

Sophisticated News Outlets: Comparing The New York Times and Global Daily on the Framing and Diffusion of Attitude

Qingran Jin^{1,a,*}

*¹Xi'an Gaoxin No.1 High School, Xifeng Side Ave, Chang'an District, Shaanxi, China
a. sandyisarobot@gmail.com*

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Today, news media have become essential to everyday life, offering the public more information on political events. However, people who read different media outlets often hold different opinions on the same event. It is intriguing to think about how people are affected to hold the attitudes intentionally directed by the news outlets and to figure out some specific reasons behind. There are lots of communication techniques used by the news outlets in journalism in order to shape their readers' ideas, and framing is one of the common methods. Framing refers to the ways in which how an issue is characterized in news can influence how the audience understand it. This paper argues that news outlets strategically use framing to shape the orientations and opinions of their readers, by comparing the coverage of the Wagner Mutiny by two news agencies, Global Daily and The New York Times. This paper proceeds with, first, a summary of how the two news outlets reported the Wagner Mutiny, focusing on their different attitudes. Second, the paper provides a potential explanation of these differences by identifying the framing mechanisms that induces the readers' thoughts in each news outlet.

Keywords: News media, political events, framing analysis

1. Introduction

It has been almost three years since Russia invaded Ukraine. Despite substantial support from NATO, Ukraine continues to face challenges to defeat Russia and defend its national sovereignty. However, in June 2023, the Wagner Mutiny, an unexpected coup against Putin's regime in Russia signaled a turning point in the war and attracted global media attention. One day after the mutiny, Yevgeny V. Prigozhin, leader of the Wagner private military, agreed to halt his military rebellion against Moscow after negotiating with the president of Belarus. Mysteriously, two months later, Russia announced the death of Prigozhin, who was aboard a plane that crashed in Russia. Yet, news about the Wagner Mutiny and the death of Prigozhin has major differences depending on the framing. To illustrate my argument, I compare The New York Times (Chinese version) and Global Daily. Both target Chinese-reading audiences but represent different positions. The New York Times is an independent mainstream U.S. media, while Global Daily is a partisan media under the Chinese Communist Party.

2. Literature Review

Framing refers to how people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about it [1]. Framing has both sociological and psychological foundations. The sociological foundation includes diction, images, phrases, and presentation styles in communication [2]. The psychological origins are exemplified by how different presentations of the same decision-making scenario influence people's choices and their evaluation of available options [3]. Framing influence how an issue is viewed from a particular perspective and how it is construed as having particular values [4]. Framing is also a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue and make the information more accessible [5]. Moreover, it is common for news media to use framing to link politicians and other opinion leaders to the public. Politicians can win public support by encouraging people to think about their policies along particular lines [1]. Specifically, journalistic framing is a significant type of framing that informs people about events and shapes the events' significance for individuals and the country [6].

3. Difference in the reportage

To analyze the framing used by the two news outlets, I summarize the differences in their reportage of the Wagner Mutiny and the death of Prigozhin. Global Daily tends to stress that President Putin controlled the mutiny and that the Russian Government took effective measures. Global Daily emphasizes that Russia overcame challenges and maintained national stability [7]. Its news primarily cites reports from Russian official press, such as RIA Novosti and Information Telegraph Agency of Russia. Citations from other foreign media, like BBC and Reuters News, are selected to favor Russia. Global Daily reports that President Putin stayed up late to tackle the mutiny [8]. Even when Putin fled to St. Petersburg, Global Daily publishes misinformation that Mr. Putin was still working in the Kremlin [9]. Moreover, one report by Global Daily summarizes all the national leaders who publicly supported Putin, including the Presidents of Chechnya, Kazakhstan, and Turkey [10]. Global Daily also reports that China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was confident that Russia could peacefully put down the rebellion [11]. When the mutiny ended, Global Daily mentions Prigozhin's audio recording but does not mention that Prigozhin's characterization of Kremlin's rationale for the Ukraine War was false [12]. For news on the death of Prigozhin, Global Daily tends to highlight Putin's grief and sadness at the loss of this friend. In "Prigozhon killed in plane crash, Putin responds," Global Daily reports that Putin was determined to investigate the plane crash [13]. This report also reports that Putin appreciated the contribution made by Prigozhin and his Wagner troops during the Russo-Ukraine War. Furthermore, another report cites the president of Belarus to deny that the accident was orchestrated by Putin [14]. Global Daily also reports how the Russian foreign minister rebuked President Biden's "not surprised" statement about the death of Prigozhin, criticizing the U.S. disregard for diplomacy [15].

