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The Role of the Media in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Theoretical Framework*

Kurzfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz vertritt die Auffassung, dass die Medien an allen Etappen der Konstituierung von Außenpolitik beteiligt sind und dass die Politiker die nationale und internationale Wirkung der Medien berücksichtigen. Dieser doppelte Medienbezug kommt vor allem auf der Ebene des Medienmanagements zum Tragen.

Die Einbeziehung der Medien in den politischen Entscheidungsprozeß ist komplex. Wenn in der Welt etwas passiert, erfahren die Politiker dies aus den Medien. Die Informationen werden über verschiedene Kanäle transportiert, und dann beginnt der politische Entscheidungsprozeß. Medienberater und PR-Experten sind daran beteiligt; Entscheidungsträger konsultieren sie und berücksichtigen ihre Ratschläge. Sie beziehen sich letztlich auf die Medien, wenn sie die Richtlinien ihrer Politik festlegen und mit den geeigneten Medienmitteln abstimmen.

Frühere Studien über außenpolitische Entscheidungsprozesse haben sich nicht mit der komplexen Rolle der Medien auseinandergesetzt. Falls überhaupt, beschrieben sie die Medien lediglich als einen der Kanäle, durch welche die Politiker über das internationale Geschehen informiert wurden, d.h. als Input des Entscheidungsprozesses. Die Wirklichkeit zeigt jedoch, dass diese Perspektive die Rolle der Medien unangemessen minimiert. Sie sollte daher sowohl theoretisch als auch mittels angewandter Fallstudien durch einen komplexeren Ansatz ersetzt werden, der die entscheidende Rolle der Medien für die Festlegung der Außenpolitik herausarbeitet.

Der Aufsatz entwickelt einen theoretischen Rahmen dafür, der Schwachstellen bisheriger Modelle zu kompensieren versucht und der sowohl den komplexen Prozeß des Medieninputs als auch die Rolle von Presse und Fernsehen für die Konstituierung der Außenpolitik reflektiert.

Abstract: This paper maintains that the media is involved in all stages of foreign policy formulation processes and that political leaders take the media into consideration in its national and international aspects. Moreover, the paper argues that this double-edged media environment is considered mainly in the publication, or media management stage.

The involvement of the media in this decision-making process is complex. When an external, international event occurs, political leaders learn about it from the media. This information is processed through various image components and then the policy or decision-formulating process is set in motion. Media advisors and PR professionals participate in the process, officials consult with them and consider their advice. Finally, they take the media into account when they define their policy and match to it the appropriate media tools.

Past studies of foreign policy decision-making neglected to deal with this complex role of the media. They described the media (if at all) as one of the channels of informing leaders of international events, as input for the decision-making process. Actual reality demonstrates that this perspective minimizes the place of the media and therefore it should be dealt theoretically as well as in applied research case studies using a more complex approach emphasizing the crucial role of the media in foreign policy. The paper develops and presents a framework for the analysis of foreign policy decision-making which tries to compensate for some of the flaws of existing models in the field, incorporating the complex processes of media input into decision-making, as well as reflecting the role of the press and TV in the formulation stage of policy-making.

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Introduction

During the night of 20 August 1993, Uri Savir and Abu Ala signed the original Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in one of the rooms of an official Norwegian guest house near Oslo. The general terms of this agreement were leaked to the press and were first published in the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* two days later. The publication of this news was one of the sources of Israeli public opinion about the agreement and also influenced international public reactions to it.

This was the case during the first stages of the diplomatic "Oslo Peace Process," and this paper claims that it is not a unique case. It has theoretical implications, and I maintain that conventional models of foreign-policy decisions and processes do not take into consideration the press and TV, i.e., the media and their effects. The media and their characteristics should be incorporated into the analysis of these processes and make their study more interdisciplinary. The media (with all its various aspects) form an important component of the environment which foreign policy decision-makers take into consideration as they develop their policies, as well as a component of the policy outputs and decisions of governments.

Past studies of foreign policy decision-making described the media mainly (if at all) as a channel for delivering messages during the process, but the reality of the last decades reveals that this point-of-view minimizes the actual role of the media, which is much more complex. The media – TV, press, radio and new multimedia technologies – are not only channels, they also play a far more important role in the process. The media are a crucial part of the foreign policy decision-making environment, an environment which should not be regarded only as the input stage of the process, but much more as a general context, and as an output environment in which leaders make policies.

The literature that lays the foundations for the theoretical aspect of this paper comes from two disciplines: Theories of foreign policy decision-making, on the one hand, and theories of mass communication effects, on the other. Using these sources, a theoretical framework will be introduced that is needed to describe the complexities of media involvement in the foreign policy decision-making process.

