

Editorial Reflections on Historical/Diplomatic Relations with Japan and the U.S.: International Newspaper Coverage of the 60th Anniversary of the Hiroshima Bombing

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Introduction

Even a cursory comparison of international newspaper coverage of the 60th anniversary of the explosion of an atomic bomb over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, reveals that the portrayals of the event conflict with one another around the world. This study aims to investigate the ways in which major newspaper accounts memorialized the event of the world's first nuclear attack on Hiroshima, 60 years previously. The goal is to understand the extent to which the depictions of the event overlap, in what ways they differ, and why – with the ultimate aim of ascertaining to what extent the event is perceived as relevant to the goal of building a lasting world peace.

The data for the study consist of articles published between August 5 and August 8, 2005, in newspapers in 12 countries/regions around the world. The mainly qualitative content and frame analysis focuses on major themes and descriptions emphasized in the articles. The study is undertaken from a theoretical framework that assumes: (1) media content, especially international coverage, is influenced/biased by diplomatic relations, historical views, and ideology, and (2) media discourse is a social practice through which meaning is constructed in particular contexts.

The following specific research questions are addressed:

- (1) How was the act of dropping the bomb framed (e.g., as a justifiable means of ending the war, as a war crime) and/or compared to other similar events (e.g., as having less significance, the same significance as compared to such atrocities as the holocaust)?
- (2) To what extent were the readers informed of the horrible aftermath and delayed effects of radiation on the victims of the bombing?
- (3) Was the morality of the action of dropping the atomic bomb questioned?

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- (4) Was the event presented as only a past event, or said (or implied) to be a significant lesson that should be passed on to future generations?
- (5) What factors appear to be related to the differing portrayals of the Hiroshima bombing?

The results of this study may help to provide a basis for more effective future dissemination of the message of peace that Hiroshima has dedicated itself to proclaiming to the world.

Background

Bias in International Coverage

News coverage cannot be objective. This is applicable not only to domestic coverage but also to foreign coverage. Mass communication researchers have found deviance and ideological bias existing in newspaper coverage of foreign countries and issues. Researchers have identified different types of deviance, including statistical, potential for social change, normative and labeling (Shoemaker, Chang & Brendlinger, 1987). News bias exists in any media coverage in any country. Several studies have reported that bias emerges in a variety of forms, including source bias, unbalanced presentation of controversial issues, emphases on the exceptional event rather than process or context, and reliance on partisan sources (e.g., Corcoran, 1986; Entman, 1991). Content analysis has been used to analyze American press coverage of events in other countries, such as the Korean Airlines and Iran Airbus shootings. The data examined in one study, for example, strongly suggested that the nationality of the perpetrators significantly influenced how the crisis was covered (Peh and Melkote, 1991).

Another study (Budner & Krauss, 1995) compared American and Japanese newspaper coverage of the same three events: the FSX fighter plan debate, Japan's purchase of Columbia Pictures and Rockefeller Center, and the Structural Impediment Issue (SII), which dealt with trade imbalance. Coverage of the three disputes appeared to have been balanced and objective, but this varied with the issue, and the coverage included a significant number of one-sided and/or tendentious presentations. In addition, stories with host-country datelines tended to ascribe less blame to the host nation than did other articles written in another country.

Frame analysis

Framing is the selection of meanings of an issue to suggest what is involved and promote a particular causal interpretation (Gamson, 1989; Entman, 1993). The

way media frame an issue influences the way people think about it. The news frame has been empirically examined and found to be relevant to public opinion and policy making (Linsky, 1986).

The framing of a social problem constructed and disseminated by the media is especially important in terms of public opinion and policy making (Ghanem, 1997; McCombs, 1997) because “frames make the world more knowable and understandable” for the society (Durham, 1999, p. 100). What we know about the world is constructed by how that world is framed. Especially in cases of foreign issues, people can hardly have knowledge from their own experience. Therefore, people cannot help but depend on frames for issues observed in the media content. Iyengar states (1991) that media framing intrinsically includes causal reasoning, causal attribution of a problem, and possible policy options for responding to the problem.

Researchers from various fields of social science have defined frames in various ways. According to Goffman (1974), frames enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21) events and/or information. Gamson (1989) states, “[a] frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (p. 157), and in a more illustrative way, “[i]t is possible to tell many different stories about the same events” by using different frames (p. 158). Entman (1993) argues that “frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions,” and framing “select[s] aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them salient. . . in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 55).

In the frame analysis of media content, the interpretive content is more important than the information in news stories. In other words, analyzing framing in news incorporates “the intent of the sender of the message” (Gamson, 1989, p. 158). There may be multiple frames in news stories on such topics as the Hiroshima bombing. Thus, it is important to determine which one is dominant among the competing frames in the same news piece.

Frames exert a strong impact on issues. For example, the definition of a situation can be framed through language and have a dramatic influence on human activities. For example, the Vietnam War was framed by some as a holy war for democracy and against communist expansionism, and by others as a violation of the sovereign right to independence. Similarly, the Japanese Imperial Military during World War II called its invasion of Asian countries an extension of the “Great Eastern Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” These frames may sound far-fetched to people outside, but they often represent reality for people inside.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identified five framing devices that suggest how to think about a given issue and three reasoning devices that justify what

should be done about the issue. The framing devices are (1) metaphors, (2) exemplars (typical examples such as historical events), (3) catchphrases, (4) depictions, and (5) visual images. Three reasoning devices are (1) roots (causal reasoning), (2) consequences, and (3) appeals to principle. Related to Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) five framing devices, Ghanem (1997) proposes four dimensions of media frames: (1) the topic of a news item (included in the frame), (2) presentation (size and placement), (3) cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame), and (4) affective attributes (tone of the picture).

