

The Influence of Mass Media on Turkish Foreign Policy in Responding to the Crimean Annexation by Russian Federation in 2014

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Abstract: The annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 was a very controversial action that sparked various responses from countries in international society. Among the various responses, Turkey became the one who strongly opposed the Russian Federation's decision in the Crimea, and openly declared its stance to support the Ukraine in its territorial dispute. Turkey's foreign policy, as stated before, is quite contradictory to reality in that the relationship between Turkey and Russia was at a pretty good level. The closeness of their relations has been indicated by the cooperation woven by both countries, with one of the cooperation's focus points being in the field of nuclear energy. There was also a fairly intense meeting between Erdogan and Vladimir Putin during that period. Under these conditions, it is almost impossible for Turkey to take a very opposite stand against Russia in a dispute that does not even affect Turkey directly. Therefore, in this paper, the author attempts to analyse Turkish foreign policy through the level of analysis of the mass media and public opinion by looking at the extent to which the mass media can influence public opinion against the Crimea, which can ultimately be used to pressure the government. The mass media and public opinion level of analysis is very interesting to use in this case because it can explain Turkey's foreign policy from different perspectives, coupled with the media in Turkey being quite contrary to the Erdogan regime.

1 INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is an indispensable element of a country, especially when it tries to play an active role in the realm of international relations. There are many factors influencing the foreign policy of a country. Therefore, there are various levels of analysis (LoA) that are helpful in explaining the reasons behind a country's foreign policy. One of the most interesting is mass media and public opinion LoA. In this paper, the authors attempt to explain the reasons behind Turkey's foreign policy in response to the Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation in 2014 through the LoA of mass media and public opinion.

Before entering further discussion about the Turkish response to the Crimean annexation, the authors will explain the background to the conflict first. The Crimea is one of the regions in the Ukraine which has a population composition consisting of mostly ethnic Russians. In the era of the presidential administration of Viktor Yanukovich in the Ukraine,

the orientation of the Ukraine - which was originally more inclined to the countries of Western Europe - shifted to Russia. This happened because of the cooperation between the Ukraine and Russia in the field of energy, especially natural gas, in which the Ukraine relies on the supply of natural gas from Russia to meet its energy needs. The proximity that occurred between the two countries did not last long. It happened because the president of Yanukovich, who was elected in 2010, was eventually overthrown in 2014. Yanukovich's overthrowing came when he made a surprise deal with Russian president, Vladimir Putin. The deal stated that Russia bought Ukrainian bonds amounting to 15 billion US dollars and slashed the price of natural gas being exported to the Ukraine by up to one-third. The widespread news seems to be a firm confirmation that President Yanukovich ignored protests from the people of the Ukraine demanding that the Ukraine no longer be a Russian ally, but more oriented towards Western Europe, especially the European Union (Diuk, 2014).

The assertiveness of Yanukovich to further attach the Ukraine to Russia caused concern for the people of the Ukraine. They were and are traumatised by the bad memories of when the Ukraine was still under the Soviet Union. This is evidenced by the huge negative view of the people of the Ukraine against Russia under Vladimir Putin's regime, where Onuch (2015) stated that almost 60% of Ukrainian people have a very bad view of the regime of Vladimir Putin. Therefore, it can be understood that Ukrainian society considers cooperating with Russia as hampering the development of the Ukraine. Therefore, there emerged a much larger protest action in response to Yanukovich's decision. The protest was exacerbated by the issue that Yanukovich was involved in a corruption scandal. Public anger also increased when Tetyana Chornovol, a journalist who exposed the scandal, was persecuted by some alleged accomplices of Yanukovich (Diuk, 2014). These events triggered the occurrence of Euromaidan, which ultimately succeeded in overthrowing Yanukovich.

