

THE AMOUNT, CONTENT AND SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL
NEWS IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE
NEW STRAITS TIMES, JUNE 1, 1985,
TO MAY 31, 1986

By
PARWEEN ATTA MOHD
Bachelor of Social Science
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
1977

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Thesis Approved:

Mark Nelson
Thesis Adviser

Walter J. Ward

Hugh E. Heath, Jr.

Norman N. Winkham
Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to examine the nature of international news coverage in the New York Times, a leading daily in the United States, and the New Straits Times, the leading daily in Malaysia. International news coverage of these newspapers was examined by amount, content and sources from June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986. The research goal was to investigate current trends in international news reporting, especially in the context of the press' role as an image-maker.

Toward this end, the following research questions were asked:

Amount of International News

1. What proportion of journalistic attention was given to international news?
2. What proportion of journalistic attention was given to the First, Second and Third Worlds?

Content of International News

3. What was the nature of international news reported?
4. What type of coverage did the First, Second and Third Worlds receive?

Sources of International News

5. Which news sources were relied on mostly for the reporting of international news?

Media practitioners and scholars have for the last 40 years been

concerned about the nature of international news in various world media systems. This is clearly evident from the extensive literature available. However, the research questions outlined above have not been touched upon with respect to the New York Times and the New Straits Times. Although the New York Times' international news content has been the subject of many content analyses, the New Straits Times, Malaysia's leading English daily, has only been compared with other vernacular newspapers in Malaysia. It is hoped that the answers to the research questions will shed some light on current trends in international news reporting.

Information received through the media has many sociological implications. The type of journalistic attention given to other countries and the manner of presenting information makes an impact on attitudes toward oneself, foreigners and, inevitably, international understanding. Information plays a vital role in international relations in that it is an instrument for knowledge and understanding between nations. That the news media are an important arbiter of reality for citizens and decision-makers is an accepted fact.

Galtung and Ruge, noted international news communication scholars, have called attention to the role of the media as image-makers and its implications for international understanding.

. . . the world consists of individual and national actors, and since it is axiomatic that action is based on the actor's image of reality, international action will be based on the image of international reality. This image is not shaped by the news media . . . alone; personal relations abroad, diplomatic dispatches etc., count too--whether less, equally, much or more, we do not know. But the regularity, ubiquity and perseverance of news media will in any case make them first-rate competitors for the number one position as international image-former. . .¹

This view was dramatically underlined as early as 1959, when Azar

et al. examined the New York Times Index and the Middle East Journal on their coverage of Egypt-Israeli relations between 1955 and 1958. The New York Times Index reported negative and dramatic events more frequently than the Middle East Journal, which reported more cooperative events. The findings clearly demonstrate how different newspapers can yield conflicting and contrasting images of the same events.²

The amount and type of international news published also can change in the course of diplomacy. Lynch and Effendi have shown that the New York Times' coverage of India and China increased in amount and became more favorable as U.S. relations with these countries improved in the early 1970s.³

On the other hand, images of nations can be transformed for the worse with the change of labels to old and new phenomena. For example, freedom fighters turn into religious extremists and terrorists into insurgents.⁴

In the mid-1970s much global concern arose about the nature of international news flow and reporting. The Western press was denounced by Third World spokesmen, the focus of criticism being the overwhelming dominance and news imperialism by the Big Four--Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters and Agence France-Press--who supply two-thirds of international news in the Third World. Talks of a New World Economic order were matched by demands for a New World Information Order.⁵

The main criticism against them is that the copy offered is too frequently colored by a Western perspective. Critics cite bias and distortion in the portrayal of the Third World. As such, Western news readers are exposed more to negative or "hard" news, focusing on

conflict and chaos, to the exclusion of development or "soft" news. This problem is exacerbated further when, lacking systems of information exchange, the developing countries depend on the Big Four for information about each other, and thus form negative images of each other. In short, the Third World is portrayed as a "handicapped actor" in the international arena.⁶

Distorted images create barriers to effective communication and understanding between peoples and nations. Individuals responsible for supplying news should be committed to the principle that it is their responsibility to inform and educate the public as accurately as possible about foreign events. A socially irresponsible press, in creating dysfunctional cultural blinders, prevents its reading public from intelligently evaluating the propriety of its government's actions and foreign policies. The dangers of a mis-informed public cannot be over-emphasized. Vietnam and Iran provide illuminating examples of the dangers of ignorance.

Furthermore, the flow of international news into developing countries, such as Malaysia, has not received much attention. Which parts of the world does the Malaysian press pay greater attention to? What is its news treatment of events in the international arena? How does the New Straits Times differ from the New York Times in the selection of international news?

Such understanding is vitally necessary as we move toward the 21st century, toward an international age of accelerating interdependence and increasing complexity. International reality today is truly a case of what you don't know will hurt you. These concerns have prompted the research project described here.

ENDNOTES

¹Johan Caltung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," Journal of Peace Research, 1965, pp. 64-90.

²Gerald W. Hoppie, "International News Coverage in Two Elite Newspapers," Journal of Communication, Vol. 32 (Winter 1982), p. 62.

³Mervin D. Lynch and Atiya Effendi, "Editorial Treatment of India in the New York Times," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 41 (Autumn 1964), pp. 430-432.

⁴Anthony Smith, The Geopolitics of Information (New York, 1980), p. 99.

⁵Robert L. Stevenson and Richard R. Cole, "Issues in Foreign News," Foreign News and the New World Information Order, eds. Robert L. Stevenson and Donald L. Shaw (Chapel Hill, 1984), p. 5.

⁶D. Riffe and E. Shaw, "Conflict and Consonance: Coverage of Third World in Two U.S. Papers," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 49, (Winter 1982), pp. 617-619.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the past 40 years, much attention has been given to international news flow, resulting in studies that examine the amount and content of international news coverage in print media systems throughout the world.

For a more systematic analysis, this literature review will focus on 1) trends in international news usage, 2) an analysis of these trends, and 3) trends in international news content (for example, topic emphases in general, topic emphases with respect to different parts of the world, perspectives in reporting, sources, etc.).

Trends in International News Usage

A number of studies show that United States dailies are not known for outstanding international news coverage despite larger news volumes than their foreign counterparts. Kaplan, who made an assessment of international news in the U.S. media, commented:

If it were possible to convert news content into calories, today's daily foreign news diet served by most U.S. newspapers and broadcast outlets would waver on the borderline between undernourishment and starvation. This is reflected in the amount, scope and type of international news being disseminated by a majority of the American mass media, particularly from the Third World countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹

Content analyses of European, Latin American, British, Israeli and Asian newspapers since the 1950s show that these papers use more

international news than the American newspapers.

1950-1960

The International Press Institute in 1953 conducted a four-week survey on European and American newspapers. It reported that European papers published proportionately more international news than most U.S. dailies.²

Similar findings were reported by Markham, who examined seven major U.S. dailies and seven South American dailies over a 30-day period in 1959. The latter sample used an average of 50 column inches daily on the United States, but the American papers devoted only 2.5 column inches daily to South America. In addition, Western Europe, Sino-Soviet and Middle East areas received more journalistic attention from the South American newspapers. Markham theorized that the U.S., because of its Big Power status, is more of a news giver--a theory that was confirmed repeatedly by future studies.³

1960-1970

Hart, who examined British dailies, further confirmed previous findings. Comparing the content of four large British dailies with four United States metropolitan newspapers over a six month period in 1964-65, Hart found that items about Western Europe, the United States and Africa comprised 65 percent of the total international newshole in English newspapers. The United States newspapers, on the other hand, allocated 60 percent of their space to news on the Far East, Western Europe and England. This time period coincided with China's first atomic blast, the war in South Vietnam, and the Olympics in Japan.

Hence, the increased attention to that part of the world. Hart's conclusions were that English papers considered international news more important than did their American counterparts, and that since the U.S. dailies had larger newsholes than English newspapers, they should have performed better with respect to publishing international news.⁴

Another content analysis conducted in the summer of 1964 on Asian and American newspapers by Hohenberg supported previous findings. The American sample comprised seven dailies. The Christian Science Monitor used 37 percent of its newshole for international news; the New York Times, 22 percent; the other dailies--the Los Angeles Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post and Chicago Daily News--averaged 8 to 15 percent.⁵

Asian newspapers, on the other hand, showed considerably higher figures. The English-language Japan Times devoted 46 percent of its newshole to international news, 9 percent more than the Christian Science Monitor. Approximately 34 percent of this featured United States news. The Hong Kong Tiger Standard, which ranked second, devoted 44 percent of its newshole to international news, twice that of the similarly ranked New York Times. Of this 44 percent, 20 percent dealt with the United States. About 24 percent of the Philippines Herald's newshole accounted for international news, again a figure much higher than the other U.S. dailies, which averaged 8 to 15 percent. Up to 46 percent of the international news of the Philippines Herald concerned the United States.⁶

In the same survey, Hohenberg commented on the performance of the Indian press. He said:

The Indian press, from its record in the survey, gave its readers a much broader view of the world than they had any

right to expect from newspapers so handicapped by lack of space and funds for foreign exchange.

