

Chinese Media's Discourse on the Arrest of Huawei's Meng Wanzhou: the Politicization of Tech

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1 Introduction

On 1 December 2018, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd., Meng Wanzhou, was arrested by the Canadian authorities as she changed flights on her way to the People's Republic of China (PRC). Canadian authorities arrested her on behalf of the United States (US), which had put out a warrant for her arrest. The warrant states that she had committed fraud by conducting business with Iran through a front company in Hong Kong called Skycom. At this time, the United States government is enforcing sanctions on Iran, forbidding companies from doing business there if they are doing business in the US. Using puppet companies would illegally break this embargo. Huawei has denied any links with Skycom. On January 28th the U.S. Department of Justice officially filed criminal charges against Meng Wanzhou, calling for her extradition. On March 1st the Canadian Department of Justice authorized her extradition hearing and Ms. Meng sued the Canadian authorities for violating her civil liberties. She is currently under house arrest in Vancouver, Canada, and it is yet unclear whether or not she will be extradited to the US.

Huawei is the PRC's largest telecom company and Meng Wanzhou is not only its CFO, but also the daughter of its founder Ren Zhengfei. She is considered to be Chinese corporate royalty. The Chinese government's reaction was furious, and it has been calling for her release. Seemingly in response to the arrest, several Canadian citizens were subsequently arrested by the Chinese authorities, and one Canadian citizen was re-tried and sentenced to death on charges of drug smuggling. This arrest comes at a time when US-PRC relations are already strained due to the trade war that US president Donald Trump started in 2018.

Huawei is a major player in the field of 5G, the next generation of information technology, which is said to be a gamechanger for countless industries. There has been much competition between companies and states over the development of this new technology, as the first actor to set a global standard would reap large benefits, both economic and political. The US has been warning its allies against using Huawei 5G equipment, because of alleged security concerns. Various observers (Swanson & Bradsher, 2019; Farrer, 2019) see the Sino-American trade war as an attempt of the US to

protect its technological hegemony. Some (Friedman, 2019) also see the arrest of Huawei's CFO as a political move rather than a judicial move.

There has been a lot of communication about this case from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Huawei towards international actors, but English-language media has paid no attention to how information about this case is communicated domestically. As international news and domestic news have entirely different audiences, the language and messages are likely to differ. How media, especially state-owned media, portray this story domestically can reveal how CCP officials might see this case, and how they want to frame it and the actors that appear therein. Analyzing reports from different official Chinese media outlets can tell us what different opinions exist within the CCP, gaining insight into the Party as it relates to this event.

Chinese newspapers are generally not known for their good journalistic practices. The PRC scored 79.82 on the Reporters Without Borders 2018 World Press Freedom Index, ranking at 177th out of 180 countries in terms of press freedom. China's state newspapers are financed and owned by the government. The CCP controls every level of government as it is the supreme political authority in the country, therefore these state newspapers rarely stray from the official Party line. These state-run papers have the official task to serve as the voice of the Party, promoting its policies, interests, and ideology. This makes it relevant to analyze these media to find out more about the Party's stance.

As technology becomes increasingly economically important it is likely that tech and the tech companies that develop and produce it will get involved in political struggles. How CCP officials regard tech and tech companies will translate to how they frame tech and tech companies in state media. Analyzing this will give us a better understanding of the role that technology and its producers might play in the eyes of the CCP.

The central aim of this thesis is thus to answer the question "How did three Chinese newspapers report on the arrest of Huawei's Meng Wanzhou, and how does this relate to the politicization of tech?"

2 Methodology

In this work I will research 35 news articles from three different PRC news sources. These news sources are Xinhua News Agency (*xinhua she*, 新华社, 11 articles), the People's Daily (*renmin ribao*, 人民日报, 12 articles), and the Global Times (*huanqiu shibao*, 环球时报, 12 articles). The articles will all discuss or be related to the arrest of Meng Wanzhou or the aftermath of the event. By analyzing these articles, I expect to find that the Chinese discourse regarding the arrest and Chinese tech companies is becoming increasingly politicized. This research will also be concerned with the changing role of technology in the geopolitical arena. I will use discourse analysis as my method for analyzing these articles.

Discourse is a way of presenting a certain subject in media. The language, images, and sounds used to present information regarding a subject can influence the perception of that information. Through this presentation a particular version of reality regarding said subject can be shaped. Shaping a particular reality in media then means shaping the way that a subject is, or should be, perceived. Discourse cannot be labeled as a “warped view of reality”, because it presents a material reality of its own that shapes society through determining individual and collective actions (Jäger, 2001, p. 34). In this sense, discourses have power, meaning that there is also power in controlling discourses and the media they are presented in. Discourse analysis can then be seen as a method that is concerned with analyzing these representations of reality (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 20). Discourse analysis is not concerned with determining whether a discourse is “true” or “false”, but aims to reveal what is *presented* as a truth and the means by which this is done (Wodak, 2001, p. 65). It aims to make clear the ways in which power and influence are used as instruments through utterances (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, p. 18). Through analyzing the discursive strands that are present in a piece of media we can tell how a creator is trying to shape the reality regarding a particular subject, what the creator presents as important, and what the creator is communicating about the subject. Discourse analysis can tell a lot about the communication strategy of a text's creator, but it is limited in that it is impossible to get any evidence about said creator's thoughts and beliefs. However, this is not a problem for this study, because its aim is to reveal what is being communicated through media rather than what the motivation behind said

communication is. After all, it is the discourse that shapes reality (and is thus more significant), not the thought process behind it.

In this research I will analyze the discourse of the Chinese state media as it frames news about the arrest of Meng Wanzhou and the aftermath thereof. According to Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson (1997, p. 221), “framing is the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy”. When looking at the articles, I will make note of their general theme, language, intertextuality, structure, and any other linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms that catch my eye, as well as the way that each newspaper’s articles are or are not related to other articles from the same newspaper. This way I can see whether or not each newspaper has its own discursive trend. Through this method of research, I provide information on what the CCP wants to communicate to its citizens about the Meng Wanzhou case, and, to a lesser extent, about the role of technology and tech companies in international politics.

I will conduct both quantitative and qualitative research in my discourse analysis. The quantitative research will mostly consist of searching for specific keywords related to Meng Wanzhou in order to find suitable texts for this research. Those texts will then be subjected to qualitative discourse analysis. In practice this means that I will analyze the contents of each article in terms of its language, structure, and themes, while looking at the degrees of intertextuality, i.e. how the texts relate to each other, and at discursive strategies such as using loaded language, rhetorical questions, and quotes. This qualitative discourse analysis will be the main focus of this thesis. By doing this, I can see possible discursive patterns appear between the various texts.

I have chosen to limit my research to news articles that were published in three separate months, which are December 2018, January 2019, and March 2019. There are several reasons for this. The first is that qualitative discourse analysis can take up a lot of time, so a limit is needed to make the task more manageable. The second is that a new development in the Meng Wanzhou case took place in each of these months, which could translate into a possible change in discourse in the articles. The third is simply that more relevant articles are published after each development, meaning that there is more material to research. I will analyze four articles per month per news source, unless I am unable to find that number of relevant articles. In that case I will analyze the articles that

I did find. The first development is the Canadian authorities arresting Meng Wanzhou on December 1st 2018. The second development is the U.S. Department of Justice officially filing criminal charges against Meng Wanzhou on January 28th 2019. The third development is Canada's Department of Justice authorizing an extradition hearing for Meng Wanzhou on March 1st 2019. Not all the articles I will use specifically reference these events in either the headline or the main body of the text.

