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THE MEDIA POLITICS OF SOCIAL PROTEST*

Víctor Sampedro†

The relationship between political agenda building and media agenda building is examined with reference to mobilization of the Spanish antimilitary movement between 1976-1993. Three models of media-state relations are discussed in terms of possible media outcomes of social protest. These models are used to examine political and media agenda building in relation to movement challenges. An analysis of the coverage of the antimilitary movement by three national dailies demonstrates that political opportunity structures shape media opportunity structures. There are, however, small windows of opportunity when the causal effect works in the other direction. Media structures can help a movement open, reset, and sometimes block official policies. Media opportunities, however, do not remain favorable in the long run because government elites can bureaucratize and trivialize movement challenges, thereby reducing their newsworthiness. Institutionalized media abide by journalistic rules that tend to validate the political class and, in the long run, dilute social protest.

Many social movements aim to influence official policy agendas by naming and defining new social problems through media strategy. The mass media are used by movements to challenge official policy and make their demands more widely known. Put another way, these movements seek to influence official policy agendas by influencing the news agendas of major national media. Indeed, the effectiveness of social movements might be assessed by measuring their impact on these two realms of agenda setting: (1) how political elites set policy agendas that either reflect or ignore social movement demands; and (2) how media agendas governing news coverage are either shaped by or unresponsive to social movement tactics (Klandermans 1989: 387-389).

This study examines the interdependence of policy agendas, media agendas, and social movement mobilization as they apply to a major yet under reported European social movement: the antimilitary movement in Spain. This movement had two distinct phases.[1] The first, beginning in the late 1970s and lasting until 1988, embraced a campaign that

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[1] I will refer to the social movement, broadly defined, as the antimilitary movement. The first phase will be labeled the CO (conscientious objection) movement, as a reflection of efforts to win legal recognition of conscientious objection to Spain's military draft. The second phase is called the *insumisión* movement, the term used throughout Spain to refer to the campaign of total rejection of the military draft, including the conscientious objection option, based on the principle of antimilitarism. *Insumisión* might be translated as "insubordination" or "refusal to submit."

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promoted conscientious objection against military service. The second was a campaign of total resistance and civil disobedience against the military (*campaña de insumisión)* that rejected both the draft and all alternative forms of service. The analysis uses a model of media and policy agendas that focuses on how social movements, established policy actors, and the media all bring to bear distinctive resources, strategies, and alliances in an evolving and interrelated way. I begin by briefly describing the model, and follow with a short history of the movement in the changing political context of Spain's democratic transition. The body of the article is an empirical study of news reports in mainstream Spanish media that demonstrates generalizable patterns of a dynamic, three-way relationship between official policy, the media, and social movement challenges.

THE MEDIA AGENDA-POLICY AGENDA MODEL

An agenda-building approach to both official policy and media attention brings together twenty-five years of research about political and discursive power in political science, mass communication, and social movement studies. Social movement studies of the media emphasize how movements are impelled to search for a "space of public representation" in the media (Melucci 1996: 218-228). News frames may shape public opinion and how social issues are discussed (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992), and attract potential supporters (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Bendford 1986; Snow and Bendford 1988). Social movements use the media to challenge public policies, to demand access to institutional agendas, and to mobilize their resources tactically. These findings are widely reflected in media studies as well (Altheide, 1976; Entman 1993, Weiss 1992).

There are important parallels between the study of social movement-media relations and the policy agenda literature. Elder and Cobb's (1984) discussion of ways to infuse new issues into policy agendas reflect Snow and Bendford's (1992) criteria for successful framing: attributing cause for collective privations, personifying responsibility, and offering solutions. Stone (1989: 299) similarly observes that a movement's grievances must not be attributable "to fate, or nature" in order to call for governmental action. Kingdon (1984) suggests that both identifying legitimate solutions and the actors to implement them are highly dependent on the existing "opportunity windows," reminiscent of the widely applied concept of political opportunity structure.

The policy agenda literature also overlaps with social movement media research by stressing a constructionist approach to agenda building in which outcomes are contingent upon the power, resources, and strategies of each group. To challenge official agendas, social movements typically make demands for broad social change through their media strategies and seek to influence specific officials in order to achieve policy innovation. In this way, there is a relationship between the political opportunity structure and those elements that affect setting the media agenda, which might be labeled the "media opportunity structure."

Recently media scholars have emphasized that media politics is partly conditioned by rules of journalistic mediation, elite access and control, and availability of alternative sources (see Van Zoonen 1996). This implies looking at the news "agenda game" as it is played out among several policy actors and the media itself—a symbolic struggle that filters issues, information, and how to think about them (Protess and McCombs 1991, McCombs 1993: 62). Depending on the political context, newsworthy issues and events may be fixed by the controlling elite, through open debates, or through

interdependent patterns for news- and policy-making. In closed political systems, media silence and agenda exclusion of challengers conform to the "second and third faces of power" (Lukes 1974), whereby the state subtly manipulates public discourse. In more open systems, the media remain institutionally dependent on official politics because it offers journalists a scheduled, organized, and legitimate course of newsworthy events. Debates and controversies among officials may indicate to the media when to inform the public (Bennett 1990), but may also indicate political openings to social movements, thereby stimulating protest. Protest activities may initiate fissures within the ruling agenda by revealing popular support for certain policies which politicians seize upon to promote their own careers. In turn, these fissures create elite conflicts that generate a second tier of news stories related to movement issues. Finally, the political impact of a social movement may be thwarted by "bureaucratizing" its challenge, namely, moving reform processes to the hinterland of government agencies or subjecting them to long judicial reviews. Under these circumstances media attention fades because of the journalistic search for new conflicts.

Following Mann (1993: 44-91), the relationship between policy agendas, media agendas, and social movements can be systematized in terms of three idealized models of political power: pure elitism, pluralism, and institutional elitism. These models are ideal-typical in that they locate real world state-media relations in terms of pure models based on nature and degree of elite control (see table 1). Like most ideal types, they provide an analytically convenient way of organizing and systematizing complex relationships. However, these models also tend to produce a more static conception of political systems than is typically the case. Regarding the Spanish conscientious objection movement, these models represent distillations of complex state-media relationships that existed over time.