1970-1980

Hicks and Gordon were the first to compare the international news content of three Israeli newspapers--the Maariv, the Davar and the Haaretz--with that of the New Orleans Times-Picayune. As in other studies, similar findings were reported. The Israeli newspapers were clearly more international-news minded, with use ranging from 26 to 30 percent, while that of the New Orleans Times-Picayune was 10 percent.⁸

The emergence of the Third World on the international political scene during the 1970s, and its increasing criticism of the Big Four and American newsgathering systems, prompted Riffe and Shaw to study trends in international news usage of the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune.⁹ These papers were selected on the basis of their position as among the elite of American newspapers and their role as reference indices for other media. This longitudinal study spanned a full decade--1970 to 1979, inclusive.¹⁰

Despite the Third World's increasing visibility in global politics during that time, neither the Times nor the Tribune increased its coverage of the Third World. In fact, the trend revealed less international news coverage on the whole.¹¹

Often cited as one of the most ambitious international news flow studies is that undertaken by Gerbner and Mervanyi in 1970. This study took on the overwhelming proportions of a multinational comparison of 60 daily newspapers published in nine countries. The nine countries represented the First, Second and Third Worlds.¹²

The newspapers were studied for the week May 24, 1970. The U.S.

press included the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, the New York Daily News and the San Francisco Chronicle. The amount of international news used was assessed by a number of relative measures. The findings that emerged are as follow:

1. In terms of international news items per newspaper per day, the Western European newspapers took the lead with 49.8 items which was nearly twice that of the U.S. newspapers (25.1 news items).
2. In terms of space per page devoted to international news, the Soviet press led with 49.8 square inches; the non-aligned papers came second with 37.5 square inches, followed by Eastern European dailies, a close third with 36.9 square inches. The U.S. newspapers ranked last with 12.6 square inches.
3. In terms of percentage of non-advertising space used for international news, Eastern European newspapers emerged first with 37.5 percent; Western European with 23.6 percent, and non-aligned newspapers with 22.8 percent. The U.S. newspapers again ranked lowest with 11.1 percent.¹³

The U.S. press ranked first on the average length of international news items, but in terms of absolute numbers, amount of space and proportion of available space allocated to international news, it ranked last.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that Kayser's 1951 study used six newspapers which also were included in the Gerber-Mervanyi multinational comparative study. The latter thus enables a time comparison of international news content as a percentage of total news space in these papers.

The table below shows the New York Times, the London Times and the

Rude Pravo of Czechoslovakia, as allocating about the same percentages of total news space to international news in 1951 and 1970. The New York Times' rate of use of international news remained at 16 percent during a two-decade period.¹⁵

TABLE I
INTERNATIONAL NEWS CONTENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF
TOTAL NEWS SPACE IN 1951 AND 1970

	1951	1970
1. <u>New York Times</u>	16	16
2. <u>New York Daily News</u>	2	7
3. <u>London Times</u>	25	22
4. <u>Pravda</u>	30	38
5. <u>Rude Pravo</u>	25	29
6. <u>Times of India</u>	14	25

The most ambitious project in this area of study was launched in 1979 by the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This joint international research venture involved 13 national teams covering the media systems of 29 countries. Their research findings provide the most up-to-date picture of international

news flow today. The teams studied both print and electronic media from April to June, 1979.¹⁶ The findings covered many aspects of the issue of international news flow but the present study will discuss only the New York Times and the New Straits Times.

The IAMCR/UNESCO researchers determined that the amount of international news coverage is best shown in terms of an average news day, indicating the amount of international news to be expected daily from each medium of communication. From a field of 84 newspapers, the New York Times ranked twenty-second with 33 international news stories per average day; the New Straits Times, sixteenth with 39 international news stories per average news day. The highest number of international news stories per average news day was 65, published by Sueddeutsche Zeitung, a German newspaper, followed by the Magyar Hirlap of Hungary with 61 international news stories per average news day.¹⁷

The findings of the IAMCR/UNESCO research project bring to a close this review of trends in international news usage from 1950 to 1980.

Analysis of Trends in International News Usage

The evidence from previous research is overwhelming. Non-U.S. newspapers use more international news. In fairness to the U.S. editors, it should be pointed out that within the U.S. itself, "faraway" states such as Idaho, Wyoming or the Dakotas receive little attention as do faraway countries like Surinam and Burundi, unless an arresting event takes place. Still, it would seem American newspapers would be more interested in stimulating their readers' interest by creating awareness of international issues.¹⁸

According to Carl Hartman, ignorance of other countries seems to be pervasive in this society. Almost every section of American society, including legislators, diplomats, students, business people, and the ordinary citizenry, generally know a great deal less about the rest of the world than vice versa. He points out that this knowledge gap has put the U.S. at a disadvantage on many occasions--experiences with Vietnam and Iran; problems such as flow of drugs into the country, refugees and migrants; and financial instability caused by unwise loans to other countries--all concrete evidences of how damaging the knowledge gap has proved to be.¹⁹

What are the probable reasons for the American press' lack of attention to international news? Scarcity of news is definitely not the case, since international news agencies provide a daily flood of material on world developments to newspapers throughout the United States, the only exception being weekly newspapers. Moreover, communication technology in the print media has so advanced that it is now possible to transmit news on tapes that can be inserted directly into printing systems, eliminating the task of retyping.²⁰

The Big Four send out altogether 34 million words per day and provide nine-tenths of the entire news output of the world's electronic and print media communication systems. The Associated Press alone reaches one-third of the world every day. Including Tass, 34 percent of the correspondents for the two agencies are stationed in the U.S.; 28 percent in Europe; 17 percent in Asia and Australia; 11 percent in Latin America, 6 percent in the Middle East and 4 percent in Africa. A noteworthy fact about the news agencies is that they subsidize their Third World bureaus. AP, for example, receives only one percent of its

revenue from the Third World and yet spends five percent or more of its revenue to collect news from the Third World.²¹

Much of the blame for the insular nature of American news content has been laid at the feet of media conglomerates and editors. Thomas Griffith of Time magazine and Don Cook of the Los Angeles Times, and media analysts such as Amos Yoder, Carl Hartman, John A. Lent and Frank L. Kaplan, are among the ever-increasing number of critics who question the lack of international news.

Griffith and Cook, in voicing their concern over the paltry dissemination of international news, argue that media conglomerates Newhouse and Gannett do not have even one permanent foreign correspondent stationed overseas. Knight-Ridder, another media conglomerate, operates only a one-man station in Toronto, Canada. Griffith and Cook also say that while the chains "make plenty out of American journalism, when it comes to sustained international coverage they return nothing."²²

In fact, one Knight-Ridder executive acknowledged a retrenchment in international reporting, and Kaplan asserts that while this is understandable due to financial conditions, it is still unwise. He cites the findings of a United Press International poll of U.S. editors regarding the primary headline stories for 1978. The poll showed five of the top ten stories named were exclusively international in origin.²³

Furthermore, the emphasis on profit-making by media chains "whose ears, deafened by the jangle of cash registers," contributes greatly to this situation of information malnutrition.²⁴ The success of newspapers today, Kaplan maintains, is based more on annual earnings rather than on editorial excellence, with editors placing greater emphasis on what they

believe people want to know. They minimize the importance of international news reporting on the basis that the public is not interested.²⁵

Such attitudes on the part of editors have raised much criticism. Griffith has this to say:

Unfortunately, the premature boredom of American newspaper editors is most acute in the area of foreign news. They assume that Americans are weary of unsolvable problems in unpronounceable places.²⁶

Charles B. Seib, syndicated columnist for the Washington Post, comments that international news is just a stepchild in most newspapers.²⁷ Yoder, a media critic, who questioned Northwest editors on this issue, finds their answers to be predictable--that they are involved in a business enterprise that is extremely competitive and dependent for survival on their readers, and that they should therefore give the readers what they want to read. These editors, who claimed that readers put "Dear Abby," the comics and local news at the top of reading priorities, were not able to document their case.²⁸

The argument that American editors are only providing news they think the people want, is further supported by Lent. Lent maintains that Zaire qualifies for publication only because two American boxers staged "a battle of the century" there.²⁹ In other words, a Third World nation, for example, should stage a pseudo-happening for it to warrant attention in the American press.³⁰

A Harris poll conducted in 1978 compared the opinions of media people and a sample of the public regarding the importance of international news. The data revealed that 41 percent of the public expressed interest in international news, whereas only 5 percent of the media people expected this response from the public.³¹

It seems strange that news executives underestimate the public's interest in international affairs. How does one explain the many trips abroad by American tourists, the large number of Japanese cars bought by Americans, the popularity of Chinese restaurants and Caribbean cruises, the taking up of Indian religions and the flaunting of Italian shoes? Moreover, the financial and commercial community which has extensive ties with foreign business and industrial concerns is clearly another market for international news.³²

The literature, then, points to a clear need for increased international news coverage in American newspapers. A broader, more universal outlook is vital for a nation so heavily involved politically, economically and culturally throughout the world.