The paper will introduce an outline of a foreign-policy decision framework which takes into account the mass media channels as a twofold input and output environment. The sources of the framework come from the main theories of foreign policy decision-making integrated with relevant communication theories. These media aspects will be incorporated in the input phase of a foreign policy decision-making framework. Then media managements theories will be integrated into the output phase of the framework. Finally, the whole framework and its theoretical and political implications will be discussed.

1. Foreign Policy Decision-making

From the vast literature of foreign policy decision-making, three main models will be used to create a general model into which the role of the media will be incorporated. The focus is on dynamic complex models recognizing the environment as a major input component of foreign policy decision-making processes.

The first model of this type was presented by Glenn Snyder and his colleagues (Snyder et al., 1969). In this article the authors stated that: „Decision makers act upon and respond to conditions and factors that exist outside them and the governmental organization of which they are a part. Setting has two aspects: external and internal. Setting is really a set of categories of potentially relevant factors and conditions that may affect the action of any state.“ (Snyder et al., 1969:203)

These authors describe the internal setting as a human environment composed of culture and population and includes public opinion (Snyder et al., 1969:201; 203). If we adopt a revised perspective on this setting, the media may be a major component of this environment. It can be described as the tool which expresses the non-governmental interpretations and expectations of the various members or groups of the society as described in Snyder's model (Snyder et al., 1969:204), as well as a tool to express government policy in state-owned – or dominated – media.

Michael Brecher developed a much more detailed framework for foreign policy decision-making analysis, and he incorporated the media explicitly as "the communication network within the political system" which enables "the flow of information about the operational environment to the incumbent elite" (Brecher, 1972:11; 183-207). Brecher's framework is environmental in its design, and he believes that: "The foreign policy system comprises an environment or setting. ... The operational environment defines the setting in which foreign policy decisions are taken. The concept of setting refers to a set of potentially relevant factors and conditions, which may affect a state's external behavior. The operational environment thus sets the parameters or boundaries within which decision-makers must act." (Brecher, 1972:2-4).

But Brecher, like the other authors, does not incorporate the media explicitly as one of the input variables of the foreign policy decision-making process. By input variable I mean an external factor, part of the international environment. Perceiving the media as an input variable means understanding its role in influencing society and politics, in agenda-setting and in constructing reality. Brecher and the other scholars of foreign policy see the media in a narrower way, as a channel through which the operational environment "can have an impact on the foreign policy process." This impact exists "only to the extent that it is communicated to the elite. Information may be communicated in a variety of ways: the mass media – press, books, radio, and TV" (Brecher, 1972:10).

Brecher and Snyder (et al.), and later Papadakis and Starr perceive the media (if they deal with it at all) as an internal component of the process, a channel to deliver messages from the diplomatic-political-security environment to the leaders. Such media, as information channels, have a minimal role in influencing leaders and their decisions. The broader perspective, which does not exist in the international relations literature, suggests that the media are part of the external-international environment which influences policy, and perceives the press and TV as external components or sources, as an input variable which drives decision processes as the other external input variables of the environment (i.e., regional power structure, other actors economic capabilities, etc.).

In a more subtle way, the media may be seen not only as part of the international environment, but also as part of the internal environment of the state. In the state the media are not just information channels, they form a "communication network" influencing policy from within the state, as well as the party system, interest groups or the socio-economic stratification of society.

A third environmental foreign policy decision-making model was developed by Papadakis and Starr (1987) to analyze the process in small states, but it is relevant to dealing with other states as well. The environment which forms the input for the policy-making process is described as "a structure of opportunities, risks, and potential costs and benefits, constraining the decision makers" (Russett and Starr, 1992:21). The authors did not incorporate the mass media into their model, neither as forming part of the societal level of environment, nor as part of the opportunities or constraints internally influencing a government in its foreign policy decision-making process.

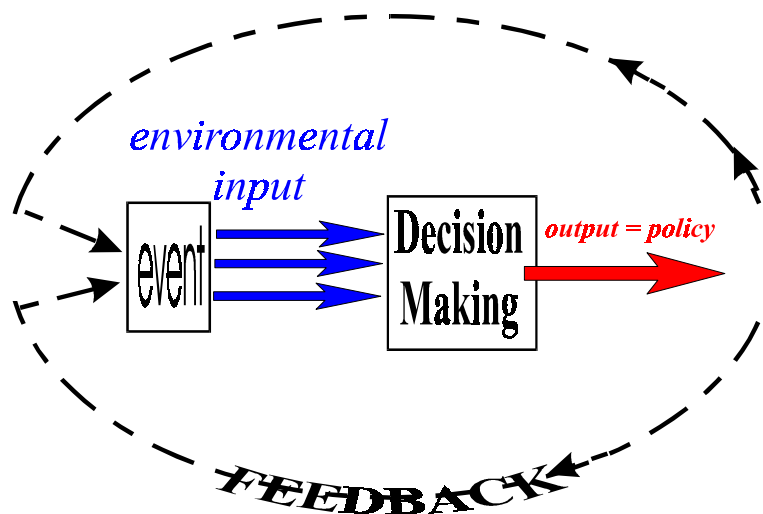


Figure 1:
Schematic structure of the foreign policy decision-making models that do not include the media

Figure 1 illustrates the schematic structure of the foreign policy decision-making models that do not include the media.

