

# Chapter 5

## The World's Windows to the World: An Overview of 44 Nations' International News Coverage

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*This chapter situates international news, and the controversies surrounding it, historically and geographically. Interest in the flow of news between nations surfaced in the 1960s, as emerging nations (all possessing a vote in the General Assembly) looked to the United Nations to remedy long standing structural inequities which disadvantaged them relative to the wealthy, northern hemisphere, former colonial powers. The flow of news was one such issue, dominated as it was at that time by five giant news agencies (Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France Press, TASS, United Press International) and focusing on the news of a few elite, industrialized nations. With backing, LAMCR researchers conducted a massive study in the early 1980s documenting the flow of news among nations (UNESCO Newsflow Study: Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). Here, Wu describes a repeat effort in the mid-1990s (the most recent mapping of international news flow on record). He demonstrates that the major news production centers of the world – especially the US and UK – continue to make headlines in most places, but also that the media of many nations devote more of their attention to their immediate region than to the news that wire services deem most important. Denis Wu was a principal co-ordinator and statistician for the 1995 international news flow project while a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina.*

Communication scholars (Gerbner & Marvanyi, 1977; Schramm, 1959) have long been intrigued by the striking differences in international news coverage across nations, regions and continents. Their inquiries usually start with the ideal assumption that news coverage should, theoretically, reflect the world as

it is and cover events without bias. But, undoubtedly, different countries have many different, if not oppositional, windows in which they see the world, resulting in widely varied understandings and interpretations of identical events. Given all the empirical evidence and case studies accumulated in the past few decades, however, there has not yet been a project that systematically draws samples from every corner of the world and presents evidence showing to what extent the globe is portrayed differently in the news media of different countries.

Professors Annabelle Sreberny of the University of Leicester and Robert Stevenson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took on the challenge and initiated this ambitious multinational collaboration. They aimed to piece together the puzzle of international news during two selected weeks of 1995. The researchers sent out invitations to as many media researchers around the world as possible, hoping to collect data from as many countries as possible. Without outside funding and resources from any international organisation, the scope of this international news flow research project was unprecedented. With the contribution of experienced researchers from around the world and the standardised procedures of media sampling and coding, a certain degree of quality control was insured.

They studied forty-four countries, encompassing every part of the world.

European countries represent the highest number of participants (20); whereas Africa and the Middle East, given their numbers of nations, are somewhat underrepresented. Despite its imperfections, this project resulted in a great opportunity to systematically examine the portrayal of the world in each nation's media. Presented in this report is the highlight of each nation's news coverage in the first two weeks of September 1995.

**Method.** Experienced researchers in the forty-four participating countries received standardised sampling and coding instructions and conducted content analysis to record elements of all international news selected in the two-week sample period (September 3-9 and 17-23, 1995).<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on news media sampling guides, coding instructions, specific codes and final media samples are available from the author. Only one coding item in the content analysis project was used in this study, 'the most important country mentioned in the news story',<sup>2</sup> which records the major, or the first, country covered. The reason the coding of 'dateline' was not used to represent the covered country is that dateline is not normally used in some countries' news media and that sometimes correspondents may not be able to report at the venue of the event. Each news story's major or the first mentioned country is tallied under every one of the 214 (guest) countries in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to sketching the news landscape of each nation, some background information during the period when the sample was selected is useful for understanding and interpreting the results. A number of significant events took place during the two-week period that influenced the media agenda

worldwide and the prevalence of specific countries included in the study. The list of these 'newsworthy' international events includes the United Nations Women's Conference held in Beijing, China; NATO's military actions and peace negotiation in Bosnia-Herzegovina; France's series of nuclear tests conducted in the South Pacific and the demonstrations and protests that followed; an explosion in BBC's studio in India; and another explosion at a Jewish school in Lyon, France. It is likely that the countries involved or the venues where these events occurred attracted more coverage in the press around the world at that time.