The result of the event was that Yanukovich was replaced by Petro Poroshenko; the regime change in the Ukraine was raising concerns in Russia. The concern was triggered by the indications that Poroshenko was a pro-Western leader. Generally, their concerns were that the Ukraine would be divided into two. The first worry was that NATO would expand into Ukraine, and the second concern was that Russian ethnics in the Ukraine would be discriminated against and receive ill-treatment by the Ukrainian society, as well as by the regime in power. In response to this, the authors can see that the purpose of Russia's annexation of the Crimea was to secure the Russian naval ports in Sevastopol as well as to protect ethnic Russians in the Crimea.

In fact, the justification is very understandable, since Russia is a geopolitically situated country in the heart region. In history, it is not uncommon for it to experience an invasion by the great powers around it so as to construct the Russian identity as an expansive nation (Lavrov, 2016). Although the annexation of the Crimea is justifiable for Russia, it has led to various reactions from various countries in which many countries denounced the Russian action, and among them, was Turkey.

As the authors have mentioned earlier, the Crimean annexation by Russia reaped harsh criticism from various countries, where Turkey became one of the countries that cast a strong condemnation of Russia related to the annexation of the Crimea. Turkish condemnations of Russia's annexation of the Crimea is an anomaly because the diplomatic ties between Turkey and Russia are practically

harmonious, at least up until the shooting down of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish armed forces in 2015. The author sees that the Turkish foreign policy anomaly is closely linked with Turkish public pressure and pressure from Turkish mass media. The authors therefore see that the mass media and public opinion can explain the reasons behind the policy.

2 LEVEL OF ANALYSIS: MASS MEDIA & PUBLIC OPINION

In the study of conventional foreign policy decision-making views, the mass media such as newspapers, television, radio, press, and multi-media, serve only as a channel to convey messages or news during the process of foreign policy formulation (Naveh, 2002). Naveh saw that the study did not realise that the mass media has a much larger role than that. Therefore, Naveh (2002) also stated that the mass media should be involved in the analysis to formulate the foreign policy itself.

Naveh (2002) stated that there are three models that describe the role of the media in decision-making related to the formulation of foreign policy. The three models focus on the view that the public environment or the wider community is one source of input that can be taken into consideration when formulating foreign policy. The first model was initiated by Glenn Snyder et al., (1969, in Naveh 2002). Snyder stated that in the process of foreign policy formulation, there is a setting that consists of two aspects, namely internal and external. Snyder (1969, in Naveh 2002) stated that the setting potentially has an impact on all decisions made by the state. Internal in this sense is understood as the factors that come from within the country, such as a community environment consisting of culture, population and public opinion (Naveh, 2002). In other words, the media plays a major role in shaping the environment. Media can be interpreted as a means to expressing interpretations and non-governmental expectations from various groups and components of society (Naveh, 2002).

Michael Brecher developed a much more detailed analytical framework for the analysis of foreign policy decision making, and he also involved explicitly the role of the media as a "communication network in the political system" that allows the flow of information about the operational environment to the government elite (Naveh 2002). The framework developed by Brecher is a model that has an environmental design. Brecher believes that the foreign policy system consists of an environment or

setting. The operational environment defines the setting in which foreign policy decision-making is conducted (Naveh, 2002). The concept of setting refers to a set of relevant factors and conditions, which can influence the country's external behaviour. The operational environment specifies the parameters or constraints on which the decision maker must act (Naveh, 2002).

However, like other authors, Brecher does not explicitly involve the mass media as an instrument of input variables impacting on foreign policy decision making. The input variables referred to by Naveh (2002) are external factors, and a part of the international environment. Viewing the media as a variable input in foreign policy decision making involves understanding its role in influencing society and politics in the agenda setting and constructing reality.

The third model of foreign policy formulation was initiated by Papadakis and Starr (1987, in Naveh, 2002) to analyse the process of formulating foreign policy in small countries, but this model remains relevant to other countries as well. The environment that forms the inputs for the foreign policy decision-making process is described as the structure of opportunity, risk, and price and profit, which restricts decision-makers. However, Papadakis and Starr do not involve mass media in their models, neither to form part of the community level in an environment, nor as part of the opportunities or obstacles that affect the internal government in making decisions (Naveh, 2002).

