THE MEDIA POLITICS OF PROTEST

Social Movements, Political and Discoursive power

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Full text of the article

"The Media Politics of Social Protest"

Mobilization: The International Journal of Theory

and Research in Social Movements. 2(2), pp. 185-205, 1997.

University of California at San Diego

ISSN 1086-671X

Salamanca, May 1997

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ABSTRACT

This article advances a parallel study of the limits of collective protest in enlarging policy and media agendas. Both agendas are closely interrelated, they affect each other, and they reveal the inequalities of political and communicative power. Social movements engage protest activities to introduce new demands in politics and public debate attaining three theoretical outcomes: elite exclusion, pluralistic competition, and stable official agendas punctuated by brief periods of conflict and change. The imperatives of news organizations sustain the latter model (institutional elitism), which provides the most accurate explanation for the rise and fall of social movements' demands in the media.

The case study (25 years of anti-military draft campaigns in Spain) suggests that political and media "opportunities" evolve together. Journalistic attention is mostly driven by official initiatives and controversy, since they breed a constant and reliable news flow. Then, political control usually entails news management. But the newsworthiness of protest events could also increase official conflict, if media were to carry a successful demand to other policy-making arenas. This would help the activists to challenge the issues, the guide-lines and even the viability of official agendas. Although, the short media attention span is quickly saturated and its focus on official sources favors the institutional concealment of collective protest by ignoring it in the long run.

Keywords social movements, collective action, political protest, media and policy, pacifism, agenda-setting, agenda-building, power, institutionalism, symbolic politics, Spain

Social movements' (SMs) effectiveness can be assessed by analyzing their impact on policy and media agendas (Klandermans 1989: 387-389). But politics and public discourse

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1This article is based on a paper presented at the Second European Conference on Social Movements, Vitoria-Gazteiz (Spain), 1996.

are interdependent spheres. Most SMs aim to build an alternative agenda by naming and defining new social problems that call for political initiatives. Does mass communication shield the official agendas from the pressure of the SMs' activists? Or do the media help SMs to challenge political exclusion? And if interdependence of politics and news is assumed, what comes first, political control or news management?

These questions lead to adopting an agenda-building approach focused on the contention among protesters, more established policy actors and the media; each one displaying distinctive resources, strategies and alliances. Every group aims to prioritize certain social problems and monopolize their public understanding as carried by the media. The latter would perform as platforms of debate that condition the activists' chances of discoursive success and, therefore, their interactions with conventional politics. After advancing a simultaneous agenda-building approach for news and politics, I relate the feasible outcomes to three paradigms of power: elitism, pluralism and institutionalism. Newsworthy and politically relevant issues may be fixed by the same controlling elite, by open debates, or through interdependent patterns for news- and policy-making.

The last model - institutional elitism - integrates elitism and pluralism in a sensible manner, considering also the organizational imperatives of news mediation. The media are institutionally dependent from official politics, that offers the journalists a scheduled, organized and legitimate course of newsworthy events. If official controversy indicates to the media when to inform about conflictive issues (Bennett 1990), it would also determine the coverage of protest to a great extent. In addition, protest activities may attract media attention and could expand official dissent, challenging the ruling agenda further on. Finally, protest that seems to gain no political impact and that it is subdued into bureaucratized processes, tends to fade out of the media because of the journalistic search for new conflicts. SMs' activists would be expelled to the margins of public discourse, regardless the symbolic

politics (Edelman 1987) or artificial policy consensus that marginalizes them.

This is what we observe after analyzing the media coverage of the anti-conscription SM in Spain[2]**.** Information about conscientious objection (CO) and media presence of the activists was related to main policy stages and protest cycles. The issue and the SM gained coverage when elite dissent or novel turnouts of protest took place. On the contrary, both CO and the objectors disappeared from the news when institutional disagreement was prevented and protest lost its novelty. Officials and journalists maintained almost simultaneous debates, because of the dependence of the latter from the former, that followed three distinct patterns.

Francoist censorship and political repression coincided with media silence and marginalization. Then, incremental policy changes in the democratic period were preceded and/or followed by coverage of protest and of polity controversy. Later on, the institutional media rules (news-making routines and norms of professional journalism) downplayed the public visibility of the activists who could resort to resistance alone. Privileged media attention to consensual rearrangements matched the loss of journalistic appeal of sustained protest. Thus the political opportunity structure seems to condition the "media opportunity structure", but for the brief moments when the media helps protesters to expand elite disagreement.

A final analysis of CO media frames in pluralistic stages shows that news coverage of protest may help to <u>open</u> the official agenda by widening the issues, actors and solutions considered for decision-making. Media coverage of protest may also help <u>reset</u> the governmental initiatives by challenging the main policy guide-lines, and finally it can help to <u>block</u> unpopular policies by hindering or impeding the implementation process. "Setting dissent" in the media is usually the only thing most activists can do, and that for a short period.

2I use the terms anti-military, anti-conscription, and CO movement synonymously, since the Spanish organizations linked CO and the rejection to conscription within a clear anti-military frame since the 1970's.

Building social demands

The media/policy agenda-building approach addresses some core questions of the culturalist "New Social Movement" theory (NSM) and of the policy oriented "Resource Mobilization" (RM) tradition [3]. It also applies inadvertently shared terminology for studying news, politics and collective action under a common concern with power. NSM theorists (Touraine 1981; Offe 1985; Melucci 1989, 1996), despite their differences, view protest as a symbolic challenge of dominant social views. New collective identities express structural dislocations and alternative systems of beliefs. Aiming to change social consensus, the activists are impelled to search for a "space of public representation" in the media (Melucci 1996:218-228). News frames may turn into public ways of discussing social issues, affecting general public opinion (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992) and attracting potential supporters (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Bendford 1986; Snow and Bendford 1988).

Instead, RM scholars tend to see SMs as policy entrepreneurs that demand access to institutional agendas and mobilize their resources tactically (Jenkins 1973; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1987). In order to attract official initiatives, protesters must consider the external conditions that hinder or facilitate their success (Eisinger 1973). A favorable "political opportunity structure" (POS) is formed by stable political alignments, formal channels of access, allies within the polity, and intra-elite conflict (Tarrow 1988). Recently, the connection with the NSM approach has been undertaken. Some researchers relate cultural construction and changing POS. "Master frames" explain cycles of protest (Snow and Bendford 1992) and the careful use of rhetorical arguments may increase the external opportunities to act in a given context (Tarrow 1994). Burgeoning SM research adopts this integrative perspective[4], that always characterized policy agenda studies.

Cobb and Elder (1971; Elder and Cobb 1984) had pointed to three processes for

3See the discussion of both approaches in Meyer, 1991:139-142; and Neidhardt and Rucht, 1991.

4See Diani (1996:1054-1058) for a good summary and an excellent contribution.

accessing new issues into the agenda. First comes what SM research calls a framing process: attributing causes, responsibility and solutions for collective privations (Snow and Bendford 1992). Protest should present a social problem as non reducible "to fate, or nature" (Stone 1989:299) in order to call for governmental action. Second, comes the proposal of policy solutions and, third, the selection of the actors encharged of those policies. Both legitimate solutions and actors are highly dependent on the existing "opportunity windows" (Kingdon 1984); that is, the POS. Coincidentally, Kingdon (1984) had also identified the opportunities that are relevant for generating policy alternatives - meeting expertise and political backings, social or technical criteria - and for conferring authority in decision-making - electoral turnouts, changes of government and parliament, conflict within Administration levels and among interest groups.

Then, both SM and policy agenda literature stress that protest frames, viable solutions and political competition need to converge for opening institutional agendas to new demands. This does not imply a deterministic and sequential chain but a constructionist process with contingent outcomes[5], resulting from the power and the strategies of each group. When questioning official agendas and frames, a SM energizes a peculiar tension between claims for broad social changes and for concrete policy innovations. Changing what is discussed by a society - an agenda - and how it should be politically addressed - the master frame - grasps the SMs' typical blend of cultural and political orientations. The agenda-building approach may refrain the NSM and the RM approaches from symbolic and political reductionism, respectively, while remaining cognizant of their contributions. A major improvement would be to analyze the news media agenda in a parallel and systematic way. Neidhardt and Rucht complained about the little attention payed to "the decisive role of mass media" in this field (1991:446). In my opinion, the problem is not the lack of research effort but its orientation which tended to ignore the progression of media studies.

