

The Great East Japan Earthquake in Overseas Media: Survey of Eight News Programs in Seven Countries¹

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¹ This article is based on the authors' article "Kaigai no Terebi Nyuusu Bangumi wa, Higashi Nihon Daishinsai o Dou Tsutaeta ka ~ Nana-ka-Koku Hachi-Bangumi Hikaku Chousa ~"[How Overseas TV News Reported the Great East Japan Earthquake: Analyzing Eight News Programs in Seven Countries], published in the March 2012 issue of *Hoso kenkyu to chousa*, the monthly journal of the NHK Broadcasting Culture and Research Institute. http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2012_03/20120304.pdf

The powerful earthquake that occurred at 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011 off the Pacific coast of northeastern Japan set in motion tidal waves greater than ever imagined, wreaking unprecedented disaster. Within 5 minutes of the time the earthquake occurred, at 12:51 a.m., financial information service Bloomberg Television broadcast its first report of “a major earthquake” hitting Japan.² This is known as the first report by an American television channel, but it is also known that television broadcasters worldwide were using images from NHK General Television, NHK World, and Japanese commercial terrestrial broadcasters to report on the ferocity of the tsunami and the ensuing damage.

From the time of the disaster, overseas newspapers, television, and other media praised the self-control and forbearance of the victims and others involved, and international journalists were often deeply moved by the willingness of those directly affected to respond to interviews despite their own personal distress.³

After the series of explosions inside the structures housing the nuclear reactors at the Tokyo Electric Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, overseas media grew increasingly disgruntled by and distrustful of the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric regarding the release of information about what had happened; the tone of reporting turned quite critical.⁴ Release of information was an important issue, since unlike the natural disaster resulting from the earthquake and tsunami, the impact of secondary disasters such as the nuclear power plant accident and leakage of radioactivity from the plant, could directly affect the energy policies and safety of the citizens of other countries. According to NHK’s *Jiron koron* [Timely Discussion, Public Opinion] program, the embassies in Tokyo of 32 countries either temporarily closed or evacuated to Osaka as of early April. More than 50 countries banned the import of Japanese goods or began to demand compulsory radioactivity checks for such

² See <http://kimelli.nfshost.com/index.php?id=10901>. Writer Kim Andrew Elliot was producer and host at programming at Voice of America for seven years and taught communications at the University of Massachusetts.

³ Yamada Ken-ichi, “Chu-Nichi tokuhain junin ni kiku: Gaikoku media ga mita Higashi Nihon Daishinsai” [The Great East Japan Earthquake As Foreign Media Saw It: Interviewing Ten Special Correspondents in Japan], *Galac*, October 2011, pp. 24–30 (*Galac* is the monthly journal of the Japan Council for Better Radio and Television.)

⁴ See “Kochira Tokuho Bu: Aitsugu genpatsu bakuhatsu Bei-Ei media kibishii roncho” [Special Reporting Division: Critical Tone of British and American Media Reporting on the Series of Nuclear Power Plant Explosions], *Tokyo shinbun*, March 16, 2011.

goods.⁵ The decrease in the number of visitors to Japan by 24.4 percent to 7,140,000 in 2011 in one year reportedly had a tremendous impact on Japanese domestic industry.⁶

The overseas media cannot be blamed categorically for the financial losses resulting from the rumors spread by overseas media, but the way the overseas media reported on the disaster in Japan did have some degree of influence over the images that emerged.

Numerous studies have been published in Japan concerning reporting by the overseas media about the disaster. Case studies analyzing the content of overseas reporting, focusing on television news programs that can be assumed to have the greatest social impact, however, are unexpectedly few in number. One of the few is a study of whether or not the Korean media reported the disaster in a sensational manner, by Korean University of Foreign Studies professor Kim Chun-sik.⁷ Among others is a study of differences in German and Japanese journalism by Kumagai Toru, in the NHK quarterly *Hoso bunka*.⁸

While these few studies are confined to disaster reporting by media in two countries, our research team expanded the scope of comparison to seven countries (China, France, Germany, Italy, Republic of Korea/ROK, United Kingdom, United States), targeting eight regular news programs, and empirically analyzed how the Great East Japan Earthquake news was reported in each country, identifying differences in the content of that reporting—quantity of reporting, topics of the news, etc. Reflecting the materials available, data on news programming was collected for five of the countries (United Kingdom, United States, etc.) for the one month and for China and Italy for the eight days following the earthquake and tsunami disaster.

⁵ Nimura Shin, on “Genpatsu jiko: Sekai e no shogeki” [The Nuclear Power Plant Accident: The Impact on the World], *Jiron koron* [Timely Discussion, Public Opinion], NHK General Television, broadcast April 6, 2011.

⁶ Special report figures released by the Ministry of Justice Jan. 17, 2012. Another reason cited besides the earthquake and tsunami is the record-breaking appreciation of the yen.

⁷ To examine this question, Kim compared and analyzed news programs about the disaster on Japan’s NHK and Korea’s KBS public television in the hour starting 7:00 p.m. between March 11 and 25, 2011. The study identifies the basically “cool” and “restrained” stance of Japan’s major media contrasting with Korean media tending to “sensationalist” reporting yet critical of the Japanese government.

Professor Kim presented this study at the Japan-Korea-China Television Producers’ Forum held in Hokkaido in September 2011. It was prepared by excerpting and editing a paper he had presented at a May 3, 2011 seminar sponsored by the Korean Press Foundation on “Disaster Reporting in the Korean Press from a Global Perspective.”

⁸ Kumagai Toru is a freelance journalist. See “Doitsu media no kanetsu hodo ni mieta mono” [Observations on Sensationalist Reporting in the German Media], *Hoso bunka* (Summer 2011), pp. 52–55.

TARGETS OF ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

Targets of Analysis

From among news programs broadcast by the major television networks in China, France, Germany, Italy, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, United States, we selected programs based on the following criteria:

- Regular news programs broadcast during the period between 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. with the greatest audience rating, on either a public or commercial channel.
- Nationwide network programs broadcast on a general channel.

With regard to the United States, however, instead of NBC's *NBC Nightly News*, which has the highest audience ratings in the United States, we selected its rival program, *ABC World News*, as one of the targets of our study, because this program made special efforts to report on the disaster by sending newscasters to connect directly from the East Japan disaster site. We also included the public broadcaster *PBS News Hour* in order to compare commercial and public broadcasting.

News programs on 24-hour news channels are outside the scope of this study. The programs surveyed are as follows:

ABC: *ABC World News* (U.S.)

Popular evening news program produced by ABC, one of the three major commercial networks in the United States. Broadcast daily at 6:30 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time), it runs for about 25 minutes including program announcements and commercials.

PBS: *PBS NewsHour* (U.S.)

News program of the public broadcaster, PBS. Broadcast from Monday to Friday (times differ from one station to another) by the 300-plus PBS member stations around the United States. A channel popular with politicians and educated viewers, it is one of the most trusted programs in the United States. Broadcast time is 55 minutes.

BBC: *BBC News at Ten* (U.K.)

Flagship news program broadcast at 10:00 p.m. daily on the public broadcaster BBC's main channel BBC ONE. Average audience ratings for 2009 published by the television rating service BARB were 4,700,000 for BBC's *News at Ten*, 4,300,000 for BBC's *News at Six*, and 3,200,000 for the commercial television program *ITV Early Evening News*. Since *News at Ten* is not broadcast on weekends, we analyzed *BBC News* broadcast on the 24-hour news channel produced for U.K. viewers for the weekend days immediately following the disaster.

TF1: *Journal Télévisé 20 heures* [Eight P.M. Television News] (France)

Marquee news program of France's commercial broadcaster TF1. In March 2011, its average audience share was 29 percent or 7,200,000. That was about 7.3 percentage points higher than the audience share of a news program aired by the public broadcaster France 2 in the same timeslot. The TF1 program broadcast time is 35 minutes, and in accordance with French broadcasting law, commercials are not broadcast during the program.

ARD: *Tagesschau* [View of the day] (Germany)

Association of public broadcasters ARD's regular news program. It is broadcast a number of times during the day, but the 15-minute program from 8:00 p.m. has the largest audience. In 2010 its average audience was 9,140,000. The program is produced by the ARD-affiliated station NDR.

KBS: *KBS Nyuseu 9* [KBS News 9] (ROK)

Major news program of KBS1, the ROK public broadcaster KBS main channel. Broadcasts at 9:00 p.m. for one hour on weekdays and 40 minutes on weekends. For the period of this survey, its audience rating was between 20 and 30 percent almost every day on weekdays.

RAI: *TG1 ore 20:00* [Eight P.M. Television News] (Italy)

The hallmark news program of public broadcaster RAI's main channel Rai Uno. The

program is broadcast for about 35 minutes from 8:00 p.m. daily and without commercials. In 2010 its average audience was 5,880,000.

CCTV: *Xinwen lianbo* [National Network News] (China)

Main news program broadcast daily 7:00–7:30 p.m. on CCTV-1, the general channel of China's sole national-level television station, CCTV. Most broadcasts begin with news on communist party leaders in order of their rank within the party, followed by domestic and then international news.

Method of Analysis

Month-long Span of Reporting Following Disaster

In order to examine the trends in reporting over a month following the disaster, we analyzed the news broadcasts from March 11 (Japan time for this and other dates given below) through April 11, through programs from six stations: ABC and PBS (U.S.), BBC (U.K.), TF1 (France), ARD (Germany), and KBS (ROK). The PBS program is not broadcast on weekends, so as a rule our study focused on programs broadcast from Monday through Friday, but we also extended this to include the Saturday (March 12) and Sunday (March 13) immediately following the 2011 disaster. We thus assessed 24 days of programs of each station for the study. As for PBS, because it did not air corresponding programs on March 12 and 13, the data for that station covers only 22 days.

First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

We also analyzed in particular the eight days of reporting between March 11 and 18 when news of the disaster occupied a large part of the news. For this time-span we also analyzed the RAI (Italy) program and the CCTV (China) program.

Disaster Reporting on March 14

Beginning on March 14, a great deal of the Japanese domestic disaster reporting came to be related to the nuclear power plant accident. Visible changes took place in the content of

reporting by the overseas stations under this study, such as some stations broadcasting images directly from the disaster areas. Therefore, we analyzed all 8 programs, including those of RAI and CCTV for this particular date.

Our analysis consisted of viewing the programs of each station and coding them for each day. The coding was based on a uniform recording format, and one member of the research team was assigned to one station. The outline of the coding is as follows:

1. Breakdown by Topic Category and Calculation of Broadcasting Time Quantity

We first identified all the topics reported in each program, recorded the order of the news (topics), and calculated the broadcasting time for each topic. We then grouped the topics into categories. For news other than Great East Japan disaster-related (referred hereafter as “disaster-related”) news, we separated topics into the categories of politics, the economy, international relations, culture, society, daily life, sports, and so on. Then working from the quantity of broadcasting time for each category, we calculated the proportion of time each station devoted to reporting about the Great East Japan disaster. We also analyzed how that proportion changed with the passage of days following the disaster. Also, as another index for learning the degree of importance each station accorded to the disaster, we examined the order of the news, where the disaster-related topics stood in the broadcasting time span, and how that standing changed over the course of time.

2. Breakdown of Content of Disaster-related News

For the Great East Japan disaster-related news, we further broke down the news by content and sought to determine what kind of phenomena (events) were of particular interest to each station: The categories were the earthquake, the tsunami, the (Fukushima) nuclear power plant (accident), and rescue/relief for victims, along with movements and conditions of broadcasting country nationals, and presence or absence of news regarding the energy policy of the country in question. On this subject as well, we also examined how reporting changed with the passage of time following the quake.

3. Analysis of the Methods of Reporting Disaster-related News

As an index of each station's reporting stance vis-à-vis the disaster, we investigated whether the station sent a newscaster or reporter to the disaster zone in Japan to report on site, degree of explanation by experts, what sorts of materials were used for broadcasting other than images, and to what extent the programs transmitted the voices of ordinary people such as victims of the disaster. In addition, for each category, we examined whether or not simply facts were reported or whether opinions and/or analysis were provided. We also studied the extent to which exaggeration or misunderstanding figured in the reporting of the news.

4. Analysis of the Images Broadcast

The study analyzed the sources of images used in the news reporting on the Great East Japan disaster. This included the extent to which each station utilized its own originally recorded images or availed itself of the images aired by NHK and other Japanese television stations.

