

DISTANCE THEORY: AN EXAMINATION OF DISTANCE AND SALIENCE  
IN MEDIA ATTRIBUTE ASSIGNMENT  
AND AGENDA BUILDING

by

SKYE CHANCE COOLEY

GARY COPELAND, COMMITTEE CHAIR

KARLA GOWER  
SHUHUA ZHOU  
KIMBERLY BISSELL  
ROBERT GOIDEL

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of  
Communication and Information Sciences  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2011

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how previous salience on the news agenda, assigned attributes, and assigned valences of an object in the news media and the distance in time from that object determine how media assign attributes and valences to that object in the future. The concept of Frequency of Object Coverage Arcs (FOCA) defines object salience for the study. The two key components of prediction of future coverage are distance in time of the FOCA and distance in time between FOCAs, the overall valences, driving forces of coverage, and assigned attributes were the primary dependent variables. The primary findings of the study featured two main points: First, that distance in time between FOCAs was a predictor of overall valence changes, the longer the time frame between FOCAs, the greater shifts in overall valence from one FOCA to the next. The second, that as distance in time of an FOCA increased, the more likely the future FOCA would have the same assigned attributes and driving force of coverage. Distance in time between FOCAs does not serve as a predictor of attribute assignment of future FOCAs nor does length of the FOCA predict overall valence of future FOCAs. The dissertation also makes theoretical contributions to the construct of scaled unobtrusiveness and mass aggregate opinion, the implications of which are also discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people I wish to thank for all of their contributions to this project. First, everyone in my committee: Dr. Copeland, thank you for three years of guidance, encouragement, mentoring and friendship. Dr. Gower, thank you for your endless patience and for going over draft, after draft, after draft with me every Thursday for two semesters. Dr. Zhou, thank you for always challenging me and taking my research to levels I never imagined it. Dr. Bissell, thank you for helping me see the larger picture and putting research, job search, and the entire process in perspective and for giving me marathon tips. Dr. Goidel, thank you for the years of hilarity and friendship, and thank you for singing “Love Shack” at my wedding.

To my dear friend Jeff Naidoo, who is probably the only other human being on the planet not directly affiliated with this document that will ever read it in its entirety, thank you for always supporting me, always staying positive, always coming to the gym on time, and absolutely being the kindest, most sincere person I have ever known. You are, and always will be, a brother to me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. My mother and father for always calling and checking on me, buying me clothes for interviews, and in general for being great parents. A special thanks to my wife Asya, whose love, cooking, and all around wonderfulness has made my life complete and this process much, much easier. Thank you for putting up with me and helping me so much, I love you. Finally, to my three brothers, thank you for not helping me at all because any input from any of you would certainly have ruined this document. I love all of you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The effects of media consumption have been constantly examined in the modern age (Klapper, 1960; McCombs, M & Shaw, D.,1972; Gauntlett, D.,2005). Modern media have been seen as a vehicle to incite war, an education forum to increase awareness and civic response, a despot leading the moral decay of society, and an innovation by which we can reach the resources of an entire world with the flip of a channel, a click of a mouse, or the answering of a customized ringtone. The reality is that media have many powerful roles in our development of thought and behaviors. Much of the scholarly work concerning media and its ability to shape attitudes, prime thoughts, and alter behavior has focused on the news media in particular. The prominence of the news media in social science research is in large part due to the recognition that news media do much more than simply entertain an audience and allow advertisers to sell products. The news media inform the public on everything from local events to global occurrences. How, when, from where, and what information comes to the media to then be distributed lies at the center of determining the power of media effects.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how previous salience on the news agenda, assigned attributes, and assigned valences of an object in the news media and the distance in time from that object determine how media assign attributes and valences to that object in the future. The study is important because it adds a new dimension to the literature on agenda-setting/building practices within the media and our understanding of media effects.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Setting the Agenda**

The development of theory has been invaluable to our understanding of how and when media have effects. Of particular importance to our understanding of news media are the theories of agenda setting and framing. Agenda-setting studies investigate the transfer of salience from the media to the public (McCombs, 2004). In more practical terms, agenda-setting has been defined as “the idea that the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about” (Severin & Tankard, 1988, p. 164). The theory is very compatible with, and corresponds to, other media directed social science theories, including gatekeeping, status conferral, the spiral of silence, and cultivation theory (McCombs et al., 1997; McCombs, 2004).

Before any further discussion can proceed, a clarity of “public” must be addressed. Driedger (2008), in discussing agenda-building by the media and its sources and the creation of shared realities, defines the “public” as “general citizens who do not directly play a role in setting government policy or laws” (p. 24). Though the definition is admittedly flawed in that a general citizen may play some role in certain instances that influence policy, the broader construct is understood to mean citizens are “not directly responsible for the decisions made” in enacting policy or law (p.24). The latter distinction of decision makers helps serve to define the distinctions between the general public and political elites through the course of agenda-building literature (Driedger, 2008).

Agenda-setting theory is grounded in psychological and sociological concepts. Human beings feel a need for orientation to their environment, The need for orientation leads people to seek information that is relevant and that reduces their uncertainty (McCombs, 2004). The

concept of relevance refers to objects that are more pivotal to an individual or to a society at large; uncertainty refers to a lack of substantial, or sufficient, information on the topic (McCombs, 2004). Agenda-setting effects are more likely to occur when a person exercises a greater need for orientation (McCombs, 2004). The need is greatest when a person does not experience objects firsthand and needs to rely on media for information.

Agenda-setting effects vary depending on the public's familiarity with the object. Objects people deal with in their everyday lives are referred to as obtrusive objects, while objects that individuals cannot experience or verify by themselves are considered unobtrusive objects (McCombs et al., 2000). A good example of unobtrusive objects, according to agenda-setting theory, are taken from international news coverage of object nations. Agenda-setting predicts international news will have greater effects on public opinion according to the agenda-setting theory.

It takes time for agenda-setting effects to propagate. Some media effects theories, such as the hypodermic theory, argued for instant effects of media messages, other require time for an effect to be noted. Agenda-setting research suggests that at least one month of consistent media coverage is needed to be able to measure effects on public opinion (McCombs, 2004). Specifically, a one-month period of coverage prior to assessing public opinion exerted a strong correlation; a two-month period of coverage yielded what appeared an optimum period; the results for the six-month period of coverage were similar to the results of the two-month period (McCombs, 2004).

McCombs and Shaw's 1972 study of the U.S. presidential election empirically tested the hypothesis of transfer of object salience from media to public opinion. For the original study, salience was defined in terms of minor and major levels of an objects appearance in news media.

The original subsets for “major” object salience included: any television story on the object for 45 seconds or more in length/and or one of three lead stories, any newspaper story where the object appeared as lead story or on any page under a three column headline, any magazine story on the object more than one column or where the object was in the lead, any item in the lead editorial position (for newspapers and magazines) (p.179). “Minor” salience for an object where “smaller in terms of space, time, or display than major items” (p.179). Two sets of data were compared: a description of the public agenda through the ordered set of objects of the greatest concern as measured through public opinion and a description of object agenda in nine major news sources (involving a combination of newspapers, television networks, and magazines). The original study defined the media agenda as “the over-all major item emphasis of the selected mass media on different topics” (p.179). The researchers found a nearly perfect correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda on five issues: foreign policy, law and order, economics, public welfare, and civil rights (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Agenda-setting also functions over long periods of time. The theory was tested over a 23-year time period (between 1954 and 1976) in an analysis of the dynamics of reporting on civil rights and the issue salience in the public mind (Winter & Eyal, 1981). Comparison of 27 Gallup polls, each containing a question on the importance of the civil rights issue, with *The New York Times* front page news coverage revealed a robust correlation. Media agenda for the study was defined solely by the number of front page stories on civil rights in the *New York Times* (Winter & Eyal, 1981).

Several related conceptual aspects support the agenda-setting theory. For instance, research has shown that public opinion can attend to only a few objects in the media at a time (McCombs, 2004). The public’s attention span is rather limited and various objects constantly

compete for a place in the public's mind. There are, also, limits on the number of media sources that people are exposed to. Whether by self selection of only certain media outlets or a limited time frame in which to view media programming, individuals can only devote so much attention to media content. The size of most media agendas are also limited (McCombs, 2004). Therefore, a limited set of sources provide a limited set of objects to occupy the public at a given point in time.

### **Attribute Agenda Setting and Framing**

In an attempt to address how news media can influence not only what objects we think about, but, also, how we think about them, scholars examined the agenda-setting theory on a more detailed level called the second level agenda-setting, or attribute agenda-setting. The theory evolved from the combination of traditional agenda-setting with framing research (McCombs, 2004; Wanta et al., 2004). Framing defines how an element of rhetoric is packaged so as to allow certain interpretations and rule out others (Goffman, 1974). Framing provides a prism through which one is to understand and conceptualize an object, providing parameters of thought and discussion. Framing of an object in the news media help form public opinion by continuously presenting an object in a given light or interpretation. A frame is the “the central organizing idea” that gives the social situation being communicated a recognizable and understood context for the mass audience (Gamson W. A., 1987, p. 143). The addition of framing concepts to agenda setting allowed for a much richer and complete understanding of how media frames assign attributes to a given object, which, then, manifest themselves in the overall media agenda whenever that specific object gains high media salience. Therefore, it is imperative to define attribute agenda-setting primarily in the light of traditional agenda-setting, because both theories are very similar in nature.

Each object on the agenda has numerous characteristics called “attributes.” An attribute is defined as “a generic term encompassing the entire range of properties and traits that characterize an object” (McCombs, 2004, p. 70). For example, an attribute for an object nation in news media coverage maybe military might, environmental policy, communism, or any host of defining characteristics for that nation. Attributes vary in salience within the framework of attribute agenda-setting similar to the way objects vary in salience in traditional agenda-setting (McCombs, 2004). Although there are similarities between the concepts, the two theories differ in function. While agenda-setting primarily focuses on obtaining attention, attribute agenda-setting concentrates on comprehension, a subsequent step in communication (McCombs, 2004). As a result of the attribute agenda-setting, “media may not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and consequently, what to think” (McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 65). Ghanem (1997) states that the media achieve this function through four dimensions: subtopics, framing mechanisms, and affective and cognitive elements (Ghanem, 1997).

The attribute agenda-setting theory has been applied in many areas of mass communication research. Most studies have focused on political communication while investigating the second level agenda-setting theory (Golan et al., 2007; Kiouisis et al., 1999; McCombs et al., 1997; Tedesco, 2001). For instance, an experimental study dealing with the public’s perception of political candidates manipulated two attributes of a political candidate, a candidate’s qualifications and personality traits, to understand the public’s reaction. (Kiouisis et al., 1999). The findings supported the theory, demonstrating that manipulation of candidate attributes correlated with the subjects’ perception of politicians (Kiouisis et al., 1999).

Other researchers investigated attribute agenda-setting focusing on economic news coverage. Hester & Gibson (2003) content analyzed 48 months of print and broadcast news

about the economy and correlated the data with consumer economic evaluations and real economic conditions. They found that negatively framed news coverage was one of several significant predictors of consumer expectations about the future of the economy (Hester & Gibson, 2003). Again, findings supported the theoretical underpinnings of agenda-setting.

The attribute agenda-setting theory has been used in the area of international communication as well. Golan & Wanta (2003) observed a great amount of negative concentration by the U.S. press on a presumably positive topic – elections. The researchers concluded that these negative coverage patterns could be leading viewers into connecting negative attributes to the perception of countries, as the second level of agenda-setting suggests. For the research, coverage patterns were understood as the defining attributes assigned to an object by the media, the positive, negative assignment used in the study was an assessment of the story content through content analysis. For example, positive or negative assessments of coverage patterns were related to attributes such as: which candidate had a vision, which was stronger on moral issues and which had the best chance to win. Media coverage was then related to public perception (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Golan & Wanta 2003).

### **Agenda Building**

As researchers began to uncover how and when news media had the most powerful effects, and what exactly those effects were, other lines of research began to examine from where the news media itself got its messages. While examinations of first and second level agenda setting effects of the media help explain the power of media messages, the intricacies of media message formation and interrelationships between message sender and message receiver are simply overlooked. The question of how the agenda of the news media gets set, which issues with what attributes receive the most prominence, led to the addition of agenda building to the

understanding of agenda setting (Johnson, Wanta, & Boudreau, 2004). The question of how the media agenda is set is critical in determining media power/effects, which is why agenda building is an important addition to communications research.

The origins of agenda building trace back to developments in perspectives of democratic theory in the early 1970s. The original concept of agenda building examined the ability of groups and organizations to push ideas and policies through to elites; defined as advantaged institutional groups of “decision makers” (p. 906) Cobb & Elder (1971) saw civic activism and organization as a way to promote a more reactive and accountable government (Cobb & Elder, 1971). However, the authors failed to address how corporations might have better access, time and ability to form such organizations with messages of their own, ultimately undermining civic engagement. Agenda building as a concept of political theory is, perhaps, a bit too idealistic and unworkable; however, the theory also lends itself to communication studies.

Denham (2008) claims that the agenda-building framework has been applied to at least three types of communication studies:

(a) Those that analyze reciprocity and interchange among policymakers, mass media and mass publics; (b) those that explore the effects of media content on the formation of public and organizational policy, as in the case of investigative journalism; and (c) those that examine influences on media content in contexts such as public relations and strategic communication. (Denham, 2008, p. 8)

Denham further states, “studies investigating reciprocity and interchange among policymakers, mass media, and mass publics, generally, do not assume independent-dependent variable relationships” (p. 8). Rather, they investigate patterns of directionality on an exploratory basis across different forms of media, different branches of government, different kinds of issues,

and differing presentations of nations (Denham, 2008). Ultimately, the author is simply pointing out that media studies have charted a variety of potential directions and origins of mass media messages. In studies containing a policy component and in analyses requiring consideration of structural factors, agenda building has often served as a conceptual framework. Mutz (1994) claims that mass media have the power to establish seemingly marginal issues as legitimate social problems and, in a catalyst role (where media messages influence public opinion), changes in public opinion drive policy changes in government (Mutz, 1994). Communication practitioners and political actors build news agendas by giving cues to news outlets that push a particular issue or movement. Though various agencies and institutions might influence which stories the media choose to cover, the media often interpret such events in ways that undermine the goals of event organizers. Such findings suggest the media retain the power of frame attribution, even when given a cue of what to cover (Denham, 2008).

The basic tenets of agenda building in communication research are that constraints of time and reliance on source by the news media allow elites the power to shape coverage of certain objects over others and assign attributes to those objects in certain circumstances (Mitrook, Seltzer, Kioussis, Popescu, & Shields, 2006). For example, the study finds that the Bush administration, via presidential communication efforts, was able to establish a reciprocal relationship with the news media that allowed the administration “to set the agenda of terrorism-related issues, and the overall framing of the issue of terrorism” (p. 19). Denham argues that the origins of agenda building, in respect to mass public awareness of an issue and subsequent policy formation by elites to match public opinion, are unrealistic, at best. Even when such groups are corporate powers attempting to influence policy based on economic factors, there are limitations to the effects on policy. This is because policy formation tends to be deliberative and not in the

hands of a single acting individual. Therefore, the notion that the public, through mass public opinion, can influence policy decisions (speaking here of policies brought forth that are actually passed into law, and not just policy declarations with no hopes of passing that politicians use to appease publics) by forcing an object to the forefront of political discussion and, subsequently, into the media agenda is suspect at best.

Some scholarly research has shown that public opinion on specific issues that are often the most controversial and least relevant to actual political discussion or future policy are actually manipulated by politicians as talking points to spark interest in a subject/issue/event that will benefit the politician politically (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). These findings, along with the notion that many corporate lobbyists, who wish to alter policy, can circumvent the media by presenting their message to policy makers, suggest a directional model of agenda building that concentrates power of agenda setting in the hands of elites. The news media themselves are part of an economically elite institution, meaning their social responsibility capabilities are limited by the need to attract and retain advertising dollars and other revenues. Thus, political elites and large corporate economic elites provide credible, cheap information to news media elites who, in turn, present that information to the public, if it is in the news media's own economic interest to do so or when circumstance and time constraints force them to. The public and public opinion is of little worth in such a model. The questions then become whether the establishment of the news agenda is really as directional as proposed in the previous discussion and whether public opinion is merely a tool to be manipulated by elites.

### **Direction of Media Messages**

As mentioned earlier, by no means are news media always subservient to the messages presented to them by elites. Competing elite interests allow for counterframes, or alternate

interpretations and characteristics for an object, as does familiarity with an object/ on the part of the media and the public. However, there are circumstances when elites have more power over agenda setting than others. While some researchers have focused on the ability of elites in fields such as public relations, law, and medicine to set the agenda for the media (Tanner, 2004), most agenda-building research has focused on political elites such as the President of the United States. Johnson et al. (2004) identify at least four factors that can help or hinder a president's ability to influence media coverage or public concern about an issue: the nature of the issue, the president's general rhetorical ability, how much he stresses an issue to influence media coverage, and real world events that may draw attention to or away from an issue (Johnson, Wanta, & Boudreau, 2004).

The ability of elites to assign attributes to a given object rests in familiarity (obtrusiveness), or lack thereof, with that particular object. The less obtrusive the object (the more unfamiliar), the greater the ability of an elite to assign attributes to it because he or she becomes the primary, and often sole, source of information on the subject (Johnson, Wanta, & Boudreau, 2004). However, the media ultimately decide what objects/events to present in the news agenda based on their own economic well being. It becomes incumbent upon competing political and other economic elites to present messages on objects that align with the overall economic goals of the media. Rather than political elites handing down messages to media elites, there is an ebb and flow of story selection and packaging that elites must conform to that, by the very nature of the news media, limit the types of content political elites may discuss and the ways in which they can discuss it. Meaning that, although there are occasions when and objects where elites can direct the news agenda, elites still must conform to norms that limit their ability to shape the news agenda and must compete for attention with other media sources on the same

or a similar topic. The notion that elites can simply hand down a message to the media that is directed solely by their own message agenda is flawed, at best. Still, there are times when elites are better able to insert certain messages and frames into the news media agenda than others.

As previously stated, the original concept of agenda building theory proposed that news media coverage can allow messages to move from the public at large, to the media, to elites, and create more reactive government. It is easy to recognize that elites and news media work in a tangled, tug of war in terms of what objects get covered and what attributes and valences are assigned to those objects. Attributes, in this case, representing the characteristics and packaging of the object, while valence represents “the evaluative dimension” of the object itself (Coleman & Wu, 2009). Without question, it is highly probably that elites often take cues from the news media on what objects to talk about and how to talk about them, and, conversely, the media do the same from elites. This does not explain, however, how an item might move from public opinion to the media. The process by which an item moves from public opinion to the media is more complex than that of an item moving from elites to the media. Elites are in positions of power that provide them access to the media. The relationship between media and elites is of mutual self-serving benefit; media get elite access, opinion, and the accompanying stories while elites have a platform to distribute their messages to the general public. For the public, getting an item into the media agenda first requires organization around an item, then focusing the attention of either the media or an elite with access to the media.

While much scholarly work has focused on how media messages manifest themselves in public opinion, equally important for establishing a working model of agenda building is understanding how and when public opinion can set, alter, and/or assign attributes to an object on the news media agenda. Zhou & Moy (2007) found that “online public opinion plays an

important role in transforming the original local event into a nationally prominent issue.” Public opinion can exert frame-building impacts on the news media in early coverage of an event (Zhou & Moy, 2007). Thus citizens, through organization and activism, in this case by using online public forums, can set the news media agenda and initial coverage attributes and valences of that object/event. While it is important to note the power of citizens to actively organize and use media to focus media attention and coverage on a given object, it is equally important to remember that the media are not subservient to the civic agenda (Zhou & Moy, 2007). Often, the media can choose from a host of civic organizations, all attempting to place a different object/event on the news agenda; however, with the advent of technology, it is far easier for civic communities to quickly organize around an object/event in such a manner as to all but force media coverage. Just as in the relationship between news media and political elites, news media and organized publics have an ebb and flow of selection and packaging of an object in news coverage.

Research through communication literature has shown that a model of agenda building, in its original conceptualization, is indeed possible. Media messages can move from an organized public, to the media news agenda, to the “verbalized” agenda of elites. But for a fully functioning model between media, the public and elites, one must understand how media coverage of a certain object found in public opinion manifest itself in elite discourse and how does it dictate policy change?

### **From Public Opinion to Public Policy**

Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) claim that politicians do not “pander” to public opinion; rather they use public opinion to craft messages on policy matters in ways that strike interest and action in the public. Polls used to track public opinion are not meant to inform leaders on how to act

regarding a certain issue; rather, they are intended to tell them how to or how not to modify their messages so that they might get the support they want on the issues they choose. However, the authors do note that politicians cater to large interest groups and lobbyist in action and policy development (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000).

