
THE AWARENESS LEVEL OF FOREIGN POLICY AMONGST MODERN MEDIA PRACTITIONERS IN THE GAMBIA

¹Mama Jaye, MSc, ²Umaru I. Tanimu, Ph.D., ³Fatima Favour-Tamar Tanimu Ph.D.

¹Gambia Radio & Television Services (GRTS).

² Senior Lecturer, School of Business and Public Administration, University of The Gambia, former Dean, American International University West Africa (AIUWA), The Gambia.

³Senior Lecturer in Education, School of Education, University of The Gambia.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify how modern media affects the Gambia government's choice of foreign policy. The study is purely qualitative. A total of 133 respondents were master's students while 20 were lecturers. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with media personnel. Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively by using the Likert scale and the SPSS software to analyze the data according to the research objective. The findings of the study showed the level of awareness of the influence the media has on foreign policy in Gambia. The media have played a role as monitors, sources of information, opinion-makers, and catalysts in the development of various policies at the national and international levels. The study recommends the empowering of modern media institutions to have access to information, especially on issues related to foreign policy to improve public confidence.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, Media, Modern Media.*

Corresponding author: Umaru I. Tanimu can be contacted at zintainstitute@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Media is a powerful tool for influencing people's thoughts and perceptions of issues. Today, the media has become the society's voice (Singh & Pandey, 2017). Its mission is to disseminate accurate and objective information about specific events and programs. His mission also includes entertainment, education, and sensitizing people to current affairs.). Media has a significant impact on how people think about and perceive certain situations. People receive information through a variety of media, including print, electronic, and online.

In the era of globalization, all nations are incredibly interdependent, and no nation can survive on its own. As a result, interactions between members of the international community always serve to influence global processes. State policies towards other states are the best indicator of their interactions. These policies are commonly referred to as foreign policy and concern the regulation and conduct of a nation's diplomatic relations with other nations in an international scenario. Foreign policy is a strategy for coordinating a nation's actions toward other nations. States must give serious consideration to the creation and efficient implementation of their foreign policies, just as they do with their domestic ones. National sovereignty can only be maintained, international dignity can only be strengthened, and national interests can only be advanced by enacting sound foreign policy (Tapa,

2014). This study intends to investigate whether the media plays an active or passive role in the formulation of foreign policy across the developmental and industrial sectors. The objective of the study is to identify how modern media affects the Gambia government's choice of foreign policy.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Foreign Policy

A nation's security and economic well-being are frequently supported, protected, and advanced by its foreign policy. Padelford and Lincoln assert that "foreign policy is a vital element in the process by which a nation translates its general goals and interests into specific courses of action to achieve those goals and safeguard its national interests. "Foreign policy involves the development and implementation of a set of principles that shape the behavior of other countries to protect and advance their vital interests," claims von Rodi. (Dahal, 2009). In contrast to domestic policy, foreign policy, according to Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen (2013), is the management of a nation's external relations and activities. measures, methods, policies, guidelines, agreements, understandings, etc. Overall, foreign policy is a tool for advancing national interests. It is the policy that states adopt in dealing with the international community.

DW TV (2022) highlighted that "new information and communication technologies are being applied to foreign policy" while talking about how the media affects foreign policy. They directly affect international relations in the twenty-first century. This paper examines the work of Udeala (2016) on the impact of the media on foreign policy. It discloses

that it is a means of influencing or attempting to influence and Collaborate with the outside world to achieve objectives consistent with perceived national interests. Cohen (2004) reveals that journalists who regard themselves as unbiased informants are more likely to be "instruments of the government" because they have a propensity to trust what government officials say, claims Cohen (1963: 20). Cohen continued that journalists who place a high value on maintaining objectivity are more inclined to back off while covering breaking news and to heavily rely on news sources. Cohen argues that journalists who see themselves as players are more likely to have an impact on foreign policy by openly questioning government officials.

2.2 Journalists and International Negotiations

The two most important changes that are regarded as having increased the media's ability to influence foreign policy are the end of the Cold War and advances in communication technology (Gilboa, 2006). Against this backdrop, some scholars suggest that the dynamics between governments and the media have changed in the post-Cold War era (Entman, 2004). Hegemony and indexing approaches suggest that the media generally mirror or index the dialogue of elites, and thus lack independent and critical coverage of foreign policy issues (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2004; Mermin, 1999). In comparison, the cascading activation model emphasizes the increased independent influence of the media on foreign policy issues (Entman, 2004). Some scholars have developed specific typologies to examine policy-media effects in this new environment (Livingston, 1997). First, the media can accelerate

policy decision-making by pushing officials for instantaneous responses to meet their news cycles.

