



Analyzing BBC's News Framing on the IMF-World Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative

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History

Submission : 20 December 2024
Review : 22 May 2025
Completed
Accepted : 25 June 2025
Available : 30 June 2025
Online

DOI :

10.51413/jisea.Vol6.Iss1.2025.62-82

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Abstract

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a major international news outlet based in the UK, wields significant influence over global information flow. As a corporation under the UK's royal charter, its coverage of the IMF-World Bank and China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' raises questions about impartiality. Global political dynamics have fueled competition between the West and China over economic influence, particularly through loans from the IMF-World Bank and the 'Belt and Road Initiative.' Using Robert M. Entman's framing model, this article examines ten BBC articles to explore how these loans are framed, revealing a tendency to positively portray the IMF-World Bank and negatively report on the 'Belt and Road Initiative.' These patterns align with the BBC's identity as a statutory UK corporation amid this geopolitical rivalry.

Key Words: BBC, IMF, World Bank, Belt and Road Initiative, framing

Cite this article :

Thomas, Patriani, I., & Lukitowati, S. (2025). Analyzing BBC's News Framing on the IMF-World Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative. *Journal of International Studies on Energy Affairs*, 6(1), 62–82. <https://doi.org/10.51413/jisea.Vol6.Iss1.2025.62-82>



INTRODUCTION

Since the Bretton Woods Conference was held in 1944 to regulate the international monetary system, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have become two international economic institutions playing a crucial role in the Bretton Woods system, particularly in matters of international loans (Kranke 2022). Furthermore, as the Bretton Woods Conference was dominated by developed countries, especially Western nations led by the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), the IMF and the World Bank also became institutions dominated by the influence of Western countries (Frieden 2019, 27). This dominance is evident in the leadership structure of these institutions since their inception. The top leadership position at the IMF, the Managing Director, has always been held by a European citizen, while the second leadership position, the Deputy Managing Director, has always been held by a US citizen. Meanwhile, the top leadership position at the World Bank, the President, has always been held by a US citizen. As a result, the dominance of both the IMF and the World Bank over the global economy also reflects the dominance of Western developed countries over the global economy. Based on this fact, the IMF and the World Bank can be viewed as institutions influenced by Western identity.

The dominance of the IMF and the World Bank proceeded without significant challengers until China's economic rise in the 21st century. Announced in 2013 and officially incorporated into the Chinese Communist Party's Constitution in 2017, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched by China as an international economic strategy to provide aid, including loans, to other countries (Carrai 2023). This program has proven capable of significant growth, establishing cooperation with 66 countries, covering 30.9% of the global economy and 61.9% of the world population by 2017 (Zou, et al. 2022, 15). By providing assistance through loans, China's strategy via the BRI has become parallel yet distinct from the IMF and the World Bank. Unlike the IMF and the World Bank, which are dominated by Western developed nations, the BRI is unmistakably an instrument of China's foreign economic policy.

The presence of the BRI offers an alternative for countries seeking financial assistance without adhering to the structural adjustment programs (SAP) conditions imposed by the IMF and the World Bank (IMF 2016, 13–14). SAP requires borrowing countries to implement structural reforms in their economies based on recommendations from the IMF or the World Bank. Aimed at strengthening the economy, SAP from the IMF or the World Bank typically includes reforms reducing government intervention in the economy (free market),

privatization, and democratization (Abouharb & Cingranelli 2007, 3–5). In other words, through SAP, both the IMF and the World Bank seek to influence domestic economic policies in borrowing countries. However, through the BRI, China does not impose such requirements.

With the economic rise of China—a country that is *de jure* "communist" and operates under a one-party authoritarian system—set against the hegemony of Western nations dominated by democratic countries valuing freedom, a phenomenon of rivalry between the two sides has emerged in global politics (DiCarlo & Schindler 2022, 1–12). This rivalry is evident in several cases, including the trade war between the US and China during Donald Trump's administration, debates over China's security policies in Hong Kong, controversies related to the Uyghur community in Xinjiang, and now the emergence of the BRI as a potential competitor to the IMF and the World Bank.