I will conduct qualitative discourse analysis on news articles from three Chinese news sources, two of which are newspapers and one of which is a news agency. I will also compare the discursive trends found within these sources to see if there are any differences between the three. As stated earlier, state-run newspapers function as the voice of the party. While these papers are financed by the state, they are responsible for also earning their keep and making a profit. These contradictory goals cause newspapers to constantly toe the line between what the Party wants and what the market wants (He, 2005). Newspapers are therefore incentivized to adopt strategies to cater to both audiences, such as re-pitching official Party ideology as nationalism or separating ideological content from “normal” content. One successful strategy is founding, or merging with, metropolitan daily newspapers. By owning both less lucrative official papers and profitable commercial papers, newspaper conglomerates are able to subsidize the former with the income generated by the latter (Stockmann, 2013). This way Party papers do not have to sacrifice their ideological news content in an effort to generate more income. This catering to each paper's readership allows for more variance between papers. Furthermore, although the CCP seems to represent one unified ideological front, there is still a spectrum of political opinions within the CCP. These political differences might not be the clear-cut “left” and “right” that foreign observers are used to, but they are still present. State newspapers have long been used as a platform for internal communication in the CCP, with “internal reference” (*neican*, 内部) reports being composed for the Party leadership (Creemers, 2015, p. 55). Each news source will be influenced by the personal views of the high ranking cadres in charge. Therefore, I believe that these different news sources will provide politically differing views and discourses, even though they will all still match the general Party narrative. Analyzing these differences can provide interesting information about how different sides of the CCP political spectrum present their discourses.

The news sources I will research are Xinhua News Agency (*xinhua she*, 新华社), the People's Daily (*renmin ribao*, 人民日报), and the Global Times (*huanqiu shibao*, 环球时报). Xinhua News Agency, founded in 1931, is the CCP's official state-run press agency, and usually the main source of news concerning the CCP or the central government. Although it has transformed into a more serious international news agency with journalists all over the world, its main task remains to promote the ideals of the CCP (Hong, 2011, p. 380). Because of this, the articles published by Xinhua first go through intense scrutiny by the CCP Publicity Department (CCPPD). Xinhua is the only source of news regarding politically sensitive issues, and other news outlets are often instructed to only use Xinhua as a source for their articles (Creemers, 2015, p. 54). Marketization has also influenced Xinhua, and though it still receives large subsidies from the government, it is partially self-supporting (Xin, 2006, p. 53).

The People's Daily is a centrist newspaper that is overseen by the CCPPD. It is the PRC's most influential newspaper as well as the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the CCP (Xin, 2006, p. 50). As such the paper's contents are representative of the Chinese leadership's views. It is the main tool used to inform the Chinese people about the CCP. When commercial newspapers' reporters need information on the position of the PRC's top leaders, they are suggested to look at reports by the People's Daily or Xinhua (Stockmann, 2013). The People's Daily is only partially funded by the state, so its journalists need to be mindful of both government wishes and market pressures. The People's Daily has set up several subsidiary papers that are less official than the People's Daily, in order to diversify its newspaper offerings as well as its sources of income.

The Global Times was founded in 1993 as a subsidiary of the People's Daily. As the name suggests, its reporting has a focus on international policy and issues, albeit from a Chinese perspective. The Global Times is known for having a hardline leftwing¹ slant, as well as being nationalistic. The paper has seen controversy at home for being sensationalist and jingoist, and not skirting away from sensitive topics ("China's Global Times plays a peculiar role", 2018). The paper's international focus gives it more space for discussion, because domestic issues are generally more sensitive. When compared to

¹ According to Pan & Xu (2018), the Chinese leftwing tends to be politically conservative, antimarket/traditional, and nationalist. The Chinese rightwing on the other hand tends to be politically liberal, promarket/nontraditional, and not nationalist.

more official newspapers, the Global Times is more open regarding international issues, makes more use of foreign sources and unofficial voices in its stories, and has a more hostile tone towards foreign countries (Zhao, 2008). While jingoist papers like the Global Times can be used to stimulate nationalist sentiments, the Chinese government does have reasons to contain popular nationalism, as unbridled nationalism would be detrimental to conducting international diplomacy (Zhao, 2008). The stories of the Global Times often carry the same general message as the People's Daily (Stockmann, 2013).

The articles used in this thesis are all written in simplified Mandarin Chinese, as are the keywords I will use to find them. Any translations that appear in this thesis will have been made by me. I will provide the original sentence after every translation. All articles will be found using the online Factiva database.

3 Relations and the Roles of Technology, Self-Image, and 5G

In this chapter I will review the concept of technology as it pertains to international relations and politics, China-US and China-Canada relations, Chinese self-image, and international competition over telecommunications technology.

Technology and international relations

In this thesis I discuss how PRC media perceive not only the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, but also Canada and the United States, large tech companies, and the technology they produce. This is important, because how these nations, companies, and technologies are seen by governments influences the domestic and international policies that these governments produce. Considering that Huawei is the PRC's largest telecom company, it is important to discuss the role that (information) technology plays in international politics. There are a number of theories that try to explain this role, though some argue that most of these are insufficient (Fritsch, 2011).

The traditional realist approach of international relations sees international politics as a struggle between state actors, all of which try to maximize their relative power and influence in an anarchic environment (Morgenthau, 1948). Most realists see technology simply as one of the factors that states try to maximize in order to gain power (Fritsch, 2011, p. 36). In this view technology is a passive and neutral instrument, in and of itself not capable of causing change in the international system. In neorealism, which focuses on using the structure of the international system and the anarchy therein to explain international politics, technology's role remains largely the same. There are several problems with realism and neorealism. The first problem is that non-state actors such as Huawei and its officers are not acknowledged. The second problem is that in this instrumentalist view, major changes in international politics wrought by the emergence and diffusion of new technologies are not acknowledged. The third problem is that social and historical factors are not considered in the development of technology.

One answer to the instrumentalist view on technology that realism and neorealism hold is technological essentialism. Whereas instrumentalists focus on what

actors use technology for, essentialists stress that technology itself has agency, as technology has trajectories that make it inherently biased towards certain social and political outcomes (Kelly, 2010, p. 34). This view presents technology as a cause of social change. The main issue with essentialism is that, much like realism, it neglects to factor in the social, historical, and cultural aspects that influence the development and use of technology.

The relationship between technology and society has been the subject of a lot of discussion. Winner (1980) discusses two ways in which technology can be political. The first of which is through particular features present in technology that lend themselves well to exercising power under certain circumstances. The second of which is through certain properties of technology necessitating specific patterns of power. The first way is flexible in that social actors can modify the societal outcomes of the technology, but the second way is rigid in that the technology itself would have to be rejected if one wanted to avoid the necessary sociopolitical outcome. Kranzberg (1995) discusses how technology often has societal consequences that fall outside the specific intentions of the technology itself, and how these consequences differ depending on the context the technology is used in. Both of these views emphasize the interplay between cultural, societal, and human aspects on one end and technological features on the other.

One international relations approach that does acknowledge these social and historical factors is constructivism. The constructivist approach of international relations states that all aspects of international relations are socially and historically constructed. In extension of this, constructivists also see technology as a social construct, meaning that it is social actors that give meaning to technology and its use, rather than any qualities inherent to the technology itself. Wendt (1995) gives an example of this when he states that “500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons.” In this view the sum of the inherent destructive capabilities of the nuclear weapons doesn’t make the United Kingdom more dangerous than North Korea, because the UK is an ally to the US, whereas North Korea is an enemy. Constructivism dismisses any separation of technology and society, and by doing this opens up the development of technology to social, political, and economic factors (Fritsch, 2011, p. 31). However, constructivism underestimates the impact that the emergence, diffusion, and use of technology can have on social structures.

While I do believe that technological essentialism and constructivism both have valid points, neither theory can explain the technological competition that this thesis examines. One theory that solves the problems of essentialism's lack of social factors and constructivism's lack of technological impact is McCarthy's (2015) concept of technology as a form of institutional power in international politics. He states that technology, as an institutional power, is politically contested, while also having determinate effects. Technology has rules, norms, and principles that are based on the creator's values, and are expressed through the way it is designed and configured. Through these configurations the ways that the technology can be used are constrained, limiting the technology's possible practices. As a technological institution is diffused internationally, the actors that created it are indirectly impacting other actors through the rules that they imposed on their institution. It should be noted that the institution's bias does not result in a specific outcome. Actors may resist the institutional bias by altering the technology, but doing so comes at a cost that the institution's creator doesn't have to pay for. A technological institution forces other actors to either accept the technological institution's bias, resist its bias by altering it at a cost, or reject the institution entirely. A rejection of the institution would mean losing out on the possible benefits that the new technology would bring (McCarthy, 2015, pp. 66-69). This shows the agenda-setting power that technological institutions hold. Technological institutions hold strategic, ideological, and economic benefits, which is the reason actors struggle over their creation.

