generating prime opportunities for

³ Rizal Sukma, “Indonesia-China Relations: The Politics of Re-Engagement,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 4 (July/August 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.4.591>.

⁴ Angela Tritto and Alvin Camba, “The Belt and Road: The Good, the Bad, and the Mixed,” *The Diplomat* (April 15, 2019), <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/the-belt-and-road-the-good-the-bad-and-the-mixed/>.

⁵ Michael Morfit, “The Indonesian State Ideology According to the New Order Government” *Asian Survey* 21, no. 8 (1981): 838-51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643886>.

⁶ Dvindra Oktaviano et al, “Indonesia Defense Strategy Towards Indo-Pacific (Case Study: The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific),” Online Article (February 2020), <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/IAGS/article/view/51417>.

PRC investment.⁷ Before competition in the Indo-Pacific could reach armed, Thucydidean proportions, IDN would likely play a role in abetting or at least tolerating significant militarization in its near abroad. Discursive power pressure could force a decision that prioritizes select Pancasila principles at the expense of others, something that either the US or PRC could prompt, if deemed necessary, albeit at considerable risk.

IDN Discourse – Qualitative Description

While online publication of key strategic documents has waned since President Widodo’s reelection and the subsequent onset of COVID-19, qualitative analysis of IDN public diplomacy reveals minimal deviation from its strategic culture and consistency with its traditional non-alignment stance. The Government of IDN has not published an updated NSS- or New Era-equivalent document since 2015. Domestic sources have anticipated an updated treatise since President Widodo’s second inauguration, but the Government of IDN has not published an overarching security strategy since 2015.⁸ Annual addresses and budgetary proceedings spearheaded by the President each August serve as the most holistic and publicly available portrayal of IDN’s enduring interests, albeit with minimal specifics regarding national defense or foreign policy priorities. Widodo’s 2019 remarks centered around infrastructure development and bureaucratic reform intended to consolidate national unity, an espoused precursor to IDN competing in an evolving environment.⁹ His 2020 address, though alluding to longer-term economic

⁷ Beginda Pakpahan, “Progressive Capitalism vs New Socialism: Where Does Indonesia Fit?” *Global Asia* 10, no. 4 (2015), https://www.globalasia.org/v10no4/feature/progressive-capitalism-vs-new-socialism-where-does-indonesia-fit_beginda-pakpahan.

⁸ Imanuddin Razak, “Where Is Defense White Paper, Minister Prabowo?” *The Jakarta Post* (November 14 2019), <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/11/14/where-is-defense-white-paper-minister-prabowo.html>.

⁹ Karina Tehusijarana, “‘We Can Be One of the Strongest Countries in World’: Jokowi’s Full Speech.” *The Jakarta Post* (July 15, 2019), <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/07/15/we-can-be-one-of-strongest-countries-in-world-jokowis-full-speech.html>.

objectives in preparation for celebrating the 100th anniversary of IDN independence in 2050, broadly pertained to protecting the nation's health and economy from the impacts of COVID-19.¹⁰

Remarks offered by President Widodo and the IDN Foreign Minister in 2020 also indicate a strong commitment to and expectation of multilateralism. In February 2020, President Widodo spoke to the Australian Parliament. There, Widodo acknowledged the cultural differences between the two nations yet cites many ideological similarities, namely democratic principles, tolerance of diversity, respect for human rights, and expectations of multilateralism.¹¹ He also hazards the “growing popularity of the zero-sum-game approach,” arguing that IDN and Australia must serve as the “anchors for cooperation” in the Indo-Pacific to counter protectionism while ascending as significant players by 2050.¹² Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi similarly championed diplomacy in her 2020 UN General Assembly remarks, calling for multilateralism to curb an environment where “might takes all” while calling on the UN to be “fit-for-purpose” and to be “adaptive to a changing world.”¹³ In various forums, Marsudi has more pointedly

¹⁰ Joko Widodo, “State of the Nation Address of the President of the Republic of Indonesia on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia.” Remarks, Jakarta, Indonesia (August 14, 2020), <https://setkab.go.id/en/state-of-the-nation-address-of-the-president-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-annual-session-of-the-peoples-consultative-assembly-mpr-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-and-the-joint-se/>.

¹¹ Joko Widodo, “Speech Before Australian Parliament” (February 10, 2020), https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/be8a2537-4a84-4dc2-b27b-28f392b06329/0000/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Retno Marsudi, “Pre-Recorded Video Remarks The Minister For Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia The High Level Meeting of The General Assembly to Commemorate The 75th Anniversary of The UN” (New York, NY, September 21, 2020), <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/1708/pidato/pre-recorded-video-remarks-the-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-the-high-level-meeting-of-the-general-assembly-to-commemorate-the-75th-anniversary-of-the-un-hlm-un75-new-york-21-september-2020>. The emphasis on multilateralism both reinforces PRC accusations that the US has operated as a hegemony and contributed to an environment of unilateralism. It also, however, seems to imply that it is unwilling to tolerate a Melian Dialogue-like environment where a strong and uninhibited PRC can use overt power to erode IDN sovereignty.

challenged international organizations, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to provide “more than rhetoric” and deliver multilateral leadership and solutions to avoid returning to the “ugly memory of the Cold War.”¹⁴

IDN Discourse – Quantitative Description

Thematically, within the research window, IDN leaders have primarily focused on addressing and mitigating the effects of COVID-19. Indeed, NVIVO autocoding indicates across twenty-two documents that health, cooperation, development, and technology dominate IDN public diplomacy. Despite the small sample available through the corpus selection techniques, some semantic trends within IDN communication reinforce Allison’s presumption (see Appendix E for an overview, Tables 5 and 6 below for IDN overview, and Appendix R-AD for individual trend charts).¹⁵ While a baseline of UN speeches suggests that IDN leaders have traditionally employed informal language, based upon this corpus, they have markedly decreased in formality in domestic and regional forums, primarily due to more concrete word selection and decreasing narrativity. Their formality in global settings, however, has remained generally steady, despite notable decreases in narrativity and word concreteness.

Word selection within IDN discourse similarly indicates considerable tailoring of psychosocial intent based upon their primary audience. Interestingly, despite the leading role IDN has often played regionally, particularly within ASEAN, its leader’s word choice exhibits less confidence (*clout*) in regional settings, in particular. Despite the more upbeat tone its leaders portray in their word selections in regional contexts, their language

¹⁴ Retno Marsudi, “Press Briefing Minister of Foreign Affairs,” (September 12, 2020).

¹⁵ Notably, the sample size located on official Indonesian pages yields considerable concentration in the fall of 2020. Though this may amplify the trend lines visually, it also illuminates the extent to which rapid discourse emitted under pressure may offer clear indices warranting consideration.

evoking affiliation is also steadily declining. In both regional and domestic settings, IDN leaders are, however, employing increasingly analytic arguments, perhaps reflective of the strains of COVID-19. Globally, their tone has decreased, yet their affiliative language and semantic authenticity in those assemblies have increased. And, temporally, IDN leaders evoke the past in domestic and regional settings yet seem to prefer orienting comments towards the present and future in global arena.

Table 5: IDN Discourse Trends (Coh-Metrix TERA)

		Coh-Metrix TERA		
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Narr	Concr	Form
IDN	Global			
	Regional			
	Domestical			



Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on IDN discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

Table 10: IDN Discourse Trends (LIWC2015)

		LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
Discourse Source	Principal Audience	Anlt	Clout	Auth	Tone	Aff	Power	Past	Present	Future
IDN	Global									
	Regional									
	Domestical									



Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on IDN discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

IDN Thucydidean Interpretation and Explanation

CDA and ACA offer prospective insights into the extent to which the stresses of great power competition may be leading IDN to reinforce its non-aligned position or exhibit tendencies towards the US or PRC position. Thematically, while geopolitics positions IDN to serve as a critical ally to either the US or PRC in deterring or constraining the other, President Widodo and his administration demonstrate few indicators thus far of conceding to an induced great power choice.¹⁶ Whereas Corinth and Corcyrea already had established positions within the Peloponnesian and Delian alliances, respectively—and invoked the involvement of the central city-states in their local dispute—IDN’s penchant for sovereignty and autonomy appears to thus far mitigate the likelihood of near-term positioning. Further, the strength of language employed when espousing non-alignment suggests that, if pressed, they may balance against a power demanding fealty. IDN leaders recognize the challenges and opportunities presented by their placement along ideological, cultural, and economic crossroads. Still, they have not yet overtly sought support from one great power at the conscious expense of the other.

However, employing Fairclough’s second and third dimensions to evaluate the data based upon Allison’s hypothesis may suggest that IDN is indicating that it is increasingly susceptible to great power pressure. Globally, IDN leaders employing less narrativity and concreteness may reflect an intent to maintain its hedging strategy, meaning for critical audiences to not misinterpret discourse as an inclination towards one great power or the other. Yet, increasing authenticity, combined with an increasingly

¹⁶ Indeed, the recurring focus on development, supplemented by health considerations in 2020 in light of the pandemic, indicates that, while IDN leaders recognize the gravity of the increasingly polarized security environment, pandemic and economic recovery may serve as the proximate means of garnering influence.

hostile tone and lack of reference to the past in global settings, may reflect a degree of angst regarding the international order's demonstrated ability to mitigate the risk of great power war.

In regional contexts, IDN discourse reflects more logical and precise argumentation, albeit in less story-like prose. While temporally focusing on the past in these venues and using an increasingly positive tone, their word choice implies decreasing confidence and decreasing desire to affiliate with regional audiences. Domestic trends broadly reflect similar inclinations as those emitted regionally, though semantically IDN leaders are exuding less authenticity and decreasing positivity. Despite its professed non-alignment, application of Fairclough's approach for examining discursive indicators may suggest, as Allison's hypothesis predicted, that IDN yearns for global leadership that contributes to stability. It also appears to be attempting to exercise such resolved leadership regionally while focusing its domestic population on a shared past and employing analytic reasoning to convey its concrete actions to navigate uncertain times.

Chapter 6: Security Discourse Analysis and Policy Recommendations

The Spartans' effort at such psychological and political warfare, however, suggests that they did believe there was enough opposition in Athens to both Pericles and his policy to make it worthwhile. Pericles, however, was himself experienced and skilled in the art of political propaganda, and the Athenians rejected the proposal. —Donald Kagan, 2010¹

But “warfare” for Goujian was not just a matter of bravery and brutally enforced discipline, of warships and swordsmanship and archery...[His] strategizing also placed a great deal of emphasis on weakening his adversary in every conceivable way: economically, politically, socially, and psychologically...[Goujian] was not above (indeed, he took a certain ghoulish delight in) resorting to such tactics as deception, trickery, lying, and bribery. —Paul Cohen, 2009²

On the “Thucydides Trap”

In Thucydides' account, the proximate cause for war derived from “the growth of Athens to a great power, which brought fear to the Spartans and compelled war.”³

According to Donald Kagan, “The Spartans were simply not yet prepared to share hegemony with Athens, nor were the Athenians prepared to accept Spartan constraints on their ambition.”⁴ In recognizing the Athenian Empire via the Thirty Years' Peace, the Hellenes divided into intractable blocs wherein a “minor incident in a remote corner of the Greek world [could produce] a crisis that now began to threaten a serious and widespread war.”⁵ While both sides invoked fear, honor, and interest domestically before initiating armed conflict, and despite multiple delegations employing existing arbitration mechanisms, Sparta obligated itself towards war if Athens did not rescind the Megarian

¹ Donald Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 69.

² Paul A. Cohen, *Speaking to History: The Story of King Goujian* (University of California Press, 2009), 29.

³ Kagan, 39.

⁴ Kagan, 77-78.

⁵ Kagan, 52.

Decree sanctioning a Spartan ally. Once Athens wittingly initiated the siege of Potidea, war followed, with both sides affixing the proximate cause for war on the other's actions.

Discourse emanating from the US and PRC since October 2018, particularly variance in how they communicate to global, regional, and domestic audiences, corroborates aspects of Allison's hypothesis that the ongoing transition risks escalation towards war. The qualitative review indicates that leaders from both great powers protest the other's employment of unfair economic policies and non-compliance with established norms. Among allies and prospective partners, the US and PRC both cite the other's actions as befitting sanctions and serving as the proximate barrier to global interests. Domestically, each employs their history to highlight exceptionalism and cites the ideological flaws and duplicity within an adversarial government and society whose culture, if further imposed, would obstruct enduring values and interests. Yet, rather than stoking systemic pressure or invoking the overt support of one great power at the expense of the other as in the case of Corinth or Corcyra, IDN continues to call for stability and signals its preference for non-concurrence with a resumption of Cold War-like alignment.

Quantitatively, the semantic war of words shares some parallels with the Hellenic model (see Tables and 5 below). Globally, US and PRC verbiage are trending in opposing directions in 10 of 12 Coh-Metrix (TERA) and LIWC indices employed in this research. For instance, the US generally evokes the past, while PRC emphasizes the present and the future. While the US exhibits less clout and implies less emphasis on affiliation with global audiences, PRC implies the contrary. Both powers are using informal language, suggesting they feel comfortable as members of the "in-group" on a global stage. Concurrently, while monitoring the two titans, IDN continues to appeal for

affiliation and harmony in global contexts while pursuing a discursive hedging strategy and maintaining guarded optimism for the future.

In regional Indo-Pacific contexts, the US and PRC exhibit opposing trends in only 6 of 12 indices. The US increasingly uses more formal, concrete, and analytical language. Contrarily, PRC appears more comfortable based upon formality and clout indicators, more inclined towards affiliation, and more sensitive to power. Perhaps based upon those trends, IDN serves as a discursive regional counterbalance among peers within its region, emphasizing clarity and positivity. Finally, based upon formality, domestic pressure appears more poignant for US and PRC leadership than their IDN counterparts. Yet, as US and PRC leadership increasingly use more abstract, story-like prose when addressing their domestic base, IDN seems inclined to use highly analytic, concrete vocabulary.

Collectively, Fairclough's dimensions offer varied results regarding Allison's assertion based upon a mixed-methods analysis of discourse since October 2018. If the US made a "de facto declaration of Cold War," as Allison surmised, a Potidean-like moment has not yet arrived. The situation has not advanced to a level where IDN would need to choose a "side" in a manner that led Corcyra to establish a defensive alliance with Athens. Both potential bloc leaders have communicated the hazards of the others' model. Yet, neither has employed the clear, redline-like language found in Thucydides' Book I, likely because doing so necessitates demonstrating military capability and political will not yet assured or pragmatic. Both culturally and based upon its discursive indices IDN seems unlikely to pose an irrevocable ultimatum in a manner that Corinth or Corcyra did that would destabilize the security environment. Despite expanding military budgets,

technological proliferation, increasing intelligence collection, and overt exercises in the region, the discursive fray has not yet reached Thucydidean proportions.

Table 12: Audience-Level Coh-Metrix TERA Comparison

Principal Audience	Discourse Source	Coh-Metrix TERA		
		Narr	Concr	Form
Global	US			
	PRC			
	IDN			
Regional	US			
	PRC			
	IDN			
Domestic	US			
	PRC			
	IDN			

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

Table 15: Audience-Level LIWC Comparison

Principal Audience	Discourse Source	LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
		Anlt	Clout	Auth	Tone	Aff	Power	Past	Present	Future
Global	US									
	PRC									
	IDN									
Regional	US									
	PRC									
	IDN									
Domestic	US									
	PRC									
	IDN									

Decreasing **Consistent** **Increasing**

Source: Data adapted from Author, with calculations based on discourse text-as-data (See Appendix E for full results table).

This research suggests that based upon discourse from October 2018 to February 2021, the US should revisit how it communicates to audiences to better align its strategic objectives with its discursive methods. Following Sparta's model as proposed by Archidamus, the US would need to build its power while striking a balanced tone with PRC to avoid provoking a prolonged war of exhaustion. Yet, the Trump Administration, and even the Obama administration though to a lesser extent, increasingly singled out PRC and its actions, potentially provoking rebuke. Further, many rhetorical efforts to date have focused on curbing PRC's rise whereas emphasis on internal cohesion and strength may prove to be most critical to the ultimate contest.

Towards those ends, based upon the current discursive trends revealed in the time period examined by this research, the US could consider fully utilizing available linguistic evaluation technology and theory to reflect more formal, positive, and affiliative language in order to evoke support in global and regional contexts. Given the ongoing substantial investment in Belt and Road Initiatives in many regions, the US currently risks communicating rigid and unsupportable redlines that ultimately undermine confidence in the evolving world order. In Indo-Pacific regional contexts, the US would need to use similarly emotive language to portray how international institutions might be reinvigorated to address contemporary problems collectively. Domestically, the US would need to use more formal, story-like language to evoke whole-of-nation support to compete with comparable PRC efforts and to ensure that the military-industrial base can be prepared and aligned to deter or deflect any potential PRC aggression. Lastly, learning from Allison's hypothesis, future collection and analysis regarding discursive power need to focus on the sentiment communicated by key partners and allies surrounding

contentious issues in order to generate opportunities to build and demonstrate multilateral resolve.

An Alternative Allegory – The “Zhao Ye Trap”

Significantly, while the Thucydidean lens offers some strategic insights based upon CDA and ACA analysis, an understanding of a highly influential Chinese allegory warrants equal consideration. During the Spring and Autumn Period (approximately 770–476 BC), soon after assuming the throne of the Kingdom of Yue, King Goujian initiated an unsuccessful war with the neighboring Kingdom of Wu, killing the reigning King Helu, and prompting the ascension of his son, Fuchai.⁶ Once besieged by Fuchai, Goujian was advised against his initial inclination to fight to the death. “Swallowing his pride” he pled for mercy and entered a state of servitude in the house of King Fuchai, living in austere conditions and performing debasing tasks.⁷ After years of captivity, he assumed further humiliation by volunteering to taste King Fuchai’s excrement, feigning expertise regarding the King’s sickness and foretelling his recovery.⁸ Once alleviated of the illness, King Fuchai released Goujian to return to his kingdom and even made reparations to the Kingdom of Yue.

Galvanized by his humiliation, Goujian and his wife devised a prolonged strategy to pursue recompense, subsisting frugally and even “sleeping on brushwood and tasting gall” to sustain their vengeful focus.⁹ While prioritizing domestic development and improving the living conditions for the people of Yue to inspire their commitment to avenge the previous dishonor, King Goujian employed bribery and obfuscation to erode

⁶ Cohen, 2.

⁷ Cohen, 2.

⁸ Cohen, 3.

⁹ Cohen, 4-5.

the internal strength and external perceptions of the Kingdom of Wu.¹⁰ While placating King Fuchai's extravagances, King Goujian obscured his malevolent intentions, ostracized Wu among neighboring states, and eventually conquered his enemy after Wu's army embarked—allegedly with Sun Tzu—on another campaign. Though King Fuchai chose clemency, having “forgotten” that Yue's initial aggression caused his own father's death, King Goujian's advisors expected vengeance, demanding he “never forget” the humiliation that they suffered at Wu's hand. Despite ominous counsel from a loyal minister, Fuchai presided over his kingdom's surprise destruction by Goujian and eventually committed suicide.¹¹

Recorded by Zhao Ye in China's first historical novel, *Wu Yue Spring-Autumn Annals*, published in 75 CE, this well-known and often-employed tale serves up the example of King Goujian to induce domestic austerity on a promise of future ascension and ultimate revenge for past humiliations.¹² Paul Cohen's *Speaking to History: The Story of King Goujian* highlights the prevalence and relevance of the Goujian story, particularly in contemporary China. This legend is exceedingly well-known by Chinese citizens yet often overlooked by Western scholars.¹³ Indeed, it serves as an Eastern version of a David and Goliath “underdog” story of redemption, a tale with the sticking power of what Dan and Chip Heath would label as a “challenge plot.”¹⁴ Combined with the narrative “Never Forget National Humiliation,” contemporary Chinese leaders benefit

¹⁰ Cohen, 11.

¹¹ Cohen, 24.

¹² Indeed, the emphasis on internal development correlates more with Archidamus' expressed preference of amassing the power to ensure a short war, if required.

¹³ Cohen, xix. Indeed, Cohen describes the tale as being “as familiar to Chinese schoolchildren as the biblical stories of Adam and Eve or David and Goliath are to American youngsters.”

¹⁴ Dan and Chip Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, (London: Arrow Books, 2008), 226-227.

from a historically-rooted, well-ingrained, pliable means of inspiring enmity and will while prolonging domestic compliance with increasingly autocratic governance.¹⁵

“Zhao Ye Trap” Interpretation and Explanation

Focusing on the Zhao Ye allegory as a basis for an alternate hypothesis yields an entirely different lens through which to pursue Fairclough’s second and third dimensions. Translating Cohen’s conclusions regarding this allegory to the contemporary environment, it can be argued that the US personifies Wu as characterized in the collective PRC narrative. The US thus serves as a symbol of the Western, post-Westphalian hegemony that subjugated, exploited, and humiliated China and much of the developing world during the colonial era. As the residual ruling power, the United States currently retains hegemonic advantages, but the CCP has pursued subversive and asymmetrical efforts (Three Warfares). It has also espoused a focus on domestic prosperity, perhaps investing for a long-awaited opportunity to exploit US distraction and strategic exhaustion.

PRC, viewed analogously to Yue in Zhao Ye’s depiction, has fought in wars against the United States in recent collective memory, specifically the Korean War. It has also persevered through economic hardship, focused on export-driven domestic policies, and, until recently, presented a deferential and defense-oriented posture while endorsing the existing balance of power. Like Wu, the United States has also sought opportunities to share power, for instance, making concessions to support PRC’s addition to the World Trade Organization in 2001, albeit with corresponding hopes of China’s eventual

¹⁵ Interestingly, multiple Goujian-related tales produced by state-run media permeated print, television, and movies. This included three television series in 2006 and 2007 alone about the Yue-Wu conflict: “Rebirth of the King,” “The Great Revival,” and “The Conquest.”

liberalization.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the CCP employed a “hide and bide” strategy under Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, seeking not to contend in public while focusing on internal development and awaiting more favorable conditions to assert dominance, especially following the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.¹⁷

In this light, the United States is arguably now trapped by a need to contend with a rising power whose domestic narrative necessitates eventual destruction of the source of their humiliation and multi-decade hardship substantiating its hide and bide investment. As Gilboy and Heginbotham argue, Chinese culture and history, though championing Confucian matching of words with deeds, has practiced veiled *realpolitik*, launching surprise attacks to seize strategic opportunities, despite diplomatic missions stating peaceful or defensive intentions.¹⁸ Sun Tzu’s asymmetric strategems and those employed by Goujian and Mao suggest little incentive for the United States to trust that accommodation or appeasement in any regard would be repaid in kind by a benevolent, hegemonic China. Rather, contributing to an emboldened or increasingly empowered China may invite the full wrath of Yue-like vengeance. Any effort to publicly shame or appear to subjugate China, however, would only feed the domestic narrative and potentially worsen the expected outcome by the world’s most populous, ethnically aligned, totalitarian regime.

Analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 based upon presumed Zhao Ye Trap tensions yields alternative findings through Fairclough’s

¹⁶ Tan Yeling, “How the WTO Changed China” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2021), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-02-16/how-wto-changed-china>.

¹⁷ Roy Kamphausen, “The Chinese View of Strategic Competition with the United States: Opening Statement” (June 24, 2020), https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Kamphausen_Opening_Statement.pdf.

¹⁸ The US failed to identify PRC intentions regarding the post-Inchon attack north toward the Yalu River that precipitated PRC intervention in support of North Korea in 1950.

approach. Qualitatively, the research found indicators of a Yue-like domestic narrative in PRC discourse, albeit within a relatively small sample size, which Cohen assesses has permeated Chinese and Taiwanese rhetoric for decades.¹⁹ Humiliation and shame were only directly mentioned twice across the PRC corpus, though “bitter” suffering also earned a mention in multiple landmark domestic speeches. Yet, both Cohen and Benjamin Daniels emphasize the distinct subtleties involved with invoking historical memory of this permeative tale, as well as the lack of Western scholar emphasis on of understanding its impact in contemporary China.²⁰ Claims of US hegemony harken to unfairness, humiliation, and unacceptable power distribution. References to colonialism or the “anachronistic” Cold War evokes past transgressions.²¹ Thus, even a subtle shift in focus from internal hardship towards ostracizing the US, just as Goujian did to Fuchai among other kings of the warring states, could indicate that the PRC now seeks to reduce the anticipated costs of aggression by isolating its hegemonic oppressor.

Analysis of the quantitative data also yields alternative observations. Decreasing formality resident within US utterances in global environments, combined with increasing confidence by PRC speakers in those same forums, might erode international perceptions of US resolve. Increasing negativity and lack of emphasis on affiliation by

¹⁹ Paul A. Cohen, *History and Popular Memory: The Power of Story in Moments of Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). According to Cohen, “The functioning of the Goujian story in these circumstances revealed much about the interior of the Chinese world in time of stress, how those inhabiting it felt—and how they talked and wrote—about the predicaments facing them, individually and collectively. Such stories and the root metaphors they incorporated formed an undercurrent of meaning—often unrecognized by non-Chinese—that flowed beneath the surface of conventional renderings of Chinese history in the twentieth century,” 107.

²⁰ Benjamin Daniels, “Yuewang Goujian Shijia: An Annotated Translation” (2013), https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/293623/azu_etd_12764_sip1_m.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Lu’s observations regarding the New Era document also would indicate that Mandarin versions of the document employ ideas and rhetorical techniques that harmonize with the Yue tale.

²¹ Le Yucheng, “Reviving the Cold War Is Anachronistic” (speech August 12, 2020), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1805747.shtml.

US discourse may also contribute to its isolation, potentially emboldening PRC provocation if it perceives that others will not support the US position. In regional settings, the PRC appears even more comfortable, given decreasing formality and increased clout. Its use of affiliative language and its reorienting cognition towards the present and future might engender soft power among regional partners. More concerningly, negative, inauthentic, and non-affiliative language in US discourse in those assemblies might contribute to regional perceptions that the US is acting like the hegemon that PRC describes. Domestically, the use of increased formality and lack of sensitivity to power might suggest that the US is unwittingly broadcasting it is under internal political pressure, incentivizing PRC's continued investment in its Three Warfares stratagems.

Forestalling the “Zhao Ye Trap” Through Discourse

Viewing contemporary strategic discourse from the PRC through this historical analogy yields valuable lessons for US leaders seeking discursive power to evade the “Zhao Ye Trap” while continuing to pursue enduring national interests. If the underlying Goujian narrative within PRC generated discursive power domestically over the past several decades is accurate, it poses a considerable risk for the international community and thus offers both challenges and opportunities for the US going forward. Just as the internal contradictions of the Soviet Union led to their undoing per George Kennan's hypothesis, the PRC has embarked on a seeming one-way journey necessitating

recompense.²² Not delivering upon the many signs of progress promised by President Xi threatens the CCP's continued power consolidation domestically and globally. Failure to subjugate the hegemon would similarly fall short of expectations that would justify the type of self-induced hardship that ensured Goujian would "never forget" his own humiliation. Given this underlying necessity, the US must recognize the risks of appeasement.

As with Wu, who gave land and gifts back to Yue, perhaps akin to a concession on Taiwan independence, foremost, the US may only embolden or further empower a seemingly deferential aggressor employing veiled *realpolitik*. Second, the US should avoid perceptions of unilateralism by championing multilateralism to earn a preferred partner status and avoid ostracization. Doing so increases the costs of aggression for the PRC and undercuts a portion of its continued domestic narrative, challenging the simplistic symbolic constructions erected by the CCP. Third, the US should abate perceptions of a Cold War mentality, which erodes trust and cooperation with those within the non-aligned movement, including IDN and India. Fourth, the US must counter the Three Warfares strategy by recognizing the ongoing politics that Goujian and Mao prescribed and the global movement the PRC is leading. US leaders must invest in domestic reform and resolve to combat internal division and perceptions thereof. Finally, the US must align words with deeds while tackling transnational issues to demonstrate

²² George Kennan, "Long Telegram," February 22, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), Central Decimal File, 1945-1949, 861.00/2-2246; reprinted in US Department of State, ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 696-709, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116178>.

leadership and, should the PRC continue to challenge sovereignty or provoke escalation, allow the world to choose principled realism over veiled *realpolitik*.

Refining the Approach to Security Discourse Analysis

Evaluating discursive power in near real-time appears promising, given the ability for technology and ACA to make doing so feasible. Indeed, states are not beholden to aligning words with deeds, nor does strategy dictate the order of appearance. Cultural differences and strategic calculations inherently influence how martial leaders choose to signal or obfuscate intentions and actions. Yet, mounting understanding of how various stimuli can influence public opinion and orient cognition suggests the value of heightened efforts to scrutinize discourse to identify emotive trends, to clarify misunderstanding, and to forestall armed conflict. The data, as with all analytical approaches, offers a different point of view to reveal and substantiate what cannot be stated overtly.

The research identified multiple avenues for further consideration, both for the particular environment of analysis and beyond. A larger corpus would certainly offer greater fidelity on trends and mitigate selection bias. While seeking to deconstruct tailored messaging into analytical tranches for varying audiences yields unique observations, N-values inherently decrease as a result. Even an analysis of forty-six US speeches, once stratified into discourse designed principally to influence global, regional, and domestic audiences yields reduced explanatory power for specific indicators. Yet, trends and tendencies outside of perceived norms will likely trigger attention from various media sources, particularly those seeking to exploit disparities to garner online attention. Further, the larger corpus may improve comparison of routine forums (UN General Assembly, ASEAN, BRICS, etc.) to discern year-over-year trends or outliers.

In addition to serving as one means of feedback regarding the effectiveness of diplomatic strategies and narratives, analysis of Tier 3 (media and think tank publications) text-as-data may also illuminate emerging trends in strategic culture.²³ Such a computational approach, Tamir Libel asserts, enables researchers to overcome the “interrelated fallacies” of “conceptualizing strategic culture as homogenous and temporally continuous,” providing a novel “discursive institutionalism” (or fourth generation) approach to evaluating strategic culture.²⁴ As AI capabilities increase, the employment of ACA with a lens for CDA sociopolitical study might yield an enhanced understanding of sentiment within other countries as well, though shuttling between the qualitative and quantitative findings presents challenges for both the researcher and the reader. It also would build important links with research specific to the US-China power struggle that highlights the impact of how narratives, characterizing the environment as zero-sum or positive, influence audience sentiment.²⁵

Comparative analysis of historical anecdotes and or theoretical models may also yield additional insights. The Thucydidean discourse's employment, unquestionably influenced by the chronicler's Athenian loyalty, offers a skewed portrayal of alliance politics. Listening to PRC discourse for Periclean- or Athenian-like indicators or

²³ Linus Hagström and Karl Gustafsson, “Narrative Power: How Storytelling Shapes East Asian International Politics,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 4 (July 4, 2019): 387–406, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1623498>. Hagstrom and Gustafsson have identified that studies of narratives “suggest[] that narratives are indeed powerful, [international relations] research has yet to conceptualize *how* and *with what* implications narrative power operates beyond national foreign-policy-making processes, that is, in the international realm.” By analyzing the United States and China’s espoused narratives regarding the security of the Pacific region amid anticipated power transition, this tiered research of allies and partners may contribute towards filling that research gap.

²⁴ Tamir Libel, “Rethinking Strategic Culture: A Computational (Social Science) Discursive-Institutionalist Approach,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 43:5, 686-709 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2018.1545645, 687.

²⁵ Peter Gries and Yiming Jing, “Are the US and China Fated to Fight? How Narratives of ‘Power Transition’ Shape Great Power War or Peace,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32:4 (July 10, 2019), 456-482, DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2019.1623170.

unwitting semiotic indicators of forthcoming decisions may yield limited early warning. If the US seeks to identify consequential shifts within PRC utterances to specific audiences, further research should investigate historical archives surrounding previous Chinese decisions to employ politics by bloodshed. Comparisons to 1950 or 1979 for the Korean War and Sino-Vietnam war, respectively, might identify subtleties reflective of PRC “red lines” or attempts to obfuscate or disintegrate opposition prior to initiating hostilities. While this research did not identify indicators approaching Thucydidean prose, analysis of Cold War discourse or that surrounding the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis might prove invaluable to improving self-awareness and mitigating misunderstanding among great powers. In so doing, it may become possible to work towards building cross-cultural protocols regarding diplomacy and the use of force concomitant to Aristotelian and Confucian conceptions of persuasion. In concert with intelligence efforts that clarify PRC actions, CDA and ACA techniques could be employed to illuminate misalignment between words and deeds and improve conformance with established norms.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

If avoiding the Thucydides Trap is a core objective of China's strategy – as President Xi insists it is – then we would hope that China's actions would be carefully calculated to make conflict less likely, not more, and would seek to reassure neighbours of and build their confidence in China's intentions.

—Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, January 18, 2016¹

An analysis of the discursive environment in the Pacific region since the publication of Graham Allison's Thucydides' Trap hypothesis illuminates some sensitivities surrounding discourse amid great power competition. CDA and ACA methods offer windows into how words in a politicized and globalized context can be oriented and aggregated within a discursive environment. Trends become discernible, and Fairclough's three dimensions offer an enduring approach to describing, interpreting, and explaining how sociopolitical entities wield power. Critical to this type of analysis, however, are the mental models and hypotheses that drive the design of the study and subsequent data interpretation.

In a discursive environment shaped by Allison's foreboding hypothesis of a Thucydides Trap and institutional memory of the Cold War in the US and the PRC, influential powers in the Pacific are already enmeshed within an ideological contest of wills on a global stage. Given considerable emphasis on great power competition in the 2017 NSS and polarizing discourse between the US and the PRC since October 2018, allies and partners are already contending with the risks associated with power transition. Elements of fear-mongering in the US narrative correlate with Sparta's claim that

¹ Malcolm Turnbull, "Australia and the United States: New Responsibilities for an Enduring Partnership," speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, DC, January 18, 2016), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/attachments/160119_Prime_Minister_Speech_1.pdf.

Athens' rise made conflict inevitable, though its leader's discourse indicates both status quo and revisionist elements. PRC discourse also increasingly evokes aspects of the Athenian perspective. Fomenting fear combined with honor and "reasonable self-interest" that demand further ascent, even at the risk of armed conflict.² In a globalized world, however, neither great power can operate autarkically, so coercive power from either may ultimately depend upon discursive power with regional partners.

Leaders worldwide are currently watching and basing decisions upon the anticipated actions and likely outcome of the ongoing emergence of the PRC. For the past seventy-five years, the world has broadly benefitted from relative peace within a global commune underpinned by liberal logic and belief in the benefits of shared sovereignty. Though proxy wars occurred between the two Cold War blocs, the fracture of the Soviet Union afforded the US a preeminent position to hope free markets would bring illiberal societies into a world conforming to democratic notions of peace.

Yet, despite globalization and the incredible rise of the Chinese economy, communism with Chinese characteristics persists. Worse, modern technology has automated totalitarian control mechanisms, allowing for targeted communication and insulation from international appeals. Hard power will inform the CCP's determination regarding whether and under what circumstances armed force may achieve a *fait accompli*. The array of alliances and partnerships provides further strategic deterrent, amplifying the United States' assumed strength atop the existing world order. As countries' economic interests with PRC accrue, however, the sentiment of mid-powers around the world may influence the great powers' decisions.

² Kagan, 66.

While the words-actions alignment remains generally supported by the scientific study of cognition, *episteme*, and inclinations, words do not always prove deterministic. Chinese history and its strategic culture indicate that it will not publicly announce its intentions or willingness to engage in armed conflict in a manner that impedes its emphasis on using an indirect approach or maximizing the element of surprise. While Confucius recognized the need for such proclivity, Daoist teachings and Sun Tzu's strategems stressed non-contention. Hence, as the United States continues to closely monitor its own words and actions and those emitted by the CCP, it cannot assume that its prospective foe will heed the Westphalian, binary peace-war divide. The US cannot afford to assume that Chinese discourse should be taken at face.

While practitioners and academics should debate the lessons of power discernible from Allison's Thucydides Trap, doing so may inculcate looking for the wrong lessons and cause us to miss early warning indicators. Jonathan Kirshner offers a scathing critique of Allison's employment of history, labeling it "sloppy, superficial, oversimplified, overconfident, and repetitive."³ While Allison's work has spurred discourse on an important matter in recent years, this research might offer "ethnocentrism" be added to the growing list of critiques. The archetypal Greek orator Pericles will not find a venue to debate with an equally passionate and similarly-minded Archidamus. Instead, we must consider the possibility of a hermitic Goujian who seeks to appease his unwitting adversary while sowing seeds of misinformation and misdirection of enmity at home—hostility that will eventually demand recompense. Zhao Ye's ancient legend offers an alternative perspective that would allow practitioners to recognize that

³ Jonathan Kirshner, "Handle Him with Care: The Importance of Getting Thucydides Right," *Security Studies*, 28:1 (2019), 1-24, DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2018.1508634.

Chinese allegories focus on domestic narratives and bilateral conflict, minimizing the role of third parties. Given IDN cultural traditions based upon consultation, among other values, honoring and working within Pancasila practices may build upon democratic foundations to ensure even a non-aligned third party complicates CCP calculus, buying time critical for diplomacy to avert war.

Appendix A: Research Design and Methodology

Research Question																
Does critical discourse analysis and automated content analysis substantiate the Thucydidean Trap narrative or suggest the US is unwittingly mired within a more Sinocentric dilemma?																
Research Objectives																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply critical discourse analysis to evaluate security-related communique in the Indo-Pacific • Identify trends within US/PRC discourse since “declaration of Cold War” in October 2018 • Discern whether the USA, PRC, or IDN exhibit Thucydidean discursive indicators • Compare Thucydidean and Zhao Yean discursive indicators to evaluate which better applies • Identify discursive strategies the US can employ to retain regional influence and avert war 																
Data Collection																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier 1: Strategic documents by current leadership outlining environment and objectives • Tier 2: Public diplomacy communique related to security in the Indo-Pacific region 																
Critical Discourse Analysis																
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Description (Textual Analysis)</p> <p><u>Qualitative Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes (NVIVO) • Strategic Objectives • Rhetorical Strategies • Intertextuality <p><u>Quantitative Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formality (TERA) • Narrativity (TERA) • Analytic Character (LIWC) • Clout (LIWC) • Authenticity (LIWC) • Tone (LIWC) • Affiliation (LIWC) • Power Sensitivity (LIWC) • Temporal Focus (LIWC) </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Interpretation (Processing Analysis)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Source</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Audience</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center;">US Discourse</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Global</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Regional</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Domestic</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center;">PRC Discourse</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Global</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Regional</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Domestic</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center;">IDN Discourse</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Global</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Regional</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Domestic</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Source	Audience	US Discourse	Global	Regional	Domestic	PRC Discourse	Global	Regional	Domestic	IDN Discourse	Global	Regional	Domestic	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Explanation (Social Analysis)</p> </div>
Source	Audience															
US Discourse	Global															
	Regional															
	Domestic															
PRC Discourse	Global															
	Regional															
	Domestic															
IDN Discourse	Global															
	Regional															
	Domestic															
Results and Findings																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US, PRC, and IDN all exhibit indicators of Thucydidean discourse, particularly domestically • US exhibits more similarities with Athens than Sparta, and more commonalities than PRC • PRC, in particular, exudes Zhao Yean indicators, and the US is amplifying PRC narrative • IDN, despite nonaligned intentions, is galvanizing domestic support and may be susceptible 																
Conclusions and Recommendations																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US must recognize the risks of appeasement and the hazards of Chinese strategic culture • US leaders must ensure words and deeds negate perceptions of unilateralism/hegemony • PRC will face increasing pressure to take decisive action against Proudhian (US) adversary • CDA offers qualitative and quantitative means of identifying trends in strategic discourse • Further research should compare contemporary PRC rhetoric with that of 1950 and 1979 																

Appendix B: Corpus Selection

For each subject of interest for the scope of this research, a concerted effort went into identifying as many speeches related to security discourse, in general, and pertaining to US and PRC interests in the Indo-Pacific region, in particular.

As a baseline, the speeches as composed by Thucydides in Book I of the History of the Peloponnesian War served as an archetype for the basic corpus analysis. Though a historical characterization, the individual scores and trends within the nine speeches in Book I in the events leading up to the existential conflict provide both primary and secondary perspectives on the power that Graham Allison employs to draw attention to the risks associated with power transitions.

In order to establish a contemporary, more general baseline for comparison, a day of speeches from UN General Assemblies from 2016 to 2020 affords a degree of comparability to other countries communicating on a world stage. While the explicitly global aspect of the discourse may appear at odds with a comparison against domestic and regional discourse by any of the three countries analyzed, the premise for the research is influenced by the great power competition involved. The US traditionally, the PRC increasingly, and IDN relations differentially have reached the global foreground, so speakers in any country and in a globalized communications context should account for global dynamics in their rhetorical selections. Because this is a cross section of speeches by dozens of countries, Coh-Metrix TERA's word limit negates utility for the tool, so the UNGA baseline will pertain principally to NVIVO and LIWC analysis.

For each of the three countries analyzed, a focused search of official and media websites resulted in the identification of speeches relevant to the research subject. The

Department of State and Foreign Ministries provided the preponderance of links to the primary documents. Those remarks specifically pertaining to Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America or niche domestic issues were excluded to orient the focus towards the Indo-Pacific region. The specific UNGA addresses by the heads of state (or their representatives) from 2016-2018 also provided a “Pre-Discursive Environment” baseline in the years leading up to Vice President Michael Pence’s November 2018 speech, albeit with a very limited sample size, to denote any seismic shift in the pre- and post- “declaration of Cold War” era.

Appendix C: Coh-Metrix Variable Descriptions¹

The Coh-Metrix Common Core Text Ease and Readability Assessor (T.E.R.A.) is a tool designed to analyze the “easability” and readability, of texts and provide useful information about text features. Most current readability measures are based exclusively on two features of text; the difficulty of the sentences (usually measured by the number of words or clauses per sentence) and the familiarity of the words (usually measured by the frequency of the words in a large database of texts). There are many readability measures and though each is slightly different, they all focus solely on the surface difficulty of the sentences and the words. Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A. is very different.

T.E.R.A. analyzes text on five components: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. For a given text, each of these components is given an “ease” score, which shows how it compares to thousands of other texts. Foremost, T.E.R.A. affords an understanding of what makes a text cohesive or not. What features make texts more or less cohesive varies from one text to the next. Because of this, we need to read texts closely to find those sections that are less cohesive. This tool can help us do that. Once these sections are found, we can work with students to help them recognize and overcome the obstacles that less cohesive texts might present.

The five components that make up the T.E.R.A. analysis are described below.

¹ D.S. McNamara, et al, Coh-Metrix Common Core T.E.R.A. Version 1.0., January 1, 2013, retrieved January 10, 2021, from <http://129.219.222.70:8084/Coh-Metrix.aspx>. Descriptions in this section are derived verbatim from the online tool managed by collaborators from Arizona State University and the University of Memphis.

Narrativity: Narrativity seems intuitive: the more story-like a text the higher the narrativity score, and the easier the text. Though this is true, some texts will score high on narrativity and not seem very story like.

Syntactic Simplicity: Syntactic simplicity is measured through several indices such as average number of clauses per sentence, the number of words per sentence, and the number of words before the main verb of the main clause. Texts with fewer clauses, fewer words per sentence, and fewer words before the main verb will give a text a higher score for syntactic simplicity. T.E.R.A. also measures the similarity of the sentences within each paragraph. Paragraphs that contain sentences with similar structures and verb tenses are easier to read.

Word Concreteness: Concrete words (mask, spoon, forest, ammunition) are words that refer to things you can see, hear, taste, touch, feel, or smell. Abstract words (democracy, appear, success, joy) cannot easily be seen, heard, touched, felt or smelled. A text with relatively high numbers of concrete words is easier to read and will have a high word concreteness score.

Referential Cohesion: Referential cohesion is the overlap between words, word stems, or concepts from one sentence to another. When sentences and paragraphs have similar words or conceptual ideas, it is easier for the reader to make connections between those ideas. Sometimes, however, low cohesion is desirable if you want the reader to create connections to understand the text. [Click here to see an example.](#)

Deep Cohesion: Deep cohesion measures how well the events, ideas and information of the whole text are tied together. T.E.R.A. does this by measuring the different types of words that connect different parts of a text. These words are called

connectives. There are different types of these connectives: time connectives such as after, earlier, before, during, while, later; causal connectives such as because, consequently, thus. Then there are additive connectives such as both, additionally, furthermore, moreover, what is more. There are also logical connectives; actually, as a result, due to. Finally, adversative connectives are words that connect two phrases or notions that on some level conflict with each other, such as “My favorite sport is baseball however I watch more football” or “Whales are not fish yet they spend their life in the water.” Some examples of adversative connectives are: but, yet, however, although, nevertheless. All of these connectives help to tie the events, ideas and information in the text together for the reader. [Click here to see an example.](#)

Conclusion: The dimensions in the T.E.R.A. analyzer are tools to help us look into a text in order to determine what might present difficulties for our students and thus how to help them. A low narrativity score means more uncommon words and possibly more information and ideas. If this is accompanied with a low concreteness score it would indicate less concrete and more abstract words. More abstract words might mean more abstract ideas as well. A low referential cohesion score means students might have trouble seeing how some sentences follow one from the other. If this is accompanied with a low narrativity score this would be even more likely. Just as low cohesion and narrativity scores might make it more difficult for students to fully understand how sentences build on each other, low deep cohesion scores might make it more difficult to comprehend how the ideas, events or information of the text as a whole fit together.

