

## Framing a Trade Policy: An Analysis of *The Wall Street Journal* Coverage of Super 301

Takuya SAKURAI  
Tokyo Denki University, Japan

**Abstract:** This study provides a detailed examination on *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of a U.S. trade policy, and examines how the trade policy is defined in the newspaper's framing practices. More specifically, this study conducts a qualitative content analysis to examine *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of the Super 301, a modified version of the Section 301 of the Trade Act, to explore how a particular understanding of the policy is promoted and reinforced. In the process of framing the trade policy, three defining devices of framing are detected: war context, personification, and threat. Framing is a powerful instrument to promote a particular understanding of a trade policy once it is defined in a certain way. In international economy news, framing reinforces and shapes the trade policy to legitimize the trading practices of the home country.

**Keywords:** Framing, trade policy, Super 301, economy, foreign news

### 1. Introduction

News plays a significant role in providing a particular understanding of the world (e.g., Carragee, 1991; Gitlin, 1980). Researchers see news as an artifact constructing a social reality rather than a mirror of reality (Tuchman, 1978) and support the notion that news is framed in particular ways by journalistic practices and ideological beliefs (Watkins, 2001). News stories in the research are considered symbolic accounts, providing the audience with interpretations of social and political reality, and the news media are agencies of symbolic production constructing such realities (Carragee, 1991). Since mass media actively set the frames through which audiences make sense of and interpret news events, the concept of framing has been attractive in media research and has proved important in the area of communication (Tuchman, 1978).

News frames are forms used to make sense of what happens in the world, and journalists use news frames to disseminate simplified and easily understood realities. In international news reporting, those news frames are especially effective and useful because most people do not have direct experience and information about foreign countries. Frames also play a significant role in helping people construct the realities of foreign countries when people have brief information and knowledge about the countries. News frames tend to be selected in order not to contradict pieces of information readers already have about the nature of events or foreign countries, especially in international news.

International economic reality is a further unknown area for most people. Understanding of the international economic situation is particularly difficult because the realities are far beyond observation. Therefore, news frames largely influence our perceptions of international

economy and economic images of other countries. In the era of the post-Cold War, foreign relations began to be described according to the economic power of foreign countries. Economic interests have become a significant manner in which to see foreign countries (Wasburn, 1997; Wu, 2000). In the post-Cold War era, at the same time, the boundary of news reporting between political and economic realities has become unclear. Lambert (2001) points out that one of the most important business stories of the last 20 years was the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet collapse demonstrated, “political development can have dramatic business consequences” (Lambert, 2001, p. 148). Accordingly, economic changes can have an equally important impact on politics. In that sense, trade dispute is manifested in international news. International economy news cannot be described only in economic circumstance, but in world politics as well.

The coverage of Super 301 of the Trade Act could be a good telling case to examine the U.S. media’s framing practices on integrated political and economic news. The Super 301 allows the United States to justify its interventions toward foreign countries’ economies, accusing them of being “unfair.” However, these U.S. claims cannot be problems without defining them as national problems (Stone, 1989). Although the targeted countries cannot help seeing it as arrogant protective policies, the Super 301 has effectively achieved its purposes.

The Super 301, “identification of trade expansion priorities pursuant to executive order,” is modeled after Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the U.S. government to investigate and retaliate against specific foreign trade barriers judged to be unfair. James (1994) wrote, “The most potent weapon in the US arsenal is that Super 301 authorizes the investigation, not just of particular goods, but of the trading practices of an entire country as well” (p. A16). Super 301 requires the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to identify each year the countries that maintain the most significant trade barriers to U.S. exports. Once identified, the USTR is required to initiate Section 301 cases against the major trade barriers in these countries. Depending upon the nature of the barrier, the Super 301 gives the USTR 12 to 18 months to negotiate an agreement to eliminate the barriers. Those countries that fail the investigation are potentially subject to huge penalties.

This paper demonstrates how a trade policy is framed in the U.S. news media. More specifically, we attempt to examine how a trade policy is defined in the newspaper’s framing practices and to explore how a particular understanding of the policy is promoted and reinforced. To conduct this assessment, this paper examines the ways in which *The Wall Street Journal* frames its coverage of the Super 301 for 20 years from its first 1988 appearance. The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to provide a detailed analysis of the newspaper coverage of the trade policy; second, to assess symbolic powers of framing as a definition promoter.

## **2. Framing**

### **2.1. Framing Theory**

Framing has its origin within the theories of symbolic interaction and social construction of reality (Baran & Davis, 2000). Goffman introduced a theory of frame analysis to provide a systematic explanation of how we use expectations to make sense of the world we see.

