

## INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

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### THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN SPECTACLE: ELEMENTS AND CASE STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

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#### ABSTRACT

An electoral debate offers a twofold aspect: intellectual confrontation and struggle to impose upon the adversary. The recommendations on how should the debate be emphasize the intellectual part. The media present the discussions as 'Who will win?' or 'Who won?' However, from the political communication results much richer to study how this came about and how the debate was prepared, especially if includes spectacular elements more typical of film and television fiction. To demonstrate it, we recover the three electoral debates between candidates George W. Bush and John Forbes Kerry, occurred just a decade ago, in 2004.

#### KEY WORDS

Political Communication - Ostentation - Electoral Campaign - George W. Bush - John Kerry.

### LA ESPECTACULARIZACIÓN DEL DEBATE ELECTORAL: ESTUDIO DEL CASO EN ESTADOS UNIDOS

#### RESUMEN:

Un debate electoral ofrece un aspecto doble: confrontación intelectual y lucha por imponerse al adversario. Las recomendaciones sobre cómo debería ser un debate acentúan lo intelectual. Los medios de comunicación, sin embargo, presentan los debates como «¿Quién ganará?» o «¿Quién ha ganado?». Sin embargo, desde la

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comunicación política, resulta mucho más rico estudiar cómo se llegó a ello y cómo se preparó al debate, sobre todo si éste incluye elementos espectaculares y a veces, más propios de la ficción cinematográfica y televisiva. Para demostrarlo, se recuperan los tres debates electorales entre los candidatos George W. Bush y John Forbes Kerry, sucedidos hace justo una década, en 2004.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Comunicación política - Espectacularización - Campaña electoral - George W. Bush - John Kerry.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A debate offers two aspects: intellectual confrontation and struggle to impose upon the adversary. The recommendations on how should the debate be emphasize the intellectual part. The media present the discussions as 'Who will win?' or 'Who won?'" Even those involved in a debate, especially if they are politicians, take advantage of the day before to announce their interest in that the debate will serve to clarify programs. However, it is common that immediately after the debate, they rush to proclaim themselves winners.

In the end, that is the *quid* of the debate: who was the winner. However, from the political communication, it is much richer to study how this came about and how he was prepared for the debate. In this regard, we can recommend a novel study of Valbuena and Padilla (2014: 271-302), the analyses of Valbuena (2010a and 2010b) and Padilla (2010), separately or the work of Requeijo and Padilla (2011), Garcia Lirios, Carreón Hernández, Bautista and Méndez (2013), D'Elia (2013), or Piñeiro and Martínez (2013). These readings are of great interest and collect diverse and rich theoretical frameworks for those who want to extend retrospectively some of the ways analyzed.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The present study recovers the three presidential debates of candidates George W. Bush and John Forbes Kerry, that happened just a decade ago, in 2004, to analyze its elements of success and failure, especially from its spectacular and ostentatious mechanisms. It will be shown that, beyond the classic materials to build the argument of the debate, the case of both materials or personal credibility or test, materials of development and materials of expertise or dramatic-, the candidates resorted to production elements, costumes, makeup and staging more characteristic of the fiction film and the television scene.

### 3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Background

In 1960, seventy million Americans were watching on television the first electoral debate between two candidates for the White House. The protagonists were Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, a young man who would win the election, largely thanks to this television appearance and how he was presented by the media.

President Nixon was in office and appeared quite shabby, although strengthened by good management. He came to the CBS studios too haggard. An accident had forced him to be at rest for two weeks in a hospital. He was shabbily dressed and barely had enough time for a makeup. Kennedy, however, had the theory learned literally. He was rested and with good skin tone, due to a few days of campaigning in California. As if that was not enough, he was with a perfect make-up. Nevertheless, he could not beat his opponent in rhetoric. So those that heard the debate on the radio, felt that Nixon was the winner. But Americans who followed the debate on television, found in the youngest candidate the one who would be their new president.

The conclusion was not simply that a young candidate won over an experienced president. A new way of political campaigning was born, a new way to win over public opinion. The words did not matter, either the electoral promises or economic outcomes. The image was prioritized, the costumes, the presence, the knowledge to be and behave before the cameras: the media spectacle. Kennedy was the first to reach the White House thanks to these weapons.

