

The PRC's 'going out' project: CCTV International and the imagination of a Chinese nation

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Abstract

This paper examines the 'going out' project, launched by the Chinese Communist Party and PRC government in 2001, in terms of one of the major organs for dissemination of PRC publicity abroad, CCTV International (CCTV-I). The paper uses original documents and content analysis of a representative sample (twenty-eight days of programming divided into two 14-day periods over sixteen weeks) of CCTV-I programming from 2004 to show the strengths and weaknesses of the going out project in television. Utilizing concepts primarily derived from Edward Said (*Orientalism*) and Kai-wing Chow (*Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture*), I analyze the production at CCTV-I of representations of China and the world for the channel's audiences. Control over the PRC's image abroad is a key component of the 'going out' project. How successful that part of that project has been can be seen from analysis of the content of CCTV-I and comparison of those findings with original unpublished government documents outlining the government's plans for CCTV-I as part of the 'going out' project.

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Introduction

On May 3, 2004 at 0400 Beijing time, China Central Television (CCTV) formally relaunched its global 24-hour English-language channel, CCTV-9, as CCTV International (CCTV-I).¹ According to CCTV-I management, the order for the transformation came from within the highest level of the Party, the Standing Committee of the Politburo: “[The] top ideological boss, Li Changchun, made it very clear that CCTV should improve.”² The aspirations of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), which is CCTV’s ‘parent’ within the political economic structure of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and channel management were ambitious, a complete overhaul that would provide another competitor in the rapidly expanding world of global English-language news services. Today, these include Al-Jazeera International (AJI), BBC World Service (BBCWS), CNN International (CNNI), France 24, Iran Press TV, Russia Today, and, as of February 2, 2009, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), Japan’s public service broadcaster. As the *South China Morning Post* noted after NHK’s entry, the field of 24-hour global news channels has become a “crowded marketplace” (SCMP, 2009, p. 10).

The emergence of a plethora of such channels in recent years speaks to a two-fold shift in the global mediascape, the relative diminution of US authority, represented by CNN in the mediascape, and always exaggerated in any case, and the failure of journalism to live up to its lofty ideals, also exaggerated. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the idea that

¹ The onscreen watermark for CCTV International is CCTV-9. However, in this paper use of CCTV-9 indicates the channel prior to the May 4, 2004 relaunch. I use CCTV-I to indicate the channel after the relaunch.

² Author’s interview with CCTV-I management.

capitalism and liberal democracy had triumphed worldwide was heralded with Francis Fukuyama's (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. The contentiousness of that project was evident in the short-lived ascendancy of the thesis. In a curious reversal of the usual oedipal displacement of the father that characterizes academic coming of age, Samuel Huntington targeted his student in 1993, with the publication of the first draft of *The Clash of Civilizations?* (Huntington, 1993). Over time any uncertainty Huntington might have felt then, indicated by the '?' in the title, was erased. The book length study arrived three years later with a far more confident title: *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order* (Huntington, 1996).

If the poverty of Huntington's historicism was not immediately evident,³ unlike Fukuyama's at least his scholarship accepted the possibility of alternatives to the American project. Part of that enterprise has always been the projection of late eighteenth century European values espoused by a certain sector of the Christian Protestant community – individualism, thrift, hard work, the god-ordained legitimacy of capitalism – as universal values. Within the cultural atmosphere of this particular United States, a particular type of journalism developed (Nord, 2004, ; Underwood, 2002). Under impact of the later introduction of scientism into journalistic ideology, that journalism came to be called the 'professional model,' and articulated the hopes for the medium, reflected in the Lippmann Dewey debate.⁴ The 'professional model' was committed to the same provincial values writ large that characterized the American project, namely a confessional 'truth' obtained, in a nod to science, through accuracy and objectivity. From the outset, inherent in this model was broad acceptance that a 'truth' higher than the 'truth' of science took precedence. Under impact of the secularization of the press, this 'higher truth' shifted away from a narrowly religious orientation to the interests of the nation as a whole, i.e. the national interest.

³ Edward Said's (2001) *The Clash of Ignorance* pointedly corrected this oversight.

⁴ Michael Schudson (2008) has provided a much-needed clarification of this debate. Schudson's work, and that of Michel Foucault (1990, 2000) on the origins of the will to confession inform the thinking of this paragraph.

When Ted Turner launched CNN in 1980, the channel had lofty ambitions, which with the first real-time television war, *Desert Storm*,⁵ in 1991, were realized in the first global real-time television event. Along with the scope of its broadcast of the Gulf War, CNN exhibited a narrow parochialism in its editorial values, consonant with a deeper commitment to the American project, then reaching its apogee as the Soviet Union was collapsing. The double standard that has always defined the professional model was core to CNN's representation of the war. Not only was it a local conflict, but in the context of the ongoing collapse of communism, the coverage doubled as a celebration of the United States as 'savior' of the free world. That double standard – professionalism combined with nationalism – has since become the norm for other 24-hour global news channels that have entered the marketplace.

With the launch of CCTV International in May 2004, the People's Republic of China (PRC) expanded the scope of its voice in the global community. In line with the double standard that characterizes the practice of global news channels, it did so with a commitment to two clearly incommensurable values, a commitment to accuracy and objectivity, and a commitment to being a voice for the PRC in the global conversation that is developing now that a multi-polar world is beginning to take shape in the wake of the Cold War era.

However, against this developing world seen through Fukuyama's rose-tinted glasses or Huntington's Orwellian vision of a world divided into 'civilizations' with fault line across Oceania, East Asia and Eurasia,⁶ the reality has always been somewhat more banal and certainly more complex.⁷ Not surprisingly though, given the quest for scientific elegance, part and parcel of the ideological baggage it carries, the American project has never been afraid to steer clear of

⁵ Or more correctly, the 'Gulf War' or 'First Gulf War', since 'Operation Desert Storm' was the U.S. name of the air and land operations (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War)

⁶ Both insights are Benjamin Elman's (1998), who has an excellent discussion of the Fukuyama, Huntington debate from an East Asian perspective.

⁷ Notwithstanding the sophistication of texts such as Jean-Francois Bayart's (2007) 'Global Subjects' and the work of globalization theorists from Karl Marx to the likes of Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri (2000) and Giovanni Arrighi (1994), even the US foreign policy establishment has come to recognize this, according to the 2008 findings of the *National Intelligence Council* (ODNI/NIC, 2008).

banality and complexity, when hubris and simplicity will suffice. The carrier for that ideological baggage has always been the academy. After all the intellectual project also suffers from the same double vision that blurs the ability of journalism to see clearly. Not surprisingly, the academy strives for a scientific truth that is always already subordinated to that higher truth, the national interest.

As Kai-wing Chow (2001) shows, in their embrace of nationalism in the late 19th Century, the intellectuals and apologists for power of late and early post-imperial China found in Social Darwinism, the hierarchy of species and Hegelian philosophy of history a way to re-conceptualize the history of 'zhongguo' (the Middle Kingdom) no longer as a center but as a peripheral country in the Euro-centric global state system. This reconceptualization provided an explanation for Imperial China's weakness in the face of European weapons. For both reformers and revolutionaries it also served as a resource for resistance to European and Japanese colonization through the appropriation by reformers and then revolutionaries of Social Darwinism and the Hegelian zeitgeist and their adaptation to local conditions.

Through conceptualization of the 'yellow' race in opposition to the 'white' race and then invention of the 'Han' in opposition to the Manchu and then the Japanese, a process of re-ordering Chinese identity proceeded by way of adoption and adaptation of the Euro-centric conceptualization of world history to account for Chinese history, reconceptualized now as a national history rather than as the history of dynastic succession (Chow, 2001). As Chow (2001) notes, learning from the European and Japanese examples, the invention of a national history required invention of an historical subject, the Chinese nation. Paradoxically, in the quest for a modern identity, the peoples of China embraced the European conceptualization of their own history in order to become Chinese. Over the next hundred years, increasing identification with this nation, consolidation of the Chinese Republic and its metamorphosis under impact of Mao's embrace of Marxism-Leninism into the People's Republic would function to obliterate the diversity of the Chinese peoples. With Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening in 1978, the

Chinese state ended its flirtation with what Liu Kang (1998) calls an ‘alternative modernity’ and fully endorsed the Euro-centric world system and its values as the price of entry onto the world stage as a global player. Part and parcel of this ‘coming out’ has been the proliferation of discourses about China, especially in the academy, where the distinctions and gradations that are central to Social Darwinism and essential to ordering nations play out.

