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Cultural discourses on repatriation: A comparative content analysis of the language of repatriation in China's Global Times and the UK's The Guardian

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Cultural discourses on repatriation: A comparative content analysis of the language of repatriation in China's *Global Times* and the UK's *The Guardian*



Figure 1: Cover image. Source: Sabrina Chan, the background image is the set of Tomb Figures from China about 728 AD, displayed at The British Museum.

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/china-and-south-asia#&gid=1&pid=4>

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1. Introduction

On the 5th of September 2023, a mini-video series titled 'Escape From The British Museum' was released by two Chinese content creators on Douyin, a video-sharing app known by outsiders as China's version of TikTok. The 3-part series follows the story of a jade teapot which at the urging of other artefacts, takes on a human form to escape from the British Museum, then enlists the help of a Chinese journalist to fulfill her wish of returning home to China (Wang & Cai, 2023).

Since its release, the series has been played over 270 million times on Douyin and uploaded onto platforms such as YouTube so that foreign audiences may see it. Despite the total runtime being only 17 minutes, the series attracted considerable attention in local and international media and initiated discussions about cultural heritage and the rightful ownership of artefacts. In the past decade, the rise in nationalistic sentiment in China has resulted in a heightened focus in news media on preserving Chinese cultural heritage. Regaining 'lost' heritage is critical to these efforts, leading Chinese citizens and media to increasingly call for artefacts to be repatriated, especially those of dubious provenance.

One month earlier, a devastating British Museum theft inspired the Global Times, a Chinese state-backed online news agency to run an editorial issuing a demand: that all Chinese artefacts currently housed in the British Museum must be returned for free. The editorial made waves across global media, with much of the attention generated from the strong language used throughout.

“The UK, which has a bloody, ugly, and shameful colonial history, has always had a strong sense of moral superiority over others, often standing on the moral high ground to dictate to and even interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.”

– Global Times, “British Museum must return Chinese cultural relics for free: Global Times editorial”, 2023

Although far from the first time a country had requested the repatriation of its cultural relics, the Global Times' editorial was the bluntest and most aggressive by far. The media buzz generated from the editorial served to push the topic of repatriation further into public awareness. The mini-video series, despite being produced months before the theft, clearly echoed the centuries-deep frustration and resentment of many Chinese towards the British for the events of their shared past. For many, this was a first introduction to the topicality of repatriation and left a lasting impression that for many countries, especially China, repatriation is not just for the sake of political or monetary benefit, but about closing historical wounds.

The discussion of repatriation has become increasingly prominent in the last few decades and outside of the academic field, the greatest contributors towards bringing heritage awareness to the public has been global coverage from news media. Greater

public scrutiny on the ethics of museum institutions led to a shift in public opinion for some, from museums being viewed as receptacles for the achievements of man, to being ‘trophy cases’ for the spoils of colonialism (Reppas, p. 1, 2007). This shift has also led politicians to utilise heritage issues for political means, a famous example being French President Emmanuel Macron, who returned 26 artefacts to Benin in 2021 shortly before a planned visit to Africa to salvage influence in its former colonies (FRANCE 24, 2021).

Publicity from Macron’s actions led to calls from international media for other ex-colonial powers to make serious efforts to repatriate cultural items. In the modern age where information transfer is no longer geographically limited, the popularity of online news media over print news is a very recent phenomenon. As of September 2024, BBC.com and BBC.co.uk boast 1.2 billion visits a year, making it the most popular news website in the world (Press Gazette, 2024). Simultaneously, the popularity of print and televised news has declined significantly. For instance, in the UK, a 2024 survey revealed that those aged over 55, one of the biggest demographics for print news, had their readership of print newspapers drop from 38% to 32% in just one year. Online news websites are now the most popular source of news in the UK (Sillito, 2024), a trend that is now being mirrored across continents.

Newspaper coverage has been long studied in academia, from tone analysis to print layout. How newspapers present heritage issues such as repatriation and rightful ownership in the media directly impacts public perception of these issues, is by extension an indication of the company’s opinions, and allows one to acquire a sense of how the writers intend for the issue to be viewed from its presentation. Just like print news, online news also serves as a record of how people viewed societal issues as they occurred, and allows for the examination of issues in the context of their time.

1.2 Research Aim

With this in mind, this research aims to attempt to understand and compare how online news agencies from different countries choose to present the issue of repatriation, the factors that influence them to present it the way they do, and the potential impact of their coverage on the future of heritage issues in the public sphere on an international level. Of particular interest is the link between these agencies’ representation of repatriation and the historical contexts and attitudes of the country they represent.

The chosen countries for this comparative study are China and the United Kingdom, which were selected due to their historical and political prominence in contemporary world history, their relevance in the field of heritage and repatriation, and their historical ties to one another. Critically, these countries can serve respectively as representatives of the West and the East. The historical divide between both regions can perhaps best be exemplified through the shared histories of both countries. The prominence of the United Kingdom in the world of museums and heritage is uncontested, and has a significant impact on the decision-making processes of other

countries in regard to heritage and repatriations, making it a good candidate to represent the interests of “The West”. Conversely, China is one of the most powerful nations existing today and is arguably one of the most vocal out of the various East Asian countries regarding repatriation and the right to restitution.

I hope that by focusing on China and comparing it to the United Kingdom, this research can serve to highlight and bring some clarity on how other countries may view repatriation as well. The Western world and China have viewed each other as adversaries for centuries, and with the current political atmosphere, their relationship is only more relevant, as China’s ever-growing influence and power has placed it squarely on the world stage. Not only would this research uncover the existing parallels and oppositions between the views of the media of both nations, but it could serve as an example of the “East-West Dichotomy” as studied from a contemporary perspective.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that will be considered are:

“How do Chinese and British online news media agencies choose to present the repatriation of cultural relics, and what could these representations imply about the future relations regarding cultural heritage repatriation between China and the UK?”

With the sub-questions:

“What kind of tone and sentiments are expressed in both agencies’ coverages of repatriation, and how do they serve to further illustrate their stances on the issue?”

And,

“What reasons do these media agencies have to represent repatriation in this way?”

1.4 Methods

The academic study of online news media is a relatively recent field of research, and the established epistemologies used in the past to analyse print news have been deemed insufficient by some to be applied to online news (Ahmad & Buyong, 2017). The newness and the ephemerality of online news media websites further complicate the matter of standardizing a methodological framework.

The objective is to conduct a content analysis based on the use of language and representation of repatriation. The structure of the methodology was inspired by, and adapted from works by various scholars who have created their own content analysis methodologies in order to analyse online news, such as Wan (2024), Glen et al., (2012), and Haxhiu (2022).

The theoretical framework is inspired and supported by the media theories of Silverstone (1993) and Herring (2003).

The dataset consists of online news articles, selected from two news websites from China and the United Kingdom. The Global Times represents China, and the UK is represented by The Guardian. The following subsections will justify the choice of websites. 15 articles were selected for each website, culminating in 30 articles total, with the selection criteria being the article's overall relevance towards repatriation, and articles about repatriation that also reference the other country. The timeframe spans approximately two decades.

Part of the selection criteria for the chosen websites is that they are both published in English. This choice was made for accessibility and ease of research and eliminated the risk of misinterpretation that would arise from translating Chinese articles to English through software, or potential author bias from manually translating them. The additional difficulties that would come from determining and comparing authorial intent, tone, figure of speech, and other linguistic features unique to Chinese heavily factored into this decision.

All 30 articles were first manually read to determine their relevance and suitability, then an inductive coding scheme was created based on their contents. The results of the scheme were then processed into quantitative data, which was then observed for existing trends and patterns. These trends and patterns were then categorized under specific themes for the sake of deeper, text-based analysis. These themes were then analysed in the context of the research questions.

1.4.1 Profiling the Global Times

The Global Times was launched in 1993 as a daily tabloid newspaper published both online and in print in China. It is an offshoot of the People's Daily, the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party. Originally published in Chinese, the Global Times launched its English version in 2009 in with the goal of competing with international media (Global Times, "Advertisement", 2024). Both the English and Chinese websites are accessible online, exempt from the Chinese 'Great Firewall'. The articles are written in Chinese, then translated and published on the English website. According to NBC News, the Global Times website receives 15 million visits daily, making its influence considerably widespread (Baculinao & Frayer, 2017).

It is known for its blunt, hawkish tone, which has led to it being described by NBC News as the "Chinese Fox News" (Baculinao & Frayer, 2017). Somewhat contradictorily, its close ties to the CCP enable Global Times to enjoy a greater degree of press freedom than other newspapers. They are even permitted to publish narratives that do not directly align with those of the CCP. It was the only state-affiliated Chinese source to acknowledge the existence of the Xinjiang Uygur internment camps, although the article was quickly recalled (Fish, 2017). The 1989 Tiananmen Square incident has also been brought up in its coverage multiple times.

The Global Times is well-known in international media, thanks to the amount of attention its headlines deliberately attempt to garner. As an English website mainly targeted towards a foreign audience, Global Times actively takes into consideration how their coverage will be perceived by those unfamiliar with Chinese culture and politics. A member of the translation team stated that not only did Global Times intentionally use provocative language and aggressive positions to earn mentions in foreign media, but that the "stance, tone, language, and topic are calculated with an eye on attention abroad" (Fish, 2017). This means Global Times possesses an amount of influence in Western media that far outweighs its actual position in China.

This has worked to their advantage so well that Western media and world leaders often mistake Global Times headlines as official state media. For example, news stories after Donald Trump's 2016 election promises led Western sources to run headlines such as "China promises to take revenge" and "China threatens to cut iPhone sales and replace Boeing with Airbus". In every case, they were referencing Global Times headlines and not official Party sources (Fish, 2017).

A critical aspect of Global Times' suitability for my research is that while it is often assumed to be a state mouthpiece, it is not. It has been said by the editor-in-chief himself that Global Times publishes the true opinions of CCP officials that are too brash to be published in Chinese state media, owing to this leniency (Fish, 2017). This unique dichotomy strongly motivated the choice to select Global Times. As all newspapers in China are state-controlled to various extents, the goal was to choose a source that could express the publication's views, which could be distinguished from the state-approved narrative.

It is important to reiterate that the purpose of my research is to find out how the representative media of a country presents its stances concerning repatriation and its motivations for reporting the way they do. Given the relative freedom of Global Times and the strength and directness of their opinions, its uniqueness greatly allows the possibility of identifying patterns, insights, and narratives that could not be identified in other Chinese state publications, which tend to be heavily censored into official state-speak.

1.4.2 Profiling The Guardian

The Guardian is a British daily newspaper, originally founded in Manchester in 1821. It is traditionally center or center-left leaning. Originally developing separate webpages for specific purposes such as news, jobs and sports, these webpages were consolidated into a unified website, “The Guardian Unlimited” in 1999. In 2013, the name was changed to “theguardian.com”. It provides free access to all news stories and offers an archive of over 3 million articles. In 2023, The Guardian website held a view count of 81 million worldwide per month (Vijay, 2023). As a publication, it leans towards progressive views and attitudes and is considered a liberal newspaper.

