

**A STUDY ON IRAQI IMAGES IN MALAYSIAN MAINSTREAM  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS**

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UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA  
2015**

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## Abstrak

Media dan imej telah menjadi bidang kajian yang penting dalam hubungan antarabangsa dan pengajian media. Penaklukan Iraq oleh Amerika Syarikat telah membentuk berbagai imej tentang Iraq di pelbagai negara. Walaupun terdapat kajian yang agak menyeluruh tentang Iraq, terutamanya semasa tempoh penaklukan, kajian lepas menunjukkan masih wujud jurang berkaitan dengan imej Iraq dari perspektif media Timur. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini bertujuan meneliti imej Iraq melalui penerbitan berita dan rencana dalam akhbar Malaysia yang dianggap sebagai negara Islam dengan komuniti multi-etnik. Kajian ini juga berhasrat untuk memperlihatkan imej Iraq dengan memberi tumpuan terhadap dua akhbar berbahasa Inggeris di Malaysia, *News Straits Times Press* (NSTP) dan *the Star* berlandaskan dua teori, iaitu Teori Pembungkahan dan Teori Penentuan Agenda. Kajian ini meneliti analisis kandungan secara longitudinal sejumlah 535 rencana dan berita melalui tiga tempoh (sebelum, semasa dan selepas penaklukan Iraq). Analisis statistik deskriptif, Crosstab, ujian Binomial, khi kuasa dua dan Cramer's V digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan NSTP memberikan lebih banyak penekanan terhadap isu dasar unipolar Amerika Syarikat dan merangka isu dasar tersebut dengan berfokuskan kepada tanggungjawab dan menggambarkan imej Iraq secara neutral. *The Star* pula menekankan isu berkaitan penderitaan penduduk Iraq dan merangka isu ini menerusi unsur kemanusiaan dengan imej yang negatif. Tambahan pula, isu penentuan agenda dalam NSTP mempunyai hubungan yang besar terhadap imej manakala *the Star* menunjukkan bahawa kategori pembungkahan mempunyai hubungan yang lebih besar terhadap imej Iraq. Kajian ini menyokong andaian teoretikal bahawa media tidak berjaya untuk memberitahu audiens apa yang difikirkan, tetapi berjaya dalam memberitahu audiens tentang apa yang sepatutnya difikirkan (tahap pertama Teori Penentuan Agenda). Kajian ini juga menyokong andaian teoretikal bahawa perbezaan dalam organisasi media mempunyai kesan yang besar terhadap cara isu yang penting dibingkakan.

**Kata kunci:** Iraq, Akhbar Malaysia, Teori Penentuan Agenda, Teori Pembungkahan, Imej.

## Abstract

Media and image have become important research areas in international relations and media studies. The occupation of Iraq by the United States has created many images of Iraq among other countries. Although there has been quite an extensive research on Iraq, especially during the period of occupation, reviews of literature reveal that there are still certain gaps on understanding its image from the Eastern media perspective. Thus, the main purpose of the study is to investigate the image of Iraq through the publication of news stories and articles in Malaysia that is considered as Islamic country with multi-ethnic community. The study also aims to reveal the image of Iraq by focusing on two Malaysian English newspapers - *the New Straits Times press* (NSTP) and *the Star* by applying both Framing Theory and Agenda Setting Theory. This study examines a longitudinal content analysis of 535 articles and news stories through three periods (before, during and after the occupation of Iraq). Descriptive statistics, Crosstab, Binomial test, Chi-square and Cramer's V are used to analyze the data. The result of this study shows that NSTP gave more emphasis to the issue of the policy of unipolar for the United States and framed it to focus on responsibility and reflected a neutral image of Iraq, while *the Star* gave more emphasis to the issue of Iraqi suffering and framed it through human interest with a negative image. Furthermore, the agenda setting issues in the NSTP has a bigger association on the image of Iraq while *the Star* proves the framing categories have a bigger association on the image of Iraq. Thus, this study can shed some light on how Eastern country views Iraq and this perhaps could help Iraq reform its image by expanding the scope of diplomatic, business and cultural actions. This study provides support to the theoretical proposition that the media are not successful in telling the audience what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling the audience what to think about (first level of Agenda Setting). This study also provides support to the theoretical proposition that differences in media organizations have profound impact on how the important issues are framed.

**Keywords:** Iraq, Malaysian newspapers, Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory, Image.

## Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I offer my sincere gratitude to Allah for enabling me to accomplish the writing of this modest study. I would like to dedicate my special thanks to my respected supervisor, Prof. Dr. Che Su Mustaffa for her support, guidance, tolerance and valuable advice which contribute in enriching my knowledge with abundance of new ideas. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my second supervisor Dr. Adrian M. Budiman, for his help and support.

My gratitude is also extended to Dr. Mohd. Khairie Ahmad , Dr. Nor IdayubintiMahat, Dr. Faridah Ibrahim, Dr. Chang PengKee, Prof. Wang Lay Kim and Dr. NorbaiduriRuslan who have helped me to complete this work.

I would also like to give my thanks to all the staff at the UUM library who provided me with the necessary help in completing this work, and to the staff of UUM, UKM, UM, USM and IIUM for their friendly and helpful attitudes. My special thanks are also extended to all Iraqi students for their support.

A special gratitude to Dr. Hammed Albahily who believed in me and endeavored in getting me the scholarship, Dr. Faleh Hamzaand Dr. Abbas Fadhil and Mr. Ali Husain (Ministry of Science and Technology) , who gave me the much needed support, Dr. Abed Al-Razaaq Muhammad who continuously encouraged me to go on, Dr. Rhea Qahtan and Dr. Irada Zidane (University of Baghdad /College of Mass Media) who supported me, my master's study colleagues and all my sisters and brothers in the Ministry of Science and Technology who supported me throughout the course of this study. A special thanks also goes to the Ministry of Science and Technology for sponsoring my study.

Finally, I dedicate this work to:

Iraq,

my beloved mother, father and step-mother,

my eleven sisters who are the candles of my life,

my brothers Adnan and Muhammad who are my candlesticks; and

my angels, Ishraaq, Ikraam and Tiba

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the present study's background, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, research scope, the significance of the research, conceptual and operational definitions, conceptual framework of the study, outline of the research, and chapter conclusion.

### **1.2 Background of the Research**

The media are important sources of knowledge. Many values, principles and behaviors come from the media (McCombs, 2002). The media have the ability to portray individuals, groups of individuals or nations in a negative, positive or neutral light (Ibrahim, Mustaffa, Kee & Ahmad, 2011). Thus, the reliance on mass media in composing a mental image is a good entrance to studying the relationship dimension of the audiences' reliance on the mass media in composing a mental image.

Walter Lippmann (1922) said that the main source of images in our minds is the media because most people do not have the opportunity to see the world. What we know about the world is based on what the media has decided to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent to the media agenda become prominent as well in the public mind (McCombs, 2002).

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