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PRESS-STATE RELATIONS IN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

Media coverage has become one important aspect of US foreign policy-making in the post-Cold War era. No recent study addressing the decision-making process in the US could overlook the vital power of the media, either through its ability to shape public opinion or its influence over policy-makers. Throughout the Cold War era, the influence of media coverage on the making of foreign policy was widely recognised in academic as well as policy circles. The end of the Cold War, and particularly the 1991 Gulf War, paved the way for the media to gain further influence and, according to some critics, assume a role in the making of foreign policy.

This chapter examines the rising importance of the media in the post-Cold War era and the role it plays in the making of US foreign policy. The expansion of media power is assessed in the light of two factors: the emergence of a new generation of communication technologies and the collapse of the old international system. Examining media power requires looking at theories of state-press relations and foreign policy in the US. The focus is upon the two dominant approaches: the autonomous model (the CNN effect) and the corporate interest model (Manufacturing Consent- MC).

THE MEDIA AND FOREIGN POLICY

The Vietnam experience forms the backdrop of the excessive sensitivity of American policy-makers towards the media. Vietnam left deep bitterness and frustration in the foreign policy establishment, among the public and in academia. The idea that the US was defeated by a small and poorly equipped Third World nation was hard to accept. In political circles the media was blamed for the military failure whereas some in the academic community placed the criticism on the US democratic system. On the political level, President Richard Nixon exclaimed to his staff: "[t]he press is the enemy" (cited in Lewis, 1987: 13). In academia, George Kennan denounced democracy and considered it as a hindrance to the conduct of a successful foreign policy. He believed that preserving democratic values and the achievement of a high degree of effectiveness in foreign policy were two incompatible objectives and that one had to be sacrificed if the other was to survive (1978: 7-8). Samuel Huntington wrote in 1975: "some of the problems of governance in the United States today stem from an excess of democracy". For him lesser participation on the part of domestic actors was necessary to "enable democracy to function effectively" (1975: 113-114). Most threatening to political authority, Huntington noticed, was the national media which had become

a "new source of national power in 1970" (Ibid: 98-99).[1] John Gaddis concurred and explained the success of Stalin's foreign policy during the early years of the Cold War on the grounds that "[t]he Russian dictator was immune from pressure of Congress, public opinion, or the press" (1972: 360).

The idea that the media was responsible for the Vietnamese debacle was disputed in more sophisticated studies (Hallin, 1984 and 1989). Nevertheless, a wide conviction that the media could drive foreign policy persisted. Michael Mandelbaum argued that TV coverage of the Vietnam War directly contributed to the loss of the war (1982: 157). Bill Kovach also believed that media coverage was responsible for the military failure. He made a distinction between the political and military aspects of the war. In the early stages of the conflict, Kovach argued, the political aspects were covered by the press in Washington, whereas the military aspect was completely overlooked. As the television moved in to cover the military activities on the ground, journalists "recognized that the political story was not being told in Washington", therefore, "they moved in to occupy the territory. Shifting their focus to the political story as seen from the battlefield" (1996: 173).

[1] Huntington advocated an oppositional media thesis and argued that the media in the US had transformed during the 1960s and 1970s from a conservative and loyal institution into an oppositional institution to political authority. See Daniel C. Hallin (1984: 2-5).

The media within this context was still seen largely as a potential and actual constraint on the making of foreign policy, rather than a participant in the decision-making process. As a consequence, policy-makers emphasised the need of having the media on the side of the government before engaging in any foreign venture. In his memoirs, Cyrus Vance, former Secretary of State, pointed to the interplay between American domestic politics and foreign policy: "our foreign policy should be understood and supported by the American people". Without that support, he added, our policies were "vulnerable to misunderstanding, public disillusionment and repudiation" (1983: 27-28). Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington [both served later in the Carter administration, the former as a National Security Advisor (NSA) and the latter as a member of the National Security Council (NSC)] demanded that the executive must enlighten the public about global complexities and generate support for their policies (1964: 387-388). Without domestic support, foreign policy, in their opinion, was doomed to suffer setbacks.

As the Cold War drew to a close the media started to look for a role to play in the foreign policy-decision-making. Marlin Fitzwater, White House Press Secretary in the first Bush administration, gave a lively picture of the pressure to impose sanctions against China applied by TV images of students being smashed by tanks in Tiananmen Square in June

1989. Fitzwater said: "[w]e were getting reporting cables from Beijing [meaning the Chinese government], but they did not have the sting, the demand for a government response that the television picture had" (cited in Hoge, Jr. 1994: 140).

The sheer force of the media in influencing foreign policy was to be demonstrated further in the aftermath of the Cold War. The 1991 Gulf War marked a new era for media ambitions. Here, the media started to claim a role in the making of foreign policy. The images transmitted live from Baghdad stunned the public but also drew significant attention in policy circles. John Dumbrell wrote: "[o]nce he had gone to war, Bush was able to operate with little concern for Congress, but could not afford to ignore the media" (1997: 180). The power of the media projected during that crisis was accompanied by a keen tendency in policy circles not to allow it to dictate the foreign policy agenda. Particularly when military action was considered, policy-makers were to show their utmost determination that under whatever circumstances not to lose a public relations battle at home before winning a war abroad (Taylor, 1992: 24-26; Bennett, 1994: 168-169). Sustaining public support through proper media coverage was considered indispensable if the war objectives were to be achieved.[1] General Norman Schwarzkopf, Supreme Commander of

[1] Initiating a public relations campaign at home prior to any military engagement abroad became part and parcel of the decision making process in the US. In the winter of 1998, Eric Alterman argued that as the US was preparing to launch an attack on Iraq after Baghdad refused to let the UNSCOM

the US-led coalition during the war, pointed out that "[n]o one wants to go to war, but if you go, you like to think that your country is behind you" (cited in Pyle, 1991: 41).

The Gulf War was not only a virtual declaration of the collapse of the old world system and the advent of a new political era, but also resulted in the emergence of a new non-state actor that came to affect both US foreign policy and world politics. This actor is widely known as the CNN effect. The question here is whether the CNN effect is myth or reality?

