

Many Shades of State-Sponsored News: A Content Analysis of Chinese, Iranian and Russian International Broadcasting in Spanish

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October, 2014
Vladimir Putin and Cristina Fernández announce RT will be freely available on Argentina's free-to-air DTT

January, 2016
Argentina's newly elected right-leaning government orders the removal of RT from Argentina's free-to-air DTT

March, 2016
The Argentinian government walks back from the decision to remove RT from free-to-air DTT.



Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46762>

The rise of state-sponsored television news

- During the 1990s & 2000s State-sponsored **multi-language television networks proliferated** worldwide (Cushion & Lewis, 2010)
 - Some at the core of the world system (e.g. France 24, RT)
 - Some in rising economic centres (i.e. Channel News Asia, Al Jazeera)
- Many of these news networks self-present as “**counter-hegemonic**” or “**alternative voices**” to dominant Anglo-American media

International broadcasting

- International broadcasting can be defined as:
 - “An actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by using the technologies of radio, television, and the Internet to **engage with foreign publics**” (Cull, 2008, p. 34)
 - “Elegant term for a complex combination of **state-sponsored news**, information and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state’s boundaries” (Price, Haas, & Margolin, 2008, pp. 152–153)

Public diplomacy and international broadcasting

- International broadcasting (IBC) is one component (of many others) in a country's public diplomacy mix.
 - Through IBC country's convey a **national perspective** on current affairs to audiences worldwide.
 - It tends to align with a country's **foreign policy**, although some are more explicit than others
 - The US' Voice of America (or the future Voice of China?)
 - The BBC, which claims "it is not the voice of Great Britain but the voice of the independent BBC" (Wood, 2000, p. 22)

Studying International Broadcasting

- Attention has centered on **English-language content** (Barkho, 2008, 2011; Figenschou, 2013), and some limited work on **Arabic content** (al-Najjar, 2009; Auter, Arafa, & Al-Jaber, 2005).
- International broadcasting in Spanish can be classified in 2 groups:
 - IBC from **Hispanic countries** (e.g. TVE Internacional or Telesur)
 - IBC from **Non-Hispanic countries**:
 - Liberal democracies and culturally proximate (e.g. DW and France24)
 - Geographically and culturally distant (CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV).

Table 1. *Major International Broadcasters in non Non-Hispanic countries*

CGTN Español

- Lack of a clearly defined target audience hampers overall effectiveness (Madrid-Morales, 2015).
 - Availability problems (Tucci, 2018) & few audience studies (Morales, 2018).
 - CGTN's (& RT's) presence seen as part rising authoritarian influences in the region (Cardenal, 2017).
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Research Questions

RQ_{1a} What are the most **salient topics** in news reports?

RQ_{1b} What are the most **salient countries & regions** in news reports?

RQ₂ What is the relationship between **countries and topics** across stations?

RQ₃ In what ways are the **United States, Latin American countries** and each stations' home country (i.e. **China, Iran and Russia**) depicted in news items?

RQ₄ What are the most frequent **framing devices** used in the coverage of the United States across stations?

RQ₅ To what extent do the **journalistic principles** of *neutrality, balance* and *impartiality* describe news content on CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV?

Methods | Sampling

- A **quantitative analysis of news content** in 2014 and 2017
 - Two randomly sampled constructed weeks per year
 - Unit of sampling: 30min newscast per day (28 in total)
 - Unit of analysis: each news story in the newscast
 - Sample size: 1,265 items ($N_{2014} = 686$ and $N_{2017} = 579$).
- Two of the authors independently coded the news items
 - Several rounds of training with a set of items not included in the final sample.
 - **Mean intercoder reliability**: 97% agreement & .90 Krippendorff's α

