



# Measuring Peace in the Media 2011

INSTITUTE FOR  
ECONOMICS  
& PEACE

An analysis of global TV networks' coverage of peace and violence issues using a fact-based approach which compares various measures from the Global Peace Index against Media Tenor's database of global media

## The Institute for Economics & Peace

*Quantifying Peace and its Benefits*

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit research organisations dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the social and economic factors that develop a more peaceful society.

It achieves its goals by developing new conceptual frameworks to define peace; providing metrics for measuring peace; and, uncovering the relationship between peace, business and prosperity.

IEP has offices in Sydney, New York and Washington, D.C. It works with a wide range of partners internationally and collaborates with intergovernmental organisations on measuring and communication the economic value of peace. IEP's ground-breaking research includes the Global Peace Index.

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## Introduction

Peace and conflict are two of the most newsworthy subjects that can occur but how accurately does the media report on them and are the levels of violence portrayed in countries actually accurate? Media Tenor and the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) have come together to jointly create a unique platform that utilizes a fact-based approach for analysing the global media coverage on topics related to peace and conflict.

The aim of this study is to better understand the texture of news coverage and its accuracy. This was achieved by analysing Media Tenor's extensive database consisting of 164,000 news items. These news items have been compiled from 31 news and current affairs programs that air on four continents. The data was further analysed and broken down by country coverage with news stories from 101 different countries. The aggregated country data was then compared to the Global Peace Index (GPI) so as to rate the accuracy of the coverage.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is unlike any other epoch in human history. The global challenges we are facing include food security, water shortages and climate change and are underpinned by over-population. All of these challenges call for cooperation and efficiencies which are well beyond our current collective capabilities. Studies of societies which are peaceful have shown that they are also the same environments that produce many other qualities that we consider desirable. Peaceful environments generally create competitive business environments, societies with lower levels of corruption and stronger social cohesion. It can therefore be said that by creating an environment in which peace thrives we are also creating the optimal environment for human potential to flourish. Resilience and peace are also interconnected since peaceful societies display high levels of resilience and as the 21<sup>st</sup> century progresses this will become important in adapting to the many faceted sustainability challenges that humanity will face.

### Key Findings



The only two networks which were either **50%** accurate or more were SABC News @ One and ABC World News with **56%** and **50%** accuracy, respectively.

The number violence reports aligned in direct proportion to the actual level of violence on the country being reported.

The Arab Spring countries saw a rise in the number of reports, especially on topics such as 'the functioning of government' as well as war and violence.

Understanding the media's coverage of peace and the way in which the media affects public perception is therefore paramount.

The media's coverage of news and current affairs directly affects the public's perception of what it considers important and what it considers is not. If the media does not cover a subject then it is unlikely that it will be debated by the public. This may then lead to little government activity as democratic governments generally respond to the public debate. Research by IEP has determined which are the key elements needed in a society to create peace. Through analysing the media's coverage of these elements it is possible to understand how much emphasis both the government and society places on what is essential for peace. Without adequate attention to all of these elements then our best attempts at creating peace will only be partially successful.

For a society to become more peaceful the appropriate attitudes, institutions, and structures need to be present. The Institute for Economics and Peace has used rigorous statistical methods to derive its "Structures of Peace" an original and holistic conceptual framework which uncovers the links between peace and economic success, governance and cultural attitudes. These structures are intuitively understood and visualized through an eight-part taxonomy.<sup>1</sup> All of the structures associated with peace are intimately interconnected. This framework does not imply causality between the structures, rather it is an interconnected set of structures that operate together to create peace. The absence of any one structure will lead to material fall in peacefulness.

The "Structures of Peace" has been used as the conceptual framework to analyse the media's coverage of peace. If the various elements within the framework are covered, then there will be debate and action on what is essential for peace. If not, important elements that contribute to peace may not receive the adequate focus and attention.

One of the eight Structures of Peace is the 'free flow of information' which is best epitomised by a free press. IEP research has shown that peaceful societies are associated with the extent to which citizens can gain access to information, and whether the media is free and independent. Peaceful countries tend to have free and independent media which disseminates information in a way that leads to greater openness and helps individuals and civil society work together. These elements lead societies to better decision-making and more rational responses in times of crisis. Peaceful societies are better positioned to learn and to adapt and have higher levels of tolerance which in turn enables social resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> The Structures of Peace (October 2011) Institute for Economics and Peace, Research Brief.

The role of the media and the tenor and accuracy with which it reports on the events has an important role to play in fostering or hindering the move towards peace through its influence on attitudes and information.

### *The Structures of Peace*

The Structures of Peace is a new conceptual framework for understanding and describing the factors that create a peaceful society. This framework has been derived from empirical and statistical analysis of the Global Peace Index (GPI). Over 300 cross country datasets have been used to define the key economic, political, and cultural determinants that foster the creation of a more peaceful society.

The Global Peace Index is comprised of 23 indicators which cover both the internal and external measures of peacefulness for 153 nations. The definition used to define peace is “absence of violence” or “absence of the fear of violence”. This approach measures what can be termed “Negative Peace”.

Understanding the relative levels and types of violence that exist in and between nations is highly useful; however this on its own does not identify the economic, political and cultural factors that shape a peaceful society. In contrast to negative peace, “Positive Peace” is about the appropriate attitudes, institutions, and structures which when strengthened, lead to a more peaceful society.

The Structures of Peace consist of the following elements:

- Well-functioning government
- Sound business environment
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Acceptance of the rights of others
- Free flow of information
- Good relations with neighbours
- High levels of education
- Low levels of corruption

These structures are needed in order for a society to be peaceful.

Peace can also be seen as including access to food, health care, shelter, and economic opportunities that are pre-requisites for the fulfilment of basic human needs. Their absence commonly leads to violence. The presence of the “Structures of peace” leads to the creation of

an environment that is optimum for fulfilling these basic needs. Both the levels of violence and presence of the Structures of Peace can be measured.

By categorizing media reports with reference to the Structures of Peace we can refine our analysis further. Through analysing these various structures, we can identify varying patterns in reporting which may help in understanding the differences in peace between countries. The media has a key role to play in reporting and raising awareness of important issues and is a key initiator and facilitator of debate. Hence, by analysing the level of reporting on the structures of peace, such as education or governance, a picture can be built up of whether these structures are adequately covered. Coverage leads to debate and debate to action which ultimately leads to a more peaceful society. It does not matter whether the coverage is positive or negative what is important is that society will focus on the issues media reports on.

### *Methodology*

The Media Tenor database was analysed for news reports containing references to violence as well as references to the components of the Structures of Peace. These were then tallied, thereby allowing a comparison to be made between violence related or peace related reports and other reports. The stories were also rated as positive, negative or neutral in their tone by Media Tenor analysts to further provide valuable insights.

Since peace can be defined as the inverse of violence, i.e. the absence of violence, the ratio of the number of stories on violence to the total number of news stories can be used as a heuristic tool which indicates the media's view of the peacefulness of a country. The underlying assumption is that the more violent a country tends to be, the greater the proportion of news stories related to violence. For example, Afghanistan which has high levels of violence also has a high volume of violence related news stories. This contrasts with Sweden, for example, where there is little coverage of violence in the international press.

Listed on the following page are the various violence related categories from the Media Tenor database that were used for the analysis.

**Table1: List of Violence Topics**

Violence Issues	
• Demonstrations/Protests	• Social unrest
• Politically motivated crime	• War activities
• Suicide bombing	• Civil war
• Assassinations	• Negative coverage on human rights
• Terrorism	• Failed elections
• Kidnapping	• Air strikes
• Murder	• Oppression of people by the state
• Nuclear weapon development	• Insurgency
• Conflicts in general	• War crimes
• Negative coverage on median freedom	• Violent crimes

Once the number of violence related news stories were tallied and the ratio to the total number of stories calculated, the countries were given a banded score ranging from one to four based on the ratio of violent stories to others. Similarly, the GPI was also divided into four bands based on the ranking of the countries. As both the GPI data and the Media Tenor data have been normalised into four bands they can now be compared.

**Table 2: Accuracy and Bands**

Bands	GPI rank	country	Proportion of Violence stories
1	1 to 30		<20%
2	31 to 75		21-40%
3	76 to 120		41-60%
4	121 to 153		>60%



- 'Media Accuracy' is then defined as how closely aligned the bands are by country. Thus, media coverage is considered accurate if the Media Tenor banded score aligns with the GPI banded score. Given this, we can also analyse the under-reporting of violence if the Media Tenor banded score is less than the GPI banded score. Conversely, we define the over-reporting of violence if the Media Tenor banded score is greater than the GPI banded score.
- Suppose that some country ranks in Band 2 for the GPI. We would expect that this would correspond to 21-40% of the total number of news stories on that country being related to violence. Now suppose that a country had 37.5% of its news stories designated as violence related. This would mean that it falls in the same band as the GPI. Through doing this for all countries covered by each of the networks it is possible to assess the accuracy of the network's media coverage on peace and conflict.

This methodology provides a simple yet powerful means of analysing violence-reporting. The analysis allows us to identify any salient factors which account for the differences across the news programs. Furthermore, given that this is an ongoing study comparisons of news coverage from year to year can also be produced.

The table below shows the eight structures of peace and the various Media Tenor topics which comprise each structure. Unfortunately, no data was available for the levels of corruption which has therefore been omitted from the proceeding analysis.

**Table 3: List of the Structure of Peace and corresponding Media Tenor Topics**

Structure of Peace	Media Tenor Topic
<b>Well-functioning of Government</b>	Administrative restructuring
	Budget policy
	Elections
	Justice policy
	Leadership changes
	Parliamentary work
	Party politics
	Political relationships
	Social policy & services
	Spending
	Strikes/Protests
<b>Sound business environment</b>	Business associations
	Business issues
	Economic policy
	Economic situation
	International trade
	Relationship to business
<b>Equitable sharing of resources</b>	Salaries/Wages
	Any stories that specifically mention inequality
<b>Low levels of corruption</b>	Crime (corruption stories)
<b>High levels of education</b>	Education
<b>Acceptance of the rights of others</b>	Values/Ideologies/Rights
	Minorities & migration
	Religion
	Gender/family
<b>Good relations with neighbours</b>	Foreign affairs
	Intra-government relations
<b>Free flow of information</b>	Media/Media policy
	Relationship to the media
	Public opinions

Domestic reporting is defined as news reports on the country in which the news program is domiciled. This was excluded from the analysis in order to mitigate the tendency to skew the data. Domestic coverage often involves news stories on topics such as sports. Hence, only international reports were analysed. Out of the total of 164,557 new stories analysed by Media Tenor, 66,336 were international stories – roughly 40%.

As mentioned above, a total of 31 news programs were analysed. The full list is given on the following page:

Table 3: Full list of News Programs and their Country of Origin

Program	Country	Program	Country
ABC World News	U.S.	RAI TG1	Italy
Al Arabiya	U.A.E	RTL Aktuell	Germany
Al Jazeera	Qatar	SABC Afrikaans	South Africa
ARD Tagesschau	Germany	SABC English	South Africa
ARD Tagesthemen	Germany	SABC News @ One	South Africa
BBC World Service	U.K.	SABC	South Africa
BBC1 10o'clock	U.K.	SiSwati/Ndebele	
BBC2 Newsnight	U.K.	SABC Sotho	South Africa
CBS Evening News	U.S.	SABC Zulu/Xhosa	South Africa
CCTV	China	SF Tagesschau	Switzerland
CNN International Desk	U.S.	Summit TV	South Africa
eTV Prime Time	South Africa	TF1 Le Journal	France
FOX Special Report	U.S.	TRT Ana Haber Bülteni	Turkey
ITV News at Ten	U.K.	TVE1 Telediario 2	Spain
NBC Nightly News	U.S.	ZDF Heute	Germany
Nile News	Egypt	ZDF Heute Journal	Germany

