

# International Media Monitoring

edited by  
**Kaarle Nordenstreng**  
University of Tampere

**Michael Griffin**  
University of St. Thomas

## THE HAMPTON PRESS COMMUNICATION SERIES

International Communication  
Richard C. Vincent, supervisory editor

Goodbye, Gweilo: Public Opinion and the 1997 Problem in Hong Kong  
*L. Erwin Atwood and Ann Marie Major*

Democratizing Communication?: Comparative Perspectives on  
Information and Power  
*Mashood Baillie and Dwayne Winseck, eds.*

International Media Monitoring  
*Kaarle Nordenstreng and Michael Griffin, eds.*

Global Productions: Labor in the Making of the "Information Society"  
*Gerald Sussman and John A. Lent, eds.*

Towards Equity in Global Communication: MacBride Report Update  
*Richard C. Vincent, Kaarle Nordenstreng, and Michael Traber, eds.*

Reconvergence: A Political Economy of Telecommunications in Canada  
*Dwayne Winseck*

forthcoming

Political Economy of Media and Culture in Peripheral Singapore  
*Kokkeong Wong*



HAMPTON PRESS INC.  
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY

Copyright © 1999 by Hampton Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording, or otherwise, without permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

International media monitoring / edited by Kaarle Nordenstreng,  
Michael Griffin

P. cm. -- (Hampton Press communication series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57273-183-4 cl. -- ISBN 1-57273-184-2 ppb

1. Mass media criticism. 2. Mass media--Objectivity. 3. Mass media--Social aspects. I. Nordenstreng, Kaarle. II. Griffin, Michael S., 1953- . III. Series

P96.C76I58 1999

302.23--dc21

99-22901  
CIP

## Contents

Foreword, <i>John Eldridge</i>	ix
Preface	xiii
Acknowledgements	xix
List of Contributors	xxi
<b>PART I: MONITORING MEDIA PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Toward Global Content Analysis and Media Criticism <i>Kaarle Nordenstreng</i>	3
2. Prospects for Media Monitoring: Much Overdue, But Never Too Late <i>Johan Galtung</i>	15
3. On Evaluating Media Performance in the Public Interest: Past and Future of a Research Tradition <i>Denis McQuail</i>	25
4. An Audit of Democracy: Media Monitoring, Citizenship, and Public Policy <i>Derek Edwards, Peter Golding, Dennis Howitt, Shelley McLachlan, and Katie Macmillan</i>	39

Hampton Press, Inc.  
23 Broadway  
Cresskill, NJ 07626

# 8

## Journalistic Norms and Forms of Cross-National Imagery: How U.S. News Magazines Photographed Tiananmen

David D. Perlmutter

### VISUAL IMAGES AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Scholars and news professionals have long commented on the types of values such as drama, recency, proximity, conflict, or relevance that determine whether an event is "newsworthy."<sup>1</sup> Yet one meta-value of news coverage is as imposing: Does an event provide good pictures?

<sup>1</sup>There is an extensive literature on this topic; for example, see: Gans (1979); see also Alisky and Barash (1957); Baldwin, Barrett, and Bates (1992); Carroll (1985, 1989); Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger (1987); Cohen (1993); Epstein (1973); Hall (1981); Jamieson and Campbell (1988); Peterson (1979); Shoemaker, Danielian, and Brendlinger (1991); Schudson (1982); Singletary (1984). For the acknowledged milestone research on criteria for selection of foreign news, see Galtung and Ruge (1965).

"Good," in the code of photojournalism, is the image that grabs viewers' attention, concentrating on "inreality"—intensified slices of the world displaying immediacy, conflict, action, and deviance (Perlmutter, 1995). Although such images do not wholly determine what is news, pictures (photographs, film, and videotape) are the dominant communicative form of the late 20th century. Despite the increase in international travel, immigration, and personal contacts, most people learn of foreign events, places, and peoples through visual media. To a great extent, therefore, mass communication is visual communication, and "the study of mass communication today is the study of visual communication" (Griffin, 1991, p. 15). The implication for communication research is simple: No study of cross-national communication is fully realized without addressing the role of the visual image. Accordingly, it is vital for academic researchers and news professionals to analyze which ideas, values, views, and symbolic codes these images attempt to suggest, both in a domestic and cross-national context and by what formal strategies the aspects and qualities are encoded. To this end, this chapter examines photographs in U.S. news magazines (*Time* and *Newsweek*) that portray the Tiananmen events of 1989 in the People's Republic of China. It serves as a case study of how Western journalists view (and create visions of) social conflict in other countries.

The cross-national transfer of pictures has not been ignored by communication research (e.g., Griffin, Schwartz, & Viswanath, 1994; Larson, 1991; Liebes & Katz, 1990). Yet, typically, however comprehensive, assessments of "images" of China in the press tend to define such "views" as verbal-lexical. At the same time, there is a drastic need for visual research. As images multiply in quantity and effect, common misconceptions about their origins, form, and content increase as well. This is not to say that pictures, like most alphabetic words, are symbolic signs. There are many analogies of pictorial forms to real-life experience (Messaris, 1994). Some aspects of visual cognition such as the limited recognition of emotions in pictures of faces seem to be human bio-universals (Ekman, 1984). Explanations drawing from nature, nurture, or culture need not be in conflict. It is because pictures, especially photographs, moving or still, are in some sense realistic, that the deep and important part of their representation of the world that is constructed and subjective is masked.