In each of these cases the tool signals what to look for as we prepare the text for our students. Used well it can help guide us to those portions of the text likely to present difficulty and thus where we want to situate our questions and our emphasis. No two complex texts are wholly alike; to prepare students for the complexity demands of the Common Core we need to regularly work with short high quality complex texts. In this way students will gradually come to recognize what makes text rich and complex and how to best absorb what these texts provide. This can only be done with teachers; the T.E.R.A. is designed to help them do this.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: In addition to the 5 component scores, T.E.R.A. provides an estimate of a passage grade level using the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level readability formula (Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975). Traditional readability formulas such as the Flesch-Kincaid have been used for decades to provide educators with an estimate of the difficulty of a text in relation to the grade level or reading ability of the reader. In T.E.R.A., the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is computed using a combination of the length of the sentences and the number of letters in the words $[(.39 * \text{sentence length}) + (11.8 * \text{word length}) - 15.59]$. This grade level estimate correlates highly with other common readability formulas.

Appendix D: LIWC2015 Variable Descriptions¹

Percentage of total words. Most of the LIWC output variables are percentages of total words within a text. For example, imagine you have analyzed a blog and discover that the Positive Emotions (or posemo) number was 4.20. That means that 4.20 percent of all the words in the blog were positive emotion words.

Summary variables. New to LIWC2015 is the inclusion of four summary variables: analytical thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone. Each of the summary variables are algorithms made from various LIWC variables based on previous language research. The numbers are standardized scores that have been converted to percentiles (based on the area under a normal curve) ranging from 0 to 100. Although the algorithms are proprietary, you can compute them by going to the research articles on which they are based. A brief overview of each summary variable follows.

Analytical thinking (Analytic). The analytical thinking variable is a factor-analytically derived dimension based on eight function word dimensions. Originally published as the categorical-dynamic index, or CDI, the dimension captures the degree to which people use words that suggest formal, logical, and hierarchical thinking patterns. People low in analytical thinking tend to write and think using language that is more narrative ways, focusing on the here-and-now, and personal experiences. Those high in analytical thinking perform better in college and have higher college board scores. To learn more about analytical thinking, see Pennebaker, Chung, Frazee, Lavergne, and Beaver (2014).

¹ Linguistics Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). Online Software. Accessed 10 January 2021. <https://liwc.wpengine.com>. Descriptions derived verbatim from <https://liwc.wpengine.com/interpreting-liwc-output/>.

Clout. Clout refers to the relative social status, confidence, or leadership that people display through their writing or talking. The algorithm was developed based on the results from a series of studies where people were interacting with one another (Kacewicz, Pennebaker, Davis, Jeon, & Graesser, 2013). Note that Clout is different from the LIWC2015 Power variable. Power or, more accurately, need for power, reflects people's attention to or awareness of relative status in a social setting. You can have a confident leader who has no interest in other people's standing in the social hierarchy.

Authenticity. When people reveal themselves in an authentic or honest way, they are more personal, humble, and vulnerable. The algorithm for Authenticity was derived from a series of studies where people were induced to be honest or deceptive (Newman, Pennebaker, Berry, & Richards, 2003) as well as a summary of deception studies published in the years afterwards (Pennebaker, 2011).

Emotional tone (Tone). Although LIWC2015 includes both positive emotion and negative emotion dimensions, the Tone variable puts the two dimensions into a single summary variable (Cohn, Mehl, & Pennebaker, 2004). The algorithm is built so that the higher the number, the more positive the tone. Numbers below 50 suggest a more negative emotional tone.

Appendix E: Quantitative Overview

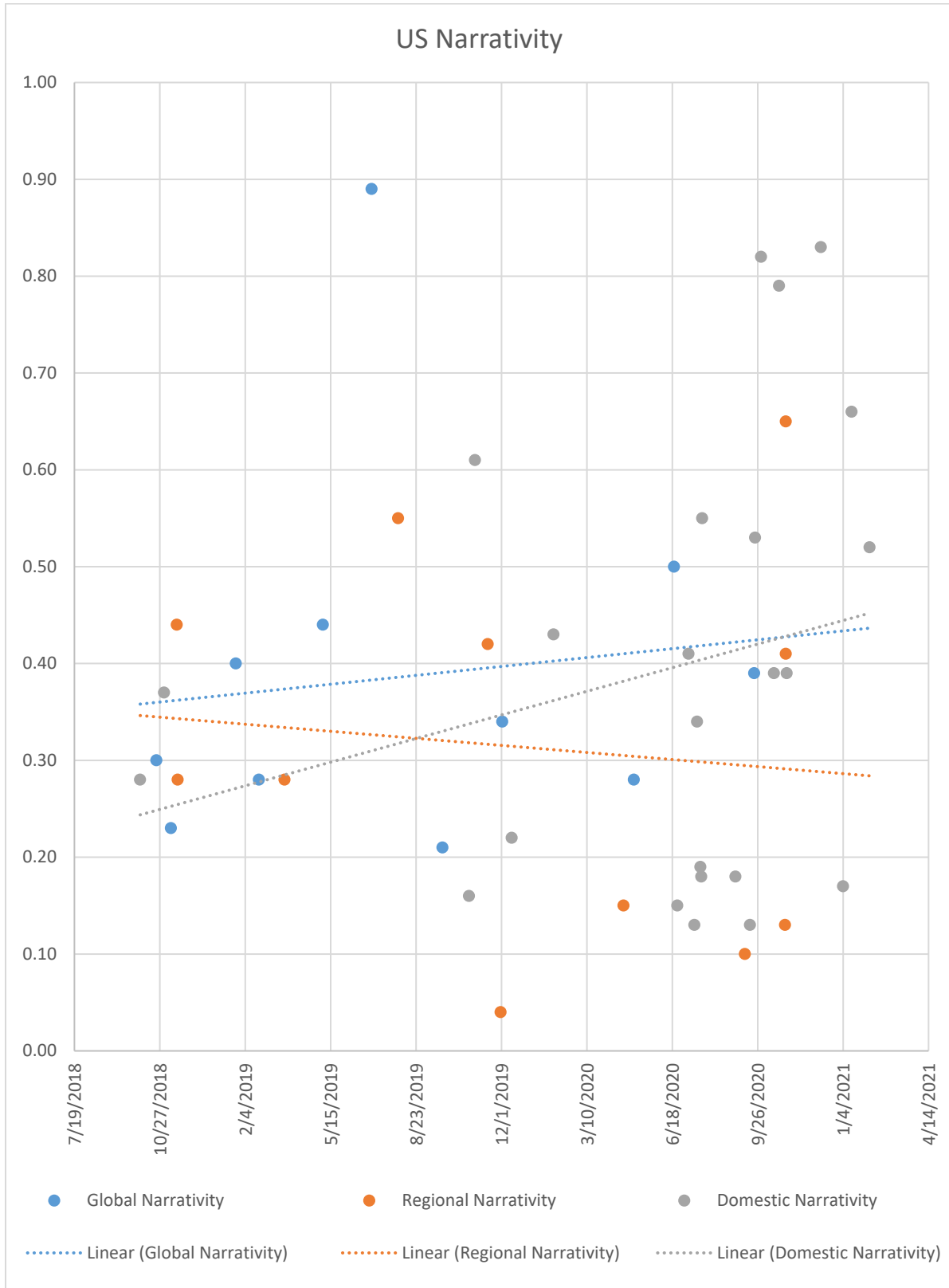
			Coh-Metrix TERA			LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
Group	Dynamic	N-Value	Narrativity	Word Concrete	Formality	Analytic	Clout	Authentic	Tone	Affiliation	Power	Focus Past	Focus Present	Focus Future
Thuc	Average	9	0.86	0.22	0.41	64.56	89.82	21.88	21.68	5.98	4.21	2.27	9.00	1.85
	Discourse Trend	9	-3	-1	-2	4	-3	1	-1	-2	2	-2	-2	2
UNGA	2016-2020	5				94.428	77.966	22.545	65.32	4.254	3.99	1.749	6.775	1.086
USA	Pre-OCT 2018	3	0.40	0.70	-0.76	84.07	81.13	32.39	64.71	5.17	5.18	1.99	8.00	1.29
	Post-OCT 2018	46	0.37	0.32	-0.87	83.49	80.61	23.08	75.83	4.76	4.34	2.27	7.49	1.19
	% Change		-6.07	-53.60	14.54	-0.69	-0.64	-28.73	17.18	-7.87	-16.28	14.12	-6.38	-7.75
	Globally	7	1	3	-3	0	-1	2	-3	-1	-1	2	0	-1
	Regionally	14	0	2	2	1	-1	-3	-1	-2	-1	2	0	-2
	Domestically	25	2	-3	2	-1	1	1	0	0	-2	-2	1	-1
PRC	Pre-OCT 2018	3	0.17	0.60	-0.13	95.13	68.73	28.83	88.11	3.65	3.57	1.42	6.74	1.30
	Post-OCT 2018	102	0.14	0.53	-0.91	96.11	76.67	28.12	85.11	4.93	3.96	1.41	5.50	1.37
	% Change		-16.86	-11.68	584.41	1.04	11.55	-2.46	-3.41	34.95	11.10	-0.95	-18.43	5.62
	Globally	37	0	0	-1	-1	1	0	-2	2	2	-2	2	2
	Regionally	44	1	1	-2	0	1	-1	-2	0	0	-2	1	1
	Domestically	21	3	-1	2	-1	0	0	-2	1	1	-1	3	-2
IDN	Pre-OCT 2018	4	0.21	0.35	-0.75	94.09	78.71	22.18	90.46	4.45	4.53	0.91	6.86	0.96
	Post-OCT 2018	22	0.24	0.32	-0.65	92.18	74.59	23.73	82.31	4.71	3.88	1.05	6.86	1.26
	% Change		15.70	-7.27	-13.58	-2.02	-5.23	7.01	-9.01	5.88	-14.32	15.24	0.00	32.07
	Globally	6	-3	-4	0	-1	0	2	-3	3	0	-3	1	2
	Regionally	6	-5	5	-5	3	-3	2	3	-5	1	4	-4	-5
	Domestically	10	-5	4	-4	5	-1	-2	-1	-2	-1	4	-5	-4
Global Audiences			Coh-Metrix TERA			LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
	Discursive Source	N-Value	Narrativity	Word Concrete	Formality	Analytic	Clout	Authentic	Tone	Affiliation	Power	Focus Past	Focus Present	Focus Future
	Thucydides	9	-3	-1	-2	4	-3	1	-1	-2	2	-2	-2	2
	US	7	1	3	-3	0	-1	2	-3	-1	-1	2	0	-1
	PRC	37	0	0	-1	-1	1	0	-2	2	2	-2	2	2
IDN	6	-3	-4	0	-1	0	2	-3	3	0	-3	1	2	
Regional Audiences			Coh-Metrix TERA			LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
	Discursive Source	N-Value	Narrativity	Word Concrete	Formality	Analytic	Clout	Authentic	Tone	Affiliation	Power	Focus Past	Focus Present	Focus Future
	Thucydides	9	-3	-1	-2	4	-3	1	-1	-2	2	-2	-2	2
	US	14	0	2	2	1	-1	-3	-1	-2	-1	-2	0	-2
	PRC	44	1	1	-2	0	1	-1	-2	2	0	-2	1	1
IDN	6	-5	5	-5	3	-3	2	3	-5	1	4	-4	-5	
Domestic Audiences			Coh-Metrix TERA			LIWC2015 Word-Level Analysis								
	Discursive Source	N-Value	Narrativity	Word Concrete	Formality	Analytic	Clout	Authentic	Tone	Affiliation	Power	Focus Past	Focus Present	Focus Future
	Thucydides	9	-3	-1	-2	4	-3	1	-1	-2	2	-2	-2	2
	US	25	2	-3	2	-1	1	1	0	0	-2	-2	1	-1
	PRC	21	3	-1	2	-1	0	0	-2	1	1	-1	3	-2
IDN	10	-5	4	-4	5	-1	-2	-1	-2	-1	4	-5	-4	

+For all audiences, a number from -5 (decreasing significantly, close to a 45-degree angle) to 5 (increasing significantly, close to a 45-degree angle) is assessed based upon the slope for the trend region lines on the graphs in Appendices F-AO .

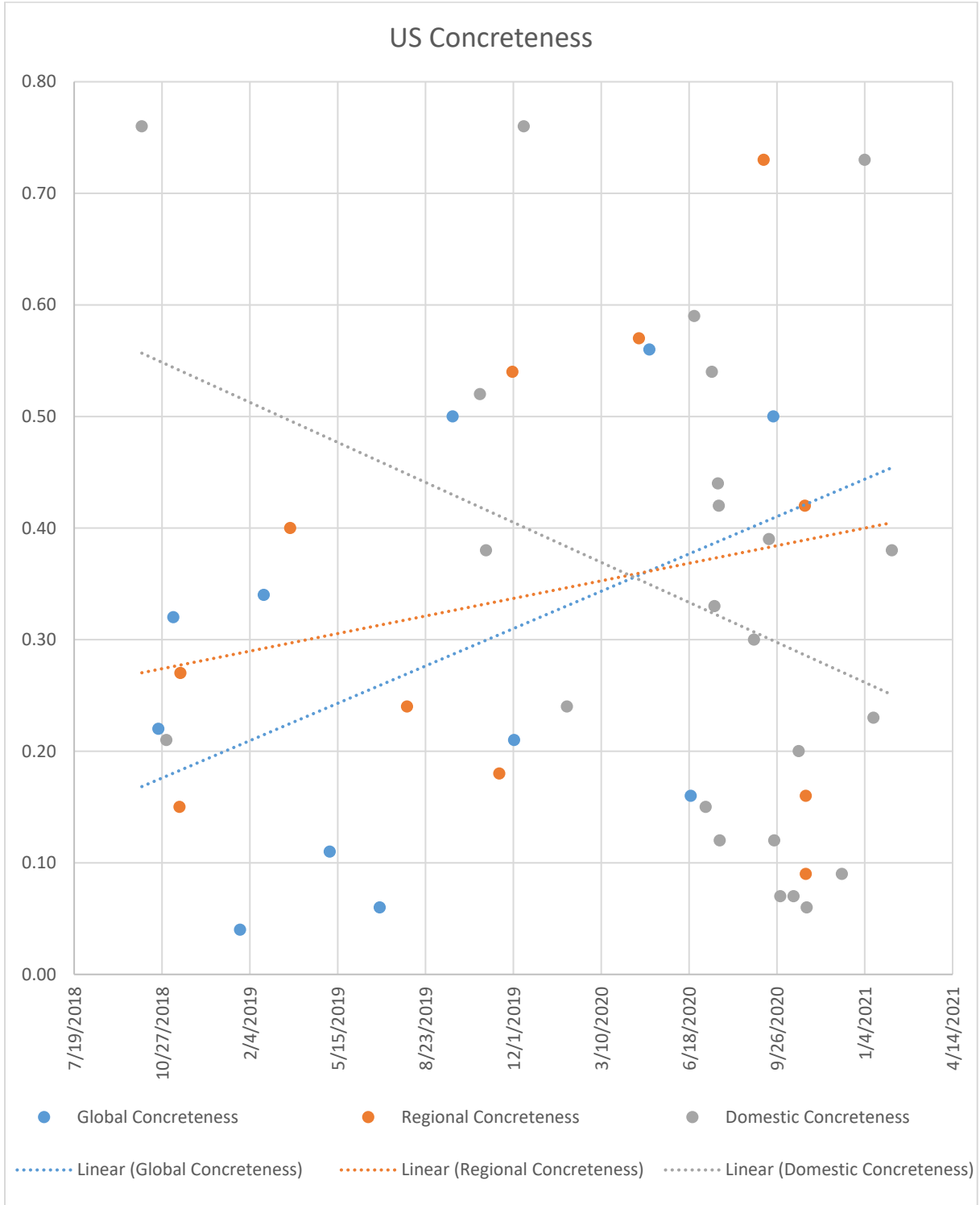
++For the 9 Thucydides speeches, the entire corpus is considered as relevant to global, regional, or domestic audiences based upon Thucydides' objective account intending to be reflective of the entire antebellum discursive body of relevance to the entire context.

+++Colors represent conditional formatting based upon all like items (percentages compared with percentages, values with values, and slope estimates with slope estimates).

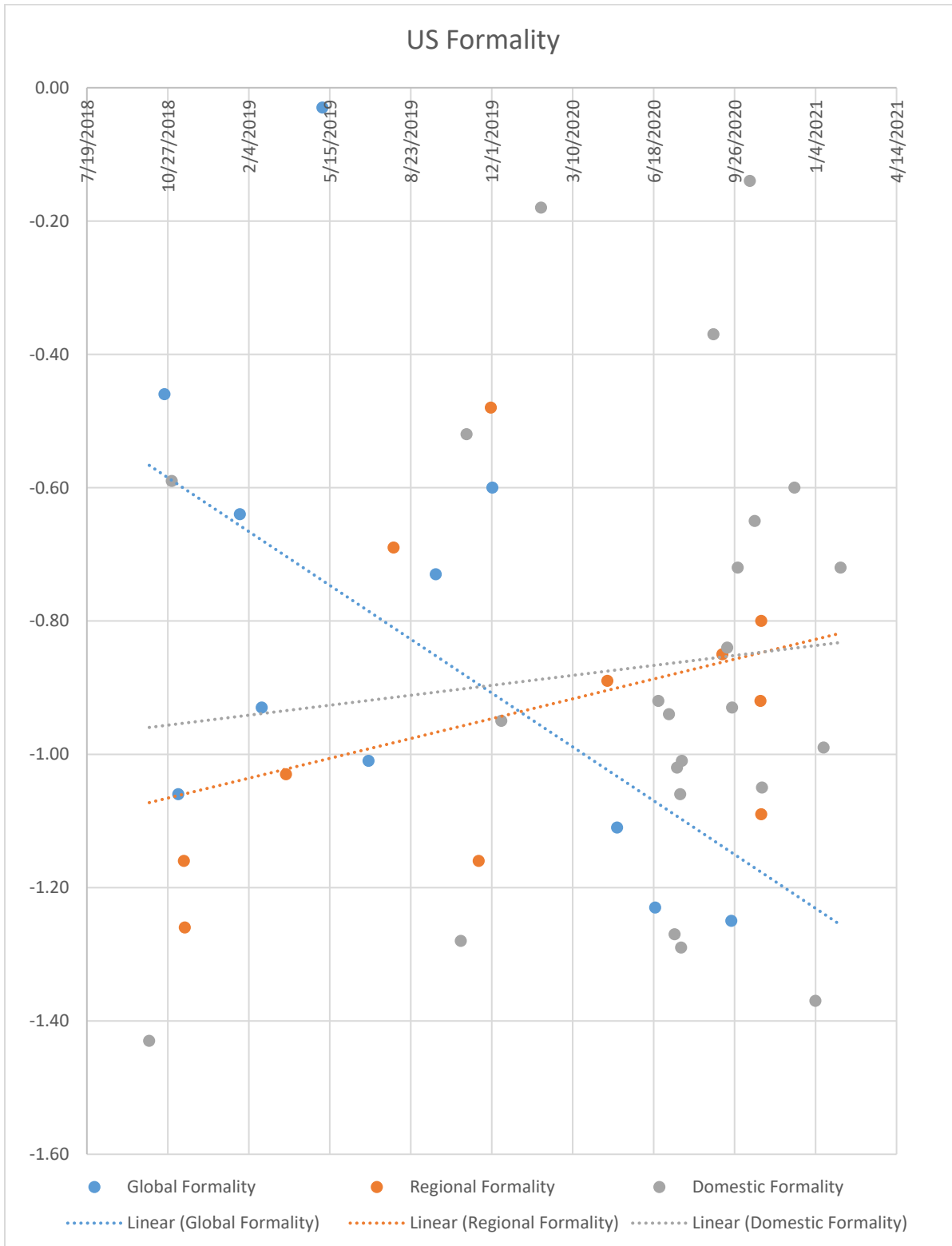
Appendix F: US Discourse Narrativity (October 2018 – February 2021)



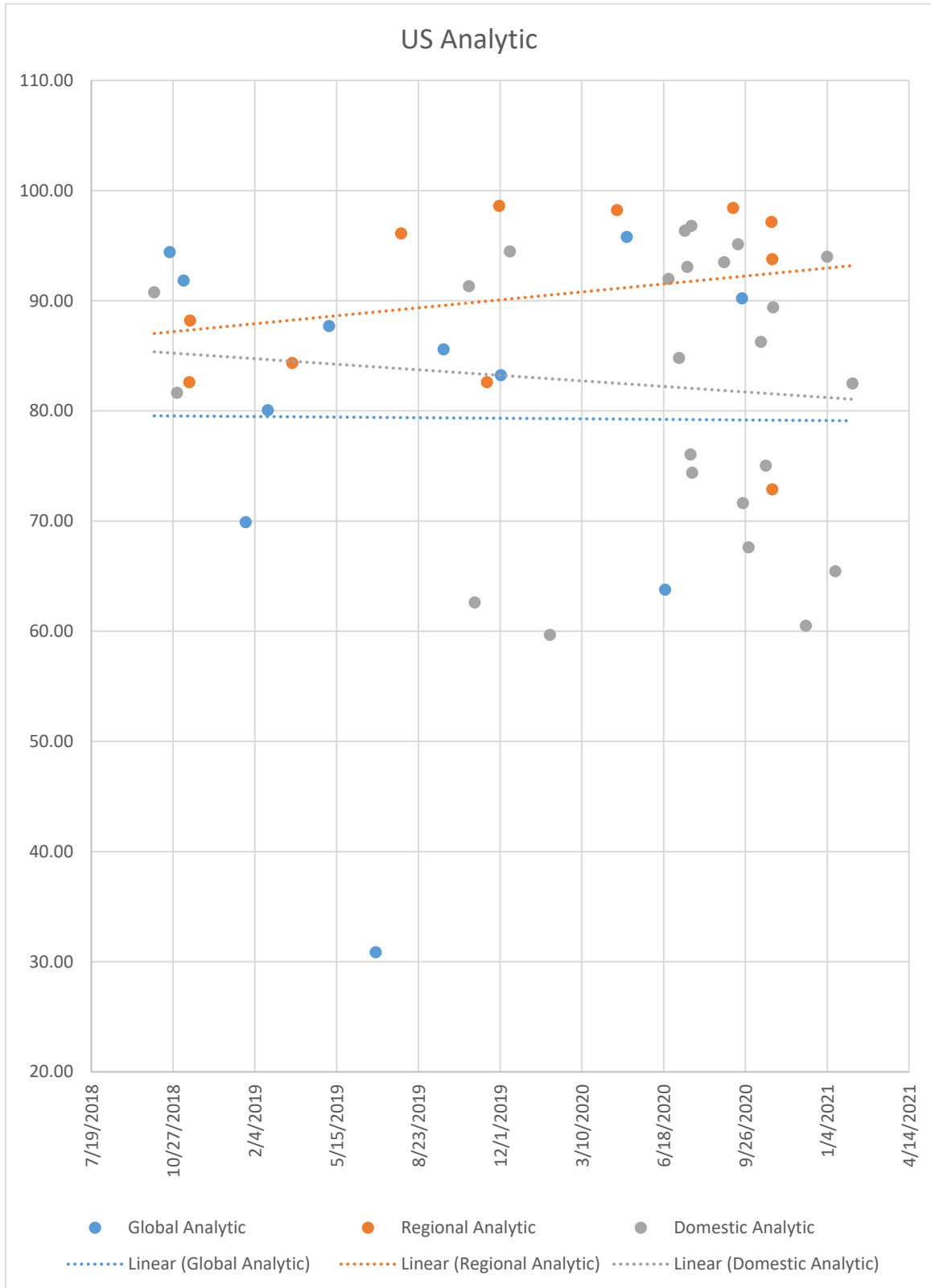
Appendix G: US Discourse Concreteness (October 2018 – February 2021)