## Findings and Analysis

Figure 1: 2011 GPI Score vs. % of TV Reports that focus on Violence

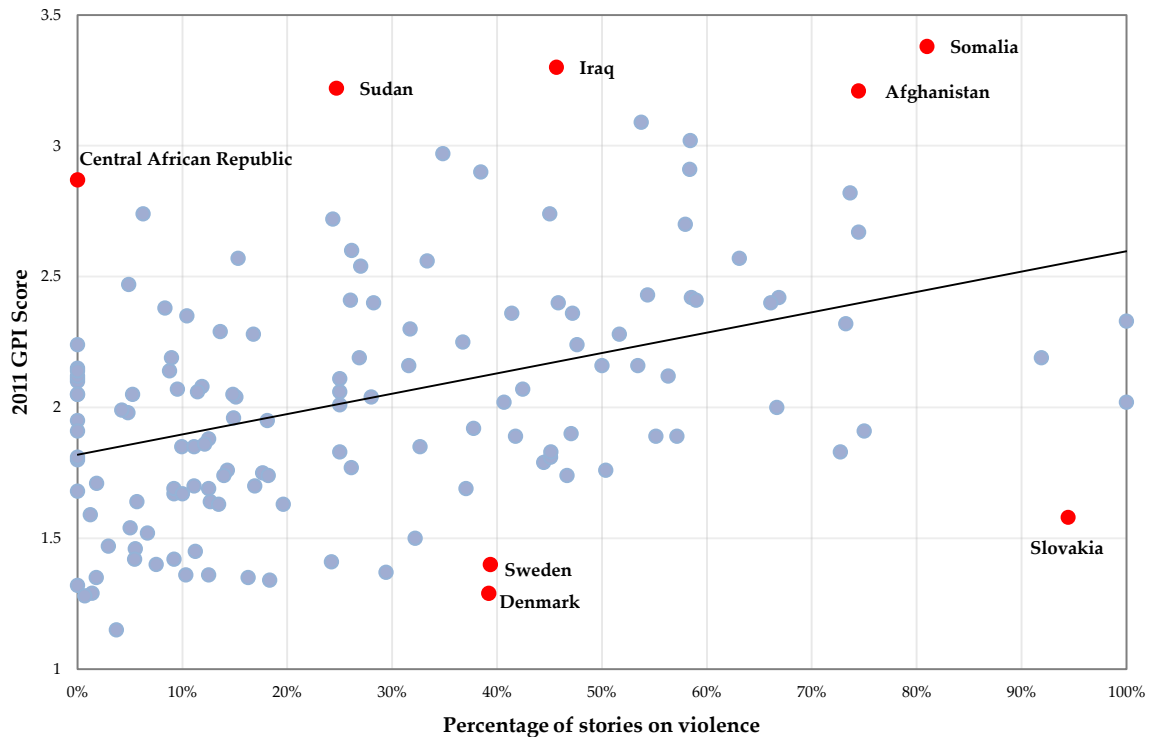


Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the 2011 GPI score and the percentage of reports which focused on violence. Each dot on Chart 1 represents a country. The vertical axis represents the 2011 GPI score with higher scores indicating less peaceful countries. Similarly, the horizontal axis gives the proportion of violence related news stories compared to the total number of new stories. It is easy to see that nations with high peace scores also have a relatively lower percentage of stories pertaining to violence. It is useful to note that the correlation ( $r$ ) or statistical significance is equal to 0.412.<sup>2</sup> This result demonstrates that the media has a relatively good track record for aligning with the GPI score. There are however many countries which are under or over reported on violence. The reason for these deviations will vary for each of the countries.

<sup>2</sup> There are several 'outliers' which are of interest for different reasons. If we remove only six 'outliers' then the R-squared value, a statistic which shows how well the regression (i.e. trend line) fits the actual observed data, increases from 0.167 to 0.242. This is equivalent to a 7.3% increase in the goodness of fit in the model. The R-squared value is the square of the correlation coefficient.

What is of interest here is why some countries (black dots) occupy 'anomalous' places given the trend line. In some instances, countries like the Central African Republic have no stories relating to violence. In fact, several countries share this curious fact: Cameroon, Angola, Estonia and Costa Rica, to name a few. Furthermore, as is the case for the Central African Republic which is only mentioned in two news reports, the total numbers of stories often are single digit. Hence, because of the small number of total news stories which feature these countries, any slight changes to the statistics can have large distorting effects. For instance, consider the example of the 'outlier' Slovakia with a GPI score of 1.58 yet with violence reporting being 94.1% of the total news coverage. In this case, the total number of reports was 18 out of which 17 focused on violence and were primarily covering murders, violent crime and gun crime. Instability resulting from the economic crisis brought about by the euro bail-out fund received only 3 stories. If Slovakia received another two non-violence related stories, the proportion of violence stories would fall by almost 10%; if it received five, it would fall by over 20%.

A simple explanation for this skew or distortion is that smaller or 'lesser known' countries often do not get media coverage. If they do get coverage, it is often minimal, not sustained nor in-depth. This results in a small number of stories which may give a biased picture as the reports often tend to focus on a small number of events. Over half of the countries in the analysis had less than 31 stories.

Other outliers, however, were not the results of the idiosyncrasies of statistics. In the case of Sudan, out of the 932 news reports, over a quarter of the news reports focused on the 2011 referendum which saw almost 99% of southern Sudanese vote for independence from the north. As a result of this historic event for the people of southern Sudan, topics associated with the referendum also came to the fore and received attention: federalism, rights and sovereignty, elections and voter turnout, and so on.

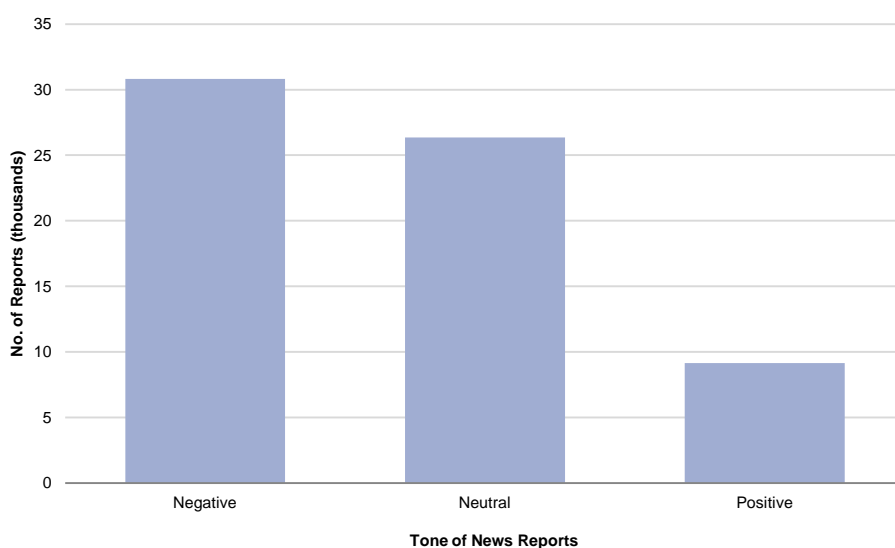
Iraq had a violence reporting percentage of 45.7% yet a GPI score of 3.3 and is one of the least peaceful countries on the GPI. This is a strong discrepancy. However the non-violent reports mainly focused on the precarious state of the Iraqi government. Issues included party politics and political coalitions, the state of the government, reduction of foreign troop numbers, and so on.

In both the cases of Sudan and Iraq, it may be unfair to say that they are outliers. This is because the simple dichotomy of violence related reports and non-violence related reports do not adequately capture the relationship which may exist between the two categories. For instance, although the Iraqi government is presently having difficulties, the significant underlying cause of this is the ongoing violence. Hence, although the reports on government issues will count as

'non-violent', they are in actuality very intimately linked with violence. In fact, out the 2,000 reports on Iraq, approximately half were negative in tone compared to a global average of 32%.

It should be noted by the reader that there was no single criteria by which to judge whether a country was anomalous or an outlier. The judgement was made based on an inspection of the data and noting the factors which are mentioned above. It is interesting to note that nine countries lie on the vertical axis, i.e. countries which had no reports on violence. If we remove the countries which had stories less than the geometric mean of 31 news stories, the correlation between the percentage of violence reports and GPI increases to almost 0.498.

**Figure 2: Overall Tone of All International News Reports**



Out of the approximately 66,000 reports which were tabulated by Media Tenor, there were more than three times as many stories that were negative in tone when compared to stories that were positive in tone. In fact, around 47% of all stories were negative. The most frequent news topics were demonstrations and protests and the stock market commentary. These topics reflect the wave of protests in the Arab Spring and the general uncertainty of the economy around the world. This high level of negative coverage reflects the tendency of news organizations to focus on violence and conflict at the expense of peace.

Figure 3: Top Ten Countries in which Violence was Over-reported

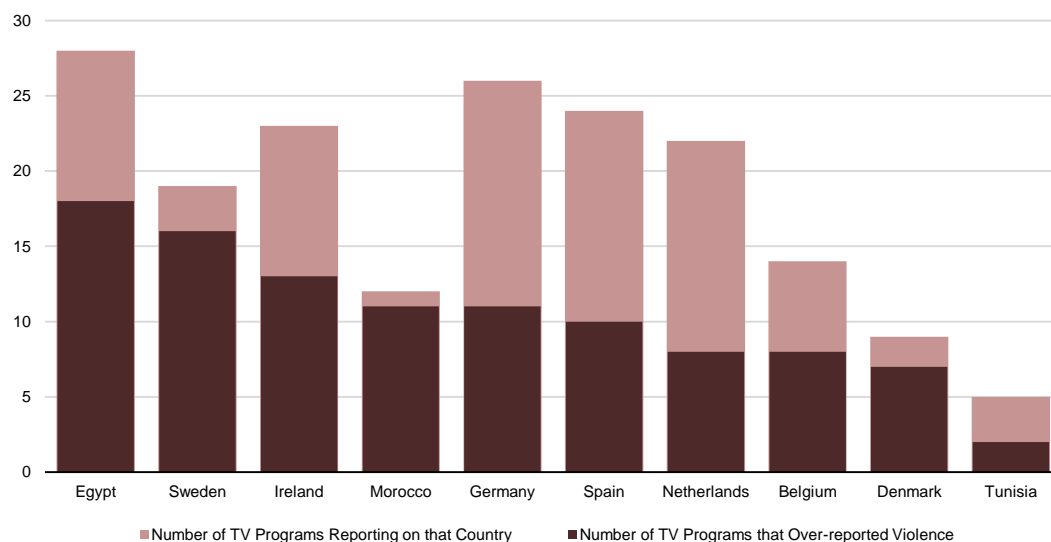
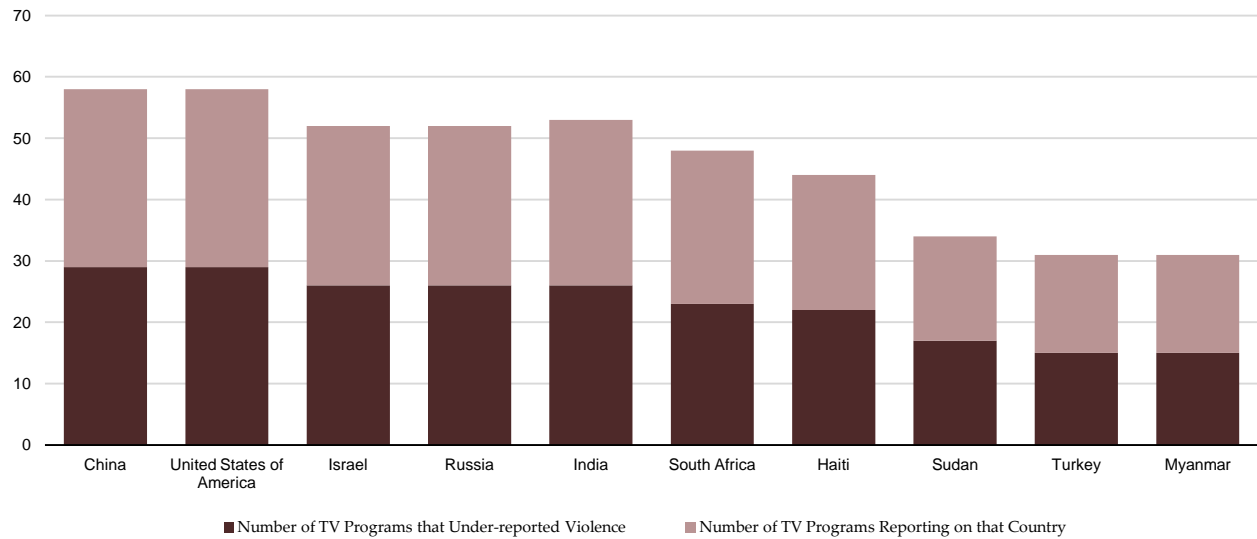


Figure 3, shows the top ten countries in which violence is over-reported when compared to their 2011 GPI score. The results are illustrative as Tunisia, along with Egypt and Morocco saw an increase in violence particularly in relation to the wave of protests and revolutions in the Middle East earlier this year. Sweden saw a sharp increase in violence reporting after the attempted car-bombing and successful suicide bombing in Stockholm in December, 2010. Associated topics of politically motivated crime, i.e. terrorism, also saw an increase with around 135 violence related reports out of a total of 343 reports.

Both Ireland and Spain saw an increase in coverage of violence which was predominantly related to their financial situation (demonstrations, levels of violence etc.). Similarly, Germany received news stories on demonstrations, international terrorism and terrorism fighting measures.

Denmark had 7 out of 9 programs over report violence, primarily due to the attempted assassination of the Danish cartoonist who drew Mohammed and outraged many Muslims. Finally, The Netherlands saw over reporting on violence which was related to cases of child abuse incidents which happened in Amsterdam.