In *Orientalism*, Said (1995) provides an account of how the academy works. Said’s analysis of the interest in controlling the Levant that was at the heart of disinterested knowledge production about the Levant is no less applicable to academic discourse in general and in this particular case, China/PRC studies in the United States, or globalization studies from a Chinese perspective. *Orientalism*, the academy, journalism and policy are linked. In this conjuncture, one can see exactly why the double standard that characterizes journalism is the same double standard that legitimizes the academic project and subordinates it to other interests. In this respect, for all their difference, area studies with the PRC as their focus and PRC studies of globalization are two sides of the same coin. Both seek to control the discursive production of the PRC. And in this sense, CNN and CCTV International play a similar role. The former seeks to apprehend, the latter to represent. So the moniker “China’s CNN” that accompanied the May 2004 relaunch should not surprise.

In this paper, I outline the origins of the relaunch of CCTV-9 as CCTV International in the PRC government’s ‘going out’ project. I then look at the content of the channel. Finally I analyze the meaning of the content for the imagination of a ‘Chinese nation’ and offer a solution in comparative studies to the problems I encounter.

The ‘going out’ project and the launch of CCTV International

In 2001, Xu Guangchun, who was then deputy head of the CPC Central Publicity Department (CPD) and head of SARFT launched the ‘going out’ project as part of the Party/State’s aim to take the PRC’s voice to the world (Xu, 2002, , cited in Liu, 2006). With

respect to television, the goals of the project were within the first five years to land a full range of PRC television overseas, especially in North America and Western Europe. Then within a further ten years, the aim was for the PRC to consolidate multi-language global and regionalized services (Liu, 2006). Xu outlined a series of strategies for ‘wai xuan’ (external publicity). Both CCTV and high profile lower tier stations were encouraged to expand overseas and enter into cooperative agreements with overseas broadcasters; managers were called on to develop strong overseas marketing and distribution teams and agencies; channels were called on to improve their understanding of media laws, regulations and policies in target regions and countries; they were also asked to study the culture and audience tastes, the politics, history, economy, etc. of target countries and regions to “help with the government’s policy-making” (Xu, 2002, cited in Liu, 2006). In short, as Liu (2006) notes, the expansion of services such as CCTV International was aimed at increasing the PRC’s political influence through media.

A media manager involved in the ‘going out’ project told me in 2003 that the aim for CCTV International was to be “China’s CNN, only cleverer.” Rather than mask the double standard operating in global news, CCTV International would embrace it. CCTV International would have the dual function of providing a global news service, while remaining the voice of the Party and State in the international media sphere. A Party/State ‘mouthpiece’ is the norm for the literature, although He Zhou’s (2000a, p. 145) description of the system as ‘Party Publicity Inc.’ better captures the authoritarian, corporate and commercial context in which the role of the media as a Party/State mouthpiece is evolving. From the viewpoint of this hybrid media form developing in the PRC, the task set CCTV-I manifested itself as a challenge for reporters to pay attention not only to a story, but to its meaning for the country’s internal development and external image, and the danger in reporting facts that could embarrass the government.

According to CCTV management, the first time they heard the term ‘China’s CNN’ was in a meeting with SARFT and the CPD in 2001, when Xu Guangchun used it to describe the role of CCTV-9 in the context of the ‘going out’ project. The first step in realizing this goal had been

the launch of CCTV-9 on September 25, 2000. Previously, CCTV's English language programming had shared CCTV-4 with Mandarin-language programming, which was primarily aimed at the Chinese diaspora. In contrast, the 24-hour English service was aimed at the global English speaking audience, including inside the PRC. It was launched on a series of satellites that provided the channel with a footprint reaching over one hundred countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania (Liu, 2006).

CCTV has distribution deals around the world, but the size of its audience is difficult to determine. In many cases CCTV-I is bundled into a package of programming, so subscription figures to the package say nothing about who is watching and what they are watching. When I asked CCTV management in 2005 how many people were watching CCTV-I overseas, the reply was "no idea." An advertising brochure used by CCTV International in 2005 gave the figure of "2.3 million subscribers outside China" (CCTV, 2005). CCTV's website in May 2007 stated that CCTV-I "programs can now be seen by 45 million subscribers outside China" (CCTV, 2007). By contrast, in early 2005, CCTV reported that subscriptions to the US-oriented 'Great Wall' package had surpassed thirty thousand (CCTV, 2006), which, according to management was the break-even point for commercial sustainability. However, on April 11, 2007, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that CCTV-I in that city would be "discontinued because of low viewership" (McDaniel, 2007). I confirmed this with Comcast, which had acquired Time Warner's cable operation. Comcast would not release viewer figures, but told me that they were "very low" and not high enough to justify carriage of CCTV International on a commercial basis.

Meanwhile, CCTV continues to aggressively market its stable of international channels, and is finding no shortage of willing partners, many of whom hope to leverage association with CCTV into access to the PRC market. In Britain for example, Sky Television, operated by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, includes CCTV-I among its package of news channels, which otherwise consists of Sky News, BBC NEWS 24, BBC Parliament, CNN, Community Channel, DD-News (Doordarshan, India), EuroNews and France 24 (see Illustration 1). Simply through

association with the likes of BBC and CNN, CCTV-I's mix of news and Party/State publicity is legitimized.



Illustration 1: Webgrab of BskyB basic news package⁸

Although, CCTV-9 had been broadcasting on a 24-hour cycle to an international audience since its launch on September 25, 2000, its relaunch in May 2004 as CCTV International was meant to mark a significant change of direction. The Controller⁹ at the time described the changes in the following manner:

From the former external publicity aim to “let the world understand China, let China go out to the world, open to the world a window for understanding China,” the channel has become an “antenna for the world, the eye of China, a window for the world.” The key is that the original single window has become two windows, not only is the channel a window for the world to understand China, but it’s also a window for the world to understand itself ... The existing news-oriented comprehensive channel has been

⁸ Source: URL <http://www.freesatfromsky.co.uk/?pID=3> Accessed October 31, 2007. Note in addition to the Indian public service broadcaster, Doordarshan, the presence of the French government-funded publicity channel, France 24.

⁹ CCTV here is using the BBC classification of job functions, hence the term ‘controller’. The equivalent term in the US media system for ‘controller’ would be managing director (television), editor-in-chief (press) or his/her equivalent.

transformed into an English-language news channel. The quantity of foreign news has been increased and this foreign news is being reported from China's standpoint and with Chinese perspective. General news has become a rolling service. The respective features of specialized news are prominent. Economic, cultural and sporting news have all been strengthened. (Jiang & Liu, 2004, p. 54)

The key differences were the re-focusing of the channel away from being a "window on China" to also being a "window on the world," the implementation of a rolling service for general news and the strengthening of the channel's identity as a news channel, rather than a comprehensive channel (in the manner of a US network). The rolling service was implemented by increasing the number of hours of news and putting news at the top of the hour, every hour. The claimed shift away from CCTV-9's identity as a comprehensive channel similar to e.g. ABC, NBC, CBS or Fox in the United States towards 'China's CNN' was achieved according to management by not only emphasizing news on the channel, but with new and revamped shows, a lineup more appropriate to a news channel, and a broadcast schedule that targeted audiences in Asia, Europe and the Americas, without forgetting its traditional service for foreigners living in the PRC (Jiang & Liu, 2004).

I noted above the role publicity chief Li Changchun played in initiating the relaunch. Li's interest in the channel's development was evident during a trip to Latin America in July 2003 when he remarked that the people of the region should have better access to information about the PRC and that the PRC could use its own CNN.¹⁰ On his return to Beijing, that comment apparently put in motion the process that resulted in the CCTV-9 relaunch, as well as the launch on October 1, 2004 of a combined Spanish and French channel with global distribution.¹¹ Beginning in 2003, Li made a number of comments "on the question of improving television's

¹⁰ I have put together this version of the genesis of CCTV International from the combined input of a number of CCTV personnel. None of their accounts fully tallied with one another when I interviewed them in 2004/5, so I have made do with what appeared common in the different versions of the story. Following is typical: "I heard that Li Changchun was in South America watching television in a hotel and he didn't see any news from China, and he said 'why don't we have a Chinese CNN?'"

¹¹ CCTV is currently recruiting for an Arabic-language channel, with a Russian-language channel apparently also in the pipeline for 2009 (Anonymous, 2008, , also see <http://english.cctv.com/>). CCTV is reportedly planning to broadcast in seven languages by 2012 (Anonymous, 2008, , 2009).

external publicity work” (CCTV, 2003). Li issued a written instruction to CCTV on September 16, 2003 making “extremely clear demands of CCTV-9” (CCTV, 2003):

我国的视角审视世界；以外国人感兴趣的问题为切入点（如经济，旅游）展示中国；以较高的时效报道全世界新闻，应成为 CCTV-9 改进的途径. (CCTV, 2003)

[looking at the world from our perspective; taking what interests foreigners (e.g. the economy, travel) as a starting point for showing China; reporting the world’s news in a timely fashion – these have to become the ways of improving CCTV-9 (author’s translation)]

Less than a week later, on September 22nd, Xu Guangchun led a delegation of senior leaders to CCTV for a discussion on external publicity. He called for the “transformation” (改造) of CCTV-9, “to make CCTV-9 in a real sense an international news channel (“把CCTV-9 办成真正意义上的国际新闻频道” (CCTV, 2003)).