5See, for example, the "garbage can model" advanced by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972).

Agendas (Mc Combs and Shaw 1972; Protess and McCombs 1991) and frames (Altheide 1976; Gitlin 1980; Entman 1993) have even a longer history in Mass Communication. The seminal idea that the news organizations tell the audience and the politicians *what to think about*, adds now that the media tell them also *how to think about* social reality (McCombs 1993:62). News agenda-setting highlights the issues for public debate - agenda - and affects how they are argued - frames (Weiss 1992). Recently media scholars have called for undertaking a constructionist view of mediated political reality (from agenda-setting to agenda-building) and for understanding "frames" quite attuned to current SM research.

Agenda-setting forecasted causality links between news content and the public or officials' preferences[6]. Thus, media coverage could help SMs to mobilize support and to exert political pressure. Although, this perspective offers quite contradictory empirical results (Kielwobicz and Scherer 1988) and neglects the rules of journalistic mediation (Van Zoone 1996). Alternatively, research could focus on the contest for monopolizing the agenda, and the media privileges granted to certain groups. This agenda-building approach (Gandy 1982) does not conceive mass media as an instrument - a mere resource - for the activists or elites. Instead, news organizations perform as public platforms that structure the chances of discoursive success and, therefore, of interaction with conventional politics.

The mass media have become "the arena for the contended definition of what is political, of what belongs to the polis [...] transforming [...] the society inner dillemas [...] into politics (literally into something concerning the polis)" (Melucci 1996:221). This goes further than building an alternative collective identity through the media. Many SMs also attempt to introduce innovative issues and policy styles that may be successfully carried from one arena to another by the news organizations. Even just the coverage of suppressed conflicts might be

6See, *Communication Yearbook*, 11, 1988, Sage: Beverly Hills; and *Journal of Communication*, 43, 1993.

considered a SM success: social attention could be reallocated calling for measures to be adopted by several institutions. The so common path that goes from police repression of protest, to court litigations and then - or simultaneously - to political debates could be certainly fostered by the news. But the first point is to determine to which extent collective protest can access and frame its demands in mainstream media. This implies looking at the news "agenda game" (Protess et al. 1991) that is played among several policy actors and the own media: a symbolic struggle that filters the policy relevant issues and how to think about them.

Media frames have been consistently considered as they are now in innovative SM studies: "as abstract forms of political rhetoric rather than as belief systems" (Diani 1996:1057-1058). The cognitive focus of Ervin Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974) influenced the conception of frames as mental structures that helped the audience to process information. But the sometimes striking differences found among media and audience frames (Graber 1988; Gamson 1992; Neuman, Just, and Crigler 1992) shifted the conceptualization of frames as purposive argumentations used by news sources to (de)mobilize the public and other groups, namely the SMs (Altheide 1973; Gitlin 1980; Entman and Rojecki 1993). As pointed out, present SM literature takes a similar view (Johnstone 1995: 217-219), looking for "the integration of mobilizing messages with dominant representations of the political environment" (Diani 1996:1058). In the same vein, I understand framing as a strategic and intentional discoursive device for interacting with other policy actors - including the media - and monopolize the understanding of a social issue. Robert Entman (1993: 52) has noted that media frames "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation". These are exactly the same phases signaled for collective action frames (Snow and Bendford 1992), and the ones applied in this article.

More than stressing a coincidental academic history, the preceding discussion sustains

a parallel analysis of political and discoursive power. Silence and agenda exclusion conform the "second and third faces of power" (Lukes 1974). Politics is an intrinsically communicative process (Cobb and Elder 1981), and media politics becomes especially relevant for those who lack other resources and must resort to unconventional collective protest. The results depend on the rules of the agenda game for building social demands in the age of mass communication.

Paradigms of political and communicative power

Agendas have been studied as if empowering the elites, the public or the institutions. Then, political control and news management may correspond in terms of "pure elitism", pluralism or "institutional elitism"[7], as Table 1 shows.

Table 1. *Models of power, source of control and outcomes of social protest in policy and media agenda-building.*

		POLICY AGENDA	MEDIA AGENDA
MODEL OF POWER	SOURCE OF CONTROL	(a) Inactivity	(a) Silence
Pure Elitism	Elitist exclusion	(b) Repression	(b) Silence or marginalization
Pluralism	Resource mobilization	Political innovation	Coverage of protest and/or of official controversy.
Institutional Elitism	Institutional interdependence	(a) Co-option (b) Institutional marginalization of conflict	(a) Institutionalization of SM sources (a') Sensationalism (b) Indifference

Pure elitism depicts an exclusionary twin control of the political and media agendas, fortressing the interests of rather cohesive ruling groups (Mills 1956). Political access and freedom of expression are both curtailed. Officials can resort to mere *inactivity*: no measure is taken by vetoing or delaying the decision process. Through *non-decision making* (Bachrach and Baratz 1962) the elites decide not to act or to block certain policy initiatives, limiting the issues that they deal with to the ones most convenient for their advantage. If protest can not be avoided, authorities may simply *repress* it. The chances that repression may foster radical

7These labels are suggested by Mann (1993: 44-91) in his sociological review of power theories.

protest or favorable publicity are almost nil, given the costs for both activists and journalists.

Elitist media outcomes would be either *silence* or *marginalization*. In case of political inactivity, the gagged news media is left with silence only. Journalists are forced to ignore those social privations, taken as "natural", "irrelevant" or "too risky" by the authorities. If official repression, mainstream media will also silence or justify it, framing the protesters as anti-systemic, extreme, without consistency or lacking public support. This is not the result of journalists' own decisions or work routines, unless they fully share the tenets of the powerholders. Most media people would silence, belittle or condemn collective protest for legal reasons and internalized threats. In advanced societies, common interests and/or background ties among elites' enterprises and main media industries account for material and ideological convergence (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Parenti 1993).

The former classic school of elitism is refined by neo-Marxist hegemony and social control studies. Hegemony has been confirmed when news organizations veil the real contention of power that the activists pose (Goldman and Rajapogal 1991) or when the media marginalize protesters (Gitlin 1980). Social control research also shows the media imposing deviant frames to unconventional collective action (Cohen 1972; Young 1990; van Zoonen 1992). Again, news silence and marginalization occur. Thus, elitism explains why "[the media] is a target as much as a medium of communication" for the activists (Gamson and Wolsfeld 1993). The paradox is that "[m]ost movement activists are media junkies" (Gamson 1995:85), they seek news coverage constantly. Pluralism could explain why.

<u>Pluralists</u> would answer that power is the shifting result of resource mobilization by interest groups in an "inclusive" and "relatively open" system (Dahl 1961). Exclusionary agenda-building becomes, then, a minor problem. Policy and news making respond to competing interests, diverse and without any pre-established bias. This bottom-up model contradicts the top-down model of elitism. In media terms, a pluralistic coverage of social

protest should foster or reflect the political impact of meaningful protest. If that were the case, news media would grant access (e.g. interviews, letters to the editor or opinion columns) and/or favorable coverage to activists and their demands. This could happen before a policy innovation takes place or when the latter is contested by the SM. But news organizations could also just reflect the increased controversy into established policy communities. Still, grievances - usually the SM's immediate demands - would be legitimized for receiving official attention.

Under this perspective, SMs would mobilize the media like other resources at their disposal. A rational exchange of information for publicity (Blumler and Gurevitch 1981; Sampedro 1994) could fit here. "The movement wants persuasion and the media search for sensation". Thus an "exchange" (Wolsfeld 1984) or "transaction" (Wolsfeld 1991) model could be assumed. Protest provides the media with personalized, emotionally laden and conflictive dramas; making it feasible for a few activists to gain quite a lot of public attention. However true, a rational and fair exchange seems far from real. This view over-emphasizes a strategic exchange between activists and news organizations, and it considers the latter as neutral public platforms for reaching the audience.