What is to be analyzed in the following lines, it is how the candidates George W. Bush and John Forbes Kerry tried to use it again to be Presidents of the United States. The result is already known. The unknown is what was behind their words, their election rallies in well selected locations, their clothes, or how these three debates, face-to-face, influenced on voters and the undecided: popular mass which can make varied the elections to either of both sides, to the last vote scrutinized. It is the clear triumph of public opinion. The same people were the ones who decided. Sampredo (2000: 21) defined it thus: "We refer to the opinions and predispositions of ordinary people. They are not the judgments of experts or rulers, but the people and therefore they lack the rigor of the first and the responsibility of the latter".

#### 3.2. First debate

It took place at the University of Miami. It lasted ninety minutes; enough time not to be too short or too tedious. It had an audience greater than 70 million viewers, the same number as in the discussion Nixon - Kennedy. It had been rehearsed for months and both sides had agreed that it would be limited to international and security issues. Therefore, the topics would be the war in Iraq, Afghanistan and national security. The candidates could not cross those limits, preventing Bush be reprimanded by one of his pending subjects: the economy. The data showed that the average American family lived worse than three and a half years ago and that "45 million Americans had no medical insurance" (*El Mundo*, 10/8/2004: 15). Kerry would have the data stored on the table and attack with other arguments. It was his

first choice. He began the first assault and opponents would approach or alienate the White House, as was his stellar or disastrous performance.

George W. Bush, as the then president at the end of his first term, remained obsessed with defending the country's security. He attacked Kerry for being a weathervane (in English, "wishy-washy"), clearly alluding to his vows changing in the Senate, and said: "A man like you, who changes his mind so many times, it's not legit". John F. Kerry, on the other hand, had a good record and magical initials, JFK, as former President Kennedy, though tragically killed, was fondly remembered by the entire US population. John Forbes Kerry was the only candidate able to take away from Bush the White House. In the end, he managed to win. His weapons were continuous attacks and arguments to discredit the political action of Bush during his four-year term. The instant polls proclaimed him winner of the debate.

The results seemed clear after those ninety minutes of debate. George W. Bush expressed his "limited rhetoric capacity." He played with the advantage of their "calculated young bulls in Florida" (ABC, 01.10.2004: 40) because he had visited the victims of recent hurricanes nearly thirty times, trying to win the votes of that state. Meanwhile, Kerry tried to crush him with his image, as Kennedy had done with Nixon years ago. The Democrat was presented with a striking tan that gave rise to many comments and jokes. His aides chose to argue that it was product of sports activities outdoors. However, some media experts consulted to know the origin of the modern and attractive dark said that it could be due to "a body makeup applied with aerosol". With this apart from the dye to hide gray hair and Botox injections to hide facial wrinkles, Kerry earned to be defined as "a metrosexual in the closet" (ABC, 01.10.2004: 40). Definitions and jokes aside, his image made him win him the first debate, with minimal advantage, but he defeated after all.

### **3.3. The debate of the "number two"**

Another classic election campaign is the debate between potential vice presidents, who often meet face to face, to measure their strength and capabilities. This can make the respective candidate for president to lose or win votes. During this campaign, the two "number twos" were Dick Cheney and John Edwards and clashed few days after the first debate.

Dick Cheney, a Republican, was a very mature man, broad and proven experience, although introverted. US media had nicknamed him repeatedly as "president in the shadow", the man who ordered Bush the decisions he had to make. For the public opinion, it was the worst cherished of the four candidates: Presidents and vice presidents.

John Edwards, by contrast, embodied the American dream and was highly valued by voters, perhaps more for his eloquence and sympathy, than his skills as a politician. He was the son of a worker turned into a millionaire and as a senator, he had always been valued positively. Even John McCain, then a Republican senator confessed that he was unable to confront Edwards in a debate in the Senate. So the Democrat candidate only had to use his language and his image to continue the sprint that Kerry had taken in the first debate. Meanwhile, Cheney's mission would be to simply stop this advance, counting with the advantage of his experience.

All these aspects showed that both potential vice presidents reached pluses in this debate of the "number twos". The problems came in the debate itself. Edwards was "censored" because the debate was done with the two candidates sitting in chairs of the same table. This prevented in part to unleash his body language, as he stated that he preferred to speak standing up. Moreover, the age difference took away his importance and credibility, as the two candidates seemed like father and son reproaching each other.