Moreover, it should be noted that all these models see the role of the image as an important filtering mechanism in the decision-making process which is also strongly influenced by the media (Brecher, 1972, 11-13; Elitzur, 1986; Vertzberger, 1990). The image is a "the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe" (Boulding in Brecher, 1972:13). The image is a fundamental part of the

individual level of international relations,¹ but it reflects a broader process as well, such as foreign policy decision-making (Boulding, 1959, 120-131; Deutch and Merritt, 1965, 132-189; Holsti, 1969; Merritt, 1972; Scott, 1965, 71-103; Gross-Stein, 1996). The expression of these images in the media is in the form of the framing process that is presented later in this paper. Figure 2 presents the process with the image included as a filtering mechanism.

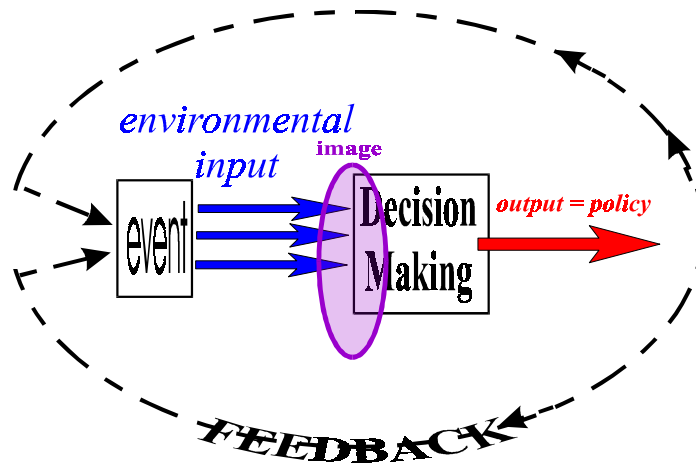


Figure 2:
Framing process

This paper tries to overcome the obstacle of excluding the mass media from the foreign policy process and suggests an analytical framework which focuses on the role of the media in this process. This framework perceives the mass communication networks as parts of the environments in which the international actor (mainly nation-states) exists and acts. The media have a twofold role in such environments. First, they provide input into the process as an independent variable added to environments described in the former models of Snyder et al., Brecher and Papadakis and Starr.

Here the leaders react to the perceived reality as constructed by the press and take it into consideration (i.e., the "CNN effect"). Second, it is part of the environment which foreign policy makers try to affect or influence by making their decisions. This means that leaders who perform in an environment which includes the media take political decisions to solve problems, but at the same time try to make such decisions that will improve their image or develop a campaign that will affect the media dealing with the relevant international events and interactions. This is the output environment component of the environment. Figure 3 incorporates the media into the framework as an environment which encircles the decision-making process while serving as an input for decisions as well as a sounding board for the output – the policy.

¹ The individual level of international relations assumes that individuals can make a difference in the foreign policy process of a given state, that the governmental structure, as well as the processes of policy-making, permits individuals to have an impact on foreign policy. Presidents, secretaries of states, prime ministers, foreign ministers, revolutionary leaders and dictators can strongly influence the foreign policy process of their own state and others" (Russett and Starr, 1992:269).