Historical relations and discourses

Canada and the United States have long been allies, sharing both a continent as well as their political ideology and form of government, liberal democracy. In spite of this, the two countries' attitudes towards the PRC have differed, though they do share some similarities. When, during the Chinese civil war, the Chinese Communist Party ousted the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) from mainland China in 1949, the US were quite disappointed, as they had supported the KMT (Knüsel, 2012, pp. 232-239). The CCP then chose to align itself with the Soviet Union rather than with the US, so the US had in a sense "lost" China from its sphere of influence. The following two decades saw antagonistic relations between the PRC and the US, characterized by the US's PRC

containment policy (Sutter, 2010, pp. 51-63). Relations only turned positive in 1972, when Nixon made a surprise visit to the PRC in order to normalize relations. Relations turned sour again when news of the CCP's reaction to the Tiananmen Square protests reached America in 1989, although economic engagement still continued. In the 1990s the PRC's increasing economic power solidified the PRC's status as a challenge to the US's economic hegemony. As a result, the US's policy became more pragmatic, increasing economic engagement while still trying to contain the PRC militarily as well as economically. In the early 2000s the US and China started focusing on the commonalities of their relationship rather than on the two countries' differences (Sutter, 2010, p. 123). During Obama's presidency (2009-2017), the US focused on engaging Asia more in order to decrease China's clout in the region, while also engaging Beijing economically. More recently, President Trump has shifted towards a more confrontational stance, treating the PRC as a rival rather than as a potential partner. Under his leadership the US started placing tariffs on Chinese products, resulting in a trade war that at the time of writing had been continuing for more than a year (Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2018).

Canadian attitudes towards the PRC have historically been less confrontational than those of its southern neighbor, focusing more on peaceful engagement. While Canada did join the US's anti-communist alliance between 1950 and 1970, Canada was still selling its surplus wheat to the famine-stricken PRC in the 1960s. In 1970, Canada was one of the first Western (used here to refer to developed capitalist liberal democracies) nations to normalize relations with the PRC, and though activity was low, relations were friendly. Although the 1989 Tiananmen square protests did cause major uproars in Canada, the government continued to give loans to the PRC. The 1990s saw Canada increasing its economic partnership with China, while engaging in human rights dialogues behind closed doors. Although Canada and the PRC were trading more than ever before in the early 2000s, Canada also adopted a more critical stance towards China. This stance was then muted somewhat after the 2008 economic crisis, which saw China's economy relatively unharmed when Canada's was still recovering (Edwards, 2008; Burton, 2011). Since Trudeau became president in 2015, Canada has been enthusiastic about deepening its economic relationship with China (Calvert, 2017).

Since the 1990s, the Chinese media discourse on the US has been increasingly negative, likely due to American actions like the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, changes in China's self-image as it relates to other countries, or marketization processes in Chinese news media (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007). Recently, Chinese media discourses on Canada have also become more negative. There has been more vocal criticism of American policies toward the PRC, as both countries seem increasingly assertive and confrontational. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership in the late 1970s the PRC had the policy of keeping a low profile and focusing on economic development. In recent years, the PRC has begun to assert itself more on the world stage (Zhao, 2012), and its economic, political, and military power has grown. How nations view themselves depends on the narrative they create for themselves. Gries (2004) argues that the way China relates to its past changed around the turn of the millennium, especially in how it relates to the "Century of Humiliation" (*bainian guochi*, 百年国耻).

The "Century of Humiliation" is the period between the end of the First Opium War (which China lost) in 1842 and the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War (which China won) in 1945, which sees China (in the forms of the late Qing dynasty, the warlord period, and the Republic of China) subjected to a number of national crises. These crises consist of unequal treaties with Western powers, loss of land and cities, paying reparations, and repeatedly being defeated in war. Whereas Party historians used to downplay these humiliations in order to build a narrative as victors, in recent times the century of humiliation has been brought up in the context of a victimization narrative. Instances where foreign actors are making demands of the PRC, imposing their values on Chinese society, or otherwise negatively impacting the PRC are often seen in light of this period and narrative. Callahan (2010) explains this trend by arguing that a pride/humiliation distinction is influencing current Chinese understandings of identity and security. He states that this form of identity politics thrives because it draws from ideas that existed before the Chinese state and still resonate with popular sentiments, namely the civilization/barbarian distinction. The pride/humiliation distinction offers a lens through which events can be interpreted and national identity can be created and maintained in popular discourse.

In order to prevent being humiliated the PRC has to be strong, and to be strong it needs to be economically developed (Roy, 2013), so the narrative goes. Several authors

(Kissinger, 2011; Callahan, 2004) have stated that the PRC sees its recent economic and political development as a return to form, or alternatively, as a return to “the rightful place of China on the world stage” (Callahan, 2004, p. 214). This narrative and newfound assertiveness are reflected in the policies the PRC produces. A major example of this is the Belt and Road Initiative that has the PRC developing infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Europe (Chatzky & McBride, 2019).

Information technology

Information and communication technology, also known as “cyber” or “ICT”, is becoming increasingly important. As information technology keeps improving and its efficiency keeps growing, industries become more and more reliant on it. There are applications for information technology in almost every sector, for instance in hospitals (electronic medical records), infrastructure (self-driving cars), finance (payment by phone), shipping (smart ports), and agriculture (automated and climate-controlled greenhouses).

The main obstacle holding back further application of information technology is hardware limitations, as the 4G system that is currently in use is not energy efficient and reliable enough for some possible IT applications. 5G, the fifth generation of information technology, is highly anticipated because it is expected to solve the bandwidth and reliability issues that 4G has run into, allowing for even more widespread use of information technology (Cooper, 2018).

Multiple companies are currently developing 5G, and all want to be the first to release fully functioning 5G technology. Being the first or the best producer of such technology would mean being able to build the necessary infrastructure and setting the industry standard. The five companies that dominate the still developing 5G industry are Samsung, Ericsson, Nokia, ZTE, and Huawei. Two of those companies (ZTE and Huawei) are Chinese. The PRC has long had issues with the fact that much of the hardware that the internet uses, as well as many of its managing institutions, are located within the United States, giving the US an internet “hegemony” (Harold, Libicki & Cevallos, 2016). Going back to McCarthy’s definition of technology as a form of institutional power, we can see that the internet as it exists now is an American technological institution. If a

Chinese company were to be the first to release functioning 5G technology, build the 5G infrastructure in a large number of countries, and create a global standard, then that would make 5G technology a Chinese technological institution. Huawei's 5G technology is advanced and affordable, making it more attractive than its alternatives. So far, Huawei claims to have obtained more than 30 contracts for providing 5G equipment globally (Tanakasempipat, 2019).

Technological competition

As the functioning of society increasingly depends on digital infrastructure, its importance from a security perspective also increases. According to US military doctrine, cyber is now considered to be the fifth dimension for armed conflict after land, sea, air, and space. The world is moving into an era of "cybered conflict" (Demchak, 2016), in which information technology equipment that is linked to another government forms a big risk. While Huawei is an employee-owned private company, its founder Ren Zhengfei has ties to the People's Liberation Army and is a member of the CCP. Furthermore, a recent study found that the ownership model of the company is actually quite ambiguous and leaves the possibility of Huawei actually being somewhat state-owned (Balding & Clarke, 2019). It should be noted that, while Chinese internet and telecommunications companies have indeed received political and financial support from the CCP, they cannot simply be seen as commercial extensions of the Chinese state, though they are also not completely independent (Hong, 2017).