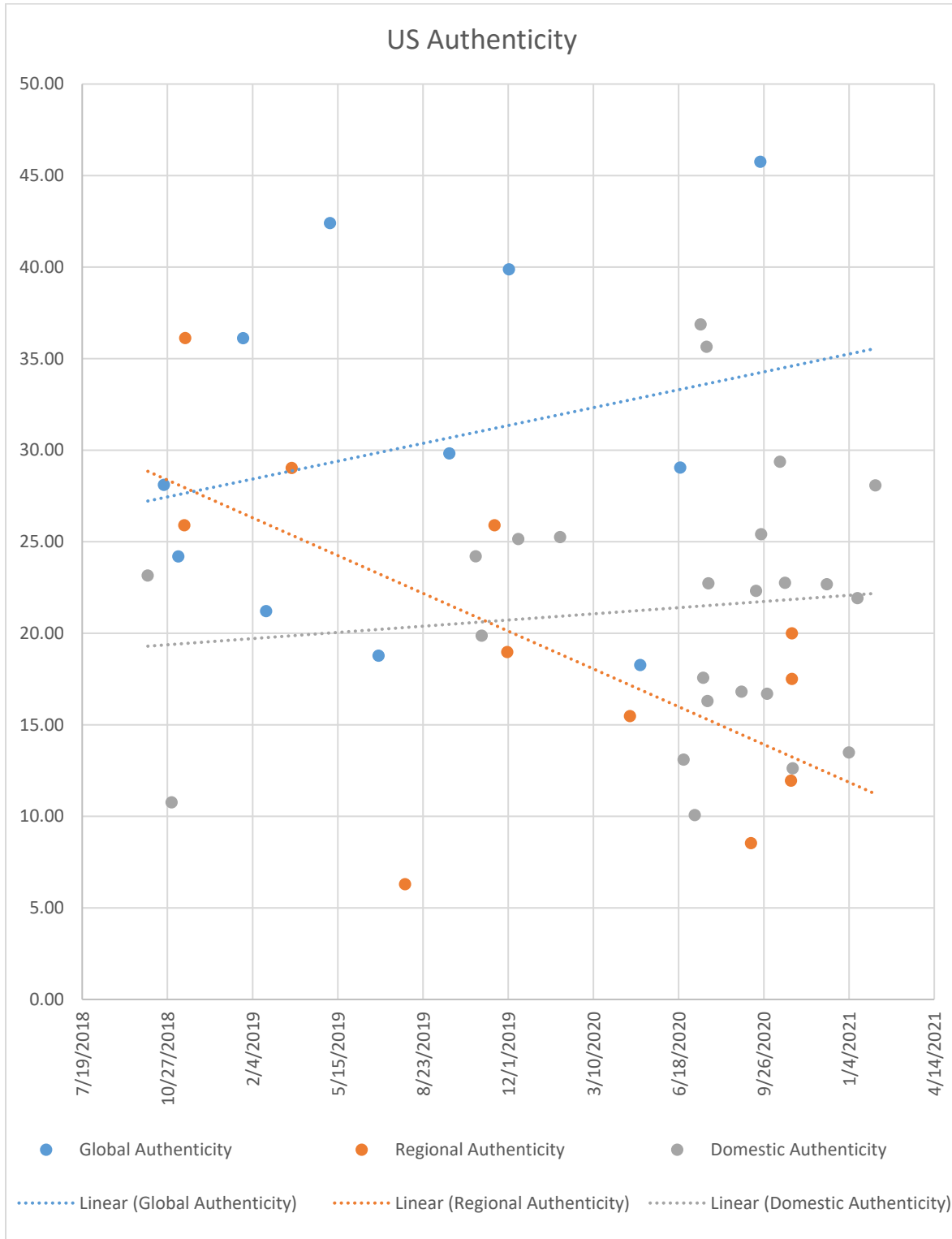
Appendix H: US Discourse Formality (October 2018 – February 2021)



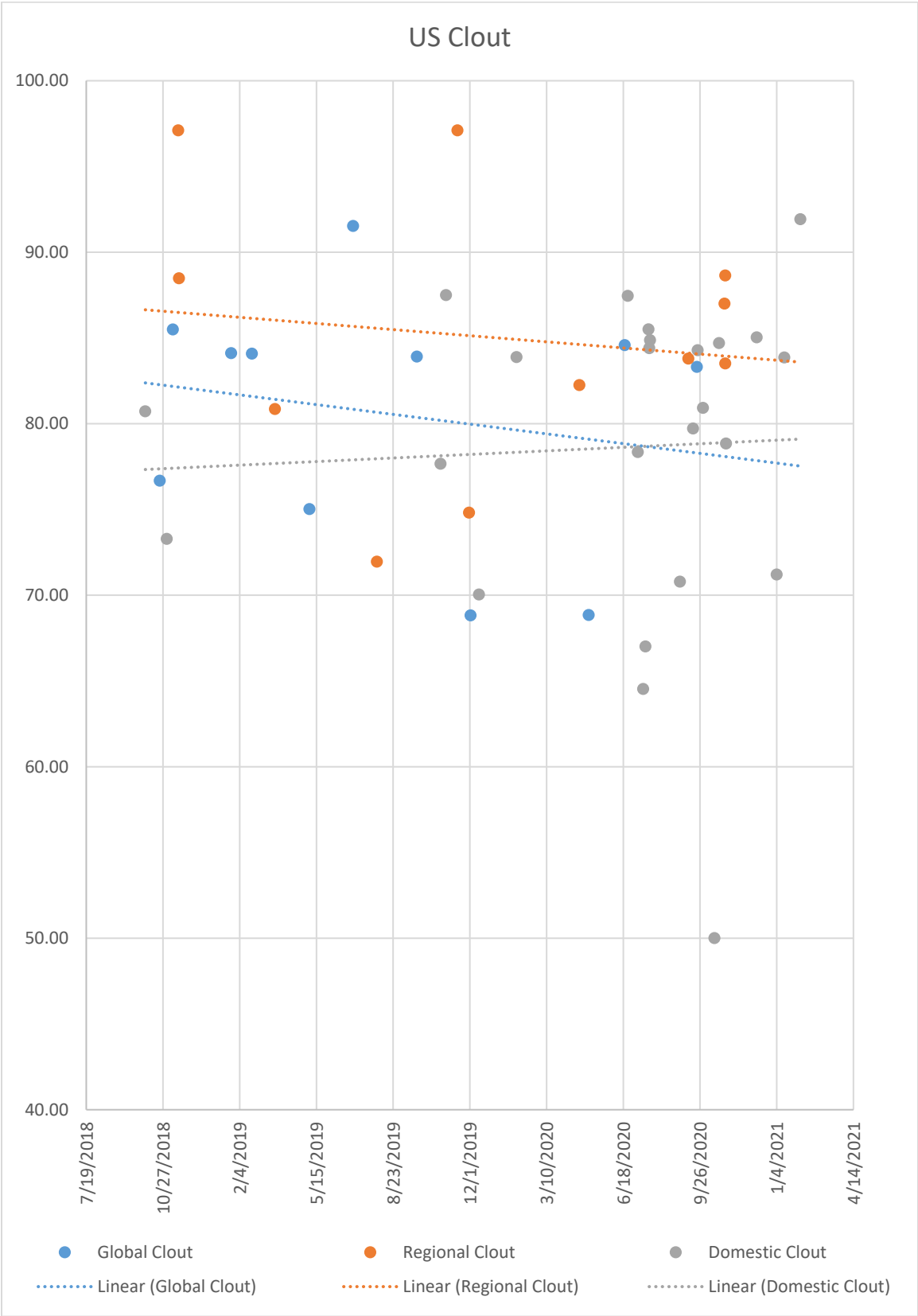
Appendix I: US Discourse Analytic (October 2018 – February 2021)



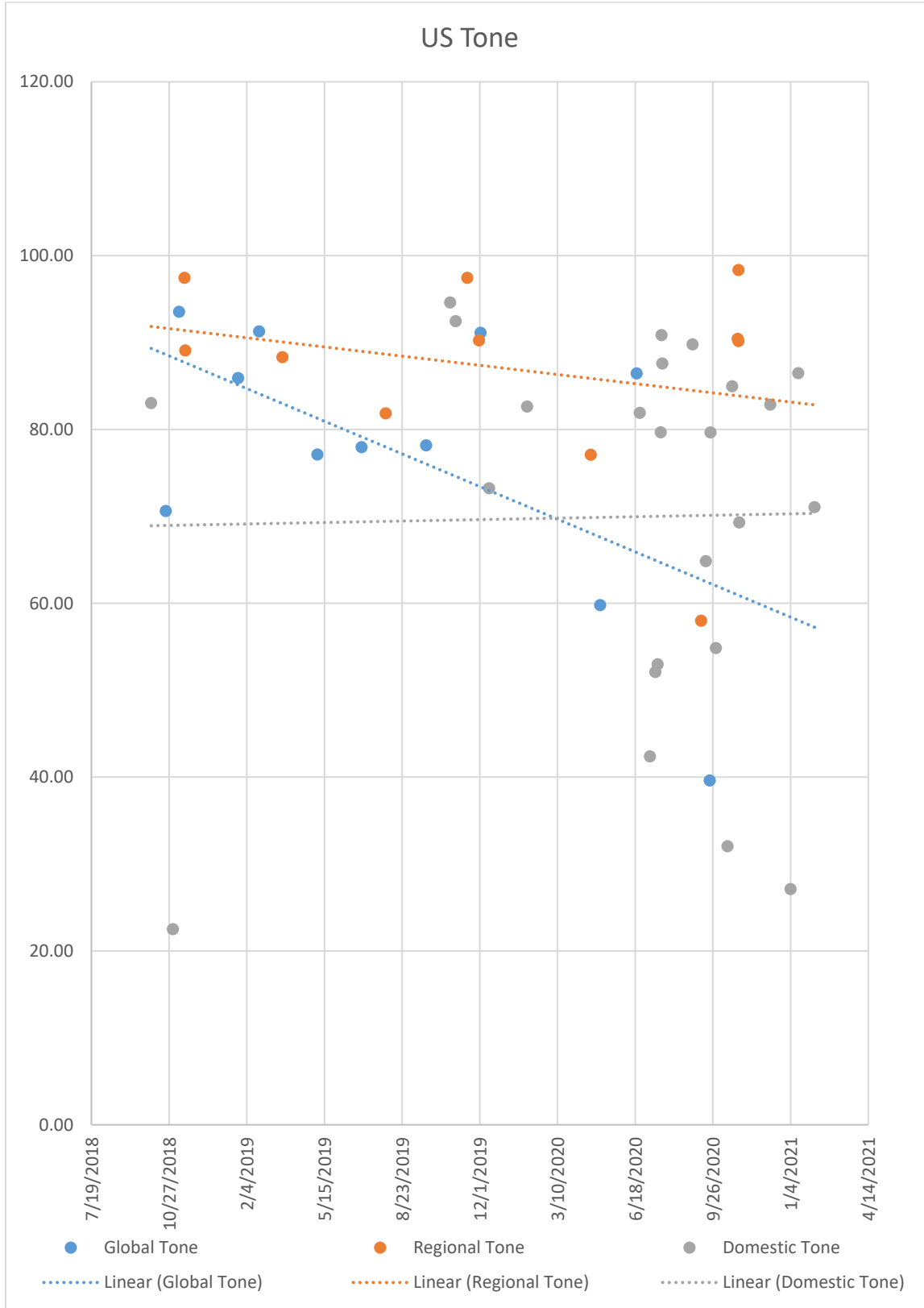
Appendix J: US Discourse Authenticity (October 2018 – February 2021)



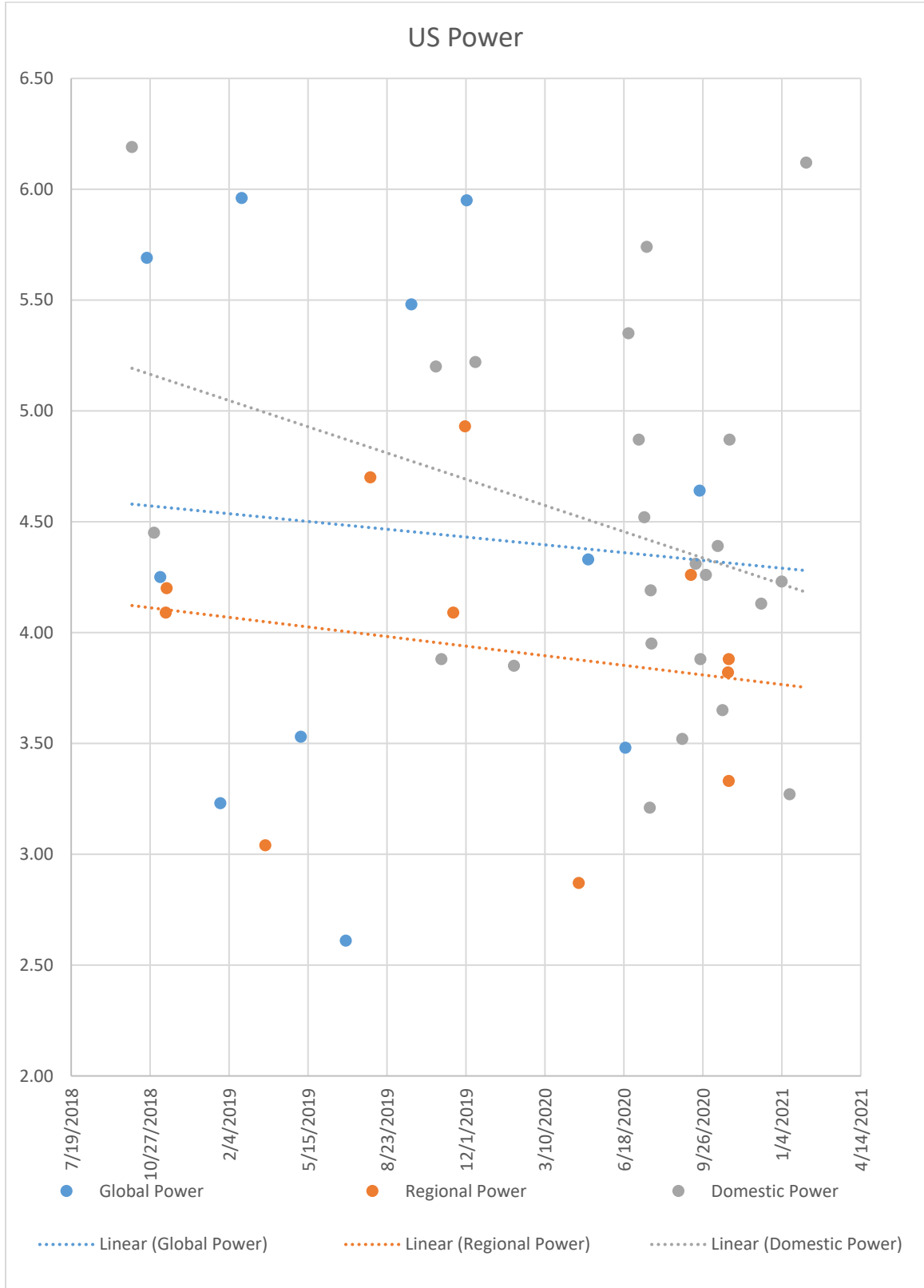
Appendix K: US Discourse Clout (October 2018 – February 2021)



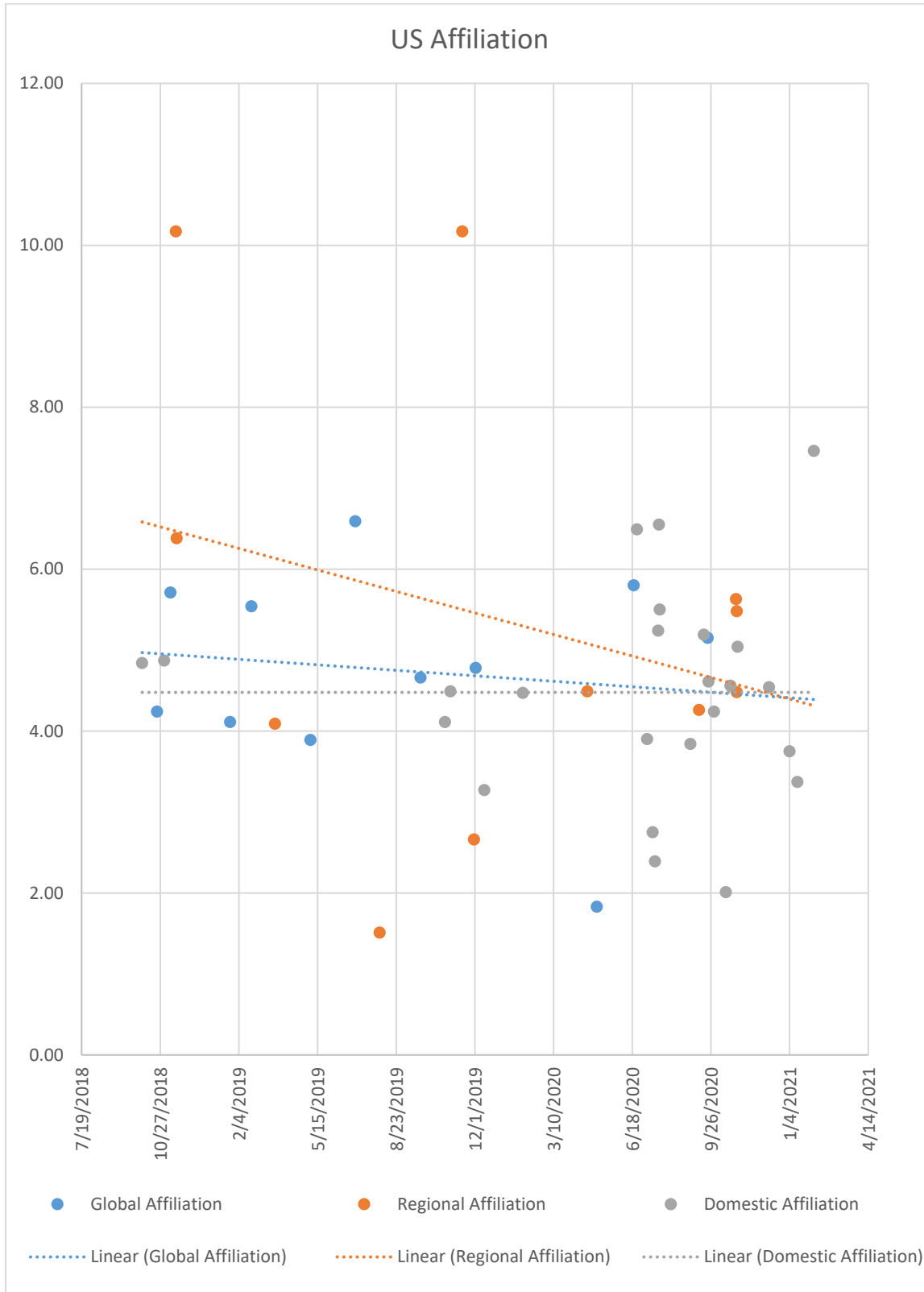
Appendix L: US Discourse Tone (October 2018 – February 2021)



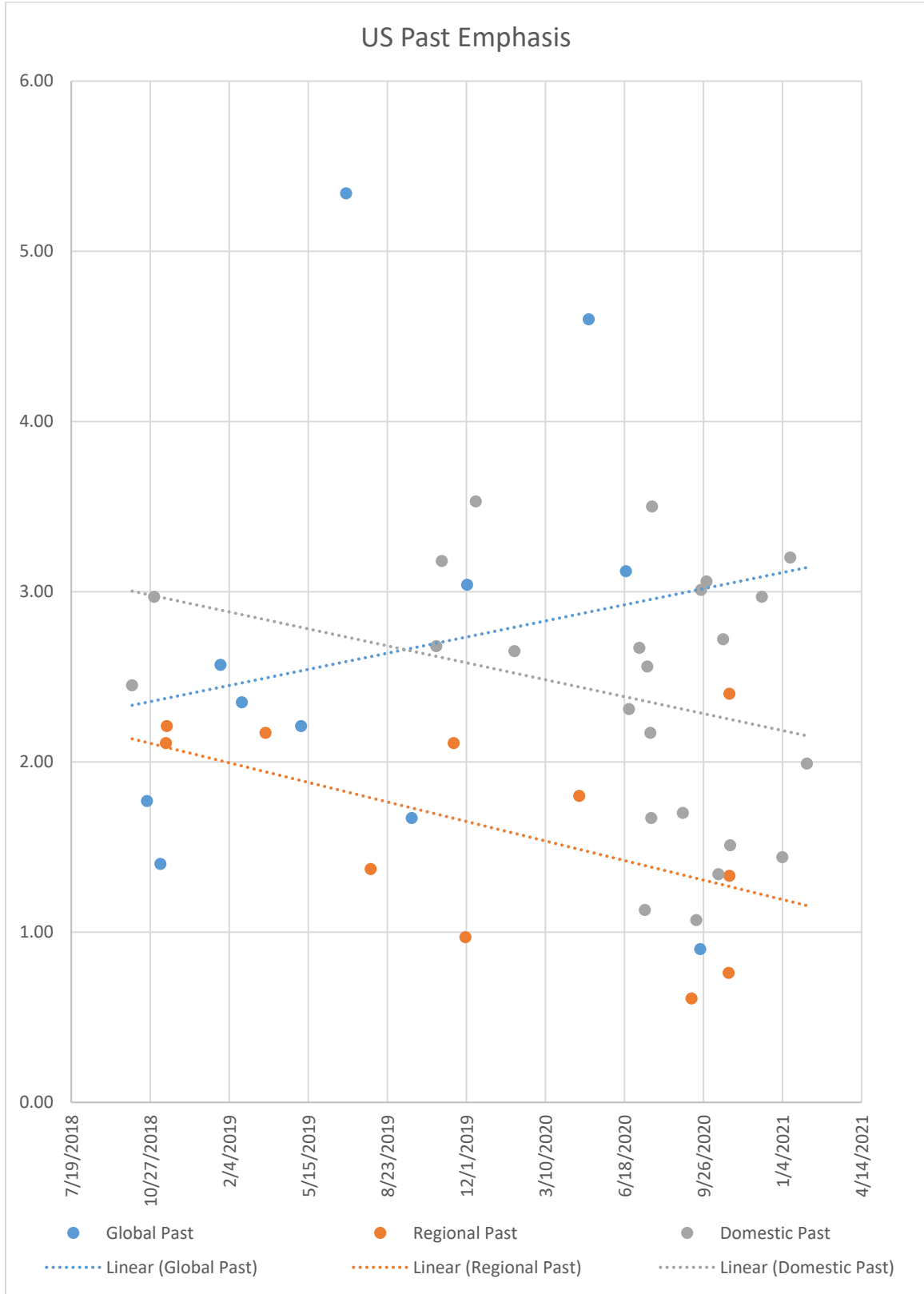
Appendix M: US Discourse Power Sensitivity (October 2018 – February 2021)



