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2008

Guerillas in Cyberia: The Transnational Alternative Online Journalism of the Nigerian Diasporic Public Sphere

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JOURNAL OF GLOBAL MASS COMMUNICATION

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IN SEARCH OF INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: A NEW JOURNAL FOR GLOBAL MASS COMMUNICATION

ARNOLD S DE BEER

In the minds of serious international media scholars as well as mass communication and journalism studies researchers must linger a question about the need for yet another international refereed journal in these related fields. This is a valid question to ask in general terms. As the ever-growing field of research into journalism and mass communications is becoming more and more accessible to a wider audience (especially in the form of open access journals), it is of utmost necessity that journals, especially new ones, should indicate unequivocally their research niche. Consequently, the new *Journal of Global Mass Communication* is quite clear about its vision and mission: to find innovative ways to examine and understand mass communication in a comparative global context.

The journal will examine the way in which similarities and differences articulate mass communication relations on a global scale. It will also explore the way in which similarities and differences open up spaces for discourse, research and application in the field of mass communication praxis. For this purpose *JGMC* will be seeking innovative articles, utilizing critical and empirical approaches regarding global mass communication (including, but not limited to, systems, structures, processes, practices and cultures). These articles could for instance deal with content, as well as its production, consumption and effects, all of which are situated within inter- and trans-national, cross-cultural, inter-disciplinary and especially comparative perspectives.

In an academic world where the discourse is still very much bound and dominated by the research, let alone ideological, parameters of the North, it is also the mission of *JGMC* to open its pages for a meaningful comparative research discourse with researchers working in the so-called Developing World. As the senior editor of this journal argued in part elsewhere (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 43), most scholars would probably agree that cross-national

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research is indispensable for establishing the generalizability of theories and the validity of interpretations derived from single-nation studies. Also, it is envisaged that the kind of comparative studies that the editors and editorial board foresee, would encourage the international mass communication research community to test “Western” approaches and interpretations against cross-cultural differences and inconsistencies.

Given the departure point mentioned above, JGMC will focus on a number of special issues whose main themes will be in line with the journal’s editorial policy of comparative analysis. Under the guest-editorship of Denis Wu and Festus Eribo, this inaugural issue of JGMC begins its publication trajectory with the topic of news flow in memory of the late Robert Louis Stevenson, whose work has influenced the field of comparative mass communication research in more ways than one.

The editors of JGMC will then edit the up-coming four editions of the journal, namely Thomas Hanitzsch on *Comparing media systems’ reconsidered: The rise of multi-perspectivism and the need for debate between paradigms*; Eric Louw on *Memories, nostalgia and identity: From a comparative global mass communication perspective*; Herman Wasserman on *Media, globalization and the postcolony*; and Shakuntala Rao on *Intersections of globalization and media ethics*.

A sixth issue of JGMC will be guest-edited by Tomasz Pludowski of Stanford University on: *Globalization of mediated political campaigning practices*.

Other special issues presently under consideration, also with the journal’s focus on comparative analysis, include: *Hearing and taking note of “distant” voices: Mass communication research in the Global South* and: *The interaction between the global and the local in mass communication studies*.

The *Journal of Global Mass Communication* is fortunate to have as its editorial board an exceptional group of foremost international mass communication scholars, whose considerable research experience and wealth of knowledge will be available to support the editors, and to facilitate the editorial team in its quest for excellence.

My special thanks go to the guest-editors of this edition, and to the four co-editors and associate editors of JGMC for the work they have done to set this new journal on its course.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON GLOBAL NEWS FLOWS: A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT L. STEVENSON

FESTUS ERIBO AND DENIS WU

The first edition of the *Journal of Global Mass Communication* is a significant, timely, and welcome addition to the global quest for more understanding of the dimension, dissemination, and expansion of international communication and scholarship. One of the objectives of this journal is to accentuate the meaningful and scientific contributions to the a priori and a posteriori knowledge of the flow of news and information in the age of revolutionary communication technologies and global cum instantaneous access to local information.

We dedicate this first edition of JGMC to late Robert L. Stevenson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in our strong belief that the passing of this outstanding scholar will not abate our recognition of his significant contribution to the study of transnational news flow and of his vision of global communication. Stevenson, a great writer, was also a remarkable, leading figure in the research communities of international communication, public opinion, and research methods.

Professor Stevenson was an unflinching defender of the developing nations as well as a responsible supporter of the developed countries in the mapping of international news flow. He held the belief that the developed and developing nations are not mutually exclusive in the propagation of news and information in a global village. In the 1970s and 1980s, he contributed to the raging debate on the new world information and communication order. In the 1990s, he embarked on an innovative project to map international news flow within and across continents. He worked assiduously, in collaboration with Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi of the United Kingdom, to establish a community of communication scholars under the appellation of a dynamic News Flow Study Group. The project was the “largest and most comprehensive” news flow study in the world. Starting with 48 national

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teams, the Study Group was organized and ready before the 1995 United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing, China. The members of the News Flow Study Group in different countries provided simultaneous analyses of the coverage of this globally significant event. See the web site at <http://www.ibiblio.org/newsflow/index.html>. A synchronized version of the quantitative analyses was presented digitally and distributed globally.

In his note to members of the Global News Flow Study Group in March 1999, Stevenson wrote about the "changes and uncertainty" in "traditional news media" and how information would be defined, packaged, distributed, and received in the age of the Internet and new communication technologies. His book, *Global Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, epitomizes the universality and inevitability of global collaboration and collective responsibility in the information age. His monumental contributions to international communication scholarship are too vast to fit into a single tribute. His papers and publications are in a repository at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We encourage interested scholars and students to examine them for posterity.

Book projects based on the News Flow Study Group findings were undertaken by Professor Stevenson for a number of years. We hope that his uncompleted projects will stimulate other scholars. At the Chapel Hill memorial service in January 2007, Professor Donald Lewis Shaw, a close colleague and friend of Professor Stevenson, reminded everyone in his memorial poem that "life is about journeys, not destinations."

We are grateful to the publishers of this journal, the editors, Thomas Hanitzsch, P. Eric Louw, and Arnold de Beer for the opportunity to dedicate the first issue to Professor Robert L. Stevenson and the most recent scholarly achievements on global news flow. We also extend our gratitude to our industrious reviewers for their most professional responses to our requests. Lastly, we thank all the researchers who sent their best works to us. We hope that you would find this issue as informative and intriguing as we do.

TOWARD A MORE HOLISTIC ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS FLOWS

FOLKER HANUSCH AND LEVI OBJIOFOR

The study of international news flows has been a dominant topic of international communication research during the past 50 years. This paper critically reviews past approaches to the analysis of news flows and identifies the main strands of research in this field. In line with some previous critiques of the field, we argue that past research has for too long been influenced by dichotomous debates that failed to take account of the complexities of international news decisions. A new direction is needed in order for news flow research to provide better answers to the recurring questions. This new direction is not a break from past approaches but rather an integration of all different approaches, which would provide researchers with a more holistic framework for analyzing international news flows. This new approach calls for a combination of political, economic, geographic, historical, social and cultural factors, including perspectives from other disciplines, such as anthropology and linguistics.

Key words: international communication, international news, foreign news, news flows, comparative journalism, journalism and culture

International communication research has come a long way since the start of the debate over a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the mid to late 1970s. The NWICO debate was initiated in order to restructure perceived latent and manifest (and also documented) imbalances in international news flow and exchanges of mass culture products. Not surprisingly, developing countries (the so-called Third World) complained of suffering severe disadvantages in Western news coverage and the production and marketing of mass culture products, such as “motion pictures, television programs, video- and audio-cassettes, records and various publications — much of them coming from

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the United States and Britain” (Hachten, 1996, p. 158). Other areas of complaint by developing countries included: the imbalance of news flow between the East and West, as well as between the North and South; the content of the flow in each direction; and the control of the information flow (Reeves, 1993; Masmoudi, 1979).

Proponents of the NWICO argued that developing countries should be able to report stories using their own reporters, and cover stories that were of more relevance to their audience. One of the aims of the call for a NWICO was to create a more positive image of the developing world rather than the perceived Western news media’s preoccupation with negative news events such as wars and disasters (Hachten, 1999, p. 164). Masmoudi (1979) articulated the concerns of developing countries by identifying the inequalities that hinder those countries from communicating with the rest of the world and from projecting their cultural and social values to the world. Such imbalances include: disparities in news and information exchange between developed and developing countries; monopoly of news and information distribution channels by major news agencies; inequity in the allocation of radio frequencies; dependence of developing countries on the news media of the West, leading to Western media imposing their views of the world on developing countries; and the distortion of news events that concern developing countries (Masmoudi, 1979, pp. 172-185). Western opponents of NWICO argued that the call for structural changes to patterns of world news flow was merely an attempt to politicize international news, because, in their view, the NWICO would sacrifice press freedom for the sake of beneficial reporting of the developing world (Hachten, 1999, p. 166).

The debate about the NWICO had an immense impact on the field of international communication, with an ever-growing number of research studies investigating the flow of international news. Tsang et al. (1988) noted that, between 1970 and 1986 alone, at least 150 research papers had examined the flow of international news, including two worldwide studies under the auspices of the International Association for Mass Communication Research and UNESCO. This paper reviews and critiques the dominant strands of news flow research in the past in order to advance knowledge and understanding of the major issues that inform the field. It further recommends what needs to be done in the future. The authors believe that past studies on international news flows have tended to be restricted in their focus by concentrating only on one or a few of the factors that determine news flow. There is therefore a need for future studies to recognize a *mélange* of approaches, which transcends old divisions and takes a more holistic approach to news flow studies, including the integration of work done in other disciplines.

Even in the age of new technologies, international news reporting continues to pose significant challenges to professional and non-professional journalists across the world. As identified in the literature on foreign news reporting, the issues are diverse but the more daunting ones appear to be the challenges associated with “interpretation and explanation” of foreign news events to a local audience. As editors of *Media Studies Journal* (1999, p.

xiii) stated, the challenge involved in international news reporting is particularly overwhelming because “journalists’ portraits of another country are usually influenced by the questions, concerns and conceptions they bring from their own land.” In this context, the following section analyzes issues that have been identified in international news flow studies.

PAST TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL NEWS RESEARCH

Mowlana (1997, p. 217) identified two major periods in the study of the flow of international communication -- the first period covering the 1950s and the 1960s. According to Mowlana, the main characteristics of this period were the fragmentary nature of the analysis of media content and an emphasis on the processes of message production. Mowlana noted that only a small number of studies considered cultural or educational aspects of communication. The second phase in the 1970s ushered in a more critical perspective, when research took a broader view of the international flow of communication. Studies conducted during this period were critical of the first phase and emphasized both the production and distribution aspects of messages, as well as their possible impact on audiences. These studies related the international flow of information to issues such as political economy (Mowlana, 1997, p. 217). Mowlana also identified another phase of the information age, regarded as the age of new technologies such as the Internet. He argued that this phase was one in which international communication in general was viewed not only as hardware and software development but also as behavioral and social development. “There is an urgent need to view the phenomenon of information flow in its human-technological dimension and in the context of individual, national, international and global issues and ramifications” (Mowlana, 1997, p. 218).

Probably one of the most well-known and widely cited studies of news flows and news factors is the study conducted by Norwegian researchers Galtung and Ruge (1965), who analyzed four Norwegian newspapers’ coverage of three international crises in Congo, Cuba and Cyprus. The study focused on eight general news factors — Frequency, Threshold, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Consonance, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition — as well as four culturally determined news factors — Reference to Elite Nations, Reference to Elite People, Reference to Persons and Reference to Something Negative. The authors argued that an event was more likely to become news the more it satisfied the above criteria (selection). Once the news event had been selected, those factors that made it newsworthy were accentuated (distortion). Both processes (selection and distortion) would occur in all steps of the chain from event to reader.

The study by Galtung and Ruge has received considerable criticism. One criticism, for example, mentioned that Galtung and Ruge examined the content of newspapers but drew conclusions about news selection processes (Hjavar, 2002). Another criticism was that

Galtung and Ruge used hard-to-define categories (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). Nevertheless, the study by Galtung and Ruge has become the most influential explanation of news values (McQuail, 1994, p. 270), with a large number of researchers adopting its framework and for the most part investigating or replicating Galtung and Ruge's arguments, albeit with some modifications.

In the first UNESCO study conducted in 1979, the researchers found that, primarily, foreign news coverage had concentrated on events in a country's immediate geographic region (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, and Stevenson, 1984). The study also found that, in news about developing countries, the emphasis was on hot spots, such as political crises. There also existed an imbalance of news flow, with the Third World receiving far more news about the First World than vice-versa. In an earlier study, Sreberny-Mohammadi (1982) found there had been a less tendency for developing regions to cover one another. In the second major international study in 1995, researchers found that the dominance of western news agencies had receded (Stevenson, 1997). Geographic proximity and national linkages remained the dominant news values in media worlds mostly defined by politics and economics (Stevenson, 1997).

Koponen (2003, p. 148) argued that these two major global news flow studies showed that the two most dominant factors influencing international news coverage were regionalism and politics. African countries were found to be most concerned about African affairs, Latin American countries with Latin American news, and so on. "And it was exclusively geographical regionalism, unable to transcend itself into a common 'Third World Perspective'" (Koponen, 2003, p. 148). Obijiofor and Hanusch (2003) also found that Nigerian and Ghanaian newspapers were predominantly concerned with regional news, with coverage of Africa accounting for 50.5 percent in Nigerian and 55 percent in Ghanaian newspapers. In comparison, other Third World regions were neglected in the newspapers' coverage.

Conceptually, Wu (1998) examined 55 research papers on international news flow and identified two broad categories of studies on foreign news flows: a gatekeeper perspective and a logistical perspective. Gatekeeper perspectives centered mainly on the news professionals themselves and how their personal characteristics affected their news selection. The logistical perspective, on the other hand, was concerned with the socio-economic components and physical logistics of newsgathering (Wu, 1998, pp. 498-501).

In light of issues identified in previous research on international news flows, the authors believe that new knowledge and research scholarship in the field would be advanced if scholars investigate how new technologies such as the Internet are impacting the way international news is reported online. The critical questions would include an examination of how online news reporting has affected the quality and quantity of international news, the sources of international news reported online, and how international news reported online differs from foreign news reported in traditional mainstream media such as newspapers,

television, radio, etc. The next section reviews some of the issues highlighted in the limited studies that examined international news coverage in online media.

IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON FOREIGN NEWS COVERAGE

The emergence of the Internet has changed the world in many ways, including the way online journalism practice has affected foreign news reporting. The new information and communication technologies have challenged our practical and theoretical assumptions about global press systems and journalistic practices. These developments challenge us to rethink long-founded research results relating to foreign news reporting in traditional news media. While there is a body of literature on how the Internet is transforming human activities (e.g. Selwyn et al., 2005; Wellman, 2004), little research exists on how the Internet has affected the coverage of foreign news, including the pictures people hold in their heads about foreign countries.

In a study of the *Montreal Gazette*'s hard-copy and online editions, Gasher and Gabriele (2004) found that the newspaper's website carried more international news stories than the hard-copy version did. That is, the on-line edition "contained more stories from more places than the hard-copy edition offered" (2004, p. 320). But the researchers also pointed out that: half of the stories published in the online edition were sports news stories; the stories were chiefly drawn from news agencies; and nearly three-quarters (73.27%) of the contents were from Canada and the United States. This implied that, with such a large volume of international news drawn from Canada and the United States, the online edition of the *Montreal Gazette* cannot really be said to be truly global or international in reach (i.e. scope) but only in terms of the number of news stories designated as "foreign". D'Haenens et al. (2004) tried to determine whether the volume of news stories in the online versions of *de Telegraaf* and *de Gelderlander* were higher than the volume of news stories in the print versions. The researchers found that foreign news stories were accorded less attention in the online editions of *de Telegraaf* and *de Gelderlander* than in their print versions. Based on the findings from these two studies and others that she examined, Chia (2007) concluded that Internet presence has not resulted in greater volume of foreign news published by online news sites. In light of the limited nature of these studies, increased research attention should be given to foreign news coverage in online sites. Greater research on foreign news coverage on the Internet would enhance knowledge of the cultural and professional dynamics that influence the coverage of foreign news on the web, including how foreign news published in traditional mainstream media differ in terms of volume, source and slant from their online counterparts.

In addition to shifting research focus to foreign news coverage in online sites, there also needs to be a shift in the entrenched methods adopted in investigating foreign news coverage in traditional mainstream media. Mixed method approaches would assist researchers to

unravel some of the issues that are not evident, for example, from undertaking content analysis of media content. In the next section, a supporting argument is made for the adoption of mixed methods approaches in investigating foreign news coverage.

MIXED METHOD APPROACH

The call for the adoption of mixed method approaches in studies of foreign news coverage is founded on the basis that most of the research on foreign news coverage conducted in the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s were predominantly based on content analyses of foreign news reports. In the authors' view the similarity in the methods adopted by researchers to investigate coverage of foreign news may have accounted for similarity in research outcomes.

Researchers' preoccupation with content analysis procedures may have also blurred the importance of investigating the underlying reasons why foreign news editors and reporters select and report news the way they do. It was in recognition of this that Obijiofor and Hanusch (2003) used a mix of content analysis and interviews with journalists in their study of foreign news reported in five newspapers in Nigeria and Ghana. Engagement with news producers and reporters is critical to enhancing theoretical and practical knowledge of the factors that influence coverage of foreign news. This is one missing element in many studies of foreign news conducted in the 1970s and the 1980s. Hanusch (2007; 2008a), for example, analyzed the foreign news contents of two German and two Australian newspapers and also conducted interviews with section editors and journalists in those newspapers in order to understand the factors that influenced the coverage of international news stories involving death. Hanusch believed that a combination of content analysis and personal interviews enriched the data he collected and he was able to understand the professional and socio-cultural variables that influenced the news selection decisions made by journalists.

Based on research evidence reported here, it is argued that a combination of content analysis and personal interviews with journalists would strengthen rather than weaken the quality of research on foreign news. Content analysis is a valid research technique but it has its flaws (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991, pp. 160-161). For example, content analysis is deficient in revealing the latent reasons why content producers encode news texts the way they do (see, for example, McQuail, 2005, pp. 363-364). This is why researchers should adopt the mixed method approach if they want to understand the full range of variables that influence foreign news coverage in the media. Studies of foreign news coverage should also include the perspectives which foreign news reporters and editors bring to bear on their job essentially because foreign news reporters and editors constitute a significant chain in the news production process. What they report and how they report it affects not only the volume of foreign news that is accorded to each country but also the images that news

audiences have about people and places in the world. The argument raised here underscores the importance of cultural differences in foreign news reporting.

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

Although there are several unifying elements that underpin the way journalism is practiced in different parts of the world, it must be acknowledged that cultural differences influence in many ways the way journalists perceive their professional responsibilities and also the way they approach their jobs. This implies there is no universal way in which journalism is practiced across cultures. For example, what is news to a newspaper editor in Europe may not necessarily be deemed news to a newspaper editor in South America or Africa. On this basis, studies of foreign news coverage should also explore the extent to which cultural and professional values influence the way foreign news is reported. In other words, apart from professional news values such as impact, proximity, prominence, conflict, timeliness, currency, human interest and unusualness or novelty (Conley, 2002), cultural factors such as the perceived role of journalists in various countries, local definitions of news, varying levels of freedom enjoyed by journalists in different countries, the level of economic development among countries, different perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable social behavior, and the level of technological development underpin the differences in the selection and publication of foreign news. Recognition of a cultural dimension to foreign news coverage is also recognition of the fact that culture is at the center of human activities. This point was highlighted, as far back as 52 years ago, in the seminal work — *Four Theories of the Press* — by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956, p. 1) when they wrote that “the differences in the press of different countries reflect simply what people do in different places and what their experience leads them to want to read about.”

In terms of cultural affinity, there is evidence that countries with similar cultures report each other more frequently or more in-depth. As Wu (1998) pointed out, many studies for example, found that former colonial ties resulted in those countries reporting about one another more frequently. Also, countries that have similar ethnic background or a shared language also experience increased news flows. In this context, Kariel and Rosenvall (1983), in their study of French and English-language newspapers in Canada, found that French-language newspapers reported more news from other French-influenced countries, while English-language newspapers reported more news from the United Kingdom.

Hester (1973) identified cultural similarity between nations as one of the factors that influence foreign news coverage. Another study that found cultural affinity as a key component in foreign news selection was Tai's (2000) cross-national study of the rankings of “top 10 world events” between 1988 and 1998. Tai found that the media favored events from countries that were culturally, geographically or psychologically close. Bonney and

Wilson (1983) noted that Australia's close historical, educational, linguistic and cultural links to Britain resulted in news from the United Kingdom being given prominence in Australian media.

In his meta-analysis of 55 research papers on foreign news coverage, Wu (1998) found evidence that cultural similarity (e.g. colonial heritage, common language, political relationship, etc.), volume of trade, geographical proximity, level of technological development, influenced how much coverage each country receives in the press of another country. Two years later, Wu (2000) found that volume of trade and the existence of news agencies were among the major indicators of foreign news coverage in developed and developing countries. While it has to be recognized that there exists a diversity of factors that influence international news coverage, what is noticeable in the studies cited here is that cultural similarity received a noticeable accent as a major factor that influenced the coverage of foreign news.

THE WAY FORWARD — TOWARD A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Research on the flow of international news has traditionally examined the flow between the First and Third Worlds or between the geographical North and South. While early studies on international news flow concentrated on quantitative analyses of news flows, the past decade has seen a more critical approach and more in-depth investigations. Yet, at the same time, ideological boundaries and methodological differences between researchers have prevented more holistic analyses, with some studies adopting purely quantitative approaches while others favored analyses based solely on politico-economic terms.

Thompson (1995) stated that mediated communication in general was always a conceptualized social phenomenon, which was embedded in social contexts. He argued that these social contexts were structured in a number of ways which again had a structuring impact on the communication. Thompson (1995, p. 11) said it was "easy to focus on the symbolic content of media messages and to ignore the complex array of social conditions which underlie the production and circulation of these messages". In any study of communication it is therefore necessary to look at both the meanings of symbolic forms and their social contexts. Mowlana (1997) recommended the inclusion of four stages: the source, the process of production, the process of distribution and the process of utilization. To do so, researchers need to move beyond the existing political, economic and sociological models and incorporate anthropological, linguistic and socio-cultural frameworks (Mowlana, 1997, p. 231).

