Rethinking the Role of Media in the Outcome of 21. Century Conflicts: A Media-Policy Interaction Approach

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Abstract

The primary objective of this article is to explore the role of media in the outcomes of 21st-century conflicts in the light of two cases: the War on Terror and the 2008-2009 Gaza War. In line with this objective, this study first critically evaluates CNN effect and Manufacturing Consent theories as two main theoretical approaches to the media-politics relations in international conflicts. Secondly, it offers an insight into media-policy interaction model both as a solution to the theoretical deadlock between these theories and as a conceptual framework for understanding the role of media in determining the outcome of 21st-century conflicts. Lastly, the question of ‘To what extent do the media determine the outcome of 21st-century conflicts?’ is answered by analyzing media coverage of the War on Terror and the 2008-2009 Gaza War in the light of media-policy interaction model.
Introduction

With the developments in communication technologies since the 1980’s, the capability of media to provide a constant flow of global real-time news has remarkably increased. In 1989, the real-time coverage of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations by CNN gave it a reputation and role as a news leader which can report events as they break out. As his administration had limited information from the protest sites, even president George H. W. Bush got information from CNN’s coverage to figure out what was happening in Tiananmen Square. The pioneering real-time coverage of Tiananmen not only opened a new phase in news broadcasting but also showed the power of live TV both to attract the attention of public to a certain issue and to impact policy-makers. In a similar vein, in the Persian Gulf War CNN transmitted images and reportage from the front lines at the same time when events occurred. It is believed that images broadcast from the refugee exodus, the so-called Highway of Death, compelled the Bush administration to end the war. With this war reporting CNN emerged once again as a prestigious and reliable news outlet with a considerable political impact on high-level decision-makers, as well as on public. (Bahador, 2007: 3) As former secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger (2002 cited in Zingarelli, 2010: 9) stated “CNN began to influence policymakers because its there all the time.”

Seeing the growing role of live broadcasting in agenda setting and audience gathering, other news agents also reorganized and adjusted themselves according to the prominent example of CNN (Hoge, 1994). The impact of media on policy-making and the conduct of wars continued through crises of the 1990’s like in the cases of Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. In his memoir, former Secretary of State James Baker (1995 cited in Balabanova, 2007: 20) wrote: “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 [times]”. In contemporary conflicts, media increasingly played a complex role as a constitutive part of wars rather than a simple observer of events. The increasing role of media in war and politics has also drawn attentions of many scholars from the 1990’s onwards. The growing body of theory on war reporting acknowledges the impact of media on agenda setting and foreign policy formation within the framework of the ‘the CNN effect’ (Shaw, 1996; Bahador, 2007; Gilboa, 2002). On the contrary, some scholars argue that political elites impel broadcasters to report the global and foreign affairs in a particular way in the sense that news media coverage of foreign affairs is ‘indexed’ in compatible with the government policies and the concerns of political elites (Chomsky and Herman, 1988; Bennett, 1990).

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1 The term ‘CNN effect’ is a communication theory of international relations which implicates the notion that the real-time news coverage of the tragic and conflict-filled stories of contemporary warfare could trigger public resentment and so could provoke policy responses from political elites to a particular event. This supposed effect is also termed as “CNN complex,” “the CNN curve,” and the “CNN factor,” each involves diverse meanings with scholars, journalists and officials. In this article, the CNN effect is loosely utilized as a widely known denomination in the literature.
In this regard the relationship between media coverage and policy-formation is not so clear and still remains inconclusive. Within the wide-ranging debate over this matter scholars have dealt with the number of questions which are not still properly answered. Among them three main questions; ‘Is the news media a decisive actor in determining foreign policy decisions in conflicts?’ or ‘do the media follow the line of ‘their’ government?’ and ‘How does the media-foreign policy relations operate in general and under specific circumstance?’ can be regarded as core ones around which academic debate still goes on today. In response to these set of questions, this article aims to explore the role of media in the outcome of 21st-century conflicts in the light of two cases: the War on Terror and the 2008-2009 Gaza War. While the 2008-2009 Gaza War coverage by Al Jazeera provides an evidence to respond to the first question, the US media coverage of the War on Terror, particularly Iraq War coverage, provides remarkable evidence to answer the second one. Consequently, both cases give an idea about the operation of media-foreign policy relations in general and specific circumstances related to international issues.