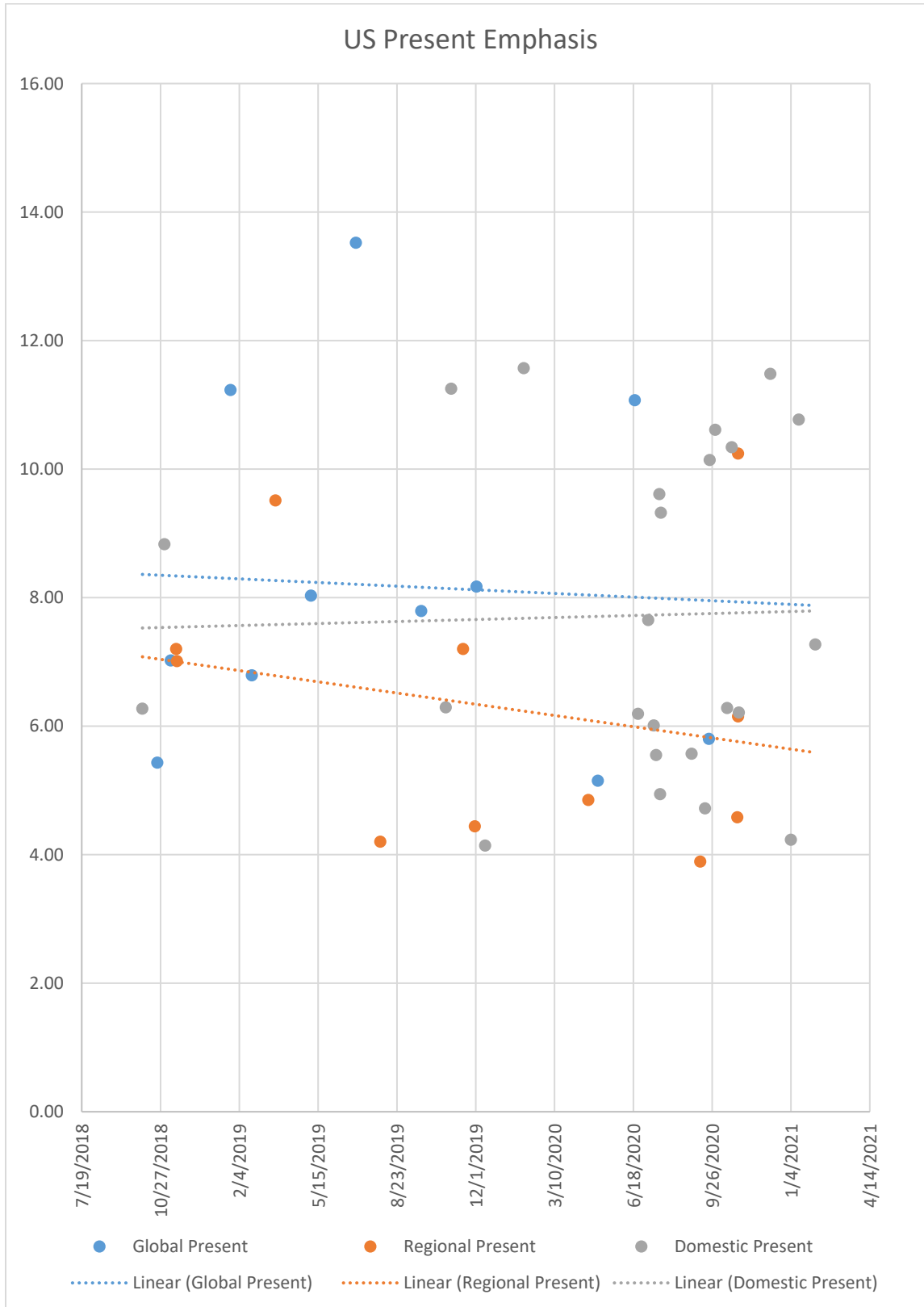
Appendix N: US Discourse Affiliation (October 2018 – February 2021)



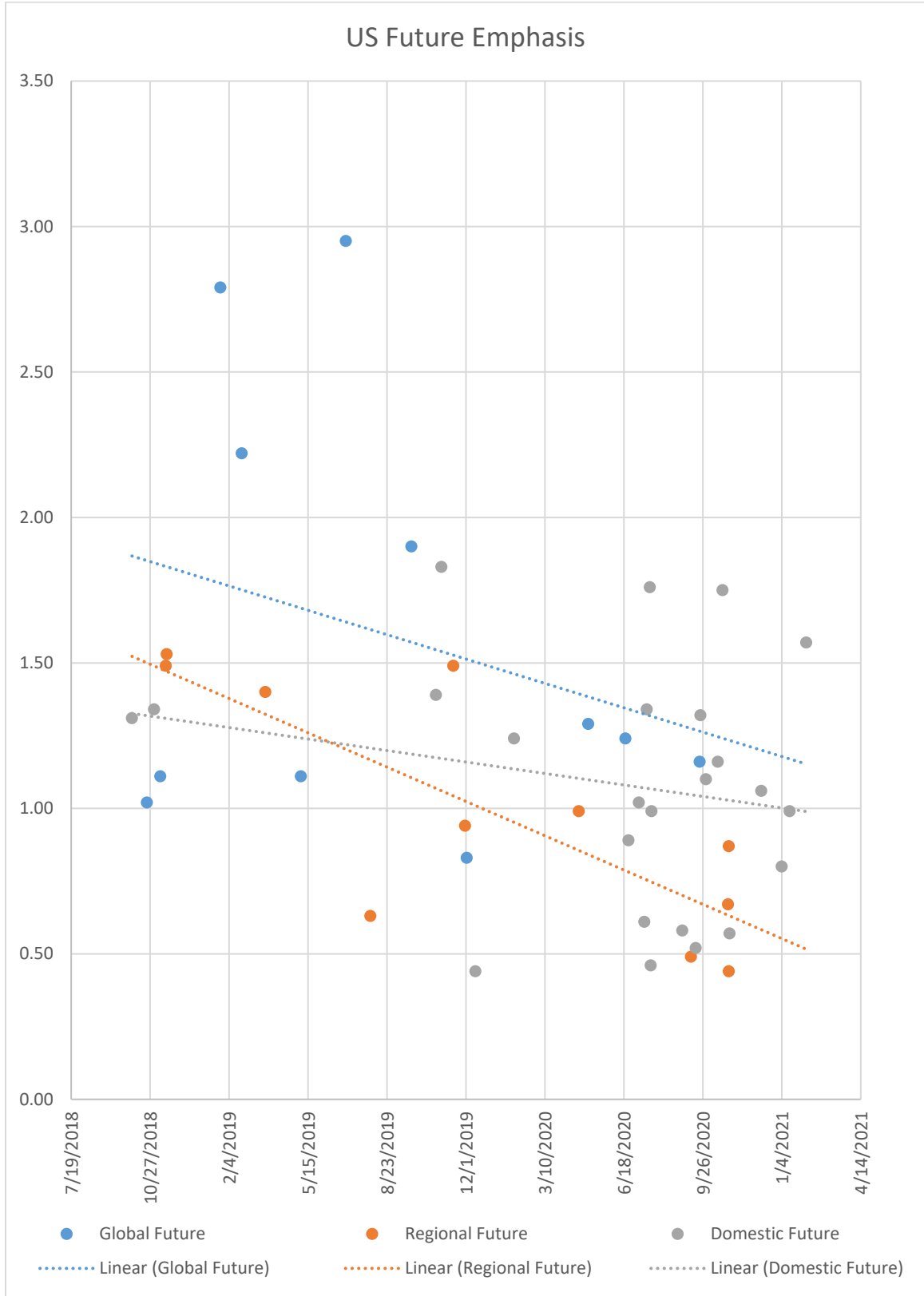
Appendix O: US Discourse Past Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



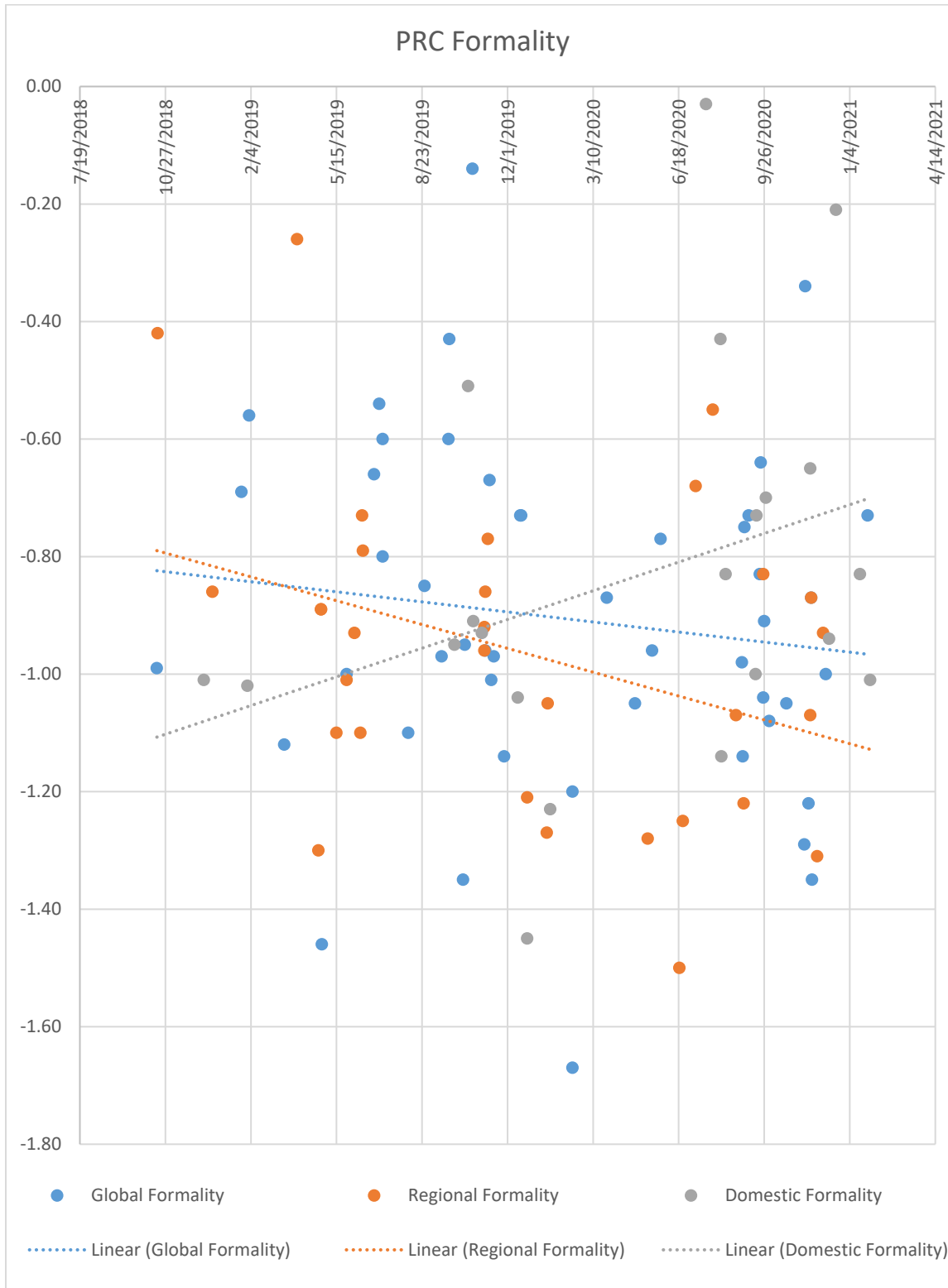
Appendix P: US Discourse Present Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



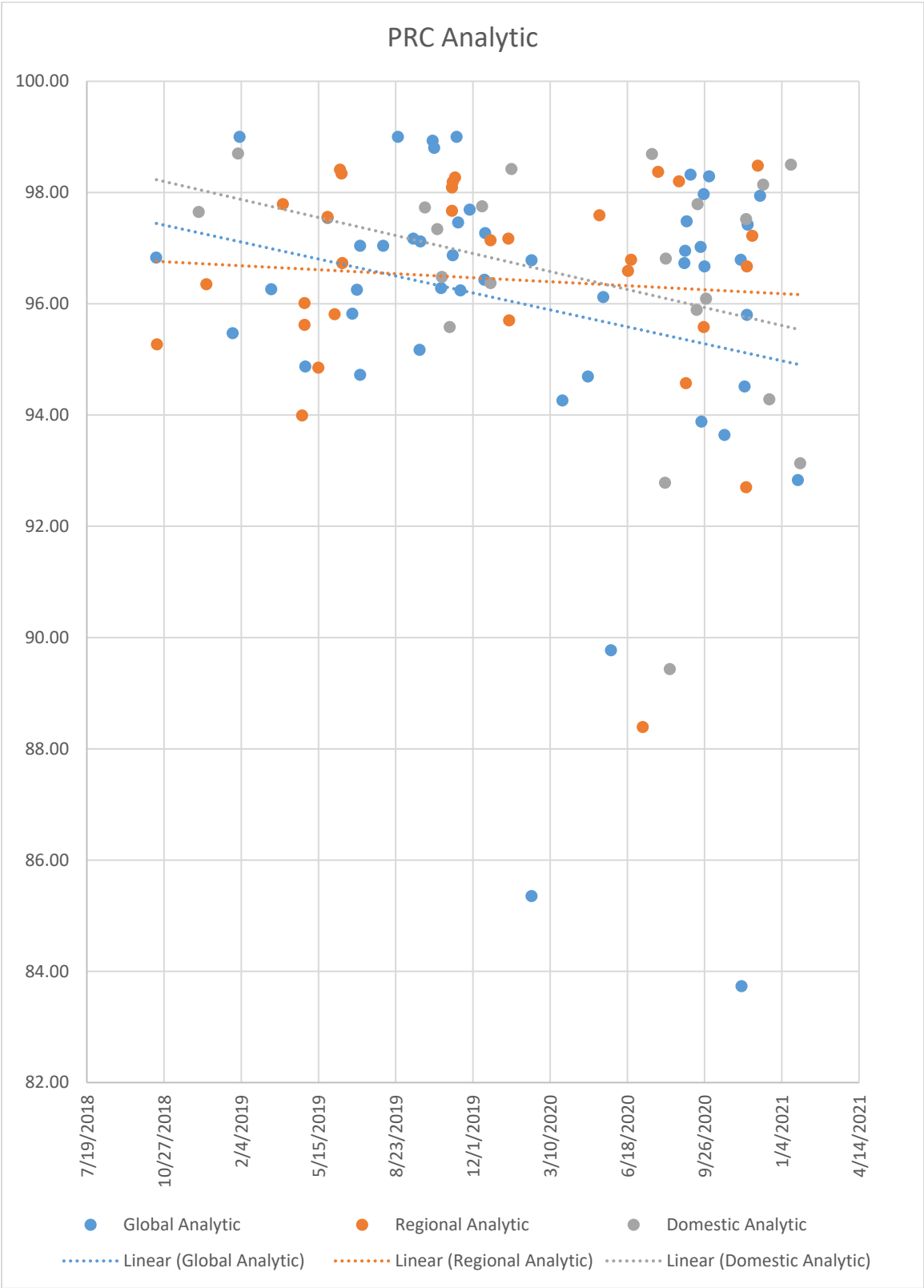
Appendix Q: US Discourse Future Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



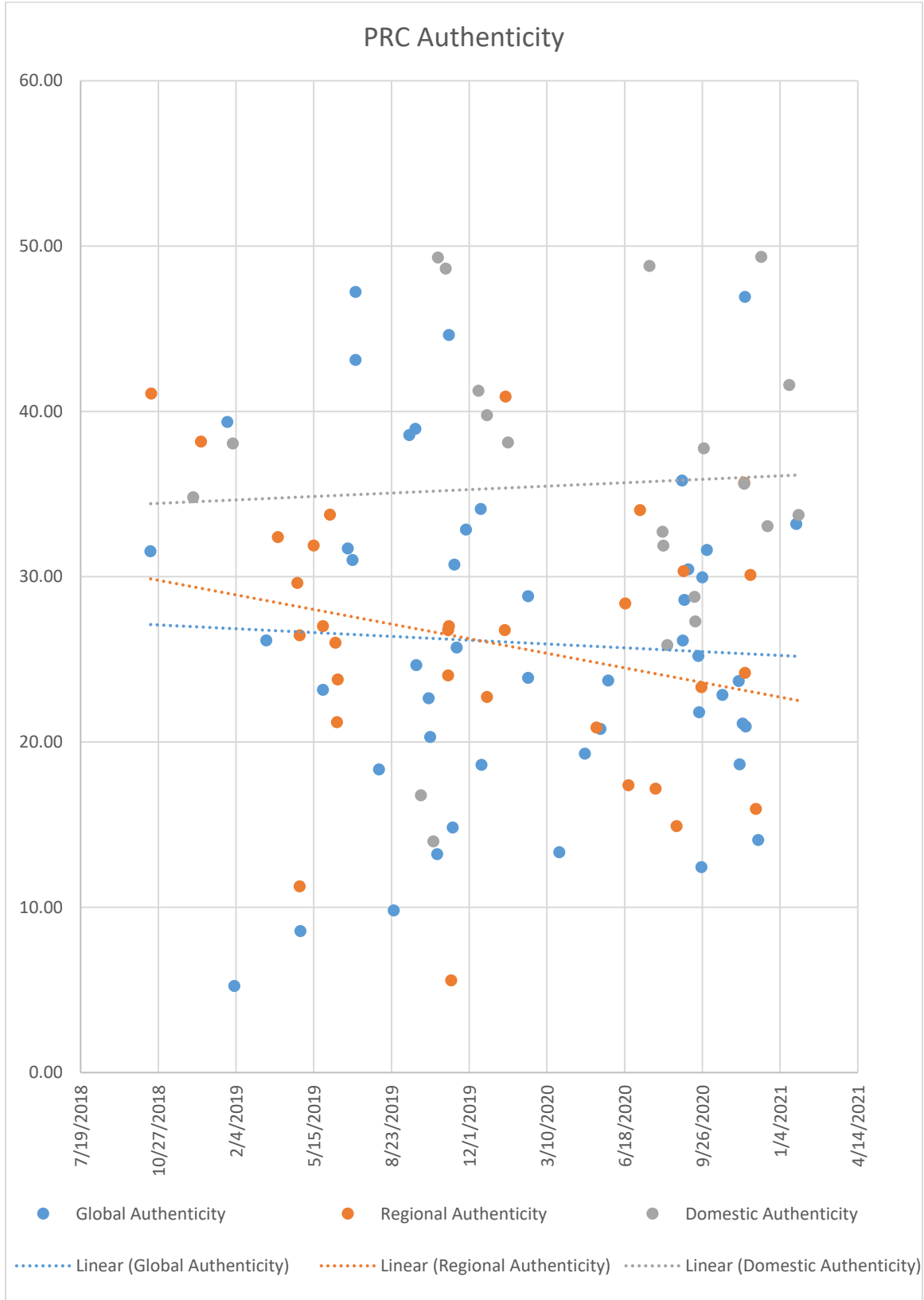
Appendix T: PRC Discourse Formality (October 2018 – February 2021)



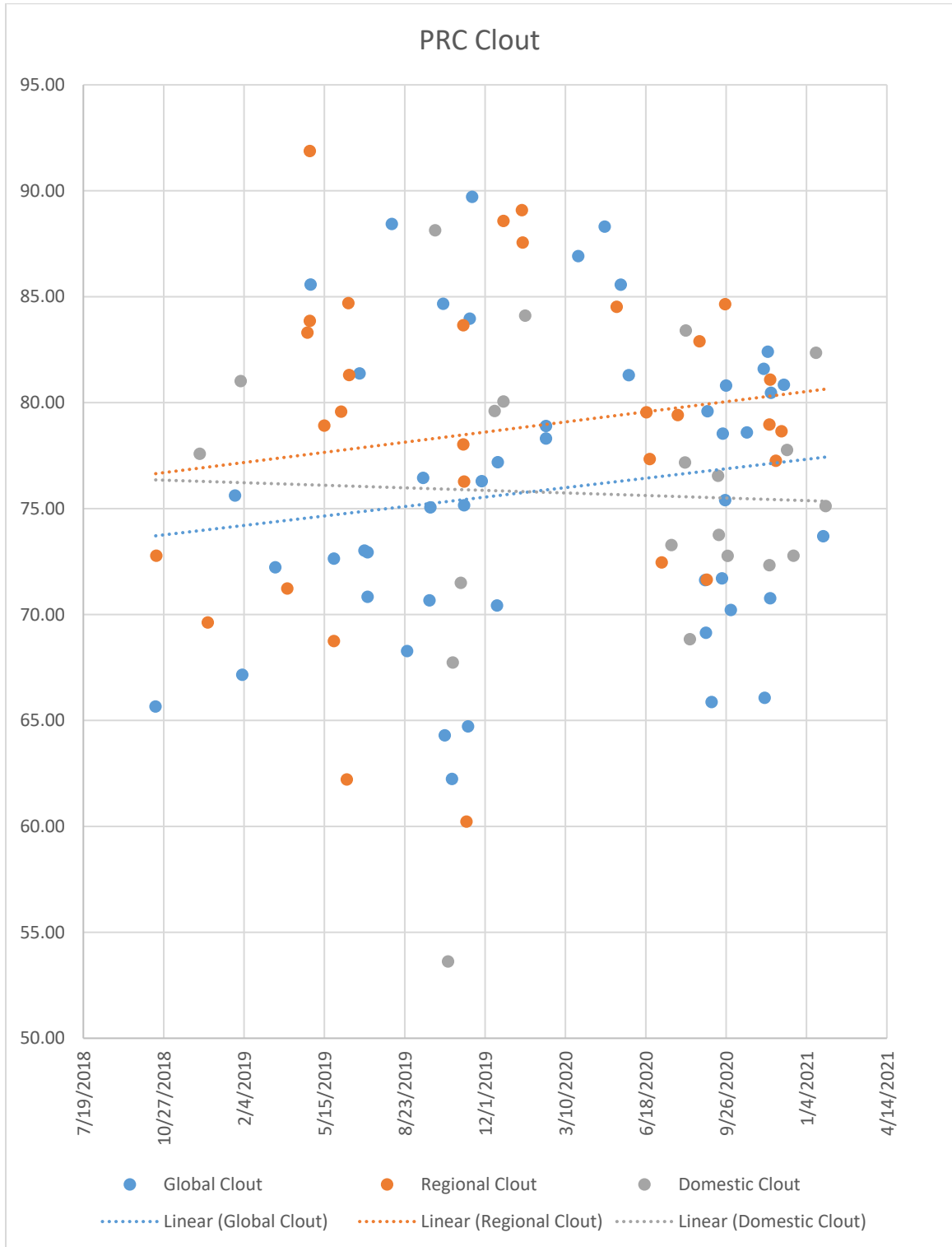
Appendix U: PRC Discourse Analytic (October 2018 – February 2021)