Davis (2007) claims there are other times, besides that of large interest groups, when politicians respond to the public. He argues that varying public choice approaches in elections explain why leaders respond to public opinion (Davis, 2007, p. 5). Because the public holds the power of election in a democracy, political and party platforms rarely fall outside a set parameter of public opinion. Thus, broadly speaking, political elites have incentives to please their electorates. Politicians, by and large, want to serve the public will. Davis points out times in which elites are likely not to respond to public opinion, for example: war, or the possibility of war, prevents a politician from acting in aggressive manners often supported by public opinion, the threat of an external power removing, or limiting, the politician's political power if he/she follows public opinion might prevent a politician from serving the public's will in exchange for his/her political survival (note that external threats could be conceptualized as a superior, an interests group, or foreign nation). However, at the very least, elites rely on support of the public to make their decisions; meaning that even if the politician does not intend to follow through with his/her message to the public, he or she must at least go through the motions of addressing the public in terms of policy choice and decision (Davis, 2007). The more successful politicians are most likely able to both craft messages to the public and meet the goals of those messages.

Further studies examining the influence of political elites on public opinion and media and of public opinion and media influencing political elites have found that public opinion and the opinions of political elites are bound to one another through the media (Bloch-Elkon &

Lehman-Wilzig, 2008). Elites have the power to shape news media, which in turn can shape, alter or manipulate public opinion. The news media have the power to draw out certain elements, stories, incidents from a collective public and force those issues to be met by policy. Thus, public opinion might not, on its own, be a political force to reckon with or even consider for elites. However, when the media take on a cause of mass public appeal, it places certain burdens on policy makers or favors those policy makers with pre-existing ideals matching those of the public at large.

In summary, the preceding discussion has shown that the original conceptualization of agenda building is very much a realistic notion. Ideas from the public, through the media, can find their way to the decision makers who have incentives to act in accordance with public opinion. And the opposite is also very much true. Objects with little foundations in public opinion may be set and presented by political elites to the media, who in turn pass them on to the public. This dissertation does not seek to draw out the distinctions of mass public organization on behalf of private corporate industry as separate from public opinion held by a collective understanding of individual citizens. To do so would undermine the focus of this study, which is to add to the understanding of message development and distribution through the media to both the public and to political elites. The author is well aware of the threats large corporate industries and interest groups have on hijacking public opinion for corporate and economic gains. However, the purpose of the previous discussion was to show that elite discourse can shape public opinion and that public opinion can shape and influence elite discourse and policy. The dissertation does not seek to stringently define or constrain public opinion as anything other than an aggregation of beliefs held by the population through organization and collectivism of some kind.

## **A Gap in Our Understanding**

The preceding argument has shown that both the communications literature's understanding of agenda building (where elites shape media discourse and public opinion) and democratic theorists' notions of agenda building (where public opinion travels through media to elite discourse) can be achieved. While agenda-building theory is a relatively straightforward concept taken as a whole, its components are extremely nuanced and have yet to be fully explained or understood.

Agenda setting theory and its various components layout a fairly concise argument as to how and why various objects are presented in the media, but the reality is far more convoluted. Critics of agenda setting point out that the theory lacks any predictive power and that it fails to address the power of the media to alter or shape attitudes on a given issue or object (Sloan, 1990). The media simply report events and they become more salient in the minds of those people exposed to the coverage relationally to the amount of coverage each event receives. Second-level agenda setting addresses how the media can assign attributes to a given event or object and, therefore, can influence audience perception and opinions of a given object. Though second-level agenda setting points to the power of the media to influence the way in which people think about a given issue, it, too, lacks predictive power. Furthermore, second-level agenda setting is dependent on the salience of a particular object in the media's overall agenda being high, a certain need for orientation on the part of the audience on the object, and the unobtrusiveness of the object in the audiences' daily lives.

The addition of agenda building to communications studies is an attempt to construct a source for a given message. Yet looking at how political elites, norms of the newsroom, and news gathering practices influence which objects are covered and what types of attributes and

valences are assigned to those objects by both political elites and, later, the news media is by no means a complete or clear understanding of news media effects, predictability of coverage, or source of message. Current notions of agenda building simply add the observation that the news media, in and of itself, are not solely responsible for which objects are covered, how much coverage those objects receive, or what valences or attributes are assigned to them. Once again, the theory fails to be predictive as to the reception of a given message by the media from elites; one simply is to presume that because elites mention a particular object that it will receive coverage from the media. Causality from where and why elites choose to mention a specific object and why they choose to assign certain attributes and valences to it in a given way is ignored. It is simply assumed elites have a specific interest in certain objects being presented with certain attribute characteristics; therefore, the causality of elite driven messages to the media is also assumed (though the media are provided a certain amount of allowance of attribute selection by the theory so as to give the media some power). Furthermore, communications studies' application of agenda building theory forgets the theory is derived from the ability of the public to set policy agendas for elites and that elites, at least on some objects covered in the media, are part of the public themselves. Not only is message source not easily directionally traceable from elites to media to public opinion, or its reverse, in agenda building theory, the clear division of media, the public, and elites ignores the fact that there is considerable overlap in these categories.

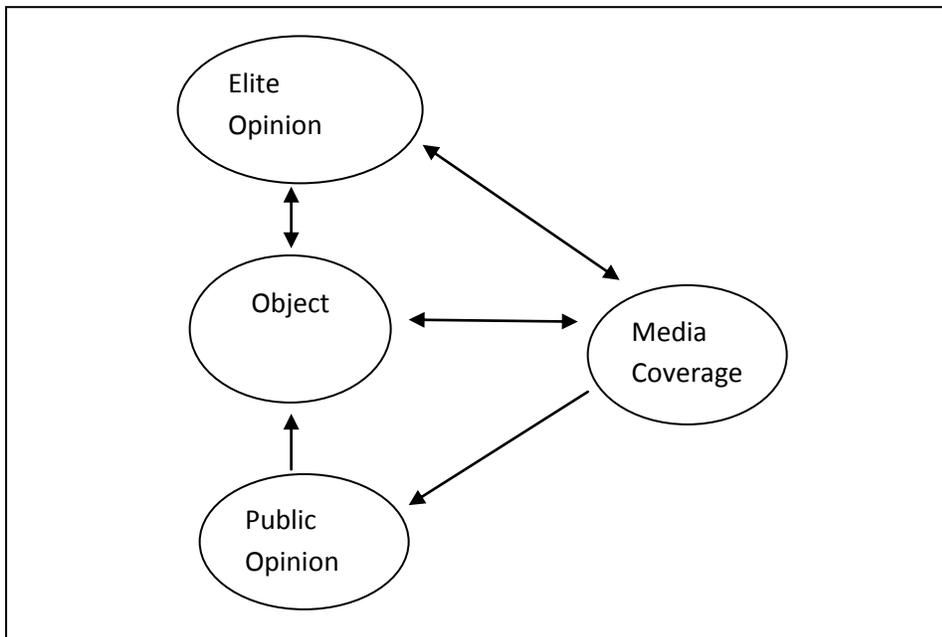
Because of these weaknesses in our understanding of agenda building, the source of the object cannot always be explained, the attributes assigned to a particular object by the media or elite cannot be explained fully, and how/why particular attributes of objects are accepted by the public and others are not is also not explained. Part of these failures is, perhaps, because the

objects are often examined within a cross-sectional framework that sees the media, the public and political elites as completely separate from one another.

### **The Intersect of the Public, the Press, and the Politicians**

Viewing the media, the public and political elites as separate entities is a very helpful simplification in explaining the manifestations of a message once it enters into public and political discourse. However, as stated earlier, such distinctions actually make it more difficult to understand the origins of messages and which messages will be well received and which will not. In a cross sectional understanding (here referring to the singular occurrence of an object on the agenda) of how assigned attributes and associated valences manifest themselves in public and elite discourse, the media is an avenue by which assigned attributes and associated valences from one group are transferred to another group.

*Figure 1.* Cross-sectional progression of an object through public and elite discourse

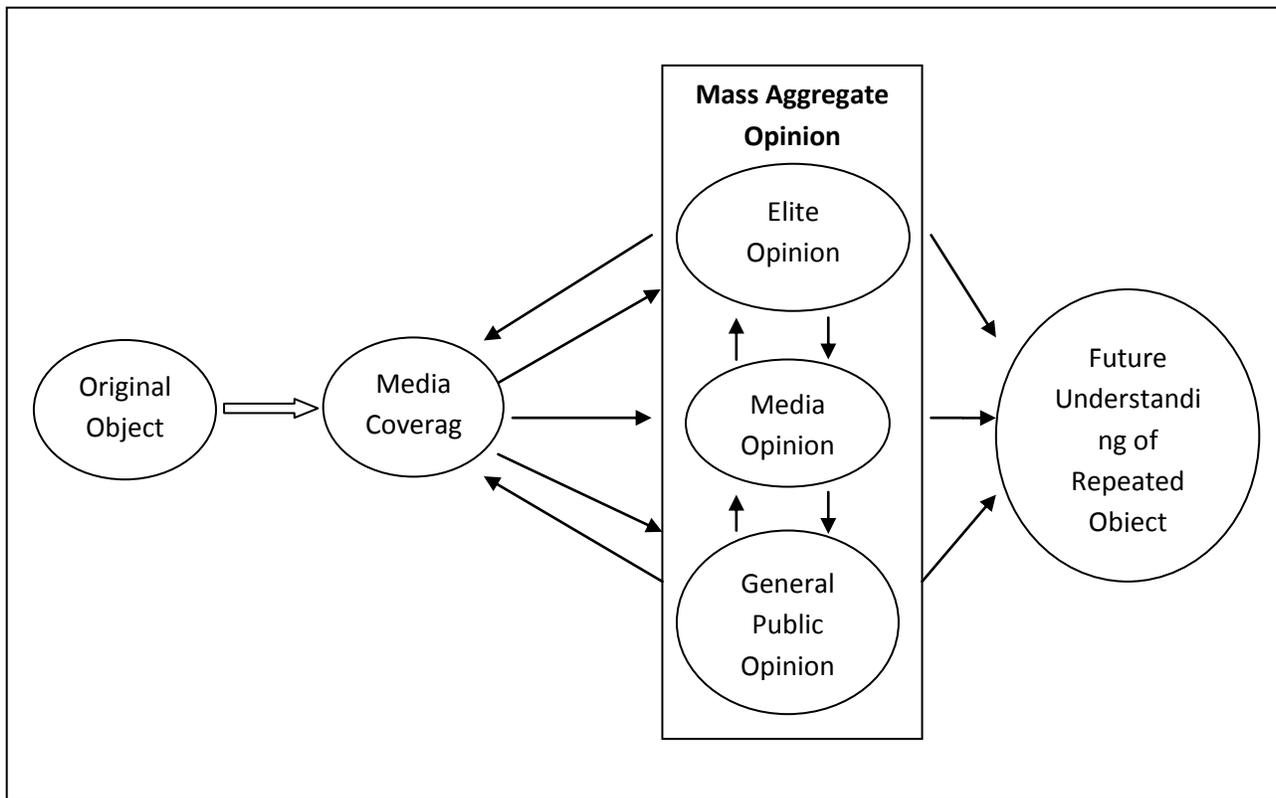


If we understand that elites, on certain objects, particularly unobtrusive objects with which there is a general lack of frequent exposure by most, at certain times, are themselves part of the larger public in terms of the ability of media messages to shape their opinions, we can see that there is overlap between the political elites and the public. For example, when reporting on objects occurring in other parts of the world, elites, as well as the general public, rely on the initial reports of the media to inform them and provide a framework in which to understand the object. Such packaging by the media of an object can, then, influence how elites pursue the object and can limit how they can present their opinions of the object to the public at large. On certain unobtrusive objects, media have the initial power of setting not only the object on the agenda, but also, the attribute and valence assignment or at the very least selecting an available source of coverage with assigned attributes and valences to the object. For example, in the case of an object nation U.S. media might use local news reports and attributes from the object nation's media in initial coverage. Such a circumstance would place the media at the center of public and political agenda formation. However, members of the media are also members of the public at large most of the time. Those journalists covering objects bring with them a framework of understanding that is, at least in part, also shaped by media coverage. How members of the media cover unobtrusive objects may, in part, depend on how such objects were covered by the media in the past.

Not only may previous media coverage have effects on public opinion, as a whole, on the understanding of a specific object (particularly unobtrusive objects), it, also, may set parameters for how future media coverage and elite discourse can present and package the object. If the media messages on certain unobtrusive objects are understood to have the ability to influence public opinion and elite discourse on that object, it is reasonable to assume that members of the

media (who are also members of the public) are also influenced or have been influenced in the past by media messages on the same or similar object. Therefore, it can be concluded that certain unobtrusive objects are assigned attributes and valences by the media, which are understood by elites and accepted by the public in ways that are dictated by prior media coverage. This collective prior understanding of an object by media, elites, and the general public is referred to here as Mass Aggregate Opinion.

Figure 2. Progression of object attribute and valence assignments



### The Importance of the Past

With no reference to how a particular object was covered in the past, the source, or medium, providing the selection of the object for coverage and the subsequent assignment of attributes may well be assumed by communication scholars to have far more power than, perhaps, is actually possessed. The desire to see effects of the media in today's affairs and in the

most recent of events leads research to focus on specific points in time, particularly when evaluating public opinion. Because of such time-specific orientations, the previous effects of the media on an audience in establishing and/or assigning attributes for the very same object are forgotten; so, too, is our ability to understand how and from where elites draw opinions and attitudes on those objects. Could it be that our need to explain present media effects limits our ability to see the effects of the past and the overarching impact of the media in selecting objects for coverage and assigning attributes to those objects? Understanding how past coverage of an object limits public understanding, the elite's ability to initiate discourse, and the media's ability to assign attributes and valences on the object in alternative ways might shed more light on how media messages form and are subsequently shaped by all the forces comprising mass aggregate opinion.

To fully understand how and why (a) a certain object is selected by the media and assigned certain attributes and valences, (b) the attributes of that object are relayed to the public by the media, and (c) the public responds to and accepts those attributes and valences of that object in the order it is relayed to them in the overall agenda, one must first understand the distance and previous saturation of that object to the present. First, in terms of predictive power, the media will always be subservient to an object taking center stage (e.g. war, conflict, elections, trade negotiations, scandals, crimes, natural/economic disasters, etc.) and cannot be expected to predict when any given object might occur in time. However, why certain objects are covered and others are not, why those objects are assigned certain attributes and valences in the coverage, and how likely those attributes and valences are ultimately to be received by the public may, in a large part, be due to what type of coverage of the same, or a similar, object was done previously, what the distance (in terms of time) from previous coverage is, and how much

saturation, what the salience of that particular object was in the media's overall agenda, of the event there was in previous coverage.

### **Media Message Acceptance & Retention**

Schudson (2007) notes that "journalists handle the anarchy of events by depending on available cultural resources, the treasure house of tropes, narrative forms, resonant mythic forms and frames of their culture." In other words, how objects were covered/presented in the past and how well, or available, those past references of that object are to the story teller determine how it will be covered in the future.

The Receive, Accept, and Sample (RAS) model suggests that media messages often directly influence individual-level attitudes, but that such effects are contingent on the nature of the information environment and an individual's exposure and resistance to persuasive messages (Zaller, 1992). According to the RAS model, public opinion is formed in two steps: a message is received (or not received) by the individual, and, then, if received, it is either accepted or rejected (Zaller, 1992). While reception of a given message is largely based on awareness of or exposure to that message, acceptance of a message is a much more complex process. An individual's acceptance (or rejection) of a message depends on the person's values and/or predispositions. An individual is more likely to accept a message that is in line with his/her own value orientations and more likely to reject a message that is inconsistent with those value orientations.

Zaller's model is concerned with political messages and attention to those messages, thus the model places the burden of reception on the individual's varying level of political involvement. Obviously, for selective exposure theory to function, one must be exposed to a message to be receptive of it. While reception is surely linked to levels of awareness of the individual, it is, also, likely that an object's salience in the media is linked to message reception

on the part of the individual. The more frequent a message is in the news media, the more opportunities there are for the individual to be exposed to that message. Furthermore, Dalton et al. (1998) found that reception of media messages was not necessarily most accurate among the most attentive (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998). So long as the issue reaches a certain threshold of salience in the media, reception of the message on behalf of the general public is rather broad. Meaning that, regardless of individual attention to the media, if an object reaches a certain threshold of salience in the media, the likelihood of being exposed to media discussion and presentation of that object, through media and/or other social channels, is relatively uniform for the public.

Acceptance of a media message is dependent on two primary factors: Familiarity with (actual first hand knowledge of) the object and, as mentioned previously, predispositions/values. The less direct, frequent exposure a person has of an object (the more unobtrusive), the easier it is to accept both the message and the attributes assigned to the object. Predispositions and cultural values refer to individual differences such as environmental, psychological, and behavioral factors, as well as shared, collective understandings of the surrounding world. The longer an object remains highly salient in the news media agenda, the more opportunities there are for elite discourse, dissent and an increased understanding of the object to arise and create altering opinions, interpretations, and subsequently new attributes to be assigned to the issue. However, it is the position of this research, that even when a highly salient, unobtrusive object remains in the news cycle for a long duration of time, the acceptance and/or rejection of the attributes and valences assigned to the object by the public may still be determined, in part, by previous media coverage of the same or similar objects. This is because previous media coverage has helped establish shared cultural values in the form of public opinion on that unobtrusive

object that limits, or sets parameters, on how fast new, accepted attributes and valences can be assigned to that object. At the end of the previous media coverage of a given unobtrusive object, this study argues, people will have formed shared understanding, formulated attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of that object which become future predispositions towards that specific object.

Studies have confirmed that prior attitudes toward an object influence acceptance of new attributes that would lead to attitude change. Goidel & Shields used the 1992 National Election Studies (NES) Panel Study to investigate individual-level fluctuations in former President George H. W. Bush's approval ratings from the months immediately following the Persian Gulf War to the months immediately preceding the 1992 Presidential elections. Their results showed that the strength of previous attitudes towards an object (in this case the President) determined how much shift there was on subsequent opinions regarding that object (Goidel & Shields, 1997).

The studies by Schudson, Zaller, and Goidel & Shields present two vital components to aid in our understanding of agenda building and news media effects. First, journalists develop stories based on a number of constraints: time, sources, and the previously accepted assigned attributes, valences, and cultural understandings available to them on a given topic. Second, audiences accept a presentation of a given object by the news media based, in part, on previous attitudes towards that object. The search for direction of message from an elite source, to the media, then to the public by cross-sectional research focused on showing the power of the media or the power of political elites over the public creates distinctions that make understanding how a media message is derived impossible. Separating out elites, the news media, and the public as entities independent of one another overlooks the fact that elites and those within the newsroom are all part of the greater public who, also, receive and accept information based on prior held

attitudes and beliefs on a given object. Rather than being able to simply manufacture opinions and attitudes toward an object, elites and the media are constrained by previous exposure to attributes and valences regarding that issue--previous attributes and valences that were quite likely established by the media. It makes little sense to assume the media have effects on the general public, but not on elites. It also makes little sense to assume the news media would not be influenced by their own previous coverage and assigned attributes and valences of objects, or that they are somehow removed from the effects of the media on their previous formations of attitudes and opinions.

The prior studies of media effects on public acceptance of attributes assigned to unobtrusive objects has largely focused on how or why a given object was selected to be covered and how the media, competing elites, and/or the public dictated the attributes and valences assigned to that object (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Mitrook, M. A., Seltzer, T. C., Kioussis, S. K., Popescu, C., & Shields, A.,2006). Because these objects are unobtrusive (lacking direct, frequent expose to the individual), it is understood that there is a lack of familiarity with the object that gives certain powers to media, organized publics, and elites in shaping coverage of that object to broader audiences resulting, eventually, in attitude formation of a mass aggregate public. When and how organized publics, elites, or media have more power over the other in assigning attributes and valences to certain unobtrusive objects has been detailed and explored in depth by previous scholars. However, these studies do not take into account the fact that the very effects of attitude formation on an unobtrusive object, which they argue occur, become part of a collective shared understanding that sets parameters for acceptable attributes and valences that can be assigned to that object again in the future. Distance in time between occurrences of an unobtrusive object in the news agenda and prior salience of that object in the news media are

important factors to be considered by future scholars attempting to sort out how media messages manifest in public opinion and how certain attributes and valences are assigned to a given unobtrusive object and others not.

The addition of a theoretical model to the research on agenda building and agenda setting that incorporates distance in time between occurrences and prior salience of an unobtrusive object on the media agenda would greatly increase the ability of scholars to understand current treatment of and potential future coverage of an unobtrusive object in the news media. The reasoning behind the added predictive power of such a model is that the distance in time from prior assigned attributes and valences and prior salience of an unobtrusive object in the news media, in part, will dictate what attributes and valences will be assigned that object by news media in the future; and subsequently how those assigned attributes and valences will be received by the public in the future. The formulation of a theoretical model of distance in time and news media salience of an unobtrusive object first requires clearly defined and operationalized key constructs comprising elements of mass aggregate opinion, distance in time, valence, frequency, and unobtrusiveness.

### **Mass Aggregate Opinion**

Of all the concepts related to a theoretical model of distance in time and news media salience of an unobtrusive object, mass aggregate opinion is the most important. Without this concept, the theory is not functional. Mass aggregate opinion is the notion, put forth by the author, that the public at large, political elites, and actors within the mass media all share a general, collective understanding of an unobtrusive object as gained from prior media exposure. Mass aggregate opinion is not concerned with message or source origin.

