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**News about China in the US Media since the Cold War's End:
Analysis of Economic Structural Determinants**

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Introduction

Since being introduced into scholarly discourse in the late 1950s (Schramm 1959), determinants of international news coverage in the United States (US) media have been the focus of increasingly more in depth and extensive research inquiry. Research has bridged the field of international communication with a wide range of other fields such as international relations, political communication, political science, business administration, and marketing. In a sense, the basis and reason for such an extensive inquiry is the assumption that news about foreign countries is one of the most pervasive and influential factors that shape a country's perception of the international world. Thus, other fields that depend on this perception have reason to be interested in the characteristics of international news. As Galtung and Ruge (1965) argue, "the regularity, ubiquity, and perseverance of news media...make them first rate competitors for the number one position as international image former."

This assumption has contributed to a vast literature on the agenda setting capacity of international news, and is relevant for policymakers just as much as it is for the news reading public (Kepplinger 2007). In this regard, agenda setting has often been said to occur as a two step process of salience transfer (Ghanem 1997). In the first step, an issue's salience in the media is transferred to the public's consciousness, where it is usually measured by opinion polls; in the second, the salience is transferred to actions taken by the public regarding international affairs, where it is usually measured by voter behavior. This process was initially considered to describe the process by which news salience set the agendas of policymakers. However, other research has shown that media influence need not pass through the public in order to affect policymakers' behavior (Brewer and McCombs 1996). Despite their differences, the objective of both approaches is the same: analyzing the influence of international news on reader perception to find causal relationships between the presentation of countries in the news and other international phenomena, including US foreign and trade policy (Ostgaard 1965).

In this regard, the present study asks a very broad initial question and provides just a glimpse at what a sufficient answer will look like. A great deal of further analysis will be required to properly address the scope of the question, which is: How does US news about East Asia impact the way the US conducts its relations with the region? The question is justified by the large amount of literature that has analyzed the relationship between politics and the press in the US in the context of international affairs. However, even though previous findings justify the type of inquiry, the legitimacy of the investigation itself must also be justified. Here, a broader international framework drawing from regional integration in East Asia can provide a relevant direction.

Regional integration in East Asia can be said to have a dual effect of altering the way East Asian countries relate to each other, as well as the way they relate to

countries outside the region and the way outside countries relate to the region as a whole (Kurlantzick 2007). In this sense, because of the role the US has played in shaping and defining the region, Tanaka (2007) argues, “It is impossible to understand East Asian developments without examining the role of the US.” But it is not clear what the role of the US will be in the future. Nor is it clear how much freedom the US will have in determining this role. What is clear, however, is that the way East Asian integration is perceived by the US will affect the actions it is free to take. It is also clear that international news will be responsible for creating a large part of this perception.

However, results that satisfy the scope of this inquiry must be arrived at from a stepwise process of individual analyses. The present study represents the initial phase of such a process and asks a more modest question that can be better addressed within the confines of a single working paper. Several months of research into the way news about East Asia is presented in the US media leads the author to believe that the following question creates a relevant starting point. The question is: How did China become the center of US news about East Asia after the Cold War?

Three relevant economic oriented frameworks drawn from the literature on the determinants of international news are considered as nonexclusive and interactive approaches to answering the research question. The first framework highlights the increasing emphasis placed on profit within the US news processing industry, known as market journalism, which affects the number of foreign correspondents sent abroad and their concentration in each country. This framework serves the purpose of describing the current state of international news gathering in the US as a function of the Cold War’s end. This study argues that since the end of the Cold War, the newsworthiness of most of East Asia can be defined in economic terms. Indeed, this argument had been made with respect to US international reporting as a whole: “In broad terms, the [news] shift is from military to economic affairs” (Seib 1997).

The remaining two frameworks make use of extra-media data to explain China’s ascent in importance to the US media. The first highlights the relevance of changing position and role within the world economy in determining a country’s newsworthiness to US news organizations. The second emphasizes the changing economic relevance of a country to the US. Variations of these frameworks have been approached qualitatively and quantitatively throughout the literature to validate research hypotheses. However, by arguing that these approaches can be used to analyze long term structural changes in news coverage about countries, the present study considers them not only as frameworks, but as “structural determinants” of international news, which can be defined as processes of change within news organizations or the international system that have long term effects on the way international news is processed and presented.

Regarding the type of media used in this study, some important distinctions between the two main types of news media – print and television – need to be clarified. Most initial research in this field made exclusive use of newspaper content, while studies from the last two decades have increasingly incorporated content from

newsmagazines and television news programs. Due to differences in how news is presented in print and on television, some determinants of news presentation have been found to be more compatible with one type of medium over another (Peer and Chestnut 1995). For example, stories that can be better expressed through a series of sensational visual images might be considered more compatible with television news, while detailed analyses of complex events, which require more space from the medium and more time from the reader, might be considered more compatible with newspapers and newsmagazines.

Furthermore, the two media types have been found to be more influential on different types of news consumers. While television news has been found to have more influence on the general public, whose political tools are largely limited to voting and protesting, newspapers and newsmagazines have been found to have more influence on elite decision makers, specifically those in high positions of political and economic power. It is important to note, however, that while changes in international news processing resulting from the structural frameworks emphasized here are consistent to both types of media, this study considers the elite level implications to be of more relevance to the initial question. For this reason, news data from two elite newspapers, widely accepted by scholars to be a major source of information about international affairs for Americans possessing the capacity to shape US international relations, are used: *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

Economic Determinants of International News

Research on the determinants of international news coverage can be traced back almost five decades. In one landmark study, Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified twelve variables they considered relevant for international coverage in four Norwegian newspapers during the 1960s. Their study dealt with the nature of events, as they sought to discern events that became news from those that did not, in addition to the characteristics of countries that received coverage as opposed to countries that did not. In subsequent literature, these two types of inquiries became the bases of two separate research streams, leading to two separate types of determinants: event oriented and context oriented. Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger (1987) first made this official distinction, arguing that it was consistent with the implied reasoning of the field's first generation of scholars: "What seems obvious is that the theoretical thinking can be grouped into two categories – context oriented versus event oriented, with the former being the dominant paradigm."