Trends in International News Content

The Big Four news agencies play an instrumental role as suppliers of international news to newspapers throughout the world. None of them makes any profit to speak of. The Associated Press, cooperatively owned by its member newspapers, merely tries to break even; it spends more than five percent of its revenue collecting information from the Third World, yet receives only one percent of its revenue from this part of the world. Reuters' profits originate from its news-collecting activities in North America. The agency depends on its other departments to maintain its ancient international news gathering operations. Agence-France Presse' operations are virtually subsidized by the French government. United Press International represents the only capitalistic enterprise, but like Associated Press does not have much profit to show from its overseas operations.³³

Despite this state of affairs, the news services' reporting activities have been denounced by the Third World, with the early 1970s witnessing much opposition to the Big Four. By the mid-1970s, a variety of communication and information issues such as international news coverage, the global strangle-hold over international news flows resulting from the dominance of the Big Four, and the possibility of alternative forms of information exchange, were being widely discussed. Demands were made by Third World spokesmen for a New World Information Order.³⁴

The following extracts from the 1976 statement of the New Delhi Declaration of non-aligned nations shed more light on the reasons for this denunciation:

1. The present global information flows are marked by a serious inadequacy and imbalance. The means of communicating information are concentrated in a few countries. The great majority of countries are reduced to being passive recipients of information disseminated from a few centers.
2. This situation perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination. It confines judgments and decisions on what should be known, and how it should be made known, into the hands of a few.
3. In a situation where the means of information are dominated and monopolized by a few, freedom of information really comes to mean the freedom of these few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest of the right to inform and be informed objectively and accurately.³⁵

Mustapha Masmoudi, a leading spokesman for the Third World, contends:

Almost 80 percent of the world news flow emanates from the major trans-national agencies; however, these devote only 20-30 percent of news coverage to developing countries, despite the fact the latter account for almost three-quarters of mankind.³⁶

This control of news flow has resulted in a cultural and

information dependence on the Big Four by Third World nations putting them in a position where they must address the world or receive news of it via the "cultural filters" of these news agencies.³⁷

The stand of Third World countries, that they are victims of this news imperialism, has drawn support from Western academics such as Herbert Schiller of the United States, Jeremy Tunstall of England and Kaarle Nordenstreng of Finland. These critics contend that the news agencies, "even though wedded in theory to doctrines of impartiality and accuracy," offer an image of the world as unbalanced.³⁸

It is apparent then that this "confrontation" between the Western press and the Third World centers on the way news is reported and indicates that the root of the problem lies in the definition of news.

In this connection, Third World critics argue that Western journalists are generally ill-prepared to handle Third World assignments, for they follow Western professional practices not in tune with prevailing conditions in the Third World. They are quick to recognize and report catastrophies and calamities, their criteria of news selection being to seek the unusual.³⁹

The Third World's news requirements, the critics point out, are totally different. They prefer to emphasize "development journalism" which covers issues such as national unity and economic development. As one Indian journalist puts its:

In our environment there is, and there will for a long time to come, much that is ugly and distasteful. If we follow the western norm we will be playing up only these dark spots and thus help unwittingly to erode the faith and confidence without which growth and development are impossible.⁴⁰

Therefore, the argument is for news in its context. It is most unfair in the context of developing countries to use a yardstick of

newsworthiness that is not related to development. To be able to see and write an objective story, a foreign journalist would have to understand this need for reporting news in a developmental context. For as long as this is not practiced, readers will read only of negative news in the Third World and the cumulative impression created in their minds will be that of near chaos.⁴¹

Christopher Nascimento, a Guyanese government official, illustrates a similar viewpoint regarding news coverage of the 1978 Jonestown tragedy.⁴² Very little reference was made to the country where the massacre took place. No attempt was made to explain the presence of Jim Jones and his followers against a backdrop of Guyana's efforts for economic survival. One of the main concerns of the Guyanese government was to populate and develop unused land. Jim Jones and his followers were a group of "economically disenfranchised Americans with willing and productive hands" who had been welcomed to help diversify the narrow economy. The media, when it did make references to Guyana, referred to an illiterate population (which is, in fact, 85 percent literate) and to a kind of English being spoken as "pidgin" and "patios" (the Guyanese speak a pure strain of English, although heavily accented).⁴³

The dearth of meaningful reporting is even more disturbing when one considers the lack of diversity of viewpoints, for the collection of news is in the hands of a few and, thus, subject to their viewpoints. This one-way flow of news dominated by Western perspectives is basically what infuriates the Third World. For example, during the 1978 coup in Afghanistan, the initial concern expressed by Western journalists was whether the new leadership was pro-West or pro-Soviet. It was a legitimate question for the Western journalist and the news consumer,

but the Third World could just as legitimately interpret this selective approach as biased and as an example of wire service nationalism. It should be remembered at this point that the Third World is mostly served by the same news agencies. Tufts University's Edward R. Murrow Center studied 15 Asian newspapers in 1978 and found that 75.7 percent of all news stories originated from the Big Four. Thus, Asian audiences receive news and views of many situations from a limited perspective.⁴⁴

The same year, the Western news agencies in Zaire characterized killings as "white massacres," despite the fact that several hundred blacks had been similarly slain. Aggarwala, of the United Nations Development Program, asks if massacres come in color tones.⁴⁵

These charges of copy affected by Western news values and perspectives are repeated in a widely and frequently quoted article by Aggarwala:

The media, particularly the news agencies, will have to cure, at least partially, their all-pervasive obsession with so-called action or spot news, and not with soft or development news--economic and social development. Disaster, famines, corruption, wars, political intrigues, and civil disorders do make for action-packed and sexy copy while economic and social development is a very slow and over short periods an almost imperceptible process.⁴⁶

A classic contemporary example that best illuminates the "Western perspective" so decried by the Third World is the revolution that led to the collapse of the Pahlavi regime in Iran. The failure of journalism in Iran, according to Anthony Smith,

. . . really highlights the way in which international reporting merely reflects the mutual images of different civilizations. A great upheaval, such as that in Iran, itself transforms those images; it changes the agenda of issues, as perceived in one society or another and thus changes the labels which are applied by journalists to new and old phenomena. Freedom fighters, for example, turn into religious extremists, terrorists into insurgents, etc., etc., all depending on the perspective of the reporter.⁴⁷

In reporting the Iranian crisis, the media continuously gave the impression that the reactionary masses, in league with leftists, were fighting a Shah who was attempting to modernize his country. The Los Angeles Times' report on September 10, 1977, is typical of most U.S. press coverage:

. . . Much of the recent rioting has grown from demonstrations called by religious extremists opposed to the Shah's attempt to Westernize this oil-rich, anti-Communist nation and to loosen the traditionally firm grip of the Moslem clergy.⁴⁸

In no way did any report consider that the Pahlavi regime may have become increasingly oppressive and unacceptable to the Iranians. The press, by and large, willingly accepted the Shah's label of "modernization." They continuously mentioned, among other things, that his land reform project aimed at modernizing Iran was being resisted by large landowners. The fact that this project did not represent an agricultural revolution, but was part of a program to widen the Shah's political base by diminishing the power of the landowners, was never mentioned. Neither was it mentioned that this "modernization" attempt benefited only 10 percent of the peasants, forced many others off their land, and that agricultural production declined to the point where Iranians, who were once self-supporting, now had to import 50 percent of their food staples. This land reform program so lauded by the Western press was, in Iranian reality, an economic and social failure.⁴⁹

It is inconceivable that the press continued citing this land reform program as evidence of attempts to modernize. Nicholas Gage reported in the New York Times on May 18, 1978:

Khomeini has been in exile in Iraq since 1963, when he launched a nation-wide drive against the Shah following the introduction of land reform and other modernization measures that he opposed.⁵⁰

Had reporters investigated the situation more deeply, a different picture would have emerged, that of gross distortion of the distribution of wealth and large sums spent on arms and on a series of cosmetic "modern" projects which proved to be highly lucrative for Western consultants and advisors.⁵¹

William Dorman and Ehsan Omeed provide further examples of Western journalists' use of labels. They question why the Shah, whose methods of control received critical coverage, emerged in the U.S. press as merely "autocratic" and "often oppressive," whereas Somoza is a "dictator."⁵²

Keeping in mind that reports of these news agencies circulate far and wide, and that Third World countries lack systems of information exchange, this state of affairs has the effect of making Third World people view one another through the eyes of Western reporters. Imagine also the distorted pictures created in the mind of the Western news consumer or, for that matter, any news consumer.

