

A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and American Coverage of Meng Wanzhou's Extradition Case and Release

Write an essay comparing and contrasting how a particular topic was covered in two countries with different journalism traditions. Your analysis should draw on examples to demonstrate how each country covered this issue was reported in each country and explore the role of journalism in that country's social sphere in relation to the chosen topic.

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Introduction

The United States has accused Meng Wanzhou and Huawei of violating sanctions that ban trade with Iran. Canada took legal action based on evidence from the United States, arresting Meng at Vancouver Airport on December 1, 2018, and preparing to extradite her to the U.S. (Hsiung, 2020). On September 24, 2021, Meng Wanzhou reached a Deferred Prosecution Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice, and Canada terminated her extradition proceedings (Sanger et al., 2021). On the same day, Meng Wanzhou left Canada on a Chinese government-chartered flight and returned to China (Xue & Sheng, 2021). Although the incident involves China, the United States, and Canada, the extradition case of Meng Wanzhou in the context of the trade war between China and the United States is a "Thucydides Trap" between a rising power and a dominant power (Hsiung, 2020). Ms Meng's case became a symbol and a critical point in the Cold War rivalry between China and the United States, and her release was meant to ease tensions between the two countries (Sanger et al., 2021).

Chinese and American media have different traditions. Chinese media embodies authoritarian theory and propagates government policies and ideologies (Meng, 2018). People's Daily is China's mainstream news media. Its reporting content mainly reflects the government's will and goals and conveys the official stance of the Party and the government (Tien, 2020). The American media embodies the characteristics of the libertarian and socially responsible traditions. As the cornerstone of democracy and the rule of law, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects all those who swear

an oath to uphold the Constitution and their fundamental rights to freedom without government control (Zechariah Chafee, Jr, 1941). The New York Times plays a crucial role in American democracy (Usher, 2014). This essay will discuss the differences between Chinese and American reports of Meng Wanzhou's return to China and the role of journalism from the perspective of report quantity, word count, news type, news title, quote, content, and reporting angles.

Comparison and Analysis

Meng Wanzhou landed in China on September 25, 2021, but she left Canada on September 24. Therefore, this essay selects the news about this event published by People's Daily and The New York Times from September 24 to October 8, 2021, as the analysis data. During the three weeks, the two media outlets published 40 news articles, 14 from the People's Daily and 26 from the New York Times. Table 1 shows the articles' publication date, title, and source.

September 24, 2021- October 08, 2021		
	People's Daily	The New York Times
1	11:23, September 25, 2021 Meng Wanzhou returning to China http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0925/c90000-9900601.html	Sept. 24, 2021 China frees 2 jailed Canadians after the U.S. agrees to release a Huawei executive. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/trudeau-china-huawei-meng-wanzhou.html?smid=url-share
2	15:46, September 25, 2021 On journey home, Meng says "without strong motherland, no freedom today" http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0925/c90000-9900633.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Meng Wanzhou agreed to the deal in a Brooklyn court hearing. https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/24/world/meng-wanzhou-huawei-trial/huawei-meng-wanzhou?smid=url-share
3	16:12, September 25, 2021 Meng Wanzhou leaves Canada for motherland after sustained efforts by Chinese government http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0925/c90000-9900643.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Meng's release could eliminate a source of friction between China and the Biden administration. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/meng-wanzhou-biden-china.html?smid=url-share
4	08:15, September 26, 2021 China's foreign ministry speaks on Meng Wanzhou's return http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900659.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Who are the Canadians detained after Ms. Meng's arrest? https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/who-are-the-canadians-detained-after-ms-mengs-arrest.html?searchResultPosition=21
5	08:27, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou back in China http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900755.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Meng's Vancouver mansion, long a source of intrigue, draws the news media again. https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/24/world/meng-wanzhou-huawei-trial/mengs-vancouver-mansion-long-a-source-of-intrigue-draws-the-news-media-again?smid=url-share
6	08:27, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou back in China (2) http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900755-2.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Who is Meng Wanzhou? https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/who-is-meng-wanzhou-huawei.html?smid=url-share
7	08:27, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou back in China (3) http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900755-3.html	Sept. 24, 2021 China hawks criticize the Biden administration. https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/24/world/meng-wanzhou-huawei-trial/china-hawks-criticize-the-biden-administration?smid=url-share
8	08:27, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou back in China (4) http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900755-4.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Private painting lessons and massages: Ms. Meng's life in detention. https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/24/world/meng-wanzhou-huawei-trial/private-painting-lessons-and-massages-ms-mengs-life-in-detention?smid=url-share
9	08:30, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou back in China http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900765.html	Sept. 24, 2021 A year after her arrest, Ms. Meng wrote of 'helplessness, torment and struggle.' https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/24/world/meng-wanzhou-huawei-trial/a-year-after-her-arrest-ms-meng-wrote-of-helplessness-torment-and-struggle?smid=url-share
10	09:28, September 26, 2021 Meng Wanzhou pleads not guilty, reaching agreement with U.S. prosecutors http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9900865.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Huawei, Booster Shots, Britney Spears: Your Friday Evening Briefing https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/briefing/huawei-booster-shots-britney-spears.html?searchResultPosition=35
11	20:37, September 26, 2021 No force can block China's forward progress http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0926/c90000-9901205.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Canadians weigh in on the Meng deal: 'What about the two Michaels?' https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/canadians-weigh-in-on-the-meng-deal-what-about-the-two-michaels.html?searchResultPosition=34
12	13:44, September 28, 2021 China opposes all power politics, never fears coercion: FM http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0928/c90000-9902061.html	Sept. 24, 2021 Trans Canada https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/canada/canada-alberta-covid-cases.html?searchResultPosition=16