The concept is culled from political and communication research on agenda building (a theory that is concerned with source origin) simply to show that the media, the public at large, and political elites have a somewhat equal opportunity to place an object on the media agenda. For example, a politician might have a vested interest in a specific object being covered as related to his or her political campaign and might push for exposure or media coverage of that object. The media, given the nature of the profession, are often the gatekeepers of selection of which objects get coverage and which do not. The public might create a specific object, through mass demonstration, that may focus media attention on (e.g. civil rights issues, labor issues, etc.). Regardless of whether an object was first introduced to the media agenda by the public, elites, or the media, the idea of mass aggregate opinion is that, through media coverage, a homogenous understanding of the object takes hold across all three (media, elites, and public), thus creating an aggregation of opinion on the issue.

For example, regardless of whether it was in the interest of a political elite to have media coverage of Saddam Hussein, or a spontaneous newsworthy event occurred in Iraq that led media to cover Saddam Hussein, or the American public had a vested interest in the leader, media coverage of Saddam Hussein began on the heels of the U.S.-Afghan war. At some point, again regardless of original source for coverage, a general, negative, mass aggregate opinion of Saddam Hussein emerged centered on issues of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and war.

The basic concept to a theoretical model of distance in time and news media salience of an unobtrusive object is that these prior mass aggregate opinions on objects have some lasting effects on subsequent coverage of the object. How much effect and how long lasting these effects are the primary subjects of inquiry in this study.

## **Unobtrusive Objects**

Obviously, most objects will never have uniform mass aggregate opinion. Objects that are frequent on the media agenda and that individuals have frequent, direct exposure to are more obtrusive objects. Obtrusive objects are difficult to build consensus and sway opinions on because individuals have formulated attitudes and understandings of the object from repeated conversation, contact, and debate on and about the object in question. This does not mean any given attitude or opinion on the object in question is absolute, unalterable or even accurate, but simply that from the lived experience and perspective of the individual, on an object that is ever present, his/her understanding and ability to articulate on that object is as proficient as any other source. Thus media sources and their coverage of the object are either dismissed or filtered through a preconceived prism of understanding. Gun control laws, political parties, and illegal immigration in the United States could be considered examples of obtrusive objects for most U.S. citizens.

Conversely, unobtrusive objects occur less frequently on the media agenda and people have little frequent, direct exposure to the object. According to Weaver (1977), lack of direct exposure to and/or knowledge about an object creates a need for orientation (Weaver, 1977). According to McCombs (2004), "need for orientation is a psychological concept, which means that it describes individual differences in the desire for orienting cues and background information" (p.1). Need for orientation is centered around relevancy and uncertainty. As an object rises in media salience, its relevancy is increased. Unobtrusive objects carry a high degree of uncertainty, or lack of knowledge of, for the individual, because individuals have little direct exposure to the object. As relevancy increases on unobtrusive objects (which have high degrees of uncertainty for most individuals), need for orientation increases and the more likely

individuals are to seek out and accept assigned attributes and valences of that object by the news media.

Although mass media can have a pivotal role in shaping the public's opinions about an unobtrusive object, they are not the only factor affecting opinion formation. Other elements, such as a person's education, cultural background, etc. influence how people form opinions about the world around them. When it comes to opinion about foreign countries, even variables such as country's geographical location are believed to influence public perception of that country. Some research investigates possible relationships between a country's proximity and international news coverage (Besova, 2008; Golan & Wanta, 2003; Hester, 1971; Larson & Hardy, 1977). Scholars have been trying to establish a relationship between geographical, cultural, and economic proximity between the counties and the international coverage. It has been proposed that countries with close physical, cultural, and economic ties are more likely to be more newsworthy than distant countries. This hypothesis has been tested by several studies with controversial findings, explained below.

Golan & Wanta (2003) suggested that economic proximity should be measured through the ranking of a nation on the list of economic partners. Economic proximity is a debatable factor among researchers and may or may not influence foreign news coverage. Ahern (1984) analyzed various economic and political factors that might account for differences in international coverage. The study revealed that a country's GNP, trade and political relations with the U.S. influenced the amount of coverage in the U.S. media, accounting for almost 60 percent of variance (Ahern, 1984).

However, several studies did not find a strong connection between economic proximity and foreign news coverage. Atwood (1985) claimed a weak relationship between economic

proximity and foreign news coverage, stating that “news does not necessarily follow trade” (as cited in Golan & Wanta, 2003, p. 2). After a close examination of the factors that could predict coverage of international elections on newscasts, Golan & Wanta (2003) revealed that nations with low trade with the U.S. were more likely to receive election coverage than other nations.

There is also no consensus among researchers on the impact of geographic proximity on foreign news coverage. On one hand, several researchers (Chang et al., 1987; Larson & Hardy, 1977) did not find any support for the hypothesis that geographic distance from the U.S. might be a factor in how much coverage a country receives. For instance, Canada, being a close neighbor to the U.S., was not in the top 20 of countries receiving the most network television coverage in the U.S. (Larson & Hardy, 1977). While analyzing *The New York Times* and *Toronto's Globe and Mail* articles on the genocide in Sudan, Kim et al. (2007) found that the U.S. media exerted substantial influence on their Canadian counterpart, although Canadian media were independent in expressing their opinion.

On the other hand, McLean & Pinna (1958) found a definite evidence for the impact of geographic proximity on international media coverage, concluding that the farther the physical distance to the nation, the less interest in news coverage the viewer would express. Wu (1998) assessed 13 newspapers and also found evidence for impact of geographic proximity. For instance, in the *Seattle Times*, 60.4 percent of coverage was allocated to Canada and only 39.6 percent to Mexico; inversely, San Francisco Chronicle devoted 35.4 percent to Canada and 64.4 percent to Mexico (Wu, 1998).

Research on a nation's proximity and its attributes is scarce. The main investigation of this subject was done by Golan & Wanta (2003), who analyzed the foreign coverage of nations' elections in regards to cultural, economic and geographical proximity to the U.S., and concluded

that media outlets tend to focus more on negative attributes of international coverage. The researchers found that news media do not link positive attributes to countries, but rather concentrate on countries that pose immediate danger to U.S. interests or are largely unknown by the majority of the U.S. people (Golan & Wanta, 2003). The researchers went further to claim that if the U.S. audience is only exposed to elections from countries that pose threats to the U.S. or have fewer ties with the U.S., the audience may link these negative attributes to nations in general (Golan & Wanta, 2003).

Though news coverage of object nations is considered, in and of itself, unobtrusive in nature, research has attempted to show that it is highly probable that the concept of “unobtrusive” is one of scale. The premise of unobtrusiveness is objects with which individuals cannot experience or verify by themselves, therefore making foreign nations an obvious candidate. However, one must acknowledge that the general public will have more experience with some object nations over others. For example, general western education entails knowledge of Europe and the state actors involved over the last century. One is far more likely to have taken a family vacation to Europe, been exposed to French or German food, culture, and languages than have even a rudimentary knowledge of cultures related to Saudi Arabia or Iran. Commercial trade between the United States and other nations also breeds a semblance of familiarity through exposure to products, currencies, and businesses that will be more common with some nations than others. For example, a business owner is far more likely to have purchased a product, stock, or had currency exchange with China or Europe than from Turkey or North Korea. Thus, a continuum of unobtrusiveness for object nations is a logical assumption.

As the focus of this dissertation is theoretical development, a spectrum for which to gauge obtrusiveness for object nations would be an invaluable addition to that endeavor. While

defining parameters for which each nation will fall based on a host of relational variables between those nations and the United States will require future studies, the current dissertation seeks to understand differences in presentation and attribute packaging in the broad context of exploring a continuum for unobtrusiveness. As research has pointed out, cultural proximity, geographic proximity and economic relationships can be a link in establishing a scale for unobtrusiveness (Besova, 2008).

One need simply establish parameters for defining these three constructs to attempt the creation of an unobtrusiveness scale. Besova (2008) conducted an exploratory study on foreign news and public opinion and defined cultural proximity through the number of immigrants from one object nation to the next. The more immigrants from a given country to the host country, the less unobtrusive the nation. Economic proximity is linked to trade between nations. The more trade and commercial transactions between nations, the less unobtrusive nations become to one another. Geographic proximity is simply the physical distance between nations, the least unobtrusive would be those directly bordering (known as Type I), next would be those on the same continent (Type II), finally, those on a different continent (Type III).

Finally, it must also be noted that a shared history and values must play some factor in the ranking of unobtrusiveness. For example, North Korea and Iran would logically represent the most unobtrusive. Both nations were claimed as part of an “Axis of Evil” in President George W. Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address, presumably for supporting terrorist activities and seeking weapons of mass destruction (Bush, 2002). Scholarship has listed the two nations as so called “backlash” states, acting in aggressive defiance toward democratic trends to which they are incapable of adapting (Lake, 1994).

Equally as logical would be the placement of France and Germany as the least unobtrusive nations of the nine. France, Germany and the United States have long histories of diplomatic relations and cultural exchange. All three nations are open liberal democracies whose relations, as stated in literature, “significantly determine the content and structure of the broader transatlantic relationship” (Mahncke, 2009, p. 79). Through the use of economic, cultural, and geographic proximity, as well as a logical assessment of shared values and ideals, an attempt to scale object nations for unobtrusiveness could be considered.

Overall, on all of these unobtrusive objects, regardless of scale, one can expect media to have more power in assigning attributes and those attributes being accepted by the public. Again, it is important to note that the origin of the object on the media agenda is irrelevant, only the fact that on unobtrusive objects with a high need for orientation on behalf of a mass aggregate public is likely to result in a lasting mass aggregate opinion of that unobtrusive object. Thus mass aggregate opinion is more likely to exist on an unobtrusive object. Once formed, this study theorizes mass aggregate opinion, defined as collective understanding of an unobtrusive, has impacts on future media coverage of that unobtrusive object. Having a collective understanding of an unobtrusive object from prior exposure does not make the object obtrusive because there remains a lack of frequent exposure. International news coverage and object nations are typically excellent examples of unobtrusive objects for Americans, which is why this study examines coverage of object nations.

Understanding mass aggregate opinion formation on an unobtrusive object, the next component of a theoretical model is the incorporation of distance in time between high salience occurrences, attribute and valence assignment of the unobtrusive object and the influence of prior mass aggregate opinion on future coverage of the unobtrusive object.

## **Frequency, Valence, Attributes, & Distance in Time**

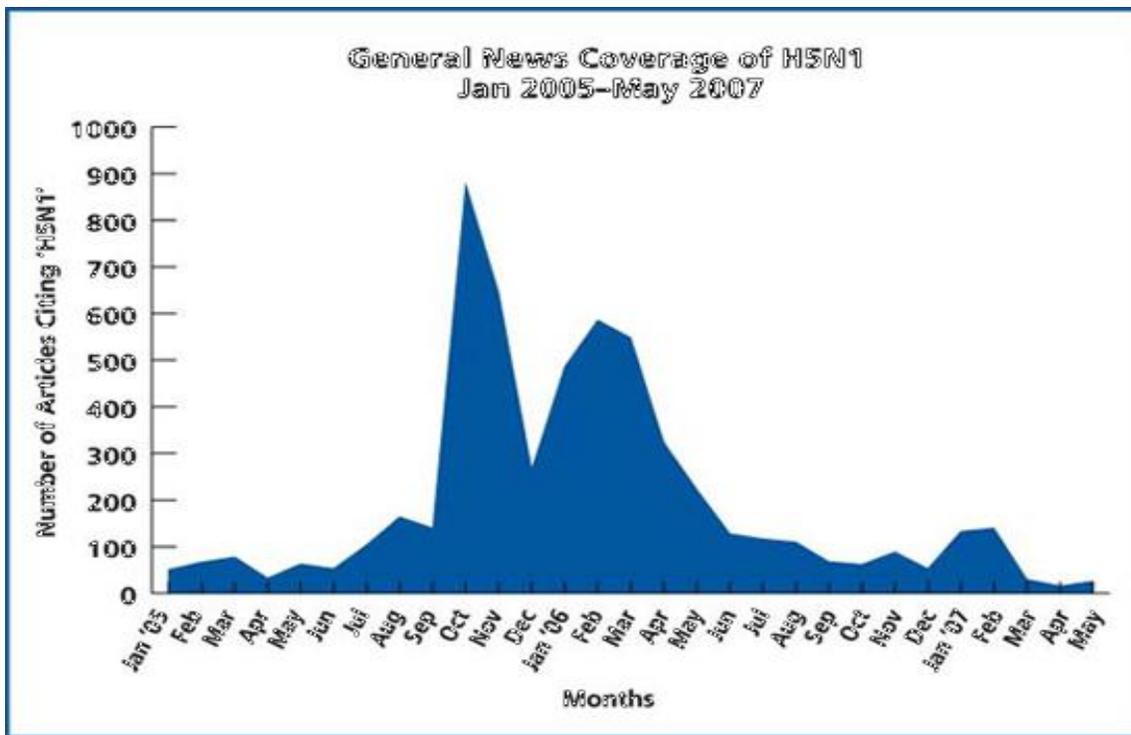
The degree to which mass aggregate opinion on an unobtrusive object has influence on (or can be a predictor of) future media coverage of that object is dependent upon three factors.

The first is Frequency of Object Coverage (FOC). FOC is simply the number of times an object is covered in the media. For unobtrusive objects, frequency of coverage typically occurs in arcs (FOCA). An unobtrusive object will often have little to no coverage prior to its placement on the media agenda, followed by a high number of stories in a short period of time, then a return to little to no coverage of the object, creating an arc like pattern across time.

An example of a FOCA for an unobtrusive object might be coverage of the nation of Haiti. In February of 2004, an armed rebellion in the nation leading to a provisional government and the exile of President Aristide received a tremendous amount of media coverage in the United States. Prior to this event coverage of Haiti had been sparse in the news media. A ProQuest database search of all articles with “Haiti” in the title in *The New York Times* between the first of November 2003 and the last day of January 2004 resulted in only 19 stories. The same search criteria for the next two-month period from February 1, 2004, to March 31, 2004, yielded 64 stories. This dramatic rise is an illustration of what a FOCA might look like. Coverage soon dissipated and the nation received little coverage for the following years; between January 2005 and December 2009 there were only 136 stories when Haiti was a headline feature in *The New York Times*. However, in January 2010, when a massive earthquake struck the nation, the amount of coverage of the nation rose. Between January and the end of February 2010, *The New York Times* featured 119 articles on Haiti, illustrating, what would constitute a second FOCA.

A simple graphic illustration of what FOCA's for an unobtrusive object might look like is provided in Figure 3 of general news coverage of H5N1 from January 2005 to May 2007. Each peak is representative of a potential FOCA. Such arcs may be statistically assessed by deviation from overall frequency mean at a set alpha, though often times they are intuitively illustratable as seen below. Setting exact criteria for what constitutes a FOCA is of critical importance and is discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 3. General news coverage of H5N1.



Note. Adapted from Sandman, P. (2007). Whose Pandemic Fatigue. *CIDRAP Business Source Weekly Briefing*.

Valence is an assessment of media coverage within each FOCA that determines if media coverage of the unobtrusive object is positive, negative, or neutral. For the purposes of this study, that assignment of valence for unobtrusive object nations is based on relation to the national interests of the United States. The reasoning behind that assignment is related to the

understanding of U.S. national interests to be an in-group motivator for all actors comprising the overall mass aggregate opinion. Nationality is an overall umbrella that unites media, political elites and the general public. Thus, the media coverage of an object nation is considered as having negative valence if the story reported or implied that the object nation's activities threaten the interests of the U.S. The media coverage of an object nation is considered as having positive valence if the overall view of the story reported or implied that the object nation's activities and values are consistent with the U.S. Stories that demonstrated a balance of both positive and negative information are considered as neutral.

For the following study, valence is coded as overall valence: Overall valence is defined as an assessment to how the coverage of the object nation and assignment of attributes relates to U.S. national interests.. An attribute is simply a characteristic assigned to the object through the course of coverage. A given news media story on an object nation may contain multiple attributes (e.g. environmental policy, economic cooperation, terrorism, etc.). Driving force, or theme, of coverage is also a factor considered for the study to note what events push an object to the forefront of coverage. Distance in Time (DT) is a simple concept; it is simply the length of time of and between FOCA. A high salience FOCA may last a month, followed by five months of little to no coverage, followed another high salience FOCA lasting a month. DT as applied to the theoretical discussion of a model of distance in time and news media salience of an unobtrusive object is also rather simplistic. The theory predicts the more DT between FOCA, the less influence prior media coverage assignment of attributes and valences from the first FOCA will have on the second. The less DT between FOCA, the more influence prior media assignment of attributes and valences from the first FOCA will have on the second.

While all major theoretical components have been discussed conceptually throughout the literature review, creating operational constructs by which to exactly measure each conceptual component is of equal importance. The formal statement of theory, list of hypotheses and research questions, and exact operationalized methodology for systematic testing are to follow in an effort to better understand and predict how certain attributes and valences are assigned to a given unobtrusive object and the lasting impacts of those assigned attributes and valences over time.

### **Hypotheses/Research Questions/Objectives**

The distancing theory proposes the following tenets: The distance in time from prior news media assigned attributes, overall valence, and attribute valences within an FOCA for an unobtrusive object, in part, dictates how that unobtrusive object will be assigned attributes and valences by news media in the subsequent FOCA.

Objective 1: Determine if distance in time between FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned overall valence.

- Hypothesis 1 a: The more time between FOCA of an unobtrusive object, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 1 b: The less time between FOCA of an unobtrusive object, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

Objective 2: Determine if salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) of an FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned overall valence in the subsequent FOCA.

- Hypothesis 2 a: The shorter the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 2 b: The greater the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

Objective 3: Determine if salience (measured in length of a FOCA in weeks) of a FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned attributes in the subsequent FOCA.

- Research Question 1a: How does salience impact the reoccurrence of attributes from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?
- Research Question 1b: How does salience impact the most frequently occurring attribute from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?
- Research Question 1c: How does salience impact the driving force of coverage from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?

Objective 4: Determine if salience (measured in length of a FOCA in weeks) of a FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of the number of assigned attributes to the unobtrusive object.

- RQ2: Does salience of the FOCA impact the number of assigned attributes?

Objective 5: Determine if salience (measured in length of a FOCA in days) of a FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of patterned shifts in overall valence within that FOCA.

- RQ3: Does salience (measured in days) of the FOCA impact the assigned overall valence for the object? [Days were used for salience rather than weeks in this case to discern

potential modeling patterns in the daily shifts of overall occurrences throughout the course of the FOCA. Because a track in time of each news story's valence (and not their aggregation) was needed, days were the most logical choice in unit to correlate and track to valence of news stories]

Objective 6: Determine how surveyed public opinion on unobtrusive object nations corresponds with news media assigned overall valences in FOCA's of those same unobtrusive object nations.

- RQ 4: How do public opinion changes coincide with valence of media messages over time?

Objective 7: Determine how scaled level of unobtrusiveness impacts an objects presentation in news media.

- RQ 5: How does the assignment of valences and attributes differ among object nations depending on level of unobtrusiveness?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Content Analysis**

In order to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, a content analysis is necessary to pinpoint the occurrence of FOCA's, overall object valence and attribute specific valence. This study examined a seven-year arc of coverage of Israel, China, France, Russia, Germany, Turkey, Iran, North Korea and Saudi Arabia from 2002-2009 in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. This time period and those nations were chosen due to the accessibility of U.S. public opinion data related to the mentioned nations, conducted annually, in this time period and because the study wished to include a broad year spectrum from which to analyze. Content analysis is a research method that provides researchers with an efficient way to investigate media content (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Some of the benefits of content analysis approach include: a) "unobtrusive appraisal of communications," b) assessment of "the effects of environmental variables and source characteristics on message content," and c) an "empirical starting point for generating new research evidence about the nature and effect of specific communications" (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996, p. 244). Content analysis is, also, the research method traditionally employed in agenda-setting and agenda-building studies (Driedger, 2008; Sheaffer & Gabay 2009).

Communication scholars agree that a select few newspapers and periodicals occupy an important position in the media landscape (Weiss, 1974). This is the case of *The New York Times*, and it is selected for this study because of its elite status as a media organization. Numerous studies recognize the prominence of *The New York Times* among the U.S. dailies in terms of foreign policy reporting (Denhan, 1997; Merrill, 1995). It is, also, one of the main elite press sources for America's foreign policy decision-makers (Denhan, 1997; Malek, 1996;

Merrill, 1995). Its “Foreign Desk” news and “Editorial Desk” opinion pieces are credited with enormous impact in the foreign policy-making community (Page, 1996, p. 17). The *Washington Post* was used to provide a secondary source from another leading periodical. The FOCAs were be constructed from the total population of articles for each unobtrusive object.

