

**Covering the Left:  
*Abante Tonite's* Coverage  
on the "Enemies of the State"  
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*This content analysis explores the reporting of Abante Tonite on issues concerning the "leftist" movement, i.e., the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its alleged front organizations tagged by the government as "enemies of the state". Particularly, this study analyzes the treatment of events, topics, individuals, and groups that were covered by the tabloid from July 2005 to August 2006 (N=43 articles). Using framing analysis, findings show a stereotyped treatment of actors and topics: negative for the leftist movement and positive for the government. The negative treatment of the leftist movement translates into two primary modes of representation: first, as an organization to be feared because of its capability to wreak havoc among soldiers and civilians; and second, as a weak, disintegrating organization slowly losing its members in encounters with the military either by death, injury, capture, or surrender.*

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**N**ews reporting extends from merely choosing which topic or event to report to deciding how to report it. That is, the press—through its use of language and images and its organization and placement of news items—infers presuppositions and value orientations in its reporting, and implies social relations among its users (Dhargren, 1995). These assertions about the press guide this research in determining how *Abante Tonite* covered news involving the Philippines' leftist

movement—the declared “enemies of the state” of the Arroyo administration.

In June 2006, President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo declared an all-out war against the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP); its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA); the National Democratic Front (NDF); its “front” organizations, supporters, and sympathizers – collectively calling them “enemies of the state”. According to Ignacio Bunye, Arroyo’s spokesperson, the CPP-NPA has done enough in setting back peace and development for more than 30 years (Dalangin-Fernandez, 2006). Also in 2006, in line with this campaign, the government released a P1-billion budget to heighten military operations against the NPA. This campaign is also directed against the legal left, which the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has labeled as “communist front organizations” (Karapatan, 2006). These include a broad range of progressive groups, church, media organizations, and personalities.

In 2005, the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) identified Bagong Alyansang Makabayan or Bayan (New Patriotic Alliance), Bayan Muna (People First), Anakpawis (Toiling Masses), Gabriela Women’s Party, Anak ng Bayan (Sons and Daughters of the People) Youth Party, Migrante Sectoral Party (MSP), and Suara Bangsamoro (Voice of the Moro People) as “enemies of the state”. Also classified as “enemies of the state” are the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI or the Philippine Independent Church), Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya or National Federation of Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines), Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP or Peasant Movement of the Philippines), IBON Foundation, Philippine Center for

Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), and National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) (Guinto, 2005; Remollino, 2006).

### **The Anti-Insurgency Campaign and Human Rights Situation**

Following the Arroyo administration’s fight against the insurgency, there has been a noticeable increase of human rights violations among civilians/unarmed sectoral organization leaders especially in rural areas. According to Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights) and the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (“Karapatan data”, 2006), hundreds of extra-judicial executions<sup>1</sup>, disappearances<sup>2</sup>,

Table 1. Number of Victims of Extra-judicial Executions and Enforced Disappearances, 2001-2006

<b>Year</b>	<b>Victims of Extra-judicial Executions</b>	<b>Victims of Enforced Disappearance</b>
2001	101	7
2002	122	8
2003	125	11
2004	75	31
2005	189	56
Jan-Nov 2006	185	93

Source: Karapatan Human Rights Report 2006

death threats and cases of torture have been documented between 2001 and 2006 against members of leftist organizations (see Table 1).

Human rights groups consider 2006 as the worst year for human rights violations (HRVs) under the Arroyo

administration. The latter is known for its intensified offensive against the 37-year old communist insurgency in the country. A Bayan International (2006) report stated that “the human rights situation in the Philippines worsened as the Arroyo [administration], beset with a severe economic and political crisis, intensified its repression and use of state terror against the people and the opposition.” According to the same report, the victims were mostly leaders (regional or provincial coordinators), members or known supporters of party-list organizations suspected of being from organizations affiliated with the CPP-NPA. Party-list organizations Bayan Muna and Anakpawis had the highest number of casualties. Other organizations like Gabriela, Anak ng Bayan, Migrante Sectoral Party, and Suara Bangsamoro are also primary targets because, as National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales declared in 2004, they are “front” organizations of the CPP-NPA.

