Which World Gets Covered?
Media Ideology and the Geography of Foreign News

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Abstract

Scholarship on foreign news coverage has long assumed that media reporting on international affairs converges across outlets, driven by the characteristics of countries and events rather than the politics of the press. We challenge this assumption by arguing that media ideology — decomposed into cultural and economic dimensions — shapes the symbolic boundaries of political community and, in turn, the geographic distribution of news attention. Culturally conservative outlets, emphasizing national identity and skepticism toward globalization, are expected to devote less attention to foreign places and to concentrate coverage closer to home. Economically rightist outlets, reflecting distinct orientations toward global trade and international institutions, are expected to exhibit the opposite pattern. We test these expectations using a novel dataset of global online news articles, ideological measurements derived from large language models, and computational geocoding of news coverage. Our findings demonstrate how ideological differences among media outlets systematically shape the informational environment through which audiences encounter the world.

Keywords: media, ideology, foreign news, computational text analysis

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1. Introduction

Do media outlets diverge in their coverage of foreign news? And if so, how does this divergence arise? These questions carry important implications for how citizens come to understand international politics. Because most individuals have little direct experience with foreign political actors, they depend on the news media as a primary window onto foreign societies and international events (Brewer et al. 2003; Wanta et al. 2004; Hayes and Guardino 2013; Rothschild and Shafranek 2017). Beyond simply transmitting information, media shapes public attention through agenda-setting — determining which stories enter the public sphere and which remain invisible — and in doing so effectively defines the political world that audiences come to know (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Harcup and O'neill 2017). Thus, when outlets differ systematically in which parts of the world they cover, they risk constructing skewed informational environments that leave citizens with unequal and distorted worldviews (Wanta et al. 2004; Wilke et al. 2012; Segev 2015).[1]

Yet scholarship has paid relatively little attention to how the political character of news organizations shapes which parts of the world receive coverage. Instead, they attribute variation in foreign news attention to the structural properties of states and their bilateral relationships. Geographic or cultural proximity between the reporting and reported country have long been treated as foundational news values: journalists are more likely to cover events in countries that are physically or culturally close to their audiences, as closeness raises perceived relevance and lowers the informational and logistical costs of coverage (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Westerståhl and Johansson 1994; Bednarek and Caple 2017; Jungblut et al. 2024). Also, this framework includes a broader range of bilateral ties — including trade volume, military presence, shared language, and political or value proximity — as predictors of foreign news coverage (Wu 2000, 2007; Jones and

[1] A substantial body of scholarship has examined how media framing shapes public perceptions of foreign affairs (Hallin and Mancini 2004; McLeod and Shah 2014; Althaus et al. 2014; Bryanov et al. 2023), but our focus is on the prior question of agenda selection.

Sheets 2009; Jones et al. 2013; Sheafer et al. 2014; Segev 2015). Yet by organizing itself around cross-national variation in news flows, this literature treats the reporting media as a relatively uniform actor within each national context, offering limited purchase on whether and how outlets within the same country diverge in their geographic attention.

While scholars have examined variation in foreign news coverage across outlets, this literature remains narrow in scope.[2] It has focused primarily on the structural role of international news agencies, arguing that AFP, AP, and Reuters have remained the dominant producers of world news (Paterson 2005, 2007; Shrivastava 2007; Segev 2019) — a dependence that deepened as television networks reduced their own international production from the 1980s onward (Paterson 2011) and that has been further amplified online.[3] Since only a small number of national newspapers maintain independent international newsgathering capacity, most outlets depend heavily on these western-based agencies (Boyd-Barrett 1980), which helps explain the persistent centrality of the United States and Western Europe in global news flows (Himelboim et al. 2010; Wilke et al. 2012; Segev 2019). This body of work, however, treats outlet type as a coarse categorical distinction rather than capturing non-binary variation in editorial orientations across the broader media landscape, leaving unexplored the wider range of outlets that constitute the everyday news environment for most citizens.

We argue that media ideology shapes the symbolic boundaries of political community, which in turn structures the geographic distribution of news attention. The core mechanism runs through the symbolic boundaries of political community: media outlets differ not only in how they interpret political events but in how they define the scope of the community to which their audiences are presumed to belong, and this boundary shapes which foreign places and actors are deemed relevant enough to cover. Drawing on social identity

[2]A partial exception is Vogler and Udris (2021), which show that outlet type shapes the geographic scope of coverage in multilingual Switzerland, though their analysis remains confined to that particular national context.

[3]However, Wu (2007) finds no significant differences between traditional and online media in the relative scope of coverage devoted to different countries.

theory and the agenda-setting literature, we argue that news selection is fundamentally an act of boundary-drawing — journalists evaluate whether an event belongs to their audience's world or to someone else's, and ideological orientation shapes precisely where that boundary falls. We further distinguish between cultural and economic dimensions of media ideology, which operate through distinct mechanisms. Cultural conservatism narrows the boundaries of political community around national identity, treating the foreign as peripheral and leading culturally conservative outlets to devote less attention to international affairs and to concentrate their foreign coverage on nearby countries. Economic conservatism, by contrast, orients audiences toward international markets and trade relationships that connect domestic economic life to geographically remote partners, giving economically conservative outlets stronger incentives to range more widely in their foreign coverage. These divergent patterns, we argue, shape the informational environments through which citizens encounter the world beyond their borders.

To test these expectations, we use a novel corpus of 472,171 quasi-randomly selected English-language online articles extracted from Common Crawl. Using machine learning, large language models (LLMs), and a new method of classifying media ideology, we measure the economic and cultural positions of 324 outlets in 26 countries. This study then uses named entity recognition, a gazetteer, and a custom algorithm to identify, disambiguate, and geo-code 2,757,820 places in this corpus. We also code whether these place mentions consist of national versus foreign coverage and the distance of these places from the outlet countries. This measurement strategy allows us to test how ideology corresponds with geographic coverage on a large and almost representative dataset of the Anglophone internet.

Our findings provide strong and consistent support for both sets of expectations. On the first dimension — the balance between national and foreign coverage — culturally conservative outlets devote a significantly greater share of their coverage to domestic affairs, while economically conservative outlets display the opposite pattern: a standard deviation increase in cultural conservatism is associated with a 5.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of national coverage, whereas a comparable increase in economic conser-

vatism is associated with a 10.8 percentage point decrease. On the second dimension — the geographic distance of foreign coverage — culturally conservative outlets concentrate their international attention on nearby countries, while economically conservative outlets range more widely: a standard deviation increase in cultural conservatism corresponds to a 13.3 percent reduction in the average distance of foreign coverage, whereas a comparable increase in economic conservatism corresponds to a 10.0 percent increase. These results hold consistently across model specifications and are robust to the inclusion of covariates, country fixed effects, and outlet-level random intercepts.

