

Global Communication and Foreign Policy

By Eytan Gilboa

This study investigated the effects global communication is having on the formulation and conduct of foreign policy and showed that it both constrains leaders and officials yet provides them with opportunities to advance their goals. The article presents a taxonomy where global communication is viewed as an actor in the policy process with corresponding attributes of type, activity, context, and concept. Four types of actors are identified: controlling, constraining, intervening, and instrumental. The article critically and respectively examines concepts developed to explain each type: the "CNN Effect theory," "real-time policy," "international political brokerage," and "media diplomacy." Although some of these concepts were found to be useful, major progress in this field requires interdisciplinary research based on joint application of theories and models from both communication and international relations.

The communication and information revolutions of the 20th century have fundamentally and irreversibly changed the meaning of power in international relations, the making of policy in defense and foreign affairs, and the conduct of diplomacy. Nye and Owens (1996) explained that "soft power," defined as "the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion" (p. 21), is increasingly supplementing military and economic power. Attraction requires effective use of global communication to persuade public opinion around the world to support one's causes. Commenting recently on diplomacy, Eban (1998) has written that "nothing has done more to revolutionize the diplomatic craft than the current vogue of persistent media attention . . . [and] there is no way of putting the clock back to an era in which negotiations were sheltered from domestic constituencies" (p. 75).

These dramatic changes primarily resulted from inventions in communication technologies that enable global news channels such as CNN International, BBC World, and Sky to broadcast, often live, almost every significant development in world events, to almost every place on the globe.

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The conduct of foreign policy goes through two respective interrelated stages. The first is policy making, where policy options, positions, and tactics are considered and decided within the domestic environments of the parties concerned. The second phase, interaction and diplomacy, entails implementing policies toward other actors, presenting positions and demands decided in the earlier stage, and seeking solutions through confrontation, negotiation, or a combination of both. The global news media have affected both the policy-making and the interactive phases of foreign policy.

Scholars have conducted considerable research on communication aspects of only a few international and global phenomena. These include uses of force, such as war, terrorism, and military intervention, and coverage of foreign affairs in the various media. Researchers, however, have not sufficiently studied the media's roles and effects on the conduct of foreign policy and diplomacy, and they have given even less attention to the emerging significant roles and effects of global communication. Scholars studying foreign policy making often ignore the roles and effects of the media and public opinion, and their colleagues in communication often ignore foreign policy in studies of roles and effects. The literature on media and foreign policy is both diverse and dispersed, whereas the scope and depth of studies focusing on the global media and foreign policy are even more limited.¹ One recent theory known as the CNN Effect or Factor claims that in international crisis situations global television has become the dominating actor in the conduct of foreign policy, replacing elected and appointed policy makers. This study raises questions about the validity of this theory, but at the same time exposes other influences of global communication on both the domestic and external environments of policy making and international negotiation.

Although there is wide consensus that the global media, particularly global television, have transformed foreign policy, the question remains whether the media are functioning today primarily as independent controlling actors, as suggested by the CNN Effect theory, or are more a sophisticated tool in the hands of government officials. This study shows that global communication plays multiple roles as it both constrains foreign policy officials and diplomats, while providing them with opportunities to advance their goals. The constraints and the opportunities appear at both the policy-making and the interactive phases of foreign policy, and they combine to facilitate significant changes in the behavior of political leaders and in the roles of officials, ambassadors, intelligence officers, and journalists.

The article critically examines various theories and analytical concepts developed to explain the effects global communication is having on the making of foreign policy. As can be seen in Table 1, it may be useful to classify concepts by type of actor and corresponding attributes of activity and context. This approach yields four types of actors: controlling, constraining, intervening, and instrumental. The controlling actor theory, the CNN Effect, that emerged in connection with humanitarian military intervention, claims that global television has taken over the

¹ See Bennett (1994); Bennett and Paletz, (1994); Gilboa (2000a, 2000b); Larson (1988); Mowlana (1996); Nacos, Shapiro, and Isernia (2000); Neuman (1996); Newsom (1996); O'Heffernan (1991, 1993); Seaver (1998); Serfaty (1991).