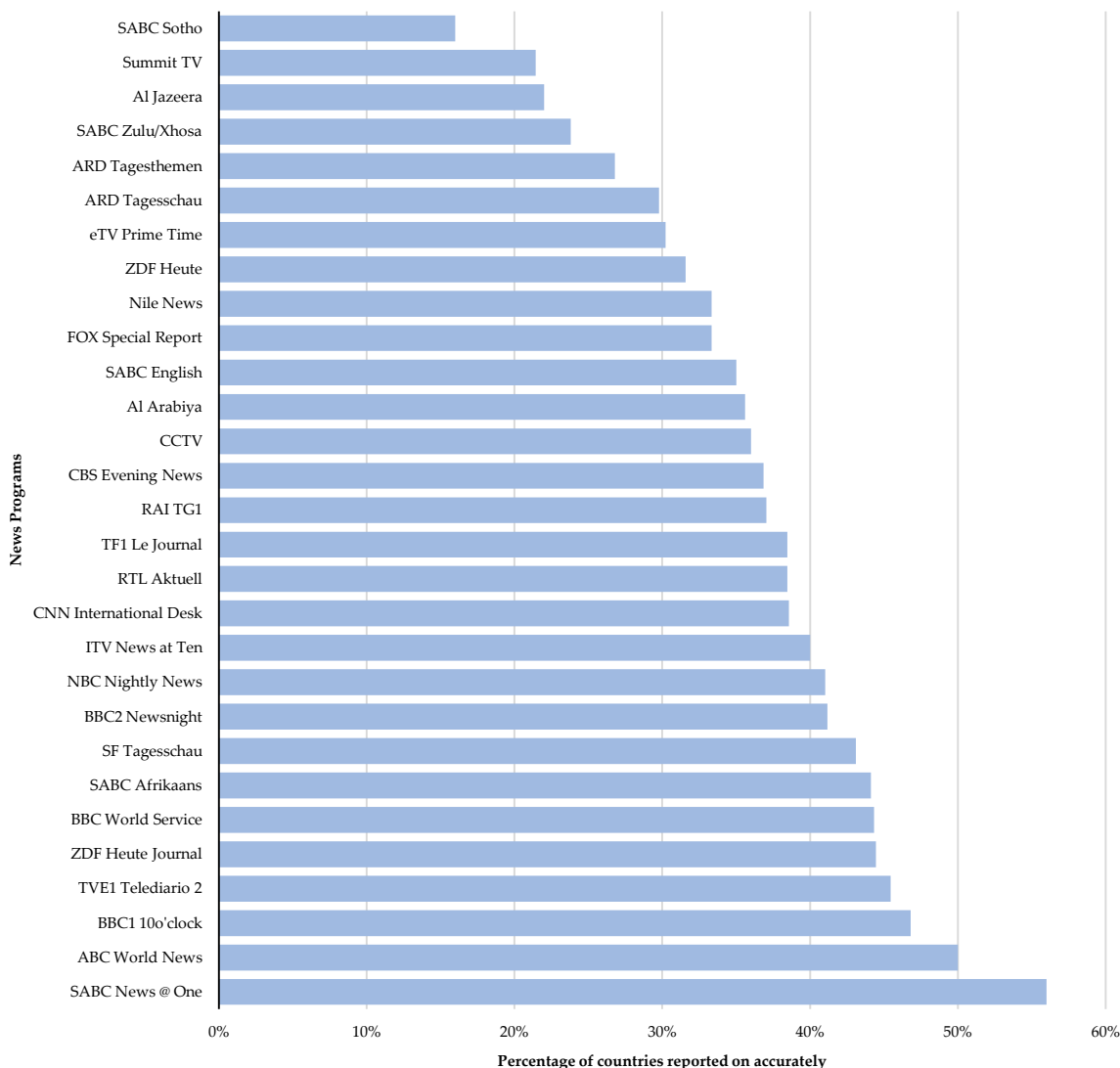
Figure 4: Top Ten Countries in which Violence was Under-reported.



The chart above presents the top ten countries in which violence was under reported by news programs. What is most striking is that there was under reporting of violence by nearly all programs on all of these countries. Hence, on average, 98% of news programs covered in the above chart under reported violence on these ten countries. In the case of Myanmar it may be that as the country opened up to the west and eased some of its political controls that the media focused on this rather than the oppression and the many low grade civil wars. Haiti suffered a catastrophic earthquake in 2010 which dominated its news coverage. The under reporting of violence in Haiti is primarily due to the large volume of reports focusing on the cholera epidemic which followed the earthquake. In the case of China, India, and the U.S. the explanation is probably much more complex and deserves a sustained treatment which is beyond the scope of this analysis.



Figure 5: Accuracy of selected T.V. Channels



The chart above shows the accuracy of the television networks covered. Each of the news networks covered on average 70 countries. The TV program with the broadest coverage was the BBC World Service which covered 119 countries.

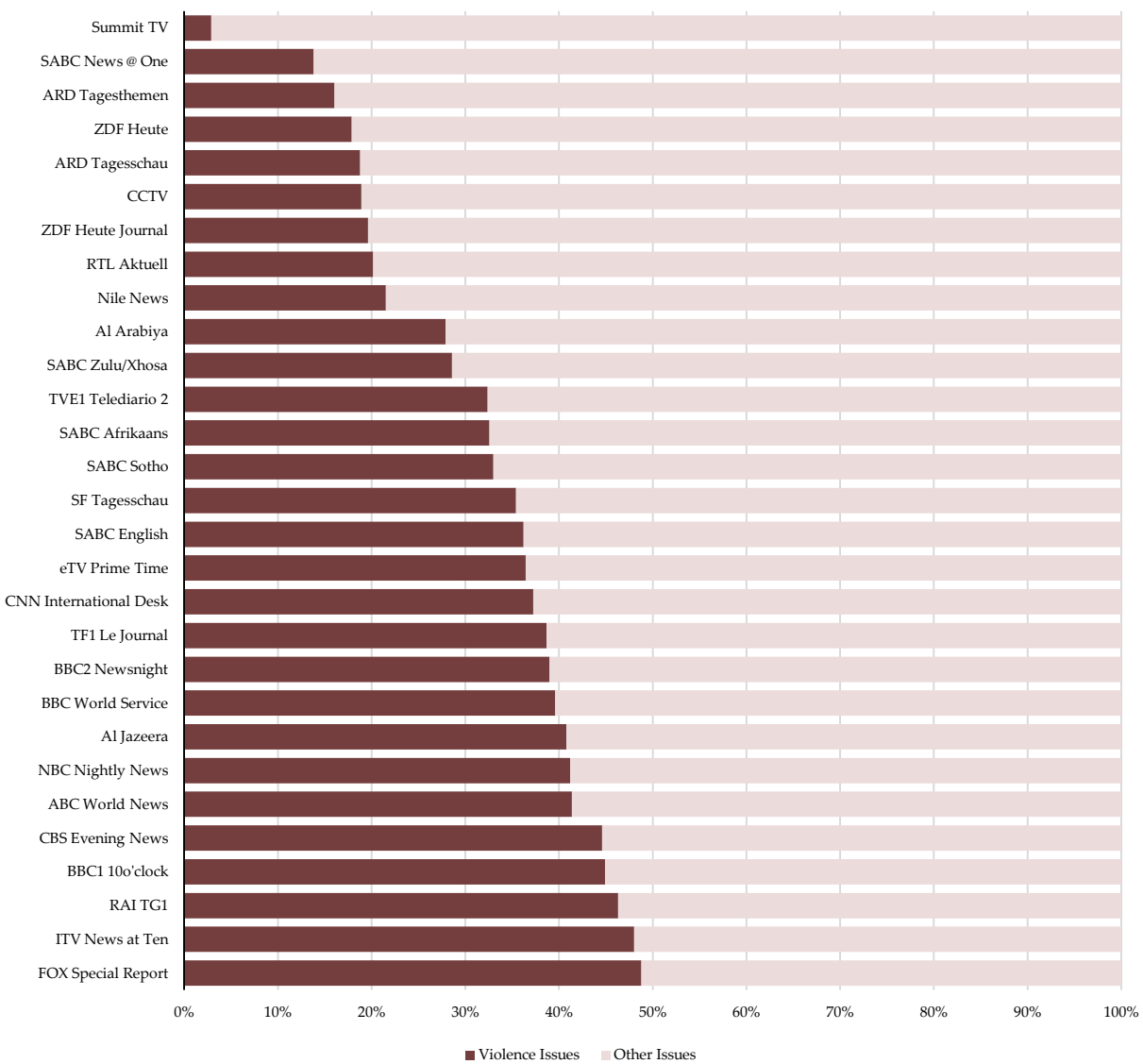
The only two networks which were either 50% accurate or more were SABC News @ One and ABC World News with 56% and 50% accuracy, respectively. Thus, even the two most accurate TV programs did not truly represent a country’s level of peacefulness for half of the countries they covered. The average level of accuracy was 37% with 16 networks being average or above average. The standard deviation in accuracy was 9%. The least -accurate network was SABC Sotho with only 16%. There is clearly a lot of scope for the TV programs in this study to increase the accuracy of their international coverage.

### Overview of Violence reporting

The graph below depicts the percentage breakdown of the number of violence reports to other news reports for each news program. The average percentage of violence reporting was 32% with 18 news programs receiving an average or above average rating. Out of the top ten news programs with the highest violence reporting percentages, seven of them were programs either from the U.S. or the U.K.

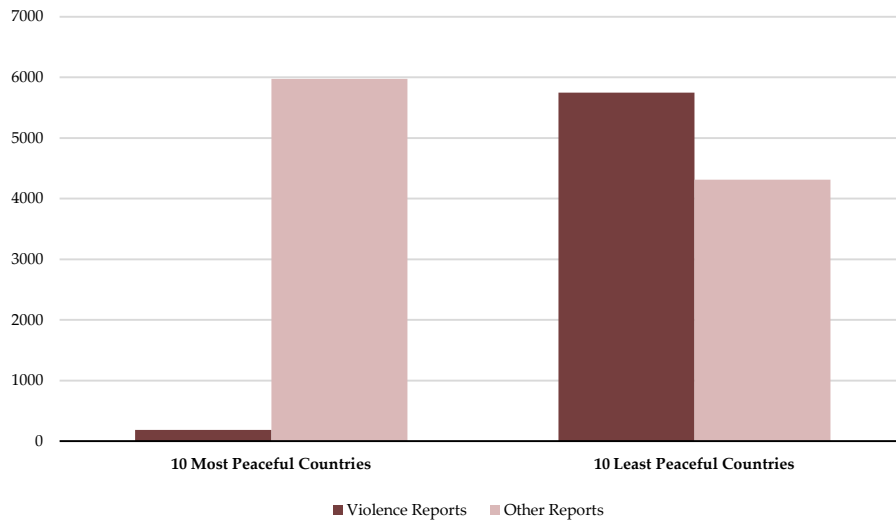
SABC SiSwati/Ndebele and TRT Ana Haber Bülteni were excluded from the analysis because of the small number of news reports which would have led to a misrepresentation of their reporting percentages.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Violence Reporting**



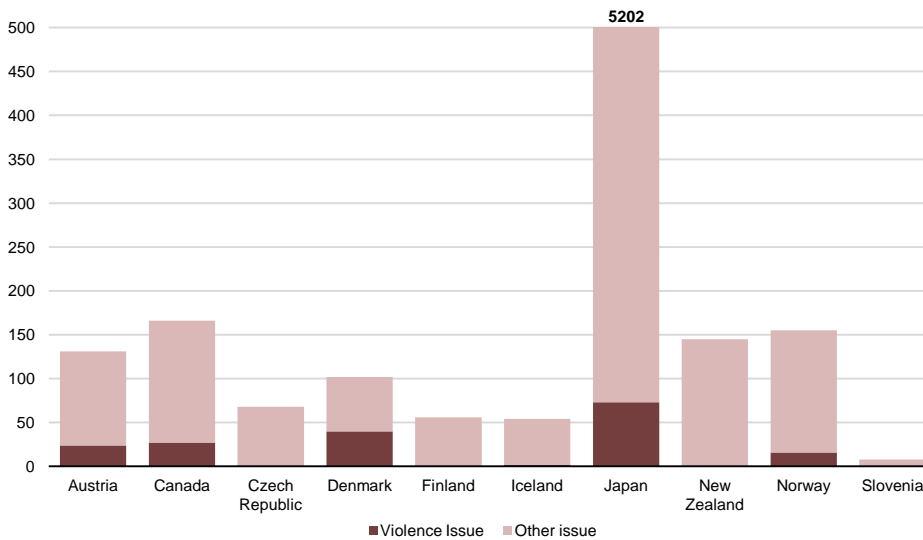
Of the ten TV programs with the highest number of reports on violence, eight are from either the United States or the United Kingdom. The previous peace in the media report, which covered reports from 2006-2009, found a similar trend.