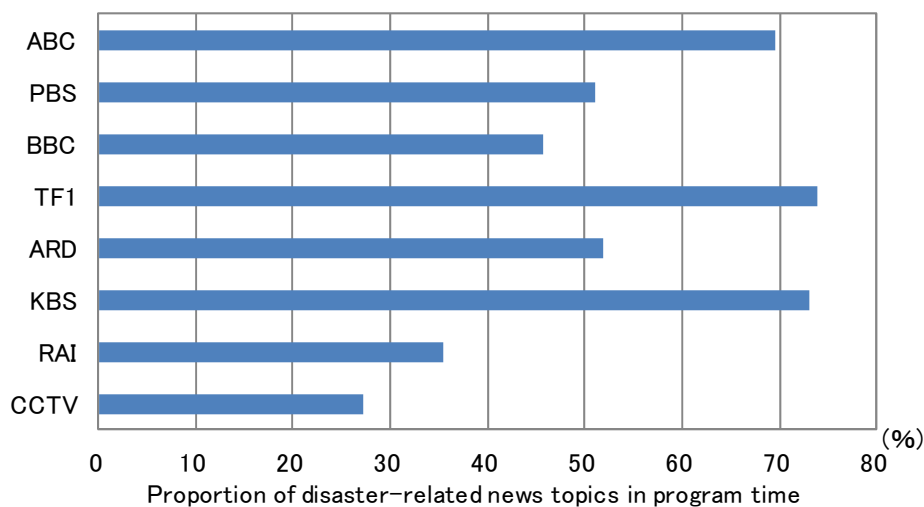
DISASTER REPORTING IN SEVEN COUNTRIES: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Broadcasting Time

Our survey shows that during the first eight days after the quake, the proportion of news programs devoted to disaster-related news broadcast was greater than 50 percent in France, Germany, Republic of Korea, and the United States.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of time allotted to disaster-related news during those first eight days. As the bar graphs indicate, five out of the eight stations dedicated over 50 percent of broadcasting time to news about the disaster, attesting to the great amount of attention the Great East Japan Earthquake drew in many countries.

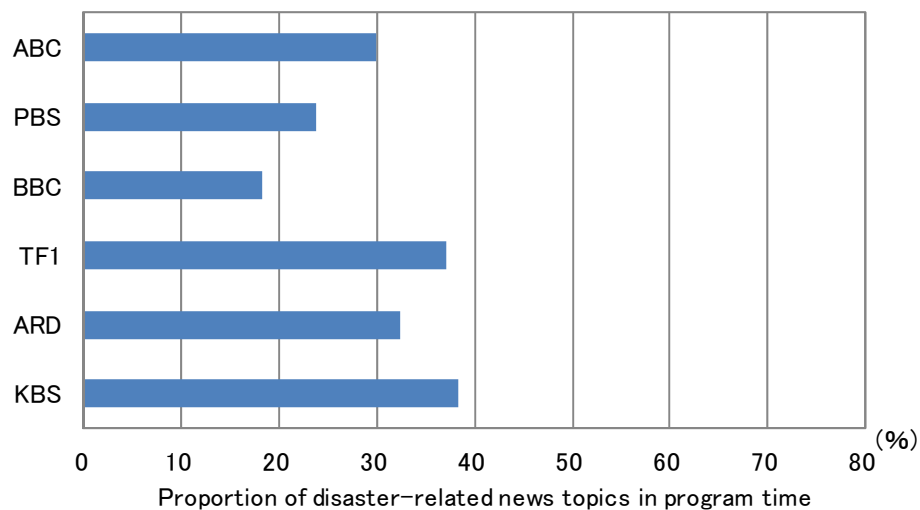
Figure 1. Proportion of Disaster-Related News in the Eight-Day Period After the Quake



* ABC (n = 3.37 hrs.), PBS (n = 5.22 hrs.), BBC (n = 3.70 hrs.), TF1 (n = 5.60 hrs.), ARD (n = 2.16 hrs.), KBS (n = 8.32 hrs.), RAI (n = 4.90 hrs.), CCTV (n = 3.94 hrs.)

Analysis of results for the first month, too, shows that three out of the six stations devoted over 30 percent of broadcasting time to disaster-related news (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Proportion of Disaster-Related News in the One-Month period After the Quake



*ABC (n = 9.68 hrs.), PBS (n = 18.61 hrs.), BBC (n = 10.90 hrs.), TF1 (n = 15.06 hrs.), ARD (n = 6.27 hrs.), KBS (n = 24.48 hrs.)

KBS (Korea) was the station with the longest actual broadcast times for disaster-related news for both the first eight days (6.08 hours) and the first month (9.39 hours). See Figure 3. While the KBS program is one hour, comparatively longest among the stations studied, it devoted the most broadcasting time to disaster-related news for the two time-spans

investigated. The next-longest times were for TF1 (France) and PBS (U.S.), respectively.

Figure 3. Total Hours of Disaster-Related News

Station	Eight-Day Period		One-Month Period	
	No. of related programs	Hours of broadcasting	No. of related programs	Hours of broadcasting
ABC	8	2.31	24	2.89
PBS	6	2.66	22	4.41
BBC	8	1.69	24	2.00
TF1	8	4.13	24	5.58
ARD	8	1.12	24	2.03
KBS	8	6.08	24	9.39
RAI	8	1.73		
CCTV	8	1.07		

The lengths of the programs of each station are approximately: ABC 25 min. and PBS 55 min. (both U.S.), BBC (U.K.) 30 min., TF1 35 min, ARD (Germany) 15 min., RAI (Italy) 40 min., KBS 60 min., and CCTV (China) 30 min. The time may also vary from one day to the next.

Top News for the First Six Days

Another index of news value is order of the news. The importance of a news topic can be assessed by analyzing its position in a program. Figure 4 shows the order of disaster-related news at six stations in five countries over one month.

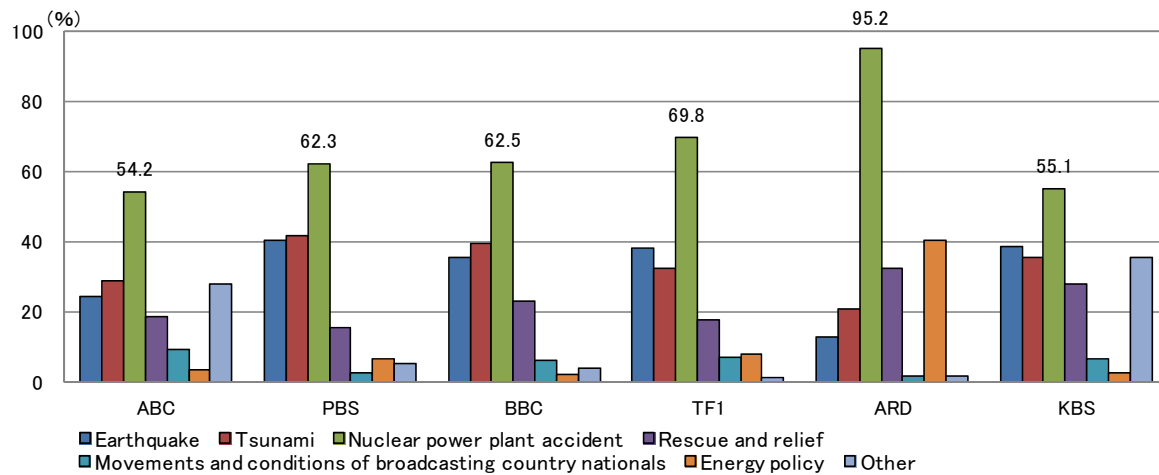
The numbers 1 to 20 on the horizontal axis of Figure 4 show the order of the news from left to right. The numbers on the vertical axis show the broadcast date from March 11 to April 11, top to bottom. The dark areas represent the date and order of news broadcast on disaster-related topics. The lightly shaded areas represent other topics covered. The number of topics in a program varies by day and from one station to another; the KBS (Korea) program features over 40 while the BBC (U.K.) and ARD (Germany) programs often include less than 20. For this report, we limited the number of topics to 20, and the remaining areas for stations that did not have as many as 20 topics are left blank.

As this table shows, all of the six stations studied made disaster-related news their top stories from March 11 to 16 and broadcast a high concentration of disaster-related news with a large number of topics. We can also see from this table that each of the stations put great emphasis on the Great East Japan Earthquake as a major news event.

Content of Disaster-Related News

“Disaster-related news” is in fact a catchall term for all kinds of subject matter. So, we broke it into the following categories (subjects): the earthquake, the tsunami, the nuclear power plant, rescue/relief for victims, along with movements and conditions of broadcasting country nationals residing in Japan, energy policy, and other matters. We investigated the frequency of appearance for each subject. Figure 5 shows the proportion of subjects broadcast in disaster-related news: In cases where several subjects are covered in one news topic—for example, earthquake, tsunami and the nuclear power plant—each reporting of one of the subjects is counted once, so this differs from the count of news topics.

Figure 5. Content of Disaster-Related News: Proportion of Each Category's Appearances in Disaster-related Topics (One-month Period/Percentage)



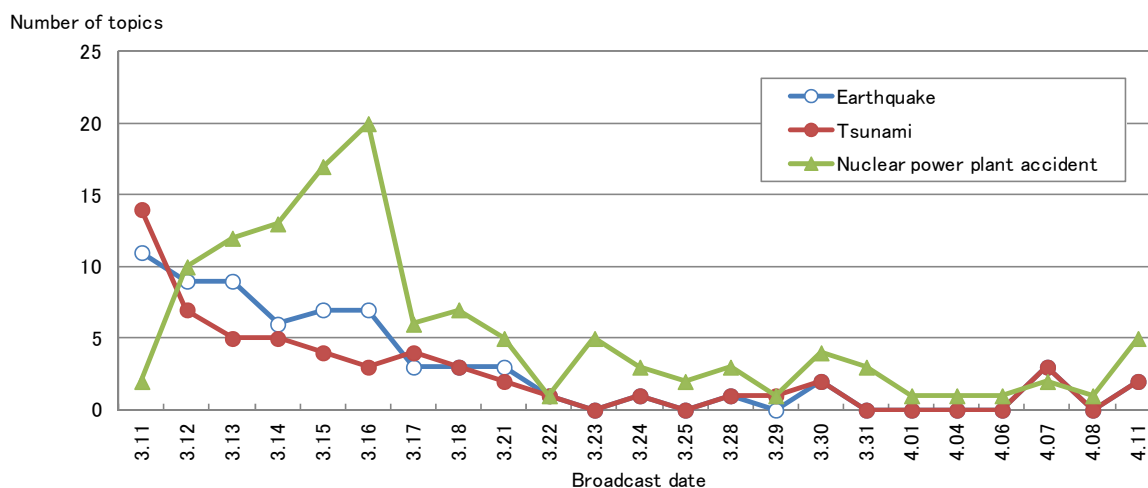
*ABC (n = 107 topics), PBS (n = 77 topics), BBC (n = 48 topics), TF1 (n = 179 topics), ARD (n = 62 topics), KBS (n = 345 topics)

The results of this analysis showed that the subject the stations most frequently covered through the month after the earthquake was that concerning the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. The fact that news about the accident at the plant figured in over half of the disaster-related subjects broadcast by all of the stations is an indication of the importance of the accident. The broadcasts by ARD in Germany, where the accident triggered the reassessment of its entire nuclear energy policy, covered topics about nuclear power in over 90 percent of its news related to the disaster.

Gradual Increase of Reporting on the Nuclear Power Plant

We also analyzed how the content of disaster-related news changed over the course of time. As an example, Figure 6 shows the data for TF1 of France, a nuclear energy giant.

Figure 6. Fluctuations in the Content of Disaster-related Topics: France TF1



Note: Our study also analyzed topics other than those shown in this graph (rescue and relief, movements and conditions of broadcasting country nationals, energy policy, other); here we present only data for the three categories with the highest number of topics.

The graph charts only content with the most topics: earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power. As can be seen from the graph, on the day of the earthquake, tsunami accounted for the largest number with 14 topics, followed by earthquake with 11 topics, and the nuclear power plant only had 2 topics. However, in the next day, the 12th, the nuclear power plant accounted for the most topics. The number of news topics related to the nuclear power plant peaked on March 16 with 20 topics. This trend could also be seen in the programming of most of the other television stations studied. Between the 15th and 17th, when the gravity of the nuclear power plant became clear, the number of topics related to the nuclear power plant covered by the six stations in the study was the highest in the month (March 11-April 11) as well as higher than for any other issues related to the disaster.

