



# The Huawei Dilemma: A Content Analysis of German Media in Evaluating Germany's China Policy

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the dilemma that Germany finds themselves in vis-à-vis China and Huawei 5G development, and whether the German government's China policy is adept enough to reconcile domestic differences. This research uses a case study methodology to examine Huawei 5G development in Germany, and a content analysis of six national German news publications to gauge reactions to both Huawei and China, and the German government's response. An analysis of fifty news articles across the political spectrum from 2018-2020 reveals a public sentiment that is out of line with Germany's tentative decision to, in essence, allow Huawei involvement in their 5G network. Most articles surveyed had a negative stance towards Huawei, with concerns divided into categories. A staggering zero percent were solely positive towards the company's potential involvement in building network infrastructure. In addition, an interesting finding is a general dislike of the United States' and their involvement in the 5G issue. These articles shed light on the vast amount of disagreement between the public, the media, and the government on the country's China policy.

**Keywords:** Huawei, German Policy, China, Content Analysis, Public attitudes

## Introduction

Since Deng Xiaoping introduced sweeping market reforms to China in the 1980s, China has quickly gone from a largely agrarian economy to an industrial, and increasingly high-tech, juggernaut. Although much of China's economy still relies on its industrial, export-driven mechanisms, the current administration under Xi Jinping has emphasized the technology industry as a path forward for China. The "Made in China 2025" plan, for example, is a Chinese state-led initiative to transform China into a dominant global producer and innovator in the high-tech industry (McBride and Chatzky 2019). By subsidizing and pushing state-led enterprises into the worldwide market, China hopes to reduce its dependence on Europe and America for tech and carve a piece of the pie for itself. The international community is wary of this push due to security issues arising from depending on technology closely linked to a rival power, and the economic disruption that comes from one country, in this case China, trying to monopolize an industry. Case in point, a June 2018 White House report stated that China's economic policies endanger, "not only the U.S. economy but also the global innovation system as a whole" (White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy 2018).

No other company is more emblematic of China's aggressive technology goals than Huawei. Huawei is the world's largest proprietor of telecommunications equipment, and thus the leading supplier of the new and improved 5G system. In a world of information and interconnectedness, the faster speeds of 5G will not only bolster productivity, but allow new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and self-driving cars, to flourish (Maizland and Chatzky 2019). However, Huawei forces a dilemma onto countries wishing to use their services. Many experts warn of security issues of using 5G technology backed by the Chinese state, but blocking Huawei, and thus China, increases the risk of political and economic retaliation from Beijing.

Germany is likewise facing this same "Huawei dilemma" when it comes to 5G adoption. Although a traditional U.S. ally, and technology producer to boot, this paper will show that Germany is caught in a quagmire of issues that cause the involved considerations to be more complicated than meets the eye. Because of the country's deep need for improved telecommunications and its close economic relationship with China, the security risks of Huawei technology, not to mention kowtowing to an authoritarian power, seem to take a backseat in Angela Merkel's current government. Unsurprisingly, many in democratic Germany see the security risks and subordination to an authoritarian power which routinely

violates human rights as a problem. As a European leader, their response will potentially shape how other countries react to an increasingly US-China dichotomized world.

This article examines Germany's response to Huawei 5G development through an in-depth look at the many facets of the issue. This is both in terms of security and economics, as well as through content analysis of national German newspapers to better understand domestic political dynamics in shaping this policy discourse. Germany faces heavy international pressure from China in adopting Huawei into their mobile network, but also from the US in opposition to this move. Other key actors, such as the media and the public, also have strong opinions when it comes to this issue. The history of German relations with China has been one of economic pragmatism, and thus German policy decisions lend themselves to decisions which optimize economic growth and output. The key question at the heart of this research: how has the media and public responded to Huawei 5G development in Germany, and does this point to a weakness in Germany's China policy?

This paper is divided into four main sections. Section one will focus on the history of Germany and China's political and economic relationship, with a particular focus on the German China policy since the German Reunification in 1990. Section two will provide an overview of the company Huawei itself, 5G technology, its importance, and why countries find issue with Huawei. Section three will focus on the German domestic response to Huawei and include a content analysis of German media as it relates to the Huawei debate. Lastly, section four will explain why this matters, and why Germany's specific national response places itself into the U.S.-China rivalry, and serves as a role model to the larger international community.

### **The Sino-German Relationship: Between Human Rights and Economy**

During the late 1970s and well into the 1980s, the Chinese under Deng Xiaoping entered into a plethora of market reforms which began to change their country from a largely agrarian state into the industrial giant seen today. Deng introduced the "four modernizations" in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense, and pushed other economic reform measures, such as a more modern agriculture system and forays into international trade and borrowing. By the 1990s, he pushed ahead further market changes and engaged in his "southern journey," where he called for China to "push ahead with rapid market-oriented changes," and to be "open still wider to the international arena" (Lieberthal 2004: 146). The reform that occurred decades ago has allowed for China's economic prowess on the wider

world stage, and for their economic and diplomatic relationship with Germany to evolve into what it is today.

The Germany that began to earnestly engage with this newly transformed China can be found initially in the reunified German government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl starting from 1990. Kohl's government, like most German governments that followed him, put a heavy emphasis on values during the beginning of the government, but gradually shifted towards an interest-driven policy with China as time went on. The five central interests that Kohl's government put forward towards the beginning of his government highlight his initial value-oriented foreign policy well. Among these central interests is "the preservation of freedom, security, and welfare of the citizens of Germany," "integration with European democracies," and most importantly, "worldwide respect of international law and human rights..." (*Weißbuch Zur Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands Und Zur Zukunft Der Bundeswehr* 1994). These values by which German foreign policy operated under the Kohl administration can be seen in full force during interactions with China.

