

Comparing portraits: US media and foreign policy

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Introduction

The charge given to a nation's free press in informing the public of the world around them is immense and essential to a functioning democratic society.* A free press functions optimally when it operates independent from the constraining influence of powerful entities within its government, thus, allowing it to fulfil its role as an independent check on government action. As events unfold overseas, papers fill various columns with what is deemed "newsworthy." If and how these unfolding events are reported back to the public carries tremendous weight in helping to form public opinion that either supports, opposes, or remains indifferent to the policy that governments implement abroad. The boardrooms of a nation's leading news outlets are filled with individuals who also possess the ability to significantly counter or reinforce government claims concerning the relevance, consequences, or threats encompassed within overseas developments; from their leading headlines splashed across page one to the very wording used to depict a particular event. These abilities, when combined, allow a nation's media to exert substantial influence on constraining or expanding decision-making options for policy makers who wish to garner public support or avoid potential public backlash. This paper will examine how this influence was exercised within U.S. society and its three leading news sources (*The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune*) in the reporting of four significant events: the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre in apartheid South Africa, the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor, the Kwangju Massacre of 1980 in South Korea, and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The goal of this paper is to recount the historic role the U.S. media has played in its telling of developing international events, and determine whether it has fulfilled its duty to inform the public with the impartiality it lays claim to or whether, at times, it simply mirrors the foreign policy agenda of a particular administration and operates in a manner as to ensure its successful implementation.*

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* The method used for research on this paper comprised of searching the historical archives of the three newspapers found in the University of Arizona main library. Using the selected database and using the year in question, a keyword was then entered for each event. The keyword "East Timor" under the years 1975 - 1979 was used for researching news coverage of the East Timor invasion. For the coverage concerning Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa, the keywords "South

South Africa 1960

Context:

In South Africa the implementation of apartheid had been in operation since the National Party was elected into office in 1948. As other African nations were acquiring independence from colonial subjugation, South African blacks and coloureds were facing more and more oppressive measures being issued against them from their white minority-ruled government. Forced relocation, police abuse and oppression, and “pass laws” preventing entry into white allocated areas were just some of these measures. In response, black South Africans began to form groups focused on ending the system of apartheid, and the two most prominent groups that emerged were the African National Congress (ANC) and, its offshoot, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). In an attempt to do away with the pass laws requiring all black South Africans over the age of fifteen to carry an identification card, the PAC organized mass protests designed to overwhelm the South African economy by flooding its jails with the cheap, black labour it so depended on. Protestors would surrender themselves to white authorities declaring that they did not possess the required identification and demand to be arrested. One of these demonstrations would take place in the town of Sharpeville on March 21, 1960. Violence ensued and, after South African police opened fire on the men, women, and children gathered outside the jail, 69 people were left dead and over 180 wounded.

A decade earlier, the U.S. was actively searching for Cold War allies as tensions between the world’s two superpowers grew as they contended for power. South Africa’s staunch anti-communist National Party, its strategic location on the southern tip of the African continent, and its valued resources (uranium deposits) made the allure of this country as an ally too great for U.S. policy makers to pass up despite its inhuman treatment concerning the vast majority of its own people. The actions of the South African authorities on the day of the Sharpeville massacre brought international condemnation and the potential for public support in the United States to distance itself from the apartheid regime. The Sharpeville massacre brought the extreme oppressiveness of apartheid out into the light of international viewing and offered an embarrassing resemblance to the very characteristics that U.S. rhetoric claimed came with Soviet oppression; not to mention the striking similarities it found with the U.S. domestic policies practiced in its Jim Crow South and northern, urban ghettos. In order to stave off this potential demand for change in the U.S.-South African relationship, it was in the U.S. government’s best interest if public outcries concerning this act of severe suppression remained mute and

Africa” and “Sharpeville” under the year 1960 were used for the search. “Kwangju” and “South Korea” were keywords used to research under the 1980 timeframe in regards to the uprising in the South Korean city of Kwangju. The Hungarian Revolution employed the keyword “Hungary” within a 1956 time period.

ineffective. How this event was portrayed to the American audience by U.S. media would play a large role in determining this outcome.

Reported:

The *Washington Post's* lead story was entitled, "62 Africans Die in Race Law Protest." The author notes that, "Blood seeped into the muddy sidewalk and into the gutters," and "Women and children were among those killed" (Porter 1960). When describing what led up to this event, the article states, "There thousands of Africans besieged 25 policemen inside a police station in the Negro quarter... The mob, growing every minute, began to form outside the police station" (Porter 1960). Quoted in the article is the Prime Minister of South Africa, Hendrik Verwoerd, who states that the PAC organized the protest "to go against the whites" and committed to "extreme deeds" (Porter 1960). Later in the article the PAC is described as "a militant offshoot of the African National Congress" (Porter 1960). *The New York Times* page one headlined, "50 Killed in South Africa as Police Fire on Rioters," took a similar perspective to their counterparts at the *Post*: "The police opened fire today on thousands of Africans besieging a police station at Sharpeville, thirty miles south of Johannesburg" (New York Times 1960). Covering the event as well, the *Chicago Tribune* entitled their piece, "South Africa Police Kill 62 Rioting Natives" (Chicago Tribune 1960). In much the same light as the two other papers, events surrounding the police shooting is reported as, "The mob, which had been stoning the police, refused to disperse when ordered and police followed up the warning with shots" (Tribune 1960).

