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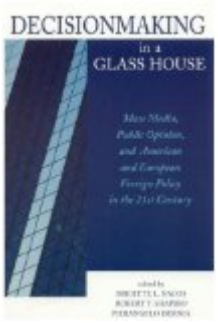

Brigitte Nacos Isernia, Robert Shapiro, eds. Pierangelo. *Decisionmaking in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion, and American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century.* Lanham, Maryland and Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000. viii + 361 pp. $79.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8476-9826-4.

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Making Foreign Policy in the Streets of Mogadishu?

During the United Nations (UN) relief mission in Somalia, Cable News Network (CNN) and other American television networks broadcast scenes of local residents dragging the bodies of U.S. servicemen through the streets of Mogadishu. Later, in 1999, while watching television in the comfort of their own homes Americans learned that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) bombing campaign designed to halt Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic's drive into ethnic Albanian territory had a human cost--so-called "collateral damage," or the unintended killing of Albanians. Today, it is conventional wisdom that such stories and imagery, spread almost instantaneously and globally by the modern mass media, affect foreign policymaking either, as in the case of Operation Restore Hope, by limiting the domestic consensus for overseas intervention (the "Vietnam Syndrome") or by forcing governments to respond, sometimes rashly, to crises (the "CNN effect"). Reinforcing the latter lesson, for example, Richard Haass, former national security aide in the administration of President George Bush (the elder) recently told *U.S. News and World Report* that despite the insular tendencies of president-elect George W. Bush's top foreign policy appointees, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, "They're going to find that in the CNN era, you can't sit at home and watch people being massacred. You have to engage."[1] The idea that the mass media stirs public passions and thus drives official policy is so axiomatic that a recent James Bond movie, ***The World Is Not Enough***, featured a Rupert Murdoch-esque media mogul who, in a misguided effort to sell more newspapers, manufactured an international crisis that took the world to the brink of war.

It is with such salient issues that the anthology *Decisionmaking in a Glass House* deals. Edited by political scientists Brigitte L. Nacos, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Pierangelo Isernia, the collection examines not only the connection between public opinion and foreign policy, but also the ways in which the mass media intervenes in that process, complicating it by potentially undermining elites' authority and by powerfully shaping popular and

elite conceptions of each other, statecraft, and the world. Although political scientists concerned with contemporary international relations have authored its essays, the conceptual problems engaged by ***Decisionmaking in a Glass House*** are also of consequence to diplomatic historians. Long interested in the opinion-policy association, historians have studied official attempts to manipulate sentiment, focused on the communication of views by private sector opinion leaders, or been content simply to recreate the opinion climate against which policymakers operated.[2] As the final approach suggests, however, the field is still unsure precisely how or to what extent mass beliefs and international affairs intersect.

The present compilation offers a host of stimulating theories, models, and case studies for conceptualizing, locating, and defining the elusive opinion-media-policy nexus. In that respect, it is comparable with other recent scholarship, including Douglas C. Foyle's ***Counting the Public In***. Also a political scientist, Foyle theorizes that the public's relative influence depends upon the particular policy formulation context and decision makers' willingness to entertain outside input.[3] But because of a dearth of substantiating evidence and a failure to engage in rigorous historical or critical inquiry, the precise effect of either the public or the media on diplomacy remains theoretical and somewhat hazy in the at times unconvincing ***Decisionmaking in a Glass House***.

Several contributors provocatively contend that, to paraphrase the old country music song, we have been looking for answers in all the wrong places. In "Elite Misperceptions of U.S. Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay propose that it is not the actual state of opinion, but policymakers' interpretation (or misinterpretation) of it that matters. From polling data, Kull and Ramsay conclude that in the twentieth century's last decade the American people, rather than harboring isolationist views as was widely believed, actually supported the UN, foreign aid, and engagement with the world. Poorly informed about such views, taking their cues from vocal interest groups, or holding a low regard for popular wisdom, however, the vast majority of the eighty-three officials interviewed by Kull and Ramsay believed that Americans wanted to withdraw from the world and accordingly tailored timid policies. By contrasting strong citizen support in both the United States and Western Europe for multilateral military intervention in Bosnia with relatively weak government policy, Richard Sobel corroborates those findings. The larger methodological implication is that in trying to locate the points at which attitudes and policy formulation meet, historians must comb the archives, looking for clues as to how diplomats received and perceived data about the electorate's views.

