

Waiting for Hillary

The media image of the US in the international media 05 - 07



At the start of 2007, the media inside and out of the US had again finished with the Bush Administration: The political and military failure in Iraq dominated the media image, and the Administration itself received ever fewer opportunities to explain its point of view. The stated goals – security and democracy – are practically invisible in media coverage. The German Tagesthemen and the Canadian newscast The National are even more critical of Bush than the Hizbollah station Al Manar. One and a half years before the election, the international media jump at the question of who will run for President next year.

Due to the development of media democracy in the US, the presidential election campaign starts early. One year before the first primaries the candidates begin campaigning. This year the preliminary rounds raised great interest in the international media: British and German television journalists observed Hillary Clinton's candidacy and her early successes in raising campaign contributions intensively, almost euphorically in the spring of this year (chart 1). US television news, on the other hand, covered her much less positively – her positions on foreign policy, in particular, raised criticism.

President Bush's media image at the beginning of 2007 was disastrous: The international media started with their swan song towards the middle of his second term (chart 2). Strikingly, the share of critical statements on the US President in the Canadian TV

news (CBC The National) as well as in the German Tagesthemen was higher than in the Hizbollah station Al Manar.

Rejection in Great Britain and Germany

The analysis since January 2005 shows how the image of all US protagonists combined – whether in politics, business or society – has deteriorated dramatically in Germany and Great Britain at the beginning of this year. The opposite is true for the assessment in the newscasts of the Arab satellite channels (chart 3).

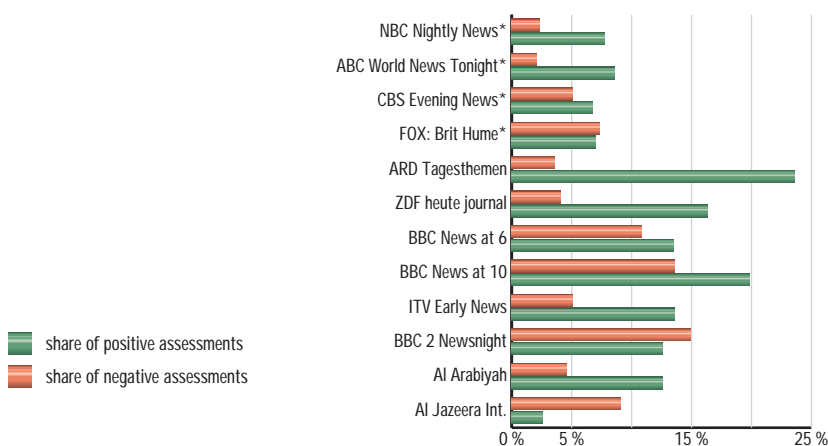
In Great Britain the downward trend is hardly surprising: The country's participation in the Iraq War has severely tainted Tony Blair's political legacy. In Germany the deterioration of the US image coincided with a time when Chancellor Angela Merkel – who, as an opposition leader, like Blair had advocated the Iraq War – was trying to normalize German-US relations. Yet while Merkel's media image is decidedly positive, the German news programs cultivate their Bush phobia.

This is a long tradition in German television (see MT 144): As early as 2003, the coverage on the Iraq War was more critical than, for example, in Al Jazeera news programs (see MT 131 & 132). And in November 2004, German journalists seemed to practically long for a changing of the guard: The image of the campaign they transmitted to Germany was quite different from that of their US colleagues (see MT 149). For the federal government it might

Research Link

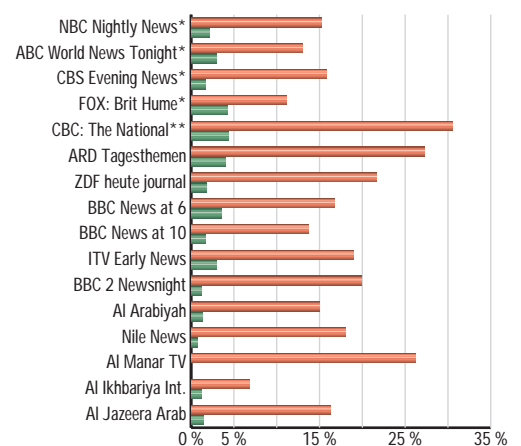
<http://www.pollingreport.com>
– current US polling results

1) Assessment of Hillary Clinton in international TV news



Share in all statements
Basis: 3,270 statements by/about Clinton in 12 international TV news programs
Time period: 01 - 03/2007 *01 - 02/2007

2) Assessment of George W. Bush in international TV news



Share in all statements
Basis: 10,131 statements by/about Bush in 18 international TV news programs
Time period: Time period: 01 - 03/2007 *01 - 02/2007 **01/2007

end up being a difficult task to justify their policies towards the US with the German public.