In short, event oriented determinants focus on the nature of an international news event being reported, regardless of where it happens. In contrast, context oriented determinants place a priority on where events happen; the specific characteristics of a country are seen as reasons some countries receive more coverage than others. In this sense, events are seen as occurring within the context of a country's current situation; rather than the event, it is the context itself that is newsworthy.

The ephemeral nature of event based coverage seems to provide another important distinction between the two categories. It might be argued that countries covered on the basis of context receive more consistent coverage regardless of events occurring within their borders. For this reason, these countries ascend and descend in importance within the US news over a longer and more gradual period of time than countries that receive only event based coverage. This is likely true in general terms, but the present study argues that event based and context based determinants become inextricably intertwined when analyzing patterns of coverage about one country over time. Just as a country's context can be used to predict the amount of coverage it will receive, context may also be able to predict the type of newsworthy events occurring within its borders. Similarly, a country's context may ultimately be quantifiable by assessing the progression of such newsworthy events.

Other scholars have offered similar categorizations under different headings, but with the same problem of categorical interdependence. Wu (1998), in a meta-analysis of the field's literature, distinguishes between the gatekeeper and logistical perspectives in determining newsworthiness. Under this taxonomy, scholars employing the gatekeeper (event oriented) perspective "directly addressed the various issues generated by the NWICO [New World Information and Communication Order] debates; therefore, those studies directly compared the determinants of coverage off/from the West with that off/from the Third World countries." Scholars employing the logistical (context oriented) perspective "investigated whether given factors would influence the acceptance rate of news transmitted from given countries without making distinctions with regard to the political nature or development level of countries." However, a look at the way these two categories of scholars legitimize their research reveals that their perspectives are interdependent and the implications of their findings are similar.

The NWICO, whose resolutions and recommendations were outlined in 1980 in a report by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, made clear distinctions between the way Western and Third World countries are covered in the world's free presses. According to the gatekeeper perspective, this distinction is manifest in the type of events receiving coverage. However, the logistical perspective has also made legitimate use of NWICO resolutions, arguing that factors creating the global context of international exchange determine disparities in the news. The accumulation of a number of studies employing this logic, and the need for a theoretical framework to govern it, led to an alternate stream of research in the field, which borrows elements from world system theory in order to explain a country's newsworthiness.

Country Position within the World System

The modern world system conceptualizes countries as components of a global structure that encompasses the international patterns of economic, political, social, and cultural exchanges. To distinguish it from previous world systems that existed in historical times, today's world system is commonly understood among scholars as the result of the

integration of local and national regions into “an aggressively expanding European-centered ‘world’ economy” (Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995). Based on their status and role within this system of exchange, countries are empirically separated by scholars into three interactive categories – periphery, semi-periphery, and core. In research on the determinants of international news, a country’s placement in a certain category is typically used as a predictor for the amount of coverage it will receive in the US news media. In some studies the category itself is the predictor, while in other studies the measurements that determine the category become predictors. In both instances, the world system as a determinant is logistical in the sense that Wu (1998) uses the term, even when it is a type of news event that is being predicted.

This determinant implies the existence of a hierarchy among countries covered and not covered in the news, which by itself is not a new development. As Chang (1998) argues, “Although not necessarily couched in the world system perspective, the notion of hierarchy among countries in international communication has long been recognized by scholars and researchers in political science, sociology, and mass communication.” In one of the first insights into an international relations approach to the flow of international news as well as other types of information, Hester (1973) proposes that a country’s hierarchical position in the world (geographic size, population, level of economic development, and number of years as a sovereign state) and level of economic association with other countries (in international trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and amount of foreign aid given or received) determine its patterns of international information exchange. While this finding does not suggest why news gatekeepers choose one type of news over another, it does shed light on the factors that influence the contents of the daily selection of news that gatekeepers have to choose from.

As mentioned above, much of the motivation for the initial research emphasizing this systemic determinant was the international debate instigated by the NWICO resolutions and the visible lack of balance in coverage given to countries representing the periphery, semi-periphery, and core (Schiller 1978; Haque 1983; Giffard 1984). As Chang (1998) continues, “This structural disparity of national status is considered an important factor in shaping the content, direction, and volume of traffic of news, entertainment, and information from country to country, especially between developed and developing nations. It is believed to be rooted in the larger inequity or imbalance of distribution of financial resources and communication technologies in the world that is generally configured by historical colonialism and contemporary economic practices.” Chang and other scholars have empirically shown the existence of this inequity and imbalance through correlations between the economic indicators proposed above by Hester (1973) and the amount of coverage a country receives in the world’s free presses (Kim and Barnett 1996; Chang, Lau, and Xiaoming 2000; Golan 2008).

However, while these studies reveal the modern world system as a systemic determinant of international news, they too often treat the system as if it were stagnant and unchangeable. Too few longitudinal studies that appreciate the possibility of ascent within the system have been undertaken to fully understand the way international

news reacts when the system changes. This is not the case in other research fields that value the world system as a relevant basis for theory, which may put to question the longevity of the system as a theoretical framework for determining international news. Indeed, since first being outlined by Wallerstein (1974), one of the most important restructurings the framework's parameters have undergone is the inclusion of the potential for ascent. This re-conceptualization has also altered the way scholars of international relations understand the process in which countries attain influence in world affairs, which is one reason for believing that the way international communication scholars understand the process by which countries receive coverage in the US news media can also be altered.