One of the problems inherent in frame analysis is that a news framing may have multiple meanings. Gamson (1989) suggested that content analysis should look at the encoders, rather than the decoders, and proposed the "preferred reading" method, which identifies the metaphors, catchphrases, or other symbolic devices typically used to convey a given frame, a practical way to understand multidimensional frames. This study will employ a modified version of the preferred reading that identifies metaphors and exemplars related to the Hiroshima atomic bombing, such as a saviour, a tragedy, or a war crime.

Opinions about the Atomic Bombing and Historical Relations to Japan

A number of public opinion polls in various countries have surveyed attitudes toward the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The results reveal sharply conflicting opinions, indicating that interpretation of the event remains controversial both within and across countries.

For example, a 1995 poll of people in five countries by the Japanese public broadcasting company (NHK Hosho Bunka Kenkyu Sho, 1997) asked whether respondents thought the dropping of atomic bombs was the right or wrong choice. The percentages of responses on both sides were as follows:

	Right	Wrong
Japan	8.2	57.8
Germany	4.3	66.2
U.S.	62.3	25.7
U.K.	50.3	31.9
South Korea	60.5	19.1

In the United States, Gallup polls have asked whether people approved or disapproved of using the atomic bomb on Japanese cities. Those polls conducted during the last 15 years reveal that the rate of approval has dropped and the disapproval rate has risen dramatically since the first poll in 1945. Nevertheless, over half of Americans still approve of the United States having dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 near the end of World War II, according to the following percentages (Gallup Poll, 2005):

Approve	Disapprove	Unsure	Date
85	10	5	August, 1945
53	41	6	July, 1990
53	41	6	November, 1991
55	39	6	December, 1994
59	35	6	July 20-23, 1995
57	38	5	July 25-28, 2005

Public opinion polls in numerous countries have also surveyed current attitudes toward Japan. A 2005 poll conducted by the Japanese Foreign Ministry (Gaimushou, 2005a) asked general Americans and American intellectuals whether they thought Japan was trustworthy. Among general American respondents, 72% said “yes,” whereas for Intellectuals an even higher rate of 90% answered “yes.” Positive responses were also given by Russian people in a poll the same year (Gaimushou, 2005b) asking them which country they liked best; 37% chose Japan, which was ranked 3rd behind France (1st) and Germany (2nd). Similarly, a poll two years earlier (Gaimushou, 2003) asking European intellectuals whether they thought Japan was trustworthy yielded the following results:

Germany	90% yes, or rather say yes
UK	82% yes, or rather say yes
France	74% yes, or rather say yes

A poll conducted a year before that (Gaimushou, 2002) in Singapore and Thailand elicited the following basically positive responses to the same question of whether they thought Japan was trustworthy:

Singapore	yes=28%, rather say yes=53%
Thailand	yes=22%, rather say yes=45%

In striking contrast, a survey by the Nihon Research Center (2005) asking Chinese and South Korean respondents whether they felt familiarity (friendship) toward Japan showed sharply negative responses:

China	71%, no
South Korea	79%, no

The results appear to reflect vastly different perceptions among regions. In particular, whereas Japan is reportedly trusted and liked by most Americans and Europeans, including Russians, not all Asians share these positive attitudes toward Japan. These diverse opinions are presumably related to varying historical and political relations with Japan. The results of these various opinion polls can be assumed to relate in some way to the media coverage we are investigating in this study. They will be referred to in attempting to interpret the findings of the content analysis under the last research question.

Method

Major newspapers from 12 countries/regions (Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the U.K., and the U.S., and the Arabic language newspaper: Asharq Al-Awsat)¹ were selected according to their prestige and availability. For example, for the U.S., *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* were selected because both are viewed as part of America's "elite" press, with the former being seen as the United States' newspaper of record, and the latter as the leading influential business newspaper. Two newspapers were also selected for the U.K. following the same standard, as well as for China (one from Hong Kong and one from mainland China). While selection of two newspapers from each country would be desirable, only one newspaper was chosen from the other countries/region because we were not able to obtain multiple newspapers from all of them. Selection of only one newspaper may damage the representativeness of newspaper coverage on the Hiroshima atomic bombing because each newspaper has its own editorial stance. However, all of the newspapers chosen were among the most influential and prestigious ones in each country. Thus, it is unlikely that the validity of the research was seriously compromised.

Some newspapers do not publish on Saturdays and/or Sundays. Because August 6 in 2005 was a Saturday, the period from August 5 (Friday) to 8 (Monday) was set in order not to miss Hiroshima articles that were carried before and after the anniversary. A complete list of newspapers used is shown in Table 1. It should be noted that while nine of the newspapers were published in English (those in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong) the others were not, and we thus relied mainly on translations (both Japanese and English) of the original articles written in Chinese, Korean, German, French, Russian, and Arabic in conducting the analysis.² In the discussion below, all the cited words and expressions below from these newspapers are English translations of the originals.

The researchers examined all the newspapers to find articles whose themes concerned the Hiroshima atomic bombing. Articles that did not deal primarily with Hiroshima were excluded even though they mentioned Hiroshima in the texts. A total of 60 newspaper articles fit the criteria to be included in the study.

The primary focus of this research was text analysis. However, we also looked at articles quantitatively, measuring the amount of space devoted to each one. In addition, we considered the dateline (country in which the story was written), story code (straight news, feature, opinion, editorial, news analysis), headlines (rated positive, negative or neutral, based on words chosen), and photo/illustrations. Furthermore, the placement (the location of a story in newspaper) was noted as a partial measure of prominence given to the story.

