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Reframing national image: A methodological framework

Kurzfassung: Der Aufsatz thematisiert die Rolle nationaler Images für internationale Beziehungen und entwickelt einen methodologischen Rahmen für deren Erforschung. Die Autoren kommen zu dem Schluss, dass sich die Untersuchung nationaler Images der Framing-Theorie bedienen und sowohl die privaten Frames, die mit Vorstellungen/Bildern von anderen Nationen verbunden sind, als auch öffentliche Frames erfassen sollte, die sich auf die von den Medien verbreiteten Bilder beziehen. Als empirischer Zugang zur Exploration privater Frames und ihrer Schnittstelle mit den öffentlichen Frames werden Tiefeninterviews mit Meinungsführern vorgeschlagen.

In Rechnung stellend, dass die Untersuchung im Schatten einer dynamischen Weltpolitik und in einem historischen Kontext stattfindet, wird davon ausgegangen, dass Public Diplomacy dazu genutzt werden kann, um nationale Reputation aufzubauen. Der Untersuchung der Beziehung zwischen den öffentlichen und den privaten Frames eines Landes kann in diesem Kontext dazu verhelfen, alternative Frames zu identifizieren, die eine Veränderungen der öffentlichen Meinung bewirken und zum Aufbau nationaler Images beitragen können, welche das Verständnis und die Beziehungen zwischen Staaten fördern.

Abstract: The article addresses the role of national images in international relations and develops a methodological framework for its study. It concludes that national image study should comprise private frames associated with perceived images of other nations, and public frames referring to projected media images of other nations by drawing on framing theory. It suggests that in-depth interview with intermediate elites can be employed to explore private frames, and the inductive or the deductive approaches to public frames. There is recognition that inquiry is conducted in the shadow of a dynamic world politics and within a historical context, and public diplomacy can be used to build national reputation. To examine the associations between public and private frames of a given country will prepare the ways for the identification of alternative frames and framing devices that may result in variation in public opinion, contributing to national image building in the state under study, and promote understanding and relationships between countries.

1 Introduction

Since the 20th century, particularly in the Cold War era, governments became aware of the significance of systematic image construction. With the coming of globalized communication, there has been a surge in national image construction. The current preoccupation with image building can serve a dual function if conducted effectively. It can not only create domestic political support but also enlarge a country's international influence. The latter function is deemed to be more crucial today since nations desire to integrate with global markets, to participate in global affairs, and to enhance their status on the world stage. How a country is perceived and projected by other countries can result in changes in their mutual relationships and to their strategic responses. Hence, the paper attempts to establish a methodological approach to the analysis of national images by addressing three issues viz. perceived images of other nations, projected media images of other nations and the role of national images in international relations.

Image is 'a human construct imposed on an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event, or person' (Nimmo & Savage, 1976). The concept of projected images recognises individual and social constructions of the image, and questions implicitly the efficacy of state-constructed images projected toward other countries. Despite the ambiguity of efficacy, there is room in this definition for image-makers to alter or create the public's perceptions of an object (Manheim & Albritton, 1983). Accordingly, national image can be divided into the categories of perceived and projected images.

2 Perceived images of other nations

Perceived images of nations can be identified as the pictures of other nations in the minds of people from the perspective of social psychology. Such an image is tied up with the attributes of the object and those of its beholders.

Lippmann notes that images are the pictures in people's head (1922). He maintains that people define first and then see, rather than see first and then define. The real environment is so complicated that human beings reduce it to a simpler model, characterized by Lippmann as a pseudo-environment. Gradually a trustworthy picture is formulated by individuals inside their minds of the external world; and a triangular relationship with 'the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene of action' is set up (p. 11). So he stresses that people respond to situations by experiencing them through pictures drawn previously by themselves or presented to them, rather than directly. Other scholars discuss the concept of national images from the social-psychological perspective as well. Boulding identifies perceived images as the 'total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit or its internal view of itself and the universe' (1956, p. 423). It is the 'organized representation of an object in an individual's cognitive system. The core of an image is the perceived character of the object with which it associates' (Deutsch & Merritt, 1965, p. 24). The 'object' can be an organization or a nation (Boulding, 1956). For Kunczik, national image is 'the cognitive

representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people' (1997, p. 47). It deals with 'the climate of opinion formed by collective expressions of perceptions and judgements of a country by its overseas publics' (Wang, 2008).

