

# Canadian Media and the Developing World

A Critical Mapping of Key Issues, Events, and Actors



## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Josh Greenberg,  
Carleton University  
Colette Brin  
Université Laval

## DATE

September 2017

## MEDIA'S IMPACTS AND STATS

- Media coverage remains the major source of news and information about the developing world for Canadians and can exert a strong influence over policymaking.
- Newspapers generated more coverage of issues and events in the developing world than broadcast or digital media.
- The largest proportion of development-themed stories were hard news reports, many of which were wire pieces

## PERCEPTIONS

Public understanding of international issues is shaped in important ways by the news networks that make up the modern mediascape.

For Canadians, this no doubt includes the CBC and its television, radio, and online properties, national newspapers like The Globe and Mail and National Post, and our local and regional dailies.

These media outlets play a crucial role in shaping how citizens learn about and understand international events, the places where these events occur, and the people who are involved and affected.

## PRINT NEWS

In English newspapers, almost half of the stories were prominently placed on the first four pages of the publication while in French the stories were more likely to be located deeper in the paper

A considerable body of research also shows that mainstream media coverage of the developing world, particularly in the Global North, is not just inadequate (Wu, 2000), but declining in both volume and scope

## NEGATIVE COVERAGE

When media does report on international issues, the coverage is frequently driven by a particularly dramatic event—famine, war, civil conflict, etc.— which significantly skews public perception of the complexities, politics, and struggles in those regions,

"We all know that not all countries can be covered everyday, yet the picture of the world presented by establishment news organizations is inevitably distorted, and people, countries, and events are represented unevenly (Wu, 2000). "

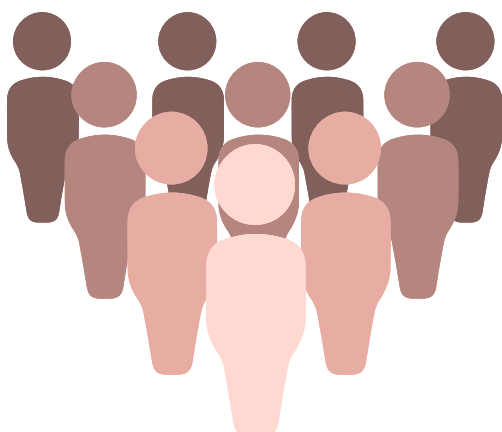
---



Scholars of international communication are intrigued by the hidden structural underpinnings that shape this coverage. They ask, why are some countries more likely than others to get covered? What are the systemic forces that shape international news?

1. They examine the processes of newsgathering and distribution by a chain of gatekeepers (media elites) who apply a set of traditional news values that reflect a collective judgement of what is considered newsworthy (and, also, what is not);
2. They assess patterns in news flow and coverage through a hegemonic lens, explaining imbalance in news coverage according to a set of ideological practices that both reflect and help constitute the larger global system, which in turn are structured by the forces of international politics and economics

This selection process depends on a number of different determinants, such as how closely developing nations are 'indexed' to elite interests (Boydston, 2013), their proximity to centers of geopolitical power (Golan, 2006; Moumouni, 2003), and their degree of narrative fidelity (Lule, 2002) and cultural affinity (Hester, 1973)



## **INFLUENCE AND POWER**

Economic, social, geographic, and political differences determine the amount and the nature of coverage that any one country receives in another nation's media system.

In another study, Rosengren (1977) found that factors such as trade, population and geographic proximity influenced the volume of coverage a nation received in the media from other nations.

## INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE OF CRISES AND DISASTERS

When disaster strikes in distant places, mainstream media are the primary sources of information about these events and their effects (Franks, 2013).

- Even with the rise in social media, legacy media organizations continue to provide a “pivotal role of validating and providing a coherent, reliable gatekeeper to the information about such crises.”
- The closure of foreign bureaus and thinning of editorial resources over the past decades has led to more heavy reliance on wire services and a decline in what National Geographic’s Paul Salopek called “deep journalism.” For Salopek, deep journalism “is informed by deep immersion in the story at ground level... revealing the texture of lives of people... who live within front-page stories, but normally don’t make the news themselves” (Bishop, 2015).
- The established narrative about the developing world – as a locus of war, conflict, and gloom – can be punctuated by positive and progressive storylines, such as those which humanize populations in developing countries, showing them to be active agents rather than passive, dependent, and needy victims (Chouliaraki, 2006; Tester, 2001).

“The Third World is persistently associated with violence and disasters”



---

Please note all body text is shared directly from the Canadian Media and the Developing World report.  
[Click here](#) for the original complete PDF.