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ABSTRACT

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Media, Nationalism and Foreign Policy: From September 11th to the War in Iraq

This presentation attempts to explore the dynamics of the relationship between Nationalism and Foreign Policy in Bush's America, from 9/11 to the war in Iraq, as well as the decisive role the Media play as amplifiers of such a relationship, through their agenda-setting and the way of reporting news stories about national collective identities and the national 'others'.

Following a theoretical and empirical investigation of a messianic-religious nature of the new American Nationalism's content which invokes the 'uniqueness' of the American nation which was entrusted with the mission to eliminate the 'axis of evil', this paper will maintain that its promotion to the American President's rhetoric as well as to the American Media's reporting constitutes a strategic foreign policy choice. This strategy aims at the moral justification of the military operations in the eyes of the American public opinion, taking into account the high percentage of religious belief in the American society, as well as its global legitimation through the traditional American invocation of higher moral values of universal proportions which are threatened by terrorists and the regimes which support them.

The Bush's Administration needs to utilize, at the domestic front, ideologically charged nationalistic language in order to receive public support for his foreign policy decisions. This harmonizes perfectly with U.S. international geopolitical priorities which dictate the implementation of an aggressive, unilateral foreign policy, aiming to remove from power regimes which are non-friendly (or hostile) towards the U.S. However, such a policy undermines the very same universalistic values which America represents and allegedly struggles to protect. This tragic irony of American politics became evident in the period from 9/11 to the war in Iraq, explains the impressive shift in global public opinion against the U.S. On the contrary, the American citizens supported in their majority the policy of President Bush. Finally this study stresses the need for a re-harmonization, by the U.S., of power with ideals, as a guarantee of global security for the new century.