Borrowing Goffman's notion of frame, Tuchman (1978) explains how the media routinely handle news stories. News is a socially constructed product and a cultural outcome influenced by a host of factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Media scholars focus on a variety of analysis levels from the micro level such as audience perceptions and journalistic practices (e.g., Gans, 1980; Watkins, 2001) to the macro level such as culture and ideology (e.g., Carragee, 1991; Tuchman, 1978). Most framing studies distinguish between two types of frames—media frames and audience or individual frames (Entman, 1991; Gitlin, 1980). Media frames serve as routines for journalists, allowing them to define and categorize information and to make it a cultural product (Gitlin, 1980). Audience frames are seen as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information” (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Reese (2001) defines frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p. 11). Each of the key terms in Reese's definition—organizing, principles, shared, persistent, symbolically, and structure—reflects the characteristics of frames. In a constructionist approach to framing analysis (Gamson, 1989; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Lee, Pan, Chan & So, 2001), a frame is defined as a “central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson, 1989, p. 157). This perspective deconstructs and reconstructs the news account into elemental frames, and the frames are identified as what Gamson calls “ideological package” through symbolic devices such as metaphors and catch phrases. Gitlin (1980) focuses on how this works, describing frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse” (p. 7). In this sense, working as powerfully as language itself (Entman, 1993), framing “enables journalists to process a large amount of information quickly and routinely; to recognize it as information; to assign it cognitive categories; and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences” (Watkins, 2001, p. 84).

Entman (1993), furthermore, explains what is meant by framing, connecting selection with salience:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. (p. 52).

This definition illustrates that frames not only carry central themes but also are capable of defining problems, identifying causalities, making moral judgments, and finding remedies.

Moreover, since priming and framing tend to be viewed as natural extensions of agenda setting, framing is considered within the context of agenda setting and priming (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1997). However, framing is theoretically distinguished from agenda setting and priming (Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). While agenda-setting and priming are based on “attitude accessibility,” according to Scheufele (2000), “framing influences how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information” (p. 309). What Scheufele (2000) calls “subtle nuances” in words and descriptions are believed to be powerful to affect how audiences interpret a news event.

Scheufele (2000) also argues that studies of framing examine three different processes:

“frame-building,” “frame-setting,” and “individual-level outcomes of framing” (p. 307). “Frame-building” studies focus on the process between elite or interest groups and media frames. “Frame-setting” studies examine the process between media frames and audience frames, using media frames as independent variables and audience frames as dependent variables. “Individual-level outcome of framing” studies pay attention to the process between audience frames and what Scheufele called “attribution of causal/treatment responsibility” (2000, p. 307). Whereas both “frame-setting” and “individual-level outcomes of framing” studies conduct surveys or content analyses to examine an impact either on the audience frames or on individual perceptions, “frame-building” studies tend to use qualitative analyses and examine what influences journalists to frame a given issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Several factors can be considered to exercise some influence over a journalist within the “frame-building” level: social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists (Borah, 2011; Gitlin, 1980; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Scheufele, 1999; 2000; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Reese, 2007; Tuchman, 1978): These scholars support the notion that social and ideological beliefs and organizational processes mediate what gets selected, packaged, and disseminated in the way that news is framed. Journalistic routines also help create the media frame in a standardized and patterned way (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Tuchman, 1978; Van Gorp, 2007). Moreover, journalists unconsciously absorb and internalize the hegemonic assumptions, which provide the media frames for the selection and presentation of news (Gitlin, 1980; Jayakar & Jayakar, 2000). The result is that the news media support the status quo, especially in cases of international conflicts and any challenges from outside the establishment (Hallin, 1987; McLeod & Detenber, 1999). Furthermore, recent “domestic frame” studies examine how the news media domesticate media frames when covering international events. Several domesticating factors such as culture, ideology, and political position are identified to be influential especially within the contexts of globalization/localization (Dai & Hyun, 2010; Guo, Holton & Jeong, 2012)

## 2.2. Previous Studies

Previous studies have unveiled that U.S. foreign news is framed by foreign policies (Entman, 2004; Jayakar & Jayakar, 2000; Robinson, 2002; Solomon, 1992), foreign relations (Keshishian, 1997), ideology (Carragee, 1991; Lee & Craig, 1992), and economic relations (Park, 2003). Entman’s (1991) study on U.S. news coverage between the KAL and Iran Air incidents reveals the ways that different frames led to different perceptions of arguably similar events. A Soviet fighter plane shot down a Korean airplane, killing its 269 passengers and crew, in 1983. In 1989, a U.S. Navy ship shot down an Iranian airplane, killing its 290 passengers and crew. Although these events were seen as similar kinds of accidents, there were huge differences in the coverage of the two events in the U.S. media. His content analysis reveals that the U.S. downing of an Iranian airplane was identified as a technical problem through deemphasizing the agency and the victims, whereas the Soviet downing of a Korean plane was described as a moral outrage. The news media in this case framed the United States as innocent while emphasizing the Soviet Union as guilty. Similarly, through the examination on the *New York*

*Times* coverage of the 1996 Indian and Israeli elections, Jayakar and Jayakar (2000) examined how frames worked in covering these two elections. Their analysis showed how differently the newspaper illustrated and described these two countries. The Israeli election was framed as “the Middle East peace process,” focusing on the personalities of the candidates; on the other hand, the Indian election was framed as “the exotic East” (p. 140), paying attention to “royalty, caste, religion and superstition, and corruption” (p. 133).

Carragee (1991) examined the *New York Times* coverage of the Green Party in West Germany from 1979 to 1986 to identify the dominant media frames and interpretive patterns used by the *Times* in its definition of the Green Party. He discovers that the *Times* definition of the Green Party was structured to portray the party as “a threat to West German political stability” (p. 22), and points out that the *Times* defined the party in a strategic rather than an ideological way. However, it is important to note that whereas the newspaper portrayed the Greens as “advancing legitimate alternatives to the German people” in its coverage of domestic German politics, it “denigrated and delegitimized” the party’s positions on international affairs ideologically (p. 23).

