

Agenda Setting

-
theory and research

What are you most concerned about these days? What are the two or three main things which you think decision-makers should concentrate on do something about?

(McCombs, Shaw, 1972: 178)

Origins of the agenda-setting perspective

1922: Walter Lippmann – Public Opinion

When an individual desires information that is out of his personal experience, he/she looks to the media to build „*a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach*“.

(chapter 1: The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads, p. 18)

1963: Bernard Cohen – The Press and Foreign Policy

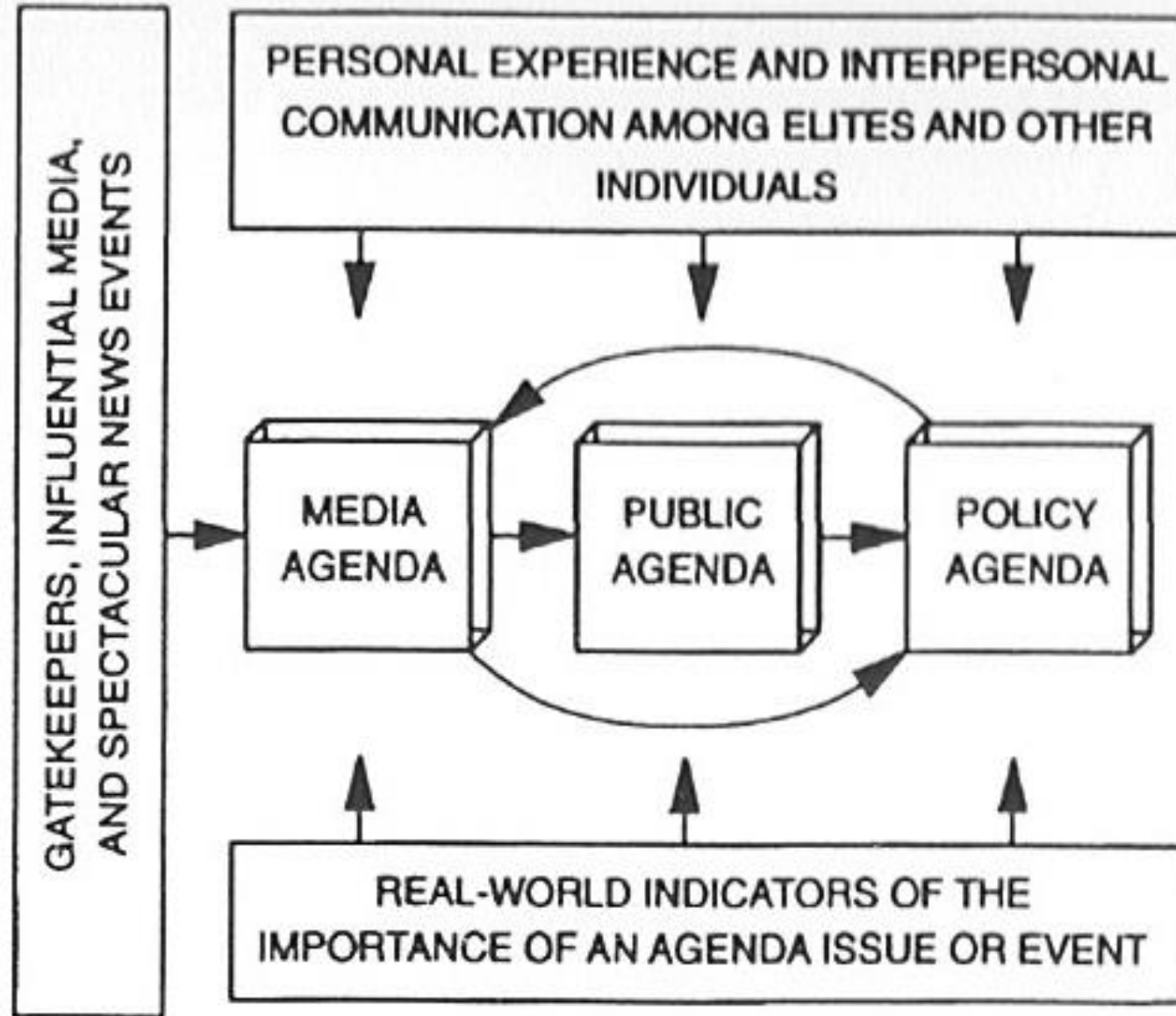
„*The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.*“

(1963: 13)

Theoretical assumptions

1. News media do not reflect the real world, but they filter and shape it.
2. The focus of newsmedia on relatively few issues leads public to perceive these issues as more important (salient). The more attention has the given issue in the news, the more important it becomes on public agenda.
3. The character of media effects are rather cognitive than persuasive.

