

CHINA IN THE NEWS

A Comparative Analysis of the China Coverage of BBC World,
CNN International and Deutsche Welle

Philip Seib and Shawn Powers



The USC Center on Public Diplomacy
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Executive Summary

The attached report presents the results of a comparative analysis of the China coverage of three international broadcasters: BBC World Service, CNN International and Deutsche Welle (DW). Drawing upon the results of a quantitative and qualitative content and framing analysis, it identifies three different approaches to covering China-related news. Although all three broadcasters produced a similar number of China stories in terms of a percentage of its overall news agenda, each focused on different types of stories and utilized different frames in reporting China news. This summary highlights key findings described in greater detail in the report, and provides a summary of the differences identified between broadcasters.

BBC's Approach

BBC offered the broadest China coverage, touching on most of the China-related issues covered by DW and CNN International while also consistently connecting and contextualizing current events with other developments, past and present. Its approach to news, including China-related news, was the most political and consequently more likely to challenge the official presentation of facts by governments, corporations and international organizations. Its China coverage was particularly robust in some areas, such as when covering Chinese society, but fairly one-sided in others, such as when detailing China's record on human and political rights and its role in international politics. More specifically:

- BBC's reporting on Chinese society, compared to DW and CNN International, provided the most insight into events going on internally in China. Whereas DW's coverage was driven by events of direct relevance to Germany, and CNN International's coverage focused on soft news (e.g., the return of several pandas by American zoos to China), BBC's coverage of Chinese society had little to do with the UK and actually provided important, current information on the state of Chinese internal affairs.
- BBC's coverage of China's role in international politics—an important topic, given its importance in handling the UN's reaction to growing concerns over Iran's nuclear program, in helping negotiate with North Korea, and in combating global climate change—was small, constituting just 8% of its China-related news stories, compared to 14% of CNN International's and 12% of DW's China-related news. To put this figure in perspective, BBC spent the same amount of time reporting on the state of political rights in China. Moreover, when it did report on China's role in international politics, it portrayed China as a negative influence in the pursuit of international law and stability 50% of the time, never portraying China as a helpful player in international politics.
- BBC's coverage of political and human rights issues in China—more specifically, Chinese press freedom, individual right to freedom of expression, association and petition, and Tibetan independence—was highly critical of the Chinese government. BBC reports offered a negative assessment of the Chinese government's approach to human and political rights 82 percent of the time. Moreover, BBC was more supportive of the Western governmental policies towards Tibet and its spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, offering critical assessment of Western approaches to Tibet just 14 percent of the time. BBC's polarized depictions of China vis-a-vis political and human rights stood out in contrast to its more balanced reporting on China-related global economic news, Chinese society and even China's stance on Taiwan.

CNN International's Approach

CNN International's coverage of China was the least substantive of the three broadcasters. Only 42 CNN stories mentioned China during the period under review, and each was on average 18 seconds shorter than its non-China stories. Moreover, its China coverage was largely driven by non-political news – general human-interest stories that rarely provided much insight into current affairs. Even on issues seemingly important to CNN International's agenda and audience (e.g. the US-Sino conflict over Taiwan, trade and Tibetan independence) the network failed to provide thorough or balanced coverage. More specifically:

- Sixty-seven percent of CNN International's China-related stories (12 percent of global economic news, 29 percent touching on Chinese society and 26 percent in the *Other* category) were entirely non-political. With the exception of one story focusing on an impoverished child living in Beijing, its coverage of Chinese society was almost entirely driven by the return of several pandas on loan to the US to China and Chinese (Lunar) New Year celebrations. CNN International's China-related global economic news centered on Toyota's automobile recall, which resulted in a trip by Toyota's President to Beijing in an effort limit damage to the company's reputation in China. CNN International stories categorized as "Other" had no political relevance, typically including minor mentions of China's performance in the Vancouver Winter Olympics or references to the geographic borders of China as a frame of reference for the locations of other countries, such as North Korea and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, CNN International was the only network that failed to broadcast a single story on the state of political rights in China, a small but important topic of reporting for BBC and, to a lesser extent, DW.
- Perhaps more surprisingly, in its coverage of Taiwan and Tibet, CNN International failed to offer even one critical assessment of the Chinese government's position on either Taiwan or Tibet, compared to 42 percent of BBC coverage and 8 percent of DW coverage. This oversight was notable considering the Obama administration's participation in major events related to Taiwan and Tibet that took place during the period under review. In contrast, 50 percent of CNN International stories included a critical assessment of the Obama administration's policies in Taiwan or Tibet, typically articulated by the Chinese government.
- However, CNN International offered the most balanced assessment of China's role in international affairs, portraying it as a positive influence in international politics in 50 percent of its stories, and as a negative influence in 17 percent of its reporting. It offered a middle ground between BBC,

which included no depiction of China as a positive influence in international affairs, and DW, whose broadcasts portrayed China as a positive force in international politics 71 percent of the time.

Deutsche Welle's Approach

DW provided the most China coverage during the period analyzed, with reports consistently offering a straightforward and balanced account of events. Typically relying on official statements from the stakeholders involved in a story—governments, corporations and international organizations—its reporting reflected the important voices on a particular topic. While unlikely to provide a significant amount of contextual background or depth on any particular issue (DW's average news story was shorter than stories presented by BBC and CNN International), DW delivered the facts surrounding a story and rarely editorialized. Importantly, outside of major international events involving China, DW's coverage of China often included stories with some connection to Germany, and especially the German economy. More specifically:

- DW's coverage of China focused more intently on China's role in the global economy. Thirty-four percent of its China-related news focused on the global economy, compared to 28 percent of BBC and 12 percent of CNN International China coverage.
- DW's coverage of China's role in the global economy, along with its coverage of Chinese society, constituted 49 percent of its overall China-related news. In stories related to both these two topics, DW's coverage was decidedly positive, portraying China as a safe, stable and happy place to live, and as a positive economic model and an important partner in global economic growth. No China-related DW story portrayed China's economic growth as a threat or Chinese society as an unhappy or unsafe place to live. DW's coverage of China's role in the global economy and of Chinese society consistently emphasized the interconnectedness of the two countries and featured examples of cross-cultural similarities (e.g. German appreciation for the Chinese [Lunar] New Year and for Chinese films). DW's coverage of China's role in international politics—an issue that it reported on more than both BBC and CNN International—was overwhelmingly supportive of China's broadening participation in international affairs. Seventy-one percent of DW's stories on China's role in international politics portrayed China as a positive influence in the pursuit of international law and stability, compared to 50 percent of CNN and zero BBC stories on the same topic.

- DW's coverage of political rights in China and Tibet/Taiwan (which combined represented 23 percent of its China-related news) was balanced and objective, particularly when compared to BBC. When covering news on the state of political rights in China, DW's reporting stuck to the established facts of the situation, providing the contributions from each of the primary stakeholder involved in the story. In its reporting on Taiwan and Tibet, two highly sensitive issues for the Chinese government, DW was balanced, providing space for both the Chinese government and the Obama administration to explain their positions while also occasionally offering critical views of both.

Introduction

Over the last two and a half years, the quality of Deutsche Welle's (DW) China coverage has been the subject of some controversy. Chinese government internet censors continue to regularly block the Deutsche Welle TV [website](#), most notably during the 2008 Olympics, and its application for a broadcast license in China was also rejected that same year.¹ At the same time, critics have charged DW TV with exhibiting a pro-China bias and as infiltrated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In September 2008, several dozen Chinese scholars and high profile Chinese dissidents and journalists living in Germany wrote an open letter criticizing the head of its China service, Zhang Danhong, for her public declarations of support for the CCP.² The letter also claimed that under Zhang's direction, DW's Chinese reporting had become so pro-Chinese that it now undermined the station's primary mission of promoting human rights and democracy. It also noted that DW stories on China were of lesser quality and shorter length when compared to reporting on other matters. A few days later, *Der Spiegel* published the letter, along with a call for DW to review whether its China bureau had allowed the station to become a conduit for the Chinese Communist Party. DW responded by conducting an internal inquiry into pro-Chinese bias, concluding that, "the accusations [were] unfounded."³ Following Zhang's dismissal and that of several others working in the China office, claims of both anti-and pro-Chinese bias have continued to be leveled against the station. For instance, Chinese economist He Qinglian (who briefly wrote commentary for the DW website before being dismissed by Zhang) refers to "the always strongly pro-China Chinese-language section of the Deutsche Welle."⁴ In 2009, DW began to expand its presence in Asia with the launch of DW-TV Asia+ available over satellite television that included a 30-minute talk show broadcast from Beijing. BBC World's China coverage has been the subject of similar controversy, and subject to frequent denunciations by the Chinese government. To name a few instances, in 1994, Rupert Murdoch, owner of Star TV, removed BBC World from its satellite line up as a conciliatory gesture towards the Chinese government, which was angry over a documentary on Chairman

¹ HerdictWeb Reporter. "Reports of www.dw-world.de blockage in China." Herdict.org is a project of Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. Accessed June 15, 2010 on: <<http://www.herdict.org/web/explore/detail/id/CN/2195/32767>>

² Xuewen, Huan et. al. "Offener Brief chinesischer Dissidenten." September 13. (2009). Accessed June 17, 2010 on: <<http://www.perlentaucher.de/artikel/4990.html>>

³ "Valentin Schmidt: 'Vorwürfe gegen chinesische Angebote der Deutschen Welle haltlos,'" [1 December 2008](#). From a DW press release translated by Kai Ludwig. Accessed June 15, 2010 on: <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3839193,00.html>> .

⁴ Qinglian, He. 'Soft Power' With Chinese Characteristics is Changing the World. China Rights Forum 2009 (4), (2009): <<http://www.hrichina.org/public/contents/article?revisionpercent5fid=173030&itempercent5fid=173029>>

Mao's sexual practices.⁵ In July 2008, China's special representative to Darfur called BBC reporting on China-Sudan relations "ungrounded and biased."⁶ Its website has also been subject to similar filtering.⁷ CNN has had a similarly fraught relationship with China. On April 9, 2009 Jack Cafferty host of the Situation Room referred to the Chinese as a "bunch of goons and thugs" and characterized Chinese products as "junk," sparking a demand for a formal apology from CNN by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, which it received.⁸ While this instance received massive news coverage in the West, CNN has perhaps been most criticized for its Tibet coverage, outrage over which prompted the creation of a Chinese language website, anti-cnn.com dedicated to pointing out media bias in CNN coverage about China.

While this report does not speak directly to the validity of any of these claims, it does provide a systematic analysis of the coverage of China-related news by all three broadcasters in the spring of 2010. The following pages document the findings of an analysis of the content and bias of BBC World, CNN International, and Deutsche Welle's coverage of China between 28 January and 4 March 2010. Through qualitative and quantitative content and framing analysis, it highlights the extent to which each broadcaster's coverage was favorable, unfavorable, or neutral, and if either favorable or unfavorable, in what ways. It concludes that in the period under review, DW coverage exhibited no notable bias against China, while BBC's and CNN International's coverage both provided a different perspective on China-related news than that offered by DW. Overall, DW drew upon fewer sources that were critical of the Chinese government than BBC, and offered more balance and political news than CNN International. Broadly speaking, DW's coverage focused on facts rather than opinion and was less in depth in its attention to controversial issues in Chinese politics and society. However, this largely stems from broader differences in DW reporting styles. DW broadcasts overall during the period under review focused on reporting the circumstances of particular events rather than the backstory of larger ideological and political issues driving those events. BBC, on the other hand, was much more political in its reporting, and more likely to challenge institutional facts and positions. CNN International differed from both DW and BBC, providing a relatively small amount of politically relevant China coverage. In

⁵ Auletta, Ken, "The Pirate," *The New Yorker*. 13: 1995.

⁶ "Envoy Liu Guijin says BBC report on China's arms sales to Sudan "biased." "BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific - Political,(2008).