It was not clear who the winner was because while one of them won in words, the other won in image and experience. The image that the public had on them was cleared and reinforced. Cheney was the prototype of old man, wise and knowledgeable about life and its dangers. American analysts compared him with the character of Yoda, from Star Wars, due to his strength as a spiritual counselor who has already experienced everything in life. However, "to his critics (...) he seems more than anything like Darth Vader, the masked character with the black shell who plays in the darker side" (ABC, 06.10.2004: 28).

On the other hand, Edwards, was defined as a great "rainmaker", a word that refers to those men who achieved great success in the world of business and politics. Before coming to the Senate, he was a well-known lawyer, winner of important and millionaire litigations, who always convinced the juries. Some US media came to define him as "a sort of second abridged edition of Bill Clinton, widely corrected in the chapter about fleshly temptations" (ABC, 10.06.2004: 28). These features made President Bush's aides tremble, who saw in him a greater danger than in Kerry. They defined him as mercurial, methodical and a "fox under the guise of Bambi" (El Mundo, 10/8/2004: 25).

The battle did not end in that debate. During the days after that televised meeting, Edwards and Cheney days engaged in a "war of words" because Cheney had said it was the first time he had seen Edwards. With these statements, he tried to make people believe that the possible future vice president escaped on numerous occasions, from his political obligations by not attending the Senate. This angered Edwards, who ended up proving the opposite, citing a meeting and a conversation they had had in Washington, in 2001, during the celebration of the National Prayer Breakfast. He managed to leave Cheney in evidence and gain an assault that seemed lost. An anecdote of this situation is that the debate moved to the wives of both candidates: Elizabeth Edwards and Lynne Cheney, who continued their discussions to side with their husbands. Finally, Democrat Edwards won again as a Web page (factcheck.org) confirmed and ratified his words.

This story also serves as a reminder that this was not the only confrontation between women that occurred during the election campaign. Teresa Heinz Kerry and Laura Bush also exchanged words, making tension and spectacle grow. From the beginning, Kerry's wife had been the "strange woman". In fact, she had so publicly defined. His image was pleasant for his charitable side, but dangerous for her "look of spoiled millionaire" (El Mundo, 22-10-2004: 34). To knock off her image, she said to Bush's wife, in their first meeting, that she did not like housewives.

These same words had already cost her disgust with Hillary Clinton in 1992, but Heinz preferred to follow her line. It occurred to her to say in the USA Today

newspaper, that she did not know if Laura Bush had a real job ever; but "other than that for the millionaire of the Ketchup, who worked in the 60's for the United Nations, but left after her marriage to the heir of the Heinz empire, one could say the same, the Republican worked as a teacher and librarian for ten years in Texas, until she married George W. "(El Mundo, 22-10-2004: 34).

In the end, the Democrat had to officially apologize for forgetting the professional experience of Laura, which he defined as "one of the most important possible: teaching children" (El Mundo, 22-10-2004: 34). Despite the excuses, Heinz was wrong again. In addition, she had forgotten that in America, it is dangerous to mess with housewives, because most citizens always prefer a traditional and housekeeper first lady, who does not work and is dedicated only to charity.

### **3.4. Second Debate**

It was preceded by some important statements in which Bush admitted that "intelligence reports about weapons of Saddam were wrong" (ABC, 10-10-2004: 30). He ended up acknowledging that there were no such weapons but argued that "America is safer today with Saddam Hussein in prison" (ABC, 10-10-2004: 30) and that "much of the information harvested by our intelligence was wrong and we find out why "(ABC, 10-10-2004: 30).

These statements were detonating to encourage the second debate. Kerry already had new and important arguments to challenge his competitor and expose him. He said that the report "is the definitive proof of why Bush should not be re-elected" (El País, 10-10-2004: 4) and went straight to his opponent saying, "Mr. President, Americans deserve more than propaganda about this war. They deserve to know the reality, not carefully prepared arguments "(El País, 10-10-2004: 4).

This second meeting took place in St. Louis, Missouri. The cameras showed whether Bush would be reborn from his ashes after being defeated in Miami. John Kerry preferred to remain cautious and took refuge with his team in Englewood, Colorado, as Bush began an email campaign, in which he stated that voting for Kerry was "vote for a more dangerous world" (El Mundo, 10-10-2004 : 26). Faced with these accusations, Kerry spokesman defended himself saying that "I do not remember a US president had ever to challenge his rival as harsh and negative mode" (El Mundo, 10-10-2004: 26).

