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# International news coverage online as presented by three news agencies

Molly Ambrogi-Yanson

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Running Head: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

International News Coverage Online as Presented by Three News Agencies

by

Molly Ambrogi-Yanson

*A Thesis submitted*

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication and Media Technologies

Degree Awarded:

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of  
Molly Ambrogi-Yanson presented on July 9, 2010

---

Bruce A. Austin, Ph.D.  
Chairman and Professor of Communication  
Department of Communication  
Thesis Advisor

---

Keith B. Jenkins, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication  
Thesis Advisor

---

Brian Barry, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Departments of Sociology and Psychology  
Thesis Advisor

---

Rudy Pugliese, Ph.D.  
Professor of Communication  
Coordinator, Communication & Media  
Technologies Graduate Degree Program  
Department of Communication

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE ONLINE AS PRESENTED  
BY THREE NEWS AGENCIES

Name: Molly Ambrogi-Yanson

Department: Communication

College: Liberal Arts

Degree: Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

Term Degree Awarded: Summer 2010 (20094)

Abstract

Past research examining international news reveals that news consumers are frequently presented with a geographically imbalanced worldview shaped by Western ideals. The present study provides an updated look at international coverage as it exists online by three news agencies that historically dominated global news reporting: the Associated Press, Reuters, and Agence-France Presse. A content analysis of news item datelines and storylines from April 2010 for each source on the aggregate Yahoo! News Website revealed that international coverage remains imbalanced despite the inherently global characteristics of the World Wide Web. While agency material no longer retains a Western focus and offers neutral and unbiased reporting, it does not equally portray the world's geographic regions and emphasizes "updated" and "breaking" political stories.

Key Words: News agency, international, online, Internet, Yahoo! News

## International News Coverage Online as Presented

by Three News Agencies

In the late 1960s, Marshall McLuhan predicted that electronic technologies would create a “global village.” He argued that evolving media would extend human interest across national borders as we “become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 24). Recently developed technologies, such as the Internet, grant citizens unprecedented access to global knowledge, beyond what McLuhan envisioned. The Web enables digitally connected people anywhere to understand world events and their global neighbors.

In the last decade, researchers have studied how the Internet effects newsgathering patterns as it surpasses traditional media, with the exception of television, as Americans’ preferred source for international news (PEW, 2008). Beyond the American audience, the Web is a daily news source for the world community as four out of five global online users access news portals for information about their international neighbors (Akamai, 2009). The Internet also provides its growing audience with multimedia elements, interactivity functions and extending hyperlinks: features unavailable to traditional media. These elements empower the Web user to attend to international news in unmatched ways. Online news gatherers have greater control over their foreign news exposure, can personalize their Net experience, access greater

depth of information and thus create different perceptions of mediated content than print and broadcast consumers (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). Furthermore, a 2001 national survey finds support for the role of the Internet as a “significant predictor of international knowledge” when used to gather news information (Beaudoin, 2008).

Although the Internet allows consumers to pay greater attention to international news, further research reveals a paradox. Americans constitute nearly 25% of the global Internet audience (Thurman, 2007); however, Americans’ accessibility to global information does not translate into an interest in or knowledge of global affairs. For example, despite daily coverage of military events in the Middle East, 63% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 could not find Iraq or Saudi Arabia on a map of the region in 2006 (National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs, 2006). Thus, the question arises whether online news sources present adequate international news coverage to satisfy audience interest.

While the Internet is inherently an international medium, major online newspapers do not always take advantage of cyberspace as an unrestricted multimedia outlet and unlimited newshole. Many Websites lack content, depth and hyperlinks that grant news seekers paths for further exploration (Chang, Himelboim & Dong, 2009). Online news consumers are limited by what journalists contribute and the content may represent bias. This situation parallels that of “older” media such as print and broadcast

news. In addition, a current trend among online newspapers to emphasize local issues at the expense of global coverage may reflect an American hesitancy to embrace the international medium (Ricchiardi, 2007-2008; Singer, 2001).

The present research goes beyond the analysis of content as presented by online newspapers by extending critical investigation to the institutions that have played an international role for almost two centuries. News agencies have historically mastered the ability to gather news across the world and report it to a global audience. The Associated Press (AP), for example, boasts 243 overseas bureaus operating in 97 countries. Their stories have the capacity to reach a billion people daily. Although an American enterprise, 70% of AP's clients are located abroad. In addition, while other news institutions have pulled out of foreign locales, AP continually expands its global reach and at the same time adapts to the Internet's challenges (Ricchiardi, 2007-2008). Agencies "have an obligation to educate the public about the important international news" and do so through various media (Ricchiardi, 2007-2008, pg. 35).

The present study investigates the extent to which the three major news wires—the Associated Press, Agence-France Presse, and Reuters—provide online media consumers with balanced and encompassing worldviews on the aggregate Yahoo! News Website. The following research questions guide this study.



*Research Question 1:* What differences are there among the three news agencies and the global regions covered in their stories?