⁷ Deutsche Welle, "Reporters Without Borders warns against Internet censorship," March 12, 2010: Accessed June 15 on <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5349061,00.html>>

⁸ Mostrous, Alexi, "CNN apologises to China over 'thugs and goons' comment by Jack Cafferty," *The Sunday Times* (UK), April 16, 2009. Accessed June 23 on <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article3756437.ece>>

all, its coverage was sparse, and when it did cover important current political news relating to China, its coverage was not typically balanced and rarely in-depth.

Sample and Methods

The USC Center on Public Diplomacy conducted a comparative content analysis of, BBC World Service, CNN International, and Deutsche Welle's English-language television news coverage of China between 28 January and 4 March 2010. The morning and evening editions of the stations respective 30 minute flagship news programs were selected for analysis: Deutsche Welle's *The Journal*, BBC's *World Newshour*, and CNN International's *World Report*.⁹ In total one hour of news coverage (i.e. 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening) per day for 35 days (i.e. 35 hours total per broadcaster) were analyzed.

The analysis proceeded in two phases:

In *Phase I* a team of three coders watched all broadcasts to identify the China and non-China news stories. In addition, stories were coded according to forty-three different categories ranging from the War in Afghanistan, to the environment, to general financial news, to China. A detailed listing of content categories identified is included in Appendix A.¹⁰

Overall, during the period of study, DW aired 797 different stories, BBC 848, and CNN International 621. Out of this total number, Deutsche Welle aired 61, BBC 52, and CNN International 41 stories about China. A full explication of the reliability of the quantitative content analysis (including inter-coder reliability) is included in Appendix B.

Each of the 154 stories mentioning China were then reexamined and divided into six sub-topics of China-related news: *Chinese Society*, *Geopolitics*, *Global Economy*, *Political Rights*, *Taiwan & Tibet*, and *Other*.

In *Phase II*, a framing analysis was completed to identify whether coverage was favorable, unfavorable, or neutral and in what ways. For each of the six primary topics, a series of questions was developed to

⁹ In a small number of cases (less than 10 percent), BBC's World Newshour was unavailable, and BBC's flagship Asia News show, *Impact Asia*, was examined in its place.

¹⁰ All stories with potential political relevance were coded into a topic category. Sports news, excluding the Olympics, and weather reports were excluded from the analysis.

specifically measure the extent to which coverage was either in favor of or critical of the primary stakeholders in a given story, including the Chinese government, Chinese business, Chinese society, the United States, as well as others. For example, stories focusing on China's role in international politics (categorized as *Geopolitics*) were examined to see if China was portrayed as a positive or negative influence in the pursuit of international law/justice/stability. Stories covering the Dalai Lama's invitation to visit the White House (categorized as *Tibet/Taiwan*) were examined to identify if the story included any criticism of China's position on Tibet (as violation of human rights or a threat to democracy, for example) and if the story included any criticism of the US/European position on Tibet (as a violation of sovereignty or a threat to international stability, for example), as well as others. A detailed list of the questions used for each of the six China sub-topics is included in Appendix C.

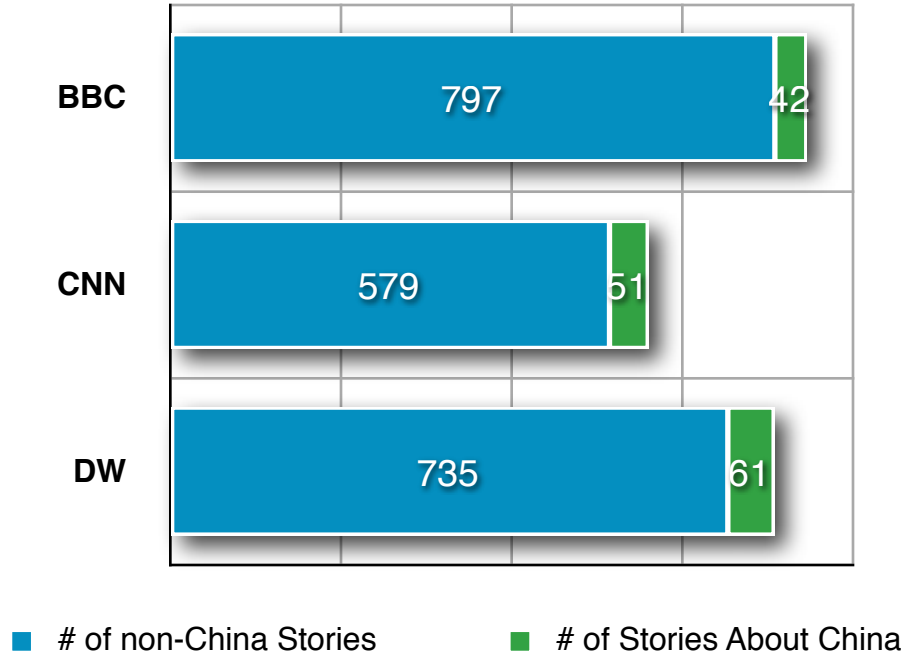
Finally, all China stories were then qualitatively analyzed. Each broadcast was reviewed and further themes and biases were tested. Comparative qualitative content analysis provides an important layer of analysis in that it helps to note what stories, stakeholders and frames are included and excluded by each broadcaster and to what effect. The qualitative analysis is helpful in contextualizing and explaining the findings from the quantitative analysis (*Phase 1*), as well as identifying particularly troubling uses of imagery and examples of incendiary or inappropriate rhetoric within a news story.

Findings

Prevalence of China Coverage

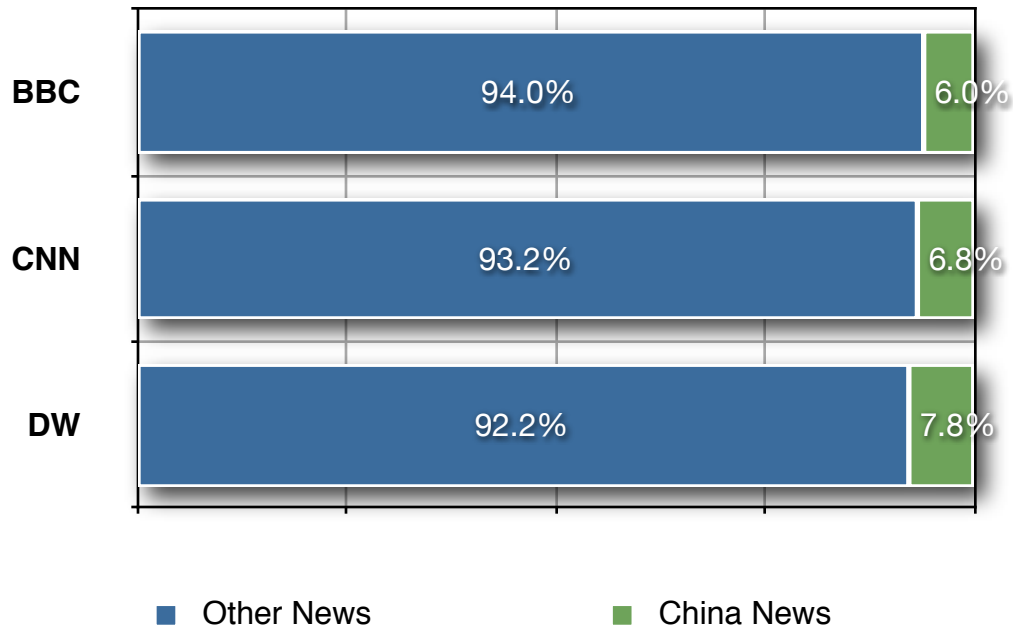
In *Phase I* researchers conducted a quantitative content analysis of all 35 hours of programming per broadcaster in order to identify the quantity and content of their China coverage. CNN International aired the fewest (N=41), and DW aired the most (N=61) China stories during the period under review. To put these numbers in perspective, China stories were less common than news about the US, the UK, Europe, Haiti, Afghanistan, finance news (stock market) and humanitarian disasters (such as earthquakes, severe flooding, etc.). Figure 1 contrasts the number of China stories with non-China-related stories.

Figure 1: Content Analysis Sample Population



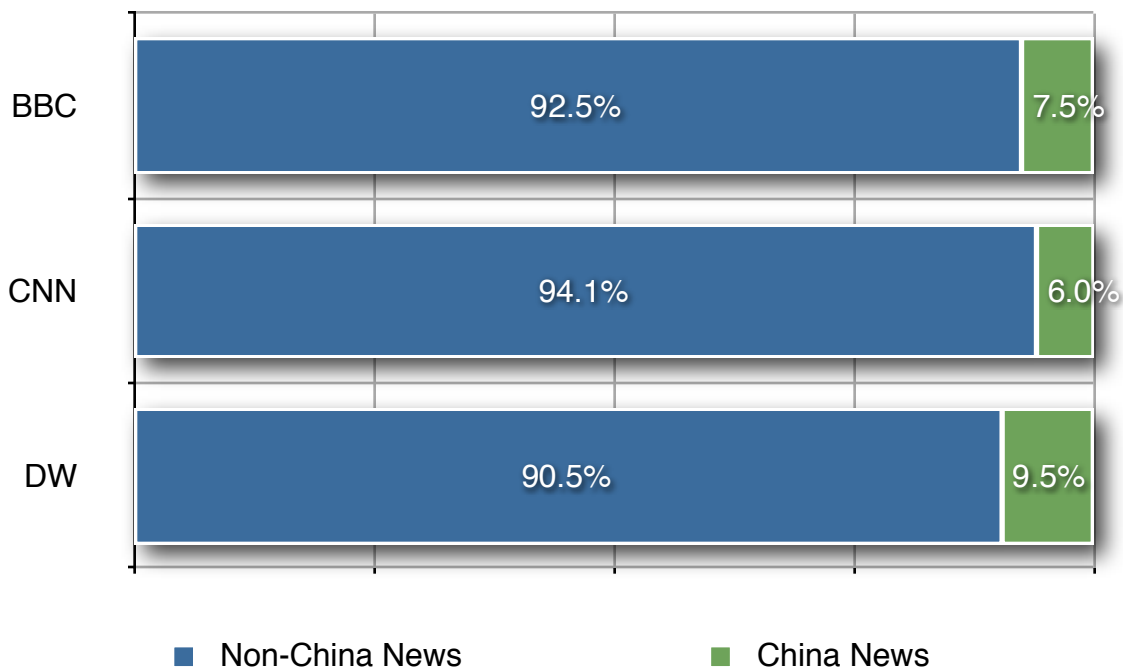
However, each network's China coverage should be understood in the context of their differing programming style. On average, in overall news coverage, CNN International broadcasts fewer stories per half-hour ($n=8.6$), when compared to DW ($n=11.06$) and BBC ($n=11.78$). This difference is attributable to CNN International's position as a private as opposed to a government-funded broadcaster. CNN International produces fewer stories each half hour in order to make space for messages from its commercial sponsors. Therefore, if we examine the number of stories as a percentage of total stories, we can see that the respective percentages of China stories are not dramatically different.

