

# **Methodology for Chapter 2 of**

## *The World in Focus*

### **Television and Radio News Bulletins**

The content of 19 digital and terrestrial TV bulletins, 5 radio bulletins and 6 online sources was recorded over a period of 2 weeks, from Monday February 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. This two week period was chosen as it avoided any major diary events and extreme seasonal fluctuations in the news cycle. The content of each bulletin was either recorded onto hard drive, DVD or VHS or supplied by the broadcaster.

The following bulletins were chosen as they represent a range of audiences (including ethnic minorities and children), a range of channels (both terrestrial and digital) and times of the day and a range of approaches to international news coverage. In most instances, bulletins were chosen in consultation with the relevant broadcaster. Where a choice of bulletins was possible, the decision was guided by the popularity of the bulletin (Five News's 5pm rather than 7pm) or where it allowed for a comparison with other bulletins (Sky News's 10pm newshour). All corresponding weekend bulletins were also included, even where the times varied. The religious and ethnic minority channels included in this study were chosen because they represent four of the most popular English language bulletins and represent a range of religious and ethnic minority audiences.

1. BBC1 Ten O' clock News
2. BBC1 Six O' clock News
3. BBC4 World News
4. BBC2 Newsnight
5. The World Tonight, BBC Radio 4
6. Newsround
7. BBC1 90 second update
8. BBC3 60 seconds, 9pm bulletin
9. BBC World Service, 7am, bulletin only (not the full programme)
10. Today, BBC Radio 4, 8am bulletin only (not the full programme)
11. BBC Radio 5 Live Breakfast, 9 am bulletin only (not the full programme)
12. Newsbeat, BBC Radio 1, 12.45pm bulletin
13. ITV1 10pm News
14. ITV1 6.30 News
15. Sky News, 10pm newshour
16. Channel 4 News
17. More 4 News
18. FIVE News, 5pm bulletin
19. GMTV News, 8 am bulletin
20. Al Jazeera English, 8pm bulletin
21. NTA International News, 8pm bulletin on BEN
22. NDTV 9 O' clock News
23. CCTV News, 3.30pm bulletin

24. Islam Channel News, 5.30pm bulletin
25. Magic FM – 10 am bulletin only (not the full programme)

Only straight news items were included in this study. Headlines, teasers, musical introductions, handovers, end titles, summaries, advertisements, newspaper reviews, sports and weather coverage were not included. The distinction between straight news coverage and sports coverage was guided by whether an item is included as part of the main news bulletin or as part of the sports section.

All news items were coded by length, topic, principle country (or international institution), story type, position, who spoke and treatment. In order to identify the country which received the principle focus of attention in any story, this study adopted a similar methodology to that used by James Painter in his report *Counter-Hegemonic News*.

*If the principle focus of attention was the story or fate of an individual or group of individuals from country X in country Y, then the story was classified as coming from country X. If the item concerned the impact of the foreign policy of country X on country Y, then the times allocated were split equally between the two countries (2008:29).*

The following categories were used to define the principle topic of each news item. These are based on Harrison's study of the international content of terrestrial TV news in Britain (2000). Where a news item addressed two or more principle topics, the topic mentioned first was coded.

1. **Politics**, including; inter or intra party conflict and disagreement, enacted government policies, elections or election campaigns, parliamentary debates, official information or reports, local government actions, politician's personal lives, political implications of events or actions.
2. **Economics**, including; government actions such as tax increases, city news, exchange rates, trade talks or international meetings,
3. **Business affairs**, including; forecasts, redundancies, industrial reports, industrial disputes, general recession and recovery stories, announcements of losses and profits.
4. **Law and order**, including; human rights, criminal proceedings, inquests, non-violent crime, corruption.
5. **Disputes**, including; negotiations between countries, non-violent aspects of peace keeping,
6. **Violence**, including; terrorist attacks, violent demonstrations, mass random killings, riots, violent crime, murder, armed robbery, funerals of people killed violently and control of violence by authorities.
7. **Human interest (light)**, including; light, humorous, unusual or celebrity stories, historic occasions, nostalgia, centenaries or ceremonies.
8. **Human interest (serious)**, including; tragic stories about 'ordinary' people, victims of crime or violence, individuals protesting for their rights.

9. **Health**; including government policy, scientific medical discoveries, official reports and statistics, general health stories and the work of private or charitable health organisations.
10. **Environment**; including environmental pollution and the environmental consequences of disasters,
11. **Science**, including; scientific inventions or breakthroughs.
12. **Disasters**, including; earthquakes, floods, typhoons and cyclones, or damage or death caused by accident such as plane crashes or explosions. Does not include droughts or famine causes by human action. Where the cause of droughts or famine is not clear it is coded as a 'disaster'. Also includes 'near misses'.
13. **Education**, including; government policy, stories about educational institutions, official reports or statistics, general education stories and the work of private or charitable education organisations.
14. **Sport**, including; incidents involving sportsmen and women or teams, sporting occasions or achievements.
15. **Religion**, including; visits or announcements by religious leaders, religious ceremonies or festivals,
16. **Weather**, including; the predictions or consequences of extreme weather conditions reported on as part of the main news bulletin.
17. **International relations**, including; diplomatic relations, conferences and meetings, not based on violence or economics.
18. **Other**, including; all stories which do not fit into any of the above categories

In order to record the nature of any international content and to move away from the artificial distinction between purely 'international' and 'domestic' news, all stories were coded as either *domestic*, *domestic with reference to international*, *international with reference to domestic* or *international*. While attempting to classify news stories according to the nature of their domestic or international content will always be a rather artificial and problematic process, some form of classification is necessary. The categories adopted here are designed to provide both a meaningful way of distinguishing between the international nature of different news stories whilst at the same time ensuring that they account for a wide range of content. A definition of each of these categories is given below and is based on the definitions used in *Viewing the World* (DFID 2000).