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2001) examined the U.S. news coverage of the transfer of Hong Kong from the British to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. The study found that the United States should play a role of “new guardian” of Hong Kong in a future “new cold war” between the United States and China. In addition, Hong Kong would suffer from the “erosion of freedom and democracy” under the communist system; however, Hong Kong may play the role of “Trojan horse” in changing the political and economic system in China. They indicate that, with the only superpower in the post-Cold War world, the U.S. media paid much attention to the handover, pointing out that “the United States stepped into Hong Kong as the chief voice of the West” (p. 362). From this observation, the study concludes that the “universal validity of U.S. media ideology” was accepted as taken-for-granted notions and that the media played an important role not only in recreating national consensus and the dominant values but also in reinforcing foreign policies (p. 362).

Park (2003) quantitatively reveals that the news of the Japanese and Korean economies were framed differently by the U.S. news media. While the Korean economy was reported in cooperative frames, the Japanese economy was largely covered in rival frames. These differences point out that the economic news of Japan reflected the trade conflict with the United States. Park (2003) mentions that U.S. news stories claimed that the trade dispute between the United States and Japan would damage the whole relationship between the two countries, framing the Japanese economy as a rival.

Toward the end of the Cold War, foreign relations began to be described according to the economic power as well as military and political powers of foreign countries (Wasburn, 1997). Wu (2000) also argues that economic interest became a significant manner in which to see foreign countries. Wasburn (1997) characterizes the economic world as the world in which “power depends as much on the ability of a nation’s banks and corporations to capture market share and defeat foreign trade rivals as it does on the capabilities of its military” (p. 191). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the United States began to force trade sanctions to liberalize markets in foreign countries (Zeng, 2004). The U.S. news media supported the government to legitimize its trade policies against targeted foreign countries. The original Super 301 provision

was considered written with Japan in mind. According to Ishizawa (1994), for example, the media emphasizes two aspects of the Japanese economy: trade surplus and closeness of the Japanese market. These emphases created the widespread American belief that the trading relationship was unfair (Carnegie Endowment Group Study, 1995).

### 2.3. Research Questions

The research questions below are designed to examine the U.S. newspapers' framing practices on their coverage of international economy news. Since the literature such as Park's (2003) did not conduct any qualitative analyses on the economic news, these studies provide little understanding of how the frames are utilized in the international economic coverage. Furthermore, while cross national framing analyses have revealed cultural and national differences in framing practices (e.g., Dai & Hyun; 2010; Guo, Holton & Jeong, 2012; Hong, 2013), frame-building or frame-production analyses require a close reading of texts that enables researchers to be sensitive to the role of language in the symbolic construction of meaning within news stories (Carragee, 1991; Reese, 2007; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Watkins (2001) also notes that such a reading enables researchers to see the verbal materials which journalists used to make their framing work manifest in the news reporting. Dominant groups not only send messages to one another through the mass media, but also "invoke 'the media' in order to size up the shape, character, and direction of society itself" (Pauly, 1991, p. 5), while Entman (1991) points out that sizing elements of reality, either magnifying or shrinking, is a significant aspect of framing. The following questions aim to identify framing practices conducted in *The Wall Street Journal's* coverage of the Super 301:

*RQ1:* What were the dominant frames of the coverage of the Super 301?

*RQ2:* How was the trade policy defined in the dominant frames?

*RQ3:* How did the newspaper promote particular definitions and understandings of the trade policy?

### 3. Method

This paper conducts a qualitative content analysis to examine the U.S. newspapers' coverage of the Super 301, a modified version of the Section 301 of the Trade Act. *The Wall Street Journal* is chosen for analyses, not only because the newspaper represents widely accepted attitudes and understandings of the trade policies, but also because it represents the "core of U.S. capitalism" (Reese, 1990). The newspaper is particularly influential for business and governmental elites. We collected a sample of articles in *The Wall Street Journal* from *Proquest*, an online database. The only keyword, "Super 301," was used to search the articles. All the 50 articles found with the keyword were examined.

Through a close reading of the coverage, this study attempts to identify the dominant media frames employed by the newspaper. This study defines a dominant media frame as an accepted interpretation of reality among readers in the home country. To operationalize an analysis, each article is examined to determine its main idea or frame, which is constructed by symbolic devices; in other words, to identify the "preferred reading" of each article

(Hall, 1982). Furthermore, with regard to its preferred reading, how the Super 301 and its corresponding problems are defined in each article is examined. These analyses include careful examinations of each article's headlines, metaphors, catchphrases, and quotes as well as the text of articles. "Framing package" (Van Gorp, 2010) helps us to examine how an international economy event is framed in a more holistic manner. In the next step of the analysis, this study sorts the identified media frames into what defining devices are employed to define the trade policy, looking for patterns in the implications of the media frames, and analyzes the patterned media frames in order to discover the system of the definitions. The analysis involves a "thick description" (Greertz, 1973) of the reporting in an attempt to examine what definitions are offered in the coverage of the Super 301. According to Carragee (1991), the validity of an argument presented in a qualitative analysis depends on the presentation of textual materials to support the interpretations that are advanced.

