

Theorizing US Media Diplomacy

Robert M. Entman

NCSU/GWU

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Paucity of theories

Gilboa's (2000) six-fold scheme includes **public diplomacy** and **media diplomacy**

- “Public Diplomacy” typically uses media communications along with interpersonal etc., and is oriented to longer-term cultivation of favorability toward US by foreign publics

Media Diplomacy

Media diplomacy (“uses of the mass media to communicate with state and nonstate actors, to build confidence and advance negotiations, as well as to mobilize public support for agreements.”) (Gilboa 2000).

Focus here: media diplomacy as short range, specific appeals for support of US policy directed at both domestic and foreign audiences.

Lacunae in theorizing media and US public diplomacy

- The central theoretical (and perhaps practical) question: understanding **the conditions under which foreign support for US foreign policies can be stimulated by US public and media diplomacy.**
- Yet no theory fully explains media coverage and public opinion indicators toward US policy—and thus influence official policy choices—*within the US.*
- Still less, then, do we have a theory of whether and how messages from the US activate and spread through other political communication systems.

Caveats

1. Foreign opposition/resistance to US positions may be grounded in better information, not in ignorance (or failures of US public diplomacy).
2. Does foreign *public* opinion really matter? Ultimately is it elite action, not public opinion, that is truly the target of public and media diplomacy?
3. Yet there is no consensus on the impact of “public opinion” (or even the definition of the term) on US foreign policy, let alone on other nations’ policies and reactions to the US.

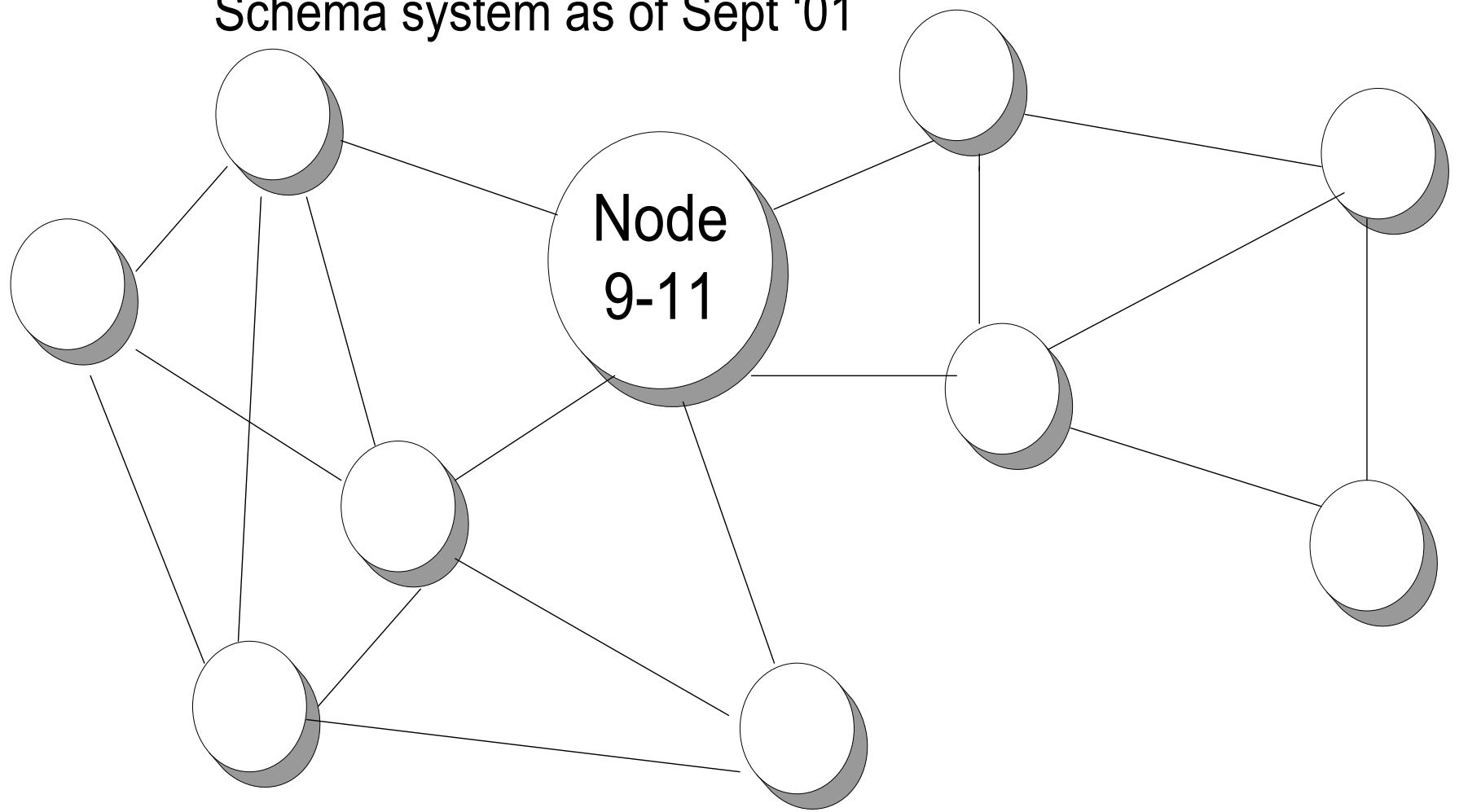
Overview

- Media diplomacy as presidential attempt to control news frames
- Theories of president/US govt, media and public opinion in foreign policy
 - Hegemony
 - Indexing
 - Cascading network activation
- Control of domestic media frames is contested
- Problematic implications for theory and practice of public/media diplomacy: *Media Diplomacy as an impossible dream?*
- Conclusion: the need for theory to guide public and media diplomacy research and practice