After new exchanges of accusations, finally the second debate took place. It was different from the first and riskiest in its format, because candidates could move freely around the stage, but would have to answer twenty inquisitorial questions, asked by the public and elected by the moderator. That public, consisting of 140 people, had been selected by a survey company. This election was not free at all because each of those individuals selected by Gallup was among those defined as "undecided" and submitted a question for each of the candidates. Responses had to be quick. Bush and Kerry had only two minutes to answer each one. Then their opponent would have 90 seconds to refute. In fact, the lights of three colors placed on the floor strictly marked these times: green (there were 30 seconds left), yellow (15 seconds), red (5 seconds) and red flashing (timeout).

The system of debate and previous surveys made both candidates had considerable difficulties. All the surveys were talking tie and break, they had to win in this debate for the undecided. Kerry again attacked his opponent. The Democrat told Bush that "the world is a less safe place" (El Mundo, 2004: 28). Bush resorted back to using his argument that Kerry had no clear ideas and constantly changed his mind, as the situation required. Again called him "weathervane" or "wishy-washy" for his changes of opinion and reminded the audience that Kerry had voted for the Iraq War in the Senate. Kerry's response was: "I voted in favor of using the authority if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction" (El Mundo, 10-10-2004: 28) and top it off, said to reporters that "Bush sees the life through rose-colored glasses" (El País, 10-10-2004: 5). Despite strong statements from both sides, it was not clear who the winner of this debate. He spoke of "tie in the background, Kerry victory in the form" (El Mundo, 10-10-2004: 26). However, it was unclear who had defended their arguments more successfully. Bush was seen nervous at first, that "started intemperate and in a loud voice, with the same profusion of gestures that so bad result gave him in the first melee. But then he warmed up and went to the attack more safely and occasional touches of humor" (El Mundo, 10-10-2004: 26). Meanwhile, Kerry always remained serene and quiet with very assertive gestures, better vocabulary and greater presence on stage. As they were evenly matched, it was ended by saying that Kerry won by carrying the microphone in his left hand, while Bush held it in his right. Although it is negative to reduce everything to a gesture, the American people finally understood it thus. Kerry won again thanks to his image, despite the harsh words and accusations of Bush.

### 3.5. Third debate

It had all the ingredients to be the most interesting and spectacular. It took place in the West, as if it were a real *western*: a duel in Tempe, Arizona. Kerry chose to focus during the previous hours in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he relaxed by taking a long bike ride that would go around the world as dozens of photographs. Meanwhile, Bush repeated taking refuge in the outskirts of Phoenix, before facing his opponent in the *Venetian Casino*.

The importance of these sites was not just to almost desert, curious features of its landscape. Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada, with few inhabitants but good economic performance, were a highly desired booty for both candidates. Together the three states totaled 9 million and its electoral strength was small: "they provide 20 votes in a polling station in which at least 270 are needed to be president" (El País, 15-10-2004: 8). They were places where advertising was launched more and more volunteers worked to get votes. Almost no campaign was done in states like New York or Texas. However, in the "cactus corridor", the opposite was true: the decision on the vote is never determined and those who want to be president of the country must meet those citizens.

That term "Cactus corridor" refers to a geographical aspect, as "comprises the hundred miles between Phoenix and Tucson, although the denomination fits Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico" (El País, 15-10-2004: 8). There is no need to imagine this area as a great desert. Economic and demographic data about the area

always speak of a great and rapid growth. Nevada, with an increase of 82 percent exceeded Arizona, also not left behind with its increase of 50 percent. They were American states that had grown most in the last fourteen years. These increases were due to people that traveled there in search of opportunities, which always depended on that growth. Also new companies came and their risk profile was always less. In fact, unemployment in those states, was then 4.4 points below the national average. The two candidates knew all this information well before the third debate. Also they knew that the polls favored Bush in Arizona and Nevada, and they tied him with Kerry in New Mexico.

It was not just thinking locally, because the rest of the country would be paying attention to see the new meeting. National polls also spoke of a tie. Kerry intended to finish in a tie with his opponent and leave open the presidential race. Arizona was the perfect place to hold the president accountable of all his mistakes. Bush, meanwhile, had to use precisely this credibility, showing Kerry as a weak candidate who was not even remotely prepared to govern the country. Ohio, one of the "swing states" would also be very aware. It was the state that had "suffered the greatest loss of jobs across the US in the last four years" (*El Mundo*, 15-10-2004: 22) and Republicans and Democrats fought for every vote that place marked by the industrial crisis. In the struggle for the "Cactus corridor", joined the struggle for the "rust belt". There were too many votes at stake and too much expectation.