Several human rights and value-driven issues were immediately at the forefront of Sino-German relations following Germany's reunification. The Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 set the precedent in assessing fundamental differences between the German and Chinese governments. Tiananmen Square led a western-backed coalition, which included Germany, to sanction China heavily. By 1992 these sanctions had ended, and Germany normalized its relations with China, causing trade to quickly flourish between the two nations. During the 1990s, China rose past Japan to become Germany's largest trading partner in Asia, with German direct investment in China rising from 233 million Deutsche Marks (DM) to over 1 billion DM (Huang 2018: 58). Through this process, Germany began to decouple their previously stated human rights values from their relationship with China. The issue of Tibet, which periodically comes up in international politics, shows this decoupling. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement refuting the Dalai Lama's "claim to lead a Tibetan government in exile" (Huang 2018: 77). Rather than erring on the side of human rights and supporting the autonomy of the Tibetan people, the Kohl government sought to placate Beijing and continue good trade relations (Huang 2018). The economic interests of Germany quickly outweighed the value-driven rhetoric and beginnings of this particular government.

This trend continues in the following government of Gerhard Schröder as well. Like the previous administration, the coalition government of this period between the center-left party of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei*, or the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the left party of

*Die Grünen*, or the Greens, put human rights at the forefront of their foreign policy. The SPD/*Grünen* Coalition Agreement of 2002 holds “the global implementation of human rights as being of central importance to international peacekeeping,” and that “basic human rights standards are inviolable and must not be overridden under any circumstance” (German Government 2002). With regards to China the German government held the position that the country should become a responsible actor within the global system, that they should hopefully one day be open and democratic, and that China would continue to grow its economy in an appropriate, rules-based manner (Huang 2018).

Regardless of this rhetoric, good economic relations were the priority in the Schröder government. Trade between China and Germany continued to grow at an alarmingly fast rate from 1998–2005, with trade values increasing from under \$20 billion to near \$50 billion Euros (See Figure 1 for more details) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020). To highlight the importance of this trade to Germany, in 2002, the VW Group, an important German car manufacturer sold 500,000 vehicles to China, around 10% of its global production (Maas 2002). Without this relationship, economic growth and prosperity in Germany would be far less pronounced. Because of this tight-knit economic relationship, Schröder took his signature approach of “Wandel durch Handel,” or “change through trade.” By trading and cooperating with China, Germany could hope to gradually change China into the “responsible actor” that was mentioned in the Coalition Agreement of 2002 (German Government 2002). Though the relationship between the two countries was fruitful in economic terms, and Chancellor Schröder and Chinese Foreign Minister Zhu Rongji has a good personal relationship, there was little progress regarding human rights protection (Schnellbach and Man 2015). His soft line towards Beijing earned Schröder much criticism from the opposition, the media, and many in the public (Heiduk 2014).

Schröder’s China policy was thus likewise mostly driven by economic interests, putting other interests aside in favor of pure pragmatism. Angela Merkel, who has served in four governments as chancellor, vowed to change Germany’s China policy into something that put less value on economic pragmatism, and promised a normative shift away from the past. In 2007, Merkel met with the Dalai Lama in Berlin, a gesture which Schröder’s government would never have considered. Through this new China policy, Merkel also promised “*Mut zu kritischen Tönen*,” or “having the courage to raise critical issues.” Signaling a commitment to ostensibly hold China accountable on value issues in line with every other German chancellor. In a speech given at the Seventh German-Chinese Forum for Economic and Technological Cooperation, Merkel stressed the value that German companies and Chinese investment

provided to the world economy, claiming that the Sino-German relationship is crucial to the health of the international economy (Merkel 2014). In an interview with *Die Welt*, Merkel remarked that Germany plays a particularly important economic role in the EU, and that China keeps watch to see how things in the EU develop. In the same interview, Merkel also praises Chinese actions against pirates, and the role it plays in ensuring free trade. Merkel, in line with traditional Germany policy towards China, focuses on building the economic partnership between the two countries and ensuring growth (Merkel 2014). While other considerations do come into the picture, such as China's lack of compliance with international rules and standards, these questions are mostly framed in economic terms, without considering the political or security weight of such matters (Heiduk 2014). This new turn in policy points towards a different side of Merkel's China policy, namely that of portraying China as a key strategic partner for Germany (Heiduk 2014).

This habit of viewing China primarily through an economic angle has led to issues for Germany under Angela Merkel. Chinese companies are now so valuable that they provide heavy competition towards German companies. Chinese buyouts of existing German companies, and Chinese investment in general, have increased massively in recent years. While investment is often great for business, increased Chinese buyouts and investments wrest away control from Germans. Thirty-seven Chinese stakes in German companies were announced or completed in the first half of 2016, coming in at slightly under 9.7 billion Euros. This is more than the previous 10 years combined (Bian and Emons 2016: 157).