Results

Table 1 presents a summary of the main features of the quantitative analysis. The number of articles ranged from 1 to 8, with an average of 4 per newspaper; the number of pictures ranged from 0 to 15, with an average of 4.8 per paper; and the amount of coverage varied from 465 to 10,429 cm², averaging 2017 cm² per paper.

Table 1: Hiroshima Coverage by Newspaper

	Newspaper	# of Articles	# of Photos	Front Page	Editorial	Amount of space
US	The New York Times	3	2	—	—	1853
	The Wall Street Journal	1	—	—	—	465
UK	The Times	2	13	—	—	3928
	Financial Times	5	4	1	1	2731
AU	The Australian	7	15	1	1	10429
CA	The Globe & Mail	2	3	—	—	2312
CN	People's Daily	2	1	—	—	465
HG	South China Morning Post	7	9	1	1	4937
FR	Le Monde	6	3	1	1	1581
DE	Frankfurter Allgemeine	8	5	3	—	4918
KR	The Dong-A Ilbo	5	3	1	—	1470
RU	Izvestiya	2	1	—	—	1552
SG	The Straits Times	5	8	—	—	3607
TH	Bangkok Post	3	2	—	—	1308
Arab	Asharq Al-Awsat	2	3	—	—	1092

Note: Amount of space is measured in square centimeters

As shown in Table 1, in terms of the amount of coverage, *The Australian* gave more than twice as much prominence to the event as compared to any other paper, mainly due to the publication of a special 12-page World War II series supplement devoted exclusively to the bomb. The other papers that featured the event most prominently, based on the amount of coverage as well as the number of articles and pictures, included *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (Germany), *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), *The Times* (U.K.) and *The Straits Times* (Singapore). Additional papers that gave it prominence through both front-page placement and editorials were the *Financial Times* (U.K.) and *Le Monde* (France). *The Dong-A Ilbo* (Korea) also featured the event through front-page placement and slightly more than the average number of articles. The two newspapers with by far the least coverage were *The Wall Street Journal* (U.S.) and the *People's Daily* (China).

A summary of the major findings of the qualitative analysis is shown in Table 2, which lists the country/city/region represented according to the historical/political affiliations shown in the second column: World War II roles (winner, occupied by Japan, loser, or not involved with wartime Japan); identification with the West or the East (or neither); and possession of nuclear arsenals (membership in the nuclear club): Member or Non(member). The other columns represent each of the first four research questions: (1) framing and comparison of the bombing with other events; (2) depiction of graphic effects of the bomb; (3) presentation of moral issues; and (4) relevance of the Hiroshima experience: only past relevance, relevant to current relations/events, or an important message for future generations.

Table 2: Summary of Main Findings

Country /Region	Historical/political affiliations ¹	Framing/Comparison	Graphic Effects	Moral Issues	Relevance ²
US	Winner, West, Member	Salvation	Few (1 article)	No	Past
UK	Winner, West, Member	Atrocity, vilest act ever	Yes	Yes	Future
FR	Winner, West, Member	Horror/terrorist act, genocide	Yes	Yes	Future
RU	Winner, Member	Life-saver/Leningrad, Stalingrad, Tokyo bombing	No	Trivialized	Past
CA	Winner, West, Non	Justified war-ender	Yes	Implied	Future (implied)
AU	Winner, West, Non	Mixed: Courageous act vs. result of dubious motives	Yes	Yes	Past/future?
DE	Loser, West, Non	Catastrophe, apocalypse/Auschwitz	Yes	Yes	Future
CN	Occupied, East, Member	Deserved punishment/Japanese invasion	No	No	Past/present
HG	Occupied, East	Horror, atrocity/holocaust	Yes	Yes	Future
KR	Occupied, East, Non	Japan's responsibility/Japanese invasion	No	No	Past/present
SG	Occupied, East, Non	Mixed: war-ender vs. American superiority	Few (1 article)	Yes	Past/future
TH	Occupied, East, Non	Holocaust/ European holocaust	Yes	Yes	Future
Arabic	Not involved in war with Japan, Non	Implied: barbarous attack/US attack on Iraq	No	Yes	Present

Note:

1. Affiliations: *WWII roles*: Winner, Occupied by Japan, Loser, Not involved with Japan; *Membership in nuclear club*: Member, Non(member)
2. Relevance: Past – only past relevance; Present – relevant to current relations/events; Future – important message for future generations

The remainder of this section presents the results of the analysis related to each of the research questions.

Framing/Comparison with Other Events

We identified four different basic stances in the framing/comparison of the Hiroshima bombing: 1) salvation/war-ender; 2) atrocity/holocaust; 3) mixed frames (both justified and questionable action); and 4) deserved punishment for Japan. Of the four, the second was the most frequent, and the third and fourth were equally least frequent, as explained below, country by country, under each stance.

1) Hiroshima as Saviour

The newspaper coverage in three countries unequivocally portrayed the bombing as a justified action that saved many lives and ended the war: the U.S., Russia, and Canada.