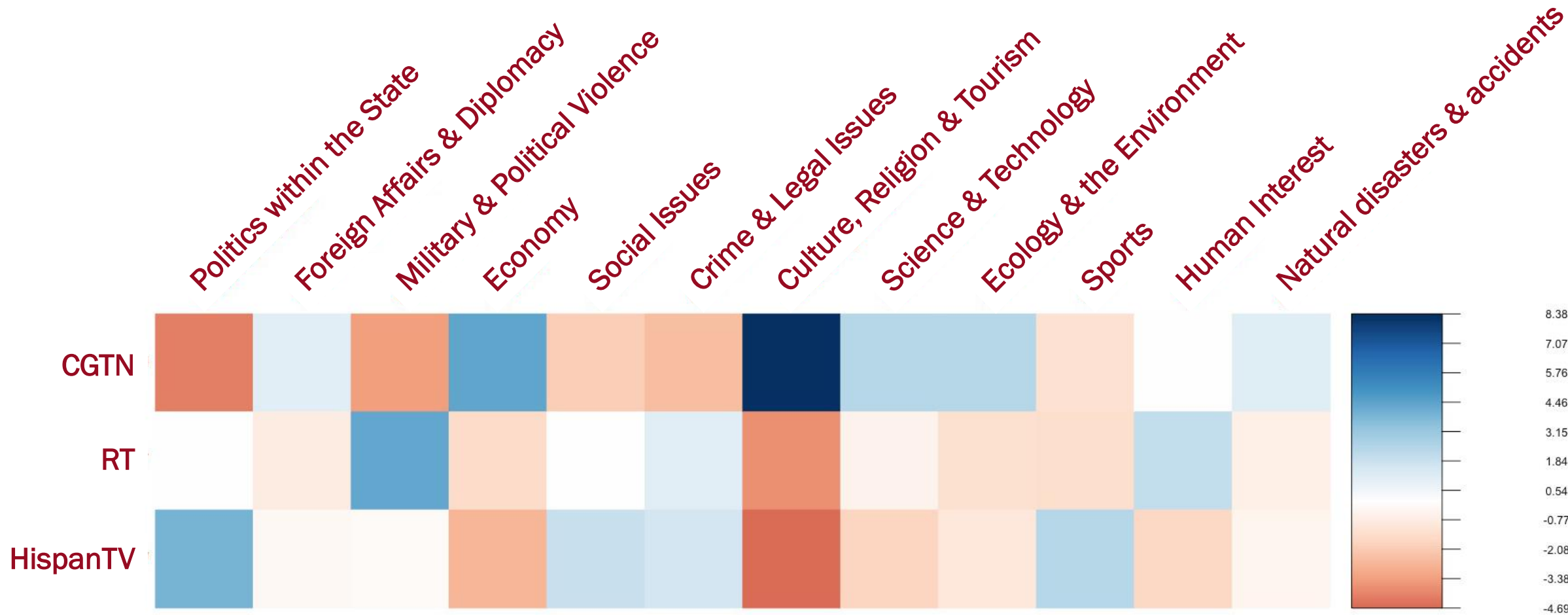
RQ_{1a}

What are the most **salient topics** in news reports on CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV in 2014 and 2017?

Table 2. Contingency Table for Topic and Channel (Number of Stories)

	Channel											
	CGTN			RT			HispanTV			Total		
	2014	2017	Total	2014	2017	Total	2014	2017	Total	2014	2017	Total
Military & Political Violence	17.5 %	15.0 %	16.4 %	42.1 %	28.9 %	36.5 %	29.1 %	18.6 %	24.3 %	28.9 %	19.9 %	24.7 %
Foreign Affairs & Diplomacy	24.1	19.4	21.9	16.3	19.0	17.5	14.2	24.7	19.0	19.1	21.4	19.6
Politics Within the State	7.5	9.7	8.5	8.9	27.5	16.9	21.6	26.4	23.9	13.4	20.7	16.8
Culture, Religion & Tourism	25.0	11.7	18.7	2.1	1.4	1.8	--	3.9	1.8	8.9	6.0	7.8
Social Issues	3.9	4.9	4.4	8.9	4.2	6.9	6.7	12.1	9.2	6.4	7.6	7.0
Economy	6.1	18.0	11.8	5.8	2.1	4.2	4.5	1.7	3.2	5.4	7.6	6.4
Sports	3.1	5.8	4.4	3.7	4.2	3.9	14.6	1.3	8.4	7.7	3.6	5.9
Natural Disasters & Accidents	7.9	3.9	6.0	3.2	4.9	3.9	4.9	3.9	4.4	5.4	4.1	4.8
Crime & Legal Issues	0.9	0.5	0.7	3.2	4.2	3.6	3.4	4.3	3.8	2.5	2.9	2.7
Science & Technology	1.3	5.8	3.5	2.1	0.7	1.5	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.3	2.6	1.9
Human Interest	1.3	1.9	1.6	3.2	2.8	3.0	--	1.3	0.6	1.3	1.9	1.6
Ecology & the Environment	1-3	3.4	2.3	0.5	--	0.3	0.4	0.9	0.6	0.7	1.6	1.1
N =	228	206	434	190	142	332	268	231	499	686	579	1,265

