

**Foreign News in Leading Newspapers of Western and
Post-Communist Countries.**

Winfried Schulz

Institute for Social Science
University of Erlangen-Nuernberg
Findelgasse 9
D-90402 Nuernberg
Germany

Phone +49-911-5302-674

Fax +49-911-5302659

Winfried.Schulz@wiso.uni-erlangen.de

Paper prepared for presentation at the 51st Annual Conference of the International
Communication Association, Washington DC, USA, May 24-28,2001

Abstract

The paper presents a quantitative content analysis of leading daily newspapers of selected western and post-communist countries. These "flagships" of journalism may be indicative of the respective countries' state of international news reporting in general. In order to examine whether or not there are still differences in journalistic style and performance between western and post-communist newspapers we have contrasted in our analysis seven dailies from both sides of the former Iron Curtain. The analysis shows that the fundamental geo-political changes which occurred around 1990 had only little impact on the flow of international news. Due to specific deficits in the news media's reporting of foreign affairs several of the arguments of the NWICO debate of the 1970s are still valid in the 1990s.

Introduction

Quite often, foreign news research is merely descriptive, depicting the content structure of international reporting of selected mass media. But even descriptive studies generate meaningful evidence if the results are interpreted in the light of a media dependency assumption for which Walter Lippmann in his classic "Public Opinion" gives a convincing illustration. Lippmann refers to a hypothetical situation in the year of 1914 when a few Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans were living peacefully together on a remote island, even after the outbreak of the First World War. "For six strange weeks they had acted as if they were friends, when in fact they were enemies." (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3) Until mid-September 1914 when the mail steamboat arrived they were unaware of the fact that they had become enemies. Because of the lack of timely news there was no need to change the definition of their situation. And, as we have learned – and Lippmann has learned - from Symbolic Interactionism, situations defined as real are real in their consequences (Thomas &

Thomas, 1928). No doubt, foreign news as well as the lack of foreign news contribute to the definition of international relations.

Starting from Lippmann's dependency hypothesis that news is a major (and often the only) source of people's image of the world, it is indeed a relevant task to describe how mass media depict foreign countries. More recent communication theory further supports the news dependency assumption. According to the agenda-setting hypothesis the public becomes aware of only those events and issues which appear in the news, and the most salient events and issues most strongly determine the public agenda. This is particularly the case with unobtrusive events and issues for which the public has no sources available other than mass media (Zucker, 1978). News about foreign countries normally deal with unobtrusive events and issues. The dependency argument becomes even more relevant on the assumption that a country's foreign policy options and strategies may be affected by its media's framing of international events. One reason for this influence is that, in addition to affecting the issue priorities of the public, mass media quite likely have an impact on the world vision of a country's elite. It is quite obvious that both routes of influence are relevant for the foreign policy agenda to be treated by a country's political institutions.

Among all mass media a country's leading newspapers have a central role in forming foreign images and influencing the character of international relations. The leading newspapers are an important news source of a country's elite and opinion leaders. Quite often these papers serve as news leaders for other mass media (Larson, 1979), and as such they set the news agenda as well as the journalistic standards of a media system as a whole. For these reasons the leading newspapers may also serve as an indicator of the over-all performance, or quality, of a country's journalism.

Moreover, the leading papers play a central role in a country's external relations. If mass media of a country are distributed and observed abroad, it is in the first place the leading newspapers. Particularly foreign correspondents from abroad rely on these papers as an information source. Because of this and because governments tend to instrumentalize their leading newspapers as a means of foreign policy, the leading papers' reporting has an indirect influence on foreign countries. However, the external influence of certain mass media and the international news flow in general

seem to be highly dependent on the military and economic power of states (Hagen et al. 1998, Wu 1998). On this background, news analysis may also indicate the structure of international relations and, more specifically, of power relations.

News Media Performance and the World Information Order

Lippmann's example of positive consequences of a lack of foreign news is, of course, a quite unusual perspective. More common is a critical view of certain deficits in the flow of international news. This was in the 1970s the central point of a highly controversial debate, particularly in the UNESCO context, about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). A key element of the debate as well as of the scholarly contributions to the debate was the criticism of mass media's poor performance in international reporting. Very briefly stated, the poor performance argument holds that the news media present an imbalanced and distorted picture of the world (Masmoudi, 1979). The media tend to focus on negative, disruptive events, on elite nations and elite people (Östgaard, 1965; Galtung and Ruge, 1965). Many parts of the world, particularly Third World countries, are invisible to the world community, their problems are neglected.

Imbalance in international news flow is due to the dominant role of a few western news agencies with their central office in London, Paris and New York. News agencies and mass media in Third World countries are dependent on the "big four" (at that time Reuters, AFP, AP and UPI), mostly because of a lack of own resources. Some critics even went as far as accusing the big news agencies of serving western powers, particularly the United States, to establish a world hegemony. In this line of arguing international news was seen as a means of cultural imperialism, as an instrument of the western ruling classes and of "big business" to dominate and exploit the Third World. A somewhat less radical argument points to the gap between North and South, between the industrial and the developing countries. It holds that the structure of international news increases the gap between a privileged minority and an impoverished majority of the world population and aggravates the existing inequalities and discriminations associated with ethnicity, race, and class.

