

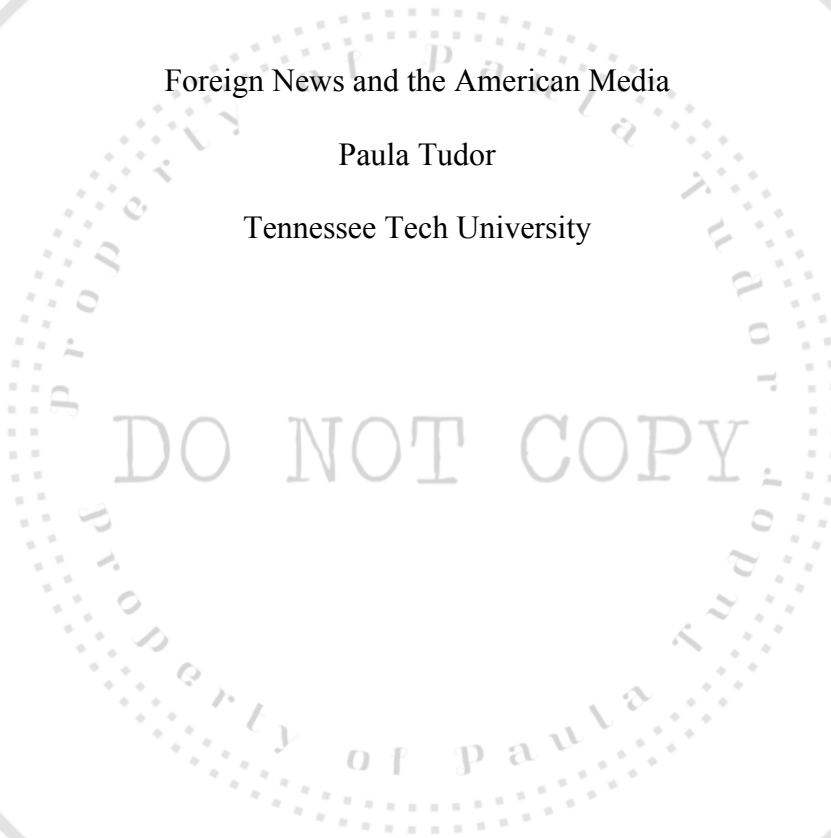
Running head: FOREIGN NEWS

Foreign News and the American Media

Paula Tudor

Tennessee Tech University

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Since the dawn of time people have been distributing and receiving news. And while the ways in which people do these things have been altered over the years, this simple concept has remained unchanged. Whether it is out of some inherent need to inform and be informed or just simple curiosity, people use the news to feel connected to the world around them. This connection is what continues to propel the circulation of news today. People who depend on this news generally want to know about the issues that affect them and today's technological advancements help make that happen in a timely manner. This is especially true in American media, where journalists in every medium work to bring important stories to the public as quickly as possible. The importance of these stories is largely based on an endless cycle of supply and demand, particularly in the case of foreign news stories, which are often the subject of a random selection process (Hamilton & Jenner, 2003)(van Ginneken, 1998)(Willis, 2006).

Over the years the nature of coverage on foreign news has changed, not necessarily in terms of its importance to the American people, but by how the media manages that coverage. Changes in the management of this coverage is partly due to advancements in technology which has made global news more accessible, forcing the national media to be more selective about what stories qualify as newsworthy. Along with these technological advancements, the landscape of the national media in America has become increasingly competitive. Important stories are often overlooked by the vast majority of news outlets in an effort to appeal to their target audience. People tend to overlook news that they cannot identify with, or that does not possess shock value, therefore the media make every effort to present stories that will attract the most attention (Hamilton & Jenner, 2003)(van Ginneken, 1998)(Willis, 2006).

For many people in the American public, foreign news stories rarely resonate unless there is a crisis, however these stories are often difficult to cover in American media for reasons that are far more complicated than a selection process based on public interest. In times of crisis, foreign correspondents are often placed at or near the scene of the crisis. Most news mediums, however, are unable or unwilling to meet the expenses necessary for placing correspondents in areas of the world where a crisis is not currently taking place, particularly for extended periods of time. Correspondents are also expected to file stories in a way that the American audience can relate to, and lengthy stays in foreign territories can compromise these efforts. Reporters can sometimes become too heavily influenced by outside cultures which can affect the perspective of their stories and cause them to lose their intended audience. For these reasons the American media do not generally send correspondents to remote areas of the world to cover stories that may or may not resonate with the public (Hamilton & Jenner, 2003)(van Ginneken, 1998)(Willis, 2006).

Journalists also have to make sure the stories they cover are credible. This is especially difficult in foreign countries, where they are immersed in cultures that are not generally representative of the audience they are trying to reach. As a result, many of these correspondents share information with each other. This helps ensure the accuracy of their research, but can also present other problems as they have to be able to trust those whose information they acquire and be able to distinguish fact from fiction. Being able to tell the difference between fact and fiction becomes even more difficult when language barriers are involved and journalists have to rely on the local people to relay information to them. In these situations it is even more crucial that

correspondents are able to find honest and trustworthy individuals to help them gather accurate information for their stories (van Ginneken, 1998).

The way that people receive their news has also changed, placing less importance on mainstream media to cover foreign news stories. American mass media is no longer the only gateway to the outside world for many people. Technology has changed all of this. People no longer have the patience to wait for news to come to them, they have become active participants in seeking out the news. Many companies now have their own news divisions that utilize the latest technology to obtain the most recent global information as it pertains to their company. In recent years, however, the Internet has undoubtedly been the most influential tool in changing the way foreign news stories are distributed. Whether it is simply fulfilling a role vacated by the American media or has grown to replace it as the primary source for these stories, it has changed the way people receive their news everyday. Because of the Internet people can access news from all over the world at any time of the day or night. And because of the widespread popularity of such technological developments as blogging, anyone can post newsworthy stories online that can be accessed by anyone, anywhere around the world. The popularity of blogging is likely due to the fact that it is not bound by the same type of censorship that is seen in mainstream media. As a result, this type of technology has greatly diminished the public's demand for foreign news from traditional sources, which may also account for the smaller role that these stories play in the American media (Hamilton & Jenner, 2003)(Willis, 2006).

Aside from the fact that people are now receiving their news differently, many journalists are changing the way in which they gather and report their stories. They are becoming much more involved in them to encourage policy changes and ensure that attention is being brought to

the issues that need it the most. This type of focus undeniably influences which stories are told and from where, and may also contribute to how many foreign news stories are selected for distribution in the American media. The amount of coverage that these stories receive is further compromised by the fact that most correspondents tend to report from areas that share similar views. Reporting from these areas makes it easier to obtain the resources necessary for covering their stories, but it may also help explain why certain areas of the world receive less attention in the media (van Ginneken, 1998)(Willis, 2006).

While many foreign news stories may seemingly go unnoticed in the American media, their significance has never wavered. It is more likely that because of the advances and increased use of technology many stories have had to be pushed aside to make room for those deemed most relevant to the American people. Most news mediums cannot afford to relay stories that may not appeal to a wide audience, therefore, with the exception of crisis situations, some foreign news stories receive little or no coverage in the states. The Internet can, however, connect people with news mediums from all over the world so global news is readily available even when there is not a crisis. These technological advancements have expanded the resources in which news circulates, allowing the media to cover stories that are most likely to resonate with the general American public. Despite their declining coverage, foreign news stories have not lost their value in the American media, the means by which people acquire these stories have simply been redefined (Hamilton & Jenner, 2003)(van Ginneken, 1998)(Willis, 2006).

## References

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