




The Occurrence of Noun Post-modifiers in Political News: A Corpus-based Study

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Abstract: This research aims to investigate and observe the occurrences of noun post-modifiers in three English news websites, namely *BBC News*, *CNN* and *Al Jazeera English* by selecting five news articles from each to discover the frequency of noun post-modifier occurrences. The paper is carried out in the realm of corpus linguistics which approaches the study of naturally occurring language through the use of corpora which are collections of authentic texts. The type of the corpus adopted in the study is the observed corpus. Fifteen news articles have been selected from the three English websites so as to make a corpus to be the basis of the data analysis. Then the articles are read and analyzed depending on using a researchers-made template to meet the specific needs in the data collection process to find out the frequency of the occurrences of noun post-modifiers and their types. A quantitative method is adopted in doing the research. The research tries, on corpus-based evidence, to find out the most frequent type of noun post-modifier in real written form of English language. The significance of the research can be seen in the framework of corpus linguistics and English syntax in that it originates from both fields, hence researchers in these two areas can take benefit from its findings. Depending on the results, the most remarkable finding of the paper is that prepositional phrases are the most frequently used post-modifiers in noun phrases. On this basis, the main conclusion of the paper is that prepositional phrases have the highest rate of occurrence among all the noun post-modifiers in political news.

Keywords: Noun Phrase, Post-Modifier, Corpus Linguistics, Prepositional Phrase, Political News

1. Introduction

The development of corpus linguistics brought important changes in linguistics and applied linguistics. Corpus linguistics, as defined by Huntson (2022), is an approach to investigate language: spoken, written, or signed, in which the collection of large quantities of naturally occurring language is involved so that later that language will be analyzed using a specific computerizing procedure in order to obtain information about how frequently the language occurs. According to McEnery and Wilson (2001), corpus linguistics has faced several changes in recent years and these changes have resulted in broadening its scope. Although corpus linguistics has a long history, the term itself is considered modern. Briefly, corpus linguistics is described as a language study depending on real-life instances of language use.

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For Lindquist (2009), corpus linguistics is not considered a branch of linguistics but rather a methodology since he claims that corpus is not to tell you what is studied but provides a methodology that can be applied. In the same vein, in her definition of corpus linguistics, Huntson (2022, p.1) states that it is “an approach to investigate language.” Thus, she asserts the idea that corpus linguistics is a method. On the other hand, scholars like Tognini-Bonelli (2001) believe that it is a branch of linguistics. Additionally, McEnery and Wilson (2001) claim that there is no clear-cut answer to the matter as for them corpus linguistics can be both a discipline and a methodology.

A corpus that is selected to represent a state or a variety of a language is defined as collecting naturally occurring language texts. In other words, it is the collection of the language in use (real-life or authentic instances). The size of corpora is important and the collections must contain many millions of words (Sinclair, 1991). This definition partially matches what a corpus is, but it has drawbacks that need to be amended with other definitions. Bennet (2010, p.1) provides a better definition. He states that “A corpus is a large, principled collection of naturally occurring examples of language stored electronically.” Each word in Bennet’s definition carries important key ideas about what a corpus actually is.

McEnery and Wilson (2001) simply claim that a corpus can refer to the collection of more than one text, but when modern linguistics is taken into consideration, this simple definition no longer works because a corpus tends to have more specific connotations than the definition suggests. In other words, according to McEnery and Wilson, there are certain criteria which a corpus should possess. These features are sampling and representativeness, finite size, and machine-readable form. These characteristics are similar to the ones Bonnet (2010) referred to in his definition of corpus.

It is important to distinguish a corpus from a text archive. The chief difference between them is that a corpus is the collection of texts in an organized and principled method and later, it is benefited from for linguistic analysis. In contrast, an archive is referred to as a text repository, but it is not necessarily structured as a corpus is (Kennedy, 2014). Also, Leech (1991, p.11) suggests that “the difference between an archive and a corpus must be that the latter is designed or required for a ‘representative’ function”.

As previously mentioned, a corpus is the collection of large authentic texts using specific software. It is obvious that corpora have important roles in researching, especially in linguistic analyses. It is necessary to figure out that there are different types of corpora. Also, each type of corpora is there to serve a specific scope of the language. Therefore, to find out the right corpus, one should determine their purpose because depending on the purpose, the type of the corpus may change. According to both Huntson (2022) and Bennet (2010), there are eight different types of corpora each of which is used for a specific aim. Here, taking the nature of the nature of the study into account, the observed corpus has been adopted consisting of fifteen news reports which have been selected for the purpose of the data analysis.

Now, turning to Noun phrases, they are essential in the English language since a considerable amount of the language is dominated by noun phrases due to their various forms and functions. Haan (1989) describes noun phrases as combinations of words having internal structures which could be determiners, modifiers, (pre-modifiers or post-modifiers), and a head which is the compulsory element to be present in noun phrases. As proposed by Greenbaum and Quirk (1990), the head is the most essential constituent of a noun phrase because the other components, namely determiners and modifiers, gather around it and it is the

head that determines the agreement in terms of number and person with the rest of the sentence. Aarts and Aarts (1982) state that the head, to which they refer as the dominant component, can stand alone and replace the entire phrase without the other elements around it.

Modification is the process of adding information to a noun phrase unless it is non-restrictive. A noun phrase is modified either by a pre-modifier or a post-modifier. Greenbaum and Quirk (1990, p. 363) define post-modification as “comprising all the items placed after the head.” The rationale behind focusing on post-modifiers in noun phrases, especially in political news, is that they provide the reader with necessary information regarding the noun in question since the noun alone is not obvious to the reader and needs more clarification or description. According to Biber et al. (2009), post-modifiers are classified into two major groups. They are clausal post-modifiers and phrasal post-modifiers, as discussed below.

1.1 Clausal Post-modifiers

Clausal post-modifiers, as the name suggests, are sentence-like constructions which can be tensed or tenseless. Sentence elements such as subject, verb, complement, etc. can be found in this kind of noun post-modifiers. This class of post-modifiers is further subdivided into the following:

1. **Relative Clauses:** This kind of clausal post-modifier is introduced by a relative pronoun such as *who*, *which*, *that*, etc. The relative pronouns function as subject or object. Depending on the meaning, a relative clause can be either restrictive or non-restrictive. If the head noun is recognized only with the relative clause, it will be a restrictive relative clause because it contains the information necessary to identify the head, e.g. *the girl who stands in the corner*. In contrast, the relative clause is non-restrictive when it just provides additional information not needed for identification, e.g. *Christopher Columbus, who was an Italian explorer* (Quirk et al., 1985). Huddleston and Pullum (2005) affirm that all relative clauses are finite clause modifiers.
2. **Appositive Clauses:** This one can only be a post-modifier for an abstract noun such as *peace*, *fear*, *fact*, etc. Like relative clauses, appositive clauses can also be either restrictive or non-restrictive. They are introduced by a conjunction, (usually ‘*that*’), not a pronoun; which can also be omitted, e.g. *The belief that he is a superhero is nonsense* (Haan, 1989).
3. **Non-finite Clauses:** The non-finite clauses are divided into three types depending on the first verb in the verb phrase. They are *-ing* clauses, e.g. *the man walking down the street*, *-ed* clauses, e.g. *the car crashed in the accident*, and *to-infinitive* clauses, e.g. *enough money to buy*, (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2016).

1.2 Phrasal Post-modifiers

This group of noun post-modifiers are smaller in size as compared to clausal post-modifiers; they may consist of only one word in certain cases. They are subdivided into some other groups. Huddleston and Pullum (2005) categorize this group into the following:

1. **Prepositional Phrases:** A prepositional phrase starts with a preposition followed by its complement, the obligatory element, e.g. *food for the baby*.
2. **Adjective Phrases:** The usual position of an adjective phrase is before a noun, but in some cases, it follows the noun and functions as a post-modifier, e.g. *attorney general*.