In popular discourse, photographs and other electronic/mechanical images, even those originating in other cultures or of other peoples, are considered neutral and "objective." The photograph, as Giselle Freund (1980) noted, is seen popularly as a window onto the world. News photos are not treated to the same level of scrutiny that is accorded by press and public alike to lexical-verbal news; no one looks at a photograph and says,

"well, that's just his opinion" (Perlmutter, 1995). Studies of photographic production in news and elsewhere, however, have shown that they are the result of constructed codes and conventions (e.g., Rosenblum, 1978; Schwartz, 1986). The manufacture of a news photograph, for example, involves countless editing decisions that affect its final selection, framing, presentation, content, and captioning (see Becker, 1974, 1978; Brecheen-Kirkton, 1991; Byers, 1996; Hardt, 1991; Perlmutter, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Roberts, 1988; Scherer, 1985; Schwartz, 1992; Snyder, 1984; Woo, 1994). Simply put, no lens is wide enough, no film is sensitive enough, and no news page is large enough to capture reality. The question, therefore, is what pictures display in the narrow frame of presentation (cf. Perlmutter, 1997a, 1997b) and what has been excluded.

### VIEWING CHINA

These visual issues are intimately linked to the traditional problem of Western portrayals of the Orient. For Western journalists covering Asian peoples and events, cultural and linguistic barriers to understanding and communication are common. Many of the reporters who covered the China-Japan War and the Chinese Civil War "hung around the cities," spent their time having tea with intellectuals, and never learned either standard written Chinese nor any spoken dialect (see discussion in Mackinnon & Friesen, 1987). Typically, their defense was that the English-speaking government officials and intellectuals were better sources of information than the taciturn peasant.

Such an excuse is disingenuous in the sense that it praises a necessity by calling it a virtue. The industrial work standards of modern journalism discourage grounded, reflective, and tenured expertise—it is too much bother to become an expert. Going geographically or intellectually to the usual sources is a risk-reducing behavior for journalists and an important routine employed in mass media organizations (Turow, 1992). Specifically, the reporter must produce a steady and regular stream of words and images.<sup>2</sup> These news data must also, perhaps more importantly, fit into existing categories, prepackaged for easy organization, dissemination, and consumption. Such a process does not typically allow for the development of cultural depth or expertise in the news practitioner.

<sup>2</sup>The applied cousin of the scholar, the revolutionary, must go deep into the local scene, spending years cultivating trust with people unaccustomed to being consulted or listened to. In China there is the famous example of Peng Pai organizing in Haifan county in the 1920s; to spur rebellion he had to invest years of careful effort (Ristaino 1987).

Significantly, in the wide new order of global journalism, the standards of foreign correspondent expertise seem to be deteriorating. Foreign correspondents might be sent anywhere at a moment's notice (Collingwood, 1980). They have been described as "firemen" who race from crisis to crisis (Mossetig & Griggs, 1980; see also Larson, 1992). In addition, journalists in foreign lands are normative filters of complexity: Even the most intellectually advanced and culturally sensitive among them know that foreign signs and symbols must be "translated" for the domestic audience. That much of importance is lost in this transmission is self-evident, although journalistic defense rhetoric deems such distortions irrelevant or fails to mention them at all. As this chapter attempts to demonstrate, such observations are equally applicable to images about China.

Indeed, misperception and cycles of positive and negative views have characterized how China has been seen in the Western imagination (Isaacs, 1958). Many of the U.S. founding fathers admired what they knew of the Middle Kingdom, although their knowledge was selective (Aldridge, 1993; see also Ching & Oxtoby, 1992). In the 19th century, China presented a much less appealing image to the West. As described by the historian Jack Gray (1990), "China had come to symbolize almost the opposite: a polity stifled by the power of a self-perpetuating elite who were both guardians of a quasi-religious tradition and the servants of an arbitrary despot. . . . The decisive factor in Western views of China was not change in China, but change in Europe" (pp. 1, 3).

The 20th century marked a time when the welfare of China seemed a great concern of U.S. citizens. In the 1930s, Secretary of State Henry Stimson remarked that it seemed as if every town in the United States was sponsoring a missionary in China (Dulles 1972; see also Varg, 1958). When China was seen as a victim, such as in the Sino-Japanese war, opinion, always registering a tendency to favor the "underdog," was even more sympathetic. After Pearl Harbor, the image of the valiant Chinese struggling as our ally was reinforced in news and entertainment media representations. Yet, during the Cold War mainland China was part of the enemy block—a Communist evil empire.

In sum, the relationship between China and the United States has been called a "tragedy of conflicting perceptions" (Seith, 1974), alternating between "love and hate" (Chang, 1993, pp. 37-38), and following cycles of "romance and cynicism" (Lee, 1990, p. 21). The wild enthusiasm that greeted the Nixon visit, for example, was followed by the traditional corrective slump in mood after China did not transform overnight to our expectations (Fairbank, 1983).

The relationship between the U.S. press coverage of and foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China provides clues for under-

standing this phenomenon of seesawing images and perceptions. Chang (1984, 1989, 1993) has shown that coverage of China in the U.S. press was heavily influenced by the opinions of U.S. foreign policymakers (typically in the executive branch), but in cases where there was serious divergence within the powers-that-be (for example, Congress vs. the President), contrarian opinions also appeared in the press.