The ideology of Soviet writers is seen often as a handicap to their reporting of the West and its activities. In like manner, it should be noted that Western journalists' own ingrained ideological prejudices can hamper their professional performance.⁵³ Reports on land reform programs may be factually true, but the dangers of not reporting them in their due context are too inherent and consequential.

In the light of the Third World's denunciation of the news agencies' international reporting performance, the researcher deems it pertinent to examine studies of the types of international events actually covered by various newspapers.

The study by Riffe and Shaw regarding coverage of the Third World

by the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune and the IAMCR/UNESCO project on international news reporting in 29 countries stand out in this respect. Both studies provide invaluable insights on trends in the types of topics covered in various newspapers and offer a clear idea of the image of the outside world these newspapers have projected to their audiences.

The Riffe-Shaw study supports, for the most part, Third World criticism of Western coverage of developing countries. The researchers report that in almost every year (1970-1979, inclusive), the foci of the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune showed consensus. International conflict and internal conflict in the Third World were the prevalent topics. During those years when such conflict was not a leading topic of emphasis, it still ranked high when compared to other news items.⁵⁴

In addition, the data showed a marked difference in news treatment between the First World and the Third World. Internal and International Economics ranked high among the First World news topics in contrast to conflict and strife topics for the latter. An unexpected finding, noted Riffe and Shaw, was that the New York Times, which normally publishes fewer news stories on disasters, etc.--reported more "bad" news items than the Chicago Tribune.⁵⁵

Riffe and Shaw concluded that the newspapers' coverage of the Third World "continued in the traditional mold" and reinforced and perpetuated old stereotypes by supplying new evidence. They acknowledged that the conflict-related items reflected reality, to some extent. However, when one considers the shrinking international newshole, it is indeed disappointing that such coverage is the norm.⁵⁶

The IAMCR/UNESCO project, the first of its kind to include

Malaysian newspapers, reveals interesting findings. One clear universal pattern emerges; that is, news is politics. The researchers were able to identify the same foci in international news reporting. Of 1,487 stories published by the U.S. newspapers (the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, Minneapolis Tribune and Charlotte Observer), 18 percent comprised International Politics, 21 percent, Domestic Politics, and 16 percent, Military. This pattern is repeated by the Malaysian newspapers (the New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia and Sin Chew Jit Poh). Of 2,040 international news stories, 19 percent comprised International Politics, 16 percent, Domestic Politics, and 12 percent, Military.⁵⁷

A striking finding is that Third World newspapers similarly concentrate on "hard" news in their coverage of the West--terrorism in Europe, religious strife in Northern Ireland and racial violence in the U.S.⁵⁸

It can be concluded, then, that according to recent research, international news presentation across most media systems shows homogeneity to a certain extent.

Problem Statement and Hypotheses

To investigate the amount, nature and sources of international news in the New York Times and the New Straits Times is, therefore, the overall objective of this thesis. To achieve this purpose, the following problem statement is presented:

Are there significant differences between the New York Times and the New Straits Times in international news coverage from June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986?

Toward this end, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. The New Straits Times will have a significantly greater international news coverage than the New York Times in terms of the number of international news items reported and the news space devoted to international news.

This hypothesis is generated directly from the literature review on quantitative analysis of trends in international news reporting. The purpose of this hypothesis is to investigate if there is any change in amount of coverage in the New York Times. Second, it seeks to investigate whether the New Straits Times can be included among newspapers that have covered international news more than their American counterparts. Third, the information will generate a comparison of international news coverage by the two newspapers.

2. There will be significantly greater coverage of the First World and the Second World than the Third World in both the New York Times and the New Straits Times.

This hypothesis is presented to investigate the criticism that little attention is paid to the Third World by the news-collecting agencies. Since research findings show that the Third World depends heavily on the Big Four (AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters) for their supply of international news, it is the author's belief that the New Straits Times will also publish more news of the First World.

3. The New York Times and the New Straits Times will show consonance in their pattern of attention to various topics, highlighting politics.
4. The New York Times and New Straits Times will show consonance in their pattern of attention to the First, Second and Third Worlds.

In 1984, the IAMCR/UNESCO researchers reported striking similarities in international news reporting of the 29 countries studied. This was all the more evident regarding politics--that news was politics throughout the world. Hypotheses 3 and 4 developed from the author's interest in investigating specifically the pattern of journalistic

attention accorded to international news reporting by the New York Times and the New Straits Times.

5. The New York Times and the New Straits Times will show a significantly greater reliance on the Big Four news agencies as sources of international news.

Past research shows that the Big Four are the main suppliers of international news to media systems throughout the world. The author believes that the information gleaned by testing this hypothesis should provide an up-to-date picture in this respect.

This study, therefore, seeks to shed light on the nature of international news reporting in a leading newspaper of a First World and a Third World country.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To determine the journalistic attention given to international news coverage, the data for this research effort were obtained from news stories, editorials and features in microfilmed copies of the New York Times and copies of the New Straits Times.

Selection and Sample of Newspapers

Several studies have cited the New York Times as one of the world's most important newspapers as well as one of the leading and influential newspapers in the United States.¹ Ogan holds the opinion that the New York Times represents the "best" rather than the "average" of American journalism.² Holding a position among the elite of the U.S. press, it serves as a reference index for other media.³ In addition, it has been suggested by Peterson that this highly-esteemed newspaper could be used to:

. . .set forth benchmarks of journalistic performance which may invite related researches or to which the results of further investigation may be compared.⁴

The New Straits Times, on the other hand, is the leading English-language daily in Malaysia. Reasons for selecting it over its competitor, The Star, are obvious. The New Straits Times has a daily readership of 629,000, double that of The Star, which has a readership of 304,000. In addition, 77 percent of Malaysia's adults who read an

English-language daily subscribe to the New Straits Times as compared to only 37 percent who subscribe to The Star.⁵

The sample was drawn from issues of the New York Times and the New Straits Times from June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986. This particular period was chosen because the data gleaned provided the most up-to-date assessment of international news treatment in both newspapers. In addition, this period represents the last full year prior to the projected completion of this study.

Stempel has determined that a sample of 12 issues a year, randomly selected, does an adequate job of representing a newspaper's yearly content of a particular subject category. A sample size beyond 12, he asserts, does not produce significantly more accurate results.⁶ Jones and Carter similarly conclude that a 12-issue sample is comparable to the entire yearly universe.⁷

In line with this sampling procedure, the sample drawn from a table of random numbers comprised 12 issues for each newspaper examined. The sample-day dates are as follow:

1. June 4, 1985
2. July 5, 1985
3. August 4, 1985
4. September 3, 1985
5. October 3, 1985
6. November 2, 1985
7. December 2, 1985
8. January 1, 1986
9. January 30, 1986
10. March 2, 1986

11. April 3, 1986

12. May 3, 1986

Mode of Analysis: Content Analysis

The primary data-gathering was by content analysis, a procedure which enabled the researcher to establish if there were significant differences in international news coverage between the two newspapers. Berelson has defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."⁸

The purpose of content analysis is further explained by Laswell as follows:

Content analysis aims at a classification of content in more precise, numerical terms than is provided by the impressionistic. It provides a precise means of describing the contents of any sort of communications--newspapers, radio programs, films, everyday conversations, verbalized free associations, etc. The operations of content analysis consist of classifying the signs occurring in a communication into a set of appropriate categories. The results state the frequency of occurrence of signs for each category in the classification scheme.⁹

In line with this mode of analysis, every international news item was read, counted, measured, coded and subjected to statistical procedures to answer the problem statement.

Consistent with trans-national analysis methodology, news items were converted into square inches rather than column inches. Micro-filmed copies of the New York Times containing the relevant data were photocopied and converted to original squared size for measurement purposes.

