

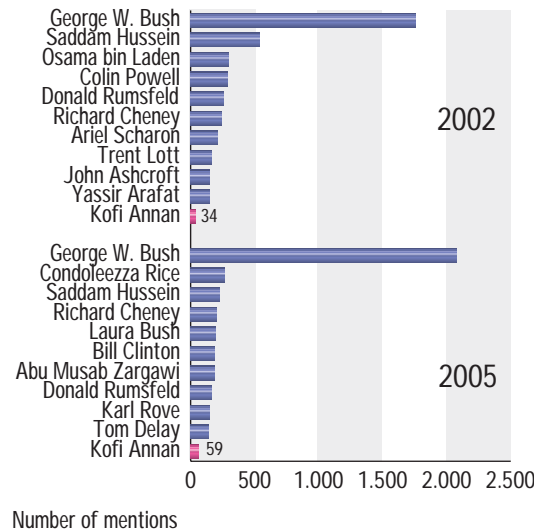
# Chances for the Newcomer

The communication balance of the United Nations in an international comparison



Kofi Annan

## 1) Presence of Kofi Annan in US TV: 2002 and 2005



Source: Media Tenor 01-12/2002 and 01-12/2005 Basis: 67.698 mentions of persons in 3 US TV news

public's attention with their key issues of development aid, securing peace and human rights. International conflicts, terrorism and scandals shaped the news and led to a steep decline in popularity for the UN.

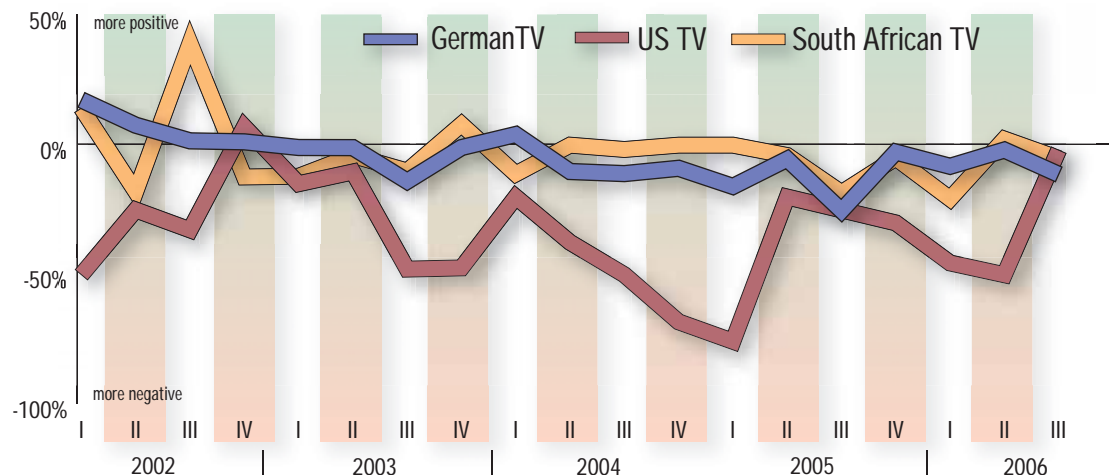
Representatives of the UN played only a minor role in the coverage of German, US and South African news outlets. Graph 1 illustrates Kofi Annan's weak presence, for example, in US television news. Although the aftermath of 9/11 and the beginning of the Iraq crisis in 2002 were great challenges for the UN, the General Secretary was only a marginal figure. Instead, the TV audiences in the US were overloaded with information on Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Even in 2005, the 60th anniversary of the UN, general awareness of Kofi Annan was only slightly higher. Annan's report on the reform of the United Nations, "In Larger Freedom", was barely mentioned in the main news of ABC, NBC and CBS.

**"The United Nations are potentially the source of fascinating information. However, they must be communicated appropriately, because public support is indispensable for strengthening the organization..."** said the report of General Secretary Kofi Annan on September 9th, 2002. The Media Tenor analysis of international television news demonstrates that, in the past few years, the UN barely managed to attract the

The relationship between the UN and the US have been strained for many years now. The international comparison of TV news coverage shows to what extent the UN's image has suffered in US news (graph 2). The corruption scandal in the "Oil for Food" aid program for Iraq fuelled new criticism of the UN and plunged it into a deep credibility crisis. The UN has a keen interest in presenting itself and its key issues more strongly in public again. In order to achieve this goal, it

## 2) More restraint in German television

Recently in the US news, the United Nations were criticized less vehemently. "The choice of Ban Ki Moon is primarily an expression of the new balance of power between the US and China, the two strongest protagonists in the Security Council...", wrote the German daily Tageszeitung in its editorial on October 9th, 2006.