The hypothesis for this study is in line with such observations: Western visual coverage of Tiananmen will show images of symbols and scenes that resonate with Western cultural expectations and ideology. Specifically, it is hypothesized that U.S. media texts will (a) stress the symbols of Western idealized (and normative) values, that is, the "Statue of Liberty," and slogans such as "freedom" and "democracy" and in other aspects (attribution of causality of violence and narrative closure); and (b) favor almost exclusively the popular Western (anti-Chinese government) view of the events—not translation, but transformation.

#### METHOD: VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

*Time* and *Newsweek* are the leading weekly news magazines, in circulation size and in significance, for the U.S. market. Both cover world events and have a high number of photographs. This study examined all photographs related to Tiananmen in issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* published in 1989. The variables were the three fundamentals of visual meaning: the code of the medium (photography), the caption (the words directly associated with or framing each image), and the context (both physical and socio-cultural-historical). The images were then coded for manifest content in four topic areas (suggested by a pretest); all were judged from the published photographic content and from descriptions in captions:<sup>3</sup>

1. Representations of Violence: Is there bodily or physical violence or its results? If so, who is shown or described as the victim or the perpetrator of the violence?

<sup>3</sup>Each page of the runs was examined by the primary coder (the writer). Half the units by monthly blocks were randomly selected for viewing by a secondary coder. Four randomly selected years of pictures were viewed by five other coders. The primary coder had a beginner's knowledge of Chinese, but was moderately well read in China's history and culture. The secondary coder had no knowledge of Chinese and very little knowledge of China. Of the latter coders, one was born and raised in the People's Republic of China, two others came from Hong Kong, and the final two were Westerners (one Australian, one U.S.) who read and spoke Chinese fluently. For this study every page of the complete run of the news magazines *Newsweek* and *Time* were examined. Due to the simplicity and manifest nature of what was coded, reliability was high (95%).

2. Representations of Foreign Press: How is the involvement of foreign press in the events represented, that is, as interference or neutral observation?
3. Use of Symbols: Are Western ideological symbols present and, if so, how are they shown or described?
4. Narrative Closure: Is the story represented or told in words and images as having an ending (a final curtain), or is it open-ended (i.e., "the story continues")? How have the news magazines attempted to render a verdict on the history of Tiananmen?

## RESULTS

### Question 1: Representations of Violence

No statistically significant variation was found between the visualizations of violence in *Time* and *Newsweek*, thus their combined vision is discussed. Out of a total of 186 images related to Tiananmen, 37 (19.9%) contained violence, and 31 (16.7%) referred to violence in the caption (some images had no captions except a photo credit; see Tables 8.1 and 8.2). Moreover, in pictures and captions portraying violence, it was overwhelmingly shown and described as being incited and largely conducted by the Chinese government (although both government forces and dissidents were shown to commit violence; see Tables 8.3 and 8.4). Violence against government representatives was often justified as self-defense, or as the result of provocation, or it was shown that the dissidents tried to curtail it. Captions tended to support such visual meanings; that is, caption and text were mutually supportive. Several examples provide the flavor of such combinations. In a photograph in *Newsweek* (June 19, p. 14) the body of a young man was shown being transported on a bicycle; the caption tells us, "I saw the dead falling at Tiananmen": As the Chinese Army starts its bloody crackdown, a bicyclist takes cover on the ground and a victim is carted away for treatment." In *Time* (June 19, p. 17) there is a photograph of several people who (along with their bicycles) have been crushed to death on the street. The nearest caption is a quote attributed to "A Worker"—"Tell the United Nations, tell the world what has happened in China, tell them that the Chinese government is killing the Chinese people."

Table 8.1. Frequency of Violence in Images.

	VIOLENCE PRESENT	VIOLENCE NOT PRESENT	VIOLENCE NOT DISCERNIBLE	TOTALS
COUNT:	$n=37$	$n=146$	$n=3$	$n=186$
ROW PCT:	19.9%	78.5%	1.6%	about 100%

Note: All percentages rounded to the nearest tenth.

Table 8.2. Frequency of Violence in Captions.

	VIOLENCE PRESENT	VIOLENCE NOT CAPTION	VIOLENCE NOT DISCERNIBLE	TOTALS
COUNT:	$n=31$	$n=8$	$n=0$	$n=186$
ROW PCT:	16.7%	4.3%	0.0%	100%

Note: All percentages rounded to the nearest tenth.

