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MEDIA'S AGENDA-SETTING POWER IN LEBANON: THE
CASE OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW

by
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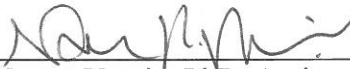
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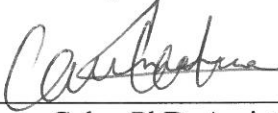
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Media's agenda-setting power in Lebanon: The Case of the Domestic Violence Law.

What is the dynamic that governs the relationship between Lebanese media and politicians? A variety of studies have established that the media – depending on the type – can influence the agenda of policymakers; in other words, there is a positive correlation, indicating that the media can lead policies on certain issues and sometimes influence politicians to take an action. This study attempts to explore the agenda-setting power of the media on policy agenda in Lebanon in the context of the domestic violence law. This study assumes that the media – by extensively publishing news about domestic violence lead politicians to make a demanded change and vote in favour of the law, despite the controversy surrounding the draft bill. To test this hypothesis, the study borrows from previous studies on agenda-setting in public policy and collects data from two local newspapers including a trusted news source as well as data about public policy related to domestic violence.

This study codes and quantifies the data and runs a regression to test whether there was a correlation. Results from the regressions compliment research on media agenda setting primarily theories that assume the media leads political behaviour especially prestigious newspapers on certain issues. The regression result indicates a significance and positive correlation between political activity and one of the newspapers under study. When that particular media publishes a story, it increases the probability of a political action taking place.

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1. CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In what way do mass media affect the government's decision-making process?

Research on the media and its coverage of news in the framework of agenda-setting theory are evidence that newspapers and television can influence the way politicians react to certain issues (Winter and Eyal, 1981, Welgrave et al, 2008, Bartels 1996, Edwards and Wood, 1999)¹. However, past research has been western-centric and no study investigated the media's probable agenda-setting power on politicians or the public in Lebanon.

This paper explores media's agenda-setting power in Lebanon by looking at a single issue that has received attention from both the media and politicians; the domestic violence law. The Lebanese parliament passed the domestic violence bill in 2014, criminalizing violence against women and children and offering for the first time in the country's history tools for women to report and file charges against their abusive husbands. Prior to its passing, some politicians and religious authorities vehemently opposed the law, lowering its chances for approval. Religious authorities have in the past obstructed the passing of laws in Lebanon given the prominent role they play in public life including a proposed law for civil marriage and a women's right to grant her children nationality; therefore, their opposition to that particular draft law should have been detrimental.

The draft law remained under study in a parliamentary committee for four years before being put on a vote in a legislative session in Parliament. What factors led

¹ Winter, James P., and Chaim H. Eyal. "Agenda setting for the civil rights issue." *Public opinion quarterly* 45.3 (1981): 376-383. Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* (2007). Bartels, Larry M. "Politicians and the press: Who leads, who follows?." annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA. 1996.

legislatures to put the draft law up for a vote despite heavy opposition by dominant religious authorities? What factors raised this issue into salience - either in the public mind or politicians' agenda - enough for policymakers to take action? While there could be several factors that have lead policymakers to take action such as repeated protests by activists or simply government officials seeking to lure voters, this paper will focus on local media's presumed role in putting pressure on officials to make the demanded change in the framework of agenda-setting research.

Increased media coverage of news conferences, protests, and individual cases related to domestic violence raised the issue into salience in the public agenda, prompting policymakers to act on the matter and respond accordingly. As preliminary research on the topic showed, several cases of domestic violence in which the women involved died received media attention and the court trials that followed those cases were also covered, keeping the issue salient in newspaper coverage.

To explain the role and test the hypothesis, this research relies on agenda-setting theory to find the correlation between the media and political activity. The theoretical domain of agenda-setting research is the interface of the mass media agenda and the public (McCombs, Shaw, 1993)². Researchers have shown that mass media play a role in telling the public what is important and how they should think about it and that is the broad definition of agenda-setting. While an agenda is a collection of problems and issues in the minds of people (Birkland, 2007)³, agenda setting is the process whereby the salience of items on the news agenda influences the salience of items in the public's minds or the

² McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public opinion quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.

³ Birkland, T. A. (2007). Agenda Setting in Public Policy. *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, 63-78.

public agenda (Carroll, McCombs 2003)⁴ be it events, issues or even public figures. People also tend to assign importance to issues relative to the media's agenda (Shaw,1979)⁵ and the characteristics of an issue presented in the media strongly correspond with the way people view topics in the news (McCombs, 2002)⁶. The mass media impact public agenda by perhaps giving an issue more time than others during the nightly news hour, in editorial openings of newspapers or television stations or in the way they highlight certain characteristics about an issue.

Not only do mass media impact the public agenda, they influence policy makers as this paper seeks to explore. Research on Belgium has found that parliament and government activities are significantly impacted by what the media covers and that news coverage of issues precedes political attention toward them (Welgrave et al, 2007)⁷. Therefore, political scientists use agenda setting to explain and describe how political actors decide on issues and what their priorities are, as Welgrave and Aelst (2006)⁸ put it. Welgrave and Aelst embarked on the task of formulating a hypothesis that would explain the role of media in political agenda setting. By reviewing previous research designs to determine the effect of the media, Welgrave and Aelst noted that political agenda setting by the media is contingent and depends on many circumstances. They narrowed down the

⁴ Carroll, C. E., & McCombs, M. (2003). Agenda-setting Effects of Business News on the Public's Images and Opinions about Major Corporations. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 5(1), 36-46.

⁵ Shaw, E. F. (1979). Agenda-Setting and Mass Communication Theory. *International Communication Gazette*, 25(96), 96-105.

⁶ McCombs, M. (2002, June). The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion. In *Mass Media Economics 2002 Conference*, London School of Economics.

⁷ Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* 41.814 (2007): n. pag. Web.

⁸ Walgrave, S., & Van Aelst, P. (2006). The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory. *Journal of Communication*, 56(1), 88-109.

factors to four: type of media (newspapers or television), type of issue, the political agenda, and the time period in which political agenda setting takes place. Whether it is newspapers or television that has the most impact on the public or politicians, Welgrave and Aelst said that all types of media should be covering the same event for it to have the maximum impact. The media's power would be demonstrated in issues that "without media, would simply be not observable" (Welgrave et al, 2007, p.93). Issues that politicians were not familiar with could become more prominent on their agenda as a result of the media's impact and covering negative consequences of an issue could also create pressure on policymakers to make a demanded change.

Agenda-setting studies indicate that when the "media cover certain issues, chances increase that these issues will also pop up on the political agenda afterwards" (Aelst, Walgrave, 2011, p.296). Aelst and Walgrave (2011)⁹ said the measurable impact of the media's political agenda-setting power has been modest given the fact that most studies are specific to issues or agenda. To test that hypothesis, they surveyed MPs in Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands to see how politicians view the agenda-setting power of the media on politics. The MPs surveyed said mass media set the political agenda to a very large extent when compared with the prime minister, ministers and political parties. The research noted that "the media do not fail and are considered to be among the most important determinants of what politicians do and care about" (p.306).

This paper aims at enriching the body of research on media's political agenda-setting power. Welgrave et al (2007)¹⁰ wrote that researchers had accumulated little

⁹ Van Aelst, P., & Walgrave, S. (2011). Minimal or massive? The political agenda-setting power of the mass media according to different methods. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 1940161211406727.

¹⁰ Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media,

knowledge on the magnitude of the mass media effect on political agenda. Moreover, variations in findings exist because media effects differ "across political agenda, media outlets, and policy domains." (p.2). Research on political agenda-setting mainly covers the United States and there is a lack of research on countries beyond those borders (Welgrave et al, 2007). This research would help explain the media's presumed impact on the public and policymakers alike in Lebanon, showing why some issues make it on the policy agenda while others remain neglected. It would also shed light on how the media could influence the passing of other policies or obstruct the process and certainly give activists insight on how to use the media to get their demands heard and obtain the change they seek.

The study is limited in terms of time and consequently data collection. Time constraints limit the scope of the study, preventing the research from looking at several mass media outlets to include television stations. Without time limitations, the study would have looked at other issues for longer periods for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic at play between the media and policymakers in Lebanon. Surveys of either the public or politicians would have complimented the study and provided a qualitative reach to better understand the dynamic. However, this is a first attempt at studying mass media agenda setting in Lebanon and the case study used in this approach would help shed light on the larger picture (Gerring, 2004)¹¹.