U.S. Overall, *The New York Times* (*NYT*) framed Hiroshima as a past event, particularly represented by an August 7 article titled “An Anniversary to Forget,” written by a Japanese Internet entrepreneur who was born in Japan but immigrated to the U.S. Although the content did not necessarily represent *NYT*’s editorial opinion, *NYT* chose to publish the article, and it is a common practice for newspapers to have someone else say what they want to say, especially opinionated/subjective content because newspapers are supposed to be “objective” and neutral. As its headline indicates, this article framed the Hiroshima atomic bombing as a past event which should be forgotten by saying, “[T]he bombings don’t really matter to me or, for that matter, to most Japanese of my generation ... the horror of that war and its nuclear evils feel distant, even foreign.” Other exemplars framing the atomic bombings were “pop culture,” “elevator music” and “the equivalent of a cultural ‘game over’ or ‘reset’ button.” The article concluded by reiterating the author’s understanding of Hiroshima as follows: “The result, for better and worse, is that, 60 years after Hiroshima, we dwell more on the future than the past.”

Whereas *NYT* avoided expressing support or non-support in its articles, *The Wall Street Journal* expressed its support of dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima for the reason that it “hastened World War II to its conclusion.” The newspaper carried only one article, which appeared in the opinion section. The article not only justified the Hiroshima bombing, but also framed it as “salvation”:

Nuclear weapons are often said to pose a unique threat to humanity, and in the wrong hands they do. But when President Truman gave the go-ahead to deploy Fat Man and Little Boy, what those big bombs chiefly represented was salvation: salvation for...all the GIs; salvation for the tens of thousands of Allied POWs the Japanese intended to execute in the event of an invasion;

salvation for the grotesquely used Korean “comfort women”; salvation for millions of Asians enslaved by the Japanese... Not least, and despite the terrible irony, the bombings were salvation for Japan.

Salvation framing could have a strong effect on people’s image building, particularly for Christian readers. This article presented the readers only its support and justification for the bombing of Hiroshima and for nuclear weapons. Its contention was that nuclear weapons are good as long as they are in hands of the right people.

Russia. *Izvestya* carried two articles, one, an opinionated story by a news agency, and the other, a discussion over the bombing. The former, “Hiroshima: Mistake, crime or necessity?” presented a “revisionist” view of Hiroshima and seemingly trivialized the bombing. It stated that the former Soviets understood the bombing as barbaric crime of American imperialism because of propaganda in the cold war time, but that:

during the Second World War there were other more terrible tragedies, such as the siege of Leningrad or the battle for Stalingrad. In Japan itself in the result of the bombardment of Tokyo on March 10, 1945, more than 100,000 people perished and the city actually disappeared. Approximately the same number of people were killed in Hiroshima, while the scale of destruction was much less.

This article also framed the bombing as a “life-saver” by saying, “Washington had every reason to suspect that the U.S landing on the main territory of Japan would be confronted by an even worse nightmare of the total war of the populace. It goes without saying, that from this viewpoint the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki probably saved hundreds of thousands of lives.”

Canada. *The Globe and Mail* covered Hiroshima as part of its “V-J Day: 60th Anniversary” feature. A human story article entitled “Aug. 6, 1945: The world was changed by a flash that filled the air” reported the experience of a female survivor who is now a Canadian. The article framed the atomic bombing as a justifiable means of ending the war by referring to “the world’s first atomic bomb used in warfare—an attack that would spur the Japanese to surrender and finally bring an end to the horrors of the Second World War.”

2) Hiroshima as Atrocity

Newspapers in a total of six countries/regions were found to frame the event as an atrocity comparable to the holocaust or a terrorist act: the U.K., France, Germany, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the Arabic region.

U.K. *The Times* carried a six-page feature article in the supplement on August 6, “TO HELL AND BACK: When the Hiroshima bomb was dropped 60 years ago

today, these three men were among the survivors. Then, amid carnage and chaos, they set off for their home town – Nagasaki.” This article primarily reported their strange and tragic destiny of suffering from the atomic bombings in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Importantly, the article is not just a non-fiction story. The author of the article includes criticism again the bombings:

For 60 years, politicians and historians have argued about the morality of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Did it bring an end to the war, removing the need for a land invasion that would have killed many more civilians? Or was it a cynical test of a new weapon on an enemy already on the verge of collapse? . . . In the three days since the first bomb, no word had come from Tokyo suggesting imminent surrender. But American intelligence was fully aware of the confusion in the Japanese High Command: the question under debate was not whether, but how, to submit to the inevitable. It knew too that, with the entry into the Pacific War of the Soviet Union, Japan’s decline was irreversible.

Financial Times (FT) carried a total of five articles, including front page coverage with a photo and an editorial. Among them, a book review about three Hiroshima-theme books was the most critical of the bombing. Titled “How morality went bang”, it went beyond an ordinary book review to present a critique of the atrocity inflicted by the U.S. and a discussion of nuclear weapons. For example, sentences like, “Little Boy performed to perfection, scorching, ripping, atomising and carbonising the flesh of 100,000 children, women, and men” and “Given the horror of the atom bomb, a weapon that has come to symbolise mankind’s most barbaric century, it is hardly surprising that humans continue to agonise over the morality of its invention” suggested the target was not a military city but civilians. The last paragraph represented the author’s assertion: “Today, people are used to living with the bomb. Yet the chances of nuclear attack are probably greater now than in the cold, bipolar world where deterrence held a grim logic. Dropping the atomic bomb on Japanese civilians is arguably the vilest single act one set of human beings has ever perpetrated on another.”



Figure 1: *Le Monde*'s front page illustration on August 6, 2005.