We should also understand how Li Changchun saw CNN. Given that the Party operates from a Marxist-Leninist perspective on media, which sees media as an instrument of the ruling party and central to maintenance of the political and social systems, by “China’s CNN” Li was not arguing that CCTV-9 should be developed as a global news channel with editorial subjection to commercial oversight but independence from direct political oversight. On the contrary, from what is known about how the PRC leadership views media like CNN, apparently it views them as little different from PRC media, i.e. as instruments of direct political power. For example when Deng Xiaoping was criticizing foreign coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen incident, he notes:

The causes of this incident have to do with the global context. The Western world, especially the United States, has thrown its entire propaganda machine into agitation work and has given a lot of encouragement and assistance to the so-called democrats or opposition in China – people who in fact are the scum of the Chinese nation. This is the root of the chaotic situation we face today. When the West stirs up turmoil in other countries, in fact it is playing power politics – hegemonism – and is only trying to control those countries, to pull into its power sphere countries that were previously beyond its control (Nathan, Link, & Zhang (compiler), 2002, p. 472).

Moreover, in the *Tiananmen Papers* (Nathan, Link, & Zhang (compiler), 2002), cited above, the government’s media monitors appear to make no attempt to distinguish between

foreign media such as CNN and *Voice of America*. Operating from a Marxian political economic perspective that links the ideological superstructures of a social formation to their economic base and recognizing the double standard at the heart of the global news project, they lump them together in the reports compiled for the leadership from the foreign press, which, according to the book's editors, were the "most instructive items in the leaders' intelligence flow" (Nathan, Link, & Zhang (compiler), 2002, p. xli). Nathan's comment captures the double standard that characterizes global media. They can be factual, accurate and objective in what they report while remaining partial within the discursive framework of commercial and/or national interests that shape news as both a source of information and a political economic instrument. In the case of CCTV-I, whether the term "China's CNN" or e.g. "Voice of China" therefore better characterizes the channel is a moot point, since the leadership does not distinguish between the two conceptualizations of the press. From discussions with CCTV management and conversations with journalists, Li clearly wanted CCTV-I developed as an instrument of global influence, what Joseph Nye (2004) would call 'soft power' or, more tellingly in the political economy of the global mediascape, what Antonio Gramsci (1971) would analyze as an oppositional discourse to the dominant hegemony.¹²

The content of CCTV International

To understand the effectiveness or otherwise of the PRC's 'soft power' or counter-hegemonic system as represented by CCTV International, one starting point must be content, since content is the evidence on which audiences at least in part base their attitude to the channel, notwithstanding any suspicion of the role of Party/State controlled media in the PRC context.

¹² 'Soft power' is a relatively weak conceptualization of the role of media in shaping attitudes when compared to Gramsci's work on hegemony and its application to media. That 'soft power' has gained such currency in the journalistic and academic worlds is evidence of the poverty of the intellectual imagination.

The following analysis is based on CCTV-I content drawn from a 28-day period in 2004.¹³ In a country as vast and diverse as the PRC, one would expect a wide range of datelines and a richness of content that would do justice to the myriad peoples and cultures of the PRC (including Hong Kong and Macao) and Taiwan. However, this was not the case. Rather, in line with the imagination of the Chinese nation that has been part and parcel of the intellectual and state project since the late nineteenth century, what the survey of content showed was a narrow range of topics and datelines and a predominance of official voices.

NEWS SOURCES

What content analysis showed in the coding period was that news was drawn from a small range of sources. PRC sources accounted for about half of the news. Associated Press and Reuters accounted for a third and a mix of sources, primarily PRC sources, the other twenty percent.¹⁴ The single biggest source of news on CCTV International was the international news agencies. Associated Press and Reuters each supplied their 24-hour video and script feeds to the channel. The next biggest news source at some twenty-three percent of the news was other CCTV channels, primarily CCTV-1 and CCTV-4, respectively the main national channel and the Mandarin-language channel of CCTV's Overseas Service Center. Stories by writers and reporters accounted for just over twenty percent of the news.

What is striking about the sources of news on CCTV International is their general paucity. Despite a range of bilateral agreements with other broadcasters and membership of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), my observation of the news making process at CCTV-I throughout 2004 showed no other significant sources of news than other CCTV channels – whose stories CCTV-I translated and rewrote for broadcast in English – the international agencies, and self cover by CCTV International's reporters. For a country as large and diverse as

¹³ Although only the results are reported here, for an explanation of the rationale and methodology associated with the content analysis presented here see Jirik (2008, pp. 139-197)

¹⁴ For the exact percentages and methodology, see Jirik (2008, chapters 6, 11).

the PRC and one so central to the global political economy, the channel drew on a surprisingly small pool of resources for its news.

In the blueprint (CCTV, 2003) for development of CCTV International, management pointed to the channel's comparative advantage over foreign broadcasters in reporting the 'China story.' But CCTV International did not take advantage of this comparative advantage to the degree one might have expected. After the launch in May 2004, the channel continued to rely on CCTV-1 and CCTV-4 for the bulk of its PRC news, rather than expand on its few direct relationships with regional broadcasters such as Shanghai TV and expand their own news net by stationing reporters in the PRC's major cities.

A lack of English-speaking television talent outside of Beijing and Shanghai was one problem. Budgetary constraints were another. Beginning from January 2005, CCTV-I was permitted to carry advertisements at a maximum rate of four minutes per hour. But advertising did not come close to covering costs. In addition, any advertising revenue did not go to the channel directly, but went to CCTV's advertising department.¹⁵ A third problem was a certain reluctance amongst some of the Beijing-based reporters to lose the travel privileges that came with the job, had regional supply been increased or reporters stationed in key cities.¹⁶

As for CCTV International's heavy reliance on the international news agencies, if the viewer was denied much in the way of news about the PRC that was not supplied by CCTV's Chinese-languages services, outside of the country the opposite was the case. CCTV had fourteen overseas correspondents in 2004 (ABU, 2004), more than any of the US networks at the time.¹⁷ Moreover, many of those foreign correspondents were former CCTV-9 staff. But with three exceptions – the Hong Kong, Sydney and London correspondents – they did almost nothing for CCTV International. As a result, CCTV International relied almost exclusively on

¹⁵ Interview with CCTV International management.

¹⁶ Interviews with CCTV International reporters.

¹⁷ In 2005, both CBS and NBC had eleven foreign bureaux. In 2004, ABC had six. (PEJ, 2006)

the Associated Press and Reuters for its foreign coverage. In 2008, CCTV International opened mini-hubs in London and Washington, and stationed reporters there. But according to one senior newsroom staffer in Beijing, at the time of writing neither mini-hub had made an appreciable impact on the overall form and content of the news.

NEWS CONTENT

In the context of the ‘going out’ project, four elements of content of analytical value are orientation, place, person (institution) and voice.¹⁸ Orientation is categorization of stories according to a domestic, foreign policy or foreign focus.¹⁹ Orientation is derived from place, which is where the story happened. Person indicates persons and institutions referred to in the news. Voice is who speaks in a story.²⁰

Orientation

As Chang & Chen (1998, ; 2000) have noted, orientation has a particular relevance for news editing in the PRC, an observation reflected in CCTV International’s role in the PRC’s ‘going out’ project. Domestic and foreign policy stories were required to reflect the Party’s and government’s point of view, or at least not contradict the Party’s and Government’s point of view. As the CCTV-9 Controller noted ahead of the May 2004 relaunch, “We are taking great efforts to minimise the tone of propaganda, to balance our reports, and to be objective. But we definitely won’t be reporting as much negative domestic news as the western media” (Cui, 2004).

As for foreign news, the CCTV International blueprint called for the channel to also look at the wider world from a Chinese perspective. In its public pronouncements, management at the

¹⁸ A fifth element is narrative, which this paper does not address since narrative was not a focus of the dissertation research on which this paper was based.

¹⁹ This definition of orientation is taken from Chang & Chen (1998). Their recognition that editorial decisions at CCTV must take into account orientation is as relevant today as it was then.

²⁰ For the full explanation of the data sample, its analysis and discussion, see Jirik (2008).

channel was concerned to repeat this claim. In April 2004, the Controller stated that one goal of CCTV-9 was “to voice a Chinese perspective on world affairs and to break the western voice’s monopoly on the news. Our opinions on the world are quite different from those of CNN and the BBC” (Cui, 2004).