A day later, the *Washington Post* would attempt to analysis the root causes of the conflict by detailing the radical nature found within the Pan Africanist Congress. "[The PAC is] vastly more radical than the parent organization [the ANC]... The Pan Africanist profess willingness to accept a multiracial society in South Africa, as does the ANC; in fact, however, theirs is an Africa-for-Africans philosophy and they would like to see all Europeans - about 3 million - ousted from the country" (Kasischke 1960). Offering up "radical" examples of the PAC, the article provides the following, "Defying police, Negroes chalked these slogans on walls: 'Freedom,' 'Minimum wage and equal pay for equal work' and 'Down with [identity] passes'" (Kasischke 1960). When describing another "radical" tactic employed by the PAC, a nationwide labour sit-down strike, the author states that "Negro sit-down [sic] strikers were reported trying to keep others from going to work. In Langa, a police official charged that Negroes wanting to go to their jobs 'have been intimidated by terrorists'" (Kasischke 1960).

The *Times* would follow this up in their article on the same day with their headline, "Riots Continue in South Africa." While containing the updated body count of the Sharpeville massacre to stand at 72 with 177 wounded at the hands of South African authorities, the article attempts to address the underlying reason for fear in the South African townships. "The Africans were

tense and fearful of another outbreak of violence by extremist elements. In the Vereeniging area many Africans said they were afraid to go to work for fear of reprisals by demonstrators” (New York Times 1960). Given that, “Police opened fire with submachine guns and rifles. Jet planes and armoured cars also were brought into use,” (Porter 1960) the assertion by the *Times* that the primary cause for fear among black South Africans laid with anyone other than the South African government seems somewhat flawed. Not to forget impartiality, the article also offers a critique of the South African government. “With the responsible leaders regarded as moderates banned or banished the extremist elements are left to whip up anti-white sentiment through organizations such as the Pan Africanist Congress ...The group’s motto is ‘Africa for Africans’” (New York Times 1960). Never inquired by the reporter is how the oppressive nature of apartheid or the detainment and execution of those who challenge it serve to “whip up” this anti-white sentiment. By effectively portraying the elements directly challenging the apartheid regime as anti-white, the editors and reporters helped ensure that the white American populace viewed the event as a race war rather than a pursuit of liberty and equality.

Nine days after the shooting in a Wednesday edition of the *Washington Post*, another perspective was given differing considerably from the South African government’s account of what transpired and what had been relayed by the three news outlets when the *Post* reprinted an article from the *London Observer* entitled, “Eye Witness Describes Shooting at Sharpeville.” In this report the witness, one of two journalists actually on site at the time of the shooting, reported that, “Before the shooting, I heard no warning to the crowd to disperse. There was no warning volley. When the shooting started it did not stop until there was no living thing on the huge compound in front of the police station...One of the policemen was standing on top of a Saracen, and it looked as though he was firing his sten gun into the crowd. He was swinging it around in a wide arc from his hip as though he were panning a movie camera” (Tyler 1960). This alternative description of the massacre warranted only a Wednesday edition, required the work of a foreign newspaper, and would not find a similar piece of reporting thereafter. A *New York Times* article on May 4, 1960, bolstered the account given in the *Post* when it reported that a senior district surgeon testifying before a judicial inquiry stated that about 70 percent of bullet wounds suffered by the gathered crowd entered from the back (New York Times 1960). Along with being allocated a small portion of page sixteen, this too would not be further expanded on by those reporting on apartheid in South Africa.

East Timor 1975-79

Context:

The people of the archipelago island of East and West Timor had known colonial rule as far back as the early 1700’s. The Portuguese colonized the Eastern portion of the island calling it Portuguese Timor and the Dutch, setting up settlements in the Western area, laid claim to it as part of the larger Dutch

East Indies. Contentions arose as expansion by the two European powers brought them into border disputes resulting in the Treaty of Lisbon in 1859 that established the border separating East and West Timor. Following World War II, nationalist fervor in the area of Dutch East Indies now known as Indonesia, led by a man named Sukarno who later became the country's first president, resulted in clashes with the Dutch colonizers eventually ending with Dutch recognition of an independent Indonesia in 1949 that included West Timor.