Figure 2: Number of China Stories as a Percentage of Total News



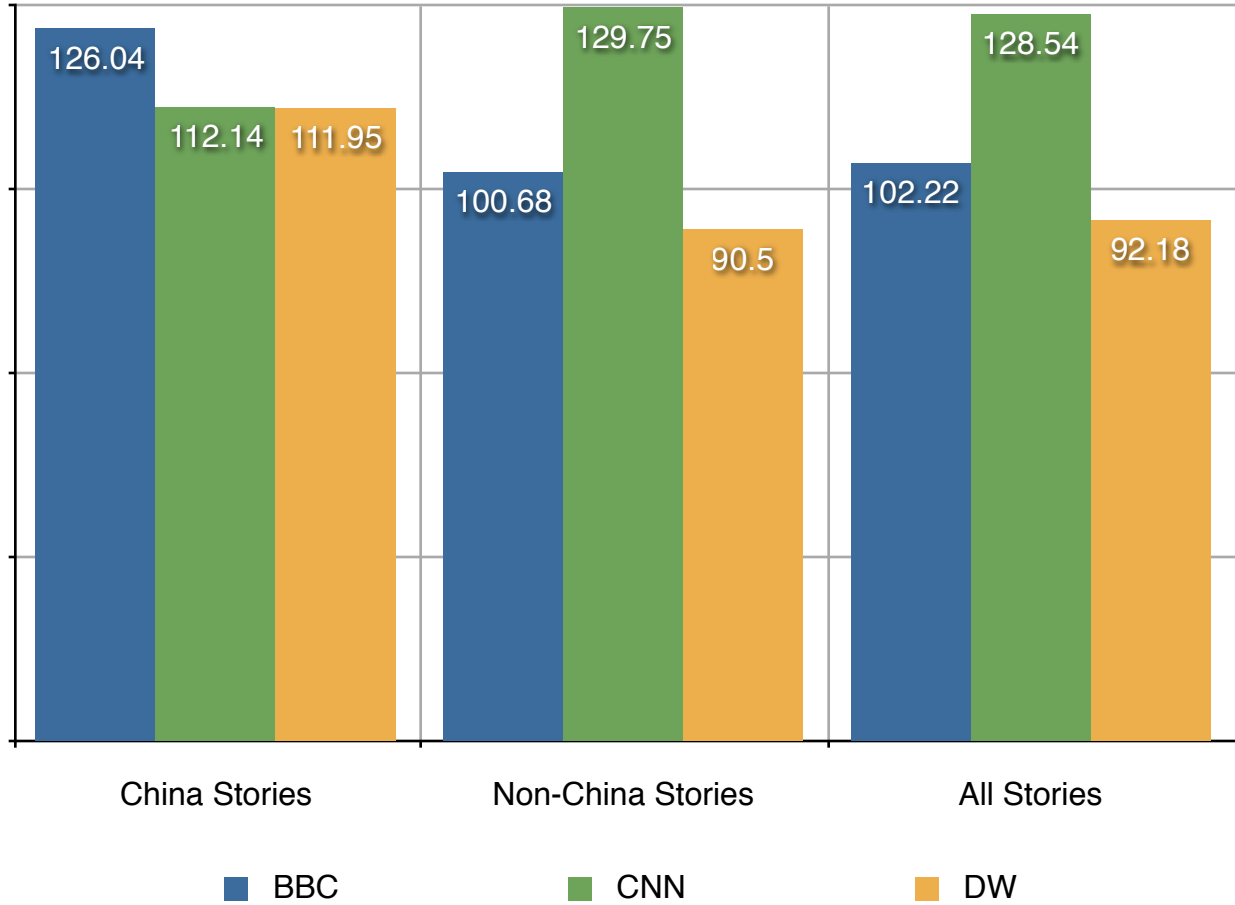
Deutsche Welle contained the highest number of stories about China both in raw numbers and as a percentage of overall news. BBC contained the lowest percentage of China stories as a percentage of overall stories, and CNN International produced the fewest stories about China in raw numbers. However, if we look at the total number of minutes dedicated to China coverage, differences between the broadcasters emerge.

Figure 3: Percentage of Broadcast Time Dedicated to China News



As Figure 3 illustrates, out of the three broadcasters, DW dedicated the highest percentage of total broadcast time to news about China. It dedicated 9.5 percent of total broadcast minutes to China news, ahead of BBC World who spent 7.5 percent of total broadcast time on China, and well ahead of CNN who dedicated only 6 percent of broadcast time on China. However, while DW dedicated the largest total time to China news, BBC tended to feature the longest, more in-depth stories, as depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Average Length of Individual News Stories in Seconds



As Figure 4 demonstrates, while DW dedicated the largest percentage of broadcast time to China, BBC's individual China's stories were the longest in length with an average of story length of 2.06 minutes¹¹ (126.04 seconds) compared to DW (111.95 seconds) and CNN (112.14 seconds). In fact, BBC China stories were on average significantly longer than stories on non-China-related events (126.04 versus 100.68 seconds).

China Coverage in Context

¹¹ With a standard deviation of 84.99 seconds.

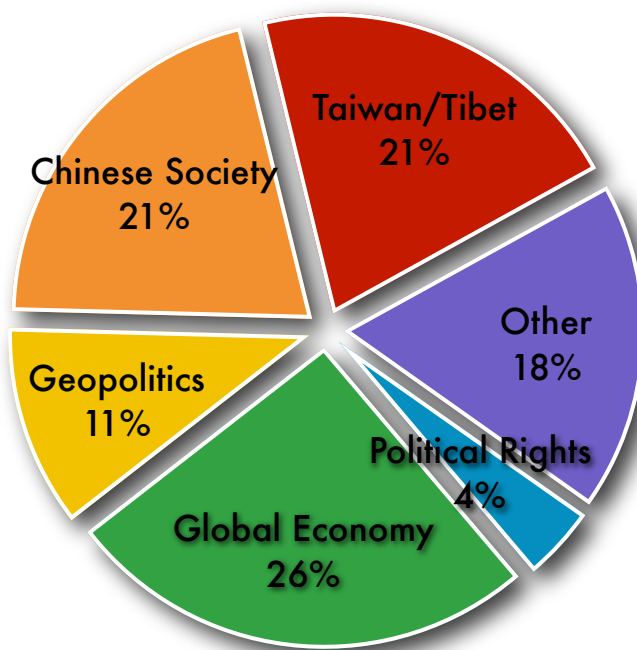
Regardless of the small differences in amount, across all three outlets, China news accounts for a relatively small percentage of all stories. The majority of stories clustered around several key events that took place during the period under review, detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Timeline of News Events				
Date	Event	DW	BBC	CNN
28 Jan	Toyota recall		X	X
29 Jan	World Economic Forum, Davos	X	X	
30 Jan	Obama announces \$6 billion US arms sale to Taiwan	X	X	X
31 Jan	China cracking down on media		X	
2 Feb	Report: Chinese Economy Growing Strong	X		
3 Feb	Obama announces his intention to meet the Dalai Lama	X	X	X
4 Feb	Obama to enforce trade rules to open up China's markets		X	
4 Feb	US returns pandas to China		X	X
6 Feb	Munich Security Conference	X		X
9 Feb	China passes Germany as world's largest exporter	X		
9 Feb	IAEA leaks a report about Iran's acceleration of its nuclear program	X	X	
11 Feb	Berlin International Film Festival	X		
11 Feb	Chinese Human Rights Activist Liu Xiaobo loses appeal	X	X	
12 Feb	China allows human rights activists from Japan to return to Beijing		X	
12 Feb	Chinese New Year	X	X	X
12 - 28 Feb	Vancouver Winter Olympics			
15 Feb	Japan maintains title as the world's second largest economy with China not far behind	X	X	X
16 Feb	China wins first Gold medal in figure skating	X		X

Table 1: Timeline of News Events				
17 Feb	China sells \$bn of US treasury bonds		X	
18 Feb	Obama hosts the Dalai Lama at the White House	X	X	X
27 Feb	Chilean Earthquake			
1 Mar	IAEA meet in Vienna in Iran's Nuclear Program			X
3 Mar	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference		X	

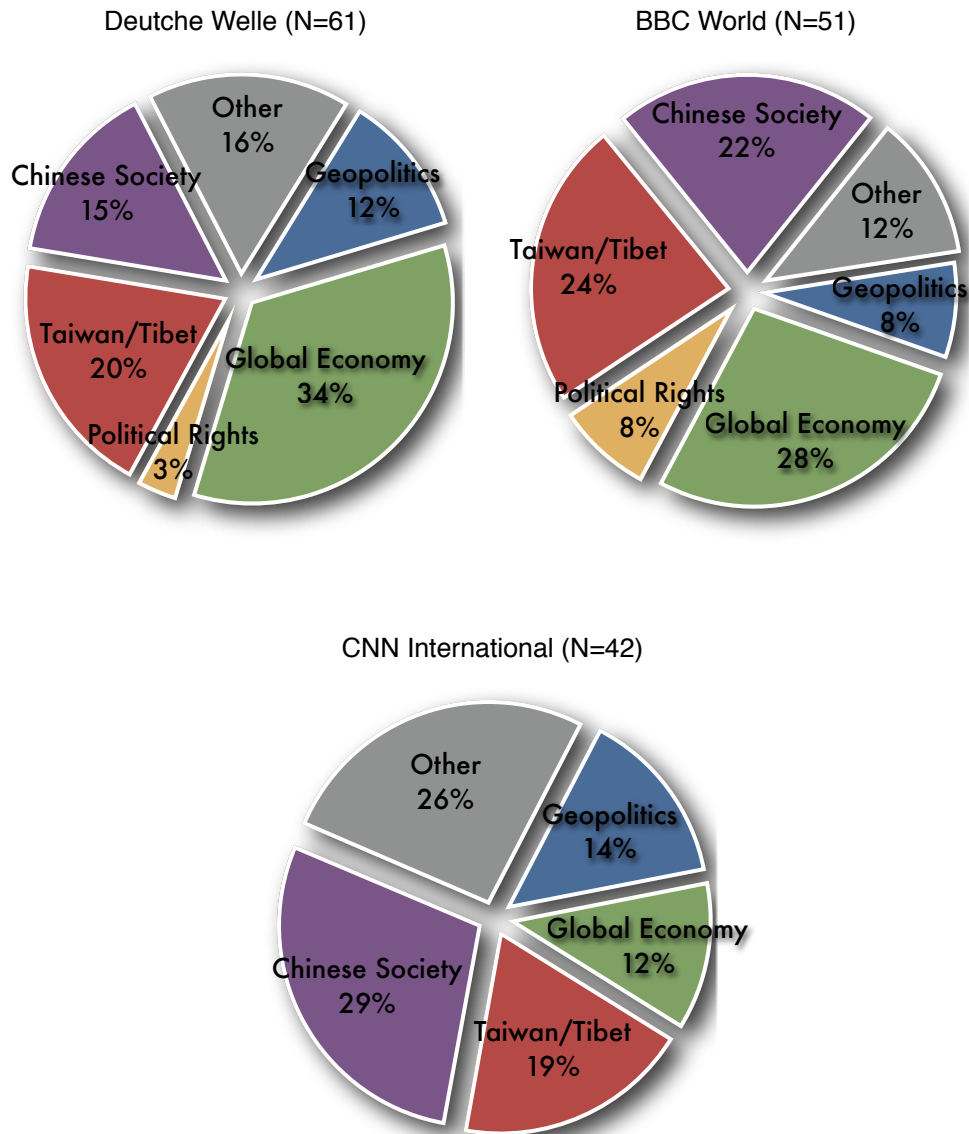
Table 1 details major events in coverage and notes which broadcasters ran stories on which events. China coverage centered on the events in Table 1, and largely conformed to six sub-topics identified in Figure 5. These sub-topics are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Figure 5: Sub-topics in China Coverage



However, different broadcasters focused more intently on different themes, as depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Prevalent Themes in China Coverage By Broadcaster



As Figure 6 highlights, different broadcasters focused on different sub-topics. For example, 34 percent of DW stories explored China’s role in the global economy in comparison to 12 percent of CNN International’s. BBC was the only one of the three to address issues about political rights in China in a concerted fashion. CNN International committed a majority of its China coverage to “soft news,” with 55 percent of its news agenda focusing on non-political news coded as *Chinese Society* and *Other*. The differing treatment each broadcaster gave to each of these themes is discussed in the following six sub-sections.