By reacting to the political debate, namely in the UNESCO context, communication researchers had a considerable influence on the framing of this debate (for details

see Golding and Harris, 1997, 1-9; Stevenson and Cole, 1984; Wu, 1998). In fact, many arguments of the debate have the character of empirical statements and are thus amenable to an empirical testing. The NWICO debate stimulated a number of studies into the structure and flow of international news. One of the more ambitious projects was the so-called Foreign Images Study, a cross-national comparative news analysis sponsored by UNESCO and the IAMCR and organized by Jim Halloran and others (see Nordenstreng, 1984; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; Stevenson, 1984). The study monitored the foreign news coverage of selected media (including news agencies) of 29 countries during one or two sample weeks in 1979. Like the findings of other studies, the results of this project justified several, though not all, of the critical arguments of the NWICO debate.

In addition to its influence on the agenda of communication research, the NWICO debate resulted in a series of practical measures that were initiated by UNESCO and other organizations (Hamelink, 1997). Among these were the commissioning of the McBride Report ("Many Voices – One World", report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, 1980), the Mass Media Declaration of 1978, and the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), created in 1980.

By the end of the 1980s, partly as a consequence of these measures, partly due to fundamental geo-political changes, the debate on a new international information order had ceased. It was the time when the Soviet empire collapsed and the Cold War ended, when new political systems emerged in central and eastern Europe. Some of the Third World countries, namely in South America and the Far East, were entering higher stages of economic development. While globalization seemed to emerge as a universal trend, a resurrection of nationalism could be observed in some quarters of the globe, particularly in central and eastern Europe. In addition, there have been major changes in the international media system, including the news agencies market (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998; Musa, 1997). Most remarkable was the transition of mass media in central and eastern Europe from ideology-dependent and highly state-controlled systems to free media markets.

In view of these developments it became an interesting question how the political changes and the re-structuring of national and international media systems have affected the reporting of foreign news. Which patterns of international news remained stable over the past decades and which have changed? Is it still justified to criticise the media's performance of international reporting? Which arguments of the NWICO debate of the 1970s are still valid? These questions were the starting point of a cross-national comparative study in 1995 that was inspired by the 1979 Foreign Images Study. The following analysis draws on the data of the 1995 study and looks particularly at some performance indicators of international reporting: Its scope and diversity, its cosmopolitan (or parochial) orientation, the differential visibility of different countries and world regions, the alleged imbalance of news, and the sources of foreign news.

Like any other news, foreign news coverage can be evaluated on grounds of professional performance criteria. One key performance criterion is the range and diversity of reporting. The more countries and world regions are attended to by a medium, the more diverse is its news coverage. Or, to turn the perspective around: The more diverse the foreign news coverage, the higher chances are that a number of countries and large parts of the world come to the attention of the public. Other performance criteria that are considered to be highly important are, for example, the accuracy and balance of reporting as well as the transparency of its sources. There is a growing literature which discusses these and other performance criteria and ways of operationalizing and measuring the actual performance of journalism (Westerstahl, 1983; McQuail, 1992; Hillve, Majanen, Rosengren, 1997; Hagen, 1995).

Data Base

The analysis presented here is based on a cross-national project, the "Cooperative Study of Foreign News and International News Flow in the 1990s" (briefly called the Foreign News Study) which involved almost 40 countries from all world regions. The quantitative part of the project was a systematic content analysis of international news coverage during two sample weeks that resulted in a rich data set.¹ The sampled dates were September 3 through 9 and September 17 through 23, 1995.

Bob Stevenson (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi (University of Leicester, UK) initiated and coordinated the research (for more background information on the project see <http://www.ibiblio.org/newsflow/>).

By applying a common standardized coding scheme and by monitoring news media of exactly the same sample dates it was intended to reach a high degree of comparability across countries. Each participating team applied the coding scheme to a few selected news media which were chosen according to their position in the countries' media system.² It was required that the sample should include the most influential national newspaper, "a serious daily published in the capital, widely read by government officials and other elites, frequently quoted abroad".

The following results pertain to a sub-sample of these leading newspapers. The analysis is limited to one leading daily per country; most often it is *the* leading newspaper, an exemplar of the so-called quality or elite press.³ Included are countries with their leading paper which meet two conditions: The leading newspaper (1) must be identifiable by title⁴ and (2) must have been observed for the whole two-weeks period.⁵ We will look here at only 14 of the 24 countries meeting these conditions, namely seven post-communist countries in comparison with six western European countries plus the United States.

The sample is a bit arbitrary because it is defined partly by rather technical circumstances, partly by self-selection, i.e. self-selection of national research teams who were interested in participating in the study and who had the necessary resources available.⁶ As Table 1 shows, our sample consists of a variety of countries of different size and power, including the two former Cold War opponents, Russia and the United States. Among the Western countries are three mid-size powers (Germany, Spain and United Kingdom) and three smaller countries (Austria, Belgium and Finland). Among the post-communist group are three countries which are quite advanced in their transformation processes (Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia) and three more retarded countries (Armenia, Rumania, Ukraine). The two groups may be seen as appropriate selections of typical post-communist and western leading newspapers. We nevertheless do not present aggregated data for both groups, but rather results for the individual newspapers.

Table 1 about here

It should be mentioned that the degree of validity and comparability which the study strived for did not fully materialize. This was mainly due to the lack of funding both on the national level and for the central project coordination. Comparability is reduced due to differences in selecting relevant material for analysis and in the coding scheme. Moreover, only few of the countries and individual media that were sampled are identical for 1979 and 1995. This makes it for our approach almost impossible to directly compare the results from both points in time.