People's repertoires of images are primarily overlaid by stereotypes as well as personal experiences. The most pervasive influences are stereotypes as through them we are told how to see the world before seeing it (Lippmann, 1922). According to Perlman and Cozby (1981, p. 440), stereotypes are the 'sets of traits attributed to the members of social groups'. They are our projections upon the world based on our values, positions and rights (Lippmann, 1922). Social categorization and ingroup-outgroup bias, chiefly brought about by ethnocentrism, are the key loci of stereotypes (Perlman & Cozby, 1981). Ethnocentric biases attribute to the conception and the labelling of outgroup behaviour, as well as the characteristic role relations between groups. An ethnocentric outlook, one that reveals attitudes, cultural symbols, ideologies, action, and relations among nations, 'tribes' and groups, may be associated with labelling ones own group as the centre of everything: all others are scaled and rated in relation to it (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). A group with such an outlook justifies its own group as superior while seeing others as inferior.

Relationship pattern of other nation	Image of other nation	Potential Action
Goal compatibility Status equal Power equal	Ally	Cooperation
Goal incompatibility Status equal Power equal	Enemy	Attack or conflict
Goal incompatibility Status lower Power lower	Dependent	Control or exploitation
Goal incompatibility Status Lower Power higher	Barbarian	Potential invader
Goal incompatibility Status higher Power higher	Imperialist	Sabotage

Table 1: Images of other nations as a function of goal compatibility, relative status, and relative power (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, as cited in Alexander et al. 2005, p. 30)

Most image theorists (e.g. Cottam; Herrmann; Herrmann, Tetlock & Visser, as cited in Alexander & Levin, 2005) examine the cognitive perceptions of group relations. They find that the perceptions of group relations will enhance the strategic responses of the images that a country holds of others. Alexander and Levin assert that the images or stereotypes that a nation has of another depend on three structural features of interstate relations: goal compatibility, relative power/capability, and relative cultural status, or sophistication. The assessments towards these structural relations will determine the kind of images that are classified as ally, enemy, barbarian, imperialist, and dependent (colonial) images, and subsequently can influence compatible international behaviours. Table 1 specifies the perceived structural relations, resulting images and the relative strategic responses. Another group of scholars search for the elites' (e.g. Wang, 2000) and the public's (e.g. Cohen & Peery, 2006; Kamalipour, 1999; Huck, 1984) views of a country. Wang investigates the mutual images held by the Chinese and the American elites during the early 1990s. He argues that national image refers to each nation's conception of the fundamental character of its international political opponent, characterized by three S's: subjective, stable, and selective. The S's are related to stereotypes of a nation, state, or people, affected by history, experience, and self-image. Cohen and Peery find that many students' views of women in Islam retain their initial biases. In addition, some scholars are concerned about the image formation process. White (1999) develops two models of the structure of image formation that feature Australians' perceptions of China. The first model is characterized as *the process of generating multi-dimensional imagery at the site of cross cultural contact through both external and internal experience*; the second offers a new interdisciplinary curriculum framework to stimulate intercultural understanding through imagery that merges many aspects of knowledge and reality within human consciousness. Scott (1965) and LeVine (1965) examine the sources of national and international images in terms of the psychological structure of the individual, the social structure of his/her society, and his/her own place within that social structure. Furthermore, most scholars agree that how decision-makers perceive other countries will influence their decision-making in foreign policy formulation (Holsti, 1962; White, 1965; Rosenberg, 1965; Holsti, 1968; Hoffmann, 1968), and as a result affect the bilateral relationships (Alexander et al., 2005; Kunczik, 1997; Holsti, 1968; Boulding, 1958).

3 Projected media images of other nations

Images arising from an individual's cognitive systems will not become visible until they are communicated. Mass media acts as a key player in formulating and disseminating the images of nations (Kunczik, 1997). In the examination of a country's image it is therefore necessary to consider this other dimension: projected media images of other nations.