Bush and Iraq

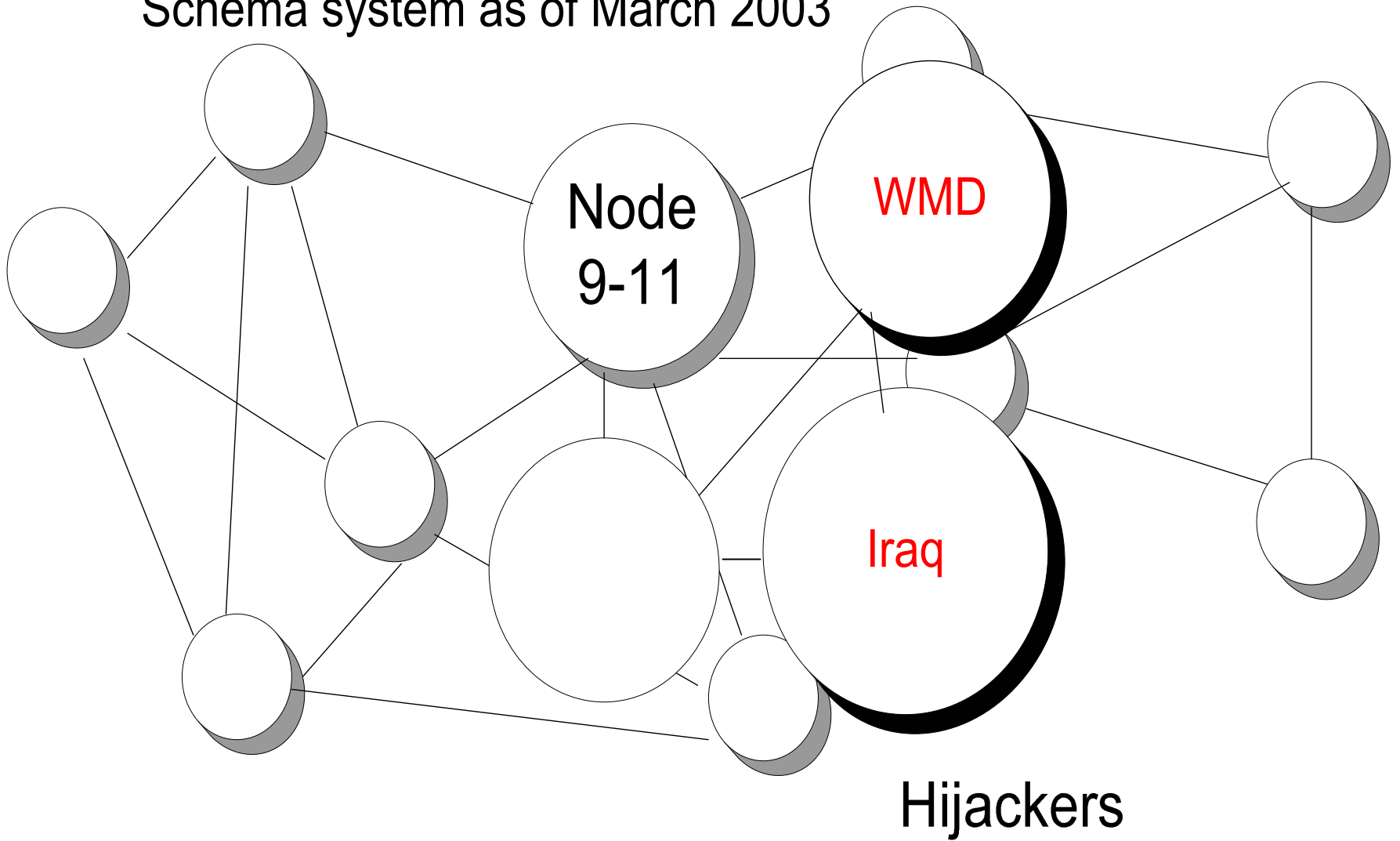
Media Diplomacy requires presidential control of news frame activation and diffusion. Example: 9/11 and Iraq.

Schema system as of Sept '01

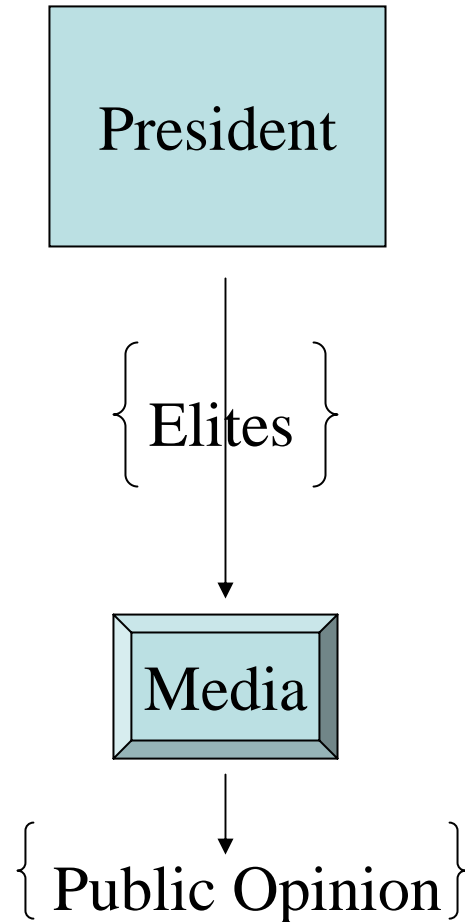


Hijackers

Schema system as of March 2003



Hegemony model



MAY 13, 2002

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

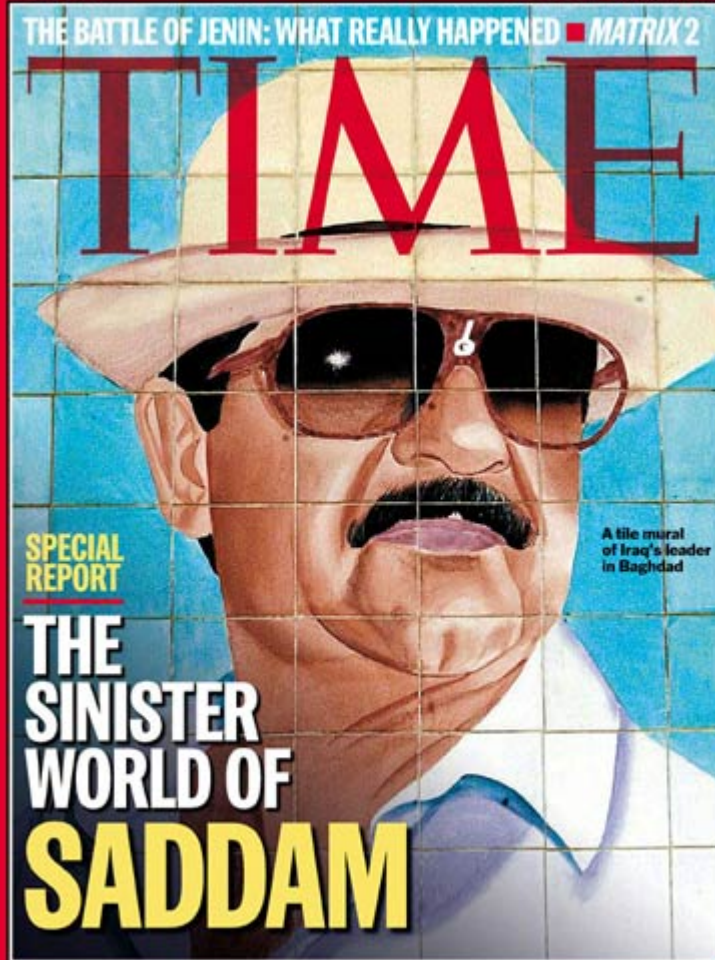
THE BATTLE OF JENIN: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED ■ *MATRIX 2*