Frequent Use of Images from Japanese Television Stations

When examining the disaster-related images used by each station, we find that much of the footage used was filmed by NHK or Japanese commercial broadcasters. Figure 7 shows

the frequency of use of images from Japanese stations by these overseas broadcasters in the eight days after the earthquake. All of the stations frequently used images from NHK, the international broadcast service NHK World, or images presumed to be from NHK. Of the images used by KBS (Korea), more than two thirds were from NHK. Images taken by NHK World were also widely used by all the stations and five of the eight stations used such images in one third or more of the topics related to the disaster. Images taken by Japanese commercial broadcasters were also frequently used by RAI (Italy), BBC (U.K.), and other stations.

Figure 7. Rate of Use of Images Produced by Japanese Television Stations in Disaster-Related News during the Eight Days after the Earthquake

(%)

	NHK	Presumed NHK	NHK World	Japanese commercial station	Presumed Japanese commercial station
ABC	12.6	21.8	26.4	17.2	8.0
PBS	2.0	2.0	36.7	8.2	0.0
BBC	28.9	5.3	39.5	26.3	0.0
TF1	8.5	31.8	43.4	14.0	2.3
ARD	9.1	0.0	45.5	3.0	0.0
KBS	67.8	0.0	10.9	9.1	0.0
RAI	23.5	1.5	38.2	26.5	0.0
CCTV	20.4	0.0	20.4	6.1	0.0

Note: There were many cases when images from both NHK and commercial broadcasters were used in one news topic.

* ABC (n = 87 topics), PBS (n = 49 topics), BBC (n = 38 topics), TF1 (n = 129 topics), ARD (n = 33 topics), KBS (n = 230 topics), RAI (n = 68 topics), CCTV (n = 49 topics)

How Emphasis in Broadcast Content Shifted

As we have observed, the evening news programs of the eight overseas stations covered news related to the Great East Japan Earthquake in considerable quantity. In this section, let us finally look at the proportion of time devoted to disaster-related reports over the course of the month, and see how the percentage shifted day to day in relation to other important news topics.

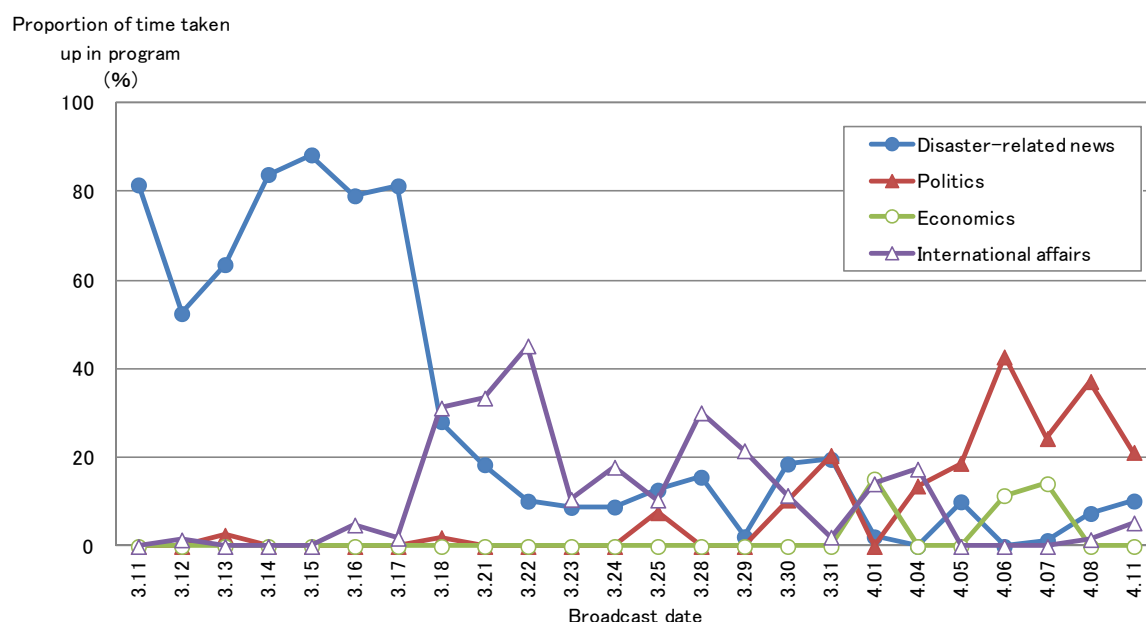
Figure 8 shows how broadcasting time for different news categories changed day by day. All of the stations were analyzed, but here as an example, we look at the content shift for

the broadcasts of ABC (U.S.).

From the time of the earthquake until March 17, broadcasting time was overwhelmingly allotted to disaster-related. On the 15th, nearly 90 percent of programming was disaster-related news. From March 18 onward, the percentage dropped sharply, and the proportion of news on international affairs increased to over 30 percent (March 18)—slightly exceeding that of earthquake related news. This was because the UN Security Council passed a resolution authorizing air strikes on Libya by groups such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The growing tensions in Libya led to a sudden increase in international affairs-related news.

The above trend was common among U.S./European television stations, and news on international relations exceeded that of disaster-related news from March 18 for all six U.S./European stations. In the case of KBS (Korea), the time allotted to international relations-related news temporarily equaled that of disaster-related news on March 17, but after that until March 23, disaster-related news was broadcast the most. Due to its program's nature, CCTV (China) devoted most of its broadcasting time to politics.

Figure 8. Fluctuations in the Proportion of Time Devoted to Each News Category: ABC



Note: Our study also analyzed news on topics other than those shown in this graph (culture, society, daily life, sports, other); because of limitations of space, here we present only data on disaster-related news, politics, economics, and international affairs.

The selection of news is decided first by the absolute value of the news itself, but when and for how long a news topic is broadcast within the given time of the program is also decided by its relative value compared to other news. News that gradually took over coverage about the Great East Japan Earthquake was mainly that of international relations such as issues in Libya. The start and intensity of the broadcasting about Libya differ somewhat from one station to another due to each country's different levels of interest in Libya, and their geo-political relationships.

Were There Any False Reports?

It is said that there was much sensational reporting and false information broadcast by overseas media about the Great East Japan Earthquake. So we examined the reporting of the stations under our study to determine whether or not there was false reporting in their disaster-related news.

Some examples of false reports included the following:

- ABC report that “We know that two (reactors) had explosions” where in fact it was the reactor building that exploded (March 14 and 15)
- TF1 report that throughout almost the whole Japanese archipelago, railways and highways had been closed (“Les transports ferroviaires et routiers ont été interrompus dans une grand partie de l’Archipel”; March 11).
- BBC report that “Parts of Tokyo, one of the biggest and busiest mega cities in the world, are beginning to resemble a ghost town” (March 17).
- KBS report that “the runway of the main airport of Tokyo has been flooded” (March 12).

There were also errors in the labeling of maps and the images used (RAI, March 11 and 12). However, while we did find some scattered cases of sensational or exaggerated wording in our analysis of reporting on the disaster as a whole, cases of clearly false information were rare.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT OF NEWS REPORTS BY STATION

This section outlines reporting on the disaster in the eight programs from seven countries in our study, station by station. Data on reports for (1) the first eight post-earthquake days and (2) March 14 were analyzed.

Reporting in Japan

Before analyzing the reporting of the overseas broadcasters, this section offers a picture of what was being reported in Japan at the time. From NHK's non-stop, around-the-clock disaster reporting at the time, we introduce the content of two of the major news programs of NHK on March 14, *News 7*, and *News Watch 9*, which started at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. respectively.

News 7

Soon after the usual title sequence, there was a brief comment on the casualties of the disaster in Tohoku, noting that "1,834 have died and over 15,000 are missing." The topic soon shifted to the "planned blackouts" in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Incorporating live relay broadcasts, the program covered the impact of the first rolling blackout that took place from 5 p.m.

Next were reports on the search-and-rescue operations in the tsunami-affected areas in the Tohoku region and the damage from the tsunami. Featured in introducing the plight of those gathered at the evacuation centers, the mayor of the town of Minamisanriku, SATO Jin, was reported saying, "There is no food or water. Please send food and water." The program also covered individual stories: a person in tears in front of a tsunami-destroyed home, a man in search of his missing wife, and a delighted family after a "miraculous" reunion three days after the disaster.

The program also introduced the reporting of the disaster all over the world. It also introduced the American "Operation Tomodachi" relief mission and the arrival of rescue teams from Korea, China, Germany, the U.K and other countries.

The hydrogen explosion at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in the Unit 3 reactor building received only brief mention. The announcer first explained there had been a hydrogen explosion and 11 people were injured, and then reported “the containment vessel of the reactor seems to be intact.” During the hour beginning at 7 p.m., reporting time about the nuclear power plant accident was 1 minute 13 seconds.

Later, after 8 p.m., tensions heightened when news about the No. 2 reactor at the Fukushima Daiichi plant reached the newscasters that, “the fuel rods in the reactor are fully exposed,” and “the possibility of a core meltdown cannot be denied.”

News Watch 9

Instead of the usual title sequence, the program started with a feature on the nuclear power plant accident.

First, it reported on the latest information provided by Tokyo Electric about the Unit 2 reactor, “It is possible that the fuel rod is damaged as radiation was detected.”

Soon after, Chief Cabinet Secretary EDANO Yukio held a press conference, trying to put people’s minds at ease, “we believe the situation will move towards stability as the problems are solved and water injection is [re]started.” However, newscaster OKOSHI Kensuke questioned such optimism, “When the Unit 1 and Unit 3 nuclear reactor buildings blew up, I thought the nuclear reactors were still safe. However, since they say the Unit 2 fuel rods may be fully exposed and all the water has boiled away, we cannot be optimistic just because they say they have been able to inject seawater.”

News Watch 9 devoted over 26 minutes of its 1-hour program to coverage of the nuclear power plant accident. Whenever there was news related to the power plant, the program stopped videos on other topics and prioritized the power-plant news.

The next day (March 15) at 5:35 a.m., Prime Minister KAN Naoto visited the Tokyo Electric Tokyo headquarters and reportedly issued instructions to company officials in angry tones. Explosions were heard at 6:10 a.m. at Unit 4 and at 6:14 at Unit 2 successively. It became clear that neither the government nor Tokyo Electric were in full control of the situation.

As tensions heightened from evening of the 14th to the morning of the 15th, broadcasting time in Europe and the United States was approaching.

United States (*ABC World News*)

(1) *ABC World News* First 8 Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

ABC World News allotted much of its broadcasting time to reporting on the Great East Japan Earthquake, presenting a special program called “Disaster in the Pacific” for the 7 days following the March 11 disaster. Together with the data for March 18, the average time devoted to the disaster for the 8 days reached 69.4 percent of the *ABC World News* program, the third largest proportion after TF1 (France) and KBS (Korea).

Weekend anchor David Muir arrived in Japan the day after the earthquake (March 12, Sat.) and on the 12th and 13th, he reported from the disaster zone as the on-site anchor. At the beginning of the week, ABC weekday anchor Diane Sawyer also visited the disaster zone and reported on the situation thereafter for two days. At the height of its reporting, ABC had a staff of approximately 50—including help from the Beijing and Seoul bureaus—assigned to the on-site disaster broadcasts, testifying to the emphasis the station placed on reporting on the disaster.

Entering the disaster zone and interviewing victims

On the day of the disaster, *ABC World News* consisted mainly of reporting on the earthquake and tsunami and the situation of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident using videos from NHK and Japanese commercial broadcasters. However, by the second day of the disaster, a reporter reached Sendai. On the third day, anchor Muir visited the disaster zone. He interviewed people forming lines in front of shops to obtain water and food, reported on people worried about radiation leakage, and visited the evacuation shelters and interviewed the victims of the disaster there. In addition, there were videos in which some of the victims shared food with the anchor, as well as showing people conscientiously separating trash at

shelters to praise the behavior of victims as examples of Japanese virtues.

Indirectly critical of the stance of the Japanese government

During the eight days of disaster reporting, ABC did not report any direct criticism of the Japanese government or Tokyo Electric, but there were a number of mentions of third parties criticizing the responses of the Japanese government.

On March 12, in relation to the nuclear power plant accident, an American official was quoted as saying, “The Japanese officials were very concerned about what’s going on at the nuclear power plant but they were not telling people about what they are worried. They were in fact saving face.”

On March 15, critical voices were introduced including the comment by a man in one of the evacuation shelters who said, “The government, nobody, tells us what is really happening.” ABC aired similar voices in its program broadcast on March 14 and 17.

On March 17, when the United States began its support for containing the nuclear power plant accident, the ABC program indirectly criticized the Japanese government’s attitude, introducing American officials’ comments that, along with mentioning that until now there had been no request for cooperation, said, “I think they are finally beginning to understand just how critical this is; something they didn’t seem to believe for far too long.”