3. Appositive Noun Phrases: Apposition is the relationship which can be established between two noun phrases having the same reference, e.g. my friend, the doctor.
4. Non-appositive Noun Phrases: Unlike appositive noun phrases, they cannot stand in place of the whole noun phrase, e.g. a rug this color.

The paper aims to deal with the frequency of the occurrences of noun post-modifiers in English. The research question that the paper tries to answer is ‘which type of noun post-modifier is more frequent as compared to the others in English political news?’. It is hypothesized that prepositional phrases, among all the other types, are the most widely used post-modifiers in English noun phrases. The reason behind developing this hypothesis lies in the experience of the researchers in dealing with English syntax in general. Thus, it can be generalized and transferred to political news as well.

2. Literature Review

Noun phrases are important since they domain a large portion of the English language due to their various functions in different positions. Thus, there have been many studies carried out in different countries concerning noun phrases and their internal structures. In this section, some studies which have been conducted on the occurrence of modifiers in noun phrases are reviewed.

Ariwibowo (2017) did a research at Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. The aim of the study was dealing with the structure of post-modification in the English department students’ compositions with respect to the variability, complexity, and accuracy of the structures of noun post-modification in the Writing III class end-of-semester composition tests. Among fifty-four students joining the course, thirty-four students accepted to become the participants of the study. The analysis of documents passed through four procedures to reveal the students’ understanding of noun post-modification. The results indicated that prepositional phrases were the most frequently used post-modifiers. Conversely, adjective phrases recorded zero percentage. On the scale of complexity, i.e. noun post-modification by one or two modifiers, the nouns with one post-modifier outnumbers the nouns with two post-modifiers with four hundred and eighty-eight occurrences (99.998%) as compared to one (0.002%).

A corpus-based study was conducted by Hutter (2015) at Portland State University in the USA. A corpus of empirical research articles from the fields of applied linguistics and language teaching was used to explore the connection between article sections (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) and six kinds of noun modifiers. The aim of this study was to find the differences in the occurrences of the modifiers across the mentioned sections and to explore the different structures of the modifiers. To accomplish this, she created a specific corpus to meet the objective of the study by collecting thirty articles from five journals in the field of applied linguistics. The results suggested that the frequency variation of relative clauses, -ing clause, and -ed clause were low across the sections, while noun pre-modifiers (adjectives) and prepositional phrases vary significantly across the sections.

Pozdílková (2010) carried out a research aiming at finding the frequency of the occurrence of clausal post-modifiers, namely relative and appositive clauses within noun phrases in newspaper reports. Pozdílková collected articles from the British broadsheet newspapers, the online versions of The Times and The Daily Telegraph. Also, the official BBC News website, news.bbc.co.uk, was used. The results of the research

indicated that the occurrence of clausal post-modifiers in the selected articles was high because the sample sentences were lead sentences occurring at the beginning of the articles. More precisely, with regard to the type of the post-modifiers, relative clauses were dominant since they contributed 90% of all the clauses found in the articles because relative clauses can modify numerous nouns, whereas appositive clauses can only modify abstract nouns. Thus, the occurrence of appositive clauses was lower.

Another study was conducted by Kusuma in (2007) in Indonesia at Sanata Dharma University, focusing on the occurrence of noun phrases in five football news articles in *The Jakarta Post* published during the FIFA World Cup 2006 (from June until July 2006). The main aim of the study was to find the elements of the noun phrases which occur in *The Jakarta Post* football news. He concluded that the elements which mostly occur with noun phrases are the definite article as a determiner, an adjective as a pre-modifier, and the prepositional phrase as a post-modifier. Also, it was found that the most common type of noun phrase was the one consisting of only the head, hence, the average length of noun phrases is also revealed in *The Jakarta Post* football news during the FIFA World Cup 2006.

Although the studies' aims and contexts are different, some similarities can be extracted from their results. One of the mostly occurred elements with noun phrases in Kusuma's study (2007) and Hutter's study (2015) was prepositional phrases. Correspondingly, Ariwibowo's study (2017) showed that prepositional phrases were the most frequently used post-modifiers. These common results between these studies suggest that prepositional phrases could be the mostly occurred post-modifiers in various contexts. On the other hand, differences can also be noticed between the results. According to Pozdilková's findings (2010), the occurrences of relative clauses were the highest since they contributed 90% of all the clauses found in the articles, whereas in Hutter's finding's (2015) the occurrences of relative clauses were among the low ones. In a similar vein, there are records of adjectives as pre-modifiers in Kusuma's (2007) and Hutter's (2015) results, while there is no record of adjectives in Pozdilková's (2010) and Ariwibowo's findings. This reveals that the occurrences of relative clauses and adjectives may vary according to various contexts, unlike prepositional phrases which remain consistent.

The above-mentioned studies concentrated on the occurrence of noun phrases and their modifications. Two of them, Kusuma (2007) and Hutter (2015), generally focus on both types of modifications, pre- and post-modifications, whereas Pozdilková (2010) and Ariwibowo (2017) investigate post-modifications. They are crucial to our study because they can provide a framework for us to see the different ranges of occurrences of modifiers. This helps us to find out if the field of political news, which is a different context from contexts of the above-mentioned studies, could yield different or similar results as our study is mainly concerned with finding out the most frequent type of noun post-modifier in written discourse, especially political news. Additionally, none of these studies investigated precisely the occurrence of noun post-modifiers in political news in English news websites with a corpus-based approach. Thus, this research, adopting a corpus-based approach, tries to fill in this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument

For the purpose of data collection, a template was designed, using Microsoft Word Document, which could meet our needs for this study and the template was divided into two major sections. The first section included general information, such as the news number, the news title, the website name, the URL and the date of publication, about the news articles chosen from the three English news websites. The second section was to collect information about the occurrences of noun post-modifiers in the selected articles. This section collects information about the two major types of post-modifiers, clausal post-modifiers and phrasal post-modifiers, as well as their subtypes. In this section, there are cells which show the number of the occurrences of each type of post-modifiers. At the end of the section, there is a cell that counts the total number of post-modifiers which occurred in the whole article. The template enhances the efficiency of data collection as it incorporates any necessary information regarding the data collected which are then analyzed for the purpose of obtaining concrete findings.

3.2 Data Collection

The type of the data collected are primary data. The data were collected from three English news websites to create the corpus. The websites were BBC News, CNN, and Al Jazeera English. Five articles were selected from each of them. The articles chosen were published from 28th of January 2023 to 15th of March 2023 (i.e. taking the first quarter of 2023 into consideration). All of the articles were from the field of politics and the lengths of them were similar in order to have a consistent result. The general information related to the news articles was recorded in the first section of the template which had been designed. Word tokens of the observed corpus are 7,486. The main criterion for selecting these three websites is their reputation and fame all over the world.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis was on the basis of the data collected from the articles of the three English news websites through using a template to record the occurrences of noun post-modifiers. The data used are quantitative because they are numerical showing the frequency of the occurrences of noun post-modifiers. Based on the research question, the data were analyzed manually. In doing so, we got the total number of post-modifiers of each of the five articles selected from the three different English news websites alongside determining their types. Then we collected the total occurrences of all the three websites to reveal the frequency of the occurrences and types of noun post-modifiers in the three selected English news websites. The issue of inter-rater reliability was taken into account and agreement was reached concerning the data analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Clausal Post-modifiers

Generally, the occurrences of clausal post-modifiers were low. Starting from BBC News articles, out of 153 occurrences of post-modifiers, only 39 occurrences, which count for 25%, were clausal post-

modifiers. As for the articles selected from CNN, the number of their occurrences rises up to 95 occurrences out of 268 occurrences of post-modifiers. This counts for 35% of the total occurrences and it is 9% higher as compared to BBC News articles. Surprisingly, the occurrences in the articles from Al Jazeera English are the same (95 occurrences) as CNN, but the frequencies of post-modifiers are higher which are 294 occurrences in total; this is 33% of occurrences in Al Jazeera English articles. Finally, the total occurrences of clausal post-modifiers from all the three websites are 229 out of 715 overall occurrences.

