

International News Coverage in U.S.

Some questions to start:

- Can everyone go everywhere? (Of course not)
- What do you know about a place you've never been?
 - Landmarks, events, geographic features
- How do you know those things?
 - Usually media coverage, other people's comments
- Is your knowledge of that place complete? No
- Is there anything wrong with that? Not necessarily
- People make assumptions based on limited knowledge
- Gives media coverage great power in creating images and narratives about other countries, cultures, etc.

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Three important concepts:

- Stereotypes
- Homogeneity
- Otherness

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Concept of Stereotypes

- Walter Lippmann, 1922: Humans can't process all the complexities of the world → information shortcuts
- Argued that this is a basic human trait – we all create images of things outside our experience
- Term has evolved to focus on negative beliefs about types of people, cultures, ideologies, etc.
- Definition: Applying exaggerated negative traits to everyone within a group, based on lack of experience
- Media messages can inform people, reduce stereotypes
- Media messages can also inflame stereotypes

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Concept of Homogeneity

- Definition: People or social groups that are similar in upbringing, culture or ethnic background
- People are comfortable with the familiar
- Immigrants tend to settle with people of their group
- Social customs arise among 'closed' groups
- As U.S. population grew, so did cultural mingling
- Tensions can arise with cultural differences
- Human nature to resist too much change
- 'Navel gazing' – assuming your location, culture or experiences are the center of the universe

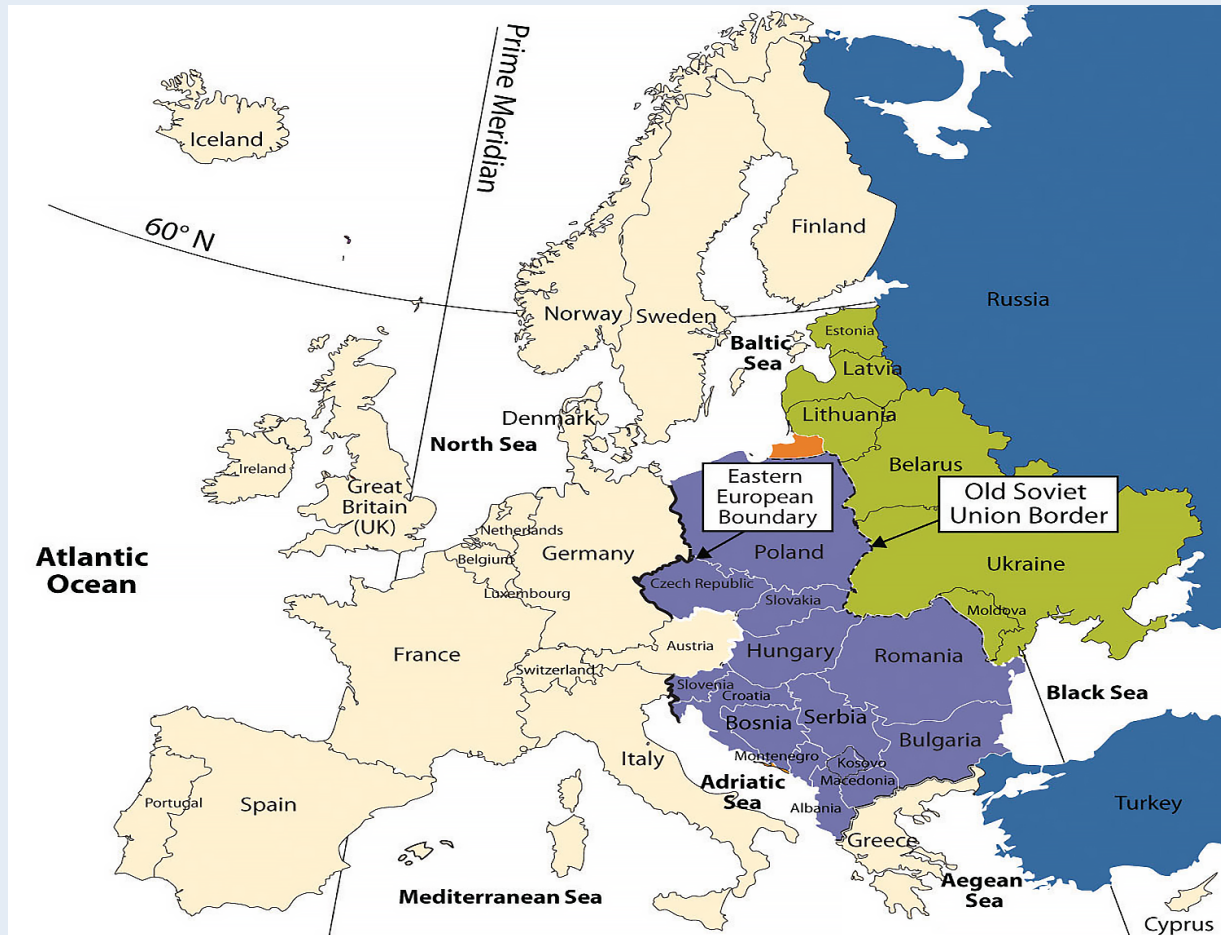
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Concept of Otherness