The Main Components of Agenda Setting



(Rogers, Dearing, 1996)

Types of Agenda Setting Research

1) Research perspective

a) **hierarchical** – more issues, short-time period; Chapel Hill Study (McCombs, Shaw, 1972)

b) **longitudinal** – one or only few issues, longer period; The Issues of the Sixties (Funkhouser, 1973)

2) The level of analysis

a) **First level agenda-setting**

- what issues are on the agenda?

- media and public agenda

- strictly quantitative methods (correlation analysis)

b) **Second level agenda-setting**

- how are issues set on the agenda?

- emphasized attributes and context

- quant. and qualit. methods (Framing analysis)

c) **Intermedia agenda-setting**

- who sets the media agenda?

- sociology of news, news production, routines, news sources, role of dominant media/news agencies

(Dearing, Rogers, 1996; Weaver, McCombs, Shaw 1998)

Chapel Hill Study

McCombs, M. E., Shaw, D. L. The agenda-setting function of the mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1972, Vol. 36: 176-187.

Goal:

The role of mass media during the presidential election campaign in 1968.

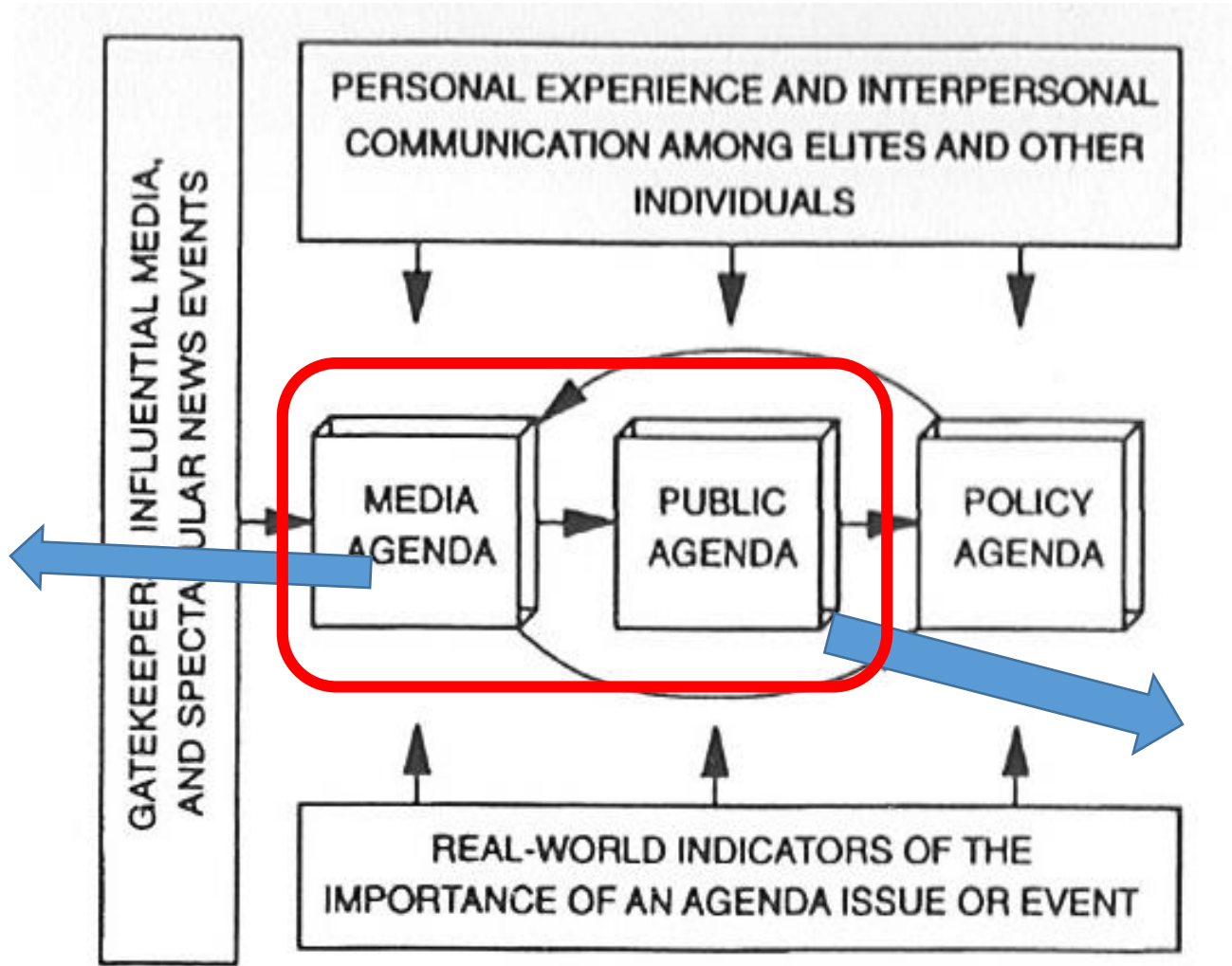
Hypothesis:

„The mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues“ (p. 177)

Method:

„... to match what Chapel Hill voters said were key issues of the campaign with the actual content of the mass media“ (p. 177)

Chapel Hill Study



news media
politics, parties and
candidates
quant. content analysis
5 dailies, 2 TV, 2 magazines
24 days before election
- issues and size

Survey using
questionnaire
Chapel Hill voters
Random choice of 100
„not-decided“

Chapel Hill Study

McCombs, M. E., Shaw, D. L. The agenda-setting function of the mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1972, Vol. 36: 176-187.

Results:

„Considerable amount of campaign news was not devoted do discussion of the major political issues but rather to analysis of the campaign itself.“ (p. 179)

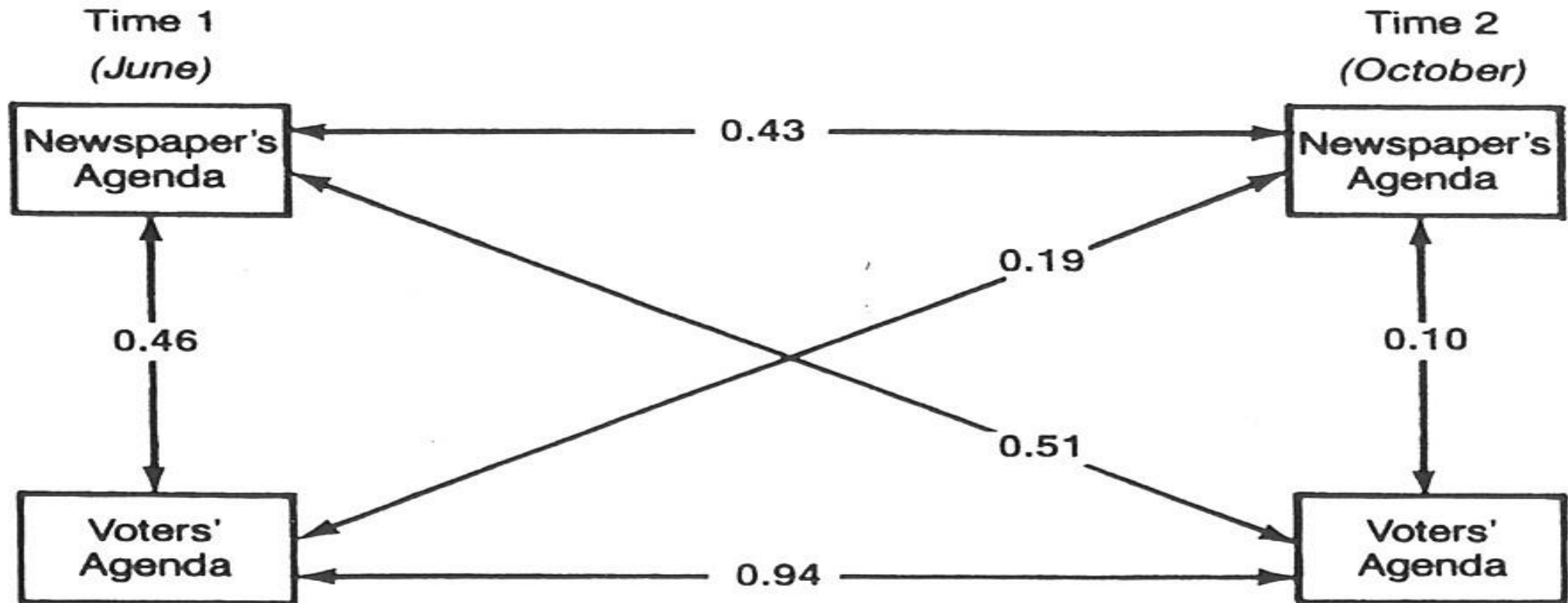
*„The media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters´ judgement of what they considered the major issues of the campaign. The correlation (...) was **+.967.**“
(p. 180)*

„High degree of consensus among the news media about the significant issues of the campaign.“ (p. 183)

Correlation and Causality

FIGURE 12.1 Cross-lagged correlations between newspaper's and voters' agendas

SOURCE: These Spearman Rho coefficients were obtained from Figure 6-1 in Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs, *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing, 1974), p. 91.