TIME

SPECIAL
REPORT

A tile mural
of Iraq's leader
in Baghdad

THE
SINISTER
WORLD OF
SADDAM



MARCH 31, 2003

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

SPECIAL ISSUE

TIME

GULF
WAR II

BAGHDAD
MARCH 21, 2003

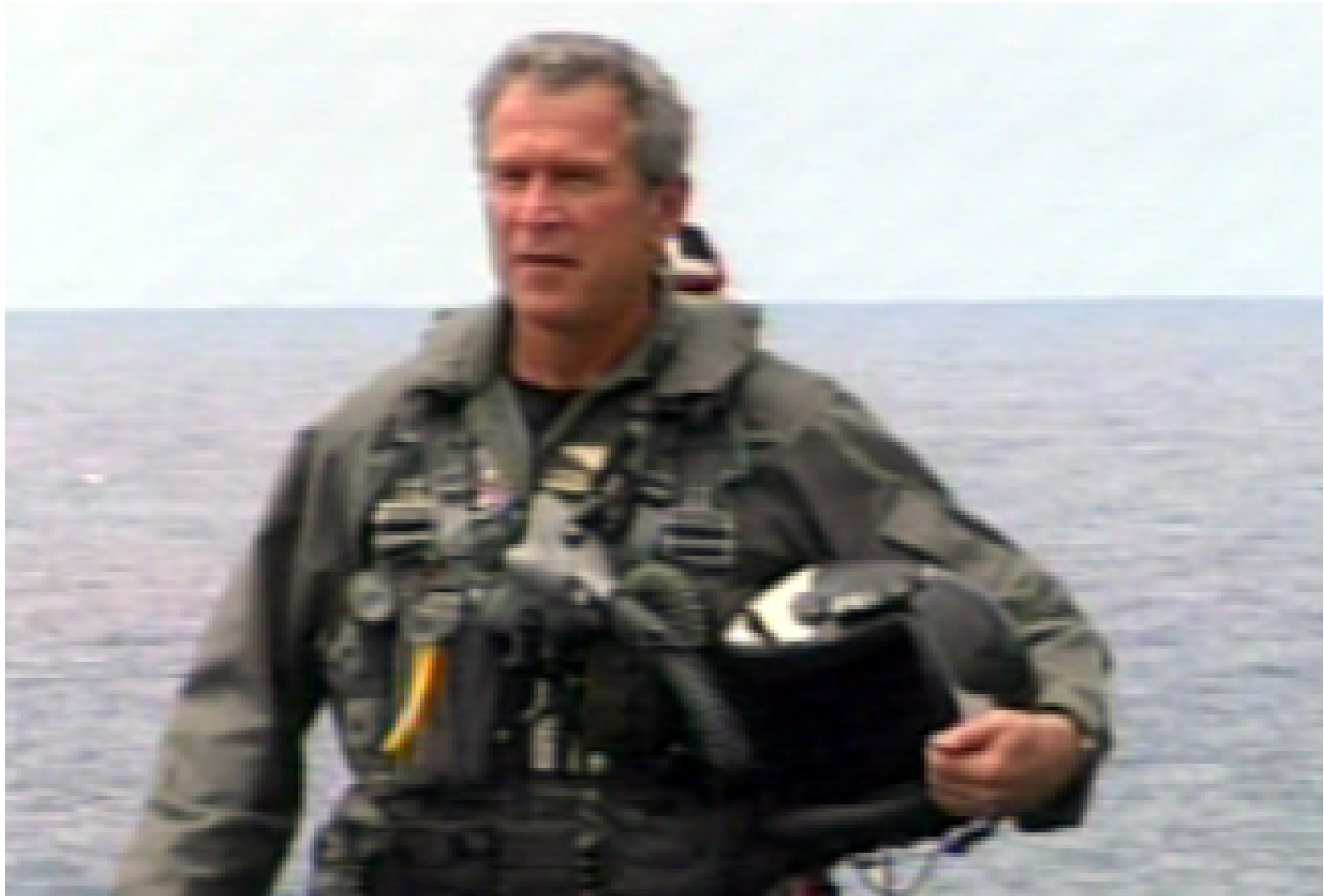


A Staggering Blow to the Heart of the Iraqi Capital



BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 21 — The American war on Saddam Hussein exploded tonight in a ferocious display of precision bombing and cruise missile strikes that blasted the heart of the Iraqi ruler's power with a spectacular opening bulls-eye on his most forbidding palace and continued with at least 100 more devastating volleys in the first two hours.

Most of the strikes appeared aimed at the few square miles of the capital that have been the monumental showcase for Mr. Hussein's brutal form of authoritarian rule.