East Timor continued to be colonized by Portugal, who by 1926, was governed by a dictatorship under [António de Oliveira Salazar](#). In 1974 a bloodless coup, known as the Carnation Revolution, took place in Portugal that led to the fall of the government and replaced it with an aspiring liberal democracy. Portuguese policy towards the island, which before was little more than "benign neglect" (Simpson 2005), would change considerably. The new government began allowing political expression on the island while, at the same time, distancing itself from it as the new government attempted to hold on to the major remnants of its colonial past; namely Angola and Mozambique. Various rival parties soon emerged in the more politically free island; the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), the Apodeti (Timorese Popular Democratic Association), and a left-leaning group called Fretilin (Portuguese for the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor). While the first two would eventually come to advocate integration with Indonesia (while receiving substantial assistance from Indonesian intelligence), Fretilin came to garner the popular support of the island with their aim of an independent East Timor. On August 11, 1975 a military coup was attempted by the UDT causing a brief civil war to ensue for control of East Timor. Though suffering early setbacks, Fretilin forces were able to route UDT and Apodeti forces and gain control of the island (Simpson 2005).

Prior to this in Indonesia power had transferred from President Sukarno to General Suharto in 1967, and the new leader would institute a "New Order" aimed at ridding the island nation of communist influence. This ideological purge, which was greatly assisted by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency who provided the new regime with names of supposed communist sympathizers, would amount to an estimated 500,000 to one million deaths (Blum 1995). Relations between Indonesia and the United States were substantially closer after the emergence of this staunch anti-communist government. This U.S.-Indonesian relationship would only grow with significance in the eyes of policy makers in Washington following the failure of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. In 1975, President Suharto would claim that a Fretilin-dominated East Timor threatened the security of Indonesia and launched a covert operation entitled, Operasi Komodo, in order to set the stage for a future invasion (Simpson 2005). On December 7, 1975 Indonesia, supplied by U.S. arms and training, would publicly begin its annexation of the island and military occupation of the 600,000 inhabitants of East Timor. Giving the "green light" for the invasion, officials in Washington desired the forced integration to transpire quickly and without capturing the American public's attention. In the words of former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, in his talks with Indonesian

President Suharto a day prior to the invasion, “we would be able to influence the reaction in America if whatever happens, happens after we return... If you have made plans, we will do our best to keep everyone quiet until the President returns home” (Simpson 2005).

Reported:

As mentioned earlier, Indonesia’s Operasi Komodo preceded the official invasion by more than two months (Simpson 2005). News stories trickled into the public sphere in America by all three newspapers concerning Indonesia’s covert operations on the island. On September 30th, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on a border clash between Indonesian government troops and Fretilin forces (Chicago Tribune 1975). Following the *Tribune’s* report, the *Post* reported “Indonesian troops, in an attack across the border, wiped out a rebel base in Portuguese Timor, informed sources said... All soldiers defending the base were killed and their leader was captured” (Washington Post 1975). The *New York Times* reported on these incursions on October 8th in an article entitled “Big Indonesia Attack in Timor Reported.” The report cites a Fretilin spokesman who tells of a major offensive launched against them by Indonesian forces along a coastal town only a mile away from the Indonesian-East Timorese border. Summarizing the article, the *Times* (1975) state, “The action would be the first use of Indonesia’s Air Force in the fighting over East Timor. According to Fretilin leaders, Indonesia has until now waged only a guerilla campaign against border settlements”

Yet, a little more than a month later in late November, the *Times* ran an article by staff writer David Andelman contending that, “Indonesian officials take every opportunity when talking with foreigners, particularly Americans, to point to their hands-off policy with respect to the civil war that is engulfing Portuguese Timor, in the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago... The Indonesian forces...have been showing remarkable restraint” (Andelman 1975). Besides the interesting play on words that presupposes Indonesian ownership of the island, Andelman effectively ignores numerous reporting by all three major papers that cite offensive operations that counter this “hands off” assertion. The self-induced amnesia suffered by Andelman spread throughout American media and resulting articles thereafter portrayed the invading Indonesian troops as stabilizing forces attempting to end the civil strife on the island. Had the papers chosen to remember their earlier reporting, the American reader might have read that a major reason for continued instability in East Timor was largely due to the activities of the very same nation exploiting it for a justifiable invasion.

Some light began to be shed on the ongoing atrocities taking place on the island, however, on Feb 16, 1976 when the *Times* ran with an article on their page eleven entitled, “Fighting on Timor Said to Kill 60,000.” The article quotes a deputy chairman of East Timor’s provisional government, Francisco Xavier Lopez da Cruz, who estimates that “About 60,000 people have been killed since the outbreak of civil war in Portuguese Timor last August.” He

concludes that, “Most of the victims in the conflict were women and children on both sides” (New York Times 1976). Continuing with the emerging reports of casualties, John Sharkey’s article in the *Post* (Sharkey 1977) on March 13, 1977 would be headlined, “Indonesians Said to Kill 100,000 in East Timor.” This article would be allocated all of the paper’s page 19 as it reported the testimony of James Dunn, a former Australian consul to East Timor, who is quoted as saying “the refugees’ accounts of Indonesian behaviour in East Timor suggest that the plight of these people might well constitute, relatively speaking, the most serious case of contravention of human rights facing the world at this time.”

