

Tennessee World Affairs Council

May 21, 2017

Friends:

In recent town hall sessions and small group discussions and briefings I've been asked about "good" news sources for people interested in keeping up with the flood of developments in world affairs. I am pleased to share my personal perspective on "where to get news" here for your consideration.

I remind you that the World Affairs Council is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational group. These recommendations are my own and are made with the thought that I seek trustworthy news and information sources -- unbiased, fair and accurate. You should not interpret the material below as either suggesting a political preference or as the position of the World Affairs Council.

Lastly, you should view these recommendations as appropriate for someone who has a general interest in world affairs. In my day job I write about the Middle East so my inbox and bookmarks are heavily oriented toward news organizations, academic organizations, government bureaus and other outlets that meet my research needs. Similarly, if you are interested in regional or topical developments and issues outside the general news flow you can easily accumulate bookmarks that will serve your specific information needs.

As always I welcome your feedback and suggestions on how we can improve the programs and resources we provide at the World Affairs Council to improve the 'global literacy' in our community.

Patrick W. Ryan
President, Tennessee World Affairs Council

WHERE TO GET YOUR NEWS?

The flood of news and information from an ever-expanding universe of sources delivered through a variety of media and devices have led to puzzlement over the veracity of what we see, hear and read. The partisan battling over so-called "fake news" has thoughtful news consumers questioning where they should turn to for accuracy, quality and credibility in the information they seek.

This World Affairs Council resource page provides suggestions as to types of media that can be relied upon as a baseline for your news and information consumption. My first recommendation is that just as you would do for your financial investments that you diversify when it comes to your news sources. No single source can be relied upon 100% of the time to be accurate and unbiased. Learn to distinguish between material that is news as opposed to "analysis" or opinion.

Commentary has strayed beyond the editorial and op-ed pages and it takes a sharper eye to separate the facts from points of view.

Moreover, you should cross check news, analysis and commentary regardless of your impression about the source's credibility. If it sounds incredible, it may well be. Search a variety of sources for news about the same story – not just to determine if an event happened or not but to see how the same story is being reported in various outlets.

The World Affairs Council provides curated current event reporting via our Twitter feed. You can find stories we find worthy of sharing with our members @TNWAC and on our Facebook page. [See below for the World Affairs Council's social media details.]

My preferences for sources lean toward the more established organizations with deeper benches in terms of coverage and expertise. That does not mean that newer, more lean news sources should be discounted. However, if you see a report from an outlet you never heard of before we suggest you cross check it through web searches to see if it has broken through as a report in any other media. [Relative newcomer "RT" became a prolific news source before many of its consumers recognized it was a propaganda outlet for the Russian Government.] Single source reports should be treated as suspect.

The suggestions here focus on global affairs but many of the sources cited and methods for developing your news consumption habits can generally be applied to national and local news as well.

A note on the American media as "enemy of the people." The current hyper-partisan atmosphere in the United States has led to an unfortunate effort to undermine the credibility of a free press. I reject the attack on the press and affirm the position that the media, despite any criticisms it has earned, is a critical element of our open society and should be supported.

HOW DO YOU CONSUME NEWS?

A Pew survey last year showed that TV (cable, local and network nightly news) was the source for 57% of Americans. Online news (social media, websites and apps) provided 38% followed by radio with 25% and print newspapers with 20% as most favored sources.

Those numbers, however, vary by age group. Pew found TV was favored by majorities of both ages 50-64 (72%) and those 65+ (85%). Younger demographics were less likely to count TV viewing as their favored source for news -- 45% of those 30-49 and 27% of those 18-29. Younger groups were more likely to use online platforms for news.

Keep in mind that among younger Americans their TV news consumption may be focused on non-traditional sources. At the time Jon Stewart stepped down from the "Daily Show" on Comedy Central a Pew survey found that 12% of Americans cited it as the place they got their news.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TELEVISION NEWS

If you are in the 57% of Americans who get their news from TV our first recommendation is that you expand your consumption to include other media, especially online sources which are attractive for many reasons. Online sources provide the flexibility to decide what you are exposed to and can choose from.

If your TV is regularly tuned to the top three cable outlets (CNN, MSNBC and Fox) you'll be bombarded by news reports often inter-mixed with partisan pundits offering instant agenda-driven analysis – the lines between news and commentary are dangerously blurred. Ratings are often driven by the need to draw sharp, partisan divisions over interpretations of news events, sometimes offering equal weight to unequal positions simply for the sake of pro and con conflict.

Moreover, cable news outlets focus too much attention on high-visual impact content with little deep analysis. If a helicopter TV crew is above a car chase in LA or a warehouse fire in Philadelphia get ready for a long spell of meaningless information.

There are exceptions if you dial beyond the top three cable channels. BBC News for example, available through most cable providers, offers high-quality world-wide coverage.

You can, however, find certain broadcasts on the big three that offer worthy coverage of global affairs. For example, the CNN Global Public Square broadcast with Fareed Zakaria shuns hyper-partisanship and can be counted on as a solid source for analysis of international affairs. You can also rely on CNN and (where available) CNN International for the best breaking news coverage of international events.

Shows like “Frontline” and “Independent Lens” on PBS provide high-quality documentaries often focused on international developments.