Table 1: The Overall Occurrences of Clausal Post-modifiers

	Clausal Post-modifier Occurrences	Total Occurrences of Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	39	153	25%
CNN	95	268	35%
Al Jazeera English	95	294	33%
Total	229	715	32%

Considering the table above, we can see that CNN and Al Jazeera English are equally high in their occurrences as compared to BBC News which has the lowest record of clausal post-modifier occurrences. In the sections below, the results of the types of clausal post-modifiers will be discussed.

4.1.1 Relative Clauses

One type of clausal post-modifiers is the relative clause which is further divided into restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. The total occurrences of relative clauses in BBC News articles are 22 occurrences which create 56% of the total occurrences of clausal post-modifiers. Four of the relative clauses are non-restrictive, while the rest are restrictive. This is considered 18% non-restrictive and 82% restrictive. The number takes a boost while looking at CNN articles as the frequency of relative clauses increase to 43 occurrences which is considered 45%. Out of 43 occurrences, non-restrictive relative clauses are 10 which is 30%, whereas restrictive relative clauses are 33 which create 70% of contribution. As for Al Jazeera English articles, there is not a big gap if compared to CNN articles as the total occurrences of relative clauses are 44 which count for 46% of the frequency of clausal post-modifiers. 29% of the relative clauses, which equals to 13 occurrences, are non-restrictive and 81% of the relative clauses (31 occurrences) are restrictive.

Table 2: The Overall Occurrences of Relative Clauses (Restrictive and Non-restrictive)

	Restrictive Relative Clauses	Non- restrictive Relative Clauses	Total of Relative Clauses	Total Occurrences of Clausal Post- modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	18	4	22	39	56%
CNN	33	10	43	95	45%
Al Jazeera English	31	13	44	95	46%
Total	82	27	109	229	47%

As noticed, relative clauses record the frequency of 109 occurrences out of 229 occurrences of clausal post-modifiers. In other words, 47% of clausal post-modifiers are relative clauses. Also, restrictive relative clauses have a higher record than non-restrictive relative clauses in total and in all the three websites in isolation.

4.1.2 Non-finite Clauses

Another level of analysis is non-finite clauses which are categorized as -ing clauses, -ed clauses, and to-infinitive clauses. Starting from BBC News articles, the overall 17 occurrences of non-finite clauses can be seen, eight of which are -ing clauses, following -ed and to-infinitive clauses the former having only one occurrence while the latter has eight occurrences from the total of 39 occurrences (43% of clausal post-modifiers). -ing clauses and to-infinitive clauses are equally high with the percentage of 94, both combined. In the contrary, the -ed clause contributes with only 6% which is the lowest. The occurrences of non-finite clauses rise in CNN articles. The frequency is 52 occurrences out of 95 and it is considered 54% of clausal post-modifiers. The -ing clauses and to-infinitive clauses have the highest frequency with 20 occurrences for -ing clauses which create 38% and 19 occurrences for to-infinitive clause which gives 36%. -ed clauses have the frequency of 13 occurrences and it is 26%. Lastly, non-finite clauses in Al Jazeera English articles have a lower record with 49 occurrences, 51%, than CNN articles, but higher than BBC News articles. The occurrences of -ing clauses are the highest with the percentage of 48 (24 occurrences), whereas -ed clauses are the lowest with only five occurrences creating 10%. To-infinitive clauses have 20 occurrences which are counted for 42%.

Table 3: The Overall Occurrences of Non-finite Clauses (-ing Clauses, -ed Clauses, and To-infinitive Clauses)

	-ing Clauses	-ed Clauses	To-infinitive Clauses	Total of Non-finite Clauses	Total Occurrences Clausal of Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	8	1	8	17	39	44%
CNN	20	13	19	52	95	55%
Al Jazeera English	24	5	20	49	95	52%
Total	52	19	47	118	229	52%

To sum up, non-finite clauses have the total of 118 occurrences out of 229 occurrences of clausal post-modifiers from all the articles selected. This creates 52% for non-finite clauses. Thus, it is obvious that non-finite clauses have the most frequent occurrences among clausal post-modifiers. Additionally, among non-finite relative clauses, -ing clauses have the highest record, while -ed clauses have the lowest frequency of occurrences in total.

4.1.3 Appositive Clauses

The last type of clausal post-modifiers to be analyzed is appositive clauses separated into restrictive and non-restrictive ones. There is something very important to point out about appositive clauses: appositive clauses have the lowest rate of occurrences in all the articles collected from the three English news websites. All the articles from BBC News and CNN have zero occurrences of appositive clauses including both types. In other words, from 134 occurrences of clausal post-modifiers in BBC News and CNN articles, there is no occurrence of appositive clauses in them. There are only two occurrences of appositive clauses, both of which are restrictive appositive clauses, in Al Jazeera English articles out of 95 occurrences.

Table 4: The Overall Occurrences of Appositive Clauses (Restrictive and Non-restrictive Clause)

	Restrictive Appositive Clauses	Non-restrictive Appositive Clauses	Total of Appositive Clauses	Total Occurrences of Clausal Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	0	0	0	39	00%
CNN	0	0	0	95	00%
Al Jazeera English	2	0	2	95	2%
Total	2	0	2	229	1%

The results in the table above indicate a fact about appositive clauses: they have the least occurrence as compared to the other types. The reason is that appositive clauses can only modify abstract nouns as explained in the introduction.

4.2 Phrasal Post-modifiers

The second major type of post-modifiers is phrasal post-modifier with its four types. At this level of analysis, phrasal post-modifier occurrences are dealt with. In BBC News articles, the occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers are 114 out of 153 occurrences of post-modifiers which are 75% of the total. Secondly, in CNN articles, phrasal post-modifiers make up 173 occurrences (65%) from 268 occurrences in total. The frequency in Al Jazeera English articles is higher as they reach up to 199 occurrences out of 294. This makes up the contribution of 67%.

Table 5: The Overall Occurrences of Phrasal Post-modifiers

	Phrasal Post-modifier Occurrences	Total Occurrences of Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	114	153	75%
CNN	173	268	65%
Al Jazeera English	199	294	67%
Total	486	715	68%

Depending on what is available here, it is understood that Al Jazeera English articles, followed by CNN articles, have the highest rate of occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers. In the upcoming sections, the occurrences of the four types of phrasal post-modifiers will be discussed.

4.2.1 Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases are surprisingly high when compared to the other types of post-modifiers. Prepositional phrases alone have the frequency of 101 occurrences in BBC News articles where the total number of occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers is 114. This makes up 88% of the frequency in total. Furthermore, in CNN articles, prepositional phrases record 143 occurrences which create 82% of the occurrences whose total is 173. Lastly, in Al Jazeera English articles, out of 199 occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers, 170 occurrences were prepositional phrases which results in 85%.

Table 6: The Overall Occurrences of Prepositional Phrases

	Prepositional Phrase Occurrences	Total Occurrences of Phrasal Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	101	114	88%
CNN	143	173	82%
Al Jazeera English	170	199	85%
Total	414	486	85%

To sum up, based on the data, it is revealed that prepositional phrases have the highest occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers in each of the five articles individually and all combined together as well. The total of prepositional phrase occurrences from all the articles combined is 414 occurrences, 85%, where the total occurrences of phrasal post-modifiers are 486.

4.2.2 Adjective Phrases

Adjective phrases are generally known to be pre-modifiers. However, it is not the case with them being post-modifiers since according to the data collected adjective phrase records as post-modifiers from all the news articles selected are very low. There are only three records of adjective phrases functioning as post-modifiers from the articles of BBC News. This is only 2% of occurrences. Furthermore, the number is even smaller with CNN and Al Jazeera English articles where the former has two occurrences and the latter has one occurrence only. This makes up 1% of contribution for both.

Table 7: The Overall Occurrences of Adjective Phrases

	Adjective Phrase Occurrences	Total Occurrences of Phrasal Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	3	114	2%
CNN	2	173	1%
Al Jazeera English	1	199	1%
Total	6	486	1%

It is revealed that among phrasal post-modifiers, adjective phrases have a very low frequency of only 6 records out of 486 records. We presume that the reason is because adjective phrases typically function as a noun pre-modifier rather than post-modifier.