International News Definitions and Categories

The unit of analysis was the general news item. For coding purposes international news items were categorized as follow:

1. International events or situations that occurred outside the home country (international news abroad).
2. Events or situations in the home country in which Internationals took part (international news at home).
3. Events or situations that occurred outside the home country involving domestic affairs (home news abroad).¹⁰

Only content appearing on general news pages was included for comparability purposes, thus excluding "specialized" sections such as sports pages; business and financial sections; women's, children's and hobbies pages; travel and leisure sections. These specialized sections are easily identified as supplements and as spatially demarcated.¹¹ General news, therefore, included news stories, editorials and features that appeared on the general news pages only.

The following topic categories for coding and analysis purposes were utilized for this project:

1. International politics--articles dealing with relations between states
2. Domestic politics--articles dealing with internal conflicts, elections, campaigns, political appointments, governmental changes
3. Military--articles dealing with armed conflict or threat of [such conflict], peace moves, negotiations, settlements, arms deals, weapons, bases, exercises

4. Economics--articles on trade, tariffs, capital investments, stock issues, economic performance, industrial projects, agricultural matters, industrial/labor relations, monetary issues
5. International aid--articles on disaster or famine relief aid for economic purposes, military aid, aid for social purposes (e.g. education and family planning)
6. Social services--articles on social problems and social welfare matters
7. Crime--articles on non-political crime, political crime, non-criminal legal and court proceedings
8. Culture--articles on arts and archaeology
9. Religion
10. Science
11. Sports
12. Entertainment
13. Personalities
14. Human interest
15. Student matters
16. Ecology--articles on energy conservation, pollution, and others
17. Natural disasters--articles on floods, earthquakes, droughts, etc.
18. Other.¹³

These topic categories represent the same set used by the IAMCR/ UNESCO researchers in their study of international reporting in 29 countries in 1979. Rather than formulate a new set, this researcher used the above which was subjected to extensive pre-testing by the IAMCR/UNESCO team.

Since this study also determined the geographic origins of international news, geopolitical categories were established. Kegley and Wittkopf's classification of nations as members of the First, Second and Third Worlds provided the basis for deciding on these categories. The classification of geopolitical regions and their member nations is as follows.¹⁴

1. First World--the industrialized nations of Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand
2. Second World--all Communist states
3. Third World--all of Asia and Oceania except Japan, Australia and New Zealand; all of Africa except South Africa; and all of the Western hemisphere except Canada and the United States.¹⁴

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 were tested with chi square, a statistical tool designed to ascertain relationships between categories of frequencies. This technique compares observed frequencies with those theoretically expected to determine if there are any marked or significant differences.¹⁵

Under the null hypothesis, the assumption made is that there are no statistically significant differences (or relationships) among the observed and expected frequencies. Should there be differences, and if these differences did not occur by chance, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and drew the appropriate conclusions. For this study, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis if the observed frequencies occurred by chance 5 times out of 100, the 0.05 level of significance.¹⁶

Hypothesis 3 and 4 were tested with Between-Papers Rank-Order

correlations (Spearman rho). This statistical tool was used to evaluate the topic frequency ranking of both newspapers.¹⁷ A highly negative correlation would imply an inverse relationship between the attention paid to the various topics, as would be the case if, for example, the New York Times ranked International Politics high and the New Straits Times ranked it low. Those situations in which the rhos are fairly strong but not perfect (for example, correlation is between 0.50 and 0.80) indicated greater consonance in attention given to the topics by the newspapers. Either way, the data used to compute the rhos were further investigated to locate the consonance or discrepancy.

The methodology as outlined above enabled the author to determine the journalistic attention given to events on the global scene and the nature of such coverage in the New York Times and the New Straits Times for the year June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986. Furthermore, the researcher was able to establish any significant differences between the newspapers in their coverage of other countries.

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CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined via content analysis the international news content of the New York Times and the New Straits Times for the year June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986. The sample comprised 12 copies of each newspaper. The following findings are presented as to amount, type and sources of international news published.

Amount of International News Published

The amount of international news published was assessed according to the number of items reported and the news space occupied by international news in each newspaper.

A total of 728 international news items was collected from the sample. The New York Times reported 281 news items as compared with the New Straits Times which reported 447 news items. The number of international items published by the New York Times and the New Straits Times on each sample day is shown in Table II.

A chi square test was run on the international and domestic news items reported in both newspapers to see if differences in these numbers were statistically significant.

As Table III shows, the computed chi square of 2.4646 is less than the table value of 3.84 at $df = 1$. The probability of this difference having occurred by chance is greater than five times in a hundred, which

indicates no statistically significant differences in the number of international news items reported in the New York Times and the New Straits Times.

TABLE II
NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS STORIES REPORTED IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES
PER SAMPLE DAY

<u>Sample Day</u>	<u>New York Times</u>	<u>New Straits Times</u>
June 4, 1985	23	31
July 5, 1985	24	40
September 3, 1985	28	40
October 3, 1985	22	53
November 2, 1985	24	44
December 2, 1985	22	35
January 1, 1986	21	33
January 31, 1986	27	27
March 2, 1986	29	38
April 3, 1986	19	39
May 3, 1986	22	40
TOTAL	281	447

The news space given to international news items in each newspaper

was calculated in square inches. As shown in Table IV, out of a total of 39,764 square inches, the New York Times devoted 7,837 square inches or 19.7 percent of its general news space to international news. The New Straits Times allocated 10,123 square inches or 25.6 percent of news space to international news, out of a total of 39,528 square inches.

TABLE III
CHI SQUARE TEST OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NEW YORK TIMES
AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES IN TERMS
OF NUMBER OF ITEMS REPORTED

Type of news	<u>New York Times</u>	<u>New Straits Times</u>	Totals
International News	281	447	728
Domestic News	399	740	1139
Totals	680	1187	1867

$$\chi^2 = 2.4646 \quad p > 0.05 \text{ at } df = 1$$

The statistical hypothesis of equal percentage of square inches of news space devoted by both newspapers to international news was tested by the normal approximation to the binomial distribution. The test statistic of $(\pi_2 - \pi_1)/\sigma$ was computed to be 19.84. This calculated value exceeds the table value of 1.645 for the 0.05 level of significance at $df = \infty$ (infinity). In other words, the New Straits Times devoted significantly greater news space to international news than the

New York Times.

In light of these findings, the researcher can conclude that there were no significant differences between the New York Times and the New Straits Times in the number of international news items reported. However, in news space devoted to international news, the New Straits Times had a significantly larger coverage than the New York Times.

TABLE IV

SQUARE INCHES OF NEW SPACE OCCUPIED BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

Type of news	<u>New York Times</u>	<u>New Straits Times</u>
International News	7837	10123
Domestic News	31927	29405
Totals	39164	39528

$$t_{\text{CAL}} = (\hat{\pi}_2 - \hat{\pi}_1) / \hat{\sigma} = 19.84 \quad p < 0.05 \text{ (normal approximation)}$$

To test Hypothesis 2, the New York Times and the New Straits Times were examined by amount of coverage given to the First, Second and Third Worlds.

Table V shows that out of a total of 231 international news items published by the New York Times, 94 items (33.45 percent) dealt with the First World; 39 items (13.8 percent) concerned the Second World, and 143

items (52.6 percent) covered events of Third World origin.

This pattern of attention was repeated in the New Straits Times. Of a total of 447 international news items reported, 165 items (36.9 percent) were about the First World; 34 items (7.6 percent) about Second World news; and 248 items (55.4) percent) about the Third World.

Table V also shows the results of a chi square test to ascertain if the differences between the observed frequencies are statistically significant. The overall chi square computed is greater than the critical value of 5.99 at the 0.05 level of significance. The probability that the observed frequencies in Table V resulted from chance alone is less than five times in a hundred. These findings enable the researcher to conclude that the New York Times and the New Straits Times gave the most journalistic attention to the Third World.

TABLE V
NUMBER OF NEWS STORIES ACCORDING TO GEOPOLITICAL ORIGIN IN
THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES,

Geopolitical Origin	<u>New York Times</u>	<u>New Straits Times</u>	Total
First World	94	165	259
Second World	39	34	73
Third World	148	248	396
Total	281	447	723

$$x^2 = 7.69 \quad p < 0.05 \text{ at } df = 2$$

By means of a chi square one-way classification test, it was also found that the individual newspapers gave significantly more coverage to the Third World than to the First and Second Worlds.