Czech Media and Foreign Policy: Emotions and Domestic Narratives

For details see – Nečas, V., & Vochocová, L. Česká média a zahraniční politika: v hradním stínu a zajetí emocí/Czech Media and Foreign Policy: Emotions and Domestic Narratives. Středoevropské Politické Studie/Central European Political Studies Review, 16(2-3), 2014 -. doi:10.5817/CEPSR.2014.23.137

Nečas, V.. Constitutional debate in the Czech Republic. Prague: Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, 2007. 43 s. Pražské sociálně vědní studie. Mediální řada, MED-011. ISSN 1801-5999. Available at: <http://publication.fsv.cuni.cz/publication.php?id=3770>

Nečas, V. Constitutional debate in the Czech Republic. Central European Journal Of Communication, 2(2), 295-305. Retrieved from <http://ptks.pl/cejc/list-of-issues/2009-2/volume-2-no-2-3-fall-2009>

Goal: main characteristics of foreign policy in the czech media

- identification of present actors and dominant topics
- foreign policy framing

analytical base

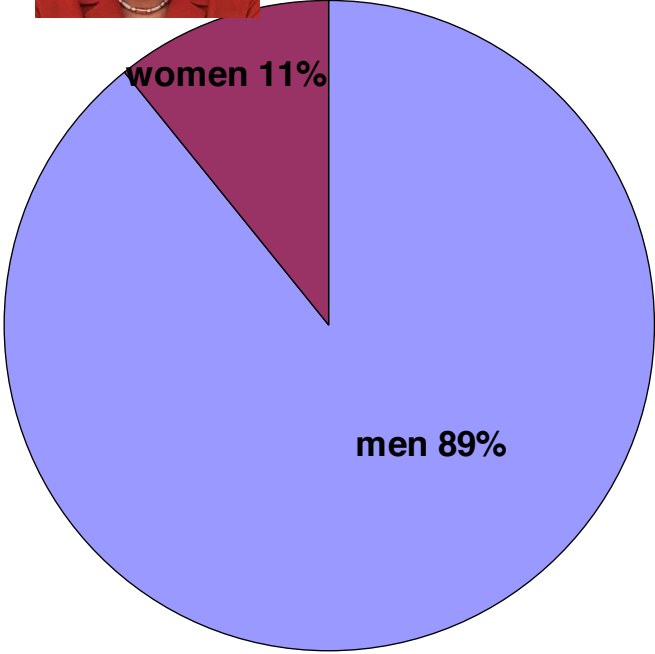
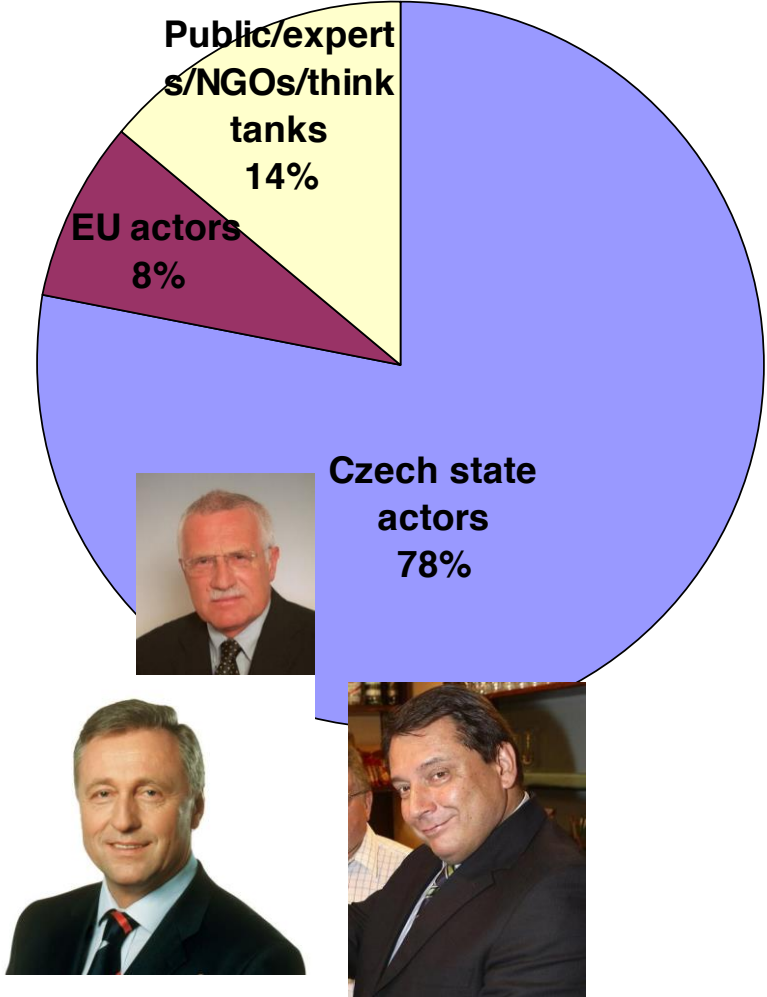
- debate on „euroconstitution“: czech dailies and magazines 6/2005-6/2007
- foreign news analysis: 3 tv stations, czech dailies and magazines 1/2008-12/2011