To test the hypothesis, I collected data from two local newspapers: Arabic-speaking An-Nahar newspaper and The Daily Star, which is the only English-speaking newspaper in Lebanon. The data covers four months prior to the passing of the domestic violence law on

Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* 41.814 (2007): n. pag. Web.

¹¹ Gerring, J. (2004, May). What Is A Case Study and What is it Good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-354.

April 1, 2014 and includes articles related to domestic violence such as real-life cases, editorials and feature stories on the issue. Political agenda was measured as political activity related to domestic violence by officials and lawmakers including press conferences, statements and seminars on the issue. I then run a linear probability model to estimate the correlation between media and political activity.

The following sections will cover a history of the domestic violence law, a literature review on media agenda setting and case study as well as the methodology and results. It also concludes from the results and proposes recommendations.

2. CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

2.1. Brief Background

In 2011, Lebanon's highest Sunni council, Dar al-Fatwa, released a statement decrying a draft law being studied in a Parliamentary committee to protect women against domestic violence, saying the law under study harmed the Muslim family (Khraiche, 2011)¹². The statement summarized the controversy surrounding the draft law well and threw the issue into the heart of a heated debate in the country. While Dar al-Fatwa - or any such religious institution - does not have the authority to reject or approve a law, it can certainly influence the law-making process. The type of governing system in Lebanon and the dynamic between the various religious groups have given religious authorities the leverage to intervene and influence the political process. Lebanon is governed by a confessional system, which created a schism whereby the country's top posts are divided among the main religious sects: Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims and Maronite Christians (Seaver, 2000)¹³. Moreover, the multiple shifts in power relations throughout Lebanon's history between the main religious sects resulted in the "leveling of political influence among the groups in Lebanon today" (Moaddel et al, 2012, p.3)¹⁴ as many political parties are made up of people from the same sect, representing corresponding constituencies. Consequently,

¹² Khraiche, Dana. "Dar al-Fatwa rejects draft law protecting women against domestic violence." *The Daily Star*. The Daily Star, 23 June 2011. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

¹³ Seaver, B. M. (2000), *The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon*. *Political Science Quarterly*, 115: 247-271. doi:10.2307/2657902

¹⁴ Moaddel, Mansoor, Jean Kors, and Johan Garde. "Sectarianism and Counter-Sectarianism in Lebanon." *Population Studies Center Research Reports* 12 (2012).

religious figures have had the authority to obstruct the process of several issues be it social policy or gender related including a law regulating civil marriage (Zarqat, 2013)¹⁵ and the right for women to grant nationality to their children (Pollard, 2016)¹⁶. Both these draft laws were put on the back burner.

At the legislative level, Parliament must also equally represent Muslims and Christians as stipulated in the Constitution. Policymaking in Lebanon is therefore “rooted in the sectarian socio-political culture of Lebanese politics, which has long been organized around political parties beholden to one or another religious faction” (Khodr, Issa, 2016)¹⁷. It is important to note that in the four months preceding the passing of the law, Lebanon was going through instability on a large scale; a lack of a functioning government and a series of terrorist attacks including assassinations have thrown the country at the edge of chaos.

2.2. Lawmaking in Lebanon

The Chamber of Deputies - Parliament - holds the exclusive power to pass laws. Members of Parliament, ministers, the president and the prime minister all have the right to submit draft laws for study in Parliament, according to the Lebanese Constitution published on the presidency website¹⁸. All proposed draft laws, whether by MPs or Cabinet, are referred to a Parliamentary committee for reviewing and possibly amending. The

¹⁵ Zarqat, Maha. "Qabbani makes a fatwa: Civil marriage is apostacy." Al-Akhbar. N.p., 29 Jan. 2013. Web. 22 July 2015.

¹⁶ Pollard, Ruth. "Lebanese citizenship law strips women of identity and property." Reuters . N.p., 25 May 2016. Web. 15 Dec. 2016.

¹⁷ Khodr, Hiba, and Carla Issa. "The Interplay between Policy and Politics in Combatting Terrorism The Case of Lebanon (2011-2015)." Middle East Review of Public Administration 2.1 (2016): 1-23. Merpa.scholasticahq.com. Web. 5 May 2016.

¹⁸ "The Lebanese Constitution ." Presidency of the Republic of Lebanon. Lebanese government , n.d. Web. 26 May 2016. <<http://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Documents/Lebanese%20Constitution.pdf>>.

committee - sometimes joint committees - should approve any draft law and submit the final version to Parliament's General Secretariat, which decides - with the speaker of Parliament - on items to list on the agenda of an upcoming legislative session. According to the Constitution, Parliament should meet annually in two ordinary sessions. The first session should open on the first Tuesday following March 15 until end of May. The second session begins the first Tuesday following October 15 and lasts until the end of the year. Decisions shall be taken by a majority vote. Should the votes be equal, the item under consideration would be rejected. Votes are taken by roll-call and legislative sessions should be public unless five lawmakers or the Cabinet requests otherwise. The president promulgates laws approved by Parliament and has to sign off their publication in the official gazette. The president has the right to ask the Cabinet to reconsider decisions taken by Parliament within a time period stipulated in the Constitution. Ministers are entrusted to apply laws and regulations, each pertaining to matters related to their ministry

2.3.The case of the Domestic Violence law

A bill to criminalize domestic violence was first proposed by the Justice Ministry to the Council of Minister (Cabinet) under the Prime Minister Saad Hariri in 2010. Cabinet approved the draft bill and referred it to a Parliamentary committee (Qawas, 2010)¹⁹, which a year later created a subcommittee to exclusively review the draft law. In the period prior to the passing of the law and even prior to the Cabinet's decision, human and women's rights groups organized rallies and protests with the aim of building pressure on parliamentarians to pass the law. KAFa (enough) Violence and Exploitation – a non-profit

¹⁹ Qawas, Nafez. "Cabinet approves law against domestic violence." The Daily Star. N.p., 7 Apr. 2010. Web. 30 May 2016.

organization – spearheaded an activist campaign against domestic violence and was a rare case of civil society activism in the country. The organization played a critical role in seeing the issue materialize into a draft bill and ultimately a law. In its 2014 annual report, KAFA said it began campaigning for a bill to criminalize family violence back in 2008. The campaign was based on a law drafted in 2007 by activists and presented to government officials until Justice Minister Ibrahim Najjar proposed it to Cabinet in 2010. The aim was to fill a void in the legal system with regards to protecting women against violence, an abuse that has increased in frequency. Between 2010 and 2013, KAFA said it received over 2,600 calls to its helpline annually and that 25 women had been killed by family members during the same time period. Four women had lost their lives in the first four months of 2014, according to the report.

KAFA ran an advocacy campaign, networked with civil society actors, local communities, held news conferences, highlighted domestic abuse cases and worked closely with the family of victims. The organization’s campaign, which was also paired with television and billboard advertisements, certainly placed the issue of domestic violence in the limelight. While there is a lack of research and study about the role of KAFA in placing and maintaining the issue in the minds of public and politicians, the organization prides itself with drafting the law with the help of other activists and leading the campaign against domestic violence. While KAFA-lead protests remained relatively small throughout the years, the biggest protest was held on March 8, 2004 – a few weeks before the law was passed - bringing together almost 5,000 people in Beirut, demanding the passing of the law. On April 1, 2014, Parliament listed the Domestic Violence law number 239 on the agenda of a legislative session and it passed it. Until the writing of this thesis, KAFA remains active in family abuse cases, following up on court rulings, issuing statements, and

highlighting flaws in the existing Domestic Violence Law.

Despite the need for research to better explore KAFA's role in the case of the domestic violence law, it is safe to say that the organization – which also run campaigns to better the status of migrant workers and end sex trafficking – has had an impact on raising the issue into salience. There are certainly other unexplored factors that might have contributed to the passing of the law including the abuse cases that surfaced in the past few months prior to April 1st, 2014.