As a point of departure, the present study aims to move beyond the common interpretation of the world system as a stagnant determinant of international news, and include the possibility of countries ascending and descending within the system over time. In essence, this departure is an attempt to define the system instead as a structural determinant (defined above) of international news, with ascent in the system ultimately amounting to ascent in newsworthiness. Ascent is assumed to be a component of the nature of the modern world system, congruent with the need for capitalism to accumulate economic surplus by producing and selling commodities. Likewise, this accumulation is considered the force that increases international exchange in the form of exports, which is one of the indicators commonly used to determine a country's position and role within the world system.

However, only a longitudinal study of both international news itself and its determinants can reveal the factors influencing a country's ascent into its daily thread. Because "the economic ascent of China in the past two decades is the most dramatic change in the capitalist world economy of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries" (Ciccantell and Bunker 2004), and because China has simultaneously usurped Japan as the most extensively covered East Asian country by the US news media, this study considers China's change in position and role within the world system to be one relevant structural determinant. However, China's ascent in the world system does not alone explain its ascent in importance to US news organizations.

Country Relevance within the Dominant Frame

Of the original twelve factors proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) as having influence on the processing of international news, the variable that has arguably been most utilized is country relevance. Originally, the relevance of international news was metaphorically likened to the meaningfulness of a radio signal to potential listeners, "The more meaningful the signal, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to" Galtung and Ruge (1965). From the gatekeeper perspective, this variable may be stated as the relevance of an event within a country to the interest of news readers. However, before relevance can be identified and measured, it must first be defined. Ultimately, a country's relevance to the US depends on the nature of that country's relationship with the US. In keeping with the argument above regarding

China's economic ascent, the present study views the relevance of China to the US through the role the US plays in this ascent – namely, through China's exports to the US and US foreign direct investment (FDI) in China.

As Ciccantell and Bunker (2004) argue, "In any rising economy, strategies for economic ascent must respond to and take advantage of...the nation's position and location within that particular global economy." Thus, questions regarding the characteristics of the system itself must also be addressed to understand the context of China's ascent within it. In this regard, the East Asian trade-FDI nexus is relevant. As argued by Urata (2007), this nexus "results in increasing intraregional economic activities," but cannot be properly conceptualized without acknowledging the importance of non-regional economies such as the US. As part of the East Asian trade-FDI nexus, the US economy plays a specific role not only as a source of FDI, but as a final destination of products made in the region (Urata 2007). With these two processes working together, it can be argued that the importing of American products made in China has solidified China's economic relevance to the US and facilitated China's ascent in importance to the US news media.

China's ascent into a more favorable position in the world system is often seen as a product of the country's transition to a developmental state, which, as Ciccantell and Bunker (2004) argue, resulted from a combination of factors, including "the ending of the Cold War, the collapse of the socialist development model, the search for lower cost production sites by China's neighbors as their costs of production increased, the increasing investment of Chinese diaspora capitalists in China, and the transition from revolutionary leadership to younger, more innovative leadership in China." Although each of these factors is important, regarding China's ascent in important to news in the US, one factor consistently appears within the literature on determinants (since the 1990s). The ending of the Cold War is often considered by scholars in the field as a structural change so large that it necessitates the reevaluation of conclusions produced from decades of research (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991; Hoge 1993; and Wu 2000).

However, in order to understand the way the ending of the Cold War changed international news in the US, the characteristics of news during the Cold War must first be established. Here, the concept of dominant news frames, defined in several studies as "persistent patterns of presentations through which journalists organize their stories" (Tuchman 1978; Gitlin 1980; and Wanta and Hu 1993), is relevant. For international news in the US, the frame that sets the parameters of these patterns is consistently equivalent to the dominant conflict influencing US foreign policy. As Hoge (1993) argues, "The press has traditionally covered international affairs from the perspective of America's perceived interests." Specifically, as argued by Norris (1995), "For many decades the Cold War frame provided a simple and clear way for American reporters to select, structure, and prioritize complex news about international affairs." This structure was contingent upon the ideological differences between the US and the Soviet Union. However, as Seib (1997) argues, by the early 1990s, this framework "had become obsolete."

In one sense, the ending of the Cold War can be interpreted as a liberator of US international news. As Seib (1997) argues, “America’s national interests [had] to be redefined...and policymakers, their critics, and those who covered them enjoyed new flexibility.” According to Gwertzman (1993), newspapers at the time had “an opportunity to examine the different aspects of a society more fully.” However, this opportunity came with some inherent complexities that soured the liberation interpretation. Another interpretation likens the Cold War to a compass, without which international news in the US became lost Seib (1997). As Tefft (1993) argues, “Covering the world’s last communist power in the midst of extraordinary global economic and social change has turned the foreign press in Beijing into journalistic schizophrenics.” Furthermore, this lack of direction made international issues more difficult to cover for American journalists: “The challenge is even greater now because the press, if it is reporting these stories responsibly, has got to dig deep enough to understand the nuances” (Matlock 1993).

Ultimately, the most common assessment of what these challenges produced was the duality of a declining American interest in foreign affairs and an increasing emphasis on profit in news processing, a combination that contributed to decreases in the amount of international news appearing in print and on television, and a fewer number of foreign correspondents working abroad. As this duality, which is often placed in the context of a broader phenomenon known as market journalism, became more entrenched throughout the 1990s, it impacted the way most countries were covered. Specifically, because less space was allotted to international news, a country needed to be particularly relevant to the US in order for news about it to be justified. Although coverage about most East Asian countries decreased, this was not the case with China. The present study considers the changing relevance of China’s economic relationship with the US as a second structural determinant that, when seen in the context of the frameless and profit oriented practice of processing international news instigated by the ending of the Cold War, influenced China’s ascent in importance within the news.