13	15:11, September 28, 2021 Former Alstom executive: China's national power ensures Meng's different outcome http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0928/c90000-9902135.html	Sept. 24, 2021 U.S. Agrees to Release Huawei Executive in Case That Strained Ties With China https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/us/politics/huawei-meng-wanzhou.html?searchResultPosition=32
14	08:20, October 08, 2021 Yang-Sullivan meeting showcases positive signals, major divergence http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/1008/c90000-9904228.html	Sept. 25, 2021 To Get Back Arrested Executive, China Uses a Hardball Tactic: Seizing Foreigners https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/25/world/asia/meng-wanzhou-china.html?searchResultPosition=30
15		Sept. 26, 2021 Booster Shots, Germany, Britney Spears: Your Weekend Briefing https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/26/briefing/booster-shots-germany-britney-spears-your-weekend-briefing.html?searchResultPosition=29
16		Sept. 26, 2021 Your Monday Briefing: A dramatic prisoner swap https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/26/briefing/germany-election-meng-wanzhou-evergrande.html?searchResultPosition=28
17		Sept. 27, 2021 Your Monday Briefing https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/briefing/germany-election-britain-pandemic-shortages.html?searchResultPosition=27
18		Sept. 27, 2021 A Strange Voice on the Phone https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/business/dealbook/ozy-goldman-sachs-investment-call.html?searchResultPosition=26
19		Sept. 27, 2021 Power Outages Hit China, Threatening the Economy and Christmas https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/business/economy/china-electricity.html?searchResultPosition=8
20		Sept. 27, 2021 American Siblings Barred From Leaving China for 3 Years Return to U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/us/politics/china-americans-released.html?searchResultPosition=24
21		Sept. 27, 2021 Canada Doubles Its Afghan Refugee Resettlement Target to 40,000 People https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/americas/canada-afghanistan-refugees.html?searchResultPosition=6
22		Sept. 28, 2021 How the Huawei Case Raised Fears of 'Hostage Diplomacy' by China https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/28/us/politics/huawei-meng-wanzhou.html?searchResultPosition=22
23		Sept. 29, 2021 Your Thursday Briefing https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/briefing/japan-kishido-india-pandemic-britney.html?searchResultPosition=21
24		Oct. 1, 2021 Trans Canada https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/01/world/canada/british-columbia-fairy-creek-protests.html?searchResultPosition=20
25		Oct. 4, 2021 U.S. Signals No Thaw in Trade Relations With China https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/business/economy/us-china-trade.html?searchResultPosition=19
26		Oct. 5, 2021 The End of a 'Gilded Age': China Is Bringing Business to Heel https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/05/business/china-businesses.html?searchResultPosition=18

Table 1 Article Publication Dates, Titles, and Sources from People's Daily and The New York Times

The New York Times published 12 more news articles about Meng than the People's Daily and had more words. Among the 14 articles in the People's Daily, the news with the least words is 46, the one with the most words is 1,520, the average word is about 398, and only two articles with more than 1,000 words. Of the 26 articles in the New

York Times, the shortest was just 29, the longest was 1,570, and the average word count was about 596. Seven articles exceed 1,000 words.