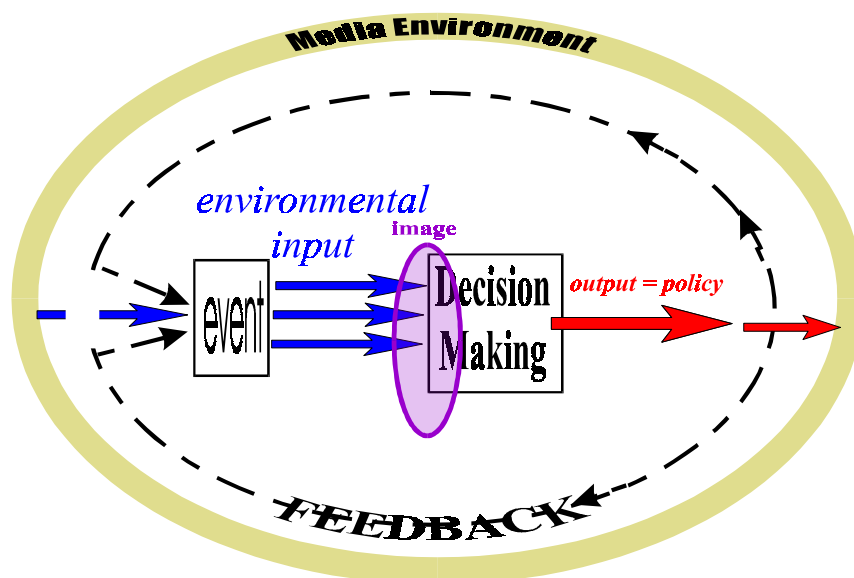


Figure 3:
Incorporation of the media

2. The Media as Environment

The mass media as an environmental factor in a specific state involve six variables: First, the political communication regime in the state under consideration. Second, the communication policy adopted by the government of that state. Third, the political economy setting of the mass media. Fourth, the various communication channels and technologies existing in that country. Fifth, the typical functions performed by media channels. And finally, news values, the criteria that lead media "gatekeepers" to include items and events in the news.

2.1 The Political Communication Regime

The relations between the state and the press span a continuum between authoritarian and libertarian patterns (Mundt, 1991:11-27). Some authors believe that these relations should be divided into Four Theories of the Press: the Authoritarian, Soviet, Social Responsibility and Libertarian. To these, two additional theories or patterns can be added – the Development and the Democratic-Participant (McQuail, 1994:127-31). These regimes are characterized by four criteria: Who owns the media? How are media financed? Who appoints the editors? and finally, is the content of the media controlled or censored? In an authoritarian regime, for example, media are owned by the government, the government finances the media, the government appoints the editors and it controls and even censors the content of the media. These theories serve as a tool to define the specific press-government relations or the Political Communication Regime in the state under consideration. These relations create the ground for the state's communication environment and set the main rules of the communication policy of the government towards the media.

2.2 The Communication Policy

Governments set the rules and the regulations according to the general Communication Regime pattern of that state. By communication policy we mean goals such as: promoting competition and pluralism in the media, minimizing regulations, preventing cross-ownership, allocating broadcasting frequencies, protecting copyrights, etc. (Baldwin et al., 1996:301-352).

2.3 The Political Economy Setting of the Media

Most of the modern mass media are motivated by economic criteria, namely profit and business considerations. Other trends which define this field are the following (Bagdikian, 1987:4-10; Herman, 1995:82-83):

- Advertising is the primary income source

- Media organizations tend to concentrate and merge into large corporations.
- Media organizations are increasingly acquired by non-media corporations.
- Media organizations become part of multi-national global corporations.
- These corporations tend to become media monopolies.
- These media corporations try to increase their audiences by using the most modern technologies.
- These media corporations have strong political and other ties with governments.

These seven trends define the economic setting of the mass media, and communication research in a given state has to take them into consideration. It should be noted that these trends are typical mostly of democratic or developing states. Free-market media economics is limited in authoritarian states where the media are state-owned. Therefore, the media regime and the communication policy also define to what extent commercial processes such as concentration and globalization are possible in a given state.

2.4 Media Channels and Organizations

The combination of the above-mentioned dimensions (communication regime, communication policy and economic background) provide the basis for the fourth dimension – the existence of the various communication channels, from newspapers and radio to TV and modern multimedia interactive technologies (McQuail, 1994:12-21; Baldwin et al. 1996; Winston, 1995). Moreover, the variety of channels includes the national media environment operating *in* the state and the international channels penetrating from abroad using new technologies and opening the state to an international media environment. In the modern democratic state with commercialized media there is hardly any way to differentiate between these two media environments, and they can be viewed as an integrated media package of internal media and press and international media sources. In authoritarian states where the media are not located in an open market, the media package is unilateral – exclusively internal because no external-international influence is allowed.

2.5 Typical Media Functions

Finally, the mass media provide components of the internal foreign policy decision-making package through their professional performance. Harold Laswell described this performance in his pioneering presentation of the media functions, distinguishing three roles of the media (Lasswell, 1971 :85):

1. the surveillance of the environment
2. the correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment
3. the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next.

Later two functions were added to the list (McQuail, 1994:78-79):

4. Entertainment
5. Mobilization.

In providing the foreign-policy environment, three of these roles are relevant: the informative, the correlative, and mobilizing functions. In performing these functions, the mass media incorporate and integrate the national society as part of the internal environment.