This article aims to make several important contributions to the literature on political communication and foreign news coverage. First, our findings speak to two gaps in the existing literature on foreign news coverage. Prior work treats geographic proximity as a fixed property of interstate relations (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Westerståhl and Johansson 1994; Wu 2007; Segev 2015; Jungblut et al. 2024), and research on outlet variation has concentrated narrowly on the role of international news agencies (Paterson 2005; Segev 2019). We fill this gap by showing that proximity is also conditioned by the ideological orientation of the reporting outlet, such that geographic distance in foreign news is not a fixed structural feature of the international system but a boundary shaped by media ideology. Second, while existing research on media ideology has focused overwhelmingly on domestic political content (Larcinese et al. 2011; Puglisi and Snyder Jr 2011; Dotson et al. 2012), we extend this literature to the domain of foreign news coverage. Our findings suggest that media ideology does not stop at the water's edge: as a worldview about one's political community and its relationship to the world, it should be visible in which parts of the world outlets direct their attention to. Third, by documenting systematic ideological differences in the geographic scope of foreign news coverage, this study speaks to research showing that citizens select media along ideological lines (Festinger 1957; Fischer 2011). Specifically, our results imply that such selective exposure may generate corresponding differences in foreign policy knowledge, salience, and attitudes, as ideologically distinct outlets construct divergent geographic boundaries of the world for their audiences.

2. The Ideological Foundations of News Coverage

To explain variation in the geographic scope of foreign news coverage, we develop our argument around the concept of media ideology. Ideology, in its broadest sense, refers to a relatively coherent system of meanings, values, and beliefs that functions as a worldview — governing how individuals and institutions perceive the world and what they take to be natural or obvious (Williams 1977). Applied to news organizations, media ideology refers to the systematic tendency to select and present information in ways that reflect such a worldview — shaping which events, actors, and places are deemed relevant, visible, or worth covering (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006). While variation in media ideology is sometimes overstated (Budak et al. 2016), there are often considerable differences in topic coverage, arguments, framing, and sources across outlets (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Entman 1993; da Silva 2026a). Many prominent outlets have clear ideological positions — such as *Fox* in the US, *The Sun* in the UK, and *Hankyoreh* in South Korea — and many even explicitly endorse political parties along ideological lines (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007; Reeves et al. 2016).

The ideological character of news organizations may arise from multiple, overlapping sources. At the organizational level, owners and proprietors exert influence over editorial lines, whether through direct intervention or by hiring journalists whose orientations align with their own (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Ladd and Lenz 2009). Journalistic backgrounds and professional socialization within newsrooms further shape the range of perspectives that come to be treated as legitimate or newsworthy (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Groseclose and Milyo 2005; Baron 2006). At the market level, outlets also face incentives to cater to the preferences of their audiences, as ideologically segmented readerships reward coverage that confirms their existing worldviews (Dunaway 2008; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2010). Taken together, these forces embed ideological orientations into the organizational fabric of news production.

One of the primary methods by which media ideology plays an important political role stems from its influence over which events and places enter the news agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Journalistic decisions about newsworthiness are never purely technical;

they inevitably reflect subjective assessments that resist reduction to objective criteria (Donsbach 2004). These assessments, moreover, do not emerge in a vacuum — they are shaped by broader interpretive frameworks that tend to render certain perspectives on the world self-evident while marginalizing others (Hall 1973). Political ideology is one such framework, and we might therefore expect it to color how journalists weigh the relevance and importance of potential stories (McQuail 1993). Even when reporters strive for impartiality, their prior orientations may lead them to overlook events or places that sit outside their ideological frame of reference. The downstream consequences of such selection decisions are substantial: coverage choices construct the informational world available to audiences and establish which issues and actors acquire political salience (Harcup and O'neill 2017). Systematic patterns in what gets reported — and what does not — therefore carry significant implications for public agenda formation and political evaluation (Boydstun 2013).

Empirical research across multiple contexts supports the view that media ideology shapes coverage decisions.[4] Journalists' personal political beliefs correlate significantly with their news judgments across five democracies (Patterson and Donsbagh 1996), and the partisan composition of reporters' social networks leaves traceable imprints on the stories they produce (Wihbey et al. 2019). At the organizational level, newsroom ideology predicts the ideological slant of published content even after accounting for consumer demand (Hassell et al. 2022). These dispositions manifest in systematic patterns of selective attention: partisan alignment predicts how much coverage newspapers devote to unemployment under opposing-party presidents (Larcinese et al. 2011), which party's scandals receive greater prominence (Puglisi and Snyder Jr 2011), and how extensively

[4]Beyond direct effects on coverage, media ideology shapes newsroom dynamics and journalist behavior in indirect ways: ideological misalignment between reporters and their outlet predicts higher job turnover (Hassell et al. 2023), outlet ideology shapes how journalists engage with audiences on social media (Lee et al. 2016), and ideological distance between journalists and citizens affects public trust in the press (Curini et al. 2024).

ideologically distinct outlets report on issues such as climate change (Dotson et al. 2012).[5]

Yet despite this accumulating evidence, existing research has paid surprisingly little attention to how media ideology shapes coverage of the world beyond national borders.[6] The studies reviewed above focus overwhelmingly on domestic political content — economic policy, electoral scandals, or nationally bounded issues such as climate legislation. This is a notable omission given that ideology, at its core, is a worldview: a set of beliefs not merely about domestic arrangements but about the proper relationship between one's political community and the rest of the world. If media ideology governs which events and actors are deemed relevant or visible, it should shape not only what outlets say about foreign affairs but whether and where they look abroad at all. Thus, this question — how ideological orientations structure the geographic scope of news attention — remains largely unexplored.

3. Two Dimensions of Media Ideology and the Geography of Foreign News

Building on the concept of media ideology, we develop a theoretical argument linking outlets' ideological orientations to the geographic scope of their foreign news coverage. Ideology, as we have established, is fundamentally a worldview (Willnat and Weaver 2014) — and a central dimension of any worldview is how it partitions the social world into "us" and "them" (Tajfel et al. 1981, 1986).[7] This partition carries direct conse-

[5]Some studies do caution, however, that outright partisan suppression of opposing viewpoints is difficult to demonstrate (Hassell et al. 2020), suggesting that ideological influence on coverage is real but operates through subtle selection processes rather than overt exclusion.

[6]Westerståhl and Johansson (1994) demonstrate that ideological context shapes how journalists apply news values such as proximity and importance in foreign news selection, but locate this ideology at the level of national culture rather than individual media organizations.

[7]A growing body of international relations scholarship has shown that individuals evaluate foreign actors and their signals through the lens of identity-based biases (Chu 2021; Chu and Lee 2024; Han

quences for news selection: journalists routinely evaluate whether an event belongs to their community's world or to someone else's, and this judgment shapes not only how foreign events are framed but whether they are selected for coverage at all (Nossek 2004). Relevance and meaningfulness, in turn, flow from this community membership: events are more likely to be judged newsworthy when they concern actors and places that audiences recognize as part of their world (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Jones and Sheets 2009; Harcup and O'neill 2017). Also, a historically dominant partition of this kind runs along national lines. As Anderson (1983) argues, the nation is an imagined community, and mass media have played a central role in constructing and sustaining it by synchronizing collective attention around shared domestic affairs. Along with the line of these ideas, we argue that media ideology shapes precisely where these boundaries of relevance are drawn. Specifically, outlets whose worldview is organized around a narrow conception of political community — one that privileges national identity and treats the foreign as peripheral — will systematically attend less to the world beyond their borders than outlets whose worldview encompasses a broader, more internationally oriented sense of collective membership.