Taiwan/Tibet

Between 28 January and 5 March, two highly charged events sparked coverage about Tibet and Taiwan in relation to China. First, on January 30, the Obama administration announced America's intent to sell \$6.4 billion in arms to Taiwan, including 60 Black Hawk helicopters (totaling \$3.1 billion), 114 advanced Patriot air defense missiles, a pair of Osprey mine-hunting ships; and advanced communications systems. The announcement invited media attention, as the PRC had consistently characterized US arms sales to Taiwan as "interference in China's internal affairs," and issued statements denouncing the US and its allegedly aggressive foreign policies.¹² Second, on February 18th, President Obama hosted the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the spiritual leader of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhists. Tibet is a very sensitive subject for the Chinese government, since it is politically controlled by China but seeks greater political autonomy and perhaps, according to some, total independence from the PRC. In the past, when heads of state such as President Nicholas Sarkozy of France (2008) and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (2007) met with the Dalai Lama, the Chinese government denounced these meetings as threats to Chinese national sovereignty, and reacted in each case by canceling summits and top-level political meetings with the respective countries.¹³

There are important differences between the situations in Tibet and Taiwan, and their relationship to the US and China. However, given the proximity of the events, and the Chinese government's similar reactions, news stories about Taiwan would often mention Tibet and vice versa as evidence of an overall deterioration of US and China ties.

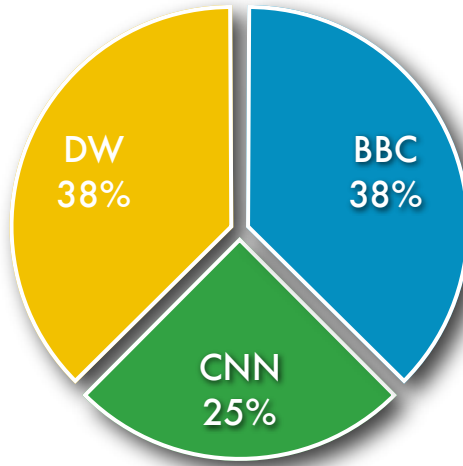
Overall, researchers identified 32 stories that focused on or mentioned these Taiwan and/or Tibet controversies, accounting for 21 percent of all of China-related news broadcasts during the period under review. (See Figure 5 for an overall breakdown of the topics of China-related news) Stories coded as *Taiwan/Tibet* included any story that mentioned Tibet, the Dalai Lama or Taiwan in a political context. There are 3 stories, for example, about humanitarian issues in Taiwan that were non-political and thus

¹² Xinhua News Service, "Chinese FM urges US to stop selling weapons to Taiwan," Feb 1, 2010 <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-01/31/c_13157384.htm>

¹³ BBC, "China protest at EU-Dalai meeting," Dec 7, 2008, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7769123.stm>>; Atlantic Review, "Angela Merkel Annoys China by Meeting Dalai Lama," Sep 25, 2007, <<http://atlanticreview.org/archives/847-Angela-Merkel-Annoys-China-by-Meeting-Dalai-Lama.html>>

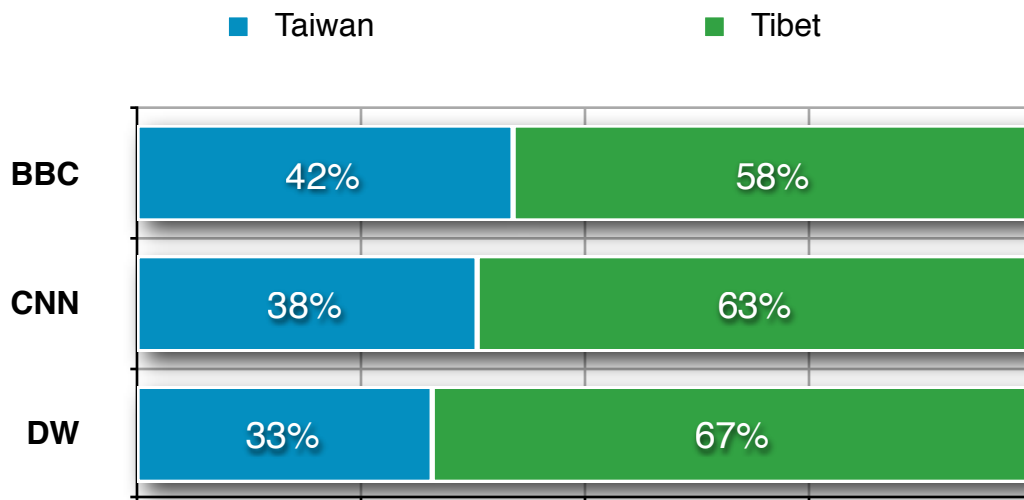
are included in the *Other* analysis category. Of the 32 stories, DW carried 12, BBC 12 and CNN International 8, as depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Percent of Reporting on Taiwan/Tibet



However, as depicted in Figure 8 all three broadcasters focused on the Dalai Lama’s White House visit almost twice as much as they did the proposed arms sales to Taiwan (See Figure 8 below for details.)

Figure 8: Percent of Reporting on Taiwan Versus Tibet by Broadcaster



In order to identify bias in coverage of the Taiwan and Tibet controversies, each of the 32 news broadcasts were coded according to the following four questions:

1. Does the story explain China's claim of sovereign control over Taiwan/Tibet?
2. Does the story mention any explanation of the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (i.e. supporting an emerging democracy/supporting human rights and/or religious freedom)?
3. Does the story contain criticism of China's position on Taiwan/Tibet (as violation of human rights or a threat to democracy, for example)?
4. Does the story contain criticism of the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (as a violation of sovereignty or a threat to international stability, for example)?

Question 1: Across the board, 75 percent of each broadcaster's news stories about Taiwan and/or Tibet offered some explanation of China's claim to have sovereign control over Taiwan/Tibet (9/12 BBC stories, 6/8 CNN International stories and 9/12 DW stories).

Question 2: 42 percent of BBC stories (5/12), 38 percent of CNN International stories (3/8) and 25 percent of DW stories (3/12) provided an explanation for the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (i.e. supporting an emerging democracy/supporting human rights and/or religious freedom). It is important to note that while BBC's stories were most likely to include an explanation for the US/European position, all five of the occurrences took place in reference to Tibet, in the context of human rights and religious freedoms, and none offered an explanation for US arms sales to Taiwan.

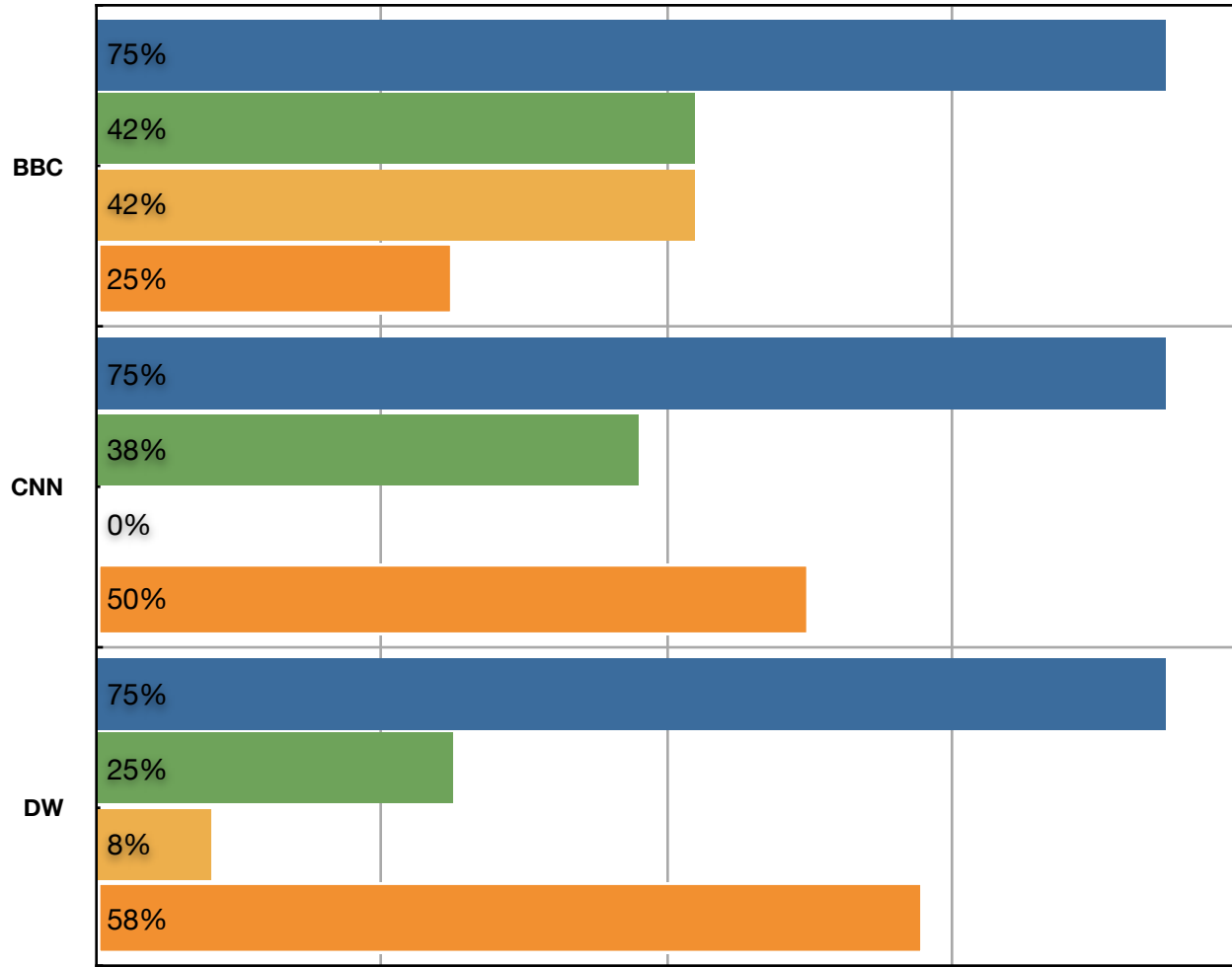
Question 3: All three broadcasters were unlikely to contain criticisms of China's position on Taiwan/Tibet (as violation of human rights or a threat to democracy, for example); 42 percent of BBC stories did (5/12), 0 percent of CNN International's stories did (0/8) and 8 percent of DW's stories did (1/12). Once again, it is important to note that each of BBC's stories that were found to provide a critical explanation of China's position were in reference to Tibet, not Taiwan.

Question 4: Regarding whether a story provides a critical explanation of the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (as a violation of sovereignty or a threat to international stability, for example), 25 percent of BBC stories did (3/12), 50 percent of CNN International stories did (4/8) and 58 percent of DW stories did (7/12).

These findings are summarized in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Bias in Taiwan/Tibet Coverage by Broadcaster:

Percentage of Stories that include a/an:



- Explanation of China's Sovereign Control over Taiwan/Tibet
- Explanation of US/European Policy
- Critical assessment of China Policy
- Critical assessment of US/European Policy

Questions 1 and 2 identified which stakeholder's opinions were included and privileged in the story. Across the board broadcasters were more likely to articulate China's claim of sovereign authority over Taiwan and/or Tibet, with each broadcaster noting this fact in 75 percent of its stories. Conversely, all three broadcasters were less likely to mention or explain the reason for US arms sales to Taiwan or

President Obama's invitation to the Dalai Lama (BBC 42 percent, CNN International 38 percent, and DW 25 percent). Thus, the prevailing frame permeating the two stories was China's opposition to Western interference in its internal affairs.

Questions 3 and 4, examined trends in bias among the broadcasters' coverage of China. They examined whether the stories analyzed provided a critical assessment of either of the stakeholder's policies. Note that this does not mean that the story necessarily agreed with the critical assessment, but rather that such an assessment was included either through a primary source or the reporting journalist. Thus, there could be examples of stories that provided a critical assessment of both sides on the issue, though only one such story was found in this study.¹⁴

CNN International's coverage of the Taiwan/Tibet issues was the most imbalanced, focusing on critical assessments (oftentimes from the Chinese government) of US arms sales to Taiwan and of the President's invitation to the Dalai Lama to the White House 50 percent of the time, and failing to provide a critical assessment of China's approach to either Tibet or Taiwan in any of its coverage. BBC, on the other hand, was more balanced. BBC stories on the issue were critical of China's approach to Tibet/Taiwan 42 percent of the time, and only critical of the US/European policies 25 percent of the time. Setting aside stories on arms sales to Taiwan, and looking only at the issue of Tibet, BBC's coverage was critical of the Chinese government 71 percent of the time, and critical of the US/European stance on Tibet and the Dalai Lama only 14 percent of the time.¹⁵ DW, on the other hand, was more likely to offer a critical assessment of US/European policy than Chinese government policy, with 58 percent of the stories including the former and only 8 percent including the latter. While BBC coverage was by far the most critical of the Chinese government, CNN International's was lopsided in favor of Beijing's official stance, and DW providing a more balanced approach, albeit somewhat deferential to the Chinese government's account of events.