In the realm of international communication, this article focuses on examining how the British media organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), reports on the BRI in its role as a British media institution with the status of a statutory corporation under the UK Royal Charter (Leighton 2005, 247–248). With this status, the BBC operates under the authority of the British government in matters such as setting license fees and appointing the BBC's executive leadership (UK Secretary of State 2016). As one of the most influential media outlets in international information flows, the BBC's background is particularly significant in relation to its reporting on Western-China rivalries, or more specifically, as discussed in this article, on the BRI and the IMF-World Bank. As a close ally of the US and one of the leading Western nations, the UK has considerable influence in both the IMF and the World Bank.

Although the BBC, like other British media outlets, is regulated by Ofcom and required to maintain impartiality, its identity and background—including its unique relationship with the British government—are worth noting. This is because media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, especially when the media entity in question, such as the BBC, holds a unique identity and status amid turbulent UK-China relations, driven by East-West frictions in global politics. In other words, there is an undeniable possibility that the BBC's identity and status align with its reporting tendencies regarding China's BRI as a rival to the Western world. Such reporting can influence public perceptions as part of a propaganda process, regardless of intent.

This article presents the results of an analysis of ten BBC news articles that report on the IMF, the World Bank, or China's BRI. These articles were published between

2017 (the year BRI was officially incorporated into the Chinese Communist Party's Constitution) and 2022. Five of these articles report on the IMF or the World Bank, and the other five focus on China's BRI. By presenting these findings, this article aims to highlight the BBC's perspective on the IMF-World Bank and China's BRI. These findings are then analyzed using Alexander Wendt's constructivist approach to explain how the BBC's identity shapes its interests, which subsequently influence its differing approaches in reporting on the IMF-World Bank compared to China's BRI.

METHOD

This research is descriptive in nature and employs a qualitative approach. By analyzing news articles, it aims to describe how these articles present their narratives. As a descriptive study, the researcher presents the results of textual analysis as accurately as possible based on the written content of the articles.

The analysis of the collected news articles is conducted textually, focusing on prominent sentences according to Entman's framing model: emphasizing (highlighting), associating (association), or being ambiguous (ambiguous). Sentences identified as meeting these framing criteria are collected and used as indicators to determine whether the article contains positive, negative, or neutral framing toward its subject. Of the ten articles analyzed—five on the IMF or World Bank and five on China's BRI—patterns in the BBC's framing of these subjects will emerge.

Ten BBC news articles are deliberately selected (five on IMF/World Bank lending and five on China's BRI) using clear inclusion criteria to ensure a well-defined and balanced sample. All chosen articles were published between 2017 and 2022, which captures the recent surge of activity in global development finance (e.g. post-2013 BRI expansion and recent World Bank/IMF programs) and guarantees timeliness of coverage. Each article explicitly focuses on international lending, either via the IMF/World Bank system or via China's Belt and Road Initiative, and all are produced by the BBC, our target Western media outlet. This selection strategy serves several purposes: it ensures comparability across cases, aligns the sample with the research focus on Western media framing of development finance, and controls for publication source. Importantly, we include an equal number (five) of articles in each category (IMF/World Bank vs. BRI) to enable a balanced comparison of framing across these two lending paradigms. In summary, the ten BBC articles were chosen for their timeframe (2017–2022), their relevance to the

study topics (IMF/World Bank or BRI lending), and their origin in BBC news, with a 5/5 split to avoid category bias.