In parallel with this purpose, firstly this study critically evaluates two main theoretical approaches to media-politics relations in international conflicts: CNN effect and Manufacturing Consent media theory. Then, it offers an insight into media-policy interaction model both as a solution to the theoretical deadlock between these theories and a conceptual framework for understanding the role of media in determining the outcome of 21st-century conflicts. Lastly, the question of ‘To what extent do the media determine the outcome of 21st-century conflicts?’ is answered by analyzing media coverage of War on Terror and the 2008-2009 Gaza War in the light of media-policy interaction model.

The CNN Effect

The communication revolution in media during 1980’s, symbolized commonly by CNN’s coverage, and enabled the transmission of the information and images of human suffering to the vast majority of individuals around the world. Today, those who do not directly or personally experience the wars get involved in contemporary conflicts because of the news media. As Blumler and Gurevitch (2000: 161) indicate the saturation of the media with real time coverage of the top events ‘ensures that almost everyone, even some who “don’t want to know,” will be reached by news about major political events and conflicts’. Therefore contemporary conflicts are also characterized by the greater involvement of spectators living thousands of miles away from the conflict zones. The tragic and conflict-filled stories of wars like Iraq, Bosnia, Haiti, and Somali attract public attention and so impel policy-makers to respond promptly to news accounts. This is how ‘the CNN effect’ comes into existence. Yet, the CNN effect is not so simple. It is understood and utilized differently by scholars. As Livingston (1997: 291) states, ‘despite numerous symposia, books, articles, and research fellowships devoted to unravelling the CNN effect, success at clarifying it has been minimal’.

Broadly speaking, Livingston (2000) has categorized the CNN effect into three main types as the agenda setting effect, the impediment effect, and the accelerant effect. This categorization reveals how and in what ways media impacts the policy-makers, as well
as public opinion. First, the agenda setting effect refers to the impact of news media to impel policy-makers through public opinion to implement a certain policy or to rearrange government’s course of action. The agenda setting implies that the mass media triggers the public awareness by reporting images, news of conflict zones and suffering people that public demands policy actions from their government even when inappropriate. More precisely the causal mechanism of the agenda setting usually operates in the following way (Jakobsen, 2000: 132).

Figure 1. The Causal Mechanism of the Agenda Setting

This process is often applicable to the impact of media coverage on humanitarian intervention. In the case of NATO intervention in Kosovo War, in the aftermath of the Gornje Obrinje massacre tragedies of suffering people become visible to people around the world through television news coverage which caused widespread resentment among public and opinion leaders. By doing so the media channelled the course of conflict by pushing external governments to undertake a military intervention in response to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. As a result of striking news coverage and growing public
pressure the National Security Council needed to hold an emergency meeting and issued an ultimatum to Slobodan Milasović-withdraw troops or face firepower (Bahador, 2007: 142). But, media effect is not so simple and unidirectional as it can be asserted relying on this case. It does not exist in every case of humanitarian crisis and varies from one case to another according to factors such as policy certainty, media independency, news framing. As Robinson (2002) argues, the CNN effect does not exist if media is non-influential and political élites are setting the news broadcasting. In terms of the CNN effect in humanitarian intervention, there are two main inadequacies. First, the CNN effect does not provide satisfactory explanation why the news coverage is influential in pushing policy-makers to undertake humanitarian intervention in some cases and not in others. Second, the CNN effect also seems inadequate to provide evidence for or against the claim that media triggers policy-makers to take action in humanitarian sense by reporting tragedies of war-torn people.

Second, the accelerant effect of news coverage refers to media’s capability to speed up the decision making process in the crisis time. The emotive news coverage of war zones places timing and pressure on politicians to respond quickly to the reports since they need to appease growing public resentment due to their political concerns. Moreover, they sometimes feel themselves morally responsible to relieve the humanitarian crisis as soon as possible. In the aftermath of Bosnian crisis British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd stated that the novelty is not ‘in mass rape, in the shooting of civilians, in war crimes, in ethnic cleansing, in the burning of towns and villages’, but ‘that a selection of these tragedies is now visible, within hours, to people around the world. People reject and resent what is going on because they know it more visibly than before (1999 cited in Balabanova, 2007: 6). This statement shows how the accelerant effect impels policymakers to respond quickly to human suffering and globally visible humiliation in order to appease the growing public resentment. However, in respect to policy formation, the accelerant effect may lead to impulsive and ill-defined policies. As Bahador (2007: 61) states “Of course, policy substance might also be influenced in directly by the need to generate policy faster making it more likely for misunderstandings and errors to form part of the policy”