These findings enable the researcher to conclude that the New York Times and the New Straits Times gave significantly more coverage to the Third World, as compared with the First and Second Worlds in terms of the number of articles on each of the geopolitical regions. Hypothesis 2--the New York Times and the New Straits Times will give significantly more coverage to the First and Second Worlds than to the Third World--is therefore rejected.

Type of International News Published

Comparisons were made regarding the New York Times' and the New Straits Times' pattern of attention to 18 topic categories for each sample day (see Table VI) and for the year (see Table VII).

Spearman rho computations for each sample day and for the year produced no significant differences in this respect.

With reference to Table VI, it can be seen that the Between-Newspapers correlation for each sample day ranged from 0.49 to 0.82. At $df = 17$ each of these correlations exceeds the critical value of 0.41 at the 0.05 level of significance. In other words, the researcher is 95 percent confident that the Between-Newspapers consonance regarding the 18 topic categories ranged from a moderate but substantial relationship at the very least and a high-marked relationship at the very most.

These sample-day findings were corroborated by the correlation findings for the year (see Table VII). The Spearman rho Between-Newspapers correlation was 0.94 which at $df = 17$ exceeds the critical

value of 0.41 at the 0.05 level of significance and 0.58 at the 0.01 level of significance. A dependable relationship of consonance thus existed between the New York Times and the New Straits Times on topic categories for the year June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986.

TABLE VI
SPEARMAN RHO RANK-DIFFERENCE BETWEEN-NEWSPAPERS CORRELATION
FOR EACH SAMPLE DAY

Sample Day	Between-Newspapers Correlation
June 4, 1985	0.51
July 5, 1985	0.82
August 4, 1985	0.79
September 3, 1985	0.74
October 3, 1985	0.70
November 2, 1985	0.49
December 2, 1985	0.80
January 1, 1986	0.57
January 31, 1986	0.59
March 2, 1986	0.71
April 3, 1986	0.68
May 3, 1986	0.78

At df = 17 all Between-Newspapers Correlation coefficients (Spearman rho) are significant at 0.05 level.

TABLE VII
COMPARISON OF TOPIC FREQUENCIES BY RANK IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

Topic Category	<u>New York Times</u>		<u>New Straits Times</u>	
	Frequencies	Rank	Frequencies	Rank
International Politics	52	2	69	2
Domestic Politics	83	1	98	1
Military	25	5	15	8
Economics	15	6	39	5.5
International Aid	4	11	9	11
Social Services	3	12	10	10
Crime	34	3	65	3
Culture	0	16.5	3	14.5
Religion	9	3.5	8	12.5
Science	9	8.5	39	5.5
Sports	0	16.5	2	16.5
Entertainment	0	16.5	2	16.5
Personalities	13	7	14	9
Human Interest	5	10	21	7
Student Matters	2	13	8	12.5
Ecology	0	16.5	0	18
Natural Disasters	1	14	3	14.5
Other	26	4	42	4
Total	281		447	

At $df = 17$ Spearman rho Rank Difference Between-Newspapers Correlation of 0.94 is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

Table VII also furnishes data regarding the ranking of the individual topic categories by the New York Times and the New Straits Times. The topic categories of Domestic Politics, International Politics and Crime similarly received first, second and third ranking.

Politics made news in both newspapers throughout the year. The New York Times used 83 Domestic Politics news items, which comprised 26 percent of its international news coverage. This news category was allocated 98 items or 22 percent of the international news reported in the New Straits Times.

International Politics, which ranked second for both newspapers, comprised 52 items or 18.5 percent of the total international news published in the New York Times. The New Straits Times published 69 International Politics news items, which comprised 15.4 percent of its international news reported.

The Crime topic category ranked third in both newspapers. The New York Times allocated 34 items to Crime news, which comprised 12 percent of its international news coverage as compared with the New Straits Times, which reported 65 Crime news items accounting for 15 percent of its total international news.

Neither the New York Times nor the New Straits Times carried news items on Ecology, which ranked last. Additionally, the New York Times carried no news on Culture, Sports and Entertainment in its international news reporting. These topic categories, which ranked last in the New York Times, were expected to receive a low ranking because this research project was confined to the general news pages. The New York Times deals with Culture, Sports and Entertainment in separate newspaper sections rather than in the general news columns.

As noted, Ecology received no attention from the New Straits Times. In contrast, although Sports and Entertainment are reported on specially allocated pages, two articles on each of these topics were found in the general news pages. These topics, however, ranked second lowest in the New Straits Times for the probable reason, as in the case of the New York Times, that they receive special attention in the pages reserved for such news.

These findings lead to the acceptance of Hypothesis 3--the New York Times and the New Straits Times will show consonance in their pattern of attention to various topic categories, highlighting Politics, International and Domestic.

Tables VIII, IX, and X provide data on the pattern of attention of the New York Times and the New Straits Times to the First, Second and Third Worlds on types of news coverage.

The Between-Newspapers Spearman rho correlation is 0.71 for the First World (see Table VIII); 0.80 for the Second World (see Table IX) and 0.72 for the Third World (see Table X). These correlations exceed the critical value of 0.41 at the 0.05 level of significance and 0.58 at the 0.01 level of significance at $df = 17$.

The probability that these correlations occurred by chance is one-in-a-hundred. The findings thus support Hypothesis 4--that the New York Times and the New Straits Times will show consonance in their pattern of attention, in terms of type of news, to the three geopolitical regions. In fact, a high-marked relationship prevailed between the newspapers in this respect.

With reference to Table VIII, it can be seen that the topic categories which dominated First World coverage in the New York Times were

TABLE VIII
COMPARISON OF FIRST WORLD NEWS TOPICS BY RANK IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

Topic Category	<u>New York Times</u>		<u>New Straits Times</u>	
	Frequencies	Rank	Frequencies	Rank
International Politics	17	1	40	1
Domestic Politics	15	2	20	4
Military	14	3	3	10
Economics	11	4.5	11	5
International Aid	2	11	6	9
Social Services	1	12	2	12.5
Crime	11	4.5	24	2
Culture	0	15.5	1	15.5
Religion	7	6	1	15.5
Science	4	8.5	23	3
Sports	0	15.5	0	17.5
Entertainment	0	15.5	2	12.5
Personalities	3	10	10	6.5
Human Interest	4	8.5	8	8
Student Matters	0	15.5	2	12.5
Ecology	0	15.5	0	17.5
Natural Disasters	0	15.5	2	12.5
Other	5	7	10	6.5
Total	94		165	

At $df = 17$, Spearman rho Rank Difference Between-Newspapers Correlation of 0.71 is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

International Politics, Domestic Politics and Military. There were 17 news items (18 percent) on International Politics, which ranked highest, 15 items (16 percent) on Domestic Politics, which ranked second, and 14 items (15 percent) on Military, which ranked third.

International Politics also dominated First World news coverage in the New Straits Times, which reported 40 news items (24.2 percent). There were 24 news items (15 percent) on Crime, which ranked second. This was followed by news items on Science, which ranked a close third with 23 news items (14 percent) reported.

A study of the data in Table VIII shows that the New Straits Times reported no items on Ecology and Sports. These topic categories, therefore, received the lowest rankings in both newspapers.

In addition to the above categories, the New York Times published no articles on Culture, Entertainment and Student Matters, all of which shared the lowest ranking with Sports and Ecology. As mentioned earlier, the lack of attention to Culture, Entertainment and Sports probably is due to the fact that these topics are dealt with in separate sections.

The same reason probably holds true for Sports and Entertainment for the New Straits Times. The New Straits Times, however, did feature one article on Culture in the First World. Culture, which ranked 15.5, shared this low ranking with Religion.

When the data in Table VIII were further investigated to seek discrepancies in ranking between the newspapers, it was found that the Military, Religion and Science topic categories were accorded widely different ratings. Military news ranked third in the New York Times and tenth in the New Straits Times; Religion ranked ninth in the New York

Times and 15.5 in the New Straits Times; and Science ranked 8.5 in the New York Times and third in the New Straits Times.

The data in Table IX illustrate the type of coverage of the Second World offered by the New York Times and the New Straits Times.

International politics received the most coverage in the New York Times with eight news items (21 percent). Domestic Politics and "Other" categories each rated 2.5 with six news items (15.3 percent). Science ranked fourth with five news items (12.8 percent).

The New Straits Times coverage of the Second World focused on Economics. Seven news items (20.5 percent) were published. The newspaper used six news items (17.6 percent) on Domestic Politics, which ranked second. The topic categories of International Politics and "Other" rated 3.5 with the newspaper reporting five articles (14.7 percent) on each.