Finally, the government's foreign policy agenda can be influenced by the media. The conditionality of media influence is acknowledged by other academics (Gilboa, 2002, 2006). International negotiations are one of the topics where the media are most likely to have an impact on foreign policy, particularly when there is no direct line of contact between the parties. When they are unsure of how the other side will respond to their suggestions, officials employ the media to transmit messages (Gilboa, 2006). Nicholas Burns, a former spokesman for the US State Department, backed up this assertion in 1996. acknowledging that "we use briefings to communicate our foreign policy objectives to other governments." He recently used media diplomacy in the Six-Party Dialogue on North Korea's nuclear aspirations. Government elites use the media to shape public opinion, manage information access, and assess the significance of particular problems in the game of domestic influence. One of his takeaways from Plato's fables is that in a well-ordered system like domestic politics, limiting access to information enables governments to better control their constituents.

Cohen (1963) stated that when media is included in the equation, it may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is immensely successful in telling the public what to think. Comparing Israel's crackdown on Hamas (November, 2022) and its effects on civilians in the Gaza Strip with the civil war that raged in Syria last year provides a wonderful illustration of how the prominence of an issue affects foreign

policy. Despite the latter's brief lifespan, the former is given more weight by the media than the latter. The public backlash that each has generated is the same.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research uses a survey methodology. The study adopts both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In addition to the questionnaire, the study uses interviews to raise the standard of writing. 200 respondents make up the study's population. The research focuses on a few print and electronic media outlets in the Greater Banjul Area (GBA), as well as the Information and Foreign Affairs Ministries. The research concentrates on the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Information both located in the Greater Banjul Area (GBA), which is the focus of the study's attention.

Table 1. Demographic Representation of Respondents

	Media Institutions	Number of participants
1	GRTS	45
2	Paradise Radio/TV	5
3	The Point Newspaper	5
4	FOROYA Newspaper	5
5	West Coast Radio	5
6	QTV	7
7	The Standard Newspaper	5
8	School of Journalism and Digital Media UTG	20
9	Women Journalist Association Gambia (WoJAG)	6

10	Media Academy for Journalism and Communication (MAJaC)	15
11	Gambia Press Union (GPU)	5
12	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	5
13	Ministry of Information	5
TOTAL		133

Source: Field Data, 2023.

Table 2. Result of the Socio-Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	52	5.2%
	Female	74	7.4%
Marital status			
	Single	61	6.1%
	Married	62	6.2%
	Others	3	0.3%
	Age of Respondent		
	15-20yrs	10	1.0%
	21-30yrs	50	5.0%
	31-40yrs	39	3.9%
	41-50yrs	22	2.2%
	51-above	5	0.5%
Education			
	Certificate/Diploma	48	5%
	BSc	56	6%
	Masters	19	2%

PhD	3	0%
Work experience		
1	8	0.8
2	16	1.6%
3	33	3.3%
4	63	6.3%
5	6	0.6%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Gender distribution discovered that it represents our entire sample population, as the female respondents were greater in number with 7.4% of the population as opposed to 5.2% counterparts the male respondents. This is seen that females are more involved in the media than males. Regarding marital status, the study's Table 4.1 results revealed that married respondents made up 6.2% of the sample population, followed by single respondents (61%), and media workers (0.3%). The study shows that the working age group of 15-20, which accounts for 1% of the population overall, is followed in dominance by that of 21-30, with 5.0%, while 31-40, with 3.9%, is followed by 41-50, with 2.2%, and above 51, with 0.5%. This analysis reveals that the majority of respondents are young people, and modern media practitioners appear to be aware of foreign policy. According to the study's analysis of the respondents' educational backgrounds, those with a BSc degree make up the majority of the population—6%—while those with a master's degree make up just 2%.

Table 3. The Awareness Level of Participants on Modern Media Practitioners in the Gambia

Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Foreign policy has no relationship to modern media	28(22.2%)	45(35.7%)	23(18.2)	21(16.7)	9(7.1)
Modern media is a major actor in foreign policy in The Gambia	3(2.4)	8(6.3)	29(23.01)	59(46.8)	27(21.4)
Modern media has an enormous influence on Gambia's foreign policy	2(1.6)	17(13.5)	17(13.5)	57(45.2)	33(26.2)
Foreign policy has a significant impact on the activities of modern media institutions in the Gambia	5(4.0)	12(9.5)	23(18.2)	44(34.9)	42(33.3)
Modern media is a major channel of communicating	2(1.6)	12(9.5)	12(9.5)	57(45.2)	43(34.1)

foreign policy
in the Gambia

Modern media helped cement relations with other nations	(0)	2(1.6)	18(14.3)	60(47.6)	46(36.5)
---	-----	--------	----------	----------	----------

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

4. DISCUSSION

The hypothesis from the study was that foreign policy has no relationship with modern media. Of the 126 respondents in the survey, 28 (22.2%) strongly disagree that foreign policy has no relationship to modern media. While 23 (18.2%) were undecided about this, the overwhelming majority of 45 (35.7%) respondents disagree that foreign policy has no relationship with modern media. In their opinion, foreign policy has a direct relationship with modern media. Again, 21 (16.7%) respondents agree that foreign policy has no relationship to modern media, and 9 (7.1%) respondents strongly agree that foreign policy has no relationship to modern media. The study also revealed that respondents were divided on whether modern media is a major factor in the Gambia's foreign policy. Using the Likert scale, 3 (2.4%) strongly disagree while 8 (6.3%) disagree. 29 (23.1%) of the respondents were undecided. 59 (46.8%) of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that modern media is a major actor in Gambia's foreign policy. 27 (21.4%) strongly agree with this fact. On the issue of whether modern media has an enormous influence on Gambia's foreign policy. While 33 (26.2%) strongly agreed, only 2 (1.6%) strongly disagreed as opposed to the majority 57 (45.2%) who agreed that modern

media is a major channel of communicating foreign policy in the Gambia. The remaining 17 (13.5%) disagreed and 17 (13.5%) of respondents were undecided.