Several cases surfaced in 2013 and early 2014 that received media attention primarily the case of Rola Yaacoub²⁰, a woman who was found comatose in her home in north Lebanon after being beaten by her husband. The media and activists highlighted the gruesome details of the case, which received attention over court rulings especially after her husband was released a couple of months later. There was also the death of Manal Al-Assi, Christelle Abu Shakra and Ruqiyah Munzir; the death of these women allegedly at their hand of their husbands surfaced in the months leading up to the legislative session on April 1st, 2014. These events can be characterized as focusing events²¹; they are triggering and coincidental but have a great impact on politicians and go as far as forcing politicians make the demanded change. Focusing events can lead to group mobilization and these groups seek to expand and build momentum around these events. Relatives of the victims were interviewed on local media and protests took place, demanding the passing of the domestic violence law in response to these focusing events. One of the cases involved a man beating his wife to death with a pressure cooker back in 2014 (Al-Shoufi, 2016)²² and most cases

²⁰ "Woman dies after found beaten, comatose at home." The Daily Star. N.p., 9 July 2013. Web. 1 Feb. 2017

²¹ Birkland, Thomas A. "Focusing events, mobilization, and agenda setting." *Journal of public policy* 18.01 (1998): 53-74.

²² Al-Shoufi, Eva . "Manal Al-Assi Case: The revival of honor killing."

had history of domestic abuse. Despite some lawmaker's public opposition to some items in the draft law including MPs studying the draft law in the subcommittee, the most striking was Dar al-Fatwa's statement that rejected the law altogether in 2011. In its 16-point statement, the religious body said the law prevented reconciliation between spouses and promoted individualistic values that run contrary to the values of a Muslim community (Khraiche, 2011)²³. Another high-profile incident that perhaps drew more attention to the law under study was the threat of a political party to withdraw from subcommittee in protest of proposed changes to the draft law. The Lebanese Forces - a predominantly Christian political party - argued that the law should be passed in its original form, insisting that lawmakers keep an item that criminalizes marital rape (Gatten, 2012)²⁴. The threat, which came in an announcement during a press conference, took place in 2012 and did not affect the subcommittee's work.

On April 1, 2014, during a legislative session, lawmakers passed the domestic violence law with amendments that did not bode well with activists who also considered the passing a victory nonetheless.

2.3.1. Provisions of the law

Law Number 293 - the bill to protect women and family members from domestic violence - was passed on April 1, 2014 and published in the Official Gazette on May 15, 2014. A version of the law is published on the website of a non-profit organization's

Al-Akhbar Newspaper. N.p., 16 July 2016. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.

²³ Khraiche, Dana. "Dar al-Fatwa rejects draft law protecting women against domestic violence." *The Daily Star*. The Daily Star, 23 June 2011. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

²⁴ Gatten, Emma. "LF threatens to pull MP from domestic violence subcommittee." *The Daily Star*. N.p., 1 May 2012. Web. 22 June 2016.

website, Kafa²⁵, which has for years spearheaded the movement to pass the law. The law criminalizes any act, abstaining from something, or threatening to do act/or abstain by a member of the family against one or more family members and results in murder or physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm. The crimes include forcing a minor to practice beggary and prostitution, a facilitating prostitution of minors especially among family members, killing of a spouse, beating/threatening a spouse. The law requires the prosecutor to appoint a lawyer to a spouse who files a complaint and it creates a department under the police force - also known in Lebanon as the Internal Security Forces- specializing in domestic abuse and receives complaints. The department is set to include trained female personnel and the personnel should receive sufficient training to resolve disputes and social guidelines. Members of the department can investigate a case in the presence of social workers. Personnel will be penalized if they attempt to coerce or exert pressure on a victim to retract a complaint and if they ignore complaints. The bill also sets the procedure after a complaint is filed including the right of the victim - and entire family if applicable - to receive legal protection. In the case family members are at danger, the person in question is prohibited from entering the family house for 48 hours that can be extended once, the person can be detained or victim and their family can be moved to safe location. Court procedures in cases of domestic violence are to be kept secret. An abuser, aside from penalties of committing domestic violence, will be obligated to undergo rehabilitation against violence in specialized centres. The law also creates a private fund to help victims of domestic violence and provide them with needed care, to make means of limiting such crimes available and to fund preventative measures including the centres. Article 22 of the

²⁵ "Law to protect women and rest of the family from domestic violence."
Kafa organization. N.p., 2 Sept. 2014. Web. 2 July 2016.

law stipulates that all provisions considered contrary to the new law would be annulled except in cases of the personal status laws and the protection of juvenile offenders at risk.

3. CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dynamics that govern the relationship between mass media, the public and policymakers have been the focus of much research for decades with the aim of determining whether these elements affect each other and in what way. To be more specific, communications research has for so long focused on the media's role in shaping public opinion and policy making and whether public policy is influenced by public opinion (Soroko, 2002)²⁶. The following section reviews research on media and the agenda setting framework to better understand how and why some issues become prominent while others remain buried.

3.1 Mass media and public agenda

What is an agenda? Birkland (2007)²⁷ described an agenda as a collection of problems, symbols and causes that surface in the public's mind and government officials. It can be divided into two types: the public agenda and the formal agenda, as Cobb et al (1976)²⁸ explained. The public agenda is a group of items or issues that have received public attention/awareness, require action and are of some governmental unit's concern. The formal agenda, Cobb et al noted, is what policy makers deem important enough for

²⁶ Soroka, Stuart N. "Issue Attributes and Agenda-Setting by Media, the Public, and Policymakers in Canada." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 14.3 (2002): 264-285.

²⁷ Birkland, Thomas A. "5 Agenda Setting in Public Policy." *Handbook of public policy analysis* (2006): 63.

²⁸ Cobb, Roger, Jennie-Keith Ross, and Marc Howard Ross. "Agenda building as a comparative political process." *The American Political Science Review* (1976): 126-138.

their consideration.

Researchers have argued that mass media play a critical role in setting the public agenda by simply telling the public what is important and what is of no significance. McCombs and Shaw (1972)²⁹ were the first to explain why people think about issues in their much-cited work on the theory of agenda setting. They concluded that there was a correlation between media coverage of an issue and how people conceived it to be important; when the media emphasizes an issue, the public would recognize it as important. Their study set the groundwork for the media's agenda setting power on the public agenda. The agenda of a media outlet can be identified through its coverage of news items, for example, a television station's daily reports on a single issue or the space devoted for a news item in a newspaper. Over time, the media can shape the concerns of the public on issues and the main issues on the media agenda become, with time, those on the public agenda (Behr and Iyengar, 1985)³⁰. Carroll and McCombs (2003)³¹ put it simply by saying that "the core proposition of agenda setting theory is that the prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public. Or in the language of this theoretical metaphor, the salience of elements on the news agenda influences their salience on the public agenda" (p.35,36). Shaw (1979)³² summarized the agenda-setting theory by saying that people are aware and not aware of issues or events because of the

²⁹ Cobb, Roger, Jennie-Keith Ross, and Marc Howard Ross. "Agenda building as a comparative political process." *The American Political Science Review* (1976): 126-138.

³⁰ Behr, Roy L., and Shanto Iyengar. "Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49.1 (1985): 38-57.

³¹ Carroll, Craig E., and Maxwell McCombs. "Agenda-setting effects of business news on the public's images and opinions about major corporations." *Corporate reputation review* 6.1 (2003): 36-46.

³² Shaw, Eugene F. *Agenda setting and mass communication theory*. ERIC Clearinghouse, 1977.

media.

“People tend to include or exclude from their cognitions what the media include or exclude from their content. People also tend to assign an importance to what they include closely resembles the emphasis given to events, issues and persons by the mass media” (p.96).

Citing a number of research papers on media agenda setting and its influence on the public agenda, McCombs (2003)³³ supported the agenda-setting theory, noting a high correlation between how issues are ranked on the media agenda and how the public ranks issues of importance. McCombs wrote that the characteristics of an issue presented in the media also strongly correspond with the way people view topics in the news. The attributes presented in the media coverage of an issue, a presidential candidate’s characteristics for example, heavily influences how people think and talk about them. This influence “is the epitome of political power” (p.6). But McCombs showcased that such an influence could be limited citing the Clinton-Lewisnky scandal as evidence of such limitation. He said that the American public rejected the notion that the scandal was relevant to Clinton’s failure or success as a president, as the U.S. media sought to demonstrate.