Findings

In a cover story about developments in the news business the British magazine *The Economist* tried to substantiate the "modern paradox" that in our age of globalization news seems to be much more parochial than a century ago (*The Economist*, July 4th, 1998). We take this assertion as a starting point of our data analysis and test some of its implications by looking at a key variable that served to define the relevant news content of the Foreign News Study.

The study includes different types of foreign or international news.⁷ The coding instructions were (with examples from an US American perspective):

1. Stories with a foreign dateline and without involvement of own country.
Example: *TOKYO -- Japanese officials increased efforts to rebuild Kobe after earthquake.*
2. Stories with a foreign dateline and with significant involvement of own country.
Example: *GENEVA – U.N. officials said United States forces would play major role in withdrawal of forces from Bosnia.*
3. Stories with a domestic dateline and without involvement of own country.
Example: *WASHINGTON – French ambassador to US said EU would continue active role in Bosnia.*
4. Stories with a domestic dateline and with significant involvement of own country.⁸
Example: *WASHINGTON – Congress voted to reduce foreign aid.*

Table 2 shows the distributions of these four types of news. The first type represents "pure" foreign news: Stories originating abroad without any involvement of the

reporting newspaper's own country. We may take the share of this category as an indication of a cosmopolitan orientation of the foreign news reporting.

Table 2 about here

Among the western newspapers the Belgian *Standaard* and the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine* seem to be the most cosmopolitan publications with a share of more than 60 per cent "pure" foreign news . But even higher percentages can be found among the post-communist papers with the Slovenian *Delo* and the *Republic of Armenia* at the top. However, the other extreme is also represented in this group with the *Voice of Ukraine* and *Izvestiya* at the bottom. There is much more variance in the degree of global or parochial orientation among in the post-communist group than among the western newspapers.

Another way of looking at the newspapers' international orientation is shown by Tables 3a and 3b. They list for all newspapers to what extent they refer in their reporting to each of the seven western and post-communist countries of which the newspapers belong to. The percentages are based on all types of foreign news stories. For each news story up to three important countries were coded that were covered or referred to in the news. The figures on the diagonal in the upper part of Table 3a and in the lower part of Table 3b indicate a parochial (or ethnocentric) framing of foreign affairs. Most newspapers devote a share of more than 40 per cent to international news that is characterized by a considerable involvement of own country or belongs to what may be termed "foreign news at home". However, five newspapers with a respective percentage of around 30 (or even less) deviate from this pattern: the Slovenian *Delo*, *Romania Libera*, *Republic of Armenia*, the Flemish *Standaard* and the Spanish *El País*. These results are in part complementary to the cosmopolitan orientation indicated by the first column of Table 2.

Tables 3a and 3b about here

Next to the newspapers' own countries the country most often referred to is the United States. With a few exceptions this holds for western as well as for post-communist newspapers. The exceptions are the Estonian *Eesti Päevalehe*, *Republic*

of *Armenia* and *Voice of Ukraine*. They still look mostly at Russia as the former leader of the Soviet Imperium, whereas all other leading newspapers are focussing most of their international attention on the U.S. as the western super power.⁹ However, the high reference to Russia in newspapers of the countries which are located closely to Russia (even have a common border with Russia) may also be explained by the importance of proximity factors in international news flow (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). We find some other instances of the high foreign references due to proximity in geographical, cultural and economic terms in the Tables 3a and 3b, e.g. the high mutual attention of the British *Guardian* and the *New York Times*, or of the Austrian *Standard* and the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. Besides the U.S. and Russia only the United Kingdom and Germany draw a considerably high share of attention of the leading newspapers on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. This again proves that, besides proximity, economic power is the major determinant of international news flow (Hagen et al. 1998, Wu 1998).

We now broaden our perspective and look at all countries referred to in the news (not just the countries of the newspapers in our sample). Table 4 shows these references by categorizing the most important country in each news story according to its regional location (the percentages of references are transformed into rank orders). The rank orders clearly indicate the importance of proximity as a criterion of international news selection. Events in the nearer environment draw much more attention than events in the more distant parts of the world. This pattern of a "universal regionalism" was already a salient result of the 1979 Foreign Images Study. There is only little disagreement between western and post-communist newspapers in addition to the obvious difference that the former refer primarily to western European countries and the latter primarily to central and eastern Europe. North America and Africa rank a bit higher among the western newspapers, whereas the post-communist newspapers pay more attention to events in the Middle East.

Table 4 about here

It is already apparent from Table 2 that there is a considerable variance in the volume of international reporting among the leading newspapers in our sample. However, the comparability of the numbers in the far right column of Table 2 is

limited to some degree because of differences in the publication frequency of the newspapers. Some appear with seven issues a week, others less frequently (e.g. *Izvestiya* only on four days, see Table 1). The average number of stories per issue, as shown in the first column of Table 5, compensates for these differences. Most western newspapers publish more than twice as many foreign news stories per issue as the post-communist countries. An obvious explanation for this difference is the stronger financial basis of the western newspapers due to higher advertising revenues. Higher ad revenues allow for a more extensive foreign coverage. But this does not seem to apply to the *New York Times* which has by far the lowest volume of international reporting of the sampled western countries. Ironically, the leading paper of the present political world leader shares this characteristic with *Izvestiya*, the leading paper of the former leader of the Communist Empire. With its small volume of international reporting *Izvestiya* falls far behind the other sampled newspapers of post-communist countries. Among this group the Hungarian *Népszabadság* provides the greatest number of international stories, whereas among the group of western media the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* has by far the highest output.