In order to manage protest news, a SM would need (a) stable networks for media relations, (b) internal division of labor between those members devoted to activism and those encharged of press relations (Wolsfeld 1984), (c) control over supporters to schedule and sustain protests that are easy to be covered by the journalists; and (d) explicit collective identity and frames. Instead, "the autonomous and gratuitous production of cultural modes [of SMs is] not governed by cost-benefit calculations but by symbolic waste" (Melucci 1996: 359). In addition, the above requirements would imply a level of "institutionalization [that] dampens rather than stimulates collective action" (Koopmans 1995: 234-235). In the alleged SM-media exchange, too many journalistic factors cannot be controlled, or plainly work to

the SM disadvantage when the time for pay-off arrives. Kielbowicz and Scherer ended their literary review on mass media as a SM resource with quite a disappointing finale: "..the newsmaking process hardly has a uniform effect on different social movements; other forces are certainly at work" (1986: 90). William Gamson maintains a sharper conclusion: "[media discourse...] often obstructs and only rarely and unevenly contributes to the development of collective action frames" (1995: 104). Indeterminacy or negative effects of news coverage spring from journalistic work routines and professional values. Media and media people are neither neutral channels nor unbiased messengers of social demands. These conclusions of the sociology of news-making share with hegemony theory a critical tone (Entman 1989; Bennett 1988, 1990, 1996), but the explanation rests now on the media institutional "logics" and its interdependence with other contemporary institutions.

Institutional elitism is the third and last paradigm of power. It deserves a more extended presentation because of its novelty and promising prospects. For us, institutions are organizations or conventions - formal or informal procedures, routines and norms - embedded in politics and news production. They privilege certain interests and, at the same time, create room for the expression of social demands. In short, the agenda game is not played in equal terms by SMs and established policy actors but it remains open. The institutional model accounts for both elitist and pluralist results, because it emphasizes asymmetries of power, path dependence and unintended consequences (Hall and Taylor 1996).

Conventional practices (in this case, policy- and news-making) result from previous power struggles, which once institutionalized constrain the outcomes of present conflicts (Mann 1993: 7). Power is distributed unevenly across social groups, and new issues must follow some "paths" - e.g. past policy styles -, already established by networks that favor the best positioned actors[8]. States, political parties, courts, etc. and media organizations structure

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8For a basic bibliography of the new institutionalism, besides those cited in the text, see March and Olsen (1989); Powell and DiMaggio (1991).

power relations, since they maintain distinctive forms of interaction with pressure groups. Nevertheless, institutions generate unintended consequences and inefficiencies. Agenda-building is characterized by long periods of stability and short periods of change. It reflects "constantly reshaped systems of limited participation" (Baumgartner and Jones 1992).

In keeping with this perspective, we could assume that agenda-building lurches from one extended phase of stability to another, as officials and journalists establish new routines or alter the existing ones to support the policies and the news that give themselves greater advantage. A main feature of SMs is that they bring up problems and demand social responses that have not become routinized yet. They challenge the institutional "bias in the mobilization of interests" (Schattschneider 1960). But complete domination (pure elitism) or full openness (pluralism) of the agendas do not exist. Short periods of change are followed by new equilibria, based on institutional rearrangements that preserve the position of the dominant groups again. Policy monopolies over leading policy ideas and guidelines can be broken but are soon reshaped or replaced by new ones.

As Meyer notes (1991), institutionalization of SMs can take two forms. When *co-opted*, the activists may achieve their demands without altering the existing institutions, but working within them - e.g. on advisory or decision-making boards. Political success - measured by incremental reforms - may improve but it requires downplaying radicalism. If *marginalized*, the SM could not longer interact with official politics. Furthering Meyer's argument in line with institutionalism, we could speak of *institutional marginalization*. Conflict could be managed by commissions of experts and elucidated by higher levels such as Constitutional or Supreme courts. Finally, protesters could be prosecuted and condemned if they kept breaking the law with their resistance. Thus, conflict is delayed and privatized, confined into bureaucracies with their own proceedings and pace that are protected from the pressure of public opinion. Incumbents can even avoid the blame of repression, that is based

on inherited legal frameworks and other institutional legacies. Quite different from that of open competition, institutional logics tend to favor the more powerful actors.

Similar processes take place in the news media, a true institution in contemporary societies (Beniger and Herbst 1990). Moreover, media coverage of protest is shaped by certain "parameters" - "epistemological and organizational features of news organizations" (Van Zoonen 1996). In fact, we talk of institutional conventions that are engrained in daily journalistic practices and structure the contest for representing politics in favor of those groups that already count on institutional resources. Journalists' routines result from their organizations' requirements of efficiency and profit. And work routines are reconciled - not without tensions - with professional norms such as fairness or objectivity (Bennett 1996). Both news-making routines and professional ideology mostly inhibit the coverage of social protest. Mainstream media is "path dependent" of the course of "legitimate politics" (Hallin 1986) and political control usually entails news management (Wolsfeld 1997).

Journalistic representations of politics endorse official sources for pragmatic reasons: they provide a constant and reliable flux of information for making "different" news stories on a regular basis. Institutional actors become the primary definers of political conflict because their easy access and predictability. Instead, SM activists are complex sources. They usually lack structured media relations, they mix personal and collective demands, and the course of their activity is uncertain, while news-making requires "routinizing the unexpected" (Tuchman 1978). Besides, work routines find legitimation in the norms of professional journalism - e.g. conventional objectivity - that privilege institutional voices because they embody the social authority that allows journalists to speak about reality (Tuchman 1978; Gans 1980; Fishman 1988). Instead, social protest always carries the weight of proving its legitimacy. All this amounts to a relation of "asymmetry" between the SMs and the media, just the opposite to that which exists between politicians and news organizations (Gamson

and Wolsfeld 1993). In short, SMs need the media more than the media needs them, while the reverse is true for professional politicians.

Media agendas are more accessible for elite consensus and official conflicts than for social protest. That is why we prefer to speak of institutional *elitism*. But the agenda game never ends, as institutionalism reminds us. Journalistic routines and norms could also facilitate the coverage of SMs. The latter can adopt consensual viewpoints and interact with several institutions that are regularly followed by journalists. Another alternative is to generate shocking protest events and images that fit the news values of dramatism and surprise. Although, when activists totally embrace these strategies they may become co-opted for the imperatives of news organizations.

Media co-option can take two forms: institutionalized SM sources for the media and sensationalist coverage. In both cases the activists accept the journalistic norms and try to produce a fully media consonant discourse. The institutionalization of SM sources requires demanding policy revisions instead of revearsals and to adopt more conventional frames. Thus, the media would help to diffuse original claims through news that would follow the SM transactions with key decision makers. A second form of media co-option may happen if journalists adopt a sensationalist frame for the protesters, who might end up acting as press "stars". Obsessed with gaining media attention, the hard-liners of the SM can turn into odd celebrities that resort to any means - including, symbolic or physical violence - regardless of the delegitimation that they bear (Gitlin 1980: 146-178). Then journalists would stress the deviance of protesters; not because of (self)censorship - the case of elitism - but for efficiency and commercial imperatives. Shocking news stories are easier and faster to "manufacture" than background reports, and they sell better. Summing up, source institutionalization requires a lower degree of unconventional collective action. And sensationalist information bears a loss of persuasion and trivializes social protest.

On the contrary, the institutional marginalization of conflict may go hand in hand with media *indifference*. Sustained protest saturates the media quickly because news is identified with novelty. Moreover, if the activists have been removed into tedious institutional processes with low public visibility (e.g. judiciary trials), they may gather less and less information. Conflict without resolution or movement, without clear villains and victims, is not newsworthy (Cook 1996). If missing the connections among lengthy and intricate institutional proceedings, the journalists would not visualize protest as part of a broader storyline that moves the news plot in a easy way to follow and transmit to the audience. Again, the most common and facile news plot coincides with the "trail of power" (Bennett 1996). Then, journalists will tend to report protest based on the sources and viewpoints that are perceived as affecting the course of the story; that is, the institutional and bureaucratized sphere of conventional politics. If activists are unable to generate elite disagreement or innovative re-framings of their demands, protest would fade out of the media. In short, through media institutionalization a SM may become either bureaucratic, eccentric or irrelevant news sources.

The three models of agenda-building underline tendencies which might always be present. Nonetheless, they also could be seen as corresponding to different phases of an ongoing institutionalization process. The agenda game would continue as long as protest is not entirely coopted or marginalized by mainstream policy and news systems. The hypothesis of a longitudinal study of the rise and fall of SMs' impact on politics and media discourse may be as follows.

The starting point could be a pure elitist stage, when authorities control both politics and news by limiting policy-making access and freedom of expression of activists and/or the media. Coverage of protest would be zero, scant or distorted, presenting conflict as irrelevant or as a menace to the system.

