
News Coverage of Africa: A Big Data Approach Comparing Chinese and Non-Chinese Media

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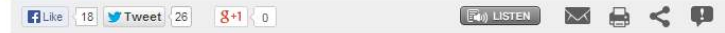
Sino-African mediated engagements

Sino-African media relations



China is relying on its own media to try to secure its trade relations with the resource-rich continent.

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Chinese media in Africa: What you need to know



GEOFFREY YORK

Why China is making a big play to control Africa's media

GEOFFREY YORK

NAIROBI — The Globe and Mail

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Globalized or globalizing media?

- During the 1990s, the focus of attention of debates on media globalization were private news organizations and transnational conglomerates.
- In parallel, we see the advent of strong State-sponsored global news media organizations outside the assumed hegemonic nodes of content production.
- The internationalization of Chinese media begins in this period, the mid-1990s, but only reaches maturity in the late 2000s, when it becomes a priority for successive Chinese leaders.

On media flows and contra-flows

DOMINANT FLOWS

CONTRA-FLOWS

GLOBAL

TRANSNATIONAL

GEO-CULTURAL

FLOWS OF CAPITAL

FLOWS OF CONTENT

FLOWS OF NORMS AND VALUES

Africa in (Anglo-American) media

- Previous research on representations of Africa in the media suggests that coverage of the continent has tended to be ...
 1. Scarce when compared to other world regions;
 2. Narrow in the topics covered and the frames used;
 3. Predominantly negative or “Afro-pessimistic”;
 4. Dominated by North American and European perspectives.

Africa and global Chinese media

- Our knowledge about the way global Chinese media cover Africa is sparse, inconclusive and sometimes contradictory.
 1. News about Africa is said to be event-driven and, thematically, focused on “hard news” (i.e. security, war, politics...).
 2. Chinese global media say they are doing “positive news” about Africa; although previous research suggests otherwise.
 3. The degree to which Chinese global media differ from other global media (i.e. BBC or AP) is disputed.

Research Questions

RQ₁ - How much coverage does Africa get in global Chinese media compared to Anglo-American media?

RQ₂ - How much geographic diversity is there in Chinese and Anglo-American media's coverage of Africa?

RQ₃ - What topics do Chinese and Anglo-American media cover when reporting on Africa and other regions?

RQ₄ - Does news valence in stories about Africa differ between Chinese and Anglo-American media?

RQ₅ - Does China provide a content contra-flow when reporting contemporary Africa?

Research Methods

- Computational Text Analysis of **N = 1,162,373** news items published and/or broadcast between January 2012 and December 2015
- Data comes from four news outlets: **Xinhua** (n = 380,104), **CCTV+** (n = 102,657), **The Guardian** (n = 177,967) and **Reuters** (n = 501,645).
- Three types of analysis were used: keyword search (**RQ₁** & **RQ₂**), supervised machine learning (**RQ₃**), and sentiment analysis (**RQ₄**).

RQ₁. How much coverage does Africa get in global Chinese media compared to Anglo-American media?

Figure 1. Country mentions by news outlet aggregated at continent level (2012-2015)



Figure 2. *Country mentions by news outlet aggregated at continent level (2012-2015)*



Table 1. Country Mentions by News Outlet (2012-2015)

		News Organization				
		Xinhua	CGTN	Reuters	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total
1.	United States	6.07%	6.95%	13.03%	15.13%	11.26%
2.	China	11.87	36.83	6.41	2.73	8.74
3.	Great Britain	2.54	2.13	4.55	16.61	6.42
4.	Syria	5.16	2.67	5.20	2.59	4.50
5.	Russia	3.43	2.57	5.50	2.72	4.20
6.	France	2.15	1.26	3.30	4.11	3.05
7.	Iran	2.59	0.97	4.10	1.32	2.94
8.	Germany	1.91	1.14	3.22	3.17	2.74
9.	Israel	3.15	0.84	2.69	1.57	2.48
10.	India	1.96	1.24	3.25	1.73	2.47
...						
18.	Egypt	1.69	1.44	1.58	0.78	1.43

RQ₂. How much geographic diversity is there in Chinese and Anglo-American media's coverage of Africa?