Market Journalism and China’s Centrality

Shanor (2003) describes the recent emphasis placed on profit in the US news media as a victory of news organization bookkeepers in an ongoing struggle with gatekeepers for influence over operations: “The business side of both broadcast and print journalism has always had a role in determining what stories are covered and to what extent. But in recent years the managers have far eclipsed the editors in determining the content of the news, with profit replacing professional judgments of what is important.” This change in priority and its outcomes have been attributed to a change in management style, which has arguably altered the main purpose of international news processing. As one newspaper publisher interviewed by Shanor (2003) laments, “The pursuit of quarterly profits and the wish to satisfy shareholder interests and demands have replaced the traditional management system. It used to be that being the best in

journalism was what mattered. That was when the leaders of the newspaper business were the publishers...Now newspapers are in the hands of the marketing people.”

Throughout the 1990s, US news organizations took several courses of action to limit international news in an effort to meet the aims of this new emphasis; the overarching and most repercussive decision was the closing of foreign bureaus. Today, most US newspapers that used to file some of their own foreign reporting (e.g. *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Detroit News*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, etc.) have closed all their foreign bureaus, leaving only four newspapers with the capacity to send correspondents abroad – *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. However, this rebalancing of priorities in news processing still became evident at these organizations, as less important bureaus (if not closed) were given fewer resources or were moved to other cities thought to be better able to generate profitable news.

Today in East Asia, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* both have bureaus in Tokyo, which are also responsible for covering North and South Korea. The *Los Angeles Times* has a bureau in Jakarta that is responsible for covering Southeast Asia, but at the *Washington Post*, this region is also the responsibility of the Tokyo bureau. However, the two newspapers each have two bureaus in China, one in Shanghai that is responsible for economics news and one in Beijing. The *New York Times* is similar with bureaus in Tokyo, Shanghai, and Beijing. However, rather than a bureau in Southeast Asia, it has one in Hong Kong that also contributes to coverage of China. The *Wall Street Journal* publishes an Asian version called the *Wall Street Journal Asia*, which itself has bureaus throughout East Asia: Bangkok, Beijing, Hanoi, Hong Kong (main), Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Taipei, and Tokyo. However, this version is neither printed nor circulated within the US, so its impact on US readers is limited to those articles that get picked up by the US version.

The closing of foreign bureaus and reduction of overseas personnel by US news organizations has impacted the flow of international news into the US in at least two ways. One is regarding the amount of stories being reported, which affects the contextual continuity that helps explain the events that do receive coverage (Shanor 2003); another is regarding the ability of personnel to adequately research stories, which affects the depth and extent to which countries can be covered. If China's ascent within the world system and increasing relevance to the US after the Cold War help explain the reason China has ascended in importance to US news organizations in the last two decades, then the recent emphasis on profit helps explain the reason other East Asian countries did not follow suit, leaving coverage of China to dominate US coverage of the entire region. As the emphasis on profit becomes more entrenched over time, the effects of these two phenomena on the coverage of all East Asian countries except China become more noticeable.

One way these effects can be seen is in the utilization of foreign correspondents and news agencies by the newspapers that still gather news through foreign bureaus. In general, when a newspaper has a foreign bureau in a country, the longer analytical

stories about the region for which it is responsible will be written by a foreign correspondent. Shorter articles bought from news agencies, which have their own correspondents in the same country or region, are typically used to provide daily continuity for the more analytical stories or to break a story that needs immediate coverage. However, as Shanor (2003) argues, “The correspondent can’t have a lofty detachment from everyday events, or he or she won’t be able to understand the big picture.” For this reason, correspondents also frequently write shorter articles when they are not occupied by a more analytical story. Indeed, the ideal situation at a foreign bureau is to have a number of correspondents, some who can write the more frequent and continuous articles while others research stories of more complexity. The reduction of personnel results in correspondents either writing fewer analytical stories or giving news agencies a larger responsibility in providing continuity, both of which can be easily measured by looking at the articles with datelines from that country.

These effects can also be observed in whether countries receive exclusive coverage or if they mostly make appearances in coverage about other countries. As mentioned above, some foreign bureaus in East Asia are responsible for covering a large number of countries in the region. Especially regarding countries where foreign bureaus used to exist, it seems logical that this situation would increase the number of stories that include coverage about multiple countries. In this way, one characteristic of a country’s declining coverage might be its placement in the context of coverage about a more relevant country. In a previous study, utilizing the analytical tool of network analysis known as degree centrality, the author reveals that news about China increasingly became the focal point of news in the *New York Times* about all Northeast Asian countries between 2002 and 2006 (Knudson 2008). As Japan was the most centralized country from 2002 to 2003, the findings show that the reorganizing of news gathering resources in the region has resulted in China usurping Japan as the region’s most centralized country in the US news. To partially explain this focus on China, the present study models the significance of two independent variables – China’s position in the world system and economic relevance to the US – as predictors of the importance attributed to news about China since the end of the Cold War.

Coding Scheme, Variables, and Hypothesis

The Cold War was symbolically ended at the Malta Summit between US President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1989. Because the present study is interested in changes in the news about China since the end of the Cold War, the beginning of 1991, which allows a full year to pass after the symbolic ending, is considered a reliable starting point for recording post Cold War coverage of China. The recorded coverage proceeds in one year increments through 2006. The Lexis-Nexis portal was used to obtain articles about China from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. In order to ensure that each article would be about China, the search was limited to articles that included a Chinese city in the dateline. This means that

each article retrieved was written in China, presumably by a foreign correspondent assigned to cover China.

