ABSTRACT

The Role of the Press as an Opinion-Maker
In the Foreign Policy Process of Small States:

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For a small and economically weak state, the actions and postures it adopts
towards other states is important for its survival. Such actions and postures are
affected by several variables in a society, including the press which is a powerful
opinion-maker.

This study examined the causal relationship between the press as an opinion-
maker and foreign policy and was based on a content analysis of news stories,
editorials and commentaries published in The Daily Gleaner on Jamaica-Cuba
relations between 1972 and 1980.

The study found that while the press impacted on public opinion, personal
experiences and ideological biases also played a role. It also highlighted the
important role leaders play in the formulation of foreign policy and the low rating
placed on mass opinion.

The study emphasised that journalists in small states need to move beyond
narrow ideological biases and to generate wider interest in foreign policy. Educating
readers on the factors influencing the making of such policies and available options
should be a primary aim.