THE CNN EFFECT / MC DEBATE

The end of the Cold War triggered a fierce debate in the academic community over the role of the media and its relationship to foreign policy. The new set of conditions established by the shift in the international system provided the elements for initiating the debate. The spectrum of opinions expressed among scholars ranged between viewing the media as a principal actor in policy-making, influencing policy-making, or still a vehicle for news supplied by policy-makers;

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inspectors carry out their disarming mission, the Clinton administration "contacted top executives at CNN and arranged for a world-wide broadcast of a national 'town meeting'". The meeting was attended by top administration officials: Secretary of State, Secretary of Defence and the NSA (1998: 12). Although the meeting was perceived to be a public relations disaster, it showed the importance attached to winning the support of the public instead of leaving them an easy target for alternative media coverage.

autonomous, relatively autonomous, or externally controlled. This debate is known in academic circles as the CNN effect versus MC.

THE CNN EFFECT SCHOOL[3]

The CNN phenomenon principally emerged with the eruption of a Middle Eastern crisis (the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), where the Cable News Network (CNN) played a vital part in the war's public diplomacy (Bennett, 1994: 168). Philip Taylor wrote:

It was already apparent that, by providing a public forum to the traditionally secretive world of diplomacy, CNN was quite simply changing the rules of international politics and that, as a consequence, it was also likely to alter the way in which modern warfare would be projected onto the world's television screens (1992: 7).

The role of the CNN effect in influencing policy-making was limited, however, during that war due to tight military censorship;[4] rather the phenomenon took shape after the end of the war, with the media image of Iraqi Kurds driven out of their homes after rebelling against

[3] According to Piers Robinson "The 'CNN Effect' is often used as shorthand for the media driven foreign policy thesis largely because CNN epitomised the globalized real-time environment and certainly not because it was only CNN itself that commentators thought was driving policy" (2000: 1).
[4] For the military censorship employed by the US government during the Gulf War, see Taylor (1992) Carruthers (2000) Smith (1992) MacArthur (1992) and Kellner (1992).

Saddam's regime. Martin Shaw believed that on humanitarian grounds (the fear of ethnic cleansing and the use of chemical weapons to suppress the rebels) and with the international community already mobilised against Saddam, the media urged the "free" world to intervene (1993: 79-88). However, it was Michael Mandelbaum who triggered the debate in an article published in *Foreign Policy* in 1994. Mandelbaum argued that with the Cold War over:

> for the United States...what lies behind intervention...is neither gold, nor glory, nor strategic calculation. It is, rather, sympathy. The televised pictures of starving people in northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia created a political clamor to feed them, which propelled the U.S. military into these three distant parts of the world (1994: 16).

Mandelbaum's argument generated more controversy at the time than was expected; policy-makers took a supportive stand in general, whereas political scientists and media scholars were divided over the issue.

The ambiguous motives behind US intervention in the post-Cold War era were the key factors behind the confusion. US intervention during the Cold War was driven almost exclusively by the great rivalry

with the Soviet Union and involved recognisable national interests.[6] The motives for intervention in the post-Cold War era were particularly unclear. As a consequence, Mandelbaum's argument gained some grounds. Interventions in northern Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and particularly in Somalia in 1992, were widely understood at least partly as being triggered by media coverage of countries trapped by ethnic cleansing, mass killing, oppression, military rule, massive human rights violations and people torn by civil war, all urging the international community to come to their rescue (See Roberts, 1993).

The case of Somalia captured the attention for three major reasons:

1. US national interests, whether economic or strategic, were not clear.[7]

2. The event captured widespread American attention at the time due to extensive media coverage.

3. Principal policy-makers claimed that the news media provided their sole motive to intervene, basing their argument on humanitarian ground- President George Bush claimed that "it was television pictures of starving Somalis that led him to order the use of U.S. troops in Somalia" (cited in Livingston and Riley Jr., 1999: 16). General Colin Powell (at the time JCS Chairman) was quoted as saying:

[6] See, for example, Morgenthau (1967).
[7] Some suggested, however, that US oil companies had had large concessions in the country rewarded by the pro-US ousted dictator, Muhammed Siad Barre. See Fineman (1993).

[t]he world had a dozen other running sores that fall, but television hovered over Somalia and wrenched our hearts, night after night, with images of people starving to death before our eyes" (cited in Dumbrell, 1997: 187).

Marlin Fitzwater, White House Press Secretary, supported these claims and stated:

[w]e heard it from every corner that something had to be done. Finally the pressure was too great…TV tipped us over the top…I could not stand to eat my dinner watching TV at night. It made me sick (cited in Gowing, 1994: 68).

THE CNN EFFECT AND THE US INTERVENTION IN SOMALIA

A wide range of opinions was expressed about the role of the media in forcing the US to intervene in Somalia. In this section, we present the arguments of scholars and media experts. We start with those who confirmed the existence of the CNN effect and, thus, believed that a media-driven foreign policy model had emerged in the post-Cold War era and then move gradually to reach the other end of the spectrum to meet

those who denied the existence of the CNN effect and, thus, took us back to the MC school of the Cold War.

Conclusions on the role played by the media in the decision leading to the US intervention in Somalia varied according to the methods used to study the case. Studies appeared immediately after the US decided to intervene in Somalia, and based merely on scant observation, were inclined to accept the official story that the news media had emotionally influenced policy-makers and forced them to act. In an article published in the *NYT*, George F. Kennan espoused this idea wherein he argued that media coverage of the humanitarian crisis triggered the intervention. "[T]he reaction would have been unthinkable without" television exposure of the "suffering of the starving" Somalis (1993). Jessica Mathews (1994)[v], Adam Roberts (1993: 434 and 446), Bernard Cohen (1994) and Michael Mandelbaum (1994) have all expressed similar opinions.

Around the same time, another line of argument emerged, based largely on interviews, accepting the official story but conditionally. It argued that the CNN was likely to play a role in directing US foreign policy but only if the leadership was divided and lacked a clear vision in the foreign policy domain (Hoge, 1994: 138; Gowing, 1994: 85-86; Minear et al., 1997: 73; Strobel, 1997: 219). James F. Hoge, Jr. accepted

[v] Jessica Mathews argued that "in the absence of a post-Cold War doctrine....televised events that stir emotions have an unprecedented ability to manipulate policy" (1994).

the story of a media-driven foreign policy only in the case of Somalia basing his argument on the "absence of articulated policy" which forced George Bush "[i]n his waning days as president" to react "to televised pictures of starving Somalis" (1994: 139). Nik Gowing (1994) and Warren Strobel (1997) examined the official account of the decision to intervene in Somalia and also accepted the argument that media coverage had paved the way for intervention "television got the US into Somalia...and got the US out" (Gowing, 1994: 68). Nevertheless, Gowing and Strobel rejected the claim that television was the only force behind the intervention, but one amongst several factors that produced the necessary conditions for the decision. What the media could do was shaping "the environment in which decisions were made" (Strobel, 1997: 142). The conclusion was that media coverage forms one aspect of a structure within which policy-makers work with constraints and choices in mind. Among these constraints are public opinion, group interests and Congress.