Limited reporting on American citizens in Japan

News depicting the behavior and situation of American citizens in Japan in the disaster was relatively scarce. On the day of the disaster, videos on YouTube and Skype were used to introduce the earthquake experiences of American citizens residing in Japan, and on the following day, March 12, reports included telephone interviews with American citizens in Japan and American citizens in the United States who have families in Japan. On March 16, when the danger of the nuclear power plant accident started to become widely recognized, the anchor Muir returning to the United States reported from Haneda Airport about Americans fleeing Japan.

Anxiety within the U.S. regarding nuclear power plants

The U.S. has 104 nuclear reactors, the largest number of any country in the world, and the Obama administration had favored the building of nuclear power plants as a means of shifting away from reliance on fossil fuels. Against that background, ABC repeatedly reported on the safety of nuclear power plants in the U.S., and on U.S. nuclear energy policy.

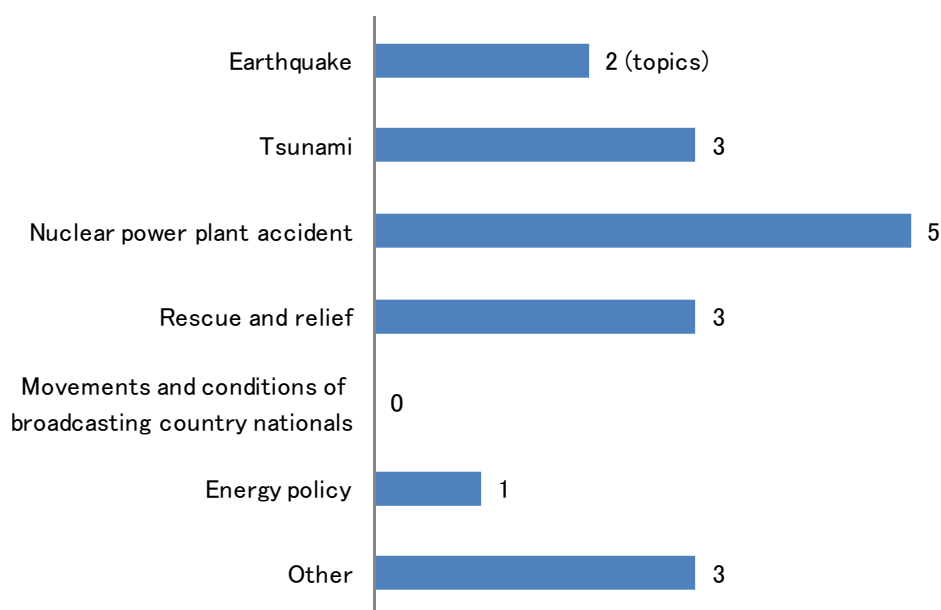
On March 13, ABC reported that the same type of nuclear reactors used at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant were installed in many nuclear power plants in the U.S., but representatives of the U.S. nuclear power industry showed confidence about safety. However, an expert stating that it was hard to tell what would happen should a tsunami of the level experienced in Japan on March 11 hit the United States was also introduced. On the 14th and 16th, there were reports stating that nuclear power plants in the U.S. are not completely safe. March 17th reports introduced voices of politicians for and against current U.S. nuclear energy policy, and it was mentioned that many experts say the nuclear power plants are safe. On the 18th, concerns regarding what would happen if there was an accident at nuclear power plants, were reported from two locations near nuclear power plants, one in a suburb of New York City and another in California.

Regarding news on nuclear power plants and nuclear energy policy, the program depicted the dangers of existing nuclear power plants, but the program maintained a balanced position by reporting the views of both sides, for and against, regarding safety and nuclear energy policy.

(2) ABC World News Reporting on March 14

On March 14 (Monday) the program's main weekday anchor Diane Sawyer began reporting live on location in Japan, and almost the entire program that day consisted of news of the disaster. Among disaster-related news topics, most (5) were news related to the nuclear power plant, next most (3) were on the tsunami, rescue and relief of victims, and the "other" (good behavior and restraint of victims, etc.) each, and then 2 topics about the earthquake (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Breakdown of Disaster-Related Topics on March 14: ABC



The top news on March 14 reported that three of the reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant had problems and that two reactors exploded (the fact is that the protective housing around the reactors exploded), spewing radioactive material into the air. It told of the critical situation at the power plant accident, including the possibility of the meltdown of the fuel rods within the reactor.

The program went on to show new footage of the tsunami and the resulting damage, and introduced the voices of some of the victims.

Regarding the nuclear accident, the program introduced a U.S. Department of Defense official's comment that "Japan's nuclear power reactors are surrounded by 6 ft. steel and concrete containment vessels so even multiple reactor meltdowns would not likely be bad as Chernobyl." In the worst-case scenario, the report added, it was possible that radioactive material could be carried through the air as far as the United States.

On this day, the increasing gravity of nuclear power plant accident was a major part of the news, but as this program had a practice of closing with a human interest story, it ended by introducing a mother and her baby who had been born just after the disaster.

United States (*PBS NewsHour*)

(1) *PBS NewsHour* First 8 Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

Here we will provide some more detail about the characteristics of *PBS NewsHour* mentioned briefly in “Targets of Analysis” above. One feature is that, in contrast to the “breaking news” featured on the news programs of the other 4 U.S. major networks and CNN, the PBS program is centered on commentary and analysis. The number of staff is limited, but given the 55 minutes of broadcasting time, it is able to present long interviews with people in the news and experts on the subject matter. While the program is highly regarded for its conscientious and easy-to-understand style, some find it monotonous and slow-paced. Even for ongoing news such as the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami disaster and the nuclear power plant accident, *PBS NewsHour* does not include live broadcasts from the site of the news. It does not have offices overseas, but transmits news from other countries produced by Independent Television News (ITN), a British news and multimedia company. The first half of the program is straight news and feature stories, and the latter half consists of interviews; there are no commercials. *PBS NewsHour* does not broadcast on weekends, so the following is an analysis of six-days’ worth of programming.

Detailed reporting; shift from earthquake/tsunami to the nuclear power plant

For the first 7 days after the earthquake, 3.11 disaster-related topics were top news and on the 8th day, the top news changed to the situation in Libya. Coverage of the earthquake/tsunami disaster and nuclear power plant accident was detailed throughout the week, taking up at the least 22 minutes of the 55-minute news hour and at most 36 minutes (March 15). The news images on March 11 (Friday) were almost entirely taken from NHK World, but starting on March 14 (Monday), on-site reports by ITN reporters were included, with detailed stories of Rikuzentakata and several other parts of the disaster zone. The program broadcast the largest number of on-site reports (6 times) on the 15th (Tuesday).

By content of the news, there were 8 earthquake-related topics and 7 tsunami-related topics, and only 3 nuclear power plant on March 11; on the 14th, with 5 each about the

earthquake and tsunami and 4 about the nuclear power plant and the 15th, 5 on the earthquake and 4 each on the tsunami and nuclear power plant, about the same number each. From the 16th, however, topics about the nuclear power plant were the most numerous and on the 18th all five topics were news about the plant. For the six days of reporting analyzed, it was found that 51 percent of the entire program's broadcast time was devoted to 3.11-disaster-related news.

Disaster reporting is on-site and nuclear power plant commentary-centered

On the day of the disaster, the features of *PBS NewsHour* reporting were commentary on images broadcast from Japan and multiple interviews with American reporters based in Japan conducted via the Internet-telephone service Skype. The use of Skype, because of its economy and mobility, has recently come into rapidly increased use in U.S. news programming. After that, news regarding the earthquake and the destruction from the tsunami was based mainly on ITN reports from the disaster zone; regarding the nuclear power plant, reporting centered mainly on commentary and interviews with scholars and other experts in the studio.

In reporting from the disaster site in American news programs, the reporter or newscaster is almost always on screen, his or her presence leading the camera, but the images from ITN foreground the site itself or the victims/evacuees, with the reporter rarely appearing on screen. Moreover, American reports were generally very short, at about 1 to 1-and-a-half minutes, but ITN reporting devoted 3 to 4 minutes per topic, telling about conditions in the disaster zone in detail. A total of 16 reports from the site were broadcast on *PBS NewsHour* during that eight-day period of its reporting the week following the disaster. Of those 16, 10 were related to the earthquake and tsunami and 6 concerned the nuclear power plant accident. The programs during this 8-day period, regarding the earthquake and tsunami, consisted mainly of detailed reports by journalists in the disaster zone showing the huge amount of damage, and regarding the nuclear power plant mainly using images from the Japanese media about the destruction and contamination. The only original report by the ITN crew in Japan was covering of a case of people who fled to the western part of Japan following the accident

at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

Information from a variety of commentators

Some 15 people were interviewed on *PBS NewsHour* in the one-week (5 day) period, an average of 3 interviews per day. Those interviewed included (in order of appearance on the program) a Japanese studies specialist, specialist in earthquake-resistant architecture, specialist on tsunami, leader of a humanitarian relief NPO, the under-secretary-general of the United Nations, a PBS science reporter, specialist on radiation, economics journal reporter, former high official in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), energy reporter, nuclear power generation engineer, specialist on nuclear fusion, radiation technology specialists, and so on, with all the interviews in the latter half of the period devoted to the nuclear power plant. The interviews are fairly long for each person at 4 to 5 minutes, asking numerous questions and obtaining a considerable amount of valuable information. Rather than criticizing the responses of the Japanese government or Tokyo Electric, the impression of the reporting is of a stance seeking to provide listeners with multifaceted information by talking to as many specialist as possible.

As mentioned above, the United States has the largest number of nuclear reactors (104) in the world, but while the program reported the news that President Barack Obama ordered safety checks at all nuclear power plants in the United States and that the Secretary of the U.S Department of Energy declared that the United States should apply the lessons learned from the disaster in Japan (both news on March 16), the news was not presented in such a fashion as to suggest that the United States should review its own nuclear power generation policy.

Throughout this eight-day period, *PBS NewsHour* adhered to its policy of providing objective facts.

(2) *PBS NewsHour* Reporting on March 14

The two days, March 14 and 15, when the nuclear power plant accident added to the earthquake and tsunami disaster, were the climax of PBS reporting on the so-called “compound” 3.11 disaster. On the 14th, 31 minutes were devoted to disaster-related news (3

on-site reports and 4 interviews); on the 15th, 36 minutes were devoted to the news with as many as 6 on-site reports and 3 interviews. Of the two days, the 14th was the first chance that the program, which does not air on the weekends, had to show the scale of the earthquake disaster and shocking images of the tsunami that had come in over the weekend.

The program opened with nearly five minutes of video footage of the massive tsunami damage, search-and-rescue activities, the evacuation shelters, the two explosions at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, and the arrival of relief teams from other countries. Following were reports by ITN reporters from the disaster zone in Rikuzentakata, Minamisanriku, Kesenuma, and Ishinomaki, all showing vividly the situation right after the disaster. Next were interviews with representatives of NPO groups and the United Nations, with each person emphasizing the urgency of getting relief to the disaster zone. Then, after reporting on the situation in Libya and other non-disaster-related news, in the latter half of the program two interviews (commentary) were broadcast relating to the nuclear accident. One was an explanation of the nuclear accident by a PBS reporter specializing in scientific topics, using computer-graphic illustrations of the interior of the reactor, then taking up the possibility of damage to the reactor and presenting a detailed account of past nuclear power plant accidents such as those at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. In the second interview, with the director of the Columbia University Center for Radiological Research who was asked for his assessment of the situation and future of the Fukushima nuclear power plant as well as the differences and similarities between Japan's nuclear power plants and those in the United States. The two interviews together took up about 10 minutes. On this same day, while US broadcaster ABC had sent its own reporters to Japan and was broadcasting live from the city of Koriyama in Fukushima prefecture, PBS programming centered on specialists interviewed in its studios.

