

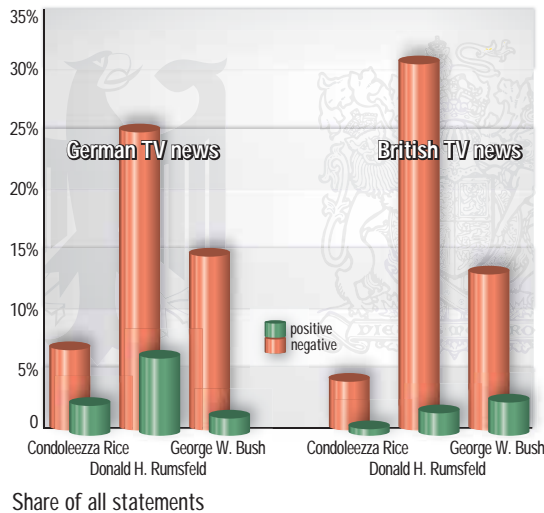
Dubyu has gambled his standing away

George W. Bush's media image in Germany and Great Britain 2002 till 2006

1) The image of American top politicians in Germany and Great Britain



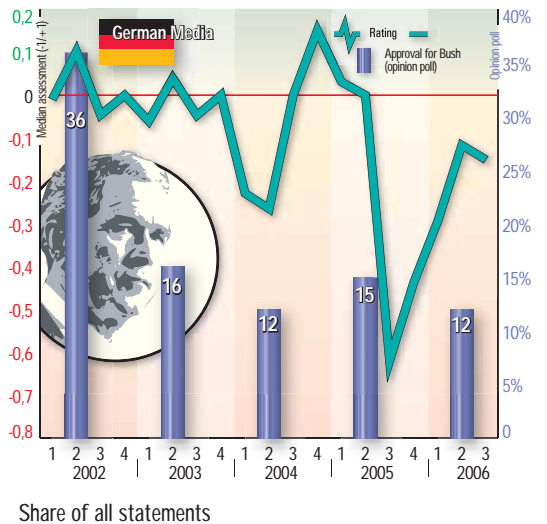
In British news, Katrina washed away the remaining trust in Bush



Source: Media Tenor
01/01/2002 - 10/15/2006

Basis: 19.326 statements in 3 German and 3 British TV news

2) Bush's image in Germany: TV news and opinion polls



Source: Media Tenor
01/01/2002 - 09/30/2006

Basis: 1.759 stories on George W. Bush in 7 German TV news

Donald Rumsfeld received most criticism in Germany and Great Britain

In the mid-term elections, the US voters have finally arrived at a view in line with how the German TV news covered the 2004 presidential campaign. The media image of the US President in Germany and Great Britain has not been able to recover from the setbacks of the past few years. It remains questionable whether or not the dismissal of the "scapegoat" Donald Rumsfeld and a more amenable attitude towards the Democrats' political ideas will truly improve his image.

American culture and US products are leading the way in Europe, yet the opposition to US politics continues unabated in the fourth year after the Iraq War. The leading people of the US government have been under criticism for years. The public's lack of understanding for President George W. Bush and the critical media coverage reinforce one another – not only in Germany. In its latest poll Transatlantic Trends 2006, the Marshall-Fund draws a sobering conclusion: "The share of Europeans, who find a leading role of the US in international politics desirable, fell from 64% in 2002 to 37% in 2006; the share of those who reject a leading US role, increased from 31% to 57%. The sharpest drop among the European countries can be observed in Germany, that is from 68% in 2002 to 43% in 2006. The fact that the government under Angela Merkel has been more open towards the US does not seem to have had any effect on the population's attitudes.

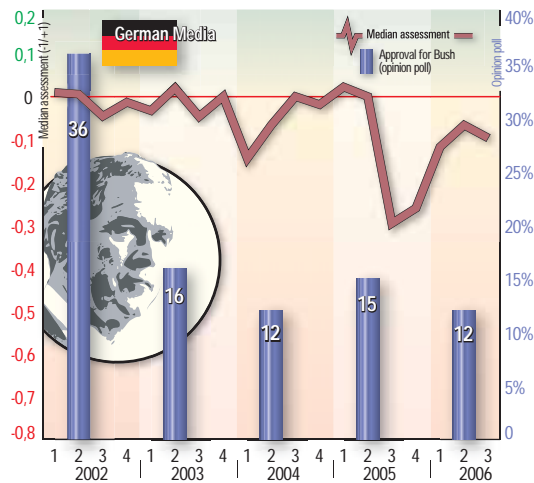
The German media had mistrusted Bush from the beginning of his first term. Yet the German government and most of the German people did support his reaction to the attacks on September 11th and the war against the Taliban. The Iraq War, however, turned public opinion around, and this was confirmed in the past few years by the failure to pacify the country on the one hand, and the continued revelations about the dubious premise for the war on the other.