On the contrary, The New York Times focuses more on reporting the catastrophic effects of the mutiny. It prefers to demonstrate how serious it was for Putin to be betrayed by one of his most trusted leaders. According to "What Will Happen to Prigozhin and His Wagner Fighters? Here's What We Know," Prigozhin's rebellion threatened Putin's authority and his dictatorial rule [16]. Instead of portraying Putin as a national hero fighting against a destabilizing mutiny, news from The New York Times shows Putin's failure. An article titled "Mutiny Provided Glimpse of a Post-Putin Russia. Is the Window Still Open" reports that after the mutiny, Putin still tried to re-establish a veneer of equilibrium in Russian politics to convey a firm grip on power and enduring popularity [17]. Internationally, The New York Times focuses on the decade-long political and economic collaboration between China and Russia. One report states that the Wagner Mutiny could have threatened President Xi to hedge the Sino-Russian alliance, which might bring China global criticism

and harm China's interests [18]. Regarding the attitude toward Prigozhin, The New York Times focuses on Prigozhin's complaints to the military officials and their handling of the invasion [19]. The New York Times also tends to emphasize the relationship between Prigozhin's death and his disregard for Russian authorities. It emphasizes that Prigozhin was a "public power player" in the past few months, who had escalated his feud with the military leadership of the Russo-Ukraine War, accused the Russian army of attacking his forces, and led the Wagner Mutiny [20]. Moreover, one piece of news titled "Rule No.1 in Putin's Russia: Defy Him at Your Peril" recalls the grim fate of individuals who threatened the domination of Putin in the past and alluded that Prigozhin, a traitor called by Putin during the mutiny, might have the same fate due to his disloyalty. It reports that many Western officials believed Putin ordered the plane crash. For Prigozhin's burial, The New York Times says that misinformation about the burial site may illustrate that the Russian Government tended to avoid spontaneous rallies in memory of the top leader of Wagner and the Russian state media barely mentioned the burial.

4. Explaining the differences

The readers' preference for each outlet is different. Since The New York Times is censored in China, its Chinese readers need to spend more effort to access the reports. Driven by a curiosity to get more perspectives, these readers are a relatively small group of people who tend to be more open-minded and have broader horizons. By contrast, Global Daily has a larger domestic Chinese audience. The digital news of Global Daily had 15.79 million followers in 2020, ranking first among all newspapers in China [21]. The proportion of party cadres and government staff was about 32 percent of the total followers, which was higher than average [22]. This suggests that readers of Global Daily are likely to support the Chinese government and trust the state media.

5. Framing in the news outlets

Framing is an important tool for news outlets to address their audience. There are several ways in which framing can induce readers' thoughts. First, the titles of Global Daily usually include key facts or directly use brief summaries of the contents, such as "Sort it out in one post: these countries have stated their support for Putin and the Russian government's actions," "Russian Media: Putin interviewed about special military operation against Ukraine, says he 'slept late recently,'" and "Foreign media inquired about the 'Wagner incident', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: China is confident that Russia will be able to maintain national stability." The framing of these titles is ingenious. These titles are concise and conclusive, without specific causations against the events. They leave more space for the readers to connect the contents and convey most of the information that Global Daily intends to share. For instance, when the readers see the three titles above, they will likely conclude that the mutiny has been in control of the Russian leadership and Russia has many advocates to win the war. Moreover, Global Daily prefers to use a combination of short videos and real-time reports in the content. The videos are often characterized by a photo of one member of the Russian government or Putin, symbolizing stability in Russia. The videos usually provide short summaries of the content and focus on facts. Furthermore, this type of concise framing influences the readers who read the rest of the report. Like the framing of the titles, the framing of the content also uses segmented citations and information without details to convince the readers. The readers will likely try to depict the "fact" that Global Daily selectively presents. Though all the facts are real, curating these facts can present biased positions and shape the readers' attitudes toward the mutiny.

By comparison, titles of The New York Times have no punctuation marks or citations and usually do not conclude the content. The reports tend to present a brief overview of the latest situation instead of making real-time reports, like "Putin Says Russia Is United Behind Him, After Quelling Rebellion"