Chinese investment, and by extension Huawei, has increased so much that it poses a real economic and security threat. As a report by the Permanent House Committee on Select Intelligence state, "Opportunities to tamper with telecommunications components and systems are present throughout product development, and vertically integrated industry giants like Huawei and ZTE provide a wealth of opportunities for Chinese intelligence agencies to insert malicious hardware or software implants into critical telecommunications components and systems" (Rogers and Ruppertsberger 2012: 3). The report continues, listing Huawei's lack of care for intellectual property rights, close ties with the Chinese government, and general patterns of illegal behavior. Chinese companies like Huawei represent the danger that Chinese business can bring to Germany. The economic relationship is still too important for the German government to take substantive action against China. As one senior German official put it, "Merkel has no problem with pushback against China as long as it's not Germany that is doing the pushing" (Barkin 2020a).

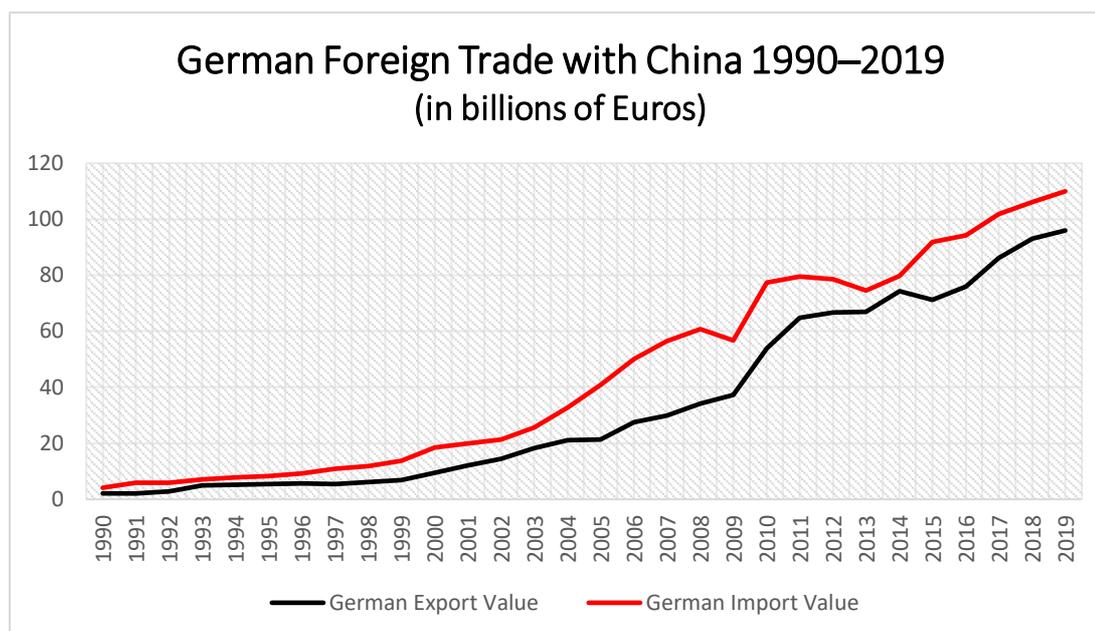


Figure 1. German Trade Value with China 1990–2019

### The Strategic Importance of 5G Technology

While the Sino-German relationship is already economically orientated, what makes the 5G issue special is the strategic importance of 5G. The technology itself is the result of a long line of development that spans back to the 1980s when mobile telecommunications networks first began to appear. Mobile telecommunication is the use of cellular towers, combined with mobile devices, in order to facilitate connection and transference of data. Making a call on one's cell phone is perhaps the most recognizable example of this. When one makes a cell phone call, radio signals go from the phone to the nearest cell tower, which are then conveyed to the person on the other end; this process naturally works from the other direction, making the cell tower a middleman in the interactions.

5G simply stands for the fifth generation of wireless technology and has three major improvements over the last iteration of wireless (4G). Firstly, 5G has vastly lowered latency speeds in their connections, allowing connections to proceed with fast speeds and little delay. Secondly, 5G allows for the use of more channels that can run on any frequency of radio wave. When finding a connection, cell phones select the most optimal frequency with which to transmit data, and 5G allows phones to have a greater choice in radio waves. For example, previously, higher frequency waves were not usable in telecommunications, but 5G allows the use of these high frequencies, otherwise known as "millimeter-wave" or "high-band 5G," which vastly increases speeds (Segan 2020). While the use of such frequencies comes at the cost

of geographic range and coverage, cellular speeds are around 30-80 times faster than a typical U.S. 4G connection. Lastly, 5G grants the ability for an unprecedented number of devices to be able to be connected to a mobile network at the same time. Within one square kilometer, a 5G network is capable of supporting 1 million devices connected to the internet simultaneously (Fisher 2020). For developing technologies, such as self-driving cars, the ability to sustain such a high capacity is integral to the design, functionality, and feasibility of such a technology. Current networks could not handle the needs of one million cars connecting to and communicating with each other over a mobile network. While the technical details go far beyond these few facts, the improvements that 5G brings allow for new possibilities within many aspects of society.

In the so-called “Information Age,” the increased speeds and bandwidth that 5G offers gives countries which adopt them a leg up in the technological arms-race. As the U.S. Congressional Research Service wrote in their report on “National Security Implications of Fifth Generation (5G) Technologies,” 5G is expected to support a host of developing and existing technologies, including, but not limited to: “smart homes, self-driving vehicles, precision agriculture systems, industrial machinery, and advanced robotics.” On the military side of the equation 5G could “improve intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems and processing; enable new methods of command and control; and streamline logistics systems for increased efficiency...” (Hoehn and Saylor 2021, 1). Countries which choose to broadly incorporate 5G technology into their existing telecommunications networks first would be at an advantage compared to countries who do not or are slow in adoption. In addition, 5G is expected to generate \$3.6 trillion in economic output and be involved in the creation of 22.3 million new jobs. According to IHS Markit, a global analytics company, total global economic value derived from this would amount to \$13.2 trillion with value spanning across many different industries (IHS Markit 2019). With ability to improve economic output across industries, the use of 5G is critical for the economic strategy of any power in the 21st century.