Other authors suggest, however, that the process is more complex than officials simply whetting fingers to test the attitudinal winds before setting a diplomatic course. Rather, as one contributor, Natalie La Balme, states, "the opinion-policy nexus is more interactive and reciprocal than unidirectional" (p. 276). According to La Balme and others, a rich interaction exists as public opinion simultaneously forces and constrains the official hand. Also, while using expressions of the people's will as bargaining chips in the domestic and international political arenas, both at home and abroad policymakers often try to manipulate those attitudes. For instance, while demonstrating that the electorate's thinking can both force states to make diplomatic choices and limit available options to those likely to be endorsed in the next election, in her study of modern France La Balme notes that once settled on a course of action officials in the Francois Mitterand administration used public opinion (or their perception of it) as a political tool to convince domestic opponents and international allies of that tack's correctness. Meanwhile, in the nascent and imperfect democracy that is post-Soviet Russia, Eric Shiraev and Vlad Zubok find that although

the Kremlin is not necessarily responsive to popular concerns, it uses them to justify and undergird its predetermined stance before native and foreign friends and foes alike. Similarly, in one of the anthology's more historically-minded essays, Shapiro and Lawrence R. Jacobs contend that U.S. presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt have institutionalized opinion polling within the White House so as not only to measure and thus follow attitudes, but increasingly also to lead them.[4] Based upon extensive archival research, they persuasively show that the Ronald Reagan administration tracked published polls, commissioned in-depth monthly surveys, and carefully monitored reactions to the president's foreign policy speeches. According to Shapiro and Jacobs, rather than influencing policy formulation, the Reagan White House, as was the case with its Nicaraguan agenda, used this data "to design the [public] presentation of already decided policies" as a means of building domestic consensus (p. 238).

The media has increasingly intervened in the opinion-policy dialogue, thereby adding a complicating dimension to it, according to ***Decisionmaking in a Glass House***. In an intriguing contribution, Benjamin I. Page poses a triangular model to explain the interaction between the public, policymakers, and the media. Newspapers, radio, magazines, the Internet, and, especially, television news mediate between elites and ordinary folk. It is through the media that officials get a feel for public thinking and, in turn, try to manipulate it. From interviews with former Paris officials, for example, La Balme shows that 94 percent of them derived their perceptions about popular attitudes from the media (p. 268). According to Page, because of their utility as sources and their inherent newsworthiness, leaders are to some extent able to manage the presentation of the news. But as events in Mogadishu show, things often happen beyond the official pale. Finally, while the media gives consumers what they want insofar as the profit motive makes it sensitive to public desires, the very way in which CNN and others report global crises also shapes mass perceptions.

An assumption implicit in Page's schema, and one that runs throughout the book, is that the media's role in foreign policymaking has recently grown vis-a-vis the state's. Stressing the post-Cold War global structure in which there are no longer clearly identifiable heroes and villains, in his essay "Declarations of Independence" Robert M. Entman argues that information providers exert greater influence by making sense of a seemingly chaotic world and thus setting parameters for national security debate. According to John Zaller and Dennis Chiu, these changes in the global landscape have encouraged American journalists, who during the Cold War had been the foreign policy establishment's helpmates, to be increasingly adversarial in their reporting on international issues. Rather than the altered global structure, Martin Shaw writes that technological advances--including satellites and the Internet--have allowed the media to cross international boundaries easily, communicate with vast numbers of people, and thus escape governments' clutches.