Pluralistic stages may punctuate elitist periods, when policy monopolies are reshaped or replaced by new ones. Mass media attention could be reallocated by a SM promoting or challenging certain policy innovation. Pluralism could also be identified when media cover elite disagreement, as far as it favors the SM *immediate* demands.

Finally, institutional elitism would both integrate and follow those preceding phases with three outcomes. (a) Political co-option would coincide with regular policy-making stories and coverage of the SM institutional representatives. (b) Resilient protest can be trivialized by journalistic sensationalism. And (c) institutionalization of conflict would downplay the coverage of protest because of media saturation and lack of attention to complex institutional rearrangements. Media organizational imperatives and the norms of professional journalism account for these three outcomes. Next, we will see how this corresponds in the case of the Spanish anti-military movement.

Anti-militarism, politics and press: study case and methodology

Conscientious objection to military service (CO) remained excluded from Spanish political agendas during three different political systems: the Francoist dictatorship, the regime transition and the democratic consolidation. Institutional responses to anti-draft campaigns were a chain of repressive measures, vetoes, deferments and symbolic politics [see Appendix 1]. The objection cases commenced in the early 1970's, but it was not until 1988 that the first democratic laws (1984) were complete with the regulation of a civilian service. Nevertheless, the CO policy could not be fully implemented because the CO organizations launched the *insumisión* campaign - civil disobedience against the military and civilian services - in 1989. No other anti-conscription movement gathered such numbers of legal objectors (about a 50% rate over conscripted population during 1996; against the 5%-10% Western European average) and of civil disobedients (around 9,000 at the beginning of

1994[9]) in such a short period, while also enjoying also uninterrupted public support[10].

Only Germany surpasses the Spanish CO rates, but European total objectors (*insumisos*) remain to about a dozen annual cases per country. Spain may be considered the first state where a SM has forced a transition toward full professional Armed Forces in peace time. The Anti-Vietnam War movement is not an exception, but confirms the singularity of our study case, even at the mobilization level (18.000 legal prosecutions in USA during 12 years[11]. The end of compulsory conscription has usually responded to military strategic rationales (Shaw 1991). Recent transitions towards all-volunteer armies - Belgium, Holland, France and Portugal - have not been preceded by the numbers and radicalization of the Spanish CO organizations. In addition, these nations changed their draft policies without such rigorous budgetary constraints on Defense as in Spain, which neither counted on comparable levels of professionalization nor previous plans. A 1991 policy consensus upon a semi-professional model of the Armed Forces was broken when the 1996 Conservative government announced the end of conscription in 2,000. Officials recognized that popular rejection to conscription was one of the main reasons for this change[12]. Technical and geostrategic arguments contradict the ones voiced a few years ago, and seem too recent to be considered as as relevant as the pressure of the CO movement.

Appendix 1 shows the main phases of a prolonged policy control that the CO activists consistently confronted. Did the press offer an "oppositional space" (Rojecki 1993) where political exclusion could be challenged? To answer this question, we analyzed all the CO coverage provided by the three main national newspapers from 1976 to 1993[13]. A media

9*El País*, January 30, 1994:23.
10See the polls in Ibarra (1992); and Sampedro (1996).
11*The New York Times*, June 20, 1975.
12See the governmental documents published by *El País*, May 3, 1996, p.22.
13629 pieces of information of *El País*, 266 of *ABC* (both from May 1976 through June 1993) and 329 of *El Mundo* (from October 1989 through June 1993) conform the data set including all news stories and editorials. *El País* was born 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

leadership effect of *El País* (aligned with the social-democrats), *ABC* (of conservative orientation) and *El Mundo* (a more popular and adversarial daily) was assumed. Considered as "elite press", they set the agendas for the media organizations through a "cascade effect" (Noelle-Neuman and Mathes 1987).

The agenda-building approach was applied first by contextualizing the news flow on CO within the main policy and protest cycles. Then, we coded the "news promoters" (Molotch and Lester 1974); that is, the actors who stimulate media coverage by getting their activities and declarations reported. Elites, activists and the own media were conceived as competing and/or establishing alliances in a symbolic battle to schedule and monopolize the CO debate as carried by the press[14]. This way, the relation between policy control and news management was tested and complemented by qualitative examination of the actors' strategies. Finally, a frame analysis was conducted focused on the coverage of *El País* and *ABC* during 1988. The goal here was to reveal the contest over the political definition of CO in a crucial stage: just after the Constitutional Court sanctioned the official policy and the *insumisión* campaign was announced. The paragraph was the unit of analysis and the coding categories cover each of the definitional traits considered as decisive for political purposes[15].

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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 come closer to those of the former newspapers.

14A trained coder analyzed a 15% random sample of the whole data set and reliability found was 0.96. Six categories became relevant: *Media* initiative includes polls paid by the media, investigative and background reports, editorials and columns of paper pundits. *Judiciary* initiative includes military and civilian court trials, prosecutions, indictments and sentences. *Political* initiative includes all executive measures, parliamentary debates, declarations and opinion columns by professional politicians. *Conscientious objection* includes the movements' protests, direct actions and legislative initiatives, declarations and opinion columns by objectors and movement leaders, straightforward support from non political institutions such as religious organizations and human rights associations. *Military* initiative includes declarations or proposals of military personnel concerning CO.

15The data base is formed by 280 paragraphs of *El País* and 82 in *ABC*. The frame components analyzed were: (a) The extent and features of CO as a social problem, (b) the presence and privileges of the actors as information sources, (c) the actors responsible of the conflict and, therefore, diminished in their strengths for proposing and carrying on solutions, (d) the causes of the problem, (e) the policy proposals thought to address the causes and to solve them, and (f) the overall moral judgement upon CO and the activists. Intercoder reliability in a 15% sample of the 1988 paragraphs in *ABC* and *El País* was 0.92, with a range of 0.85 - 0.97.

This last analysis means to be an example of the roles that mainstream press may play in challenging official policy frames. The pages that follow present the data gathered and their theoretical implications.

Flows of conflict and information

In this section we will see how media access is closely related to political control; that is, political opportunity structure conditions, to a great extent, the "media opportunity structure". Distinctive forms of policy exclusion were replicated in communicative terms. The modes of agenda-building were tested by relating the type of political filters, the news flow over the issue, and the news promoters shares. Elitist periods were characterized by reduced media coverage of CO and almost no news promotion from any actor. Elite inactivity and repression of protest generated scant news. Instead, pluralist stages reflected a significant increase of media attention, and of activists' and elites' newspromotion, due to waves of SM mobilization and/or policy innovations. Finally, institutional phases followed policy rearrangements and media saturation with protest. Both issue coverage and SM news promotion decreased, while elite news shares began to monopolize a narrowing debate. What follows is a summary of a research project over the media politics of the Spanish CO movement (Sampedro 1996).

Time and resource constraints impeded a detailed analysis of the Francoist period (1939-1975), but a brief account seems pertinent. It clearly followed a pure elitist model: repression was exerted by the most authoritarian cadres of the regime. Surprisingly enough, the highest ranking officers - who had granted corporative representation in the Commission of Defense - vetoed two governmental proposals to legislate religious CO in 1970 and 1971. They are unique examples of vetoed governmental initiatives in the dictatorship. The executives had tried only to solve the problem posed by the objectors who were then imprisoned until the age of 38. Finally, the Military Code changed this penalty in 1973 for a

single sentence up to 6 years in prison, plus the disqualification from any political rights, public jobs and arm licenses. The new born CO movement had been backed for promoting a CO law by important sectors of the inner opposition and the external pressure from the Vatican and the European Market. When this failed, civil disobedience (explicitly presented as *insumisión* in some cases[16]) was adopted. The activists began self-managed civilian services and asked for their official recognition, while refusing draft calls.

(Self)censorship was the communicative lever of political elitism. The objectors hardly gained any presence in the media, subjected to strict restrictions or edited by "loyal" Francoists. A quite exhaustive examination of journals and magazine coverage, shows that it just focused on the governmental initiatives, without reflecting inner disputes and omitting the voices of the CO movement and its allies. The few examples of protest news stories marginalized the activists who were blamed for being "communist friends", "foreign agents" or "a bunch of hippies"[17]. Press coverage of policy initiatives almost resembled an official transcription and collective protest was omitted, denigrated and ridiculed.