Figure 3. Mentions of African Countries by News Outlet (2012-2015)

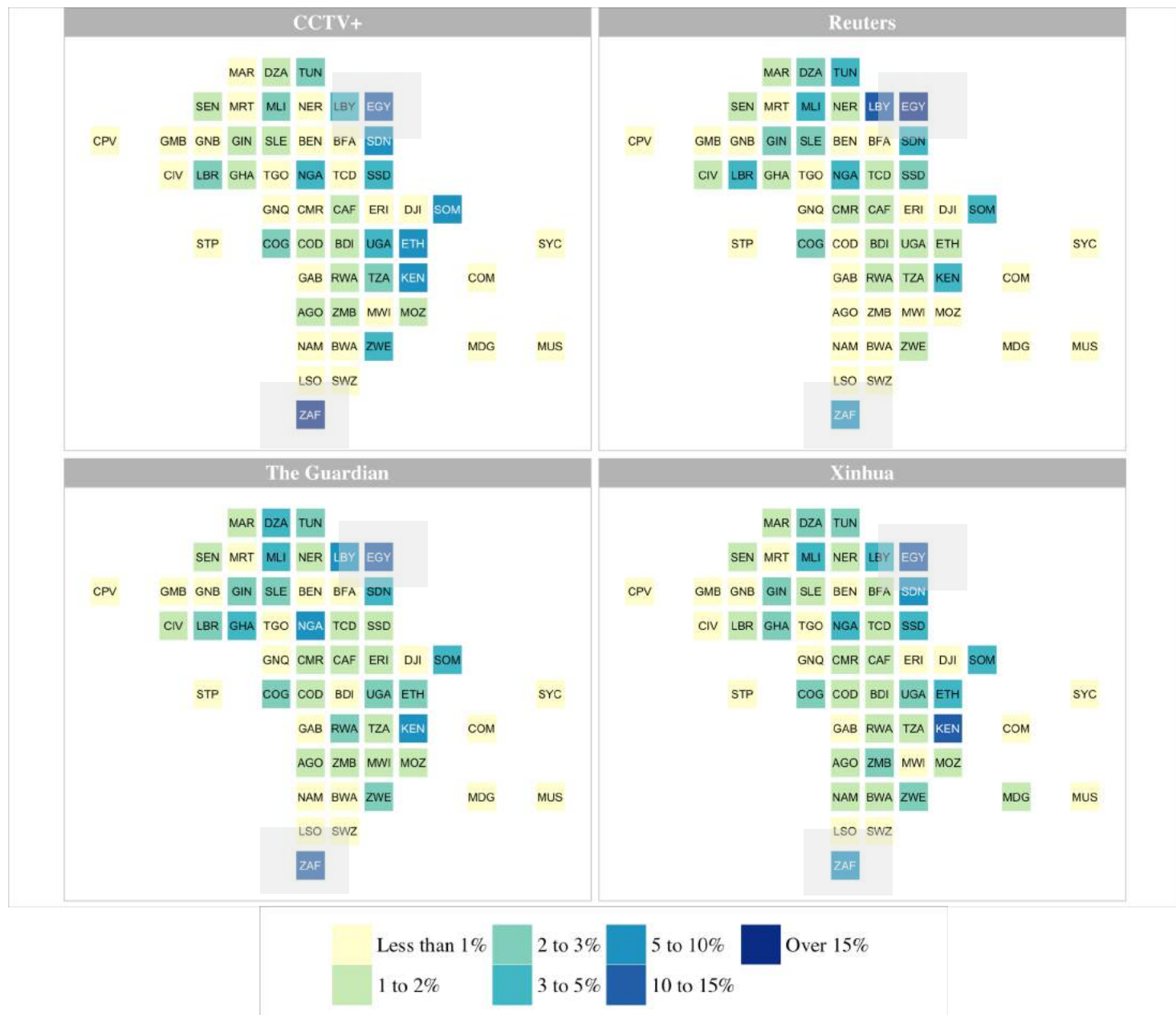




Figure 4. Mentions of Libya by News Outlet (2012-2015)

RQ₃. What topics do Chinese and Anglo-American media cover when reporting on Africa and other regions?