It is known to be self-critical and very proactive regarding its historical links with contentious and problematic events of the past. An academic review was commissioned by The Guardian to look into its founders, where it was discovered that the founder and many of the initial backers were involved with the Transatlantic slave trade. An apology was issued and a restorative justice program was created, and is now projected to be fully implemented by 2030 (Guardian News & Media, 2017). The Guardian’s ability to hold itself accountable indicates the publication’s willingness for transparency and dedication to honoring the undesirable aspects of historical narratives, which is incredibly important when covering heritage issues in media.

In terms of popularity, although the BBC dominates, The Guardian was determined to be the better choice for a few crucial reasons. As this research specifies the comparison of UK and Chinese news websites, the chosen sources must be prominent in both their own countries as well as in the sphere of international media. Although the BBC is better known globally, The Guardian has consistently been the most popular news website in the UK, and is still continuing to grow in popularity. The BBC declared it the largest newspaper website in the UK, with 365 million domestic visits in July 2024 alone (Sillito, 2024).

Another decisive factor in selecting The Guardian is its commitment to ethical storytelling, especially in regard to its coverage of repatriation. The publication is extremely vocal about heritage issues, especially in regard to the UK’s colonial legacies. Many of their editorials include rich detail and cultural and historical context that would often be deemed non-essential to the story by another newspaper. For example, BBC coverage tends to adopt an extremely dry voice and avoids narrative

exposition unless absolutely necessary. Even then, the exposition will be very minimal, and often quite dismissive. The Guardian's style of coverage is extremely suited for the purposes of this research. Analysing writers' choices in crafting arresting narratives is crucial to understanding the nuances of how The Guardian views the issue of repatriating cultural artefacts.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In this chapter, I have introduced the topic at hand, the justifications, and the goal of my research. The following chapter will provide essential background context about the existing discourses on repatriation in international media, the Chinese context of repatriation and critical historical context, the British attitude towards repatriation, a brief overview of the developments in the study of repatriation, and lastly, a presentation of the theoretical framework in which this study is based. In Chapter 3, a comprehensive detailing of the devised methodology will be given. Chapter 4 will contain the results of my study. Chapter 5 will delve into the analysis and discussion of the results, to answer the set research questions. Lastly, Chapter 6 will cover the limitations of my research, conclusions, and closing remarks.

Chapter 2: Background Context & Theoretical Framework

2.1 Discourses on the return of cultural property in international media

The issue of repatriation has become increasingly relevant in international media in the last two decades, exacerbated by the increasingly high readership of the online platforms of already prominent newspapers. Greater awareness of the importance of cultural heritage, the problematic nature of many items being kept in museums worldwide, a desire to address and correct historical wrongs, as well as formerly silenced people gaining an outlet as well as the means to express their opinions have all led to the formation of a robust dialogue surrounding the ethics and practical considerations of repatriation.

Not only is this becoming a prominent social issue, but politicians have also become aware of the importance of repatriation in the future of politics, and its potential to both mend and strengthen its relations with other countries, especially when it comes to improving their image.

Bienkowski (2015) defines repatriation as “the return of human remains or sacred objects, usually on grounds of ethical consideration. ‘Restitution’ is defined as the return of an object based on analysis or property rights. However, ‘return’ and ‘repatriation’ in news media are generally considered to refer to both terms.

As the first national public museum in the world, the British Museum in London houses roughly 8 million cultural and historical artefacts (Al Jazeera, 2023), has an estimated annual visitor count of 6 million people (The British Museum, 2024) and is well regarded as one of the most prestigious museums in the world, however in recent decades has been heavily criticized and condemned for how it acquired many of its objects. Public outcry has also become increasingly vocal thanks to social media, and netizens, despite maybe not fully understanding the debate itself, are often exposed to articles, online posts, or videos that detail the ongoing debate. Due to a lack of action, the British Museum’s reputation is currently a peg down from its former impenetrable air of prestige and vulnerability. It has faced much criticism in particular for the Elgin Marbles taken from Greece, currently housed in the British Museum, and the Benin Bronzes looted from Nigeria, also housed in the British Museum among other European institutions.



Figure 2: Illustration from the Global Times' article "Refusing to return artifacts, Britain still clings to its colonial past", (Blackrock, 2023)

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202311/1302722.shtml>

The political impacts of increased debate concerning the practice of restitution and repatriation are becoming increasingly significant now, and will only continue to be in the future. This is beginning to be recognised, for example, French President Macron returned some Benin Bronzes as part of good faith in 2021.

The dialogues created about repatriation and the growing awareness of the criticality of provenance ensure that this research is highly important, and will only grow in relevance in the coming decades.

2.2 News media as a suitable medium for discourse analysis

Discourse analysis refers to the examination of the text to find a meaning, and indications of framing, which when compiled, can work towards explaining certain phenomena (Xahiu, 2022, p.13). Through the fundamental nature of language, it is a suitable vehicle in which to understand the thoughts and feelings of a culture. It is a logical assumption that textual productions of a certain culture would serve as a good representation of the thoughts and opinions of said culture. Even if the textual content is produced to be deceptive, or is even outright falsified, it would still be possible to identify some traces of the true intentions of the author through examination of the words and phrases used, by focusing on what is purposefully being emphasised, and what is purposefully omitted.

Silverstone (1988) explores the theoretical and methodological implications of treating museums and exhibitions as media, specifically, the viewing of museums, exhibitions, and their related discourses as being framed in relation to television, and other modern forms of media (Silverstone, 1988, p. 231). He argues that museum-related media can be considered “narratively coherent” and also “culturally and historically embedded” (Silverstone, 1988, p. 231). His work mainly focused on the legitimacy of cultural discourses concerning museums through its framing through the form of television programmes, however, when applying his theories to contemporary media, it is now perhaps more topical to apply this theory to online news media. I will presently explain why this is so.

The ongoing discussions concerning the future of repatriation are directly related to museums and the conversations surrounding them. This is particularly significant when one considers that the relevance of museums as educational institutions and ambassadors of culture is inherently dependent on their public image and reputation to uphold as an agent of representation (Silverstone, 1988, p. 231). In particular, public image and reputation are of great priority to modern museums, as remaining favourable in the eyes of both governments and the public is essential to maintain their credibility. The increasing importance of repatriation has placed some of the world’s most prominent institutions, for example, the British Museum, into great media scrutiny.

These institutions, as well as governments, now heavily depend on how they are portrayed in international media. The reach news websites have simply outweighs the reach of traditional forms of news consumption in every way. Unlimited global access to a website allows the entire world to participate in a global dialogue. This means there are many individuals who regularly read foreign newspapers, which for many would result in much of their existing knowledge and perception of a foreign culture being primarily established and reinforced through the consumption of this culture’s media.

The basis of this understanding would transcend the actual narrative content of the media itself- for instance, an article from a Chinese newspaper, criticising a foreign government for its reluctance to engage in a dialogue to negotiate the return of a Chinese artefact. This article would impress on the reader some key perceptions: The historical context of the contested artefact and its significance to the Chinese, an understanding of the Chinese sentiments concerning repatriation, the attitudes of the foreign government towards repatriation, and an understanding of why the topic is newsworthy. Finally, the reader would form a personal stance on the issue, one that could be heavily influenced by the article they have just read.

Additionally, newspaper websites are highly conscious of the fact that their audience is both much larger and more international, meaning that they must now consider more than ever how their content comes across under the unfamiliar scrutiny of a new, vast foreign audience, many of whom are unaware of their fundamental cultural values (Herring, p. 1, 2003). This means that online news media is now one of the most important avenues toward understanding shifts and developments in public opinion.

Herring (2003) covers the importance of online media in the current age. Contemporary language has changed in ways that are occurring too quickly to process. Herring suggests that socio-historical analysis of media and the language used within said media is integral to the pursuit of understanding how topics are understood and processed in contemporary media.

Taking this into consideration, the goal of my research is to investigate the extent of clarity in which the views of a foreign culture can be represented to its readers, through the examination of the language and narratives identified from the online media coverage on the subject of repatriation, and consequently, how the coverage of these newspapers are intentionally structured to influence the reader. This is based on the understanding as proposed by Herring (2003) that media can be taken as an object of analytic focus in its own right and as an appropriate indicator of the cultural perception of a topic.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodology devised to conduct this research. As the study of online news media is relatively recent, there is no established methodological approach, and many existing approaches towards analysing online media are generally constructed in ways highly specific to the characteristics of the form of online media that is being studied, that make it unsuited to use for other types of research. Due to this, the methodology for this research is also specifically constructed, with the works of Wan (2024), Glen et al., (2012), and Haxhiu (2022) used as both inspiration and example.

The basic structure follows the principles of content analysis, where a set of categories based on tonal indicators will be defined using inductive means, and then coded according to these categories. The results of this scheme will have numerical values assigned to them, and to be analysed quantitatively. These values will then be subject to further analyses by categorizing the results into a set of themes, of will be decided by both observing the quantitative results of the coding, as well as through observation of the general trends and patterns found in the news articles.

3. 1 Data collection

A total of 30 online news articles were selected, 15 from Global Times and 15 from The Guardian. All articles were in the English language. All articles fit within the temporal range of the last two decades, with the most recent article dating from the 22nd of July, 2024, and the oldest from the 28th of January, 2008. This is because prior to the last two decades, repatriation had not yet become a prominent topic in news media. The articles were not chosen on a yearly representative basis, meaning they were selected based on relevance to the topic of repatriation, not by selecting an article about repatriation for each year. Due to this, the specific timeframe is actually over a period of 16 years.

As instances of articles concerning the repatriation of artefacts spike whenever a relevant event occurs, multiple selections of articles from the same year were allowed to be selected, due to their relevance and to compare coverage of the same event from different companies. This was also done to allow for accurate representation of the high and low points of the popularity of the topic, to better identify patterns and trends. Despite this, care was taken to ensure that there remained an adequate representation of articles over this timeframe, to avoid large gaps in the timeframe that would be unaccounted for.

For Global Times, the articles were collected by using the search function on the Global Times website. Attempting various search terms, such as 'repatriation' 'returning artifacts' and 'historical repatriation' resulted in overly broad results, and yielded articles that featured those terms in unrelated contexts. The terms 'stolen

artefacts' and 'lost relics' were also not specific enough. Further refining resulted in the term 'lost cultural relics' being the most effective. This search brought up 536 results. These were manually reviewed, and the 15 articles were all selected from the keywords 'lost cultural relics'.

For The Guardian, articles were collected by going to The Guardian UK website. I navigated to the 'culture' section, where I selected the tag 'museums' within this section. The 'museums' tag yielded 5,775 results. The 15 articles were selected from this tag and from the 'heritage' tag in the same section, which yielded 5,375 results. Due to the large number of results, to further optimize the selection, the Google 'advanced search' function was utilised, as The Guardian website did not have its own advanced search engine. This was used to narrow down the search, as well as effectively pick out articles that had been more 'popular' or widely read, as Google will often present results that have had the highest web traffic most prominently.