Straubhaar (2003) argues that research needs to move beyond the traditional dependence and inter-dependence relations or narrow definitions such as core, semi-peripheral and peripheral countries. He identifies several levels of interaction between the cultures of the world: political-economic, technological, cultural production, content and content flows and

the reception of culture. Thussu (2000, p. 72) also identified a trend away from the structural analyses of international communication's role in political and economic power relationships toward the cultural dimensions of communication and media. Similarly, Lie (2003, pp. 72-3) argued that the cultural state of the world was intrinsically linked to the flow of information and knowledge. While it is important to recognize the predominant economic, political and power analyses of cultural flow in past studies, Lie argued there was also a need for a cultural analysis of this flow.

Christensen provides an insight into the interplay of factors that influence international news coverage when he argued that:

the proposed tendency towards coverage of culturally 'proximate' regions (a result of geo-cultural pressures) is related to organization and political economic factors: stories on proximate regions are more likely to be within the professional and cultural 'universe' of the journalists and/or editor (organizational pressures), and are also likely to be cheaper to cover and more attractive to domestic audiences (political economic pressures) (Christensen, 2002, p. 27).

In an analysis of death in international news coverage, Hanusch (2008b) adopted a holistic model that accounted for the various factors that impinge on news flow. Hanusch, based on Servaes (1999, 2002), used a framework of four dimensions: worldview, value systems, systems of social organization and systems of symbolic representation. These, he argued, could account for a combination of factors such as political, economic, cultural, social, historical and linguistic, therefore providing a more inclusive approach to the study of international news flows. Such a framework, Hanusch (2008b) argues, could help to fill theoretical and methodological gaps in previous research on foreign news coverage.

In terms of value systems, for example, Hofstede's (2001) value dimensions, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) value orientations and Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context orientations provide useful insights into how a society's values can influence professional decisions made by journalists. In order to examine cultural values that inform journalists' selection of international news, Hofstede's (1980, 1997, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) work on international differences in work-related values provides a particularly useful framework for classification. Hofstede identified five independent dimensions along which dominant value systems could be ordered, namely: power distance; individualism; masculinity; uncertainty avoidance; and long-term orientation. As Hanusch (2008a; 2008b) successfully demonstrated, differences in journalists' value systems can account for differences in approaches to international news reporting. This is because value systems determine journalistic routines. The assumption is that people are more interested in events and people from countries with similar value systems, as they seem to be more like them, and the events appear to resonate in their own experiences. That is, the audience can relate

to the people and events being reported on. The authors believe there is a link between political economy and cultural issues in globalization theory.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has argued for a new, more holistic approach to the examination of international news coverage. It was noted that, while past approaches, such as the political-economy perspective, are useful, they do not account for all factors that influence international news coverage. In response to the shortcomings evident in previous studies, a cultural framework as suggested by Hanusch (2008b) was advocated. This framework incorporates such approaches as political economy, but makes use of them within the larger concept of culture. The cultural framework is made up of four dimensions, namely world views (including issues such as religion); value systems (including national values such as Hofstede's value dimensions of individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long- and short-term orientation); systems of social organization (including political, economic, historical and geographic factors); and systems of symbolic representation (concerned with issues such as language and media systems). All the dimensions are interrelated and at any one time there will be different levels of each dimension's influence.

Researchers who adopt this framework holistically should be able to contribute new knowledge and perspectives on international news flows. However, it is acknowledged that this is a recommendation designed to advance, refine and validate future studies on international news flows, including the research methods adopted in conducting those studies. Overall, the challenge for future researchers on international news flows is to examine international news within the framework recommended here.

It was also recommended that researchers should examine how new technologies such as the Internet are impacting international news reporting across cultures, including the quantity, quality and sources of international news reported online. Also advocated in this paper is the adoption of a combination of research methods (e.g. content analysis and personal interviews) rather than reliance on a single research technique. The use of mixed method approaches would enable researchers to unravel and understand the latent and manifest reasons that inform international news reporting in traditional and online media across different countries.

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FIVE VIEWS OF DEVELOPMENT: HOW NEWS AGENCIES COVER THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

C. ANTHONY GIFFARD AND NANCY VAN LEUVEN

This case study examines how news agencies construct a repertoire of contrasting narratives and how they choose to report people, places, and issues in the context of development. The case in point is the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — which seek to reduce poverty, injustice, and inequality — by the year 2015. These Goals differ from most international topics that engender tensions and disputes in that the MDGs transcend national and regional boundaries and have the endorsement of virtually every country in the UN. We look at the amount and kind of information about the MDGs available to traditional media and online readers from five international news agencies, examining the overall coverage and also the similarities and differences among the agencies with respect to the people, organizations and issues mentioned in their dispatches about MDGs. Overall, our findings demonstrate that many framings reflect a top-down use of UN and Western-based perspectives as opposed to a bottom-up, participatory dialogue of development using native sources. However, anyone with access to the Internet and hence to a spectrum of news sources, such as those described in this study, could get a broader perspective on development issues than may be found in their local media.

Keywords: Mass media, news agencies, development communication, information flows

Let's be straight about it — we share this small and fragile planet with a growing number of our fellow human beings. What happens in one country increasingly affects those who live in other countries. We will not have a safe and secure world unless we do something about

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poverty, injustice and inequality. We can do something. And it is the media — the mirror that we hold up to ourselves — that has an enormously powerful part to play in helping to make this happen, both in what we call ‘the North’, and in ‘the South’ where so many people bear the brunt of poverty. (Benn, 2004)

Plans for and evaluations of development projects have repeatedly stressed the importance of communication among participants (Bryant & Kappaz, 2005). This is true not only of people and organizations directly involved in development projects, but also of other constituencies whose financial and political support is essential if programs are to succeed.

Few newspapers, broadcast outlets or online media have their own resources to cover multinational forums where key decisions are made. For that reason news agencies can make a significant contribution to development communication. As the wholesalers of news to community media that in turn determine what issues will be covered and whose voices will be heard, news agencies help set the agenda for public discussion, a crucial filter in today’s informational overload (Read, 1999). They represent appropriate communication appropriate for both the relational and informational needs of modern states, capitals, and civic society (Boyd-Barrett, 1996). The agencies, says a former editor for the *New York Times*, “unquestioningly distribute the greatest share of news about what is taking place in the developing world.” (Altschull, 1995, p. 305). In addition, new technologies have enabled the news agencies to reach out directly to the public through online databases, thus bringing development news out of official offices and into homes and libraries around the world (Hancock, 2000).

The UN first heralded the 1960s as the “Development Decade,” but its efforts stalled when organizations did not communicate with each other, enforce accountability measures or monitor progress (Bissio, 2003). However, a series of UN conferences in the 1990s renewed the international commitment to development goals. The conferences included the Social Summit in Copenhagen, the Environment Conferences in Rio and Johannesburg, the Population Conference in Cairo, the Women’s Conferences from Mexico to Beijing, and the Financing for Development Conference in Monterey, Mexico. The UN commissioned an independent advisory panel, directed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs and staffed by 265 experts from the public and private sector, to identify MGD strategies and monitor progress, and released a 2005 blueprint for implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), *Investing in Development* (United Nations, 2005).

These Goals have become a universal framework for development and a platform for developing countries and their partners to work together. By 2007, more than 80 developing countries had prepared reports on their progress toward attaining the MDGs. Governments, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, and major civil society groups are using the MDGs as benchmarks for their development programs. And, although the MDG Declaration has no specific goals relating to the role of media in promoting

development, they clearly are implied in all of them. Aware of the importance of media coverage, sponsors of the MDGs launched the Millennium Campaign in 2002 to encourage people's participation in the realization of the goals, and efforts to hold their governments to account for the Millennium promise (Millennium Campaign, 2008). Media are considered an important ally, according to key opinion leaders; for instance, the Director of the Commonwealth Foundation noted at one media workshop that, "Journalists play a key role as opinion-formers who can ensure that citizens and politicians alike recognize that there is no room for complacency in tackling these Goals" (Millennium Campaign, 2007).

In 2004, as part of the Millennium Campaign, the UN Department of Public Information launched an annual list of "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About." The lists include reports about development, health, education, and human rights — all MDG-related issues the UN believes would benefit from greater media exposure. "The media are our partners in getting the word out about what needs to be reported," said Kiyo Akasaka, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, when he introduced the 2007 list (United Nations, 2007).

The largest single event intended to draw media attention to the MDGs was the 2006 *World Congress on Communication for Development: Lessons, Challenges and the Way Forward*. The congress, held in Rome, was an opportunity for dialogue among three key stakeholders: policy makers, practitioners, and academicians. It highlighted the necessity of incorporating communication into development policies and practices. The congress drew 600 participants, including global leaders and policy makers. For the media, it was a global event. Apart from policy makers, the WCCD actively encouraged media representatives to attend and interview communicators from around the world. Their reports were sent out through a wide range of media — print, radio, television, and Internet, both global and local (World Bank, 2004).

PERSPECTIVES OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

There is an extensive literature about the function of media in promoting and implementing development initiatives. Academic research tends to make subtle distinctions between development communication and use of media for social advocacy. Earlier theorists focused on development communication — the use of media to bring about economic, political and social progress especially in the less developed countries (Schramm, 1964). Variants of this concept still have their adherents. For example, the Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CMDf), established in 1979 and funded largely by the United Kingdom, focuses on the role of media in promotion of democracy, good governance and, more recently, the achievement of the MDGs (Commonwealth Media Development Fund, 2007).

Another approach to the use of media in development takes a different tack. Rather than using media to reach recipients of development aid directly, the idea is to create political support, often in donor countries, for funding and implementing development projects such as the MDGs. This function, known as media advocacy, assumes that media shape public debate, putting pressure on decision-makers to adopt political and social interventions. The goal of advocacy is to make innovation a priority that cannot be ignored. To be politically effective, influencing news agendas is essential (Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, & Themba, 1993).

Media coverage of the MDGs by international agencies is the focus of this paper. At the core of the Millennium Declaration is the concept of developed and developing nations working together to overcome poverty, hunger and ill-health. This implies a cooperative, supportive attitude on the part of the citizens of donor countries that will provide the necessary support and funding. Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Millennium Project, points out that ending poverty will require actions by the rich countries as well as the poor. The poor countries should take ending poverty more seriously; the rich must follow through on their repeated promises to provide more help (Sachs, 2005). To achieve this, there must be grass-roots political support, particularly in the donor countries. Content analyses of newspapers in different regions of the world have shown that about three-quarters of their international news is derived from the major world agencies (Mowlana, 1997). And numerous academic studies have noted an insufficiency in the amount, type and scope of news disseminated, particularly in the coverage of the developing world.

For example, one project concluded that in foreign news, East and West first cover their respective geopolitical areas as well as East-West relations, whereas Third World media in general devote the greatest proportion of foreign news coverage to the North. Western Europe was the most frequently reported region around the globe (Gerbner & Marvanyi, 1997). Robert L. Stevenson and Richard R. Cole concluded that North American and Western Europe were, in fact, the most visible areas in global media while developing regions and Eastern Europe received the least media attention (Stevenson & Cole, 1980). The voices of ordinary citizens — even in the North — are seldom heard; in addition, a study by G. Cleveland Wilhoit and David Weaver argued that news from “official” sources dominates news from all world areas (Wilhoit & Weaver, 1981).

Boyd-Barrett and Thussu point out that research literature on news agencies identifies several main types of bias that may affect their coverage. One is “qualitative” bias which includes political and sociological ideologies, the foreign policy objectives of the countries in which the transnational news agencies have their major base, and an incipient “star” system in news agency reporting. Structural or “quantitative” bias includes favoring news of the region to which a given news wire is directed, followed by news about North America or Europe, followed by news of Third World regions and the Second World. They privilege reports on international or domestic politics and economics, but pay little attention to

culture, social services, education and the like. "Source bias" results in favoring elites, and particularly government sources, and a bias toward news from capital or big cities (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992).

Coverage by news agencies of the MDGs provides a promising opportunity to test some hypotheses derived from these earlier studies. One might expect that powerful, wealthy, Western nations, although proportionately few in number, would be mentioned more often in the news agency stories than those in the periphery; that people quoted or mentioned in news media are disproportionately nationals of elite nations; that high-profile, powerful actors would be mentioned more frequently; that they tend to be government officials rather than civil society, and are predominantly male, and that organizations based in the developed world would get more attention than those in less-developed regions.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The MDGs differ from most international issues that engender tensions and disputes. While conflicts generally get more attention than cooperative endeavors, support for the MDGs transcends national and regional boundaries and has the endorsement of virtually every country. Plans to reduce poverty, hunger, disease, child mortality, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women are particularly relevant to the needs of developing nations. Others are equally relevant to developed nations — such as the prospect of ensuring global environmental sustainability, human rights, security and ultimately world peace. Such conflicts as do arise seldom concern the goals as such, but rather the means of achieving them. There are differences of opinion about priorities, and about how much and to whom development aid should be directed. For example, some nations, such as Norway and Sweden, have pledged to allocate 0.7 percent of their gross national income for official development assistance. Others, including the United States, have not. The Bush administration insists that only countries that control corruption, introduce democratic reforms, and encourage trade and private investment, should be eligible for extra aid through the U.S. government's rival Millennium Challenge Corporation.

This study is intended to determine the amount and kind of information available to traditional media and online readers from five international news agencies. It examines the overall coverage and also the similarities and differences among the agencies with respect to the people, organizations and issues mentioned in their dispatches about MDGs. The analysis includes:

News Geography: What cities were the reports filed from, and which nations and geographic regions were mentioned most frequently?

Actors: Which people were accorded the most attention, and what were their nationalities, gender, and spheres of activity?

Organizations: What organizations were represented -- governments, United Nations, NGOs, or others?

MDGs: Which of the eight goals figured most prominently in the coverage?

Coverage by news agencies of the MDGs provides a promising opportunity to test some hypotheses derived from these earlier studies. One might expect that: (1) Most reports would be filed from Western capitals; (2) Powerful, wealthy, Western nations, although proportionately few in number, would be mentioned more often in the news agency stories than those in the periphery; (3) People quoted or mentioned in news media are disproportionately nationals of elite nations; (4) High-profile actors would be mentioned more frequently, and are likely to be government officials rather than civil society; (5) Most actors would be male; (6) Organizations based in the developed world would get more coverage than those in less-developed regions; (7) Although the Millennium Goals relating to poverty, hunger and disease are highly relevant to the developing nations, more attention would be accorded to Goal 8, which includes funding mechanisms to pay for the other goals — and hence is of considerable interest also in the North.

News agencies included in the study were selected after a search of databases for reports about MDGs identified a handful of sources that provided the most extensive coverage. All of the agencies covered in this analysis are available online, either through their own websites, through information portals, or through services such as LexisNexis. Two are Western — Paris-based Agence France-Presse and the New York-based Associated Press. Two are in developing regions — PANA (formerly the PanAfrican News Agency) headquartered in Dakar, and the New China News Agency (Xinhua), with headquarters in Beijing. The fifth is Inter Press Service (IPS), which, while its administrative headquarters are in Rome, has a decentralized network with bureaus in all the major regions. The five agencies therefore comprise a global sample of coverage that includes perspectives of both developed and developing countries.

The study encompasses the period January 1, 2004 to September 15, 2005. The period is bracketed by two significant events: the 2004 World Social Forum and the 2005 UN Summit, which affirmed the commitment of developed nations to fund the MDGs. The year 2005 was singled out by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as a “make-or-break moment for the world’s poor,” because of the critical opportunities for world leaders to decide on concrete actions to implement the MDGs, such as a meeting of the UN General Assembly in June, the G-8 Summit in July and the UN World Summit in September (Associated Press, 2005).

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF REPORTS, NUMBER OF WORDS AND AVERAGE STORY LENGTH

Agency	AFP	AP	IPS	PANA	Xinhua
Number of reports	256	287	413	468	716
Number of words	137050	173048	382904	197063	265364
Average story length	535	602	927	421	370

DATA COLLECTION

The texts analyzed in this study were downloaded from news agency web sites and from the LexisNexis database. To be selected, news reports had to include the words "Millennium Development Goals" or "MDG" in their headlines or texts. We chose the five news agencies with the largest numbers of reports, in English, about the MDGs. This yielded a total of 2,140 reports.

Over the 20-month period covered by the study the agency with the smallest number of reports averaged more than three a week; the highest had almost nine. Most reports were clustered around major events such as UN or G-8 summits. Xinhua and PANA had the largest numbers of reports, but their stories were shorter on average than those of the other agencies. IPS, whose stories had on average twice as many words, comprised almost a third of the total coverage.

To determine the news geography of the coverage, content analysis software counted datelines to determine which cities the reports were filed from, and how many came from each (ZUMA, 1998). The dateline cities were grouped by nation and geographic region. We determined which nations were mentioned, and how often their names appeared in the reports. The nations were grouped also by level of development as measured by the World Bank's ranking of nations by gross national income (GNI) per capita (World Bank, 2004).

The name of every person mentioned in the reports was entered into a database that included gender, nationality, position, organizational affiliation, and sphere of activity. This yielded a list of 1,798 individuals. To measure the prominence each was accorded, we determined the number of times each name appeared.

To quantify the amount of attention paid to the various development goals, we analyzed documents on the official MDG websites and also the news agency reports themselves, and compiled lists of keywords and phrases pertaining to each goal. We then computed the frequency of each keyword in the agency texts and compiled the data into categories representing the eight goals. We checked the validity of the scheme by coding a sample of the reports manually and comparing the results to the computerized analysis. The keyword

dictionaries were modified if there were discrepancies. Similar dictionaries were compiled to determine the names and frequency of mention of organizations.

FINDINGS

Datelines

The cities and nations from which reports are filed can be an important factor in determining what perspectives are made part of public discourse. The question here is whether different points of view were represented -- North and South, East and West, rich and poor. The large numbers of reports with a United Nations dateline are included separately in this analysis rather than listing them as being filed from New York. African, Asian and European cities were the datelines for the majority of the reports.

AFP had the largest number of dateline cities (88), many of them European capitals, but it also had extensive coverage from Africa and Asia, where France has long-term interests and AFP has an extensive network of correspondents. Xinhua had the second-highest number of dateline cities (74), with particularly strong representation in Asia and Africa. This reflects China's regional interests in Asia, but also its growing interest in Africa as a market, a source of raw materials and of political support in international forums.

IPS had the third highest number of dateline cities (59), and one distinguishing feature was the inclusion of 15 cities in Latin America and the Caribbean — a region largely ignored by the other agencies. This can be explained in part by the history of IPS, which began as an "information bridge" between Europe and Latin America (Giffard, 1998). PANA ranked fourth (52 cities), more than 90 percent of them in Africa. This is in line with PANA's policy of providing an indigenous outlook about issues crucial to Africa (Panapress, 2005). AP reports came from 40 cities, most of them in Europe, then Asia and Africa.

Counting the number of reports about MDGs from each city shows that four of the agencies filed their largest numbers from the United Nations in New York. For PANA, however, the UN dateline ranked sixth, behind five African cities led by its headquarters in Dakar. After the UN, the Western agencies and IPS had large numbers of reports filed from G-7 cities, particularly Washington, London, Geneva, Brussels and New York. Overall, however, there were more reports from cities in developing than in developed regions owing to the large proportion of reports with African and Asian datelines on PANA and Xinhua.

Geographic Regions

Analysis of the number of reports filed from each region (not only their major cities) shows that AFP, AP and IPS had more reports from Europe than any other region. PANA

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF NATIONS MENTIONED, BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION

Region	IPS		Xinhua		AFP		AP		PANA	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Africa	47	27.6	46	32.9	43	31.2	33	26.4	47	43.9
Europe	40	23.5	29	20.7	29	21	32	25.6	20	18.7
Asia	26	15.3	25	17.9	24	17.4	23	18.4	17	15.9
Latin America	18	10.6	13	9.3	16	11.6	13	10.4	10	9.3
Middle East	15	8.8	13	9.3	14	10.1	10	8	6	5.6
Caribbean	13	7.6	4	2.9	6	4.3	5	4	3	2.8
Oceania	9	5.3	8	5.7	4	2.9	7	5.6	2	1.9
North America	2	1.2	2	1.4	2	1.4	2	1.6	2	1.9
Total	170	100	140	100	138	100	125	100	107	100

and Xinhua each had particularly large numbers of reports from Africa and Asia. Latin American datelines were few, and of the 78 reports from the region, 56 were from IPS correspondents.

Data on which cities reports were filed from shows AFP, AP, IPS and Xinhua all had more reports from the United Nations in New York than any other center (PANA filed its largest number from its headquarters in Dakar). The total number of reports from all five agencies combined shows that most came from the UN, followed by Nairobi (almost all from PANA and Xinhua); London (most of them from the AP and AFP); Washington (especially AFP, IPS and the AP); Dakar (all from PANA) and Brussels (mostly from IPS, and usually dealing with European Union development aid).

Mentions of Nations

A common critique of news agency reporting is that news about "elite" nations -- and particularly the wealthy and powerful G-7 group -- monopolizes coverage (Rauch, 2003). We checked whether reports that dealt with the MDGs followed the same pattern. When measured by the number of nations mentioned in each region the critique does not hold. There are more African nations mentioned in the combined agency reports than any other region. The number of African nations mentioned is in part a reflection of how many there are: altogether 47 of 54 nations in Africa are mentioned by name at least once.