France. A striking front page illustration of *Le Monde* on August 6 (Figure 1) apparently meant that the atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Al-Qaida's 9/11 attacks on the U.S. were identical in nature: brutal attacks on civilians. Its caption depicted Uncle Sam, an American, telling a Japanese mourner, "As the bearded men of Al-Qaida say so well, from time to time it is necessary to know how to slaughter civilians!" It can be said that *Le Monde* framed the atomic bombing on Hiroshima as "genocide." The full-page feature on the same day, "In Japan, the memory of the nuclear terror of Hiroshima is becoming blurred," started by saying, "On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb used against a civilian population exploded." As this opening and the illustration suggested, *Le Monde*'s overall interpretation and framing of the bombing was "atomic bombing aimed at civilians," a framing that was not observed in American or most Asian newspapers.

Germany. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* carried three front-page stories on August 5 and 6 (the 7th was a newspaper holiday). Throughout the coverage, no trivialization or justification was observed. Instead, framings of "holocaust," "doomsday," and "inhumane act" were employed. The bombing was framed as "unprecedented catastrophe" in one August 5 article, "Peace city: Hiroshima and Japan after 60 years of atomic bombing." This framing carried on in the August 6 front story, "The atomic age: How Hiroshima changed world politics," which presented atomic bombs in the frame of "destroyers of humanity": "If this discovery (atomic bomb) is developed further and used for destruction there will be no victors, and it could be that no civilization survives"; "Now, with one bomb, a large city could be dissolved; with a dozen, a nation could be erased."

Another front page story, “The heavens over Hiroshima,” identified Hiroshima with Auschwitz and regarded Hiroshima as a very important and unjustifiable event in history. The article stated, “In many ways Auschwitz and Hiroshima are connected with each other... Auschwitz has shown what kind of unspeakable horrors depraved humans are capable of performing. The mushroom cloud has shown what humanity brings to fruition. Therefore Hiroshima is not only the big dividing line in the last century but also a pivotal point in history.” It also framed Hiroshima and atomic bombings as a “doomsday” or “apocalypse” as it informed readers that “In the lightning flash of enlightenment over Hiroshima, the end of humanity became knowable.”

Hong Kong. *The South China Morning Post* framed the bombing as an important moral lesson and reminder of nuclear atrocity. The editorial on August 7, “A timely reminder of modern nuclear threat,” appreciated the importance of Hiroshima in world peace: “The 60th anniversary yesterday of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima was not only a remembrance of the 140,000 people who died in the blast and another 100,000 found to have died of related causes, but a reminder of the horror of nuclear war that is always timely.” Further, “holocaust” framing was reiterated in another article, “Why the world is in Japan’s debt,” to mean that the bombing was as horrible as the holocaust: “the memories of that nuclear holocaust are fresh in the minds of the Japanese precisely because of the horrible uniqueness of the experience” and “Whatever Japan’s faults, it is the only nation to have ever suffered thermonuclear holocaust.”

Thailand. There were three articles on the bombing in *Bangkok Post*. The August 6 article entitled “Remembering the Hiroshima holocaust” presented three war survivors — a comic novelist, a filmmaker and a Hiroshima museum director — who are committed to passing on the experience of the bombing to future generations. By introducing their comments and mission, this article framed the bombing and people’s sufferings as an important event to remember, e.g., “If Hiroshima does not serve as an appeal to the world against nuclear weapons, what would?”

Arabic Region. The one article about the Hiroshima peace memorial day that was carried by *Asharq Al-Awsat* came from Reuters. Therefore, the content of the article was straightforward and fact-based without any apparent opinion about the bombing. However, an illustration and photo represented a different interpretation and understanding of Hiroshima for Arabic readers. The illustration on the editorial page (Figure 2) informed the readers of what the U.S. did to Hiroshima 60 years ago and what the U.S. is doing now in the Middle East in its caption: “Hiroshima 60 years ago, Middle East everyday.” The U.S. dropped a single atomic bomb on Hiroshima with a bomber, while it keeps dropping bombs on the Middle East with more sophisticated bombers. Thus, the drawing severely criticized wrongdoings by the U.S.



Figure 2: Asharq Al-Awsat's illustration on August 7, 2005

One of the photographs accompanying the article (Figure 3) showed an atomic bomb and a symbol of the U.S., the Statue of Liberty, with its face replaced by a skull, personifying Death. The caption said, "Protest demonstration by Green Peace in front of U.S. embassy in Berlin. The Statue of Liberty with a skull face in the mock-atomic bomb." The selection of this photo apparently represented the feeling of the people in the region. The newspaper's visual criticism against the U.S. is so eloquent that no one can miss the message.



Figure 3: Asharq Al-Awsat's photo on August 7, 2005

3) Hiroshima as both Justified and Questionable Action

Two countries (Australia and Singapore) presented a more ambivalent, mixed stance, seemingly accepting the first frame of a justified means of ending the war, but also introducing other motivations for the act, including the goal of establishing U.S. superiority for the coming cold war.

Australia. Overall, *The Australian* portrayed the bombing from various perspectives, though primarily from a supportive perspective. The front-page story on August 5 presented the viewpoint of soldiers, and of the U.S. This story focused on the pilot of Enola Gay and his grandson, an active bomber pilot. There are numerous citations and comments from these two men that mainly express their perceived justifications for dropping the bomb.

In line with this article, the editorial on August 6/7 supported the bombing. Its headline, “An awful act in a just cause: In using the atomic bomb, Harry Truman ended the war and established a precedent for the defence of democracy,” literally presented the bombing as a courageous decision by Truman and a justifiable act of war, while it mentioned a bit about human suffering in the first paragraph. It posed the question of “whether the use of such extreme force was justified against a largely civilian population” and answered it: “Certainly using the bomb saved far more lives – of troops on both sides and of Japanese civilians – than it took.” It also trivialized the bombing by saying, “Nor should the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki be [singled] out as some unique act of infamy... And in their moral impact the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki broke no new ground.”