Lastly, the impediment effect refers to news coverage impact on military strategy and action. The reportage of dead soldiers, war zones and collateral damage can lead public to question the purpose of a given war or conflict. The impediment effect can hamper military operations due to the public outcry it generates. Vietnam War can be considered as a prominent example of impediment effect of public outcry on US military action in Vietnam. At that time CNN did not exist, but the critical television coverage of war zone and deaths of American soldiers led to an impediment effect by creating public outrage that worries policy makers to action of some sort. In a similar vein, the impediment effect once again came into existence in Somalia case when Clinton administration wondered if undertaking a humanitarian intervention in Rwanda is worth the risk regarding the effect of related news coverage.

In fact, the link between media coverage and policy-making is not so clear and it can not be regarded as a simplistic cause and effect relationship. For instance, the
media—foreign policy relations during the Somalia intervention reveals that the link between media and policy formation is far more complex and situational rather than being unidirectional. In Somalian case, US government adviser on Somalia pushed broadcasters to transmit the horrific news and images of the conflict to the public in order to generate widespread consciousness and resentment about Somalia. By looking into US intervention in Somalia, Livingston and Eachus (1995) indicate how media coverage can be set by government officials in compatible with a certain policy in order to galvanize public support for undertaking humanitarian intervention. They draw a conclusion that CNN effect is in operation if journalists independently set the news agenda. However, one can hardly find concrete link between media coverage and foreign policy decision when political elites are influential in news agenda setting.

Therefore, questioning the CNN effect in respect to ‘who controls the media’ is a crucial and primary starting point in analyzing the complexity of media-foreign policy relation in conflict times. In this regard, what really missing in the CNN effect is the precise impact which the role of policy certainty and political elites has on the formation of news media coverage in conformity with what can loosely be called the official agenda of government policy. Thus, rather than unidirectionally presuming that the news media coverage influence and compels governments to act in a certain way in respect to a given matter in international politics, the media, as being exposed to power politics, is also impelled by political elites to read the global issues in a particular way. Therefore, this reveals that media-policy relations are a double-edged sword in which the news media coverage is also determined and hedged by political elites and the official agenda as it is propounded by the manufacturing consent thesis.

The Manufacturing Consent Thesis

Due to the complexity of media-policy relations, the CNN effect thesis has been exposed to criticism from both scholars and journalists. Because media occasionally plays a servile and cheerleader role in regard to government decisions and policies related to international issues. Therefore, media impact on foreign policy is also regarded as limited and inoperative in scholarly debate. Advocates of this thesis argue that the news agenda is not independently set by reporters and editors and it is not free from the political pressure and effects of policy-makers. Due to their economic interest and institutional ties, news outlets are in the need of setting their agendas by taking account of the priorities of political elites and government policies. Thus rather than assuming that reporters act as impartial observers and critics who has an indirect constitutive role in policy-making process this thesis asserts that media plays a subordinate and non-influential role in foreign policy formation. Substantial conceptualization of this view comes from the work of (Bennett, 1990). For him, news media coverage of foreign affairs is ‘indexed’ according to interests of political elites and the political dynamics. If media coverage is critical of governmental policy, this reflects a ‘professional responsibility [for journalists] to highlight important conflicts and struggles within the centres of power’ (Bennett, 1990: 110). The crucial point in this evaluation is that the media coverage can be critical of governmental policy when
there is a division and strain among political elites on executive policy, but the overall role of media in policy making process is passive and highly limited in final analysis. For instance, unlike the mainstream approach to Vietnam case accepted as a prominent example of the media influence on government policy, Hallin (1986 cited in Balabanova, 2007) argues that Vietnam war reportage represents a case of media responding to the divisions among policy-makers by broadcasting critically. He states that ‘when consensus is strong, they tend to stay within the limits of political discussion it defines; when it begins to break down, coverage becomes increasingly critical and diverse in the viewpoints it represents, and increasingly difficult for officials to control’ (1994 cited in Balabanova, 2007: 4).