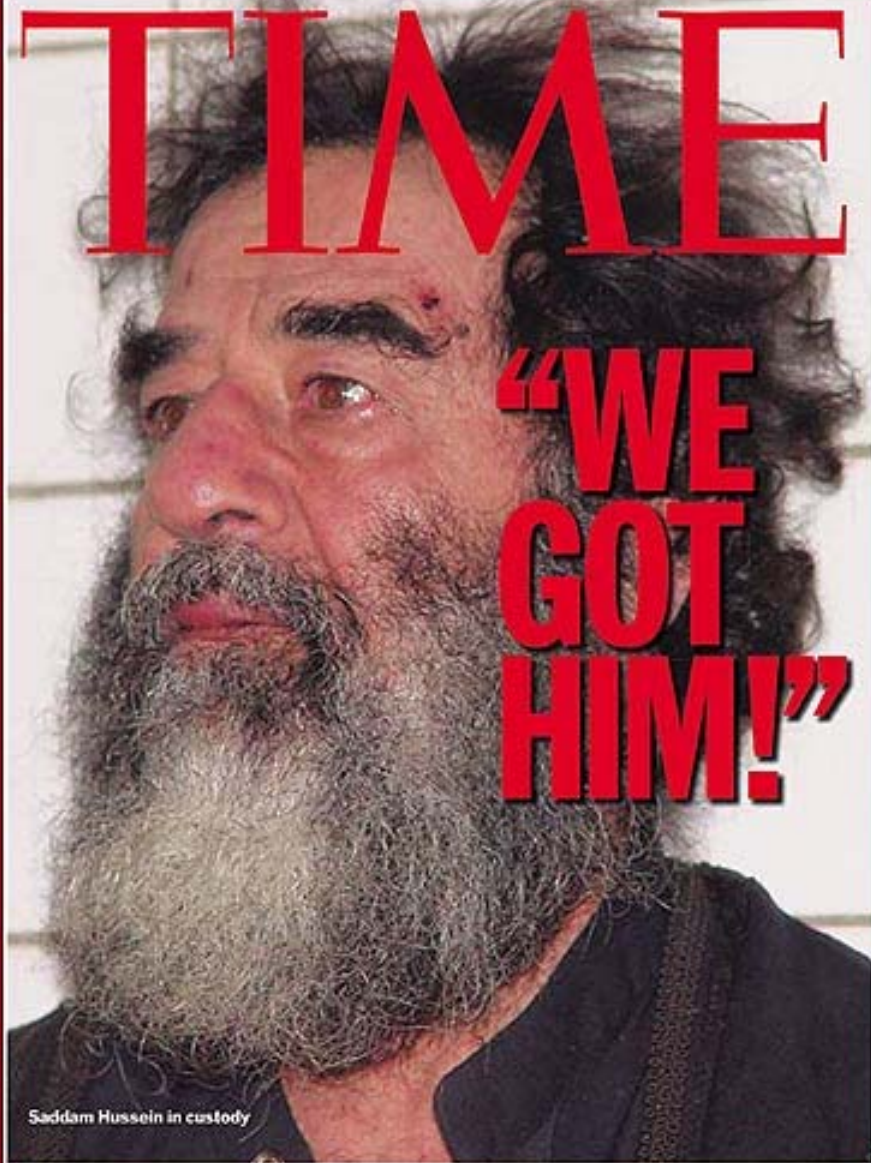






DECEMBER 22, 2003

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME



Saddam Hussein in custody

DECEMBER 29, 2003 / JANUARY 5, 2004

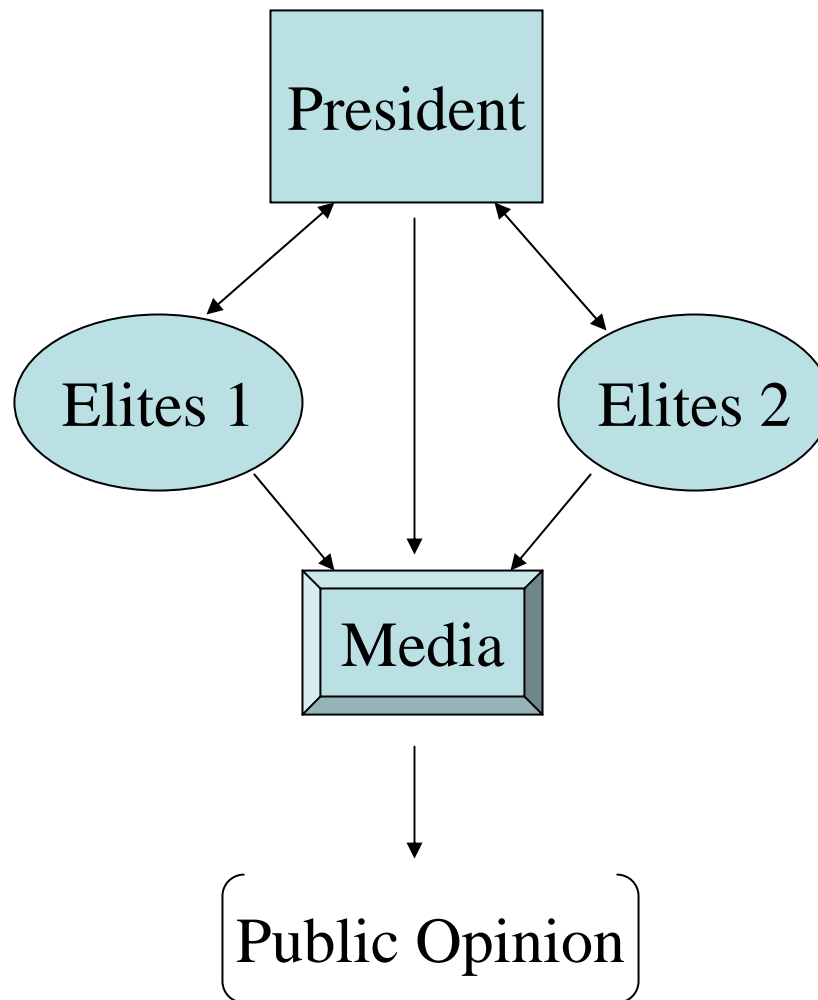
www.fox.com AOL Keyword: TIME

PERSON OF THE YEAR



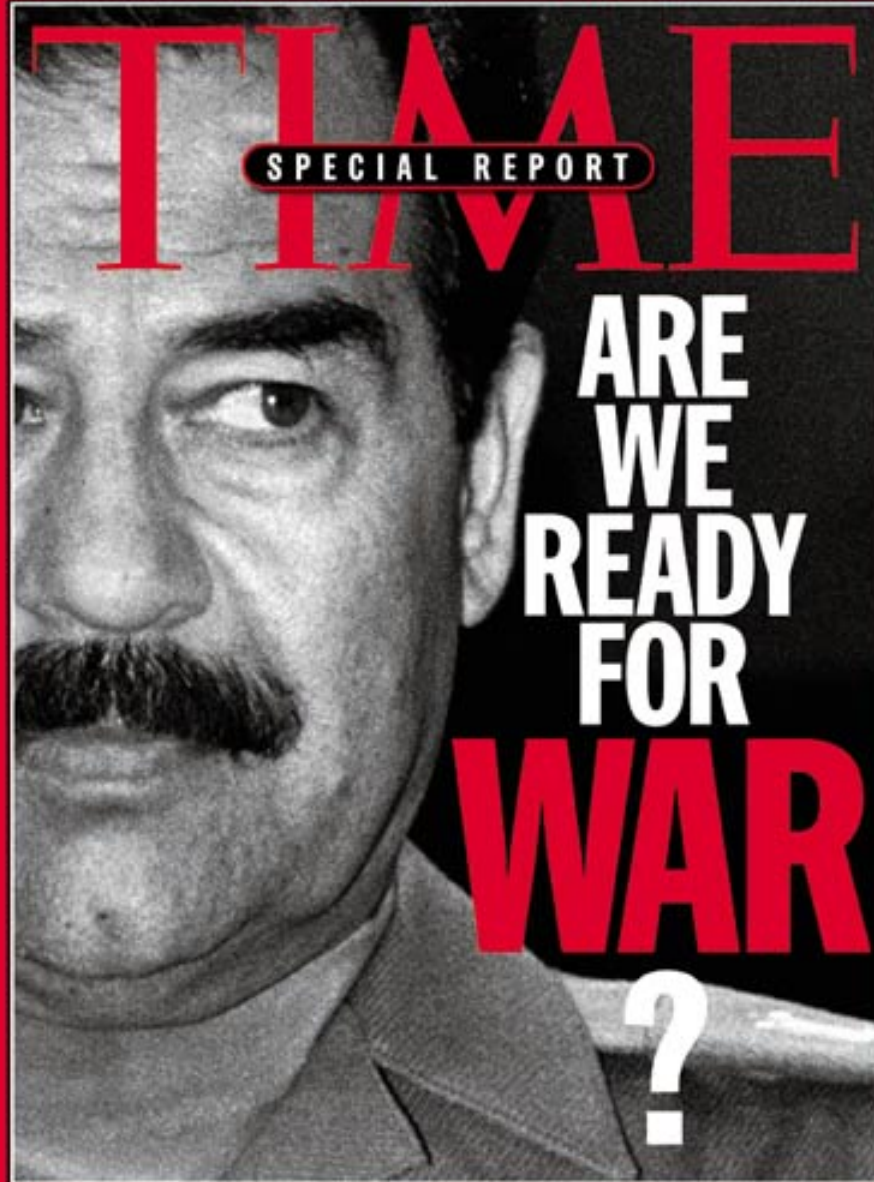
**THE
AMERICAN
SOLDIER**

Indexing model



SEPTEMBER 16, 2002

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME



JANUARY 13, 2003

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

TIME

THE BIGGER THREAT?

KIM JONG IL

NORTH KOREA'S dictator is a nuclear menace.
Why he may be more dangerous than Saddam



MARCH 3, 2003

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

TIME

A photograph of George W. Bush dressed as Uncle Sam, wearing a top hat with a white star on a blue band and a blue jacket with a red bow tie. He is pointing directly at the viewer with a serious expression.

**DO YOU WANT
THIS WAR?**

- WHY AMERICANS ARE TORN
- BUSH'S U.N. GAMBLE
- **EXCLUSIVE** HANS BLIX ON IRAQ:
"THEY HAVE NO CREDIBILITY"

Quotes or paraphrases from Democrats on Iraq July-October 2002

	ABC World News	NBC Nightly News
Questioning remedy	29	14
Questioning process	39	26
Questioning problem definition/cause	12	1
Questioning Bush's moral legitimacy	1	2
<i>Supporting</i> Bush	25	10
Other	8	8
Total	114	61

TEPID OPPOSITIONAL RHETORIC

9/16/02: DEMOCRATIC SENATE MAJORITY LEADER TOM DASCHLE: So, we'd be more than willing to take the model that we used in the post-9/11 period, where we sat down together, wrote a resolution on a use of force, and came up with a unanimous vote.

10/3/02: RICHARD GEPHARDT (Democratic House Minority Leader): I mean, let's get serious here. We're not playing games here. This is about life and death. This is about whether or not we can prevent terrorist attacks in the United States.