and “Rumors and Misdirection Keep Crowds Way from Prigozhin Burial.” Each report is relatively independent, making it less likely to induce people to combine the presented opinions in the titles. In addition, longer content focuses on commenting on the mutiny and expressing clear attitudes. When reading, the readers do not need to connect fragments of information by themselves or assume the authors’ opinions. The New York Times provides readers with a more comprehensive narrative of the events and emphasizes logical expression. The attitude of the authors is always hidden in the background information and facts. For instance, a report named “Yevgeny Prigozhin, Renegade Mercenary Chief Who Rattled Kremlin” intertwines Prigozhin’s life with the growing tensions between him and the Russian authorities, making the connection between his eventual death in a mysterious plane crash and what he had done. Moreover, The New York Times refers to other media and uses citations as supporting evidence instead of heading them in titles to lure the readers. All in all, the framing of The New York Times fits the preference of the intended audience who are likely to spend more time reading and understanding the authors’ opinions instead of only knowing some fragment of facts. By combining facts with the insight from the authors, the reports of The New York Times induce audiences to reflect on the reasons behind the political events by themselves instead of directly showing the personal attitude of the authors. In other words, the topic of each report in The New York Times cannot be obtained only from scanning the titles or a few sentences in the contents. The readers always need to read more carefully while thinking deeply to capture the main ideas by their own understanding.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper analyzes how journalistic framing influences the readers’ attitudes toward the Wagner Mutiny. This paper helps encourage people to read from various news resources before forming their own opinions of a particular event. The paper also makes people aware of the impact of framing on the kinds of information they can access.

The Russo-Ukraine War continues, and its media coverage still surrounds us in many aspects of our lives. Hopefully, people who read this paper can distinguish some framing techniques and form more objective and thorough opinions about any political event reported by the news.

References

- [1] Druckman, Dennis Chong and James N. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Reviews (Annual Reviews)* 103-126.
- [2] Druckman, James N. 2001. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior* 225-256.
- [3] Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky. 2013. "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk." In *Handbook of the Fundamentals of Financial Decision Making*, by Leonard MacLean and William T Ziemba, 99-127. Canada.
- [4] Chong, Dennis, and James N Druckman. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 103-126.
- [5] Tewksbury, Dietram A. Scheufele & David. 2006. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication* 9-20.
- [6] Baden, Christian. 2020. "Framing the News." In *THE HANDBOOK OF JOURNALISM STUDIES*, by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, 253. New York: Routledge.
- [7] Yuwei, Fan. 2023. Foreign media inquired about the "Wagner incident", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: China is confident that Russia will be able to maintain national stability. *Global Daily*.
- [8] Zhang, Jiangping. 2023. Kremlin: Russian Defense Ministry and other department report to Putin on measures taken in response to armed insurgency attempts. *Global Daily*.
- [9] Jiang, Xiaoping. 2023. RUSSIAN MEDIA: Putin is working in the Kremlin, says Peskov. *Global Daily*.
- [10] Zhang, Xiaoya. 2023. These countries have stated their support for Putin and the Russian government's actions. *Global Daily*.
- [11] Yuwei, Fan. 2023. Foreign media inquired about the "Wagner incident", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: China is confident that Russia will be able to maintain national stability. *Global Daily*.
- [12] Zhang, Xiaoya. 2023. Foreign media: Prigozhin issued the first message after the end of the "Wagner" incident. *Global Daily*.

- [13] Zhao, Jiandong. 2023. *Prigozhin killed in plane crash, Putin responds*. *Global Daily*.
- [14] Lin, Zeyu. 2023. *"Putin plotted the murder of Prigorin"? Lukashenko responds: impossible*. *Global Daily*. Jiang, Xiaoping. 2023. *RUSSIAN MEDIA: Putin is working in the Kremlin, says Peskov*. *Global Daily*.
- [15] Suo, Yanqi. 2023. *Russia's deputy foreign minister hits back at Biden's remarks on Prigogine crash: shows U.S. disregard for diplomacy*. *Global Daily*.
- [16] Bigg, Matthew Mpoke. 2023. *What Will Happen to Prigozhin and His Wagner Fighters? Here's What We Know*. *The New York Times*.
- [17] Sonne, Paul. 2023. *Mutiny Provided Glimpse of a Post-Putin Russia. Is the Window Still Open?* *The New York Times*.
- [18] Pierson, David, and Olivia Wang. 2023. *Wagner Uprising Highlights China's Risks With Russia*. *The New York Times*.
- [19] Hopkins, Valerie. 2023. *Putin Says Russia Is United Behind Him, After Quelling Rebellion*. *Berlin: The New York Times*.
- [20] Hopkins Valerie. 2023. *Yevgeny Prigozhin, Renegade Mercenary Chief Who Rattled Kremlin*. *The New York Times*.
- [21] Wang, Yuanyuan, and Shenghong Tang. 2020. *2020 Newspaper Convergence Communication Index Report*. *People's Daily*.
- [22] Zhao, Qinqin. 2020. *Media positioning information of major Chinese news media*. March 1. Accessed March 1, 2020.