The search was further limited to articles that included the word “China” at least fifteen times. This procedure was taken for two reasons: first, it strengthened the assumption that the articles are about China; second it reduced the number of articles to make the coding more manageable. However, in the midst of coding, it was noticed that this delimiting did not apply exclusively to article content, but also included the automatic geographic relevance function applied to any article search on Lexis-Nexis. Thus, some articles likely did not mention China fifteen times, but rather mentioned something related to China that prompted the automatic function to respond. However, this is not considered a limitation as more articles were likely retrieved, resulting in more accurate data.

Each article retrieved was coded for its position in the newspaper and its length. Regarding article position, a four point coding scheme was used. A code of four was given to an article that appeared on the front page of the newspapers’ first section. A code of three was given to an article that appeared on the front page of any subsection (for example, the business section or sports section). A code of two was given to an article that appeared on any other page in the newspapers’ first section. A code of one was given to an article that appeared on any other page of any subsection within the newspaper. This four point coding scheme for article location is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Location of Article Coding Scheme

| Section | Page | Code |
|-----------|-----------|------|
| Not First | Not front | 1 |
| First | Not front | 2 |
| Not First | Front | 3 |
| First | Front | 4 |

Regarding article length, a coding scheme sensitive to increments of 500 words was used. Because the shortest articles were less than 500 words and the longest article was 5,728 words, the range of the scale was twelve. This twelve point coding scheme for article length is shown on Table 2. The total number of articles, average yearly values for article location and length are shown on Table 3.

Table 2: Length of Article Coding Scheme

| Words | Code | Words | Code | Words | Code |
|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| 1-499 | 1 | 2,000-2,499 | 5 | 4,000-4,499 | 9 |
| 500-999 | 2 | 2,500-2,999 | 6 | 4,500-4,999 | 10 |
| 1,000-1,499 | 3 | 3,000-3,499 | 7 | 5,000-5,499 | 11 |
| 1,500-1,999 | 4 | 3,500-3,999 | 8 | 5,500-5,999 | 12 |

Table 3: Number, Average Location, and Average Length of Articles

| Year | Articles | Location | Length |
|------|----------|----------|--------|
| 1991 | 156 | 2.21 | 2.29 |
| 1992 | 197 | 2.16 | 2.30 |
| 1993 | 181 | 2.28 | 2.54 |
| 1994 | 196 | 2.24 | 2.41 |
| 1995 | 211 | 2.42 | 2.50 |
| 1996 | 246 | 2.26 | 2.47 |
| 1997 | 208 | 2.39 | 2.53 |
| 1998 | 341 | 2.31 | 2.40 |
| 1999 | 376 | 2.28 | 2.40 |
| 2000 | 362 | 2.33 | 2.47 |
| 2001 | 277 | 2.64 | 2.72 |
| 2002 | 188 | 2.56 | 2.86 |
| 2003 | 231 | 2.42 | 2.69 |
| 2004 | 200 | 2.58 | 2.90 |
| 2005 | 274 | 2.28 | 2.68 |
| 2006 | 212 | 2.44 | 2.70 |

Dependent Variable

This study combines the coding schemes employed to determine the location and length of articles to assess those articles' importance within the news. In this regard, the surface of newspaper pages is likened to a kind of real estate. Regarding article location, articles that appear closer to the front of the newspaper are considered more valuable than those that appear in the back pages. It should be commonsense that the most important news articles of a certain day appear on the front page of the newspaper's first section. Other important articles appear on the front pages of subsections, which are more content specific and aim to attract the interest of a specific kind of reader. Similarly, regarding article length, articles that occupy more space are considered more valuable. Article length may also signify the depth into which the article can cover an event; in order to breach the boundary between factual news and analytical news, space is required.

Thirty-one combinations of values for location and length were found. The thirty-one point coding scheme for article importance and the corresponding location and length values are listed in Table 4. Rather than systematically applying more weight to either location or length, each combination of values was carefully considered before corresponding it with a value for importance. For instance, an article with a length value of two that appeared in the back pages of the first section is given the importance value of five, while an article with a length value of three that appeared in the back pages of a subsection is given a higher importance value of six. Similarly, an article with

a length value of two that appeared on the front page of a subsection is given the importance value of seven. Other methods for applying the importance values could have been used, but the author considers this method to represent a realistic attribution of article importance. The average yearly value for article importance is shown on Table 5.

Table 4: Importance of Article Coding Scheme

| Location | Length | Importance |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 2 | 2 | 5 |
| 1 | 3 | 6 |
| 3 | 2 | 7 |
| 2 | 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 2 | 9 |
| 1 | 4 | 10 |
| 3 | 3 | 11 |
| 2 | 4 | 12 |
| 4 | 3 | 13 |
| 1 | 5 | 14 |
| 3 | 4 | 15 |
| 2 | 5 | 16 |
| 4 | 4 | 17 |
| 1 | 6 | 18 |
| 3 | 5 | 19 |
| 2 | 6 | 20 |
| 4 | 5 | 21 |
| 3 | 6 | 22 |
| 4 | 6 | 23 |
| 3 | 7 | 24 |
| 4 | 7 | 25 |
| 3 | 8 | 26 |
| 4 | 8 | 27 |
| 4 | 9 | 28 |
| 4 | 10 | 29 |
| 4 | 11 | 30 |
| 4 | 12 | 31 |

Table 5: Average Importance of Articles

| Year | Importance | Year | Importance |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| 1991 | 6.5962 | 1999 | 7.1144 |
| 1992 | 6.5787 | 2000 | 7.5359 |
| 1993 | 7.6906 | 2001 | 9.0433 |
| 1994 | 7.1224 | 2002 | 9.3670 |
| 1995 | 7.8389 | 2003 | 8.3593 |
| 1996 | 7.3780 | 2004 | 9.3500 |
| 1997 | 7.8894 | 2005 | 8.2664 |
| 1998 | 7.2023 | 2006 | 8.6604 |

Independent Variables

The present study attempts to model the significance of two independent variables – China’s position in the world system and economic relevance to the US – as predictors of the above importance value attributed to news about China. Thus, it is hypothesized that these two independent variables can be modeled as significant predictors without violating any of the model’s assumptions.