A total of 63 articles for both agencies combined were initially read, then progressively narrowed down via a process of elimination. Grounds of elimination consisted of weighing the subjective 'value' of the information in one article over another until the set number of 15 articles per agency was reached.

For the types of articles, the Global Times selection consisted of 12 standard news reports, 1 opinion article, 1 editorial, and 1 opinion/editorial hybrid article. Out of the selected articles from The Guardian, 12 were standard news reports, 2 were opinion/feature pieces, and 1 was an editorial. A specific form of article was not selected for.

The full list of articles complete with titles and dates for The Guardian and Global Times can be found in the appendices section under Appendix 1 and 2 respectively. For the sake of clarity, the suffixes 'A' and 'B' were used to differentiate from which source an article was from. For example, the first article from The Guardian was listed as '1A', the second as '2A', and so forth, while Global Times articles were listed as '1B', '2B', and so on.

The selection criteria did not discriminate against the type of the article, and were as follows:

i) All articles must be primarily text-based. Articles with embedded video clips and picture slideshows are acceptable, as long as they are only included to supplement/accompany the information already given in the article.

ii) Articles must be a news report, opinion piece, editorial, or a hybrid of these categories. Articles consisting of or featuring polls, surveys, podcasts, and other primarily audio/visual-based search results were excluded.

iii) All articles must concern the repatriation of cultural artifacts, the topic of repatriation itself, and/or topics about histories directly relevant to repatriation (e.g. colonialism, imperialism, conflict leading to heritage disputes)

In cases where the article had accompanying media such as embedded videos or picture slideshows, they were excluded from the analysis.

3.2 Coding scheme and post-processing of results

To begin formulating a coding scheme, the articles were first all individually read to facilitate a greater understanding, familiarity, and immersion into the topic. This was the last measure in confirming the selected articles were indeed appropriate for research purposes, and held enough useful information to conduct analysis with.

Based on the content of the articles, 6 tone-based categories were created to be used for the coding scheme. To determine how the authors chose to approach the topic of repatriation, it was decided that a tone-based approach was the most appropriate, as it would be able to best identify various inflections and nuances in the text, allowing close examination of the linguistic features used to embed the authorial voice (Wan, 2024, p. 190) and also to condense them quantitatively.

These 6 categories were settled on after careful consideration of what tonal indicators could best encapsulate the authors' uses of evaluative language and persuasive strategies. These indicators are based on lexicogrammatical features, which can be used to realize attitudes (Wan, 2024, p. 191). They are listed and defined as follows:

1. Obligation

This category refers to the use of modal verbs. Modal verbs indicate through context that something is an obligation or a necessity. Examples of modal verbs are words and phrases such as *should*, *have to*, *must*, *will*, *should*, *would*, and *can*.

Use of modal verbs in the context of repatriation can indicate the author's stance on an issue, whether they view something as an obligatory or necessary action or something that must be done.

2. Suggestion

This category refers to the use of words and phrases used to suggest something, or indicate that the author feels as though an action or a decision should be made or taken. Examples of this are *recommended*, *'put into consideration'*, *'it is suggested'*, *urge*, *raised*, *committed*, *requested*, *raised*, and *encourage/d*.

Use of suggestive words or phrases in the context of repatriation may indicate the author wants to present the view that a solution or a certain course of action would be beneficial but does not insist on it.

3. Supportive

In the research context, 'supportive' does not directly refer to being for or against repatriation, but rather focuses on whether repatriation is discussed in a manner that implies approval and encouragement of something. For example, a phrase such as '*cultural collaboration*' used to describe the signing of a long-term loan agreement between two countries could be interpreted as the author supporting the agreement and the countries for their contributions. '*Bridging a gap*', '*promoting cultural understanding*', *call*, *renewed*, and *resonate* are other examples of supportive words and phrases.

The use of supportive language could indicate an author views repatriation as not only a positive thing, but also that they want to present it as addressing a larger cultural issue, or as a way to improve relations with other countries.

4. Critical

In the research context, 'critical' also does not directly refer to a negative stance on repatriation, but more so to the tone and phrases used to discuss it and in related contexts. For instance, using words such as 'stolen' to describe contested artefacts, or 'historical sins' to describe the provenance of artefacts. Other examples are *brazen*, *triggered*, *stunned*, '*slap in the face*', *disappointment*, *heartbreaking*, *unflattering*, '*make amends*', *debt*, *hamstrung*, *infantilised*, *draconian*, and *questionable*.

The use of critical language could indicate the author holds a negative view of something and wants to emphasize that they do not view the actions or event in a favourable light, or disapprove of something.

5. Aggressive

This category refers to the use of words that imply violence or invoke violent imagery, either to describe something or directed towards a party. Examples include terms such as *demand*, *looted*, *stolen*, *bloody*, *ugly*, *shameful*, *stain*, *infringement*, *forced*.

The use of aggressive language implies the author may perceive something as wrongful and unjust and is intentionally using provocative terminology to emphasize the violent nature of something or to elicit strong emotions from readers through shock.

6. Conciliatory

This category refers to the use of words and phrases that are used to placate and pacify, such as framing something as emotionally healing, making amends, or righting wrongs. Examples include emotion-based terms such as *reconciliation*, *restorative*, *justice*, *emotional*, *forging*, *relationship*, *joy*, *proud*, *partnership*, *unification*, *dignify*, *open*, *symbolic*, *peaceful*, *exchange*.

The use of conciliatory words and phrases implies that the author views something as not only beneficial, but also symbolic, and poignant, and wants to present it as a morally and ethically correct action.

Due to all the above categories being fully dependent on their individual contexts, it was determined too vague and too nonspecific of a task to construct a predetermined list of words that belonged to each category. Rather, what determined which code a word or phrase belonged in was by reading all the articles and coding them each, on a line-by-line basis. Due to this, a small degree of overlap between categories appeared occasionally. In this case, it would be intuitively determined based on the context of the specific word or phrase which category it belonged in most.

After this coding was completed for the 30 articles, based on both quantitative (the numerical tallies for each category) and qualitative results (the broader narratives and sentiments expressed in the texts themselves), underlying themes identified across the coverage of both agencies will be identified for the purpose of deeper analysis in the discussion chapter. A frequency count of the number of articles that these themes were identified will be given.

Following the methodology outlined in this chapter, in the following chapter, the results of this study will be given.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of the content analysis will now be presented. The raw results of the coding scheme for both The Guardian and Global Times can be found in the appendices section, under Appendix 3 and 4 respectively.

Below are the results of the content analysis, after the results of the coding were processed into a graph for easier understanding. The frequency table used to create this graph can be found in the appendices under Appendix 5. The Guardian is represented in blue, and the Global Times is shown in red.

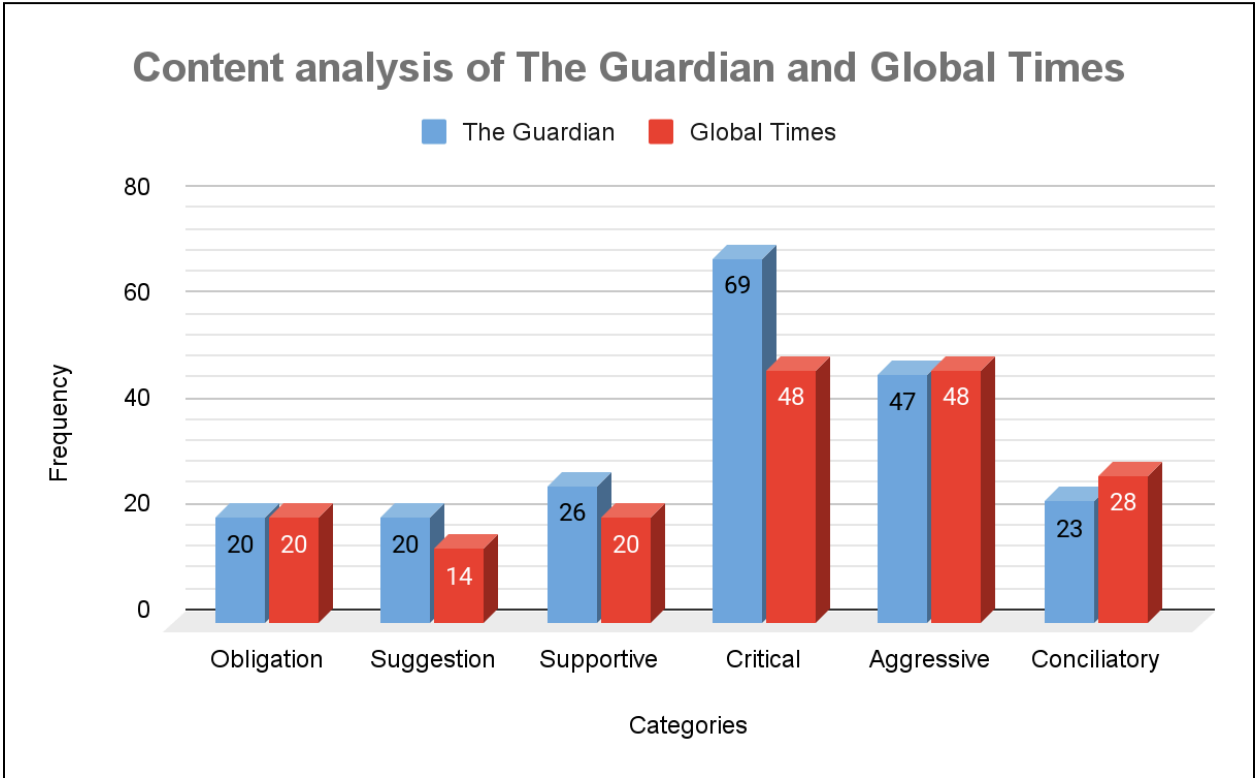


Figure 1. Visual tabulation of resulting content analysis frequencies for The Guardian and Global Times

From the graph, it is immediately observable that for most of the six categories, the results of the coding for The Guardian and Global Times do not differentiate from each other greatly. Both have 20 counts for the ‘obligation’ category. While not particularly high in terms of frequency, from the individual contexts in which the counts for this category were recorded, the results suggest that both newspapers hold the view that repatriation is a necessary obligation.

