

Media and Humanitarian Intervention

A Study of the CNN Effect and the United States Foreign
Policy Making in the Context of Somalia and Darfur

Liselotte Olsson, Irina Bernebring Journiette

Abstract

Media is an important actor in our globalized world but the question remains if news coverage, actually can affect the outcome in a humanitarian crisis. This study focuses on the possible media influence of United States foreign policy concerning humanitarian intervention. Our purpose was to conduct a critical trial of Piers Robinsons existing theory about the CNN effect, where he has developed the "*Policy-Media Interaction Model*". This concludes that critical and empathizing media framing combined with policy uncertainty should give a strong CNN effect. In the context of US foreign policy we used Somalia as an illustrative example, of where the media coverage did not influence the decision to enforce a humanitarian intervention. Then we analyzed how media framing and policy uncertainty has/has not influenced the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Our purpose was to describe and understand what the CNN effect is and examine if it has occurred in Darfur.

Keywords: CNN Effect, Humanitarian Intervention, Somalia, Darfur

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1 Introduction

1.1 Description of Topic and Purpose of Study

During the recent decade there has been a frequent debate between politicians, journalist and scholars concerning the CNN effect and its repercussions. Even though there is an extensive amount of research conducted it is still difficult to define and determine how and if constant media coverage can effect political decisions, such as a humanitarian intervention.

There is also a deep theoretical difference between those who maintain the opinion that the CNN effect can force political elite, to carry out humanitarian intervention and the critics who state the opposite; “that there is no effect of news coverage”. They argue that news coverage rather follows than precedes the political decision and that other factors effect the decision to intervene. Hence the CNN effect is over exaggerated and mythical. We find this topic fascinating since media is an important factor in our globalized world and it would be relevant to know if media coverage of international affairs can affect the outcome in humanitarian crisis.

1.2 Research Problem

Subsequently what we will examine, is/if and how constant news coverage may effect the decision making process concerning humanitarian intervention, by analyzing the CNN effect and its probable consequences for carrying out humanitarian intervention, e.g. “Operation Restore Hope” in Somalia 1992-94 and the pending humanitarian situation in Darfur, Sudan.

The more detailed problem formulation is:

- How can media coverage affect US foreign policymaking concerning humanitarian intervention/ non-intervention?
- Has there been a CNN effect in Somalia?
- Has there been a CNN effect in Darfur?

1.3 Previous Research Concerning the CNN Effect

The CNN effect has been brought to attention through a number of articles and books and has been a popular subject for debate and research. Yet, it seems likely scholars, policy makers and journalists can not agree on whether the CNN effect exists or not, what it means and how it affect foreign policy making. Eytan Gilboa (2005) conducted a study which critically analyses ten years of research and debate on the CNN effect and concludes that previous studies only have been producing contradicting statements. There only are two aspects of the CNN effect that the three groups agree on. “That global news coverage accelerates the foreign policy making process and that it affects the policy’s conduct” (Gilboa 2005;333-336).

Steven Livingston (1997) has developed a model where he identified three different ways to understand the CNN effect. First, the CNN effect can be seen as a policy agenda-setting agent where emotional coverage of conflicts and humanitarian crises can generate a public opinion, can affect foreign policy priorities and decisions. Second it can be understood as an impediment to the achievement of desired policy goals, when media affects the military and public opinion in a humanitarian intervention and can make them question the legitimacy of military operations. The third way in which he defined the CNN effect is as an accelerant to policy decision-making. Meaning that media coverage can speed up the political process thus pressuring policymakers to make quick decisions based on rash conclusions (Livingston 1997;2).

2 Method

Our paper is descriptive and what we intend to show, is to in a critical way try and analyze an already existing theory concerning the CNN effect. We conducted a qualitative study focusing on the case studies of the intervention in Somalia 1992-94 and the current situation in Darfur, Sudan. We compared two cases since we believe that this will give us a better and broader conclusion and larger understanding of how media coverage can affect the decision to intervene or not.

The case of Somalia works to illustrate an example of when the CNN effect seems over exaggerated and is compared to how media coverage, has/has not, affected the issue of intervention in Darfur, Sudan. We chose two cases in order to limit our research and obtain a deeper understanding of the CNN effect instead of measuring it (Teorell & Svensson 2007;264). If we had chosen a larger amount of subjects to analyze we would have been able to achieve a generalization and conclusion about general patterns but would have lost the depth of the analysis (Bjereld, Demker & Hinnfors 2002;114).

