

Local Newspaper Coverage and Endorsement of a U.S. Military Buildup in the Pacific

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A recently announced shift in the global military strategy of the United States involves an increase in the presence of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific. Drawing from propositions of the system-maintenance role of local media, this study examines how the *Pacific Daily News (PDN)*, a newspaper on the Western Pacific island of Guam, covers a U.S. military buildup, and the extent to which such coverage influences residents' opinions. A content analysis revealed the *PDN* reported more frequently on the military buildup's economic benefits, and less on its potential risks. A representative survey showed that reading the *PDN* influenced residents' support for the buildup and endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits, but not its risks. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: System-maintenance role, newspapers, public opinion, U.S. military, Pacific

A long tradition of research indicates that local newspapers function to maintain the stability of the communities they serve (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1973; Hindman, 1996, 1999; McCluskey, Stein, Boyle, & McLeod, 2009; Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1980). A key proposition derived from this system-maintenance perspective posits that local newspapers of less economically diversified communities facing sluggish economies tend to promote new industries that promise economic growth. This proposition is supported by studies conducted in a number of communities in the continental United States (Dunwoody & Griffin, 1999; Taylor, Lee, & Davie, 2000; Tichenor et al., 1980). However, few studies to date have investigated this proposition's applicability to local newspapers of international communities. Additionally, few prior structural studies of local newspapers have examined the implications of the system-maintenance role of local newspapers in the formation of community residents' personal opinions toward local public issues.

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The purpose of this case study is to extend the system-maintenance perspective to an international context. In adopting the system-maintenance perspective, a content analysis was conducted to investigate how the *Pacific Daily News (PDN)*, a local newspaper on the Western Pacific Island of Guam, covers the potential outcomes of a U.S. military buildup scheduled to occur on the island. We focus on analyzing the frequency of reports covering economic benefits (e.g., increased job opportunities, improvements in local economy, etc.) and risks (e.g., increases in crime, overcrowding, etc.). A community survey was also conducted to investigate the extent to which the newspaper's coverage of the buildup affects local residents' opinions on the issue. To briefly describe this military buildup, the U.S. Department of Defense will be relocating some members of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, currently stationed in Okinawa, Japan, to Guam. This move will bring an estimated 4,500 additional U.S. troops, along with more than 10,000 of their dependents, to Guam.

This case study is of practical significance in light of the United States' recent announcement of an impending shift in its global military strategy. This shift involves an increased U.S. military presence in the Pacific region that could impact the cultural and environmental conditions there. The present case study contributes to a theoretically based understanding of how local newspapers in the Pacific rally support for the increased presence of the U.S. military. This study could also inform journalists who cover U.S. military issues pertaining to the Pacific, and highlight to these journalists the implications of the angles they take in their news reports.

The macrosocial approach of the system-maintenance perspective is primarily concerned with the community as the unit of analysis (Donohue et al., 1973; Hindman, 1996; Tichenor et al., 1980). The use of a case study of a single community differs from extant structural studies of local media (e.g., Hindman, 1996; McCluskey et al., 2009; Tichenor et al., 1980), which typically involve analyses of several communities. As such, the purpose of this case study is not to examine variations in media coverage across communities. Instead, it investigates how a Pacific island's sluggish, undiversified local economy conditions news coverage of a U.S. military buildup, and the subsequent influences of these news reports on local public opinion.

Theoretical Framework

The System-Maintenance Role of Local Media

As noted, this case study is guided by assumptions of the system-maintenance role of mass media. This role conceptualizes local media as a subsystem, or institution, whose behaviors are shaped by other subsystems in the larger environment, such as political, economic, religious, and educational institutions (Donohue et al., 1973; Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1973). From this perspective, an explication of the larger social environment that local media serve is needed to understand media functions, reporting, and subsequent effects (Tichenor et al., 1973; Viswanath & Demers, 1999).

A basic premise of the system-maintenance role is that local media serve as agents of social control. Media are viewed as the central distributor of knowledge, and they play a crucial role in maintaining the stability of a social system (Demers, 1996; Donohue et al., 1973; Gaziano & Gaziano, 1999; Hindman, 1996, 1999; McCluskey et al., 2009; Viswanath & Demers, 1999). Media are able to

control information available to the public through either feedback or distribution. Feedback control refers to the exchange of symbols between the media and the public. This could include letters to the editor, comments on online editions, and reference to appropriate social norms (Donohue et al., 1973). Distribution control involves the selective distribution of information, which could range from censorship to delaying the time that information is made available to the public (Donohue et al., 1973).

The system-maintenance role also emphasizes that media are oriented toward the power structure of their communities. This emphasis assumes that power is unequally distributed among competing groups within a community. Powerful elites, particularly economic and political actors, boast greater power and are far more influential in the decision-making processes of a community than groups representing alternative views. Local media treat those in the local power structure with more legitimacy than groups representing alternative views (Hindman, 1999; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod & Hertog, 1999; Nah, 2010; Pollock, 2007).