Breaking down the coverage of the arms sales to Taiwan in more detail, across the board, each of the broadcasters was heavily reliant on government sources for information, often citing Chinese government press releases, Chinese state-run media sources, and US government officials and

¹⁴ World Report, British Broadcasting Corporation, Feb 19, 2010 (0900).

¹⁵ BBC is the only broadcaster who exhibited significant differences between its reporting on Tibet and Taiwan. These differences are noted in the main body of the report. Unless otherwise noted, broadcasters' coverage of the two issues were statistically similar.

institutions. While both DW and BBC brought in independent, expert political analysts to comment in their extended coverage of the situation, CNN International did not. Indeed, CNN International's coverage of the situation was sparse compared to the other broadcasters, dedicating only 4:16 minutes to the arms sale, compared to DW's 5:28 and BBC's 8:48.

DW's coverage of the proposed Taiwanese arms sale included somewhat charged language regarding China's reaction to the deal, twice describing the Chinese government as "angrily" reacting to the news. In comparison BBC and CNN International's stories quoted official sources that said they were "outraged" at the news. While minor, the choice of the descriptive "angrily" reacting is meaningful, especially in the context of reporting on international affairs, as the term is often used to describe an irrational and even immature response.¹⁶ While it is almost certain that the small difference between the terms is entirely due to language translations, it is important to note nonetheless.

BBC's Tibet coverage stood out, not only for the depth and background it drew upon in explaining the current conflict over Tibet and the Dalai Lama but also for its critical assessment of the Chinese government's approach. BBC was the only broadcaster to go into detail—often critically—regarding the current situation in Tibet, describing the province as under "martial law" since protests broke out in 2008.¹⁷ Yet, at the same time, its coverage did not provide the same level of critical inquiry about US and European policies toward Tibet, never challenging Western support for Tibet outside of airing complaints from the Chinese government arguing that such an aggressive stance intruded in the internal affairs of the PRC risked threatening international stability.

BBC coverage of the Dalai Lama's visit was one sided in that it did not provide a Chinese counterpoint. It also went a step further than both CNN International and DW in its reporting of China's reaction to the Dalai Lama's White House visit, editorializing that while in the past China had been less publicly outraged with the meeting of US heads of state and the Tibetan leader, now, "a more muscular Beijing is becoming increasingly intolerant of internal dissent or external criticism."¹⁸ Neither DW nor CNN International offered such opinions on the current situation in Tibet or regarding China's response to Dalai Lama's visit to the White House.

¹⁶ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations*, 1976. Princeton University Press.

¹⁷ World Report, British Broadcasting Corporation, Feb 19, 2010 (0900).

¹⁸ World Report, British Broadcasting Corporation, Feb 19, 2010 (1500).

However, that is not to say that DW exhibited a pro-China bias. While each broadcaster carried some part of the Dalai Lama's comments after meeting with President Obama, DW was also the only broadcaster to carry his criticism of the of the Chinese government, specifically describing its censorship of information as "immoral."¹⁹

Overall, BBC stories highlighted opinions and analyses highly critical of China, especially regarding Tibet, while CNN International failed to offer a critical assessment of China's policies on either Tibet or Taiwan. DW provided some balance on both issues, giving stakeholders on both sides the opportunity to express their opinions on air, while also providing, at times, critical assessments of both.

Political Rights

News stories regarding political rights in China broadcast by BBC, CNN International or DW were relatively sparse during the period under review. All told, only 6 stories focused on the topic of political rights, 4 from BBC and 2 from DW, representing just 4 percent of stories mentioning China.²⁰ Despite this small number, given the controversial nature of the state of political rights in China, and the sensitivities surrounding the reporting on such issues, the stories were analyzed in greater detail to look for potential bias in the reporting.

The first story, only reported by BBC, addressed a report from the International Federation of Journalists, titled, "China Clings to Control: Press Freedom in 2009."²¹ The report detailed intensified efforts by Chinese authorities to control online content and commentary and assessed the official restrictions faced by local and foreign media working in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau. The second story, only broadcast by DW, reported that Tan Zuoren, a Chinese political activist, had been sentenced to 5 years in prison for "inciting subversion of state power." According to Amnesty International, the sentence was due to Zuoren's investigation into governmental culpability in the deaths

¹⁹ The Journal, Deutsche Welle, Feb 19, 2010 (0900).

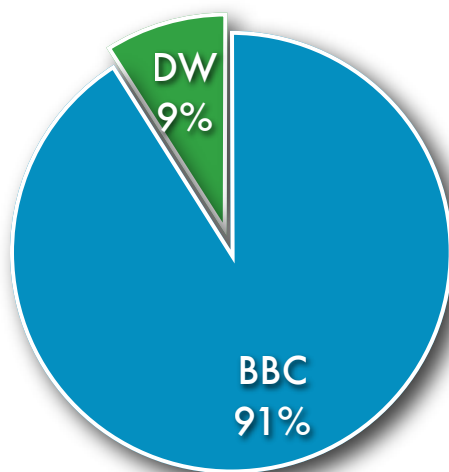
²⁰ The issue of political and human rights did come up in some coverage of Tibet and the Dalai Lama, though often in passing. Notable mentions of political and human rights are discussed in the Taiwan/Tibet sub-section of this report.

²¹ International Federation of Journalists, "China Clings to Control: Press Freedom in 2009," Jan 31, 2010 <<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/assets/docs/026/101/5bc771a-e97d065.pdf>>

that occurred in the aftermath of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.²² The third story, covered by both BBC and DW, reported that Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo’s appeal had been rejected by a Beijing court, and that Xiaobo would serve an 11 year sentence for “charges of subversion” related to his demands for expanded political freedoms in China.²³ Finally, the fourth story, broadcast only by BBC, reported on Feng Zhenghu, a Chinese human rights activist, who after being refused re-entry into China on 8 occasions spent a total of 92 days living in the arrivals hall of Japan’s Narita International Airport.²⁴

All told, of the 10:25 minutes spent reporting on political rights in China, BBC’s coverage was responsible for 9:29, and DW responsible for 0:56 (see Figure 10: Percent of Reporting on Political Rights in China). As previously mentioned, CNN International did not broadcast any story on the state of political rights in China during the period analyzed.

Figure 10: Percent of Reporting on Political Rights in China



In order to identify bias in the news coverage of political issues in China, we asked the following two questions of each of the 6 stories:

1. Was the Chinese government portrayed as respecting basic political rights?

²² Amnesty International USA, “China: Free human rights activist jailed after unfair trial,” Feb 9, 2010 <<http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGPRES201002091533&lang=e>>

²³ The New York Times, “China Rejects Dissident’s Appeal,” Feb 10, 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/11/world/asia/11dissident.html?ref=liu_xiaobo>

²⁴ Associated Press, “Man who spent 3 months in Tokyo airport to leave,” Feb 2, 2010 <http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap_travel/20100202/ap_tr_ge/as_travel_brief_japan_terminal_activist>

2. Did the story put the alleged violation of political rights into appropriate context (did it explain why limitations are in place, or compare China's limitations to that of other countries)?

In each of the stories, regardless of the broadcaster, the Chinese government was portrayed as not respecting basic political rights, such as freedom of expression, association and petition. Moreover, none of the stories put the alleged violation of political rights into appropriate context by explaining the Chinese government's rationale for such restrictions, or compared China's restrictions to those imposed in other countries. Thus, coverage of the state of political rights in China was fairly one-sided and critical of the Chinese government's policies on political rights.

Qualitative analysis highlights a marked difference in the coverage between the two broadcasters. DW's coverage of political rights issues in China was relatively straightforward. Its broadcasts highlighted the facts of the situation, the key stakeholders involved, and any stakeholder reactions to the event, if at all. Each of its stories on political rights lasted only 0:27 and 0:29 seconds. BBC coverage, on the other hand, used the news event in question to make broader claims about the state of political freedoms in China, with journalists often editorializing about the deteriorating nature of political rights. For example, in its coverage of the International Federation of Journalists report documenting a rise in China's control over the media, BBC used video clips from protests in China that had taken place in years prior. These clips included images of violence, civil unrest and bloodshed. Against this backdrop, the reporter stated that the Chinese government had learned from previous civil uprisings that it was "better to allow tightly controlled access to a few than to allow everyone to report what was happening."²⁵ With no explanation of the Chinese policies, the report concluded, "so as China celebrated 60 years of communism last October...Restrictions on what could be reported here are as tight as they've ever been." Put another way, whereas neither DW nor CNN International were compelled to report on the new study, BBC used it as an opportunity to portray Chinese policies as draconian and broadcast images of violence and unrest among China's civil society.

In regards to China's sentencing of political dissident Xiaobo, despite his appeal—the one event where both DW and BBC broadcast stories—the differences in coverage were stark. Again, DW's coverage was brief and factual, noting that Xiaobo had lost his appeal and was "sentenced to 11 years in prison for undermining state power by inciting subversion." The story went on to outline the allegations of

²⁵ World Report, British Broadcasting Corporation, Jan 31, 2010 (1300).

Xiaobo's subversion, and noted that the US and EU had publicly criticized the decision to reject Xiaobo's appeal.²⁶ BBC, on the other hand, broadcast a 2:48 minute story providing detailed background on Xiaobo that focused on international reactions to the sentence. The report included a quote from Xiaobo's wife, noting that "this government is just that kind of government, you can't have any kind of expectations of them," and adding that the trial lasted only ten minutes and that nobody was allowed to speak in Xiaobo's defense. The BBC reporter commented that the sentence was "heavy even by Chinese standards," stressing that the only comment from China's government was that "there are no dissidents, only criminals in China." The reporter went on to note that, "China is persecuting those who speak out," and included statements from both the Political Counselor from the US Embassy in Beijing and the Spokesman for European Union Delegation in China, both of whom were highly critical of the decision. Finally, BBC's story concluded with a broad comment about the state of political rights in China, suggesting, "instead of becoming more tolerant as China gets richer, it appears the Communist party is cracking down harder on any who may threaten its hold on power."²⁷

It is important to note that bias is not only found in the framing of stories, but also in the overall agenda of a news broadcaster. News outlets are defined equally by what and how they report certain stories *and* by what they do not cover. In this instance, BBC dedicated the most time to stories about political rights in China, and framed its coverage in such a way that it was highly critical of the Chinese government. DW covered important political rights news, including a story on a Chinese rights activist that BBC did not, and did so in a straightforward and brief way. CNN International, on the other hand, did not cover the topic whatsoever. Similar to its coverage of Tibet, CNN International's China news steered clear of broadcasting any criticisms of the Chinese government's stance on human and political rights. The different approaches to China coverage outlined here, with BBC being the most critical, DW offering a very factual and straightforward account of events, and CNN International avoiding the issues altogether, is emblematic of the somewhat stark differences between the three stations.

Geopolitics

While many of the stories that mention China include some geopolitical considerations, geopolitics as a category for this content analysis was used to identify stories specifically focused on China's role and/or

²⁶ The Journal, Deutsche Welle, Feb 11, 2010 (0900).

²⁷ Impact Asia, British Broadcasting Company, Feb 11, 2010 (1500).

impact on international politics. Examples of stories coded as *Geopolitics* included: China's participation in international negotiations with North Korea, its role in handling the potential development of a nuclear-armed Iran (and its related role on the United Nations Security Council), its role in international summits focused on conflict resolution, its relationship to Burma as it relates to the international community, and China's role in international governance (including treaties) more broadly. While China's growing importance in global economics has important geopolitical consequences, those stories were treated separately, in the *Economics* sub-section of this report.