Piers Robinson (2000) (2002) has developed the “*Policy-Media Interaction Model*” which according to his thesis can determine when a CNN effect is likely to occur. This model will be further described in our theoretical framework and is considered to be one of the most promising theories even though it requires more validation through testing of additional case studies. Hence we used empirical data to question and critically try the theory in the case of Darfur, thereby contributing to the already existing research on the CNN effect.

2.1 The CNN Effect

The term CNN effect is a shortened term for the theory about media driven intervention and should not be interpreted as the impact of only the CNN channel. The CNN effect was initially spoken of during the first Gulf war in 1991 and was then considered to refer to the economic and psychological consequences which arose simultaneously as the CNN war coverage (Gilboa 2005;327). The technological advancement contributed to the constant global news coverage and instant mass communication (Gilboa 2005;325). The constant global coverage lessened the space between people and nations and affected the overall global awareness. The CNN effect has been a focus of a variety of studies but there is still a problem with defining what the essence of the term really is and when it occurs. This since the “*‘theory’ has never been properly defined and it is highly questionable whether it is at all a theory or just an attractive neologism*” (Gilboa 2005, 326).

During the recent years the CNN effect has come to be related to the concept of policy formation, meaning that CNN can in some way affect national/international policymaking. This is the perspective this paper is intended to study and illustrate the CNN effect. Hence the CNN effect is seen as an all powerful part of the media which forces politicians to act (Robinson 2001;942).

2.2 Materials

Since our time and resources were limited we choose to conduct case studies based on existing material. Most of the material concerning Somalia were published during the 1990s while the material concerning Darfur, were published in the 2000's. The material we used are all secondary sources since we not in a position to collect new empirical material. The majority of our sources are scientific reports and articles which we found using ELIN. We also used articles from international newspapers and publications, most frequent: *The CNN Effect: The myth of news, foreign policy and intervention*. London: Routledge, 2002, by Piers Robinson. These contribute to our theoretical approach and we chose this format after careful investigation, of how different scholars within the subject relate to each other.

2.2.1 Critical Source Evaluation

When evaluating our sources we defined three criteria for determining their value. First we established the authenticity of the material, by trying to find similar confirming data in different sources and by different, conducted research. Second we established the authors' credibility. This was done by analyzing their reason for conducting research and checking the authors' independence by establishing that our sources were not involved in the conflict in anyway or had any personal gain/political influence or reason to disseminate misleading or false information. The third criteria was that the time gap between the event and the publication of the source should not be too wide/outdated (Teorell & Svensson 2007;104-106).

While it was fairly uncomplicated to find scientific information about the media coverage in Somalia it was difficult to find in Darfur due to the ongoing conflict and the lack of scientifically proved empirical data.

2.3 Case Selection

The intention of conducting a qualitative study is not to statistically generalize but to generate extended knowledge. We used "The Operation Restore Hope" in

Somalia in 1992 which often has been seen as a clear example of how the CNN effect can influence foreign policy making. As an illustration of how difficult it is to determine whether there was a CNN effect or not, since there seems to be a wide belief that the media pressured the United States to intervene in Somalia. At the same time Robinson's case study on the intervention in Somalia in 1992 concludes that news media coverage of the starvation in Somalia did not have a great effect on the US decision to intervene. We believe that our illustrative case study of Somalia will help us to bring light to our second case study which is Darfur.

At this time, another humanitarian crisis is taking place in Sudan and our televisions and newspapers are filled with emotional graphics of suffering people. Hence voices have been raised within the global society, to act. At the same time, the Sudanese government believes that the world's humanitarian "good will" is nothing but a façade for strategically geopolitical interests. We are interested in which role the media plays during this problematic situation. What we are trying to establish with these cases is what processes drive an intervention forward and if media can be seen as the reason to why the United States decide to intervene in some cases but not in others (Western 2002;138).

We choose to examine these cases in the context of US foreign policy making, since our understanding is that they still believe to dominate world politics. It was especially interesting since they were the key player in Somalia and also have taken on this role in Darfur. *"Understanding what motivates the US to act is central to understanding the CNN effect because the majority of forcible interventions have occurred under the command and leadership of the US."* (Robinson 2002;1).

