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An Analysis of The Star and The New Straits Times Global Islamic News

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ABSTRACT

Malaysian media received their world news from the international news agencies; therefore readers are flooded with news reports structured by the Westerns point of view. This paper wishes to investigate the portrayal of Islam in news selected and republished in the World section of The Star and the New Straits Times. A content analysis revealed that most of the stories on Islam are revolved around war, crime and politics. News on Islam has reported that this religion been relatively associated with violence; suggesting that the news agencies are bias as reporting on Islam, especially in the news republished by The Star. The main frames projected in The Star are "Islam is inherently violent" and "Islam does not go well with the concept of peace". Although news reports in NST suggested that terrorism and wars are common in the Islamic countries, yet the tones suggested that Islam is not the source of the act of extremism. The main frames in NST are "terrorism and wars are common in the Islamic countries, yet Islam is not to be blamed" and "the Muslim countries are slowly moving from extremism to peace and moderation. The finding indicates that there English newspapers are forced to republished negative news on Islam which will resulted in a misconception of Islam among the readers.

Keywords*: Islam, news framing, stereotypes, international news agencies*

Introduction

The international news agencies supply news stories to other news trade all over the world including newspapers, magazines, and radio and television broadcasters. This allows the international news agencies to shape and structure news stories from the Westerns point of view. The paper wish to investigate the portrayal of Islam in news selected and republished by the English newspapers in Malaysia by identifying the types of news on Islam projected by the news agencies, the tones of the news stories and the news frames news Islam in The Star and the New Straits Times. A month-long content analysis on the World section of both newspapers too will look at other aspect of news elements including sources of news and the size of news to measure credibility of the news and the amount of attention given to the news.

International News Agencies' Control of the World News

International news agencies have been accredited to be responsible for conveying most of the world's news and have thus become the most important sources of international information (Boyd-Barret, 1982; Alleyne & Wagner, 1993). Boyd-Barret (1982) asserts that the biggest news agencies, and perhaps the most influential, are of course, the "Big Four" Western international news agencies – Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, and Agence France Press (AFP) – due to a combination of factors that have to do with "the resources available to them, their generally non-governmental character and their traditions of rigorous editing, comprehensive coverage, relatively high reliability and quality of delivery." (p. 2)

Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen (1998) affirm that till the second world war, news agencies can be owned by any mixture of these media discourse: media as powerful and influential, media as vehicles of nation - state or class propaganda; media as exemplars of a modern, technologically sophisticated professional. Although Boyd-Barret claims that the news agencies were later moved toward a progressive, modernist discourse, he believe that in reality, the news coverage did little to sustain the credibility of the free flow model.

Tunstall (1992) has accused the international news agencies of national and western bias. Calling the Europe as "news superpower"

(p. 97), Tunstall said western media tends to favour "home news abroad story" (p. 98) which means foreign stories with strong involvement of the Westerners. Tunstall cited examples how the British media covered the Gulf War, which "key roles" includes "Mrs Thacher telling Bush to get tough, courageous British pilots trained to attack at low level, and British special forced dressed as Arabs deep behind enemy lines". (p. 96)

The Portrayal of Islam in the Western Media

How does Islam being treated by the Western media? Western media encourage stereotypes about Islam, according to an article by Mughees-uddin (1995). He emphasizes that the U.S. media has attempted to generate conflict and misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity by representing Islam as a non-tolerant religion and Christianity as a tolerant one.

One example of the misleading stereotypes on Islam, according to Khairul Azahar Idris (2002) was on the concept of 'jihad'. According to Khairul, the Western has labeled 'jihad' as a military training to prepare the terrorist and suicide bombers. The Western, according to him, has failed to understand the concept of jihad in Islam. Khairul perceives Jihad differently; it is not about killing or sacrificing oneself which lead to the death of innocent people such as women, children and the elderly.