Within this broader argument, we distinguish two ideological dimensions that we expect to shape the geographic scope of foreign news coverage in theoretically distinct ways: cultural and economic ideology. Scholars have increasingly argued that ideology operates along two distinct axes — a cultural dimension organizing attitudes toward national identity, tradition, and cosmopolitanism, and an economic dimension organizing attitudes toward redistribution and market liberalism — and that these dimensions are theoretically and empirically separable (Kriesi et al. 2006; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Their relative salience has moreover shifted as globalization has elevated cultural conflicts over identity and sovereignty alongside longstanding economic divisions, rendering the two axes increasingly orthogonal (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Yet existing research on media ideology and news coverage has overwhelmingly conceived of ideology as a single liberal-conservative continuum (Groseclose and Milyo 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2010;

et al. 2025; Han 2025a).

Budak et al. 2016). This distinction matters for our purposes because cultural and economic orientations imply distinct relationships to the nation, to foreign actors, and to international institutions — and may therefore pull the geographic scope of foreign news coverage in opposing directions. Treating ideology as unidimensional risks obscuring these divergent dynamics and conflating media outlets whose worldviews differ in theoretically meaningful ways.

Cultural ideology refers to positions on the rights, roles, and conditions of socio-cultural groups, encompassing issues such as gender equality, immigration, and national identity (Inglehart 1971; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Cultural conservatism favors traditional group roles, the interests of dominant groups, and nationalism, cultural progressivism favors equality, the empowerment of marginalized groups, and cosmopolitanism (Kriesi et al. 2006). This cultural dimension bears directly on how news organizations define the boundaries of their political community and, in turn, which parts of the world they deem worth covering. Culturally conservative orientations tend to define political community narrowly — privileging national identity, expressing skepticism toward foreign institutions, and treating domestic affairs as inherently more relevant than international ones (Kumar 2023; Schroeder 2019). Research on foreign news selection supports this logic: studies consistently find that journalists orient their coverage around a domestic "us," treating foreign events as newsworthy primarily insofar as they impinge on national interests, and that this domestic cultural filter shapes the selection of foreign stories (Nossek 2004).

This logic leads to an expectation regarding the volume of foreign news coverage. Outlets whose ideological orientation is organized around cultural conservatism construct a narrower symbolic boundary of political community — one that privileges national identity and treats foreign affairs as peripheral to the concerns of their audiences. Because relevance and newsworthiness are filtered through this boundary, culturally conservative outlets should be systematically less likely to select foreign events and places for coverage than their more progressive counterparts. Culturally progressive outlets, by contrast, embrace a broader conception of political community — one that extends across national

borders to encompass foreign actors, international institutions, and cosmopolitan concerns — and should therefore devote greater attention to the world beyond their borders.

On the other hand, economic ideology refers to positions on redistribution, government spending, and market regulation — the axis that historically formed the primary basis for ideological competition among news outlets (Carmines et al. 2012; Feldman and Johnston 2014; Downs 1957; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, outlets such as *The Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* aligned with aristocratic or capitalist elites, while others — such as *The Daily Herald* and *L'Humanité* — oriented toward the working class (Chalaby 1998; Kuhn 2006). In terms of worldview, the economic dimension maps onto distinct orientations toward the international order. Economically rightist positions — favoring free markets, capital mobility, and international trade — imply a conception of the relevant economic community that extends well beyond national borders. Economically leftist positions, by contrast — emphasizing domestic redistribution, labor protections, and state intervention — orient attention more narrowly toward the national economic arena, treating international actors and institutions as peripheral to the concerns of domestic audiences.

This distinction carries direct implications for the geographic scope of foreign news coverage. Outlets with more economically rightist orientations embed their audiences in a world where international markets, foreign firms, and global supply chains are directly consequential to everyday economic life. The foreign is not peripheral but constitutive of the economic community their coverage serves. As a result, such outlets have stronger incentives to cast a wider geographic net — tracking developments in distant markets, trade partners, and financial centers that bear on the interests of their readers. Economically leftist outlets, by contrast, are more likely to frame economic life within national boundaries, treating domestic labor, wages, and state capacity as the primary objects of concern. This inward orientation of economic attention implies a correspondingly narrower geographic scope of foreign coverage, as distant places and international institutions carry less direct relevance for the audiences that these outlets address. Hence, we hypothesize as follows:

***H*$_1$**: *Media outlets with stronger culturally conservative orientations are less likely to cover foreign news.*

***H*$_2$**: *Media outlets with stronger economically rightist orientations are more likely to cover foreign news.*

Beyond shaping how much outlets cover foreign affairs, media ideology also determines how far into the world their coverage reaches. Geographic distance is not merely a logistical constraint on news gathering but also a symbolic one: the further a place lies from the reporting country, the more cognitive and cultural work is required to render it relevant to domestic audiences (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Jones et al. 2013). The extensive literature on news proximity consistently finds that outlets devote disproportionate attention to nearby countries, reflecting both the lower costs of coverage and the greater presumed relevance of proximate events to domestic audiences (Wu 2000; Wilke et al. 2012). Yet proximity is not purely a function of physical distance — it is also filtered through the ideological lens of news organizations, which shapes which parts of the world are deemed close enough to matter. We argue that the cultural and economic dimensions of media ideology generate systematically different orientations toward geographic distance in foreign news coverage.

Culturally conservative outlets, as argued above, define political community narrowly around national identity and treat the foreign as inherently less relevant. This inward orientation should intensify with geographic distance: the further a country lies from the reporting nation, the more culturally and symbolically remote it is likely to appear to audiences whose sense of community is bounded by national borders. Conversely, culturally progressive outlets — whose broader conception of political community extends across national boundaries — are better positioned to render distant places relevant to their audiences, as cosmopolitan orientations reduce the symbolic friction of covering far-away events. We therefore expect culturally conservative outlets to concentrate their foreign coverage on nearby countries and to underrepresent more distant parts of the world.

The economic dimension, by contrast, implies a different relationship to geographic

distance. Economically rightist outlets are oriented toward international markets, trade, and capital flows — economic relationships that frequently span large distances and connect domestic audiences to geographically remote partners. For such outlets, distance does not diminish the relevance of foreign coverage so long as distant places remain economically consequential. Indeed, major financial centers, commodity producers, and trading partners are often geographically far from the reporting country, and their economic significance gives economically rightist outlets strong incentives to cover them. Economically leftist outlets, focused on domestic redistribution and national economic capacity, have weaker reasons to follow developments in distant markets. We therefore expect economically rightist outlets to be more likely to cover geographically distant countries than their leftist counterparts.