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 The CNN Effect – a Theory of Media Influence on Foreign Policy

A theory-based approach to the CNN effect enabled us to specify the conditions under which the phenomenon occurs and to form hypotheses about why it occurs.

The *Policy-Media Interaction Model* measures if and how media coverage influences intervention decisions and is a theoretical model of news media influence where the key factors are policy certainty/uncertainty and media framing. Based on earlier research the hypothesis is that the CNN effect appears when influence of news media increases while policy certainty decreases and vice versa. This insight is consistent with earlier research that has identified a connection between the ability of external factors to influence policymakers when there are policy uncertainties. Media, frames and reports in different ways and graphic and emotive coverage is thought to pressure politicians to act. Therefore, it is reasonable to theorize that media influences are the greatest when the coverage includes criticism of foreign policy makers and portraying of suffering people (Robinson 2002;25).

The *Policy-Media Interaction Model* was created to identify those circumstances where media play a considerable role in influencing or pushing policymakers down a particular path. This stands in contrast to Livingston's theory where media might incline policymakers to act rather than creating a political imperative to act. This weak CNN effect theory suggests that media coverage plays a trivial role during decisions, concerning intervention and is unlikely to be an important factor in influencing policymakers to act. However Robinson argues that Livingston's accelerated and impediment aspects should be kept apart from the theory of the strong CNN effect since neither of them could be seen as a cause or an important factor in the decisions to carry out a humanitarian intervention (Robinson 2002;38-39). Since our research problematic, foremost considers the CNN effects possible effect on decisions regarding humanitarian intervention. We decided to use the *Policy-Media Interaction Model* even if Livingston's theory offers an important insight of the CNN effect.

3.2 Criteria

We used the two variables, policy certainty and media framing, to operate the *Policy-Media Interaction Model*. First of all these variables needed to be properly identified.

Policy uncertainty is defined as the degree of coordination and consensus among policymakers regarding a special issue. Policy uncertainty therefore exists when there is no relevant policy addressing the situation. If the policy line changes frequently or if an inconsistent policy line arises when subsystems of the executive power are politically divided concerning the policy (Robinson 2000;617).

Media framing is the second variable and while there are different ways to cover humanitarian crises and conflicts, the one that can influence foreign policy making is when empathic coverage is accompanied by criticism against policymakers. Empathetic journalism focuses on the suffering of individuals and describes them as the victims of the conflict who need help. Often referring to humanitarian aid or assistance and intervention from the international community. Critical media coverage of government's foreign policy where media takes sides in the political debate can influence and pressure policymakers to address the issue and take action. While the supportive coverage can justify and support the government decision to intervene (Robinson 2002;26-30).

4 Historical Background

4.1 Somalia and “Operation Restore Hope”

Somalia has during the latest decades been tormented by major political shifts. Due to its geographical and strategic placement close to the Middle East and with oil resources it has been an attractive country to govern throughout the Cold War. During the Cold War the United States supported the militant president Mohammed Siad Barre to have an ally in the otherwise soviet friendly Horn of Africa (Western 2002;119). But when the Cold War ended, the US support vanished, a rebel led force overthrew the regime in a coup, leading to the flight of Siad Barre. The armed conflict arose and became critical in 1991 when the fighting reached the capital of Mogadishu resulting in total anarchy. A mutation of conflict then took place when it evolved into a power struggle between the former government, guerrilla warriors and different clan leaders (Robinson 2002;47)

The intense fighting between the two major rivals, Gen. Mohammed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed lead to the collapse of the Somali state structure which devastated the civilian population (Western 2002;122). The famine in Somalia was in 1991 defined as the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophe. By early summer 1992, 300,000 people had died, 3,000 perished daily due to starvation, 95 percent of the remaining population were suffering from malnutrition and 70 percent were in direct risk of dying due to starvation (Western 2002;115). Somalia was a state in collapse.

Between January 1991 and August 1992, the first phase of US engagement took place when the government ordered relief supplies to be airlifted into Somalia. The emergency airlift however failed to end the starvation. This led to the US/UN decision to support and place 3,000 UN troops and provide 2,100 U.S. Marines as offshore support outside the harbor of Mogadishu (Baum 2004;200-201). In early 1992 the United States government were opposed to intervention in Somalia and deploying US troops. Claiming it to be a humanitarian tragedy but not vital for the United States policy interest. Arguing that the hostile environment with civilians and combatants intertwining and that the troubled Somali past would make the intervention to risky for US troops (Western 2002;113).