The frequency with which nations in each region were mentioned by name -- a measure of the prominence they were accorded -- is a more telling metric than the number of nations (Table 3). Summing the number of times each nation is referred to results in European

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF MENTIONS OF NATIONS BY REGION

Region	IPS		Xinhua		AFP		AP		PANA	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Africa	808	19	1055	30.3	514	18.8	387	15.1	1857	80.4
Asia	929	21.8	1498	43.1	549	20.1	528	20.6	106	4.6
Europe	1084	25.5	270	7.8	1005	36.8	796	31	204	8.8
North America	470	11	374	10.8	380	13.9	385	15	77	3.3
Latin America	673	15.8	93	2.7	89	3.3	117	4.6	37	1.6
Middle East	146	3.4	56	1.6	156	5.7	190	7.4	20	0.9
Oceania	36	0.8	119	3.4	18	0.7	128	5	3	0.1
Caribbean	109	2.6	13	0.4	19	0.7	37	1.4	5	0.2
Total	4255	100	3478	100	2730	100	2568	100	2309	100

countries ranking highest on AFP, the AP and IPS. Xinhua favors Asia by a wide margin, then Africa. PANA has a heavy emphasis on Africa — 80 percent of all mentions are to nations on that continent. Two-thirds of all mentions of Latin American nations are found in the IPS files.

The nations mentioned tend to reflect the national orientation of the news agencies. AFP mentions France most often, the AP favors the United States, PANA favors Ethiopia, and Xinhua mentions China more often than any other nation. After that there is no clear pattern. However, counting the number of times each nation is mentioned in the combined file of the five agencies gives the United States the lead, followed by China, France and Britain. Of the top 10 countries mentioned, five are elite nations — the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Japan. However, China, India and Kenya also rank high.

Rich and Poor Nations

To ascertain the coverage of “rich” as opposed to “poor” countries, we used the World Bank’s classification of nations by Gross National Income per capita.

Every agency mentioned more nations in the lowest per capita income bracket (\$825 or less a year) than any other group (Table 4). Altogether 37.6 percent of the countries mentioned are in this cohort. Together the low-income and lower-middle income groups (income of \$825 or less up to \$3,255) comprise 64.3 percent of the overall total. PANA and

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF NATIONS BY WORLD BANK INCOME CATEGORIES

GNI per capita	AFP		AP		IPS		PANA		Xinhua	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
\$825 or less	57	38	49	38.3	62	33.7	50	44.2	55	36.2
\$826 – \$3,255	38	25.3	30	23.4	53	28.8	27	23.9	46	30.3
\$3,256 --\$10,065	20	13.3	16	12.5	28	15.2	12	10.6	17	11.2
\$10,066 or more	35	23.3	33	25.8	41	22.3	24	21.2	34	22.4
Total	150	100	128	100	184	100	113	100	152	100

Xinhua had a slightly higher percentage of their coverage from the two lower groups, but IPS mentioned more countries in those categories than any other agency.

When one computes how often individual countries were referred to, those in the two lower-income brackets (\$825 or less) were mentioned most frequently, together comprising two-thirds of all references. There are significant differences among the agencies. On the AFP, 54.7 percent of mentions of nations were to those in the two lower brackets. On the AP the figure was 49.0 percent, for IPS it was 53.9 percent. However, PANA (86.9%) and Xinhua (81.0%) were considerably higher. Most of the references in the lower-income groups were to African and Asian nations, especially China, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. Britain and the United States were two most commonly mentioned high-income countries.

Actors

It is perhaps inevitable that people in positions of power and influence will get the most coverage. But in addition to the movers and shakers, reporting on development ideally would reflect a wide range of voices — including those of the poor, the sick, the hungry and the illiterate. We therefore examined the kind of people who were mentioned in the reports about MDGs to determine whom the news agencies considered newsworthy. Every actor was coded by nationality, geographic region, gender, and organizational affiliation (if any). United Nations officials (nationality not specified) topped the list by a large margin for all agencies. American citizens were second overall, followed by Britons. After that, however, came citizens of four developing nations — Kenya, South Africa, China and Nigeria. Then came Belgium, followed by citizens of two more developing nations, Brazil and Mozambique.

To further contrast the actors mentioned in MDG reports, we analyzed the number of actors from various geographic regions. The rank order was similar across the agencies, with

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF ACTORS BY SPHERE OF ACTIVITY

Sphere of activity	AFP		AP		IPS		PANA		Xinhua	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Government	134	37.3	90	37.0	196	30.1	178	38.5	197	45.8
United Nations	101	28.1	60	24.7	155	23.8	110	23.8	119	27.7
NGOs	74	20.6	61	25.1	225	34.5	108	23.4	75	17.4
Citizens	31	8.6	18	7.4	31	4.8	38	8.2	16	3.7
Experts	19	5.3	14	5.8	45	6.9	28	6.1	23	5.3
Total	359	100	243	100	652	100	462	100	430	100

most from Africa, the UN, and Europe. IPS had the largest number, with 651 people referred to at least once, and had more actors from the UN, Europe, North America and especially Latin America than the other agencies. PANA had the largest number of African actors, and Xinhua the most Asians. Counting the number of times actors in each region were mentioned determined that UN officials were quoted more frequently than other cohorts by four of the five news agencies. PANA was an exception, favoring Africans. In second place for the AFP and AP were North Americans, followed by Europeans. Asians were in second place on Xinhua. IPS mentioned more actors in almost all regions than the other agencies and featured a comparatively strong representation of Latin Americans.

To determine the sphere of activity of the actors, we coded them into five categories: Government; United Nations; NGOs; Citizens; and Experts (Table 5). The rank order for four of the agencies was Government, followed by the UN, then NGOs. The exception was IPS, which featured NGO-affiliated people more often than any other sphere, and had twice as many actors from NGOs than any other agency. IPS also had the highest number of UN officials and experts. XINHUA had the highest number and proportion of government actors. Across the board, ordinary citizens and independent experts were outnumbered by government and UN officials and by representatives of NGOs.

Counting how often actors were mentioned by sphere of activity shows that AFP, AP and IPS referred to government actors more frequently than any other category, followed by UN officials, then representatives of NGOs. PANA and Xinhua mentioned UN officials more often than government personnel, and also had NGO representatives in third place. However, while government officials across all five agencies comprise 46 percent of the number of actors, they account for only 37 percent of mentions. UN officials, who together number 28 percent of all actors, account for 35 percent of mentions, indicating that UN officials were mentioned proportionately more frequently than their absolute numbers would suggest, and national government actors less so. This was due in part to the frequent

TABLE 6
NUMBER OF ACTORS BY WORLD BANK INCOME CATEGORIES

Income level	AFP		AP		IPS		PANA		Xinhua	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
\$825 or less	100	34.5	37	19.0	137	26.0	196	57.3	144	44.0
\$826 – \$3,255	47	16.2	33	16.9	100	19.0	39	11.4	90	27.5
\$3,256 – \$10,065	13	4.5	6	3.1	38	7.2	10	2.9	15	4.6
\$10,066 or more	130	44.8	119	61.0	252	47.8	97	28.4	78	23.9
Total	290	100	195	100	527	100	342	100	327	100

references to high UN officials such as Director-General Kofi Annan — the person mentioned most often by all agencies.

Given that reports about the MDGs are by definition about development, it is interesting to know whether the voices of the poor — the major stakeholders in the debate — are being heard (Table 6). Nearly 55 percent of all actors were from the two lower levels of the World Bank GNI per capita index (\$825 or less to \$3,255). PANA and Xinhua both had more actors from low-income and lower-middle income countries — nearly 69 percent in the case of PANA and 71.5 percent in Xinhua — which reflected their emphasis on African and Asian citizens.

The proportion of actors from low-income nations drops when one measures the number of times they were mentioned as opposed to their absolute numbers. While the overall number of actors in the two lower categories was about 55 percent, their combined frequency of mention was 50 percent of the total. Forty-five percent of the actors are from nations in the two upper levels (\$3,256 - \$10,066 or more), but they accounted for 50 percent of the number of mentions. The difference is not large but is statistically significant and reflects the prominence accorded to the wealthy and powerful. AFP, AP and IPS referred to actors in the top income bracket more often than any others, while PANA and Xinhua referred most often to those in the low-income group.

Women and Men

Since every one of the eight goals is of interest and significance to women, one might expect they would be given equal prominence to men. That was not the case. Over the five news agencies combined, men represent 79 percent of all actors (Table 7). Individual agencies vary from a high of 29 percent of women on IPS to a low of 14 percent on Xinhua. IPS reports referred to 188 different women by name — nearly twice as many as any of the other agencies.

TABLE 7
NUMBER OF FEMALE AND MALE ACTORS INCLUDED IN REPORTS

Gender	AP		AFP		IPS		PANA		Xinhua	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Men	299	83.5	195	80.6	465	71.2	364	79.0	370	86.0
Women	59	16.5	47	19.4	188	28.8	97	21.0	60	14.0
Total	358	100	242	100	653	100	461	100	430	100

The differential treatment of men and women is even more pronounced when one compares the proportion of women actors to the proportion of times they are mentioned. In every case, the percentage of mentions of women is lower than their numbers would predict. On the AP, 16.5 percent of the actors are women, but they account for just 10.5 percent of mentions of all actors. On AFP the drop is from 19.4 percent to 11.4 percent. The drop also is noticeable on PANA and Xinhua. On IPS, the decline is less precipitous — from 28.8 to 23.4 percent.

Institutions

We examined both NGOs and UN agencies involved in Millennium projects because of their importance in international development efforts. While they have their own channels of communication, NGOs also rely on news media — increasingly those that are available on-line, such as the agencies covered in this study — for networking, fundraising, and learning what is happening in their fields (Lindenberg & Bryant, 2001). Altogether 206 NGOs, ranging from major international organizations to small local groups, were mentioned in one or more agency reports. Of those the ones with the highest number of mentions across the five agencies combined were, in order: Oxfam (174), Amnesty International (29), Africa Action (20), Eurostep (19), and Global Call for Action Against Poverty (17).

We likewise checked lists of specialized United Nations agencies against the reports — using both the full names and abbreviations of each. IPS reports included the highest number of mentions of the UN agencies (2,016), followed by Xinhua (2,008), PANA (1,964), AFP (1,561) and AP (775). The rank order of frequency of mention of UN agencies was very similar across the five news agencies. Nearly all of the often-mentioned agencies have their headquarters in the North.

TABLE 8
FREQUENCY OF MDG KEYWORDS

Goals	IPS		Xinhua		PANA		AP		AFP		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Development aid	4478	30.8	2981	32.9	1934	27.3	1689	35.9	1425	35.3	12507	31.7
Poverty	2510	17.3	1792	19.8	1045	14.8	1084	23.0	905	22.4	7336	18.6
HIV/AIDS	1865	12.8	1411	15.6	1455	20.6	782	16.6	611	15.1	6124	15.5
Environment	1537	10.6	1138	12.6	1031	14.6	390	8.3	479	11.9	4575	11.6
Gender	1659	11.4	612	6.8	514	7.3	115	2.4	191	4.7	3091	7.8
Education	1348	9.3	558	6.2	369	5.2	367	7.8	209	5.2	2851	7.2
Maternal	740	5.1	356	3.9	485	6.9	136	2.9	95	2.4	1812	4.6
Children	387	2.7	215	2.4	246	3.5	144	3.1	125	3.1	1117	2.8
Total	14524	100	9063	100	7079	100	4707	100	4040	100	39413	100

Coverage of the MDGs

Analysis of the combined files of reports from all five agencies showed that every one of the eight goals was covered hundreds of times, although some received far more attention than others. Goal 8 drew the most attention from the five agencies' combined files. Poverty/hunger and HIV/AIDS were in second and third place respectively, followed by environmental, gender and education issues. Maternal health and child mortality between them accounted for less than eight percent of the keywords (Table 8).

Goal 8, *Develop a Global Partnership for Development*, alone accounted for almost 32 percent of all references to keywords. Factor analysis suggests the goal includes five themes we called Development Aid, Terms of Trade, Debt Relief, Good Governance and Bad Governance. IPS, PANA and Xinhua paid proportionately more attention than AP or AFP to funding of development programs, while the AP and AFP showed more interest in debt relief. The "Governance" subset was spurred by President George W. Bush's call for "a new compact for global development, defined by new accountability for both rich and poor nations alike" (Bush 2002). "Good governance" was related to the concept that development aid should be channeled preferentially to those nations that respected human rights, accountability, and democracy. "Bad governance" was characterized by corruption, waste, and money laundering. All five agencies had more keywords relating to good governance than bad, but the AP and AFP had a higher proportion of references to "bad" governance than the developing-country agencies.

Goal 1, *Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*, was second in terms of overall frequency of mentions, with 18.6 percent of the combined total. This goal divided logically into two subsets with keywords relating to poverty occurring three times as often as those

relating to hunger. The most frequent keywords in the Poverty subset were "poverty" (4,230 mentions), slums, dollar a day, unemployment and impoverishment. In the Hunger subset, that word occurred 1,012 times, followed by food, malnutrition, and food security/insecurity.

Goal 6, *Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and Other Diseases* ranked third. There were almost 2,000 references to HIV/AIDS, AIDS, or HIV in the combined file. Malaria was mentioned 465 times, and tuberculosis or TB 215 times. The words disease, health care and epidemic also appeared frequently.

Goal 7, *Ensure Environmental Stability*, ranked fourth overall. This goal could be factored into three main themes: the environment in general, clean water, and global warming. The environment subset included the word "environment", often in conjunction with "sustainable." Also in this subset were references to biodiversity, ecosystems, and ecology. The clean water subset led with "sanitation" and phrases linked to water, such as: safe, clean, and potable. The global warming subset encompassed that phrase, along with references to climate change, pollution, emissions, greenhouse gases, and the Kyoto Protocol.

Goal 3, *Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women*, was in fifth place. Frequent keywords were gender, equality and inequality, disparity and empowerment.

Goal 2, *Achieve Universal Primary Education*, was sixth, characterized by references to words or strings such as education, primary school, literacy and illiteracy, Education for All, universal education and school enrollment.

Goal 5, *Improve Maternal Health*, was seventh, with the most common keywords and phrases being maternal mortality, reproductive health, family planning, maternal health, birth control, pregnancy and contraception.

Goal 4, *Reduce Child Mortality*, in eighth place, comprised references to words and strings like child mortality, child deaths, infant mortality, children under five, child survival, immunization and measles.

The priorities of the agencies were similar. All paid more attention to Goal 8 (Partnership for Development) than any other goal. This is due in part to the complexity of that goal (it has more themes and hence more keywords than any other MDG) and there is a correlation between the number of keywords assigned to each category and the number of references we found. Four of the five agencies ranked Poverty/Hunger as second, HIV/AIDS as third and the environment as fourth. However, there were large differences in the scope of the coverage. IPS carried the largest number of references to keywords, with 33.1 percent of the total number. This can be attributed to the fact that IPS reports on average were considerably longer, more closely focused on the MDGs and more detailed than those of the other agencies.

DISCUSSION

There is no simple way to assess the impact of news agencies on development projects and programs. One cannot determine accurately which of the agency reports were picked up by newspapers or other media. Traditional news media such as radio, television and newspapers use only a very small part of what is available from the wire services. And the smaller media outlets in particular tend to subscribe to only one or perhaps two agencies. Nor do we know, if the reports were published, who read them and with what cognitive effect.

Also unknown is the number of people who accessed the agency reports directly from web sites. However, data from IPS web logs show a huge and rapidly growing number of people are accessing its reports directly from the Internet. Most of them are directed to the IPS web sites via search engines such as Google. In the first half of 2008 the IPS site was averaging 1.5 million page views per month (IPS website, 2008). This figure does not include individuals who access the IPS editorial services through the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), OneWorld, Third World Network websites and Yahoo among others who partner or pick-up IPS news for their web-sites. Analysis of the web logs of the other agencies no doubt would show a similar tendency: growing numbers of readers with an interest in such issues as development aid are bypassing traditional media and finding what they want directly from alternative sources. People wanting to know about development initiatives, and had access to multiple websites, can find in news agency files extensive information about the issues, the interests and the stakeholders involved, presented from a wide range of perspectives.

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NOT ENOUGH TIME TO COVER ALL THE NEWS: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE IN TIME AND NEWSWEEK

MARIA M. GARCIA AND GUY J. GOLAN

This study provides empirical examinations of international news coverage in the two leading U.S. news magazines: Time and Newsweek. Seventy magazine issues were analyzed in total. The unit of analysis was the individual news article. The results of the study provide some evidence as to the importance of the world system variables as key predictors of international news coverage. The study identified a highly significant correlation between news coverage and a nation's gross domestic product, overall levels of exports, and population

Keywords: determinants, international news flow, international news coverage, international journalism, magazines, gatekeeping, international communication

The world we live in is constantly shaped and transformed by events that occur throughout its various regions. From internal conflict to regional wars, from scientific breakthroughs to natural disasters, from touching human interest stories to worldwide epidemics, such as HIV and mad cow disease, our daily lives both locally and abroad are constantly influenced by what is happening all around the globe.

Despite globalization and the various emerging markets, international communication research consistently indicates that there is a lack of balance in the flow and coverage of international news (Masmoudi, 1979). It appears that media gatekeepers consistently focus the majority of their coverage on a select group of nations while limiting their coverage of the rest of the world (Weaver, Porter, & Evans, 1984).

The current study aims to advance knowledge of international news coverage research by providing one of the first empirical examinations of international news coverage in the

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two leading U.S. news magazines: *Time* and *Newsweek*. Moving beyond mere descriptive, our study aims to identify those news factors that may explain why some nations are more newsworthy to media gatekeepers than others. Based on Chang's (1998) incorporation of world system theory (Wallerstein, 1974) into research on the determinants of international news flow and coverage, our study investigates the relationship between the prominence of nations and the overall amount of coverage that they receive from elite news magazines.

Understanding how American news magazines cover world events is of importance not only because of the impact that this coverage may have on public opinion (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004), but also because of the impact that the coverage may have on international knowledge (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000) and government policy (Gilboa, 2003; Piers, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

International News Coverage (Scope)

For decades, media scholars have examined both the scope and the nature of international news coverage in the United States and across the world. Research findings indicate that as a whole, international news comprises an important part of the collective news content mix. Whitney et al. (1989) found international news stories accounted for 34 percent of all network television news content between 1982 and 1984. Larson and Hardy's (1977) study of television network news coverage revealed that international news accounted for 35 to 39 percent of all news content. In addition, Larson's (1982) decade long analysis of television news revealed that about 40 percent of the content dealt with international news. Paik (1999) conducted an analysis of the international news coverage patterns from the *Wall Street Journal*. The author analyzed 74,520 news articles and found that nearly 44 percent of these articles dealt with international news.

Moving beyond the mere scope of international coverage, researchers have analyzed the nature of this coverage. Findings consistently indicate that there is a fundamental lack of balance in coverage as only a select few nations get coverage while most world nations do not (Masmoudi, 1979). Weaver et al.'s (1984) content analysis of international news coverage on network television news found that Europe and the Middle East dominated coverage when compared to Africa and Latin America. When Larson (1982) analyzed network television news coverage of the world between 1972-1981, his results indicated that a few nations (USSR, Israel, Britain, and South Vietnam) dominated coverage while most nations around the world received limited to no coverage.

Golan and Wanta (2003) analyzed network television news coverage of international elections on four different networks. Their results indicated that while eight elections were covered by all four networks, 102 of the 138 elections that occurred throughout the world received zero coverage.

Golan (2003) conducted a content analysis of every single television network news story from four different networks during 1999. The author found that 80 percent of international news coverage focused on less than twenty nations. Paik's (1999) content analysis of international news coverage in the *Wall Street Journal* revealed that European and Asian coverage dominated the news while other regions, such as Africa and the Caribbean, were substantially under covered.

As demonstrated by these previous studies, U.S. media tend to focus their international news coverage on a select few nations/regions while limiting their coverage of most world nations to a minimum across media. The current study aims to advance knowledge in the field of international communication by providing one of the first examinations of international news coverage in U.S. news magazines. Based on the findings of previous research that indicates a lack of balance in coverage of the world, we will predict the following:

H1: News magazine coverage of the world will focus on a small number of nations while providing limited coverage of the rest of the world.

H2: News magazine coverage of the world will focus on a limited few regions while providing limited coverage of the rest of the world.

The Determinants of International Coverage

As evident by international communication research, not all nations were created equal to be news in the eyes of U.S. media gatekeepers (Chang, 1998). Moving beyond the descriptive approach that clearly demonstrates this pattern of lack of balance in news coverage, researchers attempted to identify and understand the news factors that make certain nations or regions more newsworthy than others. This area of research is often referred to as research of the determinants of international news coverage (Wu, 1998). As noted by Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger (1987), determinants research typically follows one of two theoretical approaches: the event-oriented approach or the contextual approach. While the former focuses on the nature of the international news event, the latter focuses on the contextual characteristics of the countries involved.

Over the past few decades, dozens of determinants studies were conducted and offered dozens of explanatory variables for the lack of international news coverage balance (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Rosengren & Rickardsson, 1974; Kariel & Rosenvall, 1984; Kim & Barnett, 1996). Out of these many studies, four main theoretical approaches have been utilized in predicting international news coverage, these include: deviance (Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger, 1986), relevance (Chang & Lee, 1992), cultural affinity (Hester, 1973) and the location in the nation in the hierarchy of nations (Kim & Barnett, 1996).

One key finding is that the media tend to favor negative international news stories over positive ones (Worthington, 1971; Queiser-Morales, 1982; Golan & Wanta, 2003). Shoemaker et al. (1986) argued that deviance in an international event along with high levels of conflict can best predict levels of coverage. Indeed several studies have tested and supported the deviance hypothesis that claims that the more negative an international event is, the more likely it is to receive coverage by the media (Chang et al., 1987; Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991; Chaudhary, 2001).

In addition to deviance, relevance has been identified as a key predictor of coverage. Chang et al.'s (1987) study of international news coverage on three television networks and *The New York Times* revealed that relevance to the United States (operationalized by threat to the U.S.) was the strongest predictor of coverage. Indeed, Chang and Lee's (1992) survey of newspaper editors found that relevance to the U.S. in the form of national interests and national security were key news factors that led to coverage in newspaper editors' international news selection process. Chang and Lee's (2001) replication of the Chang et al.'s (1987) study also found strong evidence of a significant relationship between relevance to the United States and coverage of nations by the media. In his analysis, Riffe (1996) found that 39 percent of *New York Times* international news had some linkage to U.S. interests.