Images of objects are embedded in the minds of individuals, limited by external and internal factors. Media as the essential channel for people to get information on international issues, contribute heavily to national image projection. 'Every public image begins in the mind of some single individual and only becomes public as it is transmitted and shared' (Boulding, 1956, p. 64). From the media angle, national image refers to 'a representation of a country's positive or negative standing in media, in terms of historical, political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious context' (Hanan, as cited in Saleem, 2007, p. 136). The examination of portrayed media images of a given country needs to be cognizant of multi-dimensionality. Portrayed media image can be discussed 'in terms of political, economical, military, diplomatic and religious relations in the changing domestic, regional and international scenario and its effects on the thoughts, behaviour, feelings, and inclinations of the owners of the media organization' (Noshina, as cited in Saleem, 2007: p. 136). At the same time, the public gain images of world affairs through the readings of mediated images and other texts (Chitty, 2007). They rely more on media discourse for global issues rather than on direct experiences or the search for original statements that are mostly available on the internet (Chitty, 2007; Choi, 2006). Therefore, the mass media continue to 'occupy the most significant place for most people when they access the world beyond their immediate environment', but information and misinformation can transform the world politically, militarily and economically, as addressed by Taylor (1992, p. 3).

1.	Magnitude (or threshold) which refers to the relative significance of the event.
2.	Clarity (or lack of ambiguity)
3.	Ethnocentricity (or cultural familiarity), the idea that an event needs in some way to be a part of the Audience's cultural experience for it to become newsworthy.
4.	Consonance is directly connected with the expectations, values and beliefs of the audience.
5.	Surprise (or unexpectedness). Events involving prominent members of society are more likely to make the headlines.
6.	Elite centeredness. Events in the elite nations of Western Europe and in the USA are also regarded as having a higher news value for similar reasons.
7.	Negativity. There is a number of reasons why bad news is good news for journalists and editors. First it is more unexpected. Second, its time-span makes it easier for the news medium to cover – good things usually take time whereas disasters happen quickly. Finally, people are more likely to agree that an event such a train crash is negative than they are that a rise in share process is positive. Negative news is therefore more consensual, and in consequence more likely to become a news item.
8.	Human interest plays an important part in the treatment the story receives.
9.	Composition (or balance): authority and objectivity
10.	Location reporting: the importance of visuals and images and on live report.
11.	Actuality reporting (the filmed material of the events), works in unison with 10, location reporting, to increase the item's impression of authenticity and authority.

Table 2: News factors according to Selby and Cowdery (1995, p. 136-138)

The changing nature of media in the information age, however, informs us to pay extreme attention to the role of media in chaotic world affairs. 'It is a fast world, with fast morals and fast media – and seemingly vast problems', alerted by Taylor (1997, p. 1). Professional journalists wish to tell people what is happening as objectively as possible. However, there is a gap between journalistic ideals and practice. Whether a 'story' will be selected for airing in the public domain largely depends on its 'news value' or newsworthiness. News value consists of the following characteristics: Magnitude, Clarity, Ethnocentricity, Consonance, Surprise, Elite centeredness, Negativity, Human interest, Composition and Balance, Location Reporting, Actuality Reporting (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). The meanings of each element are illustrated in the Table 2. In reality, news value is subject to commercial interests, political pressure, media practitioners' experiences and preferences, limitation of time and space and so on. Furthermore, media is characterized by conflict orientation. It tries to create dramatic tension by concentrating on conflicts, tragedies and spectacular events in order to enhance audience response (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). In its evolution into the information age, the world is undergoing chaotic global developments. To some extent we see that 'international affairs appear to be an unpredictable business conducted by unfathomable people', and that the international system is moving rapidly and chaotically to a state of disorder (Taylor, 1997, p. 12). In such a dynamic world, media has been criticized for its over-simplification of foreign news coverage. Taylor explains that 'Simplification masquerades as complexity, illusion masquerades as reality, texts masquerade as context and quantity masquerades as quality' (p. 13). He observes that politics and public information about it are packaged to be more entertaining or exciting than instructive or informative; tabloid journalism and 'real-time' television are developed to frame the completed world; media becomes a subjective participant rather than an objective observer; the relations between government and media is more of cooperation than of confrontation. 'There is more and more information, and less and less meaning' (Baudrillard, as cited in Taylor, 1997, p. 3). Summarized by Taylor, the 'real-time' image of an event represented in the media has noth-

ing to do with the original event, but is 'a flawed construct created by the distortion, compression and manipulation', which results in 'not only ... the appearance of chaos but also ... the making of crises' (p. 13).