The identified patterns are analyzed using Wendt's constructivist approach, particularly by examining the relationship between these patterns and the BBC's identity, as well as contemporary international relations between the UK and China. The alignment or misalignment of the BBC's reporting patterns with its identity and the UK's relationship with China will then be reassessed through a process of data source triangulation to strengthen the final conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

This article employs Robert M. Entman's framing model to analyze ten BBC articles textually and identify tendencies in framing or biased narratives within these articles. The purpose of using this model is to examine how an article portrays its subject in a positive, negative, or neutral manner. The analysis results for each article, derived using this model, are further evaluated using Alexander Wendt's constructivist approach to identity and actor interests.

Wendt's constructivist approach to actor identity and interests aids this research in drawing conclusions about the BBC's behavior as a corporate actor within British society and governance structures. Assuming that BBC reporting contains elements of "bias" due to its identity as a British media outlet—particularly one influenced by the UK government—Wendt's approach allows researchers to observe this phenomenon more clearly and deeply. Ultimately, identity forms the foundation of interests, and interests influence how an actor like the BBC behaves, especially when it is positioned between two other actors: one perceived as a "friend" and the other as a "foe" (Ruhiat & Akim 2020, 29).

Historically, the BBC holds a unique identity compared to public media in most other countries. Despite its status under the UK Royal Charter, the systematic appointment of its executive leadership by the British government, and funding determined by the UK Parliament, the BBC consistently portrays itself as an independent media entity free from government intervention. This independence is underpinned by regulations from Ofcom, the regulatory body for mass media in the UK, which prohibits any media outlet from being "controlled" by any political entity, including the government (Ofcom 2021). While these regulations require the BBC to maintain a neutral editorial body free from government interference, they do not eliminate its unique systematic relationship with the UK government.

This research does not argue that the BBC lacks independence. However, by analyzing its reporting patterns on China's BRI, particularly in the context of its relationship with the UK government, this study seeks to demonstrate that the BBC's reporting ultimately aligns with the UK's perspective on China. This phenomenon could still indicate that the BBC operates independently, but its identity as a British public media outlet indirectly compels it to support the government's perspective on international phenomena (Neack 2019, 131). This occurs because, as the primary entity handling the UK's international relations, the government is also the first to establish a frame on an issue. This frame is presented to the public, and oppositional entities, including mass media, often choose to follow the established frame to better align with the prevailing framing at that time.

Mass media can challenge the framing established by the government, but such actions are relatively difficult when the government's framing aligns with broader cultural resonance within society. This becomes even more challenging when the government's framing resonates deeply with general societal understanding and culture.

Robert M. Entman's Framing Model

Following Entman's framing model, this article employs specific sentences to analyze the selected BBC news articles (Entman 1993). These sentences focus on *highlighting*, *associating*, and *ambiguity*. Each term is used to explain how framing within a text works to create salience.

Entman explains that salience in information arises due to the placement or repetition of certain elements (*highlighting*) or by associating the presented information with cultural elements or symbols familiar to the audience (*association*) (Entman, 53). Beyond highlighting and association, salience can also emerge from information that is less explicitly illustrated or explained but can be steered toward a particular interpretation aligned with the pre-existing beliefs of the reader. This method of presenting information is referred to as *ambiguity* (*ambiguous*).

Ultimately, framing is not always effective, as it results from an interaction between the text and the reader. Entman emphasizes that the presence of framing detected by researchers in a text does not necessarily indicate an absolute influence on the audience. However, identifying and analyzing framing in media reporting remains crucial because a lack of absolute influence does not equate to no influence on societal thought patterns. Furthermore, framing within media texts—whether

positively or negatively depicting a subject—can influence audience perceptions, especially when repeated frequently (Neack, 133).

The ten collected articles are analyzed and their results presented in three classifications: articles with positive framing, articles with negative framing, and articles with neutral framing (neither positive nor negative). The results of the framing analysis will reveal patterns in the BBC's reporting tendencies toward the IMF-World Bank and China's BRI. These patterns are then analyzed using Wendt's constructivist approach, focusing on identity and actor interests in international politics.