The mass media has begun to have a significant influence on the formulation of foreign policy since the presence of television broadcasts on a global scale and the emergence of an international news agency that is CNN (Gilboa, 2005). According Gilboa, humans always need news in order to follow the development of an event that is or has happened. Even if we look at history when the civil war occurred in the United States in 1861 to 1865, the demand for news increased dramatically. As a result, the United States Newspaper increased its publication to seven days a week (Gilboa, 2005).

The same condition occurred during the Gulf War in Iraq in 1991. Gilboa (2005) stated that with the availability of global cable television broadcasts, the public was able to watch the war reports first aired in real time. Therefore, the public interest in the news reported, especially by CNN, is very high. In fact, many Americans sit in front of the television for hours to watch news broadcasts live from conflict areas. The huge public interest in news broadcast from all over the world has not been followed by a critical

attitude to question the truth of the news presented, making it a great opportunity for the mass media to further influence public opinion. The author discerned that this factor is what then encourages the emergence of the CNN effect. Gilboa (2005) stated that the CNN effect arises because of changes in the attitude of the international community caused by the ease and speed of access to information resources. Meanwhile, a computer security expert stated that the CNN effect occurred when the source of information, which has very much entered into the news, was manipulated (Johnston, 1996 in Gilboa, 2005).

Despite the existence of the CNN effect theory, there is still a debate among academics and policy makers because of a lack of evidence that leads to it. Already there are some cases that claim to suffer the impact of the CNN effect itself. Gilboa (2005) stated that in 1999, there were protests from senior US and British officials including Tony Blair related to the issue of Russian military activity against the Chechen people. In response to the protests, the senior military officers of

Russia, General Valery Minilov, stated that the protests made were on the basis of news spread widely through the media, without being clarified directly and seeking the truth in advance, resulting in misinformation related to what is actually happening in Chechnya.

Gilboa (2005) also explained that the mass media has proven to be on the path of diplomacy that is sometimes far more effective than conventional lines. This is in line with Naveh (2002), who explained about some of the functions of mass media in influencing foreign policy as the only agenda setting. The mass media can enhance the prestige and authority of a person or group by giving legitimacy to their status. Agenda setting is a way that the media constructs public opinion in accordance with what is desired by the media, where there is usually a political agenda. Naveh (2002) also stated that for most political observers abroad, an overview of the world's most influential forum today can be precisely mapped by journalists and editors compared to a map of the work of cartographer. Although the map compiled by the media does not provide enough information that is objective to the reader, it must be admitted that the map is very successful in directing the reader toward what to think about. In other words, the media exerts an influence on how one views a region, such as the existence of a construction that makes the audience have a negative view that the Middle East is nothing more than a terrorist nest and a centre of chaos.

Naveh (2002) also stated that another function of mass media in foreign policy is as a means to conduct framing. Framing is defined as a process in which a medium creates an image by filtering out existing facts for use in foreign policy formulation. Seeing the explanation that the media play an important role in the formulation of foreign policy, the authors saw that the influence of media in building public opinion is actually divided into two. First, is the media influencing public opinion to oppose, criticise, or pressure governments to change or formulate foreign policy. An example of this is in the case of the Rohingya conflict; the media played public opinion, viewing the conflict from religious sentiments in which Muslims are the victims of a vicious massacre perpetrated by non-Muslims. This affects public opinion, especially in Indonesia where religious sentiments are still very strong. As a result, many people are demonstrating and pressuring the Indonesian government to respond to the case. In the end, the actual Indonesian government did not have a significant national interest in Rohingya and also responded, due to the strong public pressure framed by the media. The second is how the government uses mass media to construct public opinion in order to increase the legitimacy of the policies adopted. The author sees that only a strong government and firmness in the formulation of foreign policy alone can do this, especially if the government has control over the mass media within a country. The author noted that the influence of mass media on the formulation of foreign policy in Turkey is a very interesting thing because in Turkey itself, there is a big media company that is called the Dogan Group, which in some ways is contrary to the Erdogan government.