What follows are the results of the international news coverage study in the 44 surveyed countries:

*Argentina.* The country that got the highest number (250)<sup>4</sup> of news stories in Argentina's news media was the United States. Spain distantly followed the United States, garnering less than half of the coverage of the United States (94). The rest of the countries that received a reasonable number of news stories were either European countries such as France (61)<sup>4</sup>, the United Kingdom (57), Italy (36), or Argentina's Latin American neighbors: Brazil (50), Chile (37), Mexico (31), and Colombia (27). Four powerful countries in other parts of the world – Japan (29), Russia (26), Germany (25) and China (22) – also received significant coverage.

*Armenia.* Russia received the highest number of news stories (161) from this former Soviet Union republic in Asia Minor. The United States (70) only got about half the coverage of Russia. The other countries that were significantly covered included Armenia's close neighbours (except for France, which received 26 news stories) Georgia (30), Turkey (33), Azerbaijan (28) and Iran (15). Most countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America were not covered in the Armenian media.

*Australia.* With its unique location in the southern hemisphere, does Australia represent a distinctive, 'down under' perspective on international news selection? Three countries received over one hundred news stories – the United States (305), the United Kingdom (154), and France (107) – with the United States leading the pack. Australia's increasing interest in and identification with the Asia-Pacific region was shown in its moderate amount of news coverage on China (71), Japan (58), India (33), New Zealand (32), Indonesia (29), Hong Kong (25) and Papua New Guinea (18). Three other remote countries in discrete regions – Bosnia (52), Russia (31) and South Africa (19) – also received significant coverage.

*Austria.* Surrounded by many countries in Central Europe, Austria's news media devoted a lot of space to her adjacent neighbours and other European countries. Her German neighbour received an unparalleled amount of space, a total of 231 news stories. The United States, the superpower across the Atlantic, also received impressive coverage with 200 stories in the Austrian press. Other prominent nations that received a fair amount of coverage

included France (131), the United Kingdom (97), Bosnia (69) and Italy (66). Russia (52), Spain (39), Slovakia (30) and Switzerland (28) also enjoyed fair representation. Lastly, two influential countries in the Far East, China and Japan, were also covered with a substantial number of stories (36 and 27 respectively).

*Belgium.* France, Belgium's southern neighbour, which shares its language, received the largest number of news stories (183). Slightly behind France, the United States captured 141 stories in the Belgian press. The United Kingdom (88), Germany (85) and the Netherlands (84) seemed equally covered in the second rung. Bosnia (62) was abundantly covered, too. Other European nations, Italy (54), Russia (53) and Spain (46) also received a fair share of newshole. China (30) was the only non-European nation on the top-ten list. The rest of the nations that had more than 20 stories were Israel (24), Denmark (21), Japan (21) and Algeria (20).

*Benin.* Because only one newspaper was included in the study of Benin, the number of stories allotted to foreign countries is inevitably smaller compared to other countries in the sample. The nations that received significant coverage in Benin's newspaper, *La Nation*, seemed to fall into two groups: African countries – South Africa (14), Algeria (5), Côte d'Ivoire (5), Kenya (5), Nigeria (11) – and Western powerful countries such as France (10), the United States (11) and the United Kingdom (4).

*Brazil.* The United States captured the lion's share of Brazil's international news coverage (84). The next group of nations, Argentina (19), France (18), the United Kingdom (17), Bosnia (15), and Italy (12) were in the second rung of news prominence in Brazil. Other than China (9) and Japan (7), the next cluster of moderately covered nations were in either Europe or the Americas, including Colombia (5), Canada (4), Cuba (4), Mexico (4), Germany (4), Portugal (3) and Spain (3).

*Bulgaria.* Two countries dominated Bulgaria's international newshole – the United States (174) and Russia (112). The second-rank group of countries that received extensive coverage in the two weeks is all located in the Balkan Peninsula: Albania (23), Bosnia (40), Greece (32), Romania (12) and adjacent Turkey (15). The rest of the salient countries were mostly in Europe, such as Italy (26), France (63), Germany (51) and the United Kingdom (25). Lastly, Israel (23) and China (25) were also covered somewhat prominently in the Bulgarian press.

*China.* The United States (68) was placed in the central spotlight of the Chinese press. The nation's neighbor, Japan, only received 25 stories. Other salient nations in China's media were Bosnia (18), Russia (16), France (14) and the United Kingdom (11). Germany (9), Australia (6), Mexico (5), Italy (4) and South Africa (4) are also notable. A great number of nations across different continents received one or two stories, indicating an effort of the Chinese media to monitor various corners of the world.