The crisis was then defined by the US government as “*fueled by age-old tribal animosities;*” where “*the tribal combatants were heavily armed and indistinguishable from the civilian population, making U.S. force protection*

virtually impossible” and where “*the desert terrain, although open, would create enormous operational and tactical difficulties*” (Western 2002;116).

On the 9th of December 1992 the first troops of 28,000 soldiers were deployed on Somali soil with the intention to intervene to protect relief agencies and the deliveries of food supplies. The second phase of engagement also known as “Operation Restore Hope” had begun (Robinson 2002;47-49). The mission did from the beginning have a limited objective, to open the relief supply routes since the relief did not reach outside Mogadishu ports to the countryside due to looting, corruption and other obstacles. When the decision to intervene was made the perspective on the US involvement changed stating that there was a low chance of something going wrong with the operation, a low expectant number of casualties¹ and low expected military costs (Baum 2004;199). This resulted in the expectations on the outcome of the intervention being high.

The third phase of Operation Restore Hope was when the newly elected, President Bill Clinton, during the autumn of 1993 decided to withdraw and end all US engagement (Baum 2004;199). This less than a year after the intervention was initiated and the support for the intervention among the public and Congress had diminished. (Baum 2004;188) The decision was made after the events that occurred on October 3rd 1993, after a Black Hawk helicopter was shot down during a mission to capture Gen. Mohammed Farah Aideed. This led to severe fighting between US Rangers and rebel forces, leaving 18 dead American soldiers and 75 wounded. This resulted in a change in the US policy towards Somalia, after President Bill Clinton’s televised speech on October 7th 1993 when he declared that all US forces were to be withdrawn before March 31, 1994 (Baum 2004;218).

4.2 Sudan and the conflict in Darfur

Darfur is a province in western Sudan where three ethnic groups dominate the area and the majority of people are Muslims. Most of the black inhabitants are farmers while the Arabic are nomads. According to many scholars and experts on Sudan, the situation in Darfur has been widely misunderstood and simplified as a conflict between Muslim Arabs and black Africans.

During the colonial era the British colonial power created a native administration in Darfur which transformed already existing political structures of the Sudanese tribal communities. After Sudan’s independence local conflicts escalated into national power conflicts as the local chiefs were afraid to lose the power that they had been given by the British Administration.

¹ During a briefing before the initiation of Operation Restore Hope the estimated numbers of casualties were 20 U.S. fatalities.

The underlying cause of the various conflicts is underdevelopment and marginalization of the Darfur region (Nordic Africa Institute 2007;10-12,14). In March 2003, rebel groups accused the government of Sudan of neglecting Darfur and supporting the Arabic nomads more than the black farmers. In the beginning of the conflict, the black rebel groups experienced some military success. The Sudanese army then started to provide Arabic nomads with weapons and riding nomad warriors called Janjaweed started to attack farmer's villages. A peace agreement was settled in May 2004 but was not respected. At the same time the US government described the conflict in Darfur as genocide. The government of Sudan then accused the United States for using a humanitarian national problem for their own political interest. In 2004 UN's highest aid coordinator also described the situation in Darfur as "the world's worst humanitarian disaster" and despite considerable international pressure, the Sudanese government took little action to stop the attacks. The UN did not respond with sanctions since the Security Council were in deep disagreement.

The US was pro sanctions while Russia and China took a clear standpoint against this. In January 2005 a UN commission concluded that the Sudanese army and its allies had committed systematic assaults on the civilians but that the violence could not be defined as genocide, under International law. The UN was therefore not obligated to take action in terms of military intervention but so called humanitarian intervention.

The African Union then initiated a peacekeeping operation in Darfur called AMIS. The AMIS force did not manage to stop the violations in Darfur and the African Union decided to hand over the peacekeeping mission to UN with a massive protest from Sudan as a result. After intense pressure from the world community a new peace agreement were signed in Nigeria in May 2006. The peace agreement was signed by one rebel group and the government of Sudan while the rest of the rebels refused to sign the papers. The new secretary general of UN, Ban Ki Moon promised to prioritize Darfur in the beginning of 2007. In June, Sudan announced that they accepted a UN/AU hybrid force in Darfur and in July the UN admitted a resolution to create the hybrid force UNAMID (the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur).