Table 1. Policy and Media Outcomes of Social Protest by Models of Media-State Relations.

Model of Power	Policy Agenda	Media Agenda
Pure Elitism	(a) Inactivity (b) Repression	(a) Silence (b) Marginalization
Pluralism	Political innovation	Coverage of protest and/or of official controversy
Institutional Elitism	(a) Cooptation (b) Institutional marginalization of conflict	(a) Institutionalization of SM sources or sensationalism (b) Indifference

Pure Elitism

This model depicts an exclusionary control of both political and media agendas by relatively cohesive ruling groups. Political access and freedom of expression are both curtailed. In the face of social protest, officials respond by *vetoing or delaying* decision making that may threaten their interests. If protest cannot be denied or ignored, authorities may simply *repress* it. The chances that repression may foster popular protest or favorable publicity in support of a movement are greatly reduced given the repression of coverage.

Media outcomes for protest are either *silence* or *marginalization*. Silence typically results from authoritarian legal proscriptions or more tacit internal censorship. Frequently, common interests and/or background ties among political, business, and media elites account for the convergence of material interests and ideological beliefs (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Parenti 1993). Marginalization means that journalists are either forced to ignore popular grievances or treat them as "natural," "irrelevant," or "too risky" for official action. If official repression occurs, mainstream media will either react with silence or justify it by framing the protesters as antiestablishment, extremist, inconsistent, or lacking public support (Entman and Rojecki 1993). Thus, elitist media model either obscures challenges to power (Goldman and Rajagopal 1991) or marginalizes them by imposing deviant frames (Cohen 1972; Young 1990; van Zoonen 1992).

Pluralism

The pluralist model is based on Robert Dahl's well-known description of democratic political competition between interest groups in which resources play a large role in determining success. It is an "inclusive" and "relatively open" system. Policy making and news making respond to diverse competing interests without any pre-established bias. Coverage of social protest can foster or reflect popular support, or sometimes both. The news media grant access (e.g., interviews, letters to the editor, or opinion columns) to social movement activists and give ample coverage (sometimes favorable) to their demands. This could happen either before policy innovation takes place or during the process of mobilization to challenge old policies. In the pluralist model, news organizations also report on conflict and controversy within established policy communities because these debates are accessible and thought to be newsworthy.

In pluralist competition, movement organizations mobilize the media like other resources at their disposal. It has been suggested that a rational exchange of information for publicity—one that mirrors rational market transactions—occurs (Blumler and Gurevitch 1981; Wolsfeld 1984, 1991; Sampedro 1994). Personalized, emotionally laden, conflictive, and dramatic stories are highly valued commodities which deserve high visibility coverage, sometimes enabling just a handful of people to achieve broad public attention. Yet just as nonmarket forces typically constrain the rationality of the market, so too do institutional and political constraints distort the exchange of news information. In most Western democracies, a movement needs stable networks and an internal division of labor to manage press relations (Wolsfeld 1984). Koopmans points out that this kind on institutionalization "dampens rather than stimulates collective action" (Koopmans 1995: 234-235). Gamson observes that "[media discourse]. . . often obstructs and only rarely and unevenly contributes to the development of collective action frames" (1995: 104).

Institutional Elitism

The model is most characteristic of Western democracies and, as I will show, increasingly mirrors Spanish media relations. It recognizes that news production is an institutionally embedded process, conditioned by political context, which has its own routines and norms. The media privilege certain interests but, at the same time, may create room for the expression of social demands. In a sense, the institutional model combines elitist and pluralist types because it emphasizes both asymmetries of power and the unintended consequences of institutional patterns (Hall and Taylor 1996).

Regarding official policy, the institutional model is characterized by long periods of stability and short periods of change. It reflects "constantly reshaped systems of limited participation" (Baumgartner and Jones 1992). Agenda building lurches from one extended phase of stability to another as short periods of change are followed by new equilibria that reestablish the position of the dominant groups. Officials and journalists establish new routines or alter the existing ones to support their interests. The role of social movements is to define problems and demand new policy initiatives that have yet to become routinized. In limited cases, policy monopolies can be broken by major mobilizations.

The institutional model also recognizes how the power of state structures shape social movements. Meyer (1991) observes that social movements can be *coopted* by being incorporated into existing institutions, e.g., putting leaders on advisory boards or to work on new government programs. One might also speak of *institutional marginalization* in which conflict is managed by commissions of experts, detoured to the courts, or confined to bureaucratic proceedings (at a bureaucratic pace). Enmeshing movements in the legal system is a common tactic. The net effect of these official strategies is to shuttle movement demands out of the public eye.

The power of institutional structures also biases media agendas. Media coverage of protest is shaped by "epistemological and organizational features of news organizations" (Van Zoonen 1996). Institutional conventions ingrained in daily journalistic practices structure the contest for representing policies in favor of those groups that already possess institutional resources. Mainstream media is "path dependent" on official politics (Hallin 1986) because official sources provide a constant and reliable flow of information for making different news stories on a regular basis. Institutional actors are usually able to set the parameters of political conflict through the national media because of their accessibility and predictability. More subtly, journalistic routines find legitimation in institutional sources because their social authority implies objectivity (Tuchman 1978; Gans 1980; Fishman 1988). In contrast, social protest must always carry the weight of proving its legitimacy. All this means that media agendas are more accessible for elites than for social activists.

As I will show, institutional elitism is not a completely closed system because there are instances when journalistic routines facilitate movement coverage. Social movements may influence media agendas by moderating their demands and adopting a more consensual frame or working closely with official agencies that are regularly followed by journalists. In this case the cooptation of a social movement occurs via media agenda in the form of institutionalized movement sources, as listed in the bottom right box in table 1. When a movement refuses to moderate or adapt, there is another variety of cooptation that derives from the structure of the media. I have in mind activists' strategies to generate shocking and novel protest events to capitalize on media preferences. In these cases, it is a real possibility that journalists may frame protestors as sensationalists, not because of state directives or elitist ties—as in authoritarian systems—but because of the commercial imperative to win market share. The result is

that the movement is sensationalized, trivialized, and coopted. The creation of "media stars" among the activists obsessed with gaining attention can further contribute to sensationalization and cooptation of a movement (Gitlin 1980: 146-178). In short, through media institutionalization, a social movement may also be coopted by becoming an eccentric news source.