In order to further strengthen the conflict between Islam and Christianity, Western media must continue its propaganda against Islam throughout the world. Haider (2002) emphasizes that the foreign media has flooded the Islamic world with the negative perception of itself. He has further claimed that the news produced in more developed country and sent into the Third World and "feeds those societies an image of self as terrorist, fundamentalist, and impoverished - implicitly, a self suffering the ills of submission." (p. 27)

A study with more positive findings indicated that the media played the role of guardian and protector to the Islamic community initially after the September 11, 2001. Pollock, Piccillo, Leopardi, Gratale & Cabbot (2005) highlight on the role or function of newspapers which in general to provide comprehensive coverage on the issues at hand and dispell misconceptions which exist about Islam in relation to the terrorists in particular.

However, more recent findings show that the opposite – giving way to a more negative, pessimistic, accusatory view of Islam. For example, Kumar (2008), by referring to the Orientalist framework or the system of thought, emphasizes on the portrayal of Islam from two different terms: the forces of destruction represented by terrorism, rogue states, and extremism, and on the other are the champions of democracy and freedom, represented by the US and its allies.

Kumar (2008) in his study regarding the existing literature on Orientalism old and new ways in which Arabs and Muslims have been demonized post September 11, 2001, found that there are five discursive frames that have been employed to represent Muslims, Arabs, and the Middle East post September 11.

The 5 main frames are as follows:

1. Islam is a monolithic religion
2. Islam is a uniquely sexist religion
3. The "Muslim mind" is incapable of rationality and science
4. Islam is inherently violent
5. The West spreads democracy, Islam spawns terrorism

Kumar (2008) has also pointed out that the Orientalist argument on the "West" as a dynamic, complex and ever changing society while the "Orient", and particularly the world of Islam, as static, barbaric and despotic and therefore in need of Western intervention has brought about a progressive change.

The findings confirm one of the two frames in newspaper coverage as suggested in an earlier study that terrorism goes hand in hand with Islam (Katz, Cullen, Buttner, and Pollock, 2007). The other frame emphasizes the differences between Islam and terrorists, particularly the values held by most Muslims as opposed to fundamentalist Islamic terrorists.

Shahzal Ali and Khalid (2008) who studied the portrayal of Muslim by the Newsweek and Time magazine from year 1991 to 2001 found out that the proportion of negative coverage was greater than the positive coverage. The study to identify the proportion of positive coverage of US allies Muslim countries is greater than the proportion of negative coverage of US enemy declared Muslim countries. Out of 12 countries understudied, the research found that Jordan received the highest positive coverage, Afghanistan and Indonesia received maximum negative coverage, while Iran received zero per cent negative coverage.

Framing Theory

In the field of communication studies, there have multiple definitions of media framing been introduced and a number of approaches practiced by scholars. Gitlin (1980) has introduced the notion of frames in communication and described the frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion" (p. 7).

Media frames, in particular, have been defined as the core or central organizing idea of the news package that provides the means for understanding events (Gamson, 1983) or as "conceptual tools" used to convey, interpret, and evaluate information (Neuman *et al.*, 1992, p. 60). Entman (2004) define media framing as "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and or solution" (p. 5). Framing theory suggests the mass media do even more than create saliency. This means that the media limit or define the story's meaning and thereby shape people's interpretation of that story (Hallahan, 1999).

Research Methodology

The research is based on the analysis of newspaper content about how the international news agencies are portraying the Islamic world as republished in two English newspapers, The Star and The NST. It is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative method. The finding of the quantitative analysis will served as a basic knowledge to further understand the framing of these news during the qualitative analysis. As for the quantitative analysis, the instrument was identified by using 'emergence coding' (Creswell, 2007; Given, 2008). This is a technique that is usually used in qualitative data analysis when dealing with content analysis. In this research the researchers, treat the newspaper content as raw data. The data was sorted according to the date of the newspapers. The researchers identified the categories by using comparative data analysis techniques (Given, 2008), and the categories emerge from the findings as the researchers read through the raw data. The researchers analysed one month of news from the World Section of the Star and NST. The collection of the data started from 1ˢᵗ February 2009 until 28ᵗʰ February 2009. With that the researchers identified (on both newspapers) these categories, 'politics', 'social', 'technology', 'crime', 'war', 'family', 'law'

and 'policy', and 'others'. These categories were identified based on the news reports that report on Islam's issues.