Regarding world system position, Gunaratne (2001) argues that unlike gross domestic product (GDP), which is by itself commonly used to assess a country’s position, the size of a country’s exports represents its “ability to expand into the global economy on a competitive basis.” Gunaratne (2001) proposed that combining a country’s percentage of the world’s total GDP with its percentage of the world’s total exports provides a more realistic assessment of its world system position that take into account its global export competitiveness. In Gunaratne’s (2001) study, a coefficient that gives a weight of fifty-five percent to percentage of world GDP and a weight of forty-five percent to percentage of world exports is utilized.

The present study agrees with Gunaratne (2001) that percentage of world GDP and percentage of world exports are both relevant for assessing a country’s position in the world system; this may especially be true for China, which has become renowned for its economic transformation through the manufacturing and exporting of products. However, this study cannot justify applying more weight to either GDP or exports, thus they are weighted evenly. The equation used for measuring China’s ascent in the world system is as follows: $[(\%GNP \times 50\%) + (\%Exports \times 50\%)]$. China’s yearly percentage of world GDP and world exports, as well as the world system position (WS) coefficient are shown in Table 6. Figures for GDP were obtained from the World Bank World Development Indicators; figures for exports were obtained from the World Trade Organization Statistics Database.

Table 6: China's % of World GDP and World Exports, and WS Coefficient

| Year | % of World GDP | % of World Exports | WS Coefficient |
|------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1991 | 1.99% | 1.97% | 0.0198 |
| 1992 | 2.22% | 2.20% | 0.0221 |
| 1993 | 2.49% | 2.41% | 0.0245 |
| 1994 | 2.73% | 2.87% | 0.0280 |
| 1995 | 2.94% | 2.93% | 0.0293 |
| 1996 | 3.13% | 2.88% | 0.0301 |
| 1997 | 3.30% | 3.36% | 0.0333 |
| 1998 | 3.47% | 3.38% | 0.0343 |
| 1999 | 3.62% | 3.48% | 0.0355 |
| 2000 | 3.77% | 3.90% | 0.0384 |
| 2001 | 4.03% | 4.32% | 0.0418 |
| 2002 | 4.31% | 5.00% | 0.0466 |
| 2003 | 4.62% | 5.64% | 0.0513 |
| 2004 | 4.90% | 6.28% | 0.0559 |
| 2005 | 5.23% | 7.02% | 0.0613 |
| 2006 | 5.58% | 7.74% | 0.0666 |

Following Urata's (2007) argument that the US is one of the most important final destinations of products made in China, China's percentage of total exports to the US is used as one indicator of China's relevance. Hester (1973) also considers this type of relevance to be part of the construct of economic association between countries. Furthermore, in a study of news coverage of thirty-eight countries, Wu (2000) found international trade to be a leading predictor of the amount of coverage a country receives. Relevance has been measured in similar ways by Shoemaker, Danielian, and Brendlinger (1991), Golan and Wanta (2003), Stone and Xiao (2007), and Golan (2008).

A second indicator of China's economic relevance is the percentage of total US FDI that goes to China. A method similar to the one used to obtain a coefficient for China's world system position is used to assess China's increasing economic relevance to the US. The two indicators are combined in following equation for obtaining an economic relevance coefficient: $[(\%Imports \times 50\%) + (\%FDI \times 50\%)]$. China's yearly percentage of total exports to the US and FDI from the US, as well as the relevance (ER) coefficient are shown in Table 7. Figures for exports to the US were obtained from the US Census Bureau foreign trade statistics records; figures for US FDI were obtained from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development International Direct Investment Statistics Yearbook.

Table 7: China's % of US Imports and US FDI, and ER Coefficient

| Year | % of US Imports | % of US FDI | ER Coefficient |
|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1991 | 3.11% | 0.09% | 0.0160 |
| 1992 | 3.92% | 0.11% | 0.0202 |
| 1993 | 4.42% | 0.16% | 0.0229 |
| 1994 | 4.84% | 0.42% | 0.0263 |
| 1995 | 5.11% | 0.40% | 0.0275 |
| 1996 | 5.39% | 0.48% | 0.0294 |
| 1997 | 6.00% | 0.59% | 0.0330 |
| 1998 | 6.47% | 0.63% | 0.0355 |
| 1999 | 6.64% | 0.77% | 0.0371 |
| 2000 | 6.90% | 0.85% | 0.0387 |
| 2001 | 7.47% | 0.83% | 0.0415 |
| 2002 | 8.95% | 0.66% | 0.0481 |
| 2003 | 10.06% | 0.66% | 0.0536 |
| 2004 | 11.12% | 0.74% | 0.0593 |
| 2005 | 12.19% | 0.80% | 0.0649 |
| 2006 | 13.06% | 0.93% | 0.0699 |

Statistical Analysis

The Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0 with the SPSS Trends Version 16.0 add-on module was used to build a regression model to determine the significance of the change of China's world system position and economic relevance to the US as predictors of the change in importance of news coverage about China in the US news media. Because this analysis utilizes longitudinal data, it is most appropriate to use an auto-regression integrated moving average (ARIMA) model that is capable of dealing with autocorrelation, an unwanted but common characteristic of longitudinal data. It is important to note that unlike previous versions of SPSS Trends, Version 16.0 has an Expert Modeler function that "automatically identifies and estimates the best-fitting ARIMA model" according to characteristics of the dependent variable(s) (SPSS 2007).

