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The influence of public relations on news coverage and public perceptions of foreign countries

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The influence of public relations on news coverage and public perceptions of foreign countries

by

Hye Hyun Hong

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Ames, Iowa

2007

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Today, it is widely believed that a positive national image enables a nation to achieve a more advantageous position in global economic and political competition. A positive national image may drive other nations' foreign policies in favor of a country, increase revenues from products, and draw tourists and foreign investment (Wang, 2006). Moreover, as the attacks of September 11, 2001 have shown, severe antagonistic feelings from foreign publics may even threaten national security.

Cognizant of these issues, many governments have started strategic public relations (PR) efforts to improve their national images throughout the world. The foreign news media have become a major outlet for governments trying to influence news content about international issues and foreign affairs, especially with regard to their own countries. However, governments also reach foreign publics directly by disseminating information regarding their countries and launching government-sponsored international broadcasting channels and websites (e.g., Voice of America). Governments also try to influence public opinion in foreign countries through cultural exchange programs (e.g., artistic performances, film festivals, second language training, and student exchange programs). The Fulbright program, which subsidizes international students' education in the U.S., is a good example of such efforts.

This study aims to investigate (1) how international PR activities conducted by a government influence the image of a country as perceived by foreign publics and portrayed in the foreign news media, and (2) how the public's perception of foreign countries is

influenced by this news coverage. Following Lee's (2004) proposed path of influence as shown in Figure 1, this study explores the international PR activities of foreign governments that target the United States in order to influence U.S. media portrayal of foreign countries, and, consequently, U.S. citizens' perception of these foreign countries.

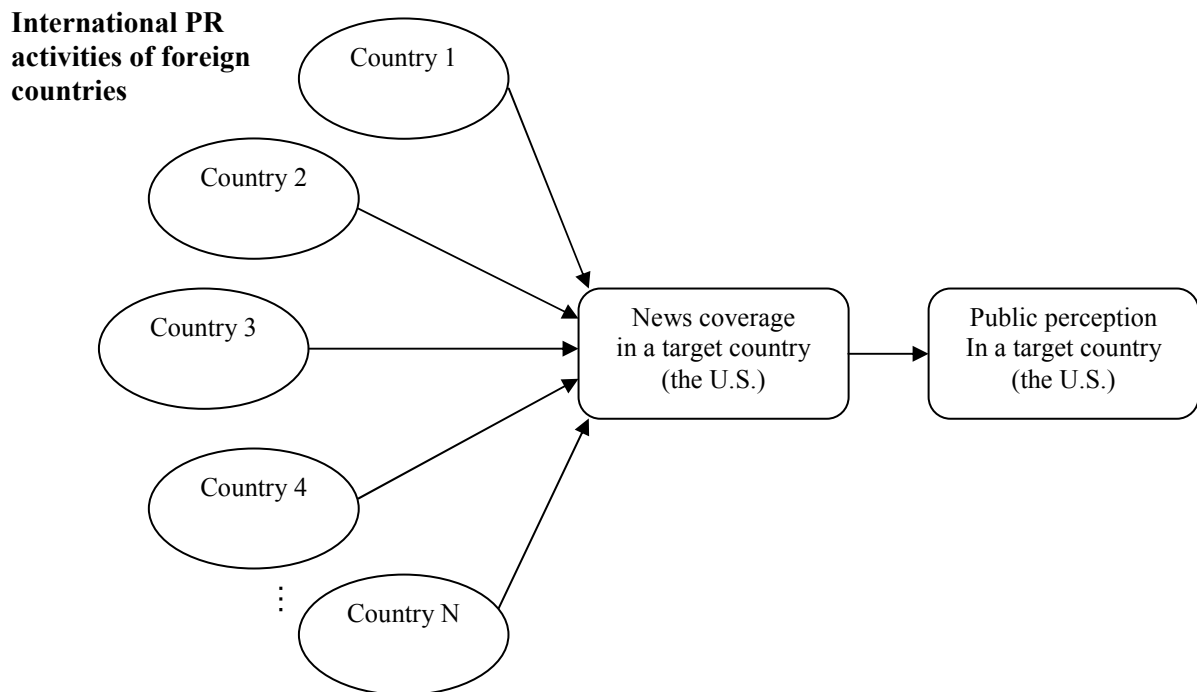


Figure 1. National images of foreign countries perceived by U.S. news media and public. Adapted from A theoretical model of national image processing and international public relations, by S. Lee, 2004, p. 4.

Chapter 2.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Influence of public relations on news content

In many studies in the area of media sociology, scholars have identified a number of factors that influence news content. Specifically, five categories of factors have been identified as influencing news content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Shoemaker, 1991). According to scope of influence, these factors include (1) individual attributes (e.g., media professionals' education and gender); (2) media routines (e.g., gatekeeping, beat system, and pack journalism); (3) organizational characteristics (e.g., political endorsements, editorial positions, and corporate policies); (4) extra-media variables (e.g., advertisers' and news sources' interventions); and (5) ideological influences (e.g., standard social values).

According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), in addition to competing media organizations, advertisers, audiences, and government controls, the public relations activities of a variety of news sources, such as interests groups and corporate organizations, can be considered extra-media organizational factors can significantly influence news content. Manheim (1987) also argued that external factors, including the strategic public relations efforts of news sources, may affect decisions about whether a topic is included or discarded in the news media agenda.

Many organizations consider their own appearance in the news media as a cost-effective way of reaching their publics. Press releases from different sources also assist journalists in identifying news items and fill news holes under tight deadlines (Shoemaker, 1991). Indeed, Shoemaker (1991) explains that public relations activities affect news content

directly by providing story ideas to the media that support an organization's position or indirectly by using the media to project organization-related issues onto the public agenda. Public relations practitioners also create pseudo-events, such as demonstrations and protests, to gain media attention and, subsequently, public attention, and these events serve move news content toward the direction intended by the source organizations (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Shoemaker, 1991). Turow (1989) pointed out that "public relations is a driving force behind what gets on television and into print" (p. 26). He notes that many news stories originate from press releases, indicating the "overwhelming importance of PR materials for the contemporary press" (p. 206). In the process, public relations practitioners "insinuate their ideas into hard news stories with the aim of attracting lawmakers' attention" (p. 208) and try to disguise their own political agenda from both the media and the public. In spite of its significant influence on the flow of news, however, the field of public relations has received limited attention from scholars. This neglect becomes more problematic considering the potential impact of public relations on international news content.

The empirical evidence that demonstrates public relations' effect on news content is sometimes contradictory. For example, Albritton and Manheim (1983) found that a public relations campaign improved Rhodesia's image in the U.S. press. Stocking (1985), on the other hand, suggested limited effects of PR activities by saying that PR activities often do not go beyond news value. An issue's news value, Stocking suggests, is a more powerful predictor that an issue will appear in the news media agenda.

According to Manheim and Albritton (1984), professional and systematic public relations efforts in the U.S. on behalf of foreign governments noticeably increased in the 1970s, as suggested by the Foreign Agent Registration Records (FARA) of the Department

of Justice. Since then, fostering a country's positive and favorable image in the U.S. news media has been an important goal that international clients try to achieve by contracting with American PR firms. Testing the effect of public relations intervention on the visibility and valence of U.S. news coverage about a foreign country, Manheim and Albritton (1984) found that national image, as portrayed in the news media, improved after the signing of contracts with PR firms in the U.S. This finding suggests that public relations can change how countries are portrayed in the news media of a target country.

However, recent empirical studies have shown a somewhat limited effect of international public relations activities on the news content of the foreign news media (Lee, 2004; Yoon, 2005). Yoon (2005) organized previous studies that investigate the impact of PR on news content into two major categories: (1) acceptance or rejection of sources' information subsidies and the utilization of these information subsidies; and (2) journalists' perceptions of PR and PR persons and how these perceptions affect journalistic products. An organization can build legitimacy as a news source and can attract media attention by steadily providing journalists with information subsidies (Yoon, 2005). According to Yoon (2005), "PR could be a key strategic choice to pursue, either to consolidate superior media access or to make frequent interventions as sources contend for media space" (p. 763). She found that although public relations efforts do not directly correlate with media access, media access can be increased by enhancing journalists' perceptions of the sources' legitimacy, which is significantly correlated with the quantity and quality of public relations efforts. The sources perceived as legitimate by journalists are likely to be covered more favorably and positively in the long term.

According to Lee (2004), the more public relations contracts foreign countries sign with PR agencies in the U.S., the more coverage those countries receive in the U.S. newspapers. He also found that the number of public relations contracts in the U.S. was positively correlated with a country's prominence in national newspapers and in network television news coverage. After controlling for environmental and relational factors, strategic public relations emerged as a significant factor explaining the variance in the prominence that countries enjoyed in U.S. newspaper coverage. He concluded that public relations may be associated with prominence in terms of length of stories published and where they are located in a newspaper edition, whereas the quantity of coverage is influenced by newsworthiness (Lee, 2004).