Table 1. Taxonomy of Actors and Concepts

Type of actor	Activity	Context	Concept
Controlling actor	Replacing policy makers	Humanitarian military intervention	CNN effect
Constraining actor	Constraining policy makers	Decision making	Real-time policy
Intervening actor	Becoming mediators	International mediation	International political brokerage
Instrumental actor	Promoting negotiations & agreements	Conflict resolution	Media diplomacy

policy-making process. The constraining actor role considers global communication as one influential factor among a few that affect foreign policy making. The context consists of decision making and the relevant concept is “real-time policy.” The intervening actor role is performed by prominent journalists who temporarily assume mediation roles in international conflicts. Here, the context is international mediation and the concept is “international political brokerage.” In the instrumental role, leaders employ global communication to advance negotiations and to mobilize public support for agreements. The context consists of conflict resolution and the concept is “media diplomacy.”

Controlling Actor: The CNN Effect Theory

The CNN Effect theory, suggesting that global television has become a direct and perhaps even dominant actor in the formulation of policies in defense and foreign affairs, results from reflections made by policy makers on the roles played by global communication, particularly CNN, in major international conflicts of the post-Cold War era. These include coverage of the Chinese government crackdown on students’ protest in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in June 1989, the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis following Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait, the Russian coup attempt of August 1991, and the civil wars in Northern Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

The testimony of principal policy makers on the factors that had the greatest impact on their decisions has been frequently cited by scholars and commentators to establish the validity of the CNN Effect theory. Several major policy makers indeed spoke and wrote about the effects of global television on foreign policy in general and on humanitarian intervention decisions in particular. Former Secretary of State James Baker III (1995) wrote that “the terrible tragedy of Tiananmen was a classic illustration of a powerful new phenomenon: the ability of the global communications revolution to drive policy” (p. 103). He added that since then “in

Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Chechnya, among others, the real-time coverage of conflict by the electronic media has served to create a powerful new imperative for prompt action that was not present in less frenetic time." Another former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, told the Senate: "Television's ability to bring graphic images of pain and outrage into our living rooms has heightened the pressure both for immediate engagement in areas of international crises and immediate disengagement when events don't go according to plan" (Neuman, 1996, pp. 14–15).

Although both Baker and Albright talked about "pressure" for action created by global communications, lower level foreign policy and military officials made more precise and forceful statements. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck (1996) wrote, "The media got us into Somalia and then got us out" (p. 174). These perceptions were held not only by Americans. Former U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has complained, "CNN is the sixteenth member of the Security Council" (Minear, Scott, & Weiss, 1996, p. 4) and former British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd blamed foreign correspondents covering the Bosnian crisis for advocating military intervention by being the founding members of the "something must be done" school (Hindell, 1995, p. 73). The statements by senior officials imply loss of policy control to global television, as if leaders no longer make decisions on the basis of interests but rather are driven by emotional public opinion aroused by television coverage.

Scholarly studies on the CNN Effect present mixed, contradictory, and confusing results. Shaw (1996) and Cohen (1994, pp. 9–10) concluded that global television coverage forced upon U.S. policy makers the 1991 intervention in Northern Iraq to save the Kurds and the 1992 intervention in Somalia, respectively. In other studies it is not sufficiently clear whether global television controlled decisions and forced interventions on policy makers or merely exerted influence on them. Gowing (1994), for example, agrees CNN coverage has drawn attention to crises and may have evoked emotional public reactions, but, based on interviews with policy makers in several countries, he concluded that they resisted pressure to act solely in response to television news reports. He noted that in 1991–1992, the United States and other Western governments refrained from intervention in the Bosnian crisis despite substantial news coverage of atrocities. Gowing sees the CNN Effect as a necessary but insufficient condition for intervention. Strobel (1997) also used interviews and reached similar conclusions.

Using careful content analysis and interviews with decision makers in Washington and Africa, Livingston and Eachus (1995) concluded that the U.S. decision to intervene militarily in Somalia for humanitarian reasons "was the result of diplomatic and bureaucratic operations, with news coverage coming in response to those decisions" (p. 413). Jakobsen (1996, p. 212) has explored the influence of several factors on the initiation of peace enforcement operations in five crises and found CNN coverage to have been an important factor because it placed the crises on the agenda; but still the decision to intervene "was ultimately determined by the perceived chances of success." In a more recent study (2000, p. 138) he further argued that the CNN Effect is relevant only in a small minority of cases where governments are reluctant to intervene, and even then "interventions are unlikely