Al Jazeera TV news broadcasts are available through its web site and despite the criticism and controversy that has surrounded its past coverage and its sponsorship by the government of Qatar, its reach and focus should be considered as one element of a broader palette of your news sources.

~~~

### DIGITAL SOURCES – GOOGLE AND BEYOND

Do you like a la carte or a fixed menu? Do you want to curated, packaged reporting delivered to your email inbox or do you have the time and interest to browse. There are approaches for every news appetite in the digital realm.

## World Affairs Council

As mentioned the World Affairs Council curates a news feed in its Twitter feed. You don't have to be a "Twitter person" to see what's there. Just browse over to [www.Twitter.com/tnwac](http://www.Twitter.com/tnwac) and you can see what we're posting. Most of the news items are marked with the hashtag #TNWACquiz but many insightful articles and reports that are not "current news" are on the Twitter feed without the quiz hashtag (i.e. State Department statements, think-tank analyses, etc.)

Note: Whether you are a news junkie or not I suggest you take the TNWAC "What in the World?" Weekly Quiz. It comes out in email every Monday at 10am. You can subscribe to the email on the [www.TNWAC.org](http://www.TNWAC.org) web site. You can also find the quiz on the web site and on the TNWAC Facebook page. A prize is offered at the end of the month to one person selected from among the weekly quiz winners.

The World Affairs Council also provides two regular news summaries to its members. Every day members can receive "Daily Chatter." It is a reliable, independently produced product that arrives in email at 5:30 a.m. (CT) every weekday. The publication gives readers a "two-minute read" on the news shaping the world each day in three sections: "Need to Know," "Want to Know" and "Discoveries." Check [www.TNWAC.org/join](http://www.TNWAC.org/join) for details on "Daily Chatter" and other membership benefits.

Council members can also receive the "Weekly World News Update." Prepared by the staff of the national office of the World Affairs Council of America this curated news summary, derived from numerous sources, may be just the right product for consumers who don't have the time for daily news reviews. Visit: [www.worldaffairsCouncils.org](http://www.worldaffairsCouncils.org) to sign up or view examples.

## Curated News and Analysis

If you want world news delivered to your inbox browse the web sites of your favorite outlets. Most will have a subscription service that allows you to customize your daily inbox feed. My news appetite is probably more than most people would like to digest in a day.

### *New York Times*

I am a digital subscriber to the New York Times service (fee) which includes a broad selection for customizing emails. I receive their "Morning Briefing" and "Interpreter" emails and have access to a dizzying array of news, information and entertainment via email, on the web site, video and podcasts.

### *The Economist*

The best (in my humble opinion) news magazine in the world also has a vast array of digital news and information resources for your consideration. (TNWAC members can receive a discount to The Economist.) In addition to the hard copy, weekly magazine (that I can also access on my computer and iPhone) I have selected a number of email deliverables like their "Daily Dispatch"

and “Editor’s picks” as well as a daily news summary via an Economist smartphone app called “Espresso.”

### *Think-Tanks*

There are think-tanks and there are think-tanks. Just like validating and diversifying your news sources you need to do a little homework to make sure that information you get from think-tanks is credible, accurate and well-sourced. Here are several I rely on:

#### *Council on Foreign Relations*

A wealth of top-notch resources on their web site and available through email subscriptions.

- Daily News Brief
- The World This Week
- More at: <https://www.cfr.org/newsletters>

#### *Center for Strategic and International Studies*

CSIS is a premier institution for insights on global issues and developments especially in the political-military sphere. Their web site will provide indepth reporting, podcasts, email newsletter signups and much more. You can also follow CSIS on social media.

- The Evening CSIS – A good starting point for CSIS newsletters
- Email signup and more: <https://www.csis.org/connect>

#### *Brookings Brief*

- This Week in Foreign Policy
- More at: <https://www.brookings.edu/newsletters/>

#### Wilson Center

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org>

#### United States Institute of Peace

<http://www.usip.org>

### Browsing

Google News – well organized multi-source reporting.

[www.news.google.com](http://www.news.google.com)

Headlines, tops stories and the ability to customize your interests (“Personalize Google News” ‘sliders’ by category (i.e. World, US, Sports, Business, etc.)

#### Reuters and AP

Wire services are easily my best, first sources for breaking news and increasingly for analytical pieces.

#### Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/news/world>

#### AP

<https://www.apnews.com>

~~~

RADIO/PODCASTS

Coming soon.

~~~

## VIDEO

Coming soon.

~~~

SOCIAL MEDIA

Coming soon.

~~~

## A QUICK REFERENCE LIST

Economist

<http://www.economist.com>

BBC World

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world>

Google News

<http://www.news.google.com>

Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/news/world>

NY Times

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com>

~~~

TENNESSEE WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL MEDIA

Web site:

<http://www.tnwac.org>

Twitter

@TNWAC and/or

<http://www.twitter.com/tnwac>

Look for #TNWACquiz

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeWAC/> (Please like our FB page)

Photos

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/tnwac/albums>

Briefing Slides

<https://www.slideshare.net/tnwac>

~*~

Links to articles discussed:

Benefit for Members – “Daily Chatter” – Tennessee World Affairs Council

<http://www.tnwac.org/member-info/member-benefit-daily-chatter/>

“The Modern News Consumer” – Pew Research Center, July 7, 2016

<http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/pathways-to-news/>

“As Jon Stewart steps down, 5 facts about ‘The Daily Show’” – Pew Research Center, August 6, 2015

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/06/5-facts-daily-show/>

“How does your favorite news source rate on the ‘truthiness’ scale? Consult this chart” – MarketWatch – Dec 17, 2016

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/how-does-your-favorite-news-source-rate-on-the-truthiness-scale-consult-this-chart-2016-12-15>

BALANCE

You may have seen this chart making the rounds on social media (see link below). It places various news outlets on a continuum of partisanship (left-right) and depth of reporting and analysis. People may interpret the placement of their favorites using their own yardsticks but it does provide food for thought and discussion.