Alexander Wendt's Constructivist Approach

Wendt's constructivist approach explains how the identity and interests of an actor are primarily influenced by shared ideas held by that actor (Wendt 1999, 1). Shared ideas are commonly understood knowledge that connects numerous individuals within a society (Wendt, 141). These collective ideas significantly impact an actor's identity and interests, which Wendt argues are more influential than material factors (Wendt, 1). Wendt classifies identity into four types: personal or corporate identity, type identity, role identity, and collective identity (Wendt, 224).

- Personal or Corporate Identity refers to the distinct identity arising from an actor's unique structure that differentiates it from others. This type of identity can pertain to individuals, institutions, or corporate entities.
- Type Identity consists of groups or individuals classified as a unit due to shared characteristics, such as appearance, skills, attitudes, or values. This can include social groups or political parties.
- Role Identity is defined based on the role an actor plays and its relationship with other actors. For instance, a leader within an organization derives their identity and interests from their position.
- Collective Identity refers to the sense of unity felt when individuals identify with others to the extent that distinctions between self and others blur, forming a collective identity (Wendt, 229).

In this context, the BBC is analyzed as an actor with a corporate identity using Wendt's constructivist approach.

Referring to how an actor's identity shapes its interests and behavior—especially regarding perceptions of 'friends' and 'foes'—the ten BBC articles analyzed using

Entman's framing model reveal patterns of reporting tendencies. These tendencies may align or diverge from constructivist explanations regarding the relationship between identity and actor interests. Divergence indicates balanced and neutral reporting by the BBC, whereas alignment suggests a lack of neutrality.

To strengthen conclusions, the BBC's reporting pattern is briefly compared with National Public Radio (NPR) and Al Jazeera on the same subject: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). If alignment exists, it suggests that the BBC, as a public media entity of the United Kingdom, views the IMF-World Bank as a 'friend' and reflects this perspective in its reporting. Simultaneously, the BBC perceives China's BRI as a 'foe' presenting a threat. NPR and Al Jazeera serve as relevant comparisons: NPR, as U.S. public media, likely shares similar views with the UK regarding the IMF-World Bank and China, especially in viewing China as a 'foe.' In contrast, Al Jazeera, funded by Qatar's government, represents a perspective diametrically opposed to the West, viewing the West itself as a 'foe' (Prakoso 2023, 20).

Nicholas Onuf's speech act

To supplement Alexander Wendt's insights, it is very appropriate to look into how language and speech acts affect international relations as explained by Nicholas Onuf and Martha Finnemore. Nicholas Onuf's foundational work *World of Our Making* (1989) emphasizes that language and speech acts constitute international relations. In Onuf's view, state behavior is shaped by the rules people create through communication: human beings construct reality through their works. Crucially, these works may be speech acts, and through repetition these speech acts become institutionalized as rules linking "word" and world (Zehfuss 2002). In other words, diplomatic declarations, promises or statements are not mere descriptions but performative acts that generate shared understandings and norms. Incorporating Onuf highlights that the very language of media coverage and policy discourse actively shapes international reality.

This perspective offered by Onuf presented us the ability to see how BBC's reporting on international things are in a two-way relationship with how the people in the UK view China and IMF-World Bank, especially on the international lending. It is two-way because the common culture of freedom and democracy in the UK is reasonably colliding with the reputation of China as an authoritarian state, and this culture would shape how the BBC works as it is run primarily, either directly or indirectly, by the people and the government of the UK.

Martha Finnemore's International Organization

Martha Finnemore's contribution (National Interests in International Society, 1996) complements the notion how the alignment of IMF-World Bank to the Western political order (which the UK is obviously part of) affects how the BBC would approach and frame the information that they have about China and about IMF-World Bank. International organizations (IOs) themselves act as normative agents that shape state interests. Finnemore demonstrates that IOs socialize member states to adopt new goals and values, effectively redefining what states perceive as their "national interest." She academically highlighted that international organizations are consequential and purposive social agents in world politics that can shape state interests (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