#### 4. Findings

Table 1 indicates the amount of *The Wall Street Journal* coverage devoted to the Super 301. The coverage of *The Wall Street Journal* began with the articles entitled "Japan Fumes at U.S. Steps in Trade Bill" and "Europe: West Germany Awaits a Trade Bill Veto" in April in 1988, describing how foreign countries such as Japan and Germany began to fear a U.S. "new wave of protectionism" in international trade circumstance (Lambsdorff, 1988, p. 1). The newspaper provided each of these articles with Tokyo and Bonn datelines respectively and claimed that issuing the "Super 301" bill would go against and ruin the idea of free trade. In the following year 1989, *The Wall Street Journal* ran 20 articles dealing with the Super 301 provision, the largest number of the articles in a year. Most of them focused on whether President Bush would sign the bill or not. In 1994, 14 articles, the second largest number, were offered by the newspaper, paying attention to how President Clinton renewed the section. By this time, the Super 301 had already become a political agenda to adjust U.S. trade imbalances and to maintain its competitiveness in international trade, and the newspaper ran few articles of the policy after 1995. Although three articles were run in 2004 in the newspaper, the trade policy was described only in the context of the 2004 presidential campaign. The presidential candidate John Kerry mentioned the trade policy in ways of showing how he would improve the U.S. economic conditions and deal with an emerging threat from the Chinese economy.

Table 1. The Amount of *The Wall Street Journal* Coverage

Number of Articles	
1988	2
1989	20
1990	6
1991	0
1992	4
1993	0

1994	14
1995	0
1996	0
1997	1
1998	0
1999	0
2000	0
2001	0
2002	0
2003	0
2004	3
2005	0
2006	0
2007	0
SUM	50

#### 4.1. “Fair - Unfair” Dominant Frame and Its Defining Devices

One of the most important roles framing plays is to define an issue (e.g., Carragee, 1991; Entman, 1993; Watkins, 2001). Stone (1989) argues that the process of defining an issue is “the active manipulation of images of conditions by competing political actors” (p. 299). Such a framing practice is revealed through an examination of dominant frames employed in the coverage of an issue or event (Carragee, 1991; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Lee et al., 2001). Through *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of the Super 301, a fair-unfair comparison plays the most significant role in defining the U.S. trade problems with the solution of the Super 301. However, an idea of “fair” on the coverage cannot make sense without “unfair.” That is, unfair traders give the United States an image of “fair.” The reportage simplifies and defines the U.S. trade by the mere implication that it was fairer than others. According to Gitlin (1980), the media oversimplify the notions behind issues, and “the complexity of its identity and its deals” are also simplified (p. 231). This argument can be made with regard to the coverage of the Super 301 policy. The newspaper provides readers with easy and quick reportage to understand the policy merely in either what-is-fair or what-is-unfair contexts. The reporting on the Super 301 article reinforces the characteristics of what the policy looks like, and creates a mere comparison between fair and unfair trades in order to legitimize the United States and its policy. This fair-unfair frame, with regard to the first research question, is identified as the dominant frame of the Super 301. To manifest the fair-unfair frame in the newspaper’s coverage, defining devices such as a “war” context, personification, and threat are also detected. These devices prop up the promoting definitions in the coverage and allow the Super 301 to be defined the way it is. The following sections demonstrate our attempts to respond to the second and third research questions.

## 4.2. “War” Context

Throughout *The Wall Street Journal*'s coverage of the Super 301 clause from 1988 to 2004, the media frames that implied war contexts were detected. Since trade disputes were prone to be described in the contexts of “trade war” and “power game” in the coverage, military tools such as “weapon,” “grenade,” and “arsenal” were manifested to illustrate the Super 301. Military implications were fundamental in interpreting the Super 301 section itself as well as what was happening in the U.S. trade in the coverage of *The Wall Street Journal*. A “market-opening tool” is another example of how the Super 301 was framed on the coverage. Although this expression literally articulated the trade policy, the newspaper focused more on how effective the trade policy was in terms of reducing U.S. trade imbalances and improving the U.S. economy than the policy itself. Hence, the trade policy is reduced to a mere tool of trade negotiation in the process of how the policy is framed to disseminate an understanding of it.

Within the “war” contexts, the United States was located in unfair trade practices conducted by foreign countries through a fair-unfair contrast. *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of the Super 301 constructed a perspective that viewed foreign countries as deviant with unfair trading practices. As Chang, Shoemaker, and Brenlinger (1987) point out, deviance constructs a common focus against others for a nation. Illustrating foreign countries as deviant constructs the common notion about the United States and its responsibility for free trade; namely, the U.S. trade systems are fairer than those of foreign countries. Seeing foreign countries as deviant is the basis for the ways of viewing the United States and its behaviors as commonly accepted “fair.”

Some figures provided a rationale and measurement of the Super 301 as a fair treatment. For example, the newspaper announced that Germany announced to cut trade surpluses with the United States by 10% a year (Lambsdorff, 1988) and that the bill caps the number of cars the Japanese can export at 1.65 million a year (1992, July 10). Another article explains that the United States estimated its “losses of at least \$200 million a year in revenue” from unprotected recording (Schlesinger & Graven, 1990, p. A10). These figures efficiently enhanced a fair-unfair understanding of the Super 301, and gave the newspaper articles the support for the governmental official statements. Accordingly, President Bush said, “We (the United States) buy their (Japanese) cars, and they won't buy our agricultures” (Truell et al., 1989, p. 1). The numbered figures reinforce the president's statement in a fair-unfair understanding of the trade between the United States and Japan.