### Question 2: Representations of Foreign Press

Part of the persona of objectivity of photojournalism is that the camera operator is an observer or eyewitness. Visually this is demonstrated by the fact that journalists rarely show themselves or other journalists involved in events—within the frame of the lens. They tend to remain in what sociologist Erving Goffman (1974) called the traditional "backstage" or out-of-sight position (see also Banks, 1992). This phenomenon is evident in the images examined for this study. There are no images or captions that identify journalistic involvement. Indeed, although photos are often credited as being taken by Western photojournalists, there are no images of Western reporters interacting with the protesters in the *Time* or *Newsweek* issues sampled. Partial exceptions to this rule illustrate the normative strategic intent of the depiction. In *Newsweek* (May 29, p. 28), beneath an insert title "Karl Marx, Meet Marshall McLuhan," a still image from a CNN video displays a tall Westerner talking to two Chinese. The caption reads: "Pulling the Plug: CNN's Alec Miran argues with Chinese Officials." The item refers to the government's closing of CNN transmission facilities. In *Newsweek* (June 19, p. 23) we see a photograph within a photograph. A

and moments of urgency such as at Tiananmen (during the crackdown) or during the Gulf War (live from Baghdad or under Scud attack), the correspondent and occasionally the videographers can visibly become part of the story. This entry to the "frontstage," however, remains rare—a "Peter Arnett effect" rather than a new norm (Banks, 1992; Zelizer, 1991). In sum, U.S. news magazine visual-lexical strategy is to enhance journalistic credibility by stressing that reporters are only observers.

**Question 3: Use of Symbols**

Several consistent sets of symbols were employed in the texts: (a) the V Sign; (b) English translations of Chinese characters, or English phrases on posters or banners; and (c) the "Goddess of Democracy."<sup>4</sup>

*The V sign.* The sign, created gesturally by outstretching the arm and splitting the index and middle finger into a V-shape while curling the other fingers into the palm, has a long and complex history in Western culture, with ambiguous and ancient meanings (Feldman 1941, 1959). In the second World War it became associated with military or partisan (i.e., violent) victory (Rhodes, 1987). During the Vietnam War it increasingly (although not everyone was aware of this) became a sign associated with peace or protest (Jury, 1971/1986). In the People's Republic of China, the sign can embody either or both meanings. In any case, it is a familiar and significant sign to Western observers, and its uses in the analyzed texts are revealing.

In their 1989 coverage of Tiananmen, *Time* and *Newsweek* published 15 photographs depicting V's in Chinese hands. Generally, the uses of the V were explained or shown as denoting peace or victory or both; it connoted that the "democracy demonstrators" wanted Western-style ideals. The June 5 cover of *Time*, for example, showed a split image within a red Communist star. Russian protesters, fists raised, appeared on one half of the star; a young Chinese, giving the V sign, balanced the other side of the star. The theme of this issue of *Time* was "PEOPLE POWER Beijing: Defying Dictatorship, and Moscow: Demanding Democracy." Also in *Time*, an end-of-year montage of images displayed

<sup>4</sup>There has been considerable argument among Chinese groups as to the origin of the statue. Feigon (1990) concedes it "bore a striking resemblance to the American Statue of Liberty" (p. 231). Wu Ye (1989), a writer for the official *Renmin Ribao* [*People's Daily*] wrote that it "was a serious distortion of freedom and democracy and showed disrespect for other people's free and democratic rights" because it was erected without permission and in the same place as other monuments (p. 28). After the events in China, the Goddess became an international celebrity, in reconstructed forms, appearing in art exhibitions and as a statue erected near the Chinese embassy in Washington (Forgey, 1989).

**Table 8.3. The Perpetration of Violence in Images That Show or Describe Violence.**

	GOVERNMENT PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE [IMAGES OR CAPTIONS]	DISSIDENT PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE [IMAGES OR CAPTIONS]	TOTAL
COUNT:	n=49	n=6	n=55
ROW PCT:	89.1%	10.9%	100%

Note: "Images + Caption" represents a compression of all instances in which violence was shown and all instances it was described; thus, this total is additive and higher than the total number of images. All percentages rounded to the nearest tenth.

**Table 8.4. The Suffering of Violence in Images That Show or Describe Violence.**

	GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AS VICTIM [IMAGES OR CAPTIONS]	DISSIDENTS AS VICTIM [IMAGES OR CAPTIONS]	TOTAL
COUNT:	n=9	n=54	n=63
ROW PCT:	14.3%	85.7%	100%

Note: "Images + Caption" represents a compression of all instances in which violence was shown and all instances it was described; thus, this total is additive and higher than the total number of images. All percentages rounded to the nearest tenth.

crowd of Chinese citizens looks at the camera (i.e., the reporter and us). In the foreground, two hands extend into the frame and hold up a photograph of dead bodies. The caption reads: "Everyone was watching: Beijing residents display a photograph of students slain in Tiananmen Square." Such a view, in which we are, by para-projection, the picture taker and the camera, reinforces the notion that the journalist is an observer, not an insider; through his or her eyes readers see a window to the world.

The connotation of this scarcity of pictures, which show or imply the presence of reporters, is clear: They were outside the frame of the events. This, of course, is the norm for photojournalism and newswriting; the exigencies of video reporting can be more strained. In times of crisis

ed" (July 10, p. 26). Elsewhere, the Goddess is surrounded by protesters in Tiananmen Square (June 12, p. 32). The caption, interestingly, told readers that she represents "Dangerous Ideas" (i.e., to the Communist government of China). There was a full-length photograph of the Goddess of Democracy surrounded by protesters (*Time*, June 12, p. 27). The caption called it "A flash of exuberant defiance" and commented that the giant figure bears "a marked resemblance to the Statue of Liberty." The statue's existence was portrayed by visual and word accounts as standing for Western ideals.

