International News Coverage in U.S.

Concept of 'Homogeneity'

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

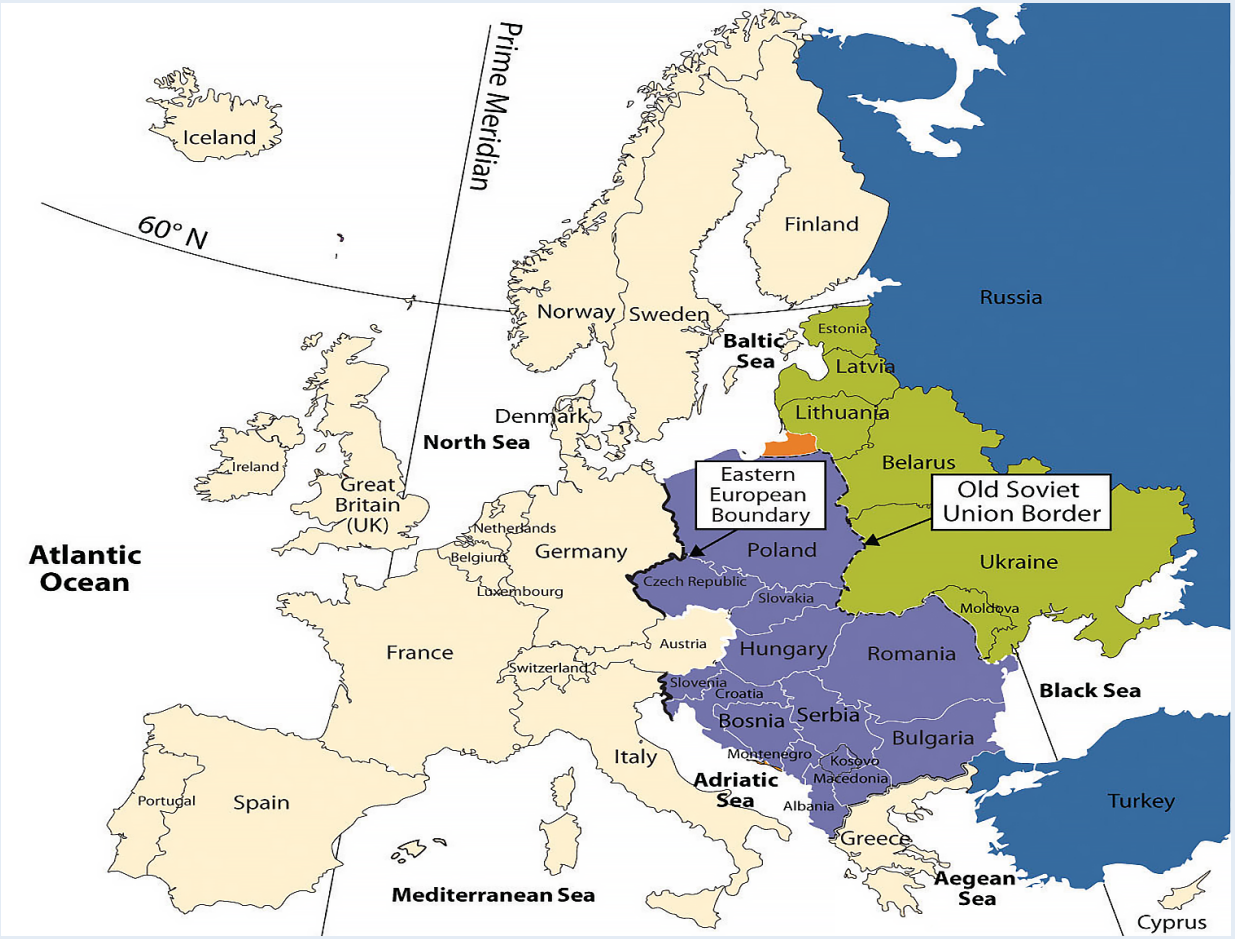
Concept of 'Otherness'

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

Definition adapted from Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org).

International News Coverage in U.S.

Western vs. Eastern Europe



International News Coverage in U.S.

Early immigration to America

Earliest:

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

Later:

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

Ethnic heritage of U.S. presidents:

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

Early American media moguls:

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

Political and trade ties to America

G7 nations:

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

Largest populations:

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

Perceptions of Western vs. Eastern Europe

Western:

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

Eastern:

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

American media coverage has often favored these stereotypes

International News Coverage in U.S.

Middle East

International News Coverage in U.S.

Perceptions of Western Europe vs. Middle East

Western Europe:

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

Middle East:

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

American media coverage has often emphasized these stereotypes

International News Coverage in U.S.

Is this deliberate bias against countries/regions?

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

International News Coverage in U.S.

What should news consumers consider?

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