

Abstract

Mette Anthonsen, 2003. *Decisions on Participation in UN Operations: Do Media Matter? Danish and Swedish Response to Intra State Conflicts in the 1990s*. English text. Göteborg Studies in Politics 80. Department of Political Science, Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. Göteborg 2003. 369 pages. ISBN 91-628-5568-9. ISSN 0346-5942.

This book answers three questions: On a theoretical level, *in which ways* can media be assumed to function in relation to foreign policy? By which *means* can media be hypothesised to matter for state policy vis-à-vis participation in UN operations? And, on an empirical level, do media *actually* play a role?

The case study of Denmark and Sweden, and their responses to UN operations in 16 different intra state conflicts during the 1990s, contributes to existing research on media in relation to foreign policy in two important ways. It moves empirical focus away from the US to a Nordic context with a different political climate, and it elevates research from single case studies of particular conflicts to a more general level.

To answer the first question, two contrasting approaches to the study of media and foreign policy are discussed; the notion of the CNN effect, and the manufacturing consent approach. Moving towards empirical analysis, research on the role of ideas in foreign policy, agenda setting and framing is employed. Empirically, the study shows that TV and newspapers do not meet the criteria for influencing decisions on where and how to participate in UN operations. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, media generally devotes very little, and very varying, attention to intra state conflicts and the UN. Secondly, public and political consensus on UN participation is widespread in Denmark and Sweden, and the question of deploying national personnel under UN command is hardly politicised. When decisions are made on whether or not to participate in UN operations, Realistic factors such as financial and military capabilities are paramount.

Likewise, even if there is some indexing to government foreign policy in media coverage *after* specific decisions, decision makers do not use media to manufacture public consent for their policy line. Again, the broad public and political consensus about the importance of the UN and about contributing to peace support operations render such manufacturing needless. Decisions on how to actually implement the internationalist strain of foreign policy is left to decision makers who do not need to manufacture consent for each and every decision.

The results are produced by interviews with 26 key decision makers in Denmark and Sweden, and by analysis of 10950 news items from Danish newspaper Politiken, Danish TV2 Nyhederne, Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter and Swedish SVT Rapport.

Keywords: Agenda setting, CNN effect, Constructivism, content analysis, decision making, foreign policy, framing, indexing, intervention, intra state conflict, manufacturing consent, media effects, peace support operation, public opinion, UN.

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