#### Question 4: Narrative Closure

The signature picture of the "Images 89" section of the December 25 (p. 2) issue of *Time* was the photograph of the young man holding a satchel, blocking a column of tanks. Its caption instructed: "Though distant and grainy, this photograph of a Chinese man standing down a tyrannical regime is the most extraordinary picture of the year. It is flesh against steel, mortality against the onrush of terror, the very stuff of courage." We may read that the struggle against tyranny continues, the people will not be repressed, and that brave individuals can make a difference—traditional U.S. ideals.

Earlier (October 2), *Time* had devoted an entire issue to China, and although a vast majority of the issue's pictures were sociocultural (landscapes, people in ethnic dress, slices of life) rather than political, the very last shot was of some big-character posters—posters written with large Chinese letters, typically attacking government policy—calling for protest. The caption read, "Next Stop Tiananmen" (i.e., the protest is in the future, not the past). The view in *Newsweek* was similar. The man and the tanks image also appeared in that magazine's December 25 issue in the "People of the Year" section. *Newsweek*'s caption read, "In Beijing a lone youth showed a profile in courage" (an allusion to the John F. Kennedy Pulitzer Prize-winning book on great leaders and decisive events) and as symbol of the "People of the Year": "Near Tiananmen, a lone man armed only with courage faced down a column of tanks." Significantly, the issue's section on China began with a feature on student leader Shen Tong: "Shen is convinced that the student movement built a foundation upon which democracy can eventually rise." The reporter then quoted the student leader directly: "The Chinese struggle is not only for the Chinese people . . . if someone somewhere wants to get freedom, it's a struggle for the whole human people" (p. 36). This sentence encapsulates (with exceptions) the attitude taken by the iconography resident in the U.S. news magazines sampled for this study. The dissidents got in the last word and image for 1989: The struggle continues, and it is universal.

"amid joy and sorrow: the sign for peace and victory" being flashed by people identified as from "Czechoslovakia, China, Poland, Bulgaria, West Germany, South Africa" (December 25). In *Newsweek* (May 29, p. 19) readers were shown a close-up of a middle-aged, Asian woman, in tears, flashing the V. The caption identified her as a teacher. This image subsumes three important and conventional submyths: the universal, cross-cultural sign of the "good teacher" (Gerbner, 1966), the crying woman—a staple of photojournalism—and the V sign.

*Western words/Translations: Emphasizing Democracy.* In photojournalistic jargon, *signage* refers to words found in posters, letters, documents, signs, and headbands, visible within pictures. Reporters covering events in foreign lands seek out English-language signage; in turn, protesters and demonstrators understand the value of producing them. A young man was shown with a headband reading "Democracy" (*Time*, May 29, p. 41). The caption identifies him as a "rebel with a cause." Here, *Time*'s editors made a distinction (and a Western pop cultural allusion to the James Dean movie of similar name) between aimless or purposeless teenage rebellion and a genuine movement for freedom (i.e., Western ideals); the rebels were portrayed as holding a cause that embodies Western idealism about progressive social change. In the same issue (the last before the violence in the Square) a more explicit association with such values was made. Protesters were shown holding up a banner that read "Give Me Democracy or Give Me Death," an allusion to the alleged words of Patrick Henry.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, in *Time* (May 15, p. 45), a photograph showed a "multilingual protest march in Beijing." The banner read "Hello Mr. Democracy." Interpretative readings of such signage are reinforced by the captions: The press was strategically attempting to maintain its mantle of objectivity while also reinforcing that the demonstrators sought Western-type goals. A further connotation is normative, that such goals are worth seeking, that is, Western forms of government are the ideals for which all people must strive.

*The statue of the "Goddess of Democracy."* The famous statue is shown consistently throughout the sampled texts. *Newsweek* informed readers that an escaped dissident, Wang Shang, currently living in New York City, had sculpted a new version of her (which is shown) and that the intent is symbolic: "the seeds of democracy and freedom' have been planted."  
<sup>5</sup>Henry's statement came from a speech that he delivered to the Convention of Virginia held in 1775. The full utterance was: "Forbit [sic] it, Almighty God!—I know not what course others may take; but as for me give me liberty or give me death" (Wirt, 1836, pp. 141-142). There is some controversy over how accurately the speech was recorded (Meade, 1969). Modern U.S. society and the Chinese students strip the first clause and thereby lose the religious character and biblical reference (Jeremiah 6:14).



## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE APPLICATIONS

This study has tried to examine what was shown in news pictures and also what was said about their content—the discourse world of the news photograph. Although production is not reception and encoding is not decoding, it is still of interest to speculate what interpretations such images were meant to offer their audience. I suggest that the major themes and symbolic values in coverage of Tiananmen events in *Time* and *Newsweek* for the year 1989 are:

1. The violence was conducted by both sides, but was largely incited and conducted by the government of China, and violence against government representatives was often justified as self-defense, the result of provocation.
2. Foreigners, especially the press, were portrayed as objective observers, that is as "backstage" to the events.
3. Chinese symbolism was largely ignored or reconfigured; concentration was placed on Western-type symbols and concepts embodied in familiar American words and shapes. The V symbolized the people's hope and spirit (victory over repression); words and translations ("freedom" and "democracy") emphasized that Western goals were sought; the Goddess of Democracy was a symbol of Western views of these universal ideals.
4. Neither the story nor the struggle is over. The narrative continues. Under the surface rebellion is still simmering; protesters are oppressed but not defeated.