Furthermore, the “war” and “game” contexts in the fair-unfair frame provide the newspaper coverage with a win-or-lose understanding of what was happening with the Super 301. “The agreement is a significant victory for the principle of free and fair trade,” said Mr. Yeutter, a congressman. “This is far preferable to protectionist measures that would restrict imports without increasing U.S. exports” (James, 1994, p. 1). The newspaper offered the coverage of the trade policy, explaining how the Super 301 solved the unfair trade dispute, deciding who was a winner and loser.

## 4.3. Personification

*The Wall Street Journal* personified the news cognitively focusing on particular companies and

government officials. Along with the Presidents, Bush and Clinton, U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills often appeared on the news coverage, being labeled as “Mrs. Super 301.” She described the Super 301 as “a crowbar to open and expand trade” and Japan as an “unfair trader” (1990, May 3). Those news articles that were personalized as “Mrs. Super 301” provided the ideas of what the Super 301 was like and why the United States needed to issue it. Especially, since she was a U.S. representative of the trade talks between the United States and Japan under the Super 301 of Trade Act, she became a key figure of how to understand what was happening between the United States and Japan. This framing promoted a particular understanding of the Super 301, focusing on whether Mrs. Hills would win over Japan to successfully force Japan to accept U.S. offers.

Employing a term, “chief definer,” to describe the persons who show up most often in news narratives to define a particular issue or problem, Watkins (2001) points out that “chief definer provides important layers of information regarding ‘who’ journalists selected to help define and develop their framing judgments” (p. 91). Zelizer (1990) also argues that one of the narrative devices to strengthen journalists’ authorities in reporting was personification. In the coverage of the Super 301 provision, the U.S. officials served as “chief definers” to determine what aspects of trade problems the newspaper picked up to describe the solutions.

Furthermore, commonly recognized company names simplified an understanding of the trade policy into a fair-unfair contrast. Trade disputes between U.S. (General Motors and IBM) and Japanese companies (Toyota and NEC, for example) were easily associated with each of the countries. The article entitled “Party of Protectionism,” identifying Toyota and Nissan, argued that the bill assured “to beat up on the Japanese if they don’t buy more American auto parts of the Japanese cars made in Japan and the United States” (1992, July 10). On the other hand, the newspaper demonstrated the U.S. companies’ fairness. The article entitled “Super-301: The Economic Equivalent of Civilian Bombing” said, “Some companies such as IBM, DEC, Unisys, Honeywell, AT&T, and Data General purchased components from Japanese suppliers” (Powell, 1989, p. 1). These companies represented each of the countries and reinforced the ways of seeing Japan and the United States in the fair-unfair comparison.

#### **4.4. Threat**

The idea of threat makes the Super 301 article newsworthy to cover. Chang and Lee (1992) point out that a threat to the United States is one of the most important criteria for the U.S. gatekeepers to select international news. Shoemaker, Chang, and Brenlinger (1987) also argue that a common focus for group emotion was produced by deviance against a threat. That is, a threat creates an axis to protect a country from outside; therefore, the threat justified portraying the United States as facing unfair trade practices in the coverage. A threat helps a nation “to maintain a semblance of consistency with its stated ideal of peace” (Ivie, 1980, p. 292). Through emphasizing that the threat came from outside the United States, the coverage successfully also avoided paying attention to the internal aspects of the U.S. economy. Higher unemployment rates and losing competitiveness of the U.S. economy can be related to unfair foreign traders. Therefore, a threat defines the policy in terms of how to protect the United States and its economy.

Threat is more clearly identified when it is compared with military might. The “war” context of framing became more powerful when it was literally described in the comparison of actual military. The article entitled “Super-301: Just Claiming Our Rights” introduced the national surveys that indicated:

[M]ore than 60% of Americans feel that the greatest threat to America’s long-term national security is the economic prowess of Japan and not the military might of the Soviet Union. Over 66% feel that a country’s status, prestige and influence on the world stage are more a function of its economic vitality than its military might. (Archey, 1989, p.1)

The article of “The Return of 301,” furthermore, clearly identified, “The great threat to America’s future” is the trade between Japan and the United States.

Under the Super 301, newly developed technologies were also described as a threat to challenge the U.S. dominance in some industries. The United States had accused the Japanese of unfairly restricting imports of satellites, supercomputers and forest products. The article entitled “U.S. is turning wary eye to Japanese computer plan” wrote:

TRON—a coordinated network of computer chips and software—has heightened U.S. concern about technological competitiveness...TRON has the potential to challenge American dominance in sophisticated computer technologies, such as logic chips, if it catches on. (Schlesinger, 1989, p. 1)

The United States was sensitive to not only the loss of current business but also fear of the future in the American-dominated high-tech fields in the coverage of the newspaper. Especially, the Super 301 was described as an effective treatment for the future in order to eliminate possible threat the United States might have.