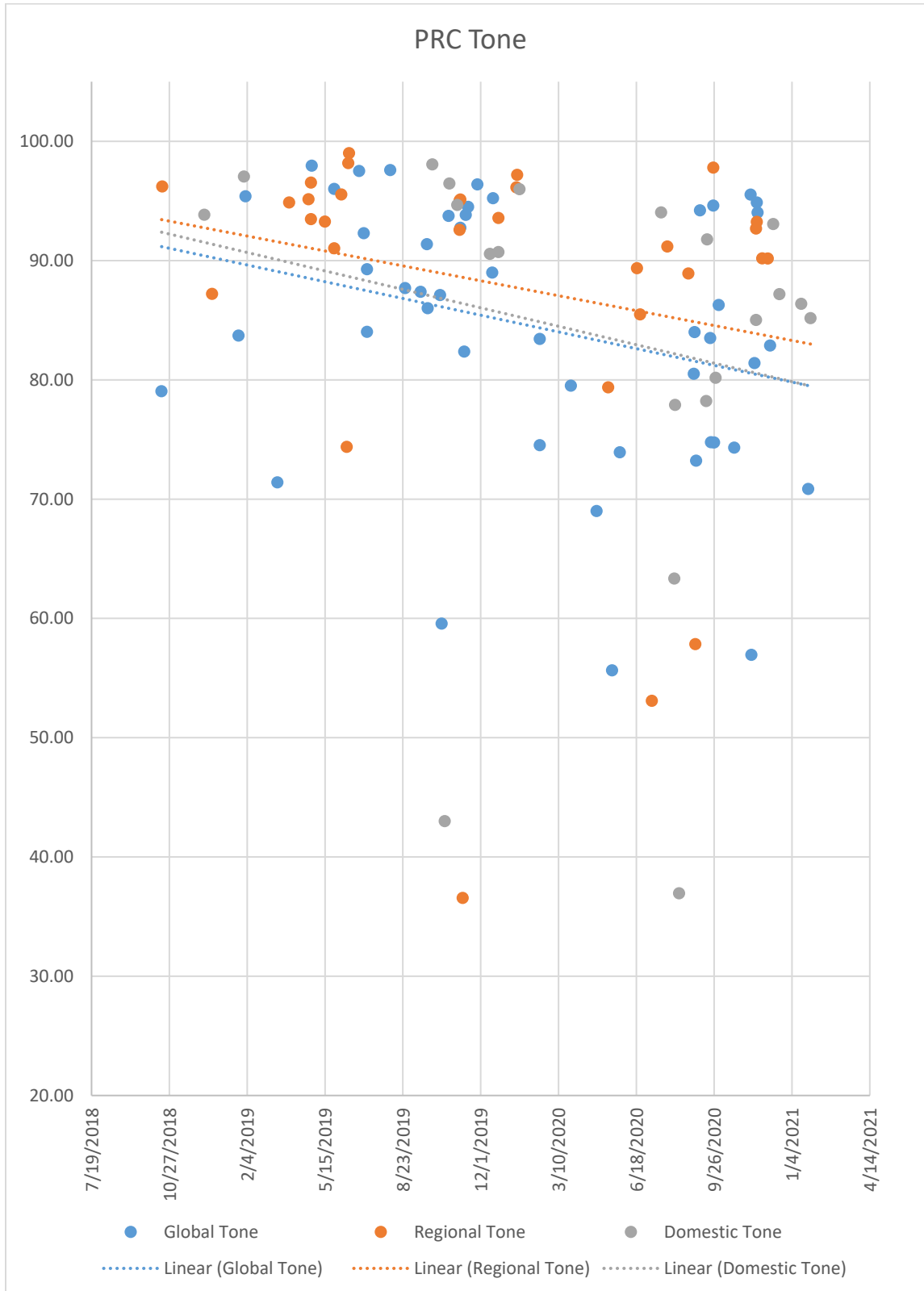
Appendix V: PRC Discourse Authenticity (October 2018 – February 2021)



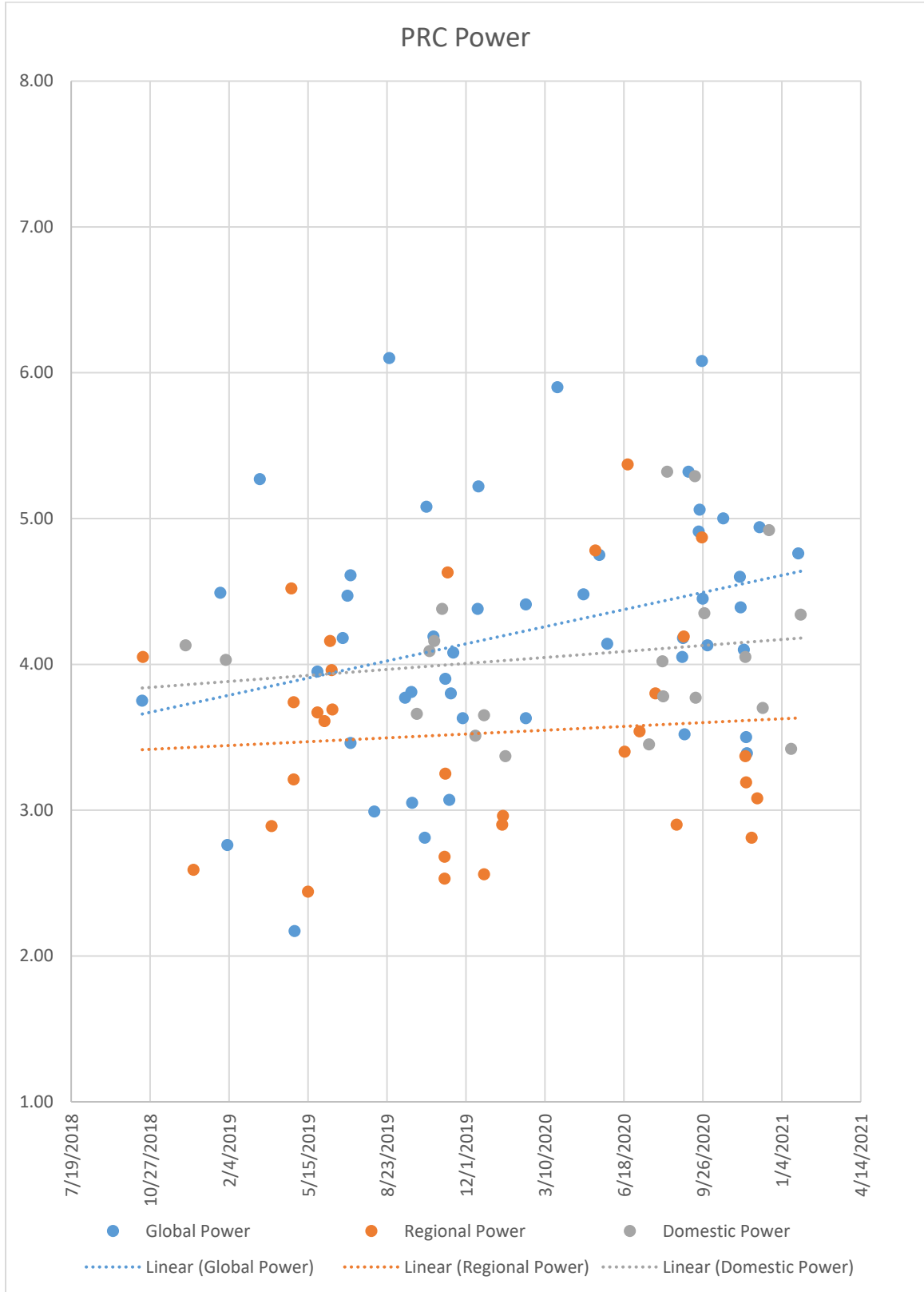
Appendix W: PRC Discourse Clout (October 2018 – February 2021)



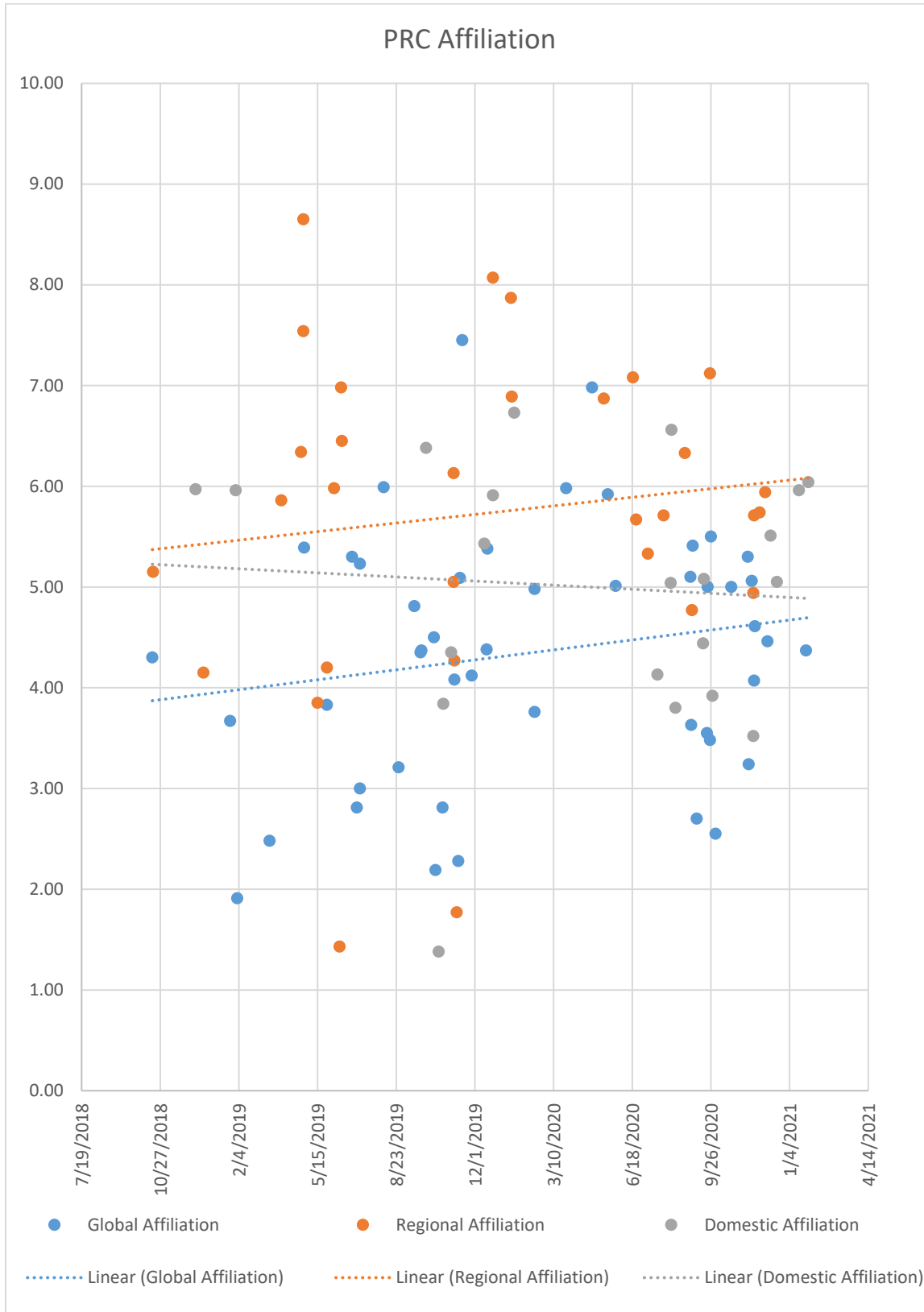
Appendix X: PRC Discourse Tone (October 2018 – February 2021)



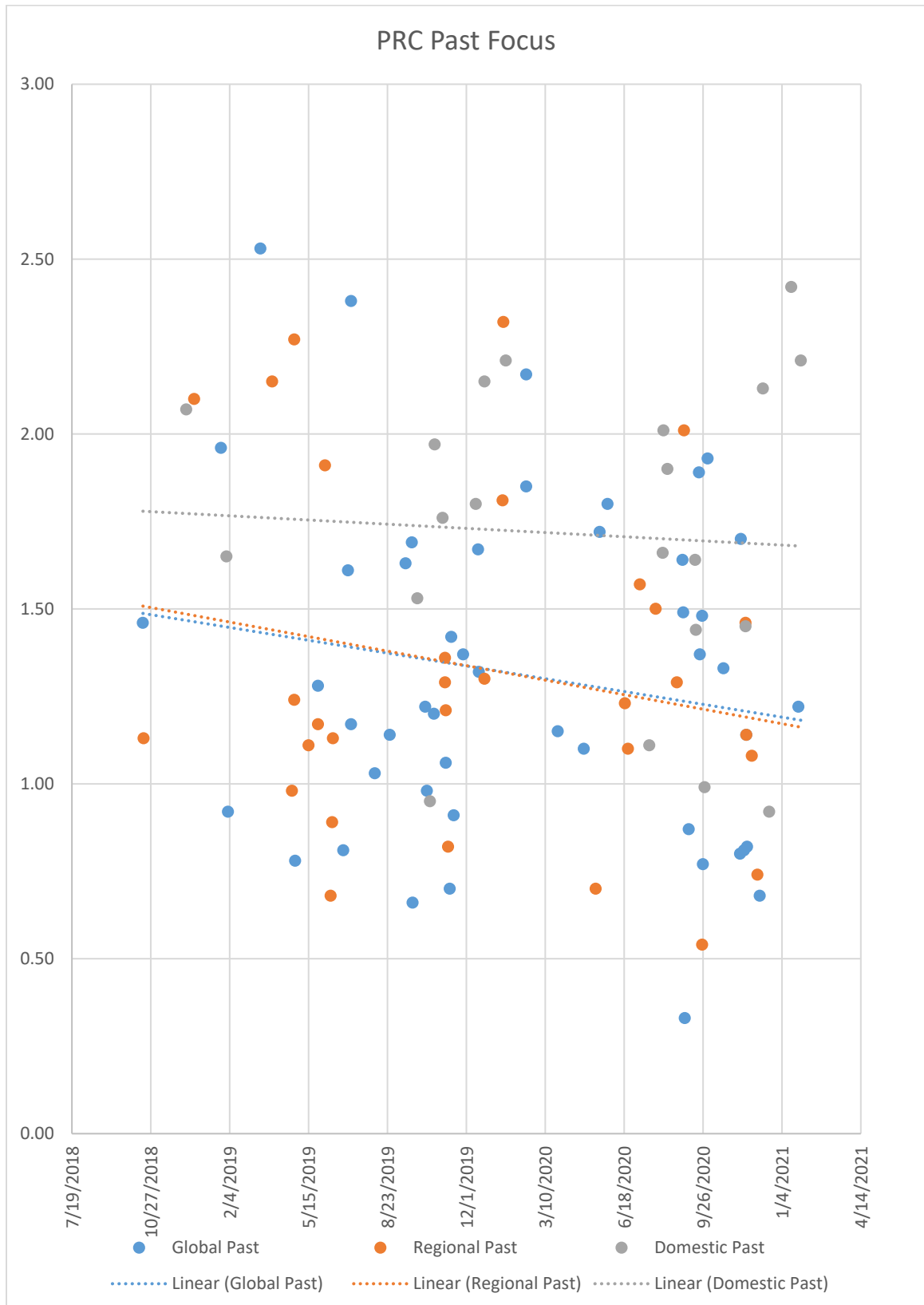
Appendix Y: PRC Discourse Power Sensitivity (October 2018 – February 2021)



Appendix Z: PRC Discourse Affiliation (October 2018 – February 2021)



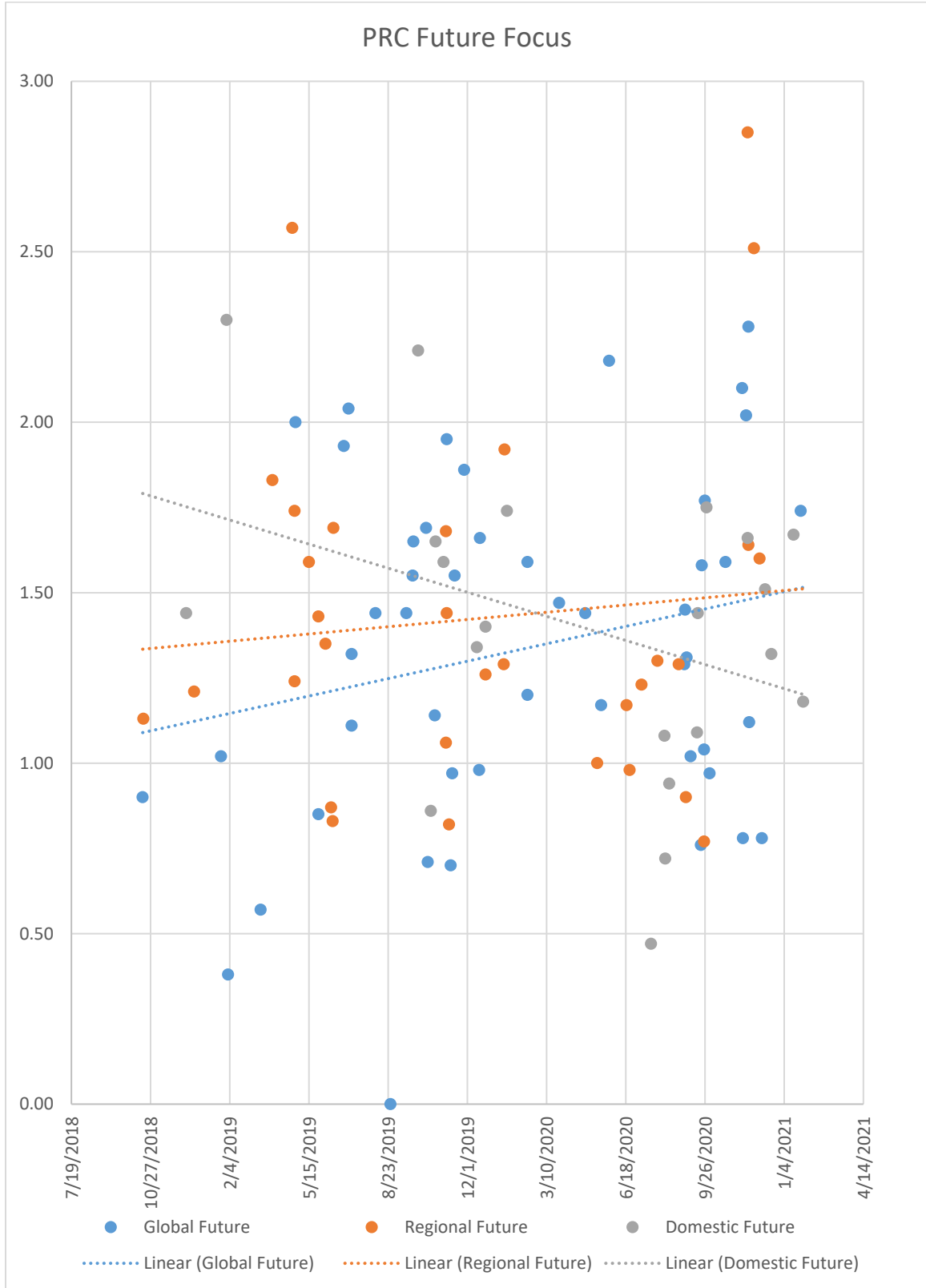
Appendix AA: PRC Discourse Past Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



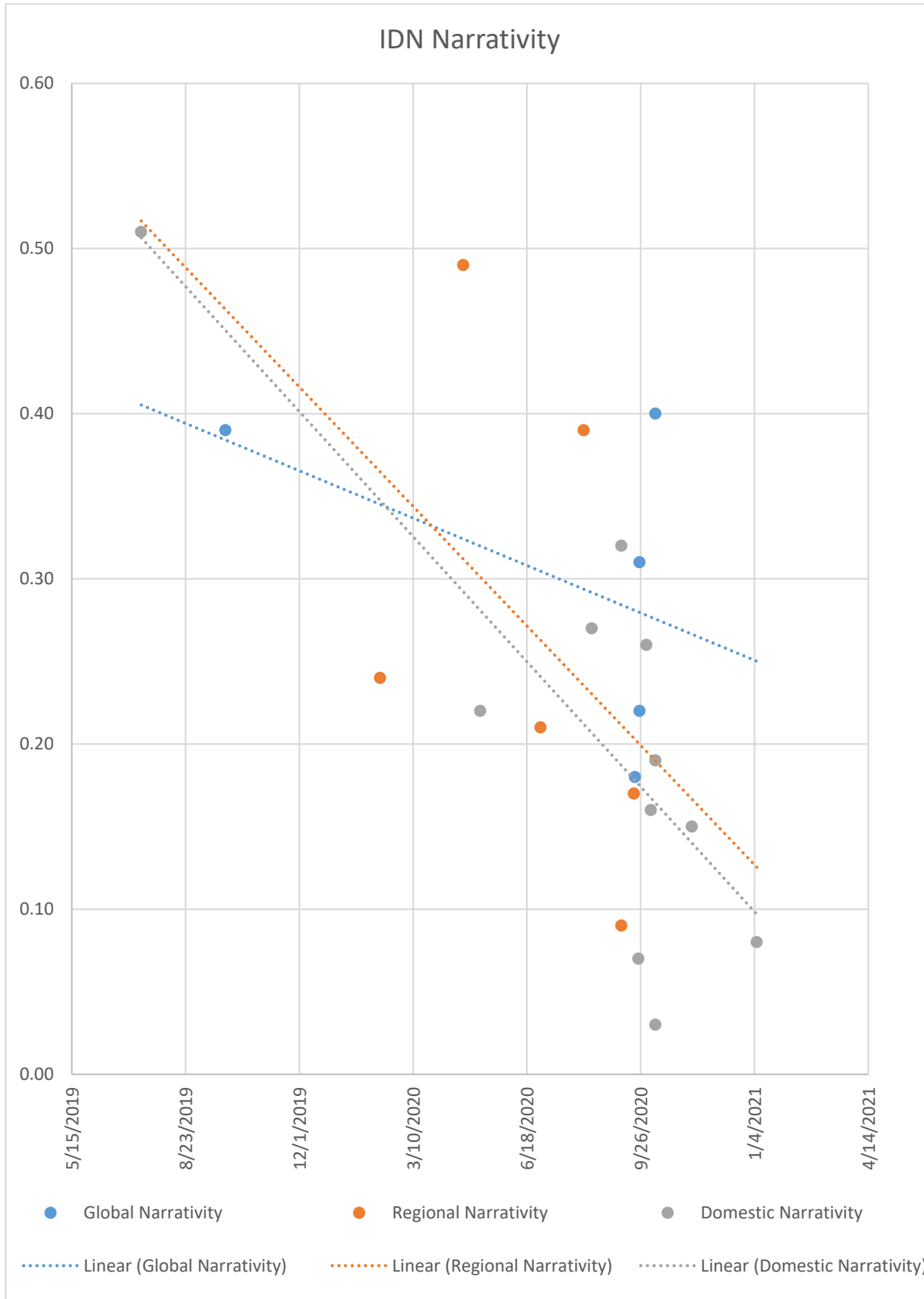
Appendix AB: PRC Discourse Present Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