From a discussion of the emerging nature of media in the business of international journalism, we get a general overview of projected media images of other nations. There is considerable argument in the literature of the multiple media effects on the public attitudes towards international affairs. This impact is observed despite the role of media saturation, media reliance and personal experience in view formation. Experts insist that media can be the strongest international image former (Kunczik, 1997; Smith, 1973; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Tunstall, 1970). A wide range of research demonstrates that exposure to media reports can increase audiences' attention of foreign countries (e.g. Saleem, 2007; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Dell'Orto, Dong, Moore & Schneeweis, 2004; Brewer, Graf & Willnat, 2003; Nwuneli, Okyoye, Okunna & Ayo, 1993; Manheim & Albritton, 1983). How media in another country portrays a particular country can produce various outcomes on the perceived images of this nation, such as demonstrated in the work of Sun (2007), Cao (2007), Peng (2004), Lee (2000), Kamalipour (2000), Yan (1998) and Harmon (1998). Biased or unbalanced foreign reporting can cultivate negative impressions (Perry, 1987) and media coverage can lead to 'serious distortion and misunderstanding' (Taylor, 1997, p. 1). Special elaboration should be made of media factors leading as they do to distorted images of Arabs in the Western mind (Hamada, 2001). The more American television coverage a nation receives, the more the American public thinks that it is of vital importance to US national interests, and the more negative the coverage by American media, the more negatively will the public think about that nation (Wanta, 2004). To evaluate the visibility and the valence of a country in another country's media through content analysis (e.g. Manheim & Albritton, 1983), or the signs and the myths through discourse analysis (e.g. Li, 2005) are the popular approaches to investigate the media representation of countries. Furthermore, scholars explore the arts and the effectiveness of image manipulation from the perspective of public relations by taking advantage of media. The concept of branding and the pursuit of branding communication strategy have been introduced in national image management to attract international audiences' attention and forge their engagement (Wang, 2008). International advertising, international public relations and propaganda, especially through the promotion of pseudo-events, are the important tools of image building (Kunczik, 1997; Boorstin, 1971). Image management can cause the distortion of images, misperceptions and false stereotypes, or can develop positive outcomes, for instances, the marketing of a nation, or the modification of national reputation. Li (2005), Kunczik (1997), Manheim and Albritton (1983), Jervis (1970), and Lasswell (1965) have demonstrated these findings. Clearly, the contest for attention is tense and means that nations are under pressure to make themselves positively visible and heard in the global media agenda.

4 The role of national images in international relations

The role of national images in international relations can be explained in the light of power theory, the perspective of social psychology and the practice of public diplomacy.

'Power is the ability to influence the behaviours of others to get the outcomes one wants' (Nye, 2004, p. 2). According to Nye, power encompasses hard and soft variants in today's global information era. There are three sources of power – military, economic and soft power. Soft power is distinguishable from hard power in that preferred outcomes are achieved through co-option rather than coercion. The soft power of a state centres on its culture, its political values and its foreign policy. The strength of a country's soft power rests on the extent to which its culture, political values and foreign policy appeals or repels those of the targeted countries.

National images, in fact, are one part of a state's soft power. It is believed that the images of a nation are public goods that can serve to generate either a favourable or an unfavourable environment for the public and the state (Leonard, as cited in Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 2007, p. 18). The nation's reputation can politically and economically be an asset or liability. Positive reputation helps countries to attain foreign goals, attract overseas investment, tourists and education. Whereas images of nations in permanent crisis or showing economic unreliability, can discourage investment, cause future crises, even military conflicts (Kunczik, 1997; Boulding, 1958). Media portrayal of a country, whether positive or negative, can affect the general public views and subsequently change cross-national personal associations, public opinion regarding foreign policy, or the practice of public diplomacy (Smith; Bartels; Manheim; Peffley & Hurwitz, as cited in Brewer et al., 2003).