Influence of public relations on public perceptions

Because a positive national image is regarded as national capital, many governments are starting to improve their national image by directly communicating with foreign publics. Wang (2006) argues that national reputation is an indication of a nation's power and strength. Other scholars (Jervis, 1970; Nye, 1990, 2004) have emphasized the pivotal role of a positive national image as a form of "soft power," as opposed to the "hard" military or economic forms of power. Nye (2004) defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (p. x). It can be achieved by "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" (p. x). Hard power, on the other hand, is generally represented by economic and military sanctions. Nye (2004), however, also argues that hard and soft power must complement each other to achieve national goals.

Public diplomacy is one way by which governments can improve their soft power by going directly to foreign publics. Over the past decades, government-to-government interactions through political leaders such presidents, prime ministers, and ambassadors had typically been considered the most efficient form of diplomacy. However, many governments are now experimenting with various ways of reaching foreign publics through the media and through other ways because they recognize that the positive opinion of foreign publics can improve national image and, consequently, influence favorable foreign policies toward their countries.

Public diplomacy is defined as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). Gilboa (2000) defines public diplomacy as “direct communication with foreign peoples with the aim of affecting their thinking, and ultimately, that of their governments” (p. 291). Melissen (2006) argues that public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in that public diplomacy “targets the general public in foreign societies and more specific non-official groups, organizations and individuals,” rather than using official relationships between international actors (p. 5). Public diplomacy “describes activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizens” (Frederick, 1993, p. 229). Wang (2006) notes that “public diplomacy is not merely about advocating and promoting political and economic goals to the international publics; it is, instead, about relationship building between nations and cultures through better communication” (p. 93). To Wang, therefore, public diplomacy is the “public face of traditional diplomacy” (p. 91).

Previous studies have uncovered two types of public diplomacy efforts: (1) information dissemination through the mass media and other means; and (2) cultural diplomacy.

First, governments can reach foreign publics by disseminating information through the mass media (e.g., through public relations campaigns in mass media) or by directly delivering information (e.g., print or video materials) to the general public without mass media intervention. The U.S., for instance, reaches out to the Middle East through American Corner, an organized collection of Internet-accessible computers and books on American subjects installed in several Middle Eastern universities. It is considered to be a cost-effective and safe way to help students and the general public know more about American culture, society, and politics (Robinson, 2005).

Government-sponsored radio and television broadcasts in foreign markets is another way to reach foreign publics. For instance, during the Cold War, the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty were launched to convey a positive American image to specific target countries. Today, in response to negative publicity in the Muslim media - the so-called *Al Jazeera* effect - the Bush administration subsidizes a variety of media channels, including radio stations, satellite channels, websites, and teen magazines to directly reach the Muslim world (Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele, and Shanahan, 2004).

Second, governments can reach foreign publics through a variety of cultural channels used in public diplomacy efforts. Cultural diplomacy, or public diplomacy through cultural channels, focuses on long-term relationship-building instead of conflict resolution or immediate information delivery. Schneider (2006) notes that “culture provides a means to expand upon ideas and images created by the market” (p. 158). Gilboa (2000) counts

“cultural and scientific exchanges of students, scholars, intellectuals, and artists; participation in festivals and exhibitions; building and maintaining cultural centers; teaching a language; and establishing local friendship leagues and trade associations” as cultural diplomatic activities (p. 291).

Schneider (2006) argues that even during the Cold War, artists in the Soviet Union, such as dancers with the Bolshoi and Kirov ballets, impressed the American public in spite of ideological differences between the two countries. Artistic and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and the Soviet Union were regarded as “a means of counteracting isolationism and increasing understanding between the two countries” (p. 157).

As part of its ongoing efforts, to promote a positive image in Middle Eastern countries, the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative promotes the ideology of democracy and women’s rights. In Jordan, for example, the U.S. sponsors a student exchange or education program targeted at teenagers that involves after-school English classes and U.S. embassy tours. Robison (2005) explains that these cultural programs are designed to allow students in Muslim countries to experience “real images of Americans rather than the ones they see in *Al Jazeera*” (p. 5).

News media influence on public perception

Using structural theory, Galtung and Ruge (1965) explain that the economic, social, political, and geographic attributes of a country can affect how often and how favorably that country is described in another country’s news media. In their theory, which emphasizes the critical role of the news media as image-projectors, they suggested a linear process of image formation through news coverage (Figure 2). In this model, the public’s perception of a

country is created through a series of steps although each step may introduce image distortions. Galtung and Ruge (1965) indicated that national image is shaped not only by the news media but also by a variety of information channels, such as personal contacts. The news media, however, remain “first-rate competitors for the number-one position as international image-former” because of their “regularity, ubiquity, and perseverance” (p. 64).

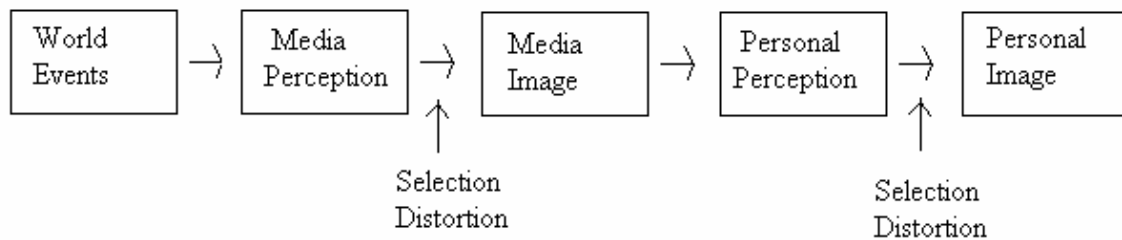


Figure 2. The chain of news communication. Adapted from “The structure of foreign news,” by J. Galtung and M. H. Ruge, 1965, *Journal of Peace Research*, 2, p. 65.

Additionally, according to the media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach, 1979), individuals generally rely on the media for the best available information to understand issues and to form their perceptions about them, especially when the issues are beyond their personal experience. Manheim and Albritton (1984) also argue that the news media are often the major sources of the most up-to-date information regarding international affairs.

However, the news media have a limited capacity in terms of covering all parts of the world. Thus, countries receive varying levels of coverage in the U.S. news media (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Wu, 1998; Chang, 1998). Political, geographical, economic, and cultural considerations force the news media to assign different “weights” in their coverage of other countries (Lee, 2004; Golan & Wanta, 2001; Wu, 1998; Larson, 1982). This imbalance in the

coverage of foreign countries in international news reporting may influence the public's perception of the salience of each country to their own country's and to their political lives and, consequently, public opinion toward them (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). The news media not only report foreign policy but also help shape foreign policy by galvanizing public opinion through their coverage.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between international news coverage and public opinion about foreign countries. For example, Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver, and Willnat (1992) analyzed U.S. network news and wire service coverage of nine countries (West Germany, East Germany, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Great Britain, France, Japan, and Israel), and compared it with public opinion about these nine countries gathered from the U.S. national public opinion surveys. The findings showed that the visibility of foreign countries in TV news significantly influenced public opinion about these countries (Semetko et al., 1992). McNelly and Izcaray (1986) also concluded that mass media exposure was related to positive images of foreign countries in a given nation.

Nisbet et al. (2004) found that Muslim audiences who choose Western networks as primary news channels have less negative perceptions of the U.S. than those who prefer the pan-Arab regional networks. Viewing the pan-Arab networks serves to "amplify" anti-American attitudes, but watching Western networks functions to "buffer or attenuate" this effect. This finding supports the idea that the selective use of media channels and biased contents have a bearing on public opinion toward a country.

Many media effects studies have shown the influence of news coverage on public perceptions. The agenda-setting theory, which proposes the transfer of issue salience from

the media agenda to the public agenda, is one of the traditional media effects theories often applied in studies of this kind.

Second-level agenda-setting

Since McCombs and Shaw proposed the agenda-setting theory in 1972, a large number of studies have been conducted to show that the salience of issues portrayed in the media influences the salience of these same issues in the public agenda. Agenda-setting studies have now shifted from researching not only the transfer of issue salience but also the transfer of issue attributes, second-level agenda-setting. While first-level agenda-setting focuses on the “transmission of issue salience cues from news coverage of issues to public concern with issues, the second level investigates the transmission of attributes of actors in the news from media coverage of these attributes to the public’s recall of the same attributes” (Wanta et al., 2004, p. 365). Second-level agenda-setting posits that the attributes of issues (or objects) emphasized in the media affect the way people think about the issue (or object), as well as the salience of these issue (or objects). In short, second-level agenda-setting examines “how media coverage affects both what the public thinks about and how the public think about it” (Ghanem, 1997, p. 3).