A striking pattern of consonance between the New York Times and the New Straits Times prevailed in the International Aid, Social Services, Culture, Religion, Entertainment, Ecology and Natural Disasters topic categories. The newspapers did not feature any news in these categories. The scarcity of news from the Second World may account for the absence of news on these topics.

Although the Spearman rho Between-Newspapers correlation computed was highest for the Second World, wide discrepancy is evident on the topic of Economics. The New York Times published one article (2.56 percent) on Economics and the New Straits Times published seven articles (20.5 percent). This topic category ranked ninth in the New York Times and first in the New Straits Times.

TABLE IX
COMPARISON OF SECOND WORLD NEWS TOPICS BY RANK IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

Topic Category	<u>New York Times</u>		<u>New Straits Times</u>	
	Frequencies	Rank	Frequencies	Rank
International Politics	8	1	5	3.5
Domestic Politics	6	2.5	6	2
Military	4	5.5	1	9
Economics	1	9	7	1
International Aid	0	14.5	0	14.5
Social Services	0	14.5	0	14.5
Crime	4	5.5	3	5.5
Culture	0	14.5	0	14.5
Religion	0	14.5	0	14.5
Science	5	4	3	5.5
Sports	0	14.5	2	7
Entertainment	0	14.5	0	14.5
Personalities	3	7	0	14.5
Human Interest	1	9	1	9
Student Matters	1	9	1	9
Ecology	0	14.5	0	14.5
Natural Disasters	0	14.5	0	14.5
Other	6	2.5	5	3.5
Total	39		34	

At $df = 17$, Spearman rho Rank Difference Between-Newspapers Correlation of 0.80 is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

Data on the type of coverage accorded to the Third World by the newspapers are provided in Table X. Both newspapers emphasized the Domestic Politics of Third World countries. The New York Times allocated 62 items (42 percent) to this category and the New Straits Times published 72 items (29 percent).

International Politics received the second largest coverage in the New York Times with 27 articles (18.2 percent). Crime, which ranked third, was allocated 19 news items (13 percent).

The New Straits Times ranked Crime second, publishing 38 articles (15.3 percent). The topic category "Other" ranked third with 27 articles (11 percent) of Third World origin.

Neither newspaper published any news on Sports, Entertainment and Ecology in the Third World.

The data in Table X also reveal a wide discrepancy between the newspapers' stand on publishing news on Science. The New York Times reported no items about Science, which accounts for this topic category's low ranking of 15.5. The New Straits Times, on the other hand, published 13 news items (5.24 percent), thus giving this category sixth ranking.

In addition, the New York Times published no article on Human Interest in the Third World. This news category ranked 15.5. The New Straits Times, which reported 12 articles (4.83 percent) on Human Interest, ranked this category seventh.

Sources of International News Published

Both samples were analyzed to test Hypothesis 5--that the New York Times and the New Straits Times will show a significantly greater

TABLE X
COMPARISON OF THIRD WORLD NEWS TOPICS BY RANK IN THE
NEWS YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

Topic Category	<u>New York Times</u>		<u>New Straits Times</u>	
	Frequencies	Rank	Frequencies	Rank
International Politics	27	2	24	4
Domestic Politics	62	1	72	1
Military	7	5.5	11	8
Economics	3	7	21	5
International Aid	2	9	3	13
Social Services	2	9	8	9
Crime	19	3	38	2
Culture	0	15.5	2	14
Religion	2	9	7	10
Science	0	15.5	13	6
Sports	0	15.5	0	17
Entertainment	0	15.5	0	17
Personalities	7	5.5	4	12
Human Interest	0	15.5	12	7
Student Matters	1	11.5	5	11
Ecology	0	15.5	0	17
Natural Disasters	1	11.5	1	15
Other	15	4	27	3
Total	148		248	

At $df = 17$, Spearman rho Rank Difference Between-Newspapers Correlation of 0.72 is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

reliance on the Big Four news agencies (Reuters, Associated Press, United Press International and Agence France-Presse) as sources of international news. The 728 international news articles collected from the sample were coded according to seven news sources: Home Country agency, Own staff, Reuters, Associated Press, United Press International, Agence France-Presse and Others.

As shown in Table XI, the overall chi square computed is 352.55, which for $df = 6$ exceeds the critical values of 12.59 at the 0.05 level of significance and 22.46 at the 0.01 level of significance. The variation between the two samples' use of news sources is too large to have occurred by chance.

The data were, therefore, further investigated to ascertain which were the significant news sources used by both newspapers.

By means of a chi square one-way classification test, it was found that the New York Times used significantly most of the articles contributed by its own staff members (68.3 percent). Only 14.2 percent of its international news content comprised items provided by Reuters, 9.96 percent by Associated Press, 6.76 percent by United Press International and 0.35 percent by a Home Country agency and other sources. These findings illustrate that the New York Times published significantly fewer international news articles originating with the Big Four news agencies than those provided by its own staff members.

The data regarding the news sources used by the New Straits Times were similarly tested and revealed significant differences between the observed frequencies. The New Straits Times used primarily news items transmitted by Reuters (40.4 percent). Articles originating with Bernama, Malaysia's only news agency, comprised 23.9 percent of the

international news published. Only 14.5 percent came from the Associated Press, 8.5 percent from United Press International and 5.59 percent from New Straits Times' correspondents. The articles contributed by Agence France-Presse amounted to only 0.44 percent of the total.

TABLE XI
CHI SQUARE TEST OF DIFFERENCE IN TERMS OF FREQUENCIES BETWEEN
THE NEW YORK TIMES' AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES'
USE OF NEWS SOURCES

News Sources	<u>New York Times</u>	<u>New Straits Times</u>	Total
Home Country agency	1	107	108
Own Staff	192	25	217
Reuters	40	181	221
AP	28	65	93
UPI	19	38	57
AFP	0	2	2
Others	1	29	30
Totals	281	447	728

$$x^2 = 352.55 \quad p < 0.05 \quad \text{at } df = 6$$

Thus, with the exception of Reuters, the New Straits Times reported more news collected by Bernama than by the other members of the Big

Four. The proximity of Bernama to Third World countries, coupled with the fact that the New Straits Times published significantly more items on the Third World, accounts for the greater use of Bernama than of AP, UPI and AFP.

The findings produced by the chi square tests of differences between the newspapers' use of news sources leads the researcher to reject Hypothesis 5--the New York Times and the New Straits Times will show a significantly greater reliance on the Big Four than on other sources for international news coverage.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The amount, type and sources of international news published in the New York Times and the New Straits Times for the year June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1986, were examined via content analysis. Toward this end, data were obtained from a sample of 24 newspapers--12 microfilm copies of the New York Times and 12 copies of the New Straits Times.

The findings that emerged from the analysis enable the author to answer the five research questions presented at the beginning of the study. A brief summary of the questions and findings follows:

1. What proportion of journalistic attention was given to international news?

To answer this question, the data were analyzed according to the number of international news items published and the news space devoted to these items.

The New York Times and the New Straits Times did not differ significantly in the number of items published. However, the New York Times devoted significantly more news space to international news than did the New York Times.

2. What proportion of journalistic attention was given to the First, Second and Third Worlds?

The Third World was given significantly more journalistic attention than the First and the Second Worlds in both newspapers. Coverage of the Third World exceeded that of the First and Second Worlds, with the New York Times reporting 53 percent of Third World news, 34 percent of First World news and 13 percent of Second World news; the New Straits Times reporting 55 percent of Third World news, 37 percent of First World news and 8 percent of Second World news.

3. What was the nature of international news reported?

A striking similarity in international news content prevailed between the newspapers examined. The Between-Newspapers Spearman rho computed was 0.94, indicating a very dependable relationship of consonance.

Of the vast array of news available, editors of both newspapers similarly focused on "hard" news. Politics and Crime dominated international news selection. In Domestic Politics, internal conflicts were highlighted and in Crime, non-political crime was emphasized.

The New York Times favored the publication of military matters next, in contrast to the New Straits Times, which focused on Economics and Science.

There was little evidence of "soft" news in either newspaper. In addition, articles on Culture, Religion, Student Matters, Social Services, etc., were brief in nature.

4. What type of coverage did the First, Second and Third Worlds receive?

The New York Times and the New Straits Times presented similar coverage of the three geopolitical regions as indicated by the Between-Newspapers Spearman rho computations--0.71 for the First World, 0.80 for

the Second World and 0.72 for the Third World.

Readers of both newspapers were mostly exposed to news on International Politics in the First World. However, readers of the New York Times received more news on Domestic Politics and Military matters in their part of the world, whereas their Malaysian counterparts read more on Crime and Science.