The data from the analysis was used to develop the research instrument for the quantitative analysis. From there the researchers did a comparison analysis between the two mainstream newspapers mainly focussed on the frequency of the categories identified. Three persons coded all 151 articles and then re-coded 30 articles drawn at random to check for 'coder's reliability'. The rationale of this is to make sure that all three coder were consistence in categorizing the data, thus ensuring the reliability in stability, representation, and equivalence (Nueman, 2006) of the data categorized. This means that reliability in quantitative method is measured across time, groups, and indicator. The final part of the analysis uses framing technique by looking at the message of the news articles to identify persistent patterns of cognition, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion.

Findings and Discussion

Types of News

The Table 1 indicates that there is a slight difference in the percentage of the findings and the structure of the types of news reported. Both newspapers had 'War' types of news ranked first in the list. Dooley and Corman (2002) who studied temporal patterns of influence to determine themes and patterns in Reuters news coverage of September 11, found evidence of a "stimulus-response" model. The study suggested a triggering event, such as an attack, led to an institutional military and/or political response and subsequent sense-making of the societal impact of the terrorist act.

Therefore the news coverage was influenced by such events. When the Muslim world does not just revolved around the Middle East or 'War', there are other Muslim countries that are thriving and developing positively, but are rarely mention in the news.

In the second level between two newspapers, the type of 'Politics' and 'Crime' news traded places. In the Star 'Crime' is the second most featured news but for NST, 'Politics' was in the second level. This proves that both newspapers had different concentration in choosing the news that they would consider important. Even though, the 'Social' and 'Law & Policy' type of news remain at the same level for both newspaper but

the choice of news type also differ for the rest in the list for example The Star would report on 'Forum' or 'Comment', 'Family', and etc., NST would reports on Business, Trade, Finance, and Education. Therefore the readers that read these newspapers might be exposed to difference type of understanding of the world.

Table 1: Comparison between Types of News featured in the Star and NST

	Frequency The Star	The Star	%	Frequency NST	% NST
War	27	36	War	29	38.6
Crime	23	30	Politics	21	28
Politics	17	22	Crime	15	20
Social	4	5.5	Social	6	8
Law & Policy	1	1.3	Law & Policy	2	2.6
Forum/ Comment, Family, Etc.	4	5.5	Business, Trade, Finance, and Education	2	2.6
Total	76	100		75	100

Size of News

The size of news determined the amount of attention given to the news in term of space allocation. This will identify prominence of the news, thus suggested the quality of reportage. In the study, it was found out that the size of news column on both newspapers differs in the centimeter square. Referring to the Table 2 and Table 3 below the classes division also differs. Therefore the researchers decide to divide the class into three parts. Both newspapers have seven classes variance; hence the researchers categorize the classes into small, medium and large-size news. As or The Star, 22.5 to 153 cm^2 is small, 154 to 285 cm^2 is medium, and 286 to 483 cm^2 is large. As for NST, 33 to 266 cm^2 is small, 267 to 532 cm^2 is medium, and 533 to 970 cm^2 is large.

Table 2 and Table 3 below indicate that for both newspapers, news on Islam are mostly featured in the small and medium size and there is a big difference between the frequency of news with largest size and the smallest size. Although most of the news are small in size and suggested that the amount of attention given in term of space allocation is small and less prominent in terms of coverage, but the frequency is high. As the highest frequency for types of news in both newspapers is 'War' and

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Table 2: Size of News in The Star (n = 76)

Class (cm²)	Frequency	Relative Frequency	%
22.5 – 87.5	27	0.357	35.7
88 – 153	14	0.184	18.4
154 – 219	14	0.184	18.4
220 – 285	11	0.145	14.5
286 – 351	4	0.052	5.2
352 – 417	4	0.052	5.2
418 – 483	2	0.026	2.6
	76	1.00	100

Table 3: Size of News in New Straits Times (n = 75)

Class (cm²)	Frequency	Relative Frequency	%
33 – 133	40	0.533	53.3
134 – 266	18	0.242	24.2
267 – 399	14	0.186	18.6
400 – 532	1	0.013	1.3
533 – 665	0	0	0
666 – 798	1	0.013	1.3
799 – 970	1	0.013	1.3
	75	1.00	100

"Crime", the findings suggested these types of news are fed to readers in small dosages.