*Côte d'Ivoire*. As in Benin, there was only one daily newspaper (*Le Jour*) coded in Côte d'Ivoire, which makes it harder to detect the trends in international coverage. Of the countries that received a relatively large number of news stories, most of them were in Africa – Algeria (3), Burundi (3), Egypt (4), Ghana (3), Liberia (5), Mali (4), Nigeria (4), South Africa (4), Zaire (4) and Zimbabwe (5). The United States, however, topped them all with 9 stories. France (4) and Israel (3) were rather salient in *Le Jour*, too.

*Cuba*. Based on the coding of Cuba's two broadcast media, its Western neighbour, Mexico, received the highest number of news stories (11), followed by France (9) and Argentina (8). The second tier of salient countries included two world powers: the United States (6) and China (5). Surprisingly, Cape Verde, a small island in the Atlantic, received three stories, the same amount of news, as did Ecuador and Iran. It seems harder, as in other countries whose media sample is limited, to identify any trend of international news coverage in Cuba.

*Cyprus*. Bosnia (15) and France (14), two of the nations where newsworthy events took place at the time, got the highest number of stories in the press of this Mediterranean island. Several countries in close proximity, including Israel (3), Macedonia (3), Russia (5) and Turkey (3), also received a fair amount of coverage. In addition, the United States (9), China (6) and the United Kingdom (5) were emphasised in Cyprus's media. One should note that the sample of Cyprus only included one week of news.

*Estonia*. Russia (79), Estonia's mighty neighbour and former ruler, was the most covered nation in this Baltic nation's media. The next tier of countries that occupied a significant part of the newshole of Estonian media included the United States (46), France (41) and Finland (31). Estonia's press devoted its attention rather evenly to other European countries. The following list of countries indicated the trend: Bosnia (19), Germany (18), Sweden (18), the United Kingdom (10), Latvia (9), Lithuania (9), Ukraine (8), Spain (9) and Croatia (7). Outside of Europe, China (16), Israel (18) and Japan (12) were also covered extensively.

*Finland*. With eight news media constituting the Finnish sample, countries that had extensive coverage are easily spotted from the statistical output. The United States beat all other nations with more than 300 news stories during the sample period. The runner up was Sweden, Finland's neighbour, which was featured in 213 news stories. The United Kingdom (178), Russia (170), France (150) and Bosnia (140) were the four other nations that received more than 100 stories. Other countries that received fair coverage were spread across Europe – Estonia (43), Norway (49), Germany (85) and Italy (38) – as well as selective spots of the world, such as China (53), Japan (45), Israel (34) and French Polynesia (26).

*Gambia*. As with other countries where only one newspaper was selected, it is somewhat tricky to identify the countries that were emphasised in Gambia. Based on the limited sample, Bosnia topped all countries with nine stories in

*The Observer*. Sierra Leone (8) and Liberia (4), both located in Western Africa, also received significant coverage. The rest of the list includes large countries such as China (4), France (4) and the United Kingdom (5). It is interesting to note that the United States, often on the top of the list of most covered countries, only received three stories.

*Germany*. At first glance, the nine news media that constitute the German sample covered world economic powers most extensively, including the United States (812), France (482), the United Kingdom (322) and Italy (234). Its neighbouring countries, Switzerland (156), Austria (140), and the Netherlands (100) and three populous countries Russia (285), China (124) and India (66), were also covered prominently. The other countries that received remarkable attention from the German media during the time included Israel (96), Bosnia (120) and Turkey (77) – the first two were constantly involved in conflicts; the third had a large number of immigrants living in Germany. Most countries mentioned so far received more than one hundred news stories in the sample period; on the other hand, Third World countries received scanty coverage – the majority of them either did not get covered at all or received fewer than ten news stories during the two weeks.

*Greece*. The conflict in Bosnia and former Yugoslavia (Serbia) drew the most attention in the Greek media over the two weeks. France (22) and the United States (20) also received significant coverage in Greece. Aside from France and Bosnia, other European countries that were moderately covered were Belgium (5), Italy (5), Russia (7), the United Kingdom (5) and Spain (4). Only one country outside of the Western world, China (8), was covered substantially.