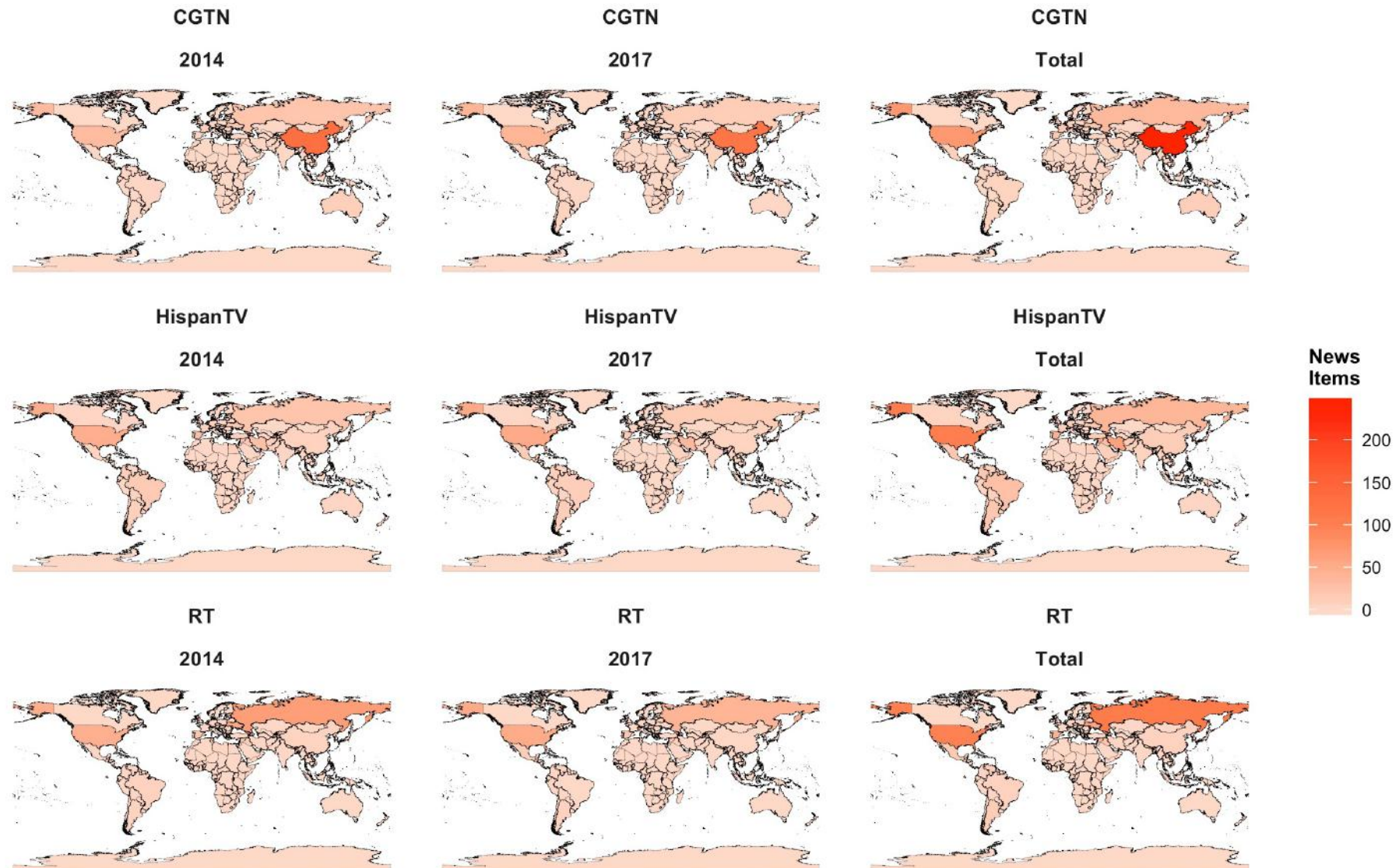
Figure 1. Chi-square residuals correlation



RQ_{1b}

What are the most **salient countries & regions** in news reports on CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV in 2014 and 2017?

Figure 2. Frequency of Country Mentions by News Channel and Year



RQ₂

What is the relationship between **countries and topics** in news reports on CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV in 2014 and 2017?