Ghanem (1997) conceptualizes four sub-dimensions of issue attributes in second-level agenda-setting: subtopics, presentations, affective elements, and cognitive elements. For example, analyzing media content regarding the 1996 Spanish general election, McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey (1977) found two basic attributes of candidates, substantive and affective attributes, which are conceptually consistent with the cognitive and affective elements in Ghanem’s (1997) study. Affective attributes were defined as the facets

that elicit emotional reactions from audiences; substantive attributes involve the cognitive processes audiences apply to make sense of the news.

With a few exceptions (e.g., Wanta et al., 2004), most empirical studies of first- and second-level agenda-setting were conducted in political contexts, such as presidential elections. Some studies have shown a positive correlation between news coverage of candidates and the public's perceptions of each candidate's cognitive and affective attributes. People perceive issues as more important when candidates are described in relation with the issues in the media. The more positively candidates appeared in the media, the more positively people perceive the candidate (Golan and Wanta, 2001; Kiouisis, Bantimaroudis, & Ban, 1999).

Wanta et al. (2004) applied second-level agenda-setting to the context of foreign news coverage and the public's perception of foreign countries by considering countries as objects instead of issues or attributes of issues. Wanta et al. (2004) found that increased coverage of foreign countries increased the perceived vital interest of the countries to the U.S. among Americans, and that the number of negative news items about foreign countries created a negative public evaluation of those countries.

Hypotheses and research question

From the foregoing literature, this study suggests a model illustrating the relationships among international public relations efforts by a foreign country, the U.S. news coverage of the foreign country, and the U.S. public's perception of a given country (Figure 3). The model will be tested using the U.S. as the target country whose public opinion many foreign countries aim to influence. Following common public relations objectives, it is

assumed that these countries employ communication strategies and techniques to gain positive portrayals in the U.S. media. Such positive portrayals translated to favorable American public opinion about the source countries.

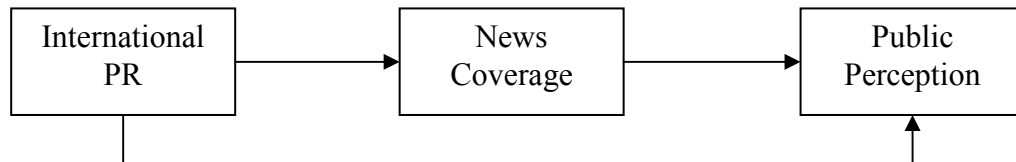


Figure 3. The flow model of international PR, news coverage, and public perceptions

Based on the literature review, this study posits the following hypotheses in regard to the relationships among the three elements.

The first set of hypotheses proposes the international public relations efforts of a foreign country will influence the U.S. news coverage in terms of the prominence and valence of U.S. media coverage of the source countries. Thus:

H1-a: More international public relations efforts will lead to more prominent news coverage of a foreign country in the U.S. media.

H1-b: More international public relations efforts will lead to more positive news coverage of a foreign country in the U.S. media.

The second set of hypotheses assumes that the extent to which a foreign country is prominently and positively portrayed in the U.S. news media will affect American public perception of this foreign country in the U.S. Hence,

H2-a: The more prominent news coverage a foreign country receives, the more the country will be perceived by the U.S. public as significant to their country and to their lives.

H2-b: The more positively a foreign country is portrayed in the U.S. news media, the more positively the country will be perceived by the U.S. public. The more negatively a foreign country is portrayed in the U.S. news media, the more negatively the country will be perceived by the U.S. public.

The third set of hypotheses assumes that the international public relations efforts of a foreign country will influence U.S. public perception.

H3-a: International public relations efforts by a foreign country will be positively correlated to the perceived significance of that country among the U.S. public.

H3-b: International public relations efforts by a foreign country will increase the positive feelings of the U.S. public toward that country.

The six suggested hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 4. Each arrow linking the two variables represents one of six hypotheses.

In addition to the six hypotheses, the following research question is posed:

RQ 1: To what extent does the proposed model (Figure 4) explain the relationships among the international public relations efforts of a foreign country, news coverage of the country (i.e., prominence and valence) in the U.S. media, and U.S. public perceptions of the country (i.e., cognitive and affective evaluations)?

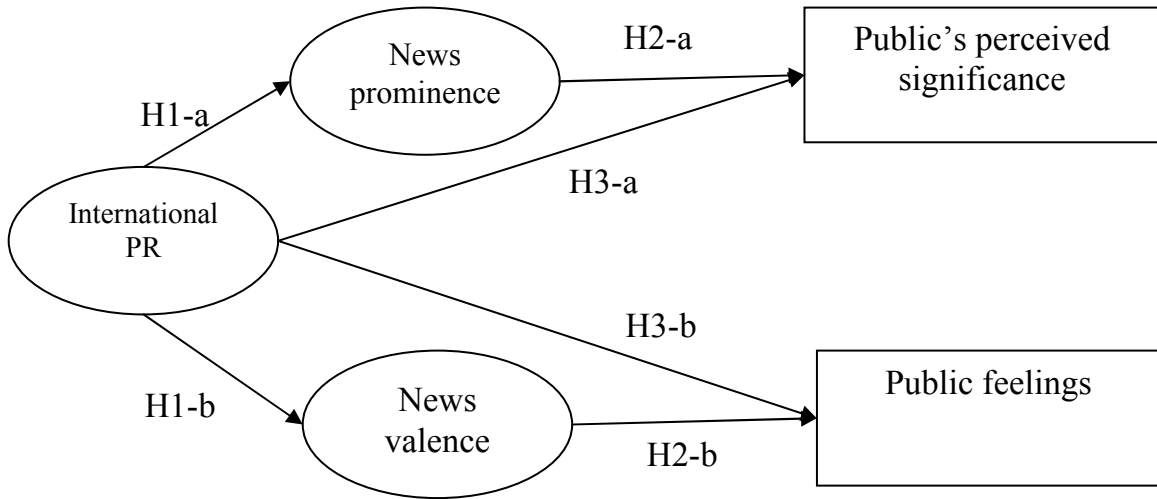


Figure 4. Flow chart of variables involved in the six hypotheses

Chapter 3.

Method

This study employs multiple methods of data gathering. First, secondary data were gathered and analyzed to determine international PR efforts of foreign countries from the semi-annual report generated through the Foreign Agency Registration Act (FARA). The results of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) survey were also analyzed to examine U.S. public perceptions of select countries. Second, content analysis was conducted to reveal the nature of U.S. news coverage of foreign countries. Using these methods, this study examines the international public relations efforts conducted by foreign countries in the U.S., the U.S. news coverage of those countries, and U.S. citizens' perceptions of those countries.

Operationalization and measurement of international public relations

International public relations involves intentional activities governments undertake to influence foreign media and publics. According to Lee (2004), these activities include contracts with public relations agencies in a target country, the dissemination of press releases disseminations, and the management of a public information ministry or embassy. The funds dedicated to international PR and administrative expertise in public diplomacy are also potential factors that have a bearing on a country's ability to influence the foreign media and publics. Among these, according to Gilboa (2000), contracting public relations agencies in a target country is the most effective method that "strengthens the legitimacy and authenticity" of public relations efforts.

In this study, international public relations efforts were operationalized using two indicators: (1) the number of contracts foreign governments have signed with PR agencies in the U.S., and (2) the dollar amount of these contracts. These data were gathered from the semi-annual FARA reports. FARA was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1938 because of significant concerns about the involvement of American PR agencies in German propaganda. Since then, PR agencies have been required to publicly report contracts involving international clients to the Department of Justice. Thus the FARA dataset has been the best available source of information regarding the diverse types of international public relations activities conducted in the U.S.

The data for this study came from the first semi-annual FARA report of 2002. Aside from the number of contracts and the contract prices used in this analysis, the report also includes other PR-related contract information from over 150 countries, sorted in alphabetical order (e.g., the PR agency involved and its contact information, the description of the contracted services, and the terms of the contract). The FARA report includes all PR contracts with all types of international clients such as individuals, political parties, and corporate organizations. However, only contracts by foreign central governments including foreign affair ministries and embassies were selected and counted to test main hypotheses in this study.

Operationalization and measurement of public perceptions of foreign countries

Public perception of foreign countries was considered as having two dimensions, cognitive and affective evaluations, following Ghanem's (1997) and Wanta et al.'s (2004) conceptualizations. In this study, cognitive evaluation was defined as how significantly the

American people perceive a country in relation to the U.S., while the affective evaluation was defined as how Americans feel about a given country.