Figure 5. News Items by Topic and Continent for each News Outlet (2012-2015)

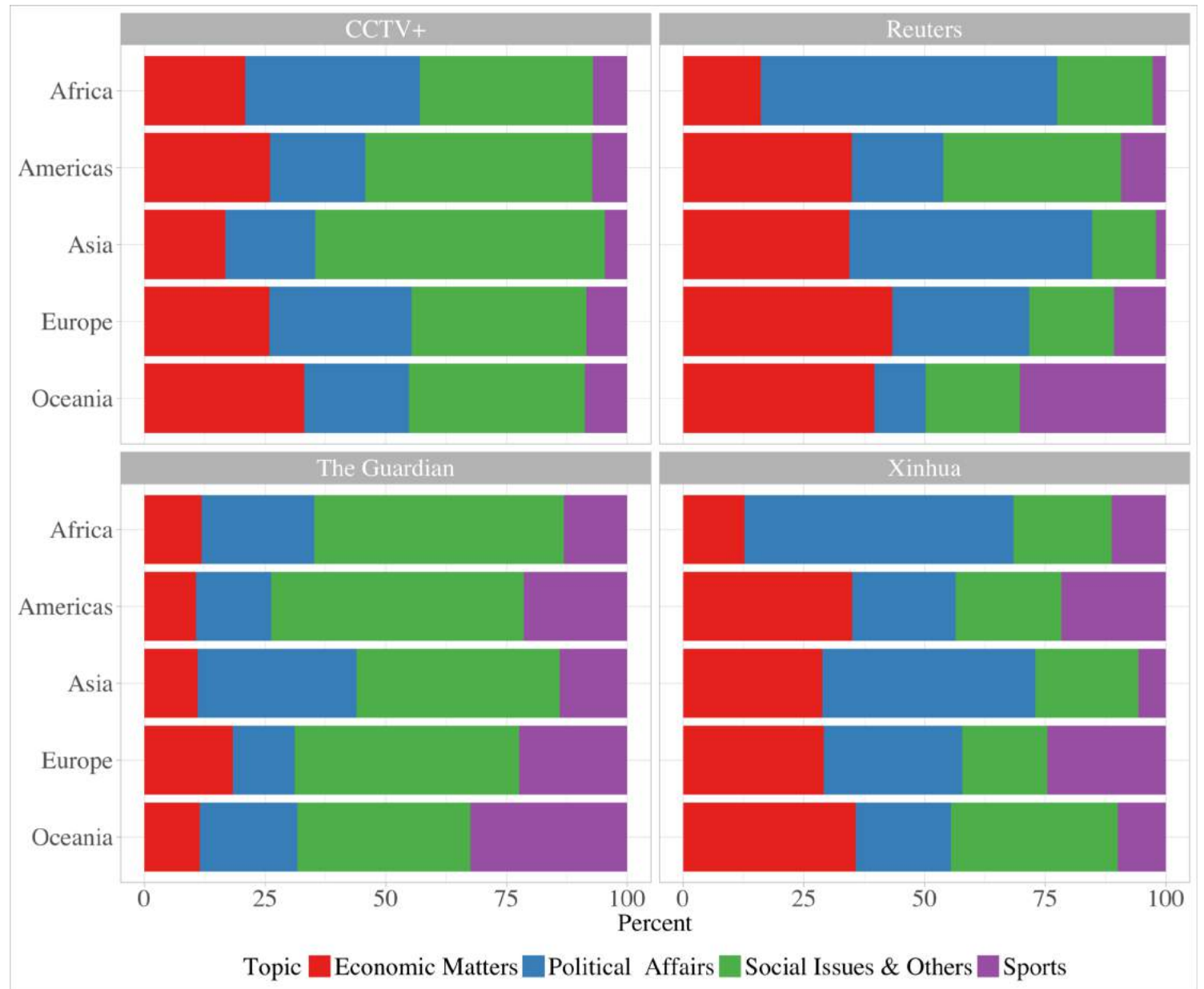
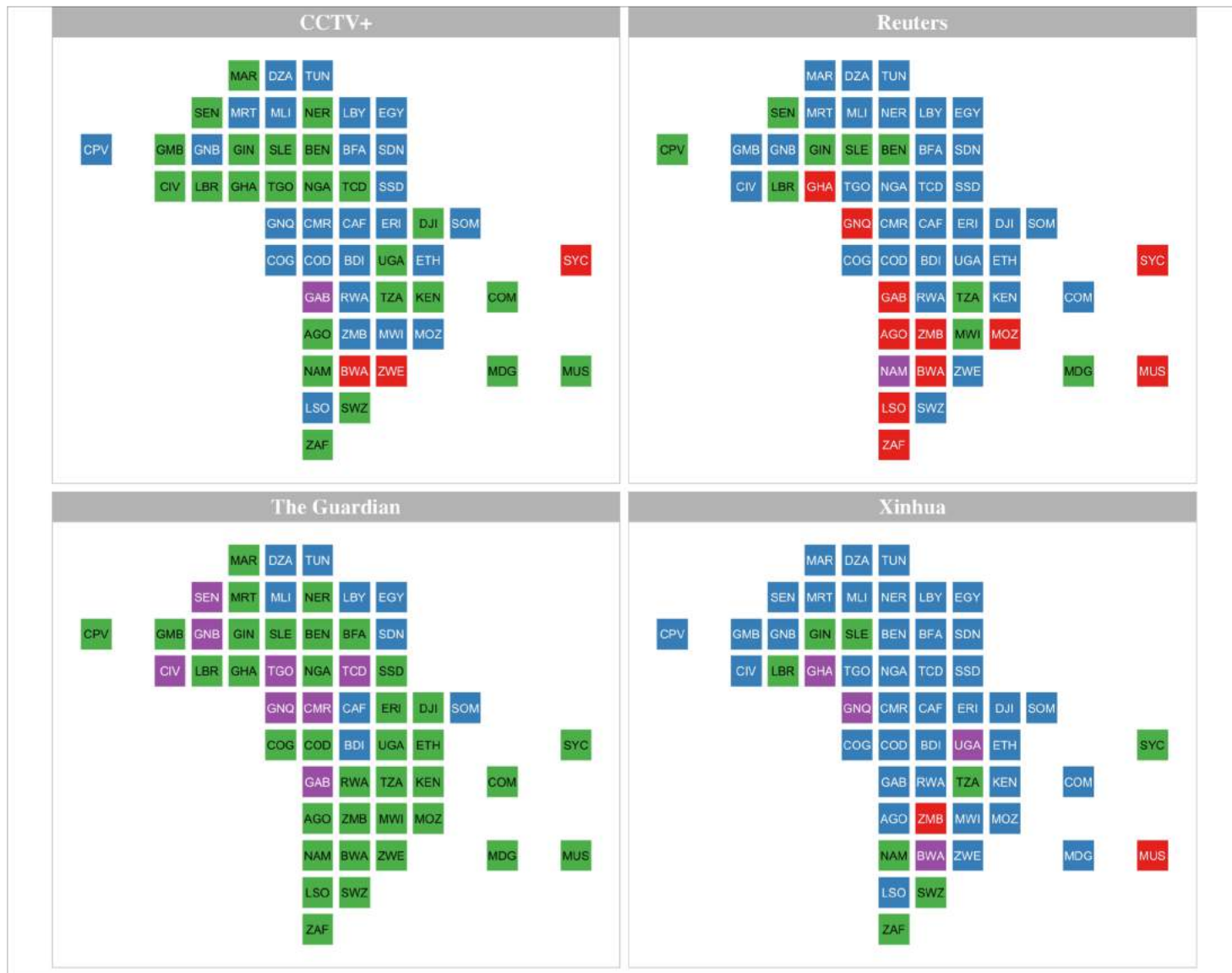