There has been much contention between the US and the PRC on tech. The US has complained about "forced technology transfers" for US companies operating within the PRC (Miles, 2018), and a report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission stated that joint ventures between American and Chinese firms, Huawei in particular, could pose security risks due to the Chinese company's potential links to the Chinese government (Messner, 2012). This same commission stated in 2018 that "Chinese dominance of networking-equipment manufacturing threatens the security of U.S. fifth-generation, or 5G, wireless infrastructure" (O'Keeffe, 2018). Fears of spying and possible backdoors that would allow the Chinese government to access or control 5G infrastructure that uses Huawei equipment have led several countries such as the US, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia to ban Huawei from providing 5G equipment (Tao,

2018; Jolly, 2018; Smyth, 2019). The US has been urging all of its allies to turn their backs on Huawei because of these concerns, but it has not been proven that Huawei actually poses a risk, as no evidence has ever been delivered to back up the US's accusations. Several US allies, such as Germany and the UK, as well as some other countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and Poland, have stated that they value their security, but still plan to use Huawei 5G equipment (Meyer, 2019). It has been speculated that technological hegemony is the main reason for the current trade war with the PRC, with economic reasons being secondary (Gros, 2019; Akita, 2018).

The development of 5G technology has thus become highly politicized. Obtaining the institutional power of 5G technology would give strategic, ideological, and economic benefits to the actor that created it. While security concerns are not necessarily inherent to 5G, the US's allegations regarding Huawei have added another possible political dimension to the company's 5G technology. This context, plus the current Sino-American trade war and Huawei's status as possibly the world's largest 5G equipment producer have made the arrest of its CFO seem rather political in nature. This view was reinforced when president Trump stated that he would intervene in the arrest if it would help him secure a trade deal with the PRC (Holland, Mason, & Rampton, 2018).

The question is how the arrest of Meng Wanzhou might have affected the CCP narrative about technology and tech companies such as Huawei, particularly in the context of international politics. In this next chapter, I will discuss how different PRC news sources have presented the arrest of Huawei's CFO, and in relation to that, tech companies and technology.

4 Research Findings

In the three sections following the quantitative analysis I will summarize all articles and the arguments made therein, highlighting relevant quotes. In the section following that I will examine the news sources' discursive strategies by analyzing the articles' arguments and language. The analysis will show how certain communication strategies are used to give shape to the news sources' discursive material realities, while also discussing the presented discourse on technological competition as it relates to the earlier theoretical discussions of technology.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

In order to do the quantitative analysis I looked at the amount of articles related to Meng Wanzhou that I could find. These results had major differences, as the Xinhua search engine gave 296 hits, the People's Daily search engine gave 503 hits, and the Global Times search engine gave 45111 hits. This gap between the number of hits seems to be the result of the Global Times copying articles from other news agencies, as well as the search engine providing unrelated results. The numbers are also inflated due to the search engine's lacking advanced search functionalities, therefore including hits that fall outside of the time period that I am researching. The Factiva database allowed me to search within the specific time period and filter out unoriginal content, which gave closer results: 38 articles from Xinhua, 16 articles from the People's Daily, and 95 articles from the Global Times. Nevertheless, a great deal of these articles were only marginally related to Meng Wanzhou. I was able to find enough articles to analyze per news source per month, with the exception of Xinhua articles in March, of which I could only find three. The consequence of this is that I will analyze 35 articles instead of 36. This dearth of reporting might suggest political sensitivity, or simply a lack of developments to report on. Most of the articles I found were news reports, commentaries, and reports or transcripts of official press briefings.

Xinhua and the People's Daily did not provide sources for their information, unless they were specifically quoting someone. There was one exception where the People's Daily used the Globe and Mail, a Canadian newspaper, as a source. The only

news source to provide clear sourcing was the Global Times, which often referenced foreign media such as the Globe and Mail, the Financial Times, the Guardian, the Washington Post, or the New York Times. The newspaper also openly used online comments as a source, showing the commenters' names. The use of foreign media as sources probably has to do with the newspaper's international focus.

4.2 December: the Arrest

Generally, the news sources all focus on negatively framing Canada. This is done by calling Canada's actions malicious and illegal and claiming that Canada has violated Meng's human rights. The content of Xinhua and the People's Daily is built around quotes from PRC officials, all of which deny any wrongdoings on Meng's part without mentioning what she is accused of. The Global Times also draws from these official statements, but less so. The People's Daily and the Global Times both discuss how the arrest has a political nature, which is not mentioned by Xinhua. The US's involvement in the arrest is mentioned mainly in the People's Daily and the Global Times, though the latter is the only source that presents 5G competition as a possible motivation. A lot of the criticisms towards the actions of the US and Canada stress that they are targeted at Chinese citizens and companies rather than specifically Meng Wanzhou and Huawei. All three sources generally carry an outraged tone and emphasize that this arrest has broken with international conventions.

The focus of Xinhua's December articles is on the PRC's official response to the arrest taking place, and on the proceedings of the arrest and Meng Wanzhou's subsequent treatment. Xinhua reiterates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official response to the arrest in three of its four articles. One quote by the Ministry's spokesperson, Geng Shuang, that is repeated in these articles is "The Chinese side immediately started serious negotiations with Canada and the US, and has clearly stated their stern position, demanded that the other party immediately clears up the reasons for detainment, immediately releases the detained person, and practically guarantees the concerned person's rightful and legitimate rights" (中国方面立即启动了与加拿大和美国方面的严肃谈判，并明确表明了我们的严正立场，要求对方立即澄清有关拘留的理由，立即释放被拘留人员，并切实保障有关人员的正当合法权益)² This quote, or a part of it, is also present in articles from the People's Daily and the Global Times.

One of Xinhua's articles is much more hostile and accusatory than the other three. The author professes Meng Wanzhou's innocence, stating that "from a legal standpoint, Meng has not broken Canadian laws. However, Canada is selectively listening to the US's side of the story, and to seize her when she was switching planes is unacceptable from a

² Anonymous, 7 December 2018, "中国方面立即启动了与加拿大和美国方面的严肃谈判". Xinhua. Anonymous, 8 December 2018, "中国方面立即启动了与加拿大和美国方面的严肃谈判". Xinhua. Anonymous, 13 December 2018, "中国方面立即启动了与加拿大和美国方面的严肃谈判". Xinhua.

extremely serious price for this” (国家利益受到严重损害).⁷ Another article claims that there will be serious consequences for Canada, should they not handle this case correctly.⁸

The People’s Daily discusses how the arrest of Meng Wanzhou was a premeditated political move by the US against Huawei. In one article it is described as “politically hunting down and killing” (政治迫害) the Chinese tech company. The newspaper presents the US as worried about China’s quick economic development, afraid that China will outpace Western countries in the field of science and technology. It argues that the US is “using the excuse of “national security” to suppress Chinese companies and hinder China’s development” (借“国家安全”之名打压中国公司阻碍中国发展).⁹

The People’s Daily rejects the notion that Huawei could be a threat to national security, citing a lack of evidence for such claims and the company’s efforts to respect rules and regulations. The 5G equipment deals that Huawei has with many countries and the quality of its 5G technology are used as proof for Huawei’s trustworthiness. One article states that it is preposterous to hinder a company’s operation based on “conjecture” (猜测), also citing “suspicion and envy” (猜忌) as motivation.¹⁰

One thing I noticed is that the People’s Daily saves its harsh criticism, hostile language, and vague threats for Canada, even while addressing the American motivations for having her arrested.

The focus of the Global Times is on the process of the arrest and on the US and its relationship with Huawei. The Global Times is the only paper to clearly address both the accusation of Huawei circumventing the Iran sanctions, and competition in the field of 5G being a possible underlying reason.

The Global Times claims that Meng has been treated like a heavy criminal, even though she has not had a trial. The fact that Canadian authorities had cuffed her is presented as a gross violation of her human rights and human dignity. In one article, it is

7 Anonymous, 9 December 2018, “国家利益受到严重损害”. People’s Daily.

8 Anonymous, 11 December 2018, “国家利益受到严重损害”. People’s Daily.

9 Anonymous, 14 December 2018, “借“国家安全”之名打压中国公司阻碍中国发展”. People’s Daily.

10 Anonymous, 11 December 2018, “猜忌”. People’s Daily.

mentioned that, at a court hearing, “she looks like she has received humane treatment. However, [this is] merely a facade” (仅仅是一个幌子).¹¹ The author also mentions that Canada has not provided Meng with the care she needs, as she has gone through surgery in May 2018 and is currently suffering from high blood pressure.