While Finnemore's emphasizes how international organizations shape the behavior and interests of states, her framework can also be reversed to examine how states (or actors within states, such as media organizations) construct perceptions of IOs. In this study, the IMF and World Bank are understood not only as international organizations with normative power, but also as objects of favorable identity construction by Western actors. The BBC, as a UK public media institution, frames the IMF and World Bank as legitimate, benevolent, and stabilizing forces, reinforcing their identity as "Western-led" and thus compatible with British strategic interests: freedom and democracy as opposed to China BRI's so-called "debt trap" conducted by what the general public in the West would understand as an authoritarian dictatorship. This aligns with Finnemore's claim that IOs become norm carriers, but here, the BBC participates in reproducing the norms and positive identity associated with these IOs within the domestic public discourse of the UK.

Data Triangulation

Data triangulation involves comparing one data source with another to identify patterns in behavior or thinking (Creswell 2013, 198-99). This process strengthens the validity of the data, providing robust evidence to support the final conclusions (Creswell, 251). Patterns derived from one data source must align with those from another. This ensures that the phenomenon under investigation is not random but results from identifiable factors and explanations.

The framing patterns of the BBC—whether aligned or not—must be compared with media entities with similar contexts but differing identities. In this case, NPR and Al Jazeera are ideal choices. The contemporary global political landscape, characterized by China's rise through the BRI program, places the U.S. and the UK in the same bloc (the West), while Qatar represents a contrasting bloc. Examining

how NPR (U.S.) and Al Jazeera (Qatar) report on China's BRI compared to the BBC (UK) will assist researchers in ensuring the validity of the study's data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Below are the ten BBC articles collected according to the defined timeframe and subject matter of reporting:

Table 1. The Ten Articles Analyzed

No.	Title of Article	Publication Date	URL Address
1	Why Europe will have to face the true cost of being in debt to China	May 3, 2022	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61276168
2	China: Big spender or loan shark?	September 29, 2021	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58679039
3	Should Africa be wary of Chinese debt?	September 3, 2018	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45368092
4	China: Is it burdening poor countries with unsustainable debt?	January 6, 2022	https://www.bbc.com/news/59585507
5	Belt and Road: China showcases initiative to world leaders	April 25, 2019	https://www.bbc.com/news/business-48047877
6	IMF provides \$50bn to fight coronavirus outbreak	March 5, 2020	https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51732459
7	World Bank loan scheme 'failing clean energy'	January 27, 2017	https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-38762930
8	IMF agrees to loan up to \$50bn for Argentina	June 8, 2018	https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44408495
9	Coronavirus: World Bank pledges \$12bn in emergency aid	March 4, 2020	https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51728766
10	War in Ukraine: World Bank approves \$723m financial package	March 8, 2022	https://www.bbc.com/news/business-60657127

Among these ten articles, Articles 1 to 5 focus on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while Articles 6 to 10 report on the IMF (Articles 6 and 8) and the World Bank (Articles 7, 9, and 10). By classifying the reporting subjects into two groups based on the global political landscape, there is a balanced number of articles for each group: five articles with the subject of the BRI (China) and five articles concerning the IMF-World Bank as part of the same group (the West, including the UK and the US).

BBC Reporting on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Below is a table summarizing the textual analysis of Articles 1 to 5, which focus on the BRI:

Table 2. Textual Analysis Results Using Entman's Framing Model for Articles 1 to 5

No. Article	Framing Toward Subject	Main Discussion
1	Negative	The threat of the BRI program in Europe, especially Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece (Beake 2022).
2	Negative	Loans from the BRI program characterized as "high interest" and "risky" compared to loans from G7 countries (Hatton 2021).
3	Negative	The threat of the BRI program in Africa (Madowo 2018).
4	Negative	The threat of the BRI program in Sri Lanka (Wang 2022).
5	Negative	The global development of the BRI as a threat via "debt diplomacy" (BBC 2019).