**Figure 7: Number of Violence Reports - Top Ten vs. Bottom Ten**



The chart above illustrates what would be expected: the ten least peaceful countries have a higher proportion of reports that are related to violence than the most peaceful countries with almost 57% of their total reports being on violence. The most peaceful countries had fewer than 2% of their reports related to violence.

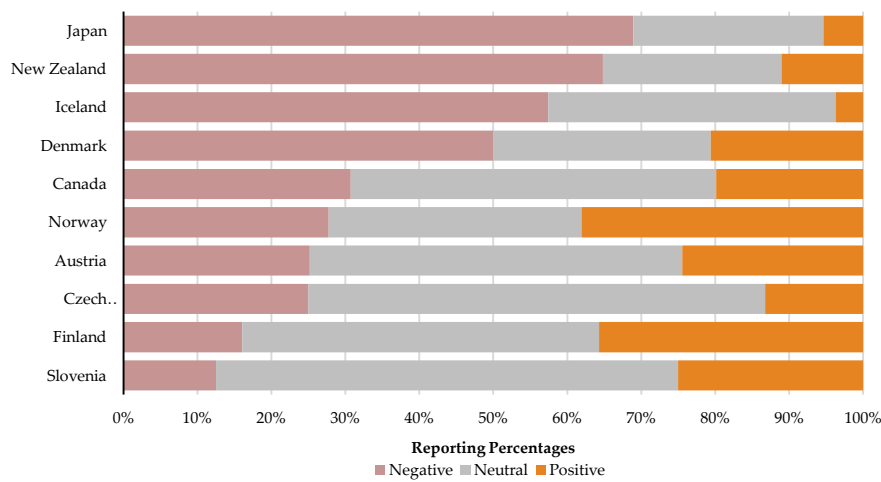
**Figure 8: Violence Reporting Patterns for the Top Ten GPI ranked Countries**



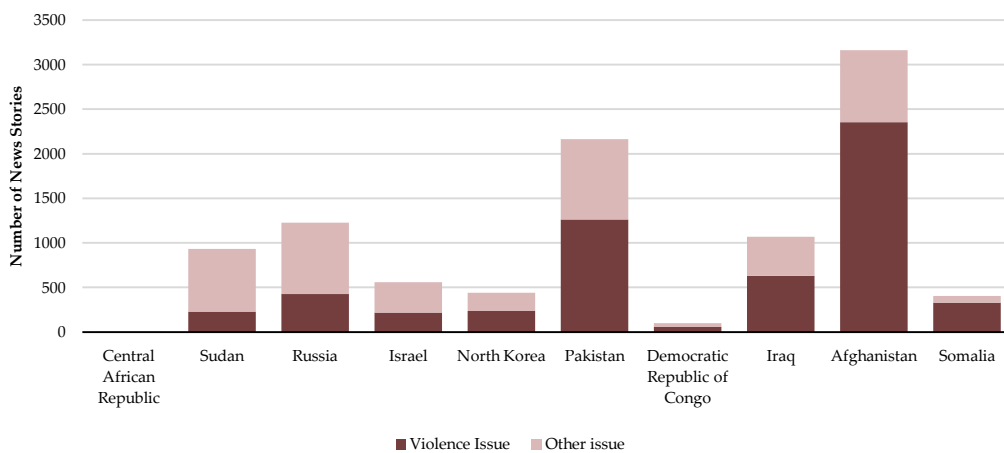
The chart above gives a breakdown of violent and non-violent related reports in the top ten countries of the GPI. The average number of news stories for the most peaceful countries, including Japan, is 616. If Japan is omitted, the average drops to 98. The primary reason for the large number of reports on Japan was the fear of a nuclear catastrophe after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant was damaged following Japan’s 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Note that the column representing Japan is not to scale – it has been ‘shrunk’ in order to meaningfully fit into the graph.

Furthermore, we can see from the chart below that the coverage on Japan and New Zealand was overwhelmingly negative in tone. Norway and Finland had the highest percentages of stories which were positive in tone.

**Figure 9: The Tone of News Reports for the Top Ten GPI ranked Countries**



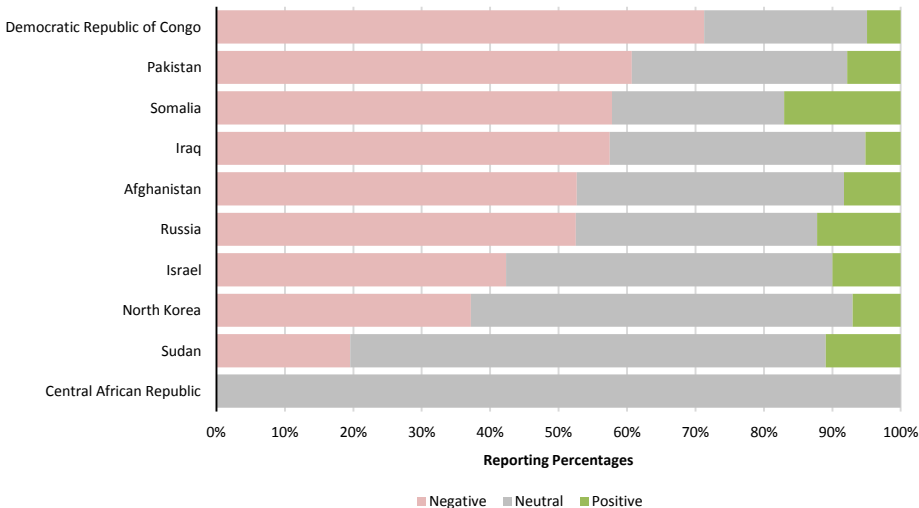
**Figure 10: Violence Reporting Patterns for the Bottom Ten GPI ranked Countries**



If we now look at the ten least peaceful countries, we see a greater variability. The Central African Republic, as previously mentioned, received no news stories. This is likely due to the nation not generating stories which were newsworthy for international news channels.

Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan had the highest coverage, as well having a higher proportion of violence stories because of the ongoing conflict in these countries. Violence reporting on Israel focused on its relation to Palestine such as the controversy surrounding Jewish settlements, terrorism and the peace process. The columns representing the countries are ordered from the lowest percentage of violence reports (left) to the highest percentage (right). In general, we can see that war and terrorism are the greatest drivers of conflict coverage, and that coverage of the least peaceful nations far outweighs coverage of the most peaceful nations.

**Figure 11: The Tone of News Reports for the Top Ten GPI Ranked Countries**



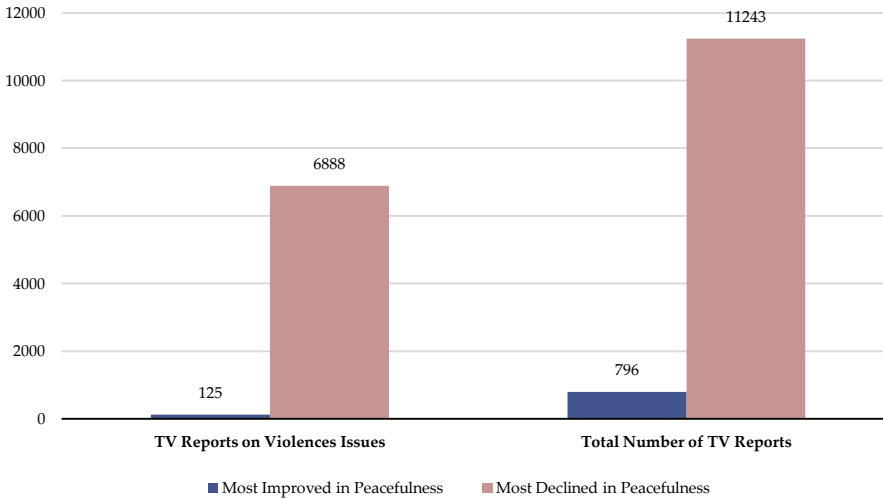
Comparing the top and bottom ten countries, the ten most peaceful countries averaged almost 21% of positive news stories while only 8% of the least peaceful had positive news stories. Conversely, the ten least peaceful countries averaged 45% negative news stories as opposed to 34% for the most peaceful countries. Whilst peaceful nations have a higher proportion of positive stories, the fact that both the top ten and bottom ten countries have significant levels of negative coverage suggests that conflict is still the prime driver of media coverage.

### *Most Improved and Declined in Peace*

News coverage was also analysed in terms of the ten countries which had the biggest improvements in peace and biggest declines in peace between 2010 and 2011. This was done by analysing the GPI scores and finding the ten countries whose score had improved the most.

Similarly, the ten countries which had the greatest downward shift in their scores have also been highlighted.

**Figure 12: Violence Reporting Patterns for the Ten Most Improved and Ten Most Declined Countries**



It is interesting to note that the countries that declined the most in peace received fourteen times more attention by the media than countries which improved the most. For the most peaceful nations only 17% of their reports were related to violence as compared to 61% for the least peaceful nations.

The charts below illustrate the tone of reporting for each of the most improved and most declined countries, respectively:

**Figure 13: The Tone of News Reports in the Most Improved Countries in Peace**

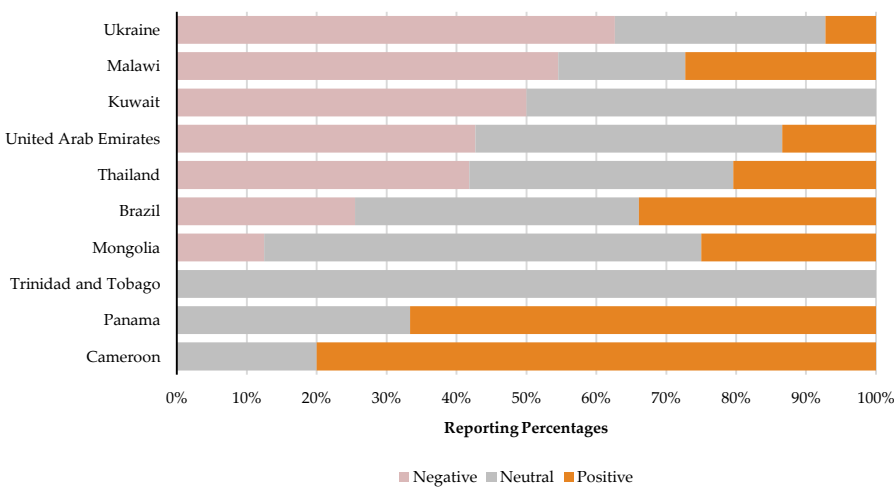
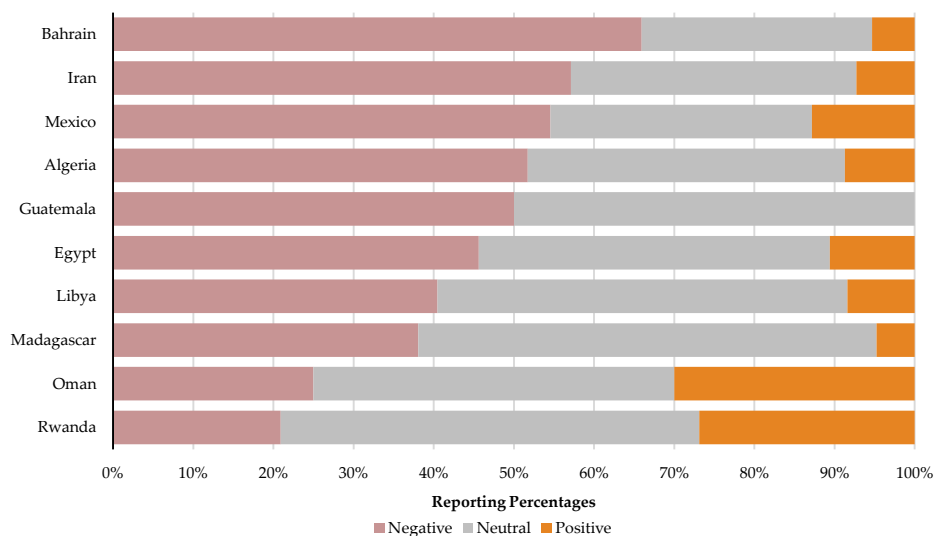


Figure 14: Tone of News Reports in the Countries with the Biggest Declines in Peace



It is interesting to note that five of the ten countries which had the largest declines in peace were the Arab Spring countries: Libya, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman and Algeria. On average, the countries with the largest declines in peace received more reports which were negative in tone, 45%, than the most improved countries where 30% of reports were considered negative in tone. Conversely, the most improved countries in peacefulness received more than twice as many stories which were positive in tone than the biggest fallers with 27% of their stories being positive.