Finally, institutionalized media agendas may react to social movements with indifference. This corresponds to the shift of contention from the streets to bureaucratic processes, discussed above. Contention that is shifted to judicial or administrative arenas where conflict simmers without resolution, claims are asserted without drama, and debates rage without clear villains or victims, is not newsworthy (Cook 1996). Lengthy and intricate institutional proceedings obscure the broader story line and make a news plot that is hard for audiences to follow. If any story line is forthcoming at all, it will coincide with the "trail of power" (Bennett 1996), and draw upon institutional and bureaucratized sphere of conventional politics. If activists are unable to generate elite disagreement or innovative reframings of their demands, protest will fade from the media.

The preceding discussion has presented three models of agenda building that specify different relationships, tactics, and consequences of social movements depending on the openness of political and media institutions. In the pages that follow I will apply these models in a longitudinal study of incremental—but not continuous—institutionalization of Spanish media. I am interested in the play of the agenda between 1976 and 1993 as it relates to the Spanish antimilitary movement. The implication of this analysis is that some of the processes observed in Spain will be generalizable to other issues and other political contexts. Prior to 1976, the conscientious objector movement was effectively marginalized by Francoist authoritarianism and media control. At the other end of the study's temporal frame, we encounter a process of media agenda building that was integrated into institutionalized relations with political elites but which played a role in opening public discourse to antidraft protests.

ANTIMILITARISM AND POLITICS

The Spanish government required two years of compulsory military service for all healthy adult males. Serious consideration of conscientious objection as an alternative service was excluded from the political agenda for fifty years: during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975), during Spain's democratic transition (1976-1982), and during the democratic consolidation (1982-1996).[2] Institutional responses to draft resisters ranged from repression and imprisonment under Franco, to bureaucratic stonewalling, symbolic campaigns, and temporary deferments after Franco's death. Cases of conscientious objection (hereafter CO) were few and mostly religiously inspired during the Francoist period. After Franco's death in 1975, the opening of political space in Spain meant that more politically motivated CO cases appeared, with their number growing each year during the democratic transition. The legal texts which supposedly regulated CO at this time were an ambiguous executive decree which recognized religious CO (Royal Decree 3011, Dec. 23, 1976) and constitutional article 30.2.

[2] In 1996 the period of socialist rule ended with the election of a Conservative government. This was the second wave of elite replacement since the end of Francoism. The first was the replacement of center-right UCD elites by the socialists (PSOE) in 1982.

The military was the major antagonist against the Spain's democratic transition. Francoist Generals supported an authoritarian, traditionalist, and unitary conception of the state that saw pluralist political competition as a threat. Conscientious objection was a direct attack on the privileged position the military had enjoyed for forty years under Francoism. For a decade after Franco's death transition governments balanced the power of the military and threats of coups d'etat against popular demands for change. Even though the 1978 constitution provided a right to conscientious objection, and a Conscientious Objection Law was passed in 1984, it took until 1988 for implementation to occur. This was the first time that an alternative civilian service in the place of military conscription was attempted to be put into widespread effect.

For the main SMO, the Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia (MOC), and other CO organizations, implementation of these laws was not enough. In 1988 they responded by launching a campaign of civil disobedience (*campaña de insumisión*, or campaign of "insubordination") against all compulsory military and civilian service. Their reasoning was that an acceptance of alternative service continued to legitimate not only the military draft but the military itself. The strength and numbers of the Spanish antidraft movement grew at an unprecedented rate as a result of the *insumisión* campaign. Between 1988 and 1989, the number of official recognitions of conscientious objection almost doubled, growing from 6,552 to 12,140 (see table 2). Between 1989 and 1996 the

Table 2. Recognitions of Conscientious Objection by the Spanish State, 1986-1994

1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
4,995	6,882	6,552	12,140	20,857	28,627	35,584	46,084	82040

percentage of conscientious objection grew from about 5.5% to 50% of the total draft. This is compared to the Western European average of 5%-10% conscientious objection rates (Germany surpasses the Spanish CO rates). According to several polls, the campaign enjoyed broad public support (see Ibarra 1992; Sampedro 1997). By 1993, those choosing total rejection of the conscription system (called *insumisos*), that is, refusing both military or substitute civilian service—thereby risking imprisonment—reached 9000. In other European countries total objectors remained at about a dozen cases per year (*El País*, January 30, 1994: 23). In response to popular pressure, the Conservative government announced in 1996 the end of military conscription by the year 2000 (see *El País*, May 3, 1996: 22). Spain may be considered the first case where a social movement forced the transition to a fully professional Armed Forces in peace time.

METHODOLOGY

To examine the relation between policy agenda, media agenda, and social movement, I analyzed all CO coverage provided by the three main national newspapers from 1976 to 1993. A media leadership effect of *El País* (aligned with the socialists),

ABC (conservative) and *El Mundo* (a more popular and adversarial daily) was assumed.[3] Considered as "elite press," it is reasonable that these three dailies set the agendas for other media organizations through a "cascade effect" (Noelle-Neumann and Mathes 1987). For the period May 1976 to June 1993, 1224 pieces of information were coded from the news stories and editorials of *El País* (n = 629), *ABC* (n = 266) and *El Mundo* (n = 329, but for the period October 1989 to June 1993 only).

The agenda-building model was examined by measuring the news flow on the conscientious objection-*insumisión* issue from 1976-1993. Our model assumes that elites and activists compete among themselves and form alliances with media agents and other players in order to gain media space for their side of the CO debate. Thus, we identified five "news promoters" (Molotch and Lester 1974) by coding media coverage in terms of what activities and declarations were reported. Five categories of news promoters were evident: (1) the *media*, for which we counted newspaper polls (paid for by the paper itself), investigative and background reporting, editorials, and columns of political pundits; (2) the *judiciary*, indicated by military and civilian court trials, prosecutions, indictments, and sentences; (3) *political* sources, including all executive measures, parliamentary debates, declarations, and opinion columns by professional party politicians; (4) the *conscientious objection movement*, which refers to movement-initiated news about protests, direct actions, and legislative initiatives, or declarations and opinion columns by objectors and movement leaders. Reports of support from nonpolitical institutions such as religious organizations and human rights associations were also included in this category; (5) *military* news initiatives, which included declarations or proposals of military personnel concerning CO. A trained coder analyzed a 15% random sample of the whole data set and the resulting reliability was 0.96. The relation between policy control and news management was examined and complemented by qualitative examination of the actors' strategies.