*Research Question 2:* What differences are there among the three news agencies and the topics that they report?

*Research Question 3:* What are the differences among news agencies regarding the negative or positive values that they attribute to geographical regions?

*Research Question 4:* What geographical, topical and directional differences exist between online wire services and the international news stories as reported by the NYTimes.com?

The study helps illuminate how Western news agencies, through a portal media outlet, depict the world and whether international news representation requires reassessment in the context of an increasingly globalized community. International events are becoming progressively more salient to domestic populations and their news gathering habits reflect these trends as they look to the Internet for world coverage.

### Review of Literature

As public interest in world affairs grows, news consumers rely on media to describe events outside their daily experience. This dependence prompted scholars at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to investigate how the press depicted foreign nations and

international events. At this time, just over one percent of American daily newspapers consisted of foreign news (Wilcox, 1900). The press was geographically limited. It did not represent all global populations and could not report on every event worldwide. Instead, Lippmann (1965) compared the press to a “beam of a searchlight mov[ing] restlessly about,” highlighting a sensational event in one part of the world before quickly illuminating another occurrence across the globe (p. 229).

Looking beyond the American press, Wilke (1987) conducted the first longitudinal study of international coverage. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German, French, English and American newspapers increased their foreign reporting and extended their coverage geographically outward from a traditional European focus. However, Central and South America, Africa and Asia remained in the periphery, as agency bureau locations and agreements determined international coverage into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The worldview created by global media remained an imbalanced one in the 1950s and 1970s (Sterling, 1972; Gerbner & Marvanyi, 1977). Although news agencies extended their geographic reach, wire material focused predominantly on the U.S. and Western Europe. Stories contained “official news,” focusing on politics, foreign relations, war and economics. When global media did report on a “peripheral” geographic area, coverage emphasized “unusual events,” highlighting crisis and

outbreaks of violence (Sterling, 1972). According to Gerbner and Marvanyi (1977), the “process of reciprocal information [was] out of joint,” as wire agencies dominated the news flow (p. 60). Kayser (1953) warned that such agency dependence for foreign narrative ignored the “national subjectivity” and “journalistic diversity” that media consumers relied upon to understand events abroad (p. 93).

However, not all research supports the prevailing influence of international news agencies. A 1994 study provided a longitudinal look at one “elite” American medium, the *New York Times*, and its “shrinking foreign newshole” over a 22-year period (Riffe, Aust, Jones, Shoemake & Sundar, 1994, p. 74). The paper reported a decrease in international reports from 1969 to 1990. However, its stories from abroad were longer and had greater depth. News agency contributions in the *New York Times* decreased as well and the remaining agency articles were shorter in length. Thus, while the importance of international news did not diminish, the paper’s decreasing need or use of agency-contributed material may reflect the domestic focus of the *Time’s* coverage.

Beyond quantitative analysis, scholars have investigated qualitative aspects of international coverage as presented by newspapers. Consistently attributing cultural values to geographical areas in the media promotes stereotypes and misrepresentation. A content analysis of the *Los Angeles Times* reveals an emphasis of specific values for certain world regions (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2001). For example, the attribution of

materialism to Asia, power and not peace to Africa, and spirituality to the Middle East appeared consistently. To avoid misrepresentation, the media must recognize what values they repeatedly ascribe to certain world regions (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2001). Furthermore, global media institutions, such as news agencies, have the capacity to provide a diverse range of values to more accurately and comprehensively depict the world.

Although newspaper readership is in decline, Americans continue to cite television as their primary source for domestic and international news (PEW, 2008). During the 1950s, television gained unrivaled popularity among the American public. Concerned that evening broadcasts helped “viewers create stereotypes and form opinions about foreign nations,” scholars turned their attention to evening network news (Hester, 1978, p. 87). Parallel to the aforementioned studies about print coverage, the televised news was geographically and topically imbalanced. Most foreign stories concerned military-defense matters, while human-interest features and other “soft news” topics rarely aired. Broadcast coverage focused on Western European and American participation in armed conflict and civil unrest (Hester, 1978). Developed nations received more exposure than developing countries, and the coverage of the latter areas was crisis-orientated. Furthermore, reporting of peripheral regions occurred primarily in relation to, or in the interest of, a developed nation (Larson, 1979).

A 1992 analysis updated previous research and revealed that over an 18-year time frame foreign news reporting changed minimally (Gozenbach, Arant & Stevenson, 1992). While new technologies facilitated foreign correspondent reporting, network anchors continued to use stories supplied by news agencies to cover international topics in greater depth and for longer time (Gozenbach et al., 1992). Yet news coverage of developing nations was largely absent; such reports depended on the presence of international news agencies and correspondents (Larson, 1979).