In Articles 1 to 5, the reporting on China's BRI tends to portray the subject negatively. Negative framing is evident in several articles, even in the titles themselves. The findings indicate a pattern suggesting BBC's negative stance on China's BRI.

The central theme across these articles is the idea that Chinese foreign loans through the BRI program pose a threat to recipient countries. Each article emphasizes the risks associated with Chinese loans, particularly regarding the sovereignty and economic security of borrowing nations.

1. **Article 1** discusses the lack of human rights protections in China's BRI program in Europe and its threats to the sovereignty of European countries, with a focus on Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. Negative framing is

prominent, even when sources from the governments of these countries express positive views about the BRI. For example, when Greece's Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias highlighted Greece's openness to more Chinese investments, the article countered with the question: *"But what about potential 'debt traps' that might come with any future Chinese investment in Greece?"* This narrative suggests the author's suspicion of the BRI as a threat, despite the positive perspectives of the sources.

2. **Article 2** emphasizes the risks of Chinese loans by describing them as "high interest" and repeatedly labeling them as "risky." Additionally, it contrasts these loans with those from G7 countries, portraying the latter as less risky.
3. **Article 3** highlights the risks of the BRI in Africa, even though the data in the article itself shows that the largest share of Africa's debt is owed to Western nations, not China. Moreover, despite acknowledging the significant infrastructure developments enabled by the BRI in Africa, the article dismisses China's collaboration as mere *"lip service,"* implying minimal substantive action.
4. **Article 4** addresses the risks of the BRI in Sri Lanka, referencing the leasing of Hambantota Port to a Chinese company as evidence of these risks. Although the article includes analysis from the UK's Chatham House research organization, which indicates that the port lease was not necessarily caused by a Chinese "debt trap," it still asserts that the BRI poses a threat in Sri Lanka. For instance, it states: *"Despite that, there's little doubt that China's economic involvement in Sri Lanka has grown in the past decade, and concerns persist that this could be used to advance its political ambitions in the region."* This framing not only suggests that the BRI's presence is a threat but also speculates on China's political ambitions, framing the initiative as jeopardizing Sri Lanka's sovereignty and the region's stability.
5. **Article 5** examines the global expansion of the BRI and its impact on nations through "debt diplomacy." The article claims that countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia have experienced "concerns" regarding the BRI, though it fails to provide supporting data from these nations. Furthermore, the article confidently cites Hambantota Port as an example of the debt-related consequences of Sri Lanka's dealings with China, despite ongoing debates on the matter, such as those discussed by the UK's Chatham House (Jones & Hameiri 2020).

BBC Reporting on the IMF and World Bank

Below is a table summarizing the textual analysis of Articles 6 to 10, which focus on the IMF (Articles 6 and 8) and the World Bank (Articles 7, 9, and 10):

Table 3. Textual Analysis Results Using Entman's Framing Model for Articles 6 to 10

No. Article	Framing Toward Subject	Main Discussion
6	Positive	The IMF provides an emergency aid package of USD 50 billion to low- and middle-income countries to address the impact of the Coronavirus (BBC 2020).
7	Negative	The World Bank's policies have failed to support environmentally friendly resource utilization (Kinver 2017).
8	Neutral	The IMF is willing to lend USD 50 billion to Argentina during its economic crisis (BBC 2018).
9	Positive	The World Bank provides USD 12 billion in emergency aid to tackle the impact of the Coronavirus (BBC 2020).
10	Neutral	The World Bank approves a USD 723 million financial package for war-stricken Ukraine due to the Russian invasion (BBC 2022).

In Articles 6 to 10, BBC's reporting on the IMF and World Bank does not display a strong bias toward either positive or negative framing. Some articles present the subjects positively, while one (Article 7) leans toward negative framing. Two articles (Articles 8 and 10) maintain a neutral tone, neither leaning significantly toward positive nor negative framing.