Based on previous research that identified deviance and relevance as key predictors of coverage, the current study will predict the following:

H3: The more negative the valence of nation coverage, the greater the amount of coverage a nation will receive (deviance).

H4: The more negative the valence of nation coverage (in regards to the U.S.), the greater the amount of coverage a nation will receive (deviance and relevance).

Location in the World System as a Predictor of Coverage

In his seminal study, Chang (1998) proposes that Wallerstein's world system theory (1974), which suggests that the world's nations are divided into core, peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, can be of great value in predicting international news coverage.

Since first argued, several studies indeed tested the core/periphery world system structure in research on the determinants of international news coverage. Chang (1998) found that Western industrialized nations form a "core zone" of a world news system and act as filters through which international news must pass. Chang, Lau, and Hao (2000) argued that core nations dominated coverage of international news and that one core country covered in international news would be equal to two semi-peripheral counties or about seven peripheral nations. Gunaratne (2001) solidified the notion of the incorporation of the world

system theory into international communication research, but argued that economic blocs should replace individual nations in the analysis.

Wanta and Golan (2001) tested Chang's (1998) approach in their examination of media coverage of international elections. They discovered core nations and those countries with strong ties to core nations were likely to be covered, while most peripheral and semi-peripheral nations received limited to no coverage.

The current study aims to advance knowledge on the determinants of international news coverage by investigating Chang's (1998) assertion that the location of a nation in the world system may be useful in predicting the amount of coverage that the nation may receive from the news media. Research indicates that such world system variables as a nation's gross domestic product (Wu, 2003), levels of trade and exports (Wu, 2000), and population (Kim & Barnett, 1996) may serve as key determinants of international news coverage.

Based on research that incorporated determinants research with world system theory, the current study will predict that the amount of news magazine coverage of nations will be associated with their overall location in the world system as operationalized by three dominant factors:

H5: There will be a significant correlation between a nation's gross domestic product and its overall coverage in the news magazines.

H6: There will be a significant correlation between a nation's level of exports and its overall coverage in the news magazines.

H7: There will be a significant correlation between a nation's population and its overall coverage in the news magazines.

Methods

The current study represents one of the first empirical investigations of international news coverage in U.S. news magazines. We conducted a content analysis of news article that focused on international news in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines between January of 2006 to February of 2007. These two publications represent the top two circulated news magazines in the United States according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (2006).

Seventy magazine issues were analyzed in total. The unit of analysis was the individual news article. A total of 196 articles were analyzed in the study and these represented a census rather than a sample of international news stories in the two magazines. Each of the articles was coded for the following variables:

Magazine: Did the story appear in *Time* or in *Newsweek*?

Country: What was the nation that the article focused on? If the article focused on more than one nation, it was double coded in accordance to the nation focused. It should be noted that such coding only occurred when two or more nations were the main focus of the article rather than if a second nation was just mentioned or briefly discussed.

Prominence: Each story was coded for the number of paragraphs in it. A final paragraph tally provided a measure of overall prominence of each nation's coverage in the two magazines.

Region: What geographic region did the nation in the story belong to? Regions were coded as either, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, North America, South America / Latin America or Pacifica.

Issues: This variable coded the main topic in the news article. Since most articles focused on more than a single issue, three separate variables were coded for each article including main issue, secondary issue and third issue. Issues included War on terror, internal conflict/terror, internal politics, international relations (not with the USA), international relations (with the USA), economics, crime and law, health care and medicine, accidents and tragedies, natural disasters, human interest and entertainment, religion, focus on an individual, and other.

Valence: Each story was coded for its valence. That is, we examined if the story or the nation was covered in a negative, neutral, or positive manner. Here is an example of a paragraph from a story regarding Afghanistan which was coded as negative for valence (Ratnesar & Baker, 2006):

Venture outside of Kabul, and the reality of the country's blight becomes overwhelming. Sixty percent of the country is still without electricity, 80 percent without potable water. Unemployment hovers around 40 percent. The absence of credible police and consistent government services in rural areas has created vacuums that are being filled by an array of antigovernment forces (p. 40).

Valence towards the USA: Each story was coded for its valence in relation to the United States. Here the analysis focused on how the nation or event was framed in relation to the U.S. interest. The following is an example of a news story about Somalia that was coded as being negative in its valence regarding the U.S. (Dealey, 2006):

The fear is that Somalia, a country with nearly 9 million Muslims and one that the U.S. has long suspected is haven for al-Qaeda, may fall further into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists sympathetic to terrorist organizations (p. 51).

The last three variables in the analysis were employed based on previous research that applied world system theory in determinants research. These included gross domestic product (Chang, 1998), exports (Chang, 1998) and population (Golan & Wanta, 2003). All three variables were coded based on data from the CIA World Factbook (2005). Gross

domestic product scores were in billions, and exports and population scores were in millions.

In order to ensure intercoder reliability, a second coder analyzed ten percent of the articles (20). Satisfactory reliability scores were found using the Holsti (1969) method: Magazine 1, country .97, region 1, main issue .91, secondary issue .87, third issue .81, valence .91, valence towards the USA .88, gross domestic product 1, exports 1, and population 1.

Statistical Procedure

In order to assess the relationship between the independent country-based variables (GDP, exports, and population) and the dependent variable (amount of coverage), we ran Pearson correlations. While useful in identifying a relationship between variables, Pearson correlations is limited to the mere identification of an association between variables, and its significance may be limited by issues of external validity. However, as noted by Golan (2003), research on the determinants of international news coverage faces a consistent limitation in regards to the application of OLS regression analysis since the dependent variable in most determinants research (coverage) is not normally distributed.

The lack of normal distribution for the coverage variable is a result of the fact that the media do not cover the world in a balanced manner. Media scholars who try to empirically test the news values (determinants) of international news often have to deal with this methodological shortcoming since normal distribution is a basic assumption of OLS regression. Such violations of the OLS assumptions are likely to result in serious errors in the estimation (Gill, 2001), and may lead to incorrectly accepting a null hypothesis.

Recognizing this methodological limitation, some determinants scholars have used log transformation as a way to overcome this limitation (e.g., Wu, 2000; Golan, 2006).

The current study chose not to log the dependent variable of coverage since news magazine coverage was almost completely limited to less than 30 nations and most nations received scores of zeros. Thus, we limited our analysis to Pearson correlations which while powerful, do not allow for as great of a level of measurement as the more indicative regression analysis.

RESULTS

In order to test hypotheses number one and two, simple frequency tests were run in order to measure the amount of coverage that each nation received. The results as displayed in Table 1 indicate that 178 news stories out of the 196 total stories in the analysis focused on 19 nations. This means that 90 percent of the news magazine coverage focused on less than 10 percent of the nations in the analysis (UN member state, the Palestinian Authority,

TABLE 1
STORY AND PARAGRAPH COUNT BY NATION

Country	Stories	Rank	Paragraphs	Rank
1. Iraq	40	1	532	1
2. USA	32	2	482	2
3. Lebanon	14	3	177	4
4. Israel	13	4	185	3
5. China	13	4	148	6
6. Iran	12	5	160	5
7. England UK	8	6	111	7
8. North Korea	7	6	101	8
9. International Organizations (not UN)	6	7	63	11
10. Palestinian Authority	4	8	64	10
11. Russia	4	8	43	12
12. United Nations	4	8	37	13
13. Cuba	4	8	29	15
14. Afghanistan	3	9	71	9
15. Somalia	3	9	35	14
16. Mexico	3	9	25	17
17. France	3	9	24	18
18. Japan	3	9	20	19
19. Pakistan	2	10	28	16
Total (196 stories in analysis)	178		2335	

and international organizations). The results further indicate that Iraq was the most covered nation with about 20 percent of all stories, followed by the United States (16%), Lebanon (7.1%), Israel (6.6%), China (6.6%) and Iran (6.1%). Thus, when further analyzing these results, we find that five foreign nations received more than 46 percent of the total international news coverage. The finding that the United States represented 16 percent of the total coverage further indicates that stories tended to focus on international news from a U.S. perspective.

Based on the results in Table 1, we find support for hypothesis number one that predicted that news magazine coverage of the world will focus on a small number of nations while providing limited to no coverage of the rest of the world.

Moving beyond the identity of the nation that the magazine article focused on, we examined the region to which the nation belonged. The results of our analysis once again indicated that media gatekeepers focused most of their stories on a few geographic areas while limiting coverage of the others. Regional coverage focused primarily on the Middle East (44.4%), North America (17.9%), Asia (17.3%), and Europe (8.7%).

TABLE 2
ISSUES LINKED TO MOST COVERED NATIONS

Country	War on terror	internal conflict	internal politics	international relations	relationship with the USA	economics	crime/law
Iraq	12	33	28	3	20	1	5
USA	21	4	23	22	0	3	5
Lebanon	3	9	10	13	3	0	0
Israel	8	3	10	11	2	0	0
China	0	1	10	5	2	10	1
Iran	1	3	7	7	5	7	0
England	3	5	6	1	0	1	3
N. Korea	2	0	4	3	5	2	0
Intern. Org.	0	1	1	4	0	0	0
Palestinian	0	3	4	4	0	0	0
Russia	0	1	2	2	0	1	2
UN	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
Cuba	0	0	4	0	1	2	0
Afghanistan	2	1	2	0	2	0	0
Somalia	2	1	3	2	0	0	1
Mexico	0	0	3	0	1	3	0
France	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Japan	0	0	2	2	0	1	0
Pakistan	0	1	2	1	0	0	0
Total	54	66	128	84	41	31	17

Moving beyond the mere score of coverage, the current study also examined its nature. Our analysis of individual articles identified up to three main issues that were linked to the covered nation in the magazine story. Table 2 displays the issues linked to each of the top 19 nations, as mentioned before, constituting over 90 percent of the overall coverage. It is important to note that each article was coded for up to three issue frames and thus, their total number may be greater than the total stories analyzed in the study.

Our results indicate that the majority of issue frames of international news focused on internal politics (128), international relations (84), internal conflict (66), the U.S.-led War on terror (54) as well as relations with the USA (31), and economics (34). When examined closely, it is apparent that the two news magazines primarily framed international news in terms of conflict as the War on terror frame and the internal conflict frame represented the second highest tally. In addition, many of the international relations and relations with the U.S. frames focused on conflict (e.g., Iran-U.S. relations in regards to Iran's support of the Hezbollah). Absent from Table 2 are the issues that were not widely covered by the

TABLE 3
STORY VALENCE (GENERAL)

Country	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
1. Iraq	31	7	2	40
2. USA	14	14	4	32
3. Lebanon	11	3	0	14
4. Israel	5	6	2	13
5. China	3	3	7	13
6. Iran	9	2	1	12
7. UK	2	5	1	8
8. North Korea	7	0	0	7
9. International Organizations	2	1	3	6
10. Palestinian	3	1	0	4
11. Russia	3	1	0	4
12. UN	3	1	0	4
13. Cuba	1	2	1	4
14. Afghanistan	2	1	0	3
15. Somalia	2	1	0	3
16. Mexico	2	1	0	3
17. France	1	1	1	3
18. Japan	0	1	2	3
19. Pakistan	0	1	1	2
Total	101	52	25	178

magazines, such as entertainment, accidents, and natural disasters as well as human-interest stories.

As demonstrated by previous research, international news stories tend to focus on negative aspects rather than positive ones. In our analysis, we coded each news story as negative, neutral, or positive in terms of its valence. The results in Table 3 highlight the valence of magazine coverage of the top 19 nations (representing 90 percent of overall coverage).

The results clearly indicate that the majority of magazine news stories were negative (56.7%), followed by neutral (29%) and positive (14%). Iraq (77.5%), Lebanon (78.5%), Iran (75%), and North Korea (100%) represented the most negative coverage from the top eight nations covered. This trend in story valence is logical when considering that all of these nations were either at war or in the midst of an international conflict or tension (e.g., North Korea and Iran over nuclear proliferation).

TABLE 4
STORY VALENCE (VALENCE TOWARDS THE USA)

Country	Negative (USA)	Neutral (USA)	Positive (USA)	Total
1. Iraq	28	10	2	40
2. USA	11	17	4	32
3. Lebanon	9	5	0	14
4. Israel	2	9	2	13
5. China	3	6	4	13
6. Iran	10	0	2	12
7. UK	1	6	1	8
8. North Korea	6	1	0	7
9. International Organizations	0	5	1	6
10. Palestinian	3	1	0	4
11. Russia	1	3	0	4
12. UN	2	2	0	4
13. Cuba	1	2	1	4
14. Afghanistan	2	1	0	3
15. Somalia	3	0	0	3
16. Mexico	1	2	0	3
17. France	0	2	1	3
18. Japan	0	2	1	3
19. Pakistan	0	2	0	2
Total	83	76	19	178

The results in Table 4 further solidify the notion that news magazine coverage of the world largely focused on negative stories. Once again Iraq (70%), Lebanon (64%), Iran (83%), and North Korea (85%) are framed in the most negative light in regards to the United States. It is likely that the insurgency against the United States, the ongoing nuclear crisis of Iran and North Korea with the USA, and Lebanon's ties to the Iranian- back Hezbollah and war against U.S. ally Israel may explain these findings. Based on the results displayed in Tables 3 and 4, we found evidence to support hypothesis three and hypothesis four.

The current study incorporated research on world system theory and international news coverage in its analysis. This research suggests that larger, more powerful nations (core) would be more likely to be covered by the media than smaller and weaker nations (peripheral). The results of the Pearson correlations provide support for hypotheses 5-7 as significant correlations were identified between the amount of magazine news coverage

(number of paragraphs) and a nation's gross domestic product (.482, $P=.000$), levels of exports (.328, $p=.000$), and its population (.154, $P=.031$).

DISCUSSION

The current study provides one of the first empirical investigations of U.S. news magazine coverage of international news. The results of our analysis clearly indicate that much like television (Larson, 1982) and newspapers (Paik, 1999), news magazines do not cover the world in a balanced manner. Indeed less than twenty nations accounted for more than 90 percent of international news coverage. Furthermore, Africa, Oceania, and South America were altogether ignored by the magazine editors who apparently identified those regions as not newsworthy. These findings provide additional evidence to what scholars have long suspected—there is an overall lack of balance in the flow and amount of coverage of nations by U.S. media outlets (Masmoudi, 1979; Weaver et al., 1984; Larson, 1982; Chang, 1998).

Furthermore, our results indicate that the magazines not only limited their coverage on a few nations, but also framed their news stories on a limited number of issues—most of which dealt with negative coverage.

Our analysis indicates that the overall valence of the majority of magazine news stories was negative rather than neutral or positive. These results support many previous studies that indicate that international news coverage tends to focus on the negative rather than the positive aspects of international news and events (Masmoudi, 1979; Riffe & Budianto, 2001; Golan & Wanta, 2003).

The extent of the negative coverage was best highlighted by the coding of the two valence variables that pointed to the fact that negative frames accounted for overall story valence (56.7%) and for valence of nation coverage in regards to the United States (46.6%). It has been long held by scholars that international news in general and in particular regarding the Third World tend to focus on negative news, such as earthquakes, coups, famine, and war (Rosenblum, 1979; Queiser-Morales, 1982). The results of our study suggest that this widely viewed perspective may no longer be relevant in today's global political environment. In another case in point, the U.S.-led War on terror and related sub issues, such as international relations and relations with the U.S., are key issue frames that U.S. news magazines focus on.

In the post September 11th world, every nation around the globe can be viewed as a friend or an enemy. It is not likely to be of coincidence that Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon, North Korea, Pakistan, and the Palestinian Authority were all highly covered in relation to nations that received limited coverage, such as the powerful nations of Brazil, Germany, and India.

It may strike one as odd that a nation such as India received less coverage from two U.S. news magazines than did Somalia. However, it is important to note that even though India accounts for nearly 15 percent of the entire world population, American gatekeepers most likely identified Somalia as more newsworthy due to its reputation as a breeding ground for Al-Qaeda operatives. The authors of the current study will argue that in addition to the location of a nation in a world system, scholars of the determinants of international news coverage ought to consider the location of a nation within the greater context of the U.S. War on terror.

Finally, the results of our study provide some evidence as to the importance of the world system variables as key predictors of international news coverage. We identified a highly significant correlation between news coverage and a nation's gross domestic product, overall levels of exports, and population.

Indeed, the results of our analysis identified China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Japan, and France as highly newsworthy nations to the two U.S. news magazines. It is important to also note that not many studies tested Chang's (1998) assertion of the significance of incorporating the world system theory into research on the determinants of international news coverage. The current study is one of the first to test location in the world system measures in regards to coverage in U.S. magazines in particular and in the U.S. media in general. Therefore, future studies ought to further test whether the core/periphery/semi-periphery structure is useful in predicting media coverage of international news across media.

Limitations

The current study aimed to provide one of the first investigations of international news coverage in U.S. elite news magazines. While the study's results are of great interest, they are somewhat limited by the highly descriptive nature of our analysis. While the study provided a reliable description of how the magazines covered the world, it provided only a limited account of the variables that accounted for the coverage.

Future studies should further explore our findings and could expand our analysis by using a multivariate analysis of those world system variables that may serve as key determinants of coverage (GDP, exports, and population). In addition, future studies should explore how elite magazines outside of the U.S. covered the world in order to avoid the Americentric nature of research that is so common in the field of mass communications.

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NEWS AGENCY MAJORS: OWNERSHIP, CONTROL AND INFLUENCE REEVALUATED

OLIVER BOYD-BARRETT

This paper assesses the definitional status of 'news agencies' in the early twenty-first century and the distinguishing features of the major 'global' and/or transnational agencies. It investigates how far major agencies exhibit shifts of structure, operation and business model in response to political and economic challenges of recent decades, and ponders the implications for their public accountability. It proposes that the established news agency research agenda is ethnocentric, lopsided, and insufficiently attentive to quality issues.

Keywords: global media, international communication, news agencies, wire services.

Global news agencies are organizations whose main *raison d'être* continues to be to gather and to sell news throughout the world for the benefit of 'retail' media (principally newspapers and broadcasters and their online sites, as well as online portals, websites and aggregators that use agency news) and non-media outlets, including businesses, banks, brokerage houses, governments, private individuals. Yet there is increasing uncertainty as to how to define a leading "news agency."

Ever since their appearance in the mid nineteenth century, few news agencies around the world could make plausible (even if contentious) claim to comprehensive gathering of news and its distribution to retail media around the world, in a wholesaler-retailer relationship. In the 1900s the principal wholesalers were (in alphabetical order), Associated Press (AP) (headquartered in New York), Havas (Paris), Reuters (London), and Wolff (Berlin). Of these, Havas, Reuters and Wolff were leading signatories to a news cartel whose most powerful member, by virtue of its location in the capital city of the British Empire, was Reuters, and whose junior members constituted national news agencies, then principally European, who exclusively pooled their news with cartel agencies. Though the

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wholesaler operation typically focused on provision of news to newspapers and national agencies, the majors had other revenue sources including government subventions, non-media clients (e.g. for business and financial data), and diversification including, in the case of Reuters, banking and telegraphic cable and, in the case of Havas, brokering of advertising space. Then as now it was not always clear whether the business model was primarily general news provision subsidized by cognate revenue streams, or primarily financial data (advertising, banking etc.) promoted alongside a public service of general news.

Some trends persisted through the following one hundred years. Reuters was still the leading agency in the monetary value of its overall operations among *general* news agencies, followed by AP and Agence France Presse (AFP) (post-World War II successor to Havas). In 1907 a second major American agency, United Press (later United Press International, UPI) had appeared, once a major competitor to AP but now much reduced. Two agencies associated with the communist block appeared in the first decades of the twentieth century: TASS of the Soviet Union, and Xinhua of China. With the demise of the Berlin Wall in 1989, TASS became ITAR-TASS, official global news provider for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that succeeded the Soviet Union. Xinhua continues as major agency of the Chinese Communist Party, since its foundation as Red China News Agency in 1931 (affiliating, 1949, to the State Political Council as the sole legitimate national agency).

Scholarly research dedicates disproportionate attention to western-based news agencies (see Boyd-Barrett, 1980). In terms of monetary value and scale of production and distribution, TASS and Xinhua were not as strong as Reuters and AP (see Kruglak, 1963, on TASS; Xin, 2006 on Xinhua), more comparable with those national agencies of Europe and Asia that sustained limited operations of international reporting (e.g. dpa of Germany; EFE of Spain; Kyodo of Japan) primarily for the benefit of their domestic members or clients. Western journalists regarded TASS and Xinhua as indistinguishable from official information services of their respective countries, state propaganda that rated poorly as sources for hard news, and inferior to Anglo-American principles of objectivity and impartiality. That they were often free of charge reinforced such views Xinhua started selective charging from the 1980s (Xin, 2006, p. 181).

This western perspective had shortcomings. Just as TASS served the information interests of political elites and state governed Soviet media, AP, as a cooperative owned by America's daily newspapers, served American media, first and foremost, and routinely privileged "authoritative" US (usually official) sources. The business models underwriting TASS and Xinhua were not totally unfamiliar among western agencies. AFP always depended on significant indirect government subvention through subscriptions of state organizations, and certain services of Reuters were government subsidized over decades. In Russia and the CIS, ITAR-TASS continues as state agency but is subject to fierce competition from a new, private and commercial agency, Interfax, established in 1989. This

sustains a considerable market presence all over Russia, the CIS, China and Central and Eastern Europe.

From 1985, China's Xinhua weaned itself from total dependence on government finance, even having to restrain its entrepreneurial zeal when this threatened scandalous intermixing of business with news principles in the 1990s (Xin, 2006). Xinhua may not compete on all measures with western giants, and its strength is primarily domestic, but its scale is impressive. Xinhuanet.com (established 1997) claims to be among the world's top 50 websites, garnering 800 million hits daily, third among the world's news websites behind BBC and CNN, ahead of Reuters, AP and AFP and among the top ten media brands in China.

Outside of wartime, the western majors were not extensions of government as were TASS and Xinhua but, like any texts, theirs demonstrate framing and priming functions, including strong selectivity in balance of coverage among sources, countries and topics (Boyd-Barrett, 1980). Furthermore, spectacular growth of Russian and Chinese news agencies clouds the meaningfulness of older distinctions between global, intermediate and national. Even a classic national news agency like the UK's PA sells specialist sports news services in overseas markets.