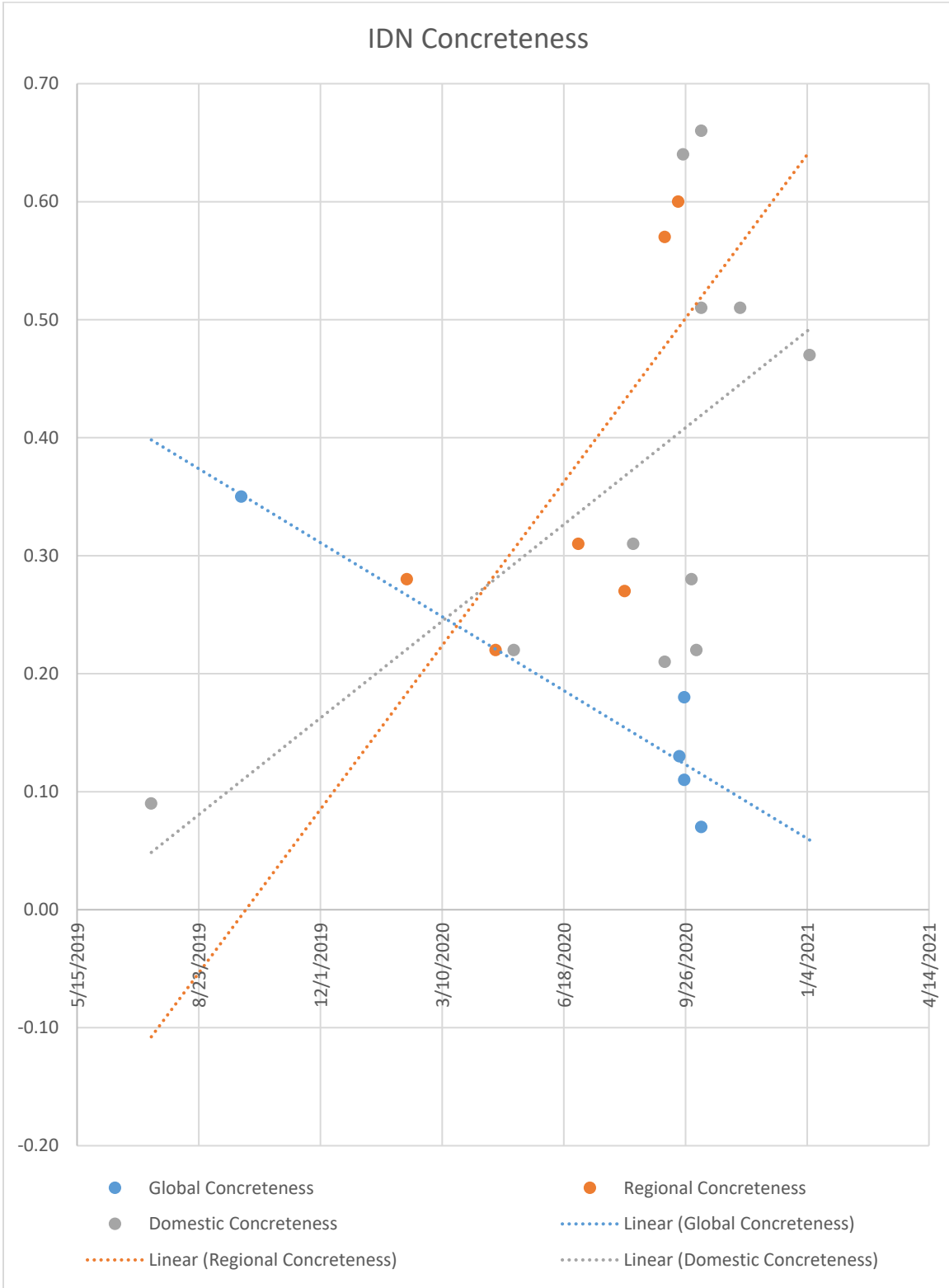
Appendix AC: PRC Discourse Future Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



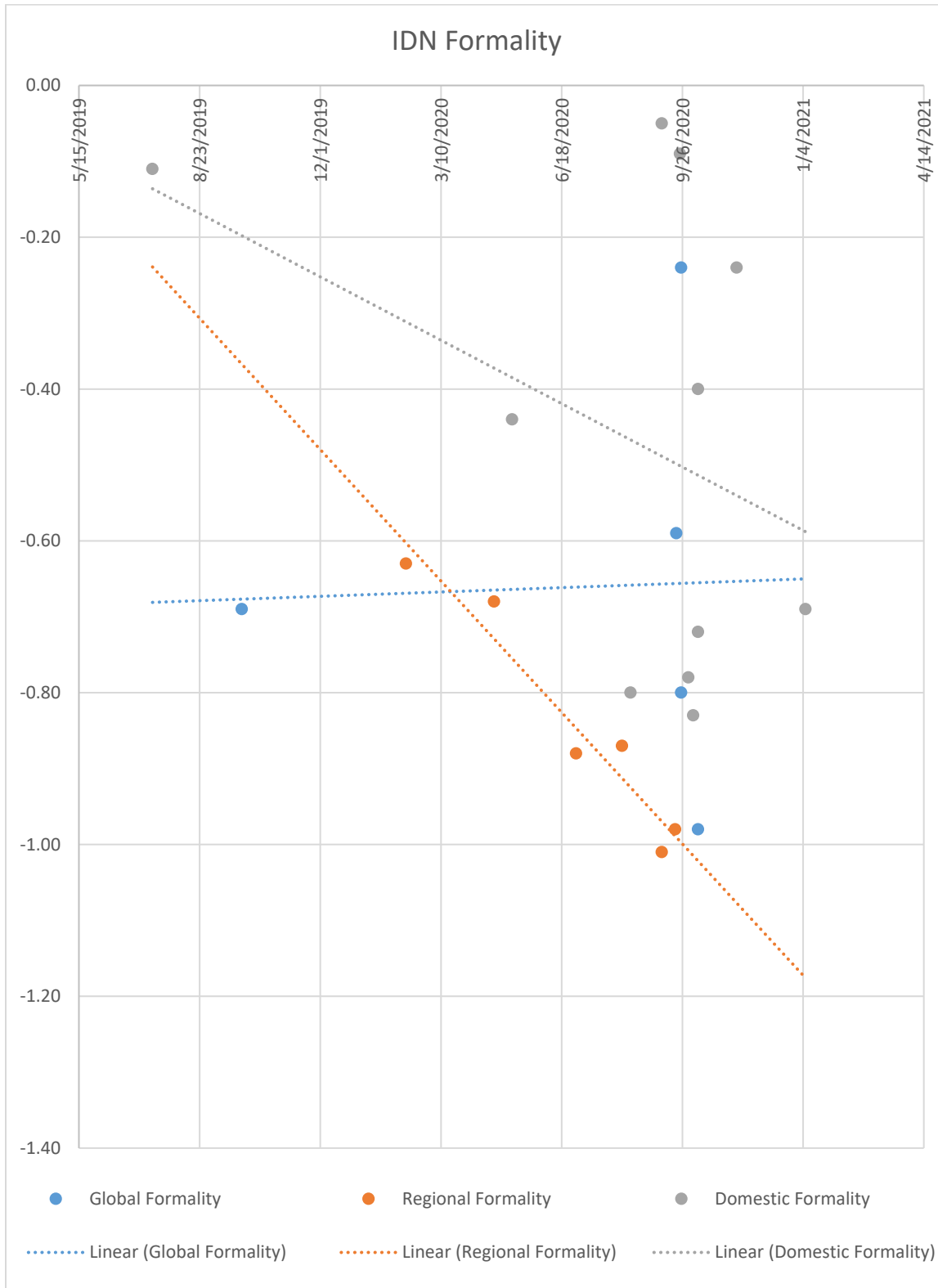
Appendix AD: IDN Discourse Narrativity (October 2018 – February 2021)



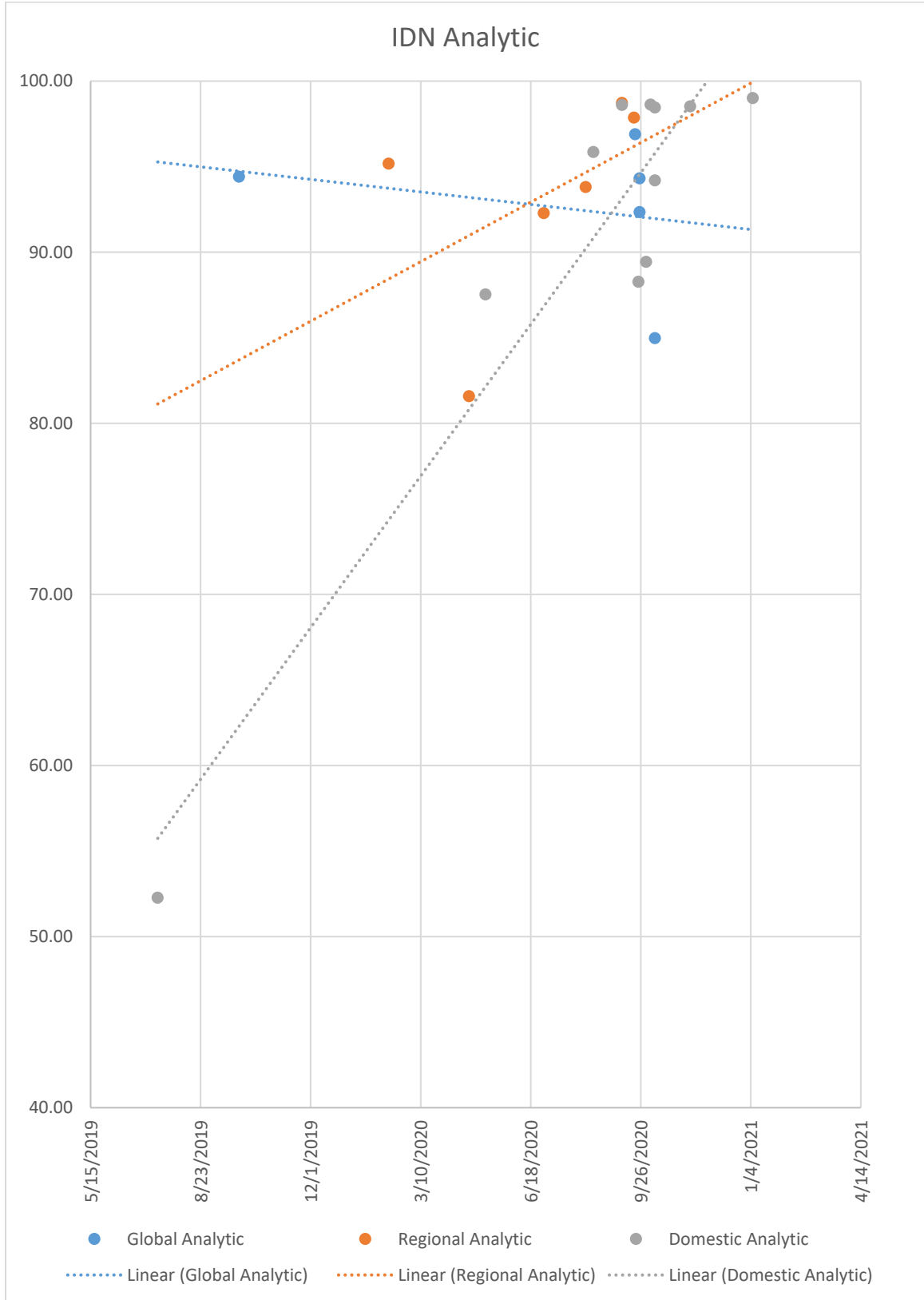
Appendix AE: IDN Discourse Concreteness (October 2018 – February 2021)



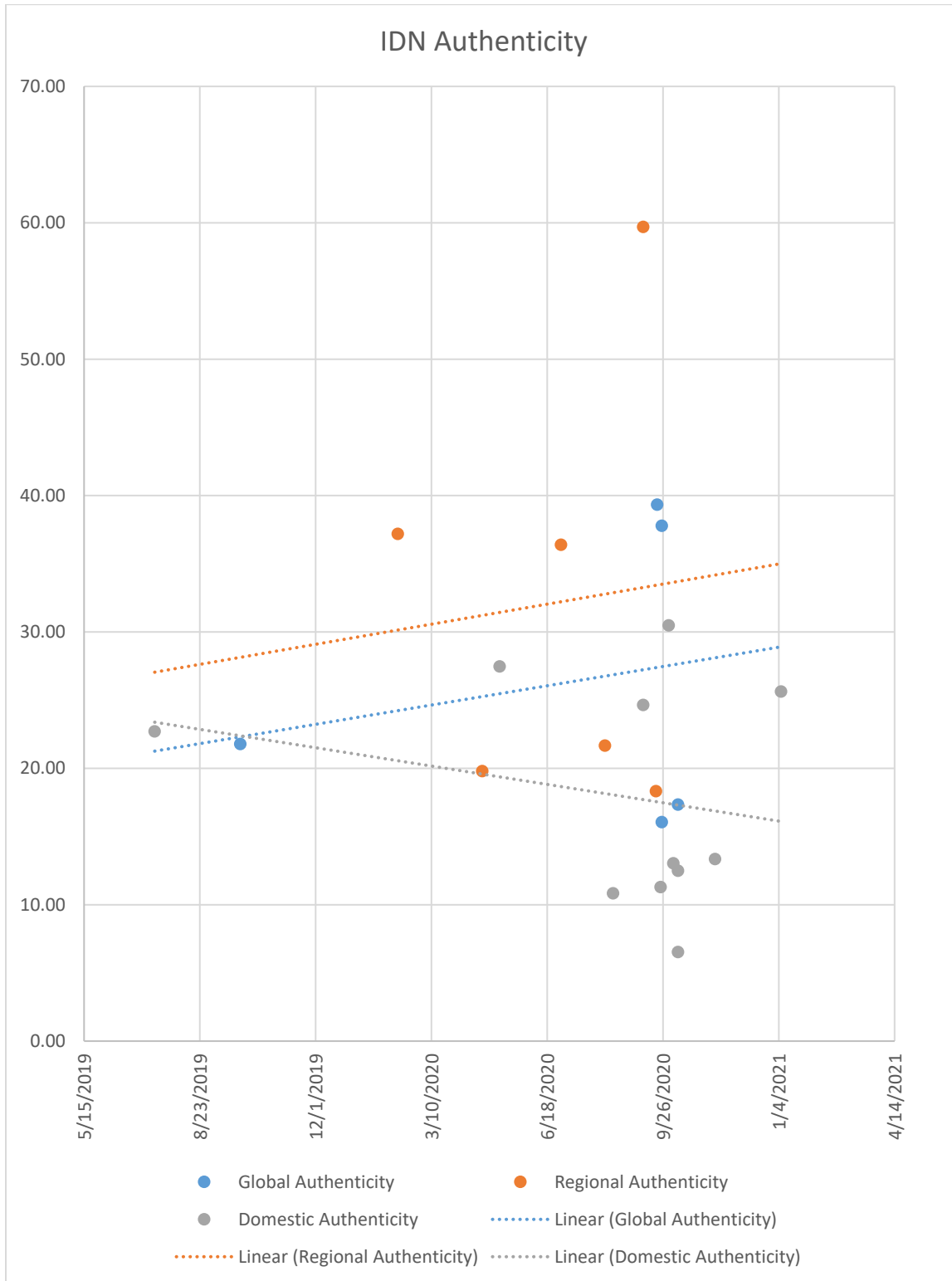
Appendix AF: IDN Discourse Formality (October 2018 – February 2021)



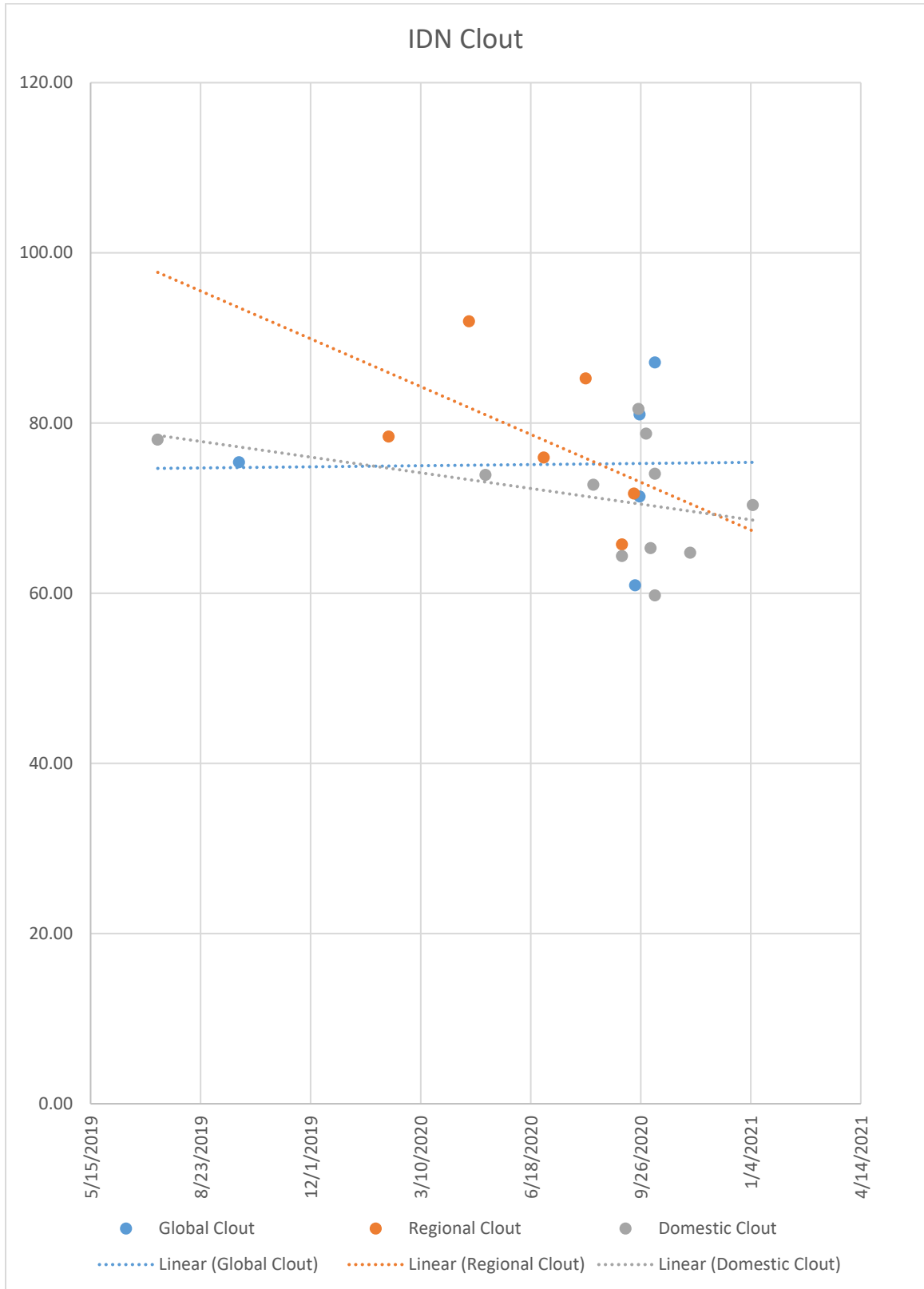
Appendix AG: IDN Discourse Analytic (October 2018 – February 2021)