The Global Times writes extensively about the US’s role in the arrest, but also admonishes Canada for deciding to take the initiative and arrest her. The articles claim that Canada made a huge mistake by “helping a villain do evil” (帮坏人做坏事) and should have remained neutral, and should not have one-sidedly listened to the US.¹² The paper discusses how Canadian citizens are disappointed with their government’s actions. The articles remind Canada to think about its own long-term interests in China before it decides on its next move, which I would interpret as another vague threat.

The paper discusses how competition in the field of 5G between the US and Huawei is the real reason for the US to have a core executive of Huawei arrested. One article discusses the strategic, economic, and military importance of 5G. The article specifically states “In the wide-spread dispute related to intellectual property rights, the standard of 5G is key, which is the reason why the US and its allies are using everything they can to suppress the scientific and technological revolution of Chinese IPs” (在知识产权的广泛争议中，5G标准是关键，这也是美国及其盟友使用一切手段来抑制中国IP科技革命的原因).¹³

The Global Times discusses how the US’s use of legal jurisdiction as a political move against Huawei sets a dangerous precedent for unfair competition, comparing it with opening Pandora’s box. One article claims that this happened because US tech companies cannot legally compete with Chinese companies and therefore started illegally working together with their government. The US is presented as having misused their jurisdiction to set legal traps, thereby breaking the global order of business. The arrest is even said to “develop into a cancer on the global governance system” (发展成为全球治理体系的癌症).¹⁴

11 Anonymous, 10 December 2018, “仅仅是一个幌子”. Global Times.

12 Ibidem.

13 Wu Y., Xiao D., Qing M., Li Z., Bai Y., Cui J., Liu Z., & Wang X., 7 December 2018, “在知识产权的广泛争议中”. Global Times.

14 Anonymous, 12 December 2018, “发展成为全球治理体系的癌症”. Global Times.

4.3 January: Unreasonable Suppression

In January, the US Department of Justice announced charges against Huawei and Meng Wanzhou, and it announced that it would file a request for her extradition. This prompted a response from Huawei and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as they released statements addressing this news, protesting it, and denying all charges. These statements, or specific sentences therein, are found across all three news sources in January. All newspapers contain the claim that the US and Canada “are abusing their bilateral extradition treaty” (美国加拿大滥用引渡条约), as well as calls to revoke the warrant for Meng’s arrest.

One major development among the three news sources is that the main subject of their criticism and attacks is now the US rather than Canada. This change seems to reflect the US being the main actor changing the status quo surrounding the Meng Wanzhou case in January. The news sources frame the US as breaking with international conventions and abusing its legal system in order to pursue its feud against the PRC. The People’s Daily and the Global Times both contain a statement from Geng Shuang, saying that China “strongly urges the US to stop unreasonably suppressing Chinese companies, including Huawei, and to treat Chinese companies objectively and fairly” (中国强烈敦促美国停止无理打压中国企业, 包括华为, 并客观公平地对待中国企业). However, Canada still receives criticism, as both newspapers urge Canada “to immediately release miss Meng and earnestly guarantee her legitimate and lawful rights, and to not be a cat’s paw for the US” (加拿大应立即释放孟晚舟, 并切实保障其合法正当权利, 不要成为美国的猫爪). All news sources criticize and question the functioning and fairness of the American and Canadian legal systems and rule of law.

The focus of Xinhua’s January articles is on denying any charges or accusations from the US and Canada and on victimizing China and Huawei. One development in Xinhua’s articles is that the articles now mention the Iran sanctions and the general contention between the US and Huawei.

One of the articles addresses China’s arrest of two Canadian citizens, which Canada has interpreted as retaliation from China for the arrest of Meng. The article denies this and promptly accuses Canada of having double standards regarding rule of law. In several other articles Huawei is defended. One article reiterates that there has been no evidence that the Chinese government is using Huawei technology to monitor anyone, and claims that the US and Canada are trying to create a panic.

Xinhua vaguely mentions the Iran sanctions in the context of defending Huawei as a law-abiding company, as it states that “in essence, it is an issue that involves the American sanctions against Iran” (中美贸易摩擦本质上是美国制裁伊朗问题)¹⁵ The article then says that China disagrees with any sanctions implemented outside of the framework of the United Nations, and that the sanctions “in itself do not conform with international law, and have met with disapproval from the whole world, including the US’s allies” (制裁本身并不符合国际法, 且遭到全世界, 包括美国盟友的反对)¹⁶

One calls the US’s actions illegitimate and highly political in nature, and “a kind of science & technology bullying” (科技霸凌). The same article also says that the US’s motivations “are to stop at nothing to suppress Chinese high-tech companies and limit China’s legitimate right to develop” (不惜一切代价遏制中国高科技公司, 限制中国合法的发展权利)¹⁷ One article mentions “the hypocrisy that is revealed when certain Canadians play with the concept of “law”” (某些加拿大人在玩弄“法律”概念时所暴露出的虚伪)¹⁸

The focus of the People’s Daily’s January articles is on reiterating official rhetoric, as three of the four articles are built around statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that protest the US’s extradition request. Much of the language used in the official statements is repeated from statements made in December. The biggest change is that the January articles do not particularly vilify or make any vague threats towards Canada.

One of the articles in the People’s Daily is an interview with Huawei founder and Meng Wanzhou’s father, Ren Zhengfei. The interview has a more personal tone than the other articles due to it being an interview. The article discusses Huawei’s 5G achievements, its good track record regarding safety, and how internet safety and privacy protection are the company’s guiding principles. By doing this, the article is defending Huawei against the criticisms it has received without actually mentioning them.¹⁹

15 Zheng M., 23 January 2019, “中美贸易摩擦本质上是美国制裁伊朗问题”. Xinhua.

16 Ibidem.

17 Ibidem.

18 Zheng M., 11 January 2019, “某些加拿大人在玩弄“法律”概念时所暴露出的虚伪”. Xinhua.

19 Anonymous, 18 January 2019, “华为创始人任正非接受采访”. People’s Daily.

has already defined the US-China competition over 5G “control” as a “new arms race” (5G“ ” “ ”). The US is presented as a bully, single-mindedly using all means to push forward their “America first” policy, with no one able to resist. The US is also accused of “using the law to play political tricks” ().²⁴

On the other hand, Huawei is presented as a champion that will stand against this bully. The article says that Chinese high-tech companies, especially Huawei, bear most of the weight of the US’s attempts to contain China’s rise. It then states that strangling Huawei will be difficult due to the company’s strong position within the 5G market. The newspaper tells the company that it not only has the support of the Chinese public, but “The world’s silent majority is actually standing at [Huawei’s] side” (). The Global Times raises the stakes of the Huawei lawsuits by saying: “Huawei is the star of Chinese private enterprises, if it is overwhelmed by the US, then it will also be a setback for China’s rise to prominence” ().²⁵

The Global Times again quotes Canadians criticizing their government. The Globe and Mail is quoted calling Canadian foreign policy terrible, and a former ambassador to China is quoted saying that Canada is facing its most serious crisis since the seventies.²⁶

Generally, the three news sources started to focus less on Meng Wanzhou specifically, and more on Huawei and its relation with the US, which is reflective of a shift from Canada to the US. In that regard the Global Times is the most consistent, as it both still chastises Canada for its lack of morals and shines a light on the relationship between the US and Huawei, which the newspaper also did in December. However, the Global Times is inconsistent in that it presented 5G competition as the reason for the arrest in December, but now presents general antagonism against the PRC as the main motivation. I noticed that the specific charges against Huawei and Meng Wanzhou are usually not mentioned. When they are, they are then placed in the context of a larger effort by the US to halt China’s development.