The dubious result, according to most media, was that Bush was defeated. Apparently, Kerry jumped on stage with more vitality and energy, ready to defend himself with his best weapons. Bush knew that Kerry he could win with his image and attacked the usual flank claiming about the Democrat that "rhetoric is not up to his history: he has been a senator for 20 years and voted 98 times in favor of raising taxes "(*El País*, 15-10-2004: 2).

As a defense, Kerry reiterated its commitment to cancel tax cuts favoring the wealthy and keep Bush tax cuts for the middle class. Stitching these promises said, forcefully, that "the president has turned his back to the welfare of Americans"(*El País*, 15-10-2004: 2). According to the data, he was right because the country's economy had not improved under President Bush. But the Republican turned to religion matters where, no doubt, he was imposed upon Kerry. In fact, many media claimed that Bush would win the election thanks to his religiosity, which earned him the trust of the vast American religious community. Bush said that homosexuality was not an option for him and that "believe in the sanctity of marriage, which is the union between a man and a woman" (*El País*, 15-10-2004: 2). As if that was not enough, he added more theatrical notes: "I am a Catholic and was an altar boy" (*El País*, 15-10-2004: 2).

They defended very marked positions and clearly aimed at winning votes from certain voters. However, from the reading the main polls, Kerry would finally come out undefeated and "resurrected" while Bush was shipwrecked. However, Bush only lost the debate, not elections, because the polls said he still was liked more. For Republicans, "the president won by a landslide and, in the end, Americans will see a scenario in which Bush reassures them and gives them more confidence and an improving economy" (*El País*, 15-10-2004: 3 ).



#### 4. WINNING THROUGH STAGING

Humans tend to retain in memory more easily, an image rather than a word. With this axiom, the experts in communication and political marketing try to exploit it to the fullest. Bush, in fact, improved its image, although not the opinions about his intellect, thanks to the images presented to the public. For example, the legendary landing on the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* cost more than one million dollars to the Americans. However, the image displayed an almost divine heroic president, strategically lit by the last rays of the sun, accompanied by the banner that read "Mission Accomplished".

No one would distinguish that image of a blockbuster film about heroes who save the world. Bush got what he wanted. The staging was wonderful. Neither action film director Jerry Bruckheimer had achieved something like that. And the truth is that he did not need it because he already had a large and professional team for this task. At the head, he had his communications director, Dan Bartlett, who traveled to the site of the rally with several days in advance to select extras, the public, measure the frames of the cameras and the amount of light, "if possible twilight, which is very epic" (*El País*, 15-10-2004: 8).

In addition to Bartlett, Greg Jenkins, a former producer of the Fox stood out, Scott Sforza (director of scenery) and Bob Deservi, former NBC cameraman and considered the "great magician of lighting." Outside the campaign and debates, this team looked for another image to the president, quieter, less heroic and extremely familiar and traditional. The site chosen was the town of Crawford, Texas, where Bush's ranch was. There, "meekly cows graze in the meadows and cicadas celebrate the permanent torpor. On the streets the unanimous silence of 700 souls reigns invisible, with their rifles and rancheras. We are in the home town of George W. Bush, at the edge of nowhere" (*El Mundo*, 24/10/2004: 26).

That picture was a reflection of pure expectation since, across town, all citizens eagerly awaited the inauguration of the winged sculpture *Angel of love*, made by the artist Lei Henneysey-Owen, in honor of Bush "for his service to the country." The inauguration had been previously announced by the parish bulletin, *The McGregor Mirror*, who spoke of the celebration on its cover. Also, the sign at the entrance of the village already left some clues: "In it George and Laura Bush appear welcoming you and encouraging you to visit the souvenir shop" (*El Mundo*, 24/10/2004: 26). All that remained was that Bush left his ranch to attend the inauguration. In fact, he did: sitting in the back of his truck with his dog *Spot* in his arms and waving to his neighbors.

Another important point in all these celebrations, debates and the like, is the costume. In the first debate, it was visible that the trend in the clothing of both candidates was very similar: "dark suit, white shirt, powerful tie and pins with American flag" (ABC, 02.10.2004: 29). The two agreed that detail; it was a way to show your patriotism. He gave such good results that repeated the same model in the next two debates and in each of its rallies.