4.2.3 Appositive and Non-appositive Noun Phrases

This is the last level of analysis for phrasal post-modifiers. Starting from appositive noun phrases, there are 10 records of them in BBC News articles which contribute 10% of the occurrences. The number goes up while looking at CNN and Al Jazeera English articles. Out of 173 occurrences of the former and 199 of the latter, they both equally have the occurrences of 28 appositive noun phrases. It makes up 17% for CNN and 14% for Al Jazeera English.

Table 8: The Overall Occurrences of Appositive and Non-appositive Noun Phrases

	Appositive Noun Phrases	Non-appositive Noun Phrases	Total Occurrences of Phrasal Post-modifiers	Ratio
BBC News	10	0	114	10%
CNN	28	0	173	17%
Al Jazeera English	28	0	199	14%
Total	66	0	486	14%

However, there is not a single occurrence of non-appositive noun phrases from all the articles and this indicates how infrequent and uncommon this type of post-modifier it is in news reporting language.

4.3 The Overall Occurrences of Post-modifiers

This section tries to provide a summary for the data presented in paper. The post-modifiers are divided into two major types which are clausal post-modifiers and phrasal post-modifiers. The total occurrences

of noun phrase post-modifiers are 715 from all the fifteen articles selected from BBC News, CNN, and Al Jazeera English. For clausal post-modifiers, there are 229 occurrences out of 715 records of post-modifiers. This means that 32% are clausal post-modifiers. Concerning clausal post-modifiers, non-finite clauses have the highest rate of records, which is 118, whereas restrictive appositive clauses have the lowest rate which are only two occurrences. On the other hand, phrasal post-modifiers have 486 occurrences out of 715 occurrences and this creates 68% of the post-modifiers. Among the phrasal post-modifiers, with 414 occurrences, prepositional phrases have the highest frequency, while non-appositive noun phrases have the lowest record of zero occurrences.

Table 9: The Overall Occurrences of Post-modifiers

	Clausal Post-modifiers	Phrasal Post-modifiers	Total
Number of Occurrences	229	486	715
Ratio	32%	68%	100%

Now, it is obviously understood that prepositional phrases are the most occurred and frequent type of post-modifiers in the three selected English websites. The results obtained in this study are similar to those of Ariwibowo (2017), Hutter (2015), and Kusuma (2007) in that prepositional phrases are the most widely used post-modifiers in noun phrases. However they are different from those of Pozdřlkov (2010) in which relative clauses can be seen as the most frequently used post-modifiers of nouns in political news. To sum up, it is worth indicating that the results of the current study are in line with the hypothesis made in the introduction.

Conventionally, there can be certain limitation in doing any kind of research. This is also the case with this research. The most outstanding limitation of the study was the issue of selecting the articles in order to prevent the existence of bias to the international as well as regional powers and governments about which the articles were published since political issues are very sensitive to deal with. Another limitation of the study was lack of sufficient previous studies closely related to the topic to be used for literature review. Due to the inevitable existence of syntactic structures in any written text, it is implied that numerous further studies can be done integrating syntactic phenomena to corpus linguistics in other types of texts such economy, sports, agriculture, etc.

5. Conclusion

Noun phrases are essential in English since a considerable amount of the language is dominated by noun phrases due to their various forms and functions. This paper aimed to investigate and find out the occurrences of noun post-modifiers in political news in three English news websites, namely BBC News, CNN and Al Jazeera English by selecting five news articles from each to discover the frequency of noun post-modifier occurrences. Depending on the results obtained, non-finite clauses have the highest record among clausal post-modifiers with 118 occurrences (52%). Also, prepositional phrases have the highest frequency among phrasal post-modifiers with 414 records (85%) of phrasal post-modifiers. Additionally, prepositional phrases record the highest occurrences of post-modifiers among all the fifteen political news

articles selected, whereas non-appositive noun phrases have the lowest record. The findings of the paper, implied by the results, parallel the hypothesis concerning the highest frequency of prepositional phrases functioning as a post-modifier in noun phrases. The linguistic implication that can be proposed from the research is that various and numerous syntactic issues are found in any type of written discourse, hence there is enough opportunity for further research in this field of language relating it to corpus linguistics. Finally, what is also significant to be mentioned is the limitation of the study: selecting the articles in a way that bias must be avoided.

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Appendix

The following is all the fifteen political news articles used as the data of the study:

1. Boris Johnson says he will find it hard to vote for Rishi Sunak's Brexit deal

Boris Johnson has said he will find it "very difficult" to vote for Rishi Sunak's new Brexit deal for Northern Ireland.

The former prime minister said the deal was "not about the UK taking back control".

It is the first time he has commented since Mr Sunak unveiled the Windsor agreement on Monday.

The deal with the EU aims to fix post-Brexit trade problems in Northern Ireland.

A spokesman for Mr Sunak said the prime minister would "continue to engage with MPs", but would not confirm when he had last spoken with Mr Johnson.

The spokesperson said Mr Sunak's deal remained "the best deal for the people of Northern Ireland and businesses in Northern Ireland".

But in his speech, Mr Johnson said it was "a version of the solution that was being offered" to Liz Truss when she served as his foreign secretary last year.

In a speech in Westminster, the former PM said: "This is the EU graciously unbending to do what we want in our country not by our laws but by theirs.

"I'm going to find it very difficult to vote for something like this myself, as I believe we should have done something different."

The deal would act as a "a drag anchor on divergence" from the EU, he added.

"Brexit is nothing if we in this country don't do things differently."

Mr Johnson called for his controversial Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which the EU argued would breach international law, to be restored if the new deal does not work out.

The bill was scrapped by Mr Sunak, who told MPs his new deal "puts beyond all doubt that we've now taken back control".

MPs are expected to have a vote on Mr Sunak's Windsor framework in the coming weeks.

Mr Johnson could decide to abstain, rather than actively voting against it.

He remains an influential force on the Tory backbenches but it appears the majority of the party's MPs will vote for the new deal.

Labour have also said they will back it, guaranteeing that it will become law.

Asked if he would return to frontline politics, Mr Johnson said it was "very, very unlikely I will need to do a big in politics again".

Instead, he said he would focus on writing his memoirs alongside campaigning for Ukraine, Brexit and Levelling Up.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) - whose support is crucial restoring the power sharing government in Northern Ireland - have yet to deliver their verdict on the deal.

The Brexititeer European Research (ERG) group of Tory MPs have hired lawyers to study the text in detail before announcing whether they support the deal.

Mr Sunak has previously said the new deal is about "what is best for people in Northern Ireland" and not "personalities".

He said the deal "will make a positive difference for all" in Northern Ireland.

The prime minister is willing to clarify any "misunderstandings" about how the new Brexit deal for Northern Ireland will work, his official spokesman said.

2. Tunisia bans opposition protest as officials held

The Tunisian authorities have banned an opposition rally that was due to take place on Sunday.

Members of the opposition coalition that called it are suspected of crimes against the state.

A Tunisian official said the coalition's request for the rally had "not been approved as some of its leaders are suspected of plotting against state security".

In the past month, the authorities have launched a wave of arrests of key figures including rivals and critics of President Kais Saied, with dozens of them held.

On Thursday, police arrested Sadok Chourou and Habib Ellouz - two senior officials of the main opposition party Ennahda.

The party said the arrests were meant to "terrorise the opposition" and called on Tunisians to join the planned protests.

The country has been in a deepening political and economic crisis, amid protests by

Tunisians frustrated with the economy and against Mr Saied's near-total power.

In 2021, Mr Saied shut down the parliament and moved to rule by decree before rewriting Tunisia's constitution.