23 Wen Y. & Wu Y., 30 January 2019, “ ” . Global Times.

24 Anonymous, 30 January 2019, “ ” . Global Times.

25 Ibidem.

26 Wu Y. & Su J., 28 January 2019, “ ” . Global Times.

4.4 March: Global Importance

The March articles generally have more of a focus on Canada when compared to the January articles. Many articles chastise Canada for not releasing Meng and cast doubt on the functioning of Canada's legal system. The focus on Canada seems to be the result of it approving the US's request for Meng's extradition. All news sources emphasize the political nature of the lawsuits and claim that they are of national and even global importance.

Xinhua only published three articles about Meng Wanzhou in March. One of these articles simply states that China doesn't agree with the extradition, reiterating official rhetoric also found in earlier articles, not adding any new statements. In an article about Meng suing the Canadian government and Border Service Agency over her arrest, Xinhua compares the charges against her with an abuse of judicial procedures. Xinhua also "hopes that miss Meng's legal rights can obtain protection during the judicial phase of the extradition process" (希望孟晚舟的合法权益在司法阶段能够得到保护). Here Xinhua implies that this will not be the case.²⁷

In one of the articles Foreign Minister Wang Yi says that the government supports Huawei and Meng as it urges them to "take up legal weapons to protect their rights and to not be "helpless lambs"" (拿起法律武器保护自己的合法权益,不要成为"无助的羔羊"). The article then asserts that what needs to be protected "is not merely the rights of a company, but one nation's and one people's legitimate right to develop" (不仅仅是公司的权利,而是一个国家和一个人民的合法发展权利). This notion is then elevated to a global scale: "it is more so the deserved right of every country on earth that hopes to raise the level of its own scientific and technological development" (更是地球上每一个希望提高自身科技水平的国家所应享有的权利).²⁸

The People's Daily's March articles have a renewed focus on Canada. Like Xinhua, one of the articles reports on Wang Yi's press conference in March. The two articles are essentially the same.²⁹

27 Bai Y., 4 March 2019, "孟晚舟案中方立场". Xinhua; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 March 2019, "孟晚舟案中方立场". Xinhua.

28 Anonymous, 8 March 2019, "孟晚舟案中方立场". Xinhua.

29 Anonymous, 8 March 2019, "孟晚舟案中方立场". People's Daily.

In one article, the People’s Daily discusses how Canada is “flaunting with ‘the principle of rule of law’ and ‘judicial independence’” (加拿大“炫耀”“法治原则”), even though it is “clear political meddling” (明显的政治干预). The article asserts that if Canada really did follow these principles, then Meng would be free.³⁰ Another article discusses how Canada’s judicial independence has certain logical contradictions.³¹

In the last article, the People’s Daily states about the Meng Wanzhou case that “the West’s way of doing things behind the scenes is very filthy, “trying to influence China-US relations using this method, strangling China’s development”” (西方幕后的做事方式非常肮脏, “试图用这种方法影响中美关系, 扼杀中国的发展”). The newspaper explains that “politicizing a business problem and using political methods to attack Chinese enterprises, that is something China can absolutely not accept” (将商业问题政治化并用政治手段攻击中国企业, 这是中国绝对不能接受的).³²

The focus of the Global Times’ March articles is divided. On the one hand, there is a focus on Meng Wanzhou’s extradition process and her lawsuit against Canada, and on the other hand, there is a focus on Huawei and the reasons it is facing lawsuits. Which country gets criticized in the articles also depends on the focus. Meng articles focus on Canada and Huawei articles focus on the US. In one of the articles about Meng’s extradition process the Global Times mainly discusses how the extradition is politically motivated.³³

In the article focusing on Meng’s lawsuit against Canada, The Global Times discusses three things: Canada’s immoral actions, which have led to Meng suing Canada; public support for Meng and her lawsuit; negative consequences for Canada. Regarding Canada’s actions, the newspaper cites violations of the Canadian constitution, consisting of violating of her (digital) privacy and illegally searching and questioning her. The article uses various sources to show support for Meng and her case. The paper cites a Canadian extradition lawyer as saying Meng’s lawsuit has a good chance of succeeding,

30 Anonymous, 2 March 2019, “加拿大‘炫耀’‘法治原则’”。People’s Daily.

31 Anonymous, 1 March 2019, “西方幕后的做事方式非常肮脏”。People’s Daily.

32 Anonymous, 8 March 2019, “将商业问题政治化并用政治手段攻击中国企业, 这是中国绝对不能接受的”。People’s Daily.

33 Tao D., 4 March 2019, “加拿大在孟晚舟案中的政治动机”。Global Times.

and an American university professor as saying her lawsuit would allow her to prove that her arrest is “part of an American and Canadian scheme against Huawei” (美国加拿大联手打压华为).³⁴ It also shows several online Canadian commenters criticizing the Canadian government for lying and wantonly attacking Huawei.

The articles that focus more on Huawei and the US mainly discuss two things: how immoral the US is for attacking Huawei without proof, and how Huawei will not succumb to these attacks. The Global Times calls the lawsuits against Huawei a “political farce” (政治闹剧) and claims that American and Canadian media generally do not dare to admit this truth. The paper reinforces this point by asking “if American congressmen were to now mention Huawei, which one wouldn’t gnash his teeth with political resentment and indignation?” (如果美国国会议员现在要提到华为，哪一个不会咬牙切齿地表达政治上的愤慨和愤怒?). The newspaper also questions whether or not the US attacking Huawei will affect the nature of international competition in the future, as it presents the US government as engaging in unfair competition by getting involved. Another article discusses how the US is worried about Huawei’s 5G achievements, and claims that “Huawei will prevent the US from eavesdropping as it pleases. This is the main reason the US is attacking Huawei” (华为将阻止美国随心所欲地窃听，这是美国攻击华为的主要原因). The article then discusses how the US is using its status as the world’s only hegemon as well as a strategy of spreading fear, uncertainty, and doubt about Huawei in order to protect its monopolistic position.³⁵ The Global Times states in two articles that Huawei will not fall, as it will use this challenge as a whetstone to grow even stronger while keeping its lead in 5G technology.³⁶

34 Tao D. & Ren Z., 5 March 2019, “美国加拿大联手打压华为”. Global Times.

35 Anonymous, 5 March 2019, “华为将阻止美国随心所欲地窃听”. Global Times.

36 Fang X., 28 March 2019, “华为将不会被击垮”. Global Times.

4.5 Analysis: Intertextuality, Language, and Discourse

There is a large degree of intertextuality between the three news sources, especially between Xinhua and the People's Daily. This is due to the fact that all are directly state-controlled news sources that often quote official discourse or statements from PRC officials. Xinhua and the People's Daily will often copy these statements verbatim, but the Global Times tends to alter the sentences slightly.

Generally, all news sources stick close to Party line with regard to the discourse around Meng Wanzhou and Huawei. Phrases such as “legal and legitimate rights” (*hefa, zhengdang quanyi*, 合法正当权益) and “stern position” (*yanzheng lichang*, 严正立场) respectively appear in 12 and 10 of the 35 articles, though this is most pronounced in Xinhua and the People's Daily. One particular example of intertextuality that is not based on an official statement is that all news sources made vague threats towards Canada in December.

The language used by Xinhua contains the most evidentialities, though they appear to some degree in all sources. The evidentialities are mostly variations of “as everyone knows” (*zhongsuozhouzhi*, 众所周知) or “anyone can see” (*renhe ren dou keyi kanchu*, 任何人都可以看出来), or “clearly” (*mingxian*, 明显 or *xianran*, 显然). These evidentialities are mainly used to reinforce negative statements about the US or Canada.

There is a large amount of loaded language in the three news sources, mainly used to indicate which side is “wrong”. In all instances these words are used to describe actions by the US or Canada. Some examples of this are the words “kidnap” (*bangjia*, 绑架), “rascally” (*wulai*, 无赖), “shameless” (*wuchi*, 无耻). Also, instead of using neutral words, pejoratives such as “attempt” (*qitu*, 企图), “aggravate” (*bianbenjiali*, 变本加厉) or “succeed (in a scheme)” (*decheng*, 得手) are used, especially in the Global Times.

