

Public Abstract

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The relationship between the news media and its audience via the flow of information requires a critical examination, for the impact of the media on peacekeeping missions presents far-reaching ramifications. Certainly, radio and television broadcasts, as well as newspaper stories, have created a collection of voices that have shaped public views. The goal of my research is to examine how international, domestic, participatory, and social media portrays current United Nations peacekeeping operations in two former French colonies: Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire.

Using a grounded theory approach, I identified a general trend among news sources in Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire. The portrayals of the peacekeeping missions in both states contained a positive-negative script framework that was supported by the justification and critical framing of events and interactions. Furthermore, international sources mirrored the pro-democracy propaganda of the United Nations while domestic sources were more likely to be critical of the peacekeepers' presence. In Haiti in particular, there exists a significant neo-colonial frame that epitomizes these negative perceptions.

These portrayals and perceptions can be used by the United Nations and policy makers to evaluate missions and identify and solve problem areas. The implications for social media users and participants in citizen media are also significant. As events in Syria and around the world have shown, social media and citizen journalism is being viewed as a crucial actor in conflict. In terms of peacekeeping missions, these participatory-based media forums provide a constructive environment for debate of the successes and problems with the missions.