

The Impact of the “War on Terrorism” on the Mediated Image of the USA

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The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on the 9-11 led to the development of the *War of Terrorism* master frame in the USA. This master frame serves several functions both cognitive by linking together disparate facts, events and leaders, and also evaluative by naming perpetrators, identifying victims and attributing blame. Its adoption by the White House, by the US politicians and journalists allowed them to communicate a coherent, simple message to the American public, to reshape perception of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ and to convey US foreign policy priorities to the international community (Norris, Kern and Just 2003). The War on Terrorism master frame operates the function of shaping nation images. It affects the self-perception of the USA in domestic media, the international image of the USA and the images of other nations both for the US and the international audience. This is the third research on the “War on Terrorism” master frame and how it affects the representations of the USA in the Greek media.

Greek media are important because they have applied from very early a process of oppositional decoding towards the War On Terrorism master frame by activating an interpretation framework previously formulated in respond to Kosovo bombing. Previous examination of the framing of 9-11 in the editorials of Greek newspapers explored certain attributes of the oppositional framework. Contrary to the *War on Terrorism* master frame which decontextualizes the terrorist activity from its conditions and focuses on the terrorists, the victims, the future dangers and the punitive actions; the oppositional framework contextualizes the terrorist attack; focuses on the wider conditions and by doing so it rationalizes terrorism and attributes part of the responsibility to the US policies for creating such conditions. Certain reactions of the USA to the 9-11 were framed in terms of geopolitical dominance rather than defense.

The second project explores oppositional decoding in the case of Gulf War II in the Greek press. Examined are the: (a) position towards the USA military operations, (b) Framing of motivations. This project intergrated frame analysis to quantitative content analysis. The major findings were that although the attitude of the mainstream Greek press can be characterized as one mild anti-americanism and the delegitimizing frames of the US motivations dominated the editorials, the legitimizing frames dominated the hard news. This

is due to the dominance of the USA as a “credible source” in international political communication. This project explores the transformation of international political power to international communication power, the capacity of ethnocentrism to limit such transformation and the potential of the news value of objectivity to enhance it.

The last project which formulates the core of the presentations explores the impact of the “War on Terrorism” master frame on the image of the USA in a comparative perspective. All newspapers articles incorporating references to the USA in four Greek newspapers are content analyzed for a six months period. The nation image of the USA may be affected by events as well as by intermediating “constructs” (e.g. Hollywood, technology, Bush presidency, Iraq etc) We examine the evaluation patterns of the USA as well as of the intermediating construct. Also the degree of the transfer of image attributes from the intermediating construct to the nation image of the USA is examined. The result is that the more positive the evaluation pattern of an intermediating construct the lower the degree of transfer of image attributes towards the image of the USA, while the more negative the evaluation of an intermediating construct the higher the transfer of image attributes to the nation image of USA. The war on terrorisms master frame triggers particularly negative evaluations. This project examines how a war situation affects the overall nation image of a country and decreases its soft power.