Despite having an explanatory power in some cases, the CNN effect and the manufacturing consent thesis seem limited in explaining the dialectical and situational relation between media and policy-makers and they seem not to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of media-policy relations regarding international issues and conflicts. In plain words these theories are in clear confrontation with each other by viewing media-policy relations from opposite dimensions. The CNN effect provides a simplistic and unidirectional cause and effect explanation to the debate of media-policy making relationship which fails to grasp the other constitutive factors and determinant dynamics in policy making process. On the other hand, the manufacturing consent theory overlooks the role of critical media coverage in foreign policy formation by viewing media as a passive entity, easy to manipulate by the political elites. For those who adhere to manufacturing consent theory, news coverage may be critical of government policy when there exists an elite conflict and a policy uncertainty over international issues.

Therefore, the link between news media and policy-making appears far more complex, situational, and interwoven than these two approaches imply. Each fails to determine dialectical causality relation between media and policy-makers which necessitates constructive approach to figure out a way to resolve the theoretical impasse between CNN effect and Manufacturing Consent theory. In the narrowest sense, the news media and policy makers influence one another depending on single or mutual existence of some key factors such as policy uncertainty, framing, and the worthiness of critical broadcasting for the media. Taken together, these factors offer guidance to move forward in solving the theoretical impasse arguing that media has an impact upon government and frames reports in a way that is critical of executive policy when there exists a policy uncertainty and a room for the media to press for a particular course of action. Interactively, when the government policy and political elites have a certain policy they utilize, their credibility and substantial resources as leverage to influence new media output in the sense that the media contributes to manufacture consent in line with the official agenda of government policy. Therefore, advancing upon CNN effect and manufacturing consent offers an alternative two way conception of media-policy interaction as it is expounded in the next section.
The policy-media interaction model

In order to overcome these problems Robinson (1999, 2000a, 2000b) has developed the policy-media interaction model and applied it in the analysis of the Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, US intervention in Bosnia and Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. According to him (2000b) critical media framing has influence on policy makers and so policy formation when there is no a clear, well-articulated executive policy and elite consensus on it. However, if the government has decisive policy and well-articulated objectives media influence on policy formation is limited. Even if media coverage contains a mix of critical and supportive coverage due to the existence of elite dissensus over policy it is unlikely for media to affect the policy makers who already set on a particular course of action. Despite the critically framed coverage in media in certain circumstances of elite dissensus, the general attitude of media remains relatively uncritical and tends to reflect the agendas of political elites when there exists elite consensus over policy.

Within the framework of the policy-media interaction model, policy certainty and news framing are two key factors which form the basis for analyzing under which conditions media influence policy makers and policy formation. Robinson (2002: 26) defines policy-making as ‘the outcome of a complex bargaining process between a set of sub-systems in government’. Therefore, policy certainty, as he points out, is a consensus and coordination among the sub-systems of the government on a certain issue. Framing refers to way of explaining, conveying and making sense of events which create particular understandings and interpretation of events in the mind of readers. In terms of media-policy relations, if the lack of consensus and coordination among the sub-system of government is coupled with critically framed news reporting, advocating a particular course of action, government become more vulnerable to media effect. In this situation policy makers needs to do something as a response to news coverage aiming to appease the growing public concern and so to maintain the political support and ground they rely on.

In this sense the policy-media interaction model moves beyond a simple effect/non-effect dichotomy in media theory. It offers a two-way understanding of the media-policy relationship that explains the conditions under which the impact of media coverage on policy outcomes comes into being. On that sense, it provides a comprehensive approach to the matter of media-policy relations in contemporary conflicts in 21st-century.