1. **Article 6** reports on the emergency package provided by the IMF to "low- and middle-income" countries to mitigate the impact of the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic. By highlighting the IMF's readiness to allocate substantial funds to assist pandemic-stricken nations, alongside the mention of "low-interest loans," the article frames the IMF positively.
2. **Article 7** adopts a more negative tone toward the World Bank, as reflected in its title, "*World Bank Loan Scheme 'Failing Clean Energy,'*" which immediately presents the World Bank in a negative light. However, the article also includes clarifications from the World Bank regarding the issue, providing a balanced perspective by incorporating statements from the subject being reported on.

3. **Article 8** focuses on the IMF's willingness to offer loans to Argentina during its economic crisis. Although this paints the IMF in a positive light, the article also mentions accusations—primarily from Argentine citizens—blaming the IMF for Argentina's economic crisis. This criticism stems from the IMF's refusal to provide economic assistance to Argentina during the 2001 crisis, thus balancing the narrative.
4. **Article 9** discusses the World Bank's emergency aid of USD 12 billion to countries affected by the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic. By emphasizing the aid package, including the phrase “low-interest loans,” and highlighting the World Bank's good intentions behind the assistance, the article frames the World Bank positively.
5. **Article 10** reports on the World Bank's approval of an emergency package for Ukraine, affected by the Russian invasion. The article remains neutral, avoiding language that frames the World Bank in either overly positive or negative terms.

BBC's Negative Bias Toward China's BRI

Based on the textual analysis of the ten articles, a pattern emerges indicating BBC's tendency to report more negatively on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) compared to its coverage of the IMF and World Bank. When discussing loans from China through the BRI, the BBC often frames its narrative based on negative speculation about China. This negative perspective persists even when certain sources and data within the reporting express positive views on the BRI.

Unlike BBC's coverage of the IMF and World Bank—which balances positive and negative information (as seen in Articles 7 and 8)—its negative reporting on the BRI lacks counterbalancing information. BBC's coverage does not incorporate discussions from two perspectives on the issues it highlights. Positive statements from sources and data related to the BRI, such as those found in Articles 1, 3, and 4, do not serve as strong counterpoints. This is mainly because such positive information is consistently followed by clarifications framing it within a negative narrative.

This tendency aligns with BBC's identity as a British public media outlet and its relationship with China. China's rise and its growing economic influence globally in the 21st century, particularly through the BRI, challenge the IMF and World Bank in the realm of international lending. The G7 acknowledged this competition in 2021 when it devised plans to counter the BRI (Sopel 2021). The strong influence

of G7 members, predominantly Western countries except for Japan, within the IMF and World Bank structure likely perceives the emergence of an alternative lender like the BRI as a threat.

Beyond economic competition, the identity of the Western world, including the UK and the US, as champions of democracy and freedom contrasts sharply with China's identity as a 'communist' state with an authoritarian system. This dynamic mirrors the ideological rivalry of the Cold War. Anti-communist sentiment is not confined to state actors but extends to domestic components, including mass media, particularly those connected to the government, like the BBC.

The West's victory in the Cold War symbolized a triumph for democracy, human rights, and the free-market economy model over communism, oppression (as perceived by anti-communist advocates), and state-controlled economic models. The Soviet Union's defeat reinforced a global belief in democracy as the 'correct' path (Fukuyama 1992). China's rise challenges this conviction.

This phenomenon aligns with the explanation of identity and interests in constructivist theory, which posits that an actor's identity shapes its interests (Wendt, 336). The West's belief in the superiority of democracy and the free-market economy underpins the fundamental equation in rational international relations theory: 'desire' plus 'belief' equals 'action' (Wendt, 115). Wendt's explanation of the interplay between identity and interest supports this view. If interests alone were at play, the West might collaborate with China as a BRI partner. However, the belief in the superiority of democratic values and the free-market model prevents such a scenario.