The use of a case-study approach with relevant data involved led to the emergence of a new argument disputing the assumption that the news media had obtained a role in foreign policy-making (Livingston and Bachus, 1995; Mermin, 1997). Livingston and Bachus examined in parallel the decision-making process and media coverage of the Somali crisis and used news sources as a yardstick to measure the role played by

the media in driving foreign policy. The authors discovered that the decision was the result of conventional pressure group politics. It was mid-level political actors (junior policy-makers and congressmen) who fed the media with a consistent daily news line and, thus, set its agenda in an attempt to influence principal policy-makers and push them to act accordingly (1995: 422-426). Jonathan Mermin reached the same conclusion that it was mainly congressmen who drew the attention of the media to Somalia and for domestic reasons (elections) the administration decided to take the initiative from its opponents and head towards intervention (1997: 396). Mermin argued "the framing of the crisis in Somalia as a humanitarian disaster that the United States could do something about [did] not appear on television until it had appeared in Washington first" (1997: 397).

By focusing on news sources, the case-study approach had in fact turned the prevalent assumption up side down, that is, the agenda was set for the media by policy-makers (no matter how junior they were). Nevertheless, by placing the focus on news sources these studies ignored the question of news effects and failed to provide an answer to whether or not media coverage had affected the course of policy after the intervention in Somalia became a matter of public debate.

THE CNN EFFECT, SOMALIA, AND FURTHER INTERVENTIONS

Further, post-Somalia, research was undertaken to examine the role of media coverage in setting the agenda for humanitarian intervention. One approach examined the role of the news media in multilateral policy-making intervention. The focus was upon news effects, rather than news sources, and the argument provided that there were three "pathways" in which the news media could affect policy-making. The first was the "direct path of influence" in which the news media could emotionally affect principal policy-makers and urge them to do something. The second was the "indirect path of influence" in which the news media might generate sympathy among the public whom in turn might place pressure on policy-makers to do something. The third pathway was "a variation on the two first". Here, "policy makers rely on media content as a surrogate measure of public opinion, or implicitly regard media content as an expression of public opinion" (Livingston and Riley Jr, 1999: 5). Public opinion in this case did not mean the general public but "the public-foreign policy-making elites" (Ibid: 22). After carefully examining these three models and applying them to the multilateral decision to intervene in Eastern Zaire in 1996, authors of this approach found no

evidence that the news media had pushed policy-makers to take that decision. The conclusion was that the news media might "have produced an emotional effect" on policy-makers that sparked "direct interest in the crisis" and that the media might "have created a perception among policy-makers that the public's attention was on Zaire". (1999: 21-22).

The three "pathways" approach tried to provide an explanation for certain aspects of media coverage (for example, when and how it influenced policy-making) but many other aspects were left unanswered. On one hand, the relationship between media content and public preferences has never been systematically proven.[4] The first pathway, on the other hand, was insufficient to explain the selective nature of media coverage and its influence on policy-makers. For example, why did the news media force policy-makers to act in some cases (the 1991 Kurdish crisis in northern Iraq and the 1992 Somali civil war) whereas it failed in others (Rwanda in 1994 and Chechnya in 1999)?

To fill the gaps left by the three "pathways" approach, another line of argument emerged whereby it tried to answer these questions by means of five variables believed to have determined the US interventionist policy in the post-Cold War era. These were the clarity of the case for intervention on humanitarian grounds, the availability of domestic support, the CNN effect, the national interests involved and, finally, the

[4] See, for example, Ben H. Bagdikian (1985: 107).

chances of success (Jakobsen, 1996). These variables were then applied to five cases of intervention in the post-Cold War era, three of which involved military action on behalf of the US. These were "Operation Desert Storm" to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the establishment of the "Safe Havens" zone in northern Iraq and "Operation Restore Hope" in Somalia. In the first case the conclusion was that the CNN played no role in pushing the administration to intervene. Rather, the intervention was primarily motivated by strategic and economic interests. The media in this particular event was used to garner domestic and international support for this policy.[1] In the second case, "Safe Havens", the conclusion was that "[s]trategic and economic interests [could] not explain the decision to intervene", therefore, "it was the CNN effect that put the question of intervention on the agenda". In the case of Somalia, it was also the CNN which displayed the humanitarian face of the crisis and the need to intervene. However, Jakobsen maintained, "the CNN effect does not provide the full story. The decision to go in was ultimately decided by good chances of success" (1996: 207-209). The factors involved in the five-variable approach were summarised by Anthony Lake, NSA in the first Clinton administration. Lake stated:

[1] Taylor (1992) Bennett and Paletz (1994) and Bennett (1994) all have confirmed this conclusion.

public pressure for our humanitarian engagement increasingly may be driven by televised images, which can depend in turn on such considerations as where CNN sends its camera crews. But we must bring other considerations to bear as well: cost; feasibility; the permanence of the improvement our assistance will bring; the willingness of regional and international bodies to do their part; and the likelihood that our actions will generate broader security benefits for the people of the region in question (cited in Hoge, Jr. 1994: 138-139).

The five-variable approach was useful; though lacking complete data to support its conclusions. The study did not, for example, follow a thorough examination of media coverage that accompanied each case in parallel with the decision-making process. This was vital in order to assess the effects of the news media on policy-making by identifying the stage at which this coverage was most extensive: before, during, or after the decision to intervene was made.

Hence, a policy-media interaction model emerged, tried to avoid this lapse and brought to the fore one more aspect of state-press-relations. This approach claimed that for a proper understanding of these relations one should focus on the question of certainty on the part of policy-makers regarding an issue and the likelihood of it leading to different media effects on policy. Piers Robinson argued this and relied heavily on

'certain versus uncertain policy' (Gowing, 1994; Strobel, 1997 and Minear et al. 1997). He also made extensive use of other studies which looked at media content analysis 'empathising coverage versus distancing coverage' (Entman, 1991; Preston, 1996).[1] Out of these different studies, Robinson developed a model with which to assess media coverage in terms of CNN effect versus the MC thesis. He concluded that if the government was certain about a policy it was likely to influence the media by feeding journalists with a consistent daily news line. Media coverage in this case was expected to echo the policy of the government and, hence, play the role of MC. Conversely, if the government was uncertain about a policy, the CNN effect was likely to occur. For Robinson "[p]olicy certainty [was] measured in relation to the absence or presence of policy regarding an issue". The absence of policy included "disagreement, conflict of interest or uncertainty within an executive" (1999b: 7; 2000: 3).

