Journal of Conflict Studies

Entman, Robert M. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Daniel Cassino

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.
https://www.erudit.org/fr/

the fact that he does not provide the same systematic evidence to sustain his consciousness-raising argument, which is presented as a crucial element to understanding the individual processes that give challengers the willingness "to carry on their struggle, not only against heavily unfavorable odds of success, but also in the face of great risks to themselves." Interviews with survivors would have strengthened his claims. Nevertheless, as the author mentions, state repression continues to be applied against political challengers, especially in Guatemala, compromising the possibility to conduct such an endeavor.

Probably the most valuable contribution of Brockett's study — aside from the exhaustive relation of peasant and labor contentious activity in Central America — is the application and corresponding refinement of political opportunity theory to social movements in the developing world. The political process approach was first designed to explain social movements in well-established Western democracies. Other studies of social movements in developing and semi-authoritarian countries have been conducted in the past. However, Brockett's study represents the most comprehensive analysis of how "the configuration of political opportunities are crucial for the emergence, trajectory, and certainly outcomes of contentious movements" in Guatemala and El Salvador during their respective experiences with authoritarianism.

María Inclán is Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science and Geography at the University of Texas, San Antonio.

Entman, Robert M. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Issue framing is one of the most valuable tools in the arsenal of someone attempting to push the public one way or the other in regard to foreign policy. In essence, framing is an attempt to define the alternatives and dimensions of an issue to make it more likely that the public will agree with the proposal a certain policy elite favors. For instance, a proponent of the war in Iraq might argue that we have to choose whether we are going to continue to fight in Iraq, or if we're going to surrender to the terrorists. When the choice is defined in such a way, the outcome is always going to favor the pro-war position. As such, a successful frame turns the debate into a game of three-card Monte, where the dealer wins not when you pick a card, but when you buy into the premise that one of the cards is a winner.

Framing has been important to political science and social psychology alternatives to the "minimal impact" theory of the media for at least the past 20

years, but Robert Entman's work adds substantially to the existing literature. Most importantly, he attempts to put forward a unified theory of how framing works on the macro-level, in contrast with most of the literature on framing, which examines how it affects individuals. This "cascade model" draws heavily on those same individual-level approaches, arguing that information and interpretations spread from the White House to the major networks in the same way that they spread through an individual's long-term memory. For instance, Entman argues that the American media accepted the notion that the Soviet Union intentionally shot down Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983 because it conformed to the existing schema of the brutal, calculating communists. In contrast, the media failed to condemn American forces in the Persian Gulf for similar actions in the 1988 downing of an Iran Air flight.

In general, this sort of anthropomorphism is a bad idea: ideas may spread like diseases but that doesn't mean that we should inoculate school children against them. However, in Entman's hands, it's fairly compelling stuff, for two main reasons. First, he brings an enormous amount of information to bear in support of his contentions. Each of the chapters are largely built around one or more examples from the last 25 years, including the airline downings mentioned earlier, the nuclear freeze movement, American interventions in Somalia and the Balkans, and the 2003 Iraq war. Second, it seems that the terms used in political science and social psychology to describe individual's responses to political information are vague enough, and divorced enough from the physical mechanisms of the brain that they can be applied without too much difficulty in such a context. Entman is also smart enough to avoid drawing parallels on the processes involved: there's no mention of the American public avoiding cognitive dissonance or information being activated in the long-term memory of the media. To his credit he also generally refrains from individual-level conclusions based on his macro-level data.

Even aside from the application of individual-level models to the macro-level, some of Entman's arguments are of interest to a broad range of scholars interested in American foreign policy. *Projections of Power* makes a case for giving the US president and his cabinet a privileged position not just in the formation of foreign policy but also in how that policy will be understood by the public, an extension of the bully pulpit crying out for further analysis. The book also argues that the media itself is growing, rather than declining, in power, with the end of the Cold War loosening in the ways that the American media feels comfortable portraying the world.

It's possible to question the rigor of Entman's cascade model but that may well be missing the forest for the trees. Are the interactions between the White House, the elites, the media, and the public the same as the interactions between the various mental components underlying the evaluative process? Probably not. Are the parallels close enough to give valuable insight into how policy makers

attempt to frame foreign policy issues? Certainly, and that's reason enough to applaud Entman's effort.

Daniel Cassino is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Crocker, Chester A., Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall. *Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004.

Over the years, Chester Crocker, Fen Hampson, and Pamela Aall have edited several volumes for the United States Institute of Peace, including *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict* and *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*. They make another insightful contribution to the conflict management and resolution literature with *Taming Intractable Conflicts*. Their goal here is to assist mediators involved in intractable conflicts, e.g., Angola, Northern Ireland, and Middle East.

The authors tackle a question that lies at the heart of the mediation literature: how can a mediator get the sides to agree to a negotiated settlement? This question becomes even more intriguing when we remember that their focus is on intractable conflicts. In such conflicts, the antagonists might not see a political settlement as a particularly enticing option. Undaunted, the authors view such conflicts as "stubborn or difficult but not impossible to manage." (page 7) Moreover, they "do not accept the notion that violent conflicts are best left to burn themselves out, and we believe that most intractable conflicts end only with considerable outside help." (page 187) Their tone is refreshing given the pessimism and neutrality prevalent in the literature. They argue that mediators need to adopt a strategic approach to mediation by examining their own interests, capabilities, and constraints, as well as those of the antagonists and other concerned parties when planning their moves. At the same time, they remind us that sound strategic analysis without institutional capacity and resources will not amount to much.

The organization of the book attempts to help the mediators plan their strategies. The first part of the book discusses the context facing the mediator. Here the authors discuss in depth the motives behind the mediation of powerful states, forgotten intractable conflicts, and the environment surrounding the mediator. Their discussion of forgotten conflicts demonstrates the benefits of their strategic approach, as it becomes clear that different conflicts will require different forms of third-party involvement and that there is no panacea. Similarly,