**First-level Agenda-setting**

Media coverage of a foreign country measures how important a country is to its reporting country, in particular, to the public. That is, the public learns the importance of objects based on the amount of coverage that those objects receive. Agenda-setting theory suggests that mass media serve as one of the key sources for public perception of important issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). More specifically, as Lang and Lang (1966) observe, “The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about” (p. 468). Since their seminal work, hundreds of studies have examined this media effect on the public. The vast majority support this agenda-setting notion (need some more extension or citations here).

Over decades of rich research in agenda-setting, patterns show that the media affects what the public thinks about. That is, the salience of news media reports transfers to the perception of issue salience to the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Extensive media coverage provides news consumers with salience cues regarding the importance of the political figures or issues (\*\*\*). (transition to media objects such as nations)

To extend this logic, media salience indicates significance for foreign countries named in media. Wanta et al. (2004) show coverage of foreign nations in the news relates to the perception of the importance of the countries: the more coverage a state received, the more likely respondents think the state was vitally important to the U.S. The media coverage of the countries will lead to the countries as a whole becoming more salient among the public.

**Selective Media Attention**

*[Need some transition from the public to the news editors; in this story, we take news outlets as strategic actors here.]*

From the perspectives of news outlets, limited by time and space, editors can only select a handful of stories while leaving dozens of new stories off the air. News selection is at the heart of the agenda-setting process since the issues that fail to pass through the gatekeepers of the news also fail to give salience cues regarding the relative importance of the issues.

Also, previous findings show the strategic consideration of news editors on considering what international news gets media cover. Not all countries in the world receive equal coverage. In fact, only a small portion of international events can get through the media gatekeepers and get media coverage. While most powerful core states consistently receive higher amounts of coverage from newscasts, small peripheral states remain largely uncovered. Golan and Wanta (2003)’s study examines how 138 elections held between 1998 and 2000 were covered by the U.S. network television newscasts (ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN). They found that elections in Europe, Asia or the Middle East received substantial coverage than those in Latin America and Africa. A large body of literature has examined the determinants of international news coverage and has identified variables such as geographic locations, cultural proximity, geopolitical position in the world system as key predictors of coverage (Chang, 1998; Sheafer et al. 2013).

Hence, if foreign countries receive more media coverage, the increased media salience suggests the salience of the foreign countries to the audiences and their newsworthiness to the news editors.

**Second-level** **Agenda-setting**

In addition to swaying people’s attention, media agenda is also critical in building states’ image to international audiences.

Recent research in the explication of second-level agenda-setting connects the concept of framing and suggests that news media attention can influence how people think about a topic by placing emphasis on certain attributes than others (Kiousis & Wu, 2008; \*\*\*). This entails a deeper media influence on shaping public attitudes. Improving one’s image to foreign audiences is the core of mediated public diplomacy.

As a state-controlled media platform, *Xinhua* News Agency is often considered more than a news media platform. It is a public relations platform that government invests in altering its public relations with other countries. As such, scholars often focus on China’s mediated public diplomacy efforts through Xinhua. That is, to study how government-sponsored international broadcasting contributes to influencing the public or elite opinion among foreign countries (Entman, 2008; Manheim, 1994; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Governments attempt to shape the global narrative positively regarding their leaders and foreign policies. The more Xinhua highlights positive Chinese influence on other countries, the higher potential for the news outlet to cultivate a positive foreign nation image.