During the last few decades, emerging technologies such as cable and the Internet have challenged network television. Cable channels have even attracted a growing audience through online offerings. For example, CNN boasts the largest cumulative American audience for cable television news. Its counterpart, CNN International (CNNI), claims a position as the largest international broadcast network across the globe (Groshek, 2008). Both have created Websites for their respective viewers. Yet, despite audience differences, the online content of CNN and CNNI is extremely similar (Groshek, 2008). Furthermore, an American-framed agenda profoundly pervaded both sites, supporting the theory of homogenized global news influenced by American ideals (Groshek, 2008).

While broadcast media has expanded online, not all American newspapers have equally embraced cyberspace's possibilities. Despite a lack of geographic limitations,

metro American newspapers have remained local in Web content in comparison to their print counterparts (Singer, 2001). However, media institutions with an increasingly national audience, such as the aforementioned CNN and *The New York Times* offer more international stories online than their traditional broadcast and print media, respectively (Wu, 2007). Yet again, global coverage remains imbalanced as nations that house international news agencies experienced greater coverage. Thus, “the power of news agencies, the old guard of international news flow, seems to have resurged with the help of the Internet” (Wu, 2007, p. 549). Yet, Wu recognizes the drawbacks of such agency dependence. Reliance on wire material limits the news menu to “breaking” and “updating” stories rather than detailed and different kinds of information. Although a hopeful possibility, “the Web proves no panacea to the decline or abated diversity of international news in the US media” (Wu, 2007, p. 549).

Extending beyond American institutions, Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams and Trammell (2005) analyzed hundreds of international news Websites representing nearly 50 countries. The content differences reveal that even though the Web reaches a worldwide audience, national media online continue to reflect the political and social environment in which they operate. In contrast with Groshek (2008), Dimitrova and her colleagues argue that a homogenous representation of the world does not exist online. The 2005 study also reveals the important role of news agencies during the initial

coverage of an international event. The global sites employed agency stories, images and homepage hyperlinks to increase the depth of their coverage and provide updated material (Dimitrova et al., 2005).

As these past studies highlight, news agencies have played an important role in news reporting across different media. The dominance of international agencies as a source of foreign material and a globalizing force has permeated research since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Woodward, 1930; Kayser, 1953; Sterling, 1972; Larson, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984; Gozenbach et al., 1992; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 2004; Sreberny & Paterson, 2004; Dimitrova et al., 2005).

In the 1970s, scholars reconsidered the role of the largest news agencies: Western institutions that local media across the world depended on for international coverage. Criticism and discussion sparked the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), a debate that became a central focus of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Sreberny & Paterson, 2004). UNESCO and the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), an organization representing over 60 countries, sponsored studies investigating news content, flow and the supremacy of the Big Four Western institutions and their ability to set the world agenda.

The involved organizations and researchers compiled their data with other comparable studies to create a “worldwide inventory of current foreign news content characteristics” of print, broadcast and wire service material of over 40 nations (Stevenson, 1984, p. 24). A trend appeared, revealing that the international media focused primarily on their respective local regions. Almost half of the foreign news in the Third World centered on surrounding areas. Following these locales, areas of the First World, including Western Europe and North America, dominated the news. Those in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, Latin America, Africa and Asia remained fairly invisible.

The UNESCO and IAMCR research also addressed criticism that “international news emphasizes ‘bad news’ such as social disruption and natural calamity” (Stevenson & Shaw, 1984, p. 44). Scholars found no support for this argument, stating that news was first and foremost politics, a consistent pattern across all nations and regions of the world (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984). The researchers also investigated whether a news bias, or the unequal treatment of different nations and global regions, existed. They found that “most news is essentially neutral until it is interpreted by readers, listeners, or viewers” (Stevenson & Shaw, 1984, p. 48). In all the countries studied, at least half of the news did not reflect any political, cultural or ideological bias.



Lastly, the UNESCO studies downplayed the role of the “Big Four” Western Agencies: AP, Reuters, Agence-France Presse and UPI. While wire services did set the news agenda at a national level, their reporting was neutral. Local gatekeepers, such as editors and staff, chose what made the news and how to depict the world to their audience. Furthermore, while the agencies served as a “major” source of news, they were not the *only* source. The historic argument depicting Third World nations as dependent on Western institutions appeared exaggerated (Stevenson & Shaw, 1984; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984).

Those involved in the NWICO acknowledged that technological innovations would eventually change the way world citizens received their news and challenged journalists to evolve their practice accordingly (Stevenson & Cole, 1981). These studies shed light on the role of news agencies in an era before the rise of the Internet and online news sources. While agencies continue to play a role in print and broadcast news, an updated investigation of the source proves relevant to understanding international news today.

## Method

This study employed content analysis to explore three areas of international news as presented by three news agencies: global regions, topics, and direction of

coverage. Because the agencies did not grant the researcher access to their archived articles or the news items available through their Websites, the study employed material on the aggregate portal: Yahoo! News.