The ‘suggestive’ and ‘supportive’ categories indicate that The Guardian is overall more determined to advocate for positive change and further advancement in the UK’s cultural repatriation efforts, demonstrates the publication’s willingness to openly

encourage discussions around the issue, and makes its stance clear on the degree to which the writer agrees with the conclusions of the topic he or she is covering, based on their use of positive language and framing. Although Global Times seems to be similarly determined, a likely explanation as to why it has fewer instances of both categories compared to The Guardian is perhaps due to having a personal stake regarding object repatriation. Global Times coverage overwhelmingly focuses on Chinese cultural relics. While their appreciation for other countries' efforts and initiatives comes across as genuine, the desire to see Chinese relics returned appears to be the main motivation for their support, and their advocacy and promoting change may be more in service of this goal than it is towards addressing global heritage issues. Articles such as 3B and 12B lend support to this idea. This will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

The exception and outlier is the 'critical' category, in which The Guardian has 69 counts and Global Times has 48. Another surprising result was the closeness of the 'aggressive' category, with The Guardian having 47 counts and Global Times with 48.

Given the profiles of both publications, prior to these results, I had predicted that Global Times would have much higher counts than The Guardian for both the 'critical' and 'aggressive' categories. This was due to the context of their reputation in international media along with the overall tone of their coverage. For the same reason, Global Times having a higher count for the 'conciliatory' category (28) than The Guardian (23) also came as a surprise.

However, this is not to say that the international reputations and characteristics of both sources were misjudged. As the results indicate, both sources frequently used critical and aggressive words and phrases. As it was defined in the earlier chapter, 'critical' does not mean a source has a negative view of repatriation, but it is more specifically about the general usage of a critical tone regarding something. Likewise for 'aggressive', this could refer to both an aggressive tone directed towards a target or the use of terms and phrases denoting aggression to provoke a reaction. The Guardian and Global Times both take on a highly critical tone when it comes to addressing the various claims and arguments against the repatriation of cultural objects and when discussing the problematic nature of the historical contexts that led to the need for repatriation.

The Guardian has a higher 'critical' count can be explained by the narrative form and style of their coverage. For some of their opinion pieces and editorials, richly detailed storytelling narratives were seemingly favored by the editors, meaning the writers had the license to construct emotionally charged narratives, that placed a deliberate emphasis on highlighting the plight of those campaigning for the return of their cultural objects. To emphasize their struggles, the writers adopted a critical tone towards the institutions implicated in causing them. Aggressive words and phrases were used both to evoke sympathy for the aggrieved and to drive home the consequences of historical injustice. An example of such a piece is article 14A, which has 5 counts for 'critical' and 9 for 'aggressive'.

Despite the near-identical count, the ‘aggressive’ category is the one in which the difference between both agencies is the most apparent. Their usage of aggressive words, and phrases, as well as the purpose for which aggression was employed were vastly different. The majority of Global Times’ counts of aggression are expressed toward specific targets, such as museums, foreign governments, other newspapers, and on occasion even individuals. It is apparent that little restraint is employed by the Global Times’ writers and editors regarding expressing the full strength of their opinions.

An example of this is 8B, a formal editorial with a whopping 12 counts of aggressive language, in which the anger of the writers is palpable. The instances in which Global Times’ aggression was not directed towards a specific target was when they were used to emphasize the violence of historical events, just as The Guardian does.

Considering that The Guardian has shown itself to be more supportive and proactive when discussing repatriation, Global Times’ high count for the ‘conciliatory’ category is likely due to the newspaper’s clear prioritization of recovering Chinese relics. A review of the specific contexts in which conciliatory language is employed seems to further corroborate this – nearly all contexts correspond to the writers expressing their hopes that China collaborating with Western countries will “pave the way” towards future relic repatriation, as the headline of article 9B suggests.

Overall, both publications express a solid pro-repatriation stance. Critically, the difference between the two agencies is that while both strongly support repatriation and employ various tones to express this position, they are motivated to do so for very different reasons. These reasons and their implications will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

Upon completing the content analysis, patterns of recurring sentiments were identified in both newspapers’ coverage, with these patterns being specific to each newspaper. Although certain themes for each newspaper did occasionally overlap with the coverage of the other, the main focus was placed on analysing the dominant themes for each publication, as the identification of these sentiments is directly indicative of their stances and is intimately related to their motivations surrounding the issue of repatriation. For The Guardian, the identified themes were the desire for progression and the desire for healing and reconciliation. For Global Times it was a strong theme of patriotism and a strong undercurrent of distrust and hostility.

For each newspaper, the articles in which these themes were visible were marked down separately from the content analysis coding, and placed into a separate table for the purpose of documenting the frequency at which they appeared. This table is shown on the next page.

Article No.	The Guardian		Global Times	
	Desire for Progression	Reconciliation/ Healing	Patriotism	Distrust/Hostility
1A/B		x		
2A/B	x	x		x
3A/B	x	x		x
4A/B			x	
5A/B	x		x	x
6A/B	x	x		x
7A/B	x	x		x
8A/B	x			x
9A/B	x	x		x
10A/B	x		x	x
11A/B	x	x	x	x
12A/B	x	x	x	x
13A/B	x		x	
14A/B		x	x	x
15A/B		x		

Table 1. Distribution of themes (x) identified in *The Guardian* (blue) and *Global Times* (red) articles.

The theme distribution for both newspapers was merged for convenience and better presentation. The individual tables for each newspaper can be found in the appendices section as appendixes 6 and 7.

Of the themes found in *The Guardian*, a desire for societal progression in discussing repatriation for both the UK and internationally appears in 11 out of 15 articles, and the frequent framing of repatriation as a direct agent towards reconciliation and/or healing appears in 10 out of 15. For *Global Times*, 7 out of 15 articles exhibit high patriotic and nationalistic sentiments, and 11 out of 15 show frequent displays of distrust and hostility.

The stances of both publications, the implications of the results, and further discussion of the identified themes will be revisited and elaborated upon in a broader context in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the conclusions gained from the content analysis of *The Guardian* and *Global Times*, to indicate their overall positions on the issue of repatriation, and to identify the main patterns and characteristics of their coverage. Following this, an in-depth discussion of the 30 articles will be conducted, structured through the same categories used for the content analysis. All four themes will be discussed in conjunction with these categories, and the research questions attempt to be answered.

5.1 Overview of *The Guardian* coverage

Overall, *The Guardian* has exhibited strong support for the repatriation of cultural objects and a strong desire for cultural progression, which stems from the view that reconciling the traumas of the British Empire's colonial legacies is of utmost importance. Due to these desires, much narrative emphasis is placed on highlighting efforts towards healing and reconciling the traumas of those affected, mainly from its former colonies, and are often written in the form of long, narrative story-telling style narratives.

Along with being openly critical of the United Kingdom's colonial legacy, it is also severely critical of the existing arguments against repatriation, frequently calling them outdated and illogical.

When addressing the acquisition of artefacts, it tends towards the usage of terms that imply a sense of wrongdoing, for example, "looted", "stolen", and "plundered", implicitly imparting to the reader that there is a fundamental wrongness that needs to be corrected. In their view, this correction can be achieved through suggesting and advocating for changes in the existing legislation concerning the return of artefacts. *The Guardian* holds the opinion that these laws not only heavily restrict the ability of museums to facilitate returns, but conveniently provide reluctant institutions with an excuse for why they refrain from taking action. Extra scrutiny is placed upon the United Kingdom's most prominent institutions, mainly the British Museum, which in *The Guardian*'s view, is negatively impacting Britain's international reputation through poor management and resistance to change.

5.2 Overview of Global Times coverage

The Global Times has stressed many times over that it believes repatriation is owed to China, as well as to other countries who have expressed the desire for their cultural objects to be returned. Not only do Global Times see repatriation as a moral obligation, it is viewed as the only correct response, and for them, the fact that repatriation is still considered a contentious issue in international media is a significant cause of frustration. This frustration is further exacerbated by their perception of the power dynamics of repatriation, where it is implicitly understood from the Chinese perspective as a sign of respect and deference from the giving country and as a sign of the strength of the receiving country. Due to this view, the perceived disrespect from the lack of interest of Western governments and institutions towards repatriating Chinese cultural relics has led Global Times to frequently lash out and regard the West with distrust and hostility.

The efforts of Chinese citizens to repatriate their relics from foreign collectors and institutions are praised as examples of patriotic and loyal service to the government.

From the aggressive language used, such as describing the actions of others as “mockery” “embarrassment” or “a slap in the face”, it is clear great resentment and trauma still linger from China’s historical entanglements towards its enemies, which in the context of relic repatriation are mainly Western countries. The British Museum is the institution targeted the most frequently. The Global Times contradicts itself frequently by insisting that it does not want to demand for its relics to be returned and that it views the establishing of an open dialogue between China and the Western world to be the most efficient path towards successful restitution. Despite that claim, its coverage is often filled with ultimatums, accusations of disrespect, and the constant issuing of demands to be fulfilled.

There is little attempt by their writers to disguise the fact the opinions indicated in their articles are anything but their own. Despite that, Global Times regularly speaks for the Chinese government despite it not having the official jurisdiction to do so, likely because they hope to take advantage of foreign media sources who mistake it as a state source to garner international attention.

5.3 Obligation

Both The Guardian and Global Times view the repatriation of cultural objects as an obligatory and necessary action and view it as something that is long overdue.

The Guardian has traditionally leaned politically center-left, an ideology typically inclined towards progressivism. In politics, progressivism is generally understood to mean supporting and advocating for policies and causes that work towards the overall betterment of society. It is therefore unsurprising that their coverage expresses a strong opinion that efforts toward decolonizing the legacy of the former British Empire are morally correct and of the utmost importance. They believe that former colonial powers are both responsible for addressing the uncomfortable elements of their pasts and that national and regional museums should dedicate themselves to provenance research to resolve historical disputes (art. 12A). As outlined in Article 12A, their editorial addressing the publication's official views on the restitution of cultural property, their firm belief is: "Where items are found to have been acquired wrongfully, restitution must follow".

The Global Times exhibits an equally stern attitude. As one of the world's oldest and most respected museum institutions, the British Museum is often at the forefront of media scrutiny. Due to the significance and value of their collections, it has been under pressure to address the provenance of many of their artefacts as well as respond to the repatriation claims of many countries. Out of these countries, the Global Times has been one of the most vocal in addressing its grievances with the institution on behalf of China. Throughout the data collection process, it was extremely difficult to identify another institution that the Global Times mentioned as much as it did the British Museum.

The Global Times has directly stated it views the British Museum as a "microcosm of the history of British colonial expansion" (art. 8B). The theft of over 2,000 artefacts from the British Museum in August 2023 made headlines worldwide and triggered the Global Times to publish an editorial demanding the return of Chinese cultural relics for free. The content of this editorial is an exemplary showcase of the Global Times' opinions of both the British Museum, the UK government, and most significantly, the specifics of the publication's distrust, revealed through the suspicions and accusations it lobs towards the United Kingdom.

This editorial is one of the few where the Global Times emphasizes their affiliation to the Chinese government and directly states that it is speaking for the country. The

piece is addressed to the British Museum for “the return of all Chinese relics acquired through improper channels”.