Finally, an intensive content analysis of the coverage of *El País* and *ABC* during 1988 was conducted in order to examine the role of the mainstream press in challenging official policy. 1988 was chosen as a crucial year in the debate because the Constitutional Court had just sanctioned the official policy and the movement announced the *insumisión* campaign. Paragraphs of the news text were the unit of analysis: 280 paragraphs of *El País* and 82 in *ABC*. They were coded according to six categories: (1) the extent and features of CO as a social problem; (2) mentions of different actors as information sources; (3) statements of who was responsible for the conflict (indicating a diminished capacity to propose or implement solutions; (4) causes of the problem; (5) policy proposals thought to address the causes and offer solutions; and (6) overall moral judgements of the CO campaign and activists. Intercoder reliability in a 15% random sample of 1988 paragraphs in *ABC* and *El País* was 0.92, with a range of 0.85 - 0.97.

PATTERNS OF CONFLICT AND INFORMATION

In this section I will show how media access is closely related to the levels of political control during different phases of Spanish politics. To put it another way, the political opportunity structure of the Spanish CO movement conditioned a "media

[3] *El País* was started in May 1976. Soon the daily became the most prominent quality newspaper of the country and the core of the most powerful media holding. It enjoys the highest circulation: almost 500,000 and one million on Sundays. *ABC*, its conservative counterpart with similar circulation figures, is the oldest current newspaper. *El Mundo* began printing in October 1989 and it mixes an adversarial tone with some the features of a quality paper, addressing younger publics. Its circulation figures have recently come closer to the other two.

opportunity structure." During the period of study, an elitist media agenda model held for certain periods. It manifested minimum media coverage of CO protest and almost no news promotion from any of the competing sectors (political, judicial, military, or movement). Later, the pluralist model was applicable at different times and in different intensities. These resulted from market-driven news coverage of CO mobilizations and official debate about policy innovations, as well as from strategic news promotion by both activists and elites. Finally, the institutional model is applicable to the most recent period studied (1992-1993). Debate of the CO agenda continued among officials but coverage of the movement decreased because of media saturation. Thus, elite news shares and news promotion monopolized a narrowing debate.

Figure 1 shows the media coverage of the CO issue. Figure 2 presents the changing ability of the different actors to promote their position on the CO issue as measured by sources identified in news stories. Figure 2 also presents the relationship between media coverage and the strength of the civil disobedience campaign as measured by the number of legal proceedings begun against conscientious objectors. This is plotted by the broken trend line showing movement strength increasing rapidly beginning in 1988. Also, to represent a further influence on news coverage, level of elite disagreement, measured by the number of parliamentary initiatives from opposition parties, is plotted by the solid trend line. In both figures the data are grouped according to five periods (indicated by vertical broken lines) that distinguish different media agenda-policy agenda models. In the sections that follow, I will discuss both the main players' strategies to influence the policy agenda on the CO issue and the media agenda of CO coverage according to these five periods.

Period I: Transition from Francoism (1976-1977)

This was a transitional period during which Francoist intransigence and repression of the CO movement was replaced by an official policy of benign inactivity. In 1976 an executive decree recognized conscientious objection on religious grounds only. While this was a moderation of the previous policy, it nevertheless condemned the vast majority of secularly motivated conscientious objectors to prosecution and imprisonment. Both media presence and coverage of protest demanding new CO legislation peaked in 1977 (see figure 1), suggesting pluralist influences in media coverage even though this period is only a few years out of Francoism. News in *ABC* and *El País* amounted to an average of four stories per month (three for *El País*, one for *ABC*).

Because of movement refusal and media willingness to cover innovative CO protest, the limitation of conscientious objection to religious grounds was never implemented. In November 1977, the Defense Ministry privately moderated its stance to provide for the "unofficial exemption" of all the objectors who dared to apply while publicly maintaining a hardline position against protestors. This measure was never printed in official bulletins and its publication was punishable as an offense against the Armed Forces, effectively silencing the media for the next six years, and, for the most part, ending pluralist influences on coverage of the issue (with two exceptions that I discuss below). During this delicate period in Spanish politics, the military exercised close surveillance over the process of transition, and this policy of "secret tolerance" of the CO movement reflected a symbolic concession to the military by transition politicians hoping to limit conscientious objection as an issue while simultaneously recognizing the menace embedded in the movement's demands.

Figure 1. Number of News Stories in *El País* and *ABC* (May 1976 to June 1993) and *El Mundo* (October 1989 to June 1996)