In February 2010, over 43 million online users found their news at Yahoo!, “the most visited news site on the Web” (Helft, 2010, paragraph 3). As an aggregate site, Yahoo! News does not create content, and thus avoids editorial bias. Yahoo! insists its goal is to present a broad spectrum of viewpoints through multiple contributing sources which include AP, Agence-France Presse (AFP), and Reuters. In fact, online users have the ability to sort the site’s content by specific topics such as “U.S.,” “World,” “Business,” “Entertainment,” “Sports” and so on. In addition the user can further arrange what news he or she finds by choosing a specific contributing source. For the purposes of this study, the researcher selected news items from the “World” section of Yahoo! News and filtered the content to access only those articles provided by AP, AFP and Reuters separately.

To add further depth to this investigation, this research also examined international news covered by the NYTimes.com. To maintain a similar selection process as Yahoo!, only the news items from NYTimes.com’s “World” page were examined.

The date and storylines, as gathered from downloaded and printed pages of the four online sources, represent the unit of analysis of each story. This data was collected once a day between 8 and 10 a.m. Eastern Time during the thirty-day month of April 2010. Information available through hyperlinks was excluded. An example of the study's unit of analysis follows:

[Scientists begin 520-day Mars mission simulation](#)

AP – 25 mins ago

MOSCOW - An international team of researchers climbed into a set of windowless steel capsules Thursday to launch a 520-day simulation of a flight to Mars intended to help real space crews of the future cope with confinement, stress and fatigue of interplanetary travel.

After categorizing the story for its online source, the date of publication was coded to aid the researcher's organizational procedures. In addition, the following information was coded for the NYTimes.com articles: whether the story was a news agency contribution or a staff-written piece. Although the study's research questions do not incorporate a contributing source variable, its inclusion provided further depth of analysis and allowed for comparison with other studies.

Geographic classifications were determined by information in each article date and storyline. The dateline generally reflected the location of the reporting agency bureau. However, it did not always represent the story's locality. For example, the articles concerning North Korea noted South Korea in their datelines. Thus, the researcher coded for both the dateline country and the "focus nation" of the storyline.

The study used a list of sovereign nations and territories recognized by the United Nations as a classification guide.

Past research has categorized global regions into *developing* or *developed* nations, *First*, *Second*, and *Third World* countries, or along Northern and Southern hemispheric lines (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2001; Stevenson & Cole, 1981; Riffe et al., 1994; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1980). However, these classifications do not reflect the evolving definition of geographical areas. For example, the European Union recently increased its membership to include nations previously considered part of the post-Soviet block. This study avoided economic and political classifications and coded geographically. To maintain consistency, the researcher used a list of “World Macro Regions and Components” created by the UN (United Nations, 2000). Stories that concerned international organizations or more than one country were classified as having a “multi-national” focus and sometimes a “multi-regional” concentration. These categories reflect the international focus of multiple nations associated with these organizations or a particular event (Sterling, 1972).

An additional coding element noted whether the article’s headline or storyline mentioned the United States. This allowed the researcher to determine whether the story reflected an American presence in an international news event rather than reporting on a foreign nation at its own merit.

The study modified past news “topic” categories previously established by the UNESCO and IAMCR project (Gozenbach et al., 1992; Stevenson & Cole, 1981). The 26 topic categories ranged from international politics to culture and art. Appendix A provides a detailed coding scheme. If a story contained more than one subject, the coder classified the “primary topic” as well as the “secondary topic” of the article.

In addition to medium, date, contributing source, geographic focus, and topic variables, the study also investigates the “direction” of the news story (Rimmer, 1980). The direction categorizes inherent positive, negative or neutral values attached to newsworthy issues. In past research, coding of this variable followed a set of “themes and references” established by UNESCO and IAMCR in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Stevenson & Cole, 1984). These outdated categories focused on the subject matter of the story, not the inherent character of the reporting. Although certain topics of the news are not positive, such as war and crime, the coder looked beyond the issue and coded according to the impression or “value judgment” he or she was left with from the reporting (Groshek, 2008). It is necessary to note that bias judgments convey certain cultural values. Thus, a “neutral” category was included for the news elements that imparted a varied or indistinguishable direction.

To ensure the reliability of content coding, inter- and intra-coding measurements were calculated. A trial analysis employing similar material was used to determine

intra-coder reliability for the medium, date, contributing source, geographic focus and topic elements. The researcher examined ten stories from each of the media outlets that were not included in the sample. She coded them twice at an interval of one week. The intra-coder reliability of the researcher conducting the content coding measured between 91.9 and 100% for all variables. A student who has completed his Masters degree at the same institution was trained by the researcher to ensure that the subjective element of “direction” was treated with impartiality and consistency. A similar process, using Scott’s *pi* measured inter-coder reliability at 75%.

## Results

A total of 1881 news items were coded. The Associated Press produced 542 news items, followed by Agence-France Presse with 508 articles. Reuters offered 446 items, and lastly NYTimes.com produced 385 articles during the month of April 2010. Representing 20 of the 21 world regions, 110 different nations were cited in both the articles’ date and storylines. Table 1, found in Appendix C, shows the ten countries most frequently mentioned by the datelines of each agency. The material provided by the NYTimes.com did not include a dateline, thus the researcher only coded this medium for geographic nation and region.