3. Coalition better than opposition - Plaid Cymru leader

Going into coalition is better than opposition, Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price said after his party backed getting into government as a means to achieve independence. Party members endorsed the plan at party conference on Saturday. The strategy suggests that after an election Plaid would aim to be at least a junior partner with a larger party in government. But Mr Price says the party's goal remains leading Wales. There have been debates for years in Plaid about how much the party should co-operate with Welsh Labour. Mr Price has ruled out any coalition with the Conservatives. Plaid is currently in a co-operation agreement with Mark Drakeford's Welsh government. Adam Price said there were three main points to the strategy: "Independence is our primary purposes as a party, the importance of being in government as a means to achieve that, and thirdly in order to become a party of government, we've got to broaden the base of support in all parts of Wales." Mr Price said "obviously" the party's goal remained leading a government in Wales. "But when it's not possible in one step to become the leading party, then it's still better to be in government as a partner with others than the alternative, which is to have no influence at all in opposition." Plaid members agreed the strategy at a special conference in Llanelli which was closed to the media. It has not released the strategy publicly. The conference follows a string of allegations of a toxic culture and misconduct within the party, with Mr Price telling delegates on Friday that the party must do better. Earlier, the party's health spokesman Rhun ap Iorwerth called for Mark Drakeford to sack his Health Minister Eluned Morgan over the crisis at Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

4. Xi Jinping begins historic third term as China's president

China's leader Xi Jinping has secured a historic third term as president from the country's rubber-stamp parliament. It follows a consolidation of power that has made Mr Xi, 69, China's most dominant leader in generations. In the Chinese system of governance, the functions of the president are largely ceremonial. Mr Xi's power comes from him being General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). He was handed both posts at a party congress last October. Confirmation of his third term as president had been widely expected. The naming of a new premier and various ministers in the coming days is considered more important. The new appointees are mostly expected to be Xi Jinping loyalists. This includes Li Qiang, who is tipped to serve as Mr Xi's number two. On Friday, Mr Xi has also gained another term as the chairman of the CMC of the People's Republic of China. There are two CMCs in the country - one is a party organisation while another is a state institution - but their make-up is usually the same. Mr Xi has solidified his rule as China reopens from his bruising zero-Covid policy that has fuelled anti-government protests. The country is also facing a falling birth rate that threatens its economic growth engine. Ties between Beijing and Washington remain testy, recently highlighted by allegations China had been spying on the US with balloons. "Whether a strengthened Xi and increasing centralisation is sufficient to overcome these problems - or perhaps make them worse - is unknown and perhaps not knowable at present," Ian Chong, a political scientist at the National University Singapore, told the BBC. "In a sense, Xi is betting that centralisation under the party with him at the helm is a solution to these disparate issues," he said. The so-called Two Sessions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) this week is closely watched as it provides a glimpse into China's direction in the coming years. Since Mao Zedong, leaders in China had been limited to two terms in office. When Mr Xi had this restriction changed in 2018, it transformed him into a figure with a reach not seen since Chairman Mao. Also on Friday, the national legislature appointed Han Zheng, a 68-year-old former Politburo Standing Committee member, as vice president. The importance of the position varies since its functions are not fully defined. However, the last vice president, Wang Qishan, fronted Mr Xi's anti-corruption campaign, Chong said. Chances are that Mr Han will follow Mr Xi's direction closely and enforce the president's policies as necessary, he added.

5. Russia is still India's largest arms supplier, says report

Russia continues to be India's largest arms supplier, even though its share of Indian defence imports fell from 62% to 45% between 2017-2022, a report says.

France came second with 29% of Indian arms imports, displacing the US at 11%, said the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri).

Its researchers found India remains the world's largest arms buyer, despite an 11% drop in its total weapons imports.

Delhi wants to diversify its imports portfolio and boost domestic capacity.

Experts say the drop in Russian imports can be largely attributed to India's decision to look for new suppliers and also encourage its local manufacturing.

Sipri said that Russia's position as India's main arm supplier was "under pressure due to strong competition from other supplier states, increased Indian arms production" and "constraints on Russia's arms exports related to its invasion of Ukraine".

Meanwhile, France's defence exports to India increased by 489% between 2013-17 and 2018-22, the report said. France ranks third in the list of global arms exporters - behind the US and Russia, but ahead of China and Germany.

Delhi's orders to France included around 63 combat aircraft and four submarines, Sipri said.

The fall in Russia's share coincides with calls for Delhi to take tougher a stand on the Ukraine war.

Moscow has been a time tested ally of India and the two countries have shared a close defence relationship for decades - the Indian Army is equipped with Russian-made tanks and rifles, while its air force uses Sukhoi fighter jets and Mi-17 helicopters.

Delhi has not explicitly condemned the Ukraine war but has talked about the importance of "the UN Charter, international law, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states".

The atmosphere was tense at a recent G20 meeting when top diplomats from opposing sides met in Delhi.

6. Pentagon chief speaks to Russian counterpart after drone incident

United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has said he spoke to his Russian counterpart following [this week's downing](#) of a US drone over the Black Sea, which Washington has blamed on Moscow. Austin told reporters that he spoke with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on Wednesday, but declined to provide additional details on their discussion. The rare, high-level talks come a day after [US officials said a Russian jet](#) made contact with a US MQ-9 Reaper drone, forcing it to be shot down. Moscow has denied that a collision occurred. The incident would mark the first time that US and Russian military assets have made contact since the war in Ukraine began in February of last year, and it has fuelled concerns of a potential escalation between the two countries. But Austin appeared to show restraint during a news conference at the Pentagon, saying the US takes "any potential for escalation very seriously and that's why I believe it's important to keep the lines of communication open". "As I've said repeatedly, it's important that great powers be models of transparency and communication, and the United States will continue to fly and to operate wherever international law allows," Austin said. Contact between the top US and Russian defence officials has been relatively rare since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Austin and Shoigu [first spoke](#) about Russia's offensive in May of last year, and in October, they spoke twice in three days amid a heightened threat of an escalation in the conflict. On Wednesday, Austin reiterated the [US version of what happened](#) over the Black Sea this week, saying a Russian fighter jet intercepted the US drone in international airspace. "This hazardous episode is part of a pattern of aggressive, risky and unsafe actions by Russian pilots in international airspace," Austin said during the news conference alongside US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley. The US officials also said the Russian jet dumped fuel on the \$30m drone before the collision. Milley said there were still questions as to whether Russia meant to down the drone, even though the moments that led up to the crash were "intentional". "We know that the intercept was intentional. We know that the aggressive behaviour was intentional," he told reporters. "You've heard about the dumping of fuel and everything else. We have video evidence of all that so there's no question that that part of it's intentional," he said. "The actual physical contact of the aircraft – that, I'm not so sure. So we'll have to figure that out." Milley added that recovery has been hampered by the fact the drone went down in 1,219 to 1,524 metres (4,000 to 5,000 feet) of water, but said the US had already taken measures to guard against a loss of sensitive intelligence if the drone were to be recovered by Russia. "We're quite confident that whatever was of value is no longer of value," he said. Milley added that he planned to talk to his Russian counterpart, Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, about the incident. Russia has maintained that while its fighter jets intercepted the drone, no contact was made and instead the US aircraft went down during a "sharp manoeuvre". It also has said that the drone entered an area that was declared off limits by Russian authorities. Russia has declared broad areas near Crimea off limits to flights. The [US does not recognise Russia's annexation](#) of Crimea following the invasion of the territory in 2014. Speaking after being summoned by the US Department of State over the incident, the Russian ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, said he told US officials that Russia would "no longer allow anybody to violate our waters", the TASS news agency reported. Antonov said the drone "deliberately and provocatively was moving towards Russian territory with transponders turned off". He said his meeting at the State Department was constructive and the issue of possible consequences for Moscow over the incident was not raised, the RIA state news agency also reported on Wednesday.