### Case Study – The Arab Spring

The self-immolation of a jobless graduate who had turned to selling vegetables in an effort to make a living highlighted the plight of many in the Middle East. This corresponded with a spike in food prices and not only heralded the start of the Arab Spring but may be a harbinger of the future if the price of food moves beyond affordability for the poor of the world. Mohamed Bouazizi's death on the 17 December, 2010, provided the catalyst for a wave of violent protests in Tunisia. Four weeks later, the president of Tunisia was forced to flee and take refuge in Saudi Arabia. The Tunisian uprising provided the inspiration for other Arab nations and mass protests in Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Syria, and beyond.

The Arab Spring uprisings have been marked by popular opposition to autocratic rule in unprecedented and spectacular fashion. The contagion-like effect of the uprisings is likely rooted in the social and political environment in which the region found itself. Anti-government

sentiment was in part spurred by rising food prices<sup>3</sup> and rampant joblessness: if you are a youth or young adult in the Middle East or North Africa, you are four times more likely to be jobless when compared to rest of the world. Analysis by the Institute for Economics and Peace would point to the combination of high levels of unemployment combined with high levels of education being one the major reasons behind the unrest. Once educated the youths had high expectations and could better understand the effects of corruption on the economic fabric of their societies. Although the Arab Spring countries shared a similar social, political and economic mix, the success of the various revolutions was mixed. For example, the Tunisian ‘Jasmine Revolution’ saw a fairly swift ousting and exile of former autocratic ruler Ben Ali in approximately six weeks. This was the first of the revolutions and caught the government unaware, other regimes which watched the Arab Spring had time to plan and prepare with some of the revolutions failing as in Bahrain or are still in progress such as in Syria. On the other hand, Libya experienced a full-blown revolutionary war. At the time of writing this report, Egypt has seen renewed mass protests after the successful overthrow of Mubarak earlier in the year. The table below compares some broad socio-economic indicators in both the Arab Spring countries and the most peaceful nations in the GPI:

**Table 5: Arab Spring vs. Peaceful Nations – A comparison of broad indicators**

Indicator	Arab Spring Average /10	Most Peaceful Nations Average /10
Political Democracy Index	3.15	9.11
Electoral process	1.72	9.7
Functioning of government	2.71	8.98
Political participation	3.01	8.33
Political culture	5.1	8.84
Corruption Perceptions	3.33	8.51
GDP per capita	\$9,068	\$48,170
15-34 year old males as a % of adult population	29.20%	16.58%
Unemployment	14.07%	6.08%

The 2011 GPI scores and ranks for the Arab Spring countries are given below. Given the fact that the situation is still developing in many countries such as in Egypt where the military refuses to relinquish power. These ongoing changes will be captured in the 2012 GPI. All of the scores are out of 5 with 1 being highly peaceful and 5 representing the lowest level of peace.

<sup>3</sup> Mortada, D., ‘Did Food Prices Spur the Arab Spring?’ *PBS Newshour*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011, accessed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Available at: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/world/july-dec11/food\\_09-07.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/world/july-dec11/food_09-07.html)



**Table 6: GPI and Other Selected Scores for the Arab Spring Countries**

Country	OVERALL SCORE	OVERALL RANK	Perceptions of criminality in society	Number of homicides per 100,000 people	Likelihood of violent demonstrations	Level of violent crime	Political instability	Respect for human rights
Kuwait	1.67	29	2	1	2	1	2.25	2
Oman	1.74	41	1	1	2	3	3.25	1
Tunisia	1.765	44	3.5	1	2	2	2.5	3
Morocco	1.887	58	2	1	3	3	3.25	3
Egypt	2.02	73	2	1	3	3	3.25	3.5
Saudi Arabia	2.19	101	3	1	3.5	2.5	3.6	4
Syria	2.32	116	3	2	3	2	3.75	4
Bahrain	2.4	123	3	1	5	3	5	1.5
Algeria	2.423	129	4	1	4.5	3	4	2.5
Lebanon	2.6	137	4	1	4	2	4	2.5
Yemen	2.67	138	4	2	5	3	5	4
Libya	2.82	143	5	2	5	4	5	3

**Figure 15: Average percentage of Violence Reporting per Country**

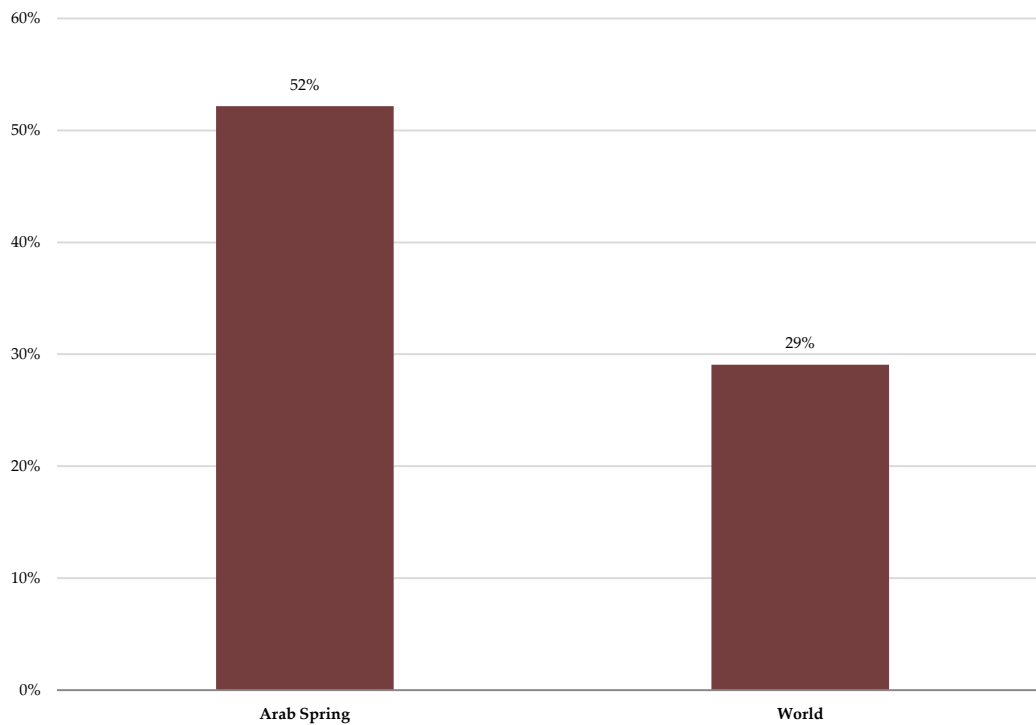


Figure 15 depicts that the average percentage of violence reporting per country in the Arab Spring nations was more than 20% higher than the world average. The average number of reports for each of the Arab Spring countries was 1,200.

Furthermore, if we look at the tone of the coverage, shown below, we can also see that it was overwhelmingly negative or neutral with a very small proportion of stories having a positive tone. This is what we would expect given the tremendous upheaval which the Arab Spring countries experienced.

**Figure 16: Violence Topics and Tone – Pattern of News Coverage in the Arab Spring**

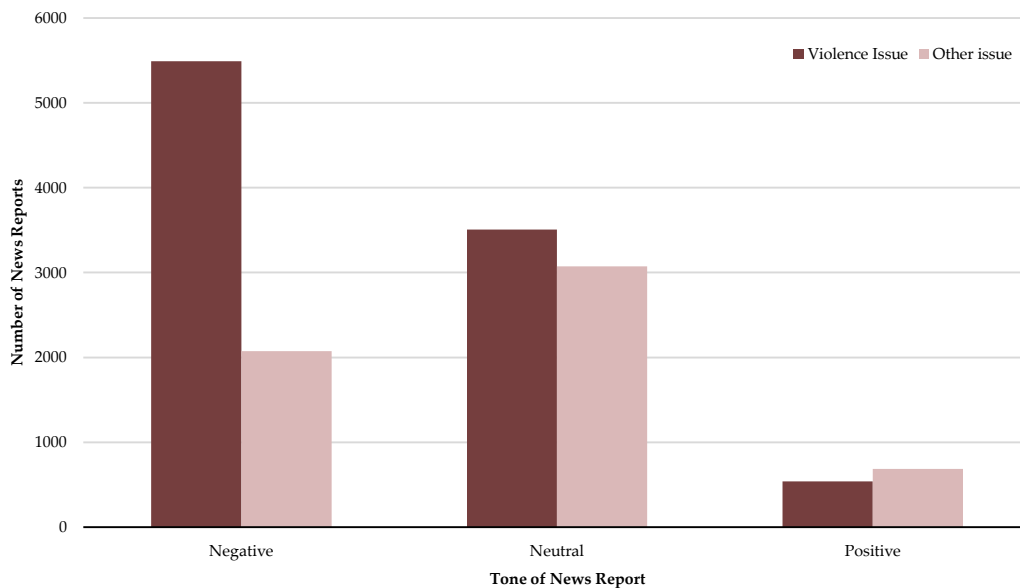
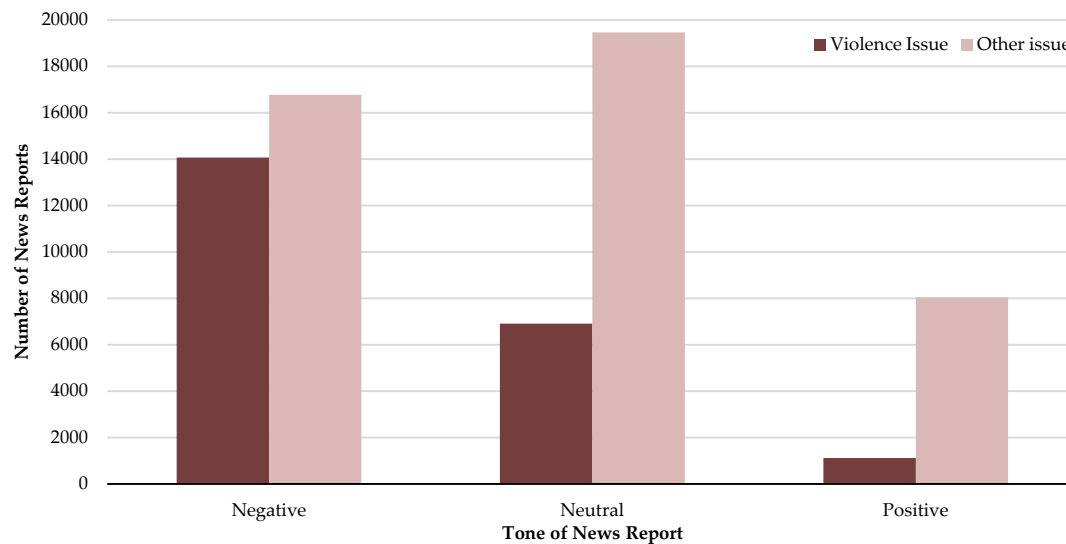


Figure 17: Violence Topics and Tone – Pattern of News Coverage Globally



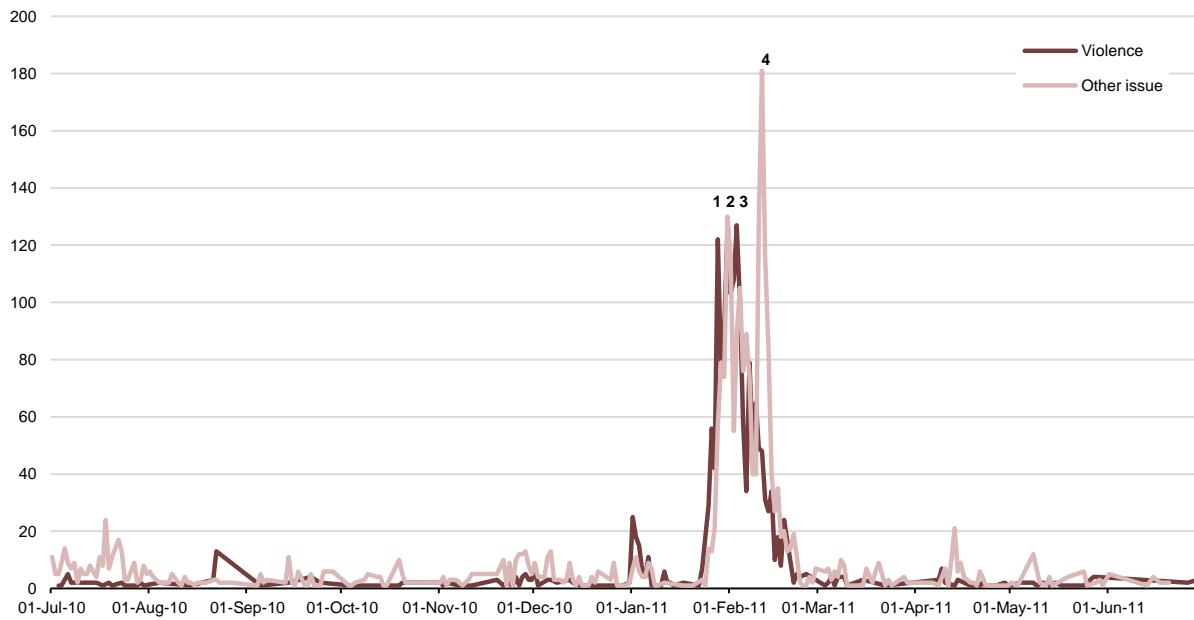
If we compare the graph above, showing the tone of the global coverage patterns we can see that stories that are related to violence are overwhelming negative when compared to other stories. In many ways this is what should be expected, however violence can be positively reported such as decreasing rates of crime, the arrest of criminals or the effects of justice and reconciliation processes after violent periods in a countries development.