The relation between certainty on the part of policy-makers and the content of media coverage was widely recognised in academic as well as policy circles. John Dumbrell argued "the uncertain agenda of post-Cold

[1] Adam F. Simon used this strategy also to assess the relationship between media content and media effect. He studied media effects of international earthquakes and argued that geographical proximity, the severity of casualties, and the number of people affected played a decisive role in deciding the intensity of media coverage. Yet the effect of media intensity on private US citizens was far greater than the effect of the number of people killed in a natural disaster, he argued (1997: 90-91). He also discovered that the impact of media coverage was greater on private US citizens whereas it was limited on US policy-makers and international agencies (Ibid: 84-86).

War foreign policy encourages media irresponsibility" (1997: 180). James F. Hoge, Jr. wrote: "[i]n the absence of persuasive government strategy the media will be catalytic" (1994: 138). Former Secretary of Defence, James Schlesinger, stated: "[i]n the absence of established guideposts our policies will be determined by impulse and image....the plight of the Kurds, or starvation in Somalia, as it appears on the screen". (1993: 18).[11]

The division among the different branches of power regarding a policy and its impact on media coverage was also recognised (Bennett, 1990: 110; Hoge, Jr 1994: 141; Williams, 1993: 313; Hallin, 1984). Different studies have argued that journalists exploited the existence of conflicting views in power circles regarding an issue to decrease the restrictions on free reporting. This could lead to driving public opinion away from the original policies and result in adopting new policy lines through pressuring policy-makers to respond to public demands. Lance Bennett argued that "the outbreak of more frequent elite debates and congressional opposition to presidential foreign policy initiatives provides journalists with a more regular supply of safe, reportable opposition views to put in the news" (1994: 171). John Dumbrell advised

[11] This analysis helps explain media coverage of the economic sanctions against Iraq during the final two years of the Clinton administration. The division among power elites in Washington came as a result of the failed policy of 'dual containment' against the so-called 'rogue states' (Iraq and Iran) and the doubts that were cast upon the ability of sanctions to bring down Saddam's regime. This was also accompanied by criticism of the unbearable humanitarian price paid on the part of the Iraqi people. All these factors made the media critical "but of the execution of policy more than the aims" (Hoge, Jr., 1994: 137).

us to look at this aspect of media activity in the light of the traditional conflict between the different branches of the executive: the NSC, the State Department, the Pentagon and occasionally the CIA over foreign policy orientations and implementations. These different parties, along with Congress, tend to leak information with the aim of undermining the policy of their opponents and weaken their position before the public. "Leaks and trial balloons are effective devices of elite communication" (Dumbrell, 1997: 183; Jamieson, 1996: 117-118 and Hallin, 1984: 12-13).

Furthermore, Piers Robinson seemed to have benefited from the study of Robert M. Entman with regard to media content analysis 'empathising coverage versus distancing coverage'. Entman established his theory of "news framing" which, he claimed, could provide a reasonable explanation for different aspects of media coverage and its relation to policy-making (1991). In "news-framing", Entman emphasised three main aspects of his theory. He started by providing a definition of what news framing means: "Frames reside in the specific properties of the news narrative that encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understandings of them".[17] Second, he defined the elements of news framing: "News frames are constructed

[17] Dorman and Farhang defined news frames as "constructions of social reality that result from journalistic decision making about what information to include in a news story, what language to use, what authorities to cite, which nuance to emphasize, and so on" (1987: 8).

from and embodied in the key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasised in a news narrative". Third, he provided the mechanism of how news framing works: "By providing, repeating, and thereby reinforcing words and visual images that reference some ideas but not others, frames work to make some ideas more salient in the text, others less so- and other entirely invisible" (1991: 7).

Piers Robinson took all these factors into account and concluded that there was too little media coverage of the Somali case to have been a factor in forcing the US administration to intervene. The study found that media coverage intensified only after President Bush decided to intervene and hence the media served to manufacture consent in favour of intervention (1999b: 31-32). When similar factors were applied to US intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, Robinson concluded that in the first case the media influenced policy because of the lack of certainty. It failed to produce similar effects (influencing policy) in the second case because policy-makers clung to their policy line and resisted media pressure to take intervention beyond the air campaign (2000: 8).

These later studies cast doubts on the argument of the CNN effect and provided substance for the continuing relevance of the MC school established during the Cold War era by a group of scholars, among them were Herman and Chomsky.

THE MC SCHOOL

The study of Herman and Chomsky (1988) covered the interventionist policies of the United States in Latin and Central America, Indochina and elsewhere. The authors concluded that the overall role of the US media was to justify and advocate American foreign policy, and in doing so distort facts, ignore events and misinterpret others. In the absence of state-owned media and formal censorship, Herman and Chomsky identified five factors that help discipline the media and render it a mere propaganda tool in the hands of policy-makers and the business elite. They called these factors "News Filters" (1988: 2-31):[13]

1. Media ownership which falls in the hands of giant mass media firms.[14]

2. Advertising as primary income source of the mass media.[15]

3. Source of information is mainly governmental, business and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources.[16]

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[13] Herman believed that "[s]elf-censorship, market forces, and the norms of news practices may produce and maintain a particular viewpoint as effectively as formal state censorship" (1985: 136).

[14] See also Bagdikian (1983: Part I) Herman (1993: 26-27) Chomsky (1997: 20) and Parenti (1986: 27-33). Edward S. Herman argued that the "dominant media are themselves members of the corporate-elite establishment". Hence, tension seldom arises between the media and policy-makers (1993: 25). Ben H. Bagdikian argued that half or more of all mass media output in the US falls in the hands of some fifty giant media corporations who control the whole process of production in the marketplace of ideas. See his list (1983: 7-18).

[15] See also Bagdikian (1983: Part II) and (1985: 107-109).

[16] See also Bennett (1990) and Hallin (1984: 13-14). Ben H. Bagdikian argued that "[t]he U.S. media are becoming more homogenized in content and structure at the same time that the population is becoming larger and more diverse and confronted with rapidly changing circumstances. There is a growing gap between the number of voices in society and the number heard in the media" (1985: 98). This tendency on the part of the US media is attributed to concentrated patterns of ownership whereby

4. "flak" as a means of disciplining the media.