7. 'Changing global order': China's hand in the Iran-Saudi deal

China's efforts in [brokering a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia](#) have been seen by analysts as broader signs of a "changing global order". During talks in Beijing on Friday, Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies within two months. The agreement also stipulated affirming "the respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in internal affairs of states". Iranian state media posted images and video of Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, shaking hands with Saudi national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban, with Wang Yi, China's most senior diplomat, standing in between. China's role as a mediator in resolving longstanding issues between the regional foes had not been made public prior to the announcement. Wang reportedly said China will continue to play a constructive role in handling hotspot issues and demonstrate responsibility as a major nation. He added that as a "good-faith" and "reliable" mediator, China has fulfilled its duties as a host for dialogue.

'Low risk, high reward for China'

The two Gulf countries severed ties in 2016 when Saudi Arabia executed a prominent Shia Muslim scholar, triggering protests in Iran with protesters attacking its embassy in Tehran. Both sides have stood on opposing sides and engaged in proxy wars in many conflict zones in the Middle East. In Yemen, with the war now well into its eighth year, the Houthi rebels are backed by Tehran, while Riyadh leads a military coalition in support of the government. Since 2021, talks have been held between both sets of officials in Iraq and Oman but no deals were reached. Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf State Institute in Washington, DC, told Al Jazeera the brokered deal is evidence of a growing Chinese presence and its increased interest in playing a role in the region. As the United States does not have good relations with Iran, China is "in a good position to broker an agreement", he said. "It's a relatively low-risk and high-reward activity for China to engage in because the Chinese are not committed to any particular outcome," Mogielnicki said. "Better diplomatic linkages between Saudi Arabia and Iran will reduce the likelihood for regional conflict and will reduce regional tensions. That's a good thing for China, for the US and for regional actors as well." Sina Toossi, non-resident senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington, DC, told Al Jazeera that China has "a clear interest" in improving ties and stability in the region as the Gulf is a vital source of energy for Beijing, which imports energy from Iran and Saudi Arabia. In 2019, when [Saudi oil facilities were targeted](#) by the Houthis, it temporarily affected the country's oil production, leading to an increase in global oil prices of more than 14 percent over the weekend, the biggest spike in more than a decade. Toossi said this was "the worst-case scenario for China, that a conflict in the Persian Gulf would affect its energy supply and economic interests".

8. Biden, Brazil's Lula vow relationship reboot at White House meet

Brazilian President [Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva](#) and United States President Joe Biden have promised to kickstart relations between the two countries, focusing on supporting democracy and combatting climate change. The pledge on Friday came during a White House meeting between the two leaders, the first since the Brazilian president, commonly known as Lula, took office in January, [replacing](#) far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro. Lula and Biden highlighted shared goals during the visit, with Biden agreeing to visit Brazil in the future. The tone was a [distinct departure](#) from that during the administration of Bolsonaro, who maintained close ties with Biden's predecessor, former US President Donald Trump. Brazil "self-marginalised itself for four years", Lula told reporters, without directly referencing Bolsonaro, who earned the nickname "The Trump of the Tropics" for his combative style and regularly [repeating misinformation](#). During the public portion of the meeting, Lula said the former president's world "started and ended with fake news in the morning, afternoon, at night". Biden laughed and interjected: "Sounds familiar." The meeting came just over a month after Bolsonaro supporters [stormed](#) the Congress, Supreme Court and the presidential palace on January 8, demanding that the military intervene and remove Lula from office. The riot paralleled the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, by supporters of Trump seeking to overturn Biden's victory. "Both our nations' strong democracies have been tested ... both in the United States and Brazil, democracy prevailed," said Biden who is set to co-host the Washington-created Summit for Democracy, along with Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and Republic of Zambia. "We have some issues on which we can work together," Lula told Biden in turn.

Differences over Ukraine

The leaders also discussed Russia's invasion of Ukraine, insecurity in Haiti, migration, trade, and United Nations Security Council reform, according to the joint statement. The leaders said they "deplored the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine by Russia and the annexation of parts of its territory as flagrant violations of international law and called for a just and durable peace". Still, the leaders have been at odds over how to respond to the Russian invasion. Biden has spearheaded a major Western effort to rally behind Ukraine, providing aid, heavy-duty weapons, military training and diplomatic support as the country struggles to repel Russia. Brazil, meanwhile, is among several major democratic countries – including India and South Africa – that have largely avoided providing material support for Ukraine and have sent mixed political messages. The three countries are members of [the BRICS group](#) of emerging economies, along with Russia and China. As a candidate, Lula also [drew ire](#) from some Western countries for suggesting Russia and Ukraine were equally to blame for the invasion. Still, Lula has presented himself as a possible peace broker in the conflict. After the meeting on Friday, Lula told reporters that he wanted to assemble an international "group of countries that aren't directly or indirectly involved in the war of Russia against Ukraine so that we can have a possibility to build peace".

9. Turkey's opposition names Kilicdaroglu as presidential candidate

Turkish opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu has been named as the main challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a landmark [presidential and parliamentary vote](#), after days of wrangling by a six-party alliance over the nomination. "Our table is the table of peace. Our only goal is to take the country to days of prosperity, peace and joy," Kilicdaroglu, chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP), told about 2,000 people gathered in Ankara on Monday. The head of the country's second-biggest party will aim to defeat the president on May 14 in a tight race. The bloc has said it will reverse many of Erdogan's policies on the economy, civil rights and foreign affairs in what many see as the most consequential election in the republic's 100-year history. Kilicdaroglu, 74, could take advantage of years of economic crisis and soaring inflation, as well as last month's [devastating earthquakes](#) in the south that killed more than 46,000 people and brought criticism of the state's response. Yet some doubt that the former economist who climbed the ranks as a corruption fighter can defeat Erdogan, Turkey's longest-serving leader whose campaigning charisma has helped him win more than a dozen election victories.

Mediation efforts

Five parties in the opposition coalition had agreed on Kilicdaroglu's nomination on Friday, but the [bloc splintered](#) after Turkey's right-wing IYI Party leader Meral Aksener warned the joint candidate risked losing the election. The IYI Party's proposed presidential candidates — Ekrem Imamoglu and Mansur Yavas, the CHP mayors of Istanbul and Ankara respectively — were not accepted by the other five parties.

Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu, reporting from Ankara, said Kilicdaroglu "is known to have lost nearly every election" he has fought. But his popularity soared after he staged a "Justice March" from Ankara to Istanbul in 2017 to protest a crackdown on journalists and academics following an [attempted coup](#). Koseoglu said the IYI Party had opposed the nomination after polls suggested Imamoglu and Yavas had a better chance of winning. After a tense 72 hours, the alliance met again on Monday and accepted an IYI proposal that Imamoglu and Yavas would later be appointed as vice presidents. In his speech, Kilicdaroglu said the leaders of the other five opposition parties would also serve as vice presidents. Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said it may also support Kilicdaroglu in the presidential election after "clear, open talks". "Our clear expectation is a transition for a strong democracy. If we can agree on fundamental principles, we may support him in presidential elections," party co-leader Mithat Sancar said in a live broadcast on private broadcaster Haberturk. Turkey's opposition has cooperated more closely since its success in taking control of major municipalities, including Istanbul and Ankara, from Erdogan's AK Party in the 2019 local elections. But the discord within the opposition alliance has raised doubts about its ability to capitalise on the erosion in Erdogan's popularity shown by the opinion polls.

10. Macron says era of French interference in Africa is 'over'

President Emmanuel Macron has said the era of French interference in Africa was "well over" as he began a four-nation tour of the continent to renew frayed ties. Anti-French sentiment has run high in some former African colonies as the continent has become a renewed diplomatic battleground, with Russian and Chinese influence growing in the region. Macron said France harboured no desire to return to past policies of interfering in Africa before an environment summit in Gabon, the first leg of his trip. "The age of Francophonie is well over," Macron said in remarks to the French community in the capital Libreville, referring to France's post-colonisation strategy of supporting authoritarian leaders to defend its interests. "Sometimes, I get the feeling that mindsets haven't moved along as much as we have, when I read, hear and see people ascribing intentions to France that it doesn't have," he added. "Francophonie" is a favourite target of pan-Africanists, who have said that after the wave of decolonisation in 1960, France propped up dictators in its former colonies in exchange for access to resources and military bases. Macron and his predecessors, notably Francois Hollande, have previously declared that the policy is dead and that France has no intention of meddling in sovereign affairs.

