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Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract <p>This paper explores the role of the press in shaping US foreign policy towards an international conflict. Its theoretical basis draws from the fields of Peace and Conflict Research and Communication Studies. It combines these two research traditions to construct a framework that defines the relations between the media, the political leadership and the public, and describes the role of each in the formation of US political response to an international conflict.</p> <p>The paper examines US press coverage of the Darfur conflict through the New York Times and the Washington Post reporting on the issue. It explores the kind of understanding provided by the press on the conflict, the US role as an international actor and the nature and extent of US responsibility to respond to the conflict and the related humanitarian crisis. It also describes the role the press had in advocating policy options to the administration and in increasing public pressure on the administration to implement them.</p> <p>The findings reveal that the US press presented the conflict with a focus on its victims. It appealed emotionally to the common responsibility of humanity to protect the victims against the villains and called for the Bush administration to lead the world's response. Because the administration failed to meet this demand, the press portrayed its Darfur policy from an overwhelmingly negative perspective.</p> <p>The accusation levelled against the administration by the press was that the only unifying motivation behind its policy on Darfur was to pass on responsibility to others, among them its Sudanese counterpart, which Washington was far too willing to treat as a cooperative partner. Washington argued that it was working gradually towards a solution from the inside, between Khartoum and the Darfur rebels. Meanwhile the press demanded for a solution to be immediately imposed on the parties from the outside and considered it immoral to negotiate on the terms of Khartoum, which it portrayed as the villain.</p> <p>In its continuous criticism of the Bush administration, the press potentially contributed to the gradual increase of pressure to scale up the administration's response to Darfur. That response eventually took the form of intensified diplomatic negotiations with Khartoum, economic sanctions on individuals responsible for violence in Darfur and humanitarian relief to victims. The response fell short of the more urgent and coercive measures demanded by the press. It is possible that the administration's response was mainly directed at demonstrating to the impatient press, the lobby groups and the public that it was working on the crisis, while avoiding politically and financially costlier commitments.</p>			
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