5. Anti-communism as a national quasi-religion and control mechanism.[iv]

Amongst these the third and fifth filters are more relevant, as both seemed to have been greatly affected by the end of the Cold War and the introduction of a new set of communication technologies. Other filters have been recently disputed as "most analysts agree that contemporary journalists operate quite autonomously from owners and publishers and that they are primarily attuned to their peers" (Jamieson, 1996: 125).

A wide range of opinions was expressed among media scholars and foreign policy analysts about the source of information as a key factor in restricting the freedom of the media. One line of argument was established during the Cold War and continued to show its relevance in the post-Cold War era. It claimed that information sources were critical to the shaping of press-state relations; and that journalists and reporters often turned to official sources to make their stories. On the other hand, advocates of this approach claimed, the government relied heavily on the media to disseminate information and present certain views targeting

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media output is produced by a handful of giant corporations. The size and power of these corporations, by their very nature, compel them to have common goals and narrow outlooks "particularly in economics, in politics, and in sustaining the status quo" (1988: 102).

[iv] This argument is Leon Sigal's. In his opinion the autonomy of the media was quite limited giving the fact that the media depended on official sources to make news stories. In addition, the lack of public investigation of government propaganda and the employment of ideological weapons such as anti-communism or national security threat made it difficult for the media to challenge the official agenda (1973: 42-60).

either the domestic public or external actors. This argument was based on the grounds that because the media, according to James David Barber, looks "to the casual observer, like no power at all", the information it transmits gains more credibility among the public and can easily shape their opinion (cited in Dorman and Farhang, 1987: 20).[14] Leon Sigal was a staunch advocate of this view wherein he showed that almost three-quarters of the front-page stories in the *WP* and the *NYT* on the Vietnam War depended on official sources (1973). Similarly, W. Lance Bennett, in a four-year study of the *NYT* coverage of the US financial support to the Contras, Nicaragua's main opposition group, found that 85% of relevant news stories during this time came from official sources, despite the different opinions they expressed (1990: 116-117). Furthermore, Bennett argued, the media was highly sensitive to signals emanating from what he called the "golden triangle": the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department (1994: 178). This tendency turned the media into an instrument to disseminate and report official information. Mark Fishman espoused a similar argument and believed that "officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them" (1980: 145).[15]

[14] The effect of media content on the US public is tremendous given the fact that media distribution in the US is among the highest in the world. Ben H. Bagdikian argued that in the US "almost the entire population has access to an extraordinary volume of media output in print, broadcasting, and recordings" (1985: 98). In addition, recent survey carried out by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations argued this, whereby John Reilly, who analysed the results, found that Americans, public and leadership, retain strong belief that their media is trustworthy (1999).

[15] Comparative simple content analysis of the *NYT* coverage of Cambodia and East Timor between 1975-1984 and the 1984 elections in El Salvador and Nicaragua enabled Edward S. Herman to demonstrate that the coverage was dancing to the tune of foreign policy (1985).

Another line of argument emphasised the importance of information sources but disputed the claim that state-press relations were based on mere manipulation. What governed state-press relations instead, this approach argued, was mutual interest. Bernard Cohen in *The Press and Foreign Policy* concluded that a relation of mutual dependency existed between the media and policy-makers in which each used the other to promote their own objectives. These relations enabled officials to send their message across, while providing journalists with a perfect channel of information to make their news stories (1963: 146-168 and 169-206, Bennett et al., 1985).[٢] Mutual dependency, Herbert Gans argued, was based on the idea that the US media had tried persistently to present itself as politically neutral between different domestic parties. Hence, it accepted to play a relatively passive role as a transmission channel of information from officials to the public (1980: 116-145). Daniel Hallin reached the same conclusion that the US media had confined itself to the "traditional "who, what, when, where" model of objective journalism" and, thus, it largely refrained from expressing opinion about actual events (1984: 12). Hallin argued that since the task of the US media was to provide the public with information and not with opinion, "the crucial

[٢] Bennett et. al. believed that the interaction between officials and reporters was governed by unwritten rules, regulations, and practices that had developed over time to produce well established patterns of normal reporting providing the ethos to decide on what to put on the news. These patterns transformed journalists into "gatekeepers" or passive transmitters of news from officials to the public (1985: 53-55).

journalistic choice becomes the choice of sources" (Ibid: 13).[٦١] In this context, policy-makers were pleased to pass selected information to the media and the media was pleased to get and report them.[٦٢]

However strong and persuasive the mutual dependency approach is, the element of objectivity in it is highly controversial. Particularly when it comes to foreign news objectivity becomes less visible, not least, because the US media looks at the external world through the lens of its own political and social values. In addition, partiality in reporting foreign news does not need to be direct. It expresses itself, as Entman has correctly argued, in the "key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasised in a news narrative" (1991:7).[٦٣]

After the end of the Cold War a new approach emerged and disputed the foundations of the MC thesis on the issue of information sources. It claimed that the post-Cold War environment had given the media a wider

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[٦١] Gans claimed that the very nature of the profession compels journalists to be objective and detached from ideological affiliations. Journalists simply perform the role of gatekeepers (1980: 182-213).

[٦٢] Mutual dependency, some argued, helps nurture personal relationships between journalists and policy-makers. Some might allow themselves to be badly used by the executive. Ted Carpenter claimed that in 1976, 50 news personnel had been on the CIA payroll. Some critics also claimed that many of the US most prominent journalists, editors and publishers received gifts from foreign heads of states. It was reported that the Shah of Iran approached prominent US reporters, through his ambassador in Washington, and that the Shah's largesse "explained the U.S. media's favorable coverage" of the Iranian monarch (Dorman and Farhang, 1987: 24).