Cascade Model Reveals Media As Semi-Autonomous Actor

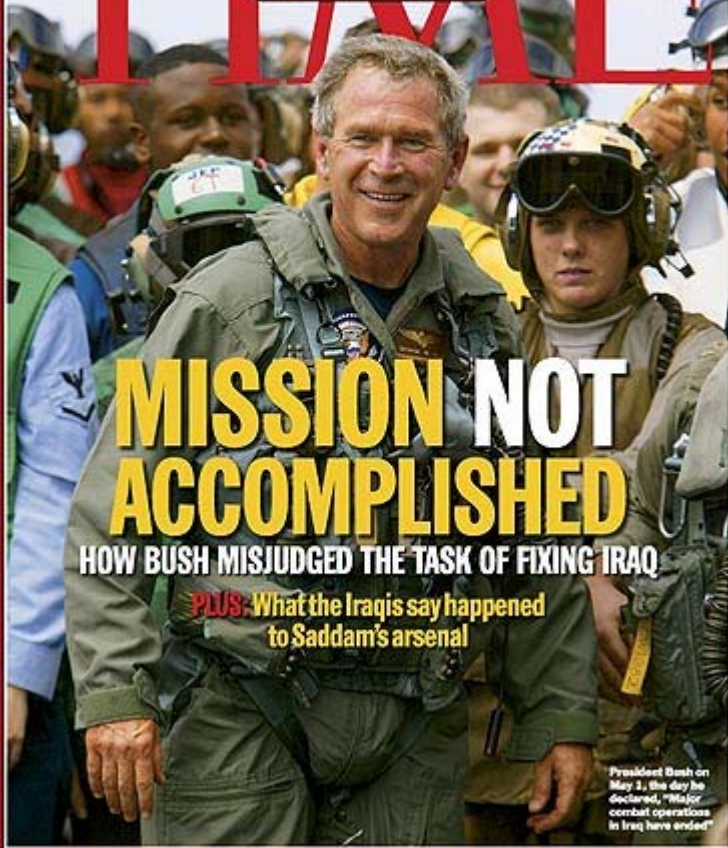


OCTOBER 6, 2003

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

TIME

SPECIAL REPORT



MISSION NOT ACCOMPLISHED

HOW BUSH MISJUDGED THE TASK OF FIXING IRAQ

PLUS: What the Iraqis say happened to Saddam's arsenal

President Bush on May 3, the day he declared, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended"

Lacunae and implicit assumptions of hegemony and indexing

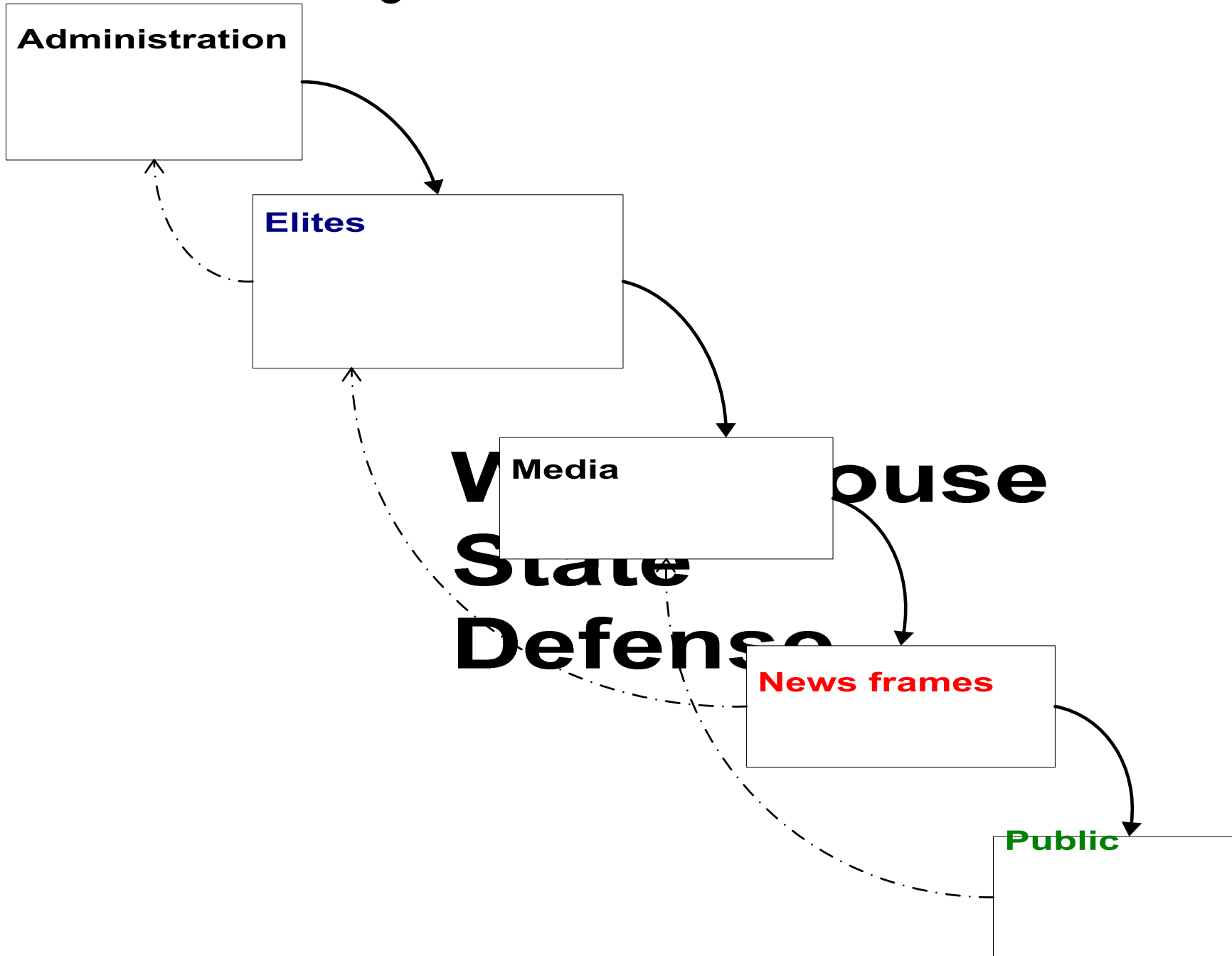
1. All presidents and administrations possess equal ability and inclination to manage news
2. For reasons unknown, elites sometimes decide to oppose and other times to support the president
3. All non-administration elites possess equal ability and inclination to challenge White House frames
4. Media process all foreign policy events and issues similarly
5. Media content and public opinion are entirely dependent variables
6. Elites can reliably detect and decide to respond to, manipulate, or ignore public opinion.
7. All media content is equivalent: all media and all statements of opposition and support have equal impact

Frame Contestation Continuum: Why *Do* Frame Contests Arise? Cascade model offers answers

Frame Dominance..... ..Frame Contestation Frame Parity



Cascading Network Activation



Cascade model adds:

1. Hierarchy of networks through which mental associations (frames in texts, schemas in minds) activate and spread.
2. The president/administration have the greatest power to initiate these associations, but each succeeding level also has some potential impact, and clear feedback paths exist.
3. Variation among presidents, specific issues, political conditions and so forth are taken into account.

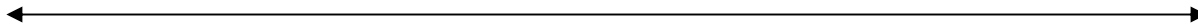
Cascade model includes 4 factors explaining frame diffusion

- **Motivations and cultural congruence** work internally to "pull" counter-framing (in US, anti-administration) mental associations into individuals' (elite and public) thinking. **Elite power and strategy**, on the other hand, operate from the outside to "push" consideration of anti-administration frames through the cascading system.