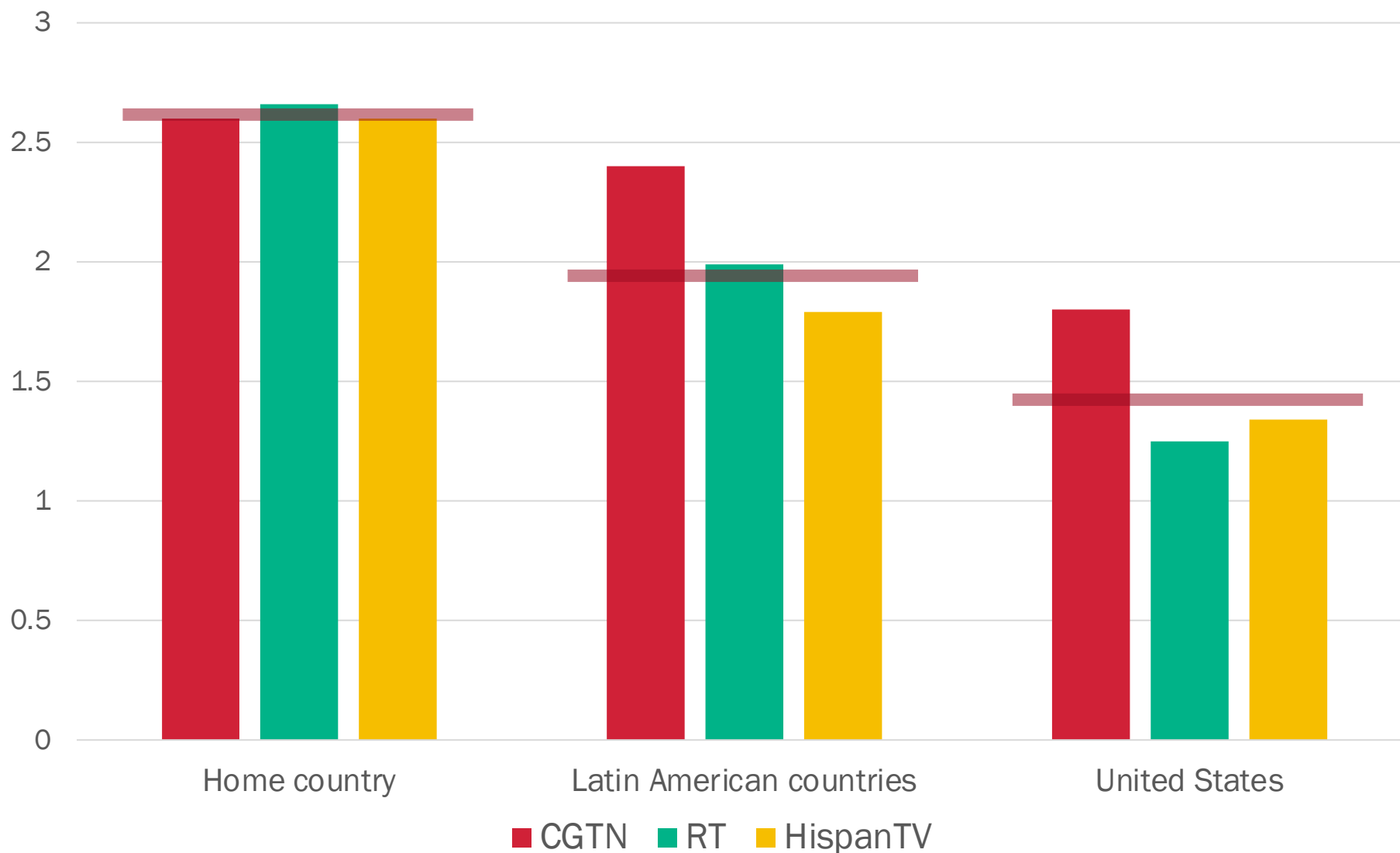
Table 3. Relationship Between Topics and Top 4 Countries per Channel

	Channel											
	CGTN				HispanTV				RT			
	China	U.S.	Russia	Spain	Russia	U.S.	Spain	Syria	Iran	U.S.	Spain	Iraq
Culture	24.0%	20.0%	5.9%	26.7%	3.5%	2.2%			8.2%			
Foreign affairs/diplomacy	23.6%	13.3%	35.3%		19.3%	31.1%	2.9%	5.3%	63%	12.2%	5.6%	12.0%
Economic	20.2%		5.9%	6.7%	5.3%	6.7%			4.1%	2.4%	8.3%	
Military & political violence	8.2%	33.3%	47.1%		36.8%	24.4%	8.8%	94.7%	4.1%	19.5%	2.8%	52%
Scientific research	6.3%	3.3%			3.5%	2.2%				2.4%		
Social problems	4.3%	3.3%		13.3%	1.8%	11.1%	14.7%			17.1%	19.4%	
Politics within state	3.8%	6.7%		26.7%	5.3%	11.1%	64.7%		6.1%	14.6%	50%	32.0%
Natural disasters	3.8%				1.8%	2.2%			2.0%	2.4%	2.8%	
Environment	2.9%		5.9%		1.8%							
Human interest stories	1.4%			13.3%	8.8%	2.2%						
Sports	1.0%	16.7%		13.3%	12.3%				8.2%	27%	5.6%	
Crime, judicial	.5%	3.3%				6.7%	8.8%		4.1%	2.4%	5.6%	4.0%
N	228	206	434	190	142	332	268	231	499	686	579	1,265

