



Global challenges

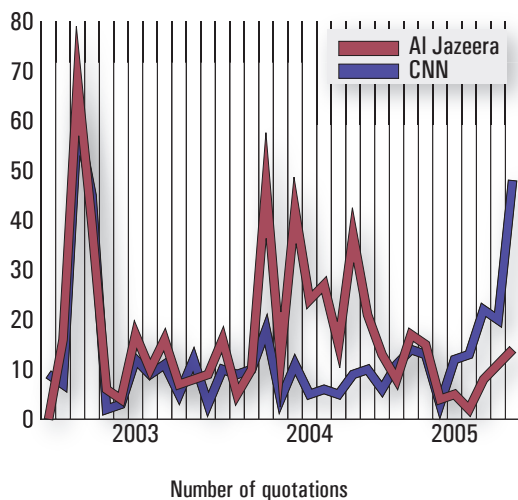
Communicating a nation in a changing media environment: the global image of the U.S.A. 2005

The worldwide media landscape is changing ever faster. New TV channels appeared, giving a voice to governments and peoples, who never before had an international representation. Websites and weblogs stretch the public sphere even beyond the community of professional news organisations. This development poses new challenges for diplomacy and international governments.

The second Gulf War, or “Operation Desert Storm”, marks the international breakthrough for CNN and the establishment of transnational satellite TV news channels as a major player in the international news system. Widely used, especially in times of war and crisis, these stations exert influence widely beyond the group of their viewers. Not only political and business protagonist are influenced by the news coverage of CNN and other satellite news channels, but also rival media organisation, be they print or electronic.

A new phase in this development was triggered by the establishment of **Al Jazeera**, the best known specimen of a new brand of Arab transnational satellite channels. In this instance too, the rise of the new programme was pushed by a war. The third Gulf War, that started with a lightning campaign of an U.S. led international coalition against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq led to the recognition of **Al Jazeera**

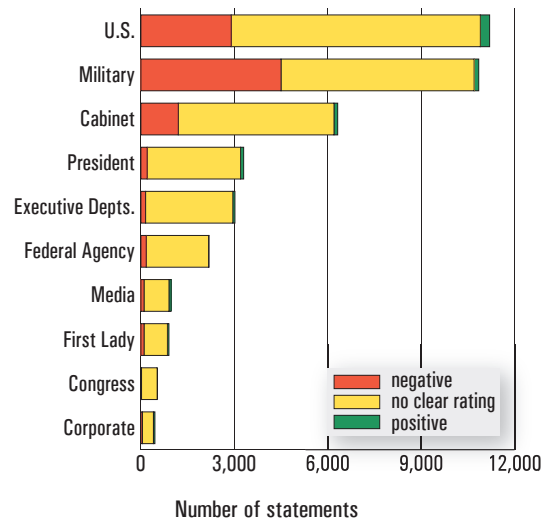
Chart 1: Quotation of Al Jazeera and CNN in German Media 2003 – 2005



Source: Media Tenor, 01/01/2003 – 09/30/2005

Basis: Quotations in leading German print and TV media

Chart 2: Top 10 U.S. protagonists, Middle East Media, 05/2005



Source: Media Tenor, 5/01 – 05/31/2005

Basis: Statements about/from U.S. government, political, business or other official protagonists

as a trustworthy news resource worldwide, widely quoted by other news media, not least in Germany (Chart 1). With CNN and **Al Jazeera** offering virtually complementary views of the military actions – with CNN showing the launching of missiles and **Al Jazeera** their impact – both channels were quoted to a comparable extent in March 2003 and the following months. When the insurgency in Iraq accelerated in 2004 quotations of **Al Jazeera** surged and only in the second quarter of 2005 CNN’s quotations outpaced those of **Al Jazeera** again.

A matter of trust

The impact of the media on the perception of foreign countries is not only influenced by the growing diversity of sources and the emergence of new players on the stage, but also by a growing distrust towards the media, triggered on one hand by a series of high-profile cases of fraud and error, especially in some renowned U.S. news outlets, ranging from the **New York Times** to **CBS** and **Newsweek**. In May 2005 the report of desecrations of the Holy Koran by U.S. troops in the last-mentioned media outlet, later disputed by official sources, proved as not sufficiently researched and retracted, fetched huge awareness worldwide. In the news coverage of six leading Arab print and TV media, media organisations comprising newsweek figured among the top ten groups of protagonists in May, showing the large impact of this issue and the high risk potential for news organisations, associated with the quest for the scoop (Chart 2).