Figure 6. Most Frequent Topic per African Country by News Outlet (2012-2015)



RQ₄. Does news valence in stories about Africa differ between Chinese and Anglo-American media?

Figure 7. Sentiment Analysis of News Items Related to Africa (2012-2015)



Figure 8. Sentiment Analysis of News Items Related to China (2012-2015)

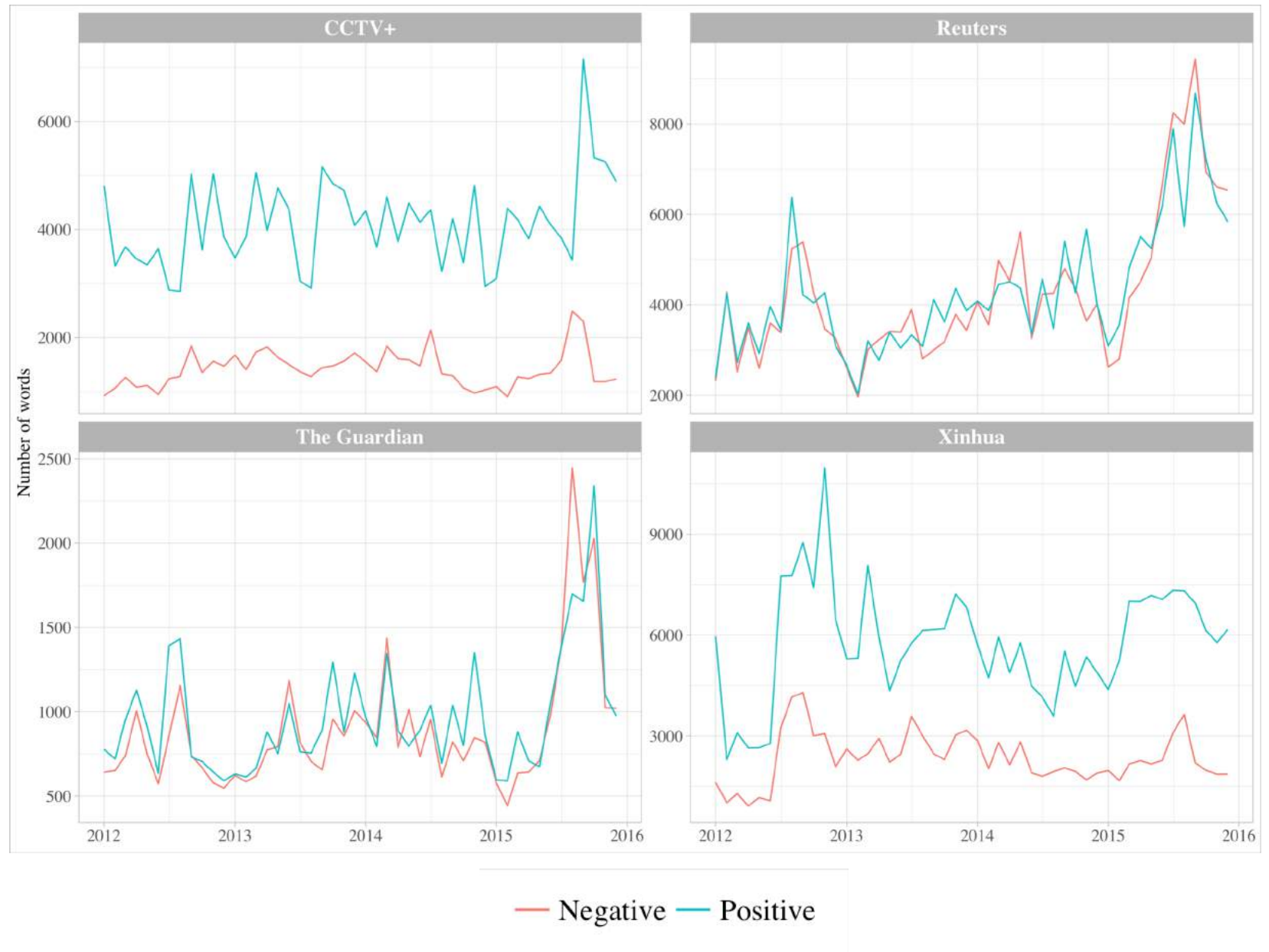
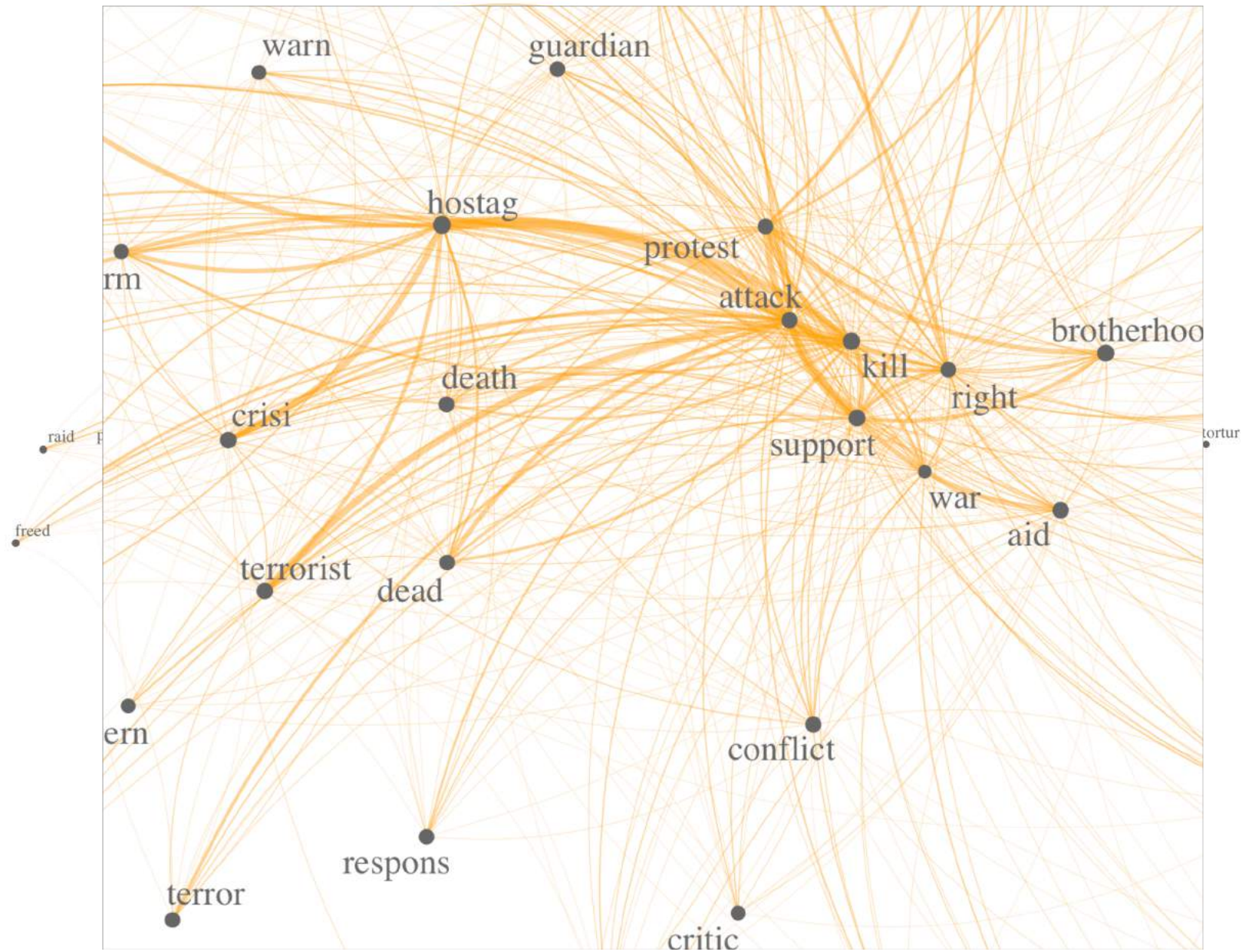