To measure these two aspects of public perceptions, the results of a U.S. national survey, conducted by the CCFR in June 2002, were collected. The CCFR is a nonprofit organization, and its quadrennial public opinion survey is regarded as the most comprehensive project exploring American attitudes toward a broad range of international relations issues, including U.S. foreign policy. The CCFR began its Worldviews Project in 1974, and the 2002 survey data is the most recent output available online (www.worldviews.org or www.ccf.org). In the 2002 survey, with the collaboration of Harris Interactive, a randomly sampled set of 3,262 U.S. citizens were interviewed via telephone (n=2, 862) or in person (n=400) from June 1 to June 30, 2002.

Among a number of questions asked in the survey, two questions were utilized as a measure of U.S. public perception of foreign countries: perceived U.S. vital interest in foreign countries, and the public feelings toward these countries. The former was measured by the percentage of respondents who think the U.S. has a vital interest in a foreign country. The more people agreed that the country is of vital interest to the U.S., the higher the score a country received in this area. Public feelings involved emotional evaluations elicited when people were asked to rate each country on a scale from 0 to 100. Assuming the midpoint, 50, is neutral, numbers over 50 mean a positive feeling and numbers less than 50 indicate a negative feeling. The more positively and favorably individuals considered the country, the higher the score given to that country.

The FARA report and the CCFR's public opinion survey had 24 countries in common. These 24 countries constituted the complete list of countries (N=24) that targeted the U.S. with public relations efforts that were analyzed in this study.

Content analysis of news coverage

A content analysis of news coverage was conducted to examine how prominently the 24 countries were portrayed in the U.S. news media and valence of that coverage. Thus, news coverage of the 24 foreign countries in the U.S. press was analyzed for prominence and valence.

Sampling process. Two newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, were selected for analysis. These newspapers are widely considered to have the strongest international news coverage and are most influential in reaching the opinions of U.S. leaders and the general public. These newspapers are also known to affect the content of other news media channels in the U.S. and overseas.

The full text of stories about the 24 countries published from January 1, 2002 to June 30, 2002, were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis database (<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/form/academic/index.html>). The period of analysis was identified by considering the time it takes to transfer an issue from the media agenda to the public agenda.

Among a total of 4,302 articles retrieved from Lexis-Nexis, one-third were selected for analysis through a systematic sampling method. First, news articles were retrieved country by country by using the name of a given country as a search keyword in news headline. Then, every third articles were selected in each list of articles with having the first one in the list as a starting point.

Sampled articles were excluded for coding if the articles mentioned a country only in a peripheral way. Any news item in the Information Bank Abstracts, which is an abstract-type of news article provided by the *Wall Street Journal* and published in the *New York Times*, was included for a analysis (i.e., the total number of articles), but was excluded in further coding for prominence and valence because they are too short (about 30 words in one or two sentences) to provide any sense of valence. If two or more countries were discussed in an article, the article was coded as pertaining only to the country of the primary actor. The actions of a country's citizens (e.g., crime, murder, fraud) in their own country and in the U.S. were included for analysis because the behaviors of citizens may affect public perceptions. Thus, if more than 20 percent of the samples for each country were excluded for these reasons, the same number of articles was substituted in the same sampling frame through a repeated systematic sampling method.

Prominence. Prominence, in this study, was measured by evaluating four indicators: (1) the number of news articles, (2) the length of coverage, (3) the position of stories within the coverage, and (4) the presence of supplementary graphic devices in the coverage.

First, the total number of articles for each country was counted. The total number of articles has been used as a reliable indicator of intensity of coverage in many previous studies (e.g., Shoemaker, Damielian, & Brendlinger, 1991; Wanta et al., 2004; Manheim and Albritton, 1984). In addition, the length of the article was coded in terms of number of words, and the position of the articles within a newspaper edition was coded as a categorical variable: 3 = front page, 2 = section front page, 1 = other pages. These two variables were added, following Shoemaker et al. (1991) and Lee (2004), because people are influenced not only by the sheer volume of stories but also by irregular and accidental exposure to coverage.

Lastly, the use of supplementary graphic devices was coded: 1 = one or more graphic devices, 0 = no graphic device. Supplementary graphic devices include any visuals that accompany news articles, such as pictures, graphs, diagrams, tables, and cartoons or other illustrations. The presence of these graphic devices was determined by the caption information provided by Lexis-Nexis. Scholars note that visual cues in news stories, both in newspaper and television, have a significant effect on audiences' cognitive processes and response because they function as "capturing and sustaining attention, improving memory, and increasing arousal" (Coleman and Banning, 2006, p. 317). For instance, Wanta (1988) points out that the size of photographs that accompany news stories influences readers' perception of the importance of that story.

A country enjoys high prominence in the news coverage when it is often covered by a target country's news media in longer and more in-depth stories, when the articles are presented in more visible space (such as the front page and the section top page), and when supplementary graphic devices are provided.

Valence. Valence is defined as the general orientation of news coverage and was assessed as (1) positive, (2) negative, or (3) neutral. Positive articles are those that discuss "progress, growth, prosperity, resources, strength, stability, and trustworthiness on the part of a given country." Negative stories discuss "unreliability, untrustworthiness, weakness, instability, retreat, and inefficiency on the part of a given country" (Lee, 2004, pp. 42–43). Wanta et al. (2004) saw a topic's conformity with U.S. interests and values as a global standard with which individuals judge whether the news is either positive or negative. In this study, if the primary foreign country described in the story threatened the interests of the U.S. or if its activity was inconsistent with U.S. values, the article was coded as negative. If the

activity of a foreign country was seen as supporting U.S. interests or values, it was coded as positive.

Two coders were trained to follow the coding guidelines based on Lee's (2004) and Wanta et al.'s (2004) studies to decide whether the valence of an article is positive or negative. Table 1 shows common examples of positive or negative valence found during the content analysis.

Table 1. Examples of positive and negative valence

Examples of positive news	Examples of negative news
· Growth of country-origin companies	· Loss of country-origin companies
· Positive cooperation with the US	(e.g., bankruptcy, decrease in sales, etc.)
	· Lack of religious rights/freedoms
	· Dangerous and unsafe environment
	(e.g, bombings, terrorist threats, arms threats)
	· Conflict between countries and in-country
	(e.g., labor dispute, political tensions, etc.)
	· Turmoil and violence
	· Devaluation of currency
	· Natural disaster (e.g., earthquake)
	· Human disaster (e.g., airplane crash)

A neutral valence is defined as one in which neither positive nor negative aspects of a country are discussed or as one demonstrating both positive and negative aspects of a given country in a balanced way. Thus, news articles about the outbreak of natural or human

disasters were coded as negative, but those dealing with government and public efforts of restoration after the disasters were coded as neutral.

This study also considered valence proportion, which is defined as the ratio of the number of positive articles to the number of negative articles. Valence proportion recognizes that people are influenced by the different tones of the news items they encounter; the impact of positive representations of a country in the news may be balanced by that of negative representations. Therefore, the more positive coverage a country received compared to the negative coverage, the higher the score it attained in terms of valence proportion.

Inter-coder reliability. To test for inter-coder reliability, 10 percent of the articles were systematically chosen and coded. The result of the Holsti formula for inter-coder reliability shows acceptable scores for the following coded variables: Country (1.00); Source (1.00); Date (1.00); Length (1.00); Position (1.00); Graphics (1.00); Valence (0.89). The coding guidelines and coding sheet for the content analysis are shown in Appendices A and B.

Theoretical model

The proposed model of relationships among the variables is illustrated in Figure 5. In the figure, variables in rectangles denote observed variables, whereas the ones in ovals denote unobserved latent variables.