to follow unless they can be conducted quickly with a low risk of casualties. Because this is rarely the case, media pressure on reluctant governments is most likely to result in minimalist policies aimed at defusing pressure for interventions on the ground.” Robinson (2000) found a similar result in his study of the 1995 and 1999 Western interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The CNN Effect theory represents an interesting case study in terminology and theory development. It was initially suggested and articulated by politicians and officials haunted by the Vietnam media myth, the confusion of the post-Cold War era, and the communication revolution. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary (Hallin, 1986), many government leaders still believe that negative television coverage caused the American defeat in Vietnam. Since then, many have viewed the media as enemies to government policies in many areas, including humanitarian intervention and international negotiation. This background helps to explain why global television has been perceived as having a power to determine foreign policy, primarily in severe crisis situations.

Various studies’ findings essentially cast doubts about the popular notion of officials losing policy control to the media. If a government wants to intervene, it may need global coverage of atrocities to justify its policy, but usually coverage alone is insufficient to impose intervention on policy makers. This argument exposes methodological inconsistencies. In some cases governments wish to pursue intervention and therefore not only do not object to media coverage of atrocities but actually initiate or encourage it, as compared to such cases when governments are reluctant to intervene and consequently resist media pressure to do so. Furthermore, as Robinson (1999) shows, the CNN Effect theory contradicts the “manufacturing consent theory,” which argues that the media reflect and in general support the official policy of the establishment.

The CNN Effect theory has been defined very broadly, but to test it, this theory had to be operationalized in a very narrow way. When this is done, as has been demonstrated in several studies, it becomes easier to disprove many of its claims and implications. This finding doesn’t necessarily mean that the controlling actor concept is always invalid. A narrower definition and research that combines communication theories with theories of international crises may yield more convincing results. Livingston (1997) has examined what he called “variations of CNN Effects” essentially by applying agenda setting to a typology of military interventions developed by Haass (1994). Robinson (1999) proposes to resolve the contradiction between the CNN Effect theory and the manufacturing consent theory by examining and applying to case studies two critical variables: policy certainty and framing. If uncertain policy and pro-intervention framing are found to be associated with intervention decisions, and the opposite with nonintervention, then “theoretical support will be found for the claim that the media causes intervention” (p. 308). Finally, Jakobsen (2000) believes that the entire focus on the CNN Effect misses the point because it ignores the more significant effects global television is having on two other important conflict phases: previolence and postviolence. He thinks research should be focused on these effects. All these are serious steps in the right direction.

Constraining Actor: Real-Time Policy

Although there isn't yet sufficient evidence to support the claim that global communication is becoming the controlling actor in the formulation of policy toward international conflicts, it certainly affects many important dimensions of foreign policy and diplomacy. As such, it may be, rather, functioning as a "constraining actor." "Constraining" means that, whereas global news coverage may disrupt the routine policy-making process, primarily the work of the professional bureaucracy, and whereas leaders may have to reorder priorities, they don't feel forced to follow a particular policy called for by the media or implied by coverage. Global communication constrains the policy process primarily through the high speed of broadcasting and transmitting information (Gerbner, 1993). As noted by Van Dinh (1987, p. 32), the speed of diplomatic messages has in the 20th century gone from weeks to minutes.

In traditional diplomacy, ambassadors and state representatives had a monopoly over several important areas of diplomacy: representing their countries, communicating their government's positions, negotiating and concluding agreements, gathering information about the countries to which they were posted, and recommending actions to policy makers back home. The communication and information revolutions have substantially eroded the ambassadors' central position in all four areas. The 1992 U.S. presidential candidate Ross Perot made the following observation:

Embassies are relics of the days of sailing ships. At one time, when you had no world communication, your ambassador spoke for you in that country. But now, with instantaneous communication around the world, the ambassador is primarily in a social role. (Neuman, 1996, pp. 270-271)

Indeed, heads of state and ministers talk and negotiate directly, in secrecy or in public, with their counterparts. Their negotiations are conducted primarily through official and unofficial meetings and visits, but also via mass and interpersonal communication.

Leaders have always used the press, particularly the "elite newspapers," to obtain information and insights on other countries and world affairs, but global television has become a much more dramatic and powerful source. The faster pace of diplomatic exchanges conducted on global television alters standard decision-making processes, particularly in acute crisis situations. Valuable information, observations, and suggestions from overseas diplomatic and intelligence sources may no longer arrive in time to have the desired influence on decisions, and, when information does arrive in time, it can hardly compete with dramatic televised images and ongoing reportage of crises and foreign policy issues.

