

artificially boost his decision-making autonomy by circumventing the normal policymaking process.

On the whole, *American Allies in Times of War* makes a useful contribution to scholarship on military cooperation among democracies by examining how the lesser members of asymmetric alliances try to reconcile a dominant partner's expectations with their own domestic constraints. It also has the benefit of being timely. Now that the last British troops have been withdrawn from Afghanistan, readers looking to reflect on why and how they were first deployed there 13 years ago have a solid place to start.

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The People's News: Media, Politics, and the Demands of Capitalism by Joseph E. Uscinski. New York, New York University Press, 2014. 195 pp. Cloth, \$79.00; paper, \$25.00.

The basic assumption of media effects research is that the nature of the news causes changes in the audience. But what about the opposite possibility—that the audience changes the news? To test the possibility that the news might be pandering to the audience rather than telling them what to think, Joseph E. Uscinski combines survey data showing which issues the public thinks are most important at a given time with a thorough content analysis of what types of issues were covered at the start of each night's network news broadcast. Which comes first? Uscinski's analysis finds some evidence for the well-established phenomenon of agenda setting: for four issue areas, increased news coverage precedes the public belief that those issues are more important. But the more common effect that he finds is "audience-driven" coverage, with increased belief that an issue is important driving greater news coverage of that issue in seven areas. The audience would indeed seem to change the news.

Is this good or bad? The news media could be pandering to audience demands, chasing bigger audiences and more advertising dollars. Alternatively, journalists could be responsively attending to public demands that greater attention be paid to certain vital but underreported areas of civic life. To see whether news firms are being democratically responsive or undemocratically market driven, Uscinski groups the areas into Democratic- and Republican-owned issues, then tests whether more people identifying as Republicans at a given point in time drives greater news coverage of Republican-owned issues, regardless of the public's explicitly stated "most important" issues. The answer, in short, is that once these controls are incorporated into the model, the news media are not really letting the public set the news agenda. Instead,

they are merely pandering to the partisan preferences of the audience: the more Americans identify as Republicans, the more Republican issues get covered.

Although Uscinski's analyses are excellent, his conceptual picture seems incomplete. His fourth chapter abandons the rigorous, systematic, 40-year historical analysis that he uses in the prior two data chapters for a series of anecdotes drawn largely from the past decade. Noting, for example, that Fox News backed off its criticism of Tea Party candidate Christine O'Donnell when it became clear that its audience had embraced her, Uscinski argues that news firms are using new techniques to directly measure, and respond to, what their audience wants in real time.

But this mechanic of influence diverges significantly from what his data show. In his analysis, news firms did not respond directly and immediately to the audience's explicit requests for changes in coverage; instead, the influence was diffuse but systemic and structural, with journalists using their sense of the general ideological drift of the country to guide their choice of stories in a relatively unconscious way. This long-term, macro-level view of the relationship between politics and the news is dramatically different from media effects' traditional model of an individual message affecting an individual recipient at a single point in time.

Indeed, this highlights why this book is necessary. Uscinski's analysis throws doubt on many of our traditional understandings of the public and the media in political communication. The news, far from being hegemonically determinate, is continually prey to audience demands for gratification. Influence does not just occur at a single point in time but accrues gradually into major effects. We now have tools at our disposal to uncover these systematic but gradual effects both from and on media. Uscinski does so here in a largely precise and perceptive way, making *The People's News* an important work for media effects scholars.

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Why Government Fails So Often: And How It Can Do Better by Peter H. Schuck. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2014. 488 pp. \$27.95.

Everyone can agree that American government has become dysfunctional in recent years as polarization has immobilized Congress. Peter H. Schuck, however, offers a far broader and more damning assessment. He argues that even during normal political times, the federal government's policies