FOCAs were defined in this study by using a Grubbs Outlier test, which is a statistical test used to detect outliers in a data set. The Grubbs test removes statistical outliers on the assumption of a normal distribution, one at a time within the data set, until no outliers remain. The Grubbs Outlier test was conducted on the data set testing number of stories per week for each nation independently from the others. The first outlier removed represented the start of a FOCA; the arc continued until the subsequent week was no longer a statistical outlier from the rest of the data set. This was done for each nation. The Grubbs Outlier test used a one-tailed alpha of .5, rather than the scientific norm of .05 alpha. The researcher chose to reduce the criteria for identifying FOCAs for a number of reasons: first the Grubbs Outlier test is only a means to provide a consistent method for defining a FOCA, the decreased alpha does not increase the chance of rejecting the null hypotheses, as the stated hypotheses are not concerned with proving or disproving the existence of FOCAs. Second, a decreased alpha identified more FOCAs, which allowed more comparisons to better under the role of distance in time and salience in media coverage. This allowed the researcher to draw better conclusions and directly test the hypotheses more fully. Third, it is more important that the characteristics in defining an FOCA, which is a concept constructed for this research, are clear and consistent, rather than stringent to the scientific alpha for which the test was originally intended. The test is one tailed because, by reason, a FOCA must be higher in number than the measure of central tendency.

In addition to the defining of FOCA, it was necessary to ascertain the valence of the object within the news article and attributes listed in the news articles. A content analysis of the overall valence of the individual articles and of attributes covered within the news articles was necessary to test the hypotheses and research questions. The content analysis of the news articles was for a census for every identified FOCA for each nation from 2002-2009. Every article within an identified FOCA, for every object nation, were analyzed for overall valence, assigned attributes and attribute valence.

Articles were retrieved through the LexisNexis periodical database. The unit of analysis for the FOCA was the entire news article. The unit of analysis for overall valence of the article was also the entire article. The unit analysis for attribute valence was the identified attributes of interest within an article. An article may contain one or multiple attributes.

### **Scaling Unobtrusiveness**

Through the use of economic, cultural, and geographic proximity, as well as a logical assessment of shared values and ideals, an attempt to scale these nations for unobtrusiveness will be conducted.

The study examined nine object nations: Israel, China, France, Russia, Germany, Turkey, Iran, North Korea and Saudi Arabia. In order to assess number of immigrants to the United States from the object nations; U.S. Census Bureau data from the Population Division, Immigration Statistics was used. Economic proximity was measured through the object nation's ranking on the U.S. list of trading partners. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Foreign Trade Division, 2010. Geographic proximity was measured through the typology of proximity, corresponding Type I for a boarding object nation, Type II for an object nation on the same

continent, and Type III for an object nation on the different continent (based on the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary's seven-continent distinction).

In order to assess number of immigrants to the United States from the object nations; U.S. Census Bureau data from the Population Division, Immigration Statistics was used. The most current data available for this study were the 2003 figures. The following is listed cultural proximity based on immigration to the United States: China: 1,192,435, Germany: 706,705, Russia: 340,755, Iran: 283,225, Turkey: 220,000, France: 151,155, Israel: 109,720, Saudi Arabia: 21,085, North Korea: specific numbers unavailable.

Economic proximity was measured through the object nation's ranking on the U.S. list of trading partners through the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Foreign Trade Division, 2010. Imported and exported products between the United States and each object nation were totaled in millions of U.S. dollars. China: 456,822.1, Germany: 130,880.9, France: 65,561, Saudi Arabia: 43,011.1, Israel: 32,246.4, Russia: 31,653.2, Turkey: 14,750.1, Iran: 301.9, North Korea: figures not available.

Geographic proximity was measured through the typology of proximity, corresponding Type I for a boarding object nation, Type II for an object nation on the same continent, and Type III for an object nation on the different continent (based on the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary's seven-continent distinction). All nations were sorted as Type III in relation to the United States.

As mentioned previously in relation to shared values, broadly Germany and France would be the least unobtrusive while Iran and North Korea would likely be the most unobtrusive. Taking all of the factors into account, a reasonable, though far from definitive, scale of unobtrusiveness for the listed object nations would be, in order from least unobtrusive to most:

(1) Germany, (2) China, (3) France, (4) Russia, (5) Israel, (6) Turkey, (7) Saudi Arabia, (8) Iran, (9) North Korea.

### **Survey Data**

To assess public opinion about different object nations, the TransAtlantic Trends Surveys were retrieved from The Roper Center for Public Opinion executed by Taylor Nelson Sofres. In these studies, CATI telephone-based interviews with a random sample were conducted among adult residents of 11 countries, including the U.K. and the U.S. An average of 1,000 respondents participated in each country for each study.

The surveys asked participants to rate their feelings toward nine object nations using a “feeling thermometer” measure. The nine object nations were: Russia, Israel, North Korea, Turkey, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, France, and Germany. The “feeling thermometer” went from 100, meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, to zero, meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling. The survey questions help inform and categorize the broad range of potential issues to which an unobtrusive object may have valence described for.

### **Coding Procedure**

Coders recorded the date of the article, the type of the article, the overall valence of the article, and valence associated with particular attributes. Coding for valence mirrored instrument categories used by Wanta et al. (2004), indicating predominantly positive, neutral, or negative coverage. The media coverage of an object nation was coded as having negative valence if the story reported or implied that object nation’s activities threaten the interests of the U.S. The media coverage of an object nation was coded as having positive valence if the story reported that object nation’s activities and values are consistent with the U.S. Stories that demonstrated a balance of both positive and negative information were coded as neutral.

Coders recorded the attributes discussed in the news articles. The list of attributes, partially adopted from Wanta & Hu's study (1993) gauging issue valence of foreign nations in U.S. news, included: economic issues, energy issues, elections and political system, environmental issues, natural calamities/accidents/disasters, human rights, military issues and defense, nuclear issues, conflict, terrorism, crime, immigration issues, religion issues, science/technology issues, global epidemics, foreign policy and diplomacy, international trade, and other. Intercoder reliability for each category was tested using Holsti's method:  $\frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$ , where "M is the number of coding decisions on which the two judges are in agreement, and N1 and N2 refer to the number of coding decisions made by judges 1 and 2, respectively" (Holsti, 1969. p. 140). Coders also assessed the driving force of coverage, that is the event or main subject of the article (e.g. war, earthquake in the region, political turmoil etc.). The two coders for this study, in a mutually coded sample of 10% of total stories, combined for an overall intercoder reliability for identification of attributes within news coverage using Holsti's formula was .87. Overall intercoder reliability for assignment of overall object valence using Holsti's formula was .82. Atlantic Trend Survey public polls from 2002-2009 showing the attitudes of U.S. citizens toward each nation were evaluated and compared to the salience of each nation in the media and the direction of valence (positive negative) of news coverage. The purpose was to show that higher salience coupled with a consistent directional valence extended the likelihood that near future events would be packaged by the media and received by the public in the same way as before.

A total of 20,756 articles from December 2009 to January 2002 with the key words "Russia," "Turkey," "Iran," "North Korea," "China," "Israel," "France," "Germany," and "Saudi

Arabia” in the headline or citation headline were counted; from those, 1082 fell into FOCA and the attributes and valences were coded for each of these.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

The examination of each FOCA included an analysis for overall valence, attribute assignment and attribute specific valence, as discussed above. The attributes coded for were adapted from a public opinion survey of U.S. public opinion on various object nations (of which the object nations within this study are included). The adaptation represents a contraction of the name of the “election and political system,” “science/technology,” and “foreign policy and diplomacy” categories to the titles of “election,” “science,” and “foreign policy” respectively. The title category “global epidemics” was changed to “pandemics” and the addition of the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars was added. These measures were taken for reasons of brevity, ease of explaining categories to coders and the importance of the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars in the chosen time period under study. The attributes are as follows: economic issues, energy issues, election issues, environmental issues, natural disasters, human rights, military and defense issues, nuclear issues, conflict, Iraqi/Afghan wars, terrorism, crime, immigration, religious issues, science, pandemics, foreign policy, international trade, other. These categories are mutually exclusive. For a complete explanation see the attached coding guide.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The results of the examination of the FOCA were compared to the subsequent identified FOCA. Comparison of overall valence, attribute assignment and attribute specific valence were examined between each FOCA and related to time interval between FOCA.

- Hypothesis 1 a: The more time between FOCAs of an unobtrusive object, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 1 b: The less time between FOCAs of an unobtrusive object, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

To test how distance in time (measured in weeks between FOCAs) impacted net shifts in overall mean valence for each nation, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with net shift in overall mean valence for each nation as the dependent variable and weeks between FOCAs as the independent variable.

- Hypothesis 2 a: The shorter the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 2 b: The greater the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

To test how salience (measured in length of an FOCAs in weeks) impacts net shifts in overall mean valence for each nation, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with net shift in overall mean valence for each nation as the dependent variable and length of an FOCA as the independent variable.

### **Research Question Testing**

- Research Question 1a: How does salience impact the reoccurrence of attributes from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?

- Research Question 1b: How does salience impact the most frequently occurring attribute from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?
- Research Question 1c: How does salience impact the driving force of coverage from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?

To test how salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) impacts the reoccurrence of issues from FOCA to subsequent FOCA, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with the percentage of the four most frequently occurring issues retained from FOCA to subsequent FOCA as the dependent variable and length of the FOCA in weeks as the independent variable.

- RQ2: Does salience of the FOCA impact the number of assigned attributes?

To test how salience (measured in weeks) of a FOCA impacts the number of issues discussed within the FOCA, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with the number of issues covered per FOCA as the dependent variable and distance in time (measure in weeks) of the FOCA as the independent variable.

- RQ3: Does salience (measured in days) of the FOCA impact the assigned overall valence for the object?

To test how length in time (measured in days) of a FOCA impacts the assigned overall valence within the FOCA, a regression analysis was conducted using linear, logarithmic, and inverse curve estimation models with the dates of news stories within the FOCA as the independent variable and overall assigned valence per story within the FOCA as the dependent variable.

- RQ 4: How do public opinion changes coincide with valence of media messages over time?

To assess how changes in public opinion coincide with overall mean valence of the FOCA, survey data from yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys polling for U.S. public opinion on the object nations was consulted. The surveys determine public opinion using a “feeling thermometer” which is scaled from 0 (coldest or most unfavorable) to 100 (warmest or most favorable). These scores were standardized on a scale from -1 (most unfavorable) to 1 (most favorable) matching that of coded overall mean valence as coded for each FOCA for each nation.

- RQ 5: How does the assignment of valences and attributes differ among object nations depending on level of unobtrusiveness?

To test the research question, the object nations will be grouped according to their scaled level of unobtrusiveness. Each nation will be placed in one of three categories based on level of unobtrusiveness. Those nations categorized as highly unobtrusive were: Saudi Arabia, Iran, North Korea. Those nations categorized as moderately unobtrusive were: Turkey, Israel, and Russia. Those nations categorized as least unobtrusive were France, China, and Germany. An analysis of variance between the three groups will be conducted using overall mean valence as the dependent variable and grouping category as the independent variable. Descriptives of the assigned attributes used for each group of nations will also be discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### **Overview**

The following chapter details the number of news stories for each object nation from January 1, 2002, to December 31, 2009. The weekly mean for each object nation is reported over the course of the 416 week study, along with descriptive details of each FOCA for each object nation including: driving force of coverage, overall valence of the FOCA, assigned attributes for the FOCA, and length of the FOCA in weeks.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The total number of stories for all nations over the time period was 20,756 (Israel n= 2413, China n= 5529, North Korea n= 983, Russia n= 2943, Iran n= 2829, France n= 2847, Germany n= 2009, Saudi Arabia n= 283, and Turkey n= 920). The weekly mean number of stories overall for each nation was: Israel 6.61 (std 4.93), China 15.14 (std 5.83), North Korea 2.69 (std 3.07), Russia 8.06 (std 4.43), Iran 7.75 (std 5.32), France 7.80 (std 3.99), Germany 5.50 (std 3.24), Saudi Arabia .77 (std 1.16), and Turkey 2.52 (std 2.36).

### **FOC's**

The critical standardized value for a FOCA established by the Grubbs outlier test for 416 cases (which represents the number of weeks coded) with a  $p = .5$ , was 3.12. This standardized score represented a different number of news stories for each nation. For Israel the critical 3.12 Grubbs value represented 22+ news stories in one week of coverage, for China 35+ news stories, for North Korea 13+ news stories, for Russia 23+, for Iran 26+ news stories, for France 20+ news stories, for Germany 16+ news stories, for Saudi Arabia 5+ news stories, and for Turkey 10+ news stories in one week of coverage.

Table 1

*Valence for Attributes in Israel FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 155)	FOCA 2 (n = 129)	Overall (n = 284)
Conflict	85%	98%	90%
Terrorism	72%	53%	64%
Military	72%	90%	80%
Foreign Policy	39%	37%	38%
Human Rights	31%	27%	29%
Defense	30%	37%	33%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	11%	9%	10%
Religion	10%	34%	21%
Crime	5%	2%	4%
Economics	4%	3%	4%
Other	3%	4%	4%
Election	3%	2%	2%
Trade	1%	0%	1%
Immigration	1%	0%	1%
Science	1%	2%	1%
Nuclear weapons	0%	2%	1%
Environment issues	0%	2%	1%
Natural disasters	0%	1%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	0%	0%	0%

Table 2

*Valence for Attributes in China FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 35)	FOCA 2 (n = 80)	FOCA 3 (n = 34)	Overall (n = 151)
Conflict	0%	12%	15%	9%
Terrorism	3%	17%	0%	9%
Military	9%	8%	6%	7%
Foreign Policy	40%	37%	15%	32%
Human Rights	6%	36%	44%	30%
Defense	3%	2%	0%	1%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	3%	0%	3%	1%
Religion	3%	21%	3%	12%
Crime	3%	0%	0%	1%
Economics	71%	44%	56%	52%
Other	9%	24%	32%	22%
Election	6%	3%	9%	5%
Trade	54%	18%	9%	24%
Immigration	0%	3%	3%	2%
Science	3%	8%	9%	7%
Nuclear weapons	0%	2%	0%	1%
Environment issues	14%	14%	6%	12%
Natural disasters	11%	6%	3%	6%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	3%	1%
Energy issues	37%	14%	9%	18%

Table 3

*Valence for Attributes in North Korea FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 72)	FOCA 2 (n = 68)	FOCA 3 (n = 43)	Overall (n = 183)
Conflict	3%	38%	37%	24%
Terrorism	0%	9%	14%	7%
Military	11%	26%	19%	19%
Foreign Policy	50%	41%	49%	46%
Human Rights	0%	12%	9%	7%
Defense	0%	3%	0%	1%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	0%	35%	23%	19%
Religion	0%	0%	0%	0%
Crime	17%	3%	0%	8%
Economics	39%	29%	70%	43%
Other	3%	3%	0%	2%
Election	6%	0%	0%	2%
Trade	3%	0%	0%	0%
Immigration	6%	0%	5%	3%
Science	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nuclear weapons	94%	94%	100%	96%
Environment issues	0%	0%	0%	0%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	3%	0%	1%
Energy issues	17%	32%	26%	25%

Table 4

*Valence for Attributes in Russia FOCAs*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 33)	FOCA 2 (n = 85)	Overall (n = 118)
Conflict	79%	79%	79%
Terrorism	70%	7%	25%
Military	64%	72%	69%
Foreign Policy	64%	72%	69%
Human Rights	12%	6%	8%
Defense	61%	4%	19%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	9%	4%	5%
Religion	15%	6%	8%
Crime	3%	1%	2%
Economics	9%	54%	42%
Other	18%	8%	11%
Election	12%	1%	4%
Trade	0%	5%	3%
Immigration	3%	1%	2%
Science	0%	8%	6%
Nuclear weapons	0%	12%	8%
Environment issues	0%	1%	1%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	6%	29%	23%

Table 5

*Valence for Attributes in Iran FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 55)	FOCA 2 (n = 29)	FOCA 3 (n = 27)	FOCA 4 (n = 35)	Overall (n = 146)
Conflict	45%	45%	74%	34%	48%
Terrorism	15%	3%	15%	20%	14%
Military	75%	45%	67%	9%	51%
Foreign Policy	62%	59%	70%	54%	61%
Human Rights	5%	7%	0%	0%	3%
Defense	15%	14%	4%	0%	9%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	42%	34%	70%	34%	44%
Religion	16%	34%	11%	14%	18%
Crime	0%	7%	0%	0%	1%
Economics	51%	66%	37%	57%	53%
Other	4%	3%	7%	0%	3%
Election	4%	0%	0%	9%	3%
Trade	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Immigration	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Science	18%	31%	15%	26%	22%
Nuclear weapons	89%	79%	56%	94%	82%
Environment issues	0%	7%	0%	0%	1%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	29%	66%	15%	26%	33%

Table 6

*Valence for Attributes in France FOCAs*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 19)	FOCA 2 (n = 24)	Overall (n = 43)
Conflict	21%	46%	35%
Terrorism	11%	0%	5%
Military	0%	21%	12%
Foreign Policy	37%	46%	42%
Human Rights	42%	0%	19%
Defense	5%	4%	5%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	0%	38%	21%
Religion	16%	8%	12%
Crime	0%	4%	2%
Economics	21%	50%	37%
Other	16%	17%	16%
Election	64%	4%	30%
Trade	16%	21%	19%
Immigration	16%	4%	9%
Science	0%	0%	0%
Nuclear weapons	0%	0%	0%
Environment issues	0%	0%	0%
Natural disasters	5%	0%	2%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	0%	8%	5%

Table 7

*Valence for Attributes in Germany FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 18)	FOCA 2 (n = 17)	FOCA 3 (n = 16)	FOCA 4 (n = 16)	Overall (n = 67)
Conflict	6%	35%	63%	25%	31%
Terrorism	6%	35%	13%	6%	15%
Military	0%	12%	81%	13%	25%
Foreign Policy	6%	12%	44%	0%	15%
Human Rights	0%	18%	25%	0%	10%
Defense	0%	35%	0%	0%	18%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	0%	35%	50%	25%	27%
Religion	0%	24%	6%	0%	9%
Crime	11%	18%	25%	6%	15%
Economics	33%	24%	44%	63%	40%
Other	17%	18%	0%	0%	12%
Election	11%	6%	0%	0%	4%
Trade	22%	0%	0%	44%	16%
Immigration	11%	6%	0%	0%	4%
Science	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nuclear weapons	0%	0%	19%	0%	4%
Environment issues	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	0%	6%	13%	0%	4%

Table 8

*Valence for Attributes in Saudi Arabia FOCA's*

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 10)	FOCA 2 (n = 6)	FOCA 3 (n = 5)	Overall (n = 21)
Conflict	0%	50%	0%	14%
Terrorism	0%	100%	60%	62%
Military	20%	33%	0%	19%
Foreign Policy	20%	0%	0%	10%
Human Rights	50%	17%	60%	43%
Defense	0%	0%	0%	0%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	70%	67%	40%	62%
Religion	30%	83%	80%	57%
Crime	20%	33%	80%	38%
Economics	10%	17%	40%	19%
Other	10%	0%	0%	5%
Election	40%	0%	0%	19%
Trade	0%	0%	0%	0%
Immigration	0%	0%	0%	0%
Science	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nuclear weapons	0%	0%	0%	0%
Environment issues	0%	0%	0%	0%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 9

*Valence for Attributes in Turkey FOCA*s

Attributes	FOCA 1 (n = 39)	FOCA 2 (n = 20)	FOCA 3 (n = 10)	Overall (n = 69)
Conflict	82%	85%	90%	84%
Terrorism	8%	35%	90%	28%
Military	87%	90%	90%	88%
Foreign Policy	85%	80%	60%	80%
Human Rights	5%	20%	10%	10%
Defense	28%	50%	90%	43%
Afghanistan and Iraq wars	90%	90%	90%	90%
Religion	0%	10%	0%	3%
Crime	0%	0%	0%	0%
Economics	69%	30%	0%	48%
Other	3%	5%	10%	4%
Election	64%	40%	20%	51%
Trade	0%	0%	0%	0%
Immigration	0%	5%	0%	1%
Science	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nuclear weapons	0%	0%	0%	0%
Environment issues	0%	0%	0%	0%
Natural disasters	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pandemic issues	0%	0%	0%	0%
Energy issues	0%	0%	0%	0%

The number of FOCA's for each nation, and a breakdown of assigned overall valences and attributes are presented above. For a full description of all listed attributes, percentages, and driving forces of coverage for each FOCA, for each nation, see the appendix.

### **Hypotheses Findings**

- *Hypothesis 1 a: The more time between FOCAs of an unobtrusive object, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.*
- *Hypothesis 1 b: The less time between FOCAs of an unobtrusive object, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.*

To test how distance in time (measured in weeks between FOCAs) impacted net shifts in overall mean valence for each nation, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with net shift in overall mean valence for each nation as the dependent variable and weeks between FOCAs as the independent variable.

The results showed distance in time to be a significant predictor of net shifts in overall mean valence ( $R^2 = .49$ ,  $F=14.61$ ,  $Beta = .702$ ,  $MS = .166$ ,  $p = .002$ ). As distance in time (weeks) between FOCA's increased, net shift in overall mean valence grew increasingly larger.