[٦٣] Dorman and Farhang disputed the claim of most journalists that the behaviour of the US media is determined solely by material self-interest. They argued that "a cost-benefits analysis of the process of journalism" obscure reality and "simply cannot explain why Iranians in revolt were "religious fanatics" and Afghans were "freedom fighters"" (1987: 188). In addition, Dorman and Farhang discovered through studying 25 years of US press coverage of Iran that the press was anything but objective (Ibid: 203). Michael Parenti went further and argued that the US media by its very nature, sources, patterns of reporting and transmitting information is ideologically affiliated. Whether journalists are aware of this reality or not is a matter of different effects (1986: 50-53). Gaye Tuchman argued that the "term "objectivity stands as a bulwark between [journalists] and critics. Attacked for a controversial presentation of "facts", newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits" (1972: 660)

margin of freedom as the anti-communist consensus, which had led to the creation of an ideological bond between policy-makers and journalist, had been broken. W. Lance Bennett agreed that relations between policy-makers and journalists were based on conflict rather than co-operation. Policy-makers tried to employ media management strategies by feeding the media with daily news lines that served their policy interests, whereas journalists tried to resist these strategies by looking for other sources of information (1994: 176).[11] Some scholars who adopted this argument went even further and claimed that particularly in the field of foreign affairs the government ceased to be the most important source of information. With the huge advancement in communication technologies, TV and the press had the means to report freely from different parts of the world. Henry A. Grunwald maintained that in the post-Cold War era the media had retained its independent sources of information. "Just as the State Department must appoint ambassadors to many of these self-created states [referring to the former Soviet Republics], the press must send correspondents" (1993: 13). Still, other critics tried to reverse the argument by claiming that in the post-Cold War era policy-makers had become dependent upon the media reporting instantly from different parts of the globe to become acquainted with a wide range of rapidly reported events. The case became clear when the government lacked alternative

[11] Patrick O'Heffernan advocated a mutual exploitation model in which both the media and policy-makers used one another each for their own ends (1994).

channels [either formal (embassy) or informal (intelligence agents)] to obtain the necessary information."[19] Adrienne M. Jamieson believed that "[p]olicy-makers depend upon the news for understanding the world.... in which they operate" (1996: 115).

Not surprisingly, these claims were not left to pass unnoticed but scrutinised and questioned in another post-Cold War approach. It argued that the end of the Cold War had provided the media with a wider margin of freedom, but the government's grip over the flow of information had not been lost. For advocates of this approach, the power of government to restrict the flow of information became evident during wartime wherein there were places journalists were denied access to (Mermin, 1999; Taylor, 1992; Carruthers, 2000; Kalb, 1994). Additionally, information classified as important for national security was widely inaccessible and reliance on official sources significantly increased during national security-related crises (Hallin et al., 1990-and Smith, 1992). The 1991 Gulf War, the air strike campaign against Serbia in 1995, Kosovo 1999, and recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, all demonstrated how far the media was dependent on official sources and how far censorship was employed. In a comment on the 1991 Gulf War, Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*

[19] For instance, when the Iranian revolution broke out, US policy-makers became ill-informed about developments in Iran. In a letter dated July 20, 1979 to Chargé d' Affairs Bruce Laingen in Tehran, Iran Desk officer, Henry Precht wrote from Washington: "We simply do not have the bios, inventory of political groups or current picture of daily life as it evolves at various levels in Iran. Ignorance here of Iran's events is massive. The US press does not do a good job but in the absence of Embassy reporting, we have to rely on inexperienced newsmen" (cited in Bill, 1988b: 276).

complained that "we 'covered' the war, but we did not 'report' the war" (cited in Gergen, 1992: 187). Ted Carpenter argued that American journalists had been subject to laws and practices of censorship for so long that the end of the Cold War was unlikely to change this cultural picture which dominated since 1798 (1995).[11]

These arguments about government control returned us to the point where we departed, enhanced the prospect for the MC school and gave substance for its continuing relevance in the post-Cold War era. Johanna Neuman summarised what happened in the post-Cold War era. She argued that the introduction of a new set of communication technologies did not change the old patterns of press-state relations but consolidated the existing ones. The only difference was that the advance in communication technologies had sped up the need to react to a wide range of international events (1996). The new technology, as Michael R. Beschloss put it, appeared to have narrowed the scope for policy-makers, pushing them to respond to whatever events were raised by the media (cited in Robinson, 1999a: 301) but the critical factor in power politics was and remains the quality of leadership and its ability to clearly define its objectives (Hatcher, 1996; Hoge Jr., 1994: 142; Williams, 1993: 309).

[11] Carpenter refers here to the Alien and Sedition Act, which allows the government to practice a kind of censorship to restrict the flow of information at times of international crisis (1995: 13-15).

The arguments presented in this chapter have left many questions unanswered in the press-state equation and its relationship to the making of US foreign policy. As explained above, the CNN effect school (with its different approaches) claims that the media has the ability (great or small depending on several factors) to influence policy-makers and set the agenda in the foreign policy domain. By contrast, the MC school (with its different approaches) claims that policy-makers and the business elite exploit the media and feed it with daily news line and express their opinion through it. When we apply these two approaches to the Middle East we find that neither one can provide sufficient explanation to the positions of either the media or policy-makers on this region. Hence, this chapter suggests that there must be more than power and influence in the press-state equation and that there must be a missing dimension that needs to be uncovered. This requires going beyond the CNN effect/MC debate and explore new domains.

BEYOND THE CNN EFFECT / MC DEBATE

US media coverage of Arab and Muslim affairs is generally considered to be negative. The classical arguments would interpret this coverage either as a reflection of US policy towards these countries (Mowlana, 1992; MacArthur, 1992; Chomsky, 1992; and Bennett and

Paletz, 1994) or as a result of the CNN effect (Jakobsen, 1996; Shaw, 1993; Minear et al., 1997).

Looking at US media coverage through a political lens provides limited explanation. There are clear shortcomings in the classical models to explain, on the one hand, the critical attitude of the media towards some of the US's closest allies in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, and thus, the MC in this case seems irrelevant. On the other hand, the CNN effect could not, apart from the establishment of the 'Safe Havens' zone (still unclear whether it was mere reaction to media coverage or a result of other factors), trigger a US response to some endemic problems in the region, such as 'human rights violations'. This latter model does not explain, for example, why the US had refrained from intervening in the Algerian civil war to halt atrocities committed in the name of democracy despite wide coverage in the US media. It also stands short from explaining why the US kept strong ties with Turkey despite massive human rights violations reported constantly in the American press.[IV] It is also significant to note that when NATO decided to intervene in Kosovo in 1999, under 'the right of the Kosovar to self determination', many Middle Eastern countries, namely Turkey and Israel, did not worry about similar interventions on behalf of the Kurds and the Palestinians. In brief, the CNN effect and MC models are not sufficient to explain US media

[IV] See, for example, Nezan (1992).

coverage and its relation to foreign policy in the Middle East. The two approaches when applied to the region, as is the case generally, are applied selectively and do not deviate from the classical arguments, as Bill Kovach put it, that "the media either take foreign policy out of the hands of the elite and open the process to an ill-informed public or they are indentured servants of the foreign policy elite" (1996: 171).