The force, which will be the largest peace force in the world, will include the existing AMIS force but will be lead and controlled by the UN. The mission of UNAMID is to support an implement the Abuja peace agreement from 2006 and the soldiers are allowed to use force to protect civilians and to get aid shipments in place. UNAMID are not allowed to disarm rebels or search for suspected war criminals. In October, Ban Ki Moon accused Sudan of delaying the first placement of the hybrid force since Sudan did not answer on which countries they approved to take part in the UNAMID force (Landguiden 2007 Utrikespolitiska Institutet).

5 Results

5.1 “When we see Somalia's children starving, all of America hurts.”² (GEORGE BUSH 1993)

5.1.1 Policy Uncertainty or Consensus?

In 1992 the Somalia crisis became a major political issue for the US government, when politicians lobbying for relief and intense media coverage about the famine and armed conflict raised questions. This led to the August 1992 airlift and “Operation Provide Relief” (Robinson 2002;47). Surprisingly there was that no visible military, political or logistical factors that changed in Somalia between the US statement in July to not intervene and the decision to intervene in November. Leaving the question, what lead to the intervention? (Western 2002, 113).

When the United States National Security Council met on the 20th of November 1992 they considered three options to deal with the pending crisis in Somalia. “(1) *increasing U.S. financial and material support for the current UN peacekeeping forces in Somalia*; (2) *coordinating a broader UN effort in which the United States would provide logistical support but no ground troops*; and (3) *initiating a U.S.-led multinational military intervention in Somalia*.” (Western 2002;136).

According to Robert Oakley, the former Ambassador to Somalia the consensus was that the third option was out of the question. However, the following day General Powell and the Joint Chiefs made the decision to intervene (Western 2002;137). When the decision to intervene was made no strict definition of what the US troops should engage in was formed other than it was a humanitarian intervention. The question as to whether the soldiers were to engage in battle with the bandits and clan leaders who were the main security threat remained unanswered. This resulted in military leaders in fact questioning whether the intervention could intensify the violence and unite the warring Somalis, opposing the US military engagement (Western 2002;116).

² Quotation from a speech made by George Bush Sr. Delivered in an Adress to the Nation in Washington D. C. in December 4, 1992.

After the initial phase of the intervention the policy shifted and the focus was not only to protect the relief providers but to also detain Gen. Mohammed Farah Aideed. This lead up to the events on October 3rd, which forced the US policy towards Somalia to change again.

5.1.2 The Media and “Operation Restore Hope”

The constant media coverage acknowledged the crisis in Somalia, intensified the awareness about it and moved it up the political agenda and can thus be seen as a policy agenda setting affect (Livingston 1997;2). At the same time however, the media coverage from the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNS and CNN before President George Bush Sr. made the decision to use military intervention was *modest*. The media coverage increased rapidly after the announcement that US troops were to be deployed only the days before, the official deployment of the troops in Mogadishu (Robinson 2002;53 Table 3.1). This is also confirmed by Warren Stroble who argued that the news coverage rather followed than preceded the decision to intervene (Stroble 1997;131-137). There was scarce media coverage when the decision about “Operation Provide Relief” took place, but after the initial broadcasting boom in the aftermath of the airlift, Somalia fell out of the news (Western 2002;135). The deployment of the soldiers in 1992 was however one of the most followed news events during 1992 (Klarevas 2000, 524).

After “Operation Restore Hope” was initiated the news coverage dropped whilst the operation slowly was succeeding. It was not until the autumn of 1993 when the military faced set backs and the amount of casualties rose that the media attention was renewed (Baum 2004;213,215). As the number of casualties increased, so did the number of articles (Stroble 1997;200). Opinion polls conducted among the American public then showed that they started to view the operation as a failure and wanted it to end (Baum 2004;216 Table 2).