Reporters inform the public of international, foreign and security events; journalists provide background, interpretation and commentary on the information. In its third relevant role, the media provide support to the established authority and its norms, especially in times of crisis or during a peace process. Here the press performs its mobilizing and recruiting role, thus creating a joint media-government environmental component. (It should be noted that it is also possible that the media will in some cases mobilize *against* the government).

2.6 News values

What are the criteria that lead editors to include items concerning war, peace or any other foreign-policy events in the news? Do journalists follow rules in making such decisions, or do they act spontaneously? The truth lies somewhere in between; scholars refer to the relevant criteria as news values (Galtung and Ruge, 1970; Larson, 1984; Westerstahl and

Johansson, 1994). The following seem to be the main criteria or news values in selecting an event and making it a news item:

- *Ideology* as the basic orientation of the news editor.
- The event must be *new* and *surprising*.
- The event should involve the dimension of *importance*, or from the international perspective, should involve the *powerful* global elite in terms of countries and leaders.
- Events that are *violent* or can be defined as *negative* will get better coverage.
- An event must be *relevant* to the nation whose media cover it, and it must be *accessible* to coverage.
- Finally, journalists prefer an event that is *familiar* in terms of previous news patterns.

Foreign-policy events and processes that satisfy these criteria will be regarded as news. War qualifies; so do shifts from conflict to cooperation. Such news events will usually be at the top of the agenda set by the media, and they will be framed by the specific frame relevant to the event, the issue, and the international actor(s) involved. Thus the media set the environment of the foreign policy process, and within this media environment decision-makers must seek to gain support and legitimacy for their policy.

3. Media as a Foreign-Policy Environment Creator

The mass communication channels have two, sometimes opposing, dimensions – they are an input variable, influencing the foreign policy decision-making process, and at the same time they serve as an output media environment (a “sounding board” towards which the spokespersons of governments work) which compels leaders to relate to it in their decisions. These double-sided effects of the media are due mainly to the agenda-setting and framing perspectives of the media.

3.1 Agenda-setting

In the late 1940s, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1971) described one of the social roles of the mass media as the Status-Conferment function. This function means that “the mass media confer status on public issues, persons, organizations, and social movements. Common experience as well as research testifies that the social standing of persons or social policies is raised when these command favorable attention in the mass media. ... The mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing their status” (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1971:560-561).

Bernard Cohen (1963) introduced this perspective to the field of foreign policy in his classic book on the role of the media in the foreign policy decision-making process. (Cohen, 1963:12-13). “It is here, in the description of the political environment and the suggestion of the policy alternatives that give the best promise of managing the environment, that we shall find the press playing such an important role in current thinking about foreign policy. This “map-making” function of the press is so central to the real impact of the press in the foreign policy field that a few words of elaboration may be appropriate.”

“For most of the foreign policy audience, the really effective political map of the world – that is to say, their operational map of the world – is drawn by the reporter and the editor, not by the cartographer. ... The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”

The last paragraph is regarded in the communication literature as the basis for the more complex “agenda setting approach,” which is mostly related to Maxwell McCombs (1972; 1981). McCombs stated that, “While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (McCombs, 1972:177). In other words, the salience of an issue or other topic in the mass media influences its salience among the audience (McCombs, 1981:126).

McQuail (1994:356-357) presented this approach as a four-fold hypothesis:

- Public debate is represented by salient issues (an agenda for action)
- The agenda derives from a combination of public opinion and political choice.
- Mass media news and information reflect the content and order the priority of issues

- This representation of issues in the mass media exerts an independent effect on issue content and on relative salience in public opinion.

It should be made clear at this stage of the theoretical debate that the agenda-setting approach can be applied not only to the informative and interpretive roles of the media, but also to the mobilizing and recruitment functions, as well as to the entertainment role. Here the media can be described as a mood-setting instrument, and all work together to create the "imagined foreign policy environment."

3.2 Framing

The media construct reality with another tool, called *framing*. This technique is important, since any political conflict centers on the struggle over interpretive frames (Wolfsfeld, 1993, xiii; Wolfsfeld, 1997a, 13-30, 31-35, Scheufele, 1999, 103-122). In this process, the media transform the nature of events through "formats," which constitute ideological or value perspectives in which the media focus on "story lines," symbols, and relevant stereotypes (Entman, 1991; Entman and Rojecki, 1993; Entman and Page, 1994; Iyengar and Simon, 1994, 171). The evidence indicates that individuals' views of national issues are altered by the way in which television news frames them (Iyengar, 1994, 141). Therefore, in the competition over media frames some relevant factors should be analyzed, such as the ways in which political actors are referred to; and nuances of the use of language (e.g., in headlines) (Roeh and Nir, 1993, 178-180; Wolfsfeld, 1997a, 49). Finally, framing is the process in which the media create the images that reflect and filter reality in the foreign policy decision-making processes.