It is obvious that the over-all volume of reporting also determines the range and diversity of foreign coverage. Table 5 (second column) lists a simple count of all single countries referred to in the news during the two-week observation period. Due to their relatively small volume of international reporting the post-communist dailies present a rather limited perspective on the outside world. The Estonian *Eesti Päevalehe* as well as the *Voice of Ukraine* covered only 56 different foreign countries during the observation period, whereas the British *Guardian* referred to a high of 130 countries, followed by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* with 120 countries. Corresponding to the relatively low volume of international coverage, compared to other western elite papers, the *New York Times* falls also short of the number of countries referred to, although the lag is not that dramatic.

Table 5 about here

Some of the newspapers included in the 1995 study had also been monitored in the 1979 Foreign Images project. For these six newspapers Table 6 compares the average number of international stories per issue which were published in the two

observation periods. If there are substantial differences between the two periods this may indicate whether the papers have become more cosmopolitan or more parochial since 1979. The comparability however is limited due to changes in the study design. Other than in 1979 when only the general news sections were monitored, in the recent study the entire newspapers have been analyzed, including also special sections like economics, entertainment, sports etc.¹⁰ Therefore the comparison needs some interpretation.

Table 6 about here

Considering the different criteria for selecting the relevant material for analysis one would expect distinctly higher figures in 1995 than in 1979, even if nothing had changed. In fact, two of the papers, namely *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and *Helsingin Sanomat*, meet this expectation. But since this is not true for all the other leading newspapers they seem to have decreased their foreign coverage. This applies not only to the post-communist papers *Delo*, *Izvestiya* and *Népszabadság*, but also to the *New York Times*. The poor showing of the former three may, at least in part, be due to the weak economic situation of the media in post-communist countries which were state-subsidized during the communist era and which now have to struggle for advertising revenues. But it is somewhat surprising that the *New York Times* is among the newspapers which seem to have not increased their volume of international reporting since 1979. The result matches findings for other U.S. media. According to the Foreign Images Study in 1979 one of the major U.S. television networks, namely CBS, carried in its main news bulletin four stories of international news on an average day (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985, p. 34). The respective figure for 1995 is less than one (exactly 4 items during the one week of observation). Trend figures for all three major U.S. television networks published by *The Economist* also prove a decreasing interest of U.S. media in international affairs which indicates, according to the British magazine, that "news is getting more parochial" (*The Economist*, July 4th 1998, p. 20).

As mentioned above, the content analysis in 1995 included all sections of the newspapers. By coding the main topic of each news story we examined which aspects of foreign affairs the different newspapers emphasized in their reporting (see

Table 7). A remarkable difference between western and post-communist newspapers is that most of the former focus on economics (including energy and environment), whereas most of the latter emphasize military matters (including terrorism) in addition to politics in general. However, the British *Guardian* and the Finish *Helsingin Sanomat* with their low percentages of economic matters deviate from this pattern. Both publish quite a lot of international sports news, as does the Belgian *Standaard*. Sports news occupies also a major share of the international reporting of two of the post-communist papers, namely the Slovenian *Delo* and the Hungarian *Népszabadság*. With its relatively high volume of economic matters the latter differs from the dominant pattern of the post-communist dailies. This applies also to the *Voice of Ukraine* which has by far the highest percentage of international economic news among this group. The differences may be indicative of different editorial concepts. The "classical" elite papers concentrate on hard news about politics and economics, whereas newspapers with a more "populist" appeal include also a dose of soft news about sports and even human interest.

Table 7 about here

Very often the complaint has been voiced that international news coverage is imbalanced in the sense that in their coverage of the world periphery the western media focus too much on conflicts and on disruptive events. Galtung and Ruge (1965) in their landmark study use the formula: The more distant the nation and the lower its rank, the more negative the reported events. The Foreign News Study of 1995 provides some fresh evidence on this issue. In order to test the bad news imbalance, it was coded for each news story whether it focuses on disruptive activities or behavior, e.g. on war, natural disasters, accidents, demonstrations and protest, crime, or violence. Table 8 shows the percentage of disruptive or negative news for different world regions, calculated on the basis of all stories referring to the respective regions. The high variance among the post-communist newspapers is at least partly due to their low volume of reporting so that the percentages often relate to only very few cases. The 100 per cent disruptive, for example, which *Eesti Päevalehe* reported about Latin America is based on just one story.

Table 8 about here

With very few exceptions, the western newspapers in fact report more negative news about Third World countries than about industrial countries. This becomes particularly apparent if the figures are compared to the average percentage of disruptive news in each newspaper displayed in the right marginal column. Perhaps more notable is that all western newspapers publish also a far above average percentage of negative news about central and eastern European countries. This contrasts to the respective percentages in the post-communist countries which are below the average (with *Izvestiya* as the only exception). On the other hand, only two post-communist papers report negatively about western Europe to an extent which is considerably above the average, namely *Eesti Päevalehe* and *Romania Libera*. Even more positive is the picture of the United States conveyed by all post-communist newspapers.

The negative news about Third World and post-communist countries relate, of course, to a high occurrence of disruptive events in those regions. For example, most of the high scoring of Central/Eastern Europe in this respect can be charged to the conflict in Bosnia in 1995. And the above average figures for the Pacific region are mostly due to the French nuclear testing at Mururoa and the protest against it particularly in countries of that region. But whether or not the differences between regions do reflect the uneven distribution of "real" disruptive events in the world, is difficult to assess. One might argue that all newspapers should show a similar distribution of negative news (within the range defined by variations of style of reporting and/or of coding) since they all refer to the same real world. That this is obviously not the case could be seen either as a structural imbalance of news reporting, particularly of the western media, or as a lack of journalistic accuracy. The latter interpretation seems to apply more likely to the post-communist newspapers with their extremely different percentages of negative news, not only about Third World countries.