The critical media coverage of the events in Mogadishu and video images of a kidnapped, beaten soldier and a dead US airman been dragged through the streets of Mogadishu whilst crowds of Somali cheered chocked the public (Baum 2004;218). The news capturing traumatic events can be seen as an impediment to the continuity of the policy to intervene and demand for a new policy regarding the U.S. involvement (Livingston 1997;2). On October 5th approximately 6 out of 10 Americans had seen the videos and according to a survey conducted by the CBS, the public support for the operation fell drastically after the pictures were shown and only 21 percent continued to approve of the intervention (Baum 2004;218).

During the early rapports about the Somali crisis and intervention, words that were supportive and empathic were used almost twice as many times as words which were critical and distancing (Robinson 2001;949). This use of positive framing and optimistic language built a support for the intervention (Robinson 2001;950). The media however changed the framing of the Somali crisis when they found independent information and began to challenge the government views (Western 2002;142) (Robinson 2001;941).

The media coverage in Somalia changed throughout the intervention, intensifying as the conflict intensified and vice versa. The reports were however of in majority framed in a way that pictured Somalia as a crisis the US could and should deal with (Mermin 1997;388).

5.2 Save Darfur

5.2.1 Genocide or Not?

Since President Bashier came to power in Sudan, during a coup in 1989, the US policy has mainly been focused on stopping Sudan from being a haven for terrorists. The US added Sudan to the lists of states that they believed to support terrorism when the Sudanese government hosted Usama Bin Laden and believed to be involved in the attacks on the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. When Sudan began to export oil the relation with US improved since Khartoum managed to take action against, terrorist suspects and cooperate with US demands (Williams & Bellamy 2005;34-35). When the violence erupted in Darfur, the Bush administration was careful when criticizing the Sudanese government since they were afraid to derail the North-South peace initiative. In April 2004 US Congressmen called for sanctions, President Bush condemned the “atrocities” in Sudan and on the September 9 Secretary of state Colin Powell defined the violence in Darfur as genocide committed by the Janjaweed and Sudanese government.

The globally criticized US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq made many states, question Washington’s humanitarian will and suspicions that a humanitarian intervention only was a facade for neo-imperial ambitions involving interest in oil and the war against terrorism increased (Williams & Bellamy 2005;36-37). In November 2004 the Bush Administration changed the policy again and tried to use “carrots” such as increased aid and promised to remove Sudan from the list of countries supporting terrorism. Some argues that aside from the Chinese veto against action in Darfur it was this shift and inconsistency in US foreign policy that was responsible for the Security Council’s failure to take stronger action against the human right abuses in Darfur. (Clough 2005;7-8 Human Rights Watch).

The author of the study *Evangelists, Oil Companies, and Terrorists: The Bush Administration’s Policy towards Sudan*, Huliaras Asteris concludes that there have, been three main factors which have formed the Bush administrations policy towards Sudan and the situation in Darfur: The American evangelicals, the war on terror and oil interest. When the Darfur crisis escalated hundreds of evangelical,

Jewish, African-American and human rights groups formed the Save Darfur Coalition and demanded more humanitarian aid and a humanitarian intervention by US troops. This massive lobbying became a major factor behind placing Sudan as high priority on the US political agenda (Asteris 2006;714-716). Together with other organizations such as Sudan Divest Task Force the Save Darfur campaign mobilized a financial boycott against companies which invested or had business with the Sudanese regime (Therner 2007).

Even if the Save Darfur campaign played a significant role in placing Darfur on the US agenda, strategic interests such as the oil and the war on terrorism become more important. US oil companies were worried about being left out from the expanding oilfields of Sudan, Supporting a dialogue with Sudan and wanting to loosen the bilateral sanctions against the country.

After the 9/11 attacks in New York, the war on terrorism became US top priority. Since the government of Sudan provided information about terrorist activities, the Bush administration became willing to lift the sanctions in exchange. The violence escalated in Darfur during the same time as the elections were to be held and the Bush Administration felt the urge to act against the violence in Darfur in order to keep the evangelical voters.

As a member of the Security Council the US administration presented resolutions which China with its huge investments in Sudan's oil sector and Russia with its interest and involvement in Sudan's weapon industry blocked. Darfur then became marginalized on the US foreign policy agenda and the focus was directed towards the North-South peace process in Sudan. The Bush Administration also left the responsibility for the crisis in Darfur to multilateral organizations such the African Union and UN (Asteris 2006;721-723).