That some agencies are component parts of government, and others not, that some subscribe to certain ideas about journalism while others have different ideas, are insufficient grounds for marginalization of any agencies. There are many reasons why State-controlled agencies are of scholarly interest (Rantanen & Boyd-Barrett, 2002). Even where their news is an unwavering reflection of state policy, the questions as to how this is achieved, with what implications, are significant. The relationship of state news agency news to official state policy may be ambiguous, reflective of unevenness in the state's control over its executive agencies at national/regional levels, or of conflicts of interest internal to the agency/state, or cutting across the state, agency and client media. Ambiguity of state policy may reflect conflicts internal to governing elites, and/or represent strategic evasion.

Anglo-American presumptions of objectivity, balance and impartiality attract substantial skepticism (cf. Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These ideals are seldom realized under pressures of time and resource, vulnerability to powerful sources, privileging of wealthier subscribers, and unequal accessibility to news from different sources (as in the case of major conflicts involving the countries in which news agencies have their headquarters). Anglo-American tradition privileges 'authoritative' sources, mistakenly implying that 'authority' equals 'credibility.' Western agencies do better with *events* than with *processes*, at relating *what* has happened, not *why* it happened. There is room for diverse approaches to the gathering of news and information. Mainstream journalists everywhere have strong views as to which agencies are 'best', their preferences rooted in professional *values*. Scholarship should *investigate* the ontology of these values, not be determined by them.

Much previous research presumed that major agencies must be *general* news agencies, providing coverage of the full range of issues important to their retail media clients. A plausible rationale for privileging general news might appeal to the role of political news within the 'general' category and its significance for democracy and public interest, unlike the presumed 'specialist' character of financial news (although such news clearly impacts public interest and democracy). The rise of financial news agencies undermined this favoring of the general from two directions. First was the ascent of Reuters from being a general news agency with secondary financial services for business clients, to being a financial news agency providing data for financial and commodity markets, and software for transactional financial trades, with general news a supporting activity. This has made it difficult to sustain meaningful comparison of Reuters with AP. AP deals primarily in general news, and also has a large domestic market. Reuters deals primarily in financial news and services, and does not have a dominating domestic market.

The predominance of a general news focus has been increasingly less justified since the growth in the 1980s of alternative economic and commodity services such as Dow Jones wire services (sister of the Wall Street Journal), Commodity News Service (now defunct), and AP-DJ Telerate - acquired by Reuters in 2005. In 2006 Dow Jones News Services were clustered with Dow Jones Licensing Services and Factiva, earning \$405m dollars that year.

The owners of Dow Jones (publisher of the Wall Street Journal and of Dow Jones wire services) consented to takeover by News Corporation in 2007. That year Reuters announced that the board of Canadian Publisher Thomson Corp. had agreed to acquire it for approx. US\$17.2 billion. Thomson would control about 53 percent. The merger would intensify rivalry between Reuters and another leading supplier of business information and trading platforms, Bloomberg, which was controlled by its founder, later mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, reporting 2006 sales of \$4.7 billion, Thomson Reuters would control 34 percent of the market for financial data, Bloomberg 33 percent. Overall 2007 Reuters revenues were approximately US\$5.1 billion, a growth of 6.5 percent over 2006. Only 6.6 percent (approximately US\$340 million) was earned by its media division. A first in news history, four of the world's wealthiest news agencies, Associated Press, Bloomberg, Dow Jones and Reuters were now controlled by businesses based in the USA and Canada.

The distinctiveness of major news agencies as 'global' suppliers and as 'wholesalers' has diminished. Cable News Network International (CNNI), established 1980, claimed a worldwide audience of 200 million in 2007. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Television, established 1991, claimed weekly audiences in 2007 of 281 million. Since then, other international and regional television news services have appeared (including Telesur, in 2005, and France 24 in 2007), rivaling the role of the traditional majors as the sole global gatherers and distributors of news. The majors maintain larger numbers of bureaus worldwide, more comprehensive coverage, and more differentiated news services for different regions. They even supply news footage to CNN and BBC World, either directly

through their own television news agencies, Reuters World News Service (RWNS), and Associated Press Television News (APTN), or through the Eurovision news exchange, a consortium of public and private broadcasters across Europe, Asia and the Americas. Retail clients (e.g. cable or satellite services and their viewers) can see the services of CNN and BBC World directly.

Streamed video from such services is increasingly available on You Tube.

CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

Continuities in news agency history are at least as remarkable as discontinuities (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, 1998). The comparative framework for this part of the discussion focuses particularly on the years 1980-2007.

Diversity

In 1980 there were four principal global news agencies operating as news-gatherers and news-distributors operating (mainly from big cities) in most but not all countries. These were primarily agencies for print news media. Two of the majors operated television news agencies (Visnews and UPITN), and two supplied audio reports for broadcasters. By 1996, the number of major print news agencies had declined from 4 to 3. UPI no longer offered equivalent competition. Some other agencies, like dpa (Germany) and EFE (Spain), significant regional players with strong activity in certain international markets, had grown stronger, but remained outside the major league. Whereas in 1980 there were several 'alternative' regionally-focused news agencies, their promise had largely evaporated by 2000, having insufficient 'credibility' for mainstream 'first world' newspapers, and suffering financial insecurity (Boyd-Barrett and Thussu, 1992). A partial exception was Inter Press Service (IPS), which despite continuing difficulties over 43 years continued in 2007 to supply a service of independent news focusing on the developing world. A newer generation of web-linked news initiatives, representing a broad spectrum of sponsorship and foci, had appeared. They ranged from intergovernmental news services such as the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), established 1995, sponsored by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and based in Nairobi, Kenya, its services distributed free by email to individual subscribers and radio stations; to the Agencia Informative Pulsar (1996-2001) an experiment based in Ecuador to link independent radio stations via the Internet, that started with a service of text-only "rip and read" news bulletins to 48 subscribers. Such sources supplement but cannot totally compensate for the gaps in the coverage of the global agencies, or for excessive dependence on agencies by mainstream media, both traditional and online. Davies (2008) writes that of some 200 countries, major print agencies have a full-time presence between only one half to two-thirds of them. In

some places this 'presence' amounts to a single correspondent. Their television arms are present in less than 60 countries. Nick Davies (2008, pp. 106-107) complains that coverage of individual countries has grown less substantial in the 2000s even while the dependency of mainstream media and their websites has increased. Recycling of agency news constitutes between 50-98 percent of news on popular websites.

By 1996, the influence of ITAR-TASS (still a state agency) had diminished in comparison with new, alternative, Russian news sources, especially the privately owned Interfax and associated regional agencies of the CIS. In China, Xinhua had prospered as a domestic agency. While still a state agency it generated almost as much commercial revenue as it received in state subsidies. Interfax and Xinhua are influential globally, primarily as sources of information about Russia and China.

Significant growth of 'wholesale' television news services took place in the 1990s. Visnews was moved from part to full ownership by Reuters to form Reuters Television. UPITN, losing its affiliation with UPI, became WTN, second largest television news service, acquired temporarily by Disney and then by AP Television to form APTN, operating from London. Eurovision and Asiavision, as satellite news-exchanges organized by public and private broadcasters under the aegis of the European Broadcasting Union in Geneva and the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union in Kuala Lumpur, continued to be influential sources in 2007 as in 1980, feeding news agency footage alongside members' own to constituent broadcasters. Some 'retail' global television news operations such as CNN (private, commercial), BBC World (commercial arm of a state broadcaster), and News Corp's Sky News (private, commercial) also acted as 'wholesalers' by distributing channels to cable operators, providing footage to client broadcasters, and feeding print and streamed video news via the Internet, while continuing to use conventional 'wholesale' agency news. To their number would soon be joined Al Jazeera based in Doha, Qatar, operating an Arabic language satellite television service from 1996 and an English language service from 2007. Al Jazeera is funded by the Emir of Qatar, as well as from advertising. Comparable enterprises emerging in the 2000s include La Nueva Televisora del Sur (Telesur), an intergovernmental South American service inspired by the president of Venezuela and based in Caracas, 2005. France 24, distributing by satellite and Internet in French, English and Arabic, started in 2006. France 24 is jointly owned by TF1, the largest French network, and France Televisions, the French public television broadcaster, and funded from license fee and advertising revenues.

In financial news, Reuters had remained global leader for some 150 years. By 1980 the agency had overtaken competitors such as AP, Dow Jones, Telerate or Commodity News Service (CNS). In the late 1990s its lead was challenged by Bloomberg (established 1981) and Reuters entered a period of retrenchment, from which it began to emerge in 2005, shortly before its acquisition by Thomson in 2007 to form Thomson Reuters. Bloomberg's influence in the financial community is magnified by feeds of financial data and economic

news through the AP network to AP members and clients in the United States, and to many national markets through national news agencies. With 500 reporters in 70 countries in the 1990s, Bloomberg extended further into general news.

Location

This apparently broader range of news sources obscured the reality that the 'voices' it represented were still few, and that North American, above all, and Western European media interests, dominated. AP, Bloomberg, and Dow Jones are headquartered in New York. Despite acquisition by (Canadian) Thomson, London will likely continue as headquarters for Reuters, as it is for APTN, BBC World, and the PA (which plays a key role in secondary European news markets). London is a major hub bureau of CNN. Other significant European news capitals include Paris for AFP; Madrid for EFE; Hamburg for dpa; and Geneva for Eurovision. The situation is not dramatically different from how it was in 1900, except that AP was then barely beginning to flex its global muscles. Germany's Wolff/Continental played a more significant role than its successor, dpa, given its influential role in Russia and its membership of the global cartel.

The majors are still concentrated among the world's most prosperous nations. In 1900 their head offices were located in Britain, France, Germany, the United States. In 2007, the American, English, and French influence similarly concentrates news agency power among the world's strongest economies. But nations that are even wealthier, or simply larger than, England and France, show little ambition or capability to acquire major status within the business, in appreciation, perhaps, of the market advantages that accrue to established players from their accumulated expertise, brand power, credibility and extensive networks. While Japan has long been a leading economic power, its national news agencies, Kyodo (general news) and Jiji (economic news) are not strong as global news providers. The major western news agencies achieve greater penetration of Asian markets than Asian agencies achieve in the West.

Autonomy

The leading agencies of the nineteenth century were Reuters, Havas, and Wolff/Continental in terms of their respective financial strength and sphere of operations. These companies were formally independent in terms of ownership; the strengths and personalities of their founders were significant early influences. They were less autonomous in their dependence on powerful clients. Earnings were generally derived from the sale of news services to media, financial or economic institutions, and governments. All were indirectly linked to their respective governments, which were important as both sources of revenue and of intelligence. The news services of these early agencies almost certainly

reflected the 'national interests' of their respective host governments. Writing of Reuters, Read says that in the period 1860-1900 it functioned 'increasingly as an institution of the British Empire' (Read, 1992, ch.3). The government of Bismarck subsidized Wolff to preempt its acquisition by Reuters. Havas sold advertising space, acting as space-broker on behalf of client newspapers and advertisers or their agencies. A newer model of agency ownership and control emerged in the US, where US newspapers formed a cooperative that recovered nearly all of its costs from media sales. Later US agencies (INS to 1957, and UPI) were privately owned by newspaper chains owned by Hearst (INS) and Scripps (UPI - later acquired by the Washington Times group).

Not enough is known in this early period about the respective balance of earnings from media clients ('media' sources), governmental clients or subsidies ('political' sources), and clients in the business, financial and commercial spheres ('commercial' sources) - except that political and commercial sources were considerable supplements to media revenues. Political patronage sometimes took the form of payments in excess of market value for services rendered. By 1933, commercial service subscriptions had overtaken UK newspaper subscriptions on Reuters' UK market; but income from economic services did not finally overtake news services, overall, until 1968. This suggests that for Reuters, the commercial category was probably much more important than the political, overall - despite significant instances of limited government subvention during the agency's history - and that media subscriptions were superior to both sources up to 1968, since when the relative importance of revenue from commercial sources has progressively increased. Political payments appear to have ceased in the mid-1980s: the last payment from BBC External Services was in 1980 (£250,000) and payments from the Foreign Office were drastically reduced in 1986 from £296,000 to their 'true' level of £20,000 (Read, p. 331).

Commercial sources were probably less important than political for Havas and Wolff, and political possibly rivaled media sources. The dominance of political sources in the form of government agency subscriptions has been sustained throughout the post-war history of AFP, accounting for around half its revenues, although there are no precise figures determining the extent to which state payments constitute 'subsidy'. For most of its history, AP was principally financed by subscriptions from member US newspapers, but their significance has declined in recent years. Other revenue sources for AP included sales to US broadcasters, overseas media, and clients for economic news services.

A new source of state aid developed during the twentieth century with the growth of broadcasting which, through much of the world, was state-owned. State involvement in media was intensified with the development of national news agencies that accompanied processes of de-colonization, 1950s-1970s. Since the 1980s, the importance of state broadcasters has declined relative to the growth of private, commercial terrestrial, satellite and cable television services.

In terms of ownership, today's major western news agencies are relatively independent. Reuters and Dow Jones, however, are now parts of larger corporate empires (Thomson and News International). News and information is still the principal activity of news agencies. This continuity is significant, given recent trends towards concentration and diversification of media empires. In the case of Reuters, AFP and AP, their constitutions restrict the range of business activity and require impartiality and objectivity. AP is restrained from entering into activities that compete with its members' business interests.

AFP, successor to Havas, has a co-operative ownership structure, representing newspapers, journalists and the state. The state accounts for some 50 percent of subscription revenue, a decline from over 60 percent since the late 1970s. Media clients are the next most important category. AFP is subject to government influence through state representation on its governing council. The German agency, dpa, does not rank among the world's 'global' agencies, although it is ranked as an important news-source by many national news agencies. Dpa is a co-operatively structured, media-owned agency that derives most of its revenue from media subscriptions and sales. We have seen that the state-owned agency of China, Xinhua, draws to a considerable extent on media and commercial, as opposed to political, sources. ITAR-TASS is primarily a state agency, but its commercial rival Interfax earns from diverse sources.

The co-operative model offers a sometimes more robust, more democratic mode of ownership, freer of dependence on political and commercial influences. Formation of the early co-operatives was based as much on exclusion of competitors as it was motivated by desire for inclusiveness. In some countries, such as Sweden and New Zealand, the model has not survived the damage exerted by competition between ever more powerful media conglomerates on news agency boards, nor has it always provided sufficient flexibility for the development and aggressive promotion of innovative new services.

One may conclude that the categories of media and commercial sources of revenue for the world's major agencies are now more important than the political in comparison with either 1900 or 1850. Several factors may be cited, principally (1) greater acceptance that political subvention of news agencies detracts from their credibility; (2) privatization and commercialization of broadcasting, together with the expansion of cable and satellite reduces role of state-owned broadcasters; (3) development of financial news markets has reduced the necessity for agency dependence on state support - completely, in the case of Reuters, and partially, in the case of AFP; (4) Reduction by Reuters and AFP in exclusive distribution through (usually state-controlled) national news agencies; (5) expansion of new media and new media markets - including news-photos, radio, terrestrial television, cable, satellite, videotext, teletext and digital services — diversifying the market overall, reducing government dependence.

Competition

Principal feature of the world's news system in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, was the cartel, an oligopolistic and hierarchical market structure controlled by Reuters, Havas and Wolff in top tier, partnering with an ever increasing number of national news agencies in second. Each top tier member had the right to distribute its news service, incorporating news of the cartel, to its ascribed territories, as determined by periodic, formal agreements. With some exceptions, top tier members were prohibited from selling their news to clients in the others' territories, although they could gather news independently from those territories. The triumvirate of Reuters, Havas and Wolff supplied world news to national news agencies in return for a service of national news and payment of a subscription fee by the national agencies. In general, the national agencies had exclusive rights to the distribution of cartel news in their territories, and the cartel had exclusive rights to national agency services on the global market.

The global news system is still hierarchical. A small number of global agencies supply world news to clients throughout the world, including national news agencies. The hierarchy is kept in place by the accumulated benefits of market advantage rather than by formal agreements between the majors. The majors are now in competition with one another to the point of selling news in each other's domestic markets, and in the markets of client national news agencies, across the full range of services. It is less common for global agency services to be distributed exclusively through national news agencies, and rare for all the major agencies to be distributed this way in any given territory. The collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, as in other instances of dramatic political transition, opened up new markets for global agencies. Equally, versions of news agency services are available through the Internet for individual as well as corporate clients worldwide.

There is now a greater range of suppliers of 'wholesale' news encompassing not just Reuters Television, APTN, Eurovision and Asiavision, but retailer-wholesalers such as Al Jazeera, BBC World, CNN, France 24, and Telesur, distributing by satellite, cable, and Internet. Each agency has certain market strengths. For example, AFP is particularly strong in France and the ex-colonial territories of France and in recent years has become much more aggressive in South East Asia, while AP is particularly strong in North and South America. Reuters is especially strong in the U.K. and much of continental Europe. AP and AFP remain general news providers. Reuters and Bloomberg are leading providers of financial information and transaction services for financial clients.

By 1980 Reuters' revenue grew parallel with and then exceeded AP (Boyd-Barrett, 1980, p.252). By 1995, with total revenues of £2703m (£2914m in 1996) Reuters had almost *twelve times* AP's £230m turnover (£258 in 1996); Reuters media products' revenue of £153m alone was worth more than half of the AP total, and probably more than AP's non-US revenue. AFP's total revenues in 1995 were equivalent to £147m, indicating

convergence towards AP since the 1970s, following more aggressive AFP activity overseas, especially South East Asia, and in economic and financial news. In 1977, AP revenue was \$100m as against AFP's \$43m (Boyd-Barrett, 1980), whereas by 1995 AP revenue, at £230m, was only 64 percent greater than AFP's £147m. But AFP annual sales were *sixteen times less* than those of Reuters.

Reuters' total annual revenue was £2,566m (approx. \$5,132m) in 2006, actually £348m less than its heyday a decade earlier, but a 6.5 percent increase over 2005, and the first increase in four years. The 2005 annual report announced that Reuters had completed the 'fix it' stage' of its strategy to put its core business 'back on track.' Reuters' main competitor in financial news and transaction services, Bloomberg, reported sales of \$4,700m for 2006, an increase of 14.6 percent over the previous year, and approximately \$430m less than Reuters. Dow Jones and Co. reported 2006 revenue of \$1,930. Thomson Corporation, which bid to acquire Reuters in 2007, reported 2006 sales of \$6,600m (of which about a third was accounted for by its financial information component).

In 2004, AP revenue was in excess of \$630m, with an operating loss of \$5m. Its total revenues were seven times less that of Reuters. Only seven percent of Reuters' revenues were contributed by Media division sales to publishers, multimedia websites and mobile information services, and this £169m represented approximately half of AP's total revenues.

Notable among the secondary giants was Xinhua's non-traditional business activities including (in 2001) newspaper dailies China Securities, Reference News and Shanghai Securities, and a number of business entities including advertising, printing, photo services, news and information trading, public relations consultancies and real estate. By 1998 Xinhua's self-generated revenue had reached \$18m, in addition to another \$11m from the government. Some 11 percent of its overall revenues were earned from overseas operations (Xin, 2006, p.181). It generated approximately \$2m surplus that year, although Xinhua is categorized as a not-for-profit institution. In 2002, the agency earned a total of approximately \$58m, in equal proportions from self-generated revenue and state subsidies. Some 50 percent of its self-generated revenue came from three newspapers, Reference News, China Securities and Economic Information Daily. Its international service was based mainly on the dispatches of other leading players and local media outlets of host countries. Xin (2006, p. 226) concluded that the "agency is still not credible enough to compete with Western news organizations in the international market."

AFP reported net profit of approximately \$3.9 million in 2006 (total sales stood at \$185m in 1999 - see James, 2000), reversing a corresponding loss the previous year and a figure described by its CEO as the "best result since 1979." Dpa, the largest and cooperatively owned news agency of Germany reported 2006 sales of approximately \$124.4 million, and earnings after tax of \$7.8 million, an increase of 30 percent over the previous year. Earnings in 2005 had registered the first increase in turnover in five years. Russian Interfax was internationalizing and commercializing at a rapid rate through the 1990s and

2000s. The British PA increased its underlying operating profit in 2006 by 5 percent to approximately \$12.8 million, on turnover which increased by 15 percent to approximately \$173.4 million.

Clients and Markets

Agency statistics must be treated warily, since different agencies define and count things differently. Reuters 2006 report claimed that its news and information reached over one billion people every day. By 2006 it served 350,000 professional clients (screens) in financial markets. For 2005 Reuters claimed a 27 percent share of the \$12 billion global market for financial information, level with Bloomberg. It employed 16,900 people in 89 countries. Reuters journalists produced 250,000 news stories, 40,000 pictures and over 4000 video stories each month. In 2006 it opened TIMES NOW, a 24 hour English-language news television in India, in partnership with one of India's largest publishers of English language news. In 2006 Reuters was looking beyond traditional media to working with user-generated content, including blogs, and reaching consumers through new digital platforms such as mobile phones, online video and interactive television. Reuters.com websites reached 16.6m visitors per month, ranking fifth among US financial news category websites, and fourth in the UK, based on the numbers of unique visitors.

On its website in 2007, AP claimed that on any given day more than half of the world's population saw news from AP. In 2005, it served 1,700 US newspapers, and 5,000 television and radio outlets, 850 AP Radio News audio affiliates and 8,500 foreign subscribers. Membership in 2006 comprised 1386 regular members and 4627 associate members. APTN's global video news service served 550 international broadcasters, with the inputs of 80 bureaus. APTN Direct, a live-to-air news service, provided unedited live news coverage to over 100 broadcast clients worldwide. In 2005, it had 3,700-4000 employees across 243 bureaus in 97 countries, serving news to 121 countries, and distributing in five languages.