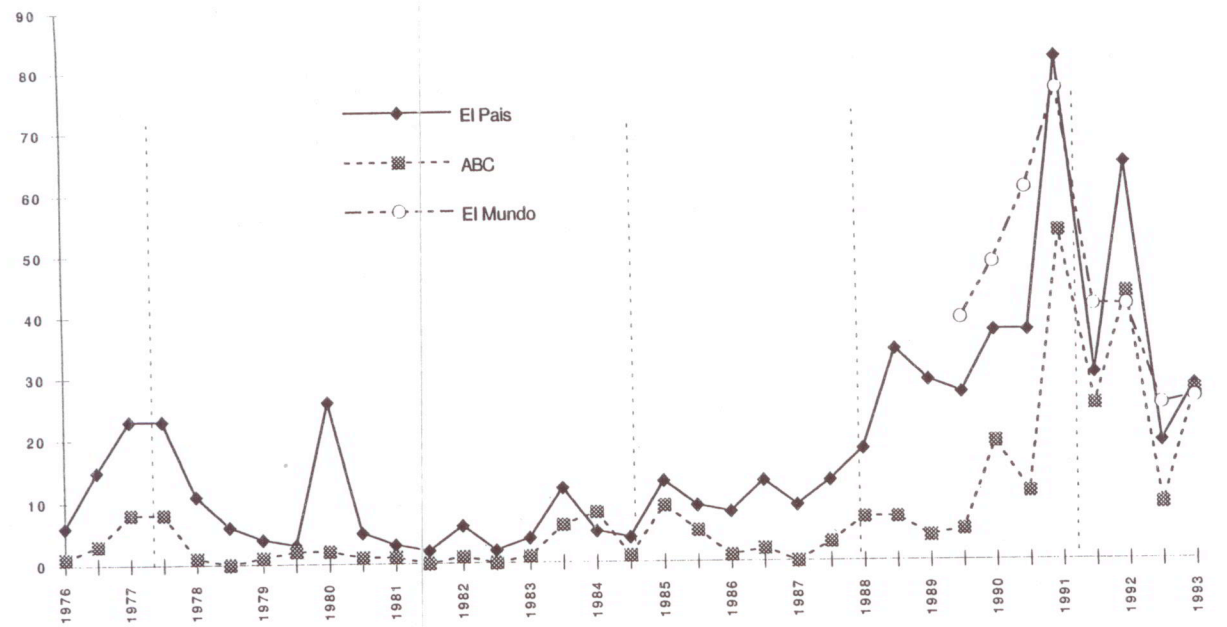
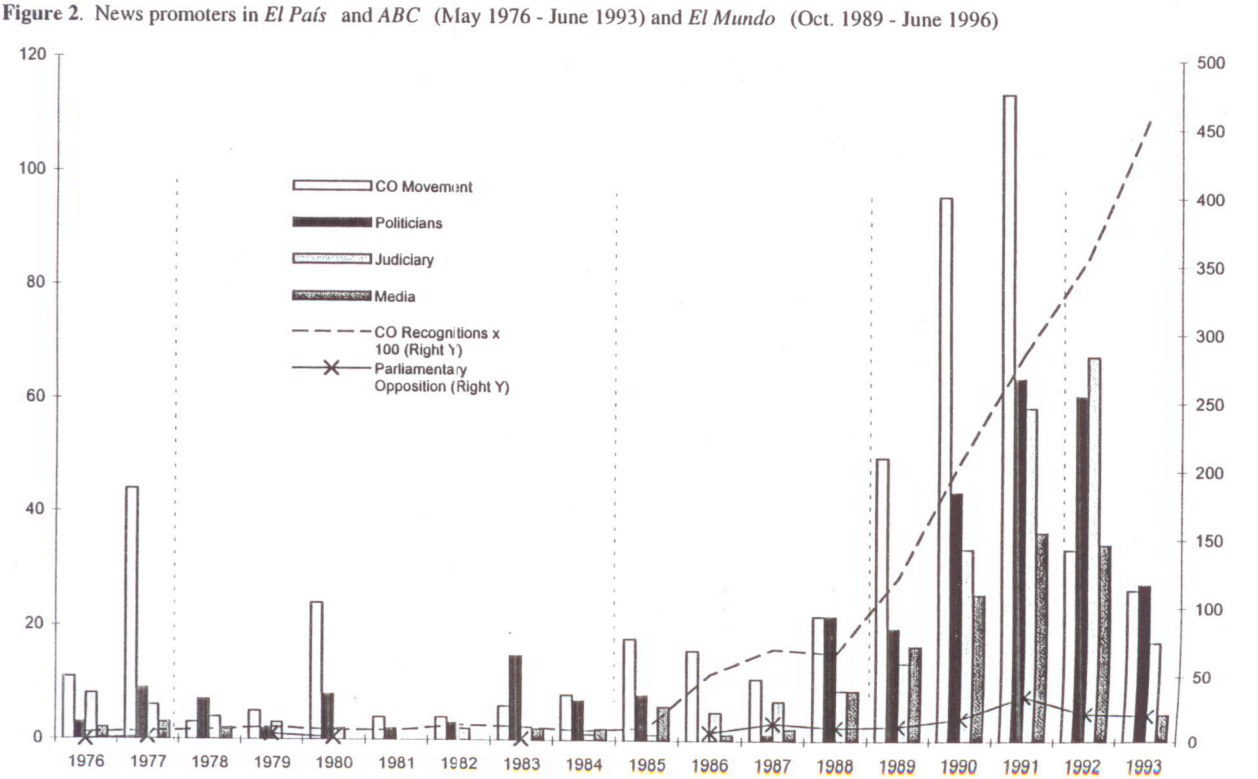


Figure 2. News promoters in *El País* and *ABC* (May 1976 - June 1993) and *El Mundo* (Oct. 1989 - June 1996)



Period II: Conflict Management by "Hidden Agenda" (1978-1984)

During this period, the military continued to threaten the process of transition and dominated the policy agenda about conscientious objection. Most senior officers were holdovers from the Francoist period, and their machinations and threats gave rise to continuous rumors of coups d'etat in the late 70s and early 80s. These rumors were actualized on February 23, 1981 when the Spanish parliament was seized by a Colonel in the Civil Guard. The government's policy agenda concerning conscientious objection was to manage conflict by avoiding a permanent and public political solution while simultaneously implementing a "hidden agenda" that did not correspond with the legal framework. The 1978 Constitution recognized secular conscientious objection, and the Spanish government had by this time incorporated the minimum legal profile of Western democracies. Nevertheless, its policies towards the CO movement were *placebo policies* in that they sought to hide external signs of the problem instead of addressing it (Stringer and Richardson 1980). Between 1977 through 1984, many objectors were amnestied together with other political prisoners, thereby "losing" them among other issues such as terrorism and regional nationalism. Subsequent objectors were exempted from military duty until 1988—a policy of "concealment by postponement." This way, transition politicians placated the military by avoiding the pressure of a social movement that had defined itself as "antimilitaristic" (Actas del I Congreso Estatal del MOC 1979; Sampedro 1997: 131-143).

The policy of "unofficial exemption" noted above was kept secret by pressure, fear, self-censorship, and threat of military tribunal. As figure 1 demonstrates, the media's reaction was to avoid coverage except for two peaks in 1980 and in 1983. The first represented coverage by *El País* of twenty Basque CO activists who had been tried and imprisoned for making public the "hidden draft exemption" discussed above, and for calling for total abolition of the draft. The second peak occurred in 1983 during heated parliamentary debate over the first secular CO law which was presented by the socialists. This occurred two years after the unsuccessful coup when the threat from Francoist generals had moderated.