In many recent crises global television coverage has replaced ambassadors and experts as the authoritative sources of critical information and evaluation on what is happening in the world. An American official acknowledged that "diplomatic communications just can't keep up with CNN" (Hoffman, 1991). The first U.S. President Bush's press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, said that in many international

crises “we virtually cut out the State Department and the desk officers. . . . Their reports are still important, but they often don’t get here in time for the basic decisions to be made” (McNulty, 1993, p. 71). Bush himself admitted during the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis: “I learn more from CNN than I do from the CIA” (Friedland, 1992, pp. 7–8).

Sometimes conventional diplomatic messages, regardless of their depth and sophistication, don’t have the same effect on policy makers as do televised images from the field. Hurd acknowledged that “when it comes to a distant but important conflict, even all the Foreign Office cables do not have the same impact as a couple of minutes of news video” (Hopkinson, 1993, p. 11). Fitzwater recalled that during the violence in Tiananmen Square, they were getting reports and cables from the American Embassy in Beijing, “but they did not have the sting, the demand for a government response that the television pictures had” (Hoge, 1994, p. 140). Similarly, during the 1991 Russian coup attempt, Boris Yeltsin’s phone messages to Washington did not impress Bush until the actual arrival of television broadcasts from Moscow showing Yeltsin’s visible and viable resistance. Only then did the U.S. administration become convinced the resistance was serious and proceeded to take actions to support Gorbachev (Donovan & Scherer, 1992, p. 317; Friedland, 1992, pp. 42–45).

In addition, policy makers now bypass established diplomatic channels, using the new technologies of global communication to transmit nonsecret messages directly to leaders of state and nonstate actors as well as to their respective publics. For example, during the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis, Saddam Hussein challenged the U.S.-led coalition through CNN by proposing a peace plan that was then perceived in Washington as a false proposal. Bush wanted to inform all 26 members of the international coalition confronting Iraq of the White House’s position. According to Fitzwater, the quickest and most effective way for transmitting this evaluation was CNN, because “all countries in the world had it and were watching it on a real-time basis” (Wriston, 1997, p. 174). During the same crisis, James Baker delivered the last ultimatum to Saddam Hussein through CNN, and not through the U.S. ambassador to Iraq (Neuman, 1996, p. 2). This growing practice has further eroded the status and main functions of professional diplomats.

The faster speed of diplomatic exchanges on global television presents major dilemmas to all the main participating actors in the foreign policy process: political leaders, experts, diplomats, and journalists. Beschloss (1993) argued that this speed may force hurried responses based on intuition rather than on careful, extensive policy deliberation, and this may lead to dangerous policy mistakes. He asked whether, under the pressure of global television, U.S. President Kennedy would have the time to carefully consider options to resolve the highly volatile Cuban missile crisis. This argument points to a difficult dilemma political leaders often face: If they respond immediately without taking the time to carefully consider policy options, they may make a mistake. If, however, they insist they need more time to think, or have no comment for the time being, they create the impression, both at home and abroad of confusion or of losing control over events. Leaders often tend to resolve this dilemma by providing some response rather than asking for additional time to deliberate a decision.

The foreign affairs bureaucracy is facing another dilemma: how to compete effectively with real-time information provided on the screen without compromising professional standards of analysis and recommendations. If foreign policy experts, intelligence officers, and diplomats make a fast analysis based on incomplete information and severe time pressure, they might make bad policy recommendations. Conversely, if they take the necessary time to carefully verify and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources, and produce in-depth reliable reports and recommendations, these may be totally irrelevant if policy makers have to make immediate decisions in response to challenges and pressure emanating from coverage on global television.

The influence of the global news media places heavy responsibility on journalists. Reporters are expected not only to report what they see and hear but also to understand and explain events to audiences around the world. Due to technological advances, it is possible today to carry in a few suitcases all the equipment needed to broadcast, and it takes only minutes to prepare for live reporting. Yet, fast reporting may be incomplete at best and very inaccurate at worst. The global all-news television networks apply pressure on their correspondents to file reports as soon they arrive in a relevant location. Often, reporters may be able to transmit pictures, but may not know the context and meaning of events and don't have the time to absorb, reflect, and explain what they see. Consequently, reports may be incomplete, distorted, and even misleading, and leaders who watch them, believing they are complete and accurate and using them as their principal source of information, may adopt wrong policies.