- Definition: Different in appearance or character from what is familiar, expected, or generally accepted
- That which is different is scary, hard to understand
- Common within most societies through history
- 'Others' often blamed for social problems
- Media can intensify issue – allow mass demonization
- Multicultural societies can hide deep divisions
- Often reflected in news coverage of foreign nations
- 'Faraway places with strange-sounding names'

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Western vs. Eastern Europe



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Early immigration to America

Earliest:

- England
- Scotland
- Ireland
- Germany
- France
- Netherlands
- Spain
- Italy

Later:

- Scandinavia
- Mexico
- Israel
- Russia
- Eastern Europe
- Asia
- Middle East

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Ethnic heritage of U.S. presidents:

- English: 38
- Scottish: 19
- Welsh: 15
- French: 12
- German: 11
- Irish: 5
- Dutch: 5
- Swiss: 3
- African: 1

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Early American media moguls:

- Benjamin Day (British)
- Horace Greeley (British)
- James Gordon Bennett (Scottish)
- Joseph Pulitzer (Hungarian/German)
- Adolph Ochs (German)
- William Randolph Hearst (Irish)

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Political and trade ties to America

G7 nations:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Canada
- Japan

Largest populations:

- China
- India
- United States
- Indonesia
- Pakistan
- Nigeria
- Brazil
- Russia

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Perceptions of Western vs. Eastern Europe

Western:

- Largely white
- Largely Christian
- Familiar cities, landmarks
- Romance languages
- Familiar cultures
- Friendly/warm
- James Bond

Eastern:

- Ethnically different
- Orthodox, Muslim
- Less known, exotic
- Slavic languages
- Less known, scary
- Foreign/cold
- Bond villains

American media coverage has often favored these stereotypes

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Middle East



International News Coverage in U.S.

Perceptions of Western Europe vs. Middle East

Western Europe:

- Largely white
- Largely Christian
- Familiar cities, landmarks
- Romance languages
- Familiar cultures
- Friendly/warm
- James Bond

Middle East:

- Entirely Arab
- Entirely Muslim
- Islamic cities, buildings
- Different alphabet
- Foreign, scary
- Hateful, war-driven
- Terrorists

American media coverage has often emphasized these stereotypes

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Is this deliberate bias against countries/regions?

- Complicated – easy to ask, hard to answer
- Early U.S. mass media – less traveled, experienced
- Stereotypes largely went unchallenged for decades
- As reporters traveled more – better understanding
- Blowback – much of U.S. audience was/is lily-white
- Anger & fear drive bigger audiences – more money
- Has increasingly driven U.S. policy choices
- Digital age – can learn more about other cultures
- Digital age – easier to exploit prejudices

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What should news consumers consider?

- U.S. media outlets tailor coverage to what they believe American audiences want
- Studies show they favor familiar over unfamiliar
- Optics: How a news story can appear from the outside at a quick glance – fits dominant narrative
- Digital age – look at international news sources to get a fuller picture and different angles of stories
- Learn more about unfamiliar countries, cultures