*Hungary*. A first glance at the countries that got abundant coverage in Hungary's media shows that Europe was heavily covered. Particularly worth noting are Russia (142), Germany (120) and France (94). The other countries in Europe that also received significant coverage were Austria (40), Bosnia (49), Croatia (19), the Czech Republic (24), Italy (77), Poland (30), Romania (80), Slovakia (94), Spain (26), Switzerland (25), Turkey (23), Ukraine (27), the United Kingdom (74) and Yugoslavia (23). Nevertheless, the United States (232) was covered with the largest quantity of news items, and was distantly followed by runner-up, Germany (120). In other parts of the world, only three countries – Japan (26), China (29) and Israel (33) – received a fair number of stories.

*India*. The United States captured the first notch among the countries that were covered by India's news media (73). India's former colonial power, the United Kingdom, also received a significant number of news stories (35). The countries adjacent or close to India all got heavy coverage as well, including Afghanistan (8), Bangladesh (14), China (17), Nepal (19), Pakistan (43) and Sri Lanka (18). The rest of the countries featured in the Indian press were the traditional powers: France (13), Germany (13), Japan (15) and Russia (14).

*Indonesia*. The United States received the highest number of news stories (99) in the press of this vast Southeast Asian country. Countries in Asia-Pacific

overall earned noticeably more news space than those in other regions. Among the prominent ones, China received 30 stories, followed by Japan (21), India (14), Malaysia (9), and the Philippines (11). Apart from these, other countries that were significantly covered were all European: France (36), the United Kingdom (30), Germany (15), Italy (10) and Russia (10). Interestingly, the Netherlands, Indonesia's former colonial power, received five stories.

*Iran.* The most striking characteristic of the Iranian media's map of the world was the emphasis on the Muslim/Middle East. The long list of the countries that were prominent included: Afghanistan (32), Algeria (18), Azerbaijan (22), Egypt (19), Georgia (16), Iraq (50), Israel (47), Pakistan (22), Saudi Arabia (14), Syria (18) and Turkey (21). Nevertheless, it was the United States (164) that topped all the countries covered in Iran's press even though the relationship between these two was hostile. Other countries that also attracted the Iranian media's attention were Bosnia (37), France (52), Germany (46), Italy (37), Russia (64), Spain (21) and the United Kingdom (86) in Europe; and China (55), India (25), Japan (43) and South Korea (21) in Asia.

*Ireland.* The United Kingdom (544) was covered more significantly than any nation in Ireland. The United States (236) received roughly half the amount of the coverage of the United Kingdom. The third nation on the list of prominent nations was France (102), followed by Bosnia (56), China (35), Germany (33) and Italy (33). European nations and venues of international events such as Bosnia and China seemed to be the main foreign news fodder of Ireland. Aside from the aforementioned nations, South Africa (24), India (23), Russia (20), Israel (18), Canada (17) and Spain (14) seemed well represented.

*Israel.* The United States received far more coverage than any other countries in Israeli news media (230). The second-tier group was composed of France (107) and the United Kingdom (98). The Israeli press generally divided the international news space into a cluster of powerful nations (in terms of economy or geographic size) and the Middle East. China (35), Germany (56), Italy (41), Japan (44), Russia (46) and Spain (25) belonged to the former group, while Egypt (19), Iran (38), Iraq (19), Jordan (16) and Syria (18) made up the latter group. The only outlier that cannot fit into either group is Bosnia (36), which received a substantial chunk of newshole, too.

*Japan.* Japan has a slightly different preference in foreign news compared to other developed countries reported thus far. The United States was spotlighted in the Japanese media with more than 600 news items in the sample period, distantly followed by France (283) and China (223). Japanese news media appeared to favour developed, powerful countries (in addition to the above countries, the United Kingdom (88), Germany (57) and Russia (77) were salient), and its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific (Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam) were covered extensively. Japan also focused on the warfare in Bosnia (86) and the nuclear tests in French Polynesia (52) – the latter focus was probably part of the reason why France led among the European countries in the rank of news stories.