1. To be defined as 'international', the news report must consist almost entirely of material filmed in other countries or explicit discussion of other countries or citizens from other countries.
2. To be defined as 'domestic', the news report must contain almost no material filmed in other countries or explicit discussion of other countries or citizens from other countries.
3. To be defined as 'international with reference to domestic', the principle location or discussion must be directly related to countries outside the UK or non-UK citizens but there will be some secondary material filmed in the UK or explicit discussion of the UK or UK citizens.

4. To be defined as ‘domestic with reference to international’, the principle location or discussion must be directly related to the UK or to UK citizens but there will be some secondary material filmed in other countries or explicit discussion of other countries or citizens from other countries.

The distinction between ‘international with reference to domestic’ and ‘domestic with reference to international’ is the most problematic and is best illustrated with an example. A news story about the death of a UK soldier in Afghanistan was coded as ‘domestic with reference to international’ if the principle focus of the story is the death of the soldier. If the principle focus of the story is the security situation in Afghanistan but there is reference to the UK soldiers, then this item would be coded as ‘international with reference to domestic’.

Although it is especially difficult to code news items about individuals, particularly celebrities, the same definitions must apply so that a news report of a UK celebrity in another country must either be coded as *domestic with reference to international* or *international with reference to domestic*, depending upon the emphasis of the item. News items about celebrities can be easily identified as they are coded as ‘human interest (light)’.

In order to give some indication of the type of voices heard in international news, the following categories were used to code the type of person speaking, on every occasion that an individual other than the journalist or newscaster spoke.

1. Participant: Individual directly involved in the news story or representative of involved organisation or institution.
2. Participating country vox pops
3. Participating country politician / official / civil servant
4. Participating country expert
5. UK vox pops
6. UK politician / official / civil servant
7. UK expert
8. Other country vox pops
9. Other country politician / official / civil servant
10. Other country expert
11. International organization expert / NGO

The term ‘participating country’ was used to refer to any individual who was a citizen of the country in which the news story principally referred to. The category of ‘participant’ was used to code all individuals who were not commenting on the story but who were directly involved in the events. The term ‘expert’ was used to refer to all those individuals who spoke who were independent from the state and who could not be considered vox pops.

The nature of the subject of all international news items was coded in one of the following five ways:

1. Hard news / unscheduled event - An unscheduled event taking place within the last 24 hours that isn't part of an ongoing process (An earthquake in Zimbabwe)
2. Continuing Story - A current twist in an ongoing process or development (or comment on it) (e.g. The food crisis in Zimbabwe has suddenly got much worse; Ban Ki Moon comments on the worsening situation)
3. Diary event - A scheduled event taking place within the last 24 hours (e.g. elections held in Zimbabwe) (diary event) (a predicted event happens that is not part of an ongoing process)
4. Feature - An ongoing process with no current angle (or a comment on it) (e.g. the food crisis in Zimbabwe continues; Gordon Brown comments on the situation).

The treatment of international news stories was coded in one of four ways using the following definitions;

1. Two-ways: conversation between two journalists, either on screen or on phone, usually between a reporter in field and a newscaster.
2. VT packages: self-contained video report including a voice over from a producer or reporter on location.
3. Newscaster report: or underlay / live voiceover refers to video footage being run with the presenter in the studio talking over the pictures (as opposed to reporter voicing over them with a sign off which is usually a VT package).
4. Studio interview/discussion: hosted by the newscaster or journalist within the studio

## **Online News Sources**

There are three main methodological difficulties in attempting to measure the volume and nature of (international) news online. Firstly, the vast number of news and news-related websites available makes it incredibly difficult to capture the variety of ways in which international news is made available to UK audiences online. Secondly, online news services provide a range of interactive, downloadable, non-linear facilities which are difficult to account for. Thirdly, the layout, style and navigation of websites vary dramatically. Despite these problems, it is important to be able to give some indication of the volume and nature of international news available online and so a simple methodology has been designed to achieve this.

The content of seven of the most popular websites from which UK audiences access news was recorded over the same two week period as the television and radio study. The websites are:

1. BBC News (UK version) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>
2. Sky News <http://news.sky.com/skynews/>
3. Guardian.co.uk <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>
4. Telegraph.co.uk <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>

5. Mail Online <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/index.html>
6. The Sun <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/>
7. YouTube <http://uk.youtube.com/> Top 10 most viewed 'news and politics' videos every day

These websites were chosen because they represent some of the most popular sources of news and because they represent a range of audiences and treatments of international news. The content was coded using the same categories as for the study of television and radio content.

To sample the news given greatest prominence and that is most likely to be consumed by the greatest audience from the hundreds of articles available, only the prominently placed articles with teasers on the front page (not the homepage) were coded (i.e. that consist of more than just a link) (Quandt 2006). For websites where fewer than five stories met these criteria, all items on the front page were included. Only breaking news and news items are recorded. All websites are accessed at 12.00 GMT as this is a time of peak usage for some of the websites. At 12.00 GMT a screenshot is taken of the front page to prevent confusion if new items are added. A copy of all news items was kept.

- The front page is defined as the main page of a news service where the most important news is presented and the hyperlinks or references to other news are presented. The home page of an online news service is defined as the top page in a hierarchy of pages that make up the website to which the front page belongs (van der Wurff and Lauf 2005:297).

## **References**

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