

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONS

IMPACT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON U.S. NATIONAL POLICY: A STUDY OF MEDIA INFLUENCE IN MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

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The American public relies on the mass media to keep them apprised of important events and developments at home and abroad. Often, media stories are the only source of information the public has on a subject, and thus are the basis of opinions and views on issues and world events. Through story selection and reporting practices the media has great influence over public opinion, which in turn drives government policy in some areas.

This thesis will explore the effects of media influence on government decision making through changes in public opinion using the U.S. intervention in Somalia as a case study. A review of newspaper articles and opinion polls covering the life of the mission will provide the data for analysis of this phenomenon.

It is vital that the military understand how media methods drive public opinion so that these methods can be used to a strategic advantage so that the U.S. national policy is not adversely affected by isolated trigger incidents, such as the Blackhawk Down incident of 03 October 1993. The impact of such events can be minimized by using these media methods to properly prepare the public for eventual mission outcomes in advance.

KEYWORDS: Blackhawk Down, Decision Making, Foreign Policy, Humanitarian Operations Media Influence, Public Opinion, Operation Restore Hope, Somalia, UNITAF, UNOSOM

DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCE THROUGH INTERNET USAGE IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (U)

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(U) The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a totalitarian regime that can be influenced through the Internet. Over 35 percent of China's citizens utilize the medium, including numerous international dissidents and pro-democracy advocates. This study illustrates China's Internet usage characteristics, provides case analyses of democratic and non-democratic Internet usage, and illustrates how the PRC and its citizens interact over the Internet. Finally, observations and recommendations are provided of what the United States should do, through the Internet, to effectively encourage democracy in China.

KEYWORDS: China, Internet, Democracy