In short, governmental foot dragging and nondecision during this period were successful in keeping the numbers of conscientious objectors low. It avoided policy debate about the constitutional right to secular conscientious objection for five years, until 1983, when politicians opened the policy agenda to debate, against the will of military hardliners. Figure 2 shows that politicians predominated over other news promoters.

Period III: Enlargement of Conflict and Debate (1985-1988)

During this period increased coverage suggests the infusion of pluralist competition into the media model. The objectors' protests directed at the still unfinished legislation expanded CO coverage in *El País*, while *ABC* maintained its relative silence (see figure 1). Both papers together averaged three stories per month, *El País* providing 77% of the information. News coverage resulted from movement mobilizations against yearly draft calls in 1986, 1987 and 1988. Also, increased news shares of judiciary elites reflected the prosecution of activists engaging in actions that preceded the *insumisión* campaign (see 1986 and 1987 in figure 2).

The Spanish socialist party (PSOE) was swept into office in 1984, but contrary to the hopes of movement activists, its policy towards the CO movement was intransigence and stonewalling rather than accommodation. It was a strategy designed

partly to placate the military hierarchy, who remained dogmatic about the military draft. Under the socialists, the Ministry of Defense actually imposed more limitations on the right to claim conscientious objection than when the party was in opposition. The socialist agenda on the CO issue was to shift movement challenges to bureaucratic and judiciary spheres. Thus, the newsworthiness of the struggle was drained by legal and administrative debates about criteria for claiming CO status or by the requirements of alternative civilian service. Moreover, any changes to the CO laws had to be sanctioned by the highest courts, further delaying resolution and removing the issue from the public scrutiny.

While the socialists were able to defer public confrontation for about two years, their control of the agenda was increasingly questioned by other institutions (the People's Ombudsman, most opposition parties, regional and local administrations, the judiciary, etc.). In the end, their policy agenda was challenged by the *insumisión* campaign of civil disobedience that began in February 1989. The campaign mobilized increasing numbers of conscientious objectors and total objectors (*insumisos*) and made it impossible to keep the conscription issue on the back burner of the official policy agenda any longer.

Period IV: Outburst of Conflict and Debate (1989-1992)

As a result of the campaign there were almost 9,400 *insumisos*—young men refusing both military service and substitute CO service, between 1989 and 1993 (Casquette 1996: 205). News coverage increased significantly each year during the campaign and peaked in 1991 (see figure 1). *El País* provided an average of seven news stories per month; *ABC* jumped up to four; and *El Mundo* displayed a striking monthly average of nine stories. The high point of coverage in 1991 coincided with anti-Gulf War mobilizations of the antimilitary movement. Figure 2 shows that movement organizations were the primary news source. The news share of the politicians and judiciary were also significant during this period because of continuing parliamentary debate over the model for the Armed Forces, and ongoing judicial proceedings against the increasing numbers of *insumisos*. A second peak of information occurred in March 1992 when a not-guilty sentence was passed, generating an impressive news share for judicial news promoters (see figure 2).

Period V: Institutionalization (July 1992 - June 1993)

Curiously, during this period the CO issue lost appeal with the dailies which had previously been so receptive. As figure 1 shows, media coverage declined during this period, ignoring the continued growth of the movement and the increased number of judicial proceedings and court sentences—some favorable to conscientious objectors and others upholding prosecution of *insumisos*. *El Mundo*'s coverage decreased from nine to five stories per month, and *El País*'s from seven to five. Several factors related to news agenda-building can account for the change. First, journalistic routines and professional norms led to indifference because of the shift of the CO issue to the judicial arena: court reports are less dramatic and less newsworthy than street demonstrations. Second, influential political elites had reached consensus that the movement's goal of all-volunteer armed forces was simply impractical and unattainable, thereby relegating the *insumisión* campaign outside the "trail of power" that often guides media attention (Bennett 1996). By taking for granted the authority of professional politicians on the issue journalists seemed to accept their definition of the movement as no longer relevant. The decline of news space during these years suggests a characteristic pattern of "either feast or famine"

(Baumgartner and Jones 1992) in which media agendas remain attentive to intense political conflict but soon become saturated. How this process played out warrants closer attention because it constitutes a serious threat to the efficacy of social movement protest.

No newspaper could avoid reporting the increase of contention in 1991. The movement mounted a huge campaign in opposition to Spain's participation in the Gulf War and, as figure 2 depicts, the news stories initiated by the movement increased significantly. Also, interelite disagreement increased elite sources as news promoters in 1991 (*ABC*, the most conservative of the three dailies, actually gave primacy to politicians and judiciary). Sensing that the debate over conscription had passed from its control, the government suspended parliamentary debate on draft reform until Desert Storm ended, but elite conflict in other sectors continued to fuel news coverage.[4]

Figure 2 shows that news coverage in 1992 changed dramatically, with judicial and political elites becoming the primary news sources. Social protest had been replaced by institutional conflicts within the government and between the government and the judiciary. Intragovernmental struggle thus became the dominant news story. In 1992 the Ministry of Defense charged that Ministry of Justice frequently recognized "false objectors" and that there was widespread fraud in the alternative civilian service. In March that year, a judge absolved a young Catholic activist from charges arising from his civil disobedience—the first *insumiso* to be set free—but Socialist President Felipe González publicly objected. He asked the Attorney General to imprison all *insumisos*, despite appeals by several bar associations and lawyer groups. By July, however, a decrease in media attention was clear. The Gulf War was over and movement protests decreased significantly. This can be seen by comparing coverage of the first and second *insumiso* trials.

A year after the first *insumiso* was absolved of charges, a second activist was found not guilty. A breakdown of the news coverage for these two trials demonstrates that media saturation and indifference was almost total by 1993.

Table 3. News Stories about the First Two *Insumiso* Acquittals

Insumiso Trial	*El País*	*ABC*	*El Mundo*
1st—March 1992	24	14	20
2nd—Feb. 1993	1	3	1

The sentence of March 1992 attracted fifty-eight news stories in the three newspapers, compared to just 5 stories for the next acquitted sentence. *El País* and *ABC* offered just one story each (four and three paragraphs long, respectively). However, the social implications of this last case should have produced much more media attention. The

[4] The government approved a symbolic reform of the military service in December 1991. The three major parties agreed to reduce military service three months, to assign conscripts close to home, and to post a "chart of rights inside the headquarters."