From here, we can systematically combine the examination of policy controls and news management. Graphic 1 shows the media presence of the CO issue[18]. Graphic 2 presents the changing ability of the different actors to promote CO news in the three media. News promotion can also be related to the degree of conflict (CO legal recognitions reflect a parallel strength of the civil disobedience campaign) and to the level of elite disagreement (parliamentary initiatives of the opposition). Both graphics present five stages that confirm a close relation between political and discoursive opportunities.

[GRAPHICS 1 and 2, about here]

Five agenda-building phases can be distinguished. (1) During the transitional period

16Ovidio Bustillo's letter to the General Captain of VII Military Region. October 10, 1976.
17See, as examples, *ABC*, April 13, 1973; or *El Noticiero Universal*, February 20, 1973.
18The three newspapers carry a similar amount of daily information, so the comparison is not biased. The data, aggregated every six months, helps to control the length differences among the stories.

(May 1976 - December 1977), the media followed a brief pluralist pattern of protest coverage, until the first policy innovation since Francoism was taken. (2) Then, military unrest impeded any official initiative until 1984, when the Socialist laws were passed. Political inactivity paralleled media silence, following an elitist pattern again. The peak of 1980 was due to a very brief CO campaign. (3) Enlargement of debate is observed until the CO legal framework was completed in 1988. It was due to several protest mobilizations that preceded the *insumisión* and provoked a pluralistic media pattern reaching its climax in the next period. (4) Civil disobedience showed its impact spanning policy and media debate at the same time. Graphic 1 highlights two peaks of the news agenda, due to the anti-Gulf War protests in 1991, and to the first absolutory sentence of a civil disobedient in 1992. Graphic 2 shows the expanding coverage of protest from 1989 to 1991, when a semi-professional model of Armed forces was agreed in parliament. Afterwards, the SM lost its capacity to promote information. (5) The final stage (July 1992 - June 1993) reflects the institutionalization of conflict: increased presence of judiciary and political elites matched reduced media coverage and minor protest news promotion.

Overall coverage sustains an institutional model of interrelated political and communicative powers. Short pluralistic periods (stages 1, 3 and 4) were characterized by policy innovation and media attention to protest. But they were always followed by elitist periods, based on institutional arrangements that expelled protest from the political system. As we will see, during the transition period (stage 2) official non-decision making removed CO out of the legal framework and the media. Military control could still be considered responsible for this outcome. The second closure of the agenda (stage 5) reflected that officials had reallocated conflict into court litigations: the judiciary and the politicians dominated a receding debate. We now detail the "sets" of the CO agenda game, and the strategies of the main players.

(1) Transitional period (May 1976 - December 1977). Francoist repression was replaced by political inactivity that was based on polity consensus conditioned by the military. The latter relied on secret tolerance and coercion guided by criteria of efficiency. A 1976 executive decree recognized CO only on religious grounds, but it was never implemented due to the movement's opposition. Instead, in November 1977, the Defense Ministry provided "unofficial exemption" for all the objectors who dared to ask for that provision. This measure was never printed in official bulletins and its publicity was punished as an "offence" against the Armed Forces.

Both CO media presence [Graphic 1] and coverage of protest demanding a CO legislation peaked in 1977, with the unofficial draft exemption [Graphic 2]. News in *ABC* and *El País* amounted to an average of 4 stories per month (3 for *El País*, 1 for *ABC*). Although the effects of this "policy" can be noticed in the next period. By avoiding to take a true political solution, governments had removed CO to a "hidden agenda": the legal framework did not coincide with real policy, the latter was kept in secret and protest was almost invisible to the public.

(2) Management of conflict in the "hidden agenda" (January 1978 - Dec. 1984). The transition cabinets had incorporated the minimum legal profile of Western democracies, but the effective policies were *placebo policies* (Stringer and Richardson 1980). They hid the external signs of a problem instead of addressing it. From 1977 through 1984, the objectors were first amnestied together with other political prisoners and, then, were exempted of their military duties until 1988. Although, the 1978 Constitution had recognized secular CO[19]. This way, the elites avoided the pressure of a SM that had defined itself as "anti-militaristic"[20].

Media coverage was limited to almost silence. *El País* and *ABC* offered together just

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19The legal texts which supposedly regulated CO were an ambiguous executive decree which recognized **religious** grounds (Royal Decree 3011, Dec. 23, 1976) and the 30.2 constitutional article (1978).

20See "Actas del I Congreso Estatal del MOC", Landa (Alava), August, 1979; Sampedro (1996).

one story per month, *El País* provided again 77% of the total. The information shortage clearly responded to official inactivity and coerced protest. Coverage increased slightly only during the legislative process of the 1984 CO laws [see 1982-1984 in Graphic 1]. *El País* broke that dynamic just once: during the first half of 1980 twenty Basque objectors had been tried and imprisoned for publicizing the draft-exemption. In short, governmental non-decision making kept numbers of objectors low, allowed no implementation of the CO constitutional right, and left no room for political opposition or collective protest. The media outcome was silence. Only in 1983, when announcing and debating the CO laws, politicians did predominate over other newspromoters and this is true for the whole period [see Graphic 2].

(3) Enlargement of conflict and debate (1985-1988). Coverage again started to follow a pluralistic model. The objectors' resistance to the still unfinished legislation expanded CO coverage but only in *El País*, while *ABC* remained with its previous silence [see Graphic 1]. Both papers together averaged 3 stories per month, again *El País* provided 77% of the information. Draft abolition was about to become the main demand of the movement, promoting most of the news stories in the last months of 1986, 1987 and 1988 through mobilizations against the draft calls. Increased news shares of judiciary elites responded to the legal prosecution of activists engaging the campaigns that preceded the *insumisión* [see 1986 and 1987 in Graphic 2].

Soon, the Socialist agenda would be driven by institutional elitism. The social-democrats (PSOE) accepted no transaction with any of the SM organizations or their political allies that criticized the legal restrictions on the CO right. Legalized CO would always perform as "a minority option" to preserve conscription (Sainz 1988; Casquette 1996). The *insumisión* aimed to block the CO policy from February 1989, and it was coupled with ever increasing rates of legal objectors and civil disobedients. Nevertheless, the PSOE cabinets adopted an institutional control. First, the Ministry of Defense (enjoying the most prominent

institutional position, since it administered the military service) set more limitations on the CO right than those announced when the PSOE in opposition. Then, social protest was removed to bureaucratic and judiciary processes. The new institutions for implementing the CO policy debated questions such as the legal grounds for objecting or the features of the civilian service. The CO laws had to be sanctioned by the highest ranking courts. Ultimately, the *insumisos* were prosecuted and imprisoned for between 2 and 6 years, so they would enter prison even if condemned to the lowest penalty. The latest reform of the Penal Code (1995) disqualified the *insumisos* from any public positions (up to 14 years) and did not fully eliminate the imprisonment. But the obscure personal fate of the activists should not pale their political impact.

Officials had avoided open and public confrontation, but their control of the agenda was increasingly questioned by many other institutions (the People's Ombudsman, most parties of the opposition, regional and local administrations, the judiciary, etc.). In the end, the CO policy could not be implemented. The 1991 policy unanimity on semi-professional Armed Forces was soon replaced by contradictory electoral proposals and, finally, the 1996 governmental agenda forecasted an all-volunteer model. Following the institutional pattern, media agendas remained attentive to the increased level of political conflict, but then became saturated: the SM had almost disappeared from the media at the end of the research period. This is what we observe in the last two stages.

(4) Outburst of conflict and debate (January 1989 - June 1993). *El País* provided an average of 7 news stories per month; *ABC* jumped up to 4; and *El Mundo* displayed a striking monthly average of 9 stories. The peaks of the agenda [see Graphic 1] coincided with the climax of the *insumisión* policy and judiciary impact. The first half of 1991, when the SM and the politicians news promotion reached the highest news shares in the whole period, matched the anti-Gulf War mobilizations and the debate over the Armed Forces Model. The

second peak of information was due to the first absolutory sentence for *insumisión* in March 1992. It generated impressive news shares of judiciary and political promoters [see Graphic 2]. Civil disobedience had accessed political, judiciary and media institutions almost at the same time. The 1991 rearrangement of draft-policy was considered a "triumph" of the anti-military movement by the Defense Ministry[21]. The absolutory sentence of 1992 actually represented the "first case of conscientious objection posed by a judge" (Lucas 1992).