The government’s compliance will be a first step in exonerating Britain from its past aggressions towards China, as it will serve as a “test and verification of Britain’s sincerity in clearing the colonial stain” and demonstrate Britain’s regrets for the “historical sins” it has committed. From the commanding tone, it is clear that the Global Times feels that trust can only be earned back through remedial action if the West is ever to be forgiven. This demand makes it apparent that Global Times still considers China as a ‘bullied’ country. This sentiment is projected onto other countries with colonial histories, going as far as to suggest that “victimized” countries’ comparative lack of motivation to recover their relics is the result of Britain’s “cultural colonization and brainwashing”.

It is essential to understand the feelings of the Global Times in the context of their own understanding of the past. Although China was never officially considered a “colony” of world power for the rest of the world, China has always considered itself a “semi-colony” from 1840 to 1949, a view that is still taught in Chinese school textbooks. This term refers to a country that only maintains its independent state in name, and has functionally lost control of its own sovereignty (Li, p. 150, 2021). China endured this status for much of its contemporary history, suffering repeated infringement by imperialist powers such as the late British and Japanese Empire.

The turbulence of this time is known historically as the “Century of Humiliation” a moniker which speaks volumes as to how everely impacted China’s cultural confidence. Aside from the consecutive invasions by foreign powers, in the span of less than a century, China witnessed its own implosion. Its territory shrunk by a third, the imperial system that had previously existed since the inception of the country collapsed, and the resulting vacuum was filled by numerous rebellions, uprisings, invasions, religious interference, and civil war (Kaufman, p. 2, 2010).

The cultural impacts of these continue to seriously affect contemporary China today, and colors modern Chinese political behavior and relations with other countries.

The historical reasons for the profound sense of distrust Global Times holds towards the West directly contribute to its disagreements with The Guardian and the British government. As previously stated, The Guardian has an absolute view that wrongfully acquired items must be returned, a view shared by Global Times. However, the issue is that both countries as it is reflected in the coverage of both publications, disagree on the definition of “wrongful” and what is considered an “improper channel”. Article 1A

is a Guardian piece by writer Dalya Alberge about the discovery of historical documents that ‘proves’ many of the Chinese artefacts currently housed in Western museums were acquired legally and with the full consent of the 19th-century Chinese. A primary piece of evidence is a letter sent from a Chinese magistrate to archaeologist Aurel Stein in 1914, praising Stein for “practicing archaeology with a stunning perseverance and thoroughness that is unheard of”.

In Article 1B, published two days later as a direct response to Article 1A, the Global Times flatly denies any scholarly recognition of Stein in China in reference to The Guardian’s claim that Stein is a “nationalist pinata” for Chinese critics. The ethics and legality of the transactions are soundly denounced by arguing that Stein deliberately took advantage of China’s political vulnerability and lack of awareness about cultural preservation at the time by buying up Chinese relics at very low prices. In the same period, Chinese warlords often sold relics to gain power and favour from the West, which Global Times insists about the buyers as “another form of plundering”.

The publications’ conflicts illustrate the complicated nature of discussing the provenance and rightful ownership of cultural objects and raise numerous important questions surrounding the morals of repatriation, that must be extensively discussed in the coming years for resolution to be reached. For instance, how can it be decided if an object was acquired legally or not? Should cultural objects sold legally to foreign buyers in the past be considered illegal and unethical in the modern age, if the selling country was driven to do so because it was facing times of hardship and oppression?

In the words of Global Times, the question of whether an artefact should be returned should be determined by modern value judgments on historical rights, and the right to assess the cultural and historical value of an artefact should be determined by the artefact’s place of origin (art. 1B). This is a view that is supported by other countries seeking the return of their objects, for example, Greece and their Elgin marbles, and Egypt and its Rosetta Stone.

5.4 Suggestion

In article 5A, in which author Mark Brown criticises the lack of effort of London museums in returning disputed objects, he acknowledges that legislation such as the British Museum Act of 1963 prevents the British Museum from permanently removing any object in its possession, in addition to the National Heritage Act of 1983. However, he is quick to suggest that institutions may not be as ‘hamstrung by legislation’ as they claim, stating ‘there are ways of getting around it’. This is an example of The Guardian’s refusal to accept longtime arguments utilised by many institutions against

repatriating objects, and how it follows up this refusal by bringing up solutions for supposed obstacles in the way of repatriation. The solution in question refers to London's V&A museum, which successfully circumvented both laws in 2022 for the return of a statue of Eros to Istanbul, by ceding it to Turkey as a long-term loan with a renewable contract ("V&A Asante Loans", 2022). Later on in the same article, Brown tactfully re-emphasizes the central message of the piece, that London museums are conspicuously lagging behind regional UK museums in regards to repatriating objects— by juxtaposing the lack of action from London museums with the successful efforts of museums abroad.

A consistent characteristic of The Guardian is the use of quotes that implicitly state the author's opinion, which is then followed up with additional information that counters the quote to purposefully highlight the dissonance in opinions. This use of juxtaposition results in the reader gaining a clear understanding of the problem, the solution suggested by the narrative, and the obstacles in the way of the solution.

In this way, the reader is influenced towards agreeing with the solution that has been presented. For instance, in reference to 5A, the aforementioned Guardian article, the author inserts a quote from Pope Francis in which he states, "The seventh commandment comes to mind: If you steal something you have to give it back," echoing the author's views. The author then adds that calls for repatriation will continue regardless of whether London's national museums are restricted or not, and emphasises that many of the objects kept within these institutions are not even available for public viewing, adding to the injustice. The narrative has been constructed to highlight the hypocrisy of the longstanding 'Universal Museum' argument, which appears increasingly weak when confronted with the fact that an overwhelming number of objects in the British Museum are sequestered away indefinitely and will never be displayed, especially when considering that less than half of the BM's catalog has been recorded even though the database was created over 40 years ago (*Guide*, British Museum, 2024).

The Guardian's suggestion is clear: If the UK's most prominent institutions are capable of bypassing the anti-repatriation legislation when deemed necessary, their lack of interest in doing so indicates they are hiding behind the law as an excuse to delay change.

The Global Times utilises the power of suggestion in a different way than The Guardian. It is a constant suggestion that feeling strongly about China's lost relics is a patriotic responsibility and is presented as a natural reaction that any Chinese citizen loyal to their country should have. The specific, emotive vocabulary employed seems

to subconsciously communicate to its audience that the desire for the recovery of China's lost relics is also a signifier of the degree of intensity of one's love for their country. Patriotism and nationalism as a core cultural value are of great cultural importance in China.

Chinese nationalism, contradictorily, is not only expressed through its cultural achievements but specifically emphasizes its past weaknesses and humiliation at the hands of foreign powers. It is suggested by Kaufman (2010) that the reason for this may be due to the 'redemption arc' narrative instilled by the Chinese government, which provides it with justification and legitimization of China's political system and attitude. It is commonly observed in Chinese party rhetoric that memories of past losses and humiliations are used to instill a sense of nationalism and loyalty into its population. This has the added benefit that as Chinese cultural victories occur, they are then self-supported by this narrative, as each victory presents China as increasingly able to counter and defeat future attempts by hostile foreign powers to 'force' it back into subjugation again (Kaufman, p. 3, 2010).

Patriotism is defined here as a love for one's country and a sense of personal identification with it, pride in its history, merits, and achievements, and a vested concern in its well-being and those of its countrymen (Primoratz, 2020). It is this expanded definition that can be observed in these articles, most significantly through the Global Times' choice of verbs, adjectives, and turns of phrase.

This is mainly done through emotional appeal, and a sense of urgency attached to these appeals. Frequently appearing are words and phrases that imply a sense of emotional urgencies, such as in article 4B by journalist Chen Xi, where the Greek Prime Minister's request for the Parthenon Marbles to be returned had "ignited a fervent response" on Chinese media for the British Museum's Chinese artefacts to be returned. Using the verb "ignited" invokes the image of fiery passions, and the adjective "fervent" further intensifies this sentiment of passionate intensity. The Chinese netizen response to the Greek Prime Minister's statement was described as, "reflecting their earnest hope for the British Museum to promptly restore China's cultural heritage." (art. 4B).

The phrasing of the sentence performs the double duty of evoking a nationalistic sentiment by directly conflating the return of Chinese artefacts with restoring China's cultural heritage, and simultaneously sets a cultural expectation for how one should feel about the return of artefacts, in this case having "earnest hopes". Furthermore, equating the return of artefacts with the restoration of cultural heritage leaves no room for other interpretations that are less absolute; for example, perceiving returns

as a gesture of goodwill, or to symbolise the reclamation of a part of their history. This leaves readers with the singular perception that demanding the return of artefacts is the only path to achieving this goal.

A study conducted by Lin Li in his 2021 work “Repatriation, colonialism, and decolonization in China” examines the view of Chinese citizens towards repatriation, colonization and decolonization. The study found that many of the participants exhibited “a desire for a powerful China.” Aligning with the theories of Kaufman (2010), it showed that Chinese citizens consider China’s colonial history integral to their commitment to supporting Chinese national development (Li, p. 155, 2021). The exhibited attitude of the Global Times corroborates this further.

The Global Times also promotes an image of patriotic duty by supporting repatriation efforts by describing and praising the patriotic actions of others as an example to uphold. Article 13B covers the donation of a looted relic to the Chinese National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) by Macao tycoon Stanley Ho Hung-sun. A quote from Ho’s daughter about the donation:

"The statue conveyed the spirit of patriotism and witnessed the successful practice of the 'one country, two systems' principle in Macao," (art. 13B).

It is written that the returned relic “conveyed the spirit of patriotism”, suggesting that the relic, a bronze horse head looted by Anglo-French forces from the Old Summer Palace in 1860, is a symbol of patriotism. Assuming this quote accurately represents the Global Times’ opinion, it seems to suggest that the acquisition and donation of the statue to the NCHA is not being celebrated as a victory for the progression of the cultural preservation of relics in China, but rather for what its donation means for the country’s national interests.

This is supported by the fact that the remainder of the article does not address the historical significance of the statue itself to China’s cultural heritage, but focuses on the donation serving as ‘proof’ of the success of the Chinese political system. This implies that outside of the goal of recovering Chinese heritage, Global Times sees the potential to relate the issue of repatriation to a strong national identity.

5.5 Supportive

Public opinion in the UK towards repatriation has become increasingly positive over the last decade, with the increased influence of the internet as well as increased engagement with diaspora communities in the UK, who are beginning to become aware of the issues surrounding their heritage (art. 9A). In conjunction with the rise in international support for the repatriation calls, The Guardian has also been vocal about the need for the existing legislation preventing repatriation to be abolished, and has been extremely supportive in promoting the idea that intense lobbying by museum directors and trustees is the most effective way of pushing the UK parliament to action (art. 6A).