That this is a simplistic version of Tiananmen events is obvious, regardless of one's political sympathies. First we note that the events were a major story in every sense of the term and received an inordinate amount of coverage compared to other similar stories occurring at the same time (Peyrefitte, 1990). The story developed so rapidly that the press seemed to lead governmental and public action or reaction (Bennett, 1990). In addition, the journalists' proximity to the site, the drama of the spectacle, and the severity of the events contributed to the press taking a more active role in shaping public and elite opinion (Harding, 1990). The Tiananmen events prompted a rare consensus of outrage in the U.S. press, public, and academy. "It was not possible to be dispassionate," admitted Charles Kuralt of CBS News. "The most cynical journalists could not help but be caught up" (quoted in Morrison, 1989, p. 174). Another study suggested that U.S. government accounts of Tiananmen (through the *Voice of America*) were more neutral and objective than coverage in the flagship of

U.S. journalism, the *New York Times* (Wang, 1992). It is no surprise that certain images as well, such as the famous "man facing the tanks" picture, were transformed into icons of outrage, emphasizing deviance from (ideal) Western values (Perlmutter, 1998).

But was there one Tiananmen to be reported objectively? Every event, however simple or complex, is open to varying, perhaps contradictory, visualizations. TV news outlets from different countries framed different versions of the events (Friedland & Zhong, 1996). The Chinese government has published its own photographic report that, not surprisingly, provides radically different visual images that highlight violence committed against soldiers and police (Committee for the Truth about the Beijing Turmoil, 1992). Even the dissidents themselves have claimed that press coverage missed much of what was going on (Shen, 1990). Indeed, a recent study that compared visual reporting of Tiananmen in the *New York Times*, and the memories of six major dissidents, found that recollections of events and relative importance assigned to them differed radically (Lin, 1996). Several western China scholars have noted that the Tiananmen protests were not simple narratives that could be interpreted without an understanding of Chinese history and culture (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1992; see also Macartney, 1990). For example, the role of students in Chinese society, from early Dynastic times to the present, was largely ignored.<sup>6</sup> As is the case in so much reporting about China, the "indigenous perspectives" were "left out of sight" (Lee, 1990, p. 20).

Tiananmen seems to fit the suggested model in which a split in the opinion of government elites is reflected in the media. President Bush came under considerable and consistent congressional and editorial criticism for not being tough enough on the Chinese government and was simultaneously seen as being too tough by Chinese leaders. In addition, a perception of a consensus of outrage among the public and the experts may have contributed to the taking of sides by the press. As Gans (1979) has observed, "journalists can also feel objective when they assume, rightly or wrongly, that their values are universal or dominant" (pp. 185-186). Because the events developed rapidly, many reporters

---

<sup>6</sup>Several contemporary factors perpetuated the uneasy place of students in Chinese society and led to discontent at the time of the Tiananmen protests. The school system produced a "small 'elite' sector," but only through *guanxi* [connections] could a post or a foreign study permit be obtained. Many found themselves sidetracked and not able to achieve the lucrative rewards of graduate study abroad and, most important, "a secure, desirable job on the frontiers of Chinese modernization" (Davis & Vogel, 1990, p. 299). Another cause of alienation (not unknown to U.S. students) was the income disparity created by the proto-market economy and increasing corruption (Davis, 1992). The situation was such that "a salesman hawking leather jackets to tourists could earn ten times more than could most scholars with degrees" (Simmie & Nixon, 1989, p. 7).

with little or no experience in China were rushed in, and most felt compelled to produce stories that, as one reporter put it to this researcher, "Americans will understand." Typically, this meant finding familiar visual-lexical symbols that tapped into Western ideals about appropriate social policies and behavior while ignoring native symbolism. There were, in essence, many Tiananmens that were pictured, or could be pictured—a Rashomon-like conflict of memory and imagery. This is the key insight masked by the "realism" of news photography.

This is not to say that the Western camera will forever define the Eastern "other." The world media structure is evolving (cf. Chang, 1993; Galtung & Vincent, 1992; Hamelink, 1994; Hur, 1982; Lee, 1972, 1993; Stevenson, 1994). New constraints and opportunities on cross-national imagery will develop as well. Mass visual communications is no longer the sole property of Western news organizations or governmental elites. The developing world is creating its own networks of visual communication distribution and oppositional groups are gaining access to new technology (e.g., cable TV, faxes, and satellite dishes; Lee, 1993). The situation is fluid: it is not wholly clear how any new communication order will be structured or divided (Hamelink, 1994). Increasingly, as other countries develop mass media structures and especially satellite technology, the West's media dominance may be challenged with its own weapons of representation and practice. If so, the global forum of visual reporting will become an area of bitter contention, of multiple colliding revisions and revisions. This will demand new sensibilities of self-reflection from the profession of journalism. The public as well as the institution of journalism must demand new standards of transcultural literacy, both visual and lexical-verbal. As the transmission of images between peoples becomes increasingly frequent, the journalist can no longer afford to ignore indigenous culture, history, language, and the ideological significance of pictures in the press.

## REFERENCES

[Note: In many Chinese names, the family name is placed first; in those cases I have retained the entire name and not employed initials for the second name. In cases where the authors used westernized name order, I have used initials for their first name.]

Aldridge, A.O. (1993). *The dragon and the eagle: The presence of China in the American enlightenment*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

Alisky, M., & Barash, R. (1957). Radio news values of teletypesetter copy. *Journalism Quarterly*, 34, 349-354.