However, it should be noted, that despite distance in time being a successful predictor of net shifts in overall mean valence from FOCA to subsequent FOCA, the differences in overall mean valence between FOCAs was only significant in one of seventeen cases where a FOCA was preceded by another FOCA (Turkey's first FOCA: Overall Valence  $m = .02$  ( $std = .53$ ) and Turkey's second FOCA: Overall Valence  $m = -.35$  ( $std = .67$ ). A t-test of overall mean valence showed statistical significance between the two FOCA's ( $t = 2.54$ ,  $df = 66$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The radical valence change in the case of Turkey is a notable exception, especially because these changes

take place in a very short period of time; counter to the logic of the theory. The extreme change of valence was set in a time of extraordinary political demands between U.S. and Turkish relations. The United States government was hoping Turkey, a rare ally in the Middle East, would allow U.S. forces to enter the nation to launch invasion forces against Iraq. The initial coverage of Turkey focused on this issue, the trade agreements being made and the long term relations between the United States and Turkey. The measure to allow U.S. troops into the country was put to a public vote in Turkey, and to virtually everyone's surprise, the measure failed to pass. The backlash against Turkey in the U.S. press was immediate and extreme, it also marked a decidedly difficult and edgy period in U.S.-Turkish relations that would take almost a decade to repair.

- *Hypothesis 2 a: The shorter the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.*
- *Hypothesis 2 b: The greater the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.*

To test how salience (measured in length of a FOCA in weeks) impacted net shifts in overall mean valence for each nation, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with net shift in overall mean valence for each nation as the dependent variable and length of an FOCA as the independent variable.

The regression analysis concluded that length of FOCA was not a successful predictor of net shift in overall mean valence, ( $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F = .81$ ,  $Beta = .22$ ,  $MS = .01$ ,  $p = .38$ ).

## Research Questions Findings

- *Research Question 1a: How does salience impact the reoccurrence of attributes from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?*
- *Research Question 1b: How does salience impact the most frequently occurring attribute from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?*
- *Research Question 1c: How does salience impact the driving force of coverage from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?*

To test how salience (measured in length of a FOCA in weeks) impacted the reoccurrence of attributes from FOCA to subsequent, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with the percentage of the four most frequently occurring attributes retained from FOCA to subsequent FOCA as the dependent variable and length of the FOCA in weeks as the independent variable.

The regression analysis concluded that salience of FOCA was a successful predictor of percentage of retained attributes from one FOCA to another, ( $R^2 = .45$ ,  $F = 12.73$ ,  $Beta = .67$ ,  $MS = .51$ ,  $p = .003$ ). As the length of the FOCA increased (in weeks) the greater the percentage of retained attributes from FOCA to subsequent FOCA became.

To test how salience (measured in length of a FOCA in weeks) impacted the most frequently occurring attribute from FOCA to subsequent FOCA, a t-test was conducted with length of FOCA (grouped as FOCA's spanning one week ( $n=10$ ) and FOCA's spanning two weeks or more ( $n=7$ )) as the grouping variable and retention of the most frequently occurring attribute from one FOCA to the subsequent FOCA as the dependent variable.

The t-test found statistically significant differences between the two groups: FOCA's spanning one week or less retained the most occurring attribute 20% of the time, FOCA's

spanning two weeks or more retained the most occurring attribute in the subsequent FOCA 85.71% of the time ( $t= 3.29$ ,  $df= 15$ ,  $MD= .65$ ,  $p= .005$ ). The results show that FOCA's over two weeks or more are significantly more likely to retain the most frequently occurring attributes in the subsequent FOCA than those FOCA's lasting one week or less.

To test how salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) impacted the driving force of coverage from FOCA to subsequent FOCA, a test was conducted with length of FOCA (grouped as FOCA's spanning one week ( $n=10$ ) and FOCA's spanning two weeks or more ( $n=7$ )) as the grouping variable and retention of the driving force of coverage from one FOCA to the subsequent FOCA as the dependent variable.

The t-test found statistically significant differences between the two groups: FOCA's spanning one week or less retained driving force of coverage 10% of the time, FOCA's spanning two weeks or more retained the most occurring issue in the subsequent FOCA 100.00% of the time ( $t= 7.45$ ,  $df= 15$ ,  $MD= .90$ ,  $p= .00$ ). The results show that FOCA's over two weeks or more are significantly more likely to retain the driving force of coverage in the subsequent FOCA than those FOCA's lasting one week or less.

Distance in time between FOCA's was not a successful predictor of percentage of retained attributes, retention of the most frequently occurring attributes, or retention of the driving force of coverage.

#### **Detail description of answers to RQ 1a, 1b, & 1c.**

*FOCA's spanning one week or less.* Of ten FOCA's spanning one week that were followed with a subsequent FOCA, regardless of distance in time between arcs, subsequent FOCA's were not likely to retain similar attributes selection, most frequent attribute, or driving factor of coverage from the prior one week FOCA. Despite no significant changes in overall

mean valence from FOCA to subsequent FOCA in any of the 10 cases, the driving factor of coverage was retained by only once, most frequent occurring attribute was only retained twice in nine case (ironically one of them by the FOCA with the largest distance in time separation (Russia FOCA 1-2, 203 Weeks)), the four most occurring attributes also had a considerable degree of variation between FOCA's, independent from distance in time. Of the ten cases, zero of the top four attributes were retained once (10%), one of the four attributes was retained once (10%), 2 of the four attributes were retained on seven occasions (70%), and three of four was retained once (10%).

Russia's first FOCA spanned one week (n=33 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.03$  (std= .63)). The coverage was driven by a Chechen terrorist attack on a Russian school. The major attributes assigned were Conflict (n=26, 78.79% of stories), Terrorism (n= 23, 69.70% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=21, 63.64% of stories), Military (n=21, 63.64% of stories), Defense (n=20, 60.61% of stories).

Russia's second FOCA came 203 weeks later, and spanned 3 weeks (n=85 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.28$  (std= .68)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t = 1.82$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p = .07$ ). Three of the first four major attributes were also retained (Conflict (n=67, 78.82% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=61, 71.76% of stories), Military (n=61, 71.76% of stories)). The major distinction between the coverage, despite the distance in time, was that rather than being the victim of a terrorist strike against rebel forces, Russia was the aggressor against those forces. Mean percentage change:  $-.03$  to  $-.28 = .25$ .

Table 10

*Descriptive Details of FOCA's Spanning One Week or Less*

FOCA's Spanning One Week or Less										
Country (FOCA #'s)	Russia (1-2)	Iran (2-3)	Iran (3-4)	France (1-2)	Germany (1-2)	Germany (2-3)	Germany (3-4)	Saudi Arabia (1-2)	Saudi Arabia (2-3)	China (1-2)
Distance Between Arcs	203 Weeks	36 Weeks	41 Weeks	51 Weeks	10 Weeks	21 Weeks	6 Weeks	1 Week	69 Weeks	5 Weeks
Overall Valence Shift	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Major Attributes Retained	3 of 4	1 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4	0 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4
Most Frequent Attribute Shifted	No Conflict	Yes Nuclear- Conflict	Yes Conflict- Nuclear	Yes Election- Economics	Yes Economic Terrorism	Yes Terrorism- Military	Yes Military- Economic	Yes AI Wars- Terrorism	Yes Terrorism- Religion	No Econ
Driving Force of Coverage Shifted	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Mean Shift	.25	.02	.12	.31	.10	.17	.00	.03	.41	.14

Iran's second FOCA spanned one week (n=29 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.27$  (std= .70)). The coverage was driven by U.S. economic deterrents for Iranian nuclear weapon development. The major attributes were Nuclear (n=23, 79.31% of stories), Energy (n= 19, 65.52% of stories), Economic (n=19, 65.52% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=17, 58.62% of stories).

Iran's third FOCA came 36 weeks later, also spanning one week, (n=27 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.25$  (std= .53)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t = 0.11$ ,  $df = 54$ ,  $p = .90$ ). However, the driving factor of news coverage had become Iran's funneling of weapons to Iraq and three of the four major attributes covered had changed Conflict (n=20, 74.07% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=19, 70.37% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=19, 70.37% of stories), Military (n=18, 66.67% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.27$  to  $-.25 = .02$ .

Iran's fourth FOCA came 41 weeks later, also spanning one week (n=35 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.37$  (std= .54)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t = 0.87$ ,  $df = 60$ ,  $p = .38$ ). The driving factor of news coverage had again become economic deterrents over Iranian nuclear development. Two of the major four attributes were retained (Nuclear (n=33, 94.29% of stories), Economic (n=20, 57.14% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=19, 54.29% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=12, 34.29% of stories)). Mean percentage change:  $-.25$  to  $-.37 = .12$ .

France's first FOCA spanned one week (n=19 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.31$  (std= .58)). The coverage was driven by the potential election of right wing radical Le Pen. The major attributes were Election (n=12, 64.16% of stories), Human Rights (n=8, 42.11% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=7, 36.84% of stories), Conflict (n=4, 21.05% of stories).

France's second FOCA came 51 weeks later, and also spanned one week (n=24 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .58)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t=1.74$ ,  $df=41$ ,  $p=.08$ ). The driving factor of coverage had shifted to U.S. French relations strained over the issue of the Iraqi war. Two of the major four attributes were retained (Economic (n=12, 50.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=11, 45.83% of stories), Conflict (n=11, 45.83% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=9, 37.50% of stories)). Mean percentage change: -.31 to 0.

Germany's first FOCA spanned one week (n=18 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .27$  (std= .46)), coverage was driven by a U.S. German soccer match. The major four attributes were: Economic (n=6, 33.33 % of stories), Trade (n=4, 22.22% of stories), Other (n=3, 16.67% of stories), Crime (n=2, 11.11% of stories).

Germany's second FOCA came 10 weeks later, and also spanned one week, (n=17 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .17$  (std= .52)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t=0.603$ ,  $df=33$ ,  $p=.55$ ). The driving force of coverage had shifted to the foiling of a terror plot on the U.S. by German officials. All four major attributes had changed: Terrorism (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Conflict (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Defense (n=6, 35.29% of stories). Mean percentage change: .27 to .17= .10

Germany's third FOCA came 21 weeks later, and also spanned one week, (n=16 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .63)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t=0.84$ ,  $df=31$ ,  $p=.40$ ). The driving force of coverage had shifted to Germany's failure to support the U.S. in war with Iraq. Two of the major four attributes had changed. Military (n=13, 81.25% of stories), Conflict (n=10, 62.50% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=8, 50.00% of stories), Economic (n=7, 43.75% of stories). Mean percentage change: .17 to .00.

Germany's fourth FOCA came 6 weeks later, and also spanned one week, (n=16 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .36)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference ( $t=0.00$ ,  $df=30$ ,  $p=1.00$ ). The driving factor of coverage was U.S. German business trade. Two of the major four attributes had changed Economic (n=10, 62.50% of stories), Trade (n=7, 43.75% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=4, 25.00% of stories), Conflict (n=4, 25.00% of stories). Mean percentage change: .00.

Saudi Arabia's first FOCA spanned one week (n=10 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.30$  (std= .48)). The driving force of coverage was the removal of U.S. servicemen and women from the country. The major four attributes were Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=7, 70.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=5, 50.00% of stories), Terrorism (n=4, 40.00% of stories), Election (n=4, 40.00% of stories).

Saudi Arabia's second FOCA came one week later, and also spanned one week, (n=6 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.33$  (std= .81)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference between FOCA 1 and 2 ( $t=0.09$ ,  $df=19$ ,  $p=0.92$ ). The driving force of coverage was a terrorist attack in the country. Two of the four major attributes were retained: Terrorism (n=6, 100.00% of stories), Religion (n=5, 83.33% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=4, 66.67% of stories), Conflict (n=3, 50.00% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.30$  to  $-.33 = .03$ .

Saudi Arabia's third FOCA came 69 weeks later, and also spanned one week (n=5 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.60$  (std= .54)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference between FOCA 2 and 3 ( $t=0.63$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p=0.54$ ). The driving force of coverage was America's support for the Saudi regime. Two of the major four attributes of the previous FOCA were retained Religion (n=4, 80.00% of stories), Crime (n=4, 80.00% of stories), Terrorism

(n=3, 60.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=3, 60.00% of stories). Mean percentage change: -.33 to .08= .41.

China's first FOCA spanned one week, (n=35 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .08$  (std= .74)). The driving force of coverage was the Olympics and Government Control of Trade. The top four most occurring attributes were: Economics (n=25, 71.43% of stories), Trade (n=19, 54.29% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=14, 40.00% of stories), Energy (n=13, 37.14% of stories).

China's second FOCA came 5 weeks later, and spanned two weeks, (n= 80 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.06$  (std= .60)). A t-test of overall valence revealed no significant difference between FOCA 1 and 2 ( $t=1.07$ ,  $df=113$ ,  $p=.29$ ). Two of the four most occurring attributes were retained: Economics (n= 35, 43.68% of stories), Human Rights (n=29, 36.37% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=29, 37.36% of stories), Other (n=19, 24.17% of stories). Mean percentage change: .08 to -.06= .14.

*FOCA's spanning two or more weeks.* Of seven FOCA's spanning two weeks or more that were followed with a subsequent FOCA; FOCA's over two weeks or more are significantly more likely to retain the most frequently occurring attributes and are significantly more likely to retain the driving force of coverage in the subsequent FOCA than those FOCA's lasting one week or less. In only one case was there a significant valence shift, only one shift of the most frequently assigned attribute, and the driving force of coverage never shifted.

Table 11

*Descriptive Details of FOCA's Spanning Two Week or More*

FOCA Spanning Two or More Weeks							
Country (FOCA #’s)	North Korea (1-2)	North Korea (2-3)	Iran (1-2)	Turkey (2-3)	China (2-3)	Israel (1-2)	Turkey (1-2)
Initial FOCA Saliency (Weeks)	2	2	2	2	2	5	3
Distance Between Arcs	8 Weeks	195 Weeks	5 Weeks	237 Weeks	1 Week	217 Weeks	2 Weeks
Overall Valence Shift	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Significant
Major Attributes Retained	2 of 4	3 of 4	3 of 4	2 of 4	4 of 4	4 of 4	4 of 4
Most Frequent Attribute Shifted	No (Nuclear)	No (Nuclear)	No (Nuclear)	Yes (AI wars-Terrorism)	No (Econ)	No (Conflict)	No (AI Wars)
Driving Force of Coverage Shifted	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Mean Shift	.16	.15	.05	.45	.05	.01	.37

North Korea's first FOCA spanned two weeks, (n=72 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.66$  (std= .39)). The driving force of coverage was North Korea's attempts at nuclear enrichment. The most occurring four attributes were: Nuclear (n=68, 94.44% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=36, 50.00% of stories), Economics (n=28, 38.89% of stories), Energy (n=12, 16.67% of stories).

North Korea's second FOCA came 8 weeks later, and also spanned 2 weeks (n= 68 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.50$  (std= .55)). A t-test showed the mean difference in overall valence between the two FOCA's was not statistically significant ( $t=1.85$ ,  $df=138$ ,  $p=.65$ ). The driving force of coverage remained the same (North Korea's nuclear enrichment attempts). Two of the four most occurring attributes were retained: Nuclear (n=64, 94.12% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=28, 41.18% of stories), Conflict (n=26, 38.24% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=24, 35.29% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.66$  to  $-.50 = .16$ .

North Korea's third FOCA came 195 weeks later and spanned one week (43 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.65$  (std= .57)). A t-test showed the mean difference in overall valence between the two FOCA's was not statistically significant ( $t=1.38$ ,  $df=109$ ,  $p=.17$ ). The driving force of coverage was again dealing with North Korea's nuclear enrichment. Three of the four most occurring attributes were retained: Nuclear (n=43, 100.00% of stories), Economic (n=30, 69.77% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=21, 48.84% of stories), Conflict (n=16, 37.21% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.50$  to  $-.65$ .

Iran's first FOCA spanned 2 weeks (n=55 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.32$  (std= .54)). The driving force of coverage was nuclear deterrents for Iran. The four most occurring attributes were: Nuclear (n=49, 89.09% of stories), Military (n=41, 74.55% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=34, 61.82% of stories), Economic (n=28, 50.91% of stories).

Iran's second FOCA occurred 5 weeks later and spanned one week (n=29 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.27$  (std= .70)). A t-test showed the mean difference in overall valence between the two FOCA's was not statistically significant ( $t=0.36$ ,  $df=82$ ,  $p=.71$ ). The driving force of coverage was nuclear deterrents for Iran. Three of the four most occurring attributes were retained: Nuclear (n=23, 79.31% of stories), Energy (n= 19, 65.52% of stories), Economic (n=19, 65.52% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=17, 58.62% of stories). Mean percentage change: -.32 to  $-.27 = .05$ .

Turkey's second FOCA spanned 2 weeks (n=20 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.35$  (std= .67)). The driving force of coverage was Turkey's rejection of support of the Iraqi war. The four most occurring attributes were: Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Military (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Conflict (n=17, 85.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=16, 80.00% of stories).

Turkey's third FOCA occurred 237 weeks later and spanned 1 week (n=10 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .10$  (std= .60)). A t-test showed the mean difference in overall valence between the two FOCA's was not statistically significant ( $t=1.79$ ,  $df=28$ ,  $p=.08$ ). The driving force of coverage remained Turkey's rejection of support of the Iraqi war. Two of the four most occurring attributes were retained: Terrorism (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Conflict (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Defense (n=9, 90.00% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.35$  to  $.10 = .45$ .

China's second FOCA spanned 2 weeks (n= 80 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.06$  (std= .60)). The driving force of coverage was the Olympic Games. The four most occurring attributes were: Economics (n= 35, 43.68% of stories), Human Rights (n=29, 36.37% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=29, 37.36% of stories), Other (n=19, 24.17% of stories).

China's third FOCA came 1 week later (n=34 news stories, Overall Valence  $m=-.11$  (std=.68)), and spanned one week. A t-test of overall mean valence showed no statistical significance between the two FOCA's ( $t=0.39$ ,  $df=112$ ,  $p=.69$ ). All four of the most occurring attributes from the previous arc were retained: Economic (n=19, 55.88% of stories), Human Rights (n=15, 44.12% of stories), Other (n=11, 32.35% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=5, 14.71% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $-.06$  to  $-.11 = .05$ .

Turkey's first FOCA spanned 3 weeks (n=39 news stories, Overall Valence  $m=.02$  (std=.53)). The driving force of coverage was Turkey's support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The four most occurring attributes were: Afghanistan and Iraqi Wars (n=35, 89.74% of stories), Military (n=34, 87.18% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=33, 84.62% of stories), Conflict (n=32, 82.05% of stories).

Turkey's second FOCA came 2 weeks later and spanned two weeks, (n=20 news stories, Overall Valence  $m=-.35$  (std=.67)). A t-test of overall mean valence showed statistical significance between the two FOCA's ( $t=2.54$ ,  $df=66$ ,  $p=.01$ ). All four of the most occurring attributes from the previous arc were retained: Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Military (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Conflict (n=17, 85.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=16, 80.00% of stories). Mean percentage change:  $.02$  to  $-.35 = .37$ .

Israel's first FOCA spanned 5 weeks, (n=155 news stories, Overall Valence  $m=.05$  (std=.77)). The driving force of coverage was Israel's military operations against Palestinians. The most occurring attributes were: Conflict (n=131, 84.52% of stories), Terrorism (n=112, 72.26% of stories), Military (n=112, 72.26% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=61, 39.35% of stories).

Israel's second FOCA came 217 weeks later and also spanned five weeks, (n=129 news stories, Overall Valence  $m=.04$  (std=.67)). A t-test of overall mean valence showed no

statistical significance between the two FOCA's ( $t=0.11$ ,  $df=282$ ,  $p=.90$ ). All four of the most occurring attributes from the previous arc were retained: Conflict ( $n=126$ , 97.67% of stories), Military ( $n=116$ , 89.92% of stories), Terrorism ( $n=69$ , 53.49% of stories), Foreign Policy ( $n=48$ , 37.21% of stories). Mean percentage change: .05 to .04= .01.

- *RQ2: Does salience of the FOCA impact the number of assigned attributes?*

To test how salience (measured in weeks) of an FOCA impacted the number of attributes discussed within the FOCA, a regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise regression model with the number of attributes covered per FOCA as the dependent variable and distance in time (measure in weeks) of the FOCA as the independent variable. The mean number of attributes covered per FOCA ( $n=26$ ) was  $m= 12.30$ ,  $std= 3.09$ . The mean length for each FOCA was  $m= 1.65$  (weeks),  $std= 1.16$ .

The results showed salience of an FOCA to be a significant predictor of number of attributes discussed ( $R^2= .17$ ,  $F=5.11.61$ ,  $Beta= .419$   $MS=42.09$ ,  $p=.03$ ). As the length of an FOCA (in weeks) increased, the number of attributes discussed increased.

- *RQ3: Does salience (measured in days) of the FOCA impact the assigned overall valence for the object?*

To test how salience (measured in days) of an FOCA impacted the assigned overall valence within the FOCA, a regression analysis was conducted using linear, logarithmic, and inverse curve estimation models with the dates of news stories within the FOCA as the independent variable and overall assigned valence per story within the FOCA as the dependent variable.