1993 sentence applied to 200,000 draftees because the *insumiso* being prosecuted had refused to perform *any* military service. This sentence also carried a strong critique of the Spanish defense model, stressed its unpopularity, and explicitly condemned the CO legislation. The 1992 sentence was more limited, affecting only 40,000 men because this *insumiso* was tried for refusing to perform the alternative civilian service.[5] Nevertheless, the media apparently considered the 1993 sentence nothing more than another case in a routine sequence of trials. Moreover, political elites seem to have learned from the dispute that broke out in 1992 that remaining silent was a way to contain damage to official policy. Just one public official criticized the 1993 sentence through a single paragraph article in *ABC*. Given the journalistic prominence of the political class, other politicians' declarations would have been published had they been voiced. The four judiciary-promoted news stories merely summarized the sentence.

A plausible explanation for this dramatic shift in the media agenda must take all the actors into account. First, the government decreased the media appeal of the *insumisión* by shifting the debate to judiciary processes. Contradictory court sentences (which carried neither imprisonment nor freedom for all *insumisos*) blurred the differences between civil disobedience (*insumisión*), conscientious objection, and draft-dodging. Officials were able to take advantage of the complexity and number of judicial proceedings by simply ignoring the ones that threatened their own position, thereby marginalizing the successes of the movement by deceasing the public's awareness. Second, in 1991 a parliamentary consensus was reached on a semiprofessional army by

Table 4. Promoters of News Stories for the First Two *Insumiso* Acquittals

Insumiso Trial	CO Movement	Politicians	Judiciary	Media
1st Trial March 1992	9	19	22	10
2nd Trial Feb. 1993	0	1	4	0

the year 2000. This was an apparent success for the CO movement, but it was accompanied by increase of penalties (up to six years imprisonment) for total objection, mitigating the movement's success and placating the military. After this law was passed, the number of parliamentary initiatives on CO decreased dramatically, which in turn quelled debate among political decision makers and led to media silence. On July 16, 1993, *El País* published a brief note about the fifth and sixth acquitted sentences of *insumisos* but none of the three national papers had reported on any other *insumisión* trial since March 1993.

Third, the governmental strategy of "judicial marginalization" of the antimilitary movement was reflected in news gathering routines. Journalists increasingly turned to institutional sources—established political and judicial contacts— because they were

[5] See the original sentences: Penal Court 4, Madrid, Sentence February 3, 1992; Penal Court 20, Madrid, Sentence 12/93, January 16, 1993, made public on February 3.

accessible and predictable. Compared to the drama of the Gulf War mobilizations and the first *insumisos* cases, subsequent judiciary episodes seemed irrelevant and the saturation point for stories about trials was quickly reached. In the first five months of 1993, there were 125 trials of *insumisos*, greatly outnumbering those held throughout 1992 (*Informe de Derechos Humanos del Parlamento de Navarra* 1993). When the sentence did not impose jail terms, some *insumisos* (12.5%) dramatically provoked authorities so that they might be jailed on principle. But even these cases were not deemed newsworthy (see *El País*, February 24, 1994: 13-14).

In sum, the factors that had previously impelled the movement's media presence lost strength. The institutional interdependence of political, judiciary, and media on coverage of the antimilitary movement suggests the model of institutional elitism for media agendas. In retrospect, it is clear that the 1991 parliamentary consensus on the CO issue (creating semiprofessional armed forces by 2000) did not enjoy widespread popular support and was therefore vulnerable to movement pressure. Despite conflict between the courts and the socialist government, on the one hand, and the socialist government and local administrations (especially in the Basque region) on the other, the antimilitary movement, energized by its strategy of *insumisión*, was nevertheless thwarted by a mix of political strategy, media saturation, and journalistic routine. What one official in the Ministry of Justice labeled as the most "unique case of civil disobedience in the history of Spain" was dampened by institutional news-making imperatives. Media famine matched policy famine, or to put differently, the fortunes of the movement were shaped by a constricting media agenda, which in turn was influenced by the struggle between officials over the political agenda.

MEDIA POLITICS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

It is important to emphasize, however, the media is not just a simple a tool of politicians. Given a more pluralistic news environment, the media can open space for social movements through coverage of protest. This was the case 1985-1991 when increasing media presence of the CO campaign opened public discourse to new lines of dissent and challenged elite power. Moreover, these stories created a momentum in which politicians, the judiciary, and even journalists themselves commented upon movement-initiated stories in order to promote their own positions and interests. The *insumisión* campaign set in motion a wave of media interest that extended beyond protest stories themselves and in which news space was opened to different proposals for draft abolition, court trials, and journalistic efforts to report, comment, and measure the turmoil. The media therefore was not only the vehicle by which the movement was brought into the public arena. It was also the means officials used to stake out their own positions. This is in line with Klandermans's observation that a movement's ability to create institutional conflict may the most important variable for determining its political impact (1989: 388). To this I might add that it is also a key variable for attracting journalistic attention.

To trace how the national media may have helped the movement, an intensive content analysis was conducted on news stories during a crucial point of the movement's career (Sampedro 1997: 267-269). Figure 1 shows that 1988 was the year in which the Spanish antidraft movement achieved a quantum leap in coverage and refocused the official agenda by beginning the *insumisión* campaign. Protest news stories began to increase in 1985 but this coverage alone was not enough to set the governmental agenda and fix its content. Rather, it was through coverage of the *insumisión* movement that the national dailies attracted media attention. The drama of the activists' resistance opened

the issue to other policy actors such as executive and legislative branches of government, the courts, communities of experts, and other media. In this section I will show how news organizations *opened* the policy agenda by introducing new issues, participants, and solutions that officials were forced to take into consideration. Media coverage also *reset* the official agenda by discussing flaws in official policy, thereby rekindling debate that was artificially closed, and covering internal disagreements within the government. In other words, the media opportunity structure altered the political opportunity structure by increasing and reporting on interelite conflict.