In 2007, AFP agency was represented in 165 countries (of which 110 were home to AFP bureaux) and broadcast from five regional centers, representing a volume of 5000 stories, 2-3,000 photos, 80 graphics and 30 video reports daily. It employed 3,250 journalists (including 1,250 full-time and 2,000 freelancers), 300 technicians, 100 administrative executives and 350 other support staff. Major regional hubs were Washington, D.C. for North America (9 bureaux), Montevideo for Latin America (21 bureaux), Hong-Kong for Asia-Pacific (25 bureaux), Paris for Europe-Africa (36 European bureaux and 16 African bureaux) and Nicosia for the Middle East (10 bureaux.) Within France there were 7 bureaux outside Paris. AFP has its own video news agency with a global network of 40 dedicated video reporters from 10 international production outlets. AFP TV International embarked

on a global expansion program in 2006 and provides news to the new French global television service, France 24.

A few examples demonstrate the contrast between the traditional ‘majors’ and the smaller ‘intermediate’ and national agencies. Xinhua in 1998 served 5,300 subscribers, 1,100 of whom were based overseas, receiving news services in any of seven languages, distributed by 21 satellite stations. Nearly 300 Xinhua journalists were working in more than 100 overseas bureaus, including five major regional bureaus in Hong Kong, Cairo, Nairobi, Mexico City and Paris. By 2003 there were also 100 non-Chinese working overseas, 70 of them journalists (Xin, 2006, p. 198).

Interfax in 2007 claimed to be the main provider of news from Russia and the CIS, and a leading provider of political and business news from China (thus a direct competitor with Xinhua) and the emerging markets of Central Europe. Interfax provides company news, industry analysis, ratings (e.g. Moody’s Interfax Rating Agency), electronic trading systems, specialist news services about Petroleum, Gas, and Metallurgy, and regional agencies that include Interfax-Azerbaijan, Interfax-Kazakhstan, Interfax-Siberia, Interfax-Urals, and Interfax-China. Interfax Global Services was established in 2003 to publish, market and sell information in foreign languages worldwide. The agency maintains offices in London, Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Frankfurt, Denver, New York, Hong Kong, Baku, Almaty, Kyiv and Minsk.

Dpa in 2005 claimed correspondents and services in more than 90 countries outside Germany, delivering in four languages to 3,000 clients. Additionally it operated 12 German regional services for the benefit of almost all the country’s newspapers, television and radio stations. The Japanese news agency, Kyodo, employed 1,000 journalists and photographers, half of them in Tokyo and the rest in the five regional offices and 48 local bureaus. Kyodo News International had 70 full-time correspondents overseas, focusing mainly on Asia and the Pacific, then North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. This can be contrasted with the figures for another leading national agency with international distribution, the Spanish EFE, which covered news from 137 cities of 102 countries, with 23 bureaus in Spain and a total staff of 1,145.

The most important markets for the news agencies are generally domestic and cognate geo-political regions, then North America and Western Europe (or vice versa). In this respect there has been little change for over a century. There have been substantial increases in overall revenue, most spectacularly for Reuters in the past two decades: revenues multiplied some 40 times in the period 1977-1995, and revenues from media services grew approximately 16 times (Boyd-Barrett, 1997).

For Reuters, the UK is the single most important country, in terms of revenue (16 percent of the total in 1995). Altogether, the area of Europe, the Middle East and Africa accounted for over half (55% in 1995) of all revenues. In the case of AP and AFP we can note that the domestic U.S. and French markets are by far their most important, and this

“dominance of the domestic” is a standard pattern in the case of almost all agencies. Europe and Asia are significant areas of activity.

CONCLUSION

This study critically examined traditional definitions of ‘news agency,’ in the context of recent changes in market structure and reviewed some major continuities and discontinuities that emerge upon examination of the history of the global news agencies (or ‘majors’), in terms of their diversity, location, autonomy, competition, and clients. The author concludes that we have witnessed growing diversity in the *numbers* of major players, but not so much in terms of their location nor of the interests that they represent, although the strengthening of China’s Xinhua and the appearance of Russia’s Interfax are important indicators of what may come. The major players are probably more autonomous than they were, but the absorption of Reuters and Dow Jones into larger media conglomerates is a worrying development.

Competition among the major players is probably as intense as it has ever been. AP’s virtual monopoly on the US market is a major exception, comparable with the traditional domestic market hold of many national news agencies. The major players have a much larger and broader range of clients served with increasingly sophisticated multi-media, web-based technology. It would be wrong to ignore many significant developments and transformations in this long period of time, but it is apparent that this is an arena of continuous dominance by North America and Western Europe, and that the influence of the UK and France, in particular, is out of proportion to their contemporary economic significance. This is accompanied by an increasing spread — as part of the process of globalization, and intensified by processes of democratization in South America, Africa, Russian and Eastern Europe — of a western ideology of news and news-making and of the business models that underline these phenomena.

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GUERRILLAS IN CYBERIA: THE TRANSNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE ONLINE JOURNALISM OF THE NIGERIAN DIASPORIC PUBLIC SPHERE

FAROOQ A. KPEROGI

The last two decades witnessed the phenomenal migratory flows of Africans, especially Nigerians, to the West, including the United States, at a proportion outpaced only by the Transatlantic Slave Trade. While the political and economic consequences of the migration flows of Nigerians to the United States have been captured fairly robustly in the scholarly literature on globalization, there is scant attention to the transnational online journalistic practices of Nigerians in the diaspora and what impacts these practices have had and continue to have on not just the form and content of journalistic practices in Nigeria but also on the national post-military politics of the country. This study used case studies to show ways in which citizen media owned by U.S.-based Nigerians broke sensitive stories that not only made it to the front pages of local Nigerian newspapers but also caused federal and state governments to react officially. The findings have implications for how we theorize news flows in the age of phenomenally fast trans-border data made possible by the Internet.

Keywords: alternative online journalism, transnational media, diasporic media, diasporic public sphere, diasporan Nigerians

The last two decades have witnessed the phenomenal migratory flows of Africans to the West, especially to the United States, at a proportion outpaced only by the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Arthur, 2000; Zeleza, 2002; Okome, 2002). In the case of Nigeria, which leads

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all African countries in migratory flows to the United States (Hatton & Williamson, 2002; Takougang, 2003), this deterritorialization has had and continues to have a profound impact on the politics of the domestic public sphere. Many scholars have studied how Nigerians in the diaspora, using the transnational cultural and political capital that their privileged territorial displacement has conferred on them, established strategic linkages with domestic activist civil society groups to form the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which became a central and symbolic locus of political mobilization in the long and arduous struggle to dislodge totalitarian military regimes in Nigeria in the 1990s (Obadare, 2005; Bradley, 2005; Njoku, 2001). Consequently, when democratic rule was restored in 1999, the newly elected government acknowledged the struggles of Nigerians in the diaspora by formalizing associational relations with them. The government inaugurated the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) and created liaison offices for diasporan Nigerians in major Western embassies (Igbanoi, 2007).

However, while the political and economic consequences of the migratory flows of Nigerians to the United States have been captured fairly robustly in the scholarly literature on globalization, there is scant attention to the transnational online journalistic practices of Nigerians in the diaspora and what impacts these practices have had and continue to have on not just the form and content of journalistic practices in Nigeria but also on the national post-military politics of the country. The literature on diasporic public spheres suggests that this omission is not exclusive to Nigeria. Hannerz (1996, p.101) points out, for instance, that academically, media studies and migration studies have not found a sufficiently vigorous scholarly convergence over the years, even though, in reality, migration and mediatization “are continuously intertwined.”

The earliest scholar to come to terms with the reality of the inextricable interconnectedness between media and migration is Arjun Appadurai whose influential book, *Modernity at Large*, perceptively territorializes the contours of globalization to include five distinct yet intimately intertwined landscapes: “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes” and “ideoscapes” (Appadurai, 1996). Actuated by the lamentations of the dearth of disciplinary conversation between media studies and migration studies, Russell King and Nancy Wood also edited a critically acclaimed volume on the intersections between media and migration in the era of globalization (King & Wood, 2001).

However, while Appadurai’s mapping of global flows and the collection of essays in King and Wood’s edited volume acknowledge the liaison among diasporic media, migration and national politics, and therefore represent a significant extension of the emerging conversation between media studies and migration studies in ways that minimize the intensity of Hannerz’s lamentations, they still fall short of capturing the robustly variegated dimensions that are burgeoning forth in the relationship between the transnational media of diasporic public spheres and the national politics of nation-states. Appadurai’s notion of “mediascapes,” for instance, only theorizes the ways in which the mass media construct

imagined selves, imagined worlds, and moral maps for deterritorialized communities. Similarly, the contributors to the edited volume on media and migration are only concerned with conceptualizing the study of the “effects” of media, broadly conceived, on and for migration across various countries, representation of immigrants in the media of host countries, and the media consumption practices of diasporic public spheres.

This limitation is broadly true of most contemporary scholarship situated in the epistemic twilight zone between media studies and migration studies.¹ The existing literature in the media-migration matrix does not offer perspectives on the ways in which deterritorialized “ethnoscapes” not only deploy their media for the purpose of coming to terms with their individual and collective experiences of migration but also how they use these media to engage their domestic public spheres in sometimes radically transformative cultural exchanges. This study, therefore, contributes to the disciplinary dialogue between migration studies and media studies by using the emergence of “alternative” online media of the Nigerian diaspora in the United States as a launching pad to explore this phenomenon.

An emerging trend in the relations between sections of the Nigerian diaspora and the domestic public sphere that has not been captured in any scholarly literature is the proliferation of immensely popular diaspora online newspapers that are transforming and complicating normative notions of news and cultural flows. In the recent past, it used to be the case that Nigerians in the diaspora relied on the online content of their domestic newspapers for news about the homeland. They deployed their own diaspora media only to nurture their collective national memories, memories that are often sanctified by nostalgia and the desire to suture the ruptures that so readily emerge in a state of uprootedness that is concomitant with geographic displacement to new socio-cultural habitats (Ritivoi, 2002).

However, with the dizzying ease of cross-border data flow, made even easier by the phenomenal expansion of Internet technology back home, a dramatic and intriguing reversal is occurring. Nigerian newspapers in the homeland are now increasingly relying on Nigerian diaspora online newspapers for their stories and their interpretive construction of the social and political realities in the domestic public sphere. The domestic newspapers search for and often find scoops about the corrupt practices of local politicians through diaspora online newspapers. Such U.S.-based online newspapers as the *Times of Nigeria*, *Sahara Reporters*, *Elendureports*, Internet portals like *Nigerianvillagesquare.com*, *Gamji.com*, and discussion groups like *Naijapolitics@yahoogroups.com*, have become rich minefields of information for local Nigerian newspapers. They have called attention to acts of corruption in Nigeria and challenged abuse of power in ways the local media are not equipped to do. This, however, in no way suggests that these diaspora online news sites are blazing the trail in the reportage on corruption and bad governance. Since the 1920s, the Nigerian press has historically championed the fight against colonial tyranny (Omu, 1978), corruption, and military dictatorship (Ibelema, 2003). In fact, muckraking diaspora online media outlets such

as *Elendu Reports* and *Sahara Reporters* are actually electronic extensions of a vibrant activist press tradition that took roots in Nigeria in the 1990s.

The author deployed case studies to highlight major cases where Nigerian diaspora newspapers broke sensitive stories that not only made it to the front pages of Nigerian newspapers but that also caused federal and state governments to react officially. The author also analyzed the content of the diaspora online newspapers and compared them with domestic Nigerian newspapers with a Web presence to show how much the latter's content were influenced by the former. This study examined the current literature on media imperialism, showing how contemporary transnational practices complicate this concept.

TRANSNATIONAL DIASPORIC MEDIA "IMPERIALISM"

This paper examines Appadurai's notion of diasporic cultural flows by imbricating the Nigerian diasporic "ethnoscapes" and "mediascape." The study shows how this complex mix is altering the domestic landscapes in very fascinating ways. It is an exploration of how the far-flung, previously ignored media of a deterritorialized people is having such an impact on the domestic politics and media practices of a peripheral nation in the global structure. The author argues that this reality complicates and significantly alters the notions of media imperialism, which is predicated on the assumption of a one-way, or at best disproportionate, flow of news from Western media organizations to the Third World (Curran, 2002). This is by no means the first attempt to interrogate and problematize the theoretical orthodoxy of the scholarship on media imperialism. The notion of a unidirectional flow of informational and cultural goods from the Western "core" to the Third World "periphery" has been contested by many scholars who insist that global flows are inherently multi-directional (Appadurai, 1996; Punathambeker, 2005).

Such scholars theorize globalization as a force that animates—or at least has the potential to animate—ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic resistance to the homogenizing and imperialistic tendencies of the Western media and the neoliberal gospel of their owners. Sreberny-Mohammadi (1996), for instance, points out that popular notions of Western cultural and media imperialism blur the intricate and mutually reinforcing nature of interaction over centuries between diverse and progressively more hybridized cultures. Similarly, Giddens (1999), among others, points to the phenomenon of inverse colonization instantiated by the proliferation of alternative loci of cultural influence in the periphery and, in fact, the increasing exportation of this influence to the core, such as the export of Brazilian television programs to Portugal, its ex-colonial overlord, and the "Hispanicization" of southern California. More generally, it is argued, global media enterprises have been forced to adapt to local cultures, and link up with local partners, in order to sustain their expansion. The identity of diasporic communities, it is argued, can also now be nourished

not only through treasured postcards and the evanescent recollections of grandparents but through daily media feeds that sustain endangered ethnic minority identities (Curran, 2002).

This study takes off from these interventions about the perpetually kaleidoscopic nature of informational and cultural flows in the age of globalization, but departs from them and advances their application of the changing face and phase of global news flow in ways that account for what the author calls emerging, as yet unformed but nonetheless potentially impactful Western diaspora media imperialism. Although the media flow that this study investigates is still geographically from the West, it is initiated by people who have been territorially displaced from the periphery to the core by the “forces” of globalization and who have not only internalized Western journalistic ethos but have tremendous access to information that is not available to their counterparts in the homeland.

The argument, therefore, is that territorial displacement in the emerging global age does not simply alienate; it also invests people with the social and cultural capital to exert influence in the domestic public sphere from which they are uprooted in ways that complicate and dramatize the antinomies between diasporic public spheres and the national politics of nation-states. This reality has profound implications for the ways we theorize globalization and media imperialism. In order to grasp the full import of the media flow from the Nigerian diaspora to the homeland, this study examines the history of Nigerian immigration to the United States and the erstwhile patterns of media usage in the Nigerian diaspora community. This will help explain the changes that this essay explores.

NIGERIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

The first noticeable wave of numerically significant Nigerian migratory flow to the United States began in the 1960s. It is important to mention, though, that Nigeria’s first indigenous post-colonial president, Nnamdi Azikwe, studied at the historically black Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, in the 1920s (see Offoha, 1989). However, the United States did not become an attraction for permanent residence by Nigerians until the late 1980s. In the past, most Nigerians who came to the United States on student visas went back to the homeland upon completion of their studies. There were valid reasons for this. The Nigerian economy was vibrant then and could comfortably accommodate and sustain the middle-class aspirations that the foreign qualifications and exposure to life in the United States inspired. Sakah Mahmud, for instance, points out that in the early years of her independence, Nigeria actually attained “self-sufficiency in agricultural production, enough for both domestic consumption as well as for export (Mahmud, 1996, p. 3). In addition to achieving self-sufficiency in food production, Nigeria also witnessed what has been characterized as “bonanza development,” (Becker, 1982, p. 88) which Richard Joseph defined as “earnings from petroleum exports considerably above the country’s actual expenditure” (Joseph, 1987, p. 236).²

This rosy picture changed in the 1980s with the collapse of the economy in part because of IMF/World Bank-inspired structural adjustment programs (Lewis, 1996; Komolafe, 2003) and the unprecedented institutionalization of venality at the highest levels of government by the totalitarian, unaccountable military regimes that seized power from a democratically elected government in 1983. Thus, from the late 1980s, a steady stream of Nigerians began to migrate to the United States and other parts of the Western world. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service figures, 112 immigrants admitted for legal permanent residence in 1986 identified Nigeria as their country of birth. By 2000, the figure rose to 4,355. The 2001 figures from the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services indicate that there were 134,940 legal permanent residents in the United States who were born in Nigeria (Reynolds, 2004). It is important to note that this figure excluded a large number of Nigerians who fall outside the classificatory category of “permanent legal residents.” For instance, it excluded thousands of undocumented people who were in the country because they overstayed their student, tourist or professional exchange visas, people who came to the United States illegally, and students who were studying in various colleges and universities in the United States and who were unlikely to return to the homeland in the immediate future upon completion of their studies. More importantly, the figure did not capture the thousands of Nigerians who immigrate to the United States on a yearly basis through the Diversity (Green card) Visa Lottery program.³ If these people are taken into account, there are probably up to two million Nigerians living in the United States. If the present trend continues, it seems reasonable to expect that the United States will surpass Britain as the second home of Nigerians. But what kind of Nigerian immigrants live in the United States? The next section looks at the characteristics of Nigerian immigrants in the United States and relates this to the cultural assets that enable them to influence the domestic public sphere through their media.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

The demographic characteristics of Nigerian immigrants in the United States especially conduce to the cultural capital they wield in the homeland. Scholars who have studied Nigerian immigrants point out that they are usually middle-class professionals with at least a college degree and often significantly more educated than most immigrant groups in the United States (Stoller, 2002; Youngstedt, 2004). The most recent statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau show that 43.8 percent of African immigrants (of whom Nigerians have an overwhelming numerical dominion) have obtained a college degree, compared with 42.5 of Asian-Americans, 28.9 percent for immigrants from Europe, Russia and Canada, and 23.1 percent of the U.S. population as a whole. As a *Chicago Tribune* columnist notes, “That defies the usual stereotypes of Asian-Americans as the only ‘model minority.’ Yet the

traditional American narrative has rendered the high academic achievements of black immigrants from Africa... invisible, as if that were a taboo topic" (Page, 2007).

A distinctive feature of Nigerian immigrants in the United States, according to Rachel Reynolds and Scott Youngstedt, is that although their ancestral provenance is spatially located in a postcolonial periphery, they are usually "structurally integrated into communities at the core...working in finance, engineering, sales and management" (Reynolds & Youngstedt, 2004, p. 7). This fact, which is in many respects congruent with the experiences of many highly skilled Third World immigrants who are "dislocated" to the First World, gives rise to a situation where "the familiar lines between 'here' and 'there,' center and periphery, West and non-West have to some extent become blurred" (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002).

Like most deterritorialized communities and displaced populations, the Nigerian diaspora in the United States has a strong nationalist attachment to the homeland (Reynolds, 2004). Even though the country is usually polarized in the homeland along ethnic and religious fault-lines, the reality of their shared experience of displacement in a strange cultural habitus has forced them to cultivate and nurture a romantic diaspora nationalism that is often lubricated by the instrumentality of hometown associations, the print media, and lately the World Wide Web (Bastian, 1999)—what Appadurai would call the "paradox of constructed primordialism" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 28). The next section shows how Nigerian immigrants in the United States have transcended their previous diaspora nationalism that was disaffiliated from the politics of the homeland to one that actively engages with the domestic public sphere through transnational, diaspora-generated online media outlets.

THE TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA OF A DIGITAL DIASPORA

As a consequence of the demographic characteristics of the Nigerian diaspora in the United States outlined above, members of this community have historically been media savvy and among the first to embrace the opportunities that the digital space provides for social interaction and the cultivation and nurturing of an idealistic diaspora nationalism. Misty Bastian's (1999) research on the Nigerian diaspora community in the United States shows that as early as the early 1990s the community had its newspapers, magazines, television and a listserv called Naijanet. These media were used to foster a sense of community and to familiarize members with "news from home" (Bastian, 1999). The first steps "toward developing a Nigerian online network took place in 1991" when a Nigerian at Dartmouth College began forwarding to select friends e-mail news about the home country (Bastian, 1999). From this modest beginning emerged Naijanet, which Anna Everett described as "one of the Internet's most robust and enduring Afrocentric virtual communities" (Everett, 2002, p. 139). Bastian reports that since 1992 "Naijanet has spun off at least six related online networks," and that at its height of influence and popularity in

1995 “Naijanetters” numbered approximately 750. During this period, too, Mary Ebeling informs us, the Nigerian diaspora of the Ogoni ethnic minority extraction from the Niger Delta region of the country “used the Internet as a political mobilizing resource very effectively” to call international attention to the exploitation of their resources and the degradation of their environment by Shell Oil Company and the military regime of General Sani Abacha (Ebeling, 2003, p. 104).

The late 2000s saw the migration of most of the print media outlets of the Nigerian diaspora to the Internet and the emergence of new online newspapers that had no offline antecedents. The dissolution of spatial and temporal boundaries that the Internet enables has conferred a hitherto unthought — of transnational social capital on the diaspora media in ways that fulfill Bastian’s (1999) vision of a convergence of Nigeria’s everyday realities, the concerns and content of the diaspora’s online media, and the domestic politics of the homeland. Writing in 1999, Bastian prognosticated that,

The wiring of Nigeria itself is probably inevitable, especially under the climate of political transparency developing in the new Nigerian republic, and is awaited with great impatience by Nigerian academics and businesspeople alike. At the moment when virtual Nigeria becomes open to real Nigeria, there is the possibility of a new synthesis, a drawing closer of the electronic world of the brain drain Diaspora and the real worlds of both material diasporic experience and Nigerian quotidian life (Bastian, 1999).

The emergence of popular diaspora online newspapers that now engage in perpetual political and cultural dialogues with the homeland would seem to have bestowed an uncannily accurate materiality to Bastian’s vision. There is now a robust synthesis between the digital media of the Nigerian diaspora in the United States and the “quotidian life” of Nigerians in the homeland. With the progressive expansion of Internet facilities in the country, this reality is expanding at a pace that probably exceeds Bastian’s expectations.

DIASPORA NEWSPAPERS ENGAGE THE HOMELAND

The most notable of the online diaspora newspapers are *Elendu Reports*, *Sahara Reporters* and the *Times of Nigeria*. There are, of course, many others such as *Empowered Newswire* (which operates like a wire service agency), *USAfricaonline.com* (which prides itself on being the “first African-owned U.S.-based professional newspaper to be published on the Internet”) but, in the main, their influence in the domestic public sphere has been peripheral at best and nonexistent at worst. By far the most influential Nigerian diasporic electronic newspapers are the first three identified above. Since their emergence in 2005, they have continued to break sensitive news stories that have significantly influenced the journalistic practices and politics of Nigeria, as the following case studies show. These diaspora news outlets have gone beyond being instruments for the construction of

subjectivities in the migratory settings of their owners to being active participants in the domestic politics of the homeland.