As powerful as these reports might have proved to inform the public of the atrocities taking place, each article presented the reports of massive casualties as only allegations that would be aggressively countered by the U.S. State Department. In the same paper as the Sharkey piece, State officials were heard on page ten under “Indonesia Charged with Atrocities” stating “We have pointed out that we believe the reports of atrocities have been greatly exaggerated” (New York Times 1977). State Department officials would be back again on March 18th to repeat the assertion in the *Washington Post*. “[Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert B.] Oakley said that casualty figures ranging up to hundreds of thousands in East Timor reported by the press ‘are greatly exaggerated.’ He said ‘we would judge the total casualties were under 10,000’” (Lescaze 1977). It is important to remember that these public remarks are being stated while, at the same time, private correspondence between the State Department and its embassies reported that estimates of at least 60,000 “were credible and had been confirmed by other sources” (Simpson 2005). While fault cannot be found with the media relaying government statements, fault can be found in their acceptance of the government as the sole provider of facts on the ground. Investigations by the three major papers into whether these allegations, which went contrary to the public statements of the U.S. State Department, were a true reflection of what was transpiring in East Timor were never taken. With the lack of an independent check concerning the number of casualties as a result of the military invasion and occupation by Indonesian forces, the U.S. press allowed for any statement challenging the U.S. official line to remain only an unsubstantiated allegation.

In addition to these allegations of atrocities, Indonesia continued to refuse to abide by U.N. Resolution 3485 that called for it to withdraw from East Timor. Despite this, the United States would continue massive military aid to its aggressive ally under the Ford administration and increase this aid substantially under Carter (Simpson 2005). However, U.S. law forbade U.S. arms given to other countries to be used in anything other than “self-defensive” operations. This was quickly sidestepped, however, by policymakers. This would be aptly demonstrated by the Assistant Deputy Secretary of State when he testified before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. The *Post* covered the testimony on its page 23, “As a result [of U.S. recognition regarding Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor], from the U.S. standpoint, if Indonesia uses any of the \$58 million in proposed U.S. military assistance for fiscal 1978 in East

Timor, it is defending its own territory” (Lescaze 1977). The weapons would be used quite efficiently by the U.S. ally; the eventual loss of life suffered by the Timorese is estimated by Amnesty International at 200,000 out of a population of no more than 650,000 (Amnesty International 1994). “US and Indonesian officials later conceded that ‘Indonesian armed forces are equipped 90% with US equipment’” (Simpson 2005).

The decisions by the U.S. government in its desire to retain its strong ties to a strategic ally in the Pacific at the expense of upholding international law and U.N. resolutions cannot be laid at the feet of the U.S. media. However, the unwillingness to challenge the U.S. and Indonesian version of what was happening allowed for a U.S. foreign policy to go unrestrained by a public that remained ignorant to the actual reality transpiring on the ground. With its domestic public in the dark, the U.S. government was free to pursue a policy to block any movement internationally that may have hindered Indonesian’s occupation through its role within the United Nations. As the UN Ambassador to East Timor, Daniel Moynihan, would write in his memoirs, “The United States wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures they undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success” (Chomsky 1993).

Ultimately, the dim spotlight that was cast upon East Timor early in the invasion would be shifted and heavily intensified onto a more convenient setting where the constraints of reporting negative aspects of a U.S. ally did not exist. The infamous Pol Pot would emerge in the country of Cambodia and lead a ruthless government that would leave millions dead in its aftermath. The news concerning this fanatical ideology and the horrors it brought would remain a constant fixation by the three major papers while the tragedy of the East Timorese would fade from the mere passing glance they had been bestowed previously. This was well illustrated by the importance given to an article written by Jack Anderson, one of few journalists still focused on East Timor years after the invasion. In an article written in November of 1979, Anderson pleads with his audience to remember the plight of those in East Timor entitling his piece, “East Timor Shouldn’t Be Ignored” (Anderson 1979). Unfortunately for Anderson and the East Timorese, he and his article were ignored by the very newspaper he worked for. The piece would find itself on the *Post*’s Friday edition right beside the day’s comic strips and crossword puzzle. Despite the many faults found in the reporting surrounding East Timor’s annexing, the most powerful detriment the Timorese people were eventually dealt was their plight’s obliviousness to the American media. The coverage, January 1, 1976 to December 31, 1979, breaks down accordingly:

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Articles concerning East Timor</u>	<u>Concerning</u>
<u>Cambodia*</u>		

* This information was obtained by searching each newspaper’s archives under the keywords “East Timor” and “Cambodia” within the time periods of 01/01/1976 to 12/31/1979.
<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/nytimes/advancedsearch.html> New York Times archive

<i>New York Times</i>	35 articles
1884	
<i>The Washington Post</i>	34
1286	
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	4
862	