Cultural Congruence Key to Elite, Media and Public Responses

Stimulus: Congruent.....AmbiguousIncongruent

Response: Habitual.....Contested.....Blocked

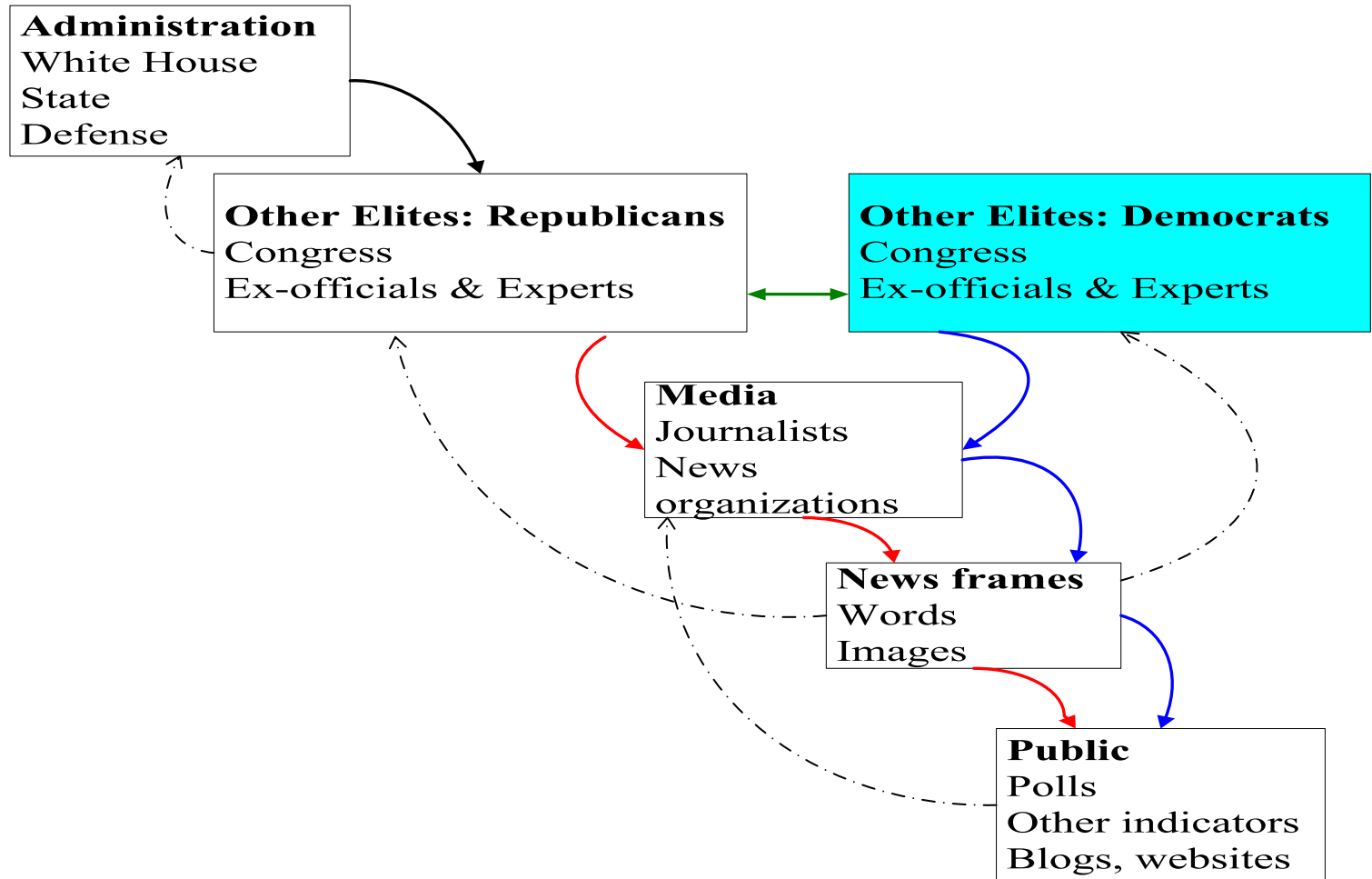


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Tipping point

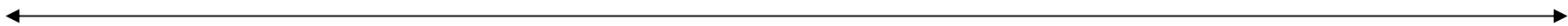
Media Diplomacy?: Perfect storm of opposition



Cascade of frame contestation

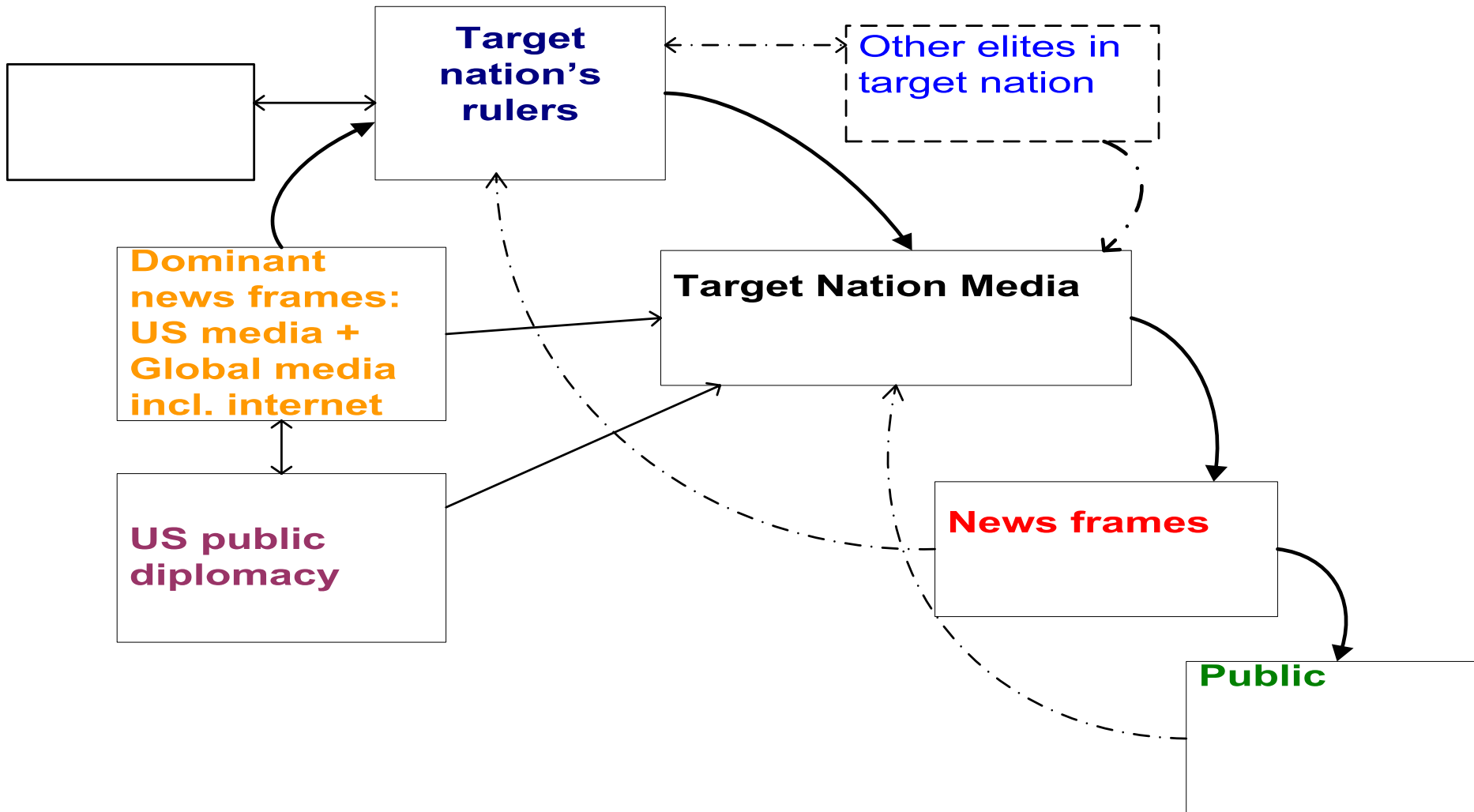


Frame Contestation Continuum in Target Nations: Media diplomacy goal to spread activation of pro-US counter- frames to often-dominant anti-US frames



Anti-US Frame Dominance.....Frame Contestation that includes US frame.....Impossible Dream: Frame Parity

Cascading Network Activation from US to Foreign Nation



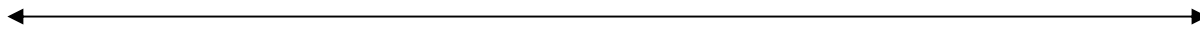
Will pro-US counterframe activate and spread in target nation?