Of 26 FOCA's, in only four was length in time a significant predictor of shifts in overall valence throughout the FOCA (Russia's first FOCA (1 week):  $p= .02$ ,  $R^2=.15$ ,  $F= 5.65$  becoming

progressively positive; China's second FOCA (2 weeks):  $p=.01$ ,  $R^2=.07$ ,  $F=6.26$  becoming progressively positive; Russia's second FOCA (3 weeks):  $p=.00$ ,  $R^2=.07$ ,  $F=7.14$  becoming increasingly negative; North Korea's third FOCA (1 week):  $p=.00$ ,  $R^2=.18$ ,  $F=9.50$  becoming increasingly negative). In no case did the logarithmic or inverse curve models reduce the error any more than the linear model, suggesting no consistent, predictable modeling patterns for shift in overall valence through the life of an FOCA.

- *RQ 4: How do public opinion changes coincide with valence of media messages over time?*

To assess how changes in public opinion coincided with overall mean valence of the FOCA's, survey data from yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys polling for U.S. public opinion on the object nations were consulted. The surveys determine public opinion using a "feeling thermometer" which is scaled from 0 (coldest or most unfavorable) to 100 (warmest or most favorable). These scores were standardized on a scale from -1 (most unfavorable) to 1 (most favorable) matching that of coded overall mean valence as coded for each FOCA for each nation.

The scores were then organized chronologically. Because the public opinion scores were taken in June and July of each year (a consistent, central point), it allowed an available yearly score for comparison to each FOCA, where each FOCA could be compared to the nearest (in time) yearly polling survey. Each FOCA's mean overall valence was statistically compared to the corresponding, standardized yearly public opinion score. Conventional wisdom regarding public opinion and the impact of news entails that those FOCA's preceding or occurring at the same time as the public opinion surveys would be more likely to have similar scores than public opinion surveys followed an FOCA. However, because the question is exploratory in nature, both possibilities were considered and examined.

Of the cases where the FOCA occurred prior to or during the yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys (n=16), only in three cases, 18%, (France's first FOCA, Turkey's second FOCA, and China's FOCA) were the overall mean valence scores significantly different from the standardized public opinion scores.

Of the cases where the FOCA occurred after the conduction of the yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys (n=8), half had overall mean valence scores which were significantly different from the standardized public opinion scores.

*FOCAs prior to or during TransAtlantic Trends Survey.* Israel's first FOCA occurred in early May 2002, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly a month after in mid June. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA (m=.05, n=155) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score (m=.1, n= 1000); t=0.99, df= 1153, p=.32.

France's first FOCA occurred in late April 2002, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months later in mid June. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA (m=-.31, n=19) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score (m=.1, n= 1000); t= 3.21, df= 1017, p=.00.

France's second FOCA occurred in late April 2003, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months later in mid June. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA (m= .00, n=25) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score (m=-.1, n= 1000); t= .89, df= 1023, p=.37.

Germany's first FOCA occurred in mid August 2002, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly in the same timeframe. A T-test comparison showed the

overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=.27$ ,  $n=18$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.22$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=0.49$ ,  $df=1016$ ,  $p=.61$ .

Germany's third and fourth FOCAs occurred in mid February and early April 2003, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly four and two months later. A T-test comparison showed neither the overall mean valence of the third FOCA ( $m=.00$ ,  $n=16$ ) or the fourth FOCA ( $m=.00$ ,  $n=16$ ) were significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.12$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=1.08$ ,  $df=1014$ ,  $p=.27$ /  $t=1.07$ ,  $df=1014$ ,  $p=.28$ .

Saudi Arabia's first and second FOCAs occurred mid and late May 2003, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly one month later. A T-test comparison showed neither the overall mean valence of the first FOCA ( $m=-.3$ ,  $n=10$ ) or the second FOCA ( $m=-.33$ ,  $n=6$ ) were significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.24$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=0.37$ ,  $df=1008$ ,  $p=.71$ /  $t=.43$ ,  $df=1004$ ,  $p=.66$ .

Iran's first and second FOCAs occurred late April and early May 2006, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months and two weeks later, respectively. A T-test comparison showed neither the overall mean valence of the first FOCA ( $m=-.32$ ,  $n=55$ ) or the second FOCA ( $m=-.27$ ,  $n=29$ ) were significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.46$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=1.80$ ,  $df=1053$ ,  $p=.07$ /  $t=1.80$ ,  $df=1027$ ,  $p=.07$ .

Iran's third FOCA occurred in mid February 2007, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly four months later. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.25$ ,  $n=27$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.48$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=2.45$ ,  $df=1025$ ,  $p=.01$ .

Turkey's first and second FOCA occurred early February and early April 2003, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months and two weeks later, respectively. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the first FOCA ( $m=.02$ ,  $n=39$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.06$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=.48$ ,  $df=1037$ ,  $p=.62$ . The overall mean valence of the second FOCA ( $m=-.35$ ,  $n=20$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score  $t=2.74$ ,  $df=1018$ ,  $p=.00$ .

Turkey's third FOCA occurred in late October 2007, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly eight months later. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=.10$ ,  $n=10$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.06$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=1.00$ ,  $df=1008$ ,  $p=.31$ .

China's first FOCA occurred in mid June 2008, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly the same time. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=.08$ ,  $n=35$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.16$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=2.73$ ,  $df=1033$ ,  $p=.00$ .

North Korea's FOCA occurred in early January 2003, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly five months later. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.5$ ,  $n=72$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.46$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=0.66$ ,  $df=1070$ ,  $p=.50$ .

*FOCAs following TransAtlantic Trends Survey.* Israel's second FOCA occurred in mid August 2006, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=.04$ ,  $n=129$ ) was

significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.22$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 3.68$ ,  $df= 1127$ ,  $p=.00$ .

Russia's first FOCA occurred in early September 2004, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly three months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.03$ ,  $n=33$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.14$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 1.97$ ,  $df= 1031$ ,  $p=.04$ .

Russia's first FOCA occurred in late August 2008, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly two months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.28$ ,  $n=85$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.04$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 5.48$ ,  $df= 1083$ ,  $p=.00$ .

Germany's second FOCA occurred in early September 2002, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly three months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=.17$ ,  $n=17$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=.22$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 0.40$ ,  $df= 1015$ ,  $p=.40$ .

Saudi Arabia's third FOCA occurred in mid September 2002, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly three months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.6$ ,  $n=5$ ) was significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.14$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 2.05$ ,  $df= 1003$ ,  $p=.04$ .

Iran's fourth FOCA occurred in early December 2007, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly six months prior. A T-test comparison showed the overall mean valence of the FOCA ( $m=-.37$ ,  $n=35$ ) was not significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.48$ ,  $n= 1000$ );  $t= 1.28$ ,  $df= 1033$ ,  $p=.19$ .

China's second and third FOCA's occurred in mid July and early August 2007, the yearly TransAtlantic Trends public opinion survey came roughly one and two months prior. A T-test comparison showed neither the overall mean valence of the second FOCA ( $m=-.06$ ,  $n=80$ ) or the third FOCA ( $m=-.11$ ,  $n=34$ ) were significantly different from the mean standardized public opinion score ( $m=-.16$ ,  $n=1000$ );  $t=1.68$ ,  $df=1078$ ,  $p=.09$ ;  $t=0.56$ ,  $df=1032$ ,  $p=.57$ .

- *RQ 5: How does the assignment of valences and attributes differ among object nations depending on level of unobtrusiveness?*

To test the research question, the object nations were grouped according to their scaled level of unobtrusiveness. Each nation was placed in one of three categories based on level of unobtrusiveness. Those nations categorized as highly unobtrusive were: Saudi Arabia, Iran, North Korea. Those nations categorized as moderately unobtrusive were: Turkey, Israel, and Russia. Those nations categorized as least unobtrusive were France, China, and Germany. An analysis of variance between the three groups was conducted using overall mean valence as the dependent variable and grouping category as the independent variable.

Those nations listed as least unobtrusive had an overall mean valence score of  $.06$  ( $std=.57$ ,  $n=261$ ). Those nations listed as moderately unobtrusive had an overall mean valence score  $-.08$  ( $std=.66$ ,  $n=471$ ). Those nations listed as highly unobtrusive had an overall mean valence score of  $-.43$  ( $std=.56$ ,  $n=350$ ).

An F-test showed statistical significance between groups ( $F=55.70$ ,  $SS=41.16$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.01$ ). A Bonferroni Post Hoc analysis showed statistical difference between: Least Unobtrusive and Moderately Unobtrusive ( $md=.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ), Least Unobtrusive and Highly Unobtrusive nations ( $md=.49$ ,  $p=.00$ ), and Highly Unobtrusive and Moderately Unobtrusive nations ( $md=.35$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The most frequently assigned attributes for the least unobtrusive nations were: Economics (19%, n=122), Foreign policy (12%, n= 76), Human rights (9%, n=61), and Trade (8%, n=55). The most frequently assigned attributes for the moderately unobtrusive nations were: Conflict (21%, n=408), Military (19%, n=371), Foreign Policy (13%, n= 246), and Terrorism (12%, n=229). The most frequently assigned attributes for the highly unobtrusive nations were: Nuclear Weapons (23%, n=295), Foreign Policy (14%, n=176), Economics (13%, n=159), and Conflict (9%, n= 117).

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

### Overview

This chapter presents an interpretation of the findings in relation to the objectives of the study. Specifically, the first section analyzes the first object of understanding the role of distance in time between FOCA's as a predictor of overall valence for subsequent FOCA's. The second section focuses on the second research objective of understanding the role of salience of a FOCA as a predictor of overall valence for subsequent FOCA's. The third section focuses on the third object of understanding the role of salience of an FOCA in predicting assigned attributes of the subsequent FOCA. The fourth section focuses on the fourth objective of understanding the role of salience of an FOCA in the number of attributes assigned to an object nation. The fifth section focuses on the fifth objective of understanding the role of salience in the shifts of overall valence with a given FOCA. The sixth section attempts to measure how media assigned overall valences to an object nation manifest in public opinion. The seventh section addresses how scaled level of unobtrusiveness impacts an objects presentation in news media. The final section discusses implication of the research, limitations of the study, as well as future directions.

*Objective 1: Determine if distance in time between FOCA's for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned overall valence.*

- Hypothesis 1 a: The more time between FOCA's of an unobtrusive object, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 1 b: The less time between FOCA's of an unobtrusive object, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

Test analyses showed that distance in time between FOCA's was a successful predictor of shifts in overall mean valence. As time between the FOCA's increased, the changes in valence from one FOCA to the next became increasingly larger. The greater the distance between FOCA's meant a departure from prior coverage and the ability to assign valence independent from prior coverage.

While distance in time is a successful predictor of overall valence shifts between FOCA's, a few critical factors remain ambiguous. Principally, setting an exact distance to which notable change will occur is not clear. Though distance in time between arcs is a significant predictor of overall valence shifts between the FOCA's, it is very rare that huge departures in overall valence took place between the arcs. Interestingly, and perhaps as a notable exception, one of the large shifts in overall mean valence occurred between FOCA's only three weeks apart in the object nation of Turkey's first and second FOCA's. The shift also marks the only statistically significant overall mean valence shift between any pair of corresponding FOCA's. The dramatic alteration in valence (a net shift of .37, (18.50%)) was sparked by an unprecedented political standoff between Turkey and the United States. In the weeks building up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Turkey was considered a sure ally of the United States and staging area for military strikes. The first FOCA displayed a slightly positive neutrality from media assigned overall mean valence. However, because of concerns over the legitimacy of the invasion, the neighboring state's Kurdish population, and perceived U.S. strong-arming, the Turkish electorate voted down a proposal to allow U.S. forces to enter the country. This came as a tremendous shock to leaders of both nations, and, despite incentives of millions in aid and production promises, the United States and Turkey could not come to terms on U.S. forces staging attacks in Iraq from Turkey. The negative overall valence shift was sharp and swift. After two hundred and thirty seven

weeks, Turkey's third FOCA had shifted back to regain the slightly positive neutral coverage it had lost so quickly.

What was consistent (omitting the case of Turkey's first and second FOCA) in measuring overall mean valence shifts between FOCA over time was that to have a shift of over .20 (10%) from FOCA to FOCA, a distance in time of 51 weeks or more was needed. That said, such a distance in time did not guarantee such a shift. On occasions, even with years between FOCA's, very slight shifts took place; as was the case with Israel's first and second FOCA. Despite being separated by 217 weeks, the overall mean valence shift between the two FOCA was .01 (.005%).

Ultimately distance in time between FOCA's resulted in greater mean overall valence shifts; though while more time allowed for different assigned overall valence, it did not always guarantee it. Events that are a departure from previous relationships may cause changes in relatively short time, as in the case of Turkey.

*Objective 2: Determine if salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) of an FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned overall valence in the subsequent FOCA.*

- Hypothesis 2 a: The shorter the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the less influential previous assigned overall valence and the more likely the media can select sources independently.
- Hypothesis 2 b: The greater the length in time of the previous FOCA of an unobtrusive object to the next FOCA, the more likely the media are to use previously assigned overall valence.

Salience of an FOCA was not a successful predictor of overall mean valence shift in the subsequent FOCA. It is notable to point out that a regression model using both distance in time between FOCA's and salience of an FOCA as predictors of assigned overall mean valence was conducted and also deemed salience to be an insignificant predictor of assigned overall mean valence. The theoretical model argued that the longer an object stayed with high salience on the media agenda, the more lasting impact the assigned valence would have on the subsequent FOCA. This was simply not the case. FOCA's with more salience were no more likely to retain overall assigned mean valence in the next FOCA than FOCA's with less salience.

There are multiple possible explanations for this. The first, and most straight forward, is simply that the theoretical model is incorrect in the assumptions on salience. Perhaps the qualification as an FOCA, which has an operationalized criteria of high news agenda salience to begin with, is more important than the length in time of that high salience, once it has been defined. Again, it is important to note that mean shifts between FOCA's were minimal overall with only one statistically significant shift taking place (between Turkey's first and second FOCA). Thus, one could argue that once an FOCA is established, the impacts of the assigned overall mean valence are fairly consistent, with distance in time between the FOCA's (as mentioned above) the more important predicting factor.

Another possibility is that, because this story is exploratory in nature, the criteria laid forth for defining salience of the FOCA, which in this case revolved around length in time of the FOCA on the news agenda, were insufficient. Items such as location within newspaper, length of story, whether or not the story was featured as a headline, relation of story from print media to broadcast media were not taken into consideration as only print coverage was used in this study. However, it is more likely, given that length in time on the agenda is a considerable factor in

salience, that once an FOCA is established, regardless of time, the assigned valences have lasting power.

*Objective 3: Determine if salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) of an FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of assigned attributes in the subsequent FOCA.*

While salience of an FOCA had little to do with shifts in overall mean valence scores from arc to arc, it proved a critical factor in how an object was packaged and the lasting power of assigned attributes from arc to arc. The objective was answered in three research questions.

- Research Question 1a: How does salience impact the reoccurrence of attributes from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?
- Research Question 1b: How does salience impact the most frequently occurring attribute from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?
- Research Question 1c: How does salience impact the driving force of coverage from FOCA to subsequent FOCA?

The first question asked how salience of an FOCA impacted the reoccurrence of assigned attributes from one FOCA to the next. The results showed that salience of a given FOCA was a significant predictor of the number of assigned attributes retained from that FOCA to the next. The greater the salience of the FOCA (in time) the more likely the same assigned attributes from that FOCA would be used in the next. FOCAs spanning a week only retained greater than 50% of the most common occurring attributes in the subsequent FOCA only once, the other 9 cases had an attribute retention rate of 50% or less. Conversely, 71% of FOCAs spanning more than a week retained greater than 50% of the most common occurring attributes in the subsequent FOCA. A regression analysis exacted a model showing the precise predicting power of salience on future retention of assigned attributes with an  $R^2$  of .45.

The second question asked how salience of a FOCA impacted retention of the most frequently assigned attribute from that FOCA to the next. Again, the results showed that FOCAs with greater salience were more likely to retain previous attributes; in this instance, significantly more likely to retain the most frequently assigned attribute from a given FOCA to the next. FOCA's spanning one week or less retained the most occurring attribute 20% of the time, FOCA's spanning two weeks or more retained the most frequent attribute in the subsequent FOCA 85.71% of the time. Interestingly, among FOCAs with a salience of two weeks or more there was no statistical change in the likelihood to retain the most frequent attribute. The crossing of the one week threshold seemed to be the most critical factor in major assigned attribute retention from FOCA to future FOCA. It is note worthy that this may serve to be a more stable construct of FOCAs for future studies.

The last question asked how salience of a FOCA impacted retention of the driving force (theme) of coverage from a given FOCA to the subsequent FOCA. The results showed that FOCA's over two weeks or more were significantly more likely to retain the assigned driving force of coverage in the subsequent FOCA than those FOCA's lasting one week or less. FOCA's spanning one week or less retained driving force of coverage 10% of the time, while FOCA's spanning two weeks or more retained the most occurring attribute in the subsequent FOCA every time. Again, the qualifying criteria for retention was salience of over two weeks, once more alluding to the fact that qualification for an FOCA might prove a more stable construct.

Finally, distance in time between FOCA's was not a successful predictor of percentage of retained attributes, retention of the most frequently occurring attribute, or retention of the driving force of coverage. This is important to note given the results from the hypotheses. Seemingly, increased distance in time between FOCAs allows for shifts in valence assignment (or attitude

toward the object), yet how the item is packaged and presented with attributes is fairly consistent over time, so long as that assignment of attributes happens in an FOCA of over a two week or greater period of time.

*Objective 4: Determine if salience (measured in length of an FOCA in weeks) of an FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of the number of assigned attributes to the unobtrusive object.*

The study found salience of an FOCA to be a significant predictor of the number of attributes assigned to the object nation within that FOCA. The longer the length of the FOCA in time, the more attributes assigned to the object. Though a relatively intuitive line of questioning, the results are important to note in establishing a theoretical model.

- Research Question 2: Does salience of the FOCA impact the number of assigned attributes?

While the greater the length of time of the FOCA the greater number of assigned attributes, most often these added attributes were secondary to a larger discussion. For example, Israel's first FOCA was undeniably about the Israeli offensive into Palestine and the siege of Yasser Arafat's compound. The assigned attributes for Israel over the 5 week long FOCA, spanning 155 news stories, most often revolved around conflict, terrorism, and the military, with each of these attributes occurring in over 70% of the total news stories within the FOCA. Conversely, attributes such as science (n=1, .65% of news stories), immigration (n=2, 1.29% of news stories), and trade (n=2, 1.29% of news stories) were minor occurrences through the life of the FOCA and had little reflection on the overall packaging and presentation of the object nation within the FOCA. The greater length of the FOCA in time, and thus greater number of new stories, simply afford more opportunities for other attributes to find their way into the FOCA.

What is important to note is that, despite a greater number of attributes in longer FOCA, that such increases was never an indication of greater shifts in the most common occurring attributes or driving force of coverage. From the onset of a given FOCA, the most frequent assigned attributes and driving force of coverage become stable, the addition of more attributes are simply minor mentions of the characteristics within a greater story on the object nation featuring the most common attributes and driving force of coverage.

However, there were occasions were a news story within an FOCA was completely outside the parameters of the rest of the stories. For example, during Russia's second FOCA an occasional story of Russia's positioning for oil, business news, or environmental policies would present attributes unique from those in the majority of news stories within the FOCA pertaining to the War in Georgia. However, such stories would not alter or shift the overall packaging or presentation of attributes within the course of the FOCA. Instead, such news stories would occur as a sort of random error, and subsequent news stories would continue with the previously assigned most frequent attributes within the greater context of the FOCA and driving force of coverage.

*Objective 5: Determine if salience (measured in length of an FOCA in days) of an FOCA for unobtrusive objects is a successful predictor of patterned shifts in overall valence within that FOCA.*

- Research Question3: Does salience (measured in days) of the FOCA impact the assigned overall valence for the object?

The object of this line of questioning was to determine whether or not a given FOCA had a predictable pattern of change in overall valence within the FOCA as it progressed in time. For example, to see if overall valence started out as neutral and became increasingly positive or

negative or any patterned change of overall valence throughout the course of a given FOCA. The reasoning behind searching for such patterned changes is at the very heart of the theoretical model. If patterned changes existed one would have to recognize that as an object's salience in the news agenda extended, through length of time of the FOCA, the power of overall valence assignment would be related to some other factor than prior aggregated opinion. In other words, if patterned changes in overall valence existed within FOCA's over time, one would have to recognize that the higher salience of an FOCA the greater the ability of some force (be it media, general public opinion, elites, or simply time itself) to shape or to alter the course of coverage.

This was not the case. No observable or testable pattern of overall valence shift occurred consistently within the FOCA's. Instead, the most common occurrence was that overall valence of the FOCA held a fairly consistent pattern throughout. While shifts did occur, these changes were unpredictable, occurring randomly and briefly, then returning back to the norm of coverage and established overall valence.