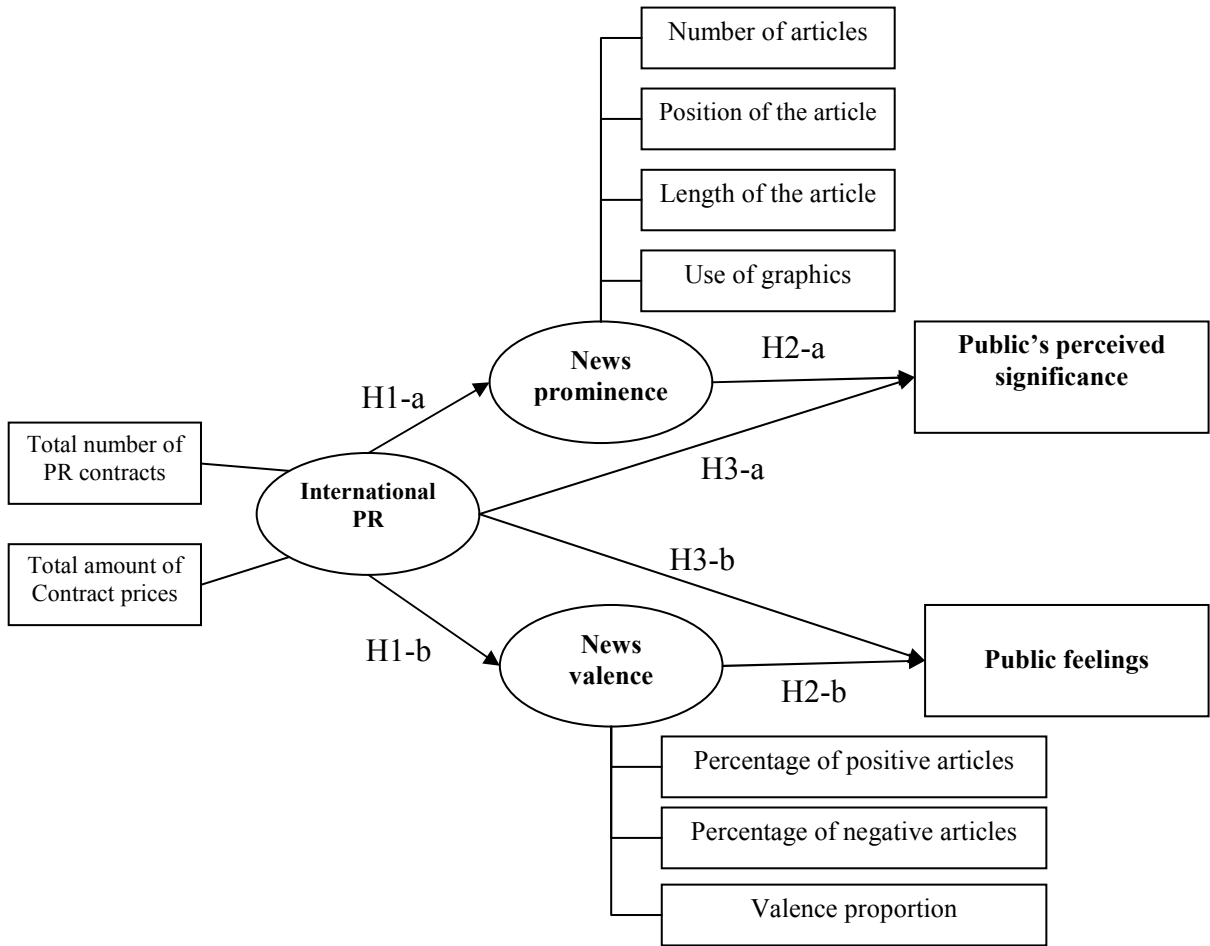


Figure 5. Theoretical model of the variables' relationships

Chapter 4.

Findings

To test the hypotheses and the degree of model fitness, the SPSS and AMOS software programs were used.

Descriptive statistics

International PR. From the first semi-annual FARA report of 2002, the number of PR contracts and total dollar amount of the contracts by foreign central government including ministries and embassies, were counted and added. Table 2 shows how many PR contracts each country had in the U.S. and how much money was involved in these contracts.

According to the FARA dataset, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Great Britain are the four countries that have the highest number of contracts and the highest total dollar amount of contracts with PR firms in the U.S. On the other hand, no government-based PR contracts were reported for Brazil and Russia. Brazil, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Russia have few contracts, and thus little money was reported for these small numbers of contracts.

Public perceptions of foreign countries. The 2002 Worldviews report from the CCFR grouped countries that the U.S. public perceived to be of vital interest to the U.S.: (1) countries for which over 70% of respondents agreed the U.S. as having vital interest (Japan, Saudi Arabia, China, Russia, Israel, Great Britain, Canada, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Mexico); (2) countries for which 51 to 70% of the respondents agreed (South Korea, Germany, Taiwan, India, Colombia, Egypt, France, and Turkey); and (3) countries for which

Table 2. Number of PR contracts and the dollar amount (from the 2002 FARA report)

Country	Number of PR contracts by foreign central government	Dollar amount of PR contracts by foreign central government (\$)
Afghanistan	2	30,000
Argentina	4	125,000
Brazil	0	0
Canada	2	752,426
China	4	468,254
Colombia	2	385,603
Egypt	4	600,688
France	1	5,717,660
Germany	1	91,980
Great Britain	7	6,721,831
India	4	1,873,737
Iran	2	5,793
Iraq	1	0
Israel	4	444,772
Japan	17	4,886,009
Mexico	11	3,008,663
Nigeria	3	300,000
Pakistan	2	300,408
Russia	0	0
Saudi Arabia	9	6,818,764
South Africa	2	2,839,060
South Korea	6	1,457,811
Taiwan	2	91,700
Turkey	5	1,077,018

under 50% of the respondents agreed (South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and Nigeria).

Statistics regarding the public's perceived significance of these countries is provided in Table 3.

The Worldviews report also measures how the U.S. public feels about these countries by asking respondents to rate them on a scale from 0 to 100. Considering the midpoint, 50, as representing a neutral feeling, a score of over 50 indicates a positive and favorable feeling and a score under 50 indicates a negative feeling. According to the report, Canada (77) and Great Britain (76) are at the top of the scale, followed by Germany (61), Japan (60), and Mexico (60). Russia, Israel, Brazil, France, Taiwan, South Africa, China, Argentina, India, South Korea, Turkey, Egypt, and Nigeria are in the mid-range, between the 40s and 50s on the scale. At the same time, U.S. citizens feel negatively about the following countries: Iraq (23), Iran (28), Afghanistan (29), Pakistan (31), Saudi Arabia (33), and Colombia (36).

Content analysis of news coverage. Among the 4,302 articles retrieved, 1,277 articles (approximately 30%) were sampled. The number of articles published in the *New York Times* articles in the sample is twice as large as the number of *Washington Post* articles. A total of 865 (67.7%) articles were from the *New York Times* while 412 (32.3) articles were from the *Washington Post* (Table 4).

Prominence was defined earlier as a composite variable that includes the total number of news articles, the length of coverage, the position of stories within the newspaper issue, and the presence of supplementary graphic devices in the coverage of a foreign country. Table 5 shows the break down of these four prominence indicators by country.

The second column of Table 5 shows total number of articles and number of sampled articles in parenthesis. There is a huge variance in total number of articles between countries

Table 3. Public perceptions of foreign countries (from the 2002 CCFR survey)

Country	Public's perceived significance	Public feelings
Afghanistan	73	29
Argentina	39	47
Brazil	36	55
Canada	76	77
China	83	48
Colombia	62	36
Egypt	53	45
France	53	55
Germany	68	61
Great Britain	78	76
India	65	46
Iran	75	28
Iraq	76	23
Israel	79	55
Japan	83	60
Mexico	72	60
Nigeria	31	42
Pakistan	76	31
Russia	81	55
Saudi Arabia	83	33
South Africa	49	50
South Korea	69	46
Taiwan	65	50
Turkey	52	45

* Public's perceived significance was measured by the percentage of respondents who agreed that the country is of vital interest to the U.S.

* Public feelings was measured on a scale from 0 to 100; with the midpoint, 50, as neutral, over 50 represents a positive feeling while under 50 represents a negative feeling.

Table 4. Number of articles by news source

Source	Number of articles	Percent (%)
<i>New York Times</i>	865	67.7
<i>Washington Post</i>	412	32.3
Total	1,277	100.0

during the study period: from 30 (Nigeria), the fewest, to 479 (China), the most number of stories.

Each sample article was also coded for the following variables: (1) the length of the article (the number of words in a story), (2) the position of the article within the publication (3 = front page; 2 = section front page; 1 = other pages), and (3) the use of supplementary graphic devices (1 = one or more graphic device used; 0 = none). The mean of length, the mean of position, and the ratio of supplementary graphic devices are presented in Table 5.

In terms of length, stories that are Iran, Argentina, Russia, Pakistan, and Israel were prominently reported with more than 850 words per article on the average. This was followed by India, with 820 words. The articles regarding Germany were the shortest, with an average of 326 words per article. Egypt had 420 words per article, and France had around 480 words. In terms of position, articles about Germany were the most prominently displayed (1.49). Israel (1.48), Argentina (1.47), and Afghanistan (1.46) were also more likely to appear in visible positions than other countries. Table 5 presents that Egypt, Nigeria, and Turkey registered a position mean of 1.00, which means that articles about these countries mostly appeared in less visible pages rather than in the front or section front pages. Stories about South Korea noticeably ranked at the top (0.57) in their use of graphic devices, followed by South Africa (0.55), Japan (0.43), and Turkey (0.42). Almost half of the articles regarding

Table 5. News prominence of the countries

Country	Total number of articles (Number of sampled articles)		Mean length	Mean position	Ratio of graphic device
Afghanistan	207	(61)	730	1.46	0.23
Argentina	191	(57)	860	1.47	0.30
Brazil	125	(40)	610	1.43	0.28
Canada	201	(55)	541	1.42	0.22
China	479	(138)	761	1.38	0.28
Columbia	109	(32)	691	1.16	0.25
Egypt	42	(13)	420	1.00	0.38
France	193	(60)	477	1.33	0.37
Germany	186	(53)	326	1.49	0.40
Great Britain	245	(69)	512	1.25	0.25
India	273	(73)	820	1.29	0.34
Iran	94	(30)	872	1.17	0.13
Iraq	158	(40)	663	1.18	0.13
Israel	393	(130)	850	1.48	0.25
Japan	368	(119)	758	1.39	0.43
Mexico	183	(48)	702	1.25	0.33
Nigeria	30	(11)	499	1.00	0.18
Pakistan	268	(72)	851	1.43	0.35
Russia	238	(76)	856	1.36	0.26
Saudi Arabia	45	(15)	605	1.07	0.13
South Africa	39	(11)	717	1.27	0.55
South Korea	76	(23)	627	1.43	0.57
Taiwan	77	(27)	616	1.33	0.26
Turkey	82	(24)	599	1.00	0.42
Total	4,302	(1,277)	705	1.35	0.30

* Mean length was calculated by the sum of length divided by the number of sampled articles (N).