South Korea 1980

Context:

Syngman Rhee had been placed into the South Korean presidency by the U.S. and its allies after World War II. He was officially elected by the Korean parliament in 1948, and later resigned amidst student protesting in 1960 due to his oppressive regime and remained in exile in Hawaii before dying of a stroke five years later. The forced resignation was followed by a military coup led by General Park Chung-hee that took over the presidency in 1961. He continued the political oppression that characterized Rhee's presidency until his assassination in 1979. Following this, South Korea entered into further political turmoil as General Chun Doo-hwan led a military junta to power setting up a token civilian government headed by President Choi Kyu Hah. General Chun was a protégé of the late Park and his ascension into authoritarian power touched off massive student protests throughout the country. One area where the voices demanding democratic reform could be heard the loudest was in the South Korean city of Kwangju. The students gathering there refused to disperse and discontinue their protests until democratic reform had been instituted. Other residents of the city joined the students and this culminated with the uprising beginning on May 18, 1980. Nine days later, South Korean paratroopers and Special Forces entered to retake the city. (BBC News 2000). The actual number of casualties that day is an issue hotly debated in South Korea to this very day. As a BBC report would conclude in 2005, "The final toll of those who lost their lives is still unknown, as it is believed the military dumped bodies in mass graves or lakes. Estimates today range from 500 to 2,000" (BBC News 2005).

Thirty years prior to this uprising, the United States was sending its military into South Korea to prevent a North Korean takeover marking the beginning of a U.S. military presence in the Korean peninsula. The strategic importance, especially in relation to Communist China, of this military installation was an asset of significant value to Washington foreign policy makers. Whether the American public would support the 39,000 U.S. soldiers in country acting as an insurance policy to an authoritarian regime gearing up to suppress a democratic movement weighed heavily on those on Capital Hill. This worry would be alleviated by the public's subjective exposure to the uprising via the U.S. media.

Reported:

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/advancedsearch.html> Washington Post archives
<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/chicagotribune/advancedsearch.html> Chicago Tribune archives

A fair amount of reporting was done during the Kwangju uprising by the three news outlets that provided ample and forceful criticism of General Chen's military rule. One such example is William Chapman's piece in the *Washington Post* where he states, "When the smoke cleared from the power grab today, military leaders were clearly in command. The shell of a civilian government remained, but it is regarded merely as a front for the generals" (Chapman 1980). A constant portrayal throughout the coverage, however, was the newspapers' acceptance by United States officials that the situation was outside the influence of one of the world's superpowers, which had a contingent of 39,000 troops in the country. As Don Oberdorfer of the *Washington Post* reported, administration officials preferred a "hands off" policy in regards to the Kwangju affair. A State Department spokesperson is quoted as saying, "In any case, it is difficult to see how a foreign government can intervene helpfully in a situation such as that in Kwangju" (Oberdorfer 1980). Oberdorfer does not question this very arguable assertion from the State Department, and, instead, goes on to provide statements attempting to explain the U.S. role. He states that "the United States publicly urged 'maximum restraint' by all parties involved... while making clear its opposition to the departure from the previously established path of political liberalization [sic]." This statement is later followed by, "The U.S. commander in Seoul, Gen. John Wickham, also approved a request by the Korean military to remove four South Korean regiments from the general reserve of the joint U.S.-Korea forces for use in riot control" (Oberdorfer 1980). The writer realized that some degree of hypocrisy resided in the two sentences, admitting "This action seemed to place the United States in sympathy with the military forces seeking to quash the insurgency" (Oberdorfer 1980).

Additionally, an unvarying theme presented by all three papers was the negative portrayal of the assembled protestors. The *Tribune* described the situation in this way, "Meanwhile, armed paratroopers dispersed a violent anti-military demonstration by 50,000 persons in Kwangju" (Chicago Tribune 1980). In the *Post*, the students were labelled "young militants [who] resisted with weapons seized last week" (Chapman 1980). While in the *Times*, an article appearing on May 28th would state, "In what appeared to be a last appeal for a peaceful resolution, President Choi Kyu Hah called on the rebels to settle the issue through talks rather than confrontation and promised 'maximum leniency' if the dissidents laid down their arms" (Kamm 1980). Now with the authoritarian government depicted attempting a peaceful end to the standoff the protestors would be described in this manner, "The Martial Law Command's statement told of looting and robbery by militants. A moderate faction was reported to be ready to surrender to the military, while the hard-liners were said to be holding out for the lifting of martial law" (Kamm 1980). With these descriptions of those fighting for political reform, the reader can rest assured that the South Korean authorities' plan to quell the rebellion is both needed and justified.