While television, newspapers and other media outlets are important sources of information for the public, Behr and Iyengar (1985)³⁴ noted that personal experience also plays a role in forming the public agenda. They said that media agenda was determined by editorial policies that could sometime divert the public's attention from their real problems but that the public cannot escape real-world indicators. High unemployment and inflation

³³ McCombs, Maxwell. "The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion." Mass Media Economics 2002 Conference. 2002.

³⁴ Behr, Roy L., and Shanto Iyengar. "Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda." Public Opinion Quarterly 49.1 (1985): 38-57.

rates can preoccupy the public and immediately become prominent on the public agenda without the media getting involved. Government officials are also another factor that set the public and the media agendas. According to Behr and Iyengar's study, the president was a contributor to the public political agenda because people tend to listen to a presidential speech and the media broadcast speeches high-ranking officials make on current conditions.

In their research, Behr and Iyengar sought to estimate the impact of news coverage on public concern and the impact of public concern on news coverage, keeping in mind that public concern is affected by real-world conditions. They reported substantial correlations between the level of public concern and economic indicators and noted that conditions, as in people's concerns, partially determine media coverage.

Behr and Iyengar further emphasized that "*news coverage boosts public concern but public concern does not, for the most part, alter the level of coverage. The only instance of such a feedback effect involves coverage of inflation, a result that can be attributed to the extraordinarily widespread public concern for this issue during the time period under investigation, or similarly widespread concern among news executives.*" (p.51)

Media agenda impacts public agenda but what kind of audience are we talking about? Zhu and Boroson (1997)³⁵ explored theories about which audience was more susceptible to the effects of agenda-setting. They discussed the cognitive framework theory that stipulated that those with higher education and political interest are less subject to such an effect. However, other studies have formulated a contradictory theory; better educated individuals with better understanding of public affairs are more responsive to media agenda

³⁵ Zhu, Jian-Hua, and William Boroson. "Susceptibility to agenda setting: A cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of individual differences." *Communication and democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory* (1997): 69-84.

setting. While level of education is a variable in terms of how much or how little the audience responds to agenda-setting, issue sensitivity is also another variable that Zhu and Boroson said determined the agenda-setting effect. Low-income families, for example, would be more concerned with inflation and unemployment issues. Zhu and Boroson concluded that various groups “are homogenously susceptible to the media agenda for some issues and invariantly insensitive to the media agenda for other issues” (p.82) However, their analysis showed significant difference between audience with high level of education and income compared to lower levels of income and education.

Given the agenda-setting power of the media, it would be reasonable to argue that politicians could use the mass media to indirectly set the public agenda in line with their ideology or policies. Although Shaw (1977)³⁶ said that the agenda-setting theory did not necessarily stipulate that the media were attempting to persuade the public mind, agenda-setting has become understood as a tool of bias in the media used by politicians to disseminate certain ideals. In Lebanon, for example, TV channels can be described, both anecdotally and in the literature, as biased toward the views of those who own it. Nötzold (2008)³⁷ showed in her research on Lebanese media that content and ownership are correlated and that content reflected the ambitions of the sectarian and political group of media company’s majority owners.

Agenda setting is closely related to framing and priming and the three concepts have been widely used in communication research and understood as tools of media bias.

³⁶ Shaw, Eugene F. *Agenda setting and mass communication theory*. ERIC Clearinghouse, 1977.

³⁷ Nötzold, K. (2008). *The political elites' dominance over the visual space: A qualitative and quantitative content study of Lebanese television*. In H. Kai (Ed.), *Arab Media Power and Weakness* (pp. 125-144). New York: Continuum.

Entman (2007)³⁸ argued that priming, framing, and agenda-setting are tools of bias used by those who seek to exert power by influencing and altering certain perspectives. Therefore, it is necessary to define the three terms and emphasize differences between them. Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007)³⁹ embarked on the task of differentiating between the three and explaining how they are related. Agenda-setting, they said, is when mass media places emphasis on certain issues as they become important for the audience while priming takes place when the content of a news story tells audiences "that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and government" (p.11). Both agenda-setting and priming effects are "memory-based models of information processing," assuming that audience makes preferences based on salient considerations (p.11). Alternatively, framing is how an issue is characterized in news reports assuming that presentation influences how audiences understand the topic at hand (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) argued that another point of comparison between agenda-setting and framing is the amount of attention the audience is dedicating to the media text. Attention to messages may be more necessary for a framing effect than that of agenda-setting since implications and content of a news message require more attention. The locus of effect was another unit of comparison Scheufele & Tewksbury used to distinguish the two terms. *"The primary difference on the psychological level between agenda setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, is therefore the difference between whether we think about an issue and how we think about it."* (p.14)

³⁸ Entman, Robert M. "Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power." *Journal of communication* 57.1 (2007): 163-173.

³⁹ Scheufele, Dietram A., and David Tewksbury. "Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models." *Journal of communication* 57.1 (2007): 9-20.

Some scholars describe framing as second-level agenda setting. Weaver (2007)⁴⁰ pointed out that the first level of agenda-setting concerns salience of issues while the second-level "examines the relative salience of attributes and issues" (p.142). On the other hand, Reese (2007)⁴¹ rejected the idea of placing framing under the umbrella of agenda-setting. Framing, Reese (2007) maintained, is concerned not with what has been emphasized in a story but "the way that certain attributes come to be associated with particular issues" (p.152).

3.2. Mass media and policy agenda

Some scholarly work has suggested that mass media affect the setting of the political agenda. Welgrave et al (2008)⁴² said such a topic has "has received relatively little attention" (p.815). While some believe that the media play a role in influencing the decision-making process at the government level, others contradict the claim. Such variations, Welgrave et al explained, are concerned with variances in the political agenda, media outlets and the issue at hand. Welgrave et al sought to study whether mass media exerts more influence on the priorities of the Parliament or government in Belgium. Their hypothesis is that Parliament would be the institution more affected by mass media while their second hypothesis was that print media exerted more influence on Parliament and government than audiovisual media. However, the general theory under study was whether the media affect government action.

⁴⁰ Weaver, David H. "Thoughts on agenda setting, framing, and priming." *Journal of communication* 57.1 (2007): 142-147.

⁴¹ Reese, Stephen D. "The framing project: A bridging model for media research revisited." *Journal of Communication* 57.1 (2007): 148-154.

⁴² Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* (2007).

They adopted a typology of issues developed by Soroka (2002)⁴³ to differentiate between three main categories of issues: prominent issues (issues that have strong tangible indicators, concrete effects and would have little room for media effects such as high unemployment rates), sensational issues (they are unobtrusive and not directly observed by either the public or politicians, hence, media lead politics), and government issues (unobtrusive and without concrete effects on the public. Politics lead the media in such issues).

They found that *“issue attentiveness in newspapers seems to lead issue attentiveness by policy makers, and more so than the other way around. That is, both Parliament and government activities appear significantly affected by newspaper coverage of the same issues. Moreover, newspaper coverage precedes political attention much more than political attention precedes newspaper coverage”* (p.827).

They concluded that mass media act as political agenda setters in parliamentary democracies and that media effects are greater on symbolic than on substantive policy agendas. This conclusion however is not set in stone. It rather comes in contradiction to other research on the probable power of the media on political actors and their agendas.

Welgrave and Aelst (2006) analyzed most research on media's impact on political agenda in order to formulate a hypothesis that would explain the role of media in political agenda setting. Some of the studies they reviewed saw hardly any impact from the media on government actions. The hypothesis they developed was that political agenda setting by the media depends on several conditions. They narrowed down the factors to four: type of media (newspapers or television), type of issue, the political agenda, and the time period in

⁴³ Soroka, Stuart Neil. *Agenda-setting dynamics in Canada*. UBC Press, 2002.

which political agenda setting takes place.

Whether it is newspapers or television that has the most impact on the public or politicians, Welgrave and Aelst said that all types of media should be covering the same event for it to have the maximum impact. As for the issue, Welgrave and Aelst said issues should be categorized as obtrusive and unobtrusive and that the media's power would be demonstrated in issues that "without media, would simply be not observable" (p.93). Moreover, new issues that politicians were not familiar with could become more prominent on the agenda than others and that covering negative consequences of an issue could see more pressure on policymakers to make a change. As for the political agenda, Welgrave and Aelst said that political agenda was hard to confine to a single thing and divided political agenda into substantial and symbolic. For example, deliberation can be considered as symbolic, while individual and policy measures are situated on the substantial side of the continuum.