4. The Media as an Output Environment

As stated earlier, the media have a twofold role in the foreign policy decision-making process. Until now the media's role as an input source for decision-making has been discussed. Now let us turn to the role of the media as part of the environment which foreign policy makers try to affect or influence when making decisions. This means that leaders who perform in an environment which includes the media make political decisions to solve problems, but at the same time try to make decisions that will improve their image or develop a campaign that will affect the media that deal with the relevant international events and interactions. This is the output of the policy-making process, which includes public relations components that are reflected in the surrounding environment. Moreover, it can be claimed that by using "proper" campaigns or "spins" or PR techniques leaders may influence or affect the environment, which for our purposes means the mass media.

4.1 Media Management ("Spin")

How do the leaders (and their media advisors) join foreign-policy decisions with considerations that take into account the media environment? How do they try to affect the media to reflect a favorable attitude, or to frame *their* side of the story in an international conflict? This is achieved by "media management" (MM), defined with the common term *spin*. The processes of utilizing the media are varied and apply to national as well to foreign policies (Gergen, 1991; Ben Elyahu, 1993; Cook, 1998; Kurtz, 1998; Paletz, 1998; Pfetsch, 1998). These policies can range from initiating coverage to government-arranged censorship; from classifying information and data to pooling journalists (see figure 4). Moreover, journalists may be restricted in their movement, accredited selectively, or favored by leaders according to their "positive-supportive" coverage. Administrations and governments who need the media to cover their political activities and their foreign policy should promote "give and take" relations with the press.

4.1.1 Who is in Charge?

In managing the media covering decision-making, governments use professionals, public relations specialists or marketing professionals. These professionals work together with the ministerial level and alongside the spokespersons in charge of media relations in the relevant offices. Furthermore, they consider allowing these spokespersons and even some of the professionals to be present at the decision-making process. The optimal method is allowing them to be *involved* in the processes and contribute their professional input.

4.1.2 What methods are used?

The techniques of media management (MM) in foreign policy (as well as internal issues) are varied. The leaders (and their teams) use methods of leaking information (Goren, 1975, 39-42; Galnoor, 1975. Limor and Mann, 1997, 160-164, Cohen, 1986, 72-82). Also, they can work more in the open, organizing briefings (public and background) by the main

decision makers, arranging interviews (exclusively to a favored journalist or jointly to a number of reporters), holding press conferences and initiating and promoting media events.

Leaders and governments developed the MM towards "spin" techniques, i.e. using all their PR and campaign tools more systematically and intensively in order to affect the media and make them accept the leadership's agenda and *its* framing of events. In using "spin," the main decision-maker is involved in each stage of the media process, as well as appointing professional and political PR teams for media management. The "spin doctors," as they are called, are involved in each decision-making process, and leaders take part in developing a systematic way of planning the strategies with regard to the media. This includes planning the most detailed messages and their diffusion (even on a daily basis), and designing messages according to the needs of the events (sharp and clear or vague and ambiguous, partial and poor in their content or full and detailed). Moreover, MM planners use public-opinion polls systematically and professionally and incorporate their findings into the planning phases of working with and "against" the media. In this process the leaders and the MM teams prepare for various situations and for worst-case and disaster scenarios. MM professionals know the media in all their facets: the media map, internally and internationally, their channels, timings and functions, and adopt the appropriate strategies towards the needs of these channels.

"Spin" means the inclusion of different government and administration organs and offices, dealing with a variety of policy issues. These "spin" participants are synchronized, coordinated and orchestrated so that messages are clear and the administration speaks with "one voice," united, consistent and unambiguous. MM professionals use the specialization of each official organ to promote the message throughout the media, and on each occasion of official-media encounter.

In utilizing these MM techniques to the utmost degree of "spin," a state, its government and leaders participate in a subtle, sophisticated modern, updated *propaganda* process, and *propaganda* is a way to present a state's foreign policy to the external world using the media. Figure 4 demonstrates the media output phase in the general framework of analysis.