Elendu Reports is published from Lansing, Michigan, and is associated with Jonathan Elendu, a former newspaper journalist in Nigeria. Since its inception on May 20, 2005 to the time of writing this essay, the *Elendu Reports* has reported 273 political stories that have had major impacts in the homeland. However, only a few will be analyzed here. The first major story that the news outlet broke, titled “Carlton Masters: Obasanjo’s Multi-Million-Dollar Lobbyist,” was an investigative story on the shady dealings between Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo and the Atlanta-based Goodworks International, LCC founded by Mr. Andrew Young, the former United States Ambassador to the United Nations. Carlton Masters, a co-founder of Goodworks, the online newspaper alleged, helped launch a presidential library campaign for Nigeria’s president where he blackmailed Nigerian public and private enterprises to contribute millions of dollars in violation of Nigeria’s laws. Wole Soyinka, Africa’s first Nobel Prize winner in Literature, described the act as “executive extortion” (Elendu, 2005). The story also alleged that oil contracts running into several millions of dollars were awarded to Goodworks without due process. One of Nigeria’s most widely read newsmagazines, *The News*, picked up the story and reproduced it verbatim. Other daily newspapers followed suit. The story was significant because it ruptured the image of transparency and honesty that the president had managed to build around his public persona over the years. The *Elendu Reports* and many other Nigerian diaspora U.S.-based online news outlets, took advantage of the Freedom of Information Act in the United States to check the records of Goodworks, and unraveled more shocking details of the morally questionable relationship between Nigeria’s president and his lobbyists in America. This was grist in the editorial mills of local Nigerian newspapers for a long time. In fact, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* picked up the story, too from the Nigerian online newspapers (Gentry & Pool, 2007).

Similarly, when Louisiana Congressman William Jefferson became enmeshed in a bribery controversy that also implicated Nigeria’s vice president, Atiku Abubakar, the local newspapers depended on *Elendu Reports* for updates. In the past, they would have had to depend on Western news agency reports. But a distinctly Nigerian journalistic reporting and interpretation of the events by a Nigerian-owned online newspaper using the journalistic resources of its host country altered the nature and character of reportage on the issue in the local Nigerian press. An evaluation of the archives of major Nigerian newspapers at the time of the incident showed that the reporting and interpretive frameworks of *Elendu Reports*, not Western news agencies or newspapers, informed the local reporting on the issue.

Another major story that the online newspaper broke in 2005 was the involvement of the president’s 28-year-old son in the acquisition of multi-million-dollar property in New York. The news became so widespread in the homeland that the government was forced to respond to the allegations in the domestic press, even though most domestic newspapers

initially ignored the story, perhaps out of fear of libel. The government's spokesperson said the son of the president acquired the property with a mortgage from a bank. This turned out to be false. Not familiar with the nature of record keeping in the United States, the government did not realize that the reporters could easily disaffirm their claims by investigating the lending history of the president's son. The reporters' investigation showed that the president's son did not get a mortgage to buy the property (Elendu & Omoyele, 2005). The local media became interested in the story and picked it up.

The newspaper also broke sensational stories about the U.S. investments and bank accounts of serving Nigerian governors and other important government officials. The Nigerian constitution forbids elected officials from keeping foreign bank accounts. Violation of this policy, the Nigerian constitution says, is sufficient ground for the impeachment of elected officials.

In 2006, Sowore Omoyele, a New York-based, Columbia University-educated journalist (or "citizen journalist," as he likes to describe himself) broke away from *Elendu Reports* and set up the *Sahara Reporters*. The journalistic practices of this site are modeled in the tradition of what has come to be known as "guerrilla journalism" in Nigeria—"unconventional," uncompromising, adversarial advocacy journalism that was used by weekly newsmagazines to confront military dictatorships in Nigeria in the 1990s (Olorunyomi, 1996). Amory Starr pointed out that the Web has now become a veritable extension of the alternative press (Starr, 2002). This is particularly true of Nigeria where the traditions of advocacy "guerrilla" journalism exemplified by such influential Nigerian newsmagazines as *The News*, *Tell*, and *Tempo* (Dare, 2007) continue to provide the template for the journalistic practices of many diasporan online news outlets such as the *Sahara Reporters*, which, in fact, has some kind of formal partnership with the *News*.

The *Sahara Reporters* is perhaps the most popular Web-based newspaper with Nigerians both at home and in the diaspora. Online editors of local newspapers monitor it closely to look for scoops and breaking stories that they consider "safe" to republish. Some of the paper's major stories are the publishing of pictures of a governorship candidate in morally compromising circumstances. Although the pictures were not reprinted in Nigerian newspapers because of their lurid nature, they were viewed widely by Nigerians at home. The pictures were printed off the Internet and widely distributed to people who had no access to the Internet. This scandal outraged the moral sensibilities of the Establishment and caused the political party of the governorship candidate to withdraw his nomination.

In 2007, the paper also broke stories alleging that a governorship candidate and the chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the organ of government charged with the responsibility of conducting elections at the state and federal levels, had falsified their educational qualifications. Both the governorship candidate and the chief electoral commissioner indicated in their resumes that they were educated in U.S. and British institutions respectively. But inquiries from the institutions that these politicians claimed

they attended showed that they either fabricated some certificates outright or exaggerated their educational attainments (Sowore & Ellis-Ezenekwe, 2007).

In spite of the paper's uncompromisingly adversarial stance against government officials, it is, at the time of this study, increasingly receiving attention from official circles. For instance, Nigeria's former vice president, Atiku Abubakar, who was at loggerheads with the president over political differences, granted the *Sahara Reporters* a full-length interview where he made stunning allegations against the president. A day after the interview was posted on the paper's Web site, Nigerian newspapers picked it up and splashed it on their front pages.

It is noteworthy that the mainstreaming of this brand of "insurgent journalism," as Curan and Seaton (2003) call alternative journalism, did not occur as smoothly as my analysis might seem to suggest. The "guerrilla" online newspapers were first ignored, even resisted, by some of the mainstream domestic media, especially the daily press; however, when the resistance had the effect of vitiating the credibility of the local newspapers because news-hungry Nigerians either often rushed to Internet cafes to read the stories directly from the diasporic Web sites or printed out the stories in bulk for sharing with people who could not afford the cost of reading a paper online, the newspapers were forced to republish and occasionally add more local color to the diaspora online newspaper stories. So the relationship between the "insurgent" digital diaspora press and the local press is at best ambivalent. It is sometimes mutually beneficial (such as when the local press utilize the investigative resources of the diaspora press to expose certain governmental corruption—and in the process give the diaspora press more "mainstream" national visibility) and at other times adversarial, such as when the domestic media ignore the exposés by the diasporic media of politicians connected to the owners of some Nigerian newspapers. Such a stance usually imposes strains on the credibility of the domestic press.

Another notable diaspora newspaper that exerts tremendous influence on politics in the homeland is the *Times of Nigeria* (TON). Unlike *Elendu Reports* and *Sahara Reporters*, TON is not a muckraking news outlet. It is more "mainstream," and has an edge over the rest in breaking exclusive news stories. Published by a Delaware-based Nigerian journalist by the name of Sunny Offili, the paper describes itself as "an African initiative by journalists with significant experience in Africa and international coverage" and says its goal is to "break news as it happens. We will provide an authoritative, comprehensive, authentic and analytical coverage of the political process as well as other facets of life in Nigeria and the African continent."⁴

The site's strength appears to be the richness and reliability of its news sources. Local newspapers also look up to it for breaking news and for scoops. A measure of the paper's acceptability in the political mainstream in the homeland is that all the major presidential candidates in the 2007 presidential election advertised on the paper's Web site. In fact, when Nigeria's then newly elected president, Umaru Yar'Adua, collapsed during one of his

campaigns prior to the general elections and was rushed to a German hospital for medical attention, it was the *Times of Nigeria* that broke the story before the local media had access to it. In time, rumors spread that the then president-elect had died in the German hospital where he was admitted. Interestingly, when the candidate heard of the rumors in his German hospital, the first newspaper he called to deny the rumors was the *Times of Nigeria*. A day after publishing the interview with the candidate on its home page, the local media picked it up and splashed it on their front pages. The paper also has the distinction of having interviewed the Nigerian vice president, former presidents and military heads of state and several other top political figures.

These three online newspapers are collectively reshaping the politics and media practices of Nigeria in many important ways.

CONCLUSIONS

The Nigerian diasporic Internet-based media are transforming both the form and content of Nigerian journalism in ways that at once enrich and complicate the dynamics of informational flow from the core—in this case, a privileged diasporic “peripheral core”—to the periphery where the ancestral roots of the migratory elite that are now spatially situated at the core are located. As we have seen, the Internet-based diaspora news outfits have become so influential that in many cases, opposition politicians fed up with the domestic media’s double standards and timidity—or even government officials hoping to fly kites or expose government secrets for personal gains—bypass the mainstream domestic Nigerian media and get across to territorially displaced “citizen journalists” in the diaspora. Once a story gets prominence in the diaspora online press, it almost always eventually becomes the editorial staple of the traditional domestic press at some point, even if there is initial reluctance from the domestic media to give such stories prominence.

This emerging phenomenon has been a source of discomfort for the Nigerian government and its response has been twofold: cooptation and threats. The main investigative reporter for *Sahara Reporters*, Sowore Omoyele, for instance, revealed in an interview that the Nigerian government had made several overtures to him to “join them” in government (Nworah, n.d.). When the government could not co-opt him and his colleagues subtle and covert threats followed. The U.S.-based attorneys of the Federal Government, on many occasions, threatened to sue *Elendu Reports* and *Sahara Reporters* for libel on a number of their reports that embarrassed the government. At a point, the Web site of *Sahara Reporters* was blocked by its U.S. Internet service provider in response to complaints from U.S. attorneys for the Nigerian government. This was later resolved when the *Sahara Reporters* convinced their ISP that all their stories were based on verifiable documentary evidence. By early 2007, however, the Nigerian president at the time, Olusegun Obasanjo, secretly sent a bill to the National Assembly (the Nigerian congress)

to give legal endorsement to block certain Internet sites from being viewed in Nigeria (Isine, 2007).

It is anybody's guess where this trend will lead. It seems reasonable to suppose, however, that the alternative media of the Nigerian diaspora will continue to make incursions into the mainstream of the Nigerian political arena in light of the constitutional rule that prevails in the country at the moment—with all the consequences that this entails. And both the alternative and mainstream news media in Nigeria will, in the foreseeable future, sustain their patronage of the diasporan online newspapers. In a significant respect, this trend is a rejection of the binary between notions of the “diasporic public sphere” and the “domestic public sphere.” Here, we are witnessing a progressive hybridization that dissolves the barrier between diasporic media and domestic media and ruptures the distinction between alternative journalism and mainstream journalism. This reality calls for more empirical and theoretical investigations into the nexus between the migration and media practices of migratory elites.

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ENDNOTES

¹Even such recent interventions as Karim (2003) have not risen superior to the limitation of merely studying the media consumption patterns of migratory elites in their bid to reterritorialize in their host countries.

²This period witnessed what in Nigeria has come to be known as the “Udoji era” in reference to the recommendations of a certain Justice Udoji who recommended that the government increase the Nigerian national minimum wage exponentially in light of the windfall from crude oil sales. The implementation of this recommendation dramatically increased the size of the middle class and generally led to hitherto unthought-of improvement in the general standard of living in the country. The head of state of Nigeria at the time, General Yakubu Gowon, was often quoted as saying that Nigeria's problem was not money but how to spend it.

³As part of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, 50,000 diversity visas (green cards) have been available yearly to people from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. The National Visa Center of the State Department holds the lottery every year and chooses winners randomly from all qualified entries. Nigeria and Bangladesh have consistently been in the top 10 countries for lottery winners. For details, see Brettell (2006).

⁴See http://www.thetimesofnigeria.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41&Itemid=67

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“ACCORDING TO CHINESE MEDIA”: NEWS FLOWS, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS AND INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING

YE XIE AND ANNE COOPER-CHEN

Chinese media, via the AP—the world’s largest news agency—have an indirect but major role in informing the outside world about China. Following a 2003 directive regarding commercialization, subsidized Party mouthpieces now occupy a smaller percent of China’s media mix. However, this study of 284 citations found that the AP relied heavily on Party media in covering China—especially the Xinhua News Agency, which swamped all other sources (accounting for more than 60 percent of AP’s cites). Perhaps worrisome is the fact that more than half of all citations provided no additional corroborating sources. In terms of topics, accidents/disasters ranked first, both before and after the commercialization reforms, recalling developing nations’ charges of “earthquake” coverage in the 1970s and 1980s.

Keywords: China, newspaper, media, Xinhua, agenda setting, Associated Press

With China’s ascendance to its new status as “the second most important country on the planet” (Zakaria, 2008, p. 38), the volume of news flowing out of China has burgeoned. Peng (2004) found that the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* increased their coverage of China by more than 50 percent during 1992-2001. The number of foreign correspondents in China rose from 173 in 1997 to 298 in 2006, or 72 percent over those 10 years (official of Foreign Ministry of China, personal communication, May 30, 2006). At this writing, coverage of the country is set to increase further, as the Beijing Olympics draws legions more reporters to China (Landsberg, 2007).

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As the world's largest international news agency (Guinness World Records, 2000), the Associated Press (AP)—"the backbone of the world's information system" (Associated Press, 2008)—has a major influence on news emanating from China. Many of the challenges that AP foreign correspondent Mort Rosenblum (1979) described 30 years ago still persist. Consider that relatively few AP reporters, operating under government restrictions and harassment (Landsberg, 2007), cover a country with more than four times the U.S. population.

To do their work, foreign correspondents rely, among other resources, on in-country media (Chu, 1984). As the AP prepares news for dispersal to the rest of the world, how does the agency make use of the Chinese media? What role do the Chinese media play in setting the AP's agenda?

Because in-country media could have an indirect but major role in informing the outside world about China, this article explores the relation between AP content and Chinese media. It examines AP's borrowing patterns in terms of what Chinese media outlets are quoted, how they are credited, and what types of news the agency borrows. The study also compares content before and after the Chinese government's fresh round of commercialization reforms in 2003 to see if the changes affected the borrowing patterns of AP.

Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) defined a news agency as a wholesaler of plain but reliable news information for its retail clients of different political and cultural backgrounds. Since the post-World War II era, the Big Four — Agence France-Presse (AFP), AP (the oldest), Reuters and United Press International (UPI) — have dominated the international news flow system (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). The role of UPI has diminished in recent years after the company was hit by management and financial troubles. Among the Big Three, AFP is the smallest by any standard.

The AP today has 4,100 employees in 243 bureaus. About 1,700 dailies, weeklies and college newspapers, as well as 5,000 U.S. radio and TV outlets, use AP reports. Its influence goes beyond the U.S. market, as 8,500 international subscribers in 121 countries receive AP news and photos. About 3,000 of AP's staff are journalists (Associated Press, 2008).

The AP has two main China bureaus, in Beijing and in Shanghai. An exchange arrangement between the AP and Xinhua, China's official news agency, resembles those that have characterized the history of the global news agency system (Boyd-Barrett, 1980).

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese authorities have regarded the press as an ideological apparatus for political and social control at home (Chan, 1993). Unauthorized reports on sensitive political affairs can result in punishment or imprisonment (Winfield & Peng, 2005; "China tries...", 2006). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (2005), in 2005 China was the world's leading jailer of journalists for the seventh consecutive year, with 32 behind bars as of 2005. According to Freedom House (2005), China ranked 177 out of the total 194 countries in the world in terms of press freedom. It scored 82, on a scale where 100 was the worst score.

On the other hand, the Chinese media's push for profits has spurred a "transition from a market socialism model ... to a state-controlled corporation model (Huang, 2007, p. 414). In certain "politically safe and socially useful news genres," the Chinese media have more latitude than ever to decide what to report and how to report it (Lee, 2000, p. 560): the economy, entertainment, social items, and lifestyle and human-interest stories.

Scholars (Chan, 1993; Lee, 2000; Zhao, 2000) cite 1992 as the year massive commercialization of the Chinese media started. In that year, Deng Xiaoping, the then paramount leader of China, urged the country to expedite reform of its economy. In the same year, the State Press and Publications Administration (SPPA) announced a landmark policy that required all major newspapers, apart from a few central Party media outlets, such as the *People's Daily*, to achieve financial independence by 1994 (Zhao, 2000).

Another landmark event in press reforms occurred in 2003 when the SPPA allowed each province only one Party newspaper and one Party journal. The other government-funded publications had to compete in the marketplace or shut down. Moreover, the SPPA forbade compulsory subscriptions to any newspaper or journal (ZhongBanFa No. 19, 2003).

By March 2004, seven months after the SPPA announced the new regulation, 677 government and Party newspapers had been shut down, with compulsory subscription fees of 1.8 billion Yuan (US\$217 million) lost. The reform involved 1,452 Party and government newspapers, or 70 percent of the total newspapers in China. In addition, 325 state-owned newspapers were transferred to commercial newspaper groups, while 310 were separated from government departments, and 94 official journals became fee-free ("677 State newspapers..." 2004).

Market reform, however, does not mean the demise of government control. Winfield and Peng (2005) point to censorship, licensing, regulations, and allocating of resources as control mechanisms. No newspaper can be set up as an independent business (Zhao, 2000). All newspapers are assigned an official rank and must be registered under a recognized institutional publisher or sponsor.

Similarly, some market aspects of Party media further blur the Party-market dichotomy, such as the ad-supported financial newspapers that Xinhua operates in Shanghai and Beijing; the agency depends on the government for about 66 percent of revenues (Xin, 2006). The AP must deal with this government-market mix when it engages in inter-media borrowing.

RELATED STUDIES

Determinants of International News Flows

Understanding "the *raison d'être*" (Wu, 2003, p. 11) of how news flows across national borders has intrigued researchers for the past half century. The earliest studies (Galtung &

Ruge, 1965; Hester, 1973; Schramm, 1959) found discrepancies and imbalances, but their authors only suggested possible reasons for news flow patterns. Thus "almost no solid theories [have been] yielded" (Wu, 2000, p. 115). Theory-building potential increased with the 48-nation project, co-directed by Robert Louis Stevenson of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (to whom this issue is dedicated), which produced a 1995-based data set. Using the data set, Wu (2000, p. 126) found that within the "mixture of forces that shape international news coverage," trade volumes and the presence of an international news agency are the two best predictors. Clearly "copy or footage provided by news services is much more economical than sending correspondents to ... foreign soil" (Wu, 2000, p. 128).

Earlier, Larson (1984) had found a statistically significant relation between TV news coverage of a country and presence of an international news agency. Thus the key role of an agency underscores the importance of the current study. Golan (2006, p. 331) calls for "complimenting research on determinants of international news coverage and flow" with "inter-media agenda setting in future studies that examine the highly complex international news selection process."

Inter-media Agenda Setting and News Borrowing

Agenda setting, which refers to the influence of the media on the public's issue salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), is of crucial importance in the arena of international coverage (Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004), given that the public generally lacks first-hand knowledge of other nations. While the seminal McCombs and Shaw study focused on the relationship between the media and public agendas, subsequent research went beyond that, trying to find out "How is the media agenda set?" (Rogers, Dearing & Bregman, 1993). According to Boyle (2001, p. 26), this is "one of the major research questions in current agenda-setting research."

A major agenda-building influence is other news organizations, a process called inter-media agenda setting. In a recent overview of more than 400 published agenda setting studies, McCombs (2004) cited inter-media agenda setting as a key component in the creation of the media agenda.

The influence of one medium on another's agenda can take many forms. For example, the "play of stories in elite newspapers" can influence newspaper and TV coverage at the local level (Protess & McCombs, 1991, p. 208). At the national level, Reese and Danielian (1989) similarly found that, in a case study of cocaine coverage, an elite newspaper (*The New York Times*) set the agenda for TV network newscasts. Likewise at the national level, Boyle (2001) found that even advertising affected the content of both newspaper and TV stories in a study on issues in the 1996 presidential campaign.

At the international level, Golan (2006, p. 331) concluded, based on a constructed-year study, that "evening television news gatekeepers include coverage in a morning paper [*The*

New York Times] as a factor that influences the newsworthiness of international events.” Like those evening news gatekeepers, many journalists “take short cuts by relying on the most accessible information sources” (Breen, 1997, p. 349)—an idea codified into the second, or Media Routines, level of the Shoemaker and Reese (1996) Hierarchy of Influences model. Especially in the case of international news, short cuts can save enormous amounts of time and money.

A related routine, whereby a news organization republishes information taken from *foreign* news organizations, is called “news borrowing” (Riffe, 1984). Sigal (1973) called this process an “informal channel” for gathering information. Fenby (1986) argued that even if news organizations in developing countries fail to meet Western standards, they remain valuable sources. Another reason to use Chinese media involves limited reliable sources, since even if Western journalists can find local sources, the options are often limited to intellectuals willing to talk and often able to communicate in English (Peng, 2004). Riffe (1984) also identified restricted access to sources, especially in developing countries, as a reason for news borrowing, as well as the decline of foreign correspondents (leaving more work for those remaining).

Effects of Commercialization of Chinese Media

When borrowing news today from the Chinese media, foreign correspondents find they are dealing with tremendously transformed, ad-based Chinese media—except for those key elite state media, such as the *People’s Daily*, *China Daily* or Central China Television and Xinhua News Agency, which are still wholly or partially subsidized by the government.

Scholars (Zhao, 2000; Winfield & Peng, 2005) found that the financial independence of the Chinese media affected content, functions, and media-government relations. To attract readers and advertisers, popular media emphasize business reporting, mass-appeal topics and consumer/ lifestyle issues. When “the media must cater to two masters with two bottom lines” (Winfield & Peng, 2005, p.261), conflicts often arise between these two masters.