It requires cultural congruence between target nation and US policy, or cultural ambiguity at minimum. Then it depends on elite/public motivations, and on elite power and strategy.

Cultural Congruence: Elite, Media and Public Responses

Stimulus: Congruent.....AmbiguousIncongruent

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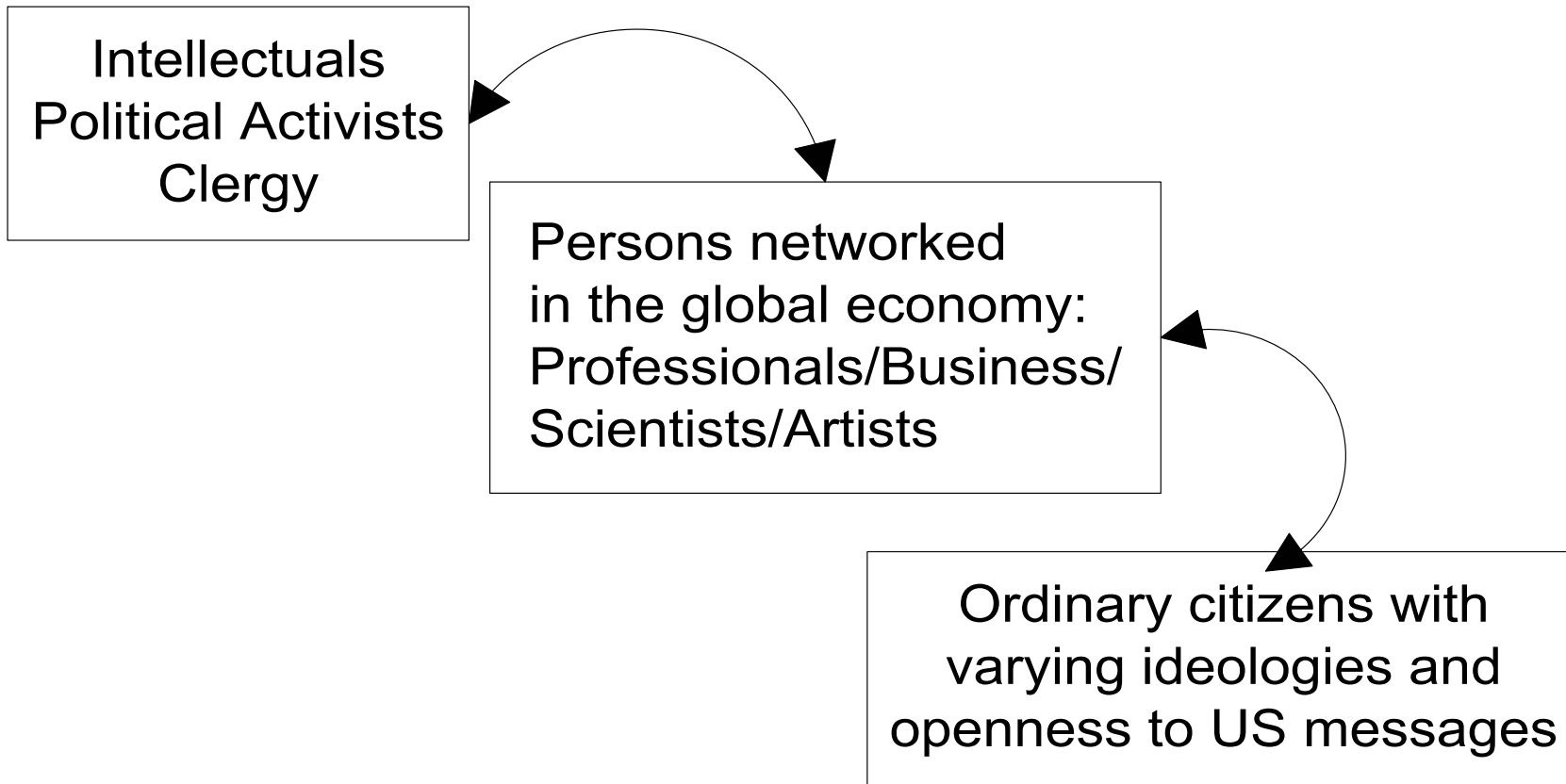
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Tipping point

Requirements for spreading activation of pro-US frames

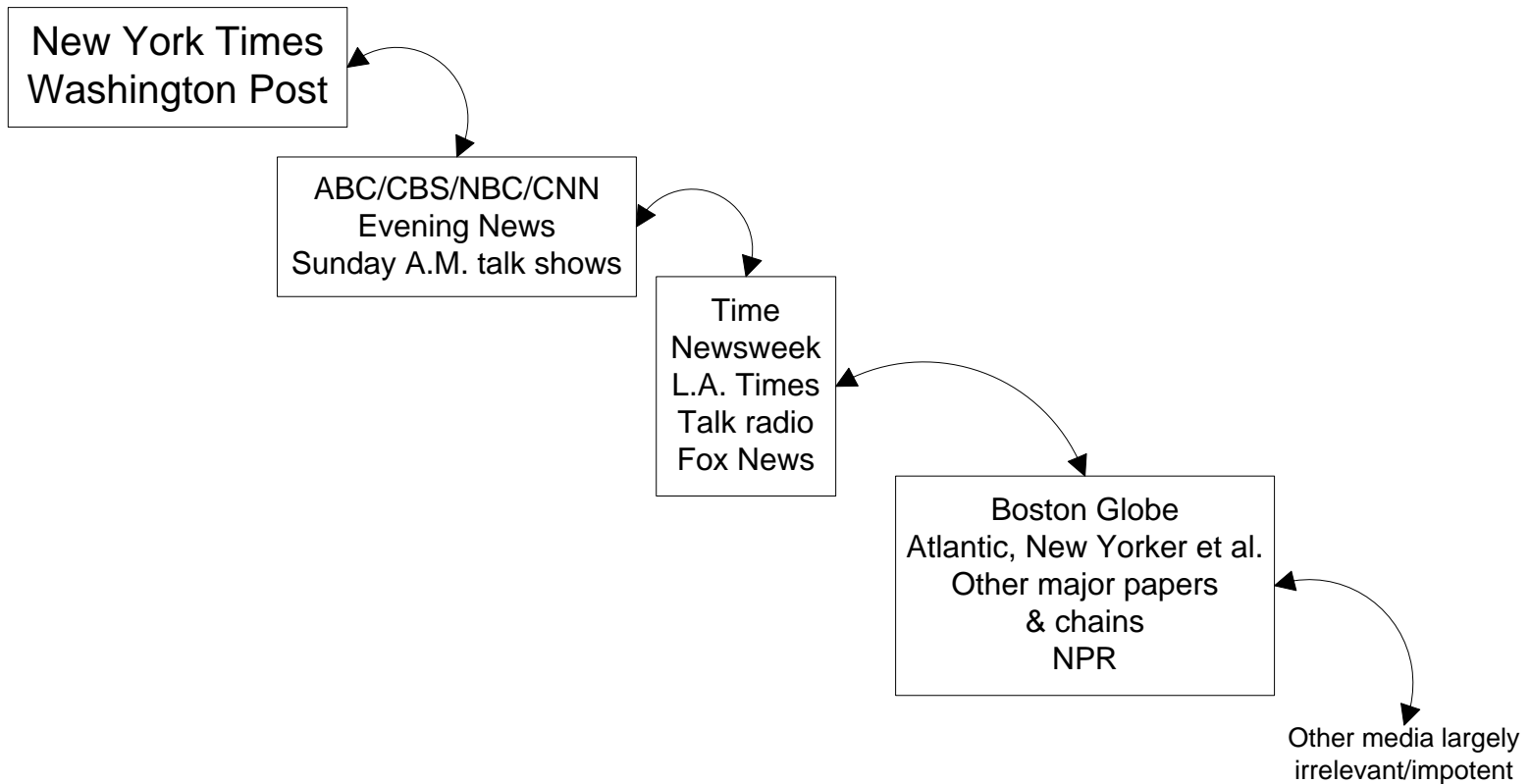
- Elite motivation to promote pro-US frame
- Elites with power in their political system, which makes their opinions newsworthy, must use it to advance the pro-US frames via strategy that is skilled, energetic
- Public motivation to seek out and believe mass media and internet sources of pro-US frames
- These are tall orders, especially in Muslim countries or others not well disposed to US