3.3. Policy agenda and the public

How does a policy agenda come together? And does the public agenda alter the policy one? Birkland (2007)⁴⁴ explained that the policy agenda has several levels in which issues travel through. The first level is the agenda universe, which contains all issues possible. Then the subcategory becomes more exclusive containing issues that the political community believes should merit attention and this Birkland called the systematic agenda. Issues can move to the institutional agenda where issues are being seriously considered by decision makers. The following subcategory is the decision agenda containing issues to be

⁴⁴ Birkland, Thomas A. "Agenda setting in public policy." Handbook of public policy analysis: Theory, politics, and methods 125 (2007): 63-78.

acted upon by the government. The last category, the decision agenda, is the final stage which would meet the demanded change in a proposed issue. As issues travel from one category to the other, some groups would exert efforts to prevent the transfer of an issue from the systematic to the institutional and then to the decision agenda while others such as activists would push a demanded change.

For example, disadvantaged groups can mobilize and raise an issue into salience by "using symbols and images to induce greater media and public sympathy for their cause." (p.67) or they could appeal to another decision-making level if they fail the first time with the hope of reaching a wider audience.

The mobilization of groups may impact the public opinion, which in turn may or may not impact policy agenda. This is a contentious issue in the literature with some researchers arguing that government officials respond to shifts in public opinion while others maintain that policy agenda is the product of other factors that come into play outside the realm of public opinion. One of the main opposition to the claim that public opinion impacts policy agenda is that "policy is really determined by interest organizations, political parties, and elites, particularly economic elites" (Burstein, 2003, p.30)⁴⁵.

Page and Shapiro (1983)⁴⁶ were among the first few to discuss the effect of public opinion on policy, measuring congruence between opinion and policy to determine the level of responsiveness. Although their research found that changes in public opinion preceded changes in policy on some topics, the two remained cautious to generalize that the public gets what they want and that policy makers listen and act accordingly. In some

⁴⁵ Burstein, Paul. "The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda." *Political Research Quarterly* 56.1 (2003): 29-40.

⁴⁶ Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. "Effects of public opinion on policy." *American political science review* 77.01 (1983): 175-190.

cases, they concluded, policy did not change at all after opinion did while in other cases policy moved to another direction than the public agenda.

3.4. Case study

This paper uses a single case study to test the hypothesis about the dynamic between media agenda setting and policy agenda. Therefore, it is imperative that the literature covers this research approach and why researchers use case study, which has over time become a research design to study trends.

Eisenhardt (1989)⁴⁷ defined case study as a "research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single setting" (p.534) and it can involve either a single case or several ones. The approach combines data collection methods including interviews, observations from the field and archival records, and the evidence may be qualitative or quantitative. Eisenhardt elaborated on qualitative and quantitative data, saying that the latter can show researchers a relationship that may not have been clear and keeps them from being "carried away by vivid, but false, impressions in qualitative data, and it can bolster findings when it corroborates those findings from qualitative evidence" (p.538). Qualitative data, however, helps researchers understand the underlying rational shown in the quantitative data.

The aim of looking at a single unit is to "generalize across a larger set of units" (Gerring, 2004, p.341).⁴⁸The unit here can mean a state, a political party or even a person observed over a certain period of time. What distinguishes a case study from other

⁴⁷ Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. "Building theories from case study research." *Academy of management review* 14.4 (1989): 532-550.

⁴⁸ Gerring, John. "What is a case study and what is it good for?." *American political science review* 98.02 (2004): 341-354.

approaches is that it relies on "covariation demonstrated by a single unit and its attempt, at the same time, to illuminate features of a broader set of units" (p.343).

There are three approaches to using the case study method. In line with Yin's approach (1993)⁴⁹, researchers have taken into consideration that this type of methodology falls into three categories: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive; each of these approaches can use a single case or multiple ones. Tellis (1997)⁵⁰ explained that the exploratory approach is used prior to specifying the research question and hypothesis; it is created ahead of time as it allows researchers to adjust the hypothesis and the methodology depending on the pilot project and gives them the freedom to add or remove data collection methods such as survey questions. Explanatory cases are better used in studies aimed at determining a causal relationship. The method could be used to analyze a case with pattern-matching techniques. The last category of cases is descriptive and it covers the depth and scope of the case under study, as Tellis explained.

Gibbert et al (2008)⁵¹ sought to investigate the sophistication of case study as a method to test hypothesis and develop theories. They assessed the rigor of case study based on criteria commonly used to assess the rigor of field research: internal validity, external validity, construct validity and reliability.

Internal validity refers to the causal relationships between variables and the results. It is whether the researcher "provides a plausible causal argument, logical reasoning that is powerful and compelling enough to defend the research conclusions" (p.1466). To enhance

⁴⁹ Yin, R. (1993). Applications of case study research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publishing

⁵⁰ Tellis, W. (1997, September). Application of a case study methodology [81 paragraphs]. The Qualitative Report [On-line serial], 3(3). Available:<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html>

⁵¹ Gibbert, Michael, Winfried Ruigrok, and Barbara Wicki. "What passes as a rigorous case study?." Strategic management journal 29.13 (2008): 1465-1474.

internal validity, Gibbert et al suggested that a clear research framework should be formulated, meaning that variable X leads to the outcome of Y, holding all other possible variable constant. Another way to improve internal validity is through "pattern matching," comparing observed patterns with predicted ones or other existing in previous studies. Construct validity is defined as "procedure refers to the quality of the conceptualization or operationalization of the relevant concept" and is part of the data collection phase (p.1466). A poorly constructed set of measures could lead to subjective judgment. To enhance external validity, Gibbert et al suggested the formulation of a "clear chain of evidence" to allow others to reconstruct the path from research question to conclusion. Reliability is the fourth criterion and is defined as the absence of a sample error, which would allow others to carry out the same study and reach similar results. Replication and transparency could be enhanced through "measures such as careful documentation and clarification of the research procedures, for example, by producing a case study protocol—a report that specifies how the entire case study has been conducted" (p.1468). Replication can be enhanced by keeping the database of the case study that includes notes and documents collected through the study period.

There is criticism against the case study approach primarily that it is context-dependent knowledge (practical knowledge) as opposed to context-independent (theoretical knowledge) and that a case study cannot produce generalization, as Flyvberg (2006)⁵² puts it. Flyvberg argued that context-dependent knowledge (practical knowledge) and experience were the main pillars for people to develop expert activity. "If people were exclusively trained in context-independent knowledge and rules, that is, the kind of

⁵² Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five misunderstandings about case-study research." *Qualitative inquiry* 12.2 (2006): 219-245.

knowledge which forms the basis of textbooks and computers they would remain at the beginner's level in the learning process" (p.5). Flyvberg also said that social science has not produced the content-independent theory and only offers content-dependent, concrete knowledge and case-study is appropriate to produce such knowledge. Flyvberge also argued against the misconception that generalization cannot be achieved through a case study.

"One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated" (p.12).

4. CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 A review of previous work

This paper examines the extent by which the media influences policymakers taking the case of the domestic violence bill as a case study. The literature reviewed in the previous section suggests that the media's coverage of issues related to an issue influences and precedes political activity.

To test a hypothesis about the impact of the media's agenda-setting whether on public or governmental policy agenda, researchers begin by identifying the media agenda and the issues that are addressed and collecting data from selected news outlets. Some researchers define media agenda by looking at one prestigious newspaper and counting - quantifying - the number of articles that appeared in a specific timeframe for the topic under study (Winter and Eyal, 1981)⁵³. Others have looked at various media outlets including television and newspapers and counted the number of articles or news reports were published on TV for a spectrum of issues (Welgrave et al, 2008⁵⁴, Bartels 1996⁵⁵).

To define and quantify policy agenda, researchers chose to define political activity in a way that reflects the political landscape of the country under study as well as provide them with sufficient political data; Welgrave et al (2008) used parliamentary records from

⁵³ Winter, James P., and Chaim H. Eyal. "Agenda setting for the civil rights issue." *Public opinion quarterly* 45.3 (1981): 376-383.

⁵⁴ Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* (2007).