The exercise of soft power basically lies in the sphere of public diplomacy, the aims of which include the promotion of positive national images. By reviewing scholarly literature in the field of public diplomacy, the Australian Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee addresses that public diplomacy attempts to establish a state's international status and actualize its objectives by fostering public conceptions in a positive way and constructing appealing national images. The committee takes the position that different from traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy seeks to affect not only the 'influentials' in foreign countries, but also wider publics; its working in harness with traditional diplomacy is essential to the successful implementation of a country's foreign policy. When traditional diplomacy that is reliant on government-to-government re-

lations fails, public diplomacy continues to assist in maintaining the linkages between countries by creating channels for person-to-person contacts (Al-Orabi, as cited in Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 2007, p. 19). Chitty highlights the value of an interactive people-to-government (P><G) approach to the construction of national image and the contribution of domestic and overseas publics to national image projection (2009). With the rising prominence of public diplomacy, a country's image in the international arena is managed in a more multi-dimensional way than before. Non-military and non-economic seduction rather than coercion, through engagement in business, cultural affairs, environmental affairs, major events and expositions, sports and through media, in order to persuade people to think and behave in a way desired by the source, are constantly conducted in support of foreign policies and a nation's objectives. Observed by Mark Leonard (as cited in Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 2007, p. 17), the spread of democracy, the media explosion, the rise of global NGOs and protest movements are the key manifestations of public diplomacy. Hence, governments are investing resources in public diplomacy activities in order to market their respective countries as national brands with positive international reputations.

The strength of images actually is determined by a basic theorem in social sciences that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This theorem stipulates that an individual's perception of and cognitive evaluation of an event will influence his/her resulting behaviour. From the international political aspect, image is the 'subjective knowledge of the world which governs people's behaviour' (Boulding, 1956). An image of a nation comprises three layers: cognitive attributes (the perceived characteristics of the nation), affective attributes (the liking or disliking of the object), and action attributes (the responses to the object) (Scott, 1965, p. 100). It indicates that the perceptions of country B that people of country A hold will influence the attitudes and policies of country A toward country B. This will in turn contribute to the multi-faceted dynamics of international relations. The responses of individual and collective actors in the world to an object tend to be decided by its recognized image rather than the object itself (Choi, 2006). Most decisions in international politics are based on misconceptions and distorted images for governmental leaders, decision-makers, and 'non-decision-makers' in the general public are rarely aware that they are living in a world of images (Kunczik, 1997; Whitehead, 1987). As a result, improper conclusions and assumptions, or international conflicts occur.

Images of other nations are affected by history as well. An individual's image of an object at the present is correlated to his/her views of its past and future. Kunczik comments that 'Many prejudices about nations are carried forward through generations, so that historical events of long ago remain decisive in a nation's image' (1997, p. 3). He discusses that the international relations (e.g. wars, hostilities, friendliness, alliances, military, economic and political compatibility) of countries, either in the past or present, play a role in national image perceptions. Owing to the dynamic and constantly changing nature of images, image study should be placed in a historical context.

5 A methodological framework for national image study

5.1 Framing and national images

National images are multi-dimensional and multi-sourced. Perceived images and projected media images of other nations are two parts of national image study. Analyzing frames and framing in individuals' minds and media representation of national images is the method to identify the connections between individual and media frames. Drawing on framing theory, we term perceived images and projected media images of other nations respectively as private frames and public frames (Frameworks Institute, 2003).

Frames and framing are widely used in a variety of theoretical domains, for instances, media studies, psychology, sociology, business management, artificial intelligence, decision-making, negotiation, environmental conflict management. 'Frame' can be used as a noun or a verb. As a noun, it refers to a set of lenses or filters through which information is selected. As a verb, it is engaged with the process of creating the aforesaid frames. It deals with 'both the construction of interpretative frames and their representations to others' (Kaufman et al., 2003). As for a complete communication process, framing incorporates four aspects: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture, allowing readers and journalists to define problems, bring up moral evaluation, explain causes or provide resolutions (Entman, 1993).