> ***H***$_3$*: Media outlets with stronger culturally conservative orientations are less likely to focus their foreign news coverage on geographically distant countries.*

> ***H***$_4$*: Media outlets with stronger economically rightist orientations are more likely to focus their foreign news coverage on geographically distant countries.*

4. Methods

We begin this section by discussing our original data. Next, we turn to our techniques to measure the cultural and economic ideologies of media outlets.[8] We then discuss how this paper identifies and geo-codes the geographic coverage of media outlets. This section concludes by describing the statistical models used.

4.1. Data

In order to test our hypotheses, we require a representative dataset of media content. Therefore, we source these articles from Common Crawl News, a repository of almost all

[8]This data and ideological measurement strategy is described in greater detail in da Silva (2026b).

online news and opinion articles (Nagel 2016).[9]

We use *news-please* — an open-source news crawler — to crawl and extract articles from Common Crawl News (Hamborg et al. 2017). However, we modify the Python version of *news-please* in two primary ways. First, we enable it to obtain (quasi-) randomly-selected articles across time, making our dataset more representative. This time period was the maximum range available at the time of data collection: from October 2016 to March 2024. Second, we only obtain English-language articles. This improves the comparability of ideology and geographic coverage between articles. While it does reduce external validity beyond English-language media, English is by far the most prominent language on the internet, accounting for about 42% of Common Crawl (CommonCrawl 2026).

We clean the dataset by removing texts that are too short to constitute articles — fewer than 100 tokens — according to our definition (25.4% of articles). Outlets that produce fewer than 400 articles (25.9% of articles) are removed so that the ideological measures are based on sufficient data. Furthermore, this ensures that insights are based on more prolific outlets that audiences are likelier to encounter. We also remove a small number of articles that are incorrectly labeled as English-language by Common Crawl (1.5% of articles). After filtering, the dataset contains 472,171 articles.

4.2. Measuring Media Ideology

Next, our study requires measures of media outlets' cultural and economic ideologies, which are the independent variables for the four hypotheses. These measurements are described in greater detail in da Silva (2026b).

First, we identify the articles that address cultural and economic issues in the first place. We fine-tune Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT-base) on 4000 GPT-classified[10] and human-validated articles that are labeled as focusing

[9]Outlets that do not provide consent to be crawled through *robots.txt* restrictions are excluded for legal purposes.

[10]This is GPT-3.5 Turbo with dynamic few-shot (Malla et al. 2024), which performed almost as well

on economic issues, cultural issues, or neither. The resulting classifier has an F1-score of 85.7%, which is considered high accuracy (Ornstein et al. 2025). We then use the classifier to label the remaining 468,171 articles, obtaining 85,592 (18.1%) economic articles, 77,398 (16.4%) cultural articles, and 309,181 (65.5%) "neither" articles. Only outlets with at least 20 economic and 20 cultural articles are kept for reliability.

Second, we classify the economic positions (leftist/centrist/rightist) of the economic articles and the cultural positions (progressive/centrist/conservative) of the cultural articles. We validate GPT classifications based on 400 human-labeled articles. Mean Absolute Error and Weighted Scott's Pi scores that indicate high reliability. This classifier utilizes a novel approach for media ideology labeling called Multi-Cue Classification (MQ-Class), which labels several ideological cues for each text and then combines them together for greater accuracy. Details about MQ-Class, the validation process, and performance metrics are described in da Silva (2026a). Using GPT-4o-mini with MQ-Class and dynamic few-shot — the best-performing combination of classification parameters — we classify the ideologies of all cultural and economic articles.

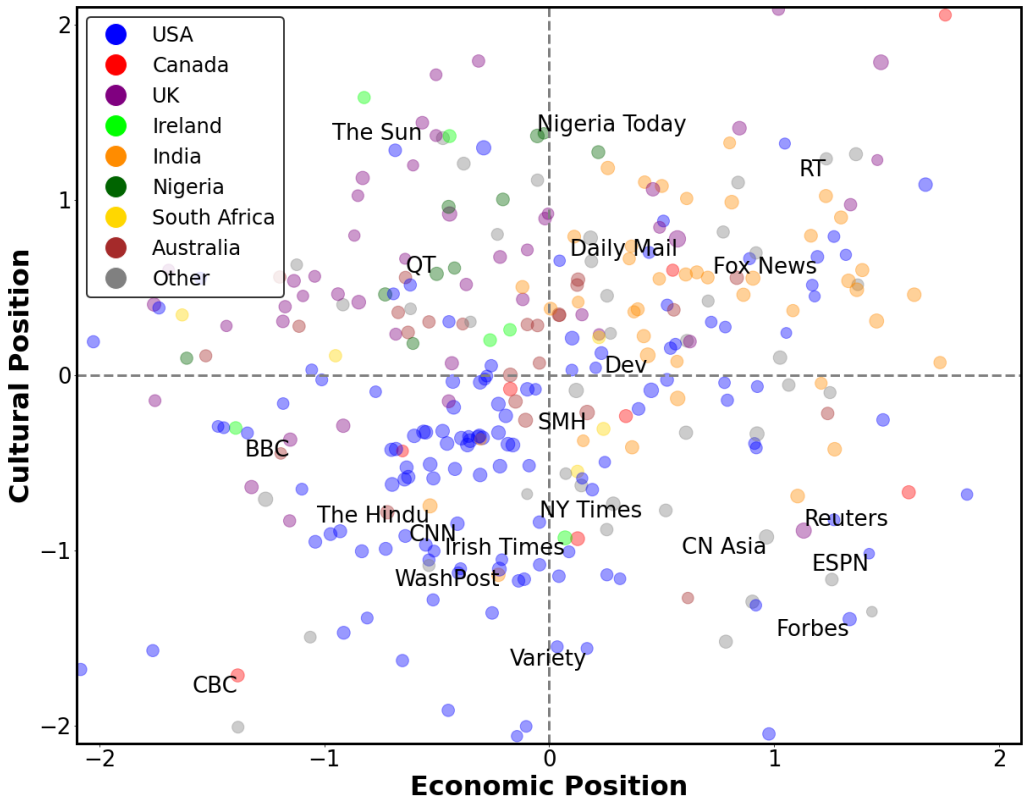
Finally, we create aggregate outlet-level scores. To do so, we recode the GPT ideological classifications to a numeric scale where -1 is leftist/progressive, 0 is centrist, and 1 is rightist/conservative. For each outlet, we calculate the mean cultural and economic positions of its articles. The resulting scores are de-meaned and standardized. Ultimately, our final dataset contains 425,987 articles from 324 major outlets in 26 countries.[11] When a media entity has different domains in multiple countries — like Huffington Post in the US and South Africa — it is counted as separate outlets.

Figure 1 displays a scatterplot of the cultural and economic scores of outlets (with outliers excluded). Most outlets fit with established ideological reputations, indicating face validity. da Silva (2026b) explores the descriptive statistics and reliability of these metrics further.

as GPT-4, the flagship GPT model at the time.

[11]See Appendix **??** for a full list of the outlets by country.