### **Huawei: Origins and Its Ties to the Chinese Government**

5G technology itself is inherently apolitical, but the cheapest version available on the market is developed by multinational Chinese company Huawei. Founded in 1987 by Ren Zhengfei, a former officer in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the company has grown from a small business trying to improve domestic Chinese telecom infrastructure to one that builds it on a global scale (BBC 2019). Yet, while this story is reminiscent of a rags-to-riches scenario, the

company has always had deep ties to the Community Party of China, enabling much of its success, and explaining much of the angst other countries feel towards the company.

Considering the founder's past relations with the PLA, and the extent to which the Chinese government interferes in the affairs of "private" businesses, the relationship between Huawei and China is worrying at best. Chinese business owners do not have immunity from the Chinese government, regardless of the size and the power of the company they head. Jack Ma, the co-founder of Alibaba, a retail and e-commerce giant in China, has close ties to the CCP, and was allegedly forced to step down from Alibaba due to his alleged shunning of President Xi Jinping at a G20 summit in Hangzhou (Nagy 2020). Wu Xiaohui, the former chairman and chief executive of Anbang Insurance group, one of the largest insurers in China, was sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment due to fraud and embezzlement (Zhang, Yu, and Mai 2018). Both were powerful and influential people in China and owned businesses that contributed to the growing wealth of China. Nevertheless, these incidents show that companies who have close ties to the CCP and are subject to Beijing's will. Huawei and Ren Zhengfei, as another powerful company-founder duo, are in a similar position.

President Xi has also enacted several new laws which bind a technology company like Huawei even closer to the party than ever before. The 2015 National Security Law stipulates that: "All citizens, state authorities ... people's groups, enterprises, public institutions, and other social organizations have the responsibility and obligation to maintain national security." More importantly, the Cyber Security Law enacted in the same years states: "Network operators shall provide technical support and assistance to public security organs and national security organs that are safeguarding national security and investigating criminal activities..." Huawei falls under each law (Nagy 2020). As an "enterprise" and a "network operator" Huawei would be forced by the government to assist in national security matters, which are determined by Beijing, potentially leading to detrimental effects for other countries. New party regulations developed in 2018 also force the establishment of party cells within organizations in society, which includes the private sector. Huawei is forced by these regulations to adhere more closely to party goals and ideology (Communist Party of China 2018).

The most often cited example of Huawei's close ties to the CCP is the large amount of government subsidies that have been given to the company. In total the company has had access to approximately \$75 billion in state support since the company's small beginnings as a phone switch reseller. About \$46 billion has come from loans, credit lines, and other such support from state-backed lenders. In the past decade, Huawei has saved \$25 billion in taxes

from state incentives to promote growth in the tech industry, and the company has appreciated \$1.6 billion in grants and \$2 billion in land discounts. While these types of assistance are calculable, other types are not. In 1999, the company was accused of tax fraud, but the Chinese central government stepped in to rescue the company. Auditors were assembled, and within weeks the company was cleared of any wrongdoing (Yap 2019). Some of this assistance is available to other Chinese enterprises, but assistance of this magnitude, as well as the more personal touch of ensuring Huawei was not saddled with tax fraud, shows a relationship that goes beyond a simple government-business interaction.

All of these factors show Huawei being more than just a private sector business to the Chinese government. Stringent national security laws, exceedingly large amounts of subsidies, and a government that is not afraid to crack down on business owners demonstrate both a dependency on the government that companies in other countries would not have. Huawei itself claims that their relationship with the Chinese government is no different from any other private company in China, and while that may be true, that relationship is too close to pretend the CCP is not influencing Huawei's business decisions. For many in the international community the question of supporting Huawei and allowing their technology results from this relationship and the obvious security problems it could entail.

### **Germany's Telecommunication Issues**

What further complicates the issue are Germany's issues with an already faulty telecommunication network. To illustrate how widespread Germany's *Funklöcher*, or dead zones, are in the country, in 2019 the term *Funklochrepublik* came in second place in the country's "Word of the Year" competition. The term, which translates to "dead zone republic" is indicative of a country that has long struggled with poor mobile networks and connection. Findings from the federal government of Germany state that connections are often patchy or non-existent in rural areas, and even in Berlin there are areas which offer slower speeds of the 3G or 2G variety (The Local DE 2019). The current network system is not up to snuff, and by the German government's own standards, not enough. Figure 2 shows the connectivity of Potsdam, the largest city of the German state of Brandenburg, which directly borders Berlin. Purple represents 4G, dark blue represents 3G, and light blue represents 2G. Areas without coloring are areas with no connection (Breitband Messung 2019). Even near such a massive urban center, dead zones are still prominent.

As stipulated in the German Telecommunications Act of 1996, Germany should strive to “safeguard the interests of users,” “ensure equal-opportunity and workable competition, in telecommunications markets in rural as well as urban areas,” and “protect public safety interests,” among others (OECD 2004). The government is currently failing to meet the second objective, as massive discrepancies still exist between urban and rural areas, as well as the fact that slower mobile speeds hurt economic development. In order to correct this problem as fast as possible (and as cheaply as possible), using Huawei equipment and technologies in upgrading mobile networks would solve that issue. Unfortunately, Huawei poses a risk to the first and third objectives in the law, making the company a less than palatable option.