System-Maintenance Reporting of Economic and Risks News

The interests of local elites and the direction and allocation of limited resources are driven by the central goal of community growth (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Lyon, Felice, Perryman, & Parker, 1981; Molotch, 1976). As Molotch (1976) explains, "a common interest in growth is the overriding commonality among important people in a given locale—at least insofar as they have any important local goals at all" (p. 310). Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that local media organizations serve as a booster of community growth, and this "growth machine" mindset is noticeable among the media of communities facing sluggish economies. Media of economically homogenous and stagnant communities tend to favor the decisions of external groups and agencies that stimulate local economy (e.g., the construction of a large supermarket chain) and their resulting employment and business opportunities for local firms and workers. Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1995) proposed that if a community is dependent upon a single industry, then the newspaper operates much like the newsletter of a large medical clinic.

Studies conducted in the continental United States suggest that local newspapers of less economically diversified communities facing sluggish economies tend to favor the decisions of external groups. For instance, Taylor et al. (2000) showed that a Louisiana newspaper serving a community with a weakened economy tended to support a new industry that promised to provide job opportunities and new sources of revenue. The new industry was a hazardous waste treatment plant. The researchers also found that when reporting on environmental conflict associated with the new industry, the local newspaper cited industry officials more often than other sources, such as activists. In a content analysis of several newspapers in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois, Dunwoody and Griffin (1999) found that newspapers of less economically diversified communities were less likely to alert readers to the presence of local risks posed by industries than newspapers of more economically diversified communities. Similarly, Riffe (2007) explained, "when local economic interests are involved and jobs are at stake, local news media may shy away from conflict coverage of environmental problems" (pp. 48–49).

Despite the accumulated evidence in support of the system-maintenance perspective described earlier, prior research grounded in this framework has been almost entirely limited to Western contexts

(e.g., Demers, 1996; Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1985; Dunwoody & Griffin, 1999; Harry, 2001; Hindman, 1996; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod & Hertog, 1999; Olien, Donohue, & Tichenor, 1968; Taylor et al., 2000; Tichenor et al., 1980). Theoretical and empirical attention to other contexts such as Asian and Pacific communities has been almost entirely missing. This negligence is important to note, as it is not yet clear in communication scholarship whether the system-maintenance perspective can be applied in non-Western community systems, particularly on Pacific islands such as Guam.

System-Maintenance Reporting on Guam

The system-maintenance role of media derives from the notion that the media of less structurally pluralistic communities, such as small, homogenous communities, would emphasize consensus and avoid conflict when reporting on controversial issues. Based on this notion, the media of small, homogenous Pacific islands such as Guam may tend to provide consonant views when covering controversies. Indeed, Guam is relatively small and homogenous. Geographically, the island is 33 miles long and 12 miles wide. Although Guam has approximately 160,000 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2011), the island is ethnically homogenous, its population comprising mostly Chamorros (indigenous residents) and Filipinos. Moreover, 85% of the population is Roman Catholic (CIA, 2012). Guam's economy is also homogenous, as the island is largely sustained by two industries: the U.S. military and tourism. In recent years, Guam has experienced a sharp economic downturn due primarily to a slowdown in its tourism industry. This slackening is attributed to a decline in the number of tourists visiting the island. According to the most recent data provided by Guam's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), the island's unemployment rate stands at 13.3%. Many residents, local businessmen, and politicians on the island believe the military buildup will bring economic growth to the island (Murphy, 2008).

From a theoretical standpoint, the system-maintenance role also suggests that local media on Guam could serve to regulate conflict through feedback control, or through what Coser (1956) has referred to as a "safety valve" mechanism. That is, in the interest of maintaining the stability of the island, local media on Guam may report on views expressed by activists to "air out differences" and reduce built-up tensions among differing groups. This assumption is based on studies showing that local newspapers could provide significant coverage of the appeals of activists (Burch & Harry, 2004; Harry, 2001). Similarly, scholars have held that marginalized groups can appropriate local media to counter dominant ideologies (e.g., Gitlin, 1980). For instance, Daley and James (2004) examined the communication of indigenous groups in Alaska and found that Alaskan natives appropriated media to counter imposed Western cultural ideas and practices. A similar phenomenon may occur on the island of Guam, an unincorporated American territory with a long history of Western colonialism and an indigenous population. Guam's local residents may thus appropriate their local newspaper, the *PDN*, to counter imposed Western cultural ideas and practices.

The system-maintenance role of media presents unique explanations for the opportunities and constraints that dictate news production. Its perspective can be aligned with other prominent lines of research in the literature that also explain and apply to the Guam context. For example, one line of research suggests the media typically cover events that are important, interesting, controversial, unusual, timely, and geographically proximate (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Limited by time and resources,

journalists tend to rely on routine channels such as public officials and press conferences (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), which can dictate how news consumers understand social events. Furthermore, owners' economic and political interests can exert influence on how, and how fully, issues are reported (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Thus, news organizations may cover events and decisions that benefit or favor their organizations. In applying this line of research to the *PDN's* coverage of U.S. military issues, it should be noted that the newspaper started on Guam in 1947 as a military publication (Rogers, 1995). Its name was later changed to the *Pacific Daily News*, and it was sold to the Gannett Company (Rogers, 1995), an American corporation that owns the *PDN* today. Because of this ownership, the *PDN's* coverage of issues concerning the U.S. military buildup may reflect pro-American tendencies. Moreover, like all other businesses on Guam, the *PDN* is economically dependent on the U.S. military's presence on the island. This may influence the newspaper to publish news articles, editorials, and opinion pieces that are favorable toward the buildup.