(5) Institutionalization of conflict and debate (July 1992 - June 1993). When comparing 1991 to 1992, *El Mundo* lapsed from 9 to 5 news stories per month; and *El País*, from 7 to 5. Instead, *ABC* increased from 3 to 4 monthly news stories. On the whole, media coverage declined, ignoring other favorable court sentences and the exponential growth of legal objectors [see Graphic 2] and of prosecuted *insumisos*. Curiously enough, the issue lost appeal for the dailies which previously had been more receptive. Journalistic routines and professional norms led the newspapers to indifference. Falling into a pool of court stories, civil disobedience lost "newsworthiness". Besides, the most influential political elites had agreed that the all-volunteer Armed Forces were unattainable. As a result, the *insumisión* had been expelled out of the "trail of power" (Bennett 1996) that usually guides journalistic attention.

Institutional elitism may explain the entire agenda-building process, as characterized by continuously reorganized systems of limited participation for both politics and public debate. However, distinct features characterized elitist and pluralist moments, and the last two phases deserve detailed examination. They differ from the previous ones because of the significance of own media institutional patterns and their contradictory results. On one hand, the *insumisión* fascinated the media in the context of an unpopular war and heated elite controversy. On the other hand, when protest lost its novelty and was removed to court

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21See the secret document "Año 1991. Información sobre la objeción de conciencia. Actividades del MOC". Ministry of Defense, p.2.

litigations, journalists took for granted both the authority of professional politicians and the irrelevance of collective protest. Media attention followed its characteristic pattern of "either feast or famine" (Baumgartner and Jones 1992).

Feast or famine

SMs that avoid policy and media institutional co-option may follow the process that is detailed now. None of the Spanish CO organizations accepted the legal framework. Even the less radical ones remained highly critical, adopted partial forms of civil disobedience and mobilized both their members and socio-political allies against the official agenda. Therefore institutionalization of SM sources for the media did not take place. Besides, recourse to civil disobedience and non-hierarchical structures avoided sensationalist and personalized media coverage. The ethical compromise of the *insumisión* and the absence of leaders with public profile prevented protesters engaging an ever eccentric or personalistic trend. This would have been another form of co-option by conventional "news values". Instead, media attention was fascinated by unprecedented institutional conflicts.

The anti-military movement clashed with the Armed Forces when their first foreign intervention since the dramatic Moroccan Wars (1920's) took place. The anti-Gulf War campaign also increased the controversy over draft-policy among the political forces. Afterwards, the *insumisión* confronted the Government and the judiciary which was encharged of guaranteeing legal obeyance to a highly unpopular policy. Finally, media attention was saturated with conflict when legal resistance was considered by the main political actors as mere draft-dodging and it was denied any further policy impact. Media indifference to social protest refuses the alleged role of the press in forcing the only viable solution promised a few years later: the draft abolition[22].

We will take a closer look at the peaks of the agenda and explain the decreasing

22See also the discussion about the arguable role of the media in favoring the increasing number of CO (Sampedro 1996: 580-582).

media attention to the SM protest. We will examine both the media saturation and the strategies of the elites that were now favored by the news organizations' imperatives.

Feast of conflict and information

No newspaper could avoid reporting the increase of contention. Firstly, the movement capitalized on the Gulf War opposition; Secondly, its impact on the judiciary arena increased inter-elite disagreement. Disaggregated data of the first quarters of 1991 and 1992 reveal the shift to the elites as main news promoters, which was also clear in Graphic 2.

Table 2. *Distribution of main news promoters in El País, ABC and El Mundo during the two information peaks: Jun.- Mar. 1991 and Jun.- Mar. 1992.*

		EL PAIS			**ABC**			**EL MUNDO**	
	CO	POL	JUD	CO	POL	JUD	CO	POL	JUD
1991 1st Q	40 (19)	16 (15)	30 (8)	12 (3)	29 (7)	30 (9)	57 (21)	14 (7)	19 (9)
1992 1st Q	14 (5)	44 (15)	26 (9)	14 (4)	48 (13)	22 (6)	25 (7)	11 (3)	25 (7)

- CO: Movement-promoted news stories / POL: Politicians promoted news stories / JUD : Judiciary promoted news stories. - Figures may not add to totals because of fractional rounding and unrepresented promotion by the media and other actors. n = ()

Anti-war protests led the coverage during the first quarter of 1991: 57% of the information in *El Mundo* and 40% in *El País*. They represent the highest concentration of CO-promoted news in both newspapers. Only *ABC* departed from that trend, giving primacy to politicians and judiciary. Political elites, instead, gathered only around 15% in *El País* and *El Mundo*. The debate over conscription had surpassed the politicians' control. In an attempt to recover it, the parliamentary sessions on draft reform were suspended until the "Desert Storm" ended.

The political class took over the CO debate, after having approved the rather symbolic reform of the military service in December 1991[23]. As a result, the coverage during the first three months of 1992 offered an almost reversed picture. Furthermore, there were striking coincidences between *ABC* and *El País*. Political elites generated almost half of the

23The three major parties agreed a partial reform of the military service that included a three months reduction of service, allocation of conscripts to neighboring areas and a "chart of rights inside the headquarters". The long-term goal was fixed at 50% of professional troops for the year 2,000. See: L.O. 13/1991, December 20.

information in both dailies. The judiciary actors gained almost one fourth of the coverage; last and least, the CO movement gained the lowest share (around 15%). *El Mundo* still offered one forth of SM news promotion, but they were half of 1991 CO-promoted stories.

Social protest had been replaced by institutional inter-elite conflicts: at first, within the government; then, between the government and the judiciary. 1992 began with accusations by the Ministry of Defense against the Ministry of Justice for recognizing "false objectors" and for fraud in the civilian service. In March, a young grass-root Catholic became the first *insumiso* to be absolved in a court. Governmental reactions, enforced by President González, ended up in a dispute with the judiciary. When the General Attorney requested imprisonment for the civil disobedients, several law associations expressed their rejection[24]. Policy controversy reached its peak in 1991 and then decreased, although the clear insufficiency of the draft reform to control the explosion of CO recognitions. Journalists ignored both the symbolic attributes of the official policy and the intensified social conflict, building an artificially restricted public debate.

Policy and media famine

Media account of the two first absolutory sentences to *insumisos* exposes how institutional marginalization met media saturation and indifference, due to bureaucratic coverage of protest and to the silence of the elites in power.

Table 3. *# News stories on two first absolutory sentences of civil disobedience in El País, ABC and El Mundo (March 1992-June 1993).*

	EL PAIS	ABC	EL MUNDO
March 1992	24	14	20
February 1993	1	3	1

The sentence of March 1992 attracted 58 news stories in the three newspapers, compared to just 5 stories for the next absolutory sentence. *El País* and *ABC* offered just one story each (4 and 3 paragraphs long, respectively), but the news value of this last case should

24See the coverage of the three media from March 7, 1992 and during April.

have produced much more media attention. The 1992 sentence affected an annual average of 40,000 young men who, by then, had to perform civilian service. Instead, the 1993 sentence affected 200,000 military draftees, it carried a stronger critique of the Spanish defence model, stressed its unpopularity and the judge condemned the CO legislation explicitly[25]. These social and political implications did not seem to matter. The media considered the sentence nothing more than another case in a routine sequence of trials. Not only did the journalists seem to hear nothing new from the judiciary, the political elites had also remained silent.

Table 4. *News promoters of the stories about the two first absolutory sentences in El País, ABC and El Mundo (March 1992 - June 1993).*

	CO	POLITICIANS	JUDICIARY	MEDIA
March 1992	9	19	22	10
February 1993	0	1	4	0

The 1992 overt dispute between politicians and judiciary was now carefully avoided. Just one public official criticized the 1993 sentence through a single paragraph article in *ABC*. Given the journalistic prominence of the political class[26], other politicians' declarations would have been published. The four judiciary-promoted news stories merely summarized the sentence.

Lack of information was the outcome of media institutional interdependence. A plausible explanation must take all the actors into account. First, the government emptied the *insumisión* of political appeal by submitting activists into judiciary processes. Contradictory court sentences (which carried neither imprisonment nor freedom for all *insumisos*) blurred civil disobedience into draft-dodging. Institutional marginalization of protest was being achieved. Besides, worried by the effects on public opinion[27], officials neglected those other

25The judge based the defense of the CO activist on the literature of Dworkin, Habermas and Rawls. See the original sentences: Penal Court. num.4. Madrid. Sentence num.75/92. February 3, 1992 / Penal Court. num.20. Madrid. Sentence num.12/93. January 16, 1993. Made public on February 3.