In addition to further investigation of the dilemmas leaders, experts, diplomats, and journalists face, it might be very useful to study the constraining role of global communication by a combination of communication theories and theories of decision making and policy making in defense and foreign affairs. This combination may be achieved either through the insertion of global communication as a major variable into models of foreign policy making or through application of communication theories to specific foreign policy decisions and events, as was done by Bennett and Paletz (1994) in their edited volume on U.S. policy in the 1990–1991 Gulf conflict.

Intervening Actor: International Political Brokerage

The communication revolution has inspired prominent journalists to assume, directly and indirectly, mediation roles in complicated international conflicts. This intervening role typically occurs when there is no contact between enemies and no third party to help them resolve their differences. Journalists often perform mediation roles within a journalistic context, in interviews, for example. This situation raises a question: How do we know when a journalist crosses the line of reporting and becomes a diplomat engaged in mediation? Geyer (1984, pp. 71–73) and Newsom (1988, p. 59) suggest that reporters who interview leaders unavailable to diplomats due to official policy or other constraints—such as Cuba's Fidel Castro or Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat before the Oslo breakthrough in his relations with Israel—are conducting diplomacy. The two authors, however, do not provide any criteria to

determine whether such interviews indeed constitute diplomatic moves or mediation. In many cases these are no more than just legitimate interviews with attractive leaders. Therefore, I suggest that journalists perform mediation only when they debate with leaders of the other side, represent the positions of their government, or suggest proposals to rivals to end a conflict or a crisis.

Gurevitch (1991, pp. 187–188) noted the new role of journalists as “international political brokers.” He cited the examples of Walter Cronkite from CBS News, who helped to arrange Sadat’s historic visit to Jerusalem, and American television news anchors who rushed to interview Saddam Hussein in Baghdad during the 1990–1991 Gulf conflict. These examples, argues Gurevitch, suggest that globalized television “may launch reportorial initiatives that tend to blur the distinction between the roles of reporters and diplomats.” He cited a *Washington Post* columnist who wrote that news anchors interviewing the Iraqi president slid, almost imperceptibly, into the roles of advocates, as if representing their own government, and negotiators, exploring with their interviewee avenues for resolving the crisis.²

Cronkite’s role in the initial critical stage of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process is probably the classic case of international mediation performed by prominent journalists. Cronkite (1996) acknowledged his diplomatic role and distinguished between unintended planning and results:

A problem with the anchor’s exalted position is the tendency for her or him to slide from observer to player. Sometimes this is the unintended result of a purely journalistic exercise, such as our Sadat-Begin interviews . . . the important point is that television journalism, in this case at least, speeded up the process, brought it into the open, removed a lot of possibly obstructionist middlemen, and made it difficult for principals to renege on their very public agreement. (p. 354)

Any professional diplomat would be extremely proud of achievements like these, as William Safire wrote in *The New York Times* (November 17, 1977, p. A25), “It took Walter Cronkite of CBS, placing an electronic hand on the backs of Israel and Egypt, to bring them together.”

Ted Koppel of ABC News performs classic third-party mediation on his *Nightline* program when he brings representatives of rival sides together on the air for discussions of the issues dividing them. *Nightline*’s motto: “Bringing people together who are worlds apart,” reveals the program’s self-declared mission. Observers have agreed: “What else is *Nightline* but an electronic negotiating table, with the anchor bringing combatants together, searching for answers, probing for common ground? Koppel may never get Kissinger’s old job, but he is already television’s secretary of state” (Alter, 1987, p. 56). Two particularly special programs that *Nightline* broadcasted, in 1985 from South Africa and in 1988 from Israel, were credited with facilitating significant steps toward conflict resolution in these countries (Koppel & Gibson, 1996, pp. 65–117). Koppel helped bitter en-

² Journalists also mediated in major terrorist incidents (Gilboa, 1990; Larson, 1986).

emies to realize goals of prenegotiation, including the removal of psychological barriers to negotiation, eliminating mutual dehumanization and demonization, defining the conflict as a mutual problem, considering negotiation as a viable option to resolve the conflict, cultivating domestic support for negotiation, and emphasizing the need to open official negotiations.³

The mediation role pursued by Cronkite was spontaneous. In background conversations or in special interviews with high-level policy makers, experienced and well-known journalists may identify a potential for negotiations (Sadat-Begin) or attempt to negotiate on behalf of a particular actor (the United States versus Saddam Hussein). In an official interview, a series of questions and answers may create a diplomatic move or accelerate one that is already in the making. In this mode, journalists function primarily as catalysts for negotiations. Koppel, however, deliberately used *Nightline* to promote conflict resolution.