3 TURKISH MASS MEDIA AND FOREIGN POLICY

The annexation of the Crimea by Russia, as the writer explained earlier, caused controversy that provoked different responses from each country, not least Turkey. As published in news reports, Hurriyet (2016) stated that Turkey once again condemned the Russian occupation of the Crimea, and gave support to the Tatar people in the Crimea. To explain why the Turkish government under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan so condemned the Russian annexation action against the Crimea and gave such strong support to the Tatar people in the Crimea, it can be seen through how the mass media influenced public opinion in

Turkey and how the government regime played the mass media to get support for the policies undertaken.

Before seeing how far the media plays an important role in influencing Turkish foreign policy related to the Crimean annexation, the author will be able to determine what role the mass media in Turkey has played since the multi-party era in Turkey. Rich (2010) explained that despite the strict control of radio media in 1927, it has yet to have a broad impact on existing politics. This happened because in that era, Turkey still had a single party system so there was only one camp with control of the media. That changed as the multi-party system began to take effect. Rich (2010) explained that after the transition from a single party system to a multi-party one, the reach of the radio broadcasting network was increasingly expanded and directed almost exclusively to reporting things seen from the point of view of the ruling party or the majority, so it can be said that there is virtually no objectivity in the news broadcast by Turkish radio. It is not wrong to mention the role of the media at that time only as a means of framing for the Turkish government.

The condition shifted when there were rapid developments in the information technology sector not accompanied by the creation of appropriate regulations (Rich, 2010). These changes have led to a variety of media controlled by private sectors. As a result, the mass media is then dominated by conglomerates who pursue profits when running the media business. Then, at the end of the military regime that was subsequently replaced by the civil regime under Turgut Ozal where he managed to unite Turkey into the global market but failed to unify disputed opinions within Turkey itself, it actually degraded the legitimacy of the government. Coupled with the occurrence of the two major recessions of the 1990s, it created a great opportunity for the mass media to increase its influence in politics (Rich, 2010).

Political instability in Turkey in that decade coexisted with different views and there was a new prime minister five times in less than nine years, which very clearly indicates that there were no hegemon actors in Turkish politics. Therefore, the media has a greater chance to increase its influence in the political sphere. In fact, observers do not hesitate to claim that the media has emerged as a "First Estate" in the political realm. The claim is not excessive. One of the biggest beneficiaries is Dogan, who became the third largest conglomerate in Turkey (Kaya, 2010).

The Dogan Group, which is controlled by Aydin Dogan, has huge potential when it comes to influencing public opinion. This happens because the

media group is very big, and consists of not only Hurriyet which moves in the realm of newspapers, but there are other newspapers such as Radikal, Posta, Fanatik, Millyet, and Vatan which also under the Dogan group. In addition to newspaper media, the Dogan group also controls television. Dogan has a total of 13 television stations, including Canal D, Eko TV, Euro D, CNN Turk, Super Channel, Euro Star, Canal D Romania, TNT Turkey, Cartoon Network, NBA TV, TV 2 and Boing. In addition, the company also controls five radio stations, four of which are still active. With so much mass media controlled by one party, as happened in Turkey, it would be possible for the Dogan Group to form public opinion which is also related to the process of foreign policy formulation in Turkey.

Aydin Dogan himself is a figure opposed to Erdogan. This statement is evidenced by the news published by Hurriyet on its website stating that President Erdogan repeatedly dropped criticisms and personally attacked Aydin Dogan (Hurriyet, 2015). In fact, as a result of the dispute between Dogan and Erdogan, the Dogan Group was banned by the government (Reuters, 2015). Given the poor relationship between the government and the media, the most likely condition is that the media was trying to play public opinion in order to bring down the government. However, in the case of Turkey with the Crimea, it is not very clear. But the authors see that the media plays a role in influencing Turkey's related foreign policy.