#### 4.5. Two-way Street

The military implications are a two-sided coin, however. The 1980s articles of *The Wall Street Journal* claimed the dangers and meanings, demonstrating what impacts the Super 301 provision would give the free-trade world. The Super 301 was illustrated as a “two-way street” even for the United States. Military implications such as “bomb” and “grenade” demonstrated effective opening tools for the United States to break the trade barriers by the foreign countries; at the same time, they entailed the danger of collapsing free trade all over the world. The Super 301 cannot eliminate the idea of protectionism and the danger to bomb even the United States itself (Truell, 1989a). The “built-in reprisals limit the scope for compromise that always has existed” and “provoke countermeasures and increase the danger of a trade war” (Lambsdorff, 1988, p. 1).

Furthermore, while insisting that the Super 301 was designed to deal with “unfair trade practices” and to force Japanese concessions, Darlin (1988) also claimed that it “needlessly angers the Japanese and risks making them less cooperative in the future” (p. 1). The 1989 Super 301 was designed to compel Japan to purchase more U.S. semiconductors and to prod Brazil into recognizing U.S. pharmaceutical patents. However, the Super 301 was not only

the “market-opening tools” to improve the U.S. trade balance, but also “a deadline which is going to force us to address some problems that we have” (Truell, 1989a, p. 1). Truell (1989b) also described the Super 301 as “a dangerous club, perhaps the biggest threat to international commerce since the notorious Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which contracted trade, sinking the world into years of depression” (p. 1). *The Wall Street Journal* also introduced some of the foreign countries’ criticisms. EU officials saw the Super 301 decisions as “potential harm to the multilateral trading system and current GATT negotiations” (Lehner, 1989, p. 1). The Japanese Prime Minister Uno also described the policy as “an attempt to divert attention from the major cause of the trade imbalance” (Lehner, 1989, p. 1). The policy tended to reinforce the perception here that the United States was turning increasingly anti-Japanese and to raise questions about America’s reliability as an ally.

The editorials of *The Wall Street Journal* in 1990 criticized the policy, arguing what free trade looked like. The article entitled “the Liberal Majority” (1990, March 26) claimed, “The world of free trade doesn’t exist” (p. A8). Clark (1990) described the Super 301 as the system the United States uses “to punish nations that don’t perform in world trade as the United States thinks they should” (p. A1). Furthermore, other editorials pointed out that trade “surplus and deficit” does not mean either gain/loss or good/bad (1990, April 24) and even indicated, “It is increasingly difficult to determine what is a ‘foreign’ or ‘domestic’ company” (1990, March 26).

## 5. Summary and Implications

The Super 301 has been covered for almost 20 years in *The Wall Street Journal*. Throughout the newspaper coverage, the trade problems the United States had to solve with the Super 301 were defined through the fair-unfair frame. The identified defining devices of framing in the above sections —“war” context, personification, and threat—are manifested in the dominant frame of a fair-unfair contrast. The “war” context enables the newspaper coverage to construct the trade dispute as unfair practices and allows the Super 301 to be defined as a powerful tool to defend “our country’s” economy. Constructing the “unfair” enemies justifies our country in the “war” context. Bass (1979) argues that a war reality is interpreted within the fair/unfair or good/bad contexts. Personification is also a strong device of framing to define problems in an easily recognizable manner. A trade policy is defined, relying on the natures and characteristics of the people who appear most often in the news. In addition to these devices, as Wasburn (1997) claims, economic threat in the post-Cold War era promotes national security more than military threat and allows the problems to be defined simply in the fair-unfair contrast. Seeing the trade policy as the military and market-opening tools dominated the overall coverage and produced a variety of understandings of how the policy would improve the unfair trade practices of foreign countries.

The Super 301 is not a single, continuous policy understood throughout the newspaper coverage; rather, it was in “the lived process” (Allan, 1999, p. 85), which is recreated article by article, relying on the definitions of the trade problems which the U.S. economy has faced. Framing is a process embodied in a lived system of meanings and values, which shapes people’s perceptions of themselves and their worldviews. The coverage of the trade policy consists of reporting on a variety of countries such as Brazil, South Korea, Japan, and China. These

countries have different economic and political systems as well as different economic levels. However, what the Super 301 did to solve the problems with these countries has been described as a defending tool in the fair-unfair frame. While the coverage of the policy responds to those changes by reframing and constructing a broad image of the policy, the framing practices still maintain the fundamental notions of the tools for unfair trading practices. The way of reporting works not only in digging out the various aspects of the world trade systems to discuss, but also in simplifying those systems in an easily-understood manner. That is, the reportage did not take any new views of the policy; rather, it constructed a continuous view of the policy, based on the definition and knowledge that readers had already had.

We have not examined any media effects on the relationship between the media and a trade policy; however, on this point, we have demonstrated the way the media reinforce and shape a trade policy once they define it in a certain manner. The defining process of framing is especially powerful enough to determine the ways in which the trade policy is accepted and legitimated. *The Wall Street Journal* provides the definitions of the Super 301 in a way of differentiating unfair traders from the United States. The dominant frame shapes the production of news, which helps explain why the media can be expected to function as agents of legitimization.