RQ₃

In what ways are the **United States, Latin American countries** and each stations' home country (i.e. **China, Iran and Russia**) depicted in news items?

Figure 3. Depiction tone of different geopolitical actors



Home country
Positives: Foreign affairs & diplomacy
Negatives: Accidents & national catastrophes

Latin American countries
Positives: diplomacy & political “friendship”
Negatives: domestic politics, political violence & social issues

United States
Dominance of stories focused on US involvement in military and political violence (e.g. Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan)

RQ₄

What are the most frequent **framing devices** used in the coverage of the United States across stations?

Table 4. Framing Devices in News Stories About the United States

	CGTN		RT		HispanTV		Total
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017	
US as interfering in other countries domestic affairs	12 %	34 %	34 %	39 %	27 %	42 %	33 %
US as policing the world	32	23	24	27	14	22	23
US as a dysfunctional polity	--	5	6	17	5	24	11
US as a country of double standards	--	3	16	12	14	7	10
US a responsible global actor	16	11	4	--	2	--	4
US as economically imperialistic	--	3	8	2	2	--	3
US as a multicultural society	8	3	2	--	2	--	2
US as culturally imperialistic	--	--	--	--	5	--	1
US as a land of opportunities	--	3	--	--	--	--	0.5
Other framing devices	32	16	6	4	30	6	13
	<i>N</i> = (25)	(38)	(50)	(52)	(44)	(55)	(264)

Note: = $p \leq .10$, = $p \leq .001$.

RQ₅

To what extent do the **journalistic principles** of *impartiality*, *balance* and *neutrality* describe news content on CGTN Español, RT and HispanTV?

Operationalizing journalistic principles

- **Impartiality:** measured promotion of an *overtly opinionated narrative*.
 - For instance, a story was deemed *partial* when a country was portrayed deliberately in a negative way
- **Balance:** the equal right of *all conflicting sides to have their position* presented.
- **Neutrality:** understood as the *presence or absence of a journalists' opinion* and interpretation in a story

Table 5. Journalistic principles & values across broadcasters

	CGTN			RT			HispanTV			Total
	2014	2017	Total	2014	2017	Total	2014	2017	Total	2014
Have an agenda (% = Yes)	46.49%	57.28%	51.61%	66.32%	62.68%	64.76%	42.54%	59.31%	50.30%	50.43%
All sides have a voice (% = Yes)	33.33	33.87	33.62	17.17	38.30	27.46	19.09	33.09%	26.83%	21.29
Journalists interpret (% = Yes)	13.60	43.20	27.65	46.31	57.04	50.90	13.80	32.03	22.24	22.77
	N = 228	206	434	190	142	332	268	231	499	686

RT
 Stories about the invasion of Crimea and East Ukraine; foreign affairs and social issues in the US.

Journalists as Interpreters
 There's a steady trend towards a more interpretative role of journalists, (maybe) pushed by RT's way of reporting.

CGTN
 Apparent balance between all voices & sides.

Final Ideas (I)

1. As expected, content was clearly aligned with **foreign policy** goals.
2. Coverage across years was not static, as there are realignments with changes in states' foreign goals.
3. Limited **interest in Latin American** countries (RT & HispanTV 20%; China 9%) and different strategies:
 - RT and HispanTV – Reports on domestic issues & ideologically clearly positioned.

Final Ideas (II)

- Each says they “counter-hegemonic” voice in different ways:
 - RT - Uncovering the “evils” of the U.S.
 - CGTN - Self-promotion (image of poverty, declining human rights’ issues and environmental problems)
 - HispanTV - Promoting governments and anti-establishment movements.
- Journalistic style
 - RT - Polarizing
 - HispanTV - Strong pro-left agenda & critical of domestic policies
 - CGTN - Plain and safe

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