

Buddhism and the Mass Media: the Representation of Buddhism in American, British, and Chinese (English Language) Newspapers

How is Buddhism represented in the media of different cultures around the world? This paper explores and compares the representation of Buddhism and Buddhists in seven American, British and Chinese (English language) newspapers (New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Time Magazine; Guardian and Daily Telegraph; and South China Morning Post and China Daily), respectively, in the period between 2001- 2013. Multiple research methodologies are employed, including quantitative framing analysis; qualitative narrative analysis of individual newspaper stories; the analysis of visual canons; and critical discourse analysis of press discourses.

In the quantitative framing analysis, I developed framing categories for articles that covered or mentioned Buddhism. I was able to separate 14 framing categories, i.e., 14 major cognitive frames of interpretation (ways or angles) how the articles approached, presented or interpreted the Buddhism-related subject matters. The 14 framing categories include 1. Cultural frame (related to Buddhist art, museum, exhibitions, literature); 2. Religious (rituals, teachings); 3 Political (relating Buddhism with politics in some ways); 4. Tourism (referring to Buddhist tourism destinations or pilgrimage); 5. Lifestyle/Health (including articles focusing on meditation that is used for psychological wellbeing or medical healing); 6. Celebrity (involving Buddhist celebrities like actors); 7. Social/Charity (articles on Buddhist charity activities); 8. Commercial (on commercialization of Buddhism); 9. Conflict (Buddhists conflicting with other groups); 10. Ecological (Buddhist environmentalism); 11. Criminal (Buddhists as criminals or victims of crime); 12. Innovation/Modernization (challenges of modernization and related changes in Buddhist organizations); 13. Educational (Buddhist schools); 14. Management (of Buddhist institutions). I coded all articles in 13 years in all seven newspapers according to these frames. The results show that the journalistic coverage of Buddhism is dominated by cultural, religious and political frames. Other cognitive frames (including tourism, lifestyle/health, celebrities, charity, ecological, commercial and criminal frames) are less frequent yet prevalent and influential.

At the same time, significant differences exist between the symbolic media universes of the American vs. the British press; the Western vs. the Chinese newspapers; and different journalism traditions (democratic media in the UK, US and Hong Kong vs. propaganda media in communist mainland China).

At the level of macro-level press discourses regarding Buddhism, two discourses represent a postmodern, meditation-oriented, Western Buddhism; and an art-oriented perception and integration of Buddhism into Western life, respectively. Two further press discourses express Western textual and visual canons of Asian Buddhist clergy in exotic, Othering, often Orientalist terms. A fifth Western press discourse blends a pro-Tibet foreign policy line with the image of victimized, mysterious land and its people. The two key Chinese press discourses of Buddhism differ from the Western ones as well as among themselves. The Hong Kong press discourse represents the mundane (practical, organizational, financial, building construction, etc.) issues of Buddhism as an integral part of everyday social life in Asia. However, the discourse of state Buddhism represents mainland China's official political and cultural line in press propaganda.

Muslims, Populist Politics and the Media: the Representation of Islam in the Hungarian media Before and During the Refugee crisis in 2015

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Direction 1: The media coverage of religious facts in political and social perspectives

The European refugee crisis in September 2015 gave unprecedented exposure to social, political and economic issues related to economic migrants, refugees and – as most refugees in Europe are Muslim people – the direct or implied coverage of Islam as a religion. Media often presented dramatic images of migrants' dangerous travel from Syria and other countries in the Middle East, West Asia and Africa, through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to Germany. Oftentimes, media representation included emotional, dramatic images of barbed wire, suffering families and dead children. Images of violence by Greek, Macedonian and Hungarian border guards beating up refugees also abound. The wide range of coverage included news reports (even real time news feeds in online media) as well as plenty of commentary and news analysis, where one of the major underlying currents had to do with the Muslim religion of most refugees and migrants.

This paper explores and compares the media representation Islam in “peace time” (i.e., before the September, 2015 refugee crisis) vs. the period of high tension and social conflict (from early September, 2015) in the Hungarian media. On the one hand, I contextualize the performance of the media in the populist nationalist political marketing and related media strategies of Viktor Orbán's government. Agenda setting and framing efforts are explored, and I also document how certain segments of the media took over the government's communication clichés. On the other hand, I explore major modes of news coverage as well as news analysis and opinion journalism. I argue that the debate about Islamic refugees and migrants crystallized among three positions:

- 1) an anti-migrant argument with strong Islamophobic, nationalist and xenophobic currents;
- 2) a pro-refugee position where arguments emphasized a) the human rights of people who escape war; b) the immediate need for practical help for refugees; c) the need for a new labor force for aging European societies that migrants can fulfill;
- 3) a middle position that featured both the human right perspective and, at the same time, a critical position regarding several Islamic organizations' and imams' supposed lack of respect for universal human and gender rights, and anti-Semitic position; this position also featured the past and expected problems of the integration of Islamic religious minorities in European nation states.

The case of Hungary is relevant for the exploring the media coverage of Islam, because its anti-refugee policies became most controversial in global media. The paper also opens comparative perspectives with France and other cases.

Bio

Miklos Sukosd is an Associate Professor at the Department of Media, Cognition and Communication at the University of Copenhagen. Previously he was an Associate Professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at the University of Hong Kong (2009-2013). He had also served as Academic Director of the Center for Media and Communication Studies at Central European University, where he also taught as Associate Professor of Political Science. He served in major international media research and consultancy projects, including as Chair of the COST A30 Action East of West: Setting a New Central and Eastern European Media Research Agenda (2005–2009), and key expert and team leader in the European Union study on indicators for media pluralism (2008–2009). His research interests include media in Central and Eastern Europe and China; environmental communication, journalism and sustainability; and media and religion. As Senior Fellow at Media Diversity Institute (London), he gave several curriculum development seminars for professors of journalism at universities in the Middle East and the Caucasus, including Egypt, Morocco and Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia. He has published over 20 books and many book chapters and journal articles. Miklos has an MA in sociology from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in political science from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has received several international research awards and fellowships, including Fulbright Fellowship at Columbia University; Japan Foundation Fellowship at the University of Tokyo; ACLS Research Scholarship at the Woodrow Wilson Center (Washington, D.C.); and a General Research Fund grant, Hong Kong.