Furthermore, on June 29, 1980 two American doctors were arrested by the South Korean government for possessing “rolls of film, color photos and mimeographed statements and many other antigovernment propaganda materials in their baggage” that related to the Kwangju suppression that occurred a month earlier (Washington Post 1980). These arrests were covered by both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (New York Times 1980). The doctors’ release and immediate deportation to Japan would be covered by the *Post* the following day with the added statement that, “The two doctors [Dr. John Kim and Dr. Glenn Gordon] had visited Kwangju at the request of the United Presbyterian Church, which expressed concern about arrests and injuries suffered by church members and other South Koreans during the Kwangju uprising” (Washington Post 1980). The testimonies of these individuals would seem to be worthwhile in attempting to seek a differing perspective than that of the authoritarian government, but, as far as this paper could find, reporting on what these men had in their baggage that proved worthy enough to warrant their arrests and what they had to say about the government’s actions in Kwangju were not pursued.

What’s more to the point of this coverage concerning the Kwangju uprising and latter massacre is the newspaper’s framing of the situation. All three papers commented on the demands of the students massing in the city and how fundamentally democratic these demands were in principle. The end to military rule, freedom of thought and expression, and free elections were not the shouts of political radicals. Yet they were portrayed that way. As we will see in the later portion of this paper concerning Hungary, the South Korean students and the many other citizens who joined them were simply protesting for democratic reform in the wrong country. A strategic ally and one where over 50,000 American lives had been given to its safeguard, South Korea held more importance as a functioning, undemocratic ally than an ally moving towards democracy. On May 16, the *Times* described the South Korean government in this regard, “Mr. Choi has ended emergency decrees that prohibited criticism of the Government or Constitution and has freed many political prisoners. But he has warned that progress toward total democracy must be gradual and careful” (New York Times 1980). This quote, coming from the powerless president of South Korea, is telling in that it reflected the stance of the United States government as well. This “gradual and careful” nudge for democratic reform by the superpower that guaranteed the security of the military dictatorship in question would play a profound part in ensuring military rule in the country for another decade (BBC News 2000).

Hungary 1956

Context:

Following World War II Hungary came under Soviet rule as a satellite state and member of the Eastern Bloc. Although there was a brief period of democracy directly after WWII, by 1948 Communist strongman, Matyas Rakosi, implemented a “Stalinist” rule in the country. This ironhanded rule fomented

resentment amongst the people culminating in late October of 1956 with a revolt led by students calling for the ousting of Rakosi, the re-instituting of free elections, and a withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets, after some delay, brutally quelled the uprising on November 10, 1956 resulting in the death of over an estimated 2,000 Hungarians. As with other Soviet suppression of political activism within the Eastern Bloc, the clash between state and citizen in a Communist nation provided U.S. media with a very attractive opportunity to detail the “evils” inherent in Communist rule and to reemphasize the seriousness concerning the stakes involved in “winning” the Cold War. While extreme restraint would be practiced by our media when reporting events involving “friendly,” journalistic freedom would be vastly expanded when covering state suppression by Communist regimes.

Reported:

Headlines for these articles concerning the Hungarian uprising presented the opening frame as to how the reader should view this uprising. The *Chicago Tribune* led its page one article dealing with the Hungarian crisis with the title, “Defy 200,000 Red Troops.” The second line in this article would be the phrase, “Rebels Fight Desperately in Hungary” (Chicago Tribune 1956). The *New York Times* headlined their page one on November 11, 1956 with the title, “Hungary Orders ‘Merciless’ Steps to Quell Revolt.” Within this article, the Hungarian protestor is portrayed by the following, “The Scandinavian correspondents, who left Budapest at noon, reported they had seen armed freedom fighters walking boldly in the streets by daylight” (Abel 1956). The *Washington Post* printed the title, “Workers Stand By ‘Freedom’ Demands at Mass Meeting in Hungary Capital,” on page A1 of their November 16th issue. The article would go on to say, “Budapest’s industrial workers, who bitterly fought Russian tanks and troops, voted today to continue their general strike” (Maron 1956). Whereas the papers stood by the government line of non-participation concerning the Kwangju uprising in South Korea and the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, the *Times* would tell of the impact the U.N. hands-off policy had on the rebellion. “But the failure of the General Assembly to take any positive action was said to have thrown the revolutionaries into despair...One of the refugees remarked bitterly: ‘The Russians, after all, were acting like Russians. But we expected more from the West than to be let down this way’” (Abel 1956) On November 8th, the *Times* printed the last-minute radio transmission by a pro-rebellion station entitled, “Hungarians Plead Desperately by Radio to Soviet Troops and to ‘All Honest Men’” (New York Times 1956).

Following the violent suppression by the Soviets hundreds of thousands of Hungarians fled the country. Some escaped to the United States, and the *Tribune* allocated a page one story of a particular 73 refugees that arrived in Milwaukee on November 23, 1956. Complete with pictures of the two babies brought over, the author’s opening paragraph expresses his justifiable sympathy. “They filed docilely - almost dazedly - off the plane that brought them, waited passively... climbed tiredly aboard waiting buses, and winced at the sirens of the police escort which sped them thru the streets” (Holmes

1956). More articles would fill the three papers detailing the struggle and aftermath of the suppressed uprising. The *Washington Post* would summarize the event, “For a few brief days between the first coming of the Russian tanks and their final, massive employment in crushing force Sunday morning, Budapest time, the fire of freedom blazed openly in Hungary” (Marder 1956).