Figure 1: The Cultural and Economic Ideologies of Media Outlets



Note: I display the names of 26 outlets, selected for their prominence or variety. Both dimensions are standardized. RT is *Russia Today*, QT is *Queensland Times*, Dev is *Devdiscourse*, SMH is *Sydney Morning Herald*, NY Times is *New York Times*, CN Asia is *Channel News Asia*, WashPost is *Washington Post*, and the other acronyms are standard.

4.3. Measuring Geographic Coverage

This study develops a novel process to measure geographic coverage, which serves as the dependent variables for the hypotheses. Ultimately, we calculate the proportion of places mentioned by an article (toponyms) that are in the outlet's country (for H_1 and H_2) and the average distance of toponyms to the outlet's country (for H_3 and H_4).

To do so, we first identify toponyms in the article corpus by using *spaCy*'s Named Entity Recognition (Honnibal et al. 2020). Based on a trained neural network, it can detect likely toponyms and distinguish between ambiguous homonyms that may or may not be a toponym, like "Chad" (both a first name and country).

Next, these toponyms are queried using the GeoNames gazzetteer, which contains

over 5.7 million location names, their coordinates, countries, population sizes, and other metadata (GeoNames 2026). We include countries, provinces/states, counties, and cities. Country locations can match on several English-country names, including the official name and other common terms, abbreviations, and and demonyms (e.g., "Arab Republic of Egypt", "Egypt", "Egyptian", "Egyptians"). We create a dataset of 2,757,820 toponyms mentioned by our article corpus. Places that are mentioned multiple times by an article are counted as separate observations.

When there are homonymous toponyms (e.g., San Juan in Puerto Rico and Argentina), our custom algorithm assigns the place from the country with the most toponyms in the article. To avoid excessive cases of homonymous toponyms — given the large number of small places in GeoNames — we only keep places with populations over 100,000, along with all countries. If there are two shared names within a country (e.g., São Paulo state and city in Brazil), the algorithm assigns the place with the larger population, though these are usually cities within homonymous counties/provinces anyway.

Figure 2 displays an example text along with a visual illustration of how spaCy, GeoNames, and our algorithm together identify and geo-code toponyms. It demonstrates how homonymous non-toponyms (e.g., turkey[12] meat) are excluded and how homonymous toponyms (London in Canada and the UK) are disambiguated. Further, it shows how metadata and derived variables are attached to the toponyms.

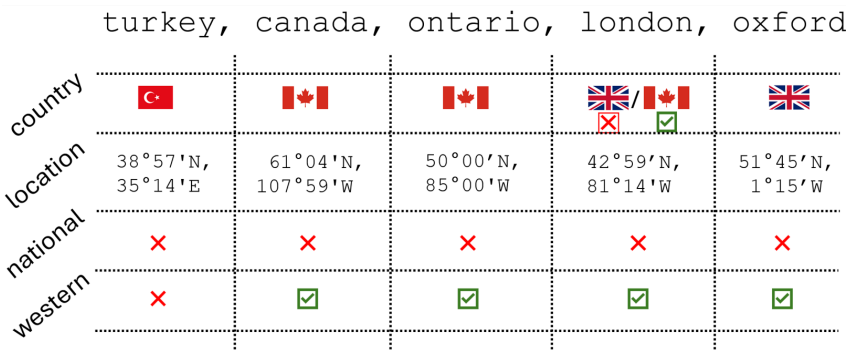
[12]Turkey the country is now officially called "Türkiye," but "Turkey" is still widely used in media texts.

Figure 2: Example of Geo-Coding Process

(a) Example Text and spaCy Named-Entity Recognition

Justin Trudeau and Katy Perry ate a turkey sandwich in Turkey last week. They then travelled home to Canada. Confidential sources claim that they drove throughout Ontario yesterday and finished the trip in London. Today, they are set to attend a political studies conference in Oxford.

(b) Geo-Coding with GeoNames

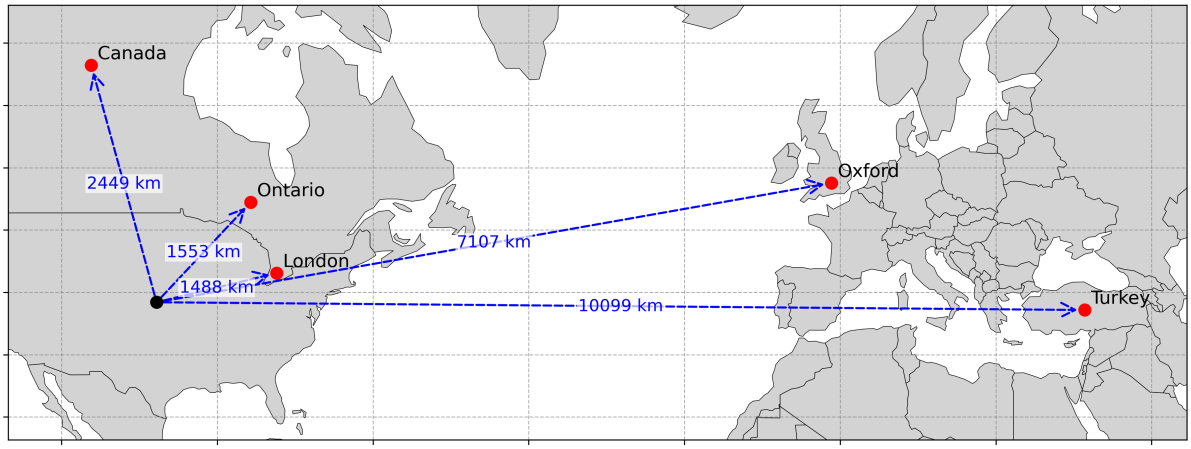


GeoNames provides the country of each toponym. We then create a variable that indicates if the toponym is in the same country (or is the country itself) as the outlet mentioning it ("national"). GeoNames also provides the coordinates of the centroid of each location. For example, for California, the coordinates are slightly north of Fresno. We calculate the distance in kilometers ("distance_km") between each mentioned place and the centroid of the outlet's country using the Haversine Formula, which accounts for the Earth's curvature when calculating distances:

$$d_p = 2R \arcsin\left(\sqrt{\sin^2\left(\frac{lat_p - lat_o}{2}\right) + \cos(lat_o)\cos(lat_p)\sin^2\left(\frac{lon_p - lon_o}{2}\right)}\right)$$

where d is distance, p is place mention, R is Earth's radius (6371 kilometers), lat is latitude, lon is longitude, and o is outlet. Figure 3 displays this visually. Since this variable is susceptible to skew, we log it ("log_dist").

Figure 3: Example Distance Calculations



Note: These places are taken from the example article text in Figure 2.

For H_1 and H_2, we create a final article-level dataset that aggregates toponyms across articles. The "national" dependent variable is averaged and becomes the proportion of places in an article that are in the outlet's country. Other variables are already at the article level.