Germany needs better telecommunications badly, but their options to do so entail a myriad of different policy implications. For a more assured safe and secure network, Germany would be wiser to go with a different manufacturer, but this would come at a delayed implementation rate and a much higher cost. Banning Chinese equipment from Europe’s 5G networks would add approximately \$62 billion dollars to the price tag (Barzic 2019). This decision would also snub Beijing and come with diplomatic and trade risks; risks which the Chinese government have explicitly said they will act on (Bennhold and Ewing 2020). The primarily economically concerned relationship with China makes that rebuke even more bitter. Go with Huawei and

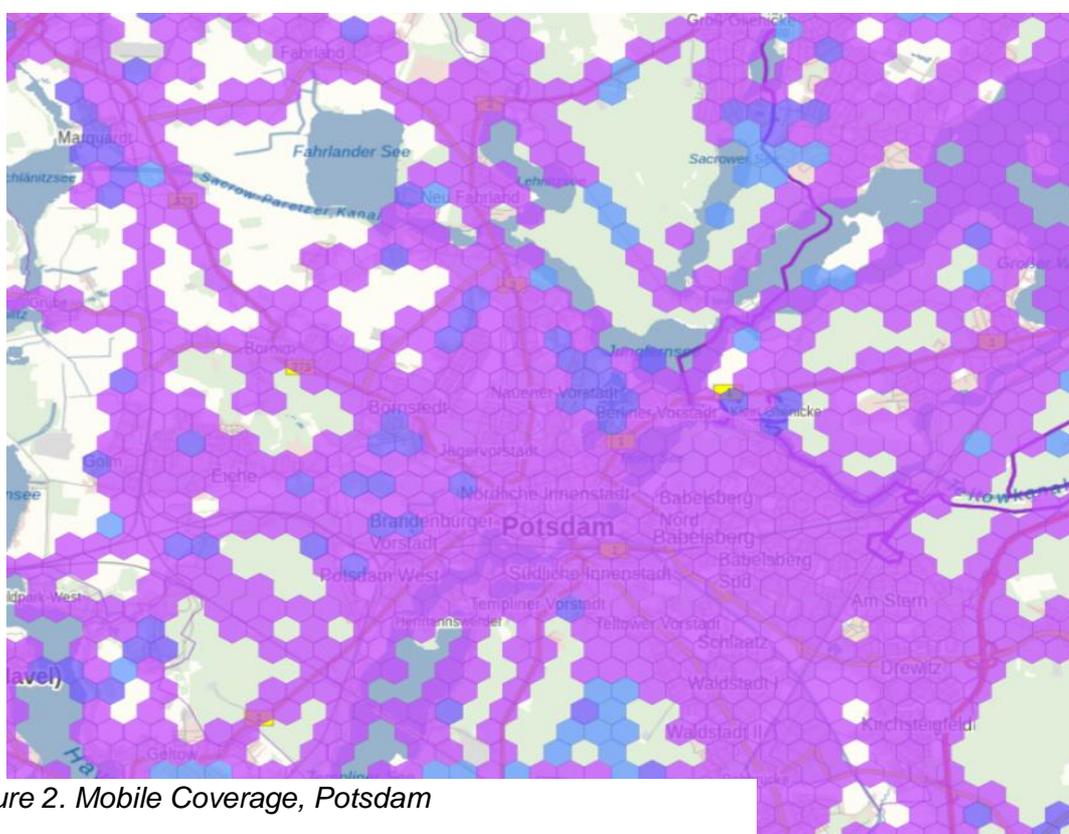


Figure 2. Mobile Coverage, Potsdam

China, and the plain-money cost will be cheaper, but Germany not only risks massive security vulnerabilities, but the country also risks a backlash from key allies and their own constituents. Because of the myriad of concerns surrounding this issue, investigating the German domestic response is critical in understanding policy around this issue.

### Research Design and Approach

Given the many factors at play in this policy decision, examining how the media has reacted to this debate is crucial in determining both public opinion on the decision, and whether or not that matters in influencing a policy outcome. This research uses a case study methodology, investigating Huawei 5G development in Germany, and a content analysis of German media to determine public opinion on the Huawei issue. For this research, fifty German news articles from January 2018 - July 2020 were analyzed from six different national media publications from across the political spectrum. Articles selected were opinion or commentary pieces from approximately the last two years that took a normative stance on Huawei, 5G development, or other factors surrounding the issue, such as government involvement.

Some might argue that analyzing commentary pieces from national media is not truly emblematic of public opinion, however because the data collected are all from large, national publications (with broad differences in political ideology) with avid readership, I believe the opinions represented in the papers can be seen as, at the very least, a proxy for wider public opinion.