Military revamp

Macron on Monday said there would be a "noticeable reduction" in France's troop presence in Africa "in the coming months" and a greater focus on training and equipping allied countries' forces. France has in the past year withdrawn troops from former colonies Mali, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic (CAR). The pullout from Mali and Burkina Faso, where its soldiers were supporting the Sahel nations to battle a long-running armed rebellion, came on the back of a wave of local hostility. In his remarks on Thursday, Macron insisted the planned reorganisation was "neither a withdrawal nor disengagement", defining it as adapting to the needs of partners. These fields of cooperation included fighting maritime piracy, illegal gold mining and environmental crimes linked to regional drug trafficking, itself driven by a "terrorist movement" in the Lake Chad area, he said. More than 3,000 French soldiers are deployed in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Gabon and Djibouti, according to official figures. The proposed revamp concerns the first three bases but not Djibouti, which is oriented more towards the Indian Ocean. Another 3,000 troops are in the Sahel region of West Africa, including in Niger and Chad.

Forest protection drive

Macron landed in Libreville on Wednesday and will later head to Angola, the Republic of Congo and the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). His comments came before several heads of state were due to attend the One Forest Summit in Libreville, which will focus on preserving rainforests that play a vital role in the global climate system. The forests of the vast Congo River Basin represent among the planet's largest carbon sinks. They are also home to huge biodiversity including forest elephants and gorillas, and bear traces of the settlement of early humanity. But they face threats such as poaching, deforestation for the oil, palm and rubber industries, and illegal logging and mineral exploitation. Macron spoke of the challenges of mobilising international finance as he and Gabonese environment minister Lee White toured the Raponda Walker Arboretum, a protected coastal area north of Libreville. "We always speak of billions in our summits, but people see little of it on the ground because the systems are imperfect," he said. Other presidents expected to attend the summit are host Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon; Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo; Faustin-Archange Touadera of the CAR; Chad's Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno; and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea. The gathering kicked off on Wednesday with exchanges between ministers, civil society representatives and experts. Macron will head to the former Portuguese colony of Angola on Friday, where he is set to sign an accord to develop the agricultural sector as part of a drive to enhance French ties with anglophone and Portuguese-speaking Africa. He will then stop in the Republic of Congo, another former French colony, where Sassou Nguesso has ruled for a total of almost four decades, and neighbouring DRC. Last year, Macron toured Cameroon, Benin and Guinea-Bissau in his first trip to the continent since winning re-election, seeking to reboot France's post-colonial relationship with the continent. The tour was to "show the commitment of the president in the process of renewing the relationship with the African continent", a French presidential official said, who asked not to be named. It signalled that the African continent is a "political priority" of his presidency.

11. China has more ICBM launchers than US, senior general tells lawmakers

A senior American military officer notified lawmakers in January that China has more land-based fixed and mobile intercontinental ballistic missile launchers than the US, according to a letter sent to Congress.

The letter from Gen. Anthony Cotton, commander of US Strategic Command which oversees the US nuclear arsenal says that as of October 2022 China's inventory of land-based fixed and mobile ICBM launchers "exceeds the number of ICBM launchers in the United States."

The letter also says that China's does not have more ICBMs or nuclear warheads than the US. A joint statement released on Tuesday by Republican leaders of Congress' Armed Services committees called the letter "a wake-up call for the United States."

"It is not an understatement to say that the Chinese nuclear modernization program is advancing faster than most believed possible. We have no time to waste in adjusting our nuclear force posture to deter both Russia and China. This will have to mean higher numbers and new capabilities," the statement said.

The details of the letter were first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Though the US has larger nuclear arsenal than China, Beijing's efforts to modernize and increase its nuclear capabilities have alarmed lawmakers and garnered the attention of US military leaders. The news of the letter comes as tensions between the US and China have increased over a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon the US military shot down over the Atlantic Ocean on Saturday. The balloon resulted in Secretary of State Antony

Blinken postponing his anticipated trip to Beijing, calling the balloon's presence over the continental USA a "clear violation of US sovereignty and international law."

China has maintained that the balloon crossing into the US was "completely an accident" and said on Sunday that China reserves "the right to make further necessary reaction."

ICBMs are a staple in the US nuclear triad, which includes nuclear delivery systems on land and in the air and sea. According to the Defense Department, they are distributed across 400 "hardened, underground silos" with another 50 silos "kept in 'warm' status."

The US arsenal also includes more than a dozen submarines capable of launching ballistic missiles and a fleet of nuclear-capable bombers.

The US stockpile of nuclear warheads far surpasses China's; in 2022, the US had more than 5,000 total nuclear warheads, with 1,644 of them deployed according to the Federation of American Scientists. China, meanwhile, has recently surpassed 400. And while the difference in stock is significant, a Pentagon report released in November said China is building its nuclear stockpile at an increasingly fast pace, and could have roughly 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035 if they maintained that pace.

"We see, I think, a set of capabilities taking shape and new numbers in terms of what they're looking to pursue that raise some questions about what their intent will be in the longer term," a senior defense official told reporters at the time.

12. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh expected to leave Biden administration

Labor Secretary [Marty Walsh](#) is expected to depart the Biden administration soon, according to two people familiar with the matter, marking the first Cabinet secretary departure of President Joe Biden's presidency.

Walsh has been offered a job heading the NHL's Players' Association, the people said. His departure isn't expected to be announced until after Biden's State of the Union address on Tuesday evening.

The departure will mark a first for what has been a remarkable stable Cabinet in Biden's first two years in office, but comes at a point officials note is historically marked by turnover inside any administration.

Inside the West Wing, two of Biden's closest and most powerful advisers -- chief of staff Ron Klain and Brian Deese, the director of the National Economic Council, have announced their departures. Klain's last day is Wednesday and Biden named Jeff Zients, his former Covid-19 response chief as his replacement.

The decision by Walsh, the former Boston mayor, will leave Biden without another critical adviser and liaison to one of his most important constituencies: Unions. Walsh has played a critical behind the scenes role in addressing some of the most complex business and union disputes and crises over Biden's first two years and was viewed inside the West Wing as a key piece of the team inside the administration.

A former top union official himself, Walsh brought a combination of political and labor bona fides to an agency Biden made clear would be elevated in importance during his time in office.

As a politician, he has been open about his recovery from alcohol addiction and [championed efforts to break the stigma surrounding it](#).

Two years after going to detox, he became a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. While in the statehouse, he said, he decided to speak out about his recovery after hearing his mentor Kevin Fitzgerald, a former Massachusetts state lawmaker, speak openly about his own recovery.

Since becoming labor secretary, Walsh says he's had conversations with different federal agencies about recovery-related programs modeled after his work as mayor. He was also a central figure in key negotiations between railroad companies and union leaders to avoid a strike in November.

News of his departure was first reported [by the Daily Faceoff](#).

Walsh and Biden have a longstanding relationship. When Walsh won Boston's mayoral race in 2013, the then-vice president called Walsh to congratulate him (but first [spoke with the wrong Marty Walsh](#)). Walsh was also a rumored potential Labor pick in 2016 had Hillary Clinton won the presidency.

13. US says Iranian-backed militias 'almost certainly' behind recent rocket attack near US embassy in Baghdad

US Central Command said Wednesday that the Sunday [rocket attack](#) on Baghdad's International Zone near the US embassy was "almost certainly conducted by an Iranian-backed rogue militia group."

Captain William Urban, the CENTCOM spokesman, said the 21 rocket attack was the largest rocket attack since 2010 on the area in central Baghdad, also known as the Green Zone.

"While this 21 rocket attack caused no US injuries or casualties, the attack did damage buildings in the US Embassy compound, and was clearly NOT intended to avoid casualties," Urban said in a statement.

CENTCOM oversees US troops in the Middle East and Central Asia.