Meanwhile, the dependent variable for H_3 and H_4 is the distance between outlet countries and *foreign* coverage, so we remove all national toponyms. For example, if a British outlet's article mentions Liverpool and Kerala, only the latter remains. Conversely, if an Indian outlet mentions the same two toponyms, only Liverpool would remain. We then use this to create a final article-level dataset for H_3 and H_4. Its dependent variable "log_dist" becomes the average distances between the outlet country's centroid and all *foreign* places mentioned within the article.

4.4. Modeling

To test the relationships between outlet ideology and geo-coverage, we perform a variety of regression models. The main results use the two article-level datasets mentioned in Section 4.3 above.

H_1 and H_2 share the same dependent variable (the proportion of national coverage of articles). Their independent variables — the cultural and economic positions of outlets

— should be included together to control for each other. Therefore, these two hypotheses are tested together in the same models. This is also true for H_3 and H_4, which also share the same dependent variable (the logged average distance of foreign coverage). Hence, the basic regression equation format is as follows:

$$\text{DV}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \, \text{cult}_j + \beta_2 \, \text{econ}_j + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where DV is dependent variable, i indexes articles, j indexes outlets, cult is the cultural position, and econ is the economic position.

Each hypothesis is tested with five primary types of models that are displayed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 below. First, a simple model just regresses the dependent variable on the cultural and economic positions of outlets. A second model includes article-level covariates for time (continuous) and word count along with outlet-level covariates for being from a Western country and outlet size (the logged number of political articles published in our corpus). The following models also include these covariates. The third model adds fixed effects for the country of origin of the outlet. The fourth model includes both these country fixed effects and clusters standard errors by outlets. The final model includes random intercepts for countries and outlets.

We also perform several robustness checks. Appendix TBD includes the same models described above, but uses the toponym-level datasets. This predicts a given toponym's location based on outlet ideology. However, since the number of toponyms included in articles can vary considerably, some articles could skew results. Therefore, this is treated is a robustness check.

Furthermore, Appendix TBD uses the article-level datasets, but performs additional models. One of these models includes three additional outlet-level covariates — binary indicators of whether outlets are local news, tabloids, or publicly-owned. These variables are important for understanding media coverage. However, they are generated by a combination of large language models (LLMs) and human verification (see Appendix TBD for a detailed description). Since this measurement process is not as reliable as our other variables, we only include these models as robustness checks. For H_1 and H_2,

we also perform Papke-Wooldridge fractional response models with country fixed effects and outlet clustered standard errors. This explicitly models the dependent variable as a proportion, but their nonlinear coefficients are not directly comparable in magnitude or interpretation to those from the linear and multilevel models.

The robustness checks in Appendices TBD and TBD are consistent with the results below, indicating robustness.

5. Results

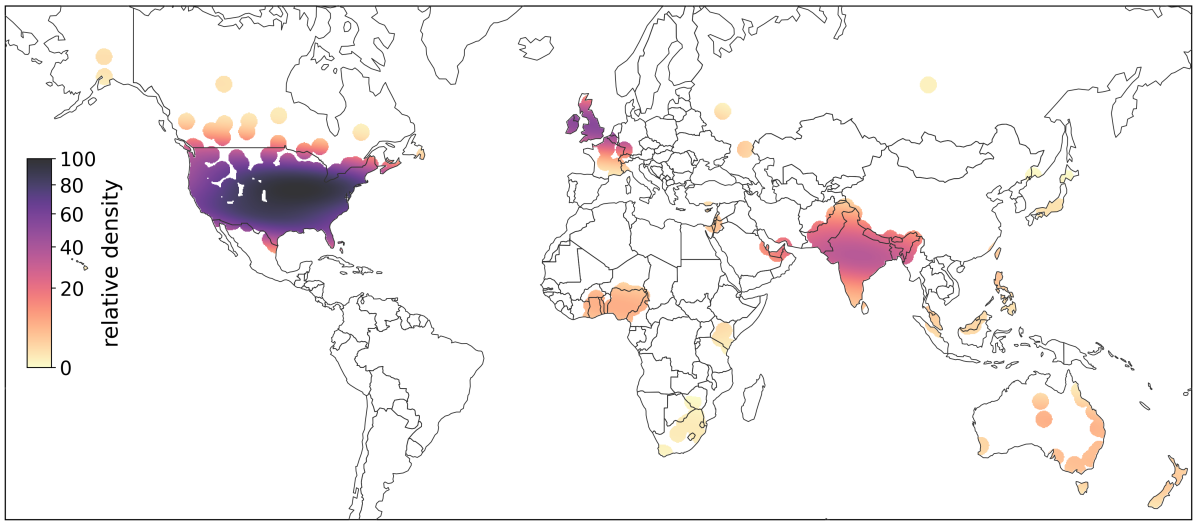
5.1. Descriptive Results

Before testing the hypotheses, we display descriptive figures. First, Figure 4 demonstrates the overall geographic coverage of our corpus. Panel A consists of just national coverage (i.e., Canadian outlets covering Canadian places), while Panel B consists of just foreign coverage.

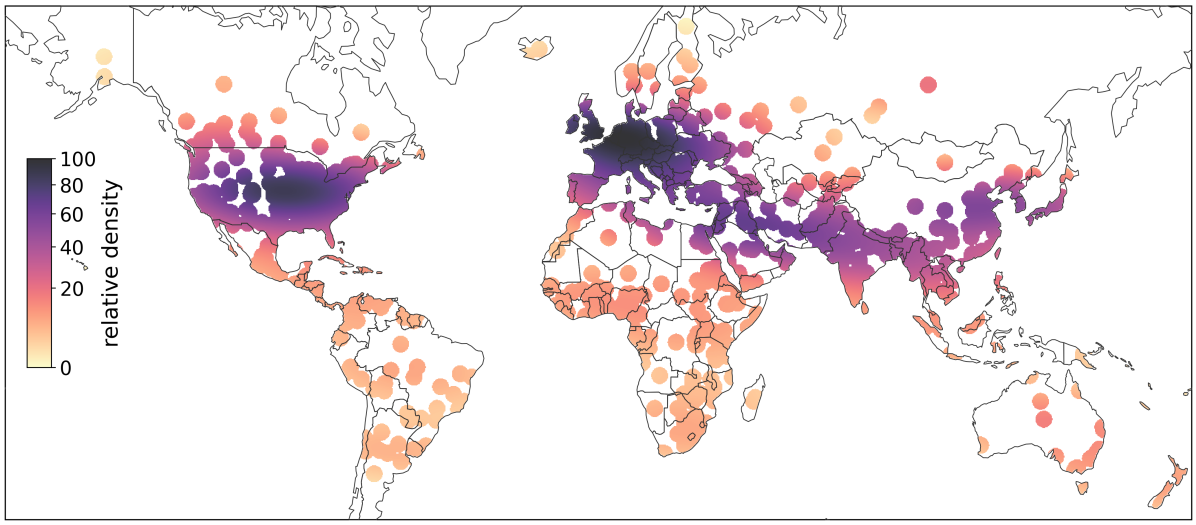
Since the corpus consists of English-language articles that mostly come from English-speaking countries, the Anglophone world and places with large English-speaking populations (like India) are understandably more represented. Panel A shows that there is a large amount of national coverage in the US, followed by the UK, Ireland, India, several other south Asian countries, and a scattering of other countries. Panel B shows that these articles often focus on the Anglosphere, but also on continental Europe and some parts of Asia without English-language legacies.