<b>Publication Title</b>	<b>Political Leaning</b>	<b>Number of Articles Surveyed</b>
<i>Die Welt</i>	<b>Center-right</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Bild</i>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	<b>Center-left</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Die Tageszeitung</i>	<b>Left-wing/Green</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	<b>Liberal</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 1. German Publications, Political Leanings, and Articles Analyzed (University of Chicago 1994)

Table 1 shows all publications, their political leanings, and the number of articles surveyed. Table is organized from the greatest number of articles to least. In terms of organizing the data set, each article was given a holistic grade of either “negative,” “positive,” “mixed,” or “unspecified,” to determine the article/author’s opinion of Huawei and their potential 5G development in Germany. A “negative” designation means that the article views Huawei and China as a risk and urges the government to ban Huawei and take a harder line against China. A “positive” designation means that the article views Huawei as a gain for the country, and that the government should allow Huawei to help develop Germany’s networks. A mixed designation takes a more nuanced approach and usually offers pros and cons on Huawei involvement, rather than Manichaeian stance. An “unspecified” designation means that while the article did discuss the Huawei 5G issue, it did not take a stance on those entities in particular. For example, the article “*Union muss schauen, dass sie nicht auf die Intensivstation verlegt wird,*” mentions Huawei as a potential issue for the German government, but overall urges the government to take a more proactive governing stance (Graw 2019).

Of those articles rated “negative,” each article had a primary reason for their position on Huawei. Four categories were drawn to highlight the distinctions between the views of each article: security, human rights, economically or technologically dependent on China (or US), and geopolitical. These categories were created in accordance with the major issues and themes that came up across authors, articles, and publications. Security articles gave spying, telecom infrastructure risk, the close relationship between Huawei and China, and the untrustworthiness of China in dealing with these issues as reasons for not allowing Huawei to develop 5G in the country. Human rights articles pointed to China’s horrendous human rights record and their authoritarian nature in a more moral sense as why Germany should not support Huawei and by extension China. Economically or technologically dependent articles generally ignored the other issues and rather focused on the reliance on China, and in some cases the US, Germany was creating by using technology from other countries and not relying on German or European made tech. And lastly, geopolitical articles put politics and balance of power at the forefront of their argument, stating that accepting Huawei weakens Germany’s position in world affairs. This category often included aspects from other designations, such as disagreement with supporting an authoritarian power, or feared dependence, but put the issue into a larger scale than other articles.

## Analysis of German Media’s Perception of Huawei and Their 5G Development

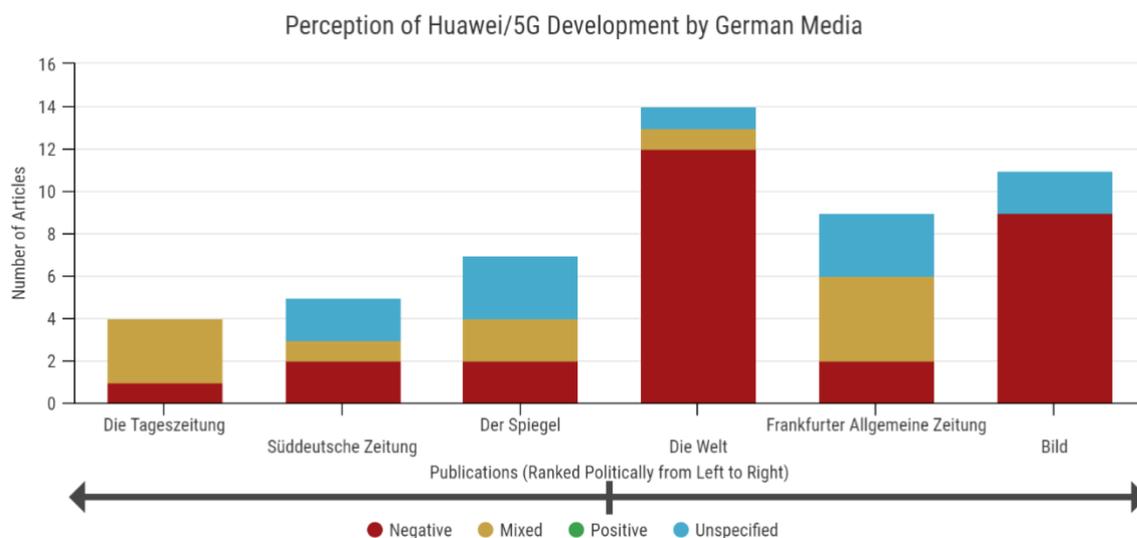


Figure 3. Perception of Huawei/5G Development by German Media

When taking all articles collected for this data as a whole, a majority of 56% viewed Huawei 5G development in a negative light. While all publications did have articles that harbored some of this sentiment, an overwhelming percentage of articles published by *Die Welt* and *Bild* possessed a negative attitude at 86% and 100%, respectively. The other publications tended to provide a more nuanced perspective, with “mixed” being a prominent presence in the remaining four outlets. *The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* had 44% mixed, *Der Spiegel* had 29% mixed, and the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* had 14% mixed. To be clear, “mixed” articles often pointed to potential benefits that Huawei could bring to Germany, and often gave greater subtlety in their analysis, but still illustrated the pitfalls of accepting Huawei into the country. Figure 3 shows these distributions. Zero articles across these publications had a “positive” rating. Thus, the more conservative outlets, with the exception of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), had an overwhelming number of their articles as negative. Including (FAZ), these publications also had a much higher tendency to write about the issue in the first place, with *Die Welt* alone having more pieces about the topic than *Die Tageszeitung* and *Die Sueddeutsche Zeitung* combined.

What is startling about this data is the sheer amount of agreement across the political spectrum on the Huawei issue. When taken as two distinct halves, the more conservative half of *Die Welt*, *Bild*, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has 72% of their articles arguing

strictly against Huawei’s inclusion in Germany’s 5G network. The liberal half of *Der Spiegel*, *Die Tageszeitung*, and *Die Sueddeutsche Zeitung* have 18% of their articles purely negative, with a further 36% in the mixed category. Public opinion in Germany on China itself would seem to corroborate these numbers. Every year for the past ten years, a majority of Germans had an “unfavorable” view of China. In 2019 alone, 66% of Germans had this view. Their views on Xi Jinping are even worse with 61% of Germans having no confidence in Xi to do “the right thing regarding world affairs” (Pew Research Center 2019). These negative views on Huawei and China are represented in the four categories of security, human rights, economically or technologically dependent, and geopolitical.