Although the self-evident growth in the media's power is an important phenomenon and one in need of scholarly inquiry, ***Decisionmaking in a Glass House***, while provocative and useful, is not the last word on the subject. For one, with the exceptions of Shapiro and Jacobs, contributors offer either insufficient or questionable evidence to support their cases, a shortcoming that often leads to unsubstantiated or overdrawn claims. In suggesting that the post-Cold War media has exerted an independent role, for example, Entman rests his case on a strikingly thin base of evidence--approximately six issues of one publication (***Newsweek***). According to the author, "impressionistically" this data is "typical" of "much of the other national media" (pp. 16-17). Similarly, Kull and Ramsay cite "polling data" in support of their argument that elites misperceived internationalist mass attitudes (p. 97). However, they of-

fer not one reference to a corroborating poll. Moreover, their (and La Balme's) interviews with former decision makers are open to scrutiny since officials have an incentive to justify past actions by citing their congruence with the popular will. More empirically-oriented essayists recognize the problem. As Shapiro and Jacobs note, "the use of archival and other historical and in-depth evidence is crucial for untangling what can be a complex relationship between public opinion and policymaking" (p. 240).

The lack of documentation reflects the collection's second major shortcoming: its occasional failure to subject suppositions to rigorous critical inquiry. For example, let us return to the subtheme that the media is newly powerful and that this nascent influence has allowed it to challenge official authority. Reflecting the essayists' general assumption, Shaw posits a past in which "States were largely able to monopolize media spaces" and thus subordinate the press (p. 31). Along with Entman and others, he contrasts that model with a contemporary age of journalistic autonomy, in which the fourth estate is free to question and thus shape foreign policy. While it is undeniable that the mass media plays a larger role in ordinary peoples lives, has become more autonomous, and has complicated policymaking, its influence is only relatively greater and its independence less fulsome than these authors would have us believe. On one hand, one need only recall accusations that the so-called "yellow press" of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst led the United States into the Spanish-American War through sensational reporting or that British propaganda (disseminated largely through newspapers) similarly precipitated American intervention in the First World War by spreading lurid tales about German atrocities in Belgium. Furthermore, although they had an ambivalent relationship with officials, by 1968 American journalists, as Daniel C. Hallin has written, were almost universally critical of the war in Vietnam.[5] An independent and influential media, it seems, is not without precedent.

Nor is the modern media unencumbered. While Page recognizes that policymakers continue to exert some influence, the state employs an array of tools, and at times weapons, to keep the media in check. In Russia, Vladimir Putin has pursued a campaign of intimidation that has largely silenced what had been a relatively free press critical of the Kremlin. Washington, meanwhile, uses less authoritarian but still effective means of persuasion. During the Gulf War, the White House and U.S. military officials cultivated domestic consensus by distributing to news-hungry networks imagery of smart bombs that seemed to strike their targets with precision while avoiding American casualties. And during NATO's intervention in Kosovo, officials attempted to regulate the flow of information by limiting reporters' access to the war zone and instead providing them with regular official briefings. Lastly, it must be remembered that television and radio networks and producers of newspapers, magazines, and movies are in business to make money in part by selling their goods to foreign consumers. Historically, and recently in such locales as China and Western Europe, Washington has been instrumental in promoting the international free trade of information and in protecting American-owned media firms from piracy and both economic and cultural protectionism.[6]

One result of such corporatist support is a globalized media that to a great extent is American-, or at the very least, Western-owned. Inherent in that ownership is the power to control imagery...to determine what is reported, what is not, and how. While *Decisionmaking in a Glass House* makes some important theoretical strides in coming to grips with the opinion-policy relationship and the media's complicating encroachment, more work is needed on those linkages, the implications of information globalization, and the impact of such new technologies as the Internet.

[1]. Warren P. Strobel and Kevin Whitelaw, "Preparing to Face the World: Bush Turns to Some Experienced Hands to Manage His Foreign Policy," *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec. 25, 2000-Jan. 1, 2001, p. 29. [2]. Examples respectively include Susan A. Brewer, *To Win the Peace: British Propaganda in the United States during World War II* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1, 187; Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 529-31. [3]. Douglas C. Foyle, *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), x. [4]. Michael Leigh has shown that in the Roosevelt administration polling emerged as an accepted means of measuring public views about foreign affairs. Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, 1937-1947* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 101. [5]. Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7-9. [6]. Seth Faison, "U.S. and China Sign Accord to End Piracy of Software, Music Recordings and Film," *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1995, Final Late Edition, sec. A, p. 1, col. 6.; "US to Complain over IP Rights in Four Countries," *Financial Times*, May 1, 1997, London Edition, sec. News: World Trade, p. 4.