### *Arab Spring Timeline*

Out of the Arab Spring countries, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have seen perhaps the most radical change. The events in Tunisia began the phenomenon of what became the Arab Spring and thus, holds a special significance in and of itself. The demonstrations in Egypt were perhaps some of the largest and most sustained in the Arab world for some time. Libya saw an armed uprising militarily supported by western powers which culminated in the overthrow of the regime and the death of Gaddafi.

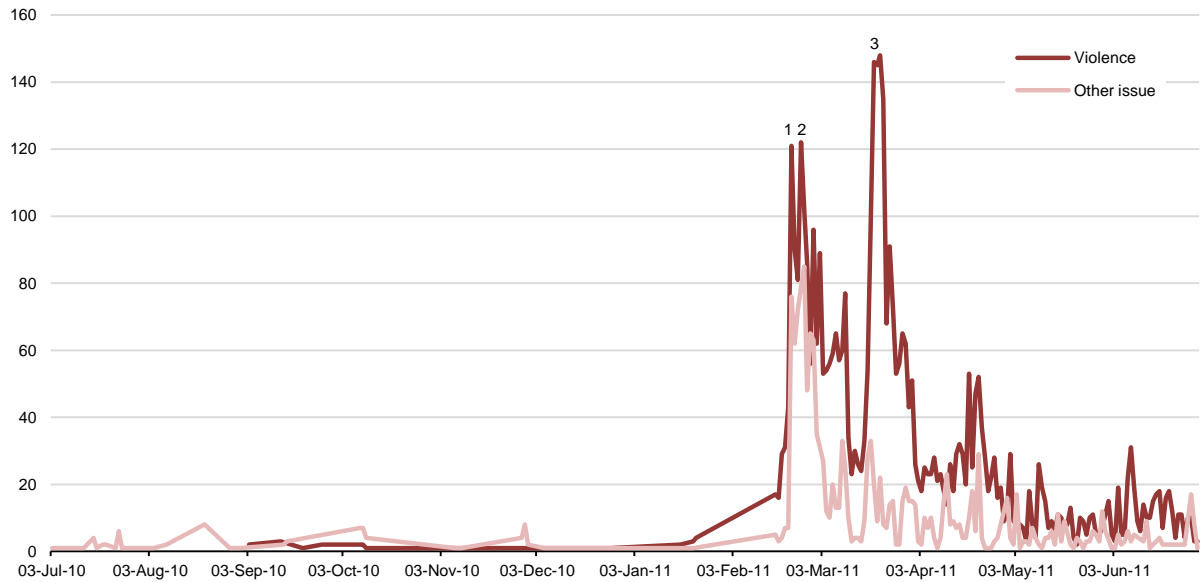
At the time of writing this report, the situation in Yemen and Syria continue to develop. These significant developments have not been documented in the present data as the events occurred starting March 2011 which was the cut off for the 2011 GPI; therefore the timeline analysis below has been limited to the *successful* revolutions from the Arab Spring.

Figure 18: A timeline of the number of reports in Egypt

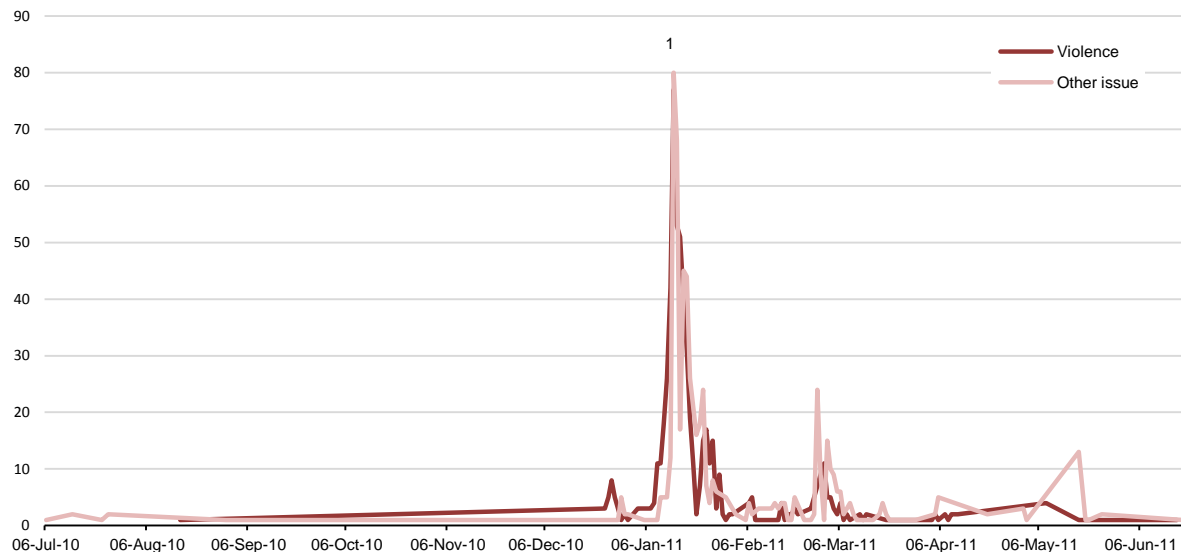


1. Mubarak makes first television appearance since the protests in Egypt start. There are massive demonstrations followed by violent crackdowns and deaths.
2. The Egyptian army releases an official statement in saying that it supports protestors and will not fire on them.
3. Protesting continues.
4. Mubarak resigns and hands over power to military.

Figure 19: A timeline of the number of reports in Libya



1. Two Libyan air force pilots flee after refusing to bomb Libyan civilians. Libyan diplomats resign in protest at the regime's violent crackdown.
2. Revolution spreads rapidly as rebels take control of several regions in Libya. Rebels shut down oil exports and Gaddafi's control is restricted to Tripoli.
3. Security Council passes resolution invoking "responsibility to protect" and stating that it must protect civilians from attack. Western allied forces target air strikes against Gaddafi's forces.

**Figure 20: A timeline of the number of reports in Tunisia**

1. Tunisian president, Ben Ali, flees country after weeks of mass protests culminates in victory for the people of Tunisia.

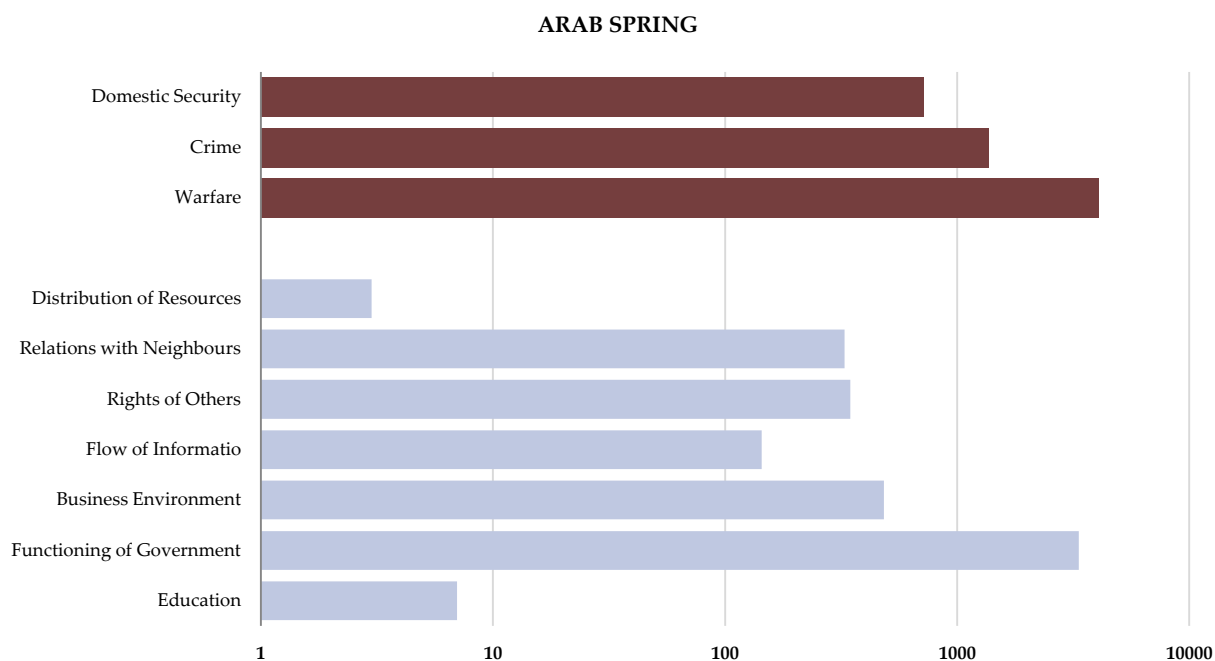
Since the available data only goes to June 2011, we cannot analyse the developments in Libya over September and October, such as the death of Gaddafi. Given the significance of the events which have unfolded in Libya, we would expect to see more news spikes if the data was available.

### *Arab Spring and the Structures of Peace*

The global coverage of the Structures of Peace comprised 36% of the total number of stories whilst reporting of the Arab Spring countries had around 33% of their coverage devoted to the Structures of Peace.

Whilst the level of reporting on the structures of peace was similar, the composition of the reporting was different. The global media coverage of the Structure of Peace was two and a half times (i.e. 250%) larger than violence related stories. This contrasts with the Arab Spring countries where coverage on the Structures of Peace was 25% lower than stories related to violence.

**Figure 21: Arab Spring Countries – Number of Reports on the Structures of Peace and Conflict-related Issues**



Care should be taken in interpreting the graph as the scale is logarithmic.<sup>4</sup>

The analysis shows that warfare and the functioning of government were the two most frequently covered topics accounting for 68% of the stories, each having 4,050 and 3,344 stories, respectively. There were only three stories relating to the distribution of resources which is interesting given that one of the driving forces behind the Arab Spring was the inequitable distribution of government and private resources.

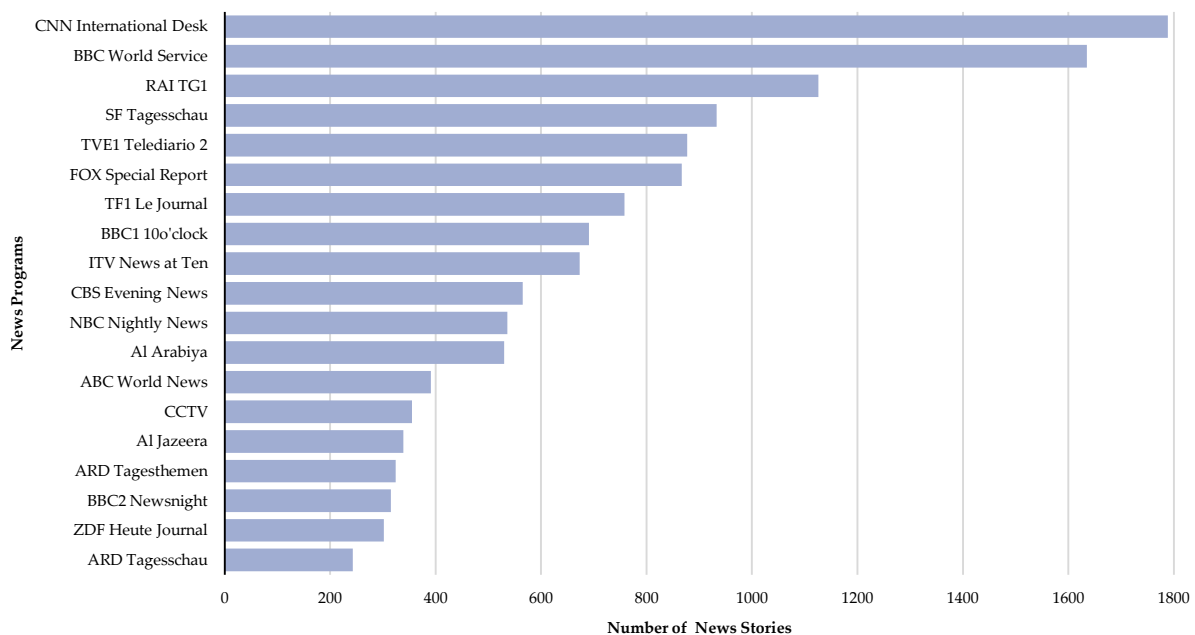
Topic	Arab Spring	The World
Education	0%	1%
Functioning of Government	31%	24%
Business Environment	4%	23%
Flow of Information	1%	1%
Rights of Others	3%	6%
Relations with Neighbours	3%	3%
Distribution of Resources	0%	0%
Warfare	38%	22%
Crime	13%	15%
Domestic Security	7%	5%
Total Number of Stories	10,782	40,747

**Table 6: Relative Reporting Percentages of Structures of Peace and Violence Topics – Arab Spring vs. the World**

<sup>4</sup> A logarithmic chart has been used because some of the structures received far greater coverage than others. Each marker on the chart is ten times larger than the previous marker.