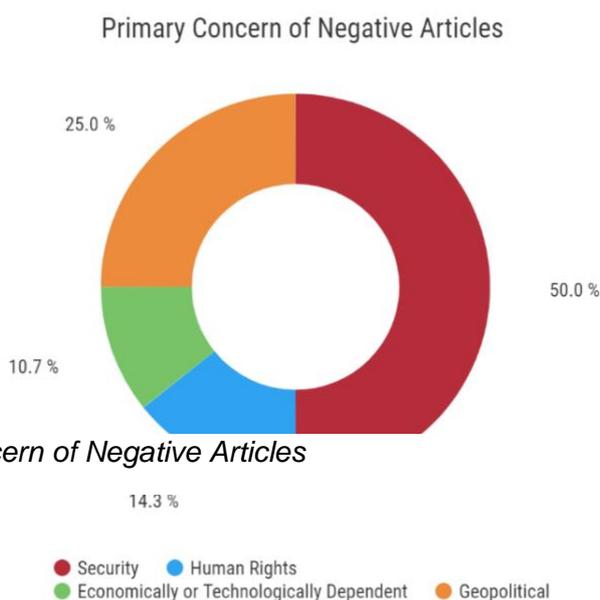


Figure 4. Primary Concern of Negative Articles

The primary concern of those with negative views toward Huawei is security. By allowing a Chinese company with tight ties to the Communist Party to develop your telecommunications system, one risks massive vulnerabilities in their information systems. The article, “*Huawei ist der verlaengerte Arm Pekings*,” (Huawei is the Extended Arm of Beijing) illustrates a particular grim situation given these potential security vulnerabilities. As the author, Metin Hakverdi, a member of the Bundestag from the SPD, writes: “A targeted shutdown of the 5G network by a foreign state actor could hit our society as hard as a military first-strike. The 5G network could be more important than the internet, storm and waterlines, roads, and rail and waterways combined. The thought that a foreign power possesses the capability to shutoff our 5G network at will with a so-called kill switch should dismay us” (Hakverdi 2019). Many of the other articles offer similarly dark situations involving spying and network weaknesses.

If China were a trusted actor to Germans, then perhaps these types of articles would not be as prevalent, but articles designated “human rights” or “geopolitical” cast doubt at the trustworthiness, or even morality, of China as a whole. Human rights articles generally post the supposition that collaboration with China by allowing Huawei is indirectly supporting China’s human rights abuses. Allowing Huawei to build network infrastructure in Germany could be seen as tacitly supporting the surveillance and human right threats that the CCP already employs. Geopolitical articles often take similar stances as the aforementioned articles on both security and human rights but broaden the scope to view larger consequences of this decision. Glacier Kwong and Joshua Wong, two activists from Hong Kong, write of the danger of China from their own endangered position: “Hong Kongese are fighting right now for freedom and human rights, and it is a hard battle. But the free world is also endangered because China is eager to expand its influence on economies of other states in order to win more influence on the world stage.” China’s attempt to influence the economies of other states through companies such as Huawei has a profound effect not only on current demonstrations against the CCP, but the free world itself. They go on to conclude that, “A collaboration with Huawei endangers the freedoms and rights, which protect German citizens. It would give China the possibility to win even more influence in Germany” (Wong and Kwong 2019).

The last designation for negative articles is “economically or technologically dependent.” Compared to the other articles, these worry less about the trustworthiness of China as an actor or their human rights record. Rather, these articles worry about the dependence that relying on Chinese, or as some articles also state, American technology creates. Because of the importance of 5G technology for future economic processes, solely depending on another country’s development is a national security risk. This fear of dependency on other countries extends to fear of the United States as well.

The United States and the NSA have just as much power as Huawei and China to tamper with network security or control technology in others’ hands. In fact, as one article from the *Die Tageszeitung* puts it, “Germany and Europe would do well to neither rely on the technology of Americans or the Chinese, but to push their own developments. This is the only way to ensure control over the technology of the future...” While not having a favorable view towards Huawei, the article states that the Huawei debate in Germany and Europe has increased “public interest in network technology security” (Lee 2019). These types of article pioneer a more “Europe/Germany first” attitude, and look askance at continually appeasement and acquiescence to foreign power, especially China.

The central question of this research, of how the media and has responded to the Germany Huawei 5G issue, and the ensuing government’s response, can be answered through the collected dataset. It appears that the Merkel government has not resolved the concerns surrounding the Huawei issue in the eyes of the public, and that the majority of opinions disagree heavily with the government’s response. Across the political spectrum and six different news outlets, the government response is out of line with what the majority opinion is. This raises many interesting implications for foreign policy decision making and the China policy of countries in similar positions.

### Implications

This research presents three interesting implications. The first concerns decision making in a democracy, where in an ideal world, policy should ostensibly follow the opinion of the people. In the Huawei issue, this has not been the case. The opinion in the country from both the public and elites has been strongly against the inclusion of Huawei in Germany’s 5G network. Regardless of this fact, the Merkel government has been keen on keeping the door open to Huawei involvement. Secondly, as a strong European leader, a German decision has the ability to sway others on the continent and even around the globe. And lastly, this issue regarding Huawei positions Germany between the United States and China, which offers insight into the Sino-American relationship.