Of the total victims recorded in 2005, about 70% were peasants and peasant leaders involved in land and farm labor disputes (Abaya & Petras, 2006). Most often, murdered peasants were accused of having ties and/or sympathizing with communist guerillas in their area. Labor leaders constituted the next largest group of victims of extra-judicial executions, e.g., Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU or May First Movement), Nestle’s Worker’s Union, Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union, National Federation of Sugar Workers, Department of Agrarian Reform Employee Association, and KMP. Igorot, Agta, and Moro indigenous peoples protecting their lands were also murdered in 2005. All these extra-judicial killings were allegedly related to the political affiliation of the victims. Christensen (2004) described political killings as an attack on the socio-political structure the victims represent and not only on the victims themselves.

## **Media’s Role in Counterinsurgency**

The Marcos administration used the media as a vehicle for government propaganda against the intensely growing communist insurgency (Chomsky, 1991). On January 30, 1970, after what was said to be the most violent night in the city's post-war history, President Ferdinand Marcos appeared on television informing the nation that the armed forces valiantly repulsed "a premeditated attack on the government, an act of rebellion and subversion" (Lacaba, 2003, p. xxi). The CPP-NPA denied these charges through their official newspaper, *Ang Bayan*, stating that they are not putschists (Lacaba, 2003). In 1919, the United States government formulated an anti-communist propaganda called Red Scare which aimed to sow nationwide fear against communists. Members of labor unions who went on strike were arrested and were branded as "unpatriotic". Likewise, the Red Scare was also known for its wanton arrests of individuals who were suspected to be radicals. Chomsky (1991) added that the media, along with business establishments, strongly supported and pushed much of this work.

### **Framing the Left**

Social and/or political movements have a complex relationship with the media. As such, many studies have analyzed how media cover pressing socio-political issues or controversial personalities at a certain point mainly because their interpretation and representation of events affect public opinion. Interpretations and representations, however, find their way back to the media institution's ideological backbone. Media's projected realities are influenced by the dominant ideology they support (Castillo & Domingo, 1999). These ideologies are evident in the media institution's selections and omissions; emphases and tones; and all their forms of treatment of an issue (Gitlin, 1995). For example, Garcia's (2005) study found differences in the way alternative (Bulatlat.com) and mainstream media (Inq7.net) covered the 2004 Hacienda Luisita incident<sup>3</sup> on November 16,

2004. As an alternative medium, *Bulatlat* vigilantly covered the Hacienda Luisita workers' strike in Tarlac until 2005. In contrast, *Inq7.net* initially showed high interest in the incident but its coverage eventually cooled off after a week (Garcia, 2005). Likewise, Gitlin's (1980) comparison of the *New York Times* and the left-wing weekly *National Guardian* coverage of the anti-Vietnam war protest staged by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on April 17, 1965 revealed remarkable differences in terms of setting the context of the story. Of this, Gitlin (1980: 52) said that the *Guardian's* readings alert us to aspects of the March reality that could have been chosen for mention by the *Times*, but were not. Further, he argued that "the *Times* relayed—and continues to relay—a hegemonic frame; which is not to say that it straightforwardly excluded alternative or discrepant information."

One way of determining media's ideological leanings is by looking at how it frames the news. Frames or framing, according to Iyengar (1991), refers to subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems. Peter Dahlgren (1995) explains that language is value-laden; as such, there is no 'pure' information, no language which does not embody presuppositions and value orientations and/or imply certain social relations among its users. There is a rhetorical slant to every representation of knowledge about the world (Dahlgren, 1995). The case of television journalism, for instance, Dahlgren (1995) said, can never merely present a 'mirror of events'.

In her study on media's coverage of terrorism issues in the Philippines, Villanueva (2004) asserted that the international media's reporting of Philippine terrorism creates a negative impression of the country because the articles focused on the threat of terrorism in general, its effect on the country, and the role of the United States government in the global war against terrorism. Further, she found that *Time Magazine* uses stronger language than regular broadsheets, resulting in a harsher portrayal

of terrorism-related events in the Philippines. Similarly, the reporting impacts negatively on the leftist movement because it is often associated with terrorists and terrorism.

## Research Questions

Media reports are ‘packaged’ through a process called *framing* (Dahlgren, 1995). Media frames, which are largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports (Gitlin, 1995). Given that media continue to be the main source of information, it is imperative to examine how that information is processed and packaged at the media organization’s end.

This study examines selected articles from *Abante Tonite* about the leftist movement *vis-à-vis* the Arroyo government’s counterinsurgency campaign to know how they are framed in the news reports. More specifically, this research seeks to answer this major question:

RQ: How does *Abante Tonite* frame its news on the leftist movement?

In this study, the framing of the leftist movement, also known as the enemies of the state, pertains to the:

- a. Prevailing subjects or topics of articles;
- b. Actors or the personalities and/or organizations mentioned in the articles;
- c. Treatment/Slant of the prevailing subjects/topics and personalities/organizations in the articles; and
- d. Attribution.