The narrative preference The Guardian has towards storytelling occasionally leads to the insertion of a storyline into an article, to provide its audience with a clear moral indicator for what they should support. For instance, in articles 6A and 11A, pop culture references are utilised to these ends. Article 6A begins with a helpfully outlined character profile- the famous exchange from *Indiana Jones*, where Jones insists that something belongs in a museum, and the villain exclaims, “So do you!”. Described in brackets by the author as a “youthful, anti-establishment, recent thief of priceless treasure” the point the article is trying to impart is that Jones thinks that he is doing the right thing, by giving an artefact the recognition it deserves by displaying it in a museum.

However, the current state of the repatriation debate is split between Jones’ perspective and the perspective favouring return, which forces the reader to ask themselves where they stand on the question: Can reconciliation, diversity, and mutual understanding be best achieved through the display of disputed cultural items or through their return?

Similarly in article 11A, Killmonger, the villain in Marvel’s *Black Panther* forcibly takes an artefact originating from Benin from the hands of a white curator at the British Museum. Just as in article 6A, the reader is introduced to the complicated questions asked in the discussion of repatriation. Killmonger, although the villain of the movie, commits an act of deaccession that many involved in the debate would theoretically support. Has the British Museum, as the ones who acquired the object from Benin, suffered a theft from Killmonger’s actions, or is he repatriating it to its rightful home? Although these pop culture comparisons should not be taken as a literal representation of right and wrong, The Guardian’s choice to utilise them is quite efficient in terms of using them to express the nuance of an issue, especially in exhibiting how there is no right or wrong answer in the discussion of repatriation, but

how the path towards the right answers can in itself, begin the process of reconciliation and healing.

Similar to The Guardian, Global Times also utilizes storytelling to emphasize the emotional longing of the Chinese for their cultural objects to be returned, with the key difference that while The Guardian makes use of pop culture references, Global Times uses the stories of its country's own citizens.

Being tied to the state, the Global Times does a careful job of toeing the line between promoting nationalistic rhetoric that is rousing enough to inspire loyalty and yet tame enough to avoid provocation. Emotional appeal is utilised to an even greater extent in some cases to sustain said rhetoric, perhaps past the limits of believability. In article 14B, Zhao Yu, a counsellor at the Art Committee of the China Association of Auctioneers is said to have recalled an instance from 2013 where he was interviewed on television after two bronze statues, part of a set of 12 were returned by a French collector. According to Zhao, when his daughter and granddaughter learned that several of the statues were still missing, they burst into tears (art. 14B).

Regardless of the believability of Zhao's anecdote, there is no denying that the image it inspires is a moving one. It establishes the idea that the plight of lost relics unable to return to their homeland is such a heartrending, bitter loss that it brings adults and children alike to tears. When it comes to triumphs, such as the donation of the statue from Article 13B, it is perceived by the Chinese as proof of China's increased national status (Li, p. 160, 2021).

5.6 Critical

Both publications frequently utilize terminology that implies historical wrongdoing and place emphasis on the unethical acquisition of relics, such as "hoarding" "looting" "stolen" "plundering" "savagery" and "dispossession", the use of all recorded from the selected 30 articles. Museum collections are sometimes referred to as "war booty" or "prisoners" of the museum. Together, both publications are in agreement that the events described were inherently wrongful, and consequently, something that requires amending.

Juxtaposition, as mentioned earlier, is a literary tool used to great effect by The Guardian's journalists. When used correctly, it allows the reader to absorb individual pieces of information with contrasting messages, while allowing the reader to compare the pieces of contrasting information themselves. The following exchange is

an example of how the author has used opposing quotes to highlight the ignorance of British politicians. This comment from Hunt,

“We’re out of kilter with colleagues in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and I think it’s almost affecting Britain’s reputation in the world.” (art. 3A)

is juxtaposed with Environment Secretary Steve Barclay’s comment,

“I don’t think anyone wants to relitigate something that’s been settled for a huge amount of time. We have very good relations with the Greek government. In terms of the Elgin marbles, they’re part of the British Museum. That’s something that’s been a constant for many decades. I don’t think anyone sees any need for that to change.” (art. 3A).

In this way, The Guardian inserts a closing reminder that proves its point without the author having to express it in their own words– the point being that Barclay’s quote exemplifies how Britain is “out of kilter” with Europe, and how this disconnect is already having consequences for Britain’s international reputation.

The contradictions and ironies observed in many of Britain’s institutions now bring into question the validity of their mission statements in this current political climate, where the UK is divided by those who support the return of contested objects and those who believe they should remain. A healthy amount of criticism is exhibited towards the “ironies abound” in its institutions, asking the question, how can museums claim in their mission statements to promote understanding between cultures when they have looted goods on display? (art. 6A).

The Guardian has been particularly critical of the oft-cited arguments of those against repatriation, frequently challenging the validity of said arguments. Addressing the idea that cultural objects are ‘safer’ in the West, it was pointed out by Martha Gill, the author of article 6A that the perceived safety of the West is an illusion, citing World War 2 bombings, the selling of objects to private collectors, and most recently, the massive loopholes in British Museum security that allowed both internal and external thefts. Additionally, over the past decades formerly impoverished countries such as India and Nigeria now have access to resources that allow them to build state-of-the-art museums to house their artefacts, rendering the ‘protection’ Western museums offer even more obsolete. The fear that allowing objects to be repatriated would lead to museums ending up empty is swiftly dismissed by acknowledging that national museums cannot run out of objects, especially when

looking at the figures. The British Museum, for example only has about 1% of its full collection on display (Sires, 2024).

From the perspective of the Global Times, the United Kingdom's untrustworthiness does not only come from its track record of historical entanglements but also from resentment stemming from the sentiment held by many Chinese that the United Kingdom still sees itself as morally superior to its former victims (art. 8B). This sentiment has led to a pervasive narrative presented by Chinese historians that the British Empire's actions in China were motivated in part by giving themselves the position of the moral high ground (Schiavenza, 2017), therefore giving itself the right to interfere in the politics of foreign countries.

From the way the Global Times positions itself in the repatriation dialogue, it seems to have already committed itself to placing inherent suspicion on the actions of Western countries, as if it cannot seem to view such actions from a lens free of historical trauma. This quote from article 10B illustrates this well:

"Even when Western countries make attempts at "emotional compensation," they intend to lay "the foundation for future expansion in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and to improve their image." – (art. 10B)

This view can be directly explained by considering the implicit Chinese understanding of the world's current international order. Post-century of humiliation, the long-held conception of the imperial 'Mandate of Heaven', which governed the population's basic understanding of the principles of life and cemented the position of China as the center of human civilization, was destroyed. The understanding of the current world order is rooted in the central idea that the world is categorized into the weak and the strong, with all of them competing for dominance on the global stage (Kaufman, p. 13, 2021). The objective of 'winning' is considered the necessary outcome, in order for China to avoid its past vulnerabilities. This perspective also leads one to understand why Chinese diplomacy is characterized by Western countries as hostile and secretive.

The fundamental lack of trust and resentment shared by many Chinese towards its historical enemies seems to have resulted in an unfortunate short-sightedness, where its desire to progress into establishing an open dialogue based on mutual respect is being blocked by its inability to free itself from the trauma of the past. Ironically, the overly critical attitude of Global Times towards the West is holding back the progress it wishes to induce.

5.7 Aggression

Although it is reserved most of the time, The Guardian occasionally employs aggressive lines of questioning and tone, especially regarding the reluctance of institutions and governments to consider steps towards establishing repatriation dialogues, and when expressing its frustrations on the difficulties of national British institutions and governments to reflect and self-criticise.

For instance, 6A culminates in an attack by confronting the British Museum on its paradoxical goals, by delegitimizing its claim that its method of educating the public is through displaying objects with “uncomfortable histories” while it fails to acknowledge that the very act of displaying these objects is considered by some as continuing to perpetuate the “colonial oppression and historic crimes” that led to the acquisition of the objects in the first place. Displaying relics with “uncomfortable histories” is framed as an act of violence, described as “brutal exploitation and joy of displaying the spoils”. The Guardian then accuses the British Museum of regressing to a violent past where despite modern pretensions, it is doing nothing but “reveling in war booty”.

This use of aggressive terminology has the effect of invoking images of savagery and historical violence, which may have been intended to make the audience feel discontent with the current direction of their country’s institutions. The solution to preventing this regression is made clear to its readers- doing away with the restrictive laws preventing the end of the cycle of exploitation and relinquishing these objects to their home countries would be the most effective solution. In this way, The Guardian uses the threat of cultural regression and condemnation of historical violence to instil in its audience a desire to think better of their national institutions and motivate them to advocate for progressive change.

In its own words, “Only one side of this (culture) war is backed by the facts: the arguments against restitution, one by one, are crumbling into dust” (art. 6A).

As for Global Times, their journalists are aware that opinions that are expressed too negatively impact the journalistic credibility of a publication, but they seem to care little about controlling the strength of their opinions. In truth, it is far from outlandish to suggest it is a deliberate strategy to draw attention from Western media, especially since sources such as USA’s Fox News and The Independent have latched on to their headlines in the past, frequently mistaking Global Times as the “voice” of Beijing (Huang, 2016). In truth, this moniker is accurate, except the voice represents the true feelings of CCP officials that cannot be expressed in formal state-produced

media, which is why they are considered to be about as ‘unfiltered’ as a Chinese newspaper can be.

However, it is important that the vitriolic language in its coverage must not be taken at face value, as the translating team has admitted to purposefully embellishing the contents of articles to generate media uproar, in one instance replacing the original text with the term “rascally varmints” to describe members of the U.S congress (Fish, 2017).

A common trend identified across Global Times coverage is the tendency for the writers to present their opinions and judgments not as their own, but as the collective, shared sentiments of the Chinese. By presenting an opinion as a widely shared one, it shifts into being presented as a moral issue that transcends national and cultural borders. An example of this is article 2B, which discusses a proposal to begin charging entrance fees for the British Museum.

In the article, the reader is directly addressed and asked by the author to imagine the feelings of other countries who have previously made requests for repatriation alongside China, such as Greece and Egypt, whose citizens would be placed into the “absurd” situation of being forcibly charged just to view “what is rightfully theirs”. The author describes this scenario as “mocking the cultural heritage of these countries”. The use of the terms “absurd” “mockery” and “rightfully theirs” imparts upon readers a strong inclination that they should feel disrespected and taken advantage of. By pitting its readership against an adversary, the British Museum, and bringing up the repatriation issues of other countries, the author nudges readers to the conclusion that the British Museum no longer follows its ethos of prioritizing education for all, due to it suggesting placing its offerings behind a monetary barrier. This holds the implication that the institution cannot be trusted to keep its word, further promoting the narrative of assumed unreliability.

This sense of distrust towards foreign institutions naturally leads to questioning the motives of the institutions, their capability to properly care for artefacts, and the political agendas of the host countries. In the same article (art. 2B) the author aggressively mocks the 2023 British Museum theft by sharing the Chinese proverb, “If you don’t have a diamond, stay out of the porcelain business”. In simple terms, the author is essentially saying, “Don’t attempt things you’re not good at”. The proverb is then followed up with the author’s suggestion that if the British Museum was too incompetent to manage its vast collections, maybe it should “adopt a more humble and open-minded approach” by taking an active role in responding to calls for repatriation (art. 2B).