Figure 10. *Semantic Network of Sentiment Words Associated with Africa on The Guardian, January 2013*



RQ₅. Does China provide a content contra-flow when reporting contemporary Africa?

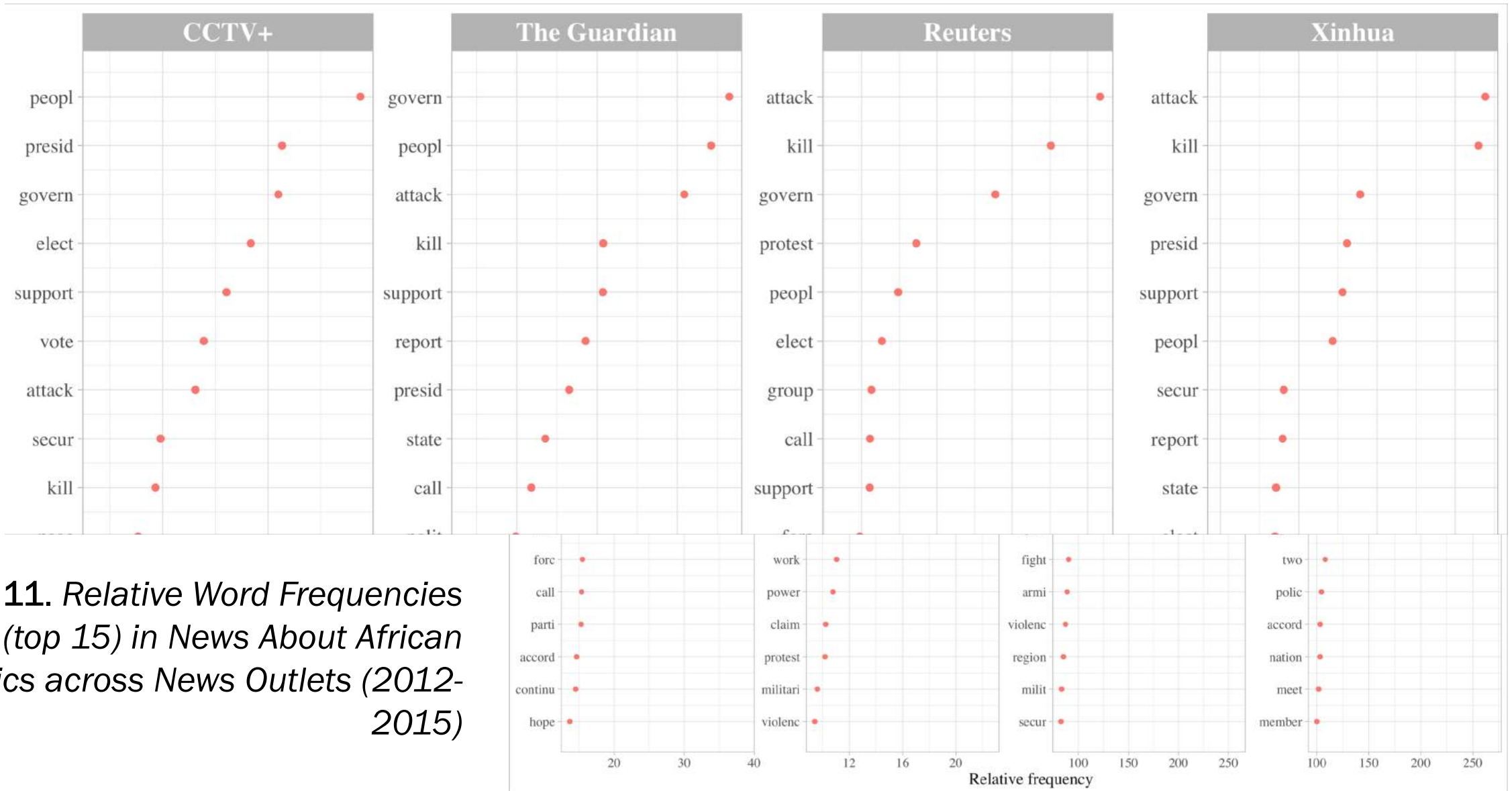


Figure 11. *Relative Word Frequencies (top 15) in News About African Politics across News Outlets (2012-2015)*