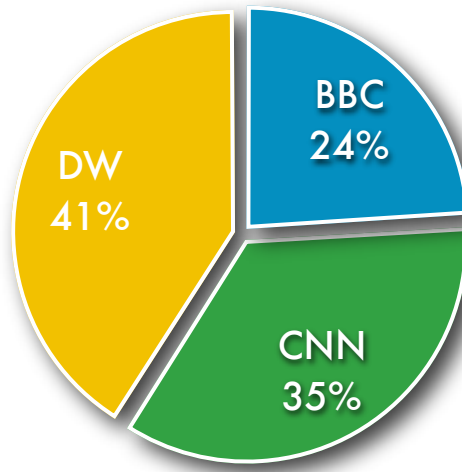
Two events in the period analyzed drove news coverage about China's role in international politics. One was the 46th annual Munich Security Conference, held in Munich from Feb 5-8, and extensively covered by DW. The conference was notable in that the Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi delivered the opening address, declaring China's emergence as a global power with an increasingly important and "assertive" role in global affairs.²⁸ The conference included extensive discussions on how to best proceed with a potentially nuclear-armed Iran, as well as how to better engage China in existing international organizations, such as the European Union and NATO. In addition to the conference, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report on February 18, 2010 outlining Iran's accelerated development of advanced nuclear technologies. This announcement was followed up with a meeting among the 35 member nations of the IAEA on March 1, 2010 in Vienna, Austria.²⁹ Both events sparked concern about the negative ramifications of a nuclear-armed Iran, and thus call for the need for the UN Security Council, of which China is a permanent member, to sanction Iran for violating its international obligations.

Seventeen stories mentioned China's role in international politics, or 11 percent of the overall China-related news. Seven of the stories were broadcast by DW, 6 by CNN International, and 4 by BBC. (See Figure 11: Percent of Reporting on China's role in International Politics).

²⁸ Subhash Kapila, "Munich Security Conference 2010: A Strategic Review," South Asia Analysis Group Paper No. 3668, Feb 15, 2010 <<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers37/paper3668.html>>

²⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Iran's Nuclear Enrichment Programme," Feb 18, 2010 <http://www.isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IAEA_Report_Iran_18Feb2010.pdf>

Figure 11: Percent of Reporting on China's role in International Politics



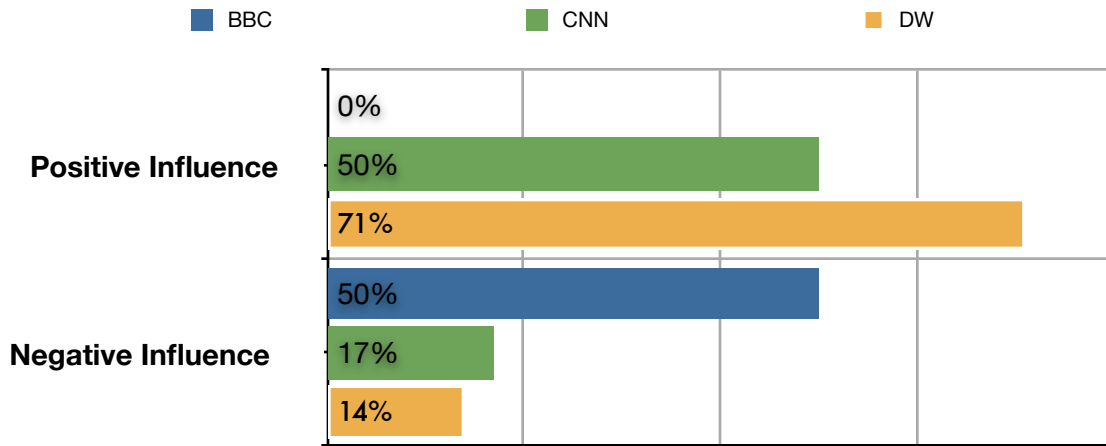
In order to identify bias in reporting on China's role in international politics, we asked the following three questions about each of the 17 stories:

1. Is China portrayed as a positive influence in the pursuit of international law/justice/stability?
2. Is China portrayed as a negative influence in the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability?
3. If the answer is "yes" to question number two, is its position on the issue in question explained such that it appears to be acting in pursuit of a legitimate interest of the Chinese nation-state?

Overall, China was portrayed as providing a positive influence on the pursuit of international law/justice/stability 47 percent of the time in stories on China's role in international politics (8/17 stories). Broken down by broadcaster, China was portrayed as providing a positive influence in the pursuit of international law/justice/stability in no BBC broadcasts, in 50 percent of CNN International's broadcasts (3/6), and in 71 percent of DW's broadcasts (5/7).

Conversely, 24 percent of all stories regarding China's role in international politics portrayed it as a negative influence in the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability. Broken down by broadcaster, China was portrayed as providing a negative influence in the pursuit of international law/justice/stability in 50 percent of BBC broadcasts (2/4), in 17 percent of CNN International broadcasts (1/6) and in 14 percent of DW broadcasts (1/7). Figure 12 provides an overview of the overall findings.

Figure 12: Percent of stories where China of portrayed as a positive/negative influence in international politics



In the four instances where China was portrayed as a negative influence in the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability, Chinese actions were explained differently. In two of the stories, one by CNN International, and another by DW, the government was portrayed as acting in pursuit of a legitimate interest of the Chinese nation-state. In one CNN International story, for example, while the report featured criticisms of China’s role in blocking the UN’s sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, it also included the explanation that China was more hesitant than other countries to agree to the sanctions due to its extensive commercial interests in Iran, including its need for Persian oil, thus providing a compelling and legitimate explanation for China’s position vis-a-vi Iranian sanctions.³⁰ In a DW story about the Convention on Cluster Munitions, an international treaty that bans the use of Cluster bombs, while it noted that China had not ratified the treaty, China’s non-ratification was explained in the context of other world powers, such as the US, who have also not yet ratified the treaty. The other two instances of stories portraying China as a negative influence in the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability were broadcast by BBC, which did not include an explanation for China’s actions and/or behaviors as legitimate or rational actions of a nation-state in either story (one about Iran, the other about Burma).

Overall, once again, a stark difference appears between the ways in which BBC and DW covered China. Whereas DW covered the Munich Security Conference in detail, noting the proactive and positive role

³⁰ World Report, Central News Network, Mar 1, 2010 (1200).

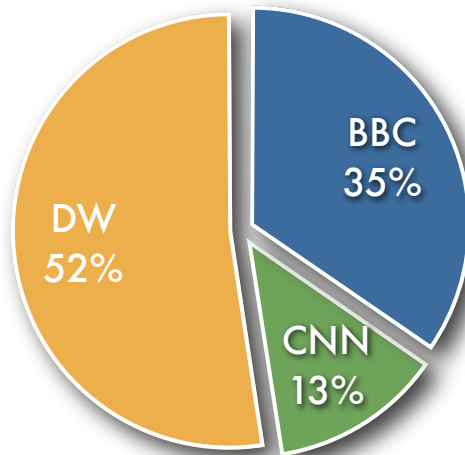
that China wants to play as a partner to European organizations, BBC did not report on the conference at all. When CNN International reported on the conference, its story emphasized China's growing role in resolving international tensions using diplomacy, dialogue and negotiations rather than force, in many ways echoing DW's coverage from the conference. Indeed, BBC's coverage of China's role in international affairs stood out in two ways. First, it downplayed China's role in the international political context, hardly mentioning China at all or toward the end of stories on Iran and international governance. Second, it overwhelmingly emphasized China as a negative influence in the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability.

Global Economy

Many stories produced during the period under review focused on the state and future of the global economy. The beginning of 2010 saw the first signs of rejuvenation in the global economy from near depression, but also new and continued hardships, particularly in Europe with the collapse of Greece's economy and the decline of the Euro. Several significant events took place that helped drive China-related global economic news: the World Economic Forum in Davos; Toyota's continued hardships surrounding the need to recall millions of cars from around the world; trade disputes between China, the US, and Europe over the value of the yuan and accusations of protectionist trade policies; China's decision to sell \$34 billion in US treasury bonds; and the news that Japan had only just managed to keep its status as the world's second largest economy ahead of China.

Overall forty stories evaluated China in the context of the global economy. The topics of the stories varied widely, touching on the events listed above to more basic economic news and trends. Of the China-related global economy news stories, DW broadcast over half, responsible for 53 percent of the China-related global economy news (21/40). BBC followed and was responsible for 35 percent of China-related global economy news (14/40), with CNN International broadcasting, only 13 percent (5/40) of the China-related global economy agenda as depicted in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Percent of Reporting on China-related Global Economic News



In order to identify bias in reporting on China-related global economy stories, we asked the following three questions of each of the 40 stories:

1. Is China portrayed as a model or leader in the global economy?
2. Is Chinese economic growth portrayed as a threat?
3. Is Chinese economic growth portrayed as good for international business?

Overall, 15 percent of stories portrayed China as a model or leader in the global economy.

Disaggregating the question by broadcaster, 21 percent BBC reports portrayed China as a model or leader in the global economy (3/14), while 0 percent of CNN International's coverage (0/5) and 14 percent of DW's coverage (3/21) did the same.

Only 4 percent (n=2) of stories portrayed Chinese economic growth as a threat. A BBC story, broadcast on Jan 29, 2010, included an extended interview with a US congressman in Davos, Switzerland, in which he asserted that China's weak "moral leadership" undermined its ability to lead the global economic community.³¹ CNN International coverage followed a similar narrative. A Feb 15, 2010 story reporting news of Japan's ability to hold onto the title as the world's second largest economy described China's economic growth as "inevitably overtaking Japan," thus risking Japanese economic leadership in the region.³²

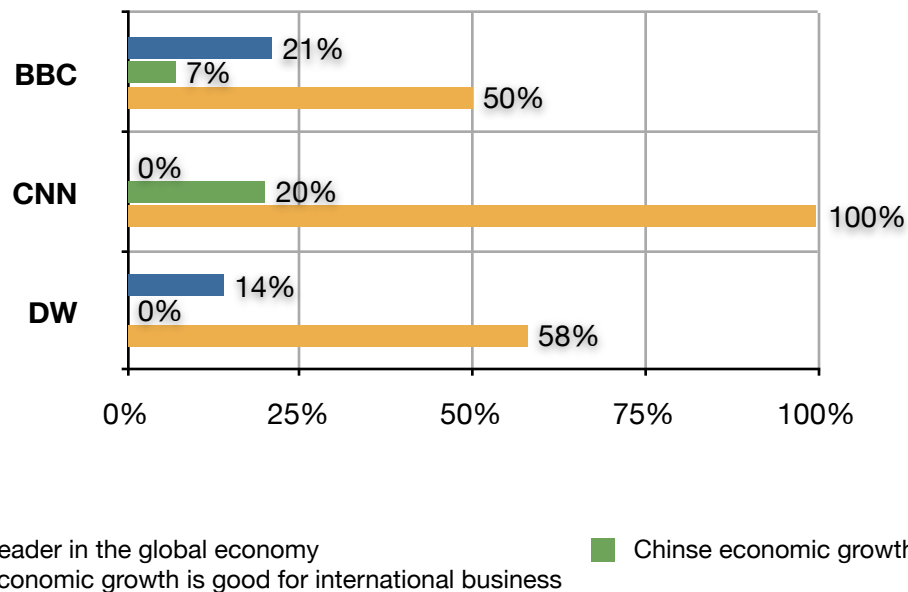
³¹ World News, British Broadcasting Company, Jan 29, 2010 (0900).

³² World Report, Central News Network, Feb 15, 2010 (0900).

It is important to note that, the same CNN International story was the only story that referenced both the threats and benefits offered by Chinese economic growth. All other stories adopted either the threat or the economic benefit frame, and typically the latter

While CNN International carried fewer stories about the business opportunities carried by China, all its coverage on the issue (5/5) highlighted the corporate benefits of Chinese growth. DW and BBC were not as universally praiseful. Fifty percent (7/14) of BBC and 52 percent of DW (23/40) stories stressed corporate opportunities in China. Figure 14 summarizes the results for each of the three questions analyzed.