Additionally, research on international news has shown that the media tend to report international events from the viewpoint of their host country's powerful elites (Altschull, 1984; Bennett, 1990; Gurevitch, 1989; Kim, 2000; Rachlin, 1988). In a similar vein, research also shows that countries that depend politically and economically on the United States are likely to have mainstream newspapers that frequently cover and support U.S. interests (e.g., Maslog, Lee, & Kim, 2006). As such, these newspapers may also provide a substantial amount of coverage of U.S. officials.

The United States annexed Guam in 1898, after more than 300 years of Spanish control of the island. The U.S. Department of the Navy was then given absolute authority on the island. In 1943 the Japanese invaded Guam and occupied it through World War II. On July 21, 1945, the Americans returned to recapture Guam from the Japanese. Today, Guam is not a foreign country but an unincorporated American territory that is economically dependent on the United States. The *Pacific Daily News*, and its reporters and editors, may therefore be inclined to support U.S. interests. For instance, a study analyzing *PDN* news items covering Guam's annual observance of its liberation published between 1994 and 2004 found that a majority of the items advocated adherence to pro-American ideological stances (Dalisay, 2009). Specifically, most of the news items expressed gratitude to the U.S. Marines who liberated Guam and reaffirmed Guam residents' loyalty to the United States. Less coverage was devoted to reporting on anti-American views, including portrayals of the United States as an inconsiderate colonial power. The study concluded that the *PDN* served to maintain the island's social system as an unincorporated U.S. territory.

In sum, the literature reviewed above suggests that local media report social issues in ways that serve the interests of powerful institutions of the community. While opposing groups may challenge the value of the military buildup based on the risks it may pose to Guam, the buildup is also an important opportunity for the island to revitalize its economy. Most of the island's elites support the buildup (Murphy, 2008; Tamondong, 2009), and as local media are oriented toward the power structure of their community and community growth, it is possible that the *PDN* reflects tendencies of system-maintenance reporting by primarily covering the buildup's economic benefits and providing less coverage of the risks it poses.

The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H1: The Pacific Daily News' reporting on the military buildup on Guam will carry a greater proportion of economic benefits than risks.

System-Maintenance Reporting and Public Opinion

The *PDN* has a local circulation of approximately 20,000 (*PDN* administrator, personal communication, December 22, 2008). Given this extent of circulation, if the *PDN* reflects a system-maintenance role in its coverage of the buildup, then this type of reporting is likely to influence residents' opinions. Limited prior structural studies of local newspapers have examined the impact of system-maintenance reporting on the formation of residents' opinions. From a media effects framework, the agenda-setting theory can be adopted to examine how local newspaper coverage affects local public opinion. Agenda setting explains that the frequency of coverage, placement of stories, size of headlines, and allocation of space communicate the relative salience and importance of issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Issues that are more salient in the news are eventually perceived as more important. Hence, the media outline the most important issues that people should think about (Cohen, 1963). This assumption has been supported by a number of empirical studies on a wide range of local and national issues and in international contexts (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The initial agenda-setting research was later extended with a focus on the salience of issue attributes. Going beyond the salience of objects, this so-called attribute agenda-setting, or second-level agenda-setting, looks at cognitive and affective characteristics of objects portrayed in the news. Such objects could include, for instance, a political candidate's issue stance and voting record, the major aspects of a particular issue (e.g., public safety vs. energy needs regarding the issue of nuclear energy), and feelings toward such issues (i.e., positive, negative, neutral) (Golan & Wanta, 2001; McCombs, 2004; Wu & Coleman, 2009). By covering cognitive and/or affective aspects of issue attributes, the media tell the public not only what to think about but also how to think and feel about it (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997). Second-level agenda setting has much in common with framing. Although the distinction between the two theories is not perfectly clear, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) state that agenda setting is an accessibility-based model, whereas framing is concerned with applicability. That is, agenda setting focuses on the role of the media in making certain objects and attributes more memorable, while framing focuses on connections between concepts presented in news messages (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

While agenda-setting research has established the link between the media's agenda and the public perception of issue importance, media sociologists have criticized it for neglecting structural antecedents of media reporting (e.g., Donohue et al., 1995). The fundamental assumption of the agenda-setting perspective is that the media have the autonomy to set issue agendas in society independent of organized activities in economic, political, and social realms. In contrast, the system-maintenance perspective focuses on a complex interaction between the media and the centers of power in the news production process (Donohue et al., 1995). The basic premise is that any modern social system is comprised of a plurality of social actors, including elites, established institutions, and social movement

groups. These social actors have differential access to social power and influence and compete for limited resources (Dahrendorf, 1959; Eisenstadt, 1985; Pollock, 2007). Issue agendas in media content stem from these institutionalized relationships among social actors revolving around the centers of power.