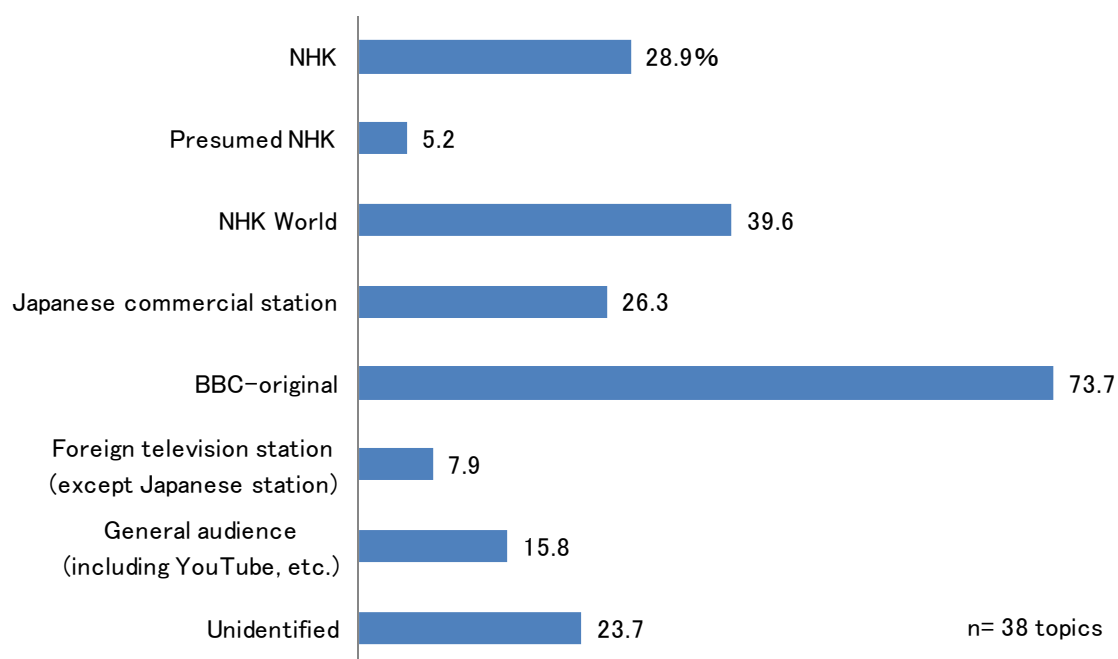
Of 16 news topics presented on *PBS NewsHour* on March 14, 8 were devoted to disaster-related news, taking up 58 percent of broadcasting time. Among other news, 20 percent concerned international affairs, 13 percent society, and 9 percent politics, the economy, and other topics.

United Kingdom (*BBC News at Ten*)

(1) *BBC News at Ten* First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

The BBC has only one permanent correspondent, Roland Buerk, in Tokyo, but after the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, correspondents were brought in from Beijing, Singapore, and other locations nearby to report the news of the disaster for a crew totaling 52. Buerk himself covered mainly Tokyo and the vicinity of the Fukushima power plant, while the reporters from other areas reported on the other disaster areas hit by the tsunami. During the three days immediately after the earthquake, the program consisted mainly of a dialogue between the main anchorperson in London and the BBC reporters in Japan, but from the 14th, the BBC reporters in Japan were linked to an on-site anchor stationed in the disaster zone. Commentary by experts on tidal waves and nuclear power was produced in London and inserted where needed in the program. With this large-scale set-up, the BBC showed more than 70 percent images that were self-produced for 38 disaster-related topics (see figure 10).

Figure 10. Sources of Images used in BBC Disaster-Related News During 8-Day Period



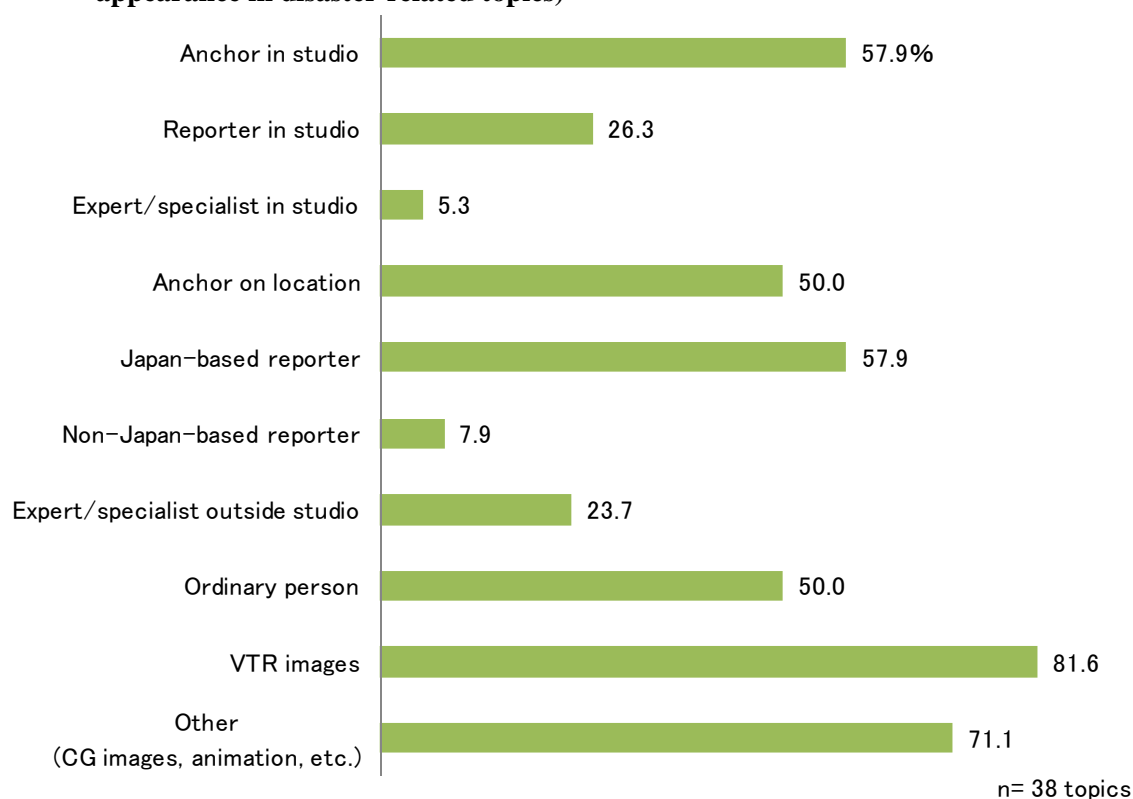
Disaster-related news predominant

News relating to the disaster in Japan occupied a predominant part of the program during this week, taking up 45.7 percent of total broadcasting time. International news other than that relating to Japan held the next-largest share of time at 24.7 percent, focusing on Libya, Bahrain, and the Middle East situation. The breakdown of disaster-related news was 21 topics relating to the nuclear power plant, 18 relating to the tsunami, and 15 relating to the earthquake.

Realistic feel of original reporting from the disaster zone

The characteristic of BBC news reporting on the disaster was the succession of original reports of conditions of the disaster by several correspondents on site including direct interviews with victims (Figure 11). These reports were mainly human-interest stories focusing on personal experiences of individual victims and using footage that showed their interviews and the physical and mental distress they had suffered.

Figure 11. Composition of BBC Disaster-Related News During 8-Day Period (percentage of appearance in disaster-related topics)



Arriving in Sendai (Miyagi prefecture) from his post in Beijing on March 12, BBC correspondent Damian Grammaticus reported on the miserable condition of the coastal area of Sendai and later had coverage of the Yuriage district of the city of Natori (south of Sendai), Ishinomaki (north of Sendai), and Miyako (Iwate prefecture). His March 14 report began “The road to Yuriage. It’s a journey to a place no longer there” introducing a Mr. Suzuki searching for mementos among the debris and a Mr. Watanabe searching for his father and grandfather—interspersed with interviews—and closed with the comment “it seems impossible that life can ever return to Yuriage.” On the 15th, he reported on the life of a Ms. Kamata and her family in Sendai, where, on top of the destruction from the tsunami, people were worried about the leakage of radiation from the Fukushima nuclear power plant and the stoppage of supplies as the shortage of gasoline brought the distribution system to a halt. His report on the 16th begins with scenes in Natori of the bowling alley that has been converted into a makeshift mortuary for the dead and shows another Mr. Suzuki, who is searching for his missing wife while taking comfort in his two small children, who survived. At the site where she went missing, the reporter relays—with explanatory gestures—a witness’s account of how just as she had brought the children to safety, she was swept away by the tsunami. Grammaticus’s March 18 report, beginning with an image of the quiet waters lapping at the beach off Miyako and the words, “It’s hard to believe it now . . . the way these waters rose . . . devouring all before them” exudes the atmosphere of the Buddhist idea of “the transience of all things” as he compares the quiet landscape with the destruction that took place just a week before. This report, too, includes two victims describing their experiences with the tsunami.

Figure 12. Origins of Reporting

March 11 (Fri.)	Tokyo, Sendai, Osaka
March 12 (Sat.)	Sendai, Tokyo
March 13 (Sun.)	Sendai, Minamisanriku, Tokyo
March 14 (Mon.)	Sendai, Koriyama, Natori, Kesenuma
March 15 (Tues.)	Tokyo, Sendai
March 16 (Wed.)	Tokyo, Natori
March 17 (Thurs.)	Tokyo, Yamagata, Ishinomaki
March 18 (Fri.)	Tokyo, Miyako

The comments not only of Damian Grammaticus, introduced here, but all of the BBC correspondents reporting from the disaster zone expressed their candid impressions of the overwhelming sight of the devastation and the plight of the survivors.

Nuclear power plant reporting revealed irritation

On March 15, the fourth day after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident, in accordance with instructions from the home government, the BBC pulled its reporters back to locations 80 kilometers away from the plant. As a result, the news on the nuclear power plant, which had the highest frequency of appearance in the disaster-related news during the first eight-day period consisted of reports delivered live from Tokyo or commentary made in the studio in London. On the 15th, a report showing ordinary citizens of the city of Minamisoma and Mayor SAKURAI Katsunobu describing the plight of the city, but the images used were by the Yamaji Toru's Asia Press Front agency with voice-over by a BBC reporter.

News about the nuclear power plant over the eight-day period can be divided into two as the situation worsened. From the 11th to the 14th, while reporting on voices of Japanese concerned about what was happening at the plant, the program preserved a delicate balance, with concern and distrust of the Japanese government response counterbalanced by views of U.K. experts such as: On the 12th the U.K. experts were saying, "At the moment there has been a small amount of radioactivity coming out with the steam from the (melted) broken fuel. As long as they don't lose the core cooling, that will be the case, there will not be the public health hazard" (March 12); "From I've seen coming from the authority so far, I don't think this is an issue people will be worrying about." (March 13). On the 15th, however, that stance changed quickly; the program candidly expressed distrust in the information being provided by Tokyo Electric and the Japanese government and irritation that the media could not accurately grasp the truth of the situation. The reporter serving as on-site anchor in Tokyo stated at the beginning of the program: "This is the capital city that really fears the massive events that simply cannot control and introduced a Japanese complaining of dissatisfaction with the authorities. This sequence may have been designed to express the station's own sentiments, and the comment was added that "It's hardly surprising that Japan's famous

stoicism is starting to slip, [to] be replaced by anger” (March 15).

(2) March 14 Reporting

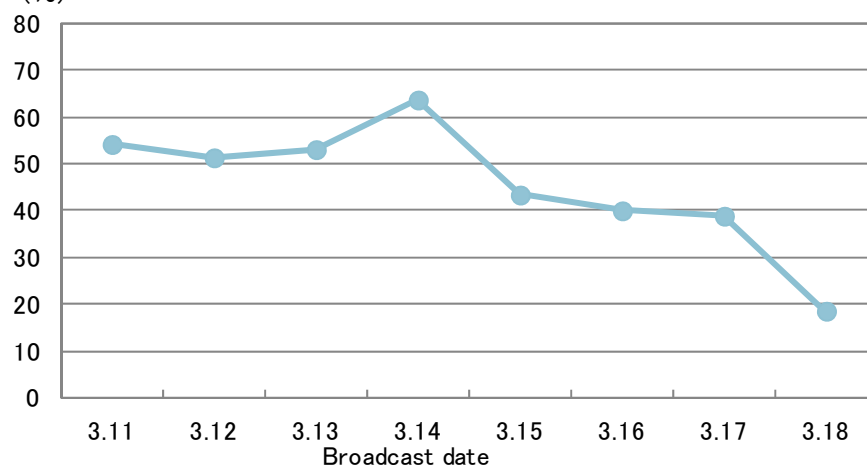
The viewer rating for *BBC News at Ten* on this day was 26.3 percent (5.31 million). Adding the viewer rating for the commercial station *ITV News at Ten and Weather* program it appears that 40.4 percent of people in the U.K. were viewing television news about the disaster in Japan.

Anchors at the Disaster Site and Multifaceted Reporting

From March 14 through 17, the BBC had an anchorman on-site in Japan and on the 14th, veteran world news reporter George Alagiah served as anchor in Sendai. On that day, disaster-related news occupied the greatest proportion (63.7 percent) of the *BBC News at Ten* program during the first eight days after the quake, and the breakdown of topics in the news was extremely diverse, and reporting from the disaster zone peaked (see Figures 12 and 13). Regarding the nuclear power plant accident, the program broadcast comments from the U.K. government chief scientific advisor and, from London, by a specialist, who reported about the impact of the nuclear power plant accident on the U.K. energy policy, but both assessments were limited to objective remarks. This nuclear power plant issue was taken up on the morning of 14 March by BBC Radio 4’s flagship news program *Today* and on the BBC *Newsonline*, but the discussion did not touch upon the pros and cons of nuclear power. The United Kingdom has 19 reactors operating in nuclear power plants around the country and has listed eight locations around the country where it can build nuclear power plants by 2025, and at that point there had been no debate about energy policy, including nuclear power plant construction, between the opposition and ruling parties.