Another source of imbalance that has frequently been criticized is that the news media rely too much on official sources. Particularly news from Third World countries is often presented only in the framing of the governments and the ruling parties of those countries (which quite often lack a democratic legitimation). In the words of

Galtung and Ruge (1965): The more distant a nation and the lower its rank, the more the reporting is focused on élite actions. Findings of the Foreign Images Study of 1979 supported these allegations (Stevenson and Gaddy, 1984; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985, p. 48). Our data show a mixed picture. The western newspapers seem to rely highly on official sources in their reporting about Central/Eastern Europe and the Middle East, in most cases also in news about Africa (with *Helsingin Sanomat* as an outstanding exception), but less so in news about Latin America and about Asia/Pacific. In the latter case the figures which are more or less close to the average may be partly due to the Mururoa conflict in which NGO's and civic organizations initiated protest events.

On the average, all post-communist newspapers rely more on official sources than the western papers do. One is inclined to see this as a journalistic heritage of the communist past. However, the fact that the *New York Times* with an average percentage of 37 for all regions comes quite close to the respective percentages of the post-communist newspapers is not so easy to explain. The high average results predominantly from an unusually high proportion of official sources in the *New York Times'* reporting about North and Latin America.

Summary and Conclusion

Our analysis shows that the fundamental geo-political changes which occurred around 1990 had only little impact on the flow of international news. Due to specific deficits in the news media's reporting of foreign affairs several of the arguments of the NWICO debate of the 1970s are still valid in the 1990s. This conclusion, however, is based on a small sample of newspapers. On the other hand, the sample consists of the leading newspapers, the "flagships" of journalism which may be indicative of the respective countries' state of international news reporting in general. In order to examine whether or not there are still differences in journalistic style and performance between western and post-communist newspapers we have contrasted in our analysis seven leading dailies from both sides of the former Iron Curtain.

We find in the data of the Foreign News Study of 1995 that most newspapers devote a share of more than 40 per cent of their international reporting to "foreign news at home", i.e. stories characterized by a considerable involvement of own country. Next

to the newspapers' own countries the country most often referred to is the United States. These and other findings of our analysis once more prove that, besides proximity, economic power is the major determinant of international news flow. This holds for western as well as for post-communist newspapers. But in general, there are still striking differences of journalistic performance between the two groups. Most western newspapers publish more than twice as many foreign news stories per issue as the post-communist countries. The *New York Times* has the lowest range of international reporting of the sampled western papers. Like the NYT some other of the sampled newspapers had already been monitored in the 1979 Foreign Images project. Of these, two western papers have considerably increased their international reporting since the 1970s, whereas all three post-communist dailies as well as the *New York Times* did not. The result matches findings for other U.S. media which prove a decreasing interest of U.S. media in international affairs. In a similar way (but probably for different reasons) the post-communist newspapers became more parochial.

Due to their relatively small volume of international reporting the post-communist dailies present a rather limited perspective on the outside world. During the observation period they covered much less foreign countries than the western dailies did. Another remarkable difference between western and post-communist newspapers is that most of the former focus on economics (including energy and environment), whereas most of the latter emphasize military matters (including terrorism) in addition to politics in general. As it has been demonstrated by previous research, most newspapers report more negative news about the Third World than about industrial countries. Perhaps more notable is that, other than the post-communist dailies, all western newspapers publish also a far above average percentage of negative news about central and eastern European countries. On the other hand, most post-communist papers report negatively about western Europe to an extent which is considerably below the average. Even more positive is the picture of the United States conveyed by all post-communist newspapers. As can be inferred from the main actors of the news stories, all post-communist dailies rely more on official sources than the western papers do. However, the western newspapers rely highly on official sources in their reporting about Central/Eastern Europe and the

Middle East, in most cases also in news about Africa, but less so in news about Latin America and about Asia/Pacific.

Table 9 about here

Most of the variables included in our analysis can be interpreted as indicators of journalistic performance. We have put together some of the relevant indicators in Table 9 and transformed the original data into simple rankings in order to make a comparison of the different newspapers easier. The Table includes also an indicator of the transparency of news sources. It is based on the percentage of all stories without an identified news source (or author), derived from a coding of the story datelines.¹¹ The rankings have been assessed separately for the two groups of newspapers. Three stars stand for best performance among the respective groups, no star means poorest performance.

Among the group of western newspapers the rankings of the British *Guardian* and the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine* ad up to the highest scores, followed next by the Spanish *El País* and then by the Belgian *Standaard* and the Finish *Helsingin Sanomat*. The *New York Times* and the Austrian *Standard* reach the lowest scores in our tentative performance rankings of international reporting. Among the group of post-communist countries three papers score equally highest, the Slovenian *Delo*, the Hungarian *Népszabadság* and *Romania Libera*. *Republic of Armenia* reaches a second place, followed by the Estonian *Eesti Päevalehe*. The Russian *Izvestiya* has the poorest showing among the post-communist group. With the only exception of *Izvestiya* each of the leading newspapers ranks top on at least one performance criterion. This indicates that the newspapers not only differ in specific content features and in their journalistic performance, but also in their editorial concepts of international reporting.

References

- Galtung, Johan und Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965). The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research* 2, 65-91.
- Golding, Peter and Phil Harris (1997). *Beyond cultural imperialism. Globalization, communication & the new international order*. London: Sage.

