Waseda University Doctoral Student Network (WUDSN)

Presentation by Troy Knudson, Waseda University, November 30th, 2010:

"A Political Institutional Approach to International News in the United States: The Case of China's Status as Most Favored Nation"

Abstract:

Image and perception have long played a role in formulating China policy in the United States. In this regard, among the most widely studied image-makers has been the elite news media, which have created images of China for American consumption for decades as well as reported on the political activity their images are said to induce.

While studies from a political science perspective have sought to establish the influence of the news media in the foreign policy making process of the United States, they have hardly kept up with the evolution of research on news media effects from the perspective of international communication. In the case of China, this discrepancy has led to findings that are largely descriptive and conclusions that are largely speculative, both of which have diminished the acceptance of the news media as a factor in international relations.

Rather than identifying and interpreting the political effects of news content, this study takes an institutional approach. A quantitative methodology of news coverage regarding China's status as most favored nation (1994-2000) is employed to ascertain if, and how, the news media acted as an institution in two respects: independently – through their selective emphasis on contingencies related to China's status as most favored nation as well as the valence of their representation of the relationship between the United States and China; and politically – through their relevance to political activity in the United States Congress.

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