Obviously, the question of power is highly relevant to the study of state-press relations in the United States. The issue of power and influence in the relationship between policy-makers and the press is neither to be ignored nor marginalised. The point is that power and influence, the core elements in the CNN effect/MC debate, do not explain the attitude of the US media towards the Middle East. Hence, there must be another component of media coverage that needs to be explored. This component involves cultural perceptions the role of which could enhance our understanding of US policy towards the region and media coverage as well as establishing a more comprehensive framework for the study of press-state relations in the US.

In the post-Cold War era this cultural component of media coverage has been almost completely ignored. The cultural dimension of state-press relations has enjoyed only limited interest in the academic community because the focus was almost always upon examining these relationships in the light of the interaction between domestic forces and

the different branches of power in a relatively homogeneous cultural environment- the US political system. As a consequence, the impact of the external world on the US media and its relation to foreign policy was neglected. Some of the few studies that took culture seriously when investigating the relationship between the US media and foreign policy were Said (1981), Dorman and Farhang (1987), Heiss (1996) and Foran (2000). The focus of all these studies was US-Iranian relations during the Cold War era.

Said's study, an immediate reaction to media coverage of the Iranian revolution and the taking of the hostages in the American embassy in Tehran, tried to shed light on the US media's tendency to bias against Islam and Muslims. Said could not, however, draw a line between what was political and what was cultural in US media coverage of the Iranian revolution. Said believed that the cultural lens which western media employed to view the Iranian events was a reflection of a political stand defined by economic and strategic interests. Yet, he failed to capture the whole picture that while the media was fiercely criticising the revolutionary regime in Tehran, the US government was trying, in words and actions, to play down the tone of confrontation and establish channels with the Islamic government of Iran. Said's failure to spot this point suggests that he was not interested in studying the US media in its own

right, rather attempting at enhancing his earlier thesis, *Orientalism*.[۱۸] In *Orientalism*, Said laid out a cultural framework, based on the political and economic dimensions of power, for understanding the relationship between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident'. Said's 1981 study, on the other hand, tended towards description, with the author commenting on news texts and refuting their contents; in Fred Halliday's words it was "a naïve critique of press coverage of the Iranian revolution" (1996, note 14: 246).

By contrast, the study of Dorman and Farhang was much more informative and illuminating, even though Said's notion of Orientalism occupied a centre stage in their thesis. The authors studied US press coverage of Iran between 1951 and 1978. They divided their study into five major phases in accordance with major developments in recent Iran history starting with the ascendance of Mussadaq to power in 1951 and ending with the overthrow of the Shah in 1978. After examining the content of some major US newspapers, the authors concluded that US press coverage of Iran shifted according to the shift in Washington's policy towards Iran.

However strong and verified Dorman and Farhang's study was, it suffered two major weaknesses. First, its conclusion contradicted the authors' initial assumption that "if the press does not *make* foreign or defense policy, in some important ways it helps set the boundaries within

[۱۸] For critical analysis of Said's 1981 study, see Fred Halliday (1996: 195-217 and 1993: 150).

which policy can be made" (1987: 2). In explaining what they meant by setting the boundaries, the authors argued that "[t]he press sets the broad limits of our thinking about the "other"". It creates a general mood among the public that consists of "a vague, generalized set of beliefs and hazy understandings and produces a crude context into which even cruder stereotypes are often fit" (1987: 19). The educative function of the media in the field of foreign affairs could affect the general public, who might pressure the executive to follow certain policy lines, as well as the public-foreign policy-making elite, the authors argued (12-13). Here lies the contradiction in the thesis of Dorman and Farhang. If US press coverage of Iran was shaped by 'hazy' stereotypes, as the authors argued, and if the press did influence both the public and the elite in the case of Iran, the reader finds himself at odds with their conclusion that media coverage followed the lead of foreign policy and not vice versa. Second, if one follows their argument, he would discover soon that the authors believed these stereotypes, particularly during the Mussadaq era, were shared by both the press and the foreign policy elite in Washington (1987: 13). "Journalists followed the lead of official Washington and opted for simple themes that matched Western conceptions of Middle Eastern peoples" (33). Derived from this assumption is the view that some vague stereotypes had driven US foreign policy towards Iran during this period. If this claim was true and could explain US policy towards Iran during

the later Mussadaq era, it could hardly explain the policy during the early Mussadaq era when the US politically supported and financially aided the Iranian leader (see Chapter 5).[11]

The other two studies that considered culture as a factor in the making of US-Cold War foreign policy and its impact on the media were Mary Ann Heiss (1996) and John Foran (2000). Heiss was not interested in the press-state debate in its own right and, hence, the issue of power and influence in the interaction between the two establishments (foreign policy and the press) was not a matter of concern. She focused, instead, on the underlying factors of US policy towards Iran under Mussadaq. Heiss examined US and British diplomatic records during the Mussadaq era and concluded very much in line with Said's thesis. She argued that the opinion of American and British officials of Mussadaq was consistent with the widely prevalent perceptions in the US press about the Iranian leader. "Influenced by long-standing Western stereotypes, British and American policy-makers consistently employed what Edward Said has termed 'Orientalism' when dealing with Mossadeq" (1996: 1). Heiss, however, could not draw a clear conclusion about whether these stereotypes had affected or not the course of US policy towards the Iranian leader. To find way out of this impasse, she concluded:

[11] The argument of the authors could have been more convincing had they argued that US policy and press coverage of Iran during the period of the study (1951-1978) were driven solely and exclusively by Cold War considerations and that culture was employed only as a supplementary factor when it suited foreign policy objectives.

We cannot say, for example, that Western stereotypes led linearly to the coup that removed Mossadeq...But this does not mean that these stereotypes were unimportant. On the contrary, by shaping the mindset of Anglo-American officials, they were part of the context within which those officials formulated policy (1996: 11).

Having agreed that these stereotypes did exist in policy as well as press circles, Heiss failed to answer two key questions. First, where were these stereotypes during the early Mussadaq era? And second, why they were not employed until late 1952, when the US administration came to the conclusion that Mussadaq was no longer an asset, but a liability for US policy in the region?