The legitimating power depends on little of the coercive apparatus of the state in liberal capitalist societies; rather, it rests on the worldview that Hallin (1987) called, “a system of assumptions and social values accepted as ‘common sense’ which legitimates the existing distribution of power and, indeed, renders opposition to it inconceivable for most of the population” (p. 4). One of the institutions that help maintain the power is the media, legitimating economic systems significant to the present political power. According to Hallin (1987), “The media play the roles of maintaining the dominant political ideology: they propagate it, celebrate it, interpret the world in its terms, and, at times, alter it to adapt to the demands of legitimization in a changing world” (p. 4). The newspaper constructs an image of the U.S. free trade because correlating the United States with the opposing images of unfair trade was the most effective reportage.

In the era of the post-Cold War, the framework that focuses on the difference between capitalism and communism hardly works in explaining an international reality; rather, the concept of the Free Trade plays such a role in today’s world. This is because political and economic dimensions are much more integrated than ever before, and economic power has begun to be seen in the same context as political and military powers (Wasburn, 1997; Wu, 2000). The United States is still portrayed as a representative of the ideal Free Trade in the newspaper. In the Cold War era, the communist forces of the Soviet Union helped create the notion of seeing the United States as a leader of the free world. In other words, the images of the Soviet Union justified the United States as a world leader. Hallin (1987) points out, “The consensus in the Cold War worked as a source of support for foreign policy oriented toward preserving U.S. hegemony” (p. 22). In the El Salvador case, as Solomon (1992) points out, the coverage “maintained the deepest U.S. ‘cultural resonances’ of democracy, fair play, and good intentions” (p. 66). Similarly, the U.S. news coverage of the Super 301 shows that U.S. international economic news tends to be framed ethnocentrically to legitimize the U.S. trade practices, while delegitimizing other countries, under the name of the Free Trade. The U.S. trade practices covered in the newspaper coverage not only supported U.S. trade policies, but

also insinuated the audiences into the U.S. version of the international trade. In short, since U.S. economy ideals might appear in the references to the United States in the world, it is deeply embedded in the U.S. society. As a result, it is the basis for international economy news reporting in the U.S. news media.

In conclusion, this study provides a detailed examination on *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of the Super 301 and examines how the trade policy is defined in the newspaper's framing practices. The fair-unfair frame enhanced by the military implications endorses a particular understanding of the Super 301 and the trade problems associated with the policy. In the process of framing the trade policy, three defining devices of framing are detected: war context, personification, and threat. Framing is a powerful instrument to promote a particular understanding of a trade policy once it is defined in a certain way. In international economy news, framing reinforces and shapes the trade policy to legitimize the trading practices of the home country.

This study found that the Super 301 is not a metaphorical trade policy, but a symbolically shaped meaning to be defined, framed, and constructed in a certain way. How the policy is understood relies largely on how symbolic handlers use their powers. The specific language usage has symbolic power to disseminate a particular discourse. Thus, the legitimated language by the power group about a certain issue reveals how the power is generated and exercised. As Bourdieu (1991) claims, "the more formal the market is, the more practically congruent with the norms of the legitimate language, the more it is dominated by the dominant, i.e. by the holders of the legitimate competence, authorized to speak with authority" (p. 69).

Several issues might limit the significance of this study. First, since this study focused on the coverage of a trade policy in a business newspaper, it captured the U.S. economy news only from the business newspaper's point of view. Future research is necessary to expand a variety of news media's coverage of trade policies. Another consideration for future research would elaborate on the relationship between international economy news and framing. The implications framed in this study are manifestly observed because we dealt with a defining process of it. Research on other aspects of framing with international economy news could provide additional insights into the relationship.

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### Author Note

Takuya Sakurai (Ph.D.) is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Tokyo Denki University, Japan. His primary research interests are in mass communication, intercultural communication, and international communication. His publications include *Communicating about Communicating with Kami (Deities): An Ethnographic Study of Washinomiya Saibara Kagura* (*Journal of Communication and Religion*, 2014), *Clan/Kinship* (*Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia*, 2012).

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**Appendix 1. References of the Articles**

	Date	Byline	Dateline	Type	Section	Title
1	5/20/2004	-		Editorial		A-Waltzing Free Trade
2	5/4/2004	George Melloan		Commentary		Kerry Tries Xenophobia as a Campaign Ploy
3	5/01/2004	David I. Oyama		News	International	World Watch
4	10/2/1997	Bob Davis	Washington	News	Industry	U.S. to Probe South Korean Auto Market--Curbs on Seoul May Result; Concern Rises Over Plan To Lift Output Vastly
5	9/30/1994	Bob Davis		News	Economy	End of U.S.-Japan Trade Talks Nears without a Clear Plan for Compromise
6	9/28/1994	Bob Davis	Washington	News	Economy	Japan's Trade Minister Offers Proposal with Steps to Help Solve Auto Dispute
7	7/29/1994	Helene Cooper	Washington	News	Economy	U.S. is Close to Taking Steps Against Japan--Barring Major Concession, Kantor to Urge Move Toward Trade Sanctions
8	3/8/1994	James Bovard		Commentary		A U.S. History of Trade Hypocrisy
9	3/4/1994	-		News	Business and Finance	Business and Finance
10	3/4/1994	Asra Q. Nomani & David P. Hamilton		News		Clinton Renews Trade Measure Aimed at Japan --- Tough Provision Steps Up Tensions with Tokyo; Early Action Unlikely
11	3/4/1994	Nomani, Asra Q. Nomani & David P. Hamilton		News		Clinton Renews Trade Measure Aimed at Japan
12	3/4/1994	Gary Rosenberger	New York	News		Dollar Fell Against Yen on Escalation of Trade Frictions between U.S., Japan