Despite this claim, what observation of the news production process showed was that the norm at the channel was, in line with practice at CNN and the BBC,²¹ to use Reuters and APTN material as it was delivered. In short, management’s claim that CCTV-I provided Chinese perspective on world events was not supported, unless a story involved Chinese interests. This observation reflected Chang & Chen’s (1998) finding a decade earlier that conformity to the ‘Party line’ in news in the PRC was contingent on the relationship of the story to PRC interests. In line with their findings, when the ‘national interest’ was not part of the story, “systematic typification” in the manner in which Galtung and Ruge (1965, cited in Chang, Tsan-Kuo, & Chen, Yanru, 1998) used the term characterized foreign news at CCTV-I.

When agency material did touch on a foreign story that had a PRC angle – such as the current Darfur situation in Sudan, where Beijing is perceived to exert influence through its support for the Sudanese government and business interests, primarily oil, in the region – management would remind writers to rework agency material or discard it in favor of a source such as CCTV-1 or Xinhua to ensure the news reflected Beijing’s position on the issue. On occasion, SARFT or the CPD would issue an interim suspension or ban on reporting a foreign story although it had no obvious PRC angle. Such was the case with the Beslan incident in 2004,

²¹ When I worked at Reuters as a television news producer in the 1990s, one aim of the video wholesaler was to supply retailers like CCN a complete package that could go to air, ‘as is.’ In Hong Kong and Singapore where I was part of the team responsible for the regional package of stories ‘Asian Report’, we would always feel particular satisfaction when stories from the Reuters’ package were re-broadcast by retailers exactly as they had been sent. Second -tier retailers like CNN bought a discounted product and re-broadcast stories with a Reuters’ watermark. Top-tier retailers, usually national level broadcasters, paid a premium to re-broadcast with no watermark, giving the impression the broadcaster had done the story.

when SARFT stepped in to prevent further government embarrassment over a gaffe by CCTV-4.²²

The orientation of the news on CCTV-I is shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 again shows orientation, but includes source. The content sample indicated a strong correlation between source and story orientation. On domestic and foreign policy stories, CCTV-I relied almost exclusively on Self Cover and CCTV, although in foreign policy stories, some use was made of agency material. In foreign stories, agency coverage was the norm.²³

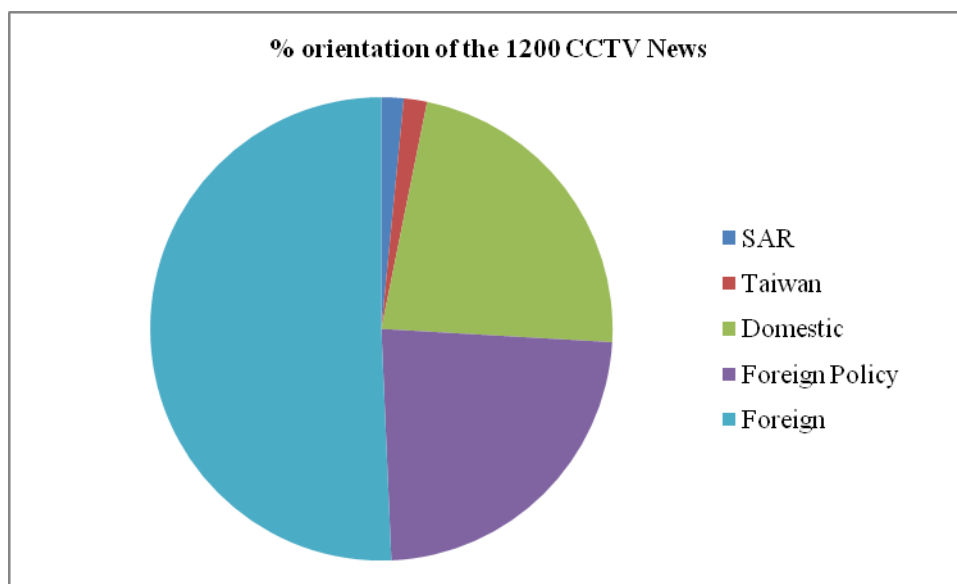


Figure 1:
Orientation of the
1200 CCTV News²⁴

²² On September 6, CCTV-4 ran a news bar at the bottom of the screen after the siege of Beslan, inviting viewers to text in a phone message for a prize, answering the question: “How many people have died so far in the Southern Russia hostage crisis? Is it A: 402, B: 338, C: 322 or D: 302?” (courtesy CCTV-I copy editor). A spokesman for the Russian President criticized the competition as the result of “incompetence and ignorance of what happened in Beslan on the part of the programmers... [and] monstrous hard-heartedness of those who composed the questions” (SCMP, 2004). The Jiangnan Times (Nanjing) reported that the quiz “attracted the serious attention of the heads of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Propaganda Department and SARFT” (courtesy CCTV-I copy editor). In the wake of the scandal, two CCTV-4 producers were removed and a duty editor sacked. SARFT issued a regulation banning unauthorized phone quizzes (Cheung, 2004).

²³ One problem with this correlation is that the agencies were restricted in their coverage of the PRC and relied heavily on purchasing material from sources such as CCTV for their global subscriber base. So PRC had little incentive to use agency stories on domestic stories. Moreover, the agencies tended to focus on negative stories within the PRC, whereas CCTV-I was concerned to put a positive spin on the story.

²⁴ Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 421).

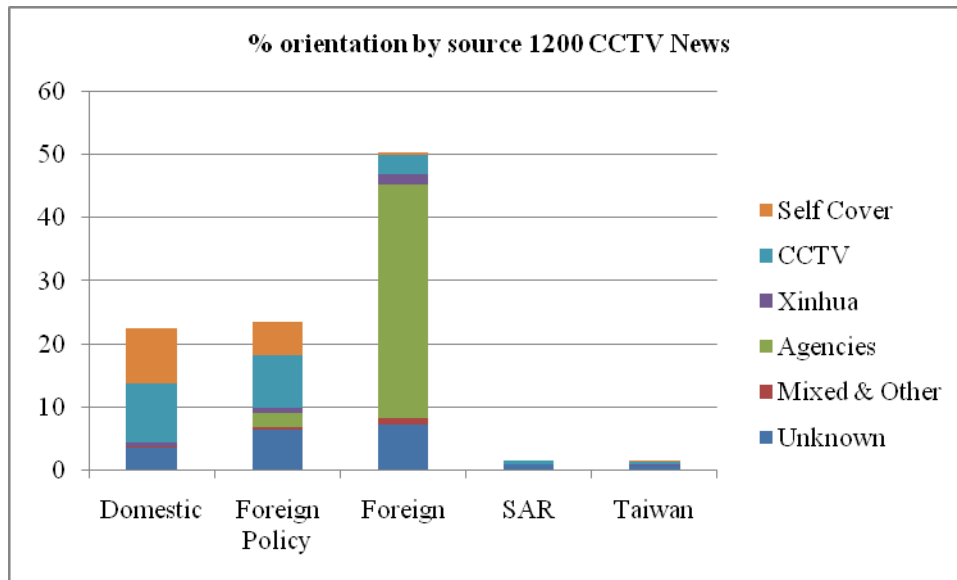


Figure 2:
Orientation by
source 1200 CCTV
News²⁵

Editorial oversight was institutionalized in the production process. On domestic and foreign policy stories, the use of CCTV stories from Chinese-language channels such as CCTV-1 and CCTV-4 shored up the Party line.²⁶ On the foreign story, so long as PRC interests were not at stake, the use of agency material was not an issue, producing “systematic typification” (Chang & Chen, 2000). The system was extremely efficient, producing news that would satisfy the regulatory and censorial authorities, with a minimum of editorial oversight. CCTV-1 effectively set the news agenda for domestic and foreign policy news on CCTV International. The international news agencies largely set the agenda in foreign news.

Place

Given the orientation of the news, one would expect “systematic typification” to also characterize places in the news, although “typification” here needs to be thought through Beijing as the center. Even accounting for the role of the international news agencies in setting the

²⁵ Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 423).

²⁶ CCTV-1 guaranteed the Party line. Its news was carefully monitored. However, as the incident with the Beslan ticker suggested, CCTV-4 had a degree of editorial autonomy that meant its work could not be guaranteed to deliver the Party line, although CCTV-9 staff considered it a reliable source.