"These groups are Iranian-backed because Iran provides both material support and direction. They are rogue because they are actually acting on behalf of Iranian interests and direction in a direct betrayal of Iraqi sovereignty," Urban said.

The rockets fired into Baghdad's International Zone on Sunday damaged buildings and cars in a residential area near the US Embassy, which said the attack "resulted in engagement of Embassy defensive systems" and that the compound suffered slight damage, but no embassy personnel were injured. The US Navy rarely discusses the movement of its submarines, but Monday's announcement also included details on the vessel's capabilities, including its "ability to carry up to 154 Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles." The CENTCOM statement followed a White House meeting earlier Wednesday where officials discussed recent Iranian threats, particularly toward the US embassy in Baghdad, and options were discussed, an administration official told CNN. The standard option of striking back at launch sites remains on the table, officials said, but no kinetic options were approved. Instead, talks focused on increased efforts on the diplomatic front and public messaging, the administration source said.

Later Wednesday, President [Donald Trump](#) used Twitter to deliver some of that public messaging in the form of a threat to Tehran, writing that he was offering "some friendly health advice to Iran: If one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over."

Unlike the statements from CENTCOM and Pompeo, which attributed the attack to Iran-backed militias, Trump accused Tehran directly.

"Our embassy in Baghdad got hit Sunday by several rockets," Trump wrote from aboard Air Force One. "Three rockets failed to launch. Guess where they were from: IRAN." The President added that the US was hearing "chatter" of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq.

On Monday, a spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry denied Iran was behind the Sunday rocket barrage, saying that the Iranian embassy is in the same area and noting that "attacking any diplomatic missions and residential areas is wrong and banned by international law."

14. Biden to visit Poland around Ukraine war anniversary

President Joe Biden will visit Poland this month to mark the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, returning to the region as the war enters a volatile new phase without a clear path to peace.

The president is planning to visit Poland from February 20-22. The White House said he would meet Polish President Andrzej Duda and other leaders from the region. He'll deliver remarks ahead of the official anniversary on February 24.

"He wants to talk about the importance of the international community's resolve and unity in supporting Ukraine for now going on a year," said John Kirby, the strategic communications coordinator at the National Security Council.

"Wouldn't it be great if the president didn't have to make a trip around a one year anniversary of a war that never should have started?" Kirby added. "Sadly, that's where we are."

Kirby said Biden would send a message of continued US support for Ukraine's efforts.

"We know the next weeks and months are going to be difficult and critical, especially for their own forces, and the United States is going to continue to stand by them," he said.

One year ago, Biden was urgently warning a sometimes-skeptical world that a massive buildup of Russian troops along Ukraine's borders was the precursor to war. At the time, even some inside his own government questioned the ability of the Ukrainians to withstand an invasion, predicting the imminent fall of the capital Kyiv.

Instead, Ukrainian fighters have held the capital and continue to resist Russian attempts to control territory, helped by a massive influx of Western weapons, ammunition and equipment. The war has become a grinding conflict that US officials say could last for months or even years.

It has come to shape Biden's foreign policy, the fallout reverberating in the global economy and leading to newfound unity between the United States and its European allies.

Biden's aides have been planning for several weeks how they will mark the anniversary of the invasion, including potentially a major address. They hope to emphasize the resilience of the Ukrainian people while stressing the importance of unity in the uncertain months ahead.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is currently preparing for an expected Russian offensive in the spring, appealing to Western governments for additional assistance and weaponry to help sustain the fight.

He visited London, Paris and Brussels this week to deliver his requests in person, a rare trip outside his country that lent his appeals new urgency. Zelensky made his first trip outside Ukraine to Washington late last year, meeting Biden in the Oval Office and delivering remarks to Congress.

His principal request has been more advanced weapons, including fighter jets and tanks, which he says are needed to stave off Russian advances. While the British and French leaders have sounded open to sending jets, Biden responded "no" last month when asked if he would send US F-16s.

He did agree last month to provide sophisticated M1 Abrams tanks and has already provided Patriot missile defense systems.

Vice President Kamala Harris is also expected to be in Europe this month attending the Munich Security Conference, where the war in Ukraine will be the top subject of discussion among world leaders.

Poland is a key NATO ally currently housing thousands of American troops that also serves as a hub for Western weapons transfers to Ukraine. US service members are also training Ukrainian troops there.

Biden last visited the country in March, traveling near the Ukraine border to visit with US and Polish troops. He also met with refugees fleeing Ukraine after the invasion.

In a major speech delivered from the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Biden said for the first time that Russian President Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power," edging toward calling for regime change in Moscow.

15. Biden makes false and misleading claims in economic speech

[President Joe Biden](#) delivered a Thursday [speech](#) to hail economic progress during his administration and to attack congressional Republicans for their proposals on the economy and the social safety net.

Some of Biden's claims in the speech were false, misleading or lacking critical context, though others were correct. Here's a breakdown of the 14 claims CNN fact-checked.

Infrastructure projects

Touting the bipartisan infrastructure law he [signed in 2021](#), Biden said, "Last year, we funded 700,000 major construction projects – 700,000 all across America. From highways to airports to bridges to tunnels to broadband."

Facts First: Biden's "700,000" figure is wildly inaccurate; it adds an extra two zeros to the correct figure Biden [used in a speech last week](#) and the White House has [also used before](#): 7,000 projects. The White House acknowledged his misstatement later on Thursday by [correcting the official transcript](#) to say 7,000 rather than 700,000. A cap on seniors' drug spending

Biden said, "Well, here's the deal: I put a – we put a cap, and it's now in effect – now in effect, as of January 1 – of \$2,000 a year on prescription drug costs for seniors."

Facts First: Biden's claims that this cap is now in effect and that it came into effect on January 1 are false. The \$2,000 annual cap contained in the Inflation Reduction Act that Biden signed last year – on Medicare Part D enrollees' out-of-pocket spending on covered prescription drugs – [takes effect in 2025](#). The maximum may be higher than \$2,000 in subsequent years, since it is tied to Medicare Part D's per capita costs.

Vaccinations under Trump

Criticizing former President Donald Trump over his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, Biden said, "Back then, only 3.5 million people had been – even had their first vaccination, because the other guy and the other team didn't think it mattered a whole lot."

Facts First: Biden is free to criticize Trump's vaccine rollout, but his "only 3.5 million" figure is misleading at best. As of the day Trump left office in January 2021, about 19 million people had received a first shot of a Covid-19 vaccine, according to [figures published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The "3.5 million" figure Biden cited is, in reality, the number of people at the time who had received two shots to complete their primary vaccination series.

Someone could perhaps try to argue that completing a primary series is what Biden meant by "had their first vaccination" – but he used a different term, "fully vaccinated," to refer to the roughly 230 million people in that very same group today. His contrasting language made it sound like there are 230 million people with at least two shots today versus 3.5 million people with just one shot when he took office. That isn't true.

Billionaires and taxes

Biden said Republicans want to cut taxes for billionaires, "who pay virtually only 3% of their income now – 3%, they pay." **Facts First:** Biden's "3%" claim is incorrect. For the second time in less than a week, Biden inaccurately described a [2021 finding from economists in his administration](#) that the wealthiest 400 billionaire families paid an average of 8.2% of their income in federal individual income taxes between 2010 and 2018; after CNN inquired about Biden's "3%" claim on Thursday, the White House [published a corrected official transcript](#) that uses "8%" instead. Also, it's important to note that even that 8% number is [contested](#), since it is an alternative calculation that includes unrealized capital gains that are [not treated as taxable income under federal law](#). "Biden's numbers are way too low," said [Howard Gleckman](#), senior fellow at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center at the Urban Institute think tank, though Gleckman also said we don't know precisely what tax rates billionaires do pay. Gleckman wrote in an email: "In 2019, Berkeley economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabe Zucman [estimated the top 400 households paid an average effective tax rate of about 23 percent in 2018](#). They got a lot of attention at the time because that rate was lower than the average rate of 24 percent for the bottom half of the income distribution. But it still was way more than 2 or 3, or even 8 percent."