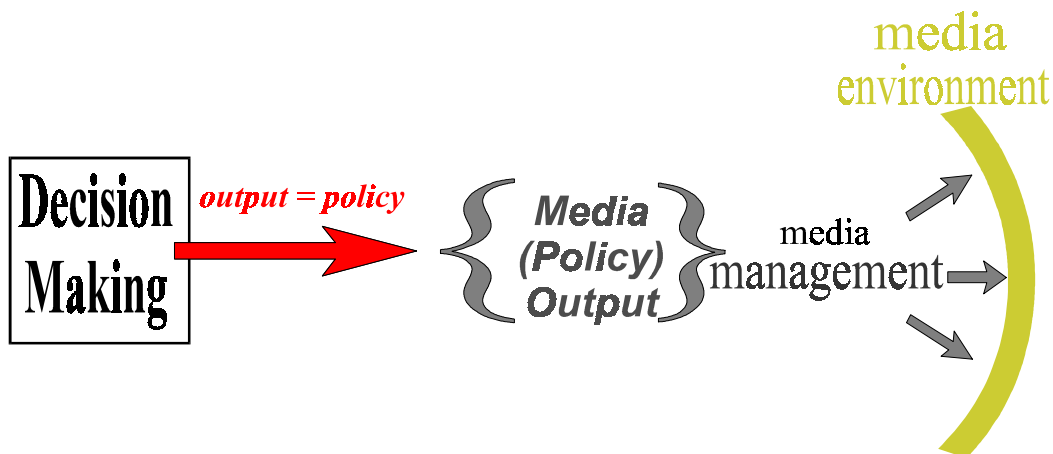


Figure 4:
Media output phase

4.2 Media Spin in Foreign Policy

MM or "spin" techniques are used on the diplomatic front to promote peace processes, as well as in times of conflict and war. When foreign policy decisions are made, or peace policies are adopted, governments may accompany these policies with threefold PR strategies toward the media. Foreign policy officials (and their media advisors) can disregard or ignore the press (e.g., not convey any message to the media); they can try to develop a "spin" (as explained earlier); or they can adopt a policy that is only media-oriented (e.g., only publishing public announcements without any "real" political action).

By choosing any of these options, a government influences the media by regulating the flow of information. It is trying to affect the political environment through the media while competing with the opposing political powers, who try to influence the media as well. When governments succeed in taking control of diplomatic events and enjoy a high degree of public consensus, the news media become supportive, and the role of the PR professionals is intended to preserve

and promote this support. But when a government loses control over the political-diplomatic process, the media become independent and critical (Wolfsfeld, 1997a, 25; Wolfsfeld, 1997b, 30-34). In this "negative" political environment, the role of MM professionals is more complex, and they try influence the media to change their attitude and be less critical, more understanding and even supportive.

In the diplomatic-cooperative arenas of international relations, leaders use the media to keep options open and at the same time to build consensus (Ben Eliyahu, 1993; Cook, 1998; Kurtz, 1998; Paletz, 1998; Pfetsch, 1998). Here, the media, by setting policy agendas and stimulating popular support for policies, provide tools for leaders to assert control. Moreover, a leader's staff can utilize the media to deliver specific messages to specific audiences (Gergen, 1991, 55-56; O'Heffernan, 1991, 62-67, 105-112; O'Heffernan, 1994, 242). In addition, the media's role as a promoter of public debates on policy issues can be used as a tool to gain support and tilt public opinion (Hindell, 1995; Powlick and Katz, 1998, 29-61; Weiman, 1994, 291-307).

In order to achieve the best results in these processes, leaders and their MM professional advisors may use various diplomatic channels with regard to the media. They can decide to keep diplomatic interactions secret, hidden behind closed doors or made public (Gilboa, 1998a, 211-225; Gilboa 1998b,56-75) and work with the media accordingly.

Therefore MM experts study the media environment and its characteristics: the political-communication regime of their own state, its communication policy, its political-economy setting of the media, and its typical media channels and organizations. Secondly, decision-makers today are learning to use the media: their typical functions, role in agenda-setting, framing capability and the terms of media news values, as well as the possibilities for promoting media events (Dayan and Katz, 1992). Third, leaders are starting to be aware of the international-global media setting, including its channels and organizations, its functions, and its news values (Cohen, 1986. 72-82; Strobel, 1996, 357-375). All these factors enable leaders to best utilize the media for securing support and legitimacy (Bar Siman Tov, 1996) (see figure 5).

Finally, two examples will demonstrate the success and failure of well-used MM. The successful "spin" or media management was seen in the American military and diplomatic handling of the media in the Gulf War. "Spin" was part of the diplomatic efforts made during the "Desert Shield" phase, as well as during the "Desert Storm" stage, but was less successful toward the end of the war (Bennett and Paletz, 1994; Denton, 1993; Kellner, 1992; Morrison, 1992; Rosenfeld, 1991; Smith, 1992).

On The other hand, the Israeli government mishandled the media during the Oslo process. The spin was dull, there was hardly any MM and the Israeli leaders believed that the process would speak for itself (Aggestam, 1995; Gilboa, 1998; Liebes, 1997; Naveh, 2001).