Thailand was the most frequently cited nation, representing just less than six percent of the agencies' news content. During the studied time period, the country experienced extensive domestic unrest as political protests escalated into violent uprisings and the consequential declaration of martial law. China followed Thailand as the news highlighted flooding, a mining accident and an earthquake that plagued the country. The United Kingdom also appeared regularly as the press reported on current political elections and candidate debates.

*Research Question 1* asked about geographic differences among the three agencies' coverage. In terms of diversity, AP extended its reporting across 90 countries while AFP and Reuters covered 74 nations each. To compare data using cross tabulations, it was necessary to focus on a smaller data set. Rather than examining the 195 nations included in the coding scheme, statistical computations focused on a smaller data set: only those countries that appeared twenty times or more.

Agency coverage of "dateline nations" was significantly different ( $X^2=125.4$ ,  $df=38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). While Reuters produced 42.1% of the articles datelined in Afghanistan, AFP contributed only 21.1%. Another difference appeared in stories with United States datelines. Interestingly, AFP provided the majority of these items (78.3%), while AP and Reuters contributed 11.6% and 10.1% respectively.

The coding element of “focus nation,” or the country depicted in the storyline, was significantly different as well ( $X^2=101.5$ ,  $df=51$ ,  $p < .001$ ). While the agencies gave similar attention to South Korea, they again differed in their coverage of the United States. AFP provided 59.5% of these stories, followed by the NYTimes.com (23.8%), AP (11.0%) and Reuters (4.8%).

Another possible way of exploring Research Question 1 was to compare the attention given to the world’s global regions by each agency. Table 2, found in Appendix C, illustrates the ten most frequently represented regions of the world in the news by all four sources. Again, to compute the cross-tabulation, the researcher focused on a smaller data set by combining smaller geographical areas into larger aggregate regions, as outlined in Appendix B. Chi square tests revealed that coverage by the three agencies was statistically different ( $X^2=34.6$ ,  $df=15$ ,  $p=.003$ ). AFP produced more 33 percent of the stories concerning North and South America while Reuters created only eight percent of these items. Geographically, each agency presented news consumers with different worldviews.

Table 3, found in Appendix C, highlights the topics covered by the studied sources, data that pertains to *Research Question 2*. International and domestic politics composed over one-third of the online items. AP differed from the other sources, as its reporting favored war and terrorism instead of domestic politics. At first glance, one



might assume that AP's focus reflects the agency's nationality and the present U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, NYTimes.com, another American institution, produced proportionately fewer stories in the subject area. Furthermore, a greater percentage (17.2%) of AFP's stories focused on natural disasters, tragedy and accidents, while this subject accounted for less than 10% of both Reuters' and New York Times' material. The chi square tests revealed that the agencies provided their audiences with significantly different subject material ( $X^2=143.7$ ,  $df=60$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The study also coded for a secondary topic of each news item, providing another angle of analysis for Research Question 2. Over 40 percent of the articles examined contained no secondary topic. The remaining majority (55.3%) involved more than one subject of reporting. Furthermore, only three percent of the international news studied considered more than two topics, such as the story covering the price of oil, affected by the Icelandic volcano eruption and the Greek bank bailout. Again, war and terrorism and domestic politics dominated this coding category. Cross-tabulations and chi square tests of the secondary subject reveal that a significant difference existed between agency coverage ( $X^2=112.7$ ,  $df=75$ ,  $p=0.003$ ).

*Research Question 3* inquires about differences in direction or value of each agency's reporting. Of the 1881 news items analyzed, only 425 articles, or 22.6%, imparted a value judgment. Of those stories that contained a direction, the majority

(68.7%) assumed a negative bias. Thus, on the occasion that a news item did not neutrally report an event or issue, it rarely had a positive connotation.

AP offered more positively directed stories, in proportion to its total output, while Reuters provided its audience with the most negative items. However, there was no significant difference among agencies ( $p=0.164$ ) and each source created similar percentages of positively, neutrally and negatively directed stories.

Furthermore, the results reveal that the agencies did not statistically differ in their portrayal of each large region. Once again, the greatest proportion of each region's news (67% or greater) was neutral. No global area stood out as having a positively or negatively slanted representation.

Lastly, *Research Question 4* compared the three Western news agencies with the online version of an "elite" American medium, *The New York Times* (Wu, 2007, p. 544). NYTimes.com did not produce as many articles as the agencies, contributing 20.5% of the content analyzed. The vast majority of the website's material was staff-written (96.1%), utilizing very little agency-created items.

Statistical evaluation revealed that the NYTimes.com content parallels that of the three agencies both geographically and directionally. While the coding elements of "primary" and "secondary topic" proved similar among the four institutions, a few differences appeared. As an "elite American newspaper," the NYTimes.com offered

significantly more material that mentioned the U.S. than the agencies. Perhaps, this American focus reflects the Website's primary audience. In addition, when dividing the topical categories into "hard" and "soft" news, the *Times* produced proportionately more of the latter ( $X^2=11.3$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). The international news stories as presented on NYTimes.com covered a greater variety of subject areas, but maintained a heavier American focus than the agency material.