Frames are held in people's minds, informing our interpretations of the world with or without our consciousness. They exist prior to our processing of information, assisting in our interpretation of the complex world, but can lead us to misunderstandings. Cognitive scientists assert that human beings perceive things with frames and the ways they are framed rather than directly search for the facts (Hiebert, 2003). To frame is to 'select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Therefore, individuals' conceptions of the outside world are subjected to framing effects. In other words, framing is the drawing of images of objects in people's heads.

Framing occurs during media production. A media frame is the basis of a large unit of public discourse (Gamson, as cited in Choi, 2006). Media framing is the essential meaning-making activity in media production (Gamson, 1992). By framing,

media paints the pictures of our world (McCombs, 2002). Reporters are assisted by media frames knowingly or unknowingly, such as news or documentary structures, in repackaging the huge amounts of information quickly and routinely into reports. Media practitioners including reporters, correspondents, technicians, columnists, writers, newsmen, editors and freelancers, responsible for gathering, producing, writing, and editing media content, behave as gatekeepers of media products (Hamada, 2001). Framing is embodied through highlighting, altering, rejuvenating or overlooking particular attributes or different stages of events to make certain aspects become more significant or understandable than they really are. By extending beyond telling its readers what to think about (agenda-setting), to showing them how to think, media framing guides the public attitudes and decision-making process (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). It attracts audiences attentions, limited as it is, to particular social agendas, and enables audiences to 'locate, perceive, identify, and label' the accessible information (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Hence, media practitioners act as dominant national image-shapers, and journalistic framing serves to examine the media projection of national image.

Noted by Wu (2006), framing has moved beyond journalistic framing to audience framing, dealing with not only media production, media representation but media consumption. Audience framing aims at finding out audience mediation in the meaning construction of media texts. It is 'the cognitive schemata or collective consciousness that assists in the construction of meaning in the minds of audience' (Wu, 2006, p. 253). Described by Stuart Hall (2002), three reader positions: the *dominant/hegemonic position* (in which the reader accepts the message given by a text, and reproduces the preferred reading), the *negotiated position* (in which readers understand the dominant position but choose to apply it to their own social context), the *oppositional/counter-hegemonic position* (in which while understanding the dominant coding, the reader rejects the values it is putting forward), explain the variable degrees to which audiences accept, mediate or avert media messages. Furthermore, the term 'reader' is more appropriate than 'audience.' 'Readers' mean those who not only 'read' but negotiate sights, sounds and printed text, in which context, social location, and prior experience can lead to different decodings (Fiske, 1987). Therefore, people are not passive consumers of media discourse instead they reconstruct the meanings together with media practitioners. It may therefore be concluded that individuals are national image makers as well, and framing provides the approach to illustrate the spectrum from individual to society.

Framing as a cognitive schema is imbued with ideology (Snow, 2000). It demonstrates the fact that national images are a kind of reproduction. The perceptions of images derive from psychological (people's personalities) and social sources, beginning with the childhood socialization and later via education, media, personal experiences, and interpersonal contacts or other external events (Kelman, 1965). For the level of conceived images held by individuals, an image is a mental identification of a country, evincing power and ideology, personal beliefs, values and expectations. For the dimension of portrayed images formulated by media, an image reminds us of the significance of combining the visual, verbal, audio signs and other modes to represent or reframe the frames. Therefore we have defined national image as 'privately held frames in the minds of individuals and public frames as discernible in media. In a world politics context, frames may include stereotypes such as ally, enemy, barbarian, imperialist, or dependent. Each of these frames is associated with particular types of international dyadic relationships and behavior such as cooperation, conflict, exploitation, invasion or sabotage respectively'. A given country's image is composed of two broad frames: private frames that are held in the minds of the public, referring to perceived national images, and public frames that are displayed in media, related to projected media national images. The study of both frames should be positioned in the present as well as the historical world politics context with the associated stereotypes. Furthermore, it is likely to have some gaps between private and public frames. Identifying two frames and comparing their similarities and differences will provide the means for reframing the host country's images, and promoting the better understandings and relations between countries.¹

5.2 Framing analysis of national image

Framing can both be adopted as a theory and as a methodology to analyse how public expressions are directed. A methodological framework for national image study with regard to framing theory is depicted in Figure 1. The respective approaches to the study of perceived images and projected media images of nations are addressed below.