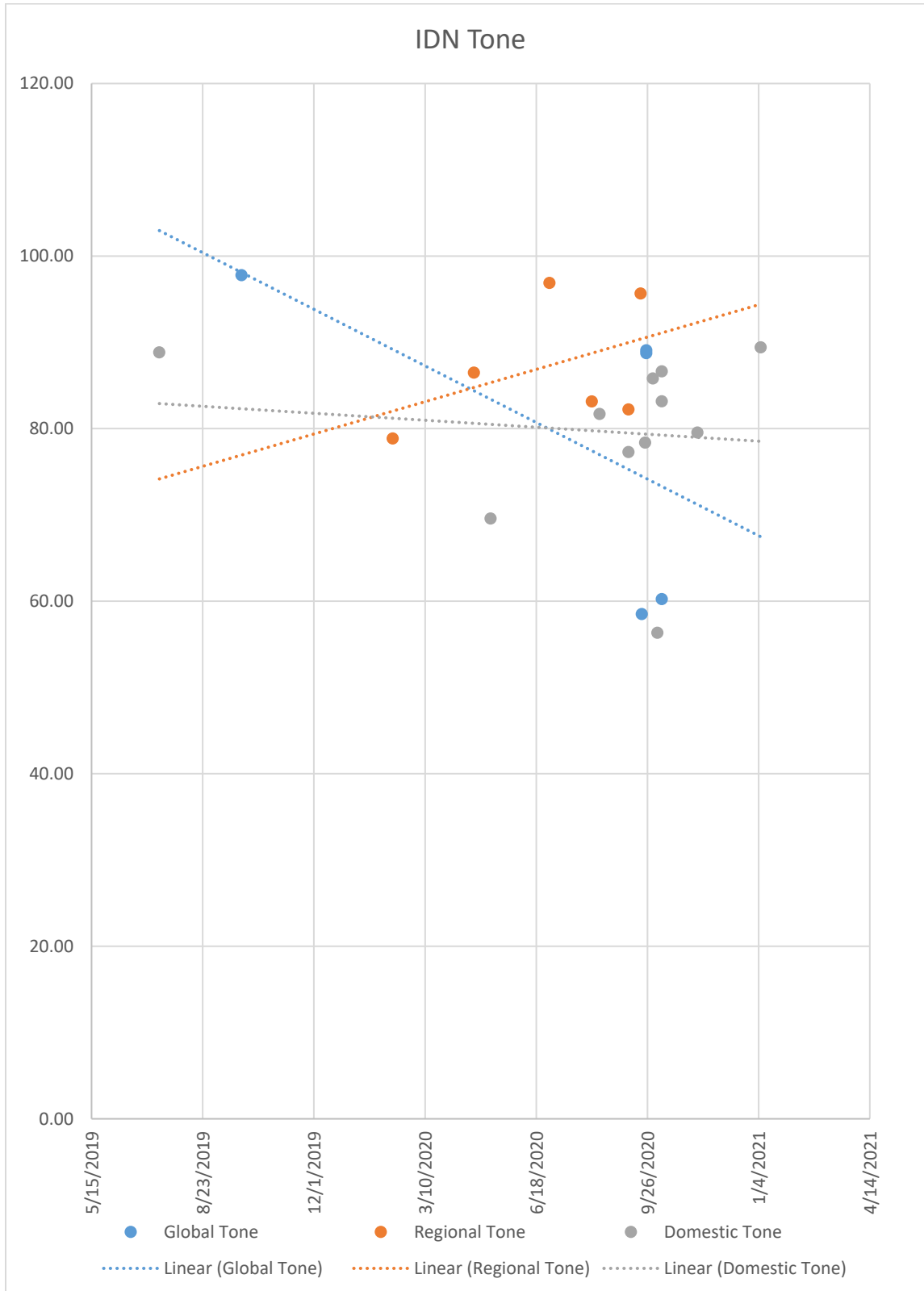
Appendix AH: IDN Discourse Authenticity (October 2018 – February 2021)



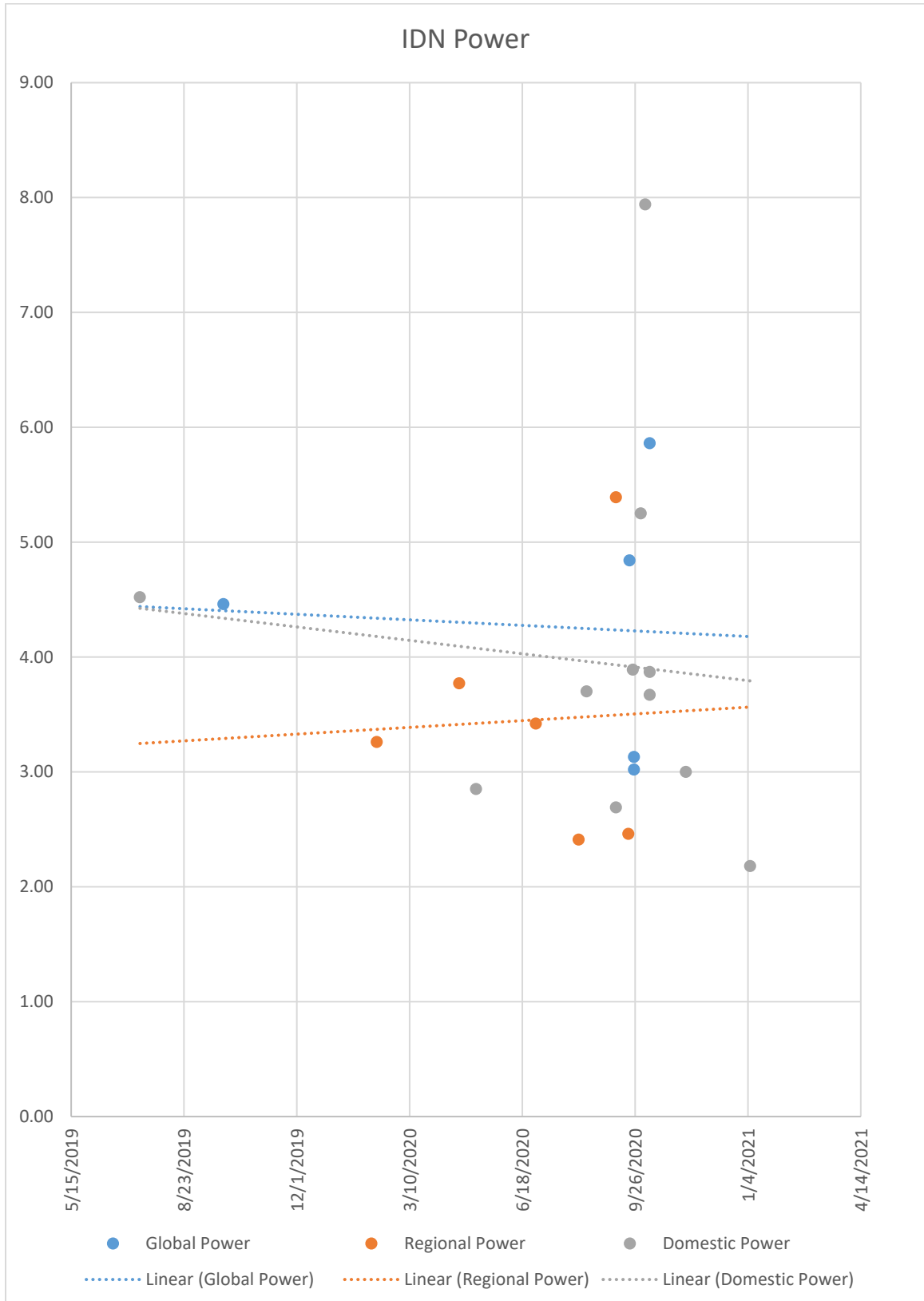
Appendix AI: IDN Discourse Clout (October 2018 – February 2021)



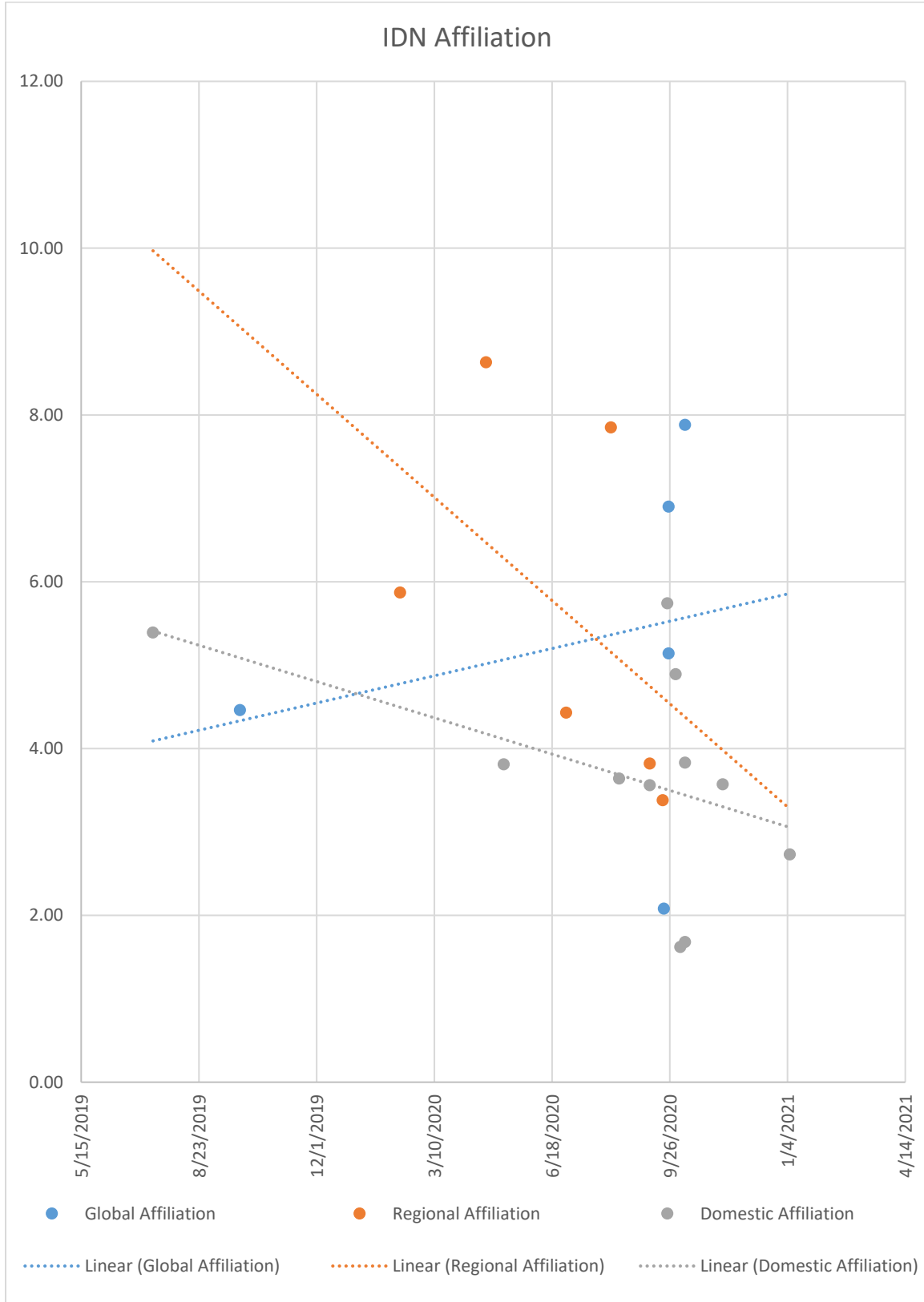
Appendix AJ: IDN Discourse Tone (October 2018 – February 2021)



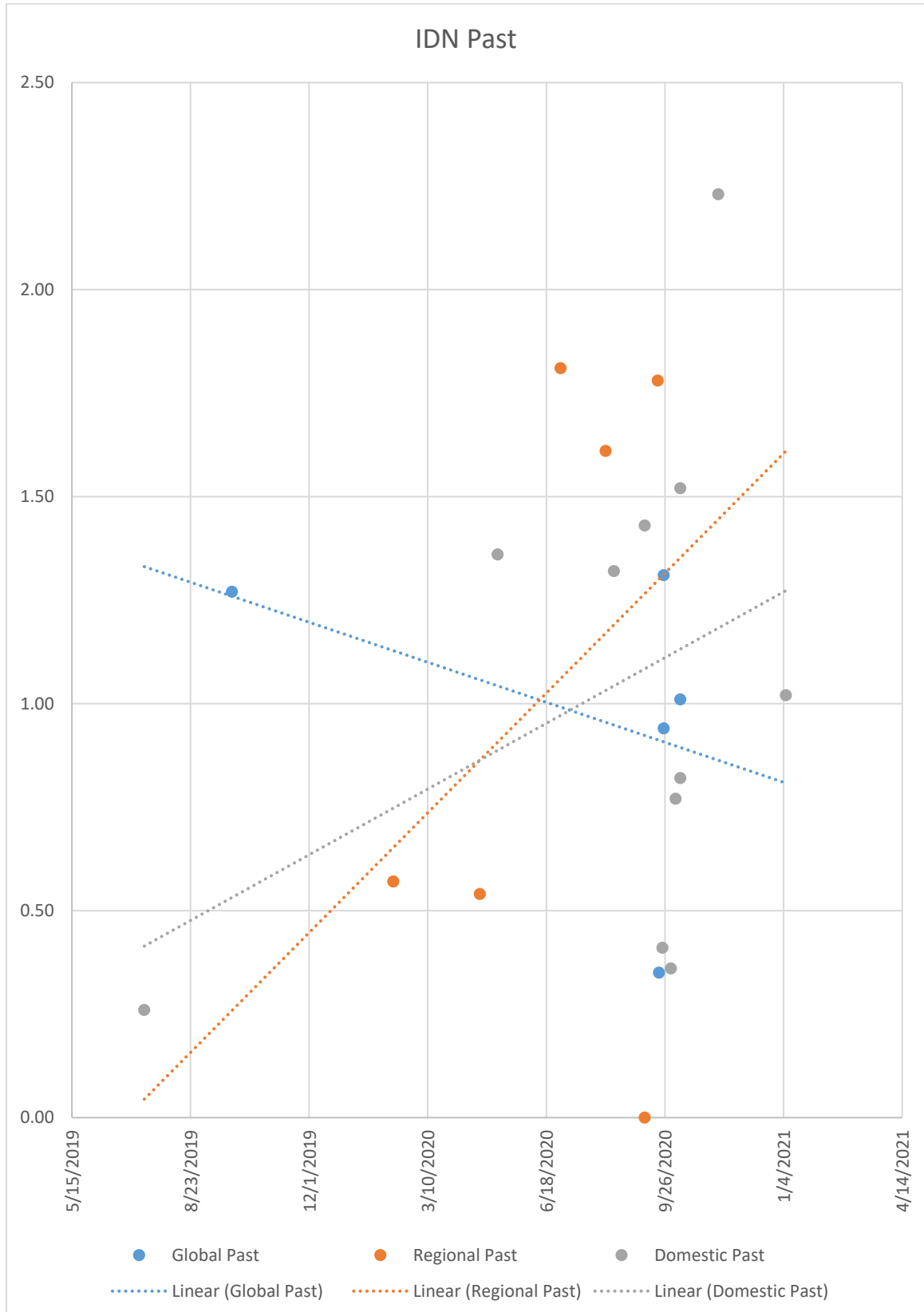
Appendix AK: IDN Discourse Power Sensitivity (October 2018 – February 2021)



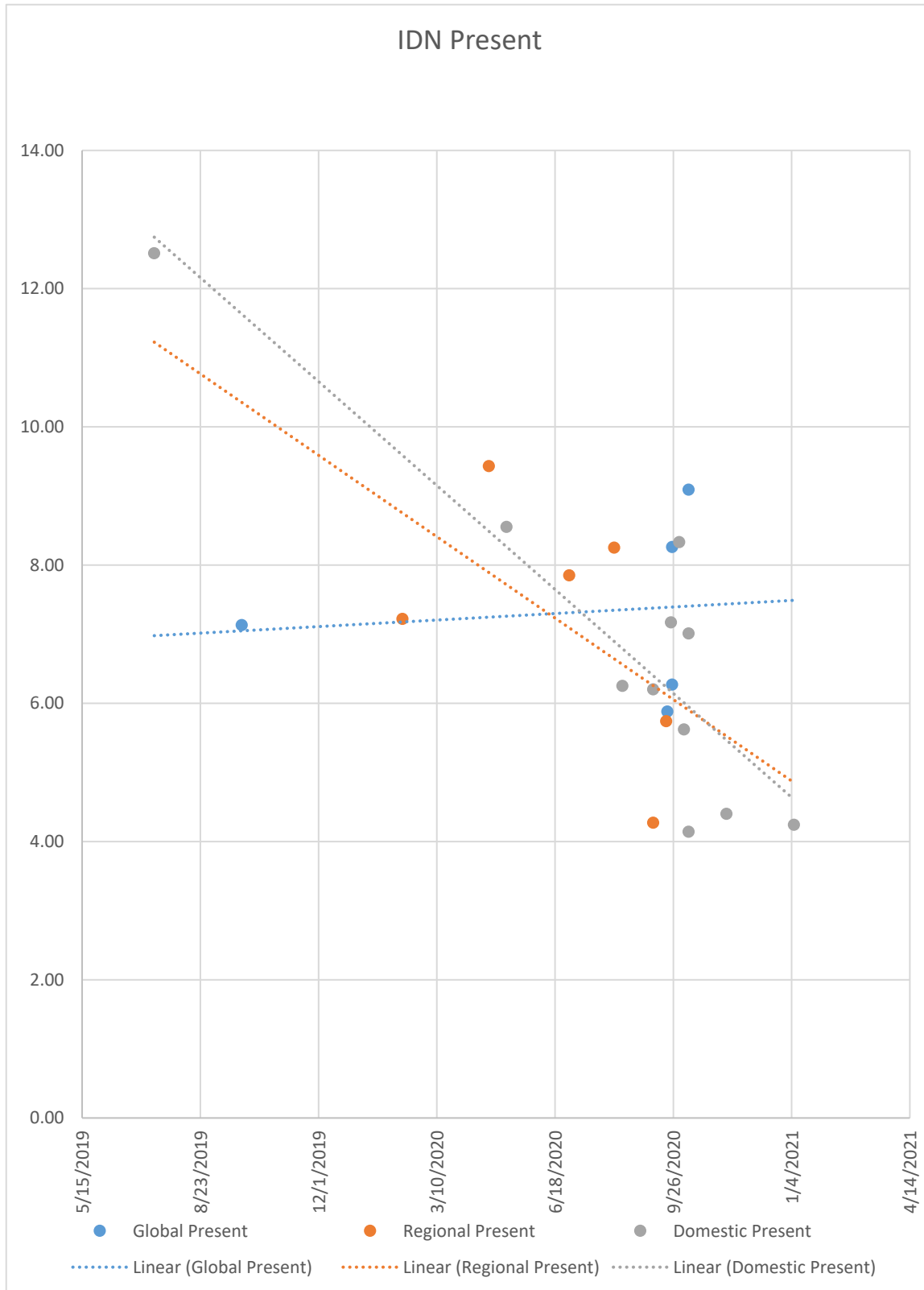
Appendix AL: IDN Discourse Affiliation (October 2018 – February 2021)



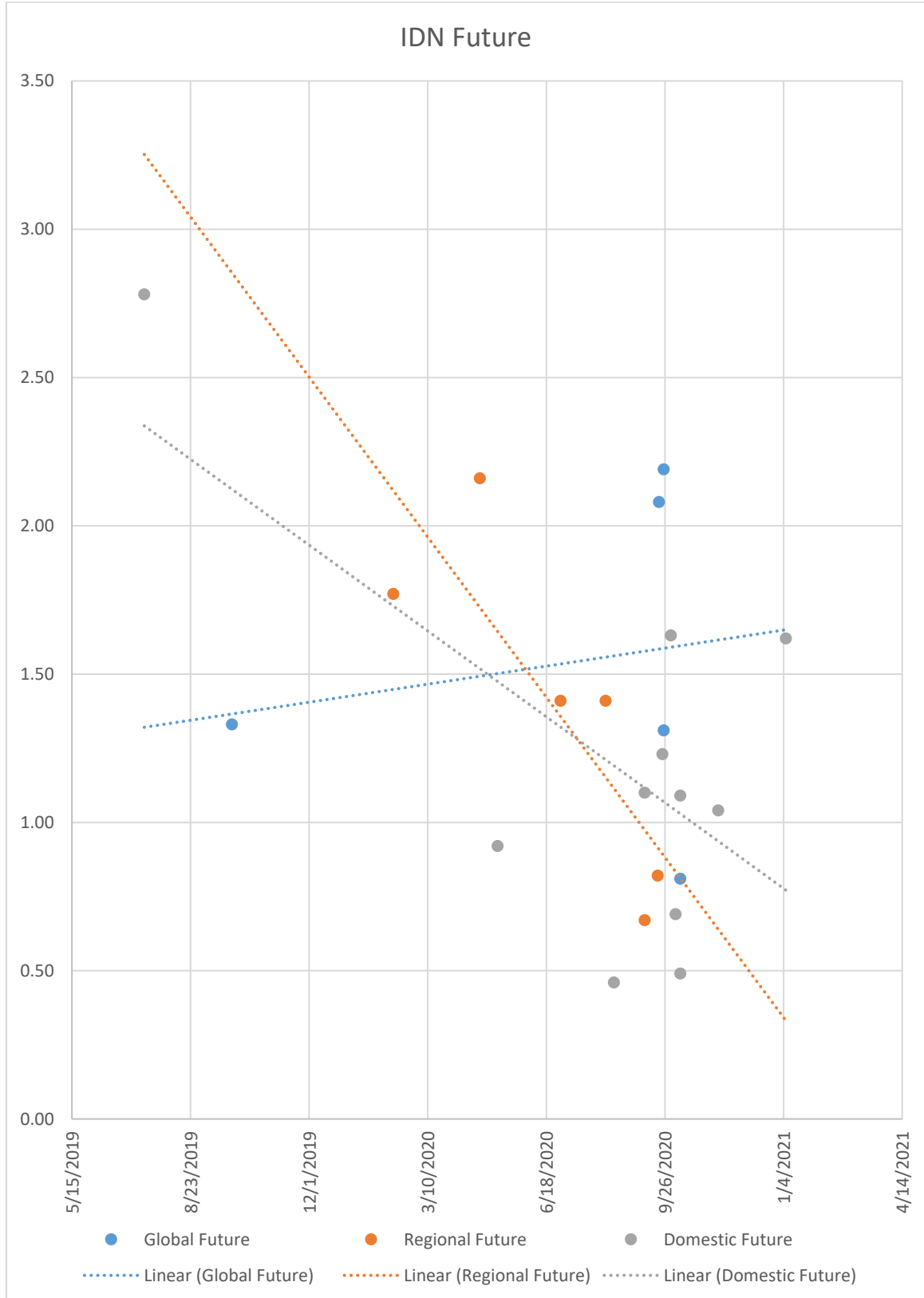
Appendix AM: IDN Discourse Past Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



Appendix AN: IDN Discourse Concreteness (October 2018 – February)



Appendix AO: IDN Discourse Future Focus (October 2018 – February 2021)



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Vita

Lieutenant Colonel (Promotable) Keith W. Benedict commissioned into the infantry after graduating from the United States Military Academy in 2003. He then attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, earning a Master of Philosophy in International Development. LTC Benedict next served in the 82nd Airborne Division, deploying with the Global Response Force to Iraq during the “Surge“ and to Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. He then deployed as a Strategic Advisor in Afghanistan and as a Strategic Analyst at Central Command in Tampa, Florida. Keith then returned to West Point and served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences. After earning a Master of Military Art and Science degree from the Command and General Staff College, LTC Benedict then served with Stryker formations in the 7th Infantry Division. Following a one-year assignment serving as a Professor of Military Science at Temple University, he then commanded a battalion within the 10th Mountain Division and a NATO Combined Task Force comprised of 1,400 military personnel and contractors in Afghanistan. He is married to the former Megan Donohue, now a Physician Assistant, and routinely revisits counterinsurgency doctrine to raise four school-aged children. A has-been golfer and skydiver and an aspiring stoic, Keith will report this summer to United States Central Command to serve as a strategic planner.