Media and 21st century Conflicts: Two Cases

As Robinson (2000b) points out in the case of high levels of policy certainty and elite consensus the executive tends to ‘sell’ policy and gain public support for their course of action through influencing news agenda. In this case, we should also expect that media coverage tends to be overwhelmingly compatible with the dominant discourse of policy makers and supportive of the existing course of action in foreign policy. Despite the critically framed coverage in specific issues at a certain level, critical media coverage is unlikely to influence foreign policy outcomes. This scenario and the pattern of media-
policy relations are obviously evident in the case of US media coverage of war on terror. After the September 11 attacks, the US media offered enthusiastic support to American policy-makers in undertaking military action against Afghanistan and Iraq by preparing American public opinion for future attack through pro-government and pro-war news coverage. Instead of questioning the claims about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and Saddam Hussein’s links with al Qaeda and the September 11 attacks, the mass media control the scope of public debate about war on terror in Iraq and prevent the majority of American public from viewing the issue from a different perspective by presenting certain facts and ignoring others. Despite remarkable evidence contrary to the claims of WMD in Iraq, such as Scott Ritter’s –former weapons inspector- statement about 90-95 percent disarmament of Iraq and Hussein Kamel’s, defected highest-ranking Iraqi official, claims about the destruction of chemical and biological weapons after the Gulf War, US media coverage ignored and buried the questions about WMDs. (Kumar, 2006) Moreover, some broadcasting organizations even criticized those who question the credibility of the official claims about WMDs.

The coverage of the claims about Iraq’s links with al Qaeda and the September 11 attacks shared similarities with the coverage of WMDs. After the September 11 attacks Bush administration tried hard to find a single link between Iraq and September 11 attacks. Depending on Czech intelligence It was discovered that the alleged leader of the September 11 attacks, Mohammed Atta, had talked with an Iraqi agent in Prague in April, 2001. Although this allegation was discredited by CIA, MI6 and MOSSAD, news about the link between Iraq and the September 11 had wide media coverage in US mainstream outlets. The impact of misleading media coverage on public opinion was partially reflected by a poll taken in early 2003 which revealed widespread public misconception about the Iraq. According to poll almost half of the Americans believed that Iraq had connection with 9/11 attacks and many believed that there were Iraqi hijackers in planes, though there was not a single Iraqi on planes (Kumar 2006).

US media coverage of war on terror was also highly supportive during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. By certain ways such as controlling information about war, news framing, self-censorship and misleading image production of war zone and combatants, media played a crucial role in constituting and mobilizing the support of US public for war and legitimatizing the actions of policy-makers and military forces in the eyes of public. For instance, In Iraq war CNN established a system of “script approval” which operated as a layer of filter in setting the tone of war coverage according to government concerns (Kumar, 2006). In this regard the selection of images and words in war reporting took an important place in creating a certain discourse of war and providing justification for the policies and actions. For example, news media coverage purposely depicted and referred to Iraqi fighters as ‘gunmen,’ or ‘insurgents,’ rather than an army, soldiers, or even guerrillas in order to delegitimize the position of Iraqi fighter in the eyes of public (Altheide, 2007). A similar attitude was also adopted in respect to death in Iraq war. While civilian death caused by Iraqi forces or Iraqi combatants are called as brutality, barbarism or terrorism, violence against Iraqi civilians by American troops is depicted and considered as a ‘regular occurrence.’ by mainstream media reporting. As Altheide (2007) emphasizes the selectively framing of war news couple with media discourse of
marginalized other, created fear and uncertain future provided a suitable ground for US policy-maker to pursue their foreign policy objectives without facing a serious objection from public. Furthermore, exaggerative coverage of terror as a central risk and safety threat to US citizen enables policy-makers to control public through domestic and international surveillance. A discourse of fear was systematically constructed by US media coverage which provide an artificial rationale for comprehensive domestic and international surveillance and a pretext for overaggressive US action against Iraq.

Unlike the US media coverage of War on Terror, the media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2008-2009 by Al Jazeera reflects media’s impact on decision-makers by some accounts. As Robinson (2000b) stresses if there is elite debates over an international issue and an uncertainty in policy the media can play a key role in triggering political action and policy change. In this sense, the 2008-2009 Gaza war presents an eminent example in which Al Jazeera effect at work in the course of foreign policy by accelerating policy decision by governments and other actors. The news broadcasting of the usage of illegal chemical weapon –white phosphorus air attacks- by Israeli forces and civilian suffering in Gaza put considerable pressure on regional and international actors by attracting the attention of international community as well as Arabs. At the outset, because of the decision of Israel policy circles not to let journalist cross the border, much of the reports on Gaza were accessible only through local journalist such as Hazem Balousha (The Guardian), Rushdi Abu Aluf (BBC), Talal Abu Rahmeh (CNN, France 2) and Taghreed El-Khodary (New York Times) who reported on the high civilian casualties, desperate hospitals, running of medicine and overwhelmed by war victims. These reports created tremendous impact on public opinion both in the western and Arab world. Particularly, the reports on falling white phosphorus bombs on the densest population concentration on earth triggered large-scale demonstrations in the United States and Europe, bursting out outrage at Israel’s “disproportionate response” and giving out with a hostile anti-Zionist rhetoric. For instance, an anti-Israel rally called “Stop the War” was held in Hyde Park London whose motto was “We are Hamas.” Right after the demonstration, a number of renowned public figures published a letter in the London Times (11 January 2009) under the title of “Israel’s Bombardment of Gaza Is not Self-Defence – It’s a War Crime.” News media coverage on Gaza had a broad repercussion in the United States as well. Particularly, Al Jazeera coverage on the War on Gaza called American public attention to Israeli-caused humanitarian catastrophe. During the Gaza war, visitors to Al Jazeera’s website increased by 600% and about 60% of the increase came from the United States (USA Today, 2009).