⁵⁵ Bartels, Larry M. "Politicians and the press: Who leads, who follows?." annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA. 1996.

the parliamentary thesaurus in Belgium to produce data related to parliamentary actions for a specified period of time. As for government actions, they coded the weekly press summary issued by the federal information service. Edwards and Wood (1999)⁵⁶ measured congressional attention to five issues as the number of days of hearings reported by the Congressional Information Index; they study the president's success in focusing issue attention by Congress and the media through television. Bartels (1996) measured congressional activities - the policy agenda - as the daily count of hearings, floor speeches, and other statements by members of Congress, which he collected from the Federal News Service. Availability of such political-related data is crucial to conduct a study on agenda-setting in public policy.

The timeframe to capture the effect of media agenda setting varied from one study to another. Welgrave et al (2008) designed longitudinal time-series analysis covering seven years to find media impact on political agenda in Belgium by looking at several issues and media outlets. Kim et al (2002)⁵⁷ studied agenda-setting and the impact of the media on the public through issue attributes by focusing on a case study about the development of local area in New York City in the United States. To identify the attributes salient in the media, they conducted content analysis on all stories in a single local newspaper for a period of four months. The analysis began a month before the issue became controversial.

To identify a correlation between Parliament activity and the media and test the hypothesis that newspaper coverage of certain issues lead Parliament activity, Welgrave et

⁵⁶ Edwards, George C., and B. Dan Wood. "Who influences whom? The president, Congress, and the media." *American Political Science Review* 93.02 (1999): 327-344.

⁵⁷ Kim, Sei-Hill, Dietram A. Scheufele, and James Shanahan. "Think about it this way: Attribute agenda-setting function of the press and the public's evaluation of a local issue." *Journalism & mass communication quarterly* 79.1 (2002): 7-25.

al (2008)⁵⁸ ran an auto regression for several issues such as defense and foreign affairs and economic policy and found a significant positive effect. Bartels (1996) used vector auto regression and found that some local newspapers followed the executive branch on some issues while the New York Times' coverage lead to political activities even more than it followed them, generally speaking.

4.2. Data and design

To measure media coverage (the independent variable), I collected data from two local newspapers: Arabic-speaking An-Nahar newspaper, one of Lebanon's most respected sources of news, and the English-speaking The Daily Star newspaper. An-Nahar was selected as it is regarded as prestigious and such newspapers tend to lead political activities more than their counterparts (Bartels, 1996)⁵⁹, while The Daily Star was chosen as an additional source of news and to test whether An-Nahar would lead political activity more in comparison.

To quantify media coverage, I construct an indicator variable for whether there was a story related to the domestic violence law published in each newspaper. Similar to Walgrave et al, (2008) this study relies on a thin content analysis and therefore will not be considering the actual content or tone of the articles.(define thin content analysis; with reference). Data from the two newspapers covers a period of four months prior to the passing of the domestic violence law on April 1, 2014. This time interval was chosen as it

⁵⁸ Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in Belgium (1993 to 2000)." *Comparative Political Studies* (2007).

⁵⁹ Bartels, Larry M. "Politicians and the press: Who leads, who follows?." annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA. 1996.

witnessed several domestic violence cases that received much media coverage in newspapers and television as well in the run-up to the legislative session that passed the law.

The An-Nahar data was obtained directly from their online archive that retains each publication in a PDF form while The Daily Star newspaper provided this research with the data on CDs because accessing the archive was not available online. Articles related to domestic violence were coded and that included cases, new victims, stories on parliamentarians or government officials and in-depth analysis, also known as feature stories.

Political agenda is defined as political activity by either government or parliamentarians regarding domestic violence including parliamentary committee meetings, statements issued by MPs regarding the draft law, news conferences of MPs, and seminars hosted by political parties that have government and parliament representation. It is hard to collect data on parliamentary and government work in Lebanon as there is no state agency that gathers and publishes activities such as a parliamentary archive or a presidential one. The parliament website is rarely updated and only includes the convening of parliamentary committee meetings and not the content of such meetings. I chose to code political agenda through government and parliamentary activities rather than one to obtain a relatively large sample. In addition, it seemed plausible to combine both for a country like Lebanon given that both ministers and members of Parliament tend to act and speak in accordance to party lines - whether for or against a certain issue - and members of Parliament are sometimes appointed as ministers and can even be appointed as prime minister.

In the data, I include news from the first lady, wife of then President Michel Sleiman, given that she represents a high public office. Despite the fact that the president

has no vote rights in Parliament, many politicians during his time of office aligned themselves with him. Therefore, knowing the presidential position on a specific law would indicate the viewpoint some policy makers would follow. I also include activity from the wife of Speaker Nabih Berri, Randa. The latter's data was included for the same reasons and given that comments she had made during the data collection period on domestic violence stirred controversy and were heavily covered by local media. She is also the wife of the parliament speaker, a long-time public figure who holds significant sway in the country's political arena.

The data on the Political agenda variable is collected from the National News Agency; a state-run news agency that publishes activities of government ministers and parliamentarians (can be described as Lebanon's C-Span). The National News Agency also aggregates news from Parliament's official website and MPs and political parties send their press releases to be published on their website as well; whether statements or party seminars. The archive was available on their website. The political activity data was collected for the same time period; four months prior to the passing of the law. Again, to quantify political activity, I create an indicator variable for whether there was any political activity (as defined above) taking place.

The data was entered on an Excel Sheet and coded for each newspaper. To estimate the correlation between the media and political activity, I ran a linear probability model. A simple probability model can be estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). Since my variables take values of 0 (nonoccurrence of a news report or political activity) and 1 (the occurrence of a news report or activity), my interpretation becomes in terms of probability. I regress a one period lag of the media variables on the political activity variable. If a publication of an article in a newspapers is to influence policy, then after publication of the

article is when we would see political response. I then run a regression to test the hypothesis of whether the media leads political activity especially prestigious media outlets.

For example, in looking at the relationship between political action and the reports of a media outlet such as An-Nahar, we assume that the relationship between media reports and political action is linear such that:

Expected Value(Political Action $t=1$ | Media report $t-1$) = $B_0 + B_1$ (Media Report $t-1$), and I estimate B_0 (the intercept) and B_1 (the slope) using Ordinary Least Squares.

The linear probability model is easy to interpret once estimated. B_1 is the increase in the probability of political action happening in period t when the Media publishes one additional report in period $t-1$. Note that if the dependent variable was not binary (not taking values of 0 or 1, but is continuous), then B_1 would be interpreted as the percent increase in political action rather than the probability of political action happening.

The reason I use the lagged value of Media Report as an independent variable (Media Report $t-1$) rather than Media Report t , is because the media outlet I investigate is print. And because the political action variable I measure is in terms of events and planned reactions. Therefore, this implies that after the newspaper prints its article, the political action needs at least one period to react.

As shown in the table 1.1 below, in Regression 1 An-Nahar is included as an explanatory variable to test the correlation between political action and that media outlet. In regression 2, only The Daily Star is included as an explanatory variable to test the correlation between political activity and that media outlet. In regression 3, both An-Nahar and The Daily Star are explanatory variables to test the correlation between both media outlets and political action. The latter regression was run to see if one or more newspapers

included would affect the political action.

Table 1.1

Political Activity	Constant (B0)	One period Lag of Articles in Anahar (B1)	One Period Lag of Articles in TDS (B2)
Regression 1	0.1382979**	0.207856**	
Standard error of regression 1	0.0392486	0.0843196	
Regression 2	.1851852**		-0.003367
Standard error of regression 2	0.0376719		0.1239067
Regression 3	0.1442478**	0.2210619**	-0.0830088
Standard error of regression 3	0.040267	0.0877784	0.1252298

Footnotes:

- Standard Errors reported below coefficients
- **Indicates significance at 5%, *Indicates significance at 10%
- The regressions reported are simple linear probability models (ordinary least squares)
- Notes: Higher level lags were not significant but maintained the same sign.

4.3.Results and Analysis

Results from the regressions compliment research on media agenda setting primarily theories that assume the media leads political behaviour especially prestigious newspapers.

The regression result indicates a significance and positive correlation between An-Nahar articles and political activity. An-Nahar publishing an article increases the probability of political activity by 0.207856. In other words, if An-Nahar publishes an article, the expected probability of political activity happening is $0.1382979+0.207852=0.3461539$, which is about 34%.