After entering the variables into the modeler, no ARIMA model could be found in which the independent variables were significant predictors. However, with a time series analysis, this is not necessarily an indication of a poor model if the variables have not been transformed. The T4253H Smoothing function in the SPSS Base was used to transform the variables. This function tends to rid variables of irregular variation, which facilitates the identification of trends within the series. However, by enhancing the visibility of trends, the function also exacerbates the presence of autocorrelation within the variables, which makes any ARIMA model based on the variables unreliable. Thus, the Expert Modeler can be expected to find an ARIMA model that rectifies this problem by differencing the variables, which makes them stationary by centering their

series on zero. The transformed series of the variables are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Transformed Dependent and Independent Variables

| Year | Dependent Variable | Independent Variables | |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | Importance | WS Coefficient | ER Coefficient |
| 1991 | 6.5962 | 0.0198 | 0.0161 |
| 1992 | 6.7939 | 0.0222 | 0.0198 |
| 1993 | 7.1421 | 0.0248 | 0.0230 |
| 1994 | 7.4675 | 0.0272 | 0.0256 |
| 1995 | 7.5791 | 0.0291 | 0.0278 |
| 1996 | 7.5433 | 0.0308 | 0.0301 |
| 1997 | 7.4558 | 0.0325 | 0.0327 |
| 1998 | 7.3881 | 0.0341 | 0.0351 |
| 1999 | 7.4670 | 0.0358 | 0.0371 |
| 2000 | 7.8834 | 0.0384 | 0.0393 |
| 2001 | 8.4777 | 0.0420 | 0.0428 |
| 2002 | 8.7974 | 0.0464 | 0.0478 |
| 2003 | 8.8054 | 0.0512 | 0.0536 |
| 2004 | 8.7207 | 0.0561 | 0.0593 |
| 2005 | 8.6676 | 0.0613 | 0.0648 |
| 2006 | 8.6604 | 0.0666 | 0.0700 |

After transforming the variables, they were reentered into the modeler. As expected, an ARIMA (0 2 0) model was found to be the most appropriate model type, which means that a second order difference was taken on the dependent variable in order to remove the unwanted autocorrelation. In addition, both independent variables were found to be significant predictors with a third order difference. The WS Coefficient variable was found to be highly significant at lags of zero and one, while the ER Coefficient variable was found to be highly significant at a lag of zero, but with its effect delayed by an interval of one. The stationary R squared for the model, which “provides an estimate of the proportion of the total variation in the series that is explained by the model” was also very high at 0.965 (SPSS 2007). The ARIMA model statistics and parameters are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: ARIMA (0 2 0) Model Statistics and Parameters (Transformed)

| Variables | Difference | Numerator | Delay | Significance |
|----------------|------------|-----------|-------|--------------|
| Constant | 2 | | | 0.028 |
| WS Coefficient | 3 | Lag 0 | | 0.001 |
| | | Lag 1 | | 0.000 |
| ER Coefficient | 3 | Lag 0 | 1 | 0.000 |

Stationary R²: 0.965

The results from the Expert Modeler not only show which model is most appropriate for analyzing the relationships between the variables, but also answers questions commonly related to time series analyses. For example, it might be argued that economic data from one year prior, in addition to the same year, makes a more relevant predictor of the importance of news about a given country than the data taken separately. This logic implies that the effects of economic changes will linger for an extra year rather than being completely superseded after one year. The Expert Modeler can show simultaneously the significance of an independent variable's same and previous year data so that they can be compared. In Table 9, this comparison is easy to make by looking at the lag order found in the Numerator column. The numerator order applies when "previous values from the independent (predictor) series are used to predict current values of the dependent series" (SPSS 2007). An order of zero means that only same year data was used in the prediction, while an order of one means that data from one year prior as well as the same year are used. For the variable WS Coefficient, orders of zero and one are both significant predictors.

Similarly, it may be argued that a given year's independent variable data is actually a better predictor of the next year's dependent variable. In the present study, this would imply that one year's economic activity would require some time before its effects can be observed in the news media. The Expert Modeler is also able to recognize when this type of effect exists, as can be seen Table 9's Delay column. Simply put, "Delay causes the independent variable's influence to be delayed by the number of intervals specified" (SPSS 2007). A delay of one on the zero order lag of the variable ER Coefficient means that a given year's economic relevance indicator was a significant predictor only of the next year's importance of news. The predicted values of the model are shown in Table 10, and can be compared to the values of the dependent variable in Table 8 to assess the model's predictive capacity.

Table 10: ARIMA (0 2 0) Predicted Importance Values

| Year | Importance | Year | Importance |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| 1995 | 7.5613 | 2001 | 8.4308 |
| 1996 | 7.5082 | 2002 | 8.8185 |
| 1997 | 7.5327 | 2003 | 8.8129 |
| 1998 | 7.3730 | 2004 | 8.7293 |
| 1999 | 7.4394 | 2005 | 8.7157 |
| 2000 | 7.8895 | 2006 | 8.6345 |

Discussion

The present study has attempted to model the significance of China's ascent within the world system and increasing economic relevance to the US as predictors of the importance of news about China in the US media. Because a previous study by the

author has observed that China is the most continuously covered country in East Asia, this study's purpose was to investigate some possible reasons. Some scholars seem content to believe that the phenomenon can be explained as a transferred focus of the anticommunist news frame from the Soviet Union to China after the ending of the Cold War. As Stone and Xiao (2007) argue, "China became the largest remaining communist country, and US policy regarded it more as an enemy nation after the fall of the Soviet Union," which suggests that "the US media mirror their government's policy toward other nations." However, researchers that have investigated post Cold War changes in the way international news is processed argue that the anticommunist frame became obsolete after the Cold War ended, which would leave no reason for the focus of the frame to be transferred to another country.

