

Abstract

Decision-making in Foreign Policy is a concept that deserves analytical attention. In this thesis the Danish parliament's decision to follow the US led 'coalition of the willing' into war with Iraq, will be examined through this perspective. By applying new theoretical angles to the case study it is the aim to illuminate what motives the decision-makers within the government had for following the US to war. By applying a mechanism driven theory of IR, namely Mechanistic Realism and Foreign Policy Framework new explanations of the decision will be revealed. Mechanistic Realism and Foreign Policy Framework offers individual standalone analytical tools that can be applied to specific parts of the decision-making process.

Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen is the main unit of analysis. Fogh relied heavily on his own perceptions of the evidence that was presented to him. He reacted preemptively to the threat that he believed Saddam Hussein posed in early 2003. The theories suggest that Fogh acted under influence of concepts such as Fear, Bounded Awareness and Wishful Thinking. The findings are diverse in their nature. First and foremost Fogh had a vision for how Danish foreign policy was to develop in the future. Fogh believed that Denmark should participate more actively in international military operations in order to secure Denmark in the international community. Thereby the fundamental assumption from Mechanistic Realism is confirmed, namely that the survival of the state is held in the highest regard within the decision-maker. Combined with his close friendship with US President Bush, Fogh chose to send Denmark into war outside of the UN. Foreign Policy Framework suggests that through personal beliefs and cognitive filters, the decision-maker will process information into existing reaction patterns that are well-known for the decision-maker. Fogh relied on personal relationships and his own political view that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, when he made the decision to go to war. This decision proved crucial for the development of Danish political tradition and debate. Fogh chose to follow a superpower into a unilateral fought war, by deciding unilaterally to do so. Thereby the role of the individual decision-maker are more important in foreign policy to examine, than ever before.