Unlike the editorial, the 12-page feature article in the supplement on August 6/7 presented the bombing in a balanced way. For example, it presented arguments both for and against the bombing. The main part, which was written by a history professor from Scotland, was basically critical of the bombing: “Truman felt the \$US 2 billion cost of the bomb had to be justified to American taxpayers. At the time, it was widely believed an invasion of Japan would kill hundreds of thousands of American soldiers ... Truman also hoped to again advantage in the next great world conflict — cold political war brewing with the Soviet Union.”

Singapore. Two of the five articles dedicated to Hiroshima in *The Straits Times* were originally carried by U.S. newspapers, *NYT* and *Los Angeles Times*. One was the same *NYT* article discussed above, “Anniversary to Forget,” with its headline re-formulated as “To post-war Japanese, bombings are history.” The other was an opinion article titled “A-bomb: Rewriting the guilt for action,” which supported the decision to drop the bomb and challenged the criticism against the U.S. Basically, this article framed the bombing as a necessary means to “end the war and head off a costly invasion of Japan.” It also trivialized its significance by suggesting that criticisms of the atomic bomb as being unnecessary and an atrocity rest on “a profoundly ahistorical assumption: that there was something unusual about what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” The article even implied that not using the

atomic bombs would have been a crime: “If the U.S. had staged a blood-drenched invasion of Japan while holding back its atomic arsenal, President Truman would have been indicted for that decision too.”

On the other hand, another August 6 article on page 14, “Hiroshima marks 60th year of bombing,” presented a markedly contrasting view of Hiroshima. This article introduced the argument that the bombings were not necessary to end the war, as it was the Soviet invasion that forced the Japanese surrender: “The myth that it was only the atom bomb which could have ended the war was invented in order to assuage ‘Truman’s conscience and ease the collective American conscience.’” The author balanced the argument by presenting an opposing opinion, “while it is true that the bombs did not persuade the hardliners to give up arguing for resistance, they did lead to the crucial intervention of Emperor Hirohito. He mentioned the bombs in his decisive address to the Cabinet.”

4) Hiroshima as Deserved Punishment

Finally, the coverage in two countries framed the bombing as a just punishment for Japan’s war crimes: China and Korea.

China. Of the two small articles about Hiroshima in *People’s Daily*, one was a press agency’s straight news story about the 60th anniversary, and the other was an essay entitled “Tragedy of Hiroshima: Where is the lesson from history.” While this essay cited the author’s Japan-Sino friendship exchanges and personal relationship with a famous Japanese artist, it also cast doubt on and presented criticism against Japanese understanding of the bombing: “Every time I visit Hiroshima, I wonder whether the Japanese people really recognize that the result of the atomic bombing arose from the fact that Japan commenced a war of aggression.” This essay considered the atrocity of the bombings by saying, “Already 60 years have passed since the horrible atomic bombings, though the scars inside the hearts of the people living in Hiroshima have probably not healed yet.” However, its perspective appeared to have framed the bombings as a penalty or what Japan deserved, as expressed in the last paragraph: “it would seem to be more important for people to recognize whether the atomic bomb tragedy was caused by the Japanese military invasion of the countries in Asia.”

Korea. The Hiroshima memorial coverage by *The Dong-A Ilbo* was transformed into acrimonious criticism against Japan. The paper published a one-page feature on Hiroshima on the memorial day: “While ignoring any apology, ‘The U.S. is the offender’ echoes in vain.” Accusations against Japan began in the lead paragraph: “Most of their activities (on the memorial day) criticized the ‘offender’ U.S. without showing any regret for the invasion of Korea. I was afraid that the Japanese society as a whole was swinging to the Right.”

This editorial tone continued through the article. For example, a subsection of the feature, “Peace Memorial Park becoming anti-U.S. advertisement,” mentioned

“Japanese war crimes toward Korea” and “the ... catastrophes ... of the Japanese war of invasion.” In another subsection, “Lessons slipped into,” the bombing was framed as “Japan’s responsibility.” It reported that the memorial park and its surroundings have turned into an anti-America campaign space and stated that the current Japanese attitude cannot convince Korean and Chinese citizens who suffered from Japanese acts of aggression.

Graphic Depiction of the Bomb’s Effects

The inclusion of graphic effects of the bomb on the victims proved to be closely related to the way the event was framed. Those newspapers that portrayed the event positively – as a life-saver or as a deserved punishment – tended not to present any graphic details. (The only exceptions were one article in *NYT* that included specific physical suffering in a portrayal of Japanese *hibakusha*, and the Canadian newspaper, which included graphic details in the above-mentioned story about a Canadian *hibakusha*.) In cases like these, when the suffering of victims was not mentioned, all the suffering and after-effects of the bomb could easily be minimized or even trivialized. On the other hand, the coverage of all of the other newspapers presented vivid depictions of the horrific physical and emotional effects of the bomb, although one of the mixed frame newspapers (Singapore) included substantially fewer details than the others. These vivid images provided strong support for the portrayal of the bombing as an atrocity.

The Times (UK) story of the three men who had experienced both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, mentioned earlier, was accompanied by vivid depictions of the atrocity of the atomic bombing, such as “blinded people, people with their faces so swollen it was impossible to tell if they were men or women, people with their skin hanging off their bodies... internal organs hanging out, the tongue or the eyes hanging loose.” Similarly, the *Bangkok Post* article about three other war survivors, introduced above, mentioned horrible suffering as a result of the bombing, describing a children’s book that “portrays some of the most graphic and sickening effects of the bombing such as melting and burned bodies covered with lice” and “losing his father in the nuclear attack before he was even born... His father was vaporized, with the only remaining mementoes being a burned belt buckle and a pocket watch.” Thus these articles informed the readers of the unimaginable and inhuman reality of the bombing.