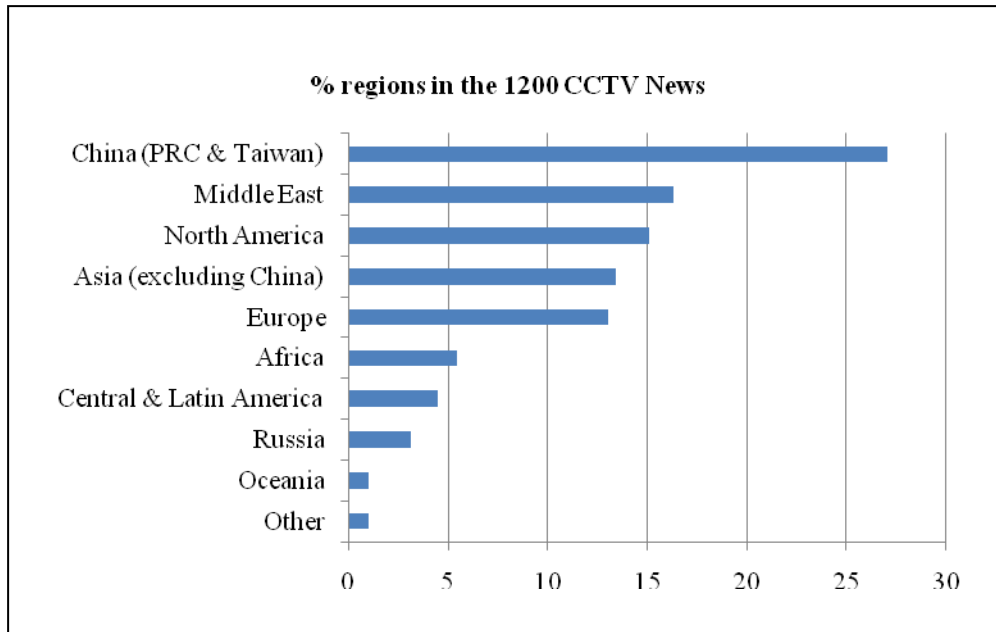


Figure 3: Regions in the 1200 CCTV News²⁷

foreign news agenda at CCTV-I, foreign news was only part of the bulletin, and the bulletin agenda was set by editorial prerogatives within the context of the ‘going out’ project and the heavy reliance on CCTV-1 and to a lesser extent CCTV-4 for domestic and foreign policy coverage. Just as one expects US news to dominate on CNNI (or Al Jazeera to shy away from upsetting its Qatari benefactors) because of the double standard at the heart of global news production, one would also expect CCTV to focus on PRC news. Figure 3 shows the percentage of different geographic regions in the noon Beijing time CCTV-I news.^{28, 29}

²⁷ Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 430)

²⁸ I derived the regions from my experience at Reuters. The rationale for and allocation of countries to regions can be found in Jirik (2008, pp. 619-621).

²⁹ From observation, the 2400 CCTV News was skewed even more heavily towards PRC coverage than was the 1200 bulletin, given that the 2400 news was largely a repeat of the 2100 bulletin which was the prime time bulletin for CCTV International and focused on the news of the day in the PRC, with a heavy emphasis on stories translated and repeated from the 1900 *Xinwen Lianbo* bulletin. In theory the 1200 bulletin should have been more international in that it should have included the overnight news from Europe, Africa and the Americas. However the degree to which that happened depended largely on the diligence of the overnight editors, of whom at least a couple delighted in making as little change as possible to each successive bulletin. Their reasons ranged from boredom to protest.

China clearly dominated the news. This was a Beijing-centric bulletin with a strong Asian flavor.³⁰ However, the Middle East and the developed world were highly visible. CCTV-I positioned the PRC at the center of an Asian sphere of influence, but focused primarily on the developed world (the United States and Europe), both its successes and failures (the Middle East wars), to the exclusion of much of the rest of the world.

Bracketing national and regional bias, this is perhaps not the world one would expect from a news service that claims to provide a different picture of the world to that available on other video retailers such as AJI, the BBCWS and CNN. Rather in what could be taken for a reproduction of Huntington's (1993) cartoon-like configuration of the global political system, it is a picture of Beijing at the center of Asia as one regional center sharing center stage with other centers in the United States and Europe. Observation of the CCTV-I editorial process suggested that the focus on the Middle East reflected both a fascination with US policy failure in the region, and the prominence of the Middle East in the agency feeds. Whether a different picture would emerge did CCTV-I not rely almost exclusively on the international news agencies for its foreign news can only be tested if CCTV-I weans itself of agency coverage, which international practice suggests is unlikely. Not surprisingly, given dependence on the international news agencies and their own editorial prerogatives, Africa and South America were of little interest to CCTV-I.

Inside the PRC, the Beijing-centric character of the news was pronounced. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the PRC's major administrative units (provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions and special administrative regions) in the news.³¹ Accepting that Beijing

³⁰ CCTV-I launched a news show called Asia Today as part of the May 2004 relaunch, tripling from 3.5 to 10.5 hours per week the news focus on Asia. However, the CCTV-I definition of Asia included the Middle East.

³¹ For the sake of simplifying analysis, I have treated as equivalent the PRC administrative units which are roughly equivalent to a state in the United States. The PRC consists of twenty-two provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, and the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao. The twenty-two provinces are Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan,

should predominate in news that is the voice of the Party and government, the asymmetry of places in the news is striking nevertheless. Given that the PRC is home to 1.3 billion people, three major and mutually unintelligible dialects (Mandarin, Shanghaiese and Cantonese), several lesser major dialects (many of them also mutually unintelligible) and a myriad cultures and local dialects, and given that the economic powerhouses that have driven the PRC's development in recent decades are situated not in or around Beijing but primarily in Guangdong Province, the Yangtze River basin, especially in and around Shanghai, on the eastern seaboard, and in many large cities and towns inland, the CCTV News was a pale reflection of the country as a whole. The location of the reporters' team exclusively in Beijing only accentuated this imbalance, as reporters' stories also had a predominantly Beijing focus.

Zhejiang; the five autonomous regions are Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Tibet; the four municipalities are Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin.

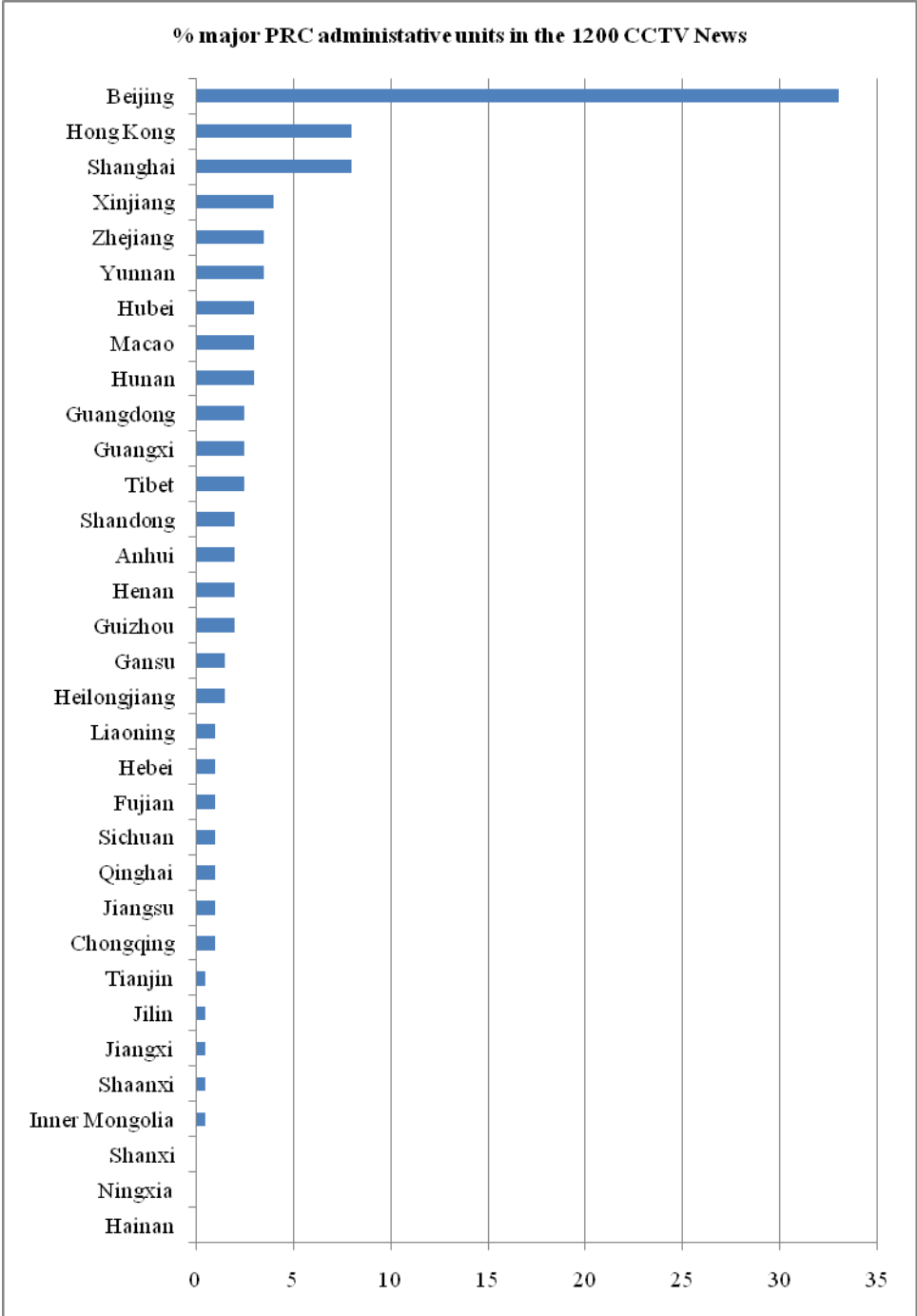


Figure 4: Major PRC administrative units in the 1200 CCTV News³²

³² Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 433)

Persons & institutions in the news; who speaks in the news

The focus on Beijing was reflected in the persons and institutions in the news. Official persons and institutions dominated. Figure 5 shows the distribution of categories of person and institution referred to for all three news orientations: domestic, foreign policy and foreign. Figure 6 shows who speaks for the same categories.