Figure 14: Representations of China’s role in the Global Economy



Not surprisingly, given the broad nature of the category of China-related global economy news, the types of stories covered by each broadcaster significantly varied. For example, four of the five CNN broadcasts focused on Toyota’s vehicle recalls, each noting how important the expanding Chinese market was to the company’s growth. The fifth story broadcast by CNN was about Japan’s ability to maintain its position as the world’s second largest economy, despite China’s continued economic growth (this story is described in more detail above). Perhaps a more important indicator of CNN’s China coverage is the instances where reporters fail to mention China at all. For example, a CNN report from the WEF in Davos did not include any mention of China, whereas both BBC and DW reports did. Moreover, CNN’s lack of coverage of the growing trade disputes between China and the Obama administration and China’s selling

off of \$34 billion in US Treasury bonds stands out as important an oversight given their relevance to the global and American economies.³³

DW's coverage of China-related global economy news was broader and more diverse, but each of the stories heavily emphasized China's growing role in the global—and particularly European—economy. In fact, 24 percent of DW's stories in this category emphasized the importance of China's continued economic growth to Germany's economy (5/21).³⁴ To put this figure in perspective, neither CNN nor BBC mentioned the importance of China's economic growth to either the American or British economies.

BBC's China-related global economy news was diverse and straightforward, with a few exceptions noted above.³⁵ BBC coverage of China-US economic disputes stood out for several reasons. First, over a quarter of BBC stories (29 percent) went into significant detail about the growing tensions over trade and currency. Neither DW nor CNN covered these disputes at all. Second, each of BBC stories probed deeper into the political elements surrounding the conflict, tying in the recent visit of the Dalai Lama to the White House and the controversial dispute over Google's operations in China. Finally, BBC was the only broadcaster to report the potentially significant news that China was selling \$34 billion in US treasury bonds, and reported the story in the context of the growing political disputes between the two countries.³⁶

Chinese Society

Thirty-two out of the 154 broadcasts under review (or 21 percent of the overall China-related news) focused on Chinese society. Of these stories, BBC was responsible for 34 percent (11/32), CNN for 38 percent (12/32) and DW for 28 percent (9/32) (see Figure 15 below). Story topics in this category varied, but mostly centered on the celebration of the Chinese (Lunar) New Year on February 14, 2010,

³³ While these stories may have been covered during other broadcast hours not included in this content analysis, given that World Report is CNN's flagship show, it is still a significant omission.

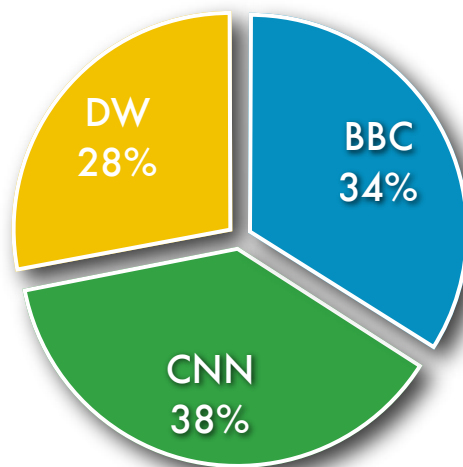
³⁴ For an example of DW's tendency to emphasize German-Chinese economic interconnectedness, see: The Journal, Deutsche Welle, Feb 9, 2010 (0900).

³⁵ One, regarding the extended interview criticizing China's ability to lead the global economic community, is discussed above.

³⁶ The Guardian, "China sells \$34.2bn of US treasury bonds," Feb 17, 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/feb/17/china-sells-us-treasury-bonds>>

the return of Chinese pandas, the inclusion of a prominent Chinese-German film in the Berlin International Film Festival, and short stories regarding (non-human or political rights-related) criminal proceedings in China, factory worker conditions, and improvements in the quality control of Chinese exports.

Figure 15: Percentage of Stories on Chinese Society



In order to identify bias in reporting on stories on Chinese society, the following two questions were asked about each of the 32 stories:

1. Did the story portray China's society as a stable/safe place to live?
2. Did the story portray China's society as an unhappy/difficult place to live?

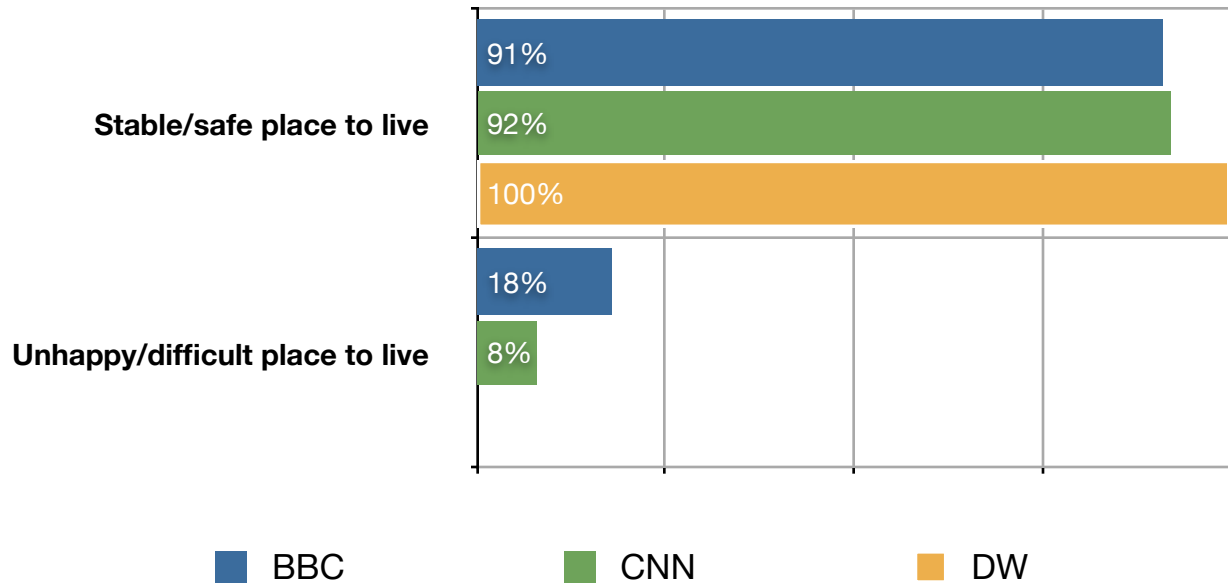
In regards to the first question, overall, 94 percent of stories portrayed China's society as a stable, safe place to live (30/32). Only two stories steered from this narrative: one BBC story highlighted labor shortages in factories on the East coast of China, and a CNN story followed a child living in Beijing "like a dog, tethered to a post in the street."³⁷ This second story will be discussed in greater detail below.

Conversely, in regards to the second question, only 9 percent of stories on Chinese society portrayed it as an unhappy or difficult place to live (3/32). These three stories broadcast on BBC and CNN include the two mentioned directly above and an additional report (from BBC) of a factory explosion in China

³⁷ World Report, Cable News Network, Feb 5, 2010 (1200).

that resulted in numerous deaths. All of DW’s stories on Chinese society portrayed it as a stable, safe place, and none of its stories portrayed it as an unhappy or difficult place to live.

Figure 16: Representations of Chinese Society as a:



Part of the reason that the data indicate such a positive portrayal of China’s society is the prevalence of stories (31 percent) reporting on the celebration of the Chinese New Year, a popular holiday where the best of China is on display to the world. Another 22 percent of stories on Chinese society focused on the safe return of several pandas, another story where the reporting was unlikely to steer in the direction of the overall living conditions in China. An additional 16 percent of stories followed Chinese participation in the Berlin Film Festival, another story unlikely to include critical reporting on living conditions in Mainland China. In all, these three categories of coverage constituted 69 percent of reporting on Chinese society analyzed here.

Of DW’s nine stories on Chinese society, five were on the Berlin International film festival, which included a major Chinese-German film, but which also focused on American celebrities in Berlin for the event. The remaining four stories all focused on the Chinese New Year. While DW’s reporting on the Chinese New Year did include some candid conversations with Chinese citizens, these interviews were conducted while the holiday was being celebrated.

The majority of CNN International's coverage focused on the Chinese panda return, the Chinese New Year, and two shorter stories about the resolution of a dispute over a will among celebrities in Hong Kong. As previously noted, there were a few exceptions to this upbeat narrative. One CNN story focusing on the deplorable poverty in Beijing is mentioned above. Originally produced by the UK's ITV, the story is the epitome of a sensationalized human-interest story, focusing on the specific condition of one child to make broader claims about the living conditions in China.

BBC's coverage of China's society was the most broad and diverse, reporting on the Chinese New Year, the panda story, the Hong Kong will dispute, but also factory conditions in rural China, the Chinese government's efforts to improve the quality of milk exports, and even the integration of local political leaders into the organization of the Communist Party policy-making process. In the few instances where the story was unfavorable toward Chinese society, it was not due to the incendiary rhetoric used in the story, but rather the facts of the situation.

Other

There were a number of stories that mentioned China in some way that did not fit into the existing categories outlined above and were of little to no political, cultural or economic significance. We identified 27 stories that were best coded as *Other*, or 18 percent of all China-related news stories. Forty-two percent (13/24) of stories in the *Other* category included a brief mention of China's performance in the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada (February 12-28, 2010). The remainder, included: references to parts of China being touched by earthquakes (with little damage reported), the fact that China borders North Korea (a US missionary that crossed into the North Korean border from China was returned to the US on February 6, 2010) and other small mentions of the PRC. Each clip was reviewed for potential importance in uncovering potential bias and found to be of no relevance to the central questions addressed in this report.

Findings in Context

Accusations of bias are inevitable in the news business. And the accusations are typically grounded in some reality, as no broadcaster can strike the perfect balance with every story. This is particularly true

when it comes to reporting international news, where additional legal, cultural and political barriers can make balanced reporting exceedingly difficult.

Previous analyses of international coverage of China have identified differences in framing and bias between news outlets, particularly across national boundaries. Wu, for example, found that the Associated Press was decidedly anti-government in its coverage of HIV/AIDS prevention in China while the Xinhua News Agency of China adopted a decidedly pro-government position.³⁸ Lee and Yang compared Associated Press coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests with that of the Japanese Kyodo news agency, finding that the AP focused on the ramifications of the event for human rights and democracy while Kyodo presented a more factual and descriptive accounting of the protests.³⁹ US news outlets have generally been found to be negative in coverage about China. In a longitudinal analysis of China news in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* newspapers Peng found that while news coverage about China had increased between 1992 and 2001, both papers exhibited a similarly unfavorable bias toward China.⁴⁰

Researchers have also identified similar bias in coverage of other countries. In 2005, BBC Board of Governors, responding to claims of anti-Israel bias in its news coverage, commissioned an independent study of its Palestinian coverage from researchers at Loughborough University. The study included a content analysis of BBC news and current affairs programs over a six-month period, and found that contrary to previous reports, BBC coverage systematically omitted details favorable to the Palestinians, and through omission adopted a “pro-Israel” bias. In short, it summarized that: “BBC coverage does not consistently constitute a full and fair account of the conflict but rather, in important respects, presents an incomplete and in that sense misleading picture.”⁴¹

With this in mind, it is important to note while this study does find some clear trends in China coverage by BBC, CNN International and DW, that its findings are relatively limited given the small sample of China-related program analyzed. Robert Entman, an expert on mediated politics at George Washington

³⁸ Min Wu, “Framing Aids in China: A Comparative Analysis of Us and Chinese Wire News Coverage of Hiv/Aids in China,” *Asian Journal of Communication* 16, no. 3 (2006): 251-272.

³⁹ Lee, Chin-Chuan, and Junghye Yang. “Foreign News and National Interest: Comparing US And Japanese Coverage of a Chinese Student Movement.” *International Communication Gazette* 56 (1), (1996): : 1-18.