### Discussion

The Internet presents news institutions and news consumers with considerable advantages previously unavailable to traditional print or broadcast media. This study investigated how historically dominant and globally expansive news agencies with unmatched foreign bureau capabilities employed the limitless Web format. While the research illuminated certain aspects of McLuhan's "global village," an imbalanced worldview still pervades online coverage.

Over one-fifth of the Web-based content focused on more than one region, reflecting our globalized world. Multiple areas experienced the eruption of the Icelandic volcano, as it affected Europe's travel and tourism industries, prompted air quality studies at the World Health Organization, changed global leaders' plans to attend the late Polish President's funeral, and influenced North American economies and Asian

business transactions. In this context of a global village, what happens abroad is of immediate concern and consequence as the world's citizens extend their social, economic and political reach outward.

Agency material covered all of the world's regions, with the exception of Micronesia. Historically, critics of the Western institutions have noted that reporting focuses solely on Western regions and ignores those in the periphery. This research does not find strong support for that argument, as a non-Western region, Asia, dominated the news menu. However, while the study directly highlights those countries frequently included in the news, one must acknowledge what the online material left out. The news content cited just over half of the world's nations. In fact, the online material at NYTimes.com covered barely one-fourth of the countries across the globe. While news occurred everywhere, the studied Western institutions did not report on everything. Despite the Internet's unlimited newshole and the agencies' broadening global reach, parts of the world, such as the North, South and Central America and Africa, remain profoundly underrepresented. Other populations continue to be invisible.

In addition to the geographical limitations, agency content was not balanced in terms of subject material. In agreement with previous studies (Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Cutlip, 1954; Sterling, 1972; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 2004; Golding & Elliott, 1979, and

Schramm, 1980), international news is first and foremost politics. The UNESCO complaint that foreign content dealt only with “accidents and disasters” or “bad news” is not strongly supported by this study (Stevenson & Cole, 1984). The coverage provided by the news agencies consisted heavily of “spot news” or “headline news” stories. Human interest, sport, and artistic or cultural pieces were largely absent. Although the research did not directly code for stylistic differences, the NYTimes.com appeared to go beyond spot news and offered more soft news items, as in the example of a story describing the experience of a Haitian ballerina, as her nation recovered from a devastating earthquake. Rarely did an agency provide a story that did not headline a current happening or provide a brief update of a previously mentioned event. The news menu as presented by the Western agencies is not balanced in terms of “official” and “unofficial” items, as it focuses on breaking news or the current events across the globe (Sterling, 1972, p. 8).

Another criticism of international news reflects the tendency of the Agencies to focus on Western ideals. “Foreign news is local,” and International Press Institute study claimed, existing as “an extension of American interests” (Sterling, 1972, pp 19). While the NYTimes.com produced more content that involved the U.S., the agencies reported on nations primarily on their own, and not in connection with America. Furthermore,

the online reporting was predominately neutral, avoiding value biases that would negatively or positively portray the world's regions.

### Conclusion

The study has several limitations. Content analysis is a descriptive method that does not infer causation, relationships or delve into audience effects. The method employed by the researcher reveals a static view of the time period examined. The study was not conducted over time and only reflects the news as reported by the included media during the month of April 2010. During this time period, certain global events dominated the news and distorted the "media map" (Sreberny & Paterson, 2004, pg. 7). However, as Weaver and Wilhoit (1984) noted, "it is difficult to find a time period when such events are not occurring somewhere in the world" (p. 184).

In addition, the news agency material in this study is disseminated to American populations through the aggregate Website, Yahoo! News. The news published by Yahoo! may not accurately reflect all that the agencies produce. Yahoo! News acts as a gatekeeper, using automated and human processes of selection, omission, and arrangement that provide the Web user with a somewhat limited news menu (Bui, 2009).

Future research, using material provided directly from agency archives, can eliminate the constraints imposed by Yahoo!, the present study's online gatekeeper. Access to these archives will allow for a longitudinal look at foreign news that avoids a news menu dominated by a few international events. Furthermore, future scholars should investigate how local or national news institutions, through their online format, employ agency-contributed stories. Editorial choice may illuminate national or global tendencies. Research should also explore a significant news element that the present study did not: visual content. The present research focused on textual communications and did not include visual representations such as photographs and video that are increasingly popular on Internet sites.

Inclusion of these elements in future research will clarify how news agencies, global institutions with unmatched bureau capabilities, employ the limitless and multimedia format of the Web to portray the world through international reporting to a growing online audience.