In fact, Al Jazeera coverage did not initiate government action in military sense but as journalist Robin Wright (2009 cited in Zingarelli, 2010: 108). said ‘it lead to a kind of alarm among leaders like they have never felt before in the history of Arab-Israeli conflict. The emotional coverage of war as an epic humanitarian suffering initiated public concern and worldwide protest against the war. This brought the Palestinian issue back on the top of agendas of Arab states and thus accelerated political response to end the war. As Hamdi Qandil, an Arab Journalist stated ‘the media successfully created a real Arab public opinion against the Israeli aggression so that it pressured neighbouring countries to call for an end to hostilities’ (2009 cited in Zingarelli, 2010: 96). In this regard, Gaza
war coverage partially set the political agendas of regional governments by rearranging policy priorities. The Gaza war coverage did not only reinforce public anger against Israeli aggression in Arab world it also attract the attention of international public. With broadcasting of pictures of humanitarian suffering and the usage of white phosphorus by Israeli forces, grass root civil societies became more aware of the significance of the issue and began to call into question the purpose of the war. This accelerated calls for ceasefire and raised as an obstacle for Israeli policy makers to further their military campaign in order to eliminate Hamas and change the domestic political structure in Gaza. In a nutshell, as it discussed so far the critically framed media coverage of the 2008-2009 Gaza war reflects media’s impact on decision-makers by some accounts. With the absence of a clear and well-articulated executive policy regarding the Gaza War, the critical news media coverage triggered the public concern and worldwide protest against the war which eventually displayed an agenda setting function by pressuring both neighbouring countries and international community to call for an end to humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Moreover, the growing outrage at Israel’s disproportionate response due to real time coverage of humanitarian suffering called into the question the purpose of war and put pressure on Isreali military forces to further the war in order to finish off Hamas and restructure socio-political structure of Gaza as they had intended at the outset.

**Conclusion**

In the light of these two cases, it can be argued that the impact of media coverage on the outcome of 21st-century conflicts cannot be explained by the operation of media-policy relations in a one-way direction, with either the government or the media. In fact, the role of media in the formation of foreign policy is far complex and situational rather than the CNN effect thesis assert. On the other hand, the manufacturing consent theory appears inadequate to explain how the growing role of media and increased speed of communication put pressure on decision-makers in making political choices and deciding priorities in times of globally visible humanitarian crisis. The aforementioned two cases present remarkable evidence that media-policy relations are inextricably related to two main factors: policy certainty and the type of media framing. As in the case of US media coverage on Iraq war, news coverage tended to be supportive of the decisive and carefully considered US foreign policy based on elite consensus and national interest. Even critically framed, news coverage in some cases like the US intelligence operations against German and Italian citizens did not influence the course of US foreign policy, increased US intelligence operations and the surveillance worldwide. On the other side news coverage of 2008-2009 Gaza war by Al Jazeera presents a different case in which critically framed media coverage put pressure on decision-makers and change the context in which foreign policy decisions are taken. Consequently, the interplay between news media and foreign policy-making process comes into being and operates according to mutual existence of specific circumstances associated to policy certainty, elite consensus, news worthiness and the type of news framing. Critically framed media coverage seems to be influential on foreign policy formation process in the absence of a clear and well-articulated executive policy when policy makers are not decisive to implement a certain
policy. Otherwise, rather than being effective on policy-makers and foreign policy making process, media coverage appears to be remarkably influenced by policy-makers in line with a certain executive policy.

References