1. This approach is followed in an extended multi-disciplinary team research approach directed at a multitude of policy areas under Strategic Framing Analysis (Frameworks Institute, 2003).

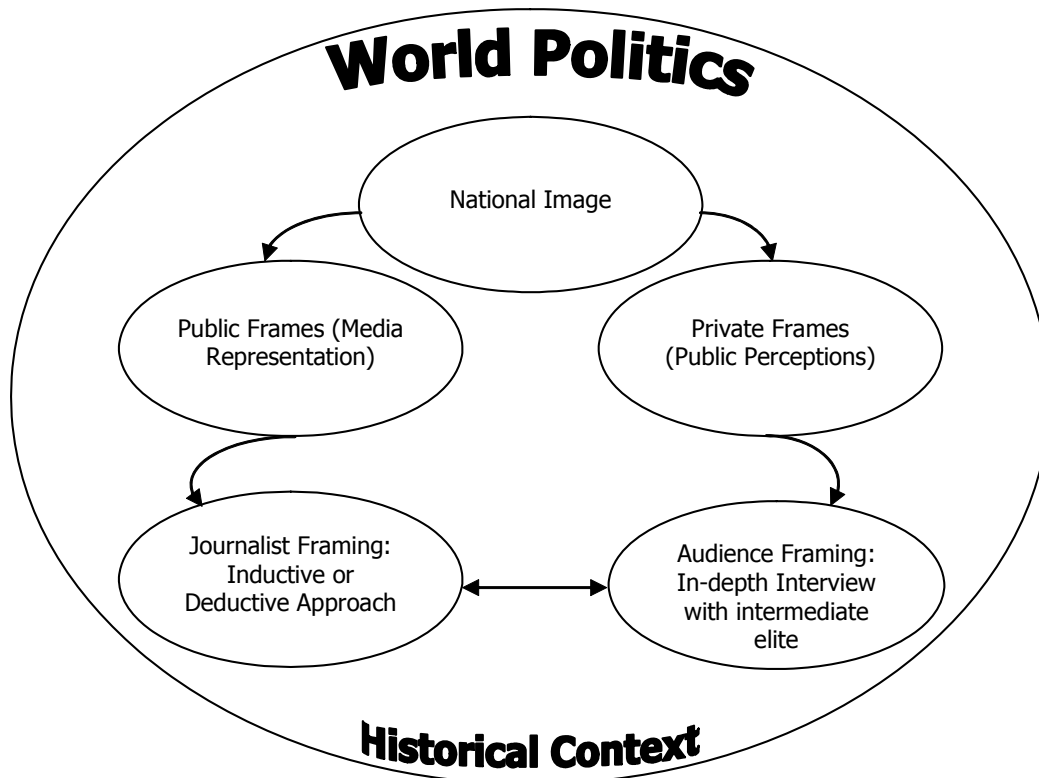


Figure 1: A Model for National Image Study

As for the examination of perceived national images, in-depth interviews with intermediate groups can be the better choice. The unstructured questions prepared for interviews provide participants more space and opportunity to offer private opinions on researched topics. Well-designed questions are the tools with which researchers may excavate otherwise hidden views from respondents. Though top decision-makers, intermediate elites, and the general public are three categories one may consider in analyzing national images (Boulding, 1958; Kelman, 1965), the intermediate elite can be the most preferable participants. As to Wang's concern (2000), performing as a bridge between top decision-makers and the general public, intermediate elites are those who are influential in shaping public conceptions of social agendas without directly participating in the foreign policy decision-making process. He argues that the opinions of intermediate elites weigh more than the other groups because they have a greater impact on policy-making than does the general public; they are better able to represent the general public views than the relatively small number of top decision-makers; they have more multi-channel and multi-level associations with people from the country concerned; they have greater professional knowledge of issues. Furthermore, the intermediate elite group is more accessible for data collection than top leaders as face-to-face interviews with the latter are difficult to get, and their public statements do not necessarily reflect their real beliefs. Lasswell (1958, 1965) emphasizes the key role of influentials and elites in the study of politics and media. He states that influentials and elites, with greater skills, tend to manage the public through the manipulation of information flows in support of their political agendas. Additionally, experts are drawn from the general public and inhabit the government sector, the business sector, the non government not-for-profit sector as well as media (Chitty, 2007). One way to ascertain public opinion relies on the study of media texts, and another on questioning experts in a particular area, both sources being information rich, as suggested by Chitty. Intermediate elites, belonging as they do to groups of elites, influentials, and experts in three social sectors and media, have increasingly influenced national image construction. They, as the image perceiving collectivity, are crucial image-makers and opinion leaders. Consequently, intermediate elites are recommended in the search for perceived national images.

Inductive and deductive methods are alternative ways to examine projected media images. Media framing analysis aims at finding out 'the persistent patterns not just isolated stories' (Gitlin, 2003, p. 7). As analyzed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), in the inductive approach, analysis is initiated without any pre-defined frames, with the purpose of detecting the frames existing in the media texts (e.g. Gamson, 1992; Wu, 2006); the deductive approach requires the prior determination of frames that are most likely to occur in the news reports. The former method is useful for finding the alternative ways that an issue is framed, and require a small sample. The latter can easily uncover the differences in framing within the