Readers of *The South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong) were also informed of the horrible suffering and after-effects caused by the bombings. One memorial day article, “Survivors of the Bomb still gripped by horror and guilt,” reported not only immediate physical damage but also prolonged physical and psychological effects as well as effects on unborn babies when the bomb was dropped: “Thousands ... were seared by the heat rays, some suffering burns to their internal organs” and “For

some, each day has been a struggle against the deadly effects of the weapon that ushered in the nuclear age.”

More of the horrible suffering was graphically described in *Le Monde* (France) as living “through a slow agony: survival in the rubble and pestilence; maggots in the wounds of living, hypersensitive bodies; hair which fell out; vomiting of blood; then leukaemia and other cancers.” Further, America’s ill-treatment of post-atomic bomb Hiroshima was reported by pointing out inhumane stories: “In spite of the medicines furnished by the International Red Cross and the occupation forces, as well as the devotion of nurses and doctors, those exposed to the radiation were left practically without treatment, because of the secrecy that the United States wanted to maintain about the effects of the bomb,” and “At the end of 1946, an American military laboratory was opened ... it did not provide any care, but performed tests on those who had been exposed to the radiation and confiscated their corpses to dissect them.”

The strongly critical stance of *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (Germany) against the bomb was supported by informing the readers of the serious after-effects of radiation and the explosion: “Only a single B-29 dropped an atomic bomb that instantly and completely destroyed a city. Later, it was found that the suffering caused by radiation is the worst. Radiation is more serious than effects of heat and explosions, and also lasts for a long time. Even today, victims’ children and grandchildren still have been suffering from it.” Although it was not a real photo, one scene from the comic book, *Barefoot Gen*, was used in an article on page 31, “Merciless sun.” The picture (Figure 4) literally described the horror of Hiroshima right after the bombing: women and children seriously burned with melting skin, shown in a kind of graphic visual depiction of the bombing that was not observed in other newspapers.



Figure 4: One scene from *Barefoot Gen*, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, August 6, 2005

Moral Issues

Whether or not the issue of the morality of the bombing was raised also related closely to the way the event was framed. No serious moral issues were explicitly raised in any of the newspapers that framed the event as a justified way to end the war or punishment for Japan. In contrast, all the other newspapers explicitly introduced moral issues, as illustrated by the questioning of the justification for the bombing presented in the framing section above.

Other examples of moral issues are seen in *Le Monde's* (France) editorial, "Memory and lapse of memory," which lamented the disappearing memory of Hiroshima and its importance as well as expressing criticism against the U.S. by saying, "On the side of the Allies, more precisely the Americans, who conceived, made, and launched the bombs, the memory is fading too. Only a minority are troubled by a guilty conscience, often in connection with some kind of religious belief." The editorial warned against the trivialization and justification of the bombing as follows:

The evocation of what is considered by some as a major crime is most often relativized and justified as a necessary act of war that spared the lives of many Americans and Japanese soldiers. This kind of statistical thinking, which allows us to avoid reflecting on modern massacres, closes the debate prematurely on a jumbled absence of lucidity and lack of courage.

Relevance to Future Generations

The question of relevance was also apparently connected to the framing of the event. Past significance alone was associated with the frame of life-saver; future significance was directly related to the portrayal of the bombing as an atrocity; and present significance was suggested or implied in those accounts that blamed Japan, comparing the bombing to Japan's invasion, as well as the one that framed the act as a barbarous attack, comparing it to the U.S. attack on Iraq.

1) Past significance alone

Like the other newspapers that framed the bombing as life-saver, the articles in *NYT* (US) did not focus on Hiroshima's role in peace. The straight news story about the 60th anniversary focused on Japan's weakening pacifism by presenting survivors' sceptical comments about the future of Japan, but did not discuss the role of Hiroshima in world peace, the atomic bomb experience, or moral issues. Hiroshima seems to have been framed as a past event and an old symbol of peace that is losing its significance in Japan. It appears that overall *NYT* avoided touching the role and interpretation of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. The *Wall Street*

Journal (US) also included no mention of the role of Hiroshima in peace. The anniversary was apparently not regarded as an important event.

2) Future significance

The August 5 article of *The Times* (UK), “Hiroshima struggles in vain against insults to memory of bomb victims,” appealed for the importance of passing on the memory of the experience by presenting survivors’ voices. For example, the comment that if young people continue to “think of the atomic bombing as something that has nothing to do with their experience ... what happened here 60 years ago could happen again” warned the readers that apathy regarding Hiroshima memories could lead to repeating the same tragedy. While reporting numerous examples of indifference and vandalism, this article also emphasized that apathy is the most serious barrier to peace. This theme was exemplified by presenting a survivor’s comment as the closing remark: “People sometimes say, ‘You can’t eat peace’ ... But the truth is that without peace you may not be able to eat at all.”

Perhaps the strongest support for Hiroshima’s role was seen in the Hong Kong coverage. An editorial in *The South China Morning Post* that discussed current North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues repeatedly mentioned Hiroshima, framed as representing an important event. For example, the closing paragraph stated, “Hiroshima and Nagasaki ... have become beacons of a pacifist Japan. For a day yesterday, Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park became the epicentre of hopes for a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons.” Similarly, an opinion article on the memorial day, “Why the world is in Japan’s debt,” regarded the experience of the bombing as invaluable for human beings: “the world owes a measure of debt to the Japanese who ‘celebrate’ the anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons by not only refusing to possess a single one themselves but also by vehemently forswearing the ambition to acquire them.”