26See the prominence of elite-promoted information in front pages of *El País*, *ABC* and *El Mundo* in Sampedro (1996:486).

27See the collective work of Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional. *Presente y Futuro de la Conciencia Nacional.* Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa.

sentences that fully supported the *insumisos*, hampering an evident debate. Secondly, disagreeing political and judiciary elites had almost no leeway left. No other policy seemed feasible, after the 1991 consensus for a semi-professional Army. The number of parliamentary initiatives on CO decreased, and silent decision-makers implied media silence. In July 16, 1993, *El País* published a brief note about the fifth and sixth absolutory sentences of *insumisos*[28]. None of the three media had reported any other sentence since the one (March 1993) discussed above.

Judiciary institutionalization had its informative complement. Journalists adopted the institutional frame to inform on the *insumisión*. It was the easiest one because of predictability and availability of information but soon saturated the media. After the mobilization climax of the Gulf War, the judiciary episodes seemed irrelevant to the press. Nevertheless, the indicators of a worsened social conflict were quite salient. Resistance from the courts to imprison the *insumisos* was becoming more evident as increasing numbers were tried. Only in the first five months of 1993, 125 trials outnumbered those held throughout 1992[29]. When the sentence did not impose prison, some disobedients (12.5%) sought new detention so that they would be jailed[30]. In 1993 CO recognitions increased 29.5% compared to the preceding year. A year later the Government recognized that CO was a "State problem"[31].

The variables that had impelled the SM news presence lost strength: the government kept silent, the elites' dispute seemed at an end, and collective protest was subdued in endless judiciary processes. That is, institutional interdependence of political, judiciary and media arenas allowed for institutional elitism. It was elitist control because the media ignored the

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28*El País*, July 16, 1993, p.22.

29The number of *insumisos* has continued to grow as have the absolutory sentences. More judges chose to apply all kind of exemptions to avoid the imprisonment. For statistics of sentences, see, Parlamento de Navarra. 1993. *Informe sobre la insumisión.* May 15. Pamplona.

30"Informe de Derechos Humanos del Parlamento de Navarra", Pamplona, June 1993.

31*El País*, February 24, 1994, p.13 and 14.

instability of the 1991 parliamentary consensus that disregarded both the aggravation of a worsened conflict and the significant backings of the movement. And the media indifference towards what a public official labelled "the unique case of civil disobedience in the history of Spain" was sustained by institutional news-making imperatives[32]. Media famine matched policy famine.

Media Politics of Social Protest

A frame analysis of a period of controversy complements the exposition of the strategies for dominating agenda-building, the most viable outcomes for SMs and their limitations. More than establishing the governmental initiatives, media coverage of protest might help to set dissent; that is, to limit and question elite power both at the political and discoursive level. Institutional conflict seems to be the most important variable for SMs political impact (Klandermans, 1989:388) and also for journalistic attention. Therefore, the interests of each contending actor coincided in the political and media sphere. While elites hid or managed confrontation, the movement tried to uncover and to enlarge it. When elites succeeded, information decreased. The governmental strategies to dampen media attention followed a sequential order: repression and coercion, inactivity, hiding inner disputes, achieving the consent of the opposition and the institutional marginalization of protest. This is a tentative range of strategies not only for political control but also for shielding the official agenda from public controversy, given the media institutional dependence from official politics. In other words, the political opportunity structure conditions the media opportunity structure to a great extent.

On the other hand, collective protest clearly maintained the CO public visibility and forced other actors to enter the debate. Had it not been for the SM-promoted news stories of *El País*, the issue would have almost been erased from the press during the decade 1978-1988 [See Graphic 1]. Also, increased information from the politicians, the judiciary and the own

32Sub-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Liborio Hierro. *El País*, January 24, 1988.

journalists followed the increase of SM-promoted news stories. The *insumisos* set in motion a spiral of information that pulled into the newspapers political proposals for draft abolition, court trials and journalistic efforts to report and comment on the turmoil [see Graphic 2]. The "hidden agenda" was transformed into "open contest" in 1991 and 1992, but the SM lost media attraction inexorably when politicians and judiciary took over a declining debate.

Every actor also tried to dominate the public understanding of CO. A frame analysis was conducted during a crucial point for this issue policy career. In 1988 the master frame of the Spanish anti-draft movement opened, reset and began to block an official agenda that would collapse a few years later. These three processes summarize the SM policy strategies that may be favored by the media. Protest news stories do not seem enough to set the governmental agenda and fix its content. But a minority of protesters can gain media projection much greater than their social relevance when resorting to the proper master frame. The media would work here as one public arena with high "capacity to carry social problems", with fast "institutional rhythm" and feasible "positive feedbacks" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) for the impact of protest on other spheres. That is, news organizations deal with a enormous variety of social problems on a daily and even hourly basis. They can both encourage and amplify the attention given to a social conflict in other public arenas (another media, expertise communities, executive and legislative branches of government, the courts, etc.). By focusing on protest, the media can introduce new issues in many other institutions and inform about declarations and measures that might be taken or demanded later on. In other words, the media opportunity structure might help to alter the political opportunity structure by increasing elite dissent in three ways.

News organizations can help to *open* the agenda, thus increasing the issues, participants and solutions that the elites in power are ready to consider. In case of a policy adverse to the SM, news about mobilizations or elite discrepancies could *reset* the official

agenda, stimulating a debate that was artificially closed. The official guidelines would be challenged and the search for new ones would begin. Media coverage of protest could question elite consensus, enlarge internal disagreements or stress the flaws of the official policy. As a last resort, the SM can try to *block* the governmental agenda, hindering its implementation. News media may perform then as an umbrella for the protesters, if repression entails obvious costs in terms of public opinion. By the same token, if popular disapproval and resistance overflow the news, a given policy can be abandoned or, most commonly, the opposition can block the official initiatives with their own. These three forms of "setting dissent" were detected in the 1988 news frames.

The activists' demands seemed discredited after the Constitutional Court fully sanctioned the CO legislation, that had been passed with a large parliamentary consensus. However, half of the paragraphs both in *El País* and *ABC* framed the beginnings of *insumisión* as legitimate social unrest, not as public disorder. Thus other policies, alternative to the official ones, were demanded in 46 % of policy proposals printed by *El País* and 66% in *ABC*. Moreover, the imprisonment of *insumisos* was asked only by a few officials. Just 3 paragraphs of *El País* (2% of policy proposals) and 4 in *ABC* (9%) demanded more severe legal punishment. Finally, repression could not rely on a negative moral judgement: 55% of the evaluations about CO in *El País* carried positive judgements about the objectors and their motives. That is, the agenda was opened for debate again.

The policy debate had also been reset. When the dailies addressed structural causes, the activists' demands were favored: military conscription and militarism of the elites were the most cited causes. During 1988, two thirds of *ABC* paragraphs combined the contradictory accusations of the government being both "militaristic" and "soft" (favoritism) on the objectors. This paradox in the conservative daily is an example of *rhetorical adversarialism*. The balance of the political frames published by *ABC* showed the clear

purpose of fitting with the editorial line: two thirds against the government and the other third against the movement. Actually, most criticism supported the political allies of each newspaper.

Nevertheless, the government could not present a coherent picture of its policy, which was labelled as too conservative (36% of policy judgements in *El País*, 21 % in *ABC*) and even militaristic: 14% in *El País*, 8% in *ABC*. By the same token, 75% of the policy proposals published by *El País* coincided with executive measures, although during 1988 it pointed to the compulsory military service (35% of structural causes cited) or to the wrong CO policy style (47%) as structural causes of the conflict. What mattered, from the SM point of view, was that the official policy was being severely criticized on both news platforms. And CO turned out to be an issue extremely useful to be rhetorically addressed in political contest. The real blocking of the agenda arrived later on: when the expansion of objectors and *insumisos* left draft-abolition as the only exit.