Cronkite and Koppel were well-known news anchors and reporters who used their positions to influence sensitive negotiations. Kissinger (1994, p. 668) once explained why highly respected and known journalists are able to conduct diplomacy: While referring to American television coverage of the war in Vietnam, he wrote that "the news anchor turned into a political figure, in the sense that only a president could have reached as many people—and certainly not with such regularity." In addition to high visibility, the combination of superstar anchor status with a considerable record of international reporting, characterizing journalists like Cronkite and Koppel, becomes a source of authority "not only to report and cover international crises but also to conduct political dialogues" (Loshitzky, 1991, p. 561).

From the governmental perspective, only officially authorized diplomacy is legitimate. "There is no place in diplomacy for journalists or anyone not authorized by the government," according to Hodding Carter (O'Heffernan, 1991, pp. 50–52). Senior American policy makers, however, were divided on the contributions of *Nightline* to conflict resolution (Koppel & Gibson, 1996, pp. 116–117). Harold Saunders, an assistant secretary of state, said that "television diplomacy" generally hinders foreign policy because the participants are engaged in debates and scoring points instead of "learning how to handle sensitive issues creatively." On the other hand, Phyllis Oakely, a state department spokeswoman, argued that "the Koppel Arab-Israeli show was well done. It was useful in presenting the passions of both sides and how difficult it is to make an agreement."

International mediation by journalists may raise difficult ethical and professional problems. Journalists are expected to provide bias-free, highly professional, and relatively objective accounts of international processes. These standards may be compromised, though, if journalists develop an interest in the success of the diplomatic moves they directly help to initiate. Cronkite and Koppel continued to report on the processes they were participating in, which could have, consciously or unconsciously, affected the accuracy and objectivity of their reporting. In addition to exploration of this issue via communication theories and concepts, re-

³ In October 2000, following the eruption of another round of Palestinian–Israeli violence, Koppel organized again a broadcast from Jerusalem with many of the 1988 original participants, but this bridging effort did not succeed (Gilboa, 2002, pp. 203–204).

search on the intervening role of global communication may be further advanced through theories of international mediation. These theories emphasize the significance of “prenegotiation stages,” the role of “third parties,” and “track two diplomacy.”⁴ In the prenegotiation stage, the sides attempt to determine whether there is a sufficient mutually acceptable base for negotiations. Third parties are often needed to help enemies begin negotiations, whereas track two diplomacy refers to unofficial mediators and informal forms of negotiations. It is possible and useful to view journalists acting independently as a third party, pursuing track two diplomacy, particularly in prenegotiation stages.

Instrumental Actor: Media Diplomacy

Today, leaders extensively use global communication as a significant instrument to advance negotiation and to mobilize support for agreements. “Media diplomacy” is the most appropriate concept for analysis of these uses, but references to this concept in the professional literature are highly confusing (Cohen, 1986; Ramaprasad, 1983). Ebo (1996, p. 44), for example, defines it too broadly as “the use of the media to articulate and promote foreign policy.” I suggest a more specific and thus more useful definition: Media diplomacy refers to uses of the media by leaders to express interest in negotiation, to build confidence, and to mobilize public support for agreements (Gilboa, 1998, pp. 62–63). Media diplomacy is pursued through various routine and special media activities, including press conferences, interviews, and leaks, visits by heads of state and mediators in rival countries, and spectacular media events organized to usher in a new era.