* Mean position was calculated by the sum of position factor divided by N.

* Ratio of graphic device was calculated by the frequency of graphic devices divided by N.

these countries had supplementary graphic devices. Article dealing with Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia barely employed supplementary graphic devices (Table 5).

Table 6 presents how positively or negatively each country was portrayed in the newspapers in terms of the percentage of positive and negative articles. The table shows that South Korea, Turkey, South Africa, and Russia had relatively high percentages of positive articles, each registering greater than 40%. On the other hand, Iraq, Iran, Argentina, Pakistan, Colombia, and Israel were presented more negatively than other countries. The percentage of negative articles was greater than 50% for these countries. Iraq was described most negatively. It was ranked at the top in terms of the percentage of negative articles (67.5%) and at the second-bottom in terms of the percentage of positive articles (10.0%).

Valence proportion, or the ratio of the number of positive articles to the number of negative articles, was calculated. This number provides an index that excludes neutral and non-available articles. As Table 6 shows, Canada (2.40) has the highest valence proportion, followed by South Korea (1.71), Great Britain (1.62), Turkey (1.57), and Russia (1.48). Iraq, Colombia, and Iran had the lowest valence proportions, 0.15, 0.19, and 0.32, respectively. In addition, France (.33), India (.34), Israel (.35), Afghanistan (.37), Argentina (.37), and Pakistan (.39) were likely to be portrayed more negatively.

Hypotheses testing

Structural equation modeling using the AMOS program was planned to test the hypotheses and the research question. However, because of limited sample size, SEM analysis produced errors such as negative variances and inadmissible parameter solutions.

Table 6. News valence of countries

Country	N	Number of positive articles (%)	Number of negative articles (%)	Number of neutral articles (%)	NA	Valence proportion
Afghanistan	61	10 (16.4%)	27 (44.3%)	20 (32.8%)	4 (6.6%)	0.37
Argentina	57	13 (22.8%)	35 (61.4%)	8 (14.0%)	1 (1.8%)	0.37
Brazil	40	14 (35.0%)	15 (37.5%)	10 (25.0%)	1 (2.5%)	0.93
Canada	55	24 (43.6%)	10 (18.2%)	21 (38.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.40
China	138	25 (18.1%)	61 (44.2%)	48 (34.8%)	4 (2.9%)	0.41
Colombia	32	3 (9.4%)	16 (50.0%)	11 (34.4%)	2 (6.2%)	0.19
Egypt	13	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	1 (7.7%)	1.33
France	60	7 (11.7%)	21 (35.0%)	30 (50.0%)	2 (3.3%)	0.33
Germany	53	13 (24.5%)	23 (43.4%)	16 (30.2%)	1 (1.9%)	0.57
Great Britain	69	21 (30.4%)	13 (18.8%)	35 (50.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1.62
India	73	12 (16.4%)	35 (47.9%)	25 (34.2%)	1 (1.4%)	0.34
Iran	30	6 (20.0%)	19 (63.3%)	5 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0.32
Iraq	40	4 (10.0%)	27 (67.5%)	9 (22.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0.15
Israel	130	23 (17.7%)	65 (50.0%)	37 (28.5%)	5 (3.8%)	0.35
Japan	119	31 (26.1%)	53 (44.5%)	35 (29.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0.58
Mexico	48	15 (31.3%)	18 (37.5%)	14 (29.2%)	1 (2.1%)	0.83
Nigeria	11	3 (27.3%)	5 (45.5%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0.60
Pakistan	72	14 (19.4%)	36 (50.0%)	22 (30.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0.39
Russia	76	31 (40.8%)	21 (27.6%)	23 (30.3%)	1 (1.3%)	1.48
Saudi Arabia	15	4 (26.7%)	7 (46.7%)	4 (26.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0.57
South Africa	11	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1.00
South Korea	23	12 (52.2%)	7 (30.4%)	3 (13.0%)	1 (4.3%)	1.71
Taiwan	27	5 (18.5%)	11 (40.7%)	10 (37.0%)	1 (3.7%)	0.45
Turkey	24	11 (45.8%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1.57
Total	1,277	310 (24.3%)	540 (42.3%)	401 (31.4%)	26 (2.0%)	0.57

* Percentages in parenthesis were calculated by the number of positive/negative/neutral articles divided by total number of articles (N).

* NA denotes news articles that were not coded for valence because the articles did not have text but rather a graphic device.

* Valence proportion was calculated as the number of positive articles divided by the number of negative articles.

Therefore, multivariate regression analysis using SPSS was applied to test hypotheses assuming the relationships among variables.

The first set of hypotheses proposed the international public relations efforts of a foreign country will influence the U.S. news coverage in terms of the prominence and valence. Multiple linear regressions were calculated to predict each prominence variable (total number of article, length, position, and graphic use) and valence variable (percentage of positive articles, percentage of negative articles, and valence proportion) based on two international PR variables (number of PR contracts and dollar amount of PR contracts).

As Table 7 shows, two international PR variables explained 6.5 percent of variance in total number of articles, 12.1 percent of variance in length of the articles, 3.0 percent of variance in position of the articles, and 4.2 percent of variance in graphic use in the articles, and these results were not statistically significant. Neither number of PR contracts nor dollar amount of PR contracts can account for the variance of four prominence variables in a significant level.

Two international PR variables also did not contribute to each of three valence variables. Only tiny portion of variances were explained by two international PR variables, and the all of them were not statistically meaningful: 1.8% of percentage of positive articles; 8.6% of percentage of negative articles; and 1.3% of valence proportion (Table 7). In sum, two international PR variables do not influence any of valence indicators at a significant level.

The second set of hypotheses assumed that the extent to which a foreign country is prominently and positively portrayed in the U.S. news media will affect how American public perceive the foreign country.

Table 7. Regression analysis of international PR variables on news prominence and valence

Dependent variables	Independent variables		Total R ²
	Number of PR contracts	Amount of PR contract prices	
News prominence			
Total number of articles	.316	-.155	.065
Length	.329	-.422	.121
Position	-.012	-.165	.030
Graphic use	.206	.001	.042
News valence			
Percentage of positive articles	.142	-.011	.018
Percentage of negative articles	.116	-.347	.086
Valence proportion	-.009	.120	.013

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Note. Numbers in the second and third column are standardized coefficient beta.

Table 8 indicates that four news prominence variables were found to explain 31.2% of the variance in public's perceived significance, but was not at a significant level. Among four independent variables, however, total number of articles was turned out as a statistically significant determinant with a standardized beta of .514.

On the other hand, according to Table 8, a multiple linear regression shows that three news valence variables explain almost half of the variance in public feelings (46.8%) at the .005 level. Percentage of negative articles was the most powerful determinant to explain differences in public feelings (standardized beta=-.589). Therefore, the results support the hypothesis that the more negatively a foreign country is portrayed in the U.S. news media, the more negatively the country will be perceived by the U.S. public.

Table 8. Regression analysis of news prominence and valence on the public perceptions

Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	Public's perceived significance	Public feelings
News prominence		
Total number of articles	.514*	-
Length	.071	-
Position	-.057	-
Graphic use	-.180	-
Total R ²	.312	-
News valence		
Percentage of positive articles	-	-.048
Percentage of negative articles	-	-.589*
Valence proportion	-	.146
Total R ²	-	.468***

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Note. Numbers in the second and third column except total R² scores are standardized coefficient beta.

The third set of hypotheses suggested that the international public relations efforts of a foreign country will influence U.S. public perception. However, the results indicated that neither of international PR variables did contribute to public's perceived significance and public feelings in a meaningful extent at a significant level; 9.3% of variance in public's perceived significance and 11.3% of variance in public feelings can be accounted for number of PR contracts and dollar amount of the contracts (Table 9).