- Hagen, Lutz M. (1995). *Informationsqualität von Nachrichten. Messmethoden und ihre Anwendung auf die Dienste von Nachrichtenagenturen*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Hagen, Lutz, Harald Berens, Reimar Zeh and Daniela Leidner (1998). Ländermerkmale als Nachrichtenfaktoren. In C. Holtz-Bacha, H. Scherer & N. Waldmann (Eds.), *Wie die Medien die Welt erschaffen und wie die Menschen darin leben*. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 59-82.
- Hillve, Peter, Peter Majanen and Karl Erik Rosengren (1997). Aspects of quality in TV programming. *European Journal of Communication* 12, 291-318.
- Larson, James F. (1979). International affairs coverage on U.S. network television. *Journal of Communication* 29 (2), 136-147.
- Lippmann, Walter (1922). *Public opinion*. New York.
- Masmoudi, Mustapha (1979), The New World Information Order. *Journal of Communication* 29, No. 2, 172-185.
- Musa, Mohammed (1997), From optimism to reality: An overview of Third World news agencies. In Peter Golding and Phil Harris (Eds.), *Beyond cultural imperialism. Globalization, communication & the new international order*. London: Sage, 117-146.
- McQuail, Denis (1992). *Media performance. Mass Communication and the public interest*. London: Sage.
- Nordenstreng, Kaarle (1984), Bitter lessons. *Journal of Communication* 34, No. 1, 138-142.
- Östgaard, Einar (1965), Factors influencing the flow of news. *Journal of Peace Research* 2, 39-63.
- Thomas, William and Dorothee Swaine Thomas (1928). *The child in America*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 571 ff.
- Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle (1984), The "World of the News" study. *Journal of Communication* 34, No. 1, 121-134.
- Srenerby-Mohammadi, Annabelle with Kaarle Nordenstreng, Robert Stevenson and Frank Ugboajah, eds.(1985), *Foreign news in the media: International reporting in 29 countries*. Paris: Unesco.
- Stevenson, Robert L. (1984), Pseudo debate. *Journal of Communication* 34, No. 1, 134-138.
- Stevenson, Robert L. and Richard Cole (1984). Patterns of foreign news. In R.L. Stevenson and D.L. Shaw (Eds.), *Foreign news and the New World Information Order*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 37-62.
- Stevenson, Robert L. and Gary D. Gaddy (1984). "Bad news" and the Third World. In R.L. Stevenson and D.L. Shaw (Eds.), *Foreign news and the New World Information Order*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 88-97.
- Westerstahl, Jörgen (1983). Objective news reporting. General premises. *Communication Research* 10, 403-424.
- Wu, Haoming Denis (1998). Investigating the determinants of international news flow. *Gazette* 60, 493-512.
- Zucker, Harold G. (1978). The variable natur of news media influence. In B. D. Ruben, (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* 2. New Brunswick: Transaction, 225-240.

Table 1
Selected Leading Newspapers

<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Circulation</u>	<u>Number of Issues in Observation Period</u>
Western			
De Standaard	Belgium (Flemish)	76.600	12
Der Standard	Austria	82.147	14
El País	Spain	421.000	14
Frankfurter Allgemeine	Germany	420.000	12
Helsingin Sanomat	Finland	479.000	14
The Guardian	United Kingdom	399.000	14
The New York Times	USA	1.013.000	14
Post-Communist			
Delo	Slovenia	91.900	12
Eesti Päevalehe	Estonia	51.000	12
Izvestiya	Russia	558.000	8
Népszabadság	Hungary	265.000	12
Republic of Armenia	Armenia	4.000*	13
Romania Libera	Romania	100.000*	12
Voice of Ukraine	Ukraine	530.000	10

*estimated

Table 2**Types of International News (Row Per Cent)**

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>For Date No Inv</u>	<u>For Date Dom Inv</u>	<u>Dom Date No Inv</u>	<u>Dom Date Dom Inv</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Number of Stories</u>
De Standaard	61	12	8	18		831
Der Standard	53	14	2	31		1009
El País	55	17	6	22		857
Frankfurter Allgemeine	62	21	1	21		1580
Helsingin Sanomat	51	15	4	30		1021
The Guardian	48	14	6	30		1165
The New York Times	50	21	2	22	6	526
Delo	78	13	8	1		518
Eesti Päevalehe	47	22	0	31		267
Izvestiya	45	41	2	12		216
Népszabadság	60	19	1	21		583
Republic of Armenia	68	14	x	18		325
Romania Libera	61	11	1	26		304
Voice of Ukraine	28	26	0	46		477

x= less than .05 per cent

Table 3a**Most Important Countries* in the News of the Western Newspapers****(Percentage of all Foreign News Stories per Newspaper)**

<u>Country</u>	<u>De Standaard</u>	<u>Der Standard</u>	<u>El País</u>	<u>Frankfurter Allgemeine</u>	<u>Helsingin Sanomat</u>	<u>The Guardian</u>	<u>The New York Times</u>
Belgium	30,4	1,8	1,2	2,8	1,6	0,2	1,1
Austria	2,0	44,7	1,7	4,6	1,2	0,9	1,5
Spain	3,6	4,5	31,4	3,4	3,0	3,8	1,1
Germany	10,3	25,7	7,1	37,2	11,4	8,8	5,1
Finland	0,4	0,4	0,1	0,4	43,5	0,7	0
United Kingdom	9,7	9,3	7,7	12,3	13,7	42,2	14,4
USA	13,8	21,1	20,0	23,1	21,4	33,0	41,4
Slovenia	0	0	0	0,1	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0,1	0	0,3	2,9	0,1	0
Russia	5,1	5,0	3,7	6,0	9,6	4,1	5,1
Hungary	0,8	2,5	0	0,9	0,7	0,3	0,8
Armenia	0	0	0	0,1	0	0	0,2
Romania	0	1,3	0,1	0,5	0,1	0,3	0,2
Ukraine	0,5	0,3	0,2	0,5	0,9	0,4	0