Attribution

Table 4 signifies that both newspapers are the contributing source of the news for government. The researchers believed that as a legitimate and reliable international news agency which supply news to the world, getting the news straight from the official source would increase its objectivity in news reporting. Apart from the difference in the frequency of the contributing sources, the findings show that news on Islam republished by The Star had quoted from seven types of sources while the NST had quoted from 11 types of sources. This indicate that the NST republished news on Islam with variety of sources and more alternative views rather

Table 4: Contributing Sources

	Frequency The Star	% The Star	Frequency The NST	% NST
Government	64	84	50	66.6
Columnist	3	4	-	-
Public	3	4	1	1.3
Militant	2	2.7	3	4
Religious Leader	2	2.7	-	-
UN and related	1	1.3	2	2.6
No Attribution	1	1.3	-	-
Politician	-	-	5	6.6
Activist	-	-	4	5.3
Religious Leader	-	-	3	4
Academicians	-	-	1	1.3
Specialist	-	-	1	1.3
NGO	-	-	1	1.3
Others	-	-	4	5.3
Total	76	100	75	100

than news focusing mostly on government sources as being done by The Star.

Source

Throughout the period of study, nearly half of the news was obtained from AFP, the oldest news agencies in the world, followed by AP and the rest were divided between Reuters and others. The only major difference between these two newspapers was that news on Islam republished by NST has more stories rewritten from various international news agencies reports and were labeled as "Agencies", and this is not a practice of the Star.

Parts of the World

The researchers have divided the world into several parts (regions). This is to identify which region would have the most news coverage. Based on the Table 6, for both newspapers, it is very clear that Middle East contributed most of the news discussed in the World section of the newspapers. This is because more than half of the news originated here.

Table 5: International News Agencies

	Frequency The Star	% The Star	Frequency The NST	% NST
AFP	32	42	29	38.6
AP	26	34	11	14.6
Reuters	11	15	14	18.6
Agencies	-	-	10	13.3
Others	7	9	11	14.6
Total	76	100	75	100

This is probably due to the fact that several Middle East countries such as Iraq, Iran, Israel, Afghanistan, and Pakistan had been involved either with ethnicity conflict that resulted in civilian war, or having political turmoil or even having to deal with old feud over land invasion.

According to a study from Sørli, Gleditsch and Strand (2005), Middle East is a region where Islam dominates. The peoples are divided between Shia and Sunni that result in ethnic dominance. Based on their study, they concluded that any dominant ethnic group increases the risk for conflict. Apart from that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dominated domestic, regional, and world politics for more than five decades. Therefore the Middle East will continue to dominate the news on Islamic world if these issues continue.

Table 6: Parts of the World

	Frequency The Star	% The Star	Frequency The NST	% NST
Middle East	51	67	47	62.6
South East Asia	12	16	7	9.33
Central and North America	5	6.5	9	12
Eastern Europe	3	4	4	5.3
South Asia	2	2.6	1	1.33
Oceania and Island	1	1.3	1	1.3
Africa	1	1.3	4	5.3
East Asia	1	1.3	2	2.6
Total	76	100	75	100

Pictures

Pictures play an important role in convincing the readers about particular news. Understanding this fact, the researchers decided to study pictures that are featured in The Star and NST's World section. Table 7 shows that most of the news articles in both newspapers were without pictures. Most of the news articles are written in small size, thus larger size news came with pictures. For the moderate size of news that had pictures, most are the 'mug shot' of who were being referred to in the news. There were more news with pictures in NST compared to The Star. This shows that since most news articles are relatively small, pictures do not play a significant role in giving prominence to the news.

Table 7: News Articles that Come With or Without Pictures

	Frequency The Star	% The Star	Frequency The NST	% NST
News with picture	17	22.5	29	39
News without picture	59	77.5	46	61
Total	76	100	75	100

Tone

The researchers divide the news articles into three tones. This is to help to detect framing better. The tones identified whether the articles are 'Bias towards Islam', 'Bias against Islam', and 'Neutral'. The researchers found out that for both newspapers, more than half of the news articles are 'Bias against Islam'. For the rest of the tones, both newspapers would yield just a slight difference in the percentage but otherwise the same position in the rank of frequencies.