Model fitting

Because of limited sample size (N=24), test of proposed model fitness was restricted. Compared to the number of parameters to be estimated in the proposed model, 24 cases were

Table 9. Regression analysis of international PR on the public perceptions

Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	Public's perceived significance	Public feelings
International PR		
Number of PR contracts	.289	.050
Amount of PR contract prices	.026	.303
Total R ²	.093	.113

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Note. Numbers in the second and third column except total R² scores are standardized coefficient beta.

not sufficient for the SEM analysis. The result of analysis therefore caused some errors such as negative variance and inadmissible parameter solution. Because this problem could not be solved until more sample cases are collected, a model was modified in a way which decreases the number of indicators. Instead of two latent variables – news prominence and valence - and seven observed indicators linked with these two latent variables, one observed indicator for each latent variable was selected – total number of articles and percentage of negative articles - which was found out to best explain the relationships between variables through previous multiple regression analyses. Figure 6 shows the outcomes of the modified model fitting.

In this modified model, there is one latent variable, or international PR. Two observed indicators – number of PR contracts and amount of PR contract prices - were used for the unobserved latent variable, and squared multiple correlations (SMCs) were used to test the reliability of the observed indicators. Two international PR indicators were reported to have .652 and .548 score, which means that 65.2% and 54.8% of the observed indicators were explained by the latent variables (i.e., international PR).

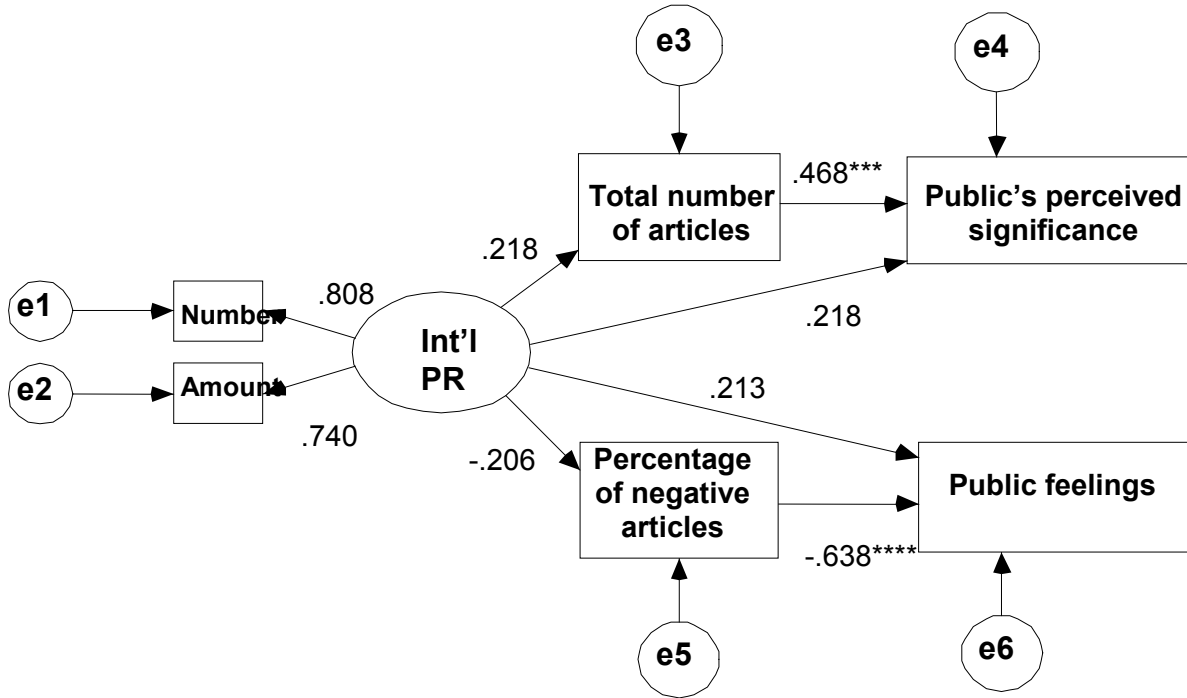


Figure 6. Modified model fitting

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$.

The standardized regression weight from total number of articles to public's perceived significance is .468 [critical ratio (CR) = 2.589] and is statistically significant ($p < .01$), and the regression weight from percentage of negative articles to public feelings is -.638 (CR = -4.181, $p < .001$). The results of model testing support two hypotheses: the more often a country is reported in the news, the more significantly the country is perceived by the U.S. public (H2-a); the more negatively a country is portrayed in the news, the more negatively the country is perceived by the public (H2-b).

The relationships between international PR efforts and news coverage were not statistically significant (H1-a and H1-b). The amount of international PR efforts was significantly related neither to total number of articles (standardized regression weight = .218,

CR=.901, $p=.357$) nor to percentage of negative articles (standardized regression weight =-.206, CR=-.850, $p=.395$).

Lastly, as for the direct causal relationships between international PR efforts and public perceptions (H3-a and H3-b), there is no statistical evidence to show the influence of international PR efforts on the public's perceived significance of foreign countries (standardized regression weight =.218, CR=1.016, $p=.309$) or on public feelings (standardized regression weight =.213, CR=1.159, $p=.247$).

In addition, the model fit indexes show that collected data do not fit for the proposed model [*Chi-square* (df=7) = 10.869, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .880, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .639]. Generally, the model is considered acceptable when GFI is greater than .9 and AGFI is greater than .8. Because these two measures failed to meet these criteria, the suggested model is not acceptable to explain the data.

Detailed statistics regarding the tested model are provided in Table 10.

Table 10. Estimates of model testing

Parameters	Model			
	Unstandardized	SE	CR	Std.
Regression Weights				
PR → Total number of articles	.016	.017	.901	.218
PR → Percentage of negative articles	.000	.000	-.850	-.206
PR → Amount of PR contract prices	1.000			.740
PR → Number of PR contracts	.002	.001	1.858	.808
PR → Public's perceived significance	.002	.002	1.016	.218
PR → Public feelings	.002	.002	1.159	.213
Total number of articles → Public's perceived significance	.062	.024	2.589***	.468
Percentage of negative articles → Public feelings	-70.028	16.749	-4.181****	-.638
Variance				
PR	2616990.696	1814664.031	1.442	
e1	4.995	4.905	3.339****	
e2	2161062.796	1456026.559	3.344****	
e3	12786.877	3829.972	1.484	
e4	161.085	48.541	1.018	
e5	.015	.005	3.319****	
e6	94.362	28.648	3.294****	

Note. SE = Standard Error; CR = Critical Ratio

$\chi^2(7) = 10.869, p = .144$; GFI=.880; AGFI=.639; NFI=.767; TLI=.738; CFI=.878; RMSEA=.155.

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$.

Chapter 5.

Discussion

Main issues

The results of hypotheses testing partially support the propositions of the second-level agenda-setting theory. How positively (or negatively) a country is portrayed in the news more influenced how people feel about the country than how prominently a country is reported in the news influenced how significantly the country is perceived by the public.

The strong relationship between total number of articles and the public's perceived significance of a country (standardized regression weight =.468) is consistent with the outcomes of Wanta et al.'s study (2004). Wanta et al. (2004) also found that the respondents' affective evaluation was not influenced by positive coverage of a country but by the negative coverage. In the current study, among three indicators of news valence, only percentage of negative articles turned out to be significantly related to public feelings.

The results of this study, however, did not provide statistical evidence to support a direct influence of international PR efforts on either news coverage or public perceptions even though hypothesized directions and decent scores of regression weights were estimated (around .22). The current study also showed that international PR bears a weak indirect effect on public perception of a foreign country, which is mediated by news coverage (.102 on public's perceived significance; .131 on public feelings). There are some possible explanations why international PR has only limited effects on media and public agenda.

Even though only international PR was considered to influence international news content and public perceptions in this study, there are a lot of influential factors to affect

news content and public perceptions of foreign countries. This study did not control other substantial factors, and followings may be such factors.

Firstly, historical events during the analysis timeframe may have influenced the news prominence and valence of certain countries in a certain way. For example, the 2002 World Cup and the 2002 Winter Olympics generated a considerable coverage. South Korea made it to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals and co-hosted this international sports event. Its performance and role may have produced a substantially positive coverage of the country. President Clinton's visit to China also produced a heavy positive coverage of China. On the other hand, the "War on terror" launched following September 11, 2001, must have produced a large number of negative articles about Middle Eastern countries. Severe conflicts with guerrillas and terrorist groups, and problems with international drug traffickers in Colombia caused noticeably high percentage of negative articles regarding the country. These historical events may encourage government-driven PR activities, but that does not always happen.