5.2.2 The Media and the Humanitarian Crisis in Darfur

According to David Campbell study *Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur conflict*, the media coverage of the conflict in Darfur was almost non-existent in the second half of 2003 despite alarming reports from Amnesty International and Médecins sans Frontières. He explains the lack of news coverage as a cause of media focus on Naivasha peace negotiations between the Khartoum government and the SPLA in the south. Most editorials seemed to believe that the western audience only could handle one story from the same marginalized area at a time and the violence in Darfur remained a forgotten conflict (Campbell 2007;366-68).

According to Hugo Slims analyses, the media were busy covering the war in Iraq and never really mobilized when the Darfur crises started in 2003. Although journalists were physically hindered to enter Darfur they did not really try (Slim 2004;818). New York Times columnist Nicholas D. Kristof criticizes the televisions failure to cover Darfur and refers to a report from Tyndall, which monitors networks news, where ABC evening news had a total of 18 minutes of the situation in Darfur during the whole year while NBC had 5 minutes and CBS only 3 minutes. As a contrast Martha Stewart got 130 minutes coverage by these

three networks (Kristof 2005 NY Times). Despite that most of the articles and argument we found were criticizing the lack of media attention given to the conflict in Darfur, there were also authors and debaters claiming the opposite. An article in Darfur Tribune argues that the conflict in Darfur is rare since it attracts much more media attention than conflicts in Africa usually get.

“Darfur is rare among Africa’s conflicts in generating both sustained media coverage beyond the continent and a diplomatic controversy involving Washington. Televised images of gaunt Sudanese in the troubled west of Africa’s biggest country have stirred worldwide compassion while a war of words rages between Washington, which says genocide has occurred, and Sudan’s Islamist rulers, who say it has not. (Maclean 2004 Sudan Tribune)

The official declaration of the violence in Darfur as genocide by Powell put Darfur on the American political agenda and created massive lobbying from liberal pro intervention groups who wanted the US to, use its military for moral purposes and African-American civil rights groups who called for more attention to the injustice in Africa. The ICID’s commission did not agree with this definition of the violence in Darfur and concluded that even if some of the crimes committed by Janjaweed and the government of Sudan were similar to ethnic cleansing, there was no proof. However, the media continued to describe and illustrate Darfur as genocide and tribal war between Arabs and Black Africans (Campbell 2007;376-78).

In a study about the photo-journalism in Darfur it is observed that most photos in newspapers are from refugee camps portraying refugees, especially women and children. Such emotional coverage only goes so far as to address the symptoms of the conflict that can be solved by international help (Campbell 2007;368).

A debate article by Andrew Stroehlein published at Reuters AlertNets website discusses the international media coverage and concludes that it often has been detached and dehumanized. Although media coverage and lobbying from NGO’s has created an overall awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, they have failed to report about the conflicts development and explain what the fighting erupted from. The media reports about the extreme human suffering are often created to receive an instant emotional but temporary response from the audience and only a few news reports seem so try to understand the conflicts dimensions (Stroehlein 2006 Reuters AlertNet).

6 A CNN Effect?

6.1 Media Framing

Although there are contradicting statements about the media framing in both Somalia and Darfur, our understanding is that much of the coverage has been emotionally framed with graphic pictures of starving, dying and suffering people.

In the media framing of these two humanitarian crises, the focus has been on portraying victims of the violence such as refugees, women and children (Robinson 2002;29). This emotional media framing has in different ways influenced the American foreign policy making. In Somalia, the media coverage justified the decision to enforce an intervention since the journalism followed rather than preceded the decision to send US troops. In Darfur's case no decision to enforce an intervention has been made and the media has criticized the US government's inaction. The emotional and critical reporting of Darfur has encouraged the audience to associate with the suffering victims of the violence and demand action from their leaders. In comparison to Somalia where the framing changed and turned critical only when the violence against American soldiers escalated, pressuring the US to withdraw (Western 2002;139).

In consensus with Robison's theory and the *Policy-Media Interaction Model* the CNN effect in Somalia seems mythical when the initial media attention was supportive instead of critical. This indicates that the media followed rather than preceded the intervention. Regarding Darfur, on the other hand, the critical and emphasizing media coverage has addressed the crisis but still no action in term of humanitarian intervention has been enforced by the US even though the crisis is defined by them as genocide.