The researchers used words association to identify the tones of the news articles. For examples, positive words such as 'development', 'technological advance', 'anti-terrorism', 'freedom', 'equality', 'caring', 'human right', 'forgiving' and 'worship of Allah' to identify whether the news were 'Bias towards Islam'. As for negative words such as 'terrorist', 'Al-Qaeda', 'militant', 'violent', 'Taliban', 'bombing', 'extremist', 'assassinations' or 'murderers', 'radical' and 'against human right' to associate it with 'Bias against Islam'. When decided whether the tones of the article are neutral or not, the researchers identify news article that

mention Islam but does not really reflect whether it is condemning or praising Islam.

Table 8: Tone of the News Articles

	Frequency The Star	% The Star	Frequency The NST	% NST
Bias towards Islam	11	14.5	10	13.33
Bias against Islam	52	68.5	49	65.3
Neutral	13	17	16	21.3
Total	76	100	75	100

Frequently Mentioned Words

The study found that for both newspapers, most frequently mentioned words were words which are bias against Islam. For The Star, there are 16 news items mentioned the word "militant" at least once in the news articles, 13 news items mentioned the word "terrorist" at least once in the news articles and 12 news items mentioned the word "Taliban" at least once in the newspaper. As for the NST, "Al-Qaeda" was mentioned 13 times, followed closely by "Taliban" which was mentioned 12 times. Unlike The Star, NST only mentioned the word "militant" 10 times. Based on the figures, the choice of word reflects the types of news that was mostly featured in both newspapers which is 'War'.

The Framing of News in The Star

Frame 1: Islam is Inherently Violent

"Islam is inherently violent" is the main frame of the Islamic-related news portrayed in the World section of the Star newspaper, as pointed out by Kumar (2008). For example, in a news article dated 14th February 2009 entitled *"Woman bomber kills 32"*, reported a woman suicide bomber dressed in a black *abaya* (a traditional Muslim head-to-toe garment for women) blew herself up in a crowd of women and children Shi'ite pilgrims south of the Iraqi capital yesterday, killing 32 worshippers. It was also mentioned in the news that the use of female suicide bombers in *abayas* has become a feared terror tactic in Iraq. There was also a

phrase saying that police has arrested a woman who has confessed to recruiting more than 80 such suicide bombers and who helped ocrestrate dozens of attacks. The frame of Islam as inherently violent was further strengthened with the phase below:

"Millions of pillions of pilgrims are traveling to Karbala for Arbaeen, a ceremony to mark 40 days after the Ashura anniversary of the killing of Imam Hussein by Sunni caliph Yazid's armies in AD 680."

(The Star, 14th February 2009)

Another news fitted this frame is the one dated 12th February 2009 entitled "*20 killed after Taliban attack ministries in Kabul*" and another entitled "*Interpol issues global terror alert on 85 Arabs*" published on the same day which reported on 85 men who were wanted in Saudi Arabia on terrorism-related charges, including links to Al-Qaeda in numberous Middle-East countries. The findings confirm the frame terrorism goes hand in hand with Islam in newspaper coverage as suggested by Katz, Cullen, Buttner, and Pollock (2007)."

Frame 2: Islam Does Not Go Well with the Concept of Peace

There is very strong frame in the World section of the newspaper telling readers that Islam does not go well with the concept of peace. Although Frame 1 has already suggested that "Islam is inherently violent", but it refers to the behaviour of the Muslims as portrayed in the news. Frame 2 suggested in this study refers to the philosophical aspect of Islam as a religion which prefer to ignore invitation to make peace.

For example, a news on 19th February 2009 entitled "*Indonesia's Muslim leader snub Hillary*" reported on an Indonesian Islamic leader Din Syamsuddin, an individual claimed to represent some 30 millions Muslims, whose the Muslim leader had rejected US secretary of State Hillary Clinton's dinners invitation during her recent visit to Indonesia. This has negatively portrayed Islam as a religion which rejects the US's attempt for peaceful negotiation and has portrayed Islam as preferring violence as the means when seeking solutions to crisis.