On the other hand, the regression showed no significant correlation between The Daily Star articles and political activity. The Daily Star did not have a statistically significant correlation with political activity even though the correlation was actually negative. The numbers show that An-Nahar lead political activity in the case of the domestic violence law. This is not to say that The Daily Star is not a respected source of news but perhaps its audience is limited because it's an English-speaking newspaper in an Arab country. The data can back such a claim of limited, select audience as The Daily Star had no statistically significant correlation with political activity; The Daily Star did not lead political activity and political activity did dominate The Daily Star's news coverage as with some news outlets (Bartels, 1996)⁶⁰.

Going through the daily issues of both An-Nahar and The Daily Star, it was apparent that the frequency of articles increased leading up to the Parliament session that saw the passing of the law. Both The Daily Star and An-Nahar ran a story on the

⁶⁰ Bartels, Larry M. "Politicians and the press: Who leads, who follows?." annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA. 1996.

development of the case of Rola Yaacoub who was found comatose in her house after her husband allegedly beat her in 2013. Both newspapers closely followed the case that garnered media attention as nongovernment organizations and the family of the woman held news conferences and protests demanding justice for the victim's death. Both newspapers also published stories on new cases and victims of alleged domestic violence cases. For example, on January 25, 2014, both An-Nahar and The Daily Star published a story on the release of Yaacoub's husband from prison. And on February 6, the two newspapers published a story on a Lebanese teacher who was allegedly beaten to death by her husband. The two papers also published a story about an Australian woman who was allegedly killed by her husband simply because the family was originally from Lebanon. Despite the fact that the incident took place in Australia, the timing was critical because it happened at a time the issue of domestic violence was already salient in the news. While this study doesn't focus on the content of the articles published in the newspapers, it is also noteworthy to mention that An-Nahar ran feature stories and opinion pieces on domestic violence more than The Daily Star during the timeframe under study. On February 26, An-Nahar published a story asking women to speak up about their abuses and then on March 7 and 8, it published opinion pieces about violence against women. In March alone, An-Nahar published a total of 11 stories about domestic violence compared to 8 in February, 5 in January and only 2 in December. The Daily Star's numbers are much less; the newspaper published 1 story in December, 3 in January, 4 in February and 3 in March. In the span of four months, The Daily Star only published two feature stories on domestic violence while the rest of the stories were short, news pieces about an event that took place the day before or over the weekend.

The political data showed the reaction of politicians primarily members of

Parliament toward the case of the teacher, Manal Al-Assi. A day after An-Nahar and The Daily Star published stories on the latest victim, three MPs issued statements most notably head of the Sunni-majority Future bloc MP Fouad Siniora, demanding justice for her killing. The next day, a future movement delegation attended the funeral of the deceased woman and a delegation from Dar al-Fatwa, the Highest Sunni Council, also made an appearance. This could be interpreted in two ways; the case was so shocking that religious leaders had to intervene or political actors pressured religious leaders to act in order to appease the constituency. But again, the aim of this paper is not to analyse the content.

In addition, Future Movement, the political party behind the bloc, held a seminar on domestic violence and used a celebration for Mother's Day to address the topic as well. The data also showed several activities in one day; sometimes it's three activities in a single day. On March 22, wife of Speaker Nabih Berri, Randa, gave a speech at a ceremony honouring mothers of martyrs in which she urged women to raise awareness about domestic violence. Also on the same day, Future Movement held a ceremony for Mother's Day and the topic of domestic violence was discussed by attendees and another political party - the Free Patriotic Movement - held a Mother's Day ceremony and touched on the issue as well. Not all these ceremonies and events were covered by the media under study - An-Nahar and The Daily Star.

During the period from December 1st, 2013 to March 31, 2014, Lebanon was witnessing political and security instability on a large scale; Lebanon had no acting government at the time as the prime minister- designate was in the process of forming a new Cabinet and a spate of car bombings and assassinations increased in frequency. Every local headline in the newspapers during the timeframe under study was either about the Cabinet formation process or an attack the day earlier. Rarely did any other local, regional

or international run as the first headline on the front page. The data also shows that the case of domestic violence was not mentioned in the front pages of either newspaper under study. Both The Daily Star and An-Nahar's local story on the front was usually a wrap-up of political activities or any relevant issues happening the day earlier. The issue of Cabinet formation or terrorist attacks tend to overshadow others given their destabilizing factor. While this is a reality in countries like Lebanon, it is worrying to see how politics and instability delay advancements in human rights issues. Despite the instability including the repeated car bombings, activists and relatives of victims maintained pressure on politicians through protests, sit-ins and seminars about domestic violence as the data showed.

It is noteworthy to highlight the media's coverage of these issues and the article placement in each newspaper as well what kind of political activity we saw as a reaction to the media' coverage. The following tables show An-Nahar's type of coverage, The Daily Star's coverage and what kind of political activity occurred.

Table 1.2

An-Nahar content

Date of publication	Page where article appears	Content of article
12/11/2013	18	Coverage of a campaign run by Internal Security forces titled Violence is also your case
12/20/2013	9	National committee releases study covering draft laws/decrees related to women
1/13/2014	9	Strike by Women's Committee in Tripoli outside Dar al-Fatwa over domestic violence
1/15/2014	18	Feature story on domestic violence, naming recent

		victims
1/25/2014	9	Rola Yaacoub's husband released from detention
1/28/2014	9	Feature story on KAFA
1/31/2014	9	Story on Rola Yaacoub – activists, family prepare action to unveil truth
2/1/2014	8	News conference for KAFA, victim's family, to support Yaacoub's case
2/3/2014	9	Rola Yaacoub's family, KAFA organize protest, shed light on legal mistakes in the case
2/6/2014	6	-Death of Manal Al Assi: victim of domestic violence
2/6/2014	6	-Brief that the Democratic Gathering will hold conference to talk about Rola Yaacoub's case
2/7/2014	9	Say No To Violence, an activist group, decry Manal Assi's death
2/19/2014	6	Detention of Lebanese-Australian woman killed by her husband
2/20/2014	9	Human Rights Committee condemn killing of Australian-Lebanese woman
2/26/2014	18	Coverage of Facebook page asking women to speak up against abuse
2/28/2014	9	Women's Democratic Gathering asks new Cabinet to pay attention to women's issue particularly domestic violence law
3/5/2014	9	Wife of House Speaker Randa Berri on marital rape – item in domestic violence draft law
3/6/2014	9	Brief on No To Violence Against Women
3/7/2014	7	Opinion piece on violence

		against women
3/8/2014	8	Opinion piece/feature story on marital rape
3/10/2014	9	International Women' day: cover of protest to pass domestic violence law
3/10/2014	9	Shiite Sheikh demanding creation of family court
3/12/2014	7	Opinion piece on violence against women being a social lesion
3/13/2014	9	Story on law protecting women against violence awaiting parliament approval
3/21/2014	9	an organization holds ceremony to honor mothers and calls for passing domestic violence law
3/27/2014	5	MPs Keyrouz, Gemayel demand law to protect women
3/27/2014	9	Ruqeyah Munzir victim of domestic violence
3/28/2014	2	Story on upcoming legislative session; highlight of parliamentary session is domestic violence law
3/28/2014	6	KAFA: demands death penalty to Manal Assi's husband
3/29/2014	8	Coverage of protest by AUB students, teachers rejecting domestic violence

Footnote: Some rows have similar days to highlight that there were two articles in a single newspaper issues on certain days

Table 1.3

The Daily Star content

Date of publication	Page where article appears	Content of article
12/14/2013	3	Feature story: Domestic violence battle moves at snail's pace
1/9/2014	3	Story about civil society activists protest against violence
1/13/2014	3	Women's committee urge domestic violence action
1/25/2014	3	Story on Rola Yaacoub's Husband found innocent in death of wife
2/6/2014	4	Story on teacher beaten to death by her husband
2/8/2014	2	Story on Manal Assi's family demands justice
2/19/2014	4	Lebanese man surrenders in Sydney after allegedly beating his wife in Australia
2/22/2014	2	Women's group calls for domestic violence law
3/8/2014	2	Feature story: Small steps for gender equality, long road ahead
3/25/2014	4	NGO reports another domestic violence death
3/28/2014	4	Reporting on recent legal case: Domestic violence punishable by death: Judge