## Methodology

This content analysis focused on *Abante Tonight* issues in 2006, the year in which politically-motivated human rights violations under the Arroyo administration were at their peak. Tabloids, with an average cost of half the broadsheets, enjoy a higher circulation and seem to be preferred by readers in the C, D, and E income brackets (Tuazon, 2002). *Abante Tonight*, first published in 1988, is one of two tabloids published by Monica Publishing Corporation. Its sister publication is the morning tabloid *Abante* that was first published in 1986. Both tabloids now have their online version, the first in the industry. *Abante Tonight* has gained reputation and market leadership at the same time (Cabula & Reyes, 2001). According to its publishers, *Abante* has graduated from being a typical sleazy, sex, and scandal sheet to a publication whose headlines often focus on national issues. This change in content is aligned with *Abante*'s vision and mission as stated in its website ([www.abante.com](http://www.abante.com)):

“To be the leading and trend setting tabloid in the newspaper industry, ran by highly and technologically creative and innovative Filipino workers, committed and dedicated to serve its readers by providing credible and accurate news reports and stories that will satisfy the newspaper buying public.”

The Philippine Media Audit Council data in 2001 showed that *Abante Tonight* had an estimated circulation of 417,000 and a readership of 1.9 million, making it the top tabloid in the Philippines. *Abante* is 100% privately owned by the family of Amado Macasaet.

A sample of 30 issues of this tabloid was pre-selected, covering the period January 1 to July 31, 2006 (total of 212 issues). Specific issues of the tabloid were selected through systematic random sampling. The starting point was set at January 2, 2006 with an interval of seven days thus limiting the data to Monday



Table 2. Distribution of sample articles by month

Month	Date/s	Total no. of articles
July 2005	25	1
August 2005	15	2
September 2005	None	0
October 2005	16, 31	2
November 2005	None	0
December 2005	5, 27	2
January 2006	16, 30	2
February 2006	6, 13, 27	3
March 2006	6, 13	5
April 2006	3, 17, 24	3
May 2006	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	7
June 2006	5, 19	3
July 2006	3, 10, 17, 31	8
August 2006	6, 14, 21	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>

coverage. However, during data gathering, not all pre-selected issues contained articles relevant to the study. In order to satisfy the minimum sample size ( $n = 30$  issues), the researcher expanded the dates from which the sample was drawn while maintaining the seven-day interval. When there was no related article on a given interval day, the previous and/or preceding day was checked. Otherwise, the researcher proceeded to the next interval date. Finally, the sample size was met within the July 2005 to August 2006 coverage. The sample issues yielded a total of 43 articles distributed as follows:



Frontpages of March 13 and June 19, 2006 issues of *Abante Tonite* which were part of the preselected issues for the study. Retrieved August 20, 2008 from <http://www.abante-tonite.com/issue/march1306/Pictures/frontpage.jpg> and <http://www.abante-tonite.com/issue/june1906/Pictures/frontpage.jpg>.

The articles served as the units of analysis for this study. From the total number of 43 articles, 12 articles were tested for inter-coder reliability. Cohen's Kappa test result showed suitable reliability among coders ( $k=0.66$ ). Coded observations on each article were logged in the content analysis form.

### *Variables and measures*

Four main variables were considered for this study: subjects/topics of articles, actors, treatment/slant, and attribution.

Subjects/topics were identified through the specific news events covered, and were classified into primary and secondary topics. Actors could be an individual or organization/group as mentioned in the article. They could be from the government, such as a pro-government official, military, police, etc. or the CPP-NPA or any of the leftist organizations listed earlier as

enemies of the state, their members, leaders and known supporters (including opposition personalities in government).

Treatment or slant categorized the news article as positive, neutral, or negative. An article was categorized as positive if it had at least one or more of the following indicators: detailed description of the incident, witnesses identified perpetrators as military persons, mentioned the nature of work of victim in his/her organization, police responded immediately/conducted investigations in favor of the victim, mentioned sentiments on the incident being politically-motivated, and mentioned grievances against the government.

An article was categorized as negative if it had one or more of the following indicators: no detailed description of the incident, no accounts from witnesses, linking the victim with the CPP-NPA, indicating victim's organization as a "front" organization of the CPP-NPA, CPP-NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist activities, did not mention nature of work of victim, police did not investigate/respond to the incident immediately, mentioned support of the AFP and/or Philippine National Police (PNP) on the all-out-war against the left, and used words like terrorist, rebel, and destabilizer.