Militarization of coverage

At the beginning of 2007, two main trends led to the decline of the US media image. On the one hand, the share of statements on the military – framed as “the failure of the superpower” – increased significantly. On the other hand, the US government’s share-of-voice clearly decreased. In other words: International TV journalists did not let the US government talk but talked about it. Even Condoleezza Rice, the “nice face of the Bush Administration”, cut no ice any more.

To give an example: In January 2005, Bush declared that he wanted to focus on the fight for democracy during his second term – and a **Tagesthemen** editorialist considered that as a “threat”. Meanwhile the topic has simply disappeared from the media agenda (**chart 4**).

Only the 2006 congressional elections received attention – because President Bush was punished, and the Democratic Party opposition now holds a majority in Congress and the Senate. Aside from that, the topic of democracy plays no role whatsoever in the context of the US.

The fight against international terrorism as a political goal, too, disappeared from the horizon of the international news. Bush and his Administration are declared a failure. But even Hillary Clinton would first and foremost be an American president who

would have to solve the basic problems of international politics. After the end of the Cold War, there has been no new order that could effectively counter the globalization of international (in-)security. The key question for all international observers will be which policies the coming US government intends to pursue on this. Still, television audiences rarely hear about it. (ret)

Basis

Media: US: NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, FOX: Brit Hume; Kanada: CBC The National; Deutschland: ARD Tagesthemen, ZDF heute journal; Großbritannien: BBC News at 6, BBC News at 10, BBC 2 Newsnight, ITV Early News, ITV Late News; Naher Osten: Al Alam TV, Al Arabiyah, Al Ikhbariya Int., Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera International, Al Manar TV, Nile News

Period of analysis: 01/2005 - 03/2007

Analysis: All statements by or about US protagonists. Statements are information units that are defined by a relationship between the subject of reference (that is the protagonist the statement refers to), the topic (as regards the content), and the bias of the portrayal and its sources. A change in the subject of reference, topic, bias or source is registered as a new statement.

Open questions

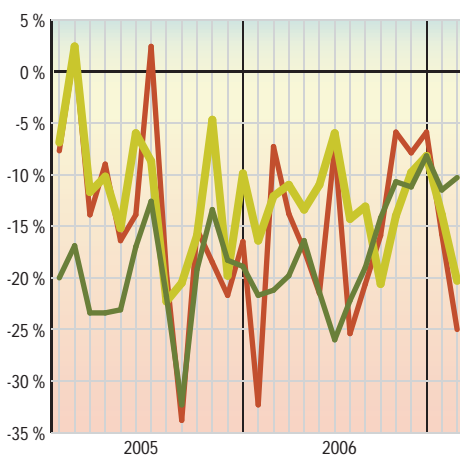
George W. Bush still has one and a half years of his presidency ahead of him. Who reports on the issues that are still on his political agenda?

What are the foreign policy goals of the Republican candidates for the presidential nomination?

Who discusses the options: What will international policy-makers be faced with when the Americans pull their troops out of Iraq?

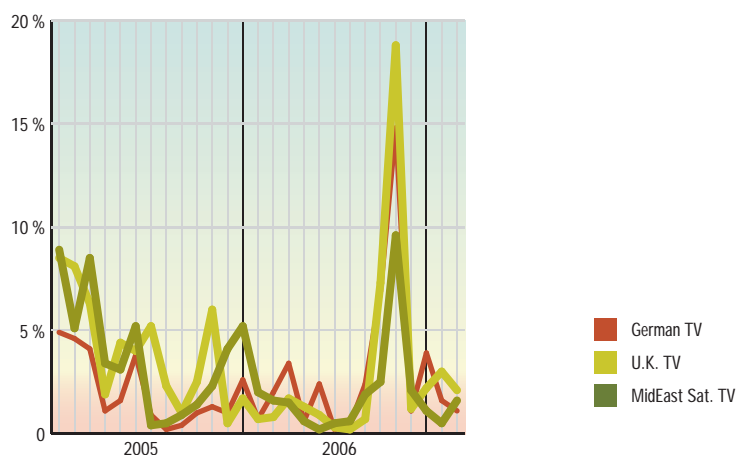
How is coverage on US politics in the Middle East developing? Will the reporting continue to focus on failures?

3) Rating on US protagonists in international TV news



Share in all statements
Basis: A total of 166,601 statements by or about US protagonists in 24 international TV news programs / Time period: 01/2005 - 03/2007

4) Assessment of the US compared across countries



Share in all statements
Basis: A total of 166,601 statements by or about US protagonists in 24 international TV news programs / Time period: 01/2005 - 03/2007