5. Conclusions

To summarize the theory, the foreign policy decision-making process takes place within an environment partly created by the media. Media performance in this environment is dictated by the state's political communication regime, government communication policy, the political-economy structure and by the specific communication channels which perform the relevant media functions. This media-created atmosphere reflects foreign-policy events through the agenda-setting perspective, influencing decision-makers and compelling them to respond through the media, with their specific characteristics. It is necessary to mention that the concept of media environment includes the feedback process, which in this context means media-oriented foreign-policy decisions on the press (like censorship, etc.) (see figure 3).

The process of media involvement is complex, but it is mainly twofold: first, the media as an input source for decision-making, second, the media as an environment which leaders must consider and relate to when they make decisions and consider promulgating them. Leaders and foreign policy decision-makers are influenced by the media. They learn about many international events from the press, and many of the messages incoming from the international arena penetrate via public communication channels through the processes described in this paper. At this stage the media serve as a source, part of the input environment of the decision-making process, supplying leaders with information and data. This part of the process is often summarized with the concept of the "CNN effect" (Gutstadt, 1993; Livingston and Eachus 1995; Jakobsen, 1996; Strobel, 1997) and was studied previously in various forms. This paper adds the media dimensions which define characteristics of the channels that deliver messages from the international environment to decision-makers.

Moreover, here the output phase is added to the process, i.e., how do decision-makers use the media, their characteristics and effects in publishing their decisions and probably also in formulating policy.

In the output phase leaders and their advisors must consider whether a message should be used only for external purposes – sending a message to other leaders, or should it also be used internally – e.g., creating legitimacy for decisions. This influences publication processes and the ways in which media channels are approached. Moreover,

leaders and the professional teams have to consider whether to tell the “whole story” or only parts of it, and in what ways. It is important to consider whether published information will include commitments, broad or narrow, clear or ambiguous, or no commitments at all. If a message is meant to serve internal purposes (“rallying around the flag”), it must use the proper channels and be phrased in appropriate terms to reach the public to create legitimacy.

This complex process is described in the following framework (see figure 5): When an external international event occurs, leaders learn about it from the media (the input process, CNN effect, etc.), information is processed via the various image components, and the policy or decision-formulating process is set in motion. Media advisors and PR professionals participate in the process, and officials consult with them and consider their advice. When a decision is made, or a policy is formulated (the output phase), leaders take into consideration the media environment (national and international) in the decision itself, and mainly in the publication (MM) process. Moreover, it should be noted that in the background national and international public opinions influence the processes, and are involved in them, but their roles will not be analyzed at this stage.

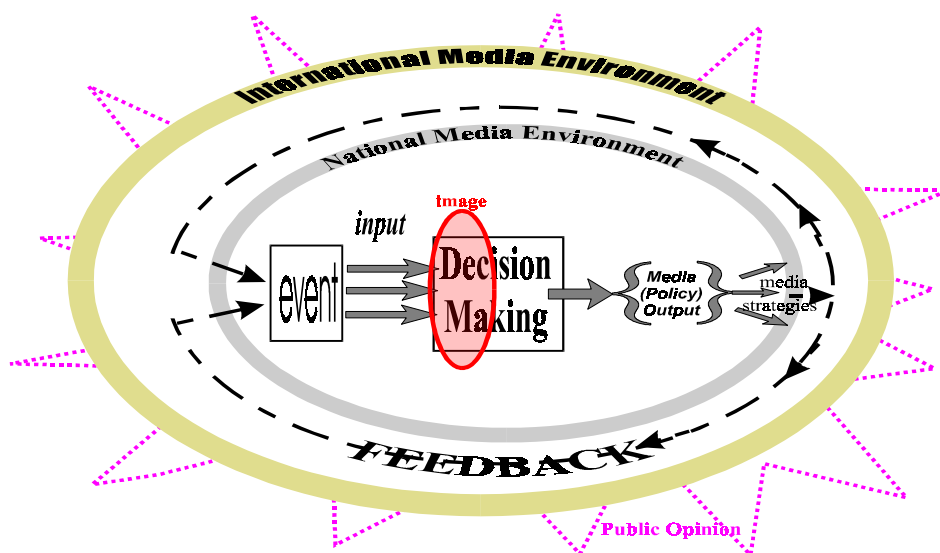


Figure 5:
Complex process

This process is more complex than described, and it may happen that the various phases happen simultaneously, and while studying actual events it may not be easy to identify each of the stages. But it is clear that a decision is not made in a vacuum and that media environments are among the ecologies within which these process take place.

Finally, it should be noted that the framework focuses upon the mass media as an environmental factor, and therefore for analytical purposes disregards other (no less important) environmental dimensions, such as military and economic capabilities, etc. More complex research must incorporate all the dimensions and include in them the media as an equal structural variable, as well as a component of the process.

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