6.2 Policy (Un)certainty

In Somalia the fact that the media followed rather than preceded the decision to intervene indicates that there was policy certainty. The journalists were then fed information from politicians and power brokers (Robinson 2001;946). However, the clear consensus among the Joint Chiefs and politicians seems difficult to prove when multiple sources argue that intervention was seen as the last resort and only days before the actual decision it was still widely debated by Congress.

The US policy towards the crisis in Darfur can be seen as uncertain since their actions have been contradictory. They have criticized the government of Sudan for committing genocide and presented resolutions in the UN Security Council concerning economic sanctions which were blocked by Russian and Chinese veto due to their interest in the oil and weapon industry. These actions can be seen as a result of the massive lobbying by the Save Darfur campaign and perhaps this can be seen as a weak CNN effect since the lobbying and media attention together encouraged decision makers to address the crisis. The US has been willing to cooperate with Khartoum, to protect their interest in the Sudanese oilfields and to ensure their strength in the war against terrorism. The Bush Administration has also meet strong global criticism for their intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and this has affected how other member states responded to their declaration of genocide in Darfur. Many member states including Sudan expressed suspicions that a humanitarian intervention only was a facade for neo-imperial ambitions.

The policy uncertainty concerning Darfur combined with the empathic and critical media framing indicates according to the *Policy-Media Interaction Model* that the CNN effect should have taken place.

	CNN Effect	Darfur	Somalia
Empathetic Media Framing:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Critical Media Framing	Yes	Yes	No
Policy Uncertainty	Yes	Yes	No

An overview of the *Policy-Media Interaction Model* applied to Darfur and Somalia.

7 Conclusion and Discussion

The CNN effect is a theory about the media impact on political decisions which occurs when the media framing is critical and empathetic and the governments policy for different reasons remain uncertain. The CNN effect is as many have stated the most common believed explanation of why the United States, decided to intervene in Somalia. However it is difficult to isolate the effect of intense, instant media coverage and according to many scholars the CNN effect in Somalia is just a myth.

Media's actual impact on the US decision to intervene is questionable, since the media seems to have followed the troops instead of leading them with government press agencies encouraging press attention. The daily focus on the starving Somali children on television however built-up support and justified the intervention after its initiation.

It is open to further discussion to question whether the second phase of "Operation Restore Hope" with the withdrawal of US troops is possible to be seen as a weak, partial CNN effect. This after the news coverage increased and became more critical, intensifying the political uncertainty, when the violence against US troops increased, demanding a policy change and a withdrawal.

According to the *Policy-Media Interaction Model*, the US policy uncertainty and media's critical and emphatic coverage of the conflict in Darfur, should show, a clear case of a CNN effect. However, this has not occurred in the case of Darfur where the US, despite considerable pressure from the media and NGO's, has decided not to carry-out/suggest a humanitarian intervention. Instead they have relied on and delegated the responsibility to multinational forces such as the AU and the UN. In the case of Darfur the US has been inconsistent with its policy towards Sudan, where political and economic interest in oil and the war against terrorism, became more important than intervention for humanitarian reasons. Even if Washington is still one of the strongest critics of the Sudanese government and has accused it of committing genocide, the US still seems keen to protect their diplomatic relations with Khartoum. If the US would be willing to take stronger action against the violence in Darfur it would be hard to justify after their problematic interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many countries suspect that their humanitarian "good will" is an expression of other interests. The US intention to impose sanctions against the Sudanese government has also met strong resistance in the Security Council due to the Chinese and Russian veto.

Although we do not wish to generalize the case of Darfur and Somalia, it enables us to conclude that there seems to be other more important factors than media coverage, such as the geo-political aspects and contradictive interest within the UN. These influence the foreign policy agenda. It is wrong to claim that the *Policy-Media Interaction Model* is inaccurate only based on the implementation of the model on the case of Darfur but it certainly questions the theory's credibility and proves that other factors than those mentioned in the model affects

foreign policy making. Intense media coverage has not in the cases we studied driven an intervention policy, however it has, together with NGO campaigns like Save Darfur, influenced policymakers to address the crisis. Hence to only focus on the CNN effect oversimplifies media influence on decisions concerning humanitarian intervention. Media attention can enlighten the public about a certain event, raise their awareness and provide a forum for the information presented by the government but the overall theory of the CNN effect seems to widely exaggerated and mythical.

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