Another example that fitted this frame is news involving the crisis in Gaza. News article dated 19th February 2009 entitled "Israel: Free our soldier first. Tel Aviv says captive release deal crucial to Gaza truce but hamas says no" reported on the out-going Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert'd decision against lifting its border blockage of Gaza strip until Hamas agreed the release of a captured Israel soldier by the name Gilad

Shalit, putting a longer term ceasefire proposal by Egypt on hold. The news too had also pointed out that Hamas, being an Islamist group which has been marked by the West as a 'terror group' has rejected linking a deal on Shalit to an Egyptian plan for an 18-month ceasefire, under which the enclave's border crossing would be opened to materials needed for reconstruction after Israel's 22-day of military offensive.

The frame suggested to the readers that the Muslims have difficulties in submitting to any attempts for peace suggested by the Westerners. This frame is an example of how the concept of Islam is, either been wrongly and negatively interpreted by the Westerners, or has been purposely interpreted wrongly and negatively.

Frame 3: Islamic Country's Political Chaos is an On-going Problem

The country which practices Islam has been too often portrayed as in the mist of disaster, especially when it comes to politics or the administration of the country. For example, news articles dated 12th February 2009 entitled "No quick march to peace. New Israeli PM has to guide cabinet through minefield of demands" highlighted that regardless of who emerged as Israel's prime minister, making peace with the Palestinians is not an easy task. The news too listed numerous demands of the Palestinians which would make the job of any future prime minister job tougher than ever.

The first two paragraphs in a news article dated 12th February 2009 entitled "Rivals battle for power in Israel. Country splits as Livni and Netanyahu claim victory after tight vote" was quoted as saying:

"JERUSALEM: Israel headed for political gridlock yesterday after its election produced rival winners. Analysts said the country was at split as the Palestinians and the prospects of the two making peace were dimmer than ever."

(The Star, 12th February 2009)

The same news articles continue to focus more on the differences of the two leaders, and end the reports with "… would be likely to set virtually impossible conditions for a peace deal." This frame suggested to the readers that generally, the leaders of the Islamic countries often failed to administer their own countries, leading to political instability and aggression.

Frame 4: Islamic's Country Technological Advances are Means of Destructions

There were a number of reports on the Islamic country's technological advances but instead of framing it as an achievement or victory for the Muslims or its country, it was negatively framed as a means of destruction which would threaten the rest of the world.

For example, on 11th February 2009, in the news entitled "President: Iran ready talks for talks with US", which reports on the President's willingness to negotiate with the US, there was a mentioned that Teheren has been slapped with a series of UN (United Nations) sanction over its refusal to suspend sensitive nuclear work when Teheren, in the same news, insist its nuclear programme is purely for peaceful means.

Another example can be clearly seen in a news item published on 27th February 2009, entitled "Iran tests its first nuke power plant", where it lengthy discuss how US had feared that Iran would use the plant for war purposes. Iran, in the same news, Iran denies that its' building a weapon, and intended to use the plant for fuel purposes.

Frame 5: US's Assault on Islamic Countries is for Its (Islamic Countries) Own Good

The study found out that news on the US decision to send more troops in Islamic countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan have been justified as if it is for the countries own good. For example, in 19th February 2009, a news articles entitled "Obama to send more troop to Afghanistan" stressed that "the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demands urgent attention and swift action".

On 11th February 2009, in the news entitled "Pakistan wants to engage US in talk to combats terrorism", where the news reported on the attempt by the Pakistan to combat terrorism, it highlighted the fact that there have been dozens of missile strikes, believed to be launched from CIA drones targeting militants on Pakistani territory. It is stated that this is the US efforts to eradicate Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and how Washington had plans to put 30,000 extra troops to Afghanistan as part of this effort.

Another news dated 2nd February 2009, entitled "Afghan injured in suicide car bombing" about a suicide car bomber which hit a convoy of foreign troops, and wounding two Afghan civilian highlighted that have been an increase in violence by the Taliban, and the news too highlighted that more American soldiers will sent to Afghanistan.

Although there is no mention that the US 's action of sending more troops to these countries as mean to combat terrorism and free these countries from these mayhem, associating "terrorism" and "the need to send more troops", is the way these news telling readers that any actions by the US is actually the best of the Islamic country itself. The researchers fear that the justification of the US on their act of terror on the Islamic countries would be an excuse by the US to attack any Islamic country.