*Kenya.* The most evident trend discernible from the frequency output is that Kenya covered African countries more extensively, particularly those located in its region. The African countries that received significant coverage included South Africa (42), Uganda (24), Algeria (21), Sudan (15), Somalia (14), Tanzania (14), Egypt (14) and Nigeria (13). Surprisingly, China, perhaps due to its role as the host of the United Nations Women's Conference, received the largest amount of news coverage (64). Other countries that were prominent in Kenya's press were also well represented in other countries' counterparts, for instance Bosnia (14), France (20), India (19), the United Kingdom (29) and the United States (44).

*Kuwait.* As in Kenya's case, Kuwait's international news coverage reflects a strong regional flavour. Not only did the countries in the region generally receive substantial coverage but also one of them, Egypt, received the highest number of news stories (30) in Kuwait's media. What follows is the list of those prominent countries in the region: Saudi Arabia (28), Oman (15), Syria (12), Iraq (11), Iran (6), the United Arab Emirates (6) and Jordan (5). The world's major countries that received the largest amount of coverage, including the United Kingdom (7), the United States (6), Canada (6), China (7) and Russia (8), also had similar numbers of news stories in the Kuwaiti press. Surprisingly, France, a frequent nation on the most covered list, was not covered at all.

*Lebanon.* Three countries dominated the Lebanese news media during the period: the United States (138), France, (129) and Israel (114). The other countries that also received significant coverage can roughly be lumped into two groups: Middle Eastern countries and the world powers. The former group was composed of Algeria (31), Egypt (92), Iran (39), Iraq (49), Jordan (30), Saudi Arabia (20), Sudan (19), Syria (43) and Turkey (23). The latter group consisted of the United Kingdom (34), China (45), Germany (37), Italy (28), Japan (18) and Russia (54). Also on the list of salient countries was Bosnia (22).

*Malaysia.* The regional power, China (56), superseded the usual suspect – the United States (26) – to be the nation in the spotlight of Malaysian media. Malaysia's journalistic attention was also somewhat regional, focusing copiously on Hong Kong (6), India (4), Pakistan (4) and the Philippines (4), among others. Perhaps due to the limited media sample, the number of nations covered is not great, which merits caution when interpreting the results.

*New Zealand.* Will New Zealand monitor the world differently from countries in the northern hemisphere and resemble Australia's choices? According to the results, the United Kingdom (176), the United States (173) and Australia (147) – New Zealand's English-speaking relatives – dominated the international newshole of New Zealand's media. The second tier of media attention was given to the French nuclear tests off the New Zealand coast: France (70) and French Polynesia (52) therefore claimed a substantial share of the total newshole. The rest of the space was somewhat evenly allocated to the warfare in Bosnia (36) and to miscellaneous countries such as China (32), Japan (36), South Africa (28), Russia (23), Hong Kong (22) and Sri Lanka (22).



Interestingly, information flow between Australia and New Zealand was not balanced – New Zealand covered more about Australia than vice versa.

*Nigeria.* International news coverage in Nigeria can be summed up with a couple of points. First, two English-speaking countries – the United States (25) and the United Kingdom (27) – were almost equally emphasised in the news media. Secondly, other than these two highlighted nations, international news space in Nigeria was quite dispersed among other countries, with only slightly more emphasis given to the African continent. The following group of prominent nations reflected the worldview of Nigeria's press: Brazil (6), China (9), Israel (5), Japan (5), Liberia (7), South Africa (13) and Zimbabwe (9).

*Norway.* The French nuclear tests held in the South Pacific got the highest attention in the Norwegian press, which resulted in the abundant coverage of France (75) and French Polynesia (20). It is interesting to note that the news media in Norway devoted substantial space to a very limited number of countries. The highlighted countries in the Norwegian news media can be categorised into two groups: European countries – Bosnia (45), Germany (10), Italy (11), Russia (17), Sweden (23) and the United Kingdom (41) – and other big nations – China (30), India (8), and the United States (55).