Figure 4: Heatmap of Geographic Coverage of English-Language Articles

(a) National Coverage



(b) Foreign Coverage



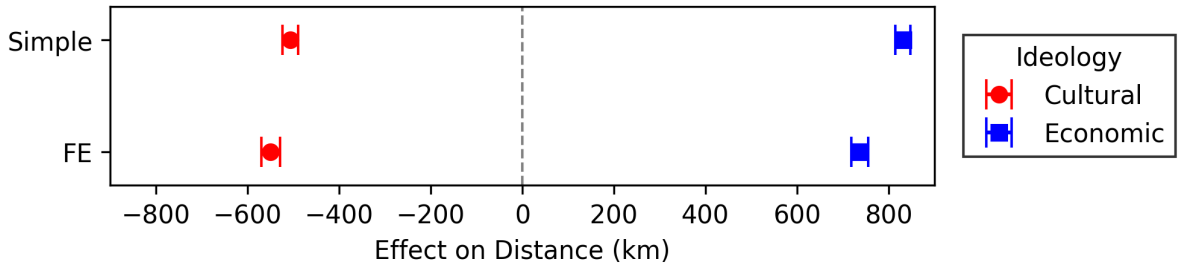
Note: Due to computational limits, both panels are based on random selections of 20,000 toponyms out of 1,517,636 (for national coverage) or 1,240,184 (for foreign coverage).

Second, Figure 5 displays the average overall coverage distance associated with a standard deviation increase in cultural conservatism and economic rightism. This differs from the results in Figure 7 because Figure 5 includes all toponyms (not just foreign coverage) and uses "distance_km" (rather than "log_distance"). It is intended to display the simple descriptive relationship between ideology and coverage distance, both in general ("Simple") and within countries ("FE"). Since there is a strong correlation between cultural

conservatism and economic rightism, we control for the other ideological dimension in these results.

Accordingly, on average, outlets that are one standard deviation more culturally conservative cover places that are about 506-550 kilometers closer to home. Meanwhile, outlets that are one standard deviation more economically rightist focus on places that are about 737-831 kilometers further away. This indicates that a person who selects media outlets based on ideology will likely be exposed to considerably different types of geographic coverage.

Figure 5: Descriptive Association between Ideology and Overall Coverage Distance



Note: The dependent variable is the average distance in kilometers between an outlet country's centroid and all toponyms in an article. The independent variables are the cultural and economic ideological positions of the outlets. Dots are coefficients and whiskers are 95% confidence intervals. "FE" is country fixed effects.

5.2. Ideology and National versus Foreign Coverage (H_1-H_2)

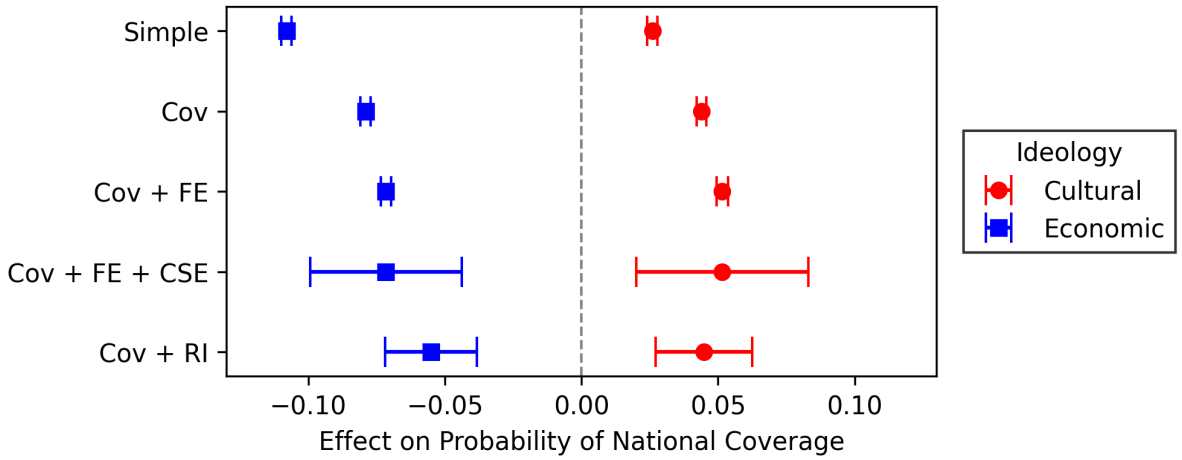
We now turn to hypothesis testing. H_1 and H_2 predict that the cultural and economic ideology of outlets influences the proportion of their coverage that is devoted to national versus foreign affairs. Figure 6 displays five models that test these propositions, as described in Section 4.4.

We find strong and consistent evidence for a relationship between ideology and national versus foreign coverage. Cultural conservatism increases the likelihood of outlets to cover their country, while economic rightism decreases this likelihood. The consistency of these results across different specifications —alongside models in Appendices TBD and TBD — indicates robustness. All of these ideological coefficients have p-values below

0.001, except the cultural ideology coefficient for the model with clustered standard errors (p=0.001). Unsurprisingly, the models with clustered standard errors or random intercepts have much larger standard errors.

These results indicate that a standard deviation increase in cultural conservatism is associated with a 2.6 to 5.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of national coverage. The relationship is even bigger for economic rightism. Each standard deviation increase in economic rightism is associated with a 5.5 to 10.8 percentage point increase in national coverage.

Figure 6: Testing the Effects of Ideology on National-versus-Foreign Coverage (H_1-H_2)



Note: The dependent variable is the average proportion of an article's coverage that focuses on places within the outlet's country. The independent variables are the cultural and economic ideological positions of the outlets. Dots are coefficients and whiskers are 95% confidence intervals. "Cov" is the covariates, "FE" is country fixed effects, "CSE" is article clustered standard errors, and "RI" is outlet and country random intercepts.