agenda-setting perspective

„The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.“ (Cohen, 1963)

„This is especially true of international news events that happen beyond the direct experience of most news consumers.“ (Wanta, 1997)

Media coverage of the debate on „Euroconstitution“



actors

1. Dominant position of national actors (Czech male politicians)



President Vaclav Klaus

Strong oponent of
the TCE project

Active role, initiator
and commentator

+

Passive role, brought in
the discourse by others

*„I am not for the European
anthem.“ (HN, 18.7.2005)*

*„I am not critical about it, that is not the case. I am all against it.“
(Pravo, 15.1.2007)*

Actors

2. Entries of international and non-political actors were rare and rather passive

- Angela Merkel

- José Barroso

- economic org.

- experts/think tanks

3. Strong gender disbalance

Women – 11 percent in total

Angela Merkel (45%)

debate on euroconstitution: conclusions

opponents of the TCE project

- Vaclav Klaus and ODS
representatives

X

supporters of the TCE project

- Jiri Paroubek and CSSD
representatives

discard the TCE project

X

continuing in ratification or
Reform Treaty





- defense system (RADAR)
- CZ PRES
- CZE army missions
- CZE-EU relations



conclusions:

- ✓ overlapping agenda - thematic homogeneity
- ✓ strong personalization - overwhelming dominance of domestic political actors
- ✓ EU as a passive, anonymous and distant entity

Qualitative analyses of the Czech printed news media in 2009-2011

Actors

- ✓ a few elite actors
- ✓ presented as irreconcilable opponents
- ✓ personalization
- ✓ negativity - competition/war language

Frames - "big narratives"

- ✓ specific position of Russia - ally or enemy?
- ✓ bipolar division of the world - USA vs. Russia
- ✓ dependant nations seeking protection - Czech Republic among them (either protected by the USA or ruled by Russia)

Symbolic discourse – historical parallels

1938 - („Munich betrayal“)

- USA as a traitor; betrayed Europe, Czech Republic; Russian threat as a direct result

Frames

"domestication" of foreign policy events

= questions of global security and EU topics related to domestic policy and the interests of Czech political actors

Symbolic discourse – historical parallels:

1948, 1968, the 50's

„The atmosphere is evil, it reminds us of the early 50's. It is the atmosphere of February 1948, the Left rising to power, the Right doing anything to make it happen.”

Mladá fronta DNES, 24.3.2009

Czech Media and Foreign Policy: Emotions and Domestic Narratives

The tendencies of Czech news media in dealing with foreign policy issues.

- the coverage is highly personalised and viewed through the prism of the personal or political interests of Czech political elites and the conflicts between them.
- the Czech media produce a considerably restricted and more or less uniform stream of news commented upon by a relatively limited spectrum of actors, mainly Czech politicians.
- For non-political, non-governmental, and international actors, access to the debate is considerably limited.
- The print media tends to present major political events as power-based conflicts between individuals or groups, rather than as negotiations about public affairs supported by substantive arguments.

thank you for your attention...

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