The New York Times invested more resources than the People's Daily. The People's Daily published seven news reports, six features, and only one analysis. The New York Times has the same number of news reports and analyses, with both 12. There are two features. Both media outlets published more reports, indicating that both focus on timely and fast release of relevant information about the event. However, the proportion of analysis reported by the New York Times is close to 50%, much higher than that of the People's Daily. This data shows that the New York Times analyses and comments on events in depth. Moreover, On September 24, the day Meng Wanzhou left Canada, the New York Times published 13 reports, while the People's Daily did not publish any information until releasing three related articles on the 25th.

The two media outlets reflected different emotions and information focuses in their headlines. People's Daily news headlines displayed two sentiments. First, there are frequent expressions of the meaning of home, such as "back", "return" and "motherland". "*On journey home, Meng says 'without strong motherland, no freedom today'* (Sheng & Zhang, 2021)" and "*Meng Wanzhou leaves Canada for motherland after sustained efforts by Chinese government* (Xue & Sheng, 2021)" not only conveys strong patriotic sentiments and gratitude but also show the Chinese government's determination and confidence in protecting its citizens on the international stage.

Second, *"No force can block China's forward progress (Du & Zhang, 2021)"* and *"China opposes all power politics, never fears coercion: FM (Shi & Liang, 2021)"*, as well as *"Former Alstom executive: China's national power ensures Meng's different outcome (Zhong & Liang, 2021)"* These three titles reflect the strength and confidence of the country. The negative expressions of "no force" and "never fears" reflect China's confrontational attitude and assertive mood. Chinese media serve the government by aligning their objectives with national goals (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956). Under the Chinese concept, Public communications are intentional tools to achieve specific goals (Rogier Creemers, 2015). Therefore, these few headlines show that the media is assisting the government in promoting the image of national victory and strength and safeguarding national interests.

Compared with People's Daily, the New York Times headline does not directly express emotions but shows a diverse focus. For example, the location of "Brooklyn Court (Bilefsky et al., 2021)" in the title reflects the legal topic of the article. "Biden Administration (Kaplan & Rappeport, 2021)" and "Strained Ties With China (Sanger et al., 2021)" reflect the political issues and changes in China-U.S. relations that were influenced by the event. Additionally, some titles focus on characters and directly quote Meng's words to describe her mood to convey and summarize the characters' experiences, such as *"A year after her arrest, Ms. Meng wrote of 'helplessness, torment and struggle'"* (Bilefsky, 2021)". In libertarian theory, the media is supposed to provide fair and accurate information to the public (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956).

However, the New York Times headlines are leading. For example, nine days after Meng Wanzhou was detained, two Canadian citizens were arrested by China (Austen, 2021). They were released after Meng was released (Austen, 2021). Regarding whether this was a case of "hostage diplomacy," the two sides hold different opinions. In New York Times headlines such as "*China frees two jailed Canadians after the U.S. agrees to release a Huawei executive* (Austen, 2021)" and "*Who are the Canadians detained after Ms Meng's arrest?* (Bilefsky & Hernández, 2021)" mentioning both Canadians and Meng at the same time, using the word "after" "to connect the two, leading readers to consider and tie the two events. This also shows that the New York Times reporters accept this as a "hostage diplomacy" attitude.