Figure 13. Proportion of Disaster-Related News Broadcast by BBC

Proportion of disaster-related news topics
in program time
(%)



The news on March 14 ended with Alagiah's comment that "I've been talking to some of the people who are playing a crucial part in keeping their families and their communities together in the challenging time," expressing the solidarity and spirit of helping each other that he observed around him.

France (TFI *Journal Télévisé 20 heures*)

(1) Journal Télévisé 20 heures First 8 Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

Interest in reporting on the disaster in Japan was high and the subject occupied the highest proportion of the news during this period among the countries studied. France is a leading nuclear power nation with 58 nuclear reactors that generate 75 percent of electricity used in the country. Perhaps for this reason, interest was high in France after the 3.11 disaster, especially in what was happening following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. In terms of the order of the news in the program, the disaster in Japan was at the top of the news for the entire first week after the quake, and it was only on the 18th that the top spot was taken over by the UN resolution initiated by France and other countries on armed intervention in the situation in Libya. During the one month after the quake, Japanese

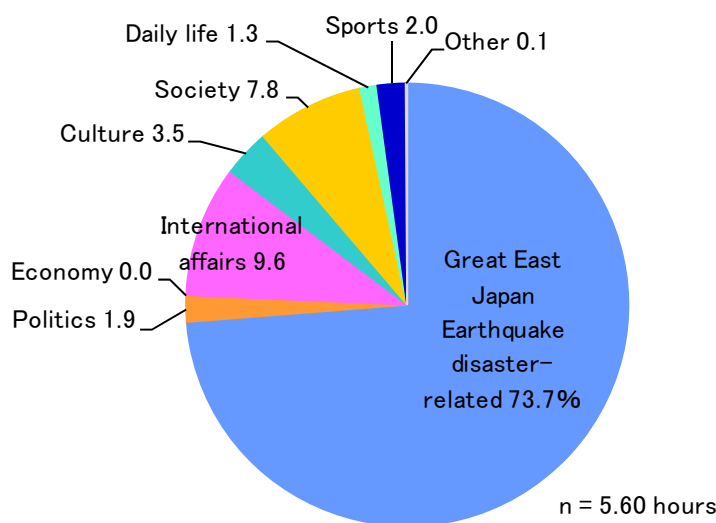
disaster-related news was top news for 16 days.

In terms of the breakdown of time allotted for topics during the program as well, the proportion occupied by disaster-related news was very large during this week. On the 11th, the day of the earthquake, it was 84.9 percent; on March 15, as tensions over control of the reactors rose to a high pitch, disaster-related content extended over 92.9 percent of the program. During the eight-day period ending March 18, the average percentage of disaster-related news on the TF1 news program was 73.7 percent (see Figure 14), the highest proportion in any of the eight programs in our study.

Looking at the breakdown of disaster-related content, we find that the vast majority (87 topics) were related to the nuclear power plant accident; the next largest number (55) were about the earthquake, followed by the tsunami (45), rescue and relief (24), movements and conditions of broadcaster nationals in Japan (11).

Regarding presentation of the news, the program did not field an on-site anchorman or make any other clear changes in its usual format. Information about the nuclear power plant accident, the spread of radioactive material from the plant, and other topics was provided in the studio by experts or journalists specializing in the subject. The source of video images during the first eight days was mainly from NHK World and the proportion of this subject in the 3.11 disaster-related news was as high as 43.4 percent.

Figure 14. Breakdown of TF1 *Journal Télévisé 20 heures* News Broadcast during the Eight-Day Period After the Quake



Admiration for Victims and Power Plant Workers

Now let us look more closely at the content of TF1 *Journal Télévisé 20 heures* broadcasting during that first eight-day period. Reporting on the disaster zone and the victims relied on interviews, and in most cases tended to follow an almost stereotyped image of Japanese as calm, patient, and persevering. On the 11th a French traveler was quoted as saying, “Seeing how calm Japanese have been [about all this] is something I find both a little strange and also admirable.” On the 12th, the program quoted the observation of a French chef who resides in Japan, “Japanese have a strength one doesn’t find in others. They control their emotions and they can change that into energy. I think they are very noble.”

There was a tendency, on the other hand, to elevate the engineers and workers who were trying to deal with the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident to the status of heroes. On the 16th, the newscaster asked the director of the Protection and Nuclear Safety Institute (Institut de Radioprotection et de Sûreté Nucléaire; IRSN), “Under what conditions are the 50 technicians working at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant?” The director answered in the studio, “They are risking their lives in the worst-possible situation. The radiation level has far surpassed international safety levels, so they go in in teams that rotate in short stints. What they are attempting is quite admirable.”

Impatience with Japanese government response

By contrast, however, the program’s stance vis-à-vis the Japanese government was quite critical. On the 13th, a reporter speaking about the nuclear power plant situation from Japan said “Why is all this so hypothetical and ambiguous? Because the Japanese government has made very little information open to the public.” On the 15th, furthermore, the reporter’s impatience had further escalated, “One thing is certain to me, after being in Fukushima for three days, is that the Japanese government cannot deal with the nuclear accident or protect the Japanese people from it.” On the 18th, however, in response to the question from a newscaster in the studio, “Does the Japanese side not have much information? Or are they just not making information available to the outside?” the chairman of a nuclear energy safety organization expressed the view defending the standpoint of nuclear energy safety officials in

Japan by saying “For the electric company and [Japan’s] nuclear energy safety officials, top priority is on dealing with the crisis, not on providing information to outside parties. I do not believe they have any intention of covering up anything. It is just very difficult to make public statements about this kind of thing.”

Implications for energy policy, cautious reporting

As for how the program presented France’s own energy policy, on the 16th, the newscaster put out the question: “Prompted by the Fukushima [accident], voices of skepticism regarding the path on nuclear power that France has chosen have grown vigorous once more. Is there a path for our society without nuclear energy?” However, France’s energy policy made up only 8.5 percent of disaster-related news during the first eight-day period after the quake, a third of the figure for Germany, which sharply turned away from reliance on nuclear power generation. In the backdrop of France’s reporting on the subject is the difficulty of shifting to alternative energy in a country that has come to rely on nuclear power plants for as much as 75 percent of its electricity supply.

Some statements were made on the program that could be construed as misleading or mistaken. “Panic is spreading in the metropolitan [Tokyo] area with its population of 35,000,000. Women and children are leaving the city” (program newscaster). Such statements may have come from overemphasizing the seriousness of the impact of the disaster.

(2) Journal Télévisé 20 heures Reporting on March 14

The program broadcast on this day was extended by 8 minutes to 43 minutes and 30 seconds and disaster-related news took up 76.2 percent of broadcasting time, the second-largest proportion after U.S. broadcaster ABC which had newscasters in the disaster zone. Among disaster-related topics in the news, the largest number (13) related to the nuclear power plant accident.

On this day, following the previous explosion at the Fukushima Daiichi No. 1 reactor building, an explosion occurred in the structure housing the No. 3 reactor. The program featured an in-studio dialogue between the newscaster and science journalist Fabrice Collaro,

who is a specialist on nuclear power, who explained what was going on in Japan through a dialogue with the newscaster. Using computer graphic images, the program reported on why the explosion had taken place and what conditions inside the nuclear reactor were presumed to be. From the 12th onward, Collaro appeared on the program every day, commenting on every development regarding the Fukushima plant.

Indirect criticism of the stance of the Japanese government

The program criticized the response of the Japanese government on the 14th as well. “People living in the vicinity of the plant are worried. They are worried about the leakage and spread of radioactivity, but on that subject the Japanese government has said nothing (newscaster),” “Until yesterday, people in Fukushima believed the official announcements. But since the explosions, we have been hearing more local people express their doubts about official government pronouncements (reporter).” Thus the program introduced the voices of victims in the area as a form of its indirect critique of the Japanese government’s handling of the situation.

Nuclear Power in France and the State of French Energy Policy

On this day, the fourth day after the earthquake, the program featured a segment covering the history and current state of nuclear power generation in France. Reporters discussed the condition of the country’s 58 nuclear reactors, the aging of some reactors, safety policy, policies to safeguard against earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and so forth, and evacuation drills.

What about energy policy? While reporting on a demonstration by ecologists calling for a national vote on nuclear power generation, the program reported that President Nicolas Sarkozy had stated to members of the ruling party that French nuclear power plants were the safest in the world and abandoning nuclear power was “out of the question.” On this issue, the program presented the news in a fashion balancing both the pro and con perspectives, apparently taking special care not to be seen as taking a stand on either side. Apparently the station had in mind that nuclear energy would become an issue in the presidential election to take place in the spring of 2012.

Ending with Message for Japan

The program on March 14 ended with a feature somewhat different from the usual. As the ending theme music played, the screen showed a series of messages for the victims of the disaster in Japan sent to the station by listeners: “We, too, mourn the loss of so many proud and conscientious people,” “Great disasters like this bring people closer together. Together with the help of countries all over the world, Japan will rebuild itself.” And the program ended with these messages.

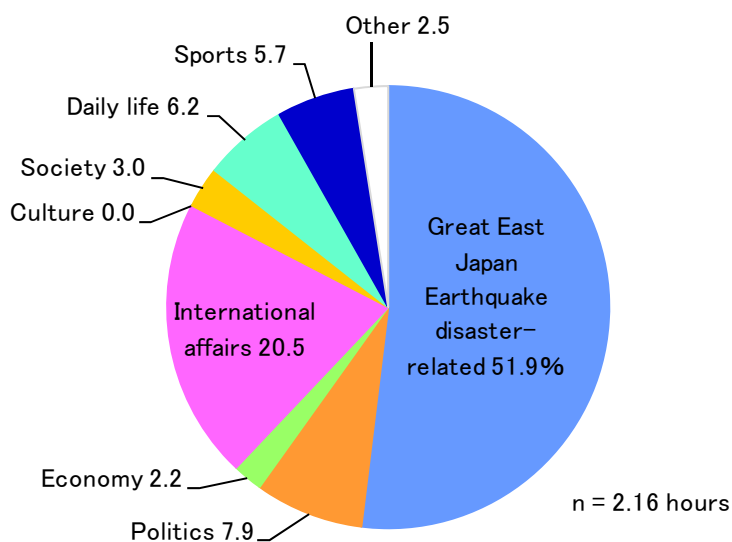
Germany (ARD *Tagesschau*)

ARD’s *Tagesschau* (“view of the day”) is a 15-minute program delivering a compact overview of the day’s news. The style of the program is mainly straight reading by the newscaster. Correspondents’ reports are included, but reporters and commentators do not appear in the studio. To provide more in-depth content about topics presented in *Tagesschau*, ARD has a 30-minute news program called *Tagesthemen*, which is broadcast each evening after 10:00 p.m. *Tagesthemen* presents background information and commentary/analysis on important news topics, but we have not included an analysis of its reporting in this report.

(1) ARD *Tagesschau* First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

Even within the compact program designed to present a balanced overview of many different kinds of news, disaster-related news was given a high level of priority (figure 15). The proportion of the time devoted to disaster-related news in the total broadcasting time of *Tagesschau* for the eight-day period from March 11 to 18 was 51.9 percent, fourth highest after TF1 (France), KBS (Korea), and ABC (U.S.). News about Libya and Middle Eastern affairs was also a focus of attention, and yet the international affairs-related news occupied only 20.5 percent of broadcasting time on the program.