*Portugal.* The United States (114), once again, topped all countries in the frequency of appearance in the Portuguese press. The second tier of prominent countries covered included the large European powers such as France (85), Spain (84), Italy (52), Germany (48), the United Kingdom (44) and Russia (31). It is fascinating to discover that three Latin-language European countries – France, Spain, and Italy – received more coverage than the Anglo-Saxon Britain and Germany. Another group of well-represented countries, including Angola (21), Mozambique (15) and Brazil (34) shared a common nexus as former Portuguese colonies. Other countries that were also highlighted were not uncommon in other host countries' media, including Bosnia (38), China (35), Israel (20), Japan (20) and South Africa (14).

*Romania.* The Romanian press devoted the largest space to covering the United States (77), which received even more than its mighty neighbour, Russia (50). France (47) also received a substantial share of news coverage, followed by the United Kingdom (36) and Italy (35). Three nations in Eastern Europe, Bosnia (25), Poland (18) and Hungary (17) and two other European nations, Spain (17) and Germany (15), were also covered with decent volume. Aside from these European nations, only Israel (14), Japan (12) and China (11) were able to make the cut to appear in the Romanian press.

*Russia.* The first impression one would get from the frequency output of the news coverage is that the Russian press covered more East European and Central Asian countries that were either part of the former Soviet Union or within its radius of influence. Of these nations, some received large numbers of news stories individually – Bosnia (38), Georgia (20), Lithuania (12), Ukraine (11) and Estonia (10). Nevertheless, the United States, Russia's traditional rival, got the

most attention (42). Other than China (15) and Japan (18), the other countries that were emphasised in Russia's news media were all in Europe – France (33), the United Kingdom (20), Germany (15), Spain (10) and Sweden (10).

*Senegal.* The international newshole in Senegal's media was largely devoted to African countries: Algeria (12), Cote d'Ivoire (23), Kenya (5), Mali (9), Niger (5), Nigeria (11), South Africa (20), Sudan (8), Zaire (7) and Zimbabwe (7). Some of these above countries share the French colonial background. The most covered was France, with 24 news stories, which is only one more story than Côte d'Ivoire got. Surprisingly, only three other countries outside Africa – Bosnia (12), the United States (12) and the United Kingdom (8) – were salient in Senegal's press over the period.

*South Africa.* The United States and the United Kingdom were the two countries that jointly dominated South Africa's international news space during the time frame, both receiving more than 100 news stories. Distantly following were other prominent countries around the world: Australia (11), China (24), France (27), Germany (17), Italy (11), Japan (17) and Russia (18). Bosnia (18) and Israel (12), two conflict spots of the world, also received significant coverage. It is worth mentioning that overall the countries in Africa were more substantially covered than those in other continents, even though only two countries – Zimbabwe (11) and Kenya (14) – stood out from the list as being prominently covered.

*Slovenia.* Slovenia's media published or broadcast more than two hundred stories about the United States during the sample period. Its western neighbour, Italy (121), gained the second place among the more prominent countries. It is interesting that Slovenia's international news menu mainly concentrated on European countries. Almost all of the countries in Europe were covered in those two weeks. What follows is a list of salient European countries in the Slovenian press: Austria (34), Belgium (21), Bosnia (50), Croatia (51), France (78), Germany (81), Russia (84), Spain (28), the United Kingdom (64) and Yugoslavia (38). Outside Europe, however, only China (50), Israel (32), Japan (21), Canada (20), India (20) and Australia (13) appeared frequently in Slovenian media.

*Spain.* The United States (170) and France (138) dominated the international news in Spain's media. Bosnia (77), Italy (74), the United Kingdom (64) and Germany (64), belonged to the second tier of prominence in Spanish media. It is noticeable that Spain's international coverage was dispersed rather evenly, as indicated by the fact that countries highlighted here are located in every continent. For example, in Africa, Algeria (30), Morocco (14) and Guinea (17) were salient; in Latin America, both Colombia and Mexico received 17 stories, respectively; Israel (18), in the Middle East, received substantial coverage; in Asia-Pacific, China (48), Japan (23) and French Polynesia (17) all were covered with a substantial number of stories. In addition to the European countries already mentioned, Russia (43), Portugal (19), Yugoslavia (16) and the Vatican (15) were also conspicuous.