Although there can be many similarities drawn between the students mounting their protests in South Korea in 1980 and their preceding Hungarian counterparts in 1956, the reporting by our newspapers of the two were starkly different. The term of “violent militants” would not be used to describe the Hungarian, student-led protests that defied their state authority. Instead, terms such as “patriots” and “freedom fighters” that were “bitterly” fighting massive Russian troops would be employed by reporters all too aware of the Cold War context they were reporting in (Abel 1956; Maron 1956). The American reader could find a hero in the Hungarian rebel fighting Soviet oppression in the headlines splashed across the U.S. media’s front pages while their Korean counterparts half a world away were dismissed as radical for protesting an authoritarian regime that happened to serve U.S. interests in the region.

Summary:

This paper has attempted to analyse the media’s role in portraying events unfolding around the globe and its affect on U.S. foreign policy. In South Africa, the reporting of the Sharpeville Massacre saw the creative reporting of events by the press in turning the extremely well-armed South African authorities into “besieged” victims attempting to thwart a rampaging mob corrupted with “militant radicals.” Throughout the reporting of the three papers, the danger posed by black, stone-throwing “radicals” was elevated to the status of equals with the jets and machine guns employed by the very state that denied them any semblance of equality.

In East Timor, the reporting by the U.S. press presented the picture of a bickering, backward tribal people whose integration with invading Indonesia was presupposed and often deemed as natural by journalists relying almost completely upon an invading army’s assessment on how things were transpiring and their own ignorance of the region. When this fell into contention, a reinforcing statement by a U.S. government official would fill the void providing authoritative reassurance to a press all too eager to sacrifice its independent analysis. Finally, the story of the Timorese people and the horrors plaguing their lives found itself buried by the more pressing matters of journalistic importance that effectively dismissed their plight as newsworthy.

In South Korea, the student’s demands in Kwangju were “understandable” but their refusal to lay down their arms and work within the vast opportunities presented in an authoritarian regime dismissed their cause as justifiable in the chronicles of America’s leading papers. The dangers posed by North Korean forces along the DMZ and our historical sacrifice to the country would trump

the desires of South Korean youths to attain the very same democratic reforms that our nation's media would praise in Hungary decades before.

Post-Cold War:

The question to be rendered is whether these skewed practices of reporting were part and parcel of the ideological conflict that was the Cold War, and therefore whether this journalistic "filtering" was a Cold War ritual that has ceased to be relevant with the collapse of the U.S.'s superpower competitor. Recent journalistic portrayals, however, recast the dye that found itself in the papers delivered to so many Americans decades before. This dye has, with the advent of twenty-four hour news, transformed itself from an ink blot to a visually stimulating television screen packaged for easy digestion by a populace "on the go." While many examples can be brought to bear, no one portrayal truly encapsulates the continuation of the journalistic trend discussed above more than the events surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

In the United States, mainstream media failed to investigate the many holes surrounding the Bush administration's case for war that centred on the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq and a Saddam Hussein connection to al-Qaeda. Instead of seeking independent verification for these claims, major media largely relied solely upon White House officials or "eye witness accounts" from members of Ahmed Chalib's Iraqi National Congress (INC) for information. As Bill Moyer would state in his segment concerning the American media's role towards war with Iraq, "What the White House was now marketing as fact, would go virtually unchallenged" (Moyer 2007). Claims from the White House were not scrutinized, but reinforced and elaborated upon in all major avenues of media. The *New York Times's* William Safire and the *Washington Post's* George Will consistently appeared on television shows such as "Meet the Press" defending the President's precedent of preemptive war and wrote op ed pieces bolstering the case for war. The *Post*, alone, would run over 140 front page articles making the case for war from August of 2002 to the invasion in March of 2003 while only a handful of articles appeared on the front page attempting to question or challenge White House claims (Moyer 2007). *New York Times* reporter, Judith Miller, would feature numerous articles presenting the claims of Chalibi's INC as conclusive proof that Saddam possessed WMDs (Shafer 2003). When NBC, ABC, CBS, and the nightly news aired its 414 segments concerning Iraq, nearly all of the segments drew its sources exclusively from the White House, Pentagon, or U.S. State Department (Moyer 2007).