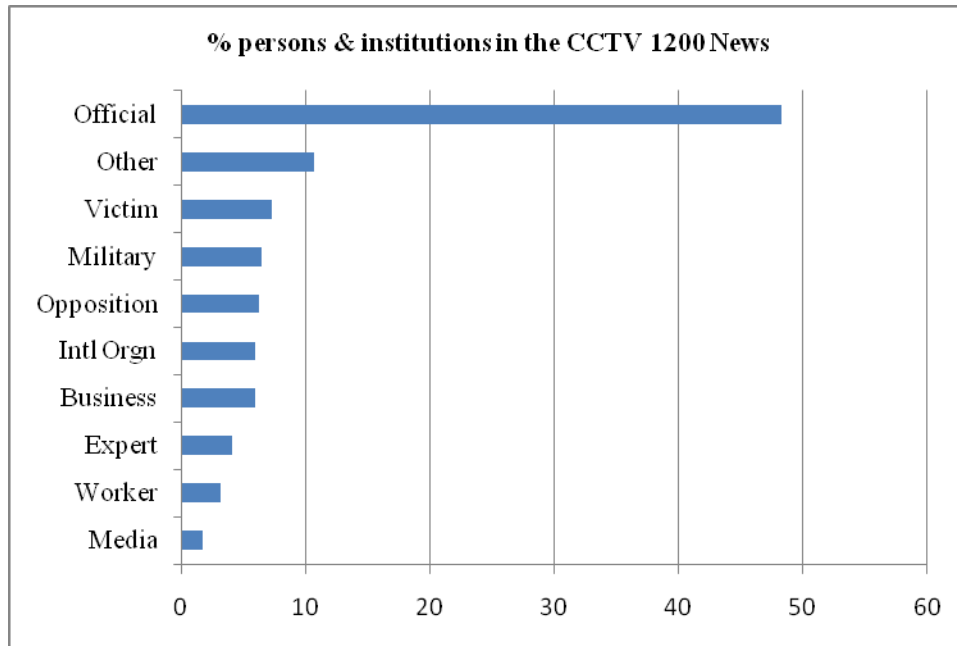


Figure 5: Persons & institutions in the 1200 CCTV News³³

³³ Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 434)

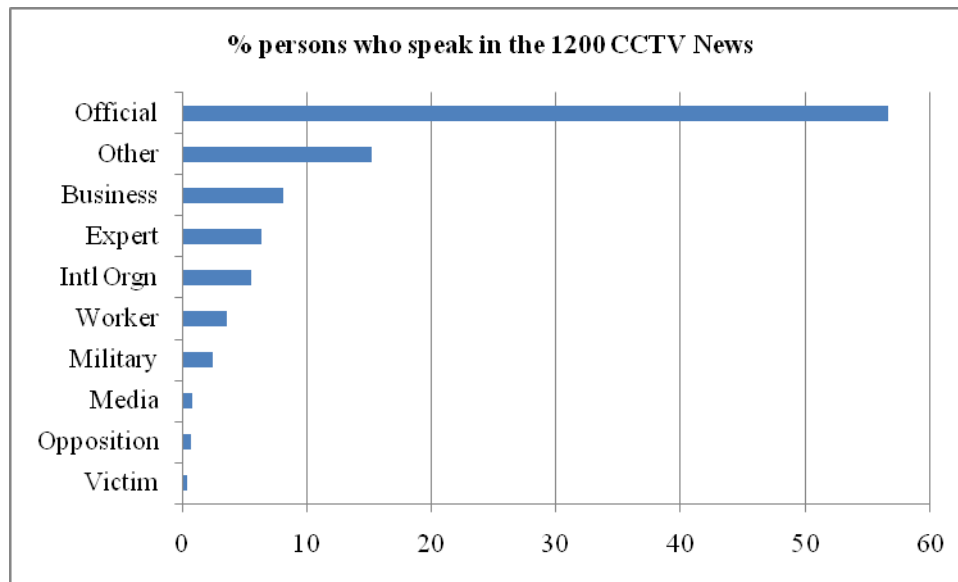


Figure 6: Persons who speak in the 1200 CCTV News³⁴

Discussion

WHAT CONTENT SAYS ABOUT THE CCTV-I CLAIMS

Clearly news on CCTV International exhibited many of the characteristics that would be assumed of a channel that serves as both a mouthpiece for the Party/State and functions as a global news channel in the manner in which e.g. AJI, BBCWS and CNN are usually understood. The heavy reliance on official voices and heavy representation of official institutions in the news was in part a direct result of the subordination of the PRC's media system to the interests of the Party and government. In part it was also a reflection of the intermediary role of the news system within any power system. Only comparative analysis with the channels with which it seeks to compete would indicate whether the proportion of official to non-official voices and institutions on CCTV-I was significantly higher than on its competitors.

³⁴ Source: derived from Jirik (2008, p. 435)

Whether CCTV-I was a 'window on China' is also debatable except in the narrowest sense in which Beijing as the political center is conflated with the PRC. Most of the country was missing from the broadcast, with scant attention paid to any major administrative unit other than Beijing. Even major trade and industrial hubs such as Hong Kong and Shanghai were barely visible in the news. The survey of content showed such a restricted range of places, voices and institutions in the news that I can only conclude that CCTV-I offered not so much a window on China, as a window on power. On the one hand, this means a viewer has a very good idea of what the Party and government want to be seen to have said. On the other hand, the centers of power are only a tiny part of the country.

However, without comparative analysis with its global competitors, I have no reason to think that CCTV-9's coverage of the PRC was any less attenuated than that of its competitors. Media research has consistently shown that official voices and institutions of power (political, military, economic and judiciary) dominate news in public service and commercial television news in countries like the United States and Britain (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 1999; Schiller, 1992; Schlesinger, 1987). So the assumption that the mouthpiece function CCTV-I plays within the PRC's 'going out' project should not be automatically translated into dismissal of the CCTV-I news, unless one is willing to subject other news systems to a similar critique.

Secondly, and as a direct corollary of the role of the international news agencies for CCTV International, the idea that the channel would become a 'window on the world' and not simply a 'window on China' with the May 2004 relaunch seems to have been realized. In fact the extremely high proportion of foreign news, about half, in the news as a whole, suggests a much richer diet of foreign news for the domestic audience in the PRC than is the norm in many countries, certainly the United States.

Research done in the United States at about the same time I was collecting the data presented in this paper concluded that ABC, CBS, and NBC, offered "mere dribbles of
Jirik 24/42.

international news” (Anonymous, 2005). Although the methodology used in that study prevents direct comparison with my findings, the fact that about fifty percent of the CCTV News was foreign news suggests that a comparison using the same methodology would show that compared to US audiences, domestic audiences of CCTV-I were seeing a much larger slice of the world on television than were domestic audiences in the United States. As for CCTV-I’s global audience, given the agenda setting function of the international news agencies for foreign news, one can assume that CCTV-I presented a picture of the world outside China that was little different than that available on channels such as BBCWS and CNNI.

However, and this is the sticking point for the ‘going out’ project, the claim that “foreign news is being reported from China’s standpoint and with Chinese perspective” was not supported. I could see two reasons for this. Firstly, observation of newsroom practice indicated that agency video primarily was used as delivered, unless Chinese interests were somehow at stake in a foreign story. Secondly, insofar as the Associated Press and Reuters set the foreign news agenda, then the stories dominating the news reflected those sources, without delivering anything that could be defined as “Chinese perspective”.

Despite this, that the content of the foreign news stories on CCTV-I was so similar to what a viewer might see on e.g. AJI, BBCWS or CNNI might have functioned to mask for the casual viewer the degree to which domestic and foreign policy news followed the ‘Party line’ laid out in the SARFT and CPD directives that the government and Party issue on a periodical basis to guide the work of publicity organs such as CCTV. Given the high proportion of foreign news on CCTV-I and agenda-setting function of the international news agencies, the news may have worked to both better inform CCTV-I viewers of international events than the case is in more parochial news systems such as the US networks, while mitigating the sense that one was watching a propaganda channel. The net result somewhat paradoxically might have been a strengthening of the ‘going out’ project since CCTV-I presented to the world foreign news that

was as broad as if not more broad in scope than that of its competitors, thereby adding to the legitimacy of CCTV-I as “in a real sense an international news channel.”