Mean assessment of the UN over time: 01/2002 – 09/2006, Assessment of the United Nations over time

Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2002 – 09/30/2006 Basis: overall 501.297 stories in 15 TV news

must continually inform the media about its activities. In the past years, the UN barely managed to communicate its diverse range of issues to the media. Social, economic and ecological projects remained hidden to the public. Yet with a stronger focus on and public awareness of those issues in particular, the UN could regain trust. Since 2002, coverage of the UN has increasingly been focusing on conflicts, terrorism and criminality.

Aside from the conflict in the Middle East, its media image was primarily overshadowed by the conflict in Iraq. The topical structure in the US news is an example of the battered image of the UN in the world (graph 3). Since 2004, criticism of the UN's role and its missions have increased significantly. Media awareness of socio-political issues such as public health or the fight against AIDS, however, is nearly irrelevant with an average share of 5% of all TV news stories. If anything, the South African news came closest to offering a platform to the UN. Health, development aid and the fight against poverty made up 10% of overall coverage. In the German news, too, the social commitment of the UN was more strongly appreciated. Yet its key competencies also remained hidden from the public.

For the United Nations, continuous and sustainable communication is essential. In order to mobilize the necessary support for its work, the UN needs to practice an active and more focused media policy.

The new General Secretary, Ban Ki Moon, therefore has a lot to do. Apart from the reform of the UN and the relationship with the US, it is another major challenge to effectively provide diverse information. For the UN, a good media image in the "donor countries" is crucial. It will be interesting to see what Ban Ki Moon, with his "iron hand in a silk glove"\*, will do to accomplish this task. (am)

The key issues of the UN such as development aid, human rights or climate protection were not visible in the media. International conflicts shaped the UN's media image and had a significant influence on the negative image.

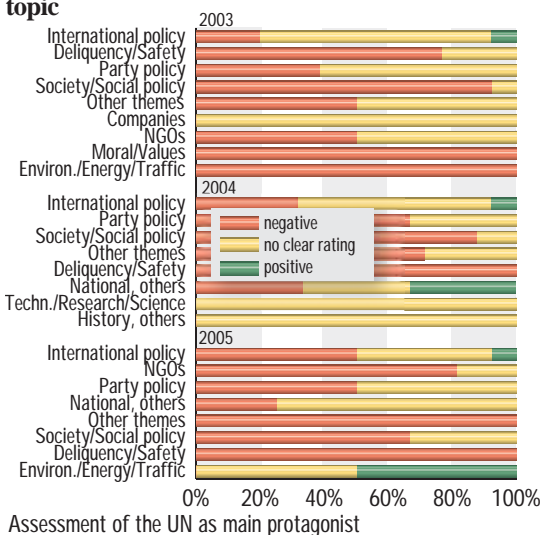
Basis:

**Media:** ARD Tagesthemen, ARD Tagesschau, ZDF heute journal, ZDF heute, RTL Aktuell, SAT.1 News, Pro Sieben Newstime, NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, Afrikaans News (SABC 2), English News (SABC 3), E-TV News, Zulu/Xhosa News, Sotho News

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

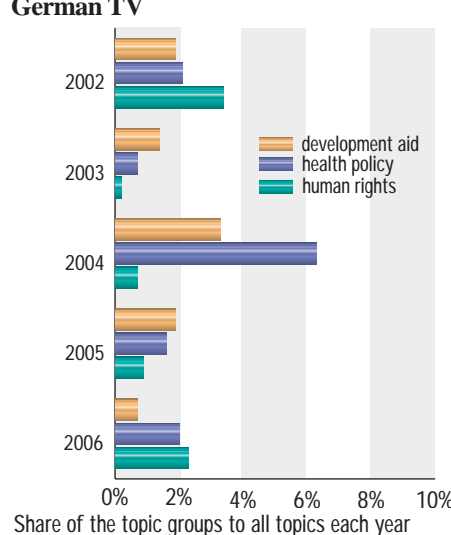
**Analysis:** All reports with bodies of UN as the main protagonist out of a total of 501.297 reports in 15 TV news broadcasts. All descriptions of Kofi Annan of min. 5 seconds length out of 925.902 mentions of persons.

**3) Assessment of the UN in US TV grouped by topic**



Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2003 – 12/31/2005 Source: 438 stories on the UN in 3 US TV news

**4) Share of selected topic groups on the UN in German TV**



Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2002 – 09/30/2006 Basis: 2.281 stories on the UN in 7 German TV news