Outside these more serious appearances, Bush and Kerry seemed more modern and chose jeans. The Republican, like a good Texan, could not appear without his plaid shirt and his *jeans*. Kerry chose, on other occasions, to disguise: cyclist, swimmer or

hunter. He should get into all these possible roles so as many citizens would feel identified their potential presidents.

All this show could not be realized if there was someone to organize. Therefore, candidates also had their campaign managers, trusted men, responsible for controlling all the aesthetic and scenic paraphernalia. Bush had the help of Karl Rove, known as "co-president". It was said of him that he always carried a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and of *The Art of War*, and was "the man who invented George W. Bush" (*El Mundo*, 13/10/2004: 22). His greatest achievement was to create a documentary accusing Kerry of betraying the prisoners of Vietnam, after contacting the group *Swift Boats for Truth*. The result was titled *Stolen Honor: Wounds that will never heal* and the Democratic Party called on the Federal Electoral Commission the withdrawal of the tape before its broadcast.

Rove also stated that he had the gift of finding out the political course, before any event. As a professor at the University of Texas, he explained to his students that negative campaigns could turn out the election campaigns. Also, before his work with Bush, he was recognized as an expert in direct mail tactics and negative ads on television and radio. He rose to fame when he made Bush topple Anne Richards as governor of Texas, in 1994.

On the opposite side, Kerry joined Bob Shrum, the author of his speeches. Known in the US as *Srummy*, he had never won a presidential election with candidates of his country. He helped Kerry to win his Senate seat and surprisingly succeeded outside, advising Tony Blair in Britain, Andrés Pastrana in Colombia or Ehud Barak in Israel, which made him a professional of mixed results.

The show did not end in the discussions. Kerry chose an image that would benefit him and his portraits always appeared when he most needed them. Before the third debate, he went out cycling and that image was published in hundreds of newspapers. He managed to look athletic and relaxed, confident and relaxed as to go for such a ride. Remarking his versatile character, around October 22, he went hunting geese with a dog and all the appropriate dress, smiling with rifle in hand. It was the image of the traditional American. And although there were not many Americans geese hunters, it pleased while television said that the mask with the face of Bush was the best selling for next Halloween.

## 5. THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA

An important aspect of these discussions is the role of the media, because not everything is image and word. Not enough to plan the appearances of candidates. Then comes another more important task, as it is to search for the broadcast and the media support. A second campaign occurs there because you cannot reach the public if not through the mass media. In the United States they know very well from the Vietnam War. That long and catastrophic conflict helped them understand the important role of the media and even today, it is said that the American country lost, in part, that war and for its citizens, for the daily broadcasting, and almost live, of everything that happened in Asian territory.

In 1968, the most famous US correspondent was Walter Cronkite. The journalist remained until his death in 2009, his fame thanks to the millions of his television

program audiences. His influence, fifty years ago, it was equally important as the electoral period that we deal with. He went to Vietnam and objectively defined war as bloody and senseless. Then president, Lyndon B. Johnson, understood that his words would be seriously considered by the American people and made history with the phrase "If we've lost Cronkite, we've lost the war" (*El País*, 8-10- 2004: 6).

The problem is that television, as technology advances, offers much more news and images and just saturating. You may lose objectivity and the public no longer trust her, especially during the elections. The citizens know that the media are politicized and it is difficult to decide who to believe and who not to. The result in the US is that "between 1987 and 2004, public confidence declined markedly because the objectivity of the media fell in turn in an overwhelming 30 percent" (*El País*, 08/10/2004: 6). The big networks had lost credibility and with it, faithful viewers and the audience began to move toward smaller media, rather than to the big media companies.

This made that shows like *The Daily Show*, of informative satire and unheralded before the campaign, to become an unexpected success. That success showed the saturation and lack of public confidence in what the media call "objective information". Instead of looking for information, they questioned satire, humor, simple, pleasant and light ways to find out what was happening. During the first debate, the show's host, Jon Stewart, called his *special envoys* to comment. These taunted Bush and Kerry. The result was followed by thousands of Americans, especially young people. Most studies claimed that the youth of America, "see no CNN, no news of any of the big chains. They know what is happening in the world of comic channel program *The Daily Show*" (*El País*, 08/10/2004: 6).

On the other hand, the American comedian Ali G used an interview show to make fun of politicians and celebrities in *Da Ali G Show*. In press, the satirical newspaper *The Onion* (Onion) grew every day in readership and expanded to new cities.