3) Present significance

None of the Korean or mainland Chinese coverage included any mention of the importance or role of Hiroshima in world peace. Nevertheless, both newspapers suggested the need for Japanese recognition and apology for past war crimes, as shown in the framing section above. Similarly, the illustrations in *Asharq Al-Awsat* (Figures 3 and 4) vividly connected the Hiroshima bombing with the current war in Iraq.

Discussion: Possible Factors Related to News Portrayals

Attempting to correlate the historical/political affiliations in Table 2 with the framing devices reveals no simple pattern. Although the frame of Hiroshima

as life-saver was associated only with countries that won WW II, other winning countries framed the event in an opposite way, i.e., as an atrocity, or in a mixed way. Similarly, the punishment frame was held only in countries that were occupied by Japan, but a wide diversity of frames was found in the other occupied countries. Moreover, no direct relationship seemed to exist in terms of status as a Western or Eastern country or membership in the nuclear club, given that both members and non-members portrayed the Hiroshima bombing in diverse ways.

Therefore, we can safely conclude that a combination of factors has to be considered in order to explain the patterns we have observed. By looking at the groups of countries that share frames and contrasting them with the other groups, it is possible to identify complexes of factors that interact, some of them apparently over-riding others.

First, looking at the countries that framed the bomb as saving lives, as mentioned earlier, all of them were winners of the war, and one of them (the U.S.) was the country that dropped the bomb. It is logical that people whose country was responsible for the action and those from allied countries who presumably supported the action at the time would continue to accept the original rationale, especially while veterans of the war whose lives were in jeopardy as long as the war continued are still alive. In fact, the international opinion poll cited earlier lends support to this interpretation (although Russia was not one of the countries polled about the bombing).

Nevertheless, it remains to be determined why the newspapers in the two other countries with the most similar profiles to the U.S. and Russia, namely the U.K. and France, who were both winners of the war and nuclear club members, would present such strongly negative portrayals of the Hiroshima bombing. This is particularly surprising for the U.K., where perceptions of the bombing were still very similar to those of the U.S. in 1995 (U.S.: right - 62.3%, wrong - 25.7%; U.K.: right - 50.3%, wrong - 31.9%), as cited earlier. Looking at the other four members of this "Hiroshima-as-atrocity" group, the coverage in Germany seems the easiest to explain. Not only was Germany a loser of the war and an ally of Japan, but it also suffered great destruction from American bombing and does not possess nuclear weapons. Moreover, as reported above, public opinion against the bombing was very strong in the same 1995 poll (right - 4.3%, wrong - 66.2%). On the other hand, two of the other members of this group, Hong Kong and Thailand, had an adversarial wartime relation to Japan, in that they were invaded and occupied, and thus could be predicted to frame the bombing as justifiable punishment, as the mainland Chinese and Korean newspapers did. Finally, the last one, the Arabic region, has no apparent historical connection to wartime Japan. Considering this diversity of affiliations, it would appear that, except in the case of Germany, some other factor or factors have to be operating. The most likely candidates would seem to be general public opinion toward Japan and recent issues/events, such as

concerns over nuclear proliferation; growing threats of terrorism, including the danger of nuclear terrorism; the present U.S. policy, particularly regarding the Iraq war; and U.S. world hegemony. These pressing current concerns and related attitudes could conceivably over-ride or cancel out older alliances and perceptions.

Current tensions between China and Korea on the one hand and Japan on the other, particularly related to conflicting accounts of wartime responsibilities, could also explain the portrayal of the bombing as a just retribution for Japan's wartime aggression in the Chinese and Korean newspapers. This interpretation is supported by the negative public opinions toward Japan reported in 2005, as cited earlier: 71% of Chinese and 79% of Koreans did not feel familiar/friendly toward Japan. Korea's security alliance with the U.S. and China's own possession of a nuclear arsenal could also be seen as factors in their lack of criticism of the Hiroshima bombing. However, it is not clear why the coverage in the Hong Kong newspaper, which was very critical of the bomb, was so strikingly different from that in mainland China. Put another way, if the assumption that current affairs are exerting the greatest influence on the way the bombing is framed, then it remains to be determined why anti-Japanese sentiment seemed to dominate the coverage in mainland China, whereas an anti-nuclear and/or anti-U.S. policy position appeared stronger in Hong Kong.

Many factors can be seen to underlie these portrayals, including public opinion, ideology, historical relations, and current political events, including the present U.S. Middle Eastern policy and world hegemony. Although newspapers in a few countries appeared to have little interest in memorializing the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing, almost all of those surveyed published several articles and pictures, and a majority included graphic depictions of the bomb's effects on the victims, raised moral issues associated with the bombing, and argued for the necessity of conveying the message of Hiroshima to future generations. Thus, it can be concluded that a majority, either directly or indirectly, conveyed appreciation for the importance of Hiroshima's role in educating the world about the dangers of nuclear warfare and helping to build peace among nations and peoples.

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Notes

1. We had hoped to include at least one newspaper from an African country, but the search of a large African newspaper database revealed no independent coverage of the 60th Hiroshima memorial.
2. The fact that all the articles were not originally written in English precluded a close linguistic analysis in this study, given that the English translations of the texts written in other languages cannot be assumed to reflect the specific linguistic or discourse level features of the original.

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