Classifying whether an article was positive or negative varied depending on the nature of topic or subject covered by the article. Not all indicators are expected to appear in one article. Finally, an article was classified as neutral if it made use of neutral language, one that does not sound harsh or suggestive of a positive or negative stance.

Attribution referred to the main source of the story. In this study, possible attributions included members of leftist organizations, the AFP or PNP and government official, the victim of political harassment, attempted extrajudicial execution, victim of disappearance who has surfaced, and victim's family members and/or witnesses.

## **Results**

### *How big is the news?*

The difficulty in completing the required sample size within the originally designated time frame initially gave an impression that news involving the leftist movement may not be *Abante Tonite*'s priority issue. Notably, its September and November 2005 publications did not have any relevant articles. Sometimes, the paper would carry more than one relevant article. May and July issues of 2006 had the most number of relevant articles (seven and eight, respectively). Of the 30 selected tabloid issues, 23% contained more than one relevant article, with very few articles appearing on the same page.

Since tabloid articles are shorter, *Abante Tonite* could contain as many as 11 articles in a page (mean=7 articles per page). As far as size is concerned, the articles analyzed had an average area of 9 square centimeters. Considering the tabloid's size of 31.5 x 29 centimeters, an area of 9 square centimeters is a generous space allotment for a single article. Furthermore, a big majority (65%) of the articles was positioned on the upper fold of the page.

The bulk of the articles (84%) was located on the first few pages of the tabloid, or from pages 2 to 5. The remaining 16% of the articles reappeared in the last pages or from pages 9 to 11, right before the last section which is sports. Unlike other tabloids, no article appears on the front page of *Abante Tonite* as per its layout. Instead, the front page contains banner headlines in bold, large font of the articles in its inside pages, pages 2 and 3 in particular. Hence, articles which are placed in the first few pages are technically front page or headline items. Specifically, 26% of the articles analyzed were headline news. The news on Batasan 5<sup>4</sup> rebellion case got featured on the front page the most number of times.

### *Events/incidents covered and their treatment*

Table 3. List of primary topics and their treatment

Primary Topic	Treatment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
NPA losses	0	5	6	11
NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist activities	1	0	7	8
Batasan 5 rebellion case	2	1	3	6
Wipe-out of NPA/Community insurgency	1	0	4	5
Government-initiated investigations on political	2	0	1	3
Opposition's grievances against government	3	0	0	3
Jamby Madrigal-CPP link	0	0	2	2
Others	3	1	3	7

*n=43 (multiple answers)*

Articles dealing with NPA losses emerged as the leading primary topic (26%). This included news on the capture, death, injury and surrender of NPA member/s. News on the government policy to wipe-out communist insurgency also appeared to be a salient topic. Data also show that almost one-fifth of the analyzed articles was mostly about NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist activities such as arson, murder, extortion, and rape.

The top two primary topics, NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist activities and NPA members captured/died/wounded/surrendered, dealt with two paradoxical ideas. First, the Left, specifically the NPA, was represented both as an organization to be feared because of its involvement in criminal activities and its capability to wreak havoc among soldiers and civilians alike; and second, that it is a weak, disintegrating organization with its members slowly declining in numbers due to capture, death, injury, and surrender of its members during and/or after

Table 4. List of secondary topics and their treatment

Primary Topic	Treatment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist activities	0	0	5	5
NPA-Army encounter	1	0	4	5
Wipe-out NPA/Communist insurgency	1	0	3	4
Batasan 5 rebellion case	0	1	2	3
Political killings/HRV	3	0	0	3
Recovered ammunitions/subversive	0	2	1	3
Government against militant organizations	1	0	2	3
Militant protests	1	0	1	2
Government-initiated investigations on political killings	2	0	0	2
Others	0	0	9	9

n=39 (articles with secondary topic)

encounters with the military. Either way, the news articles still portrayed them negatively (see Table 3).

The news on Batasan 5 specifically dealt with the court proceedings on the rebellion case filed by the government against them. For instance, the articles talked about the ‘probable cause’ to pursue the rebellion case against them; Department of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales and National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales’ accusation of their alleged involvement as perpetrators of political killings; and presentation of witnesses that will further link them to the destabilization plot.