*) Listed are only the countries of the 14 newspapers

Table 3b

**Most Important Countries* in the News of the Post-Communist Newspapers
(Percentage of all Stories per Newspaper)**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Delo</u>	<u>Eesti Pævalehe</u>	<u>Izvestiya</u>	<u>Népszabad</u>	<u>Republic of Armenia</u>	<u>Romania Libera</u>	<u>Voice of Ukraine</u>
Belgium	2,1	0,7	1,9	0,5	0,3	0,7	0,6
Austria	4,1	1,1	4,2	5,1	0,9	0,7	3,1
Spain	3,7	3,0	0,5	3,1	1,2	4,3	1,3
Germany	10,6	6,0	4,2	14,9	2,5	3,9	6,9
Finland	0,4	8,6	0,5	0,3	0	0,3	0,6
United Kingdom	5,4	5,2	10,2	8,4	2,9	7,2	4,4
USA	19,9	13,5	19,0	22,8	13,5	18,1	13,8
Slovenia	23,0	0,4	0	0,7	0	0,7	0
Estonia	0	44,9	3,7	0,3	0,3	0	0,6
Russia	9,8	21,3	42,1	13,7	32,3	11,8	17,6
Hungary	1,9	0,7	0,9	42,7	0,3	5,3	1,3
Armenia	0	0	1,4	0,3	31,3	0	1,9
Romania	0,6	0	0,5	7,4	1,5	27,6	0,6
Ukraine	1,5	1,5	2,3	3,1	3,4	1,0	71,7

*) Listed are only the countries of the 14 newspapers; up to three countries were coded per story

Table 4**Regional Location of Most Important Countries in the News Story****(Rank Ordering for Each Newspaper*)**

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>North America</u>	<u>Latin America</u>	<u>Western Europe</u>	<u>Central/ Eastern Europe</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Middle East</u>	<u>Asia, Pacific</u>
De Standaard	4	7	1	3	5	6	2
Der Standard	3	7	1	2	6	5	4
El País	2	6	1	3	5	7	4
Frankfurter Allgemeine	2	7	1	3	5	6	4
Helsingin Sanomat	3	6	1	2	5	7	4
The Guardian	2	6	1	4	5	7	3
The New York Times	1	7	2	4	6	5	3
Delo	3	7	2	1	6	5	4
Eesti Päevalehe	3	7	2	1	6	5	4
Izvestiya	4	6	2	1	7	5	3
Népszabadság	3	6	2	1	7	5	4
Republic of Armenia	4	6	2	1	7	5	3
Romania Libera	3	6	2	1	7	5	4
Voice of Ukraine	4	5	2	1	7	6	3

*) Derived from percentages of most important countries referred to by the respective newspapers; up to three countries were coded per story (in the case of ties between references to regions the region which was referred to more often in the first place was assigned the higher rank).

Table 5

Number Stories per Issue and Number of Countries* Covered

<u>Newspaper</u>	Average Number of Stories per Issue	Total Number of Countries*
De Standaard	69	106
Der Standard	72	101
El País	61	102
Frankfurter Allgemeine	132	120
Helsingin Sanomat	73	109
The Guardian	83	130
The New York Times	38	96
Delo	43	78
Eesti Päevalehe	22	56
Izvestiya	27	70
Népszabadság	49	79
Republic of Armenia	25	65
Romania Libera	25	81
Voice of Ukraine	48	56

*) Most Important Countries in News Story (Up to three per Story)

Table 6

Average Number of International News Stories per Issue 1979 and 1995

<u>Newspaper</u>	1979: General news <u>pages only</u>	1995: Entire <u>newspaper</u>
Frankfurter Allgemeine	50	132
Helsingin Sanomat	26	73
The New York Times	33	38
Delo	50	43
Izvestiya	25	27
Népszabadság	55	49

Table 7**Main Topics of the News (Row Per Cent)**

<u>Newspaper</u>	Politics	Economics, Trade	Military, Terrorism	Culture, Social, Ethical	Crime, Disaster, Accidents	Human Interest	Sports	<u>Other</u>
De Standaard	12	22	11	20	9	6	19	2
Der Standard	16	29	9	16	7	13	7	5
El País	20	21	12	18	5	11	10	4
Frankfurter Allgemeine	16	32	10	16	9	2	10	5
Helsingin Sanomat	16	18	10	28	4	6	20	3
The Guardian	13	14	8	17	12	10	16	10
The New York Times	17	31	14	18	7	4	3	6
Delo	27	12	14	13	5	7	21	x*
Eesti Päevalehe	29	16	16	21	7	3	8	
Izvestiya	20	13	35	12	8	6	4	2
Népszabadság	22	20	11	12	10	4	18	3
Republic of Armenia	42	10	15	11	7	1	13	2
Romania Libera	23	14	17	14	12	6	13	2
Voice of Ukraine	27	25	16	16	3	3	9	1

x= less than .05 per cent

Table 8**Negative News* About Different World Regions****(Per Cent Disruptive of all Stories**)**