*Thailand.* Compared to the last few countries, Thailand's media provided a strikingly different news menu for its audience. The list of the salient countries in the Asia-Pacific that were well represented includes China (49), Japan (28), Vietnam (24), India (23), Australia (15), Cambodia (15), the Philippines (12), South Korea (12), Myanmar (12) and Pakistan (10). Nevertheless, the United States topped them all with more than one hundred news stories (115). The United Kingdom also occupied a large portion (77) of the available international newshole in Thailand's media. The rest of the countries that were also emphasised were all in Europe: France (32), Bosnia (20), Russia (20) and Spain (12).

*Turkey.* Once again, the United States (118) surpassed all other countries in international news coverage in Turkey. The runner-up of the coverage contest was Bosnia, which received 80 news stories. Economic powers in Europe, such as France (50), Germany (40), the United Kingdom (44) and Italy (22), as in other host countries, received substantial coverage in the Turkish media. What is unique here is that the countries surrounding Turkey all got fair amounts of coverage. For example, Russia and Iraq both had 33 news stories. Other countries in the nearby region, such as Azerbaijan (11), Greece (23), Iran (19), Israel (13) and Saudi Arabia (11) were well represented. China (33) and Japan (11) were the only two countries in the Far East that were salient in the Turkish press.

*Ukraine.* The first characteristic one would be struck with by the Ukrainian press is that the countries in Eastern Europe were covered significantly. Of these nations, Russia led with 58 stories. Bosnia (13) and Georgia (7), also in the same region, also received substantial coverage. The nation that occupied second place in Ukraine's press, however, was the United States (34). The rest of the countries that received substantial coverage belong to the group of world economic elites – France (8), Germany (7), Japan (7) and the United Kingdom (11).

*United Kingdom.* With 12 media included in the British sample, the difference between the countries that got heavy coverage and those that did not looms more significant. The country with the single largest part of the newshole is, unsurprisingly, the United States, which received a total of more than 800 stories during the two weeks. With less than half of the news stories that the United States received, France is the runner-up, perhaps thanks to the incidents that occurred in Lyon and French Polynesia. Next, Bosnia (201), Germany (117) and Russia (115), and to a lesser extent, Italy (73) and Spain (63), were the prominent European countries in the British press. Aside from the above countries, there seemed to exist a colonial link among the well-covered countries listed below: Australia (60), Hong Kong (28), India (81), Ireland (90), New Zealand (28), Pakistan (26) and South Africa (76). Last, three other usual suspects – China (62), Israel (49), and Japan (61) – were also covered heavily.

*United States of America.* The long-lasting conflict in Bosnia received more attention than any other countries in the US news media during the sample

period. Next to Bosnia (101), the United Kingdom (72), France (57) and Japan (54) all got substantial media attention, followed by conventional powers like China (50) and Russia (35). Israel (41), a frequent conflict spot in the Middle East, also generated a great number of news stories in the US media. The third level of American media attention was paid to the country's neighbours, Canada (26) and Mexico (17), and to two countries further afield, Germany (18) and India (18). As in the other host countries, a large number of countries, especially in the Third World, did not receive any coverage in the American news media during the two-week time frame.

*Venezuela.* Regional countries were very much emphasised in Venezuela's news media. The United States, the superpower of the hemisphere, was the dominant news superpower with 155 news items. Those countries in Latin America that were also salient in the Venezuelan press included Colombia (57), Ecuador (28), Mexico (27), Argentina (20), Peru (12) and Cuba (10). The other group of prominent nations were all located in Europe – France (58), Bosnia (22), Spain (22), the United Kingdom (19), Italy (18), Russia (11) and Germany (10). Interestingly, China was the only country located outside of America and Europe that received significant coverage.

### The World in the World's Media

Presented below are the aggregate results from the international news coverage of the 44 countries. The primary purpose is to draw a more comprehensive picture of the mediated world with which to extract a general pattern of international news flow. According to the numbers of news stories tallied for each country (see Table 1), the top ten most-covered are as follows: the United States (6699), France (3280), the United Kingdom (2833), Russia (1992), Bosnia (1696), China (1495), Germany (1391), Italy (1206), Japan (913) and Israel (771).