*Objective 6: Determine how surveyed public opinion on unobtrusive object nations corresponds with news media assigned overall valences in FOCA's of those same unobtrusive object nations.*

- Research Question 4: How do public opinion changes coincide with valence of media messages over time?

The assessment of public opinion polls on an object nation prior, during, and after a FOCA for that object nation was a challenging undertaking. While the public opinion polls were very consistent in when and where they were conducted, the occurrence of FOCA's for that object nation were anything but consistent. In some cases, multiple FOCA's occurred within a short enough time frame that they were compared to the same public opinion survey. In some cases an

FOCA would occur during the public opinion survey followed by a subsequent FOCA just a few weeks after the polling and vice versa.

While the reality in assessing the manifestation of media assigned valences in public opinion proved to be a difficult task, the theoretical concept is extraordinarily simple: because media is the vehicle through which, according to the model (see figure 2), ultimately delivers coverage of an object to help form mass aggregate opinion, valences of object nations from FOCA's occurring prior to the polling of individuals regarding the object nations should correspond to individual opinions and ratings of the object nation in the polling. The study found 81% (13 of 16) of cases where the FOCA occurred prior to or during the conduction of the yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys, overall valence from the FOCA matched that (or did not statistically deviate from) public opinion. Of those three cases where the overall valence from the FOCA did deviate significantly from public opinion polls, two had circumstantial explanations for the departure of scores. In the case of France's first FOCA, the news stories centered on a singular, radical political figure (Le Pen) who was ultimately not elected by French citizens, the questions of the TransAtlantic Trends survey two months later involved attitudes of U.S. citizens toward the nation of France, not a then fading political figure. In the case of Turkey's second FOCA, which took an extremely negative departure from the relatively neutral valences of Turkey's other FOCA's and the public opinion scores from the TransAtlantic surveys. Turkey's second FOCA concerned the rejection of U.S. forces and aid packages during the height of the build up to the second Iraqi-U.S. conflict. Following this event, which was a surprise to U.S. and Turkish officials, both nations made public efforts to restore the previously cordially relationship the two nations enjoyed. Of the cases where the FOCA occurred after the

conduction of the yearly TransAtlantic Trends surveys, 50% (4 of 8) had overall mean valence scores which were significantly different from the standardized public opinion scores.

While certainly not definitive proof of the correspondence between FOCA assignment and public opinion, the study does show that FOCA's occurring prior/during public opinion polls had greater chance of correspondence of overall valence to the subsequent public opinion scores than FOCA's occurring after public opinion polling. The theoretical implications of such findings point to the ability of the media to assert assigned valences of object nations on the general public and questions the ability of the general public to manifest their attitudes and opinions in subsequent coverage of an object. This is a point that should be considered in future developments of the model and testing.

*Objective 7: Determine how scaled level of unobtrusiveness impacts an objects presentation in news media.*

- RQ 5: How does the assignment of valences and attributes differ among object nations depending on level of unobtrusiveness?

All of the groups of unobtrusive nations significantly differed from one another in terms of overall mean valence. As countries became more unobtrusive, the valences became increasingly negative. The least unobtrusive nations had an overall valence of .06, moderately unobtrusive nations had an overall valence of -.08, and the highly unobtrusive nations had an overall valence of -.43.

While all of the nations are unobtrusive, entailing a lack of direct exposure and familiarity, it is logical, and the case made earlier in this dissertation, that exposure and familiarity are a construct of scale. Based on the scale created in this study, the nations that less unobtrusive are viewed more positively and as nations become increasingly unobtrusive they are

defined increasingly negatively. However, as the purely positive presentation would be represented as a 1, the score of .06 for the least unobtrusive nations is really more of an indicator of neutrality. Thus, the objects with which we have greater familiarity have more neutral presentations, while those we are less familiar become increasingly radical; in the case of object nations that trend is increasingly negative as unobtrusiveness increases.

Furthermore, the least unobtrusive nations most frequently were assigned attributes of economics, trade, and human rights. The moderately and highly unobtrusive nations were most frequently assigned attributes of conflict, military, terrorism, and nuclear weapons. While the least unobtrusive nations are discussed with attributes related to sharing of commerce and values, the more unobtrusive nations are discussed with attributes related to war and conflict. It is noteworthy that all groups of nations were assigned the attribute of foreign policy as one of the top four most occurring attributes. This is important in showing the importance of the news media in laying forth the strategic positioning of an object nation to that of the United States.

### **Implications**

The theoretical model proposed the distance in time of and from news media assigned attributes, driving force of coverage and overall valence of an FOCA for an unobtrusive object, in part, would dictate how that unobtrusive object was assigned attributes, overall valence, and driving force of coverage by news media in the subsequent FOCA. The reality of the model statistically drawn from this study is not nearly as parsimonious, yet it is equally as insightful as the proposed model.

The two key components of prediction of future coverage are distance in time of the FOCA (salience) and distance in time between FOCAs, the overall valences, driving forces of coverage, and assigned attributes were the primary dependent variables. The primary findings of the study

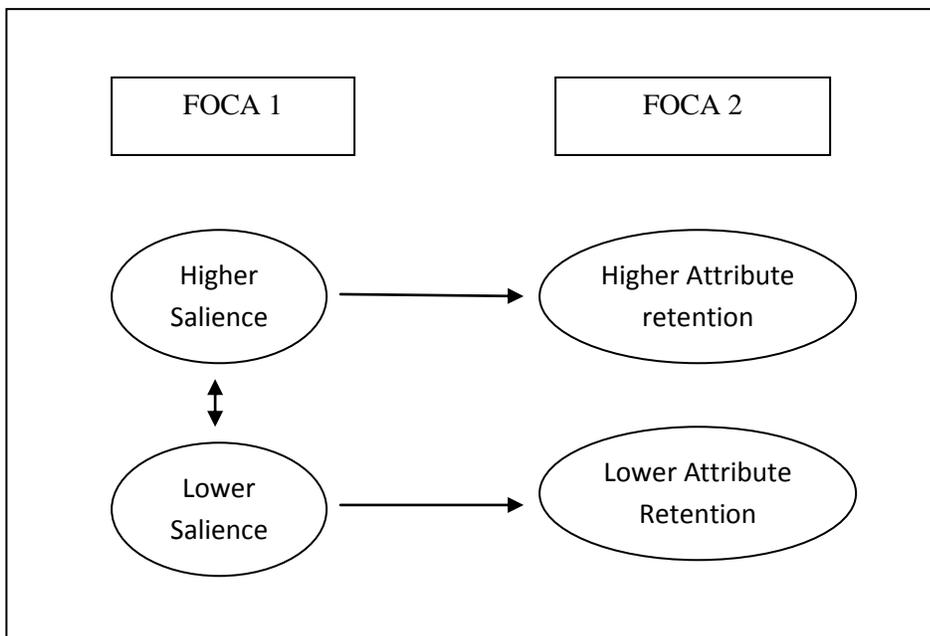
featured two main points: The first, distance in time between FOCAs was a predictor of overall valence changes, the longer the time frame between FOCAs, the greater shifts in overall valence from one FOCA to the next. The second, that as distance in time of an FOCA (salience) increased, the more likely the future FOCA would have the same assigned attributes and driving force of coverage. Distance in time between FOCAs does not serve as a predictor of attribute assignment of future FOCAs nor does length of the FOCA (salience) predict overall valence of future FOCAs.

In more simplistic terms, it seems that valence, or attitude toward an object, is more likely to change and alter over time. Regardless of prior salience, attitudes are contained within a more contemporary prism for the issue at hand. Meaning that if an objects strategic positioning has changed from the perspective of the audience (in this case the media) from FOCA to FOCA, the greater the likelihood that there will be a noted valence shift. It makes sense then that FOCAs further apart in time would afford more opportunity for alteration of an objects strategic positioning, thus entailing valence shifts. The case of Turkey, with rapid shift in valence within a short period of time, serves as the exception but furthers the point that strategic positioning is key in understanding valence assignment. The more time in between FOCAs, the greater the chance, that upon reassessment, the strategic positioning of an object has changed.

Length of a given FOCA (salience) offers its own important contribution to the model as well. The longer the length in time of the FOCA, the more lasting the impacts of its assigned attributes. Meaning, how an item was packaged in terms of attribute assignment in the media (especially for FOCAs lasting over two weeks), had lasting impacts to the next FOCA regardless of length in time between FOCAs or valence shifts. It seems that, while attitude toward an object may alter over time, how the item is understood in terms of attributes is retained. For example,

attitudes towards Israel may change from FOCA to FOCA, but the packaging of the nation as militaristic, in combat against terrorism, and democratically oriented remains. The assigned attributes to an object nation in an FOCA increasingly solidifies those attributes as the prism to which to understand the nation in the future the higher the salience of the FOCA becomes. While certainly not a continuous, or complete, model, a graphic understanding of the theoretical model from the findings of this study can be seen in figures 4 and 5.

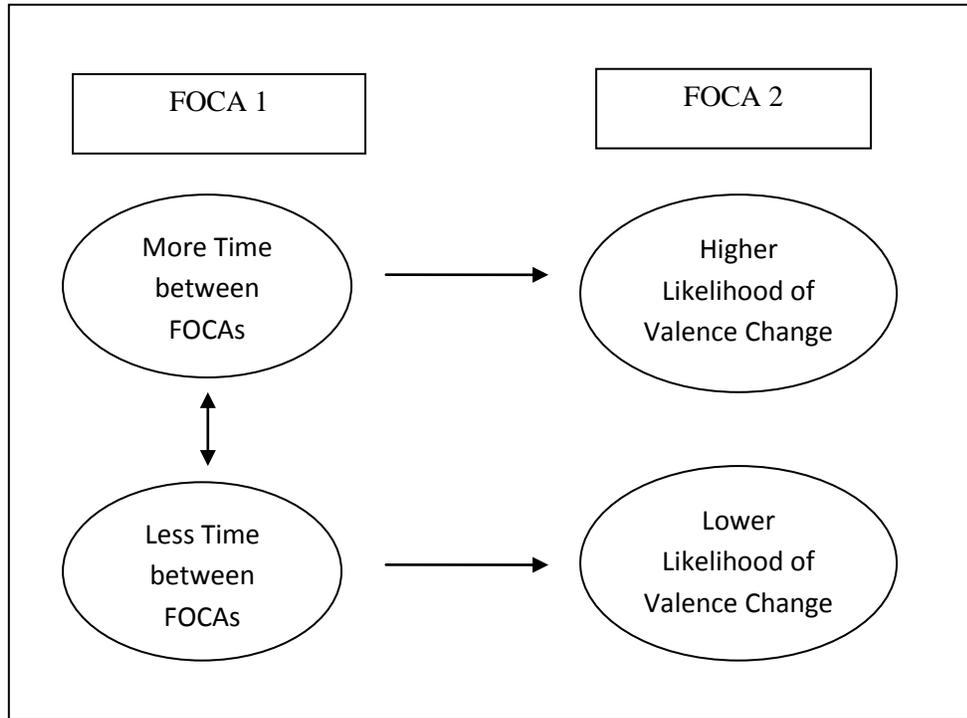
*Figure 4. Salience of an FOCA on assigned attribute retention in subsequent FOCA*



The correspondence of assigned valence and public opinion showed that if an FOCA occurred before or during polling, the overall valence and public opinion were typically in accord with one another. Conversely, if the polling occurred after an FOCA public opinion and overall valence were far more likely to lack any correlation. These findings are very much in agreement with a conceptualization of mass aggregate opinion. Prior to an FOCA the general public has certain attitudes toward an object that may or may not serve to inform the future media coverage of the object nation in the coming FOCA. However, after coverage has been

initiated, regardless of source, attitudes toward the object are more likely to agree with a collective, media portrayed attitude toward the object.

Figure 5. Distance in time between FOCAs and likelihood of overall valence change



The larger impacts of such findings are vast. First, not only are our understandings of an object dependent on a collective conceptualization from prior media coverage, but that understanding puts restrictions on how the object can be presented in the future; namely in terms of attributes. Attributes are lasting, over time and over alterations to valence, attributes remain. This knowledge is important for audiences, news media professionals and professionals dealing with publically crafted messages. For the general public, recognizing that the media gives presentations of objects in packages they already understand and that for less general presentations one might need to seek out specialized knowledge or international news sources to broaden one's perspective. Similarly, it is important for news professionals to acknowledge that,

whether by institutional or heuristic constrictions, the packaging of object nations in news has largely become a repetitive endeavor. Seeking new sources, new angles, and finding new elements of packaging can broaden public and elite understanding of an object, which may lead to more informed policy making.

The importance of these findings for industry professionals, such as public relations practitioners, requires a broader understanding of unobtrusiveness. As stated earlier, and attempted in this dissertation, unobtrusiveness is a scalable construct. For object nations, particular variables, such as economic, cultural, and geographic proximity may constitute the important factors in such a scale. While this dissertation focused on object nations due to literature denoting their representation as ideal unobtrusive objects, it is logical that other objects may be considered unobtrusive and other unique variables comprising unobtrusiveness for those objects need measured and scaled. For example, certain institutions may be considered unobtrusive. Large, multi-national corporations may be an example. Certainly one could track FOCA for various corporations in any industry sector. The degree of unobtrusiveness may be scaled in terms of profit margin, number of domestic locations, number of employees, etc...Regardless, an understanding that attributes assigned to an institution may be very lasting, yet the valence of your institution is still alterable, would impact marketing and rebranding strategies for companies and public relations professionals.

The theoretical underpinning of framing literature has held that some attributes are more negative than others. Meaning that attribute packaging may be somewhat dependent on what the attribute is. For example, war may be a difficult attribute to package in a positive light. However, the results of this dissertation suggest that attributes and valence, specifically in this case overall object valence, may act independent of one another. Future researchers exploring theory should

note the possibility of such independence or the possibility of interactions among certain attributes in valence assignment.

Of further importance are the implications that, if unobtrusiveness can in fact be scaled as attempted in this study, more unobtrusive objects have increasingly extreme presentations. The lack of neutrality may suggest that more radical presentations of objects with which we are not as familiar are more easily adopted. Thus as an object becomes increasingly unobtrusive, it is more likely to be presented in the most simplistic and extreme ways.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

The study, any most, had drawbacks and limitations, hopefully those limitations can be overcome and the results of this piece replicated and reapplied to future studies. Time was a considerable limitation in many ways: the number of object nations examined limited the amount of time could be devoted to each and narrowed the time span the study covered. A more complete study, spanning several decades of one or two object nations may be more telling and help build future models.

The lack of control in when an event sparks an FOCA and the inability to identify an FOCA in any other manner but retroactively, means that things like public opinion data (when available) may not be readily tapped within the event itself except by pure chance. This limits the ability of researchers to accurately map the ebbs and flows of public opinion along with the changes in valence over the course of the FOCA. This creates difficulties in understanding the jump from media valence to public opinion. Furthermore, public opinion surveys did not take into account attribute assignment in the data used for this study. Future studies should attempt to find data that incorporates such questions.

It is important to remember this study is exploratory in nature, and, while adding contributions to the field, has operational problems that need to be addressed. From this study alone the researcher suggests that a FOCA not be considered such unless a two week threshold of high salience of the object in the news media is reached. It is also then possible that the peak threshold of number of stories not need be so high, rather consistently elevated. A study examining the impacts of attributes and valences from an extremely high number of stories arcs in one week versus a moderately high number of stories arcs across several weeks would aid in refining the construct of an FOCA. And again, an examination of one or two nations over several decades might also reveal a greater role of distance in time in assigned attribute retention, as logic would deem an increase chance of change over a long enough period of time. Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of changes in valence, if any are noted overtime, and changes in assigned attributes would be invaluable. Particularly in the case of changes in assigned attributes, it is plausible that a major occurrence such as revolution, disaster, war, etc...is required to force attribute change. Qualitative analyses overtime would allow for such ideas to be brought to light. Also, the notion that FOCA are pure, singular event driven is flawed. It could be that a host of factors converge on an object on occasion producing a pseudo-FOCA, qualitative analyses may help explain the occurrences, if any exists, of such pseudo-events. How other objects and their associated FOCA impacts the life and length of another object's FOCA may also be brought to light using qualitative methods.

Overall this model contributes to the already existing theories of agenda setting and agenda building by showing distance in time of and between arcs of news coverage of an object are significant predictors of future news coverage of that object. The increased distance in time (higher salience) of an FOCA, the more likely previous applied attributes will be reapplied in the

subsequent FOCA. The greater the distance in time between FOCA allows for greater opportunities for changes in media assigned overall valence of the object from one arc to the next. This is somewhat dependent upon change in the strategic position of the object in relation audience perspective, the degree to however which is unknown. The model also attempts to contribute an understanding of public opinion as a mass collective understanding of an object, this component needs more exploration and was taken as a given in this exploratory study.

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APPENDIX A:  
NATION ATTRIBUTES, VALENCES,  
AND FOCA DESCRIPTIVES

**Overall Valence and Attribute Detail by Nation**

Attribute valence was assessed on a scale ranging from 1 (most positive), 0 (neutral), to -1 (most negative).

The overall valence for the 284 total stories for Israel was  $m = .04$  ( $std = .72$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was conflict (90.49% of the stories,  $n=257$ ), followed by military (80.28% of stories,  $n=228$ ), terrorism (63.73% of stories,  $n=181$ ), foreign policy (38.38% of stories,  $n=109$ ), defense (33.10% of stories,  $n=94$ ), human rights (29.23% of stories,  $n=83$ ), religion (20.77% of stories,  $n=59$ ), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (10.21% of stories,  $n=29$ ), economics (03.52% of stories,  $n=10$ ), other (03.52% of stories,  $n=10$ ), crime (03.52% of stories,  $n=10$ ), election (02.46% of stories,  $n=7$ ), nuclear weapons (01.06% of stories,  $n=3$ ), science (01.06% of stories,  $n=3$ ), trade (.70% of stories,  $n=2$ ), immigration (.70% of stories,  $n=2$ ), environment (.70% of stories,  $n=2$ ), and natural disasters (.35% of stories,  $n=1$ ). Pandemic and energy received no coverage.

The overall valence for the 183 total stories for North Korea was  $m = -.60$  ( $std = .53$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was nuclear weapons (95.62% of stories,  $n=175$ ), followed by foreign policy (46.44% of stories,  $n=85$ ), economics (42.62% of stories,  $n=78$ ), energy (24.59% of stories,  $n=45$ ), conflict (24% of stories,  $n=44$ ), military (18.57% of stories,  $n=34$ ), the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (18.57% of stories,  $n=34$ ), crime (7.65% of stories,  $n=14$ ), terrorism (6.55% of stories,  $n=12$ ), human rights (6.55% of stories,  $n=12$ ), immigration (3.27% of stories,  $n=6$ ), other (2.18% of stories,  $n=4$ ), election (2.18% of stories,  $n=4$ ), pandemic (1.09% of stories,

n=2), and defense (1.09% of stories, n=2). Environment, natural disaster, religion, and science had no coverage.

The overall valence for the 151 total stories for China was  $m = -.04$  ( $std = .65$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was economics (52.32% of stories, n=79), foreign policy (31.79% of stories, n=48), human rights (30.46% of stories, n=46), trade (23.84% of stories, n=36), other (21.85% of stories, n=33), energy (17.88% of stories, n=27), environment (11.92% of stories, n=18), (religion (11.92% of stories, n=18) terrorism (09.27% of stories, n=14), conflict (09.27% of stories, n=14), military (07.28% of stories, n=11), science (06.62% of stories, n=10), natural disaster (05.96% of stories, n=9), election (04.64% of stories, n=7), immigration (01.99% of stories, n=3), defense (01.32% of stories, n=2), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (01.32% of stories, n=2), crime (0.66% of stories, n=1), nuclear weapons (0.66% of stories, n=1), and Pandemic (0.66% of stories, n=1).

The overall valence for the 118 total stories for Russia was  $m = -.21$  ( $std = .67$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was conflict (78.81% of stories, n=93), foreign policy (69.49% of stories, n=82), military (69.49% of stories, n=82), economics (41.52% of stories, n=49), terrorism (24.57% of stories, n=29), energy (22.88% of stories, n=27), defense (19.49% of stories, n=23), other (11.01% of stories, n=13), religion (08.47% of stories, n=10), nuclear weapons (08.47% of stories, n=10), human rights (7.62% of stories, n=9), science (5.93% of stories, n=7), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (5.08% of stories, n=6), elections (4.23% of stories, n=5), trade (3.38% of stories, n=4), crime (1.69% of stories, n=2), immigration (1.69% of stories, n=2), and environment (.85% of stories, n=1). Natural disasters were not covered.

The overall valence for the 146 total stories for Iran was  $m = -.31$  ( $std = .57$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was nuclear weapons (82.19% of stories, n=120), foreign policy (60.96% of

stories, n=89), economics (52.74% of stories, n=77), military (51.37% of stories, n=75), conflict (47.95% of stories, n=70), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (43.84% of stories, n=64), energy (32.88% of stories, n=48), science (21.92% of stories, n=32), religion (18.49% of stories, n=27), terrorism (13.70% of stories, n=20), defense (8.90% of stories, n=13), human rights (3.42% of stories, n=5), election (3.42% of stories, n=5), other (3.42% of stories, n=5), crime (1.37% of stories, n=2), and environment (1.37% of stories, n=2). Trade, pandemic, immigration, and natural disasters were not covered.