As the authors explained earlier, Turkey responded to Russia's attitude toward the Crimea by casting condemnation and condemning the Russian actions. On the other hand, Turkey actually supports the Crimean Tatar nation and the Ukraine. This is a bit of an anomaly because Turkey has a considerable interest in Russia especially in the energy sector, but Turkey has also taken action by condemning Russia. The author has noted that the role of the media in this case is very strong. Based on the data that the authors have obtained, the news that emerged during the Crimean annexation event was published by leading media such as Hurriyet and Sabah, many of which contain framing elements.

These media filter out the facts and select the facts that are "sold" to the Turkish public. One fact that is played is the fact that in Crimea, there are Crimean Tatar people who have also become the victims of annexation, and who also experienced violence from the Russian side. The Crimean Tatar nation is made up of ethnic Muslims who have lived in Crimea for centuries. The nation first became diaspora and fled to the Ottoman Turks in 1783 due to the impact of the

Crimean annexation by the Russian empire. Then they became diaspora again due to the Crimean war in 1853. Therefore, up until now, there have been many Tatar people who are descendants of the Crimean Tatars in Turkey. The narrative and demographic conditions are repeatedly exploited by the Turkish media in view of the issue of the Crimean Annexation in 2014.

The news published in the Daily Sabah (2014) was titled "Turkey's Crimean Tatars worried for Crimea". The story states the narrative that the Tatar nation was a nation that was expelled from the Crimean lands due to the first Russian annexation and the outbreak of the Crimean war in 1853. The article seemed to illustrate that the Tatars are the most disadvantaged victims in the crisis, without explaining the situation that occurred in the Crimea as a whole. It was these reports that then constructed the public view of the Crimea that Russia was the only criminal in play and that the Tatars were the main victims. As published in Daily Sabah (2014), there have been many Turkish Tatar people who have demonstrated appropriately.

The number will continue to increase with the publication of such news. In addition, the news titled "Tatars, Turks not to leave Crimea again" published by Hurriyet (2014) also used framing by describing a similar narrative. The news tells about the valour of the Crimean Tatar leader, Mustapha Dzemilev, who is called the Gandhi of the Crimea. The article illustrates how the Tatar struggle and how Turkey cares for their cause. The news has an effect on increasing Turkish sympathy for the Crimean Tatar, coupled with religious sentiments in which Turkish society is made up of a Muslim majority of over 70%.

The vast amount of public opinion sympathetic to the Crimean Tatars was then voiced in the form of actions demanding that the Erdogan regime be firm against the annexation of the Crimea, and for it to condemn Russia for what has happened, particularly related to ethnic Tatars in the Crimea seen of as being increasingly oppressed. On the other hand, public opinion also leads Turkey to a closer relationship with the Ukraine, as Ukraine is seen of as the legitimate ruler of the Crimean peninsula. The author sees that this factor really does affect how Erdogan runs its country's policy to make criticisms of Russia, although Turkey has a considerable national interest in Russia especially in economic corridors. The authors assume so because despite Turkey's condemnation of Russia, the condemnation is merely a criticism. Turkey decided not to impose tough sanctions on Russia as Western countries did. It was impressed that the criticism was merely the

government's attempt to placate the public. Relations between Russia and Turkey are still normal, as evidenced by several meetings between Erdogan and Putin to discuss the case. The relationship can be said to have been good, at least until Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the Turkish response, which openly denounced the Crimean annexation by Russia was, in essence, not an initiative of the Erdogan regime but something that came from outside the government. From the point of view of the LoA of mass media and public opinion, and of the political order in Turkey where the opposing side of the government controls one of Turkey's greatest media groups, it is likely to be enormous if the foreign policy is the result of media coverage that has succeeded in influencing the masses. In this case, Turkish mass media proclaimed the narrative that the Crimean Tatars suffered so badly at the repression at the hands of Russia. The news has succeeded in influencing the Crimean Tatars living in Turkey as well as the Muslim community in general to sympathise with what happened in the Crimea and ultimately, it seeks to suppress the Erdogan regime to take decisive action against Russia.

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