As in US, cascading hierarchies:

- Among media in target nations
- Within media in target nations
- Among publics in target nations

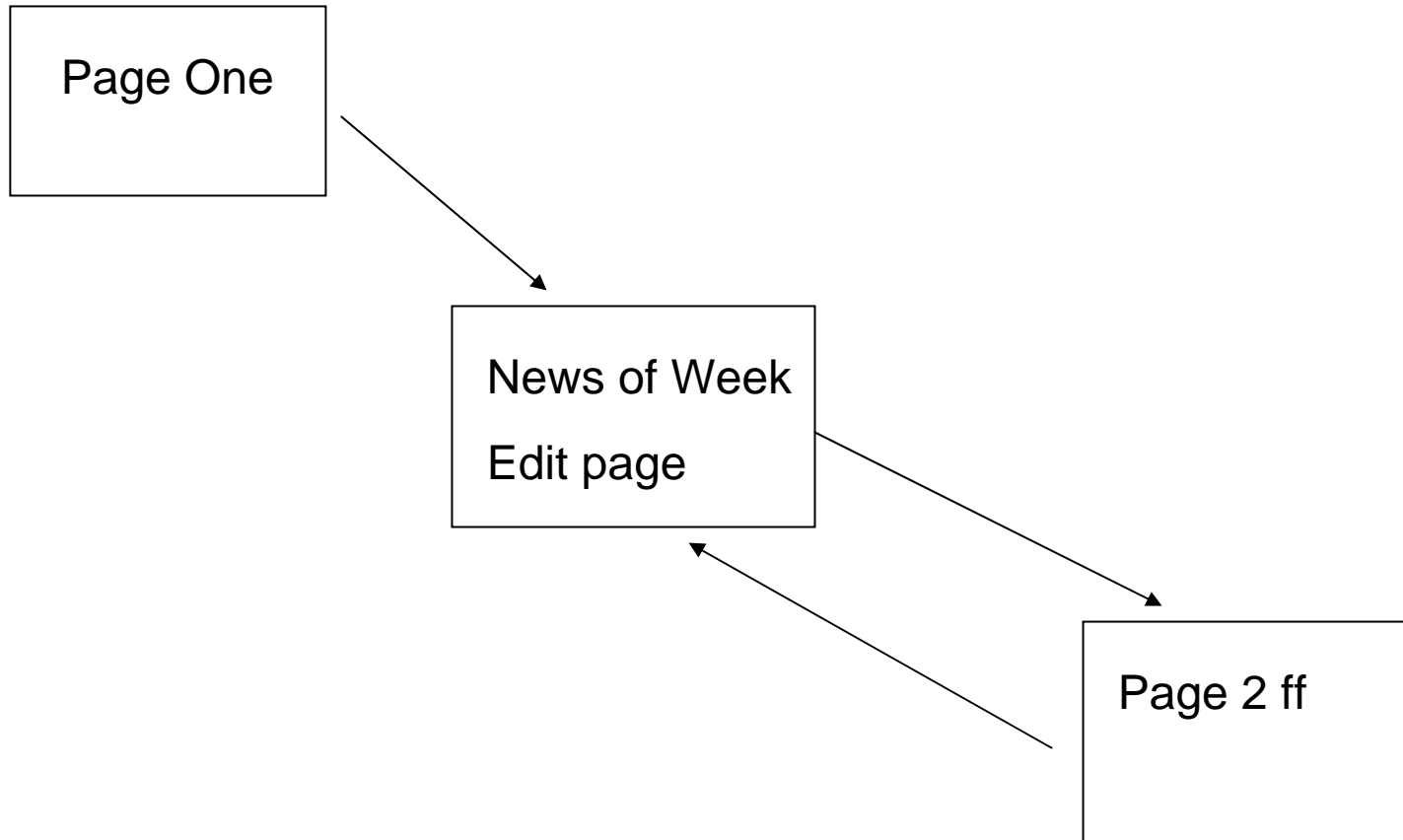


Uncertain/Flatter Hierarchies:
Different publics' orientations
and abilities to spread activation of frames



**Hierarchy Within Hierarchy:
Different outlets' ability to spread
activation of counter-frames**

Hierarchy within New York Times



Empirical issues

1. If the president and administration exert only imperfect control over media framing of US foreign policy even within the US, how realistic is it to expect even a well-funded, theory-based, coordinated public/media diplomacy program to work?
2. Often what is a useful frame for domestic US audiences will be counter-productive for media diplomacy efforts and vice-versa. George W. Bush on the aircraft carrier may boost domestic support as it undermines foreign acceptance.



Further empirical issues

1. Direct US government communication strategies must always compete with unofficial US and global media frames also reaching target nations.
2. How will US success in influencing the cascade in target nations vary across different political environments and systems?
3. Exactly what role is played by the substance of US policy and the readily verified facts on the ground in the responses of foreign elite and public opinion?

Normative issues

1. If it's normatively desirable that the president not exert total hegemony over media frames, why should we even implicitly call for presidential control over messages sent to foreign countries?
2. Normative assumption: a degree, at least, of *domestic* democratic input into US foreign policymaking—aided by independent media reporting—can help avoid or ameliorate presidential foreign policy mistakes (Vietnam, Beirut '83, Somalia, Iraq).
3. Might it therefore not also be true, remembering the role of foreign elites in the domestic cascade system, that we should welcome a substantial degree of foreign criticism and opposition to US policy—especially but not only from normally allied countries?

Conclusion

- THE NEED FOR DEEPER THEORETICAL PROBES TO GUIDE MORE EXTENSIVE EMPIRICAL STUDY; THE INTEGRATION OF THE STUDY OF US MEDIA/FOREIGN POLICY/PUBLIC OPINION NEXUS AND STUDY OF PUBLIC AND MEDIA DIPLOMACY