The present study incorporates this argument as one contributing factor to the increasing emphasis on profit within US news organizations. Specifically, the lack of a dominant frame for international news is argued to have created an opportunity for news organizations to overhaul their international news gathering departments. The newspapers that did not close all of their foreign bureaus redistributed their resources in favor of countries that were considered more newsworthy. In East Asia, several foreign bureaus of elite newspapers were closed or downsized, leaving China with the largest number of bureaus and foreign correspondents. For some different geographic regions, some noneconomic factors may have influenced the outcome of this redistribution, but in East Asia it can be argued that the factors were largely economic. As Seib (1997) argues, "The [news] shift is from military to economic affairs...Now the economic aspect is more dominant because nations' relative holdings of tanks and bombers and warheads are comparatively less important."

To test the validity this argument, articles about China that appeared in two elite newspapers from 1991 to 2006 were coded for length and location in the newspapers in an attempt to quantify the importance of news about China. This value can also be considered as representative of the interest of the media as well as the public in news about China. As Shanor (2003) argues, "If a foreign story is headlined on the front pages morning after morning...it can be said to have the public's attention. If it is a short, routine account buried down among...the classifieds...it doesn't."

After a review of the literature on the determinants of international news, it was found that a country's position in the world system and its economic relevance have been considered by several studies as important determinants of international news – for the US media in particular. However, as these determinants have not been found to apply to all countries, this study tested their ability to predict the importance of coverage of China. Specifically, the ability of changes within these factors over time since the end of the Cold War to predict the importance of post Cold War coverage of China was tested. China's GNP and value of exports to the world were combined to represent China's yearly world system position, while the percentage of US imports from China among all US imports and the percentage of US FDI in China among all US FDI are combined to represent China's annual economic relevance to the US.

The results of the time series analysis indicate that both variables are significant, but only after first being transformed by the T4253H Smoothing function in the SPSS Base. Specifically, a given year's importance of news about China was significantly predicted by China's world system position the same year as well as when China's position the previous year was also taken into account. This means that a given year's change or ascent was just as significant a predictor of the importance of the following year's news as it was for the same year's news. The relevance of this finding can be interpreted by a visual observance of a plot of the transformed data representing China's ascent in the world system. The sequence more acutely rises upward after 2000 and continues on a linear path through 2006. If the model provided in this study is accepted, then it can be expected that the importance of news about China will continue to rise in the near future.

Wu (2000), arguing that with this type of analysis data from the same year "cannot...logically infer an explanation," uses trade data from one year prior to illustrate its impact on news coverage. This logic is confirmed by the present study, as China's economic relevance to the US was only a significant predictor of the importance of the following year's news. Similar to China's world system position, the relevance of this finding can be seen in a sequence plot of the transformed data, which rises linearly and even more acutely than China's world system position from 2001 to 2006. Together, the significance of both variables as predictors of the importance of news about China can be interpreted as an indicator of China's increasing importance to the US.

One of the tenets of this study is that the increase in relevance for China cannot be obtained without a cost on the importance of other countries. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to verify (indeed, this is one of the main limitations yet to be overcome by the study), one such cost may be on the level of importance given to other East Asian countries. If what is important in the US news media is any indication of what is important to the US itself, then it might be concluded that the US is focusing increasingly more on China and increasingly less on other East Asian countries. The reason offered by the present study is related to China's ascent in world system position and economic relevance to the US. However, while these two indicators were shown to be significant in their respective ways, it has not been the aim of this study to exclude other possible factors. Indeed, another limitation of this study is that it does not consider other types of determinants in order to strengthen its case. Nevertheless, the two determinants focused on by this study should obviously not be excluded from any future explanatory framework that considers a broader range of factors.

As mentioned above, the ultimate purpose of this study is to relate the phenomenon under investigation to the role the US will have in the future of East Asian integration. Here, at least two reasons for studying the characteristics of how the region is presented in the US news are relevant. In one sense, international news in the US may be considered as an overall picture of the way in which the US perceives the rest of the world. In contrast to domestic affairs, much of what Americans know about other countries comes from the news they watch or read. If conclusions from the literature on

agenda setting theory are accepted, then issue or country salience found in the news gets transferred to both the general public and policymakers upon consumption. Thus, gaining an understanding of how East Asia is presented in the news can provide insight into how Americans perceive what or which countries are important in the region. This perception may then be useful in explaining actions and behaviors of the US that affect the region and its process of integration.

In another sense, agenda setting can be considered in more specific terms of opinion construction and persuasion, as was explained above in the two step agenda setting process. Even though the US is not an East Asian country, and even if it never becomes an official member of the integration process, increasing patterns of international exchange across the Pacific Ocean guarantee its connectedness to the region. Because of this connectedness, there will likely be times when foreign policy or trade policy decisions, regarding the either the region itself or some product made in the region, will need to be made. During these times, it can be expected that a great deal of the information upon which policymakers will base their opinions will come from the news. Studies that address these types of relationships require an analysis that considers the actual content of the news, which the present study does not do. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the significant relationships shown in this study will facilitate the finding of an appropriate direction for future studies to take.

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