Thus, the behaviors of local media and the news production process are closely tied to local power structures. In this perspective, local media do not own the independent ability to set their own and the public's agendas (Donohue et al., 1995). Rather, local media content results from a high level of interdependence between media and powerful institutions in the social system. These powerful institutions are likely driven by community growth (Molotch, 1976). Such media orientation to centers of power has important consequences for the maintenance of the status quo at both the macro- and micro-levels. As powerful institutions strongly influence definitions of social issues and the direction of public discussion (Bennett, 1990; Lemert, 1981), media content can undermine the public's ability to gain a deep understanding of public affairs issues and make informed choices (Donohue et al., 1973). Thus, implementation of public policies could ultimately be based on minimal democracy (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1992).

In sum, the present study applies the above assumptions to explain local news coverage of the increase in U.S. military presence in the Pacific. In doing so, this study proposes that as local newspapers in the Pacific region serve system-maintenance roles, they have potential to limit the type of information available to their readers. In the case of Guam, a tendency toward system-maintenance reporting in the *PDN's* coverage of the U.S. military buildup could affect the extent to which reading the *PDN* influences individual opinions on the buildup. The following research questions are also investigated:

RQ1: To what extent does reading the PDN influence endorsement of the U.S. military buildup's economic benefits?

RQ2: To what extent does reading the PDN influence endorsement of the buildup's risks?

RQ3: To what extent does reading the PDN influence personal support for the buildup?

Methods

Content Analysis

A content analysis was conducted to test H1. Data were obtained from *Guampdn.com*, the online edition of the *PDN*. News articles, opinion columns, and editorials mentioning the word "buildup" were gathered for the six-month period from January 1, 2009, to June 30, 2009.¹ The keyword search generated 165 news pieces including 132 news articles and 33 editorials and opinion columns.

The unit of analysis was the individual news piece. Each piece was analyzed to determine whether it mentioned economic benefits and risks.²

¹ This time period was selected because it was within the 6 months in which the community survey was conducted.

² The items measuring the content categories of economic benefits and risks were chosen because they were the most salient topics emerging from focus groups of Guam residents conducted on the island

Three items measured economic benefits. Coders determined whether each news piece mentioned (a) increased job opportunities resulting from the military buildup, (b) federal funding in support of the buildup, and (c) improvements in local economy.

Similarly, three items measured risks. Coders determined whether each news piece mentioned (a) overcrowding resulting from the buildup, (b) negative impacts on the natural environment, such as pollution and noise, and (c) increased crime.

Intercoder reliability was assessed for each coding category. Twenty news pieces were randomly sampled, consistent with Wimmer and Dominick's (2005) recommendation of coding 10% to 20% of the total sample for reliability assessment. Percentage of agreement ranged from 80% to 100%. Scott's pi coefficient correcting for chance agreement between coders was as follows: .80 for increased job opportunities, .89 for federal funding, .83 for improvement in Guam's economy, 1.00 for overcrowding, .94 for natural environment, and .94 for crime rates.

Community Survey

A community survey was conducted to investigate RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3.

Sample and procedure. The final sample included a representative 319 registered voters of Guam, of whom 56% ($n = 177$) were female and 43% ($n = 137$) male; five respondents did not identify their gender. The mean age of respondents was 48 ($SD = 15.97$), with ages ranging from 25 to 88. Median income was between \$25,000 and \$50,000. The last level of education most respondents reported completing was "some college, no degree" ($n = 87, 27.4%$), while 23% ($n = 73$) of the respondents reported having a college degree. While the gender makeup and median income of the sample correspond to those of the actual population when compared with actual population statistics (see CIA, 2012), the sample was relatively more educated than the general population. The three ethnicities most represented in the sample were Chamorro or indigenous residents of Guam ($n = 169, 53.3%$) and Filipino ($n = 99, 31.2%$), which corresponds to the two predominant ethnicities residing on Guam.

A coauthor of this study traveled from the U.S. mainland to Guam in June 2009 and collected data through a self-administered mail survey of a random sample of registered voters on the island. Names and postal addresses of registered voters were obtained from the Guam Election Commission.³ Systematic random sampling was used to generate a sampling frame of 1,100 respondents. Strategies from Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) *Tailored Design Method* were adopted to implement the mail

during the summer of 2008, and from preliminary analyses of news items reporting on the buildup. Note that these items were also used to measure economic benefits and risks for the community survey.

³ According to the Guam Election Commission director, there are roughly 52,000 registered voters on Guam (personal communication, March 7, 2009).

survey.⁴ Two contacts were used, rather than the five recommended by Dillman et al. A survey mailer was first sent to respondents. The mailer included a detailed cover letter; the questionnaire; a self-addressed, stamped return envelope; and a \$1 token incentive. The cover letters were personalized and printed on institutional letterhead displaying the name and logo of the sponsoring U.S. mainland university. The survey mailer was enclosed in an envelope also displaying the sponsoring university's name and logo. Respondents were then mailed a thank-you postcard that expressed appreciation for responding and indicated that the survey should be completed and mailed back if it had not been already.