The main Spanish press performed as a "space of opposition" that questioned the official agenda. But the newspapers privileged the institutional sources closest to their editorial lines. They released information in contexts under their control, discriminating between *ABC* and *El País.* The Ministry of Defense relied on *ABC* to criticize the initiatives of the Ministry of Justice, that were mostly advanced by *El País.* Press conferences, leaks and releases amounted to almost half of the information provided in both dailies. Although, the objectors gained a second place as news sources in *El País* (21% of the total paragraphs) and the last share in *ABC* (10%). It must be noted that the most prominent activist was a dissenting member of the board for recognizing the CO requests (17 paragraphs out of 59), until he finally resigned from his institutional position. Draft boycotts and the announcement of the civil disobedience campaign provided almost no opportunity for CO ideological propaganda, given the lack of interviews to the protesters. Therefore, the contending policy

frames pointed out above came mainly from inner governmental disputes and from the opposition, mostly favoring those sources.

Journalistic work routines and editorial bias account for additional data. The newspapers routinely and/or consciously tended to print the news stories about CO on pages which were dominated by information on terrorism (54% of CO news stories in *ABC* and 22% in *El País*) or on social deviance (20% in *El País* and 10% in *ABC*)[33]. Media adherence to the traditional definition of politics led them to consider only the activities of professional politicians as "politics". After covering institutional arenas, the rest of policy related news were gathered and printed together, regardless of their nature. The editorial bias is clear at least in *ABC* shares. The terrorist frame and a scant 2% of military policy suggest the intention to push CO out of the limits of legitimate controversy and deny its linkage with draft policy[34]. A plain conclusion might be extracted. SM grievances must pass several filters: the news values of professional journalism, the editorial filter, and its congruence with the discourse of the elites aligned with the media. Then, risks of manipulation in favor of already settled political options are obvious, and might explain the vanishing of activists' original demands. In fact, the *insumisión* master frame was equated with "Mili no" (No to the draft) instead of "No al Ejército" (No to the Armed Forces).

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that draft abolition did not respond to an elite plan for improving the defense system; neither that the CO movement always aimed to end with the compulsory military socialization of civilians. In this view, the media helped the SM to set social dissent against elite consensus and to foster policy alternatives against the latter. This is not agenda-setting: something difficult for an actor with limited resources and

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33The data refer to what Sampedro calls "journalistic framing by inclusion or juxtaposition" (1996: 505). While other frames of this study can be traced by responding to the initiative of the policy actors, journalistic framing ensues the own media decisions.

34On the contrary, the significant 20% of CO news stories printed by *El País* on pages of military policies shows the SM success in engaging an area of debate from which it was previously absent.

almost no bargaining or compromise ability. In any case, the activists' radical demands are often transformed into incremental reforms. In addition, the political agenda is driven by more decisive imperatives than news criticism (economic or staff constraints, inertia in previous decision-making, etc.). Rather, the *political* effectiveness of collective protest could be measured by its ability to fuel debates that transform unspoken grievances into political dissent. *Media politics of protest* would consist of spanning and accelerating that controversy in front of the public; that is, to strategically place certain frames that would run across the institutions forging political competition. This would eventually result in policy innovation, which might not necessarily coincide with the SM core demands.

Conclusion

In policy and media agenda-building processes, SMs deepen - or simply show - the contradictions or the insufficiency of the existing policy alternatives (Rochon 1988; Scott 1990). Through media coverage of protest, the activists might open the institutionalized controversy, reset the contents or block unpopular initiatives. They react and counteract the elitist control of the agenda, but for a short period, after which they fade from the public sphere. Institutional arrangements to close the agenda can be reinforced by parallel processes in the media. These are the most common outcomes. Political co-option that undermines unconventional collective action tends to match bureaucratized SM sources usually diffusing the original demands. Activists who remain (self)excluded could be trivialized by sensationalist coverage if coopted by the media for the production of ever dramatic news events. Or protesters could clash against journalistic indifference, due to fast saturation and inhibition regarding institutionally marginalized conflicts.

But news organizations should not be regarded as instruments of the elites or the activists. They may offer a "space of representation" (Melucci 1996) of new collective identities (van Zoonen 1996) or a "space of opposition" (Rojecki 1993) for articulating

unspoken political demands. If that is the case, the media perform as institutional platforms that move issues quickly among many public arenas and decision-making units. But institutional interdependence accounts also for negative "media feedbacks". Journalistic attention focuses mainly on official activities, so media opportunities are quite dependent on existing political opportunities - specially the level of institutional controversy. Symbolic politics based on artificial consensus and mere rhetoric (Edelman 1987) or placebo policies that mask certain social privations (Stringer and Richardson 1980) can easily close the media agenda. Besides, media attention to public issues reaches saturation quite soon, specially with sustained protest that has been denied further policy access. Political control and news management usually go hand in hand guaranteeing the stability of official agendas. Therefore, non-democratic exclusion behind the public's back can occur in both media and policy agendas, which tend to exhibit quite a similar distribution of power.

A "soft" version of hegemony could be endorsed. It is soft because it denies the classical view of the elites "manufacturing consent" (Herman and Chomsky 1988) through the media. News organizations do not seek ideological indoctrination, which would run against their economic goals (affluent but extended audiences) and against the journalistic norms (objectivity, independence or adversarialism). But mass communication mostly inhibits the expansion of alternative ideologies and collective action. It does not build consensus but apathy. And it does not follow the elites command but its own rules of efficiency and benefit. Because of these very same imperatives, news content is not only "indexed" by the institutional debate (Bennett 1990), but it also validates the vetoes of the political class and, in the long run, dilutes social protest. This is why the 1996 conservative government could present the all-volunteer army as a result of its "political will" and a requirement of the imminent NATO full membership[35].

35See the declarations of President Aznar in *El Mundo*, June 10, 1996, p.1, 6 and 7; or the words of the Minister of Defense in *El País*, July 1, 1996, p.28. After studying the draft abolition, the Commission of Defense delayed the date line for professional Armed Forces to

Appendix 1. *CO Legislation, Measures and CO Movement's Demands: 1970-1996.*[36]

YEAR	LEGISLATION	MEASURES	MOVEMENT'S DEMANDS
1970	First governmental proposal on religious CO. Refused by parliament.	Consecutive 6 year imprisonments up to age of 38.	Law of secular CO
1971	Second governmental proposal on religious CO. Refused by parliament.	Idem	Idem
1973	Change of Military Code	3 to 6 years imprisonment	Idem
1976	Decree on religious CO.	Idem	Idem
1977	Suspended military duties	Discretionary delays. Forbidden propaganda. 3-6 ys. prison.	
1978	Constitutional right of CO	Idem	Idem
1980	Failed governmental project on secular CO	Idem	Idem
1984	Law on secular CO and Penal Code of Civilian Service	Idem. CO propaganda allowed. Official recognition of CO	Beginnings of civil disobedience campaign
1988	Decree of Civilian Service	Civilian Service, imprisonment of *insumisos* (2 - 6 years)	End of conscription
1995	Penal Code	Disqualification of *insumisos* from public jobs or stipends up to 14 years, plus fees up to 36 million pesetas, and prison in some cases	Idem

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year 2,003 (*ABC*, December 9, pp.22-23; *El País*, December 19, p.19). In response, the CO movement engaged a new turn of the *insumisión* (desertion when already drafted) that hardly achieved news coverage (See the single paragraph published by the three newspapers in *El País*, March 8, p.22).

36**Legal Sources:** *B.O.E.* June 2 1970, Num 1102; *B.O.E.* May 5 1971, Num 1146; *B.O.E.* July 2 1973, Num 1288; *B.O.E.* December 19 1973, Num 304; *B.O.E.* January 5 1976, Num 4; Ministry of Defense Internal Circular, November 26 1977; *B.O.E.* 1978 December 29 1978, Num 311; *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales*. *Congreso de los Diputados.* I Legislatura. Serie A. October 22 1980, Num 167-I.; *B.O.E.* 1984 December 28 1984, Num 311; *B.O.E.* January 21 1988, Num 18.

Movement's Sources: Letter of the Protesters in the "March Towards the Prison" to the Ministries of Justice and Defense, March 21 1971; Internal Document of Pax Christi (I), Barcelona, August 2 1973; Internal Document of Pax Christi (II), Barcelona, 1973; Internal Document of Justicia y Paz (I), "Volunteers for Development" March 1974; Internal Document of Justicia y Paz (II), Volunteers for Development March 1974; Parliamentary Dossier of Justicia y Paz "Proposal of a CO's Statute", November 1976; Parliamentary Dossier of MOC "Proposal of a CO's Statue and a Civilian Service" July 1977; Group of MOC-Madrid. 1980. "Proposal of a CO's Statue and a Civilian Service".

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