It is intriguing to note that seven out of the ten countries that received the largest amount of coverage are economic powers. Except for Canada, the G-8 countries were all copiously covered in the world's press. The United States, dominant in almost every country's newshole, snatched roughly sixteen per cent of the world's available space for foreign news. Also salient in the news world were China and Russia, both having formidable military and political clout. The substantial coverage of Bosnia and Israel seemed a product of the conflicts that were taking place in both countries at the time. Using a different measure, the average percentage of newshole each country received in the forty-four nations (see the second column of Table 1) also resulted in similar ranking, suggesting a consistent pattern of international news coverage.

The list of the most covered nations shows that countries with political and economic clout tend to be emphasised more in the press. Other than being a world power, the only alternative way to be cast in the world's spotlight is to have large-scale, disruptive incidents. And that, of course, is why Bosnia was so well covered at this time. The same justification can be applied, although

probably to a lesser extent, to the cases of France and China, where major international events were taking place.

	number		average share
US	6699	US	15.57%
France	3280	France	7.84%
UK	2833	UK	6.92%
Russia	1992	Russia	5.18%
Bosnia	1696	China	4.92%
China	1495	Bosnia	4.78%
Germany	1391	Germany	3.18%
Italy	1206	Japan	2.46%
Japan	913	Italy	2.44%
Israel	771	Israel	1.91%

Table 1. The top ten countries covered in the media of 44 countries

These results also indicate that international news coverage is highly uneven, not only at the level of each individual country, but also at the level of the world as a whole. Even with the combined news sample, many countries in Africa and Latin America, such as Cameroon, Central African Republic, Reunion, Honduras and Guatemala, did not appear on the world media's radar screen, while a few others got abundant coverage worldwide. How each country's media selected news stories and presented the world merits further investigation and theoretical discussion.

Another potentially significant phenomenon derived from this forty-four country comparison is that news media in most countries seemed to devote more space to covering their respective regions than remote parts of the world. This trend of regional focus can be demonstrated vividly when one compares the international news coverage in any European country with that in any African nation. Although it is technically difficult to define a region and to empirically test the notion,<sup>5</sup> cross-national findings may indirectly provide evidence to support the trend found in earlier literature (see Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; Cooper, 1988; Nnaemeka and Richstad, 1980).

This basic comparison can lead to a demonstration of the universality of news value or agenda selection from the specific cases of Bosnia and French Polynesia. These two geographic areas would not have been emphasised in the world's media if the incidents were not considered newsworthy by the gatekeepers around the world. On the other hand, one might contend that this phenomenon of similar 'news diet' could be due to the influence of international news agencies. Because of the limited 'news menu' provided by the major transnational news services,

dependent media, particularly those in the South, would likely take the feeds. In the cases of Bosnia and French Polynesia, both factors are simultaneously at work. The potential impact of transnational news agencies on news coverage might be investigated further with a more advanced method.

This primitive examination of international news coverage may appear overwhelming since each country's news window to the world is vitally different. It could be the case that the underlying determinant of each nation's angle to see the world is as different as the variation of the coverage. Yet, it is imperative for researchers to seek and seize the most fundamental denominators that shape the mediated world we read, listen to, watch, and eventually treat as reality. Because the impact of this difference is too huge and broad, we simply cannot ignore this inquiry.

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### Notes

- 1 Cuba, Cyprus, Gambia, Greece, Indonesia, Nigeria, Norway, Thailand, and Venezuela only completed the first week of sample.
- 2 The project recorded three countries mentioned in each news story. However, the volume of coverage each country received using major country coded or all three countries coded was found almost identical (in terms of the variance among countries). Based on the thirty-eight-country sample, the Spearman correlation coefficient between the two measures of coverage reaches .972.
- 3 The list of the countries of the world came from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Whenever a country is listed in either organisation, it is included and tallied. The countries included 29 developing countries (based on International Monetary Fund definitions): Argentina, Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Estonia, Gambia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Slovenia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Venezuela; and 15 developed countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, UK, USA.
- 4 The number in parentheses that follows each country's name is the number of news stories.
- 5 The notion of region could be composed of psychological elements and history of transnational interaction, rather than purely determined by geographic boundary or distance.