5.3. Ideology and the Geographic Distance of Coverage (H_3-H_4)

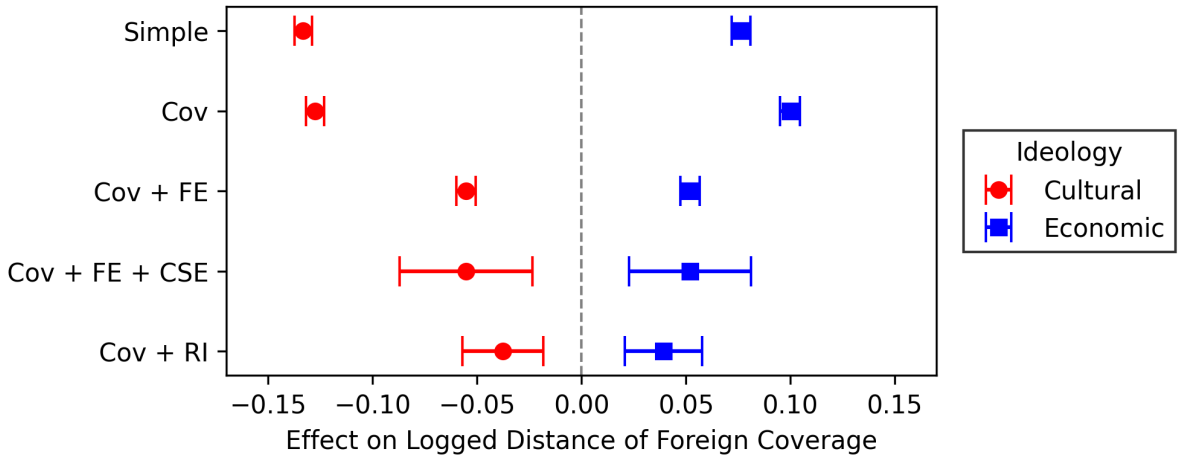
Finally, we test H_3 and H_4. These hypothesize that when outlets do cover foreign places, their cultural and economic ideologies affect the geographic distance of these covered places from their own countries. Figure 7 displays the results for these tests using the same model specifications as in Figure 6.

Again, we find strong relationships for all models in the directions of our hypotheses.

Cultural conservatism reduces the distance of foreign coverage, while economic rightism increases this distance. These results are also consistent, although there is somewhat more variation in the coefficients, especially between those that do not model country-level variation versus those that do. As before, all ideological coefficients have p-values below 0.001, except the cultural ideology coefficient for the model with clustered standard errors (p=0.001). Furthermore, models with clustered standard errors or random intercepts have much larger standard errors.

The dependent variable is *logged* distance in kilometers. Therefore, coefficients can be interpreted as the approximate percent change of distance associated with a one-unit increase in the independent variables. Accordingly, a standard deviation increase in cultural conservatism corresponds with a 3.8% to 13.3% reduction in average distance covered among foreign coverage. Likewise, a similar increase in economic rightism corresponds with a 3.9% to 10.0% increase in average distance of foreign toponyms.

Figure 7: Testing the Effects of Ideology on Foreign Coverage Distance (H_3-H_4)



Note: The dependent variable is the logged average distance in kilometers between an outlet country's centroid and all toponyms in an article. The independent variables are the cultural and economic ideological positions of the outlets. Dots are coefficients and whiskers are 95% confidence intervals. "Cov" is the covariates, "FE" is country fixed effects, "CSE" is article clustered standard errors, and "RI" is outlet and country random intercepts.

6. Conclusion

For most citizens, foreign affairs are not directly experienced but understood through mediated accounts. The news media therefore serves as a central institution through which information about international events, foreign leaders, and diplomatic interactions is communicated, interpreted, and evaluated. Yet which parts of the world become visible through the media — and which remain invisible — is not simply a function of the objective importance of countries or events. This article has argued that the ideological orientation of media organizations shapes the symbolic boundaries of political community and, in turn, the geographic distribution of foreign news attention. Decomposing media ideology into cultural and economic dimensions, we hypothesized that culturally conservative outlets — emphasizing national identity and skepticism toward globalization — devote systematically less attention to foreign places and concentrate their coverage closer to home, while economically rightist outlets exhibit the opposite pattern. Using a novel dataset of global online news articles, ideological measurements derived from large language models, and computational geo-coding of news coverage, our findings support these expectations and demonstrate that ideological divergence among domestic media outlets produces systematically distinct geographic informational environments.

These findings speak to two bodies of scholarship that have developed largely in parallel. The first concerns the determinants of foreign news coverage. Existing research has made considerable progress in explaining cross-national variation in news flows by pointing to national traits such as economic and military power (Wu 2000; Segev 2015), relational factors such as geographic proximity, bilateral trade, and cultural similarity (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Wu 2000; Jones et al. 2013), and event-level characteristics such as deviance and social significance (Shoemaker et al. 1991; Shoemaker and Cohen 2012). Yet this literature has largely treated national media systems as homogeneous actors, offering limited leverage for understanding within-country variation in foreign news attention. Our study addresses this gap by demonstrating that ideological differences among outlets operating within the same national context produce divergent geographic agendas. In doing so, we also revisit the dominant scholarly expectation that foreign

affairs coverage converges across outlets. Influential accounts rooted in indexing theory (Bennett 1990; Zaller and Chiu 1996) and the cascading activation model (Entman 2003; Bennett et al. 2008) propose that because interpretive frames flow downward from political elites to journalists, and because norms of national security coverage raise the cost of dissent (Groeling and Baum 2008; Allen and Blinder 2018), foreign affairs reporting tends to cluster around shared narratives. Our findings qualify this account: while such convergence tendencies may operate at the level of framing, they do not appear to extend to the prior stage of agenda selection — specifically, the geographic scope of coverage. Ideological divergence is not confined to domestic political reporting but extends to decisions about which parts of the world merit attention at all.

The second body of scholarship to which our findings speak concerns the ideological polarization of foreign policy attitudes (Berinsky 2009; Milner and Tingley 2015; Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Myrick 2025; Han 2025b). A rich literature documents that citizens across the ideological spectrum hold divergent views about international affairs, but the media-level mechanisms that generate and sustain such divergence remain underspecified. Our results suggest one such mechanism: if ideologically distinct outlets construct systematically different geographic worlds for their audiences, then selective exposure to those outlets — as predicted by well-established accounts of partisan media consumption (Festinger 1957; Fischer 2011) — will expose ideologically segmented audiences to different distributions of foreign coverage. Culturally progressive and economically rightist audiences, consuming outlets that devote greater attention to distant and foreign places, are likely to develop higher levels of knowledge and salience with respect to international affairs. Conversely, culturally conservative and economically progressive audiences, whose media diet skews toward domestic and proximate coverage, may develop correspondingly lower levels of foreign policy knowledge and engagement. Systematic differences in which parts of the world receive coverage thus provide a plausible pathway through which polarized worldviews about international politics are partly constructed and reinforced through the media.

These findings carry broader political implications. Places that receive less media

coverage are not only less salient to audiences but are also less likely to mobilize public attention, political pressure, or humanitarian response. If the geographic scope of foreign news is structured in part by the ideological orientation of the outlets that produce it, then the informational asymmetries documented here have consequences that extend beyond individual attitudes. Citizens whose media environments systematically underrepresent particular regions of the world may be less equipped to evaluate foreign policy decisions affecting those regions, less responsive to appeals for international solidarity, and more susceptible to elite framing strategies that exploit informational gaps. At the same time, audiences whose media diet emphasizes distant and diverse places may develop cosmopolitan orientations that are themselves ideologically skewed in their distribution. Understanding the geography of foreign news is therefore not merely a question of media sociology but a question with direct implications for democratic accountability in an increasingly interconnected world.

Data Availability

All replication materials, including data and code, are available at: TBD for anonymity

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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