Had it not been for the movement-promoted news stories of *El País* between 1978-1988 the CO issue would probably have been headed for extinction. In 1984 parliament had passed new legislation providing for civilian service for conscientious objectors, and imposing imprisonment for those who refused it. The Law of Civilian Service was passed by a large majority, and fully sanctioned shortly thereafter by the Constitutional Court. In light of broad judicial and parliamentary consensus, the media might have discredited subsequent CO protest by labeling it extremist and against the public will, but, as figure 2 shows, this was not the case. In 1988, the *insumisión* campaign was an even more radical challenge to official policy, but here too we find that the media played a positive role. Half of the paragraphs both in *El País* and *ABC* framed it as legitimate social protest. 46% of the policy proposals printed by *El País* and 66% in *ABC* demanded alternative CO policies. Moreover, in only a handful on instances did the media demand imprisonment of *insumisos*. Just three paragraphs of *El País* (2% of policy proposals) and four in *ABC* (9%) demanded more severe legal punishment. The media raised the cost of repression by their favorable evaluations of the movement: 55% of commentary in *El País* carried positive judgements about the objectors and their motives. When the dailies addressed reasons for the strength of the antidraft movement, negative elements of compulsory military conscription (35%) and state militarism were the most cited causes. Government policies were labelled as too conservative (36% of policy judgements in *El País*, 21 % in *ABC*) and militaristic (14% in *El País*, 8% in *ABC*). This kind of media treatment opened the policy debate when it very easily could have been closed by the parliamentary and judicial consensus on the new laws.

While these results demonstrate that the main Spanish press performed as a "space of opposition" that questioned the official agenda, during the same period newspapers privileged established institutional sources. Routine news sources such as press conferences, leaks, and press releases amounted to almost half of the information provided to both dailies. Also, the dailies preferred sources closest to their editorial lines. The Ministry of Defense relied on conservative *ABC* to criticize the initiatives of the Ministry of Justice, which were mostly advanced by *El País*. The movement had second place as a news source in *El País* (21% of the total paragraphs) but last place in *ABC* (10%). It was rare that interviews with protesters were used, and therefore the policy debates and editorials of these papers rarely gave full coverage of the movement's ideological position and political strategy.

Journalistic work routines and editorial bias imposed additional constraints. The newspapers routinely printed news stories about CO protest on pages dominated by stories on terrorism (54% of CO news stories in *ABC* and 22% in *El País*), or on the crime pages (20% in *El País* and 10% in *ABC*), as opposed to the political pages. Apparently media acceptance of traditional definitions of politics led them to consider only the activities of professional politicians as worthy of the political pages. Stories might have been grouped with military issues, but this happened only 20% of the time in *El País* and a scant 2% in *ABC*. Thus, the movement was "framed by juxtaposition" (see Sampedro

1996: 505), suggesting a conscious editorial decision by *ABC* to push the CO issue outside the limits of legitimate controversy and deny its linkage with draft policy. Manipulation in favor of established options on draft policy was an obvious pattern in both papers, reflected in the fact that the media never portrayed the *insumisión* master frame as globally antimilitaristic (i.e., "No al Ejército" or "No to the Armed Forces"), but only as "No to the draft" ("Mili no"). The general conclusion is that while news coverage of a movement might play a key role in mobilization, it must nevertheless pass several filters: evaluation according to the prevailing standards of professional journalism, constraints of layout and composition, and congruence with positions of elites aligned with the media.

In summary, the national news media helped the CO movement challenge elite consensus and foster limited policy alternatives. Media coverage clearly influenced the political agenda but powerful structural constraints such as elite alliances, economic considerations, international factors, staffing, or political inertia cushioned media effects. In the present case it seems that real *political* effectiveness of CO protest is measured by its ability to fuel debates within the state structure. In this sense, what we might call a *media politics of protest* consists of spreading and accelerating policy controversies in front of the public; that is, to strategically place certain challenges and demands to encourage political debate and competition among policy actors in the government. This strategy may eventually result in policy innovation, but as the case of the CO movement demonstrates, change is incrementally slow and may not necessarily coincide with the movement's core demands.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis shows that, in general, the institutional model of media relations applies to the coverage of the antimilitary movement in Spain, with periods of elitist and pluralist influence determined by the larger political context. In 1988, increased media pluralism fueled debate, but there were strong institutional factors constraining a "market model" of media and policy agenda. In contemporary societies, the best that a movement might expect is that protest mobilization demonstrates (and in some cases deepens) contradictions or insufficiencies in existing policy alternatives (Rochon 1988). Through media coverage of protest, the activists might open the institutionalized controversy, reset the contents, or block unpopular initiatives. Rarely are activists able to determine the policy agenda. For short periods, movements may react to and counteract the elitist control of the agenda, but in the long run they are faced with institutional pressures to close the policy agendas they challenge. These institutional pressures are reinforced by parallel processes in the media. Political elites have resources that enable them to co-opt movements by bureaucratizing protest and diffusing original demands. Under these circumstances, media attention reaches saturation quite soon. Another possibility is to trivialize and sensationalize a movement, although we did not see this in the present case.

By the same token, news organizations can be active contributors to the policy agenda. While institutional constraints are almost always at work, the media may offer a "space of representation" (Melucci 1996) or a "space of opposition" (Rojecki 1993) by injecting issues into different public arenas and decision-making units. Because journalistic attention focuses mainly on official activities, media opportunities for a movement are typically dependent on existing political opportunities, especially the level of institutional controversy. When the state exercises greater influence over the media,

as in the elitist model, symbolic politics based on artificial consensus and mere rhetoric (Edelman 1987), or placebo policies which mask social privations (Stringer and Richardson 1980) can easily close the media agenda.

The general conclusion is that political control and news management usually go hand-in-hand, guaranteeing the stability of official agendas. A "soft" version of elite hegemony in both policy agenda building and media agenda building seems appropriate. In contemporary democracies, elites do not baldly "manufacture consent" through the media (Herman and Chomsky 1988), nor are the major media simply propaganda organs of the state or parties. But mass communication mostly inhibits the expansion of alternative ideologies and collective action through its own rules. These rules tend to validate the political class and, in the long run, dilute social protest.

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