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>North America</u>	<u>Latin America</u>	<u>Western Europe</u>	<u>Central/ Eastern Europe</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Middle East</u>	<u>Asia, Pacific</u>	<u>Average for all Regions</u>
De Standaard	13	50	25	54	71	68	43	32
Der Standard	31	72	37	73	74	79	58	45
El País	19	37	26	58	47	48	43	31
Frankfurter Allgemeine	26	36	30	47	44	55	48	35
Helsingin Sanomat	16	42	20	45	55	33	41	26
The Guardian	22	29	23	47	50	61	42	31
The New York Times	20	41	18	44	32	19	28	26
Delo	19	14	15	12	40	14	19	14
Eesti Päevalehe	33	100	52	37	33	86	50	42
Izvestiya	14	0	23	39	33	13	17	32
Népszabadság	17	14	25	25	29	43	32	25
Republic of Armenia	4	17	20	22	50	14	46	23
Romania Libera	11	50	35	21	43	17	28	24
Voice of Ukraine	0	0	21	15	0	0	71	19

*) Stories that focus on war, natural disasters, accidents, demonstrations and protest, crime, violence, and similar kinds of activities and behavior.

**) The base of the percentages in each cell are all stories published by the respective newspaper referring to the respective region. Stories are categorized according to the regional location of the most important country in each story. Stories without reference to a specific country are excluded.

Table 9**Ranking of Some Indicators of the Newspapers' Performance**

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Stories per Issue^a</u>	<u>Countries Covered^b</u>	<u>Cosmopolitan^c</u>	<u>Negative News^d</u>	<u>Official, Sources^e</u>	<u>No Source identified^f</u>	<u>Total</u>
De Standaard	*	*	***	**	*	*	*****
Der Standard	*	*	*		***		*****
El País	*	*	**	**	*	***	*****
Frankfurter Allgemeine	***	**	***	*	*	**	*****
Helsingin Sanomat	*	*	*	***	*	**	*****
The Guardian	**	***		**	**	***	*****
The New York Times			*	***		***	*****
Delo	**	**	***	***	**	*	*****
Eesti Päevalehe		**	*		*	***	*****
Izvestiya	*	*	*	*		**	*****
Nepszabadság	***	**	**	**	**	**	*****
Republic of Armenia	*	*	**	**	*	**	*****
Romania Libera	*	***	**	**	***	**	*****
Voice of Ukraine	***			**	*		*****

a) Average number of stories per issue; high performance: * high number

b) Total number of countries mentioned in stories as most important (* high number)

c) Foreign dateline, no involvement of own country, see Table 2, first column (* low percentage)

d) see Table 8, last column (* low percentage)

e) Main actor: State official, nation; see Table 9, last column (* low percentage)

f) No source identified in dateline, based on percentage of stories without identified news source (* low percentage)

Notes

¹ The study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. As qualitative supplementation to the standardized quantitative analysis, the coverage of two specific events was assessed through in-depth description. For these case studies the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on May 8th and the U.N. Women's Conference in Beijing in September were chosen. In addition, some research teams looked more closely at news selection processes through newsroom observation (some results for individual countries have been published, e.g. by de Beer and Steyn, 1987). The outcome of the qualitative studies has not yet been processed and integrated cross-nationally.

² The exact wording of the instruction reads: "We assume that each national team will analyze a minimum of three domestic media: 1. The most influential daily newspapers. Normally this would be a serious daily published in the capital, widely read by government officials and other elites, frequently quoted abroad..." (Project Proposal, e-mail by Robert Stevenson on September 1, 1995). In addition, a second leading newspaper (possibly a popular paper with high circulation), and the leading TV newscast (this could have been substituted by a radio newscast) were selected. Teams were free to expand their sample to other media.

³ In those countries where two or more quality papers were monitored (e.g. in Britain, Germany, Japan) I selected the paper which was numbered 1 in the coding scheme (unless there was clear evidence that the national team had, other than in the instruction, assigned the number one to an elite newspaper, like in Austria). A few countries were not selected because their leading newspapers had an extremely small number of foreign news stories (less than 100 per week).

⁴ Not all national teams provided labeled data sets. Even attempts at communicating with the teams in order to get the relevant information sometimes failed.

⁵ This was to assure to have a sufficient statistical basis for our analysis.

⁶ Unfortunately, no budget for the central operation and coordination of the project was available, and all participating countries had to take care themselves for their research funds (or work on available resources). Due to limited resources, several participating countries had to confine their analysis to just one week. In addition to a few meetings among only some of the project participants on the occasion of international conferences (ICA, IAMCR), the project was coordinated mainly by e-mail communication. This limited the possibilities to control how the categories for content analysis were interpreted and applied. In general the project coordinators adopted a kind of *laissez-faire* strategy *visa-vis* the national teams which was effective for recruiting many participants but did not necessarily secure a high data quality. It was agreed among all participants to pool the resulting data and to have free access to the pooled data set.

⁷ These definitions match the ones used for the 1979 Foreign Images Study.

⁸ Stories with only a brief, minor reference to other countries were not included.

⁹ The relatively low figure of references to the U.S. in the Flemish *Standaard* is due to an extremely high attention of this newspaper to the Netherlands.

¹⁰ Because the data sets of 1979 are not available any more and because the coding scheme of the 1995 study does not include a variable for selecting the general section, there is also no way of re-calculating the results.

¹¹ The coding also included categories of specific sources like news agencies which we have not considered for our analysis because several newspapers hardly identify of their sources.