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Appendix A: Code Book

A. Date of Publication

1. April 1<sup>st</sup>
2. April 2<sup>nd</sup>
3. April 3<sup>rd</sup>
4. April 4<sup>th</sup>
5. April 5<sup>th</sup>
6. April 6<sup>th</sup>
7. April 7<sup>th</sup>
8. April 8<sup>th</sup>
9. April 9<sup>th</sup>
10. April 10<sup>th</sup> and so on until April 30<sup>th</sup>

B. Day of the Week of Publication

1. Monday
2. Tuesday
3. Wednesday
4. Thursday
5. Friday
6. Saturday
7. Sunday

C. Medium

1. Associated Press
2. Agence-France Presse
3. Reuters
4. NYTimes.com

D. Contributing Source

1. News-agency contribution
2. Non-news agency contribution

E. The nation as specified by the story dateline

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Algeria
4. Andorra

5. Angola
6. Antigua and Barbuda
7. Argentina
8. Armenia
9. Australia
10. Austria
11. Azerbaijan
12. Bahamas
13. Bahrain
14. Bangladesh
15. Barbados
16. Belarus
17. Belgium
18. Belize
19. Benin
20. Bhutan
21. Bolivia
22. Bosnia and Herzegovina
23. Botswana
24. Brazil
25. Brunei
26. Bulgaria
27. Burkina Faso
28. Burundi
29. Cambodia
30. Cameroon
31. Canada
32. Cape Verde
33. Central African Republic
34. Chad
35. Chile
36. China (including Taiwan)
37. Colombia
38. Comoros
39. Congo
40. Costa Rica
41. Côte d'Ivoire
42. Croatia

43. Cuba
44. Cyprus
45. Czech Republic
46. Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
47. Democratic Republic of the Congo
48. Denmark
49. Djibouti
50. Dominica
51. Dominican Republic
52. Ecuador
53. Egypt
54. El Salvador
55. Equatorial Guinea
56. Eritrea
57. Estonia
58. Ethiopia
59. Fiji
60. Finland
61. France
62. Gabon
63. Gambia
64. Georgia
65. Germany
66. Ghana
67. Greece
68. Grenada
69. Guatemala
70. Guinea
71. Guinea-Bissau
72. Guyana
73. Haiti
74. Honduras
75. Hungary
76. Iceland
77. India
78. Indonesia
79. Iran (including Persia)
80. Iraq



81. Ireland
82. Israel
83. Italy
84. Jamaica
85. Japan
86. Jordan
87. Kazakhstan
88. Kenya
89. Kiribati
90. Kuwait
91. Kyrgyzstan
92. Laos
93. Latvia
94. Lebanon
95. Lesotho
96. Liberia
97. Libya
98. Liechtenstein
99. Lithuania
100. Luxembourg
101. Macedonia
102. Madagascar
103. Malawi
104. Malaysia
105. Maldives
106. Mali
107. Malta
108. Marshall Islands
109. Mauritania
110. Mauritius
111. Mexico
112. Micronesia
113. Moldova, Republic of
114. Monaco
115. Mongolia
116. Montenegro
117. Morocco
118. Mozambique

119. Myanmar (including Burma)
120. Namibia
121. Nauru
122. Nepal
123. Netherlands (including Aruba)
124. New Zealand
125. Nicaragua
126. Niger
127. Nigeria
128. Norway
129. Oman
130. Pakistan
131. Palau
132. Panama
133. Papua New Guinea
134. Paraguay
135. Peru
136. Philippines
137. Poland
138. Portugal
139. Qatar
140. Republic of Korea (South Korea)
141. Romania
142. Russia
143. Rwanda
144. Saint Kitts and Nevis
145. Saint Lucia
146. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
147. Samoa
148. San Marino
149. Sao Tomé and Príncipe
150. Saudi Arabia
151. Senegal
152. Serbia (including Kosovo)
153. Seychelles
154. Sierra Leone
155. Singapore
156. Slovakia

157. Slovenia
158. Solomon Islands
159. Somalia
160. South Africa
161. Spain
162. Sri Lanka
163. Sudan
164. Suriname
165. Swaziland
166. Sweden
167. Switzerland
168. Syria
169. Tajikistan
170. Tanzania
171. Thailand
172. Timor-Leste
173. Togo
174. Tonga
175. Trinidad and Tobago
176. Tunisia
177. Turkey
178. Turkmenistan
179. Tuvalu
180. Uganda
181. Ukraine
182. United Arab Emirates
183. United Kingdom (including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and its overseas territories)
184. United States of America (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and its commonwealths)
185. Uruguay
186. Uzbekistan
187. Vanuatu
188. Vatican City
189. Venezuela
190. Vietnam
191. Yemen
192. Zambia

- 193. Zimbabwe
- 194. Multi-national, including the UN and other international organizations
- 195. Palestine/Gaza Strip/West Bank
- 196. Unknown
- 197. Unknown Dateline as omitted by NYTimes.com articles