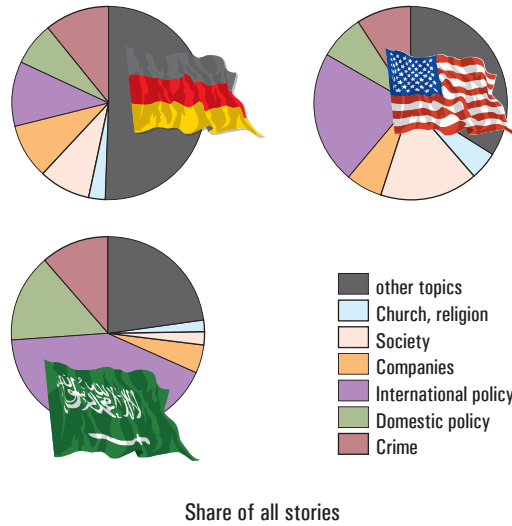
According to a recent Gallup poll, only “half of Americans say they trust the mass media to report

poll.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=18766

New kid on the block: Al Jazeera outpaced CNN for most of the last 3 years



Chart 3: Topic structure of international TV news, 01 – 06/2005



Source: Media Tenor, 01/01 – 06/30/2005
 Basis: 156,231 stories overall in 26 International TV news

the news fully, accurately, and fairly.” Although this figure increased notably in comparison with last year, it remained slightly lower than the responses in the previous years.

The authority of established news media is undermined further by the growing spread of weblogs, who offer an alternative perspective of the events, supposedly influenced less by the economic and political structures governing established media. The exposition of some factual errors in a CBS newscast about George W. Bush’s military record by a weblog,

indicating a rather careless use of unproven sources, led to a inglorious end of the career of TV icon Dan Rather in March 2005

New challenges

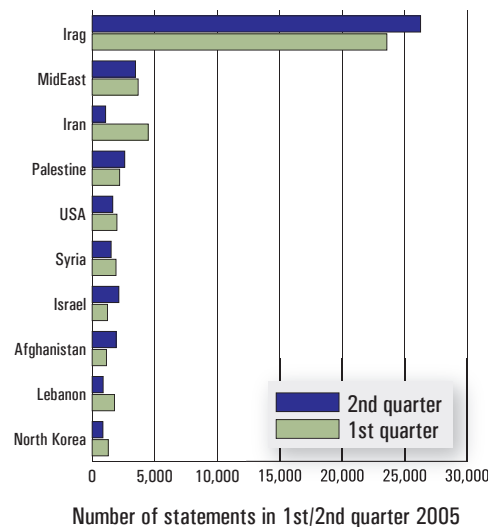
The emergence of new media and the reduced authority of established news media has changed the global media landscape allowing for a significantly reduced margin for official communication. Whereas news agencies, press conferences and established media contacts were the ordinary channels of communication in the era before the establishment of CNN, today governments and multinational companies have to cope with a growing number of diverse news arenas. But the globalisation of business and communication even poses threats to companies active only on national markets by exposing their dependency on transnational business relations, which might not be compatible with domestic standards, as was experienced by Nike, when the use of forced labor by subcontractors, damaged the international reputation of the company.

The diversity of news outlets over the world is evident in the singleminded concentration on war and conflict in the news structure of Arab media outlets in the first half of 2005: About 42% of all news stories in five Arab TV news shows dealt with international policy, compared with 22.2% in U.S. network news and 10.9% in German TV – a country not involved in counter-insurgency operations in Iraq (Chart 3).

In a worldwide perspective, conflict has become the trademark of the United States in the coverage of the leading news outlets. The occupation of Iraq continues to dominate the international image of the U.S., indicated even by a slight increase of Iraq-related conflict news in the second quarter of 2005 (Chart 4). The global commitment of the United States contributes to the impression of the Americans as worldwide troublemaker, with news about conflicts with Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon and North Korea adding to controversial news.

The intensive coverage of the occupation and insurgency in Iraq has evolved as a major factor in the global war against terrorism and the struggle for a democratisation process in the Middle East. The widely watched Arab news channels undermine the image of the USA and strengthens opposing forces by generating moral and material support worldwide. In the same time, Western news outlets have lost credibility at home and abroad, depriving governments and international organisations of a prime instrument of communication and legitimation. Western governments and news organisations will only overcome this divide, if they manage to start a new constructive dialogue with their new competitors. ck

Chart 4: Coverage of the U.S. associated with conflicts, 01 – 06/05



Source: Media Tenor, 01/01 – 06/30/2005
 Basis: Statements about/from U.S. government, political, business or other official protagonists

Iraq remains a burden American troops, resources and reputation