⁴⁰ Peng, Zengjun. “Representation of China: An Across Time Analysis of Coverage in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 14 (1), (2004): : 53-67.

⁴¹ Loughborough University Communications Research Centre. *BBC’s Reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict August 1 2005 – January 31 2006. Report to the Independent Panel For BBC Governors On Impartiality Of BBC Coverage Of The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, (2006).

University defined news content bias as: “consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side in conflicts over the use of government power. By this definition, to reveal media content biases, we must show patterns of slant that regularly prime audiences, consciously or unconsciously, to support the interests of particular holders or seekers of political power.”⁴² While reviewing all China-related coverage from the flagship news program for 35 consecutive days does provide important insights into how each broadcaster reports on China, it is just a small window into how coverage of China trends across different events and political exigencies. The findings outlined here are based on sound, social-scientific analysis of the China-related stories reported in the news between January 28 and March 4, but additional, more longitudinal research is required before using this limited sample of programming to justify accusations of substantial news bias against any of BBC, CNN International or DW.

Conclusion

This review of China-related news coverage from BBC World Service, CNN International and DW reveals important differences regarding how each of the broadcasters covers China in their daily news agenda.

BBC’s China coverage was broad and in-depth, exemplified both by the diversity of topics discussed in relation to China, as well by its allocation of more time, on average (not overall), to China stories than either CNN International or DW. Its coverage was the most political of all the broadcasters, often reporting on global economic news in the context of global political developments, particularly between the US and China. Moreover, its coverage of China was almost entirely divorced from British culture and economics, with its news agenda focused instead mostly on key global events that were rarely contextualized against current trends or opinion in the UK. At the same time, on the issues of Tibet, political rights in China, and China’s role in international politics, BBC’s coverage was rather one-sided, highly critical of China and promoting a Western frame that underscored the importance of human and political rights and democracy in domestic and foreign affairs. Moreover, BBC paid rather scant attention to China’s role in international politics—dedicating as much time to the state of political rights within China as it did on China’s influence in international affairs. This is noteworthy, particularly given the level of coverage both DW and CNN International assigned to China’s growing role in international

⁴² Entman, Robert. “Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power.” *Journal of Communication* 57, (2007): 163-173.

politics. Overall, while BBC was the most likely to challenge information provided by stakeholders in a story, in its China coverage, those challenges were more likely to target the Chinese government than US or European policy-makers.

CNN International's coverage of China was the thinnest of the three broadcasters. It broadcast fewer China-related stories than either BBC or DW. When it did, the large majority of its coverage—67 percent—was non-political in nature. As a result, its programming rarely provided much insight into current affairs. Even on issues seemingly important to CNN International's agenda and audience—US-Sino conflict over Taiwan, trade, and Tibet—the network failed to provide balanced or thorough coverage of current events. Moreover, in its coverage of Chinese society (an area where BBC's coverage was the strongest) CNN International broadcast soft, seemingly promotional and journalistic light stories on the celebration of the Chinese (Lunar) New Year and panda bears. In the few news stories that were political in nature, CNN International was rarely balanced, often providing more airtime to Chinese officials than American ones, and was surprisingly also more likely to criticize US policy than China's (on Tibet and Taiwan, for example). Combined, CNN International's overall non-political China agenda, its avoidance of reporting on any issues on political rights in China (including its avoidance of discussing human rights-related issues in its coverage of Tibet), and its heavy reliance on Chinese government sources offers a different and arguably more questionable portrayal of current affairs than either BBC or DW.

DW dedicated more time, more stories, and the largest percentage of its overall news agenda to China-related news compared to BBC and CNN International. This coverage was driven by DW's commitment to covering global financial news, of which China is an important component. In its coverage of China's role in the global economy, DW often portrayed China as an important partner in global economic growth. Unlike a small number of BBC and CNN International stories, no China-related story broadcast on DW explored the potential threats related to China's economic growth. DW's reporting was also the most likely to outline China's positive contributions to international politics via its emphasis on peaceful and diplomatic solutions to international conflicts, but also at times DW provided a critical assessment of China's foreign policies. Moreover, DW's coverage of China's role in the global economy and of Chinese society consistently emphasized the interconnections between Germany and China and featured examples of cross-cultural similarities (e.g. German appreciation for the Chinese [Lunar] New Year and for Chinese films). While these stories are important, the perception that DW's China-related news is driven in part by a story's connection to Germany may impact the broadcaster's credibility with non-German audiences.

DW's reporting style differed from both CNN International and BBC, typically relying on official statements from actors directly involved in a story, and was the least likely to include additional commentary or editorializing. As a result, DW's reporting was focused on the established facts and statements surrounding a story, but was also the least likely to provide a significant amount of contextual background or depth on any particular issue. While this allowed for an accurate portrayal of the news from the perspective of important stakeholders, it is an area where DW may consider improving upon its overall journalistic output. In its coverage of the Dalai Lama's visit to the White House, for example, DW was straightforward and fair, giving both the Dalai Lama and Chinese officials airtime to present their views, but more background on the history of the relationships between the West, Tibet and China would have been helpful in contextualizing and balancing the story.

Overall, this analysis reveals three very different approaches to reporting the news on China. Indeed, rather than think of BBC, CNN and DW as providing similar services and thus competing with each other to reach audiences, the different approaches represented in the data and described here identify three different types of news (agendas) about China, and three different means of presenting (frames) China-related stories. And, for the most part, they each have some value. Whereas BBC's China emphasis is mostly related to politically important events involving China, including outlining perceived weaknesses in Chinese politics and society, CNN International tended to avoid such controversial topics. When it did report on them, CNN International largely avoided offering critical assessments of the Chinese government. Instead, CNN International's China-related news was to a large extent non-political, dealing with timely social issues of interest to a particular audience, but typically unimportant in terms of an understanding of policies and trends in international politics. DW's approach to China-related news was also very different from both BBC and CNN International, offering the most China-related stories, emphasizing China's growing role in the global economy and in international politics, while also providing the relevant information from important stakeholders on timely political issues. Each of the broadcasters provides a relevant yet very different perspective of China, each likely to appeal to very diverse international audiences and each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Appendix A: News Topic by Category

1	Afghanistan (e.g. Surge, “Marjah Offensive,” civil society)
2	Iran nuclear development/General US-Iran relations (e.g. Israeli-Iran relations; Nuclear fuel exchange)
3	Iranian domestic politics (e.g. Elections; reform)
4	Israel/Palestine (e.g. Arab Peace Process; Assassination of Hamas leader in Dubai; settlements)
5	Palestine—politics (e.g. Hamas-Fatah meetings)
6	Iraq security/elections
7	Terrorism-(Legal/non-military issues) (e.g. Enhanced airport security; arrests of suspects)
8	Finance/Stock Market (e.g. basic financial information or industry specific stories) (Craft/Cadbury merger; EMI troubles)
9	Global financial news (Unemployment; banking reform)
10	Environment & Global Warming (e.g. India and Copenhagen Climate summits; controversy over climate science)
11	Haiti (Earthquake aftermath; aid)
12	Chile (Earthquake)
13	Sudan (Darfur; ICC rulings)
14	India (e.g. poverty; India-Pakistan bilateral talks)
15	Yemen (Civil conflict)
16	Somalia (Pirates/ransom)
17	Nigeria (Politics; absence of Prime Minister; civil instability)
18	Russia (Political dissent)
19	Pakistan (e.g. Pakistan military successes/intelligence gathering)
20	Malaysia (Political corruption/scandal)
21	North Korea (e.g. Freed an American missionary; nuclear negotiations)
22	Ukraine elections

Appendix A: News Topic by Category

23	Technology (e.g. Trade fair; iPad)
24	Humanitarian / Disaster (e.g. plane crash; Peru floods; Mexico winter storms)
25	Religion (e.g. Building a synagogue in Lebanon; Priest abuse scandals)
26	US domestic politics (e.g. Health care; Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy)
27	US Society (e.g. Toyota recall; US jobs/unemployment; Oscars)
28	UK-Politics (e.g. Iraq inquiry; upcoming election)
29	UK-Society (e.g. UK unemployment; UK snow)
30	German-Politics (e.g. Legal changes; German tax fraud)
31	German-Society (e.g. German unemployment; Seimans; extreme snow)
32	EU politics (e.g. Budgets, reform, deficits; Greece—political protests, budget cuts; Muslims in France)
33	EU society (e.g. Fire in Belgium; health)
34	China-politics (e.g. Trade disputes; currency disputes)
35	China-society (e.g. Panda; domestic economy)
36	Africa General (e.g. African Union summit; Nelson Mandela)
37	Latin America-General (e.g. Brazilian child samba controversy)
38	Olympics (use this category for general information—if the story focuses on a particular country, then list separately).
39	General interest (e.g. dog stories, space station; butterfly research)
40	Other (use only when absolutely necessary)

Appendix B: Intercoder Reliability

Approximately 10 percent (21 episodes) of the data was tested for intercoder reliability. In content analysis, reliability is measured to assess how closely multiple coders agree about observations within a data set. Strong agreement between individuals indicates that data is trustworthy and not a reflection of chance or other spurious phenomena.

One of the most effective tests for measuring intercoder reliability in content analysis is Krippendorff's Alpha (K Alpha). This test can be used to assess different levels of data (including categorical and ordinal), data from any number of coders, both large and small sample sizes, and it can deal with missing data.⁴³ This test also assesses intercoder agreement while accounting for the possibility of agreements due to chance, which makes this more rigorous than other tests of reliability that focus solely on consistency between coders such as percent agreement.⁴⁴ The table below lists the K Alpha statistics for the study outlined in this report.

Quantitative Analysis Intercoder Reliability Statistics		
Research Question	Number of Coders	Krippendorff's Alpha
General Story Topic	3	0.72
China Story	3	0.73

Lombard et al. argued that coefficients of .70 are acceptable reliability, and Krippendorff () similarly stated that coefficients in between .60-.70 also fall within an acceptable range depending on the context of the data.⁴⁵

⁴³ Matthew Lombard, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Cheryl Campanella Bracken, "Content Analysis in Mass Communication: Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability," *Human communication research* 28, no. 4 (2002): 587-604.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lombard et. al; Klaus Krippendorff and Mary Angela Bock, *The Content Analysis Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

Appendix C: Codebook for China Stories

Sub-Topic I: Taiwan/Tibet

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Does the story explain China's claim of sovereign control over Taiwan/Tibet? |
| 2 | Does the story mention any explanation of the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (i.e. supporting an emerging democracy/supporting human rights and/or religious freedom)? |
| 3 | Does the story contain criticism of China's position on Taiwan/Tibet (as violation of human rights or a threat to democracy, for example)? |
| 4 | Does the story contain criticism of the US/European position on Taiwan/Tibet (as a violation of sovereignty or a threat to international stability, for example)? |

Sub-Topic II: Political Rights

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Was the Chinese government portrayed as respecting basic political rights? |
| 2 | Did the story put the alleged violation of political rights into appropriate context (did it explain why limitations are in place, or compare China's limitations to that of other countries)? |

Sub-Topic III: Geopolitics

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Is China portrayed as a positive influence on the pursuit of international law/justice/stability? |
| 2 | Is China portrayed as a negative influence on the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability? |
| 3 | If China is portrayed as a negative influence on the pursuit of international/law/justice/stability (i.e. if the answer is "yes" to question number two), is its position on the issue in question explained such that it appears to be acting in pursuit of a legitimate interest of the Chinese nation-state? |

Sub-Topic IV: Global Economy

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Is China portrayed as a model or leader in the global economy? |
| 2 | Is Chinese economic growth portrayed as a threat? |
| 3 | Is Chinese economic growth portrayed as good for international business? |

Sub-Topic V: Chinese Society

Appendix C: Codebook for China Stories

1	Did the story portray China's society as a stable/safe place to live?
2	Did the story portray China's society as an unhappy/difficult place to live?