The New York Times quotes various sources and more diverse objects. People's Daily's primary quotes are official and fixed. For example, the New York Times quoted quotes from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Canadian and Chinese governments, and Meng Wanzhou's legal team in the article "*U.S. Agrees to Release Huawei Executive in Case That Strained Ties With China* (Sanger et al., 2021)" reflecting the intensified Sino-U.S. conflict. The People's Daily article prefers to present what the Chinese government, Meng Wanzhou, and Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. Moreover, the content of quotations reflects different cultural and political positions and attitudes. Due to different cultural backgrounds, Chinese value interpersonal relationships and social harmony, avoiding confrontation and conflict, while Western culture encourages individual expression of views (Linjing & Liu Lihua, 2022). In "*China hawks criticize*

the Biden administration (Kaplan & Rappeport, 2021)", The New York Times expressed anger and dissatisfaction with the U.S. government's release of Meng Wanzhou. Most of the comments in the article came from members of the Republican Party, criticizing Biden for giving in to Beijing and describing it as a sign of weakness (Kaplan & Rappeport, 2021). By reporting the remarks of different political figures, American media provides the public with detailed information, thereby reducing the perceived distance between audiences and events or figures and improving communication efficiency and topic participation (Linjing & Liu Lihua, 2022). This behaviour demonstrates the libertarian theory that the media functions as a "fourth estate" in governance, outside of government control and monitoring the government (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956). It also reflects the responsibility of the media to provide truthful and objective information to the public (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956). It is a forum and platform for public discussion, criticism, and exchange of views (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956).

However, the People's Daily cited broadly consistent views. Even interviews with people from countries outside China showed mainly support for China's approach. For example, in "*China opposes all power politics, never fears coercion: FM* (Shi & Liang, 2021)", the People's Daily shows the views of the Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Felix Plasencia, who agrees with China's firm position and opposes any unilateral sanctions against China. Venezuela and China support multilateralism and oppose US hegemonic politics, sharing similar positions on some international issues. Therefore, the quote by

the Venezuelan foreign minister is considered an objective position that helps affirm China's victory and justice. Although the Chinese government restricts media freedom and strictly censors news content, the media narrative enables the Chinese people to maintain a confident and positive attitude toward the country and its future and to believe that the country has an essential place in the world (Daya Kishan Thussu et al., 2017).

There are differences between People's Daily and The New York Times in fact statements and content descriptions. First, The People's Daily and The New York Times differ in their reporting on the "Two Michaels," Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, released after Meng Wanzhou (Paltiel, 2022). The New York Times noted their detention without evidence and criticized the lack of transparency in China's legal system (Bilefsky & Hernández, 2021). In contrast, the People's Daily provided detailed evidence and reasons for their arrest, stating Kovrig had illegally transmitted Chinese intelligence since 2017, and Spavor had shared photos of Chinese military equipment, classified as second-class state secrets, with outsiders (Xue & Sheng, 2021).

Additionally, both sides have different definitions of whether this is "hostage diplomacy". The People's Daily maintained its denial. Chinese media have asserted that Meng is a political hostage of the United States and Canada, whereas Kovrig and Spavor are not Chinese weapons to threaten (Xue & Sheng, 2021). Canada and the U.S. conspired to use Ms Meng to suppress China's technological development (Paltiel,

2022). Thus, the U.S. arrest of Meng Wanzhou was politically motivated, while China detained the "Two Michaels" for espionage and endangering China's national security. The nature of the two cases is entirely different; thus, they should not be conflated (Xue & Sheng, 2021). Although the New York Times almost unanimously believed that this was "hostage diplomacy", there were some differences in the degree of wording. A brief news report (Austen, 2021a) on Sept. 24 suggested that the Canadians' encounter was Chinese retaliation and used the word "apparent" to increase the degree of certainty. The article "*U.S. Agrees to Release Huawei Executive in Case That Strained Ties With China* (Sanger et al., 2021)" is somewhat ambiguous about "hostage diplomacy", suggesting that the Canadians appeared to be detained because of Meng Wanzhou. Moreover, some reports use interesting expressions to show their attitudes. For example, foreign citizens are political tools and bargaining chips for China, and Ms Meng's remarks are argumentative (Buckley & Benner, 2021); China's "Two Michaels" release was a reward for the U.S. and Canada (Sorkin et al., 2021).