NPR and Aljazeera on China's BRI

National Public Radio (NPR) is a U.S. public media organization established by the U.S. Congress. Similar to the BBC, NPR presents itself as a media entity operating without government control. Simultaneously, Aljazeera is a Qatari media organization funded by the Qatari government. In international relations, the U.S. aligns itself with the U.K. as a 'friend,' whereas Qatar adopts a stance that is more adversarial toward the U.S. and the U.K., yet somewhat closer to China in foreign policy, such as support for Palestine and cooperation in the BRI program. However, the most significant commonality between NPR and Aljazeera lies in how both portray themselves as independent media free from government control.

To compare the reporting patterns of the BBC, which tend to lean negative toward the BRI, three articles from NPR and three articles from Aljazeera about China's BRI were analyzed. The details are presented in the following table:

Table 4. Three NPR Articles and Three Aljazeera Articles on China's BRI Compared with BBC's Reporting Patterns

NPR Article Title	NPR Article Date	Aljazeera Article Title	Aljazeera Article Date
<i>China lends billions to poor countries. Is that a burden ... or a blessing?</i> (Connelly 2022)	December 6, 2022	<i>China demands secrecy in its loans to developing countries: Study</i> (Aljazeera 2021)	March 31, 2021
<i>How A Chinese-Built Highway Drove Montenegro Deep Into Debt</i> (Schmitz 2021)	June 29, 2021	<i>Who will benefit from China's Belt and Road Initiative?</i> (Romann 2019)	April 27, 2019
<i>In Sri Lanka, China's Building Spree Is Raising Questions About Sovereignty</i> (Fraye 2019)	December 13, 2019	<i>Alleged abuses linked to China's 'Belt and Road' projects: report</i> (Aljazeera 2021)	August 11, 2021

The three NPR articles on China's BRI exhibit negative framing even from their titles alone. Each title casts doubt on China's intentions behind the BRI program, particularly in the titles of NPR articles 1 and 2. In contrast, the Aljazeera article titles do not indicate a bias toward either positivity or negativity. Even the title of Aljazeera article 3 uses the terms "alleged" and "linked," indicating a tentative stance on the controversies surrounding the BRI projects.

In terms of content, NPR article 1 focuses on the risks for poor countries indebted to China. NPR article 2 explains how the BRI program has plunged Montenegro into deep debt to China. NPR article 3 explores how Sri Lanka's sovereignty has weakened due to its economic cooperation with China through the BRI program.

Aljazeera article 1 discusses a study on secrecy within China's BRI program but clearly states that the negative rumors originate from U.S. research bodies. It also clarifies that loan terms from China remain unknown and emphasizes that contract secrecy is a common practice among countries, not just China. Aljazeera article 2 provides two perspectives on who might benefit from the BRI program, including its long-term benefits alongside emerging concerns. Aljazeera article 3 addresses alleged human rights violations linked to the BRI but clarifies that local recipient countries of BRI aid also bear responsibility for the controversies, refraining from solely blaming China as the main perpetrator.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of ten BBC articles—five about China's BRI and five about the IMF or the World Bank—reveals a clear pattern that the BBC tends to report on China's BRI using negative framing. In contrast, the reporting on the IMF or the World Bank does not exhibit an overly positive or negative bias.

This pattern aligns with how constructivism explains the role of identity and interests in shaping the behavior of actors, which, in this study, is the BBC. Although the BBC is not a state, it is a public media entity from the United Kingdom with a uniquely close relationship to the British government. This identity inevitably influences the BBC's perspective on China's BRI within the context of a globally polarized political landscape marked by Western versus Chinese rivalries.

This phenomenon becomes even more apparent when the BBC's reporting pattern is compared to that of NPR from the U.S. and Aljazeera from Qatar on China's BRI. Like the BBC, NPR portrays China's BRI in a negative light, whereas Aljazeera's coverage does not lean too far in either a positive or negative direction. These findings highlight similarities between the BBC and NPR in their views on China's BRI but show differences in Aljazeera's perspective, with each resonating with the worldview of their respective countries.

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