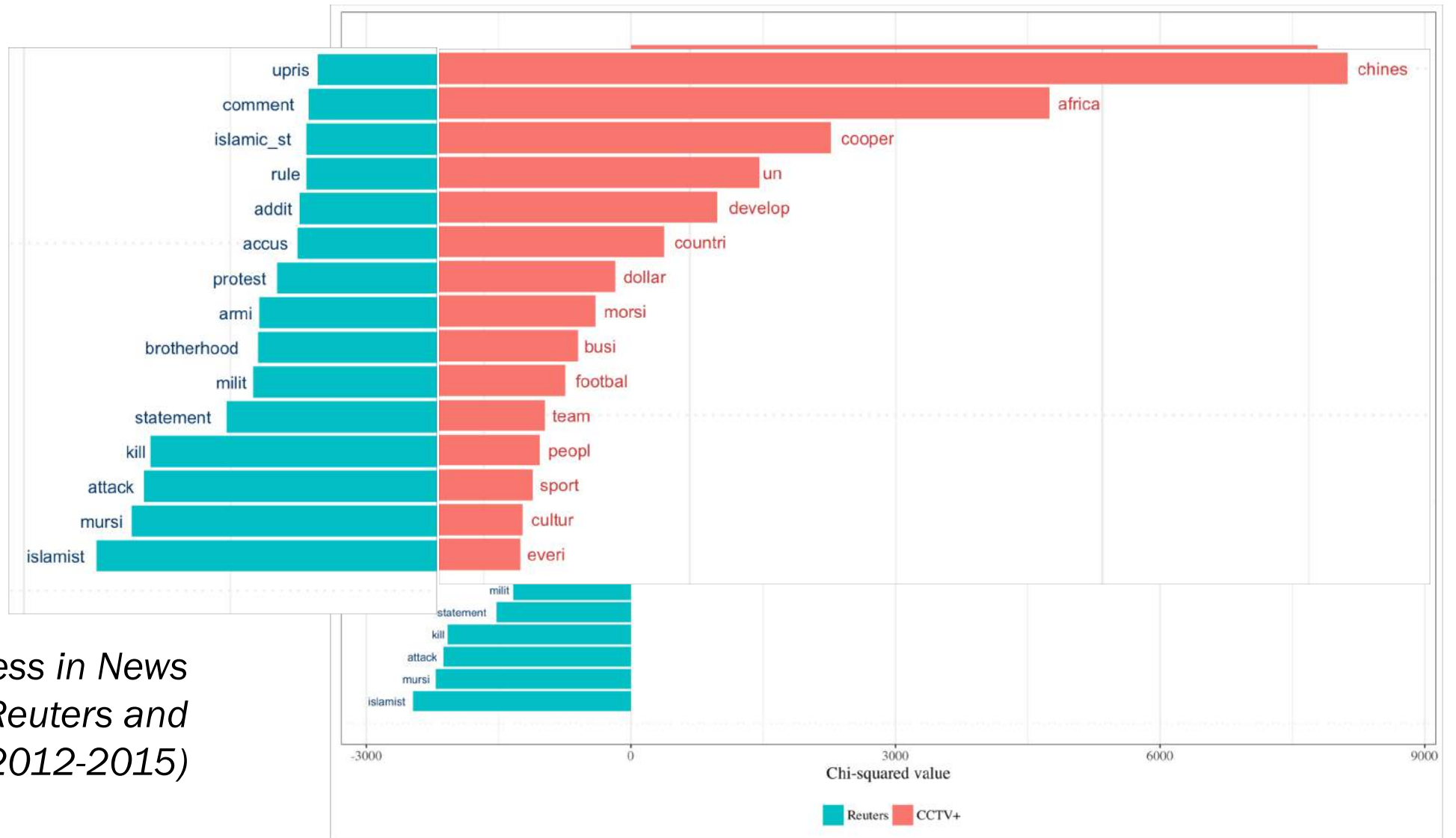


Figure 12. *Keyness in News About Africa on Reuters and CCTV+ (2012-2015)*

Final Ideas (I)

- CGTN's coverage of Africa differs from that of other global media, including Xinhua, in at least three ways ...
 1. It is more **thematically diverse**, although certain topics are absent (i.e. religion), but present elsewhere.
 2. The self-declared goal of telling a “positive story” of Africa, translates in the **prevalence of positive words** over negative.
 3. Content is less focused on political conflict. When conflict is discussed, it is framed as **cooperation** and **problem-solving**.

Final Ideas (II)

- Current depictions about CGTN's potentially transformative impact on media representations of Africa should be examined carefully for three reasons
 1. Coverage is very concentrated on a **few geographic areas** (East, North and Southern Africa).
 2. In countries where political violence has been recurrent during the period of analysis **news is monothematic**.
 3. The news agenda is **event-driven**. News about violence is given more salience than news related to culture, the economy or social issues.

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