Furthermore, anyone deviating from the march towards war with Iraq received minimal reporting from the nation's major media. The detailed speech given by Senator Ted Kennedy regarding his opposition to invasion and his elaboration on the inconclusive intelligence the White House was relying upon was given a scant 36 words in the *Washington Post*. The coverage of the anti-war protest in Washington D.C. that gathered over 100,000 in October of 2002 making it the largest anti-war protest since the Vietnam War (Zernike 2002) was allocated to

the “Metro” section of the *Post* (Moyer 2007) and a page 8 in the *Times*. The article in the *Times* attempted to minimize the number of protesters to only thousands and stating, “Fewer people attended than organizers had said they hoped for” (Clemetson 2002). The Washington D.C. police later estimated the crowd was 100,000 strong while anti-war organizers, thrilled with the amount of participation, estimated they were around 200,000 (Zernike 2002)

On February 5, 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell gave his infamous presentation to the United Nations concerning the threat posed by the Saddam regime. While the American mass media applauded the presentation as an effective case for war, foreign presses offered critical analysis and commented on the contentious assertions found within the speech. The most damning revelation was picked up by the British press regarding Powell’s description of a British intelligence dossier that “describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities” (The Guardian 2003). It was learned that the British dossier in question was actually the thesis of a post graduate student in the state of California. Complete with the spelling errors found in the original, the student’s work had been plagiarized off the internet and found its way into the speech of the U.S. Secretary of State (Moyer 2007). Whereas the foreign press ran articles and television segments elaborating on this enormous blunder that undermined U.S. credibility and the case for war, the American press fell silent on the story and continued to fully endorse the speech (Moyer 2007). The collaboration between the major press and the foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration would continue after the invasion of Iraq as well.

On April 9, 2003, many Americans were shown the symbolic tearing down of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Baghdad complete with news correspondent’s reinforcement as to the historical significance this moment held. As the FOX News channel’s Brit Hume and colleagues would comment during the live coverage, “I wonder what Dominique de Villepin and Jacques Chirac are saying if they’re watching right now?” (Fox News 2003). Another correspondent would elaborate, “Dominique of course, being the foreign minister of France and his boss, the president of France, who of course opposed the liberation of Iraq at every step along the way” (Fox News 2003). American liberation now possessed an iconic moment to be played and replayed throughout major media. The media presented this jubilation by those gathered around the crumbled statue as an act of simple spontaneity born out of the liberation found with American intervention. However, the iconic moment that was serving as irrefutable justification for American “preemption” was tainted with U.S. stage-crafting. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on an Army internal study in July 3, 2004 that criticized its psychological operations unit’s role during the Baghdad event. According to the internal report a Marine colonel in charge of the Marines converging on Firdos Square in central Baghdad saw a “target of opportunity” when he viewed the massive Hussein statue that lay conveniently close to the Palestine Hotel that held international journalists. Contrary to the media’s portrayal, the report states that it was this particular colonel’s decision to topple the statue, and it was a nearby Army psychological operations unit’s

desire to make “it appear to be a spontaneous Iraqi undertaking” (Zucchino 2004).

What is even more troublesome than this crafted propaganda on the part of the U.S. military is the collaboration of the news media in reporting the event. Both newspaper headline photos and live television coverage zoomed in on the gathered crowd surrounding the statue filling the television screen with a sense of massive celebration on the part of Iraqis. If these lenses were to scan outwards, however, the American audience would have seen that Firdos Square was completely encircled by U.S. military vehicles and completely empty save the few hundred Iraqis gathering around the statue in an upper portion of the square (McAlister 2001). Yet, this is not what American audiences were shown, because as Melani McAlister states in her book, “Working within an ideological frame that predisposed them [the media] to see smiling Iraqis, they showed only those aspects of the scene that fit the frame” (McAlister 2001).

Later in 2004, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* would publicly apologize for their coverage of the war (McAlister 2001). Yet, the same people who led the drumming up to war with Iraq and proved to be so cataclysmically wrong about their assessments are still hired on as columnists in major print and television “experts” throughout major media. As is demonstrated, aspects all too similar to those practiced decades before seem to have remained lurking within the present-day media’s mind frame.

From these historic events and the portrayals for each that the media manufactured for public viewing, the cherished free press seems all too willing, at times, to limit itself for the “greater good” of furthering the ambitions of powerful decision-makers in Washington. The ideal “free” press detached from government influence has been shown to cling to the coattails of U.S. officials who fulfil the role as sole provider of information needed for print. From the accounts taken above, a disturbing trend seems to lie grounded in our media’s coverage of international events. Dictating how the “story” will be conveyed just as much as what is actually transpiring is *where* the event is transpiring. The unfulfilled role the media has played in checking executive ambitions overseas that disregard founding tenets of international law and morality has wreaked havoc on those unfortunate enough to be under the trampling foot of these undertakings, and has played a substantial role in allowing U.S. decision-making processes to bypass constraints that might have been posed by a well informed public. Whether an informed public would derail these policy ambitions cannot be said and, more to the point, is irrelevant in this discussion. The fundamental issue at hand lays in the fact that the American public was never given an opportunity to do so. The entity that is supposed to arm the public with the tools to confront government policy that attempts to bypass their seal of approval has been shown to frequently fail them.

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