Among the major media, *The New York Times* was the first to define itself, that after the third debate, voted for Kerry and criticized Bush management. Your headline Sunday October 17, 2004 was clear: "Kerry for President". This is not surprising if you consider that this newspaper had always supported the Democratic candidates for the White House. But this time, was struck by the clarity of his message. Later, already in the text, they qualified the Bush term "disaster", stating that "the government has left in the hands of right-wing radicals and ideologists and industrial interests."

*Times* did not remain only in generalities and great phrases. It also spoke of the educational policy of the president, Guantanamo, Human Rights and the Iraq War. Outside these as direct attacks, which could be better or worse reasoned, the newspaper objectively he criticized the economic policy of the Republican president. To support the realism of its economic arguments, it had the results of the Standard & Poor's 500 Index (S & P). This index was already one of the most closely watched on Wall Street, the New York Stock Exchange, and according to their results, the falls during the first three years of mandate had reached 26.4 percent.

*The Washington Post* also followed in the wake of the New York newspaper. On Sunday October 24, 2004, he published a curious editorial with the same title: "Kerry for president". There it came to criticize Bush harshly with phrases like this: "We

supported the war and believed that the Iraqi dictator posed a threat that we face. However, we blame Bush for having exaggerated in public opinion Intelligence reports and away from our allies unnecessarily; but above all, responsible for having ignored tips that have served to better prepare the country's reconstruction after the war" or "Bush has not earned a second term."

Taking advantage of the pull of these editorials and various surveys, *El Mundo*, from Spain and dated October 18, 2004, published a picture of how had valued Wall Street their presidents, and how the stock market had influenced in that they were, or not, reappointed. The results benefited undoubtedly Bill Clinton, a Democrat, who "enjoyed the confidence of the *parquet* and in his first term, the S & P rose 15 percent" (*El Mundo*, 18-10-2004: 32).

It would not be the only time the name of the last Democratic president was mentioned during the campaign. Kerry knew that he needed him and came to him for help. He was the master of populism, the true *magnet* of the party. Finally, on October 25, Clinton reappeared next to the Democratic candidate. The two had a real bath of masses in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) before 60,000 people. The place was perfect: *Love Park* (Park of Love, in English). There, the former president, despite his recent heart surgery, was happy to be with so many people. It was quite thinner than in his last public appearance. But he knew how to squander smiles and formulate clear and effective messages for change in his only five minutes of appearance.

Far from giving a weak or sick image, he was radiant and vital and stated that "if this is not good for my heart, I do not know what will be good." He reserved a few words to Bush and predicted that the Republican will lose the election, as his father had lost them, twelve years before. According to Clinton, "our friends in the other party want a world in which power and wealth are concentrated in a few. We want to share responsibilities and act alone when we have no choice. "In all, he continued subtracting credibility to the Republican and sought to recover the black vote.

If Clinton was not enough, Kerry called Al Gore, "the president who could not be" defeated by Bush four years ago. Kerry, Gore and Clinton wanted to form a "Democratic troika" in the last days of the campaign, hand in hand with George and Jeb Bush, in the struggle for the 27 electoral votes of Florida.

However, all media claimed that between Kerry and Gore there had never been a good chemistry, especially since Gore bet on Howard Dean in the Democratic primaries, rather than to vote for Kerry. On the other hand, Gore was the "weird" of the Democratic Party and the only one who dared to harshly criticize Bush for the Iraq War when all were silent. He had become the outcast and had made him disappear from the political scene. In fact, Kerry feared that, on his return, his radical tone could hurt him. However, Gore did not disappoint him and in the University of Georgetown attacked Bush for having "a rigid and extreme right wing ideology."

Meanwhile, Bush sought a shield to defend. Perhaps the word was not enough and decided to opt for the advertising side, throwing an unexpected and surprising spot. It was the announcement of hungry wolves. In it, a pack of wolves prowling nervously in a lush forest, threatening fangs bared and moved toward the camera. Wolves were preparing to attack the United States or so the announcement hinted, if John Kerry was elected president on November 2. If the image was not violent

enough, the words remarked on the message: "Weakness attracts those who are waiting to do America harm. In an increasingly dangerous world, even after the first terrorist attack on America, John Kerry and liberals in Congress voted to slash the budget Intelligence by 6,000 million dollars. "

This whole show was devised by Karl Rove, the architect of the announcement, master of slanderous campaigns and top advisor of President Bush. It was the same who had helped Bush beat Senator McCain in the Republican primaries of 2000, spreading "false rumors of that McCain had a black child with a prostitute or had betrayed his country when he was five years prisoner in Vietnam "(*El Mundo*, 18-10-2004: 32). This time it was not very original. Spot The idea was not new, but mimicked the one used by Ronald Reagan two decades ago. On that occasion, the protagonist was a bear, representing the Soviet threat.

