There was a time when journalists overtly and publicly used media fora in order to influence the decisions of political leaders. Henry R. Luce, the founder of *Time* and *Life* magazines, promoted his anti-Communist and pro-Nationalist views regarding China in the hopes of influencing American decision-makers. In Canada members of the media’s National Press Gallery have often walked a fine line between journalism and influence, on occasion even leaving the profession to work in the political and bureaucratic arenas.

The influence that the media have on decisions taken by a country’s leaders is a subject that has been of interest to academics, journalists and – on occasion - political and bureaucratic public decision-makers themselves. It has become accepted that “there are important and traceable interactions between media, public opinion and policymakers” (Soroka, 2002, p. 281) that can have an impact on decisions made.

Governments face a wide variety of crises, severe stress situations that necessitate critical decision-making. These become organisational challenges that must be managed in a way that best mitigates their negative impacts. If it is true as Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1996) assert, that we live in a world that is increasingly prone to crisis, then it is important that public sector decision-makers have in place effective organisational decision-making processes that reflect the exigencies of government organisations, and that they are aware of and understand the influences that affect those processes.

International crises are significant challenges in an era where “our planet has become a ‘world at risk’ and where the actions of one country can have a dramatic impact on populations outside the contiguous borders of a single nation” (Rosenthal, Hart, & Charles, 1989, p. 3). These crises may be ongoing, include a threat to core values and lead to military action. Since the media have an influence on crisis decision-makers facing these severe stress situations and may even have an impact on the fate of nations, it is important that media decision-makers themselves understand how their media outputs – and thus their decisions – act as influencers.

The discussion and analysis of the complex relationship between the media decision-mak-
ing process and public sector decision-makers facing international crises is therefore timely and important. Mahmoud Eid has undertaken this task in his book entitled *Interweavement, International Media Ethics and Rational Decision-Making*, developing a theoretical foundation and a subsequent media decision-making model that contributes to our understanding. He focuses on the media-decision makers—the above-mentioned influencers—in order to render “the performance of the media-decision-makers effective, as a consequent result of being rational and responsible” (italics in original) (p. 265).

Eid agrees with Hackett, Gilsdorf and Savage that the mass media are themselves political players that define reality (p. 197) and uses the ongoing American-Iraqi conflict as a case study. He takes a thorough approach to develop the foundation of the decision-making model, introducing the concept that lends its name to the book’s title, interweavement, based on two dimensions, the rational and the responsible.

The theoretical overview that sets the stage for the foundation is a tour de force. Eid first focuses on the rational dimension of his construct and provides a far-reaching review of the theoretical streams and underpinnings of communication, decision-making, crisis situations and crisis management. He connects the theories of mathematics with communications and explores game theory. He then builds the case for the media pursuing “rational behaviour … (that)…is goal-directed towards more desired outcomes rather than less desired outcomes” (italics in original) (p. 75).

Eid explores the responsible dimension of his theoretical foundation, considering communication ethics and media responsibility, including various media codes of ethics. His thorough overview builds the case for media decision-makers to pursue an ethical approach in reaching their decisions. Eid then examines the rationality of the ongoing American-Iraqi conflict and develops a Communication Game to complete the case for the theoretical foundation he calls interweavement.

“Interweavement” to Eid is “a dynamic ideational architecture…that consists of four major dynamic, not static axes: mathematical theories, communications theories, crisis management and decision-making” (p. 226). What makes the concept and its resulting model both interesting and challenging are their complexity. Eid’s foundation is built upon a “quadri-lateral arrangement” that relates to “1) an understanding of the nature of crisis management…; 2) the dynamic of the decision-making process…; 3) the idea of modeling real situations and the application of game theory…; 4) ethics and social responsibility theory…of the media; and finally, 5) the concept of rationality” (p. 226). This “arrangement” includes multiple representations with interacting axes, including two Dynamic Axes (Mathematics and Communication; Crisis Management and Decision-making), four bilateral relationships, four tri-lateral relationships, and one quadric-lateral area. The resulting decision-making model for the media he calls a Crisis Decision-Making Model for Media Rational Responsibility (CD_M^3^ R^2^), defined as “theoretical, prescriptive and dynamic in nature” (italics in original) (p. 265).

Eid notes that a decision-making model “should enable the decision-maker to predict real-world phenomena with valuable consistency and accuracy” (p. 247) yet has created a model that is probably too complex to assist media practitioners and government decision-makers. Eid acknowledges that it is a complicated intellectual construct and further develops a simplified form of the CD_M^3^ R^2^ model. He reminds us that it is a “theoretical rather than a practical model that can be tested practically or examined in terms of special conditions of application” (italics in original) (p. 304).

Two key strengths of the book is the sheer force of the author’s exhaustive research as well as its logical argumentation. The concept of interweavement and the resulting media-decision-making model, while complicated, hold promise for further research to determine its applicability. There is little doubt that case studies are needed to test the model’s relevance and to determine whether it will be useful in assisting both government and media decision-makers better understand the processes that have
an impact on their complicated relationship in international crisis situations.

REFERENCES