The People's Daily and the Global Times also make use of rhetorical questions, especially the latter. They are used to question the US and Canada's behavior, mainly with regard to valued institutions such as human rights, rule of law and judicial independence. Examples of this are “Is it that, in Canada's eyes, other countries' laws aren't laws?” (是不是在加拿大的眼里, 其他国家的法律都不是法律?) and “Is this the proper behavior from a country ruled by law?” (这是不是从法治国家应有的行为?).

The news sources share the way they report on the specific charges against Huawei and Meng Wanzhou. Although the charges are usually not mentioned, when they

are, the articles then distract from the charges by placing them in the context of the US's attempts to hurt the PRC's development. As a result, there is less focus on the actual content of the charges, and on Meng and Huawei's alleged wrongdoings.

All three news sources use quotes to add validity to their narratives, though there are differences between the official media and the Global Times in how they use these quotes. Xinhua and the People's Daily use direct quotes in the majority of their articles, and only quote Chinese actors such as CCP officials and Huawei representatives. The two quotes from Canadians are either positive about Meng or critical of the Canadian government. The Global Times' use of quotes differs from the others in that it uses a lot more quotes, but only in half its articles. Furthermore, 80% of the quotes are from non-Chinese actors such as Canadian politicians, foreign media, and foreign university professors. However, all quotes still contain either negative statements about the actions and motivations of the Canadian and American governments or positive statements about Huawei or Meng Wanzhou, thereby reinforcing the presented discourse. The only exception to this, a quote that is positive about the fairness of the Canadian legal system, is immediately followed by "however" (然而, *raner*).

All news sources share a discourse of national victimization. Most of the articles emphasize that the actions of the US and Canada are targeted at PRC citizens, PRC companies, and the PRC's development rather than specifically Meng and Huawei, which turns the entire Chinese nation into a victim rather than just Meng and Huawei. Furthermore, all news sources continuously engage in the delegitimization of all actors, charges, and criticisms that are against PRC actors. Some examples of this are: delegitimizing Meng's extradition process by questioning the Canadian and American judicial independence and rule of law; delegitimizing the Iran sanctions by criticizing all sanctions outside the framework of the UN (therefore making it irrelevant whether or not Huawei broke them); delegitimizing the Canadian government by framing it as disregarding human rights and having lost popular support; and delegitimizing the American government by framing it as an unreasonable bully that breaks with international conventions, politicizes business, and abuses its power and laws to harm its opponents. Without legitimacy, these issues and actors seem more unreasonable and "wrong", in turn making the PRC seem more like a victim.

Discourses around the US's motivation for having Meng arrested and suing her and Huawei show the most deviation between news sources. This is the most clear in the December articles, when Xinhua made no reference to the US's motives, the People's Daily clearly presented the arrest as a politically motivated attack against Huawei, and the Global Times stated that it was a politically motivated attack against Huawei *because of 5G competition*. Although the People's Daily and the Global Times share this intertextuality of political motivation in all analyzed time periods, the Global Times is the only news source to present specific reasons for the US's actions, rather than just general hostility towards China. This creates a contradiction in the discourse regarding the US's motivations. Giving clear and logical motivations such as 5G competition or Huawei preventing the US from eavesdropping makes it harder to establish that the US's actions are based on unreasonable malintent towards the PRC. In this regard the contradiction is the result of attempting to victimize the PRC.

The People's Daily and the Global Times both share a discourse that presents technological competition as ideally being market- and technology-focused, rather than it being a broader process involving social and political factors. Following this notion of technological competition not involving state actors, anything that can be interpreted as a social or political form of technological competition is criticized and presented as wrong. Examples of this are the US urging its allies to ban Huawei and Meng's arrest. The discourse presents this political form of technological competition as something the US is one-sidedly engaging in, which adds to the victimization narrative. This is exemplified by the Global Times claiming that *the US* already defined the competition over 5G as a new arms race. This discourse of technological competition being non-political contradicts the discourse around technology and national development. The People's Daily and the Global Times both link technological development to the development of the PRC, equating harming Chinese tech companies like Huawei to harming the development of the PRC. In the same trend Huawei is presented as the champion of China's tech companies and technological development. Furthermore, multiple Global Times articles discuss the national advantages of being the frontrunner in 5G. Therefore, the discourses present technological competition as both separate from politics and deeply politically important. This image matches that of Huawei itself, which is also presented as separate from politics but deeply important to the Chinese nation's development.

5 Conclusion

The question I posed at the start of this thesis was “How did three Chinese newspapers report on the arrest of Huawei’s Meng Wanzhou, and how does this relate to the politicization of tech?”. Generally the three news sources reported quite similarly, though there exist marked differences between the three, mainly with regard to politicization of tech. To an extent, the focus of each news source matches that of the other two in every month. The least official news source, the Global Times, remained relatively consistent in its reporting. In all months it chose to mention the relationship between the US and Huawei, the political consequences of the arrest, and the relation to 5G, even as it also presented each month’s official discourse. Meanwhile, Xinhua and the People’s Daily were a lot less consistent temporally, as they chose to focus on different subjects every month. They do differ in that the People’s Daily had a larger focus on the arrest having a political nature than Xinhua, which hardly mentioned that. What remained consistent across all news sources at all times was the rejection of the notion that the arrest was in any way justified or legal.

With regard to the politicization of tech, this subject was most prevalent in the reporting of the Global Times and, to a lesser extent, the People’s Daily. Both papers argue that the US is politicizing tech and that this is wrong, as competition should not involve state actors. They use this politicization to delegitimize the arrest, as they argue that there is no room for politics or governmental interference in (technological) competition between businesses. This shows a clear demarcation between “tech” and “politics”, which is likely intended. However, I believe that the news sources themselves are politicizing tech, though in a different way than what they claim the US is doing. By framing lawsuits against a Chinese tech company and one of its officials as a political scheme meant to harm the PRC’s (technological) development, they are acknowledging and even emphasizing that tech possesses a political nature. I would argue that it is because tech is regarded as politically important that this arrest is also interpreted as such. Thus technology is presented as both political and not political. This contradictory nature is echoed with regard to Huawei, which is presented as having a key role in the PRC’s national technological development, while still being separate from politics.

The topic of 5G shows a marked difference in discourse between the more official news sources and the less official news source. The People's Daily makes numerous statements about the arrest being political, but it rarely links this political nature to 5G technology. However, the Global Times clearly presents competition in the field of 5G as the main reason for the arrest in December. As the newspaper discusses the economic, strategic and military power that being the 5G frontrunner would provide, its discourse mirrors McCarthy's theory of technology as an institutional power in international relations, albeit superficially. The discourse deviates from McCarthy in that the general condemnation of political involvement in technological competition rejects the notion that the creation of technological institutions is politically contested.

Generally, all news sources present the same discourse of national victimization. They use the same strategies to present it, which are to nationalize the conflict or issue and to delegitimize whichever actor is acting against China. When the sources mention specific criticisms or charges, they delegitimize them by casting doubt on the basis or framework behind them. The charges against Meng Wanzhou are delegitimized by portraying the plaintiff, the US, as an unreasonable villain abusing its power to maliciously harm the PRC. In this way, the charges do not have to be taken seriously, even if actual laws have been broken. By stressing how the US's actions are breaking with conventions, upsetting the international community, and setting dangerous precedents, the CCP is further emphasizing that it is the US that is in the wrong. This plays into the victimization narrative of the CCP. Although such a narrative might resonate with domestic audiences and help in maintaining a national identity, I believe that this form of identity politics hurts international relations in the long run due to its restrictive and binary view of complex issues. If interpreting events and conflicts with this lens means not acknowledging any faults or mistakes, then the CCP diminishes its capacity to compromise in international negotiations, because doing so would potentially be unacceptable to a population that perceives itself to be the victim, and would result in a loss of legitimacy and support for the CCP. In this sense victimization becomes a refusal to enter into a dialogue.