The Global Times frequently takes advantage of failures and controversies of foreign institutions and governments, most often by using them as evidence against the suggestion that Western museums can take better care of cultural artefacts than the countries they were taken from could.

The string of thefts in 2023 from various European museums had the dual effect of greatly intensifying public awareness in many countries about repatriation claims and a loss of faith in the integrity of these institutions. The Global Times has made its stance on the thefts quite clear: that these incidents are viewed as a “joke, or a slap in the face” (art. 6B). These comments not only encourage readers to distrust museum institutions but also establish that by allowing the thefts to occur, the West has committed a great offence to China. Something indicative of the Global Times’ mindset is how the publication purposefully avoids phrasing that directs its criticism to the specific country the thefts occurred in, instead frequently using generalised phrases such as “Western museums”, and “European museums”, with these terms often used interchangeably.

“The Western world” generally is used about European countries and the regions historically associated with it, such as Australia, New Zealand, and Northern America. For the Global Times, the distinction appears to be unimportant, as it frequently condemns “the West” in response to events related to a specific country. For example, the headline put out by Global Times about the British Museum's proposal to charge entry fees states that the proposal “reveals Western arrogance” (art. 2A) despite it coming from one specific British institution. Whether deliberate or not, this tendency of generalization impresses upon its readers that it is not just the offending country that must take responsibility for damaging the reputability of its institutions and global image, but the entire Western world by association, echoing a historical sentiment of ‘Us versus Them’. As a result of this association, the sentiment of distrust and hostility is extended to the associated countries as well.

5.8 Conciliatory

As with The Guardian’s usage of terms that emphasize the wrongful circumstances of how many disputed objects were originally acquired, the opposite is also true, where positive terms emphasize joy and triumph upon the successful return of objects. There is a prevalent trend towards the presentation of repatriation as not only morally just, but also as a way to patch political and cultural relations with other countries, with a focus on the emotional and spiritual implications of return. This theme. In the majority of the articles, the use of conciliatory language is intimately related to the theme of reconciliation and healing.

For The Guardian, a particular emphasis on the importance of healing and cultural reconciliation was identified in articles covering the repatriation of cultural objects belonging to Indigenous peoples. The concept of repatriation does not have an explicit definition, however, it is generally understood to mean a return to a spiritual way of life, or regaining a spiritual or symbolic identity (What is Repatriation, 2023). Repatriation is a concept that is best applied to Indigenous communities, as the objects addressed in repatriation claims tend to have more spiritual significance and roots to the living descendants of the original communities. Thus, the tone The Guardian takes heavily emphasises the emotional struggles and battles of the representatives of these communities, to allow readers to understand the depth of significance for them.

This is mainly done through the stylistic writing of the articles, where long, story-like narratives are produced, with vivid descriptions of the historical contexts in which the objects were acquired, extensive biographies of the individuals who owned the items when possible, the struggles of the communities as a result of exploitation and colonial violence, with an emphasis on how their struggles are being continued through the efforts of their modern descendants to recover their cultural heritage. Article 14A is an example of such a piece, which describes the story behind the Dja Dja Wurrung people of central Victoria. The narrative begins with an arresting hook that immediately draws the reader's attention and sympathy:

“All of these things that belong to our people in Australia – they don't tell a story about the Queen of England, do they?” he asks.

“No way. They tell stories about the people that made them and used them – that's our people here in Australia. We don't have the Queen's crown jewels. And we don't want them. But what we do want is to get our things back from the British Museum. We want them back.”

In this way, the heart of the narrative is already established, where there is an identifiable problem, and a clearly outlined desire for a solution. Although the subject of the article is a new exhibition to open at the National Museum of Australia, the article is less about the specific content of the exhibition itself but more about the cultural significance behind it. The main focus of The Guardian is telling the audience about the stories of these communities, and the problem is that despite years of open dialogue, the items featured in the exhibition would be returned to the United Kingdom in the end.

By bringing to light the complicated personal histories of the relationships that existed between the colonised and the colonisers, a certain nuance is brought out imparting the message that history is rarely uncomplicated, and due to this efforts to address the complicated nature of cultural objects would never result in a completely satisfactory response.

The Guardian's sentiment that repatriation acts as a pathway towards historical and emotional reconciliation is clear from the way the complicated nature of the issue is not portrayed as an obstacle, even when acknowledging the effort to heal these cultural wounds through proper channels would span decades. Instead, the prospect of this daunting task is described as a "compelling conversation". Standing out from other Guardian articles, where reconciliation and healing are presented as the end goal, this article presents the view that the process of healing and reconciliation from colonial trauma is at the heart of discussing repatriation and that healing begins when the discussion begins. The message it imparts to the reader is that healing the invisible wounds of these communities can also be the objective basis for both loans and restitutions, rather than objective ownership claims or political motivations.

There are signs of a conciliatory attitude beginning to show, in regard to Global Times' coverage of other countries, although a prickly attitude can still be identified in its phrasing. Despite what the overall tone of its coverage implies, if progress is made in paving the way toward future repatriations, these efforts are highly praised, and strong emphasis is placed on the improvement of international relations with those countries. For instance, article 12B details the return of 68 smuggled Chinese relics by the United Kingdom. This event was congratulatory towards the UK having "won applause from the Chinese public", insinuating that this act of restorative justice 'won' praise and respect from the Chinese that previously did not exist.

Immediately following this sentence, it was mentioned that this return occurred shortly after an incident in the city of Chongqing, where a British diplomat made local headlines for saving a drowning woman. The inclusion of this information is initially confusing as the two events are completely unrelated, however, it makes more sense when considering the diplomat's nationality is what made the event significant. It is not an easy task for the newspaper to acknowledge the good deeds of a 'former invader' a term used to describe the UK later on in the article. Connecting these two events may indicate a shift in opinion for Chinese media regarding the UK.

Article 3B details the experience of a Global Times writer who attended an international law conference hosted by the American Society of International Law (ASIL). He left with "three surprises", the first being a forum dedicated specifically

towards discussing looted Chinese relics, and the second and third surprises were that not only did Western scholars consider the topic worthy of Western academic attention, but that the questions and debates continued even after the panel ended.

These takeaways being presented as “surprises” speaks volumes about how the Global Times, and by extension China perceive the West as uncaring to its grievances. However, these takeaways may serve as a stepping stone towards future discussions.

A conciliatory tone is also taken on regarding other countries who desire the return of their cultural objects, specifically those who the Global Times considers to be in the same predicament as China. In article 10B, sympathy and a sense of camaraderie is expressed towards countries such as Egypt, Nigeria, and Italy, thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Between these countries, an understanding has been reached that the existing international regulations regarding the repatriation of cultural objects lack binding power, thus some countries have begun to see China as a leader in its efforts to regain its heritage.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Conclusion

The objective of my research was to understand how Chinese and British online news represented the topic of repatriation of cultural relics. As determined from the defined categories, both The Guardian and Global Times exhibit a pro-repatriation stance. However, the factors and motivations behind the perspectives of these newspapers differed considerably from the other. Altogether, the observed “East-West Dichotomy” primarily lies in their specific historical contexts. These contexts have strongly influenced how China and the United Kingdom address the question of repatriation in its online news media. As proposed by Silverstone (1993) and Herring (2003), contemporary forms of news media are effective capsules in capturing the essence of a culture’s view of a topic.

The Guardian overall tends towards a highly proactive view on repatriation. It frequently criticises the reluctance of British institutions to discuss and make efforts toward the repatriation of cultural objects. Of The various anti-repatriation arguments presented in the past, the writers of The Guardian express a strong sentiment that all of the perceived obstacles are not concrete, and the multiple documented successes in bypassing the existing legislation only serve to strengthen this opinion.

It can be concluded that The Guardian feels partially responsible for its connections to the former British Empire, through its frequent expression of a strong sentiment of guilt for the problematic actions in its history. Due to this, the most prominent sentiments expressed by The Guardian were a desire for cultural progression and an emphasis on promoting reconciliation and emotional healing, particularly regarding the specific countries the former British Empire encompassed. A frequently re-visited example is the case of the Indigenous Australians and the legacies of hurt resulting from the occupation. The Guardian heavily advocates for the UK’s national institutions, such as the V&A and the British Museum to be proactive in establishing dialogues surrounding repatriation with countries who have contested the museum’s ownership of their artefacts, and takes on an extremely critical and aggressive tone at times, which likely stems from frustration.

It consistently aims to make the reader question their own morals, and where they stand on the issue of repatriation. Although the narratives it constructs encourage the reader to conclude that repatriation is necessary for international cooperation and development, it stresses the moral and ethical implications of it, for instance, the

consideration of what method gives the most respect towards a disputed relic: to continue to be displayed in a museum for the enjoyment and cultural enrichment for the world, or would returning it to its place of origin be the most meaningful decision?

Regarding The Guardian's relations with Global Times, there exists a disproportionate amount of focus between the two newspapers. When taking into consideration that the British Museum is one of the most prominent museums in the world, it is logical that the coverages of both newspapers would mention it quite often. However, Global Times mentions it so often as to cement the impression that the British Museum is its primary focus. This is determined to be partially true, owing to the centuries of historical enmity between Britain and China. This enmity is also exemplified by the large number of Chinese artefacts held within the British Museum's collections, which also directly makes it the object of scrutiny from the Global Times.

Unfortunately, since the dissolution of the British Empire, this enmity is best described as one-sided. It was discussed previously that the modern Chinese conception of the political world order is that of the "strong" versus the "weak". As a state-affiliated newspaper, this understanding of order is thus imbued into the Global Times' coverage, explaining why the British Museum appears to be a constant target.

The most prevalent sentiment expressed in the Global Times' coverage is a theme of distrust for the Western world and the inherent sentiment of patriotism. The topics that are reported on are generally treated with a sense of distrust, and upon proving those suspicions right, such as in the case of the 2023 British Museum thefts, where the writers were quick to attack the institutions and governments involved, with accusations that ranged from the quality of the institution, to attacking the character of the government directly. This distrust in turn amplifies the patriotic and nationalistic tone in its coverage, as it progressively portrays the ability of China to call for the repatriation of its objects as a sign that the country has now recovered enough from the Century of Humiliation to demand its relics back, inspiring pride.

It is concluded that due to the unique position the Global Times enjoys, it can function as an 'attack dog' of sorts for the Chinese government, where it is allowed to freely and openly criticise any target, yet does not face the consequences that their reckless style of reporting would normally induce, as the normal standards of the journalistic integrity are not expected of them. This is most likely the main reason why the Global Times has been able to stay relevant in international media for so long despite its poor reputation.