The breakdown of media coverage by topic for the world and the Arab Spring shows that there are two categories that vary dramatically from the global coverage patterns; warfare and business environment. Higher levels of coverage on warfare would be expected as the Arab Spring countries are immersed in violence, however the lower levels of reporting on the business environment is curious as the business environment is affected negatively by violence.

**Figure 22: Number of News Stories on the Arab Spring Countries**



The chart above gives the total number of reports on the Arab Spring countries by each of the news programs. Al Arabiya which is based in the United Arab Emirates had more coverage of the Arab Spring than its direct competitor Al Jazeera. CNN International and BBC World Service had the largest number of stories on the Arab Spring, accounting for almost 25% of the total global coverage of the Arab Spring. Twelve news programs which had less than 200 news stories on the Arab Spring were excluded from the graph.

It is interesting to compare and contrast CNN International Desk and BBC World Service which had similar levels of coverage. Demonstrations/protests and insurgency were the main topics covered by the BBC, making up a third of their Arab Spring coverage.

CNN International Desk, on the other hand, had more stories and covered more topics than BBC World Service. It also covered topics such as violence against women, the situation of

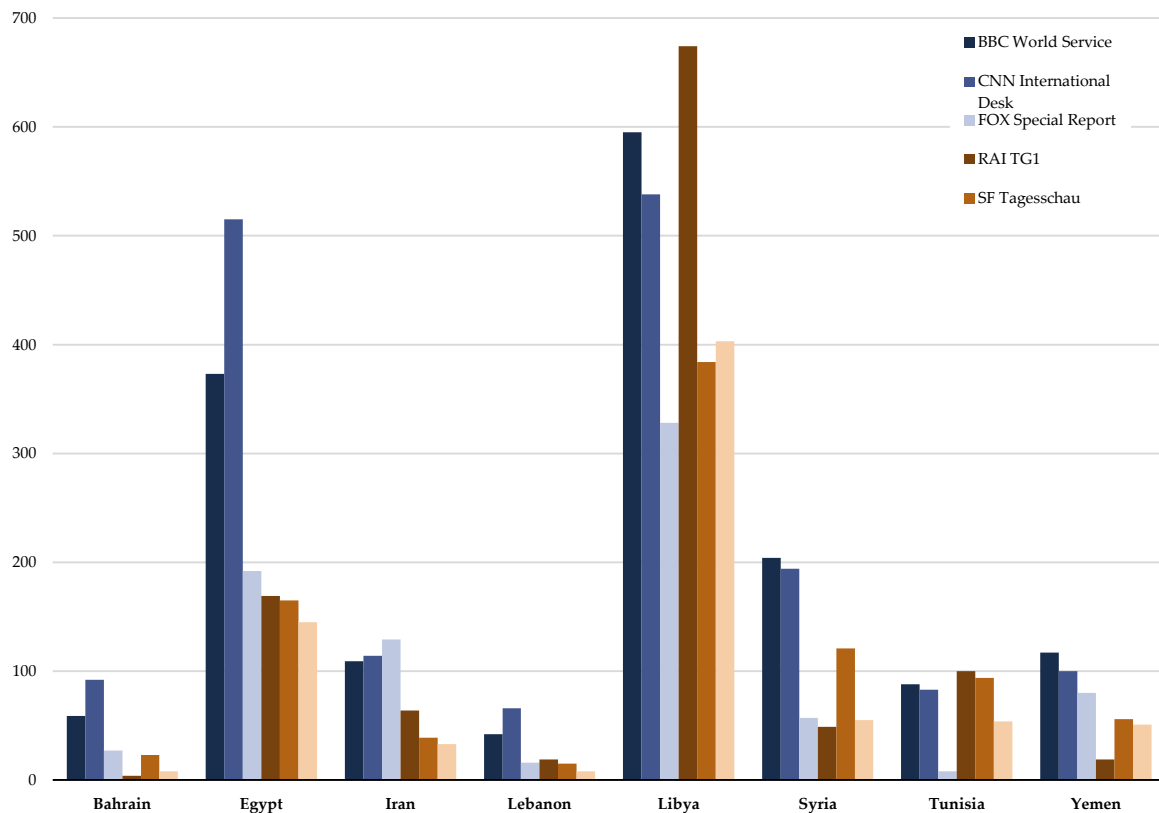


refugees, peace negotiations, administrative reform, and so on. On the whole, CNN International Desk covered more topics related to International Politics, party politics and foreign affairs whilst BBC World Service had more coverage of warfare and protests.

Although news services such as those provided by BBC or CNN were relatively extensive in their Arab Spring coverage, there are several important factors which may affect the capabilities of other networks to provide the same level of international coverage, such as budgets, international focus, programming considerations, interest of the audience and importantly ownership.

It is interesting to note that Nile News is below the average with only eleven reports on the Arab Spring outside of Egypt. Although its coverage of the violence in Egypt is excluded from the analysis because it is considered domestic coverage given the significance of the events unfolding in other countries in the region a higher level of coverage would have been expected. The likely cause of this lacklustre performance is the fact that Nile TV is a state-owned network which does not often run news items contrary to the Egyptian government’s interests. The events taking place in neighbouring countries may have been seen as a source of inspiration, and thus something problematic for the then Egyptian government.

**Figure 23: Arab Spring News Coverage for the Top Six News Programs**



The chart on the previous page depicts the six news programs with the most stories on the Arab Spring countries. The U.S. and U.K. had a great interest in Libya and particularly its now-deceased former dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Similarly, Egypt was given sustained exposure because of its ties with the U.S. and Europe. More specifically, Egypt was seen not only as a stabilising force in the Middle East and firmly aligned with the west but it was also seen as a barometer of Arab sentiment in the region.

The Italian news program RAI TG1 had relatively modest levels of coverage of the Arab Spring except for Libya where it aired more stories than any of the other news programs. This is possibly due to the economic and historical connections that Italy has with Libya.

### *Trend of reporting on the Structures of Peace*

Using Media Tenor's annual data from 2006 onwards we can analyse changes in reporting patterns in relation to the structures of peace. As stated earlier the data on 'Level of Corruption' was not available therefore only seven structures have been analysed. The timeline shows the changes in the proportion (i.e. percentages) of news stories relating to the structures of peace rather than the absolute number of stories.

Due to the varying sample size which has fluctuated each year, the absolute number of stories was not used. The varying sample size in fact has the potential to hide the relationships between the structures of peace because a trend could simply arise from changes in sample size rather than any change in the actual pattern of reporting. In order to mitigate this potential problem, changes in the relative percentages (i.e. proportion) of reporting were used.

The timelines are broken up into two sets of graphs. All the graphs on the left are timelines on the Arab Spring countries. Conversely, all the graphs on the right are timelines of 'The World', i.e. all countries. This is for comparison purposes to see in which ways do the Arab Spring countries deviate from the world average and whether this is significant in any way.

It is important to note that in all the graphs below, the vertical axis shows the relative proportion (percentage) of stories and the horizontal axis shows the years. The graphs are displayed in pairs with the legend on the right hand side applying to both graphs in the pair.

Figure 24: Arab Spring - Timeline of The Structures of Peace (2006-2011)

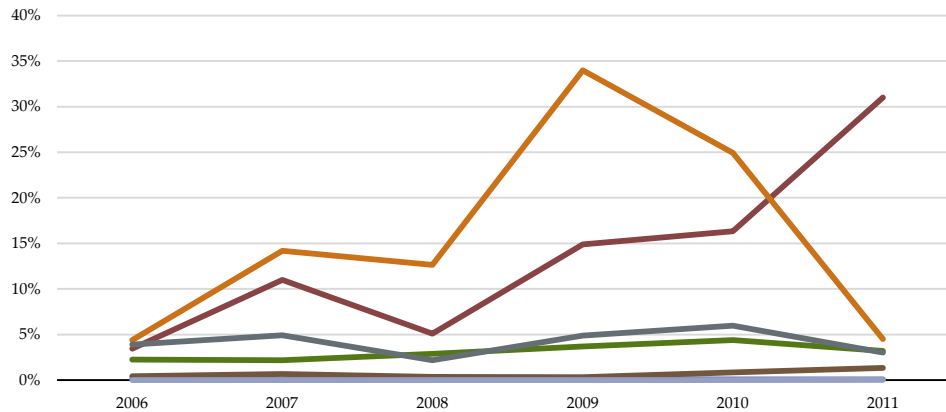
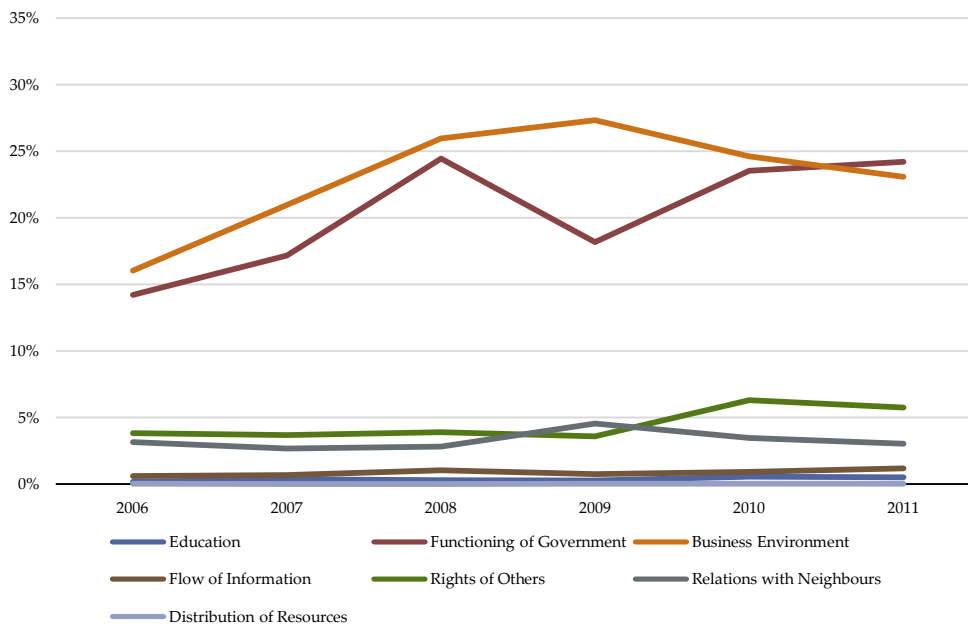


Figure 24a: The World – Timeline of The Structures of Peace (2006 – 2011)



If we look at the timeline for the Arab Spring countries, we can see that the proportion of coverage on Education, Flow of Information, Rights of Others, Relations with Neighbours and Distribution of Resources has remained steady since 2006. The low proportion of reporting is partly due to the smaller number of topics which were placed under these five structures. For example, the structure Relationships with Neighbours includes two topics: Intra-governmental relations and Foreign Affairs. This is contrasted to Business Environment and Functioning of Government which have six and eleven, respectively. Nevertheless, regardless of this fact, the low proportion of reporting is also due to the fact that very often, there are not many stories relating to these structures. For example, topics relating to the ‘Distribution of Resources’ were

almost always consistently zero – even when including all countries. This is particularly poignant as all of the Arab Spring countries had serious issues with the equitable distribution of resources which were related to gross corruption within the ruling governments. The Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassim Ben Jbar Al Thani said:

Growth was only benefitting certain group of society and was not translated into tangible gains that could be felt by all citizens... the unrest witnessed in the region, starting in Tunisia, reflects not only discontent over the lack of jobs, low wages and prevalence of poverty, but also a demand for review of the past few decades of economic policy in the region and the rights of citizens to choose the optimal economic systems for managing the development process.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that whilst five of the structures have remained stable and consistently under the 5% mark, 'The Rights of Others' crossed that 5% threshold for the worldwide average. This was mainly due to an increase in reporting on topics such as asylum policies, immigration/deportation, referendums and democracy with the largest coverage being from Sudan, France, Egypt and the U.S.