With regards to German decision making, Oppermann, Brummer, and Van Willigen (2017) in their article, “Coalition Governance and Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” argued that there were four types of coalition arrangements when it came to foreign policy decision making. Two criteria, the allocation of the foreign ministry to the senior or junior partner in a coalition and the degree of policy discretion, which is handed to that ministry, were used to determine these four arrangements.

How much policy discretion does the foreign minister have?	Which coalition partner hold the foreign ministry?	
	Senior Partner	Junior Partner
Ministerial Government	Type 1 minimal junior partner influence: little or no difference from single party government	Type 2 ‘issue ownership’ and ‘hijacking’ by junior partner: more extreme coalition foreign policy

Cabinet Government	Type 3 constraining influence of junior partner on coalition foreign policy: more moderate coalition foreign policy	Type 4 only limited scope for junior partner 'issue ownership' and 'hijacking': coalition foreign policy particularly susceptible to deadlock
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Table 2: *Types of Coalition Agreements for Foreign Policy (Oppermann, Brummer, and Van Willigen 2017).*

The Merkel foreign minister, Heiko Maas, is from the junior coalition partner, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), and also appears to have a moderate amount of autonomy when it comes to his position. To this point, he has spoken with Chinese Vice Premier Lie He about human rights abuses against the Uighur population in China, and met with a Hong Kong student activist in defiance of China's wishes. This coalition arrangement, according to Oppermann and his colleagues' model, would fall under *Type 2* or *Type 4*, both of which have the junior partner exercising excess-moderate influence on Germany's foreign policy, respectively. The SPD is against the inclusion of Huawei in Germany, and some members of Merkel's own party, the *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU), have expressed similar sentiments. According to public opinion and the machinations of coalition foreign policy decision making, Germany should exclude Huawei. However, this has yet to happen. China appears to be the "x-factor" which causes previous conventions and models to be less accurate. Further investigation into how governments make foreign policy decisions, and how China affects these decisions, is critical.

Second, Germany's decision on the Huawei issue could influence other countries in Europe one way or the other. Most countries in Europe, including Germany, have yet to make a final, definitive decision on whether to allow Huawei. Germany's position within Europe and the European Union is strong, possessing the highest GDP of any country in Europe, (Statista 2020) and the current president of the European Commission, the EU's politically independent executive arm, is German (European Union 2020). Germany took a leading role in financial and monetary discussions during Greece's crisis (Irwin 2015), and some even went as far as to call Angela Merkel the "leader of the free world" (Davidson 2020). The Huawei dilemma is not unique to Germany, but their status could prove decisive in the decision-making process of many other countries.

Third, the United States should be careful when approaching this topic. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, have been lobbied heavily by the United States to ban Huawei. Because of this pressure, the United Kingdom recently did a 180 on their stance, going from allowing Huawei to banning them (Satariano, Castle, and Sanger 2020). Similarly, an interesting attitude that this research found was that many articles cast both China and the US in a poor light. Many opinion writers found Germany between the two great powers, with both states currently being unsavory partners. The intense lobbying that the United States has engaged in to push other countries to ban Huawei is part of this aforementioned negative attitude. Germans have a more favorable opinion towards Xi Jinping, the authoritarian leader of China, than they do towards President Trump (Pew Research Center 2019). The United States should be careful not to alienate its allies in pursuit of its foreign policy goals.

### **2021 Update**

Because the articles that his paper investigate ranged from 2018-2020, recent Huawei developments are not discussed in this paper. In April 2021, the Bundestag of Germany passed into law the IT Security Law 2.0, which will enable the government to restrict and even block the role of “untrustworthy” suppliers of 5G. Moreover, telecom companies in Germany must notify the government when signing for 5G technology (Cerulus 2021). Though this does point to a tougher stand on Huawei, the near two-year hiatus on action still points to the indecisiveness and special nature of relations with China. In addition, considering the newly elected government in Germany – that of a coalition between the SPD and *Die Grünen* – one might expect a harder line due to the parties’ own views on Huawei and the aforementioned coalition political framework, where the SPD is the senior partner and *Die Grünen* the junior. China, for their part, are keen to keep Germany as a partner as well, with their Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, stating the following, “As major global economies, both sides should oppose the so-called ‘decoupling’ together, jointly keep the global industrial and supply chains smooth and stable, and enhance cooperation in such fields as trade and investment, healthcare, clean energy, digital economy, and 5G technological security standards” (Communist Party of China 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The Huawei dilemma that Germany faces is multifaceted and pits many of their inherent interests as a state against one another. Security concerns, economics, business, diplomacy, and practicality all struggle against one another as Germany makes their way to a tentative decision. The opinions embodied by many current politicians in Germany, as well as the elite

and public at large, seem to indicate a clear decision: ban Huawei. Conventional coalition politics would also point to, at the very least, a harder line on Huawei and China. However, Germany has yet to enact this decision and is still allowing for the possibility of Huawei 5G development in Germany. The data collected in this research indicate a German China policy that is outdated and erring from public opinion and traditional foreign policy decision making frameworks. This policy cannot effectively reconcile differences in German interests and public opinion with fruitful relations with China. Politicians and leaders in Germany and abroad are beginning to recognize this failure in German foreign policy (Barkin 2020b), and this research perfectly symbolizes the hard choices and deficiencies that the current China policy entails.

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