Figure 15. Breakdown of ARD *Tagesschau* News Broadcast during the Eight-Day Period after the Quake

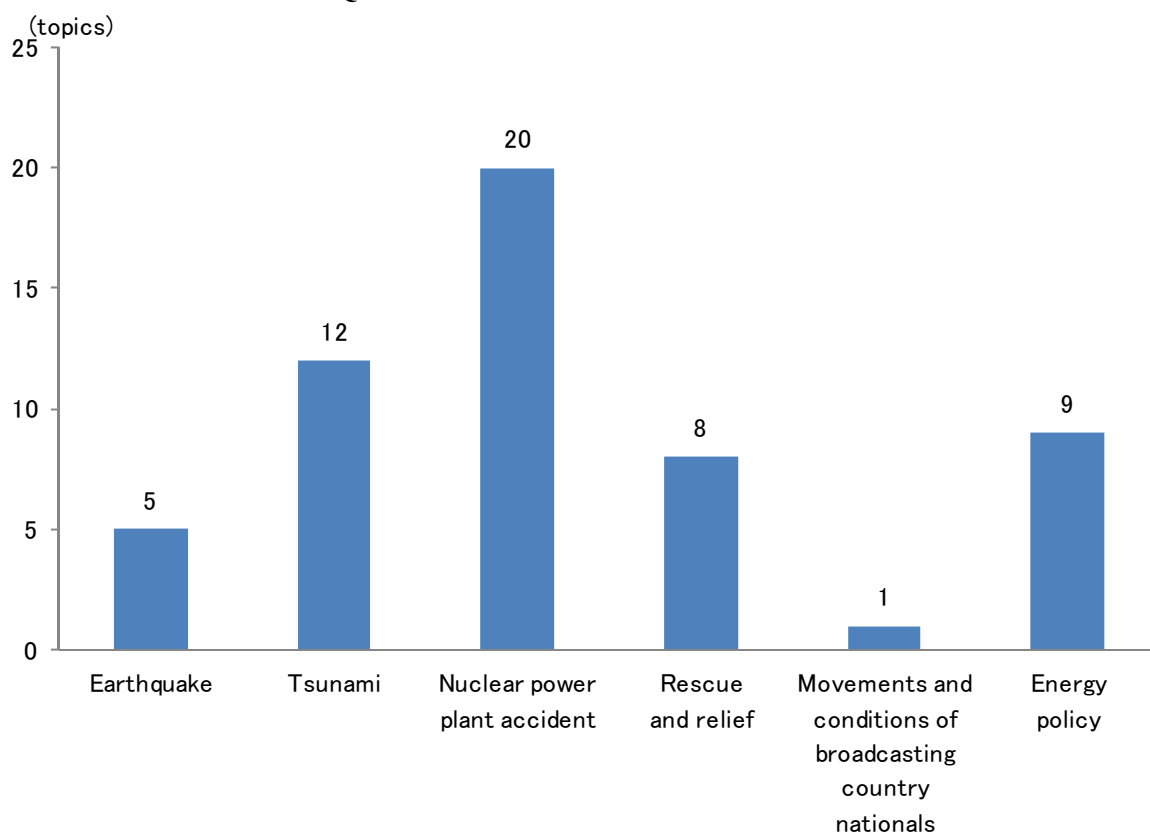


In terms of the order of the news, the disaster held the top position from the 11th to 17th, giving way to the situation in Libya on the 18th. On the 18th, disaster-related news fell to 7th position, but the opening of the program showed images of people praying in silence in Japan on the occasion of the one-week anniversary of the disaster.

Accident at Fukushima plant and Germany's move away from nuclear power

Looking at the breakdown of the content of disaster-related news for the eight-day period, the largest number of topics (20) related to the nuclear power plant and a large proportion of topics (9) also related to news regarding Germany's domestic energy policy (see figure 16).

Figure 16. Number of Topics in ARD *Tagesschau* Disaster-related News during the Eight-Day Period after the Quake



The reason for the large proportion of nuclear power plant and energy-policy related news taken up on *Tagesschau* is that the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant caused the German government to change its energy policy. Already, in 2002, during the time of the coalition government of Social Democratic Party and Green Party, Germany had passed a law determining to cease use of all its nuclear power plants by 2022. The current (as of July 2012) administration headed by the Christian Democratic Party, which came to power in 2009, however, reviewed that policy and in December 2010 the law was revised to phase out nuclear power generation by 2036. When the disaster in Japan and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant occurred only months after that decision, public opinion turned sharply against nuclear power. Under those circumstances, chancellor Angela Merkel was forced to reverse the decision that had just been made.

News about energy policy began on March 12 and continued each day of this one-week period. The news on the 12th reported on how the explosion at the No. 1 unit of the Fukushima plant had quickly rekindled debate on nuclear power generation in Germany and

showed film of a demonstration of 60,000 people calling for early phasing out of nuclear energy. And it introduced chancellor Merkel's statement indicating the need to consider a prudent change of policy, saying that if even in Japan, with its high level of safety standards, a nuclear power plant accident caused by an earthquake or tsunami cannot be avoided, it would be impossible for Germany to keep on going as if nothing had happened.

Of the total broadcasting time of 67 minutes 12 seconds of disaster-related news during the eight days, 69.8 percent related to the situation in Japan and 30.2 percent concerned nuclear power plants and energy policy in Germany sparked by the disaster.

Objective and accurate reporting

Having newscasters give on-site reports is not part of the style of the *Tagesschau* program, but reports from correspondents in either Tokyo or Osaka were included on seven of the eight days of this period. There were, however, two reports from the disaster site on the 15th (Kirikiri area of the town of Otsuchi in Iwate prefecture) and on the 16th (Taro area of the city of Miyako, Iwate prefecture).

Reporting was very accurate, with nothing that could be called false information during the eight days. There was also no particular dramatization of the content or exaggeration of what was happening. While there was no exaggeration, comments by a reporter regarding the response on March 16 to the nuclear power plant accident seemed to emphasize a pessimistic stance. The comments included expressions like "responses to the accident seem to be somewhat makeshift and desperate," "the technology is inadequate; a situation that has rendered humans powerless," "We hope that the damage will be limited to the local region and not reach as far as Tokyo and the metropolitan area, but there is no guarantee that will be the case."

(2) *Tagesschau* Reporting on March 14

The proportion of time devoted to news about the disaster occupied 66.5 percent of the program's broadcasting time on this date, the largest amount of the eight-day period. However, the report consisted of a straight recounting of the facts little different from the composition and tone of other days of the news.

The top news was about the nuclear power plant, taking up 2 minutes 27 seconds of the 15 minute 29 second program. Beginning with the explosion at the No. 3 unit, the report said that what had exploded was the concrete walls of the housing structure and that the reactor vessel itself was believed to be undamaged; images of the press conference given by (then) Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano Yukio were also shown. Next, video footage was aired showing newspaper extras about the explosion at the No. 3 unit being handed out in front of Shinbashi station in Tokyo, and the program stated, “People are eager to obtain the latest information, but in Tokyo, 250 kilometers south of the power plant, all is fairly calm.”

Next was 2 minutes 54 seconds of news about the damage from the tsunami and rescue activities. The overall damage from the tsunami was gradually becoming clear and many bodies were being found. The report told of the fading hope with each passing day of finding more survivors. Finally, the reporter in Tokyo said that the greatest concern was now what was happening at the No. 2 unit at the power plant. The government was saying it was safe, but “Given the level of bungling revealed so far, who can really believe what is being said?”

Korea (*KBS News 9*)

KBS News 9, the news program with the highest viewer rating in the Republic of Korea, is broadcast for one hour on weekdays and 40 minutes on weekends, but after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, it added a 5-minute extension on weekdays and 20-minute extension on weekends. The number of topics carried on the program each day, at between 39 and 46 topics, was much larger than any of the other news programs examined in our study during the eight-day period beginning with the day of the disaster.

(1) *KBS News 9* First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

For the period March 11 to 18, the total broadcast time for the eight days was 8 hours, 19 minutes and 12 seconds, and of that amount, news about the Great East Japan Earthquake took up about three-fourths of the total, at 6 hours, 4 minutes and 32 seconds (omitting the 10

minutes 47 seconds of presentation of headlines). In terms of the order of the news, after the explosion that occurred at the Fukushima Daiichi No. 1 unit the afternoon of the 12th, nuclear power plant news became the top news, even over news of the earthquake and tsunami, from then on. After that, earthquake and tsunami-related news was again treated as top news but after the series of explosions at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, on the 16th all the 17 top topics related to the nuclear power plant and from that time onward, news of the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster was focused on content relating to the nuclear power plant [and other related news].

Reporting shows tendency to exaggeration

News relating to the Great East Japan Earthquake was extremely detailed, but the expressions used in reporting, along with the music and sound-effects frequently used, tended to be subjective and exaggerate the worry and concern. Some examples of such expressions were:

“One of the strongest earthquakes in recorded history, continuing for about 5 minutes, reduced the Japanese archipelago to rubble” (March 12)

“Terrible earthquake reduces Miyagi prefecture to ruins” (March 13)

“With radioactive material detected in many places, the city of Iwaki, population 340,000, has been becoming a ghost town.” (March 15)

“Tokyo looks like it has gone back 100 years in history” (March 15)

Mounting dissatisfaction with the Japanese government

While at first, the program was busy enough just with reporting on the situation in the disaster zone, from around the 16th, it began to mention the rising voices criticizing the response of the Japanese government and voices from international society concerned about the insufficiency of information made available to the public.

Independent reporting about conditions of North and South Korean nationals in Japan

Figures for foreign residents in Japan with citizenship in either the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or the Republic of Korea (ROK) showed that in 2010 there were 1,105 in Iwate prefecture, 4,407 in Miyagi prefecture, 1,994 in Fukushima prefecture, and 5,780 in Ibaraki prefecture, or more than 10,000 in the four prefectures hit hardest by the disaster. For this reason, from 2 to 4 topics regarding the movements and conditions of Korean nationals were taken each day during this period. And although much of disaster-related news was drawn from NHK news, it reported on independently gathered news relating to North and South Koreans in Japan, news relating to their survival or confirmation of death. One report dealt with a South Korean man who had taken shelter at the Korean consulate after the quake in Sendai, who was searching for his missing wife (Japanese).

Are Korean nuclear power plants safe?

The program's reporting on South Korea's own energy policy indicated there was great interest in the safety of the nuclear power plants then in operation in the country. Although squeezed into limited time because of [to large amount of] reporting about the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant news from within Japan, the broadcast on the 16th, responding to the explosions at the Fukushima plant, included two reports from science reporters appearing in the studio under the title "Emergency Inspections: Are Korea's Nuclear Power Plants Safe?" The first report concerned the state of Korea's early-generation nuclear power plants, stating that some of the 21 reactors in operation in the country had been built in the 1970s and were operating beyond their design lifespan and that their use had been extended after thorough safety checks of their design. The report also mentioned that more than 640 cases of large and small problems have been reported. The second report, "24-hour Emergency: Inspection of Safety" said that the [South] Korean government had strengthened its supervision of the country's nuclear power plants, but because of the possibility of earthquakes and tsunami of greater force than envisioned in the design criteria for the plants, it had been determined that Korean plants could not withstand a tsunami of over 10 meters such as had hit Japan and reinforcement of infrastructure was under study.

(2) *KBS News 9* Reporting on March 14

KBS News 9 on March 14 lasted one hour, 3 minutes and 22 seconds and was composed of 41 topics including headlines. Of these, the top 29 topics were Great East Japan disaster-related, occupying 45 minutes 48 seconds of broadcasting time. After four unrelated topics were reported, the reports returned to disaster-related content, including the effect of the earthquake on the stock market, concerns about the supply of fisheries-related products from Japan, and other topics.

Disaster-related news on this day prioritized earthquake- and tsunami-related topics, repeating over and over the scenes of the tsunami swallowing up towns along the Japanese coastline. It then reported on the instability of the electricity supply and conditions under the “planned blackouts” begun on the 14th—the first time such had been necessary since the end of World War II—in order to prevent large-scale blackouts. Following the first explosion of at the Fukushima nuclear plant, the emergency step had been taken to use seawater as coolant, but the explosion at the No. 3 unit occurred the morning of the 14th. Under the title “Another Explosion at the Nuclear Power Plant: Fears of Increased Levels of Radioactivity,” the program broadcast news of the explosions at the plant and the measuring of local people for exposure to radioactivity.

As of the 14th, reporting about Japan was favorable and sympathetic. For example, one report described the hidden strength of Japanese who look out for others even when they themselves are in great distress, and another how the Japanese media systems for emergency broadcasting and the efficient systems for collaboration between the Japanese government and broadcasters seemed to have helped to mitigate the disaster. It also introduced as a news topic an advertisement for a special live-broadcast KBS program to be held the following day (March 15) in collaboration with the Korean Red Cross as a fund-raising event in support of victims of the disaster in Japan.