A second interesting feature is that whilst the five structures have remained relatively stable, there has been a significant shift in the reporting on the Business Environment and Functioning of Government in the Arab Spring. Both structures have trended up from 2006 to 2009, and then diverged sharply from 2009. This is also the case if we analyse the absolute numbers of reports where both structures had similar movements until 2010 when reports on the government skyrocketed, whilst reports on the business environment decreased. This is due, in large part, to the huge surge in reports on the government and compounded by an increase on reports on war. It is also interesting to note that prior to 2010, there generally tended to be more reports on the business environment than the functioning of government in both Arab Spring countries and the rest of the world. The convergence and slight cross-over of the relative reporting between these two structures for both the Arab Spring countries and the world from 2010 to 2011 is noteworthy. With respect to the world there was a large volume of stories on budget policy and debt that was related to global financial instability.

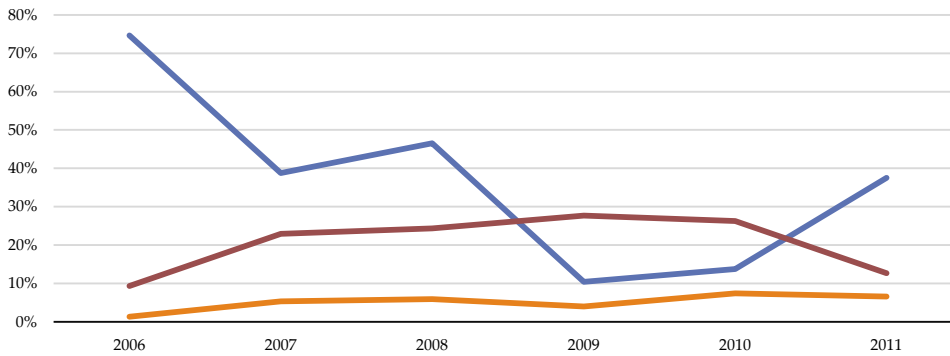
If we look at the Arab Spring graph, we can see a very sharp and significant dip in reports on the business environment. It may appear as if Business Environment is a 'lead' indicator signalling the expected onset of some major event. However there is not enough data to clearly establish this and a more diverse set of sampling would need to be analysed.

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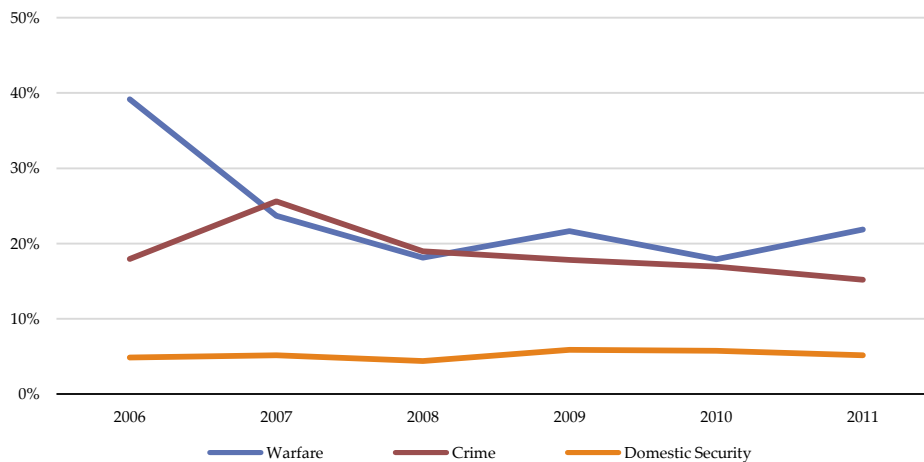
<sup>5</sup> Hani Hazaimah, 'Failure to distribute economic gains root cause of Arab Spring – Qatar prime minister', *Zawya*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011, available at: [http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20111023042422/?relcontent=GN\\_21102011\\_221021](http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20111023042422/?relcontent=GN_21102011_221021)

An analysis of the frequency of business reporting shows that there is no significant change in the number of business reports. However, there was a large increase in the number of reports on the functioning of government which decreased the percentage of stories on business.

**Figure 25: Arab Spring - Timeline of Violence Topics (2006-2011)**



**Figure 25a: The World - Timeline of Violence Topics (2006-2011)**



From 2006 to 2009, there was a significant reduction in the proportion of reports on warfare. The reporting on warfare and the business environment moved in opposite directions relative to each other which is what we would expect: as a war intensifies, the prospects for business lessen; when war lessens, the prospects for business increase. On the other hand, the war and functioning of government move independently of each other. For instance, in 2006, there was a massive amount of reporting on war and very little on the functioning of government in the Arab Spring countries. In 2011, there was a high volume of reports on war and the functioning of government.

Figure 26: Arab Spring - Timeline of the Tone of News Reports (2006-2011)

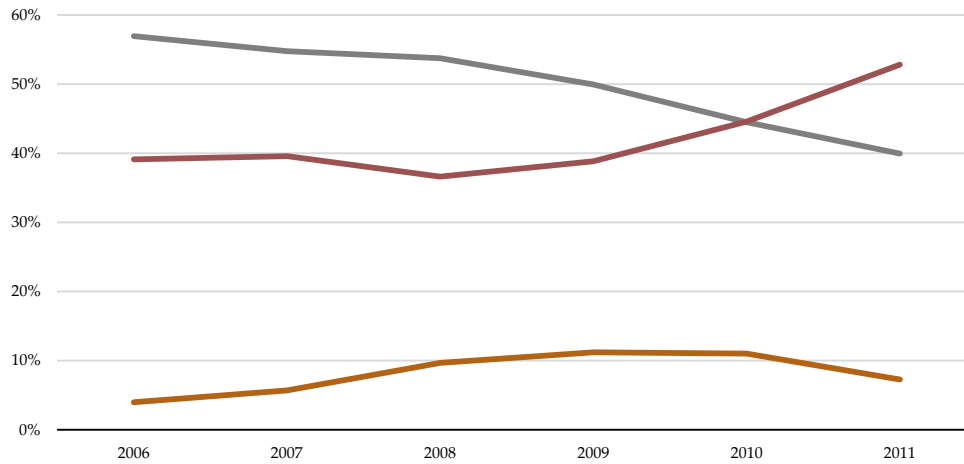
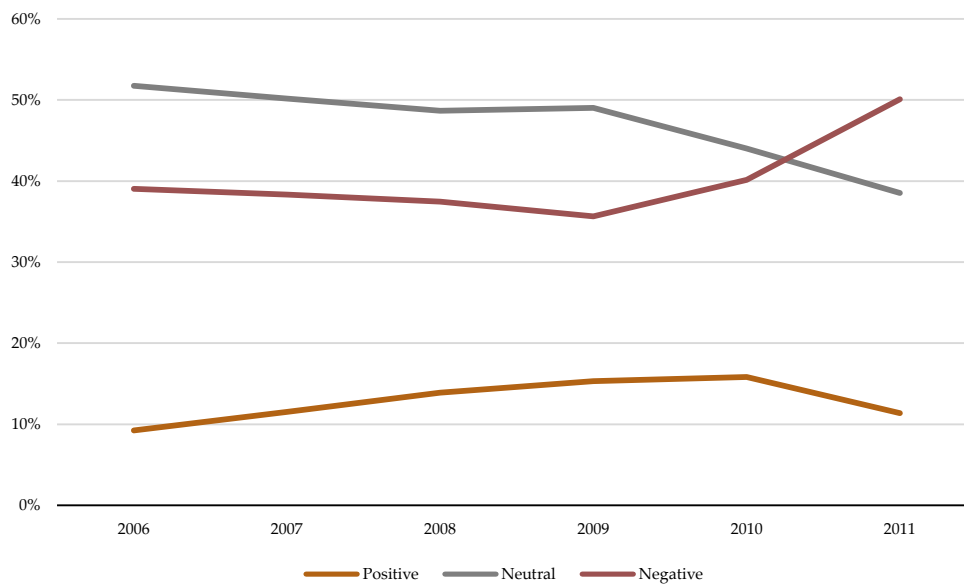


Figure 26a: The World - Timeline of the Tone of News Reports (2006-2011)



If we turn our attention to the tone of the reports, from 2008 onwards, there has been an almost identical pattern in the trends of both the global media and the Arab Spring countries with reports tending towards being more negative. The kick up in negative reports has corresponded with the Global Financial Crisis and while negative reporting has increased it is interesting to note that positive reporting also increased till the emergence of the European debt crisis. Nevertheless, there are unequivocally more negative reports than positive reports.

## *Conclusion*

Our analysis has found that stories related to violence do get the most coverage. There are likely to be several reasons for this. These types of stories tend to be more dramatic and shocking, often involving very primeval emotions concerning life and death. Hence, there is an inherent 'bias' towards such stories. Human interest stories make up a fraction of the events covered. In a sense, violence related stories are considered more serious than many other non-violence related stories. This observation also helps to explain why less peaceful nations tend to receive more news reports, in absolute terms, than more peaceful nations.

The assumption that more violent countries are more likely to receive a higher volume and proportion of reporting is consistent with the data. We see this pattern emerge not only when comparing the most peaceful countries with the least peaceful; it is also present when we turn our attention to countries which have seen their peacefulness deteriorate significantly. Because violent news stories tend to take precedence over other stories and violence related stories are often negative, we see, on average, more negative stories than positive ones. Hence, the assumption that less peaceful countries have a higher percentage of violence reports is borne out by the data and observations.

There is however a consequence from this with many readers holding the impression of the world being much more violent than it actually is. This carries with it miscommunication. If a society isn't aware of the positives advances that may be occurring, then such lack of knowledge will affect decision making at all levels of society.

But what can be done in a society that is dominated by editors of news and current affairs programs acutely aware of the need to market their programs against their competitors? While answering this question is beyond the scope of this report, it is important to point out that there is a role in supplying stories that appeal to our positive emotions. All journalists know that some positive news stories appeal to their readers. While there is a lot of research into how the media influences people, there is little research into how to package news that appeals to our better qualities in ways that make it more appealing and more marketable.

As mass communication markets expand with the convergence of technologies, it is possible to develop more targeted forms of communication aimed at particular segments, interests or attitudes. This carries with it the ability to communicate more clearly with an audience that is empathically connected to the subject matter, but also more aware of the subject matter. By developing better targeted communication platforms which are based on thorough market research, the audience for meaningful and positive news can be increased.

A new area of debate and research that has developed over the last couple of years is whether the media can be used as a predictor of future trends and major events. This concerns many areas such as economic performance, civil revolutions and the development of social trends. The answer may well be different for each one of these areas. The research carried out for this book has been limited to the predictive ability of media relating to civil revolution and encompassed the analysis of only a select number of North African countries.

Certainly the analysis done here has not found a predictive capacity by the media. One of the fundamental issues is that the news focuses on what has happened and with a bias towards news that is marketable. This means the reflection of a society by the media as a predictive tool is hamstrung by its very focus. Important facts will be under-reported or missed. However, more data and more case studies using a wider cross-section of the media are needed for future analyses before drawing any concrete conclusions.

Finally, we have reviewed the Structures of Peace and how they are covered in the media. If the media is reporting on the elements that create peace, either positively or negatively, then a society is more likely to improve on those aspects. In terms of the average world reporting on the Structures of Peace, we found that most of the reports focus either on business and finance news or on the performance of government. What was striking and highly significant was that the two structures “Acceptance of the rights of other” and the “Equitable distribution of resources” received little to no attention.

The media in some ways is a reflection of society, if leaders talk to issues or if the media raises issues then society will be informed, however, if there is no coverage of the issues, as in the case of the equitable distribution of resources, then it is unlikely these will be addressed.



## *Caveats*

### 1. Accuracy

It should be noted that this report considers media coverage of violence related issues accurate if the Media Tenor banded score is the same as the GPI banded score. Thus, 'accuracy', with respect to this study, does not refer to the accuracy of the actual media reports, namely, the accuracy and veracity of facts and truthfulness of the reports to the corresponding events. Rather, this report measures accuracy in the sense that it attempts to determine whether the proportion of violence is reflected in the proportion of reporting.

### 2. The Nature of Media

It is important to recognise the nature and limits of the media. Although reference is made to 'the media', it is in actual fact a variegated and diverse industry with differing amounts of resources, capabilities and focus. Moreover, there are also the constraints of newsworthiness, consumer demand, timeliness and the uniqueness of events. Given this, simple caricatures about what 'the media' thinks or how it ought to operate should be avoided where a nuanced analysis could easily stand in its place. For instance, we see great differences between local or regional news channels as opposed to multinational media networks. Similarly, we see differences between state-owned news networks as opposed to privately-owned news networks. These differences, and many others, are not insignificant: Nile News, for example, is a state-owned Egyptian program which systematically under-reported the massive wave of protests in Egypt earlier this year.



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