- Baldwin, T.F., Barrett, M., & Bates, B. (1992). Uses and values for news on cable television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 36, 225-233.
- Banks, A. (1992). Frontstage/backstage: Loss of control in real-time coverage of the war in the Gulf. *Communication*, 13, 111-120.
- Becker, H.S. (1974). Photography and sociology. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communications*, 1, 3-26.
- Becker, H.S. (1978, February). Do photographs tell the truth? *Afterimage*, pp. 9-17.
- Bennett, A. (1990). American reporters in China: Romanticism and cynicism. In C.C. Lee (Ed.), *Voices of China: The interplay of politics and journalism* (pp. 263-287). New York: Guilford.
- Brecheen-Kirkton, K. (1991). Visual silences: How photojournalism covers reality with the facts. *American Journalism*, 8, 27-34.
- Byers, P. (1966). Cameras don't take pictures. *Columbia University Forum*, 9, 27-31.
- Carroll, R.L. (1985). Content values in TV news programs in small and large markets. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62, 877-882.
- Carroll, R.L. (1989). Market size and TV news values. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 49-56.
- Chang, T-K. (1984). How three elite newspapers covered Reagan China policy. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61, 429-432.
- Chang, T-K. (1989). The impact of presidential statements on press editorials regarding U.S. China policy 1950-1984. *Communication Research*, 16, 486-509.
- Chang, T-K. (1993). *The press and China policy: The illusion of Sino-American relations 1950-1984*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Chang, T-K., Shoemaker, P.J., & Brendlinger, N. (1987). Determinants of international news coverage in the U.S. media. *Communication Research*, 14, 396-414.
- Ching, J., & Oxtoby, W.G. (Eds.). (1992). *Discovering China: European interpretations in the enlightenment*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Cohen, A. (1993). Israelis and foreign news: Perceptions of interest, functions, and newsworthiness. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 37, 337-347.
- Collingwood, C. (1980, April 19). Prestige, glamour, high places. *TV Guide*, p. 6+.
- Committee for the Truth about the Beijing Turmoil. (1992). *The truth about the Beijing turmoil*. Beijing, China: Beijing Publishing House.
- Davis, D. (1992). Skidding: Downward mobility among the children of the Maoist middle class. *Modern China*, 18, 410-429.
- Davis, D., & Vogel, E.F. (1990). *Chinese society on the eve of Tiananmen: The impact of reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dulles, F.R. (1972). *American policy toward Communist China 1949-1969*. New York: Crowell.

- Ekman, P. (1984). Expression and the nature of emotion. In K. Scherer & P. Ekman (Eds.), *Approaches to emotion* (pp. 319-343). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Epstein, E.J. (1973). *News from nowhere*. New York: Random House.
- Esherrick, J.W., & Wasserstrom, J.N. (1992). Acting out democracy: Political theater in modern China. In J.N. Wasserstrom & E.J. Perry (Eds.), *Popular protest and political culture in Modern China* (pp. 32-69). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Fairbank, J.K. (1983). *The United States and China* (4th ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Feigon, L. (1990). *China rising: The meaning of Tiananmen*. Chicago: I.R. Dee.
- Feldman, S.S. (1941). The blessing of the Kohanites. *American Imago*, 2, 317-318.
- Feldman, S.S. (1959). *Mannerisms of speech and gesture in everyday life*. New York: International University Press.
- Forgey, B. (1989, June 13). Their lady of the embassy. *Washington Post*, p. C4+.
- Freund, G. (1980). *Photography & society*. Boston: Godine.
- Friedland, L.A., & Zhong Mengbai. (1996). International television coverage of Beijing Spring 1989: A comparative approach. *Journalism and Mass Communication Monographs*, No. 156.
- Galtung, J., & Ruge, M.H. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four foreign newspapers. *Journal of International Peace Research*, 1, 64-90.
- Galtung, J., & Vincent, R. (1992). *Global Glasnost: Toward a new world information and communication order*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Gans, H.J. (1979). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. New York: Vintage.
- Gerbner, G. (1966). Images across cultures: Teachers and mass media fiction and drama. *School Review*, 74, 212-230.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Gray, J. (1990). *Rebellions and revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, M. (1991). Defining visual communication for a multi-media world. *Journalism Educator*, p. 46.
- Griffin, M., Schwartz, D., & Viswanath, K. (1994). Gender advertising in the U.S. and India: Exporting cultural stereotypes. *Media, Culture & Society*, 16, 487-507.
- Hall, S. (1981). *The manufacture of news: Deviance, social problems and the mass media*. London: Constable.
- Hamelink, C.J. (1994). *Trends in world communication: On empowerment and self-empowerment*. Penang: Southbound.
- Harding, H. (1990). Journalists, scholars and officials: The case of Sino-American relations. In C.C. Lee (Ed.), *Voices of China: The interplay of politics and journalism* (pp. 165-179). New York: Guilford.