The sampling frame was reduced to 927 because 173 of the survey packets were undeliverable (i.e., the address did not exist, or the respondent no longer received mail at the address or was deceased). Total response rate was 34.4%, as calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's (2010) response rate 1. Data collection ended on July 3, 2009. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.0.

Measures. A single item was used to measure reading of the *PDN*. Respondents were asked how much attention they pay to the *PDN* to stay informed or to learn about the buildup. Responses were measured along a 7-point scale Likert scale (1 = *not very much*, 7 = *very much*, $M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.66$).

Three items were developed to measure endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits: "The buildup will create lots of jobs for Guam," "The buildup will improve Guam's economy," and "The buildup will bring in much-needed federal funds to Guam." Three items were also developed to measure endorsement of the buildup's risks: "The buildup will make Guam overcrowded," "The buildup will harm Guam's environment," and "The buildup will increase Guam's crime rate." These items are congruent with those used to respectively measure "economic benefits" and "risks" in our content analysis. Responses to all six items were measured along a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Responses to the items intended to measure endorsement of risks were reverse-coded so that a higher score indicated lesser agreement with the statements. The six items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis within a confirmatory factor analytical framework using Mplus Version 5 (Brown, 2006). Maximum likelihood estimation and quartimin rotation were used to obtain a final solution. Results of this EFA within a CFA framework showed that the two-factor model fit the data best ($\chi^2 = 6.17$, $df = 4$, $p > .10$; CFI = .99; SRMR = .01; RMSEA = .04). As Table 1 shows, the three items that were intended to measure endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits loaded along one factor ($\alpha = .86$), and the three items intended to measure endorsement of the buildup's risks loaded along the other factor ($\alpha = .77$). A *t*-test showed that respondents were more likely to endorse the buildup's economic benefits ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.44$) than the buildup's risks ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.55$), $t(314) = 69.42$, $p < .001$.

⁴ The authors thank Dr. Don A. Dillman for the assistance he provided on how to best implement a mail survey on Guam. Dillman is familiar with the cultural dynamics on Guam and has been to the island to serve as a research consultant.

Support for the buildup was measured by asking respondents about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I support the military buildup" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, $M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.96$).⁵

Control variables included demographics, interest, perceived knowledge, and other communication sources that respondents used to obtain information about the buildup (including TV and radio newscasts, family, and friends).⁶

For descriptive purposes, perceived support from local officials, the *PDN*, local TV and radio newscasts, family, and friends were also measured. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements along a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*): "local officials support the military buildup" ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.39$), "the *PDN* supports the military buildup" ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.83$), "local TV and radio newscasts support the buildup" ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.48$), "my family supports the buildup" ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.46$), and "my friends support the buildup" ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.57$).

Results

Content Analysis

Descriptive results showed that the *PDN* focused more on economic benefits than potential risks. Specifically, the *PDN* covered increased job opportunities (21%, $n = 35$), federal funding (11%, $n = 19$), and improvements in the economy (17%, $n = 29$) more frequently than overcrowding (4%, $n = 6$), negative impacts on the natural environment (2%, $n = 3$), and increased crime (2%, $n = 3$).

⁵ We chose to measure the "risk" options along with the "economic benefits" options this way for two reasons. First, from a practical standpoint, focus groups of Guam residents were conducted on the island in the summers of 2006 and 2008. When the residents were probed about their general stances toward the buildup, the most salient topics discussed by focus group respondents centered on the buildup's economic benefits and risks. Second, the use of both "risks" and "economic benefits" aligns with previous literature suggesting that economic benefits and risks are often the most salient issues concerning the residents of places being occupied by the U.S. military (see Akibayashi & Takazato, 2008; Gerson, 2008; Simbulan, 2008).

⁶ Respondents were asked to report their age, gender (1 = female, 2 = male), household income, and ethnicity (1 = Chamorro, or native resident of Guam; 0 = non-Chamorro, or non-native resident of Guam). Interest was measured with the item, "How interested would you say you are regarding issues on the buildup?" (1 = *not interested*, 7 = *very interested*, $M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.70$). Perceived knowledge was measured with the item, "How knowledgeable would you say you are regarding issues on the buildup?" (1 = *not knowledgeable*, 7 = *very knowledgeable*, $M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.47$). Respondents were also asked about other information sources—including TV and radio newscasts, family, and friends—they paid attention to in order to learn or stay informed about the buildup (1 = *not very much*, 7 = *very much*).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Factor Structure and Fit Indices from an Exploratory Factor Analysis within a Confirmatory Factor Analytical Framework for the Items Measuring Endorsement of the Buildup's Economic Benefits and Potential Risks.