Overall, the primary topics were generally treated negatively (60%), i.e., they presented the CPP-NPA in an

Table 5. List of primary actors and their treatment

Primary actor	Treatment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
CPP-NDF-NPA	0	3	9	12
AFP/PNP	8	0	1	9
Government Official - pro-administration	9	0	0	9
Government Official - opposition	1	0	2	3
Anakpawis	2	0	0	2
Bayan Muna	0	0	1	1
Batasan 5	1	0	0	1
Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)	0	0	1	1
Youth Dare/Anak bayan	1	0	0	1
CBCP	1	0	0	1
Others	3	0	0	3

*n*=43

unfavorable manner. Choice of language greatly affected *Abante Tonite*'s treatment of the issue. Aside from literally using the word 'terrorist' to directly refer to the NPA, the likes of *karahasan* (violence), *paghabasik ng lagim* (wreaking havoc), *nananabotabe* (sabotaging) were the words used to refer to their alleged deeds. The use of such language indicated an obvious negative treatment.

As a secondary topic, news on NPA involvement in criminal/terrorist was also the most salient. It likewise had a negative treatment. The news on political killings/HRV carried

Table 6. List of secondary actors and their treatment

Secondary Sector	Treatment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
AFP/PNP	11	1	1	13
CPP-NPA-NDF	0	0	11	11
Government official - pro-administration	2	1	5	8
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	1	0	1	2
Anapawis	1	0	1	2
Bagong Alyansang Makabayan	1	0	0	1
Batasan 5	1	0	0	1
Bayan Muna	1	0	0	1
PISTON	1	0	0	1
Others	1	1	0	2

*n=42 (articles with secondary actor)*

Table 7. Attribution/source of story

	f	%
AFP/PNP	23	54%
Government Official	11	26%
Victims of politically-motivated HRV	4	9%
Leftist organizations	1	2%
Others	4	9%

*n=43*



a positive slant since these news items dealt with efforts in solving those crimes (see Table 4).

*Actors (individuals and/or groups) and their treatment*

The CPP-NPA-NDF emerged as the leading primary actor (28%) in most articles (see Table 5). Specifically, this group consisted of NPA members and CPP-NDF officials. Complementing the results on primary and secondary topics discussed previously, the CPP-NPA-NDF, as primary actors, were treated negatively since the articles focused on their involvement in criminal/terrorist activities. In contrast, the AFP and PNP were positively treated because the articles highlighted their efforts in preventing the criminal/terrorist activities of the left, lack of evidence against Gen. Jovito Palparan whom the activists referred to as “the butcher” or mastermind of politically-motivated HRVs, and no casualties were reported among the ranks of the AFP in their encounters with the NPA.

Among government officials, pro-administration personalities were likewise treated positively. Resoundingly, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales dominated the list of pro-administration personalities both as primary and secondary actor. In all instances, he was portrayed positively in the news stories.

All “front” organizations and groups combined made up 16% of the primary actors and 14% of the secondary actors (see Table 6). These are Anakpawis, Bayan Muna, Batasan 5, KMU, and Youthdare/Anakbayan, CBCP and Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (PISTON or Union of Drivers and Operators Nationwide). Unlike the CPP-NPA-NDF however, the tabloid appears to be friendlier with these “front” organizations because of the generally positive treatment attributed to them. In most cases, the featured interviews allowed members of these organizations to categorically deny accusations against them and express their grievances against the government.

In contrast, the CPP-NPA-NDF, even as secondary actors, received negative treatment from the tabloid.

In summary, government personalities and institutions were positively treated while leftist personalities (including opposition personalities in the government) and organizations were negatively treated. Moreover, the CPP-NPA-NDF was never positively treated in the 43 articles analyzed. Reportage on “front” organizations and its members, however, was more balanced and favorable.

### *Attribution*

Attribution was also analyzed in order to trace the source of each news article. It was measured by looking at which statements were usually quoted and from whom (see Table 7). The data on attribution coincides with previously presented data as they provided further validation as to why the leftist movement in general was negatively treated. Majority (54%) of the information presented in the news articles were accounts from AFP and PNP officials followed by accounts from government officials (26%). Overall, 80% of information were from the government through the AFP, PNP, and pro-administration government officials and institutions (i.e., National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, Department of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales).

### **Discussion**

The data show that the leftist movement as a whole is negatively treated in *Abante Tonite's* news articles. Specifically, the Left is framed as the NPA, which, in turn, is presented as a terrorist and criminal group. However, although the articles tend to associate the Left with terrorism and destabilization, they are most of the time avoiding direct attribution through the use of words like *pinaghibinalaan* (suspected) and *diumano* (allegedly)

in the reports. However, the use of certain words/phrases suggests an outright negative connotation attached to leftist organizations such as *terorista* (terrorist), *rebelde* (rebelde); and their activities as *marahas* (violent), *paghabasik ng lagim* (wreaking havoc), *nananabotabe* (sabotaging).