Second, some countries have involved long-lasting economic and political interests with the U.S. China and Russia are such cases, and they tend to be prominently portrayed by the U.S. media and also significantly perceived by the U.S public regardless their PR efforts. In addition, countries which have potential/current conflict with the U.S., especially military involvements, such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, tend to be considered significant because of potential damage on people's daily life as well as national interest. These countries rarely have PR contracts with U.S. firms, but U.S. publics perceive these countries as significant and U.S. media oftentimes cover these countries in their stories.

These factors – international historical event, economic/political interests with foreign countries, and potential/current threats of foreign countries - are generally regarded as having

high news value or news worthiness. Considering that countries or foreign affairs with high news value are likely to be appeared in the news media regardless of the countries' PR efforts, news value is another major determinant to affect news content and public perceptions.

Third, there are long-established public perceptions of foreign countries as allies or enemies in relation to the U.S. For example, Canada and Great Britain are traditional U.S. allies, and the favorable opinion about these countries has not been built in a short time. Such a long-established public perception may not be affected by short-term PR activities.

Lastly, although this study hypothesized that more international PR effort will lead people to consider the country as significant to the U.S., people in the survey may perceive the term "significant" somewhat differently from what the researcher conceptualized. A country's significance or vital interest can be considered as two different ways—positive or negative, but it seems that respondents in the CCFR survey were more likely to perceive these terms as negative (e.g., threat to national security) than positive. People tend to connect significance of a country with serious political or economic issues. For example, even if a country like Bahama makes huge PR efforts to promote tourism in the U.S., it is considered as a nice vacation destination, not necessarily as a "significant" country to the U.S. In contrast, countries like Iran and Syria are considered as significant to the U.S. without any PR activities in the U.S. because they are considered as enemies to threaten the U.S. national security.

There are some empirical cases to imply the influence of international PR on public perceptions and media coverage. For example, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea are enjoying high significance among U.S. public with having relatively many

contracts with the U.S. PR firms. In spite of the cases which support the potential of international PR, the effect seems to be offset by the other cases mentioned above.

This study is one of a few that quantified public relations and tried to find empirical evidence of PR influence on the news media and public perception. International PR efforts was operationally defined and quantified from the publicly available government-generated data. Lee (2004) argued that although the strategic public relations of foreign governments are a strong determinant of international news flows, along with environmental and relational factors, but how PR efforts actually work to achieve their objectives have yet to be critically examined. Even though the FARA dataset has some limitations, it is still the best available source of international PR data. How to improve and utilize this resource remains a challenge to future researchers.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future study

The first limitation of the study is that it used only 24 country cases for analysis (N=24) due to the limited availability of secondary data. Such a small number of cases did not only yield insufficient statistical power but also restricted the use of SEM analysis by producing negative variances and inadmissible parameter solutions. Therefore, it was not possible to test overall model fit which was originally proposed. And also, less rigorous significance test with the .10 level was conducted here due to relatively a very small size of cases. If more country cases are added from other secondary datasets or additional data gathering methods (e.g., a survey), SEM analysis of an overall model will be feasible, and the results may be more accurate and meaningful.

During the analysis, it also became apparent that the FARA dataset has critical limitations. First, not all contracts reported price. Because many contract prices are missing, the sum of PR contract prices does not represent the actual financial resources devoted to international PR efforts. For example, among the four PR contracts reported for Afghanistan, three contract prices were missing (one reported amount of a \$30,000) thereby underestimating Afghanistan's PR efforts. Second, the report reflects only contracts that are active at the time of data collection, and these contracts have different terms. Third, the majority of the countries (19 out of 24) included in the dataset had less than six government-driven PR contracts, and thus, the number of PR contracts were extremely skewed to 0 to 5. With such skewed distribution of data, a small number of country cases standing high in PR contract numbers may dominate the statistic result in their favor.

To overcome the limitations of the FARA dataset, new indicators need to be developed to more accurately assess international PR efforts. Two quantified indicators in this study could not capture the variety of PR efforts. One possible indicator is the number of foreign consular offices and their staffing strength. In the news articles analyzed in this study, most readers' opinions or responses to events and developments were provided by staff members working in foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. who support the interests of their countries by giving feedback to the news media. They also contribute to improving their respective national images by representing the point of view of their own countries and by justifying their perspectives. In addition, other strategic activities programmed by foreign governments (e.g., government-sponsored scholarships for foreign students, student exchange programs, and second language learning programs) are also potential indicators that may explain the influence of international PR.

Third, in the model suggested in this study, news coverage mediated the relationship between international PR efforts and public perception. The results showed a significant relationship between newspaper coverage and public perception rather than between international PR efforts and public perception, which bolsters traditional agenda-setting effects. However, to account for the diverse media environment, other types of media channels should be counted as influential communication sources for foreign publics, such as films, entertainment TV programs, and web sites.

Fourth, the results indicate that government-driven PR activities have a limited effect on public perception. People may be influenced mostly by individual-level experience, such as interpersonal relationships with foreign individuals and exposure to foreign cultures through traveling and cultural exchanges, rather than by programmed PR activities from foreign governments. Thus, it may be interesting to compare and contrast the effects of government-driven PR activities and individual-level experiences in future studies.

Lastly, including reverse directional effects (linkage from public perception to media content and international PR efforts, and from news content to international PR efforts) in the analysis may strengthen the model proposed in this study. For example, governments which are concerning about a negative national image among publics in a target country, may deliberately increase the PR efforts to improve their negative images. International PR activities of Iraq government in the U.S. (e.g., PR contracts reported in FARA) are an implicit evidence to show the possibility of reverse directional effect. Although considering reciprocal relationships requires researchers to confront difficulties in time control, these bidirectional interactions may help better understand the relationships among the variables examined in this study.

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Appendix A. Searching procedure and coding guideline for content analysis

1. Go to <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/form/academic/index.html>
2. Select “Guided News Search” tab
3. Select “General News” on Step One: Select a news category
4. Select “Major Papers” on Step Two: Select a news source
5. Select “New York Times, The” and “Washington Post, The” on Source List and click “Paste to Search”
6. Type “country name” in the blank and select “Headline” on Step Three: Enter search terms
 - Retrieve articles in an alphabetical order of country name
 - Use synonyms (Britain or England or UK) when searching articles associated with Britain
 - Use “and not” option with a restriction word to exclude the irrelevant articles for the following cases (“Paid Notice” for France; “New England” for Great Britain; “New Mexico” for Mexico; and “chicken” for Turkey)
7. Specify searching period as “From 01/01/02 to 06/30/02” on Step Four: Narrow to a specific date range
8. Click “Search” at the bottom, then you will see the list of news articles and the number of articles
9. Select every third articles. In other words, select No. 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 ... articles on the list. By doing so, approximately 33% of total articles will be selected for analysis.
9. Start coding each article selected and recording the data in the coding sheet following the coding instructions.

The screenshot displays the LexisNexis "Guided News Search" interface. It is divided into several sections:

- Academic Search Forms:** A sidebar menu with options like Quick Info, News, Business, Legal Research, Medical, and Reference.
- Search for Other Information:** A sidebar menu with options like Congressional, Government Periodicals Index, Statistical, and Academic.
- Quick News Search / Guided News Search:** The main search area, currently showing the "Guided News Search" tab.
 - Step One: Select a news category -- Entry Required:** A dropdown menu with "General News" selected.
 - Step Two: Select a news source -- Entry Required:** A dropdown menu with "Major Papers" selected, and a "Source List" link.
 - Step Three: Enter search terms -- Entry Required:** Three rows of search criteria. Each row has a dropdown for "and" (set to "and"), a text input field, and a dropdown for "Headline".
 - Step Four: Narrow to a specific date range -- Optional:** Radio buttons for "Previous six months" (selected) and "From: To:". The "From" field contains "01/01/02" and the "To" field contains "06/30/02".
 - Step Five: Search this publication title(s) -- Optional:** A text input field containing "New York Times, The" OR "Washington Post, The".
- Buttons:** "Search" and "Clear Form" buttons at the bottom right.

Appendix B. Coding sheet for content analysis

Variables	Instructions	Coding
ID	Assign consecutive integers from 1	
Country	Afghanistan (1); Argentina (2); Brazil (3); Canada (4); China (5); Colombia (6); Egypt (7); France (8); Germany (9); Great Britain (10); India (11); Iran (12); Iraq (13); Israel (14); Japan (15); Mexico (16); Nigeria (17); Pakistan (18); Russia (19); Saudi Arabia (20); South Africa (21); South Korea (22); Taiwan (23); Turkey (24)	
Source	New York Times=1 Washington Post=2	
Date	Date of article published in MM/DD/YY	
Length	Word count (Numeric)	
Position	Front page=3 Section front=2 Others=1	
Supplementary graphic device	Presence of caption for supplementary graphic device No caption=0 One or more captions =1	
Valence	Positive=1 Negative=2 Neutral=3	