13	3/2/1994	Asra Q. Nomani	Washington	News	Economy	U.S. to Renew A Retaliatory Trade Measure --- Expected Clinton Action is Certain to Increase Tensions with Japan
14	3/2/1994	Asra Q. Nomani		News		U.S. to Renew a Retaliatory Trade Measure
15	2/25/1994	Rich Jaroslovsky		News		A Special Weekly Report from <i>The Wall Street Journal's</i> Capital Bureau
16	2/15/1994	-		News	Business and Finance	Business and Finance
17	2/15/1994	Bob Davis & David P. Hamilton		News		U.S. Set to Press Japan in Trade Fight; Tactics Include 'Super 301' Provision
18	2/14/1994	Bob Davis & Jacob M. Schlesinger		News		U.S. Plans Sanctions Move as Talks with Japan Fail --- Action on Cellular Phones is Bid to Raise Pressure on Tokyo After Summit
19	7/10/1992	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): Party of Protectionism
20	6/17/1992	-	Washington	News	Domestic	House Panel Votes Revival of Lapsed Trade Measure
21	6/10/1992	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): The Return of 301
22	6/10/1992	-		Editorial		The Return of 301
23	7/2/1990	Lindley H. Clark Jr.	Washington	News		Strength in Exports May Not be Timely
24	5/03/1990	-		Editorial		A Game of Chicken
25	5/3/1990	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): A Game of Chicken
26	4/24/1990	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): A Trade Deficit Primer
27	4/23/1990	Jacob M. Schlesinger & Kathryn Graven	Tokyo	News	International	Japan Acts to Show Progress on Trade --- Tokyo Seeks to Avoid being Labeled 'Unfair' by U.S.

28	3/26/1990	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): The Liberal Majority
29	7/28/1989	Jadgish Bhagwati		Op-ed		Let GATT Live
30	6/22/1989	William T. Archey		News		Super 301: Just Claiming Our Rights
31	6/16/1989	-	Tokyo	News	International	U.S., Japan Trade Talks Spawn Battle of Semantics--Special to <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>
32	6/15/1989	Jacob M. Schlesinger	Tokyo	News	International	U.S. Looks Skyward and Sees Satellites Bearing Japan's Imprint, Not Its Own
33	6/5/1989	Urban C. Lehner	Tokyo	News	International	Japan's Uno, Lacking Clout at Home, Could Balk at Major Trade Concessions
34	6/2/1989	Jacob M. Schlesinger	Tokyo	News	Technology	U.S. is Turning Wary Eye to Japanese Computer Plan
35	6/2/1989	Tim Carrington & Alan Murray	Paris	News		U.S. Sticks with its Tough Trade Stance Despite Flood of International Criticism
36	5/31/1989	Alan Murray & Tim Carrington	Paris	News	International	Hills Offers Compromise of Sorts in Bid to Continue Trade Talks with Japan
37	5/30/1989	Jim Powell		News		Super-301: The Economic Equivalent of Civilian Bombing
38	5/30/1989	Urban C. Lehner	Tokyo	News		U.S. Listing of Japan as Unfair Trader is Likely to Test Two Nations' Relations
39	5/30/1989	Peter Truell	Washington	News		U.S. to Face Challenge in Conducting Tougher Approach to Trade Disputes
40	5/26/1989	Peter Truell, Alan Murray, & Urban C. Lehner		News		Singled Out: Designation of Japan as Unfair Trader Holds Promise but Much Risk--Bush's Action, Under Pressure from Congress, May Spur Talks to Lower Barriers--A Threat to Capital Inflow?

41	5/25/1989	Karlynn Keene		News		Americans are Consistently Inconsistent on Trade
42	5/23/1989	Damon Darlin	Tokyo	News	International	Trade Threats Against Japanese Work, Despite Hand-Wringing of Free Traders
43	5/22/1989	Peter Truell and Alan Murray	Washington	News		Bush Advisers Set to Suggest Trade Action--Practices by Japan, Brazil and India may be Cited, not Nations Themselves
44	5/19/1989	Peter Truell	Washington	News		Seoul Set to Ease Investment Rules; U.S. Presses Issues
45	5/17/1989	Peter Truell	Washington	News	Politics and Policy	Hills Will Wield 'Super 301' as Lever for Exports, but Some Warn it may Trigger Protectionist Wars
46	5/8/1989	-		Editorial		REVIEW & OUTLOOK (Editorial): Son of Gephardt
47	5/1/1989	Peter Truell	Washington	News		Bush, Spurred by Big Trade Gap, Begins to Move Against Barriers to U.S. Exports
48	4/14/1989	Eduardo Lachica	Washington	News	International	Koreans Making a Pre-Emptive Strike To Ward off New U.S. Trade Sanctions
49	4/9/1988	Damon Darlin	Tokyo	News		Japan Fumes at U.S. Steps in Trade Bill
50	4/27/1988	Otto Graf Lambsdorff	Bonn	News		Europe: West Germany Awaits a Trade Bill Veto