To determine whether foreign policy significantly affects the operations of contemporary media institutions in the Gambia, a survey was conducted. 44 respondents (34.9%), it was revealed, agreed with the statement. 42 (33.3%) strongly agree with this, compared to 4.0% who strongly disagree. 12 (9.5%) of the respondents disagreed, while 23 (18.2%) were undecided. The majority of the channels through which foreign policy in the Gambia is communicated, according to 57 (45.2%) of the respondents, are modern media. 43 (34.1%) strongly agreed, compared to 2 (1.6%) who were strongly opposed. The results showed that 12 (9.5%) respondents disagreed and 12 (9.5%) were unsure. 60 people (47.6%) agreed and 0% disagreed that modern media facilitates communication with other countries. 46 people (36.5%) firmly concurred. 18 (14.3%) respondents were undecided, while 2 (1.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the opinion.

5. CONCLUSION

The researchers have reached the following conclusion based on the findings of the study: contemporary media is a significant actor in the international arena, attempting to influence foreign policy. Modern media, including social media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, have improved in terms of usability and internet accessibility as a result of technological advancements, particularly, in the Gambia. It has become a means by which citizens, non-state actors, and government can share their foreign policy priorities to receive

feedback, engage in diplomacy, educate citizens, and attempt to influence foreign policy outcomes. In other words, the evolution of the media has influenced the structure of international and national systems thus; indirectly, influencing foreign policy.

As a result, there is a connection and development in the relationship between the media and the government. According to this study, a significant majority of 65 (51.6%) people believe that relationships have been covered more in the modern media, which serve as the primary communicators. Only 1 (0.8%) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement regarding bilateral relations and development conducted within the framework of the Gambia's foreign policy. According to 57 (45.2%) respondents, the modern media serves as the primary channel for the Gambia's foreign policy to be communicated. Although the public receives foreign policy updates from the media, politicians use them to inform the public of the promised benefits of their policies, thereby influencing public perceptions of foreign policy. This study claims that media is the fourth asset. The study recommends that empowering modern media institutions to have access to information, especially on issues related to foreign policy to improve public confidence is phenomenal.

REFERENCES

- Albert, E. (2017). China in Africa. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved 2018 May, 02 from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/china-africa> BBC. (2015).
- Acharya, D. J. (2016). Nepal's Foreign Policy: A Geographical Reflection Acharya, U. & Sigdel, S. (2016). Press Freedom in Constitution of Nepal 2015. Center for Media Research Nepal: Kathmandu.
- Adhikari, Dharma (2010). A compassionate journalist: the life and times of Bharat Dutta Koirala. Delhi: Pilgrims.
- Adhikary, N. M. (2008). Communication, Media and Journalism an Integrated Study. Kathmandu: Prashanti Prakashan, pp.325.
- Avisar, I. (1997). 'Holocaust Movies and the Politics of Collective Memory'. In A.H. Rosenfeld (ed.). *Thinking About the Holocaust*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, USA.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2004). *Images malgré tout*. Les Éditions de minuit, Paris, France. 272 pp.
- Dorland, M. (2005). Psycho analysis After Auschwitz? The 'Deported Knowledge' of Anne-Lise Stern. *Other Voices*, 2(3). Available at www.othervoices.org/2.3/mdorland/index.html (accessed 13 September 2005).
- Douglas, L. (2001). *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, USA.

Ellicott, Amelia (2021). <https://www.axiapr.com/blog/what-are-the-different-types-of-media#:~:text=The%20three%20types%20of%20media,%2C%20movies%2C%20and%20video%20games.>
Retrieved April 18, 2023

EU anger over expulsion of top diplomat from The Gambia.
Retrieved 2018 March 22 from
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33035570>
BBC. (2010). Gambia cuts ties with Iran and orders diplomats to go. Retrieved 2018 April 18 from
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11819143>

Finkelstein, N. (2000). *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. Verso, New York, NY, USA.

Gilboa E., (2001) "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects, Diplomacy and Statecraft" 12(2): p1-28 55.

Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (2012). *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (revised edition ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kathmandu: Martin Chautari. Mehraj, H. R. (2014). Impacts of media on society: A sociological perspective. Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: <https://mofa.gov.np/foreign-policy/>

Udeala, Samuel Onuoha (2016). The Role of The Media in Promoting Foreign Policy in Nigeria 1999-2015
<file:///C:/Users/lenovo/Downloads/admin,+Complete+SEJPS+VOL+2,+NO+2,+JULY-DEC+2016-262-278.pdf>