The overall valence for the 43 total stories for France was  $m = -.13$  ( $std = .57$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was foreign policy (41.86% of stories, n=18), economics (37.21% of stories, n=16), conflict (34.88% of stories, n=15), elections (30.23% of stories, n=13), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (20.93% of stories, n=9), trade (18.60% of stories, n=8), human rights (18.60% of stories, n=8), other (16.28% of stories, n=7), religion (11.63% of stories, n=5), military (11.63% of stories, n=5), immigration (9.30% of stories, n=4), terrorism (4.65% of stories, n=2), defense (4.65% of stories, n=2), energy (4.65% of stories, n=2), crime (2.33% of stories, n=1) and natural disasters (2.33% of stories, n=1). Pandemic, science, nuclear weapons, and environment were not covered.

The overall valence for the 67 total stories for Germany was  $m = .11$  ( $std = .50$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was economics (40.30% of stories, n=27), followed by conflict (31.34% of stories, n=21), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (26.87% of stories, n=18), military (25.37% of stories, n=17), defense (17.91%, n=12), trade (16.42% of stories, n=11), terrorism (14.93% of stories, n=10), crime (14.93% of stories, n=10), foreign policy (14.93% of stories, n=10), other (11.94% of stories, n=8), human rights (10.45% of stories, n=7), religion (8.96% of stories, n=6), immigration (4.48% of stories, n=3), elections (4.48% of stories, n=3), energy (4.48% of stories,

n=3), and nuclear weapons (4.48% of stories, n=3). Pandemic, science, natural disasters, and the environment were not covered.

The overall valence for the 21 total stories for Saudi Arabia was  $m = -.38$  ( $std = .58$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was terrorism (61.90% of stories, n=13), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (61.90% of stories, n=13), religion (57.14% of stories, n=12), human rights (42.86% of stories, n=9), crime (38.10% of stories, n=8), election (19.05% of stories, n=4), military (19.05% of stories, n=4), economic (19.05% of stories, n=4), conflict (14.29% of stories, n=3), foreign policy (9.52% of stories, n=2), and other (4.76% of stories, n=1). Trade, pandemic, science, nuclear weapons, defense, immigration, natural disasters, environment, and energy were not covered.

The overall valence for the 69 total stories for Turkey was  $m = -.07$  ( $std = .60$ ). The most reoccurring attribute was the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (89.86% of stories, n=62), military (88.41% of stories, n=61), conflict (84.06% of stories, n=58), foreign policy (79.71% of stories, n=55), elections (50.72% of stories, n=35), economics (47.83% of stories, n=33), defense (43.48% of stories, n=30), terrorism (27.54% of stories, n=19), human rights (10.14% of stories, n=7), other (04.35% of stories, n=3), religion (02.90% of stories, n=2), and immigration (01.45% of stories, n=1). Trade, pandemic, science, crime, nuclear weapons, natural disasters, environment, and energy were not covered.

## **FOCA**

The number of FOCA's for each nation, the length of each FOCA in weeks, and a breakdown of assigned overall valences and attributes are listed below. These listings are critical in understanding the basis from which the statistical tests conducted in this study came.

- Israel (2 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=155 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .05$  (std= .77)) spanning 5 weeks between April 2, 2002-May 6, 2002. Driving Force of Coverage: Israel's Offensive into Palestine and the Siege of Arafat's Compound.

Attribute Breakdown: Conflict (n=131, 84.52% of stories), Terrorism (n=112, 72.26% of stories), Military (n=112, 72.26% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=61, 39.35% of stories), Human Rights (n=48, 30.97% of stories), Defense (n=46, 29.68% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=17, 10.97% of stories), Religion (n=15, 9.68% of stories), Crime (n=7, 4.52% of stories), Economic (n=6, 3.87% of stories), Other (n=5, 3.23% of stories), Election (n=5, 3.23% of stories), Trade (n=2, 1.29% of stories), Immigration (n=2, 1.29% of stories), Science (n=1, 0.65% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 217 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=129 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .04$  (std= .67)) spanning 5 weeks between July 9, 2006-August 12, 2006. Driving Force of Coverage: Israel's war with Lebanon/Hezbollah.

Attribute Breakdown: Conflict (n=126, 97.67% of stories), Military (n=116, 89.92% of stories), Terrorism (n=69, 53.49% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=48, 37.21% of stories), Defense (n=48, 37.21% of stories), Religion (n=44, 34.11% of stories), Human Rights (n=35, 27.13% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=12, 9.30% of stories), Other (n=5, 3.88% of stories), Economic (n=4, 3.10% of stories), Crime (n=3, 2.33% of stories), Nuclear (n=3, 2.33% of stories), Science (n=2, 1.55% of stories), Environment (n=2, 1.55% of stories), Election (n=2, 1.55% of stories), Natural Disaster (n=1, 0.78% of stories).

- China (3 FOCAs)

FOCA 1 (n=35 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .08$  (std= .74)) spanning the week of June 17, 2008-June 23, 2008. Driving Force of Coverage: Olympics and Government Control of Trade.

Attribute Breakdown: Economics (n=25, 71.43% of stories), Trade (n=19, 54.29% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=14, 40.00% of stories), Energy (n=13, 37.14% of stories), Environment (n=5, 14.29% of stories), Natural Disaster (n=4, 11.43% of stories), Military (n=3, 08.57% of stories), Other (n=3, 08.57% of stories), Human Rights (n=2, 05.71% of stories), Election (n=2, 05.71% of stories), Crime (n=1, 02.86% of stories), Science (n=1, 02.86% of stories), Religion (n=1, 02.86% of stories), Terrorism (n=1, 02.86% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=1, 02.86% of stories), Defense (n=1, 02.86% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 5 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n= 80 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.06$  (std= .60)) spanning 2 weeks between July 29, 2008-August 11, 2008. Driving Force of Coverage: Olympics.

Attribute Breakdown: Economics (n= 35, 43.68% of stories), Human Rights (n=29, 36.37% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=29, 37.36% of stories), Other (n=19, 24.17% of stories), Religion (n=16, 20.86% of stories), Trade (n=14, 18.07% of stories), Terrorism (n= 13, 16.85% of stories), Environment (n=11, 14.41% of stories), Energy (n=11, 14.41% of stories), Conflict (n=9, 11.98% of stories), Science (n=6, 08.32% of stories), Military (n=6, 08.32% of stories), Natural Disaster (n=4, 05.88% of stories), Immigration (n=2, 03.44% of stories), Election (n=2, 03.44% of stories), Defense (n=1, 02.22% of stories), Nuclear (n=1, 02.22% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 1 week.

FOCA 3 (n=34 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.11$  (std= .68)) spanning the week of August 19, 2008 to August 25, 2008. Driving Force of Coverage: Olympics.

Attribute Breakdown: Economic (n=19, 55.88% of stories), Human Rights (n=15, 44.12% of stories), Other (n=11, 32.35% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=5, 14.71% of stories), Conflict (n=5, 14.71% of stories), Science (n=3, 08.82% of stories), Election (n=3, 08.82% of stories), Trade (n=3, 08.82% of stories), Energy (n=3, 08.82% of stories), Environment (n=2, 05.88% of stories), Military (n=2, 05.88% of stories), Religion (n=1, 02.94% of stories), Pandemic (n=1, 02.94% of stories), wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (n=1, 02.94% of stories), Immigration (n=1, 02.94% of stories), and Natural Disaster (n=1, 02.94% of stories). Crime, Terrorism, Nuclear, and Defense were not covered.

- North Korea (3 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=72 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.66$  ( $std = .39$ )) spanning 2 weeks between October 17, 2002-October 27, 2002. Driving Force of Coverage: Nuclear Enrichment.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=68, 94.44% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=36, 50.00% of stories), Economics (n=28, 38.89% of stories), Energy (n=12, 16.67% of stories), Crime (n=12, 16.67% of stories), Military (n=8, 11.11% of stories), Immigration (n=4, 05.56% of stories), Election (n=4, 05.56%), Conflict (n=2, 02.78% of stories), Other (n=2, 02.78% of stories), Trade (n=2, 02.78% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 8 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n= 68 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.50$  ( $std = .55$ )) spanning 2 weeks between December 26, 2002-January 7, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Nuclear Enrichment.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=64, 94.12% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=28, 41.18% of stories), Conflict (n=26, 38.24% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=24, 35.29% of stories), Energy (n=22, 32.35% of stories), Economic (n=20, 29.41% of stories), Military (n=18, 26.47% of stories), Human Rights (n=8, 11.76% of stories), Terrorism (n=6, 08.82% of stories),

Pandemic (n=2, 02.94% of stories), Crime (n=2, 02.94% of stories), Defense (n=2, 02.94% of stories), Other (n=2, 02.94% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 195 weeks.

FOCA 3 (43 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.65$  (std= .57)) spanning the week of October 8, 2006-October 14, 2006). Driving Force of Coverage: North Korea Announcing Possession of Nuclear Weapons.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=43, 100.00% of stories), Economic (n=30, 69.77% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=21, 48.84% of stories), Conflict (n=16, 37.21% of stories), Energy (n=11, 25.58% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=10, 23.26% of stories), Military (n=8, 18.60% of stories), Terrorism (n=6, 13.95% of stories), Human Rights (n=4, 09.30% of stories), Immigration (n=2, 04.65% of stories).

- Russia (2 FOCAs)

FOCA 1 (n=33 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.03$  (std= .63)) spanning the week of September 2, 2004-September 8, 2004. Driving Force of Coverage: Chechen Terrorist Attack on Russian School.

Attribute Breakdown: Conflict (n=26, 78.79% of stories), Terrorism (n= 23, 69.70% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=21, 63.64% of stories), Military (n=21, 63.64% of stories), Defense (n=20, 60.61% of stories), Other (n=6, 18.18% of stories), Religion (n=5, 15.15% of stories), Human Rights (n=4, 12.12% of stories), Election (n=4, 12.12% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=3, 09.09% of stories), Economic (n=3, 09.09% of stories), Energy (n=2, 06.06% of stories), Crime (n=1, 03.03% of stories), Immigration (n=1, 03.03% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 203 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=85 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.28$  (std= .68)) spanning 3 weeks between August 5, 2008-August 25, 2008). Driving Force of Coverage: War in Georgia.

Attribute Breakdown: Conflict (n=67, 78.82% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=61, 71.76% of stories), Military (n=61, 71.76% of stories), Economic (n=46, 54.12% of stories), Energy(n=25, 29.41% of stories), Nuclear (n=10, 11.76% of stories), Science (n=7, 08.24% of stories), Other (n=7, 08.24% of stories), Terrorism(n=6, 07.06% of stories), Religion (n=5, 05.88% of stories), Human Rights (n=5, 05.88% of stories), Trade (n=4, 04.71% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=3, 03.53% of stories), Defense (n=3, 03.53% of stories), Immigration(n=1, 01.18% of stories), Crime (n=1, 01.18% of stories), Environment(n=1, 01.18% of stories), Election (n=1, 01.18% of stories).

- Iran (4 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=55 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.32$  (std= .54)) spanning 2 weeks between April 9, 2006-April 22, 2006. Driving Force of Coverage: Nuclear Deterrents for Iran.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=49, 89.09% of stories), Military (n=41, 74.55% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=34, 61.82% of stories), Economic (n=28, 50.91% of stories), Conflict (n=25, 45.45% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=23, 41.82% of stories), Energy (n=16, 29.09% of stories), Science (n=10, 18.18% of stories), Religion (n=9, 16.36% of stories), Terrorism (n=8, 14.55% of stories), Defense (n=8, 14.55% of stories), Human Rights (n=3, 05.45% of stories), Other (n=2, 03.64% of stories), Election (n=2, 03.64% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 5 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=29 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.27$  (std= .70)) spanning the week of May 29, 2006-June 3, 2006. Driving Force of Coverage: Nuclear Deterrents for Iran.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=23, 79.31% of stories), Energy (n= 19, 65.52% of stories), Economic (n=19, 65.52% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=17, 58.62% of stories), Conflict (n=13, 44.83% of stories), Military (n=13, 44.83% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=10,

34.48% of stories), Religion (n=10, 34.48% of stories), Science (n=9, 31.03% of stories), Defense (n=4, 13.79% of stories), Environment (n=2, 06.90% of stories), Crime (n=2, 06.90% of stories), Human Rights (n=2, 06.90% of stories), Other (n=1, 3.45% of stories), Terrorism (n=1, 3.45% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 36 weeks.

FOCA 3 (n=27 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.25$  (std= .53)) spanning the week of February 12, 2007-February 18, 2007. Driving Force of Coverage: Iran funneling weapons to Iraq.

Attribute Breakdown: Conflict (n=20, 74.07% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=19, 70.37% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=19, 70.37% of stories), Military (n=18, 66.67% of stories), Nuclear (n=15, 55.56% of stories), Economic (n=10, 37.04% of stories), Energy (n= 4, 14.81% of stories), Science (n=4, 14.81% of stories), Terrorism (n=4, 14.81% of stories), Religion (n=3, 11.11% of stories), Other (n=2, 07.41% of stories), Defense (n=1, 03.70% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 41 weeks.

FOCA 4 (n=35 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.37$  (std= .54)) spanning the week of December 4, 2007-December 9, 2007) Driving Force of Coverage: Sanctions Over Nuclear Development.

Attribute Breakdown: Nuclear (n=33, 94.29% of stories), Economic (n=20, 57.14% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=19, 54.29% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=12, 34.29% of stories), Conflict (n=12, 34.29% of stories), Science (n=9, 25.71% of stories), Energy (n=9, 25.71% of stories), Terrorism (n=7, 20.00% of stories), Religion (n=5, 14.29% of stories), Election (n=3, 08.57% of stories), Military (n=3, 08.57% of stories).

- France (2 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=19 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.31$  (std= .58)) spanning the week of April 23, 2002-April 29, 2002. Driving Force of Coverage: Election of Radical Le Pen.

Attribute Breakdown: Election (n=12, 64.16% of stories), Human Rights (n=8, 42.11% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=7, 36.84% of stories), Conflict (n=4, 21.05% of stories), Economic (n=4, 21.05% of stories), Other (n=3, 15.79% of stories), Immigration (n=3, 15.79% of stories), Trade (n=3, 15.79% of stories), Religion (n=3, 15.79% of stories), Terrorism (n=2, 10.53% of stories), Defense (n=1, 05.26% of stories), Natural Disaster (n=1, 05.26% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 51 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=24 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .58)) spanning the week of April 23, 2003-April 29, 2003). Driving Force of Coverage: U.S. French Relations Over Iraq.

Attribute Breakdown: Economic (n=12, 50.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=11, 45.83% of stories), Conflict (n=11, 45.83% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=9, 37.50% of stories), Military (n=5, 20.83% of stories), Trade (n=5, 20.83% of stories), Other (n=4, 16.67% of stories), Religion (n=2, 8.33% of stories), Energy (n=2, 08.33% of stories), Crime (n=1, 04.17% of stories), Defense (n=1, 04.17% of stories), Immigration (n=1, 04.17% of stories), Election (n=1, 04.17% of stories).

- Germany (4 FOCAs)

FOCA 1 (n=18 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .27$  (std= .46)) spanning the week June 19, 2002-June 23, 2002. Driving Force of Coverage: U.S. German Soccer Match.

Attribute Breakdown: Economic (n=6, 33.33 % of stories), Trade (n=4, 22.22% of stories), Other (n=3, 16.67% of stories), Crime (n=2, 11.11% of stories), Immigration (n=2, 11.11% of stories), Election (n=2, 11.11% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=1, 05.56% of stories),

Terrorism (n=1, 5.56% of stories), Conflict (n=1, 5.56% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 10 weeks

FOCA 2 (n=17 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .17$  (std= .52)) spanning the week of September 4, 2002-September 9, 2002. Driving Force of Coverage: Terror Plot on U.S. uncovered by Germans.

Attribute Breakdown: Terrorism (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Conflict (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Defense (n=6, 35.29% of stories), Religion (n=5, 24.41% of stories), Economic (n=4, 23.53% of stories), Human Rights (n=3, 17.65% of stories), Other (n=3, 17.65% of stories), Crime (n=3, 17.65% of stories), Military (n=2, 11.76% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=2, 11.76% of stories), Immigration (n=1, 05.88% of stories), Election (n=1, 05.88% of stories), Energy (n=1, 05.88% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 21 weeks.

FOCA 3 (n=16 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .63)) spanning 1 week within February 5, 2003-February 11, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Lack of Support for U.S. in Iraq.

Attribute Breakdown: Military (n=13, 81.25% of stories), Conflict (n=10, 62.50% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=8, 50.00% of stories), Economic (n=7, 43.75% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=7, 43.75% of stories), Defense (n=6, 37.50% of stories), Human Rights (n=4, 25.00% of stories), Crime (n=4, 25.00% of stories), Nuclear (n=3, 18.75% of stories), Terrorism (n=2, 12.50% of stories), Energy (n=2, 12.50% of stories), Religion (n=1, 06.25% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 6 weeks.

FOCA 4 (n=16 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .00$  (std= .36)) spanning the week of March 26, 2003-April 1, 2003). Driving Force of Coverage: Business News.

Attribute Breakdown: Economic (n=10, 62.50% of stories), Trade (n=7, 43.75% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=4, 25.00% of stories), Conflict (n=4, 25.00% of stories), Other (n=2, 12.50% of stories), Military (n=2, 12.50% of stories), Crime (n=1, 06.25% of stories), Terrorism (n=1, 06.25% of stories).

- Saudi Arabia (3 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=10 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.30$  (std= .48)) spanning the week of April 30, 2003-May 2, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Removal of US Servicemen.

Attribute Breakdown: Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=7, 70.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=5, 50.00% of stories), Terrorism (n=4, 40.00% of stories), Election (n=4, 40.00% of stories), Religion (n=3, 30.00% of stories), Crime (n=2, 20.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=2, 20.00% of stories), Military (n=2, 20.00% of stories), Other (n=1, 10.00% of stories), Economic (n=1, 10.00% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 1 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=6 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.33$  (std= .81)) spanning the week of May 14, 2003-May 20, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Terror Attack in Troubled Saudi Capital

Attribute Breakdown: Terrorism (n=6, 100.00% of stories), Religion (n=5, 83.33% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=4, 66.67% of stories), Conflict (n=3, 50.00% of stories), Crime (n=2, 33.33% of stories), Military (n=3, 33.33% of stories), Human Rights (n=1, 16.67% of stories), Economic (n=1, 16.67% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 69 weeks.

FOCA 3 (n=5 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.60$  (std= .54)) spanning the week September 16, 2004-September 22, 2004. Driving Force of Coverage: American Support of Harsh Saudi Regime.

Attribute Breakdown: Religion (n=4, 80.00% of stories), Crime (n=4, 80.00% of stories), Terrorism (n=3, 60.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=3, 60.00% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=2, 40.00% of stories), Economic (n=2, 40.00% of stories).

- Turkey (3 FOCA's)

FOCA 1 (n=39 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .02$  (std= .53)) spanning 3 weeks between February 12, 2003-March 4, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Turkey Offered Billions to Support U.S. Invasion of Iraq.

Attribute Breakdown: Afghanistan and Iraqi Wars (n=35, 89.74% of stories), Military (n=34, 87.18% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=33, 84.62% of stories), Conflict (n=32, 82.05% of stories), Economic (n=27, 69.23% of stories), Election (n=25, 64.10% of stories), Defense (n=11, 28.21 % of stories), Terrorism (n=3, 07.69% of stories), Human Rights (n=2, 05.13% of stories), Other (n=1, 02.56% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 2 weeks.

FOCA 2 (n=20 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = -.35$  (std= .67)) spanning 2 weeks between March 19, 2003-April 1, 2003. Driving Force of Coverage: Turkey's Rejection of U.S. Forces.

Attribute Breakdown: Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Military (n=18, 90.00% of stories), Conflict (n=17, 85.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=16, 80.00% of stories), Defense (n=10, 50.00% of stories), Election (n=8, 40.00% of stories), Terrorism (n=7, 35.00% of stories), Economic (n=6, 30.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=4, 20.00% of stories), Religion (n=2, 10.00% of stories), Other (n=1, 05.00% of stories), Immigration (n=1, 05.00% of stories). Distance to subsequent FOCA= 237 weeks.

FOCA 3 (n=10 news stories, Overall Valence  $m = .10$  (std= .60)) spanning the week of October 22, 2007-October 27, 2007. Driving Force of Coverage: U.S. Turkey Tensions Over Iraq

Attribute Breakdown: Terrorism (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Afghanistan and Iraqi wars (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Conflict (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Defense (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Military (n=9, 90.00% of stories), Foreign Policy (n=6, 60.00% of stories), Election (n=2, 20.00% of stories), Other (n=1, 10.00% of stories), Human Rights (n=1, 10.00% of stories).