Another important result of the reform is the changed press landscape. Market media, which Huang (2000) called “semi-independent media,” refer to those supervised by major government departments or their sub-units, or semi-official organizations, trade unions and research centers. They are “filled with sensational content of scandals, crimes and other items of an entertaining nature” (Chu, 1994, p.9). Party media often take revenues from these mass-appeal papers, most of which are subsidiaries of the Party media.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Chinese market and Party media could indirectly, through second-party usage, influence the overseas public’s agenda. Although previous researchers have extensively studied how

the U.S. media report China (Dai, 1997; Lin, 1998; Peng, 2004; Warlaumont, 2006)), no study has focused on how international news agencies select and process the news from the Chinese media. The influential AP must monitor the Chinese media as one routine channel of newsgathering (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), but we do not know how or if Chinese media set the AP's agenda. AP's news borrowing patterns may vary across different newspapers, since traditional Party newspapers and market-oriented newspapers have different news emphases. Thus the question arises:

RQ1. Which Chinese media outlets are used as news sources by AP?

Likewise, the AP may demonstrate different patterns depending on the type of news it borrows. Thus:

RQ2. What kind of stories appearing in the Chinese media outlets will be picked up by the AP?

Riffe (1984) found that American newspapers, when borrowing news from media in developing countries, tended to attach such labels as "official" to local media to warn readers to examine the source of the story carefully. Will AP regard the news message as the government "line" funneled through the state media, or will AP treat the message as an ordinary news item? Thus:

RQ3. How does the AP convey, through labels, the information in the Chinese media?

Researchers (Zhao, 2000; Winfield & Peng, 2005) have found that the 2003 commercialization of the Chinese media had a direct influence on its structure, overall media composition, and content. The market newspapers are more aggressive in social issues, life style, mass-appeal, and business reporting, supplementing the ideology propaganda of traditional Party newspapers. It is possible that AP's citations of the Chinese media will reflect a before-and-after change. Thus:

RQ4. Will the AP cite more market newspapers and fewer Party media outlets after the SPPA launched a fresh round of commercialization reform in 2003?

RQ5: Will the news content of cited stories be more focused on business, human interest and lifestyle items than on political items after the reform?

METHOD

This study is a content analysis of AP's wire reports that cited Chinese media. To answer RQ 4 and 5, two research periods were selected to compare the news borrowing patterns of AP before and after the SPPA's "Zhongban 19" regulation in July 2003. The first period is August 1, 2000-July 31, 2003, or the pre-regulation era. The second period is August 1, 2003-July 31, 2006, the post-regulation era.

The first author created three constructed weeks (three Sundays, three Mondays, etc.) of 21 days per year, based on the sampling system of Stempel (1952). To decide the starting date of the first research period, the author opened up a book, randomly turned to a page, and added up all the digits of the page number. That gave the author the number 7, and therefore, August 7, 2000 (Monday) was the starting point for the first research period. Then, every 17th day afterwards was selected until the end of the first research period. In this way, exactly three constructed weeks were built for the first period. Likewise, another three weeks were constructed for the second research period with August 16, 2003 (Saturday) as the starting point.

Normally, two constructed weeks a year are needed in a content analysis of a newspaper for a year (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993). The constructed week method, however, is still germane to this study because most of AP's interview and reporting practice follows the normal working cycle of the government departments and companies, which is also on a weekly basis. To be more conservative, however, the researchers chose to build three constructed weeks to get a larger sample to represent the whole population.

The analysis unit is AP stories containing quoted information from the Chinese media. Using the News Wire Service option on Lexis-Nexis, the first author searched each designated day for key words in the following sequence: 1) "China" and "newspaper"; 2) "China" and "media"; and 3) "China" and "Xinhua." In a pretest, the first author found that AP would normally cite the name of the Chinese newspaper in the first reference and, in the second reference, say "the newspaper reported" or "state media reported," so there was no need to search newspapers by name. "Xinhua" had to be used as a search term in order to capture those stories that cited Xinhua. Duplicate stories and early versions of the same story were omitted, as were briefs and highlights.

To answer RQ1, "Which Chinese media outlets are quoted by AP?" coders needed to identify the names of newspapers or news organizations mentioned in the story. To answer RQ2, "What are the topics of stories quoted by AP?" the researcher developed the following categories based on the categorization of Stempel (1985):

- 1) Politics and government acts
- 2) War and defense
- 3) Diplomacy and foreign relations

- 4) Economic Activity
- 5) Crime
- 6) Public moral problems
- 7) Accidents and disasters
- 8) Science and invention
- 9) Public health and welfare
- 10) Education and classic arts
- 11) Popular amusements
- 12) General human interests

To answer RQ3, "How does AP interpret the borrowed news?" coders first noted whether AP copy referred to the Chinese media as "official," "state media," "Communist Party paper," "Government-controlled," or other similar terms. They had to decide whether AP identified the sample story as secondhand information in its title. Major indicators included such terms as "report says," "Report:...", "newspapers say" and other similar terms. Another variable is how AP treated the quoted information in the lead, normally in the first paragraph. Five options were available under this variable:

- (1) Fact without attribution: The story is totally based on reports from the Chinese media. It regards what was reported in Chinese media as a fact and does not attribute the information to the Chinese media. For example, AP reported on June 17, 2004: "China on Thursday executed a university student convicted of murdering four classmates in a bizarre crime that sparked a nationwide manhunt."
- (2) As what the government said: The story is based on reports from the Chinese media, but it would say "China said," or "Government said," in the lead. For example, AP reported on June 9, 2005: "Ammonia leaked from cracked pipes in a southern China brewery Thursday, sickening 100 people and forcing the evacuation of another 2,000 from nearby homes, the government said."
- (3) Attribution to the Chinese media: In the lead, the news stories would say "state media reported," "government official and a newspaper said" or "official Xinhua reported." For example, AP reported on September 2, 2003: "Heavy flooding in northern China has killed 38 people with another 34 people missing, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday."
- (4) Other Sources: The news story cited other sources in the lead.
- (5) Not Applicable: The news story is not based on reports of Chinese media.

In addition, the coders also identified whether other sources were provided to corroborate the original story. Moreover, coders coded whether AP identified information

TABLE 1
THE CITATION OF CHINESE MEDIA BY AP*

Genre of news organizations	Name of media outlets	Number of citations	Percent
Party media outlets	Xinhua	177	62.3
	China Daily	34	12.0
	People's Daily	5	1.8
	CCTV	5	1.8
	Others	8	2.8
	Subtotal	229	80.7
Market newspapers		25	8.8
Websites		10	3.5
General citation		20	7.0
Total		284	100

*AP cited Chinese media in 244 news reports during the period. In 35 reports, AP cited more than one Chinese media outlet.

omitted by the Chinese media. Such information includes: “the report said ...without elaboration,” “...Xinhua report did not provide more details...” “People’s Daily did not say if Mr. Wang is alive or not.”

Two trained journalism graduate students and the first author conducted the coding. Cohen’s Kappa was calculated to determine the inter-coder reliability (Cohen, 1960). The overall code reliability was .95. The reliability of “how AP treated the quoted information in the lead” was .92. The reliability of “whether other sources were provided” was .86, the lowest among all the variables. The reliability of “whether AP identified omitted information” was .93, while the reliability of “news focus” was .90.

Results

RQ1. Chinese Media Outlets Used as Sources by AP.

During the research period of August 1, 2000-July 31, 2006, AP cited Chinese media outlets 284 times in 244 news reports; by far, Party media made up the majority (80.7%) of the citations—with Xinhua News Agency swamping all the others (see Table 1). In comparison, market newspapers were quoted 25 times (8.8% of the total). In addition, AP cited the Chinese media 20 times (7.0%) by simply referring to them as “Chinese newspapers” or “state media.” Moreover, in 35 news reports, AP cited more than one

TABLE 2
TOPIC FOCUS OF NEWS REPORTS CITED FROM CHINESE MEDIA BY AP

Focus	Frequency	Percent
Accidents/disasters	55	22.5
Economic activity	40	16.4
Crime	34	13.9
Politics/government	31	12.7
Public health/welfare	24	9.8
Diplomacy/foreign relations	23	9.4
Popular amusement	13	5.3
General human interests	13	5.3
Science/invention	7	2.9
War/defense	2	.8
Education/classic arts	2	.8
Public moral problems	0	0
Total	244	100

Chinese news organization in the same story. *People's Daily* and CCTV, the traditional mouthpieces of the government, were the least cited—a fraction of the reliance on Xinhua. The reliance on Party media has constantly increased over the years, from 17 cites in 2001 to 43 in 2005, while the citation of the market papers has remained limited and stable—even though the weight of Party media has declined in the overall media mix (Wang, 2005).

RQ2: Topics of Stories.

Accidents and disasters were the major news focus of the stories that AP cited from the Chinese media, accounting for 22.5 percent of the total. Economy and business came in second (16.4%), followed by news of crime and courts, politics, public health/welfare and diplomacy/foreign relations (see Table 2).

When citing from the Chinese media, AP showed different topic preferences between Party media and market newspapers. AP was more likely to select reports about diplomacy, public welfare, accidents/disasters and politics from Party media outlets, which in turn were less dominant in popular amusement stories (see Table 3). For market newspapers cited by AP, popular amusements, general human interest and crime were the most frequent topics. Among 40 economic news reports, AP's sources of citation were more diversified.

TABLE 3
NEWS TOPICS OF THE AP'S CITED STORIES ACROSS DIFFERENT CHINESE MEDIA

Topics*	Party media outlets		Market newspapers		Both Party media outlets & market newspapers		Others**		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Accidents/ disasters	48	87.3	1	1.8	6	10.9	0	0	55
Economy	29	72.5	3	7.5	3	7.5	5	12.5	40
Crime	24	70.6	5	14.7	3	8.8	2	5.9	34
Politics/ government	27	87.1	1	3.2	1	3.2	2	6.5	31
Public health/welfare	21	87.5	0	0	1	4.2	2	8.3	24
Diplomacy	22	95.7	1	4.3	0	0	0	0	23
Popular amusement	8	61.5	4	30.8	1	7.7	0	0	13
Human interest	10	76.9	2	15.4	0	0	1	7.7	13
Total	189	81.1	17	7.3	15	6.4	12	5.2	233

* "War and Defense," "Public Moral Problems," "Science and Technology" and "Education and Classic Arts" (4.5% of total) were excluded from the analysis in all tables.

** Websites and non-specific mentions ***X² w/21df=35.9, p<.05

RQ3. Methods of Conveying Information

(1) *Labeling and headlines.* Excluding Websites and those general citations without specifying media names, AP attached such terms as "official," "state media," "government controlled," and "Communist Party newspaper" in more than 94 percent of the cited stories to describe the Chinese media. AP labeled the elite Party media almost every time (97%) it cited them, while it labeled only 58.8 percent of market newspapers it cited (see Table 4). About 10 percent of the cited reports indicated in the headlines that the news stories were based on information in the Chinese media.

(2) *Attribution.* In more than half (54.5%) of the borrowed news examples, AP immediately attributed the information to the original news agencies or newspapers. It would sometimes identify the news organizations as "state media" first and then name the newspaper or news organizations in the following paragraphs. In 9.8 percent of the borrowed news, AP treated the information as an existing fact in the lead without any attribution. For instance, the sentence "A flood in Central China killed 15 people yesterday" implies direct observation by AP, even though the source was Chinese media. More than 21 percent of the stories attributed the information as what the government said (see Table 5). For instance, the sentence "A flood in Central China killed 15 people yesterday, the

TABLE 4
LABELING AND HEADLINE INDICATOR OF STORIES
CITED FROM THE CHINESE MEDIA BY AP

	Numbers of citations	Headlines indicated "borrowed news"*		Label**	
		n	%	n	%
Party media outlets	200	17	8.5	194	97.0
Market newspapers	17	4	23.5	10	58.8
Total	217	21	9.7	204	94.0

Stories cited in both Party media outlets and market categories were excluded. Websites and those general citations without specifying names were also excluded in this analysis.

* X^2 w/1df=4.1, $p<.05$ ** X^2 w/1df=40.5, $p<.01$

government said" had the information from the Chinese media rather than from any government agencies or officials.

(3) *Sources to corroborate.* Among the 244 stories, more than 55 percent did *not* provide any other sources to corroborate the information reported by the Chinese media. In nearly 35 percent of the stories, AP sought additional sources to confirm the reports or provide additional information. In 6.1 percent of the stories, AP tried to seek additional sources to corroborate the information, but the sources either declined to be interviewed or were not available. In 3.7 percent of the stories, other sources pursued by AP denied the original reports from the Chinese media (see Table 6, bottom row).

(4) *Omission.* AP identified information omitted or not provided by Chinese media in 20.9 percent of the cited stories. It did not show different preferences across different news topics in terms of omission, nor did it show a difference between Party media outlets and market newspapers.

TABLE 5
SOURCE ATTRIBUTIONS OF NEWS STORIES
CITED FROM THE CHINESE MEDIA BY AP IN THE LEAD

Types of attribution in the lead	Frequency	Percent
Attributed to the Chinese media	133	54.5
As what the government said	53	21.7
As a fact without attribution	24	9.8
Others or N/A	34	13.9
Total	244	100

TABLE 6
AP’S EFFORTS TO SEEK OTHER SOURCES TO CORROBORATE CITED STORIES FROM
THE CHINESE MEDIA ACROSS DIFFERENT GENRES OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

Genre	Other sources for additional information		Other sources for denial		Other sources refused to comment		No sources sought or N/A		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Party media	62	31.0	8	4.0	10	5.0	120	60.0	200
Market newspapers	10	58.8	0	0	5	29.4	2	11.8	17
Party media and market newspapers	7	46.7	0	0	0	0	8	53.3	15
Others	6	50.0	1	8.3	0	0	5	41.7	12
Total	85	34.8	9	3.7	15	6.1	135	55.3	244

RQ4. Market vs. Party Media the 2003 Commercialization Reform

Overall, AP markedly increased citations from Chinese media over the years (see Table 7). However, commercialization had hardly any impact on the content and structure of those citations. The proportion from Party media increased rather than decreased after the regulation—from 80.2 percent prior to 82.9 percent afterwards—while the proportion from

TABLE 7. NUMBER OF CITATIONS OF CHINESE MEDIA BY AP ACROSS DIFFERENT GENRES OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE NEW GOVERNMENT COMMERCIALIZATION REFORM (ZHONGBANFA NO. 19, 2003) ON JULY 30, 2003

Genre	Before the new commercialization reform (August 1, 2000-July 30, 2003)		After the new commercialization reform (August 1, 2003 – July 31, 2006)		Total
	n	%	n	%	
Party media outlets	69	80.2	131	82.9	200
Market newspapers	7	8.1	10	6.3	17
Both Party media outlets/ market newspapers	5	5.8	10	6.3	15
Others	5	5.8	7	4.4	12
Total	86	100	158	100	244

X^2 w/3df=.55, $p=.91$

TABLE 8
THE NUMBER OF CITATIONS OF CHINESE MEDIA BY AP ACROSS DIFFERENT NEWS TOPICS BEFORE AND AFTER THE GOVERNMENT COMMERCIALIZATION REFORMS (ZHONGBANFA No. 19) ON JULY 30, 2003

Topics	Before the new commercialization reform (August 1, 2000-July 30, 2003)		After the new commercialization reform (August 1, 2003-July 31, 2006)	
	n	%	n	%
Accidents/ disasters	19	23.2	36	24.7
Economy	9	11.0	31	20.5
Politics/government	10	12.2	21	14.4
Public health/welfare	6	7.3	18	12.3
Crime	18	22.0	16	11.0
Diplomacy	9	11.0	14	9.6
Popular amusement	5	6.1	8	5.5
Human interest	6	7.3	7	4.8
Total	82	100	146	100

$X^2 w/7df=9.6, p=.21$

market newspapers declined (see Table 7). The difference was not significant at the .05 level, even when the categories of "Both" and "Others" were excluded from the analysis.

RQ5: TOPIC FOCUS AFTER THE 2003 COMMERCIALIZATION REFORM

The shares of political news, economy, accident and public health climbed slightly, while diplomacy, crime, amusement and human-interest news declined marginally (see Table 8). Again, such changes were not significant at the .05 level. Expanding on Table 2, where accidents/disasters ranked as by far the dominant topic overall, Table 8 shows accidents/disasters as the top topic both before *and* after the reforms.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Accidents/Disasters

AP persistently emphasized this negative topic, both before and after the reforms. This result corroborates Warlaumont's (2006) finding that more than half of China coverage in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* (August 2002-August 2004)

was negative or critical. Combining the present study’s “accidents/ disasters” category with “crime” gives a negative total of 45.2 percent of topics in period 1 and 35.7 percent in period 2. Similarly, Dai (1997) and Lin (1998) both concluded that the U.S. media demonize China.

This topic emphasis recalls the New World Information and Communication Order debates in UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s, wherein many countries then called the Third World complained of negative, oversimplified coverage by Western media (Masmoudi, 1979). Indeed, Rosenblum (1979) even titled his book on the work of a foreign correspondent *Coups and Earthquakes*.

Dominance of Party Media Outlets

Perhaps the title of this article should read “According to Xinhua,” as that agency dwarfs all other entities in the process of inter-media agenda setting. To paraphrase Golan (2006, p. 331), who studied *The New York Times*, “Media scholars and critics ought to be concerned about the notion that a single [source] might be so successful in determining or shaping the news agendas of other news organizations.” However, at least four reasons can explain why Xinhua dominates the news borrowed by AP, while market newspapers were underrepresented. These advantages underscore why the AP has news exchange agreement with Xinhua, giving AP easy access to Xinhua’s reports.

First, as the national news agency, Xinhua has extensive news networks all over the China with 31 bureaus in the country (more than *People’s Daily*). AP would incur tremendous expense by fielding so many staffers outside of AP’s Beijing and Shanghai bases. Xinhua covers accidents and disasters that break in remote areas and that the AP extensively cites.

Second, Xinhua officially disseminates government information. Given China’s hierarchical media structure (Chen & Yan, 2002), many activities of high-ranking officials and high-profile meetings are only open to elite Party media (Xinhua, CCTV and *People’s Daily*) that will report events positively. Foreign media, non-Party media and lower-level Party media have no such access.

Third, Xinhua, in particular, enjoys a privileged status in China — above that of *People’s Daily*. The agency is a ministerial-level government institution, whose boss is appointed by the government and enjoys minister-level official ranks. In Hong Kong, including before the 1997 handover, the Xinhua bureau served as a de facto consulate. As a conduit to convey messages of the government and the Party, it enjoys exclusive rights to cover official announcement, leader’s activities and political sensitive events (Nan, 1998). Moreover, it also plays a role as an agenda setter for lower level state media outlets by providing them news reports so that the government could ensure the unity in political opinion and ideology of the mass. In important, sensitive situations and topics, such as the

Taiwan and Tibet issues, other media, including *People's Daily* and CCTV, are required to use Xinhua reports, which are approved by the high-ranking leaders (Xin, 2006).

Fourth is the timeliness factor. Even though sometimes other elite Party media outlets may also have authorized access to the high-ranking officials, the advantage of real-time reporting of wire service permits Xinhua often to be first with the news.

China Daily is the second most frequently cited Party media outlet by AP. In addition to its status as a Party media outlet, the advantage of *China Daily* is that it is an English newspaper, which makes it easy for foreign correspondents to find and pick up news stories. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), reporters developed routines, or patterned and repeated practices, to do their jobs.

Compared with Xinhua, *China Daily* is more liberal, partly because the language barrier makes the government officials less likely to censor it. Thus the newspaper has more latitude to be practice somewhat aggressive news reporting, further increasing the likelihood of AP's picking up stories. The first author, who worked at *China Daily* for a few years, learned the value of having many foreign media cite a story. Since writers of such stories often receive a monetary bonus and praise from their supervisors, reporters for *China Daily* tend to chase down and write news reports so as to appeal to foreign media. This often means that reporters are motivated to pursue sensational news with potential major impact. Given that political news could be dangerous for both reporters and the paper, *China Daily* emphasizes hard-hitting economic reporting; as Table 8 shows, "economy" jumped from 11 percent to 20.5 percent of citations, verifying its status as a current hot area for foreign media.

Attribution and Corroboration

The study showed that AP interpreted messages from Party and market media the same way. That is to say, statements in the market media were at times interpreted as governmental opinion or stance; however, such interpretations are dicey. McCormick and Liu (2003) pointed out that commercial incentives might push market newspapers into politically sensitive zones and to supplying information contradictory to the authoritative version of the Party press. Even for Xinhua, not all the news reports it dispatches serve as propaganda for the government. As Xin (2006) pointed out, in addition to its responsibility as a government propaganda tool, Xinhua is also moving to provide more market-oriented news services to its client newspapers. Failure to discriminate between market newspapers and Party media leads to misunderstanding of the agenda of the Chinese media.

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

To improve its coverage of China, ideally AP should have more foreign correspondents stationed in China so that it can reduce its reliance on second-hand news from the Chinese

media. Meanwhile, it could employ more bilingual reporters so that it can pay more attention to the market newspapers. A key question arises as to whether AP over relies on the Chinese media to provide news from China. To answer this question, future researches should study what percentage of AP's coverage of China comes from the Chinese media. (Anecdotally, the authors have observed that most AP stories do have at least one citation from a Chinese medium.)

A complete study of inter-media agenda setting should also study the whole agenda of both the Chinese media and AP's China coverage. What sources are quoted in Chinese media and also appear in AP's overall China coverage? Do the rankings of the agenda of the Chinese media, the cited agenda, and the agenda of AP's China coverage match each other? Do they share the same mix of topics (Stempel, 1985)?

Interviews with AP editors and reporters should also be conducted to determine the factors influencing how messages from the Chinese media are transmitted to the Western media. Moreover, it would be fruitful to compare how AP cited reports in even earlier periods — before the Chinese media reforms and before accidents/ disasters were openly reported. In addition, a study on how U.S. newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, cite Chinese media could be enlightening — especially by comparing such results with those of this AP study. Also, a check to see how often AP's non-corroborated borrowed news was in error would be useful. Finally, future studies could employ more powerful statistical tests.

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