Using the media for signaling purposes has been known for many years (Jönsson, 1996). In the absence of adequate direct channels of communication, or when one side is unsure how the other side might react to conditions for negotiations or to proposals for conflict resolution, officials prefer to use the media, with or without attribution, to send messages to leaders of rival states and nonstate actors. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Kissinger perfected the use of the media for signaling and pressure purposes during his famous and highly successful “shuttle diplomacy.” He often gave senior American diplomatic correspondents aboard his plane background reports, information, and leaks mostly intended to extract concessions from the negotiating parties and to break deadlocks (Isaacson, 1992, pp. 573–586; Kalb, Koppel, & Scali, 1982).

In recent years, leaders more frequently use global communication rather than traditional diplomatic channels to deliver messages intended to alter an image or to open a new page. For example, in January 1998, the newly elected Iranian President Mohammed Khatami chose CNN to send a conciliatory message to the United States (*International Herald Tribune*, January 9, 1998, p. 10). CNN and the print media around the world alerted global audiences to the interview well in advance of the broadcast, and the interview was extensively discussed afterwards.

⁴ On third parties, see Princen (1992); on track two diplomacy, see Volkan, Montville, and Julius (1991); and on prenegotiation, see Stein (1989).

The “new diplomacy” that developed during the 20th century has been characterized by two principal components: exposure of negotiations to the media and direct talks between high-level leaders. Perhaps, more than any other phenomenon, summit meetings between protagonist leaders seeking an opening for conflict resolution and possibly even longer term reconciliation vividly demonstrate the combination of these two components. Depending on context and conditions, many of these summits, such as the U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit meetings and celebrations of peace agreements signed between former enemies, are primarily media events (Hallin & Mancini, 1994). Dramatic media events, after all, represent media diplomacy at its best. They are broadcast live, organized outside the media, preplanned, and presented with reverence and ceremony (Dayan & Katz, 1992, pp. 4–9). Live coverage of media events interrupts scheduled broadcasting and attracts wide audiences around the world.

Dayan and Katz (1992, pp. 204–205) identify several direct effects of media events on diplomacy: (a) trivializing the role of ambassadors, (b) breaking diplomatic deadlocks and creating a climate conducive to negotiations, and (c) creating a favorable climate for sealing an accord. Officials can use media events to cultivate public support for a peace process after the conclusion of the initial phase but before moving on to the next phase. This typically appears in cases where a breakthrough has been achieved, but the sides still have a long way to go before translating a declaration of principle into a permanent legal peace agreement. Such an intermediary effect can help in mobilizing sufficient public support inside the societies involved for the next phase in the negotiations. All three effects of media events gained vivid expression in chapters of international “summit diplomacy” and in Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

Gorbachev’s summits with Presidents Reagan and Bush demonstrate how the two superpowers became adept at exploiting the media in the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era. Their summits above all reflected the dramatic changes in superpower relations. As media events, they motivated individuals, groups, and nations “to reassess their relations with each other in light of the actions taking place live in front of their eyes” (Negrine, 1996, p. 172). Media events became increasingly popular and were frequently used in Arab-Israeli peacemaking (Gilboa, 2002, pp. 204–207). Sadat’s historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 (Bagnied & Schneider, 1982) and the 1991 Madrid peace conference (Bentsur, 2000, pp. 63–128) demonstrate the initial effect of the use of a media event to facilitate negotiations. The signing ceremonies of three major documents represent the intermediary effect: the Camp David Accords of September 1978, the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles of September 1993, and the Israel-Jordan Washington Declaration of July 1994. The signing ceremonies of two peace treaties demonstrate the “sealing effect” of media events: the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty of March 1979 and the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty of October 1994.

Whereas use of the media events theory to explore the instrumental actor role of global communication yields useful and interesting results, it is necessary to conduct further research on three problems. First, media events are not always successful, as was the case in the U.S.-sponsored Arab-Israeli Madrid conference.

Such ploys become far less effective when employed too frequently and the groundbreaking effect becomes diluted. Second, media events are fully controlled by politicians and officials who determine when, where, and how they are to be played out before the television cameras. The officials thus serve as the prime producers and directors of television coverage while journalists are reduced to more roles that are secondary and supporting. Under such conditions, journalists might be overwhelmed and thus unable to present a more balanced evaluation of the event and its consequences. Third, the theory of media events concentrates on the event at the time of its occurrence. It is necessary to look at media events also from a time perspective, particularly to determine their long-term effects. This research is even more significant for media events designed to mobilize public support for peace-making processes (Liebes & Katz, 1997).