There is also bias in terms of attribution wherein the Left almost never figured as news sources; most of the news was sourced from the government.

In terms of HRVs, no specific incidence of extra-judicial killings or disappearances was reported except for a report on the death of Florante Collantes, a Bayan Muna official in Central Luzon. Data from Karapatan showed that 2006 had the most number of victims of politically-motivated extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances (approximately 25 cases per month). However, almost none of these cases was reported in *Abante Tonite*. Though treated negatively, the most popular story on human rights violation was the Batasan 5 rebellion case.

Clearly, there is no significant attention given to incidences of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances against members of left-leaning organizations; only heightened attention on their involvements in criminal and terrorist activities as represented by news on the NPA. They were merely presented as an organization intent on inflicting terror and harm among people, and destabilizing the government.

## **Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

*Abante Tonite*, when reporting about the Left, heavily dealt with the criminal/terrorist activities they are allegedly involved in, therefore making it seem that the all-out war against communism is justified. It is recommended therefore, that *Abante Tonite* re-examine the manner by which it covers this issue or any issue for that matter, exercise thorough caution with the words used, and give assurance that both sides to an issue are presented.

Considering that the interpretation and the presentation of news relate to the audience's reception of it, as argued by the Agenda Setting and Framing theories (Littlejohn, 2002), future studies can engage in audience-based research to verify the validity of the findings with audience's opinions. Another angle is to study local/community media's reportage of this issue. A study by Senga (2002) found that *Sun.Star-Davao* journalists are more cautious about reporting on the peace process because this issue is significant to them, being citizens of Mindanao, compared to Luzon and Visayas-based journalists. This also considers the fact that the leftist movement is heavily concentrated in the countryside and cases of politically-motivated human rights violations are notably high in areas like Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, and Compostella Valley. Future researches may also directly look into government propaganda against insurgency and vice versa.

Overall, these findings reveal that whether deliberately or not, *Abante Tonite* supports the government's

counterinsurgency campaign. Its specific focus on the terrorist activities of the NPA tends not to address the root cause of insurgency or rebellion in the Philippines. Moreover, the appearance of the top two primary topics, mostly focusing on the “what”, “when”, and “where” gives the impression that this is too simplistic and mundane an issue. Postman (1985) articulated this point-of-view when he said that news is a world of fragments, where events stand alone, stripped of any connection to the past, to the future, or to other events.

The site of struggle for the Philippine leftist movement extends, as the battlegrounds are no longer situated in the guerilla zones, the streets or the House of Representatives. In a society where the news media can construct the movement’s images like that of a terrorist organization, and define for the public what is significant from what is not, it is safe to say that the news media play a crucial role in what they claim as pursuit of genuine freedom and social change.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Amnesty International uses the term “extrajudicial executions” to describe deliberate unlawful killings by state agents acting outside the framework of the judicial or legal system. Extrajudicial executions usually occur within a government’s own territory. Such killings are carried out by regular military or police forces, by special units created to function without normal supervision, or by civilian agents working with government forces or operating with government complicity. Such government forces, units, or agents are often called “death squads”. Governments often deny that the killings have taken place at all or that their agents were involved. They may blame the deaths on opposition groups (Amnesty International, 1992).

- <sup>2</sup> The term “disappearances” is used when people are arrested or kidnapped—and often tortured or killed—by government agents, but government denies that these people are being detained. Like extrajudicial executions, “disappearances” are tactics of repression that governments find to be swift and convenient and often take place in the context of violent opposition to a government (Amnesty International, 1992).
- <sup>3</sup> In November 16, 2004, striking workers of the Cojuanco-owned Central Azucarera de Tarlac and Hacienda Luisita, Inc. were violently dispersed resulting in a massacre of seven workers and injury to more than 100.
- <sup>4</sup> Batasan 5 refers to the five party-list representatives from alleged “front” organizations of the CPP-NPA—Rep. Teddy Casiño, Rep. Joel Virador and Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna; Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriella Women’s Party; and Rep. Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis. They were arrested following the declaration of PP1017, putting the nation under a state of emergency. They were charged with multiple counts of rebellion against the government.

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- Ma. Irineo Dela Cruz, 2007 from Computational Research student Landing Page of the Philippine College of Mass Communication Philippines*