People's Daily and the New York Times use different labels on Meng Wanzhou, reflecting different character construction tendencies. The author uses words with specific meanings to report events, thereby subtly influencing readers' perceptions and judgments (Linjing & Liu Lihua, 2022). The People's Daily highlighted Ms Meng as a distressed Chinese citizen (Xia & Liang, 2021a), demonstrating the Chinese government's tough stance on protecting citizens' rights. In family-oriented China, "Ren Zhengfei's eldest daughter (Zhong & Liang, 2021)" highlights her as a daughter eager

to return home, while "Huawei's chief financial officer (Zhong & Liang, 2021)" suggests she is a successful figure. The article depicts the crowd holding flowers, singing patriotic songs, cheering for Ms Meng, and highlighting people's support (Xia & Liang, 2021b). In China, leadership can shape social values and morals and plays a vital role in public discussion (Rogier Creemers, 2015). Therefore, these descriptions are designed to create a positive image of Meng Wanzhou and her unfair experience. Socialist ideas of equality and justice still have a solid appeal to contemporary Chinese people, so people usually accept state policies and positions conveyed by the media in a supportive manner (Rogier Creemers, 2015). US media highlighted Meng Wanzhou's role as Huawei's CFO (Bilefsky, 2021b), focusing on her wealth by describing her designer stilettos and GPS trackers (Bilefsky, 2021a), contrasting her affluent lifestyle with her incarceration. The New York Times also referenced her father, Ren Zhengfei, noting his roles as Huawei's CEO and a former People's Liberation Army officer (Sanger et al., 2021), suggesting close ties between her family, Huawei, and the Chinese government. According to different national positions and political environments, media interpret events under different values and experience orientations, influencing public understanding (Dunaway & Graber, 2022). Therefore, People's Daily and the New York Times create and emphasize different characters.

People's Daily reflects a unified reporting angle, while the New York Times focuses on in-depth reporting in all aspects. People's Daily report on the government's achievements, diplomatic victories, national defence and patriotism. China's

mainstream media are directly controlled by the Communist Party's propaganda Department and function as a tool of social governance (Linjing & Liu Lihua, 2022). When China faces challenges and dangers, nationalism plays an important role. It is widely disseminated through the media, uniting the mainstream consciousness of the public and forming a unified resistance and vigilance to the outside world. Therefore, the media's emphasis on nationalism and patriotism can stimulate national identity in a conflict between China and other countries, promote policies conducive to national interests, and assert national independence (Linjing & Liu Lihua, 2022).

In contrast, The New York Times covers diplomatic disputes, geopolitics, legal issues, and more. Although rich reporting angles can increase objectivity and credibility, subjectivity and bias inevitably exist. "*China frees two jailed Canadians after the U.S. agrees to release a Huawei executive* (Austen, 2021b)" focuses on human rights interests and diplomacy. However, the analysis in this article is not equal. Reporters quoted representatives of Canada and the United States as expressing only sympathy and praise for the two Canadians. The words "arbitrary detention (Austen, 2021b)" imply the author's position rather than being entirely neutral. As for China's position, only one sentence states that the government denies "hostage diplomacy." The article describes many tragic experiences of the two Michaels, such as their isolation from the outside world and lack of a nutritious diet (Austen, 2021b). The end of the article specifically pointed out Meng Wanzhou's free life in detention. The contrast between the two contents deepens readers' doubts about Meng Wanzhou and their sympathy for

Canadians, silently guiding the public's emotions. American media are not controlled by the government and pursue freedom of speech (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956). However, contemporary news media must meet the requirements of comprehensiveness and the separation of facts and opinions (Fredrick Seaton Siebert et al., 1956). Western news media have a general bias and negative tendency to report third-world countries, which may profoundly impact these countries' international image and development (CHANG et al., 1987).

Conclusion

In conclusion, The New York Times has more publications and words than the People's Daily and provides more in-depth and detailed coverage. The People's Daily headlines focused on homecoming celebrations, while The New York Times offered a multifaceted analysis. The New York Times tends to show different views. People's Daily selects the object of reference from the national standpoint to reflect the article's main idea. The People's Daily rejected 'hostage diplomacy,' while The New York Times doubted it. Chinese media tended to frame Ms. Meng as a victim, while American media emphasized her wealth and ties to the government. People's Daily's reporting Angle mainly presents a positive image of the country. The New York Times is diverse but not entirely impartial. The comparison highlights the Chinese media as government-controlled propagators, maintaining social harmony and national image. In contrast, the American media encourages freedom of speech, monitors the government, and promotes public participation.

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