| Item | Mean (SD) | Factor 1: Economic Benefits | Factor 2: Potential Risks |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The buildup will create lots of jobs for Guam. | 5.59 (1.71) | .84 | .25 |
| The buildup will improve Guam's economy. | 5.62 (1.59) | .81 | .29 |
| The buildup will bring in much-needed federal funds to Guam. | 5.73 (1.52) | .79 | .34 |
| The buildup will make Guam overcrowded. | 3.00 (1.86) | .23 | .64 |
| The buildup will harm Guam's environment. | 3.62 (1.90) | .26 | .73 |
| The buildup will increase Guam's crime rate. | 3.45 (1.85) | .28 | .78 |
| Fit indices for two-factor model: $\chi^2 = 6.17, df = 4, p > .10$; CFI = .99; SRMR = .01; RMSEA = .04 | | $\alpha = .86$ | $\alpha = .77$ |

H1 proposed that the *PDN's* coverage of the military buildup on Guam would carry a greater proportion of economic benefits than risks. To test this hypothesis, two variables were first created by combining the three items measuring economic benefits and the three items measuring potential risks. These variables were then recoded dichotomously to determine the presence of economic benefits and potential risks in each news piece. Based on the distribution of these variables, a new variable was created with four classification categories: (a) economic benefits, (b) potential risks, (c) both, and (d) neither. A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was performed to examine whether economic benefits and risks were covered equally. A significant relationship was observed between topics of coverage, $\chi^2 (3, N = 165) = 136.36, p < .001$. The proportion of reports of economic benefits (36.97%, $n = 61$) was greater than that of potential risks (3.64%, $n = 6$) (see Table 2). These results provide support for H1 and suggest that the *PDN* tends toward system-maintenance reporting by primarily focusing on the economic benefits of the military buildup while providing less coverage of the potential risks it poses. Focusing only on news articles, there was a significant relationship between topics of coverage, $\chi^2 (3, N = 132) = 110.68, p < .001$. The proportion of reports of economic benefits (37.88%, $n = 50$) was greater than that of potential risks (3.03%, $n = 4$) (see Table 2), confirming the results reported above.

Table 2. Proportion of News Stories by Type.

| Total | Economic benefits | Potential risks | Both | Neither |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-------|---------|
| | 36.97% | 3.64% | 3.03% | 56.36% |
| <i>Note.</i> $\chi^2 (3, N = 165) = 136.36, p < .001$. | | | | |
| News articles only | Economic benefits | Potential risks | Both | Neither |
| | 37.88% | 3.03% | 3.03% | 56.06% |

Note. $\chi^2 (3, N = 132) = 110.68, p < .001$.

Of all the items analyzed, 3.0% ($n = 5$) included both topics. The proportion of items discussing neither economic benefits nor risks was the largest (56.4%, $n = 93$). In terms of breakdown by content type, few proportional differences were observed between news articles and editorial content, with 37.9% of news articles ($n = 50$) and 33.3% of editorial content ($n = 11$) discussing economic benefits, 3.0% of news articles ($n = 4$) and 6.1% ($n = 2$) of editorial content for potential risks, 3.0% of news articles ($n = 4$) and 3.0% ($n = 1$) discussing both economic benefits and potential risks, and 56.1% of news articles ($n = 74$) and 57.6% ($n = 19$) discussing neither economic benefits nor potential risks.

A nonsystematic analysis of the six news items reporting on potential risks was also conducted to examine the issues they covered. One of the news items covered a community meeting at which residents expressed concerns about a planned firing range and the expected increase in traffic and crime. The news item also reported that residents expressed doubt as to whether the buildup would actually create high-paying jobs. Another news item covered the visit of an Okinawan anthropologist and community organizer, who was quoted as saying the buildup would be a "burden" for the people of Guam. Another news item covered the visit of an anthropologist from the U.S. mainland, who also expressed doubt that the buildup would lead to economic benefits. The three other news items were opinion pieces written by local residents. One expressed decolonization efforts, stating that "in order for us to change our fate, we must fight for our right to govern ourselves" (Leon Guerrero, 2009). Another stated that Guam's indigenous people had been ignored. These two opinion pieces suggest that local residents relied on the *PDN* as a vehicle to counter dominant ideologies.

A nonsystematic analysis of the news items reporting on neither economic benefits nor potential risks revealed that most of these items centered on elite actors, with headlines such as "Guthertz [a local senator] names buildup committee members," "Bordallo [Guam's representative in the U.S. Congress] will promote readiness, quality of life," "Camacho [Guam's then governor] meets Obama officials," "Camacho seeks legal advice on Guam First Commission," "Senator to attend business conference," "Senators want more info on buildup plans," "Congress committee to visit Guam next week," "Respicio [a local senator]: Camacho must convene Commission," "Judge tours dump to see progress," "Bice [a U.S. mainland official]: Contractors pay GRT," and "14 senators vote against hiking H-2 fee." These results are reflective of the system-maintenance role of local media, which explains that local media provide substantial coverage of the local power structure.