same type of media but with different genres or between different sorts of media. It requires a large sample. Framing devices attempt at examining how media frames are constructed, like the use of language, the amount of time or space given to certain frames. There are four aspects suggested for analyzing the open media frames: the topic of a news item (what content is included in the frame), presentation (size and placement), cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame), and affective attributes (tone) (Ghanem, as cited in Chyi et al., 2004). Some fix frames found in previous research are used in the deductive media studies as well. For instances, 'episodic' and 'thematic' are two formats for news structure analysis (Iyengar, 1991). Notably attribution, responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility are the forms constantly taken by news frames (Semetko et al., 2000). Other frames include identity, characterization (stereotypes), power, conflict management/process, risk/information and loss versus gain frames (Kaufman et al., 2003). Some questions are helpful for media framing analysis:

„What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another? What patterns are shared by the frames clamped over this event and the frames clamped over that one, by frames in different media in different places at different moments? And how does the news-reporting institution regulate these regularities? What difference do the frames make for the larger world?“ (Gitlin, 2003, p. 7)

6 Conclusion

As discussed above, national images contain two facets: perceived images and projected media images of other nations. The first dimension, identified as the pictures of other nations in people's mind, is influenced by individuals' cognitive systems, in relation to stereotypes and its beholders' attributes in a social psychological sense. By contrast, the nature of media and public diplomacy activities are decisive in the formation and manipulation of portrayed media images. Framing theory offers us the methodological ability to connect the study of perceived and portrayed national images. Knowingly or unknowingly, framing occurs during the process of encoding or decoding national images either by individuals or media. The study of national image should consider the combination of two frames: private frames that are held in the minds of individuals, related to individuals' perceptions of national images, and public frames that are displayed in media, linked with media representation of a given country. Framing theory helps us to be more aware that both individuals and media are image perceivers and shapers. In addition, the study of multi-dimensional national images should be sewn into a dynamic world politics and a historical context. In-depth interviews with intermediate elites may be conducted to examine how national images are perceived by individuals; the inductive and deductive approaches may be used to analyze how media portrays a given country. Research on the nexus between perceived national images and portrayed national images of a named country will contribute to the identification of alternative frames and the framing devices posited by intermediate elites that expand public policy choices¹. Due to the significance of national images as a kind of soft power in the information age, the study of it will be quite helpful to build a state's international reputation and facilitate improved understanding and constructive relationships between countries.

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1. It is acknowledged that this broad approach is adopted in Strategic Framing Analysis.

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