The instrumental role is designed primarily to cultivate public support for peace making. Thus, innovative research on this role may be achieved through joint application of peace-making approaches and communication theories, including functional theories—in particular the mobilization function, audience research, and theories on the shaping and effects of public opinion.⁵ Weimann (1995), for example, has studied the media's roles in Arab-Israeli negotiations by applying the functional approach to negotiation theory.

Discussion and Conclusions

Transforming revolutions in communication and international affairs have created new roles for global communication in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This study offers a basic taxonomy of these roles based on type of actor and corresponding attributes. The taxonomy suggests that global communication may participate in the policy process in different capacities from acting as a controlling actor to being a tool in the hands of leaders. The evidence presented here indicates that, although the CNN Effect, defined in terms of decision makers' loss of control, has not been sufficiently validated, global communication is increasingly becoming a source of rapid real-time information for policy makers; has accelerated the pace of diplomatic communication; and has focused world attention on crises in places such as Bosnia, Somalia, and Kosovo. The speed of global communication has applied pressure on policy makers and foreign policy experts to respond even faster to world events while also allowing them to send significant messages that, in turn, have affected the outcomes of these events.

Friedland (1992) concluded that

as is evident from events such as the Gulf War and the Tiananmen Square massacre, the world television system has begun to supplant traditional diplomatic activity. . . . By the end of 1992, CNN was seen to be the foreign policy tool of choice. (p. 41)

⁵ For theories of conflict resolution, see Stern & Druckman (2000).

Yet, the global media-foreign policy relationship does not by any means operate in a one-way direction, with either the government or the media solely dictating foreign policy. O’Heffernan (1993) argues that both sides incorporate “each other into their own existence, sometimes for mutual benefit, sometimes for mutual injury, often both at the same time.” He explains that “policymaking cannot be done without the media, nor can the media cover international affairs without government cooperation” (pp. 188–189).

This study shows that global communication becomes a more powerful independent actor in two situations: when prominent television journalists such as Cronkite and Koppel become international political brokers and during periods of leadership vacuums. The second condition frequently appeared in the civil wars of the 1990s. Hoge (1994) wrote:

If policymakers want to set the agenda and not leave it to the media, they must have an agenda. The existence of policy that can command public support against emotional swings stirred up by television imagery is key. In the absence of persuasive government strategy, the media will be catalytic. (p. 138)

On the other hand, as shown in the section on media diplomacy, when leaders adopt a clear diplomatic strategy, they can successfully harness the growing power of global television to achieve their goals.

This study has implications for both practice and research into the roles global communication plays in the foreign policy process. Many leaders and officials haven’t yet adapted themselves to the new realities of global communication. Foreign policy experts, intelligence officers, and diplomats have lost many of their traditional functions to journalists who are assuming some of these roles and to spokespersons and communication experts, increasingly influential in inner governmental circles. I suggest that successful coping with the challenges of global communication and efficient utilization of new and innovative media technologies require two sets of reforms: first, in the training of leaders, high-level policy makers, and diplomats, and second, in the planning and implementation of policies. Leaders must be prepared to handle the rapid pace of global communication and to avoid serious policy mistakes deriving from global television’s demands for fast and effective responses, particularly in crisis situations. Thus, in addition to traditional and conventional diplomatic considerations, sophisticated policy making in defense and foreign affairs today requires both sensitive understanding of the global media challenges and an efficient communication strategy for dealing with them.

This study also shows that, in many international events, reporters function as important participants and not only as observers. As revealed in the section on real-time policy, pictures shown on television may have significant effects on taking or avoiding actions. This places a heavier responsibility on journalists to report more accurately on what they see and hear. The section on media diplomacy demonstrates how leaders can exploit global communication to achieve international goals. Reporters have to recognize and resist policy makers’ manipulations. A balanced relationship between leaders and journalists is highly neces-

sary and valuable to ensure effective and wise foreign policy. Finally, some theories and analytical concepts are more useful than others, but all are insufficient to meet the theoretical and practical challenges of global communication. There is a clear need to further investigate these challenges along the lines suggested by Mowlana (1996), Seaver (1998), Robinson (1999), and Gilboa (2000a, 2000b). To go beyond existing research, however, it is necessary to move to new directions, and only interdisciplinary research based on joint application of theories, models, and concepts from both communication and international relations may produce the necessary advancement.

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