Bush and the Bush-whisperers

The US President catered to the media's clichés. His yearlong loyalty towards Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld confirmed his critics in Europe in their assumptions about the intellectual deficits of the President and the crucial role of his advisors. Against all knowledgeable advice from leading military experts, George W. Bush remained entirely unconcerned by the development of the war, which had grave consequences for the standing of the US government in the world. Of the leading protagonists, Bush and Rumsfeld, in particular, were criticized in 2006. In the British and German TV news, Rumsfeld stood as the main person responsible for the tragedy in Iraq (graph 1).

Until Spring 2004, successes and setbacks for George W. Bush's media image were somewhat balanced in the German news, but the disclosure of Abu Ghraib and the continued insurrection in Iraq attracted heavy criticism. His re-election only brought tem-

3) Bush's media image: Explicit assessments and polling results



Median assessment: Explicit value judgment (i.e. "war criminal")

Source: Media Tenor
01/01/2002 – 09/30/2006

Basis: 1.759 stories about George W. Bush in 7 German TV-News

porary relief, while the hapless reaction to Hurricane Katrina brought his media image to the absolute low point of his presidency (graph 2).

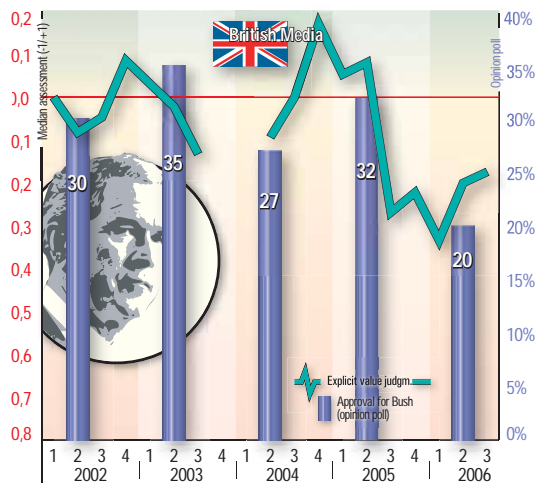
A President at the pillory

Yet the loss of trust in Germany, which is reflected in the polls from 2002 and 2003, cannot be explained with the overall image of his media presence. It rather results from explicit value judgments through commentaries and quotes that were printed or broadcast by the media: In the 3rd quarter of 2002, such assessments by then Chancellor Schröder or members of his party were more often than not negative (graph 3).

In the subsequent years, there was an overhang of positive assessments only in two quarters. The President's media image slightly recovered, but ended in the 2nd quarter of 2006 on a level below that of the period before the Abu-Ghraib-scandal. It is hardly surprising that the share of Germans supporting Bush's foreign policy has lately dropped to 12%. With this background, the Marshall Fund's conclusion, that "Europeans continue to differentiate between their judgment of President Bush and the US in general", does appear to be too sanguine.

In the British media, the President's image was subjected to much greater volatility in the past years, but even here, Bush no longer managed to gain any traction for himself after "Katrina" (graph 4). To regain lost trust is a difficult business, both nationally and internationally. The Bush administration

4) Bush's image in Great Britain: TV news and opinion polls



Share of all statements

Source: Media Tenor
01/01/2002 – 09/30/2006

Basis: 711 stories about George W. Bush in 3 British TV-News

has chosen the opposite path, obstinately refusing to build trust with the Europeans. In retrospect, the succession of bad judgments and self-delusions has proven its critics right.

Basis:

Media: BBC 1 6 o'Clock News, BBC 1 News at Ten, BBC 2 Newsnight; ARD Tagesthemen, ZDF heute journal. **Long-term analysis:** ARD Tagesthemen, ZDF heute journal, ARD Tagesschau, ZDF heute, RTL Aktuell, SAT.1 News/18:30, ProSieben Newstime, BBC 1 6 o'Clock News, BBC 1 News at Ten (no data from 10/01/2003 - 03/31/2004)*.

Opinion Poll: Computer-assisted telephone survey of about 1000 individuals older than 18 years in 13 countries by TNS Opinion on behalf of the German Marshall Fund of the United States **Period of analysis:** 01/01 – 10/15/2006

Analysis: Analysis of the coverage on George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld on the level of individual statements

Long-term analysis: Analysis of the news stories, in which George W. Bush was the main protagonist, on the level of news stories

Period of analysis: 01/01/2002 – 09/30/2006

Research Links:

<http://www.transatlantictrends.org/>
<http://transatlantictrends.org/showdoc.cfm?id=95>