Community Survey

Research question 1. RQ1 asked to what extent reading the *PDN* influenced endorsement of the U.S. military buildup's economic benefits. After controlling for demographics, interest, knowledge, and the influences of other communication sources, the regression results in Table 3 show that reading the *PDN* was positively associated with endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits ($\beta = .25, p < .01$).

Research question 2. RQ2 asked to what extent reading the *PDN* influenced endorsement of the buildup's potential risks. As Table 3 shows, reading the *PDN* was not significantly associated with endorsement of the buildup's risks ($\beta = .05, p = ns$).

Research question 3. RQ3 asked to what extent reading the *PDN* influenced personal support for the buildup. The regression results in Table 3 show that reading the *PDN* was positively associated with personal support for the buildup ($\beta = .18, p < .05$), independent of all other variables in the model. Building on this finding, additional exploratory analyses were conducted to test a mediating model, with endorsement of economic benefits specified as a mediator of personal support for the buildup (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Results showed that endorsement of economic benefits had a large positive effect on personal support ($\beta = .61, p < .001$), and it almost completely mediated the prior effect of *PDN* reading on personal support, with the magnitude of the effect of *PDN* reading reduced substantively (from $\beta = .18$ to $\beta = .02$). These results suggest that the effect that reading the *PDN* has on personal support comes largely from endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits.

Table 3. Predictors of Endorsement of Economic Benefits, Endorsement of Potential Risks, and Personal Support for the Buildup.

| | <i>Economic Benefits</i> | <i>Risks</i> | <i>Support</i> |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | β | β | β |
| Age | .11# | .13# | .17** |
| Gender (1 = Female, 2 = Male) | -.02 | .04 | -.03 |
| Income | .01 | .01 | .08 |
| Education | .08 | -.01 | .03 |
| Ethnicity (1 = non-Chamorro, 2 = Chamorro) | .03 | .02 | .01 |
| Interest | .21** | .01 | .12 |
| Perceived knowledge | -.11 | -.01 | -.04 |
| Family | -.09 | -.20 | -.16 |
| Friends | .11 | .21# | .19# |
| TV and radio newscasts | -.08 | -.04 | -.04 |
| The Internet | .03 | .13# | .14* |
| The <i>Pacific Daily News</i> | .25** | .05 | .18* |
| | $R^2 = .12***,$ | $R^2 = .05,$ | $R^2 = .14***,$ |
| | Adjusted $R^2 =$ | Adjusted $R^2 =$ | Adjusted $R^2 =$ |
| | .08*** | .01 | .10*** |

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, # $p < .10$.

Discussion

This case study examined how Guam's local newspaper, the *Pacific Daily News (PDN)*, covers a U.S. military buildup, and how such coverage impacts the formation of Guam residents' opinions. One goal of this study was to contribute to a theoretically based understanding of how local newspapers in that region may rally support for the increased presence of the U.S. military in their homelands, and how such coverage influences local residents' opinions.

The content analysis showed that the *PDN* reported primarily on the buildup's economic benefits and devoted less coverage to its potential risks. These findings should be interpreted in light of the social context on Guam and the system-maintenance role of local media. Guam has recently experienced an economic downturn due to limited economic diversification on the island and a sluggish local tourism industry. Local leaders expect the military buildup to stimulate the island's economy and a poll found that a majority of Guam's residents supported the buildup (Tamondong, 2009). Like other social institutions on Guam, the *PDN* is oriented toward community growth, which could explain why its coverage of the buildup carried a greater proportion of economic benefits than risks. Our nonsystematic analysis of risk items revealed that its coverage of the buildup included opposing voices, which could be viewed as the *PDN* performing the system-maintenance role by airing grievances to keep tensions from reaching an unmanageable level (Coser, 1956; Hindman, 1996; Tichenor et al., 1980). These results support previous studies' findings that newspapers of communities with sluggish, less diversified local economies tend to support new industries that promise economic growth (Taylor et al., 2000) but are less likely to alert readers to the risks these industries present (Dunwoody & Griffin, 1999). The present study extends these findings to an international context, showing that propositions of the system-maintenance role of local media can explain a newspaper's endorsement of an increase in U.S. military presence. Among other things, these findings imply that one way for local newspapers in the Pacific to rally support for an increased U.S. military presence is to highlight the economic benefits of that presence while downplaying its potential risks.

The community survey showed that reading the *PDN* had a positive influence on endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits, the influences of all other variables being taken into account, whereas its effect on endorsement of the buildup's potential risks was not significant. The *PDN*'s coverage of the buildup could explain these findings. As noted above, the *PDN* primarily focused on the beneficial economic aspects of the buildup and reported less on its risks. This may have limited *PDN* readers' capacity to acquire a diverse range of information about the buildup. Thus, they may have become more aware of the buildup's economic benefits, such as increased employment opportunities and positive impacts on local businesses, while perceiving the potentially disruptive consequences of the buildup for the island as less important. Along similar lines, research by Riffe and Reader (2007) shows that for local economic news, individuals rely more on local newspapers than other media sources. We can speculate that the link between reading the *PDN* and endorsement of the buildup's economic benefits could also be explained by a greater reliance on the *PDN* as a source for local economic news. This potentially greater reliance on the *PDN* might also explain why the other communication sources did not influence endorsement of the military buildup.