Table 1.4

Political activity content

Date of political activity	Content
12/2/2013	Interior Ministry – Internal Security forces launch domestic violence campaign
12/6/2013	Lebanese Forces organizes conference on domestic violence
12/7/2013	MP Shant Janjanian talks about domestic violence law
12/8/2013	MP Elie Keyrouz in seminar by Lebanese Forces, urging need to pass domestic violence law
12/10/2013	Human Rights workshop in Parliament, touched on domestic violence law
1/29/2014	Wife of House Speaker Randa Berri in seminar talk about domestic violence
1/31/2014	High Judicial Council defends court decision in domestic violence case
2/7/2014	MP Siniora condemns killing of teacher Manal al-Assi
2/7/2014	MP Strida Geagea of Lebanese Forces bloc, demanding punishment for Manal Al-Assi’s husband
2/7/2014	MP Elie Keyrouz of Lebanese Forces bloc, demanding punishment for Manal Al-Assi’s husband
2/8/2014	Future Movement delegation attending Manal al assi funeral/mufti delegation
2/21/2014	First Lady Wafaa Sleiman speaks in conference about

	need to end domestic violence
2/25/2014	Human Rights Parliamentary Committee meeting; head of committee says passed the law, hope to be voted on in upcoming legislative session
2/27/2014	Culture Minister Rony Arajji talks about domestic violence law, at opening of a women's exhibition
3/3/2014	Minister of the Displaced Alice Shabtini at conference, calling for passing of domestic Violence law
3/4/2014	Wife of House Speaker Randa Berri calls for passing of domestic violence at a women's conference
3/6/2014	Future Movement coordinator Mustafa Alloush and MPs attending women's conference for party; some comments made touched on ending violence against women
3/6/2014	Representative of Justice Minister in seminar on opposition against domestic violence
3/7/2014	MP Nidal Tohme makes statement on women's day, urging for laws to end domestic violence
3/7/2014	MP Strida Geagea on women's day, statement urging for passing of domestic violence law
3/11/2014	Minister of displaced Alice Shabitini in statement on daily activities, calls for passing of domestic violence law
3/11//2014	MP Michel Moussa in a seminar on domestic violence law, urges speed in passing law
3/15/2014	MP Michel Moussa in ceremony celebrating human

	rights, talks about human rights laws including domestic violence that was approved by committee
3/16/2014	Futue Movement holds seminar in south Lebanon on women's rights
3/22/2014	Free Patriotic Movement holds seminar on women's rights, talks about domestic violence law
3/22/2014	Future Movement ceremony on mother's day, speakers reject violence against women
3/22/2014	Wife of House Speaker Randa Berri in ceremony honoring mothers of martyrs by Amal Movement party, touched on need for awareness for domestic violence
3/24/2015	Future Movement ceremony for Mother's day, calls for passing of domestic violence law
3/26/2014	MP Sami Gemayel statement, asks Speaker of House to list domestic violence law on agenda of upcoming legislative session. Speaker agrees

5. CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Do the media in Lebanon determine the political agenda? This research has provided evidence of a positive correlation between the media and policy agenda particularly prestigious media outlets. The regression results in the methodology section add to the already existing body of research on agenda-setting and show that a prestigious media outlet - An-Nahar - effected topics that politicians paid attention to and that impact was quantifiable and measureable. The results show that The Daily Star was insignificant when it comes to a measurable impact; this media outlet had no impact on how politicians react to issues covered in the media. An-Nahar lead issue attention and politicians reacted. It could be that politicians read An-Nahar given its rich history as a long-standing newspaper and politicians use it as their own source of news. As noted before, The Daily Star is an English newspaper and perhaps its audience is limited, making politicians less interested in reading the paper. After all, political actors think that the media - television and newspaper - determine people's issue priorities and that the media's focus on an issue indicates what the public thinks about (Welgrave and Aelst, 2006)⁶¹. In the theoretical framework of agenda-setting, it is safe to say that politicians in Lebanon reacted to the increased media coverage of the domestic violence case; a controversial issue that was heavily rejected by some religious institutions.

To attribute the passing of the law to the media is an overstatement. As mentioned

⁶¹ Walgrave, Stefaan, and Peter Van Aelst. "The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory." *Journal of Communication* 56.1 (2006): 88-109.

earlier in the paper, civil rights organizations particularly KAFA played a critical in making the issue relevant and keeping up momentum through news conferences they held, their work on the ground with local communities, their regular issued statements and most importantly their work in co-authoring and drafting the law. Even after passing the law, the NGO has remained active in following up on the implementation of the law and court rulings in domestic violence cases and highlighting possible misinterpretation of the newly approved law. Moreover, this paper takes into consideration focusing events that occurred during the timeframe. These events – the death of a number of women at the hands of their husbands – are seen as triggering events in the literature; they are coincidental but had naturally added pressure on politicians to pass a law to punish abusers. Politicians same themselves and other civil society organization have reacted to these focusing events, which mobilizing groups such as KAFA can really build on to serve their goal. Combining these two factors in the media, in addition to pressure by some politicians as seen in the political activity, the draft law successfully made its way to the legislative session for lawmakers to approve and pass the bill.

While the study is limited in scope, it does give an insight to the dynamic between the local media and policymaking in a country where almost each media outlet has a political affiliation (Notzold, 2008)⁶². Activists have rallied for several social issues in the past years yet the domestic violence law was among the rare cases in which politicians carried out the demanded change. While several factors impacted the outcome, the media played a critical role in the progress of this issue that was placed on Parliament's agenda

⁶² Nötzold, Katharina. *Defining the nation? Lebanese TV stations: the political elites' dominance over the visual space 1992-2005*. Diss. Erfurt University, 2008.

and put up for a vote. This should help activists recognize the power of the media and how it can be used as a tool to advance issues they deem important such as the legalization of civil marriage and granting women right to pass on nationality to their children; both of these issues have faced rejection from certain religious authorities similar to the domestic violence law. There were several events including minor protests and news conferences that were not covered by the media. This could improve the country's bill-making policy and encourage activists to have more access to a wide spectrum of media outlets to achieve maximum impact and reach the desired outcome (Welgrave and Aelst, 2006)⁶³.

To say that the media has agenda-setting power on public policy in Lebanon would require an expanded study on other media outlets including television. This is a first attempt to explore the probable agenda-setting power of the media in Lebanon on policymaking and this should be the start of further studies including the impact of the media's agenda-setting on the public. Surveys are also needed to show how the Lebanese public and politicians perceives issues and where they get their information from. It is critical to back or invalidate the power of the media's agenda-setting role to help activists and policymakers alike. Moreover, a wide-ranging set of issues should also be looked at to determine exactly what kind of topics can the media impact; whether its impact is more obvious in foreign policy or in local issues, for example. What is also needed is longitudinal study perhaps over a period of seven or eight years to determine the effect of the media on policymaking. While there have been numerous studies on the topic as shown in the literature review, it is difficult to apply western-style models on Arab countries given

⁶³ Walgrave, Stefaan, and Peter Van Aelst. "The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory." *Journal of Communication* 56.1 (2006): 88-109.

the stark differences between the two even if, for example, they share the same governing-style of parliamentary democracies. History and the dynamics at play at the political level play a major role in policymaking especially in the Arab world and Lebanon. In this day and age, future research should focus on social media and the impact this might have on policy agenda especially in issues related to human rights and social equality.

This study is a first step but research should not only focus on one aspect and neglect others. Wolfe, Jones and Baumgartner (2013)⁶⁴ argued that a simple linear probability model cannot just explain the media effect on policy agenda but an understanding of the policymaking agenda and the role of the political elites in the process are needed to have an in-depth understanding of why politicians decide on some matters and neglect others. They called for an approach to evaluate the media's role in how politicians process information, saying the "the media agenda is simultaneously an input and an output of the political system. In terms common in political communication, news both sets the policymaking agenda and indexes it" (186). And for the purpose of understanding the dynamic at play in Lebanon, a theoretical approach should be established - based on this study and future ones - to understand the dynamism and be able to predict policymaking and act accordingly.

⁶⁴ Wolfe, Michelle, Bryan D. Jones, and Frank R. Baumgartner. "A failure to communicate: Agenda setting in media and policy studies." *Political Communication* 30.2 (2013): 175-192.

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