Of some interest was the relatively strong representation of opposition in the news over and against its silence. Showing opposition while silencing it served the traditional double function of the intellectual cum journalist in China as a servant and critic of power (Fairbank, 1986, ; Lee, 2005). An even stronger asymmetry characterized the visibility of ‘victims’ on the news, over and against their silence. In interviews, reporters at CCTV-I emphasized the role news plays as a voice of the people in the PRC. However, in line with the mouthpiece function of the channel and the traditional intellectual’s contempt in China for the ordinary person, people were spoken for, rather than allowed to speak. At the same time, the sense of social responsibility CCTV-I reporters evinced put them squarely in the camp of activist and socially responsible reporters, over and against the institutional indifference to suffering that characterizes the objectivist news model.

THE STRUGGLE OVER KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION OF PRC MEDIA REFORM

My sense of the need for new comparative studies reflects my understanding that knowledge production of PRC media reform is not disinterested. One of the problems analysis of PRC media faces is the discursive construction of the analytic object, especially in the case of area studies, which broadly speaking includes the study of PRC media reform from outside of the PRC. Given the antagonistic history between the liberal capitalist political economic system which gave birth to the dominant paradigm in media studies in the United States, over and against the Confucianist and Marxist-Leninist articulations of the relationship between intellectuals (including knowledge workers such as journalists) and the public as a whole that characterized media development in Imperial and Republican China and now the PRC, clearly space exists for discursive struggle over the appropriate object of research and its relationship to

power. As a result, paradigm formation in PRC media studies has been in a constant state of dynamic tension.

The prisms through which media reform have been viewed are several. The literature (Brady, 2006; Donald, Keane, & Hong, 2002; Jia, Lu, & Heisey, 2002; Lee, 2000a, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b; Zhao, 1998, et al.) identifies the principle ones as follows:³⁵

- the mass persuasion and propaganda model
- the liberal-pluralist model
- the socialist model
- the neo-Marxian model

Moreover, these models do not succeed one another. As Pan & Lu (2003) note, they are “interpenetrative, creating a scene of discursive construction, contestation, and appropriation in the reforms” (p. 218). The legacy of each model continues to exist in some form to the present day, regardless of the tendency in the literature to argue that developments in the PRC mitigate the effectiveness of preceding paradigms as later paradigms develop to account for changes in the real world. As an example, Zhao (1998) who falls under the “neo-Marxian” rubric cites an impressive array of literature that “has persuasively documented that the news media are moving away from the Party’s prescription of political and ideological indoctrination” (p. 4) thereby rendering the mass propaganda and persuasion model “increasingly inadequate” (p. 4).

Against such a view, Brady (2006) argues that “[p]ropaganda and thought work in China since the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 has been much underestimated and downplayed” (p. 59) by twenty-two researchers she lists, including myself and Zhao. Brady (2005, 2006) points to the lingering influence of the mass propaganda and persuasion model in the prescriptive and ideological work of the CPD. Brady sees her work as a necessary corrective to shortcomings

³⁵ The taxonomy here basically is that outlined by Lee (2000a). Other authors have a slightly different taxonomy. E.g. Pan & Lu (2003, p. 219) list the dominant discourses as Party-press, Confucian intellectual, professionalism and market economy (drawing on Lee, 2000c).

in the too hasty dismissal of an earlier paradigm by researchers seeking to account for the complexity of the PRC's media post-1989 over and against the prescriptions the Party and State provide for its development. Underpinning this debate is a struggle within the global academy which plays out in the tension between analysis and control. This tension plays out in at least three dynamics: a) orientalism and knowledge production, b) orientalism and China, and c) the struggle over media reform in China.

Edward Said's (1995) *Orientalism* is a useful reference point for understanding the relationship between power and knowledge and how that might play out in PRC media studies and feed back into media reform. Using Michel Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse as the field of statements that authorize a particular object of knowledge, Said (1995, p. 3) shows how the discursive construction of the Levant in the works of colonial scholars played a role in the manner in which the power relations between colonists and colonized played out.³⁶ As Aijaz Ahmad (1992) points out, *Orientalism* does not go uncontested. That struggle is evident today in PRC media studies. Through the great institutions of power/knowledge – the universities – particular kinds of knowledge about PRC media are authorized and marginalized.

When a leading scholar of PRC media reform such as Chin-chuan Lee (2000a) a “liberal pluralist” declares that “[n]o credible media scholarship has emerged from within China in the 1990s, in sharp contrast to the growing interest abroad which attempts to theorize the practice of journalism struggling between the “party line” and the “bottom line”” (p. 567) he rules out the entire corpus of work produced inside the PRC in a decade, while simultaneously endorsing

³⁶ Kai-wing Chow (2001, p. 66) notes that Aijaz Ahmad (1992) has criticized Said for presenting the textualities of this discourse to the exclusion of “how these textualities might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonialized [sic] countries” (cited in Chow, 2001, p. 66). However this objection does not change the discursive regularities themselves, although the manner they play out in the construction of knowledge may be contested in a manner Said did not identify.

Zhao's (1998) "neo-Marxian" and paradigm-changing *Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line*.

Lee is right about Zhao's work. Prior to her intervention, the dominant hegemony in PRC media studies had been the thesis that commercialization leads to democratization, and as a corollary that media commercialization would lead to media democratization. Today, Zhao's (1998, 2008) counter-thesis, that neo-liberal globalization is functional to both authoritarianism and capital accrual, both of which are core values for the current leaders of the CPC, continues to gain traction.

But if Lee was right about Zhao, what I am less certain about is Lee's claim that "socialist" researchers inside the PRC were not doing anything valuable in the 1990s. For example, Sun Xupei, one of the PRC's leading media theorists, published his ground-breaking *New Journalism Theories* (in Chinese) in 1994, as a result of which he was dismissed as director of the Institute of Journalism in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (Sun, 2001, p. 67). Moreover, as De Burgh (2000, p. 557, note 4) points out, a taxonomy of Chinese media studies underway in 2000 had recorded many hundreds of books and perhaps one-hundred academic journals and that most of the PRC's best media researchers associated with the CASS Institute of Journalism were engaged in research "ensuring substantial product in media studies which remain to be analyzed" (de Burgh, 2000, p. 553).

However, what is not important is Lee's specific claim, which may or may not be accurate. What is important is the way such a claim plays out in the discursive field that defines what constitutes acceptable PRC media research. His dismissal of the work of PRC-based scholars within the socialist and post-socialist traditions is evident in much of his work (Lee, 2000a, 2001a, 2003a), where these researchers are characterized as 'old left' or 'reformist Marxists' and either "sidelined" or "irrelevant," (Lee, 2003a, pp. 22-23) or labeled 'new left' and, except for Zhao, criticized for a one-sided rejection of the market as utopian and irresponsible post-socialist imagining.

How effective the current global economic meltdown, a direct consequence of utopian imaginings about the market, is in underpinning faith in commercialization as a “necessary” albeit not sufficient condition for democratization (Lee, 2000a, p. 561) is as yet unclear. But Lee was encapsulating the dominant paradigm in studies of PRC media reform when he wrote that “Chinese journalism cannot be expected to make substantial advances in press freedom without the backing of a viable market economy...” (2000a, p. 561).

Lee adds the caveat, “... but the existence of a market economy does not guarantee press freedom” (2000a, p. 561). This caveat that the market is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of a democratized press is crucial for defense of the dominant paradigm, since it enables an attack on the distortions that the market has introduced into the PRC’s media since full blown marketization began after 1992, while retaining the market as a democratizing counter force to the coercive character of the state apparatuses and the distortions associated with the Party/State’s control of media (Lee, 2000d, 2001b, 2003a).

In holding to the thesis “no bourgeoisie, no democracy” (Lee, 2005, p. 14; 2003b, p. 23), the dominant paradigm marginalizes the democratic aspirations of the revolutionary traditions in both Imperial and Republican China from which both the reformist and radical Marxists drew their inspiration, however anti-democratic their realization. More importantly, the dominant paradigm marginalizes much of the history of internal media reform in the PRC, with its roots in the intellectual tradition, and the struggle for a democratic press tradition that has been part and parcel of the socialist tradition of journalism as a voice of the people. In so doing the dominant paradigm de-legitimizes the best of the PRC’s homegrown journalism and blinds itself to democratic aspirations within state-controlled media in the PRC. In short, PRC media are conceptualized as incapable of reforming from within their own developmental trajectory. In a clear case of *Orientalism*, from this perspective only a press system imported from outside can be of value to media reform in the PRC. And with its roots in commercialism, that system is clearly the US press model.

Since the al-Qaeda attacks on the United States in September 2001, the double standard of the professional press model has been on full display, especially in US media's coverage of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Failure to question the government's rationale for invading two sovereign nations, in the case of Iraq despite UN calls for restraint in the absence of any grounds for an attack, exposed structural flaws in the western media system that went beyond a temporary lapse brought on by the shock of 911.