## 6. OTHER media leaders

In addition to the above, many people and characters, known by their proper name, influenced or attempted to influence decisively on the electorate.

Michael Moore surprised with his two documentaries, *Bowling for Colombine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The first won the Academy Award for Best Documentary and described openly, without secrets, the problem of guns in the United States, accessible to any US citizen, including minors or adults with mental problems. On the other hand, *Fahrenheit 9/11* tried to show that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that good diplomacy have prevented the conflict. Therefore, the hatred of many politicians and senators won.

In October 2004, during the election campaign, he began to talk about another film that had to pay attention: *Team America: World Police*. In it, a group of puppets, acting as an elite commando, ridiculed the Iraq war. The funny thing is that images and dialogues of the film arrived long before its theatrical release. Its creators, also creators of *South Park*, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, were very happy because of this publicity, but angry because the film had been considered violent and not recommended for children under 17 years.

After Michael Moore and *Team America*, came Kitty Kelley, author of *The Family*, unauthorized biography of the Bush saga. The journalist confessed that her book began the day that George W. Bush won his first presidential election, believing it was a victory not deserved because the candidate did not possess the necessary skills. Her campaign against the Bush was not as open as that of Michael Moore, because she preferred research, without doing too much. Therefore, her criticisms were more devastating. Reading book, translated and published in Spain by Plaza y Janés, foreshadowed that the ascension of Bush junior was the result of an entire economic campaign of the family, started by his father and whose aim, ultimately, was to place also as president his brother Jeb Bush, perhaps in the next election: "I do not know if it will achieve it, but Jeb is the family member who has always wanted to be president. The current president would have never announced his candidacy for governor if his brother had done that too. There is much competition within the family "(*La Razón*, 09.10.2004: 22).

George Soros, international financier known, also wanted to raise his voice in the election campaign. The Hungarian-American candidate defended Kerry out and out. He had the money and the means to seek voters and openly used them for the Democratic candidate.

Another phenomenon which showed that most artists, musicians and American actors were in favor of candidate Kerry. Only the actors Mel Gibson, Tom Selleck and Bo Derek publicly gave his support to George W. Bush to be reelected. Meanwhile, a group of 540 artists against Bush signed a document, which would be published in *The New York Times* in Texas.

Other famous names wanted to appear out of that manifesto, although in favor of Kerry. To do this, the organization *Rock the vote* was created, with 1.4 million enrollees and support of such well-known characters like Tom Cruise, Madonna or U2. It was necessary to reach all possible public, including young people, and the famous could help it. The truth is that American teens have never known for going to the polls en masse. Thus, this campaign tried to diminish the political apathy. Even rapper *Eminem*, then 32 years old, encouraged youngsters arguing that they had to vote like him who was going to do for the first time in his life. The reason, according to the singer, Bush was to prevent more disasters occur. He made it very clear in his new animated video entitled *Mosh*.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Finally, George W. Bush won the presidential election on November 2, 2004. Against the prognosis of all polls and surveys, it became the most voted president in the history of his country. About 120 million Americans went to the polls, raising the stake to 60 percent and of those, 58.8 million voted for the Republican candidate. so could a legitimacy that had failed in 2000 and a true historical record occurred since such results had not been reached for 35 years.

Moreover, during the count, all eyes turned in Florida and Ohio, states that could turn around the election to either side. Hundreds of international observers from the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), elected by the *Global Exchange Association*, ensured that no irregularities similar to those of 2000 were produced and after the count, these professionals qualified the elections as "absolutely clean. "Bush was the new president and nobody could appeal against that.

The Republican president had waited anxious his reelection in Ronald Reagan Center in Washington. Meanwhile, Kerry hid in a Boston hotel, which was curiously in front of another hotel where his grandfather had committed suicide long ago. For the superstitious, it was a mistake to stay there, because it could only portend something sad. Finally, the most pitiable was his defeat party, organized initially to celebrate a possible victory over Bush.

George W. Bush was reelected President of the United States without winning against his opponent in the word, not even once, in all three election debates. He did won in the show, thanks to his optimism and his iconic appearances, as well produced from the artistic.

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