The focus of this research has been on analyzing PRC media discourse and its relation to the politicization of tech. However, it does have some shortcomings. The limited scope of this study makes it hard to know whether or not the discourses

discovered here are representative of PRC media in general. No independent Chinese media have been analyzed in this study. Furthermore, the legal cases against Meng Wanzhou and Huawei are still ongoing. Subsequent research could focus on changes in discourse that might take place following substantial developments such as (possibly) extradition, release, or sentencing. This would be worthwhile because analyzing the evolution of the discourse could inform us about which aspects of these developments most influence the PRC. The same goes for developments in the volatile relationship between Huawei and the US, which might also have a large influence on the discourse in PRC media.

In conclusion, narratives of national victimization provide an important framework for the creation of PRC media discourses, as it is used here to interpret the arrest of Meng Wanzhou as an inherently negative political form of technological competition. The presented discourse on the relation between technology and politics has a contradictory political/apolitical nature, which it extends to the discourse on Huawei. Although its discussions of 5G echo McCarthy's theory of technology as an institutional power, it rejects the theory's notion that these institutions are politically contested. Future technological institutions such as 6G or 7G will likely become even more integral to national and global economies, and international competition over their creation will most likely also become fiercer. As such it would be interesting to see how the PRC and the US will contend for these technological institutions, how the PRC media discourse on technological competition will develop, and whether or not victimization narratives will continue to provide an effective framework with which to interpret said competition.

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Appendix

I have decided not to put the articles in the appendix due to the large amount of text. Instead I have opted to include only the titles, dates, authors, and translations of the titles.

Xinhua articles

Xinhua, 7 December 2018. 外交部回应华为首席财务官被捕: 澄清原因并立即释放 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs responds to the arrest of Huawei's CFO: clear up reasons and release her immediately).

Xinhua, 8 December 2018. 加拿大和美国尚未提供华为首席财务官违法的证据 (Canada and the US have yet to provide evidence of Huawei's CFO breaking the law).

Xinhua, 13 December 2018. 华为首席财务官孟晚舟获释 (Huawei's CFO Meng Wanzhou released on bail).

Wu Liming (吴黎明), 8 December 2018. 中国公民的合法权益被侵犯 (Chinese citizen's legal rights violated).

Zheng Mingda (郑明达), 11 January 2019. 外交部: 希望某些加拿大人能从痛苦的经历中吸取教训并纠正[他们的]错误 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Hope certain Canadians can learn from a painful experience and correct [their] mistakes).

Zheng Mingda (郑明达), 23 January 2019. 外交部: 美国要求引渡孟晚舟本质上是科技和科学霸凌行为 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the US demanding the extradition of Meng Wanzhou is essentially technological and scientific bullying behavior).

Ma Zhuoyan (马卓彦), 22 January 2019. 加拿大驻美大使称美国将引渡孟晚舟 - 外交部敦促加拿大和美国立即纠正[他们的]错误 (Canadian ambassador to the US states that the US will extradite Meng Wanzhou - Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges Canada and the US to immediately correct [their] mistakes).

Bai Yu (白瑜), 29 January 2019. 华为否认美国的所有指控 (Huawei denies all of the US's accusations).

Bai Yu (白瑜), 4 March 2019. 华为公司诉加拿大政府组织侵犯孟晚舟宪法权利 (Huawei sues Canadian government organizations – accuses them of violating Meng Wanzhou’s constitutional rights).

Xinhua, 8 March 2019. 王毅答记者问 (Wang Yi answers reporters’ questions on Chinese foreign policy and external relations).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部), 2 March 2019. 外交部坚决反对加拿大执意对孟晚舟进行所谓引渡司法程序 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: firmly opposed to Canada insisting on carrying out Chinese citizen Meng Wanzhou’s so-called extradition judicial procedure).

People’s Daily articles

People’s Daily, 9 December 2018. 中国公民的合法权利是不可侵犯的 (Chinese citizen’s legal and legitimate rights are inviolable).

People’s Daily, 11 December 2018. 中国希望有关国家不要人为设置障碍，影响中国企业正常经营 (China: hope concerned countries will not erect artificial roadblocks for the normal operations of Chinese enterprises).

People’s Daily, 12 December 2018. 加拿大法院批准孟晚舟保释 (Canadian court approves Meng Wanzhou’s request for bail).

People’s Daily, 14 December 2018. 加拿大孟晚舟被逮捕是预谋的政治行动 (Ambassador in Canada: Meng Wanzhou being arrested was a premeditated political action).

People’s Daily, 18 January 2019. 任正非：我们自信，让别人不想买我们的产品是不可能的 (Ren Zhengfei: we have confidence, letting others not want to buy [our products] is impossible).

People’s Daily, 22 January 2019. 美国将正式向加拿大提出孟晚舟引渡请求 – 中国：立即释放她 (The US will officially provide Canada with request for Meng Wanzhou’s extradition – China: release her immediately).

People’s Daily, 29 January 2019. 外交部回应美国对华为等公司的指控 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs responds to US Department of Justice’s charges against Huawei and others).

People’s Daily, 29 January 2019. 外交部强烈敦促美国停止无理打压中国企业，包括华为 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Strongly urge US to stop unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises, including Huawei).

People's Daily, 1 March 2019. 朝鲜半岛局势 朝美两国在共同利益上寻求合作 (North Korea and US have differences regarding lifting sanctions – Ministry of Foreign Affairs: hope both sides seize common ground).

People's Daily, 2 March 2019. 加拿大决定启动孟晚舟引渡程序 中方使馆就孟晚舟引渡案发表声明 (Today Canada decided to start the legal process of extraditing Meng Wanzhou – The Chinese embassy issued a statement on the extradition of Meng Wanzhou).

People's Daily, 8 March 2019. 国际问题专家谈孟晚舟案：西方搞邪恶背景下的操纵 (International issues expert talks about the Meng Wanzhou case: the West's way of doing things with evil manipulation in the background is dirty).

People's Daily, 8 March 2019. 王毅谈孟晚舟案：这不是简单的司法案件 – 它是蓄意的政治打压 (Wang Yi talks about the Meng Wanzhou case: it is not a simple judicial case – it is deliberate political suppression).

Global Times articles

Wu Yun (吴云), Xiao Da (Xiaod), Qing Mu (清木), Li Zhen (李震), Bai Yunyi (白云逸), Cui Jietong (崔捷彤), Liu Zhi (刘智), & Wang Xi (王曦), 7 December 2018. 华为高管在加被拘 (Huawei high official detained in Canada).

Global Times, 10 December 2018. 加拿大粗暴、严重侵犯孟晚舟人权 (Canada treats Meng Wanzhou roughly, seriously violates [her] human rights).

Global Times, 10 December 2018. 美加两国对中国公民造成伤害，没有借口 (The US and Canada do harm against Chinese citizens, there is no excuse).

Global Times, 12 December 2018. 美国不应打开潘多拉魔盒 (The US should not open Pandora's box of malignant competition).

Wu Yun (吴云) & Su Jing (苏晶), 28 January 2019. 加拿大媒体称加拿大外交政策很糟糕 (Canadian media state that Canadian foreign policy is terrible).

Global Times, 28 January 2019. 加拿大撤换驻华大使 – 他们越试图掩盖政治干预，就越清楚 (Canada fires ambassador to China – the more they try to hide political meddling, the clearer it becomes).

Global Times, 30 January 2019. 美国司法部起诉华为，虽然勇敢，但是一场闹剧 (The US Department of Justice suing Huawei, although brave, is a sham).

Wen Yan (Wen Yan) & Wu Yun (Wu Yun), 30 January 2019. (China demands that the US stops unreasonably suppressing Chinese enterprises).

Tao Duanfang (Tao Duanfang), 4 March 2019. (Carrying out Meng Wanzhou's extradition process once again harms China-Canada relations).

Tao Duanfang (Tao Duanfang) & Ren Zhong (Ren Zhong), 5 March 2019. (Meng Wanzhou countercharges - "Canada infringed on rights and violated the constitution").

Global Times, 5 March 2019. (The Meng case legal battle opens the curtains - good luck Huawei!).

Fang Xingdong (Fang Xingdong), 28 March 2019. (When will the US cease attacking Huawei without any evidence?).