The Framing of News in the NST

Frame 1: Terrorism and Wars are Common in the Islamic Countries, Yet Islam is not to be Blamed

The NST has almost equal number of "war" news and "crime" news, and there are many wordings in the news reports indicate that there is a degree of biasness in the news reports on Islam. However, the framing analysis show there is a difference in the general pattern of the news. Although news reports did suggested that terrorism and wars are common in the Islamic countries, yet the tones also suggest that Islam is not the source of the act of extremism.

For example, on February 27th 2009, a new report published by the NST entitled "Palestinian prisoner swap" started its news with a lead: Palestinian groups Fatah and Hamas exchanged promises on Wednesday to free each other's detainees in Gaza and the West Bank, in a goodwill gesture on the eve of national unity talks. The Star, which used the same news from the same source, used the words "rival Palestinian movement Fatah and Hamas" in their lead. The Star's news seems wanting to provoke negative sentiments against Islam in that news, by labeling Hamas as "Islamist group" and later associate it as terrorist in the news, when there are no mention of "rivals", "Islamists group" or "terrorist" in the same news reported by NST.

Another example of this frame is as news published on February 3rd 2009, entitled "Bomber in uniform kills 9" which started with this lead: "A suicide attacker in police uniform killed 19 policemen yesterday after infiltrating their morning exercises in the province of Uruzgan". The news was elaborated without associating Islam with incident. The news too, although did mention about Taliban, has labeled them as "Taliban Islamist fighters" instead of calling them "terrorist".

On February 13th 2009, the NST news entitled "Pakistan admits Mumbai role" reported that "Pakistan is serious about punishing those

behind the November attacks, which killed 164 people and stirrer fear that the nuclear-armed neighbors could slide towards war". This shows that Pakistan as an Islamic countries is totally against the idea of terrorism and would do everything to punish any group which responsible on the attacks on the civilians.

Frame 2: The Muslim Countries are Slowly Moving from Extremism to Peace and Moderation

Reading the news on Islam world sections of NST can give an impression to readers that the Islamic countries has suffer from this misconception that Islam goes hand in hand with terrorism. News is framed in such a way to tell readers that the Westerns are being bias towards them and these Islamic countries and the followers of Islam are finding ways to come out from the stereotype. The NST has made an attempt to explain that the act of terrorism can comes from any parts of the world, regardless of the religion.

For example, on February 3rd 2009, a news report in the NST entitled "Somalia calls for united front" started its news with a lead: "Somalia's new president called for a united front against violent extremists and signal his intent to try to bring together the country's feuding Islamic factions, according to an interview published on Sunday".

In a news reported by the NST published on February 16th, 2006 entitled "Iran prefers chess to boxing with US reported Iran's parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani as saying that "the US need to play on a chess set (with Iran) instead of playing in a boxing ring". He was commenting on the US president Barrack Obama's willingness to have a better relation with Iran. These news reports suggested that Islamic country are against terrorism and prefers negotiation rather than fighting.

These findings confirms one of the two frames in newspaper coverage as suggested by Katz, Cullen, Buttner and Pollock (2007), which emphasizes the differences between Islam and terrorists, particularly the values held by most Muslims as opposed to fundamentalist Islamic terrorists.

Conclusion

Malaysian English newspapers - The Star and The News Straits received global news from the international news agencies, and this includes news

on Islam. Therefore these newspapers are forced to republished news articles which are bias against Islam, and portrayed Islam as revolving around conflicts and chaotic events such as war, crime, and politics. The Star has allowed more news which was framed negatively against Islam. The NST, although was also forced to accept the same news from the same services, has chosen to portrayed these news in a way that Islam is not totally blamed on the event of terror and war that is happening in the world. The size of news on Islam in the World section of both newspapers is relatively small and indicated that pictures do not play a significant role in giving prominence to the news. However, the high frequency of the small size news featuring news which is biased against Islam, and about terrorism act especially in the Middle East, suggests that the international news agencies are continuously feeding the readers with negative image of Islam in small doses. Although this is true for both newspapers, NST has reduced the number of negative and bias words used in its reports. The researchers believed that news on Islam have undergone some modifications by the NST to reduce the negative stereotype portrayed by the international news agencies's original version of news.

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