The Global Times adopts a primarily hostile and aggressive attitude towards the United Kingdom. However, the most surprising takeaway from my research was that it displayed a shockingly conciliatory attitude towards its historical enemy. Adding to this revelation, it was discovered that not only did this attitude extend to other foreign countries with contest artefacts, but a strong desire for international cooperation was identified. It is immeasurably significant that China is now exhibiting a desire to not only enter into a peaceful dialogue with Western powers about the repatriation of their cultural relics but is also willing to assist other countries and is bold enough to admit that some of its long-held views towards Western countries, for instance, its perception that plight of China's struggles in retrieving its relics was not considered a topic of importance internationally, were wrong. A considerable degree of self-reflection was also observed, leading to my final conclusion:

Both agencies present the repatriation of cultural relics as a necessary action for the mutual benefit of the other. While The Guardian places significantly more focus on the repatriation and heritage issues of the more severely impacted former colonies, such as of the Indigenous Australians, it expresses a strong desire to encourage and facilitate discussion and laws concerning repatriation. The Global Times places more emphasis on how repatriation is owed to China specifically, though focus is also placed on the plight of other affected countries.

The Guardian heavily shows a tone towards regret and sentiments towards seeking cultural progression and emotional reconciliation and healing. The Global Times primarily manifests a tone of distrust and patriotism, however, most surprisingly, also has a strong desire and willingness to cooperate with its former historical enemies, to establish an international dialogue towards future successful repatriations.

It is my hope for the future that China continues to make efforts in establishing said dialogue, that the United Kingdom's national institutions, in particular the British Museum, can process the criticisms of its own media and work towards dedicating its considerable influence towards creating and upholding a new standard of what a modern museum should be.

6.2 Limitations of research

Although the purpose of this research was to examine the news outlet narratives, the scope of this study is too narrow to truly determine the feelings of the host countries concerning repatriation. This study was intended as a window into their perceptions, not as a full investigation. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct a much larger study spanning multiple decades, and multiple forms of online media, and not just online news articles would also be recommended for this. Another limitation was that specific profiles of the authors of the articles could not be given.

As the articles were chosen based on relevancy, the impacts of multiple articles being written by the same author could not be avoided.

A significant limitation was that the coding and resultant analysis was completely done by myself, meaning that the conclusions, tones, and sentiments determined from the coverages of both articles are entirely biased towards my own conception and understanding of the English language. Although considerable care was taken to ensure that the definitions of the categories for the coding scheme followed the general understanding of the meaning of the word as understood in English, alternative understanding of those terms by the reader cannot be ruled out and is thus up for subjective re-interpretation.

Abstract

The objective of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis of online news media of the media of the UK and China. These countries were selected based on the desire to compare their coverages on the topic of repatriation of cultural objects. 15 articles were selected for both the UK's The Guardian and China's Global Times, resulting in 30 articles total. A coding scheme was created based on tonal indicators, and the articles were coded on a line-by-line basis. The results of the coding were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively and then discussed. The results concluded that both newspapers were pro-repatriation, but for different reasons, with the primary explanation being the historical contexts of both countries, with The Guardian expressing guilt and a desire for reconciliation based on the UK's imperial legacy, and Global Times expressing distrust, hostility, and a patriotic slant. Surprisingly, the Global Times exhibited a strong desire for future collaboration with the UK and other Western powers, despite its perceived hostility.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of *The Guardian* articles, numbered from 1A (most recent) to 15A (oldest)

Article No.	Date	Author	Title	URL
1A	20/07/2024	Dalya Alberge	“Chinese artefacts in repatriation row were ‘given willingly’ to British Museum”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/article/2024/jul/20/chinese-artefacts-in-repatriation-row-were-given-willingly-to-british-museum
2A	25/06/2024	Paul Daley	“One exclusive Australian institution is facing up to its deeply racist past while another backs away from it”	https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jun/26/one-exclusive-australian-institution-is-facing-up-to-its-deeply-racist-past-while-another-backs-away-from-it
3A	29/09/2023	Harriet Sherwood	“V&A director says museum trustees ‘infantilised’ amid row over Parthenon marbles”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/nov/29/museum-trustees-legally-hidebound-over-repatriations-says-tristram-hunt
4A	20/09/2023	Amy Hawkins	“Viral series about Chinese teapot escaping from British Museum to become film”	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/viral-douyin-series-chinese-teapot-escaping-british-museum-film
5A	18/09/2023	Mark Brown	“London museums lag behind regional peers in returning disputed objects”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/sep/18/repatriation-london-museums-institutions-returning-objects

6A	2/09/2023	Martha Gill	“ This article is more than 10 months old Being a victim of theft might help the British Museum reflect on returning its own swag”	https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/02/british-museum-should-give-back-loot-benin-bronzes
7A	26/08/2023	Andrew Anthony	““Nobody was expecting it’: British Museum warned reputation seriously damaged and treasures will take decades to recover”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/aug/26/british-museum-reputation-damaged-treasures-loss
8A	27/08/2023	David Batty and Mark Brown	“Thefts expose British Museum’s ‘ridiculous’ stance on return of artefacts, says MP”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/aug/27/thefts-expose-british-museums-ridiculous-stance-on-return-of-artefacts-says-mp
9A	05/08/2022	Esther Addley	“Is British Museum’s stance shifting on Parthenon marbles return?”	https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/aug/05/pressure-builds-on-british-museum-to-return-parthenon-marbles
10A	02/02/2020	Ben Quinn	Devon museum in repatriation dispute over indigenous relics	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2020/feb/02/british-museum-in-repatriation-dispute-over-indigenous-relics
11A	21/06/2019	Lanre Bakare	“British Museum 'has head in sand' over return of artefacts”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/21/british-museum-head-in-sand-return-artefacts-colonial
12A	26/12/2018	The Guardian Editorial Team	“The Guardian on the restitution of cultural property”	https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/26/the-guardian-view-on-the-restitution-of-cultural-property

13A	29/06/2015	Kanishk Tharoor	“Museums and looted art: the ethical dilemma of preserving world cultures”	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jun/29/museums-looting-art-artefacts-world-culture
14A	14/02/2015	Paul Daley	“Indigenous leaders fight for return of relics featuring in major new exhibition”	https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2015/feb/14/it-taunts-us-spiritually-the-fight-for-indigenous-relics-spirited-off-to-the-uk
15A	24/01/2008	Helena Smith	“The Parthenon marbles, and the rest please”	https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/jan/24/disputedart.art1

Appendix 2: List of *The Global Times* articles, numbered from 1B (most recent) to 15B (oldest)

Article No.	Date	Author	Title	URL
1B	22/07/2024	Lang Chensun	“Cultural exploration not excuse for looting”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202407/1316493.shtml
2B	07/07/2024	Chen Xi	“Ex-British Museum chief’s fee proposal reveals Western arrogance”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202407/1315574.shtml
3B	09/04/2024	Huo Zhengxin	“Three 'surprises' I got in the US while discussing the return of Chinese cultural artifacts”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202404/1310258.shtml
4B	27/11/2023	Chen Xi	“Greek PM’s call shows global demand for the return of stolen relics”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202311/1302597.shtml

5B	26/09/2023	Chen Xi and Xu Liuliu	“Western museums’ fear of domino effect makes return of lost artifacts overseas hard”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202309/1299004.shtml
6B	14/09/2023	Global Times staff reporters	“Rare Chinese porcelains purloined from German museum, sparking anger”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202309/1298236.shtml
7B	29/08/2023	Global Times staff reporters	“Voices rise, resonate among countries for return of relics from British Museum”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202308/1297223.shtml
8B	28/08/2023	Global Times	“British Museum must return Chinese cultural relics for free: Global Times editorial”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202308/1297079.shtml
9B	24/07/2023	Global Times	“China-Germany program shows the way to relic repatriation”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202307/1294984.shtml
10B	05/01/2023	Li Yuche and Pan Xiaotong in Beijing and Jiang Xuan	“China-proposed BRI paves way for return of looted cultural relics like Egypt’s Rosetta Stone”	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202301/1283290.shtml
11B	14/03/2021	Chen Xi	“Chinese netizens show support for Greece’s request for UK to return	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/

			Parthenon relics, challenge British Museum's ownership of looted Chinese relics"	202103/1218302.shtml
12B	18/11/2020	Chen Xi	"Chinese give thumbs up as UK returns relics"	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202011/1207294.shtml
13B	13/11/2019	Chen Xi	"Macao tycoon donates looted relic"	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201911/1169936.shtml
14B	29/08/2018	Fan Lingzhi	"GQ article refuted after implying Chinese government is behind theft of treasures overseas"	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201808/1117553.shtml
15B	07/12/2012	Chang Meng	"Looted relic on auction in France"	https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201212/748756.shtml

Appendix 3. Content analysis results for *The Guardian*.

Article No.	Obligation	Suggestion	Supportive	Critical	Aggressive	Conciliatory
1A	0	2	3	0	0	2
2A	1	0	3	9	9	2
3A	3	2	1	7	2	1
4A	1	0	0	4	0	2
5A	4	2	8	4	4	8
6A	1	5	0	10	9	0
7A	1	2	0	8	1	0
8A	1	0	0	3	2	0
9A	0	2	1	5	1	0
10A	0	0	0	3	2	0
11A	1	1	1	3	1	1
12A	7	2	1	4	3	0
13A	0	0	1	3	5	1
14A	0	2	4	5	9	6
15A	0	0	3	1	0	0

Appendix 4. Results of the tonal analysis for *Global Times*.

Article No.	Obligation	Suggestion	Supportive	Critical	Aggressive	Conciliatory
1B	4	1	0	5	6	1
2B	2	1	0	3	8	1
3B	2	0	5	0	0	1
4B	1	0	4	0	0	6
5B	0	1	0	5	5	2
6B	0	1	0	4	3	0
7B	1	0	3	5	2	0
8B	4	1	1	8	12	1
9B	1	4	0	3	1	5
10B	2	1	1	3	3	7
11B	0	0	0	3	2	0
12B	0	0	4	2	1	3
13B	0	0	1	1	1	0
14B	2	4	1	3	3	1
15B	1	0	0	2	1	0

Appendix 5. Frequency count of content analysis results for *The Guardian and Global Times*

	The Guardian	Global Times
Obligation	20	20
Suggestion	20	14
Supportive	26	20
Critical	69	47
Aggressive	47	48
Conciliatory	23	28

Appendix 6. Distribution of themes identified in *The Guardian* articles

Article No.	Desire for Progression	Reconciliation
1A		x
2A	x	x
3A	x	x
4A		
5A	x	
6A	x	x
7A	x	x
8A	x	
9A	x	x
10A	x	
11A	x	x
12A	x	x
13A	x	

14A		x
15A		x

Appendix 7. Distribution of themes identified in *Global Times* articles

Article No.	Patriotism	Distrust/Hostility
1B		
2B		x
3B		x
4B	x	
5B	x	x
6B		x
7B		x
8B		x
9B		x
10B	x	x
11B	x	x
12B	x	x
13B	x	
14B	x	x
15B		