Italy (RAI TGI ore 20:00)

Before analyzing the reporting of the Italian news program, let us look briefly at the history of nuclear power generation in Italy. Following the serious nuclear power plant accident in the former Soviet Union at Chernobyl in 1986, Italy closed all its nuclear power plants and abandoned domestic generation of nuclear energy. The decision to do so was based on a national referendum held in 1987, and by 1990, Italy had shut down the three plants that had been in operation and ceased to rely on nuclear power. However, the previous Silvio Berlusconi administration (2008-2011) switched to a policy of reopening the nuclear power plants, and in February 2010 a Cabinet decision was made regarding relevant laws and moves were begun toward reopening the plants by 2020. Opposition party forces opposed to nuclear power generation, meanwhile, gathered signatures in support of holding another national referendum, and the schedule was set for a vote to be taken on the question on June 12 and 13, 2011. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident occurred in the run-up to this referendum. The turnout in the June referendum was 54.8 percent, reaching the necessary quorum, with 94 percent of the vote for “rejecting nuclear power” in Italy.

(1) TGI ore 20:00 First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

RAI does not usually have a correspondent stationed in Japan, but from the day after the disaster, March 12, it sent out two reporters, who transmitted live reports to RAI from Tokyo and Osaka; the program did not feature reports from the disaster zone, however.

In terms of the order of the news, disaster-related news took the top position for six days in a row until the 16th. The 17th, the top spot was taken by the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, which fell on that day, and from the 18th onward, the Libyan situation occupied the top of the news for some time. In the breakdown of broadcasting time on the program as well, disaster-related news accounted for 42.2 percent on the first day, and a high average of 40.7 percent for the first six days, gradually slimming down to 25.1 percent on the 17th and 12.1 percent on the 18th.

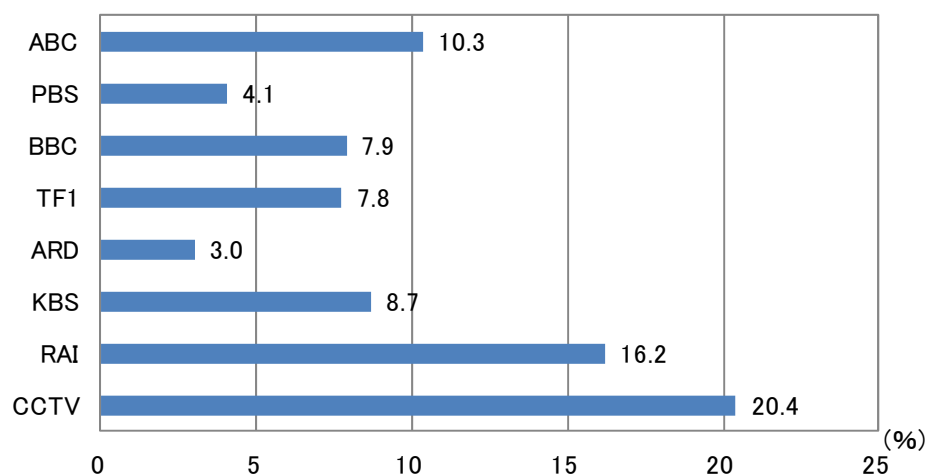
No invited expert commentary

In the breakdown of topics relating to the disaster for the whole eight-day period after the earthquake, the largest quantity (27.9 percent) related to the Fukushima nuclear power plant; next to the earthquake at 25.0 percent, to the tsunami at 17.6 percent, to the movements and conditions of broadcasting country (Italian) nationals at 16.2 percent, to rescue and relief at 8.8 percent, and to energy policy 4.4 percent. From the 15th onward, the proportion of topics relating to the nuclear power plant was by far the largest. Reports from the disaster zone mainly consisted of images from NHK or Japanese commercial broadcasters with voice-over narration by RAI added. Regarding the details of the nuclear reactor, for example, RAI used the NHK World images as they were, attaching their own narration for explanation, but there were no cases of specialists on nuclear energy invited to the studio to provide expert insight or comment.

Detailed reporting on movements of own country nationals

Distinctive to the RAI program, was the highest percentage, among the U.S. and European stations, of reporting relating to the “movements and conditions of [Italian] nationals” (see figure 17).

Figure 17. Proportion of Items on “Movements and Conditions of Broadcasting Country Nationals” in Disaster Related News during the Eight-Day Period after the Disaster



* ABC (n = 87 topics), PBS (n = 49 topics), BBC (n = 38 topics), TF1 (n = 129 topics), ARD (n = 33 topics), KBS (n = 230 topics), RAI (n = 68 topics), CCTV (n = 49 topics)

The program featured updates on the safety of the approximately 2,500 Italian nationals residing in Japan and their safety through telephone calls with the Italian embassy in Tokyo and there were many reports through telephone interviews with nationals in the disaster zone such as an Italian lecturer at a university in Sendai and a restaurant manager in Tokyo recounting the frightening experience of the earthquake itself or the circumstances following the quake and tsunami.

The program did not devote much time to reporting regarding Italy's own energy policy, at 4.4 percent. After briefly explaining the trends in energy policy in Germany, France, and other EU countries, the program repeated several times the Italian government's decision to stick to its current nuclear energy policy.

(2) *TGI ore 20:00* Reporting on March 14

This was the day of the explosions at the No. 3 unit at the Fukushima plant when the sense of crisis vis-à-vis nuclear energy was at its height, and of the program's 35 minutes 47 seconds broadcast time, 15 minutes and 33 seconds or 43.5 percent was devoted to disaster-related news. The breakdown by topic was 5 about the earthquake, 3 about the nuclear power plant, and 1 each about the tsunami, Italian nationals, and energy policy, and 2 "other." On this day, as on the previous three days, following the top news consisting of aftershock information, status of damages, and rescue and relief conditions, the program gave a status report on the condition of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant and the impact of radioactivity on local inhabitants. It introduced Japan's state-of-the-art earthquake early warning system and other topics such as the coolheaded behavior of Japanese in the disaster zone, the impact of the disaster on the Japanese and world economy, and, through telephone interviews, the circumstances of Italian nationals in Japan. Regarding the subject of energy policy, it reported on Germany's announced policy of suspending its plan to extend the use of its older nuclear power generators, and then broadcast the comment by the minister in charge of energy in the Italian government saying that the country had no intention of changing its policy on nuclear energy. Additionally, the program noted the important role played by Internet social media such as Google's *Person Finder*, set up immediately after the quake, as

well as *Twitter* and *Facebook* in helping people gain useful information and check the safety of friends and family in the 3-11 disaster.

China (CCTV *Xinwen lianbo* [National Network News])

Broadcast every day during the 7:00 to 7:30 “golden hour” time slot, this main news program of China Central Television (CCTV) is tightly controlled by the central government, so it characteristically broadcasts news with a strong ideological slant, gives precedence to domestic news, and gives priority to the activities of the country’s government leaders. Regarding news about the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster, it should be noted that while daytime news programs were apparently freer, broadcasting unedited NHK live video coverage for as much as 15 minutes from the start of a program in a manner quite proactive for international news, such practices were not the case for the *Xinwen lianbo* program.

(1) *Xinwen lianbo* First Eight Post-Earthquake Days of Reporting

Looking at the *Xinwen lianbo* program between March 11 and 18, we find that Great East Japan disaster-related news was always included among the several headlines of the program.

Treatment at the top of international news

The time devoted to that news within the 28 minutes of the news broadcasting (not counting the headlines) was not particularly long (2 minutes 32 seconds on March 11; 6 minutes 44 seconds on March 12; 4 minutes 18 seconds on March 13, etc.). The main reasons for the feature is that the program only shifts to international news from around 7:20 to 7:25 p.m. and also because the Great East Japan disaster took place at the same time that the National People’s Congress (China’s parliament) was in session, and that event was a major focus of the news. However, within the framework of international news, the disaster was treated as top news all eight days of this period.

Mainly objective reporting

In terms of content, a comparatively large amount of the program's disaster-related news was connected with China—as part of domestic news about movements of the country's leaders such as the fact that President of China Hu Jintao had sent a telegram of condolence to the emperor of Japan, and showing the arrival of the Chinese disaster relief team in Iwate prefecture. There were also on-site reports from Ofunato and Morioka in the disaster area. The content of the reports were almost all objective recounting of facts, with no expressions that might have aroused panic or concern among listeners and with no criticism of the Japanese government or Tokyo Electric. This practice reflects the Chinese government's basic foreign affairs principle of expecting the Chinese media to refrain from exaggerating news about other countries or directly criticizing other countries, except with regard to topics directly linked to China's national interest such as the territorial issue regarding the Senkaku (Ch. Diaoyu) islands. At CCTV, which is the most tightly controlled by the government, the influence of that principle is especially pronounced, it seems. Then, why did many Chinese who had been studying in Japan return to China immediately after the 3.11 disaster occurred? Kyorin University associate professor Liu Di believes the reasons for their abrupt exit can be explained in three ways: (1) Concerned parents pressed their children to come home right away, saying they had “already bought the tickets”; (2) Chinese have a strong tendency not to believe the pronouncements of their own government nor did they necessarily believe statements of the Japanese government; (3) they had a tendency to find the reports of the American and European media more trustworthy than the Japanese media and the severe criticisms [of the Japanese government] by the U.S. and European media had a significant influence on them.

(2) *Xinwen lianbo* Reporting on March 14

Reporting about the 3-11 disaster on the *Xinwen lianbo* program on March 14, took up 12 minutes and 17 seconds within the news broadcast (excluding the broadcast of the headlines), the longest devoted to the disaster during the eight-day period. First, as part of domestic news, after news about the adjourning of the National People's Congress, there were

topics on the telegram of condolence sent to the Emperor of Japan by President Hu Jintao and the telegraph of condolence sent to the chairpersons of the House of Councillors and House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet by Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo. Then after continuing with domestic news, from a little after 7:21 p.m. the program turned to a topic about Chinese foreign minister meeting Japan's ambassador to present his condolences regarding the earthquake disaster. Then, shifting to international news, all of the news related to the Great East Japan disaster, including "Some 5,000 already found dead or missing after the earthquake in Japan," "explosion at the No. 3 unit of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant," "Bank of Japan decision to increase the supply of funds to the market and Japanese stocks plummet," "activities of the Chinese Disaster Relief Team in the disaster zone," "air shipment of relief goods from Shanghai." The news about the 5,000 dead or missing from Japan occupied 2 minutes and 19 seconds, and the news about the explosion at the No. 3 unit at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant took 3 minutes and 10 seconds, both reported in very compact form.

CONCLUSION

The above review of the data collected about the eight programs in seven countries confirms that the Great East Japan disaster was taken up at the top of the news for several days by news programs in each country, occupied a predominant proportion of the news, and repeatedly used images from NHK and Japanese commercial TV stations. Also notable were the numerous human-interest stories from the sites that had been hit by a disaster of unprecedented proportions by broadcasters like ABC (U.S.) and the BBC (U.K.), which had sufficient staff and reporting arrangements in Japan.

The accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, too, was taken up in large amounts of news from each country, but only Germany reported in detail about energy policy including nuclear power generation. In the backdrop of that feature was the fact that the Fukushima Daiichi accident prompted German public opinion to become strongly inclined to

move away from nuclear energy. Another possible factor is that because an election was soon to be held in the German state of Baden-Württemberg, the home of several nuclear power plants, chancellor Merkel quickly made the decision to change Germany's policy.

Meanwhile, prior to our survey, we had formed two hypotheses. One was that there must be a difference in stance toward the news between commercial and public broadcasters. We therefore included both the commercial broadcaster ABC and the public broadcaster PBS in our study. We had thought the difference between the two would be most evident in reporting about the nuclear power plant accident, but in fact both stations provided accurate commentary and preserved an objective stance presenting the different sides of the issue of nuclear energy policy.

Our second hypothesis was that misinformation and exaggeration had distorted images of the disaster and the nuclear power plant accident in the different countries in the study. The results of our analysis of the target programs, however, showed that with the exception of KBS, very little misinformation was broadcast.

What constitutes misinformation? What constitutes exaggeration? We often discussed these questions in the course of our analysis of the data from this study. One difficult issue in this case, we believe, is the matter of distance from what is actually going on. In reporting on a large-scale disaster, the weight of a word like "panic" is different for people in the country where the situation is unfolding and for those in countries far away overseas. The overseas news programs all grew equally impatient with the inadequacy of information provided by the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric, and in some cases used expressions like "the [nuclear reactor] is no longer under control," which might have set off panic. On this point, Japanese television stations, partly as a result of being in the country where the problem was actually unfolding, were quite careful about statements that might have set off panic or generated unfounded rumors.

We believe our study has been able to provide a general idea of how each country portrayed the Great East Japan disaster in its news reporting. To understand the thinking that lies behind each station's decisions regarding why news was portrayed a certain way, why certain video images were chosen for broadcasting, and so on, we will need to perform more

in-depth research about broadcasters editorial policies and related questions. Reporting of the news is very closely related to the political and social issues that each country faces and the values held by its people. We hope to pursue further research into answering more of these “whys” relating to news broadcasting.