The community survey also showed that reading the *PDN* had a positive influence on personal support for the buildup. The results of further exploratory analyses revealed that endorsement of buildup's economic benefits mediated the prior effect that reading the *PDN* had on personal support. Based on these results, we can surmise that the influence of *PDN* reading on support for the buildup is attributable to the belief that the buildup will improve Guam's economy. From the perspective of the system-maintenance role of local media, these results suggest that the *PDN* functioned to protect Guam's social system by generating public support for the military buildup via emphasis of the buildup's economic benefits.

While these results are theoretically suggestive, it is also possible that one's news issue inclinations led to reading of the *PDN* rather than *PDN* reading leading to issue inclinations. One could particularly argue that given Guam's sluggish economy, the island's residents were interested in the island's economy and inclined anyway to search for news reports on the buildup's economic benefits and pay attention to coverage that rallied support for the buildup. Hence, it is likely that *PDN* readers tended to think about implications of the buildup in similar terms, regardless of whether they read *PDN* stories about the buildup. As noted below, longitudinal data are desirable in addressing this possibility.

These arguments, however, do not necessarily undermine the macrosocial theoretical assumptions that guided this study. This study was based on the premise that structural forces condition mass communication processes within a social system. The arguments that a sluggish economy inclines residents to pay attention to reportage on the local economy and focus on news that endorses a new industry therefore support the basic premise of this study. Taken together, the findings for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 suggest that system-maintenance coverage of a U.S. military buildup plays a role in influencing the formation of local public opinion concerning the issue.

A few limitations of this case study should be addressed. First, because this case study did not directly measure the community power structure, it does not constitute a definitive test of our theoretical inference grounded in the system-maintenance role of local media. Admittedly, identifying the community power structure (e.g., local influentials) using a reputational method (Hunter, 1953) is difficult, as is directly examining its influence on news reports. Thus, future research might want to consider using alternative measures that would account for the influence of powerful elites and institutions (e.g., politicians, businesses) on news reports, such as sourcing pattern and the placement of source quotations. Second, the findings reported in this case study come from a snapshot of a brief period of time. This demands that longitudinal studies be conducted to examine potential differences across time in coverage and public opinion concerning the buildup issue. Third, this case study focused on coverage and opinions on just two issues involving the buildup: economic benefits, and risks. Because assumptions derived from the system-maintenance role have also been applied to explain differing coverage of other issues, notably social protests (McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod & Hertog, 1999), future research could also examine whether the *PDN* reflects a tendency toward system maintenance in its coverage of other issues, and whether such coverage could impact residents' opinions. Indeed, in the system-maintenance perspective, a local newspaper may also report on views expressed by activists to "air out differences," thereby reducing built-up tensions among differing groups and maintaining the stability of its social system. As noted above, studies have also shown that local newspapers can provide significant coverage of the appeals of activists (Burch & Harry, 2004; Harry, 2001). Therefore, newspapers in communities whose residents predominantly hold anti-American military sentiments may provide more coverage of the risks posed by an increase in military presence, while being less likely to cover the economic benefits. Further research is warranted to investigate this potential in overseas places that may not be supportive of the U.S. military.

Despite these limitations, this case study provides some unique contributions. First, like recent studies adopting a structural framework (e.g., Hindman, 2009), this case study contributes to the current literature by going beyond a traditional individual-level analysis of media effects and integrating the

influence of structural forces on news reporting and subsequent effects. It is thus hoped that media effects researchers will continue to acknowledge the impact of structure on news reporting and the formation of individual opinions. In this vein, more sophisticated theoretical models could be adopted to link the macro-level propositions of the system-maintenance role of local newspapers to other micro- or individual-level processes.

Second, this case study implies that local newspapers of the Pacific Islands tend to be oriented toward the needs and interests of the surrounding local power structure, and that their reporting affects the way residents perceive social issues, so that local public opinion is shaped by the interests of the local power structure that has the capability to define issues and influence the media's agenda. Future research could investigate whether such phenomena are reflected in the behaviors of local media in overseas places where the U.S. military is present (e.g., Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa, etc.). In so doing, these studies could investigate whether potential variants in coverage may explain variations in the formation of residents' opinions.

Conclusion

The United States has recently announced a shift in its global military strategy that involves an increase in its military's presence in the Pacific region. The proposed increases in military deployment and new investment resulting from the decision would have important implications for the region, including both opportunities to boost economies and potential risks to the living environment. As our case study has demonstrated, mass media, particularly local newspapers in that region, can play an important role in informing local residents of the goals, plans, and potential consequences of increased military presence for the islands. As such, it is paramount that local media provide balanced coverage of the economic benefits and potential risks posed by the increased military presence so that residents can make informed decisions accordingly. It is also recommended that journalism educators in high schools, colleges, and universities instill in their students awareness of local power structures' influence in shaping news and affecting opinions.

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