

Cold War's End Improved American Coverage of China, AU Professor Says

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Alfred, NY -- The end of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War led to more independent, wide ranging, and conscientious coverage of China by American journalists, an Alfred University professor argues in a prestigious international journal. Dr. Robyn Goodman, assistant professor of communication studies at AU, said her article, "Prestige Press Coverage of U.S.-China Policy During the Cold War's Collapse and Post-Cold War Years: Did a Deteriorating Cold War Paradigm Set the Stage for More Independent Press Coverage?" will appear in the October 1999 "Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies." A Sage publication based in The Netherlands, "Gazette" covers all aspects of communications, including the modern mass media, traditional media, community and alternative media, telecommunications, and information and communication technologies. Its scope, audience, and writers are international. Goodman wrote the article to fill a gap in communication scholarship that she detected after returning to the States in 1990. She had taught journalism at a Beijing university for two years, consulted in China for CBS-TV, and worked as a free-lance foreign correspondence for the Orange County Register. After returning, she was surprised to learn that communication scholars had not studied the effect of the Cold War's collapse on coverage of U.S.-China policy. Journalists themselves "have insisted that since the Cold War's breakup, a lack of confidence in U.S. government assessments of ... international affairs has prodded them to cover official foreign policy in a more self-reliant, independent fashion," she said. "Scholars have virtually ignored journalistic claims that after the Cold War their coverage of the world has changed." Her study, which analyzed the content of 1,177 articles from the New York Times and Washington Post as well as 399 government articles, found that recent coverage was indeed more independent than during the Cold War period. "Journalists' renewed sense of watchdog obligations, increased access to a variety of sources, and a reassessment of national security risks may have contributed to more independent coverage," she wrote. She said that while the Cold War continued, American journalists were reluctant to investigate foreign affairs independently, lest they endanger national security. The end of the Cold War allowed them to set their own agenda and seek out their own private (non government) sources. More information about "Gazette" is available on the web at <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/...>