In a rare 'mea culpa' *The New York Times* (2004) has acknowledged its shoddy performance on the Iraq story. But it did so without any attempt to contextualize that failure in the political economy of mainstream media. Therefore the bigger failure is the inability of media and media research within the dominant paradigm to identify neo-liberal globalization – and its agent, commercial media – as a core, if not the core issue for much needed media reform not only in the PRC, but globally, if the media-driven drumbeats for war are not to become a commonplace within mainstream media's representation of the national interest as a value that consistently trumps objectivist professionalism.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the accelerating emergence of a multi-polar world, what is needed is research that goes beyond the *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). What media research needs is not a typology but a methodology that treats all media equally within the emerging global market and state system. Such a methodology would allow comparison without reducing differences to a typology. If the BBC is state-controlled, yet somewhat shielded from the state by its charter and somewhat shielded from the market by its license fee, CNN has no shield from the market, despite its freedom from direct political control. Like the BBC, CCTV remains state-controlled, but its masters, like those at CNN, must account for the demands of the market, although here CCTV is at an advantage in the market, given the dominance of political imperatives, including the function of CCTV-I for the 'going out' project, that ensures its support, despite its lack of commercial viability to date.

In the context of a comparative methodology, Lee's (1994, p. 16) demand for "contextualized and concretized" research of the PRC's changing mediascape could usefully be applied to media studies in general. Lee argued pointedly that the existing models, which drew on Siebert et al.'s (1963) typology, bore little relationship to the reality of the PRC's changing media, and that researchers should begin with specific examples and build theories on the basis of evidence, rather than ideology. The same today could be said of global media studies.

CCTV-I AND THE 'GOING OUT' PROJECT

Analysis of the 'going out' project tends to assume a monolithic 'wai xuan' mediascape in the PRC. Analysis of English-language 'wai xuan' tends to lump together newspapers (*China Daily*), radio (China Radio International) and television (CCTV-I), unintentionally simplifying the complexities and in particular the competing interests of the different players in the PRC's media system. In part, this is the result of the way the central authorities frame the relationship between different media. In his September 16, 2003 directive to CCTV, Li Changchun called for a transformation in the working style, not only of CCTV-I, but of the PRC's major media that deal with external publicity. That demand was articulated in the relaunch blueprint:

The transformation of style also means changing from CCTV's current "one man army" style, to forming a "joint strike force" involving Xinhua, CRI and CCTV, a joint force for news reporting that would jointly forge a new image for China's international broadcast media.

转变方式就是要从现在的中央电视台的"单兵作战"转变为新华社, 国际台与中央电视台的"多兵种联合作战", 在新闻报道方面形成合力, 共同打造国际传媒新形象。(CCTV, 2003)

The blueprint issued by the OSC outlining its "recommendations" (考虑) for the relaunch called for the formation of cooperation agreements to broaden CCTV-I's news-gathering ability. The "initial conception" (初步设想) was as follows:

In any news program, use first person on the spot reports from the foreign correspondents of this channel, Xinhua and CRI, whether it is breaking news or an in-depth report. The most pressing issue is to find out which of these correspondents has the ability to report

in English, and once that is known, they need to be trained in television. They need to be provided with video phones, digital cameras, etc. CCTV 9 must not be averse to using reports from Xinhua and CRI. On the contrary, we should publicize our cooperation with Xinhua and CRI to form China's news channel.

在各档新闻栏目中，由本台，新华社和国际台驻外记者第一人称方式讲述在驻在国的所见所闻，既可以是时效性很强的突发新闻，也可以是对某一问题的关注。目前最需要做的事是，确定哪些记者具备英语报道的能力，一旦确定下来，就必须对他们进行电视业务培训。为他们配备可视电话，数码摄像机和数码照相机等设备。CCTV 9 并不忌讳用新华社和国际台的名义进行报道，相反，要不断宣传新华社和国际台与我共同打造中国的新闻频道。(CCTV, 2003)

The planned tie-up with Xinhua and CRI was ambitious and would have greatly extended CCTV-I's foreign policy and foreign news nets. However, as the PRC's premier news agency and an institution directly under the State Council, Xinhua had little to gain by partnering with a minor channel within the larger CCTV structure. At the same time, in the commercialized news environment that now predominates in the PRC, Xinhua undoubtedly sees CCTV as a competitor, regardless of the Party's call for a "joint strike force" of the country's major media.

The plan to turn Xinhua's and CRI's foreign correspondents into multi-media reporters was also ambitious, too ambitious for the timeline envisaged in the relaunch, especially as most of them had no broadcast experience. It was not realistic to expect to identify, equip and train journalists, who themselves would have had little incentive to work for CCTV-I, between November 2003 and the relaunch in May 2004. Within weeks of the first planning group meeting, any talk of involving Xinhua in the relaunch had ended, and the plans for the agency's involvement were shelved. The case was much the same with CRI.

As a corollary of the failure of CCTV-I to realize the vision of the central authorities, in early 2009 evidence emerged of a new plan for further expansion of the 'wai xuan' system. According to the *South China Morning Post*, 45 billion yuan (USD 6.6 bln) has been earmarked for CCTV, Xinhua and *People's Daily* in a bid to improve the country's image abroad. Included is a plan for Xinhua to launch an "Asia-based 24-hour television station to broadcast global news

to an international audience” (Wu & Chen, 2009, p. 1), which will undoubtedly compete with CCTV-I for advertising revenue.

But if the façade of the PRC’s ‘wai xuan’ system is far from monolithic, that still does not account for the lack of recognition in studies within the dominant paradigm of PRC media reform of the complexity, contradictions, ambiguities and competing interests that are the reality of media reform. The question studies of media reform within the dominant paradigm cannot answer is the persistence of the presentation of ‘wai xuan’ as if it has a monolithic façade, when the nuanced and detailed analyses that have been the norm since Lee’s call for “concrete and contextualized” research point to the lack of control the central authorities actually have over the final realization of projects for media reform.

Whether the reason is the impact of commercialization on media, including news, the professionalism of journalists, who chafe at the constraints imposed on their work by institutions such as the CPD, or local resistance to central control, including resistance within CCTV-I to the prescriptions for its development formulated by SARFT, news production in the PRC is a highly contested field (He, 2000b; Lee, 1994, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Pan, 2005; Pan & Lu, 2003; Sun, 2006; Zhao, 2008). And insofar as this is the case, then ‘wai xuan’ is not a unified field, nor can its representations of the Party and the PRC be said to represent the image these institutions want to project.

What my research (Jirik, 2008) at CCTV International showed, including the findings derived from the content analysis and introduced above, is that the channel was not a passive instrument of the CPC, CPD and SARFT. Rather it was a dynamic and active agent in its own development. At times, CCTV-I accepted the demands put on it by higher authorities. At other times, in the manner outlined in Pan & Lu’s (2003) use of Certeau’s (1984) account of strategies and tactics of everyday life practices, CCTV-I personnel would reshape those demands to better serve internal, often conflicting, interests.

The content analyzed above in the context of its sources and the editorial values of CCTV-I indicates that the 'going out' project was contested in ways that are ignored when the complexity of the PRC's media reform is itself ignored. This is especially the case in the context of the control function that is part and parcel of the dominant paradigm in PRC media studies with its roots in *Orientalism* and the discursive legitimation of knowledge about the PRC. As a result, the question of the imagination of a Chinese nation and appropriate representations is a moot point, because it is the wrong starting point. One can only imagine a Chinese nation if one ignores the complexity of the discursive struggle over its representation.

Conclusion

Much analysis of PRC media reform lacks a comparative perspective that would make obvious not only the differences but also the similarities between channels such as CNNI and CCTV-I if the ideological hubris associated with the professional model of journalism was stripped away to reveal its imbrication in the deeper interests of the global political economy and the imagination of nations. In the same way that channels such as AJI, CNNI and the BBCWS fail to transcend the higher truth of the national interest, CCTV-I reflects the ideological environment in which it is embedded. Whereas much analysis of media reform in the PRC proceeds from the alleged problem of state control for media, what my research suggested was that state control does not automatically translate into the representation of the PRC in the manner allegedly sought by the Party/State. At the same time and not surprisingly given the double standard at the heart of global news, journalists in the PRC have no trouble presenting their work as a form of the professional model, even while the CPC and government guide and dominate content.

Given the nation-building project that has been at the heart of modernization in both its Euro-centric form and its appropriation and adaptation to the Chinese context, and given embrace of the market and forms of capitalism in the PRC since 1978, little evidence suggests

that, whatever the outcome of the commercialization of media, a strengthening of authoritarian control or media democratization in the final instance, that the rise of nationalism in PRC media will be any different to its embrace and extension as part of the modernization project that guided the development of mainstream media in democratic countries in the name of a truth higher than the ideals of professional practice.

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