On Second World coverage, both newspapers published more on International Politics and Domestic Politics than other categories. In addition, the New York Times gave wide coverage to articles on Science in contrast to the New Straits Times, which focused on Economics.

The newspapers examined did not feature any items on International Aid, Social Services, Culture, Religion, Entertainment or Ecology-- topics which would have given a broader view of life in the Second World. However, the absence of news on these topics does not necessarily reflect a bias for "hard" news by the editors, especially when one considers the overall scarcity of news from the Second World.

Politics, International and Domestic, and Crime made Third World news. There was a comparatively high focus on Domestic Politics, with markedly great attention given to internal conflicts and strife. The research findings, in this respect, tend to substantiate the results of previous studies that Western news sources and Western newspapers, more often than not, publish negative news of the Third World. Nevertheless, these findings also draw attention to the fact that the First and Second Worlds were, for the most part, reported in a similar vein by the New Straits Times.

5. Which news sources were relied on for the reporting of international news?

The New York Times relied primarily on its own correspondents' supply of international news. Very little use was made of Reuters, Associated Press, United Press International and Agence-France Presse. The international news content of the New Straits Times was made up primarily of Reuters' dispatches, but greater use was made of Bernama than the other Western news agencies.

Conclusions

The New York Times and the New Straits Times displayed a strong consensus in the amount and type of attention given to the First, Second and Third Worlds.

As the research findings indicate, coverage of the Third World exceeded that of the First and Second Worlds, thus drawing attention to the importance of regionalism in international news reporting. In both newspapers, emphasis was given to events occurring within the "neighborhood." Although African nations and the Middle-East were heavily reported in the newspapers' Third World coverage, the New York Times gave greater publicity to Latin America, and the New Straits Times, to the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The regionalism factor is particularly noticeable in the Malaysian newspaper, for every issue normally devotes a minimum of two full pages to Southeast Asian news.

Although the newspapers' coverage of the First World was fairly even, the regionalism factor was again discernible. The New Straits Times published an abundance of news about Japan, in addition to covering other First World countries. In the New York Times, "neighboring" countries such as Canada, France and England received a

comparatively stronger emphasis than other First World countries which, nevertheless, were not characterized by a marked shortage of news.

The Second World, besides receiving least attention in both newspapers, was not evenly covered. The socialist countries of Eastern Europe were invisible, China received considerable publicity, and the Soviet Union was prominent. The Soviet Union's status as one of the two superpowers probably directs the news spotlight onto it rather than other Communist countries.

To assess international news content of the newspapers concerned, this study used the same set of topic categories as the IAMCR/UNESCO research team. The results of this study, on the whole, yielded findings similar to those of the earlier study.

Analysis of the news content shows a remarkable similarity in the profile of international news published. Both newspapers selected the same foci--International and Domestic Politics. Moreover, the general news pages studied were characterized by an abundance of "hard" news. The range of topics covered did not give American and Malaysian readers a broad perspective on global events.

The debate on international news reporting has centered on the role of the Western news agencies as suppliers and "gatekeepers" to various world media systems. The research findings indicate the New York Times apparently is an exception to this dependence on the news agencies. The newspaper used, to a great extent, news collected by its correspondents overseas. As for the New Straits Times, although Reuters' supply of news was well used, Bernama, Malaysia's home agency, constituted an impressive source.

Bernama's role as an international news gatherer should not be

underestimated, for as early as 1978 it was considered the most outward-looking news agency in Southeast Asia. Kliesch, who conducted a study in the summer of 1978 on the journalistic outlook of the media systems in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, reported Malaysia as a strong second international news gatherer. He quotes a Kuala Lumpur correspondent, "If Thailand were to fall behind the Bamboo Curtain, Kuala Lumpur would replace Bangkok as the regional focus for the world's press."¹

Agence-France Presse, Associated Press and United Press International were not significant sources of international news published in either newspaper. Neither the Non-Aligned News Pool nor Inter-Press Service, both of which represent the news pooling arrangements of Third World countries, occupied a prominent place in either newspaper's news budget.

Recommendations

That the mass media have considerable potential to inform their readership is perhaps understated. Cohen maintains:

The press may not be successful much of the time in telling the people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.²

The research findings indicate that "hard" news dominated international news coverage rather than "soft" news. News, for the most part, was Politics and Crime, with a meager sprinkling of news on Social Services, Culture, Personalities, Ecology, etc.

The focus on "hard" news puts the Third World especially at distinct disadvantage in terms of its portrayal. Although First World countries received their share of negative publicity, the projected

image of these countries is not solely that of criminals and catastrophies. Through their physical and cultural exports and journalistic efforts they are constantly creating and providing knowledge of themselves. The Third World, lacking in the number and diversity of such activities, depends on Western news sources dominated by Western perspectives to report on the Third World. Hence, the resentment of "having their picture always painted by foreigners" whose conclusions may or may not correspond to reality.³ In light of this situation, the author makes the following recommendations:

1. The need to emphasize meaningful, development-related news from Third World countries is evident. News accounts of socio-economic and other development-related efforts and achievements, although they may not make dramatic and sensational news, certainly deserve equal, if not better, coverage than accounts of crime, conflicts and coups.

In this connection, the New Straits Times was no better than the New York Times in its coverage of the Third World. It is recommended that the "man-bites-dog" criterion of newsworthiness be reconsidered for positive, development-related news, thereby giving readers a clear understanding that the Third World is not in a state of perpetual chaos.

This being an international age of accelerating interdependence, increasing complexity and deepening disorder, it is indeed unfortunate that editors should select such news "diets" from the "menu" available. An abundance of "hard" news accounts certainly does not contribute to the making of an informed and knowledgeable readership or to international understanding. In fact, less dramatic reporting could go a long way in making sense out of today's confusion. Reston suggests:

It may be, however, that we need intellectual vigilance now more than barricade journalism, and particularly the gift of

seeing, and seeing in time, trends that may affect the life of the world.⁴

2. A supportive recommendation is that other news sources be utilized more. Increased attention to neighboring newspapers and other news-collecting centers on events concerning their respective regions could help to balance and diversify the current news agenda. Furthermore, editors would be exposed to a variety of perspectives on common global events, thus ensuring that the news content ultimately available to their readership is fair and balanced. It is not surprising today that many people blame no one in particular for the rising price of cars, but attribute the inconsistent price of petrol to the "greed" of a few Arabs. Nor is it surprising that they commonly link terrorism with the Palestinian issue, when the superpowers are as heavily, if not more heavily, engaged in employing, sponsoring and condoning terrorism in Nicaragua and Afghanistan. In this respect, editors have a far greater responsibility in news selection and presentation than they have been willing to shoulder.

3. The importance of fair and balanced accounts that give a truthful presentation of global events lead the author to recommend a qualitative analysis of international news content. This research effort has, no doubt, provided an inventory of the formal aspects of international news reporting. However, further research that taps the essence of what is reported, how it is reported, and that draws attention to factual inaccuracies and errors in perspective would seem desirable, bearing in mind the role of the press as image-maker of other countries among its readership. Such research is necessary to check and publicize news accounts that do not correspond to reality. Otherwise, just like many of us, the generations to come, will reach voting age, middle age, and

old age ignorant of international reality--a situation that has pathetic and potentially tragic implications for international understanding.

ENDNOTES

¹Ralph Kleisch, "News Media Presence in Southeast Asia," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 57 (Summer, 1980), p. 258.

²Bernard C. Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy (New Jersey, 1963), p. 13.

³Rosemary Righter, "Who Won?" Journal of Communication, Vol. 29 (Spring, 1979), p. 194.

⁴James Reston, "The Issues of Life Are Plain No Longer," The Quill, Vol. 63 (May, 1975), p. 44.

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VITA

Parween Atta Mohd

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE AMOUNT, CONTENT AND SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES AND THE NEW STRAITS TIMES, June 1, 1985, TO
MAY 31, 1986

Major Field: Mass Communication

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Perak, Malaysia, December 16, 1955, the
daughter of Haji Atta Muhammad and Hajjah Fazal Bibi.

Education: Graduated from St. Georges Girls' School, Pulau Pinang,
Malaysia, in December 1973; received Bachelor of Social
Science degree from Universiti Sains Malaysia in July, 1977;
completed requirements for Master of Science degree at
Oklahoma State University in December, 1986.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant, School of
Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1977-79; Lecturer,
Malaysian Entrepreneurial Development Center, MARA Institute
of Technology, Malaysia, 1980-81; Lecturer, School of Mass
Communications, MARA Institute of Technology, Malaysia,
1982-84.