John Foran differed from all previous studies when addressing US policy to Mussadaq's Iran in his claim that the press shaped US policy towards Iran and helped shift it from pro-Mussadaq to anti-Mussadaq.[1] The press "helped make U.S. foreign policy" on Iran and that it "had more influence over the policy-makers than most people think" (2000: 162-163). To provide substance to his claim, Foran focused on the coverage of *Time* magazine which he believed "stood outside the Washington foreign policy consensus" and opposed the US

[1] Foran's essay was published in a volume edited by Christian G. Appy and dedicated "to address the connections between domestic political culture and U.S. Cold War foreign policy" (Appy, 2000: 4).

accommodationist approach towards the Iranian leader (Ibid: 167). The role of *Time* in shifting US policy was facilitated, Foran argued, by the latent logic behind US-Iranian relations which was laid on cultural perceptions "further shaped ...by the political economy of oil and geostrategic power". In this context, *Time* through extensive anti-Mussadaq coverage, "influenced U.S. foreign policy" towards Iran and forced it to take the direction it took during the later Mussadaq era (Ibid: 163). *Time* contributed to this shift in policy in three ways. First, by constructing Mussadaq as a demagogue and childlike fanatic, it raised fear in Washington about the intentions and predictability of the Iranian leader and also of Iran falling to communism (Ibid: 170-177). Second, by persistent criticism of the Truman administration's conciliatory approach towards Mussadaq. And third, *Time*, Foran claimed, was "instrumental in castigating the Truman administration's indecisiveness in the region", and, hence, it "contributed to the election of a Republican administration that was more willing to intervene" in Iran (Ibid; 182, 175).

Foran, however, did not provide an answer as to why the coverage of *Time*, as he himself admitted, had changed from presenting Mussadaq as "*liberal nationalist*" at the outset of his reign "*to irrational fanatic*" in a latter stage (Ibid: 169). He also ignored the counter-thesis that because US policy towards Mussadaq had changed, *Time* coverage changed

accordingly. Finally, Foran left us wondering if Iran was really an issue in the presidential election of 1952.

As can be seen from the discussion above, all the studies which seemed to have been aware of the existence of cultural perceptions in US press coverage of the Middle East, have failed to draw clear borders between policy issues and cultural perceptions. Scholars have fallen into this trap because they could not make a distinction between the ideological bond, which had held together the two establishments (foreign policy and the press) for over forty years and the issue of culture, which was firmly established in the press. During the Cold War the ideological bond was the independent variable *par excellence* and cultural perceptions were subordinated to it. The struggle with the Soviet Union was the *modus vivendi* of the state and the press during the Cold War and cultural perceptions were employed only when they seemed to further strategic interests. This could provide an explanation to why Iranians, during the course of the revolution, were chastised in the media as fanatics whereas the anti-Soviet Afghan fighters were depicted as freedom fighters. When the ideological bond of the Cold War was broken after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the agenda of the media and that of the state, at least in the Middle East, were divorced; cultural perceptions became the religion of the media whereas *realpolitik* remained the *modus operandi* of the state. This is precisely what this thesis intends to

demonstrate and this also what makes it different from all previous studies and lies in its intention to achieve three key objectives. First, draw a line between political issues and cultural perceptions. Second, demonstrate that cultural perceptions are the driving force of US press coverage of the Middle East. And third, that political issues (economic and strategic interests) are the driving force of US foreign policy to the Middle East.

The US media finds it much easier to support the government's foreign policy when the ideals of American culture, that is, secularism and liberalism, overlap with national interests. In this case, the media plays the role of MC relying on the moral basis of conducting foreign policy. During the Cold War, with the existence of the anti-communist consensus there was no such difficulty in playing this role. Foreign policy was assessed by domestic actors, such as the media, in terms of its success in achieving the highest priority of the nation: defeating communism. After the end of the Cold War and with the collapse of the anti-communist consensus this role has become difficult to shoulder. The dramatic and rapid collapse of the Eastern Bloc overwhelmed the very inner circles of power in the US as well as the media. US foreign policy has been in a state of disarray as policy-makers stood incapable of establishing a new policy agenda that would define once and for all the new role and objectives of the United States in the post-Cold War era.

The vague "New World Order", announced by President Bush after the 1991 Gulf War could not provide this ground as it became obsolete with the sequence of regional and international events. Both the media and policy-makers have lost the solid common foundation they had had for 40 years. The end of the Cold War helped divorce the agenda of the media from that of the state. The media revived some images defined largely by cultural perceptions whereas policy-makers retained their agenda defined by economic, strategic and political considerations.

As this chapter comes to an end, it is important to re-emphasise two major points:

1. It should not be assumed that the role of culture in shaping US media coverage of the Middle East was completely absent before the fall of communism: it existed, but was overwhelmed by the great ideological struggle of the Cold War. As soon as that struggle was declared over, cultural determinants retained a leading role and came to dominate the US media coverage of the Middle East.

2. It should not be thought that because this study argues that the underlying factors of the US Middle Eastern policy are economic and strategic that it denies the existence of cultural perceptions in policy circles. Cultural perceptions exist in all levels and penetrate all circles of any given society. Policy-makers operate in a social system and are subject to its prevalent political, social and cultural values. Yet, whereas

cultural perceptions could form the basis of media coverage, policy-makers, by contrast, tend to minimise the impact of cultural differences on their foreign relations in order to protect key strategic and economic interests.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have been trying to solve the puzzle of press-state relations for many years, at least since the Vietnam War, yet the answer hardly seems closer to resolution. The fault does not stem, as argued above, from a lack of insight or effort on the part of analysts. It is rather the bewildering nature of the subject. Press-state relations are a phenomenon which involves a multiplicity of domestic and external factors and, hence, it is hard to explain by invoking a single theoretical approach. By focusing on the CNN effect / MC debate, this chapter has shown that the power-dominated theories are restricted to domestic factors (relations of power and influence) and are insufficient to explain media coverage and its relation to US policy to the Middle East, hence, the need to examine a culture-driven dimension. The culture-dominated approach involves domestic as well as external factors and by widening the argument to include elements from without, it is likely to bridge the gap in the state-

press relations and expand our understanding of US media coverage of the Middle East.

Indeed, there has been sufficient evidence to support the claim that the US media was used during the Cold War as a tool to maintain domestic and international support in the struggle against communism. However, in the post-Cold War era, with the vanishing of the anti-communist consensus, the grip of policy-makers over the media started to loosen. Here, culture advanced to fill the vacuum and take the lead as the new determinant. This, however, does not mean that the media is to assume the role of policy-maker or to direct the decision-making process, as the proponents of the CNN effect would like to argue. All this chapter has to say is that the media has retained relative autonomy with an outlook determined mainly by cultural perceptions instead of political considerations. The broad conclusion is that the media neither legitimise US policy to the Middle East nor shape US policy-makers attitude toward this region. By this the debate on media coverage of international affairs in the post-Cold War era is moved beyond the power-driven models and its focus became cultural perceptions, which play secondary role in the making of US Middle Eastern policy.

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