- Hardt, H. (1991). Words and images in the age of technology. *Media Development*, 38, 3-5.
- Hur, K.K. (1982). International mass communication research: A critical review of theory and methods. In M. Burgoon & N. E. Doran (Eds.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 6, pp. 531-554). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Isaacs, H.R. (1958). *Scratches on our minds: American images of China and India*. New York: J. Day.
- Jamieson, K.H., & Campbell, K.K. (1988). *The interplay of influence: Mass media and their publics in news, advertising, politics* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Jury, M. (1986). *The Vietnam photo book*. New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1971)
- Katz, E., & Liebes, T. (1990). Interacting with "Dallas": Cross cultural readings of American television. *Journal of Communication*, 15(1), 45-66.
- Larson, J.F. (1991). A comparative analysis of Australian, US, and British telecasts of the Seoul Olympic Opening Ceremony. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 35, 75-94.
- Larson, J.F. (1992). *Television's window on the world*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Lee, C.C. (1972). *Rethinking media imperialism*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lee, C.C. (1990). Mass media: Of China, about China. In C.C. Lee (Ed.), *Voices of China: The interplay of politics and journalism* (pp. 3-29). New York: Guilford.
- Lee, C.C. (1993). Sparking a fire: The press and the ferment of democratic change in Taiwan. *Journalism Monographs*, No. 138.
- Lin, J. (1996). *Framing Tiananmen: A comparison of eyewitness memory and visual news coverage*. Unpublished masters thesis, The Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University.
- Macartney, J. (1990). Students: Heroes, pawns, or power-brokers? In G. Hicks (Ed.), *The broken mirror: China after Tiananmen*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Mackinnon, S.R., & Friesen, O. (Eds.). (1987). *China reporting: An oral history of American journalism in the 1930s & 1940s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Meade, R.D. (1969). *Patrick Henry: Practical revolutionary* (Vol. 2, pp. 38-40). Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Messararis, P. (1994). *Visual literacy: Image, mind, body*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Morrison, D. (Ed.). (1989). *Massacre in Beijing: China's struggle for democracy*. New York: Time.
- Mossettig, M., & Griggs, H., Jr. (1980). TV at the front. *Foreign Policy*, 38, 67-79.
- Perlmutter, D.D. (1995). Opening up photojournalism. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 2, 9-11.
- Perlmutter, D.D. (1997a). A picture's worth 8,500,000 people: News images as symbols of China. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 4, 1+.

- Perlmutter, D.D. (1997b). Re-visions of the holocaust: Textbook images and historical myth-making. *Howard Journal of Communication*, 8, 151-159.
- Perlmutter, D.D. (1998). *Photojournalism and foreign policy: Framing icons of outrage in international crises*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Peterson, S. (1979). Foreign news gatekeepers and criteria of newsworthiness. *Journalism Quarterly*, 56, 116-125.
- Peyrefitte, A. (1990). *La Tragédie Chinoise*. Paris: Fayard.
- Rhodes, A. (1987). *Propaganda: The art of persuasion*. New York: Norton.
- Ristaino, M.R. (1987). *China's art of revolution: The mobilization of discontent 1927 and 1928*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Roberts, A. (1988). Photographs and African history. *Journal of African History*, 29, 301-311.
- Rosenblum, B. (1978). Style as social process. *American Sociological Review*, 43, 422-438.
- Scherer, J.C. (1985). Review of *The Vanishing Race and other illusions: Photographs of Indians* by Edward S. Curtis (Lyman). *Studies In Visual Communications*, 11, 33-53.
- Schudson, M. (1982). The politics of narrative form: The emergence of news conventions in print and television. *Daedalus*, III, 97-112.
- Schwartz, D. (1986). Camera clubs and fine art photography: The social construction of an elite code. *Urban Life*, 15, 165-195.
- Schwartz, D. (1992). To tell the truth: Codes of objectivity in photojournalism. *Communication*, 13, 95-110.
- Seith, A.R. (1974). China on our minds. *Contemporary Education*, 45, 165-169.
- Shen Tong (with M. Yen). (1990). *Almost a revolution*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shoemaker, P.J., Danielian, L.H., & Brendlinger, N. (1991). Deviant acts, risky business and U.S. interests: The newsworthiness of world events. *Journalism Quarterly*, 68, 781-795.
- Simmie, S., & Nixon, B. (1989). *Tiananmen Square*. Seattle: University of Washington.
- Singletary, M.W. (1984). News values in award winning photos. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61, 104-108.
- Snyder, J. (1984). Documentary without ontology. *Studies in Visual Communications*, 10(1), 78-95.
- Stevenson, R.O. (1994). *Global communication in the twenty-first century*. New York: Longman.
- Turow, J. (1992). *Media systems in society: Understanding industries, strategies, and power*. New York: Longman.
- Varg, P.A. (1958). *Missionaries, Chinese and diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary movement in China, 1890-1952*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wang S. (1992). Credible news source vs. propaganda tool, a comparative study of the VOA and the *New York Times* coverage of the 1989 Chinese students demonstrations. *Media Asia*, 19, 114-118.

- Wirt, W. (1836). *Sketches of the life and character of Patrick Henry*. Philadelphia: Desilver.
- Woo, J. (1994). Journalism objectivity in news magazine photography. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 1, 9+.
- Wu Ye. (1989, June 1). What does the statue of the "Goddess of Democracy" which appeared in Tiananmen Square indicate? *Remin Ribao [People's Daily]*. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, p. 28
- Zelizer, B. (1991). CNN, the Gulf War, and journalistic practice. *Journal of Communication*, 42, 66-81.