F. The Geographical Focus of the Story: Where the event or happening takes place  
1-197 (See above)

G. The Global Region of the World (as specified by the United Nation's list of World Macro Regions and Components)

- 1. Eastern Africa
- 2. Middle Africa
- 3. Northern Africa
- 4. Southern Africa
- 5. Western Africa
- 6. Eastern Asia
- 7. South Central Asia
- 8. South Eastern Asia
- 9. Western Asia
- 10. Eastern Europe
- 11. Northern Europe
- 12. Southern Europe
- 13. Western Europe
- 14. Caribbean
- 15. Central America
- 16. South America
- 17. North America
- 18. Australia and New Zealand
- 19. Melanesia
- 20. Micronesia
- 21. Polynesia
- 22. Multi-Regional
- 23. Unknown

H. Topic (as modified from Gozenbach, et al., 1992; Stevenson & Cole, 1981)

- 1. International politics, international relations

2. Domestic politics (to the particular nation involved in the story), elections
3. Military, defense, war, terrorism (with an international focus)
4. Domestic conflict including protests, uprisings, coups and strikes
5. Economics, business affairs and trade
6. International and domestic aid, charity
7. Social issues, services, human rights, and equality issues
8. Crime, drugs, piracy
9. Law, justice, order, concerning a trial or court case, investigation
10. Culture and arts, including holidays
11. Religion
12. Science and technology
13. Health care, medicine, illness
14. Sports
15. Entertainment
16. Personality profiles and celebrities
17. Human interest and oddities
18. Education
19. Ecology, environment, agriculture, weather
20. Natural disasters, accidents, tragedy
21. Energy, oil, resources
22. Multiple
23. Other
24. None
25. Travel, tourism, and transport
26. Communications and media

I. Theme: What was the direction of the storyline reporting?

1. Positive theme
2. Neutral, or combination of equal negative and positive themes
3. Negative theme

J. Was the United States of America mentioned in the storyline?

1. No
2. Yes

Appendix B: Aggregate Geographic Regions

1. Africa
2. Asia
3. Europe
4. Americas
5. Pacific
6. Multiregional
7. Unknown

## Appendix C: Tables 1-3

Table 1:  
*Most Frequently Reported Dateline Nations:*

Rank	AP	AFP	Reuters	NYTimes.com
1	China	United States	China	Thailand
2	Iraq	Thailand	Afghanistan	China
3	United Kingdom	China	Thailand	United Kingdom
4	Thailand	Kyrgyzstan	United Kingdom	Afghanistan
5	Afghanistan	United Kingdom	Iraq	United States
6	Pakistan	Russia	Iran	Iraq
7	Israel	South Korea	Pakistan	Kyrgyzstan
8	South Korea	Pakistan	Kyrgyzstan	Pakistan
9	The Vatican	Afghanistan	Russia	Russia
10	Germany	India	Sudan	South Korea

Table 2:  
*Most Frequently Represented Regions*

Rank	AP	AFP	Reuters	NYTimes.com	All
1	Multiregional	Multiregional	South Central Asia	Multiregional	Multiregional
2	South Central Asia	South Central Asia	Multiregional	South Central Asia	South Central Asia
3	Western Asia	South Eastern Asia	Western Asia	Eastern Asia	South Eastern Asia
4	Eastern Asia	Eastern Asia	South Eastern Asia	South Eastern Asia	Eastern Asia
5	South Eastern Asia	Eastern Europe	Eastern Asia	Western Asia	Western Asia
6	Southern Europe	Western Asia	Eastern Europe	Eastern Europe	Eastern Europe
7	Northern Europe	North America	Northern Europe	Northern Europe	Northern Europe
8	Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Southern Europe	Southern Europe
9	Western Europe	Southern Europe	Northern Africa	South America	Western Europe
10	Eastern Africa	Northern Africa	Eastern Africa	Eastern Africa, Western Europe, North America	Northern Africa



Table 3:  
*Most Frequently Reported Primary Topics*

Rank	AP	AFP	Reuters	NYTimes.com	All
1	War, Terrorism	Domestic Politics	Domestic Politics	Domestic Politics	Domestic Politics (18.13%)
2	Domestic Politics	Disaster, Tragedy	War, Terrorism	International Politics	War, Terrorism (15.68%)
3	International Politics	International Politics	Domestic Conflict	War, Terrorism	International Politics (14.25%)
4	Disaster, Tragedy	War, Terrorism	International Politics	Domestic Conflict	Disaster, Tragedy (11.59%)
5	Domestic Conflict	Domestic Conflict	Disaster, Tragedy	Disaster, Tragedy	Domestic Conflict (11.38%)
6	Religion	Law, Justice, Court	Law, Justice, Court	Religion	Religion (6.17%)
7	Law, Justice, Court	Religion	Religion	Economics, Business and Trade	Law, Justice, Court (6.17%)
8	Crime, Piracy	Crime, Piracy	Crime, Piracy	Law, Justice, Court	Crime, Piracy (3.14%)
9	Economics, Business and Trade	Economics, Business and Trade	Economics, Business and Trade	Crime	Economics, Business and Trade (3.14%)
10	Travel, Tourism	Aid, Charity	Culture, Arts	Aid, Charity	Travel, Tourism (1.22%)