Article

The glocalization of politics in television: Fiction or reality?

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Abstract

This article investigates the 'glocalization' of the US TV popular drama series *The West Wing*, while focusing on one (in some ways) exceptional episode. Because politics is inherently linked to language, discourse and communication, I will take an approach from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (the discourse-historical approach), with a particular focus on elements of argumentation theory and rhetoric, and combine this with media studies. More specifically, I attempt to illustrate how a thorough understanding of the *topoi* operating within the complex dialogues and interactions helps to reveal the series' (manifest and latent) political and didactic objectives, embedded in a longstanding tradition of conveying US American liberal values via films and TV. The episode analyzed in this article, *Isaac and Ishmael* (which was broadcast immediately after 9/11) is exceptional because it explicitly relates to salient real life events; its topical focus on the 'war on terror' shifts attention from US domestic politics to an issue that, according to US policy rhetoric, concerns the whole world. Thus, this episode links the debates taking place in one of the world's most famous institutions, *The White House*, with those occurring in workplaces across the world: a truly 'g/local' moment. The interdisciplinary analysis allows insight into the intricate and complex discursive construction of new glocal narratives, particularly in times of political crisis, revealing which norms are projected and recontextualized both locally and globally, given the many translations of the series worldwide.

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Media, politics and fiction

This article examines *The West Wing* as an example of one genre that has proven a particularly useful resource through which to investigate recent sociocultural trends in the public's engagement with the world of politics (Challen, 2001; Crawley, 2006; Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, 2006; Wodak, 2009a). I am interested to find out how such TV productions function in wider society, what needs are fulfilled by this genre of '*politico-tainment*' (Holly, 2008; Richardson, 2006; Riegert, 2007) and in which way such shows might influence popular beliefs about politics. I assume that the worlds created in such fictional dramas serve as a second reality or a *myth* (Barthes, 1957), a reality the audiences would like to believe in, precisely because complex problems find a solution through seemingly wise politicians who adhere to values that are deemed positive by hegemonic elites as well as by the general audience. I propose the term 'fictionalization of politics' for this ongoing process (Wodak, 2009b).

In the following, I focus on some links between politics, journalism and the media in more detail. Furthermore, I illustrate these considerations with one, quite exceptional, example from the popular drama series *The West Wing*, which has achieved cult status, not only in the US, but across many countries worldwide (O'Connor and Rollins, 2003a, 2003b). In this article, I restrict myself to the analysis of the episode *Isaac and Ishmael* as a particular prototype for the interdependence of politics, popular culture and media. For this, I apply some concepts from argumentation theory and the discourse-historical approach (DHA; see below) in critical discourse analysis. I shall have to neglect the vast literature on narrative analysis in films and other oral genres and refer readers to excellent overviews such as those by Bordwell and Thompson (2004) or Bamberg (2007). By referring to salient liberal western values such as tolerance, equality and anti-racism, all provided in the famous film *12 Angry Men* (1957, directed by Sydney Lumet),[1] particular myths about politics and values in politics are globalized and thus become part of hegemonic discourses.[2] In this way, the particular episode of *The West Wing* that I analyze in this article could be considered as a *hybrid genre* which both draws upon the above-mentioned tradition of US films, on the one hand, and the popular drama genre of the cult TV series on the other.[3]

Glocalization of politics

'We're selling a product. That product we are selling is democracy'. These words are attributed to former US Secretary of State Colin Powell when defining American diplomacy (cited in van Ham, 2001: 250). As Mitsikopolou (2009: 3) argues:

> if this shift in political paradigms, from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the post-modern world of images and influence, continues, it is expected to have a pronounced impact on both the nature of international politics and on the character of nationalism and democracy.

Recent research points to huge ongoing changes taking place in the perception and representation of politics and in the expectations addressed at politicians.[4] Dick Pels has succinctly summarized this change in performance, style and perception while emphasizing

the inherent contradictions in the new roles of politicians, mostly due to the necessity of becoming media personalities:

> On the one hand, political leaders shed their elitist aura and try to become 'one of us'. On the other hand, distance is reasserted by the remoteness of the star who, while dwelling constantly in the public eye, is still seen as untouchable and as 'living in a different world'. In this sense, politicians increasingly share in the 'extraordinary ordinariness' which characterises the modern democratic celebrity. (Pels, 2003: 59)

Nevertheless, when politics and culture share an increasingly symbiotic relationship, this necessarily has some negative consequences. Given the fierce competition for the public's attention, political reportage increasingly favours the short sensational story. Consequently, to the extent that the 'backstage' of politics is reported, this tends to be confined to scandal, rumour and speculation. The blurring of boundaries in politics between the real and the fictional, the informative and the entertaining, is made particularly apparent in programmes such as the British production *Yes Minister*,[5] the German drama series *Im Kanzleramt*,[6] the Swedish TV comedy show *Parlamentet*, which started in 1999, or a similar Danish programme that started in 2003.[7] And, of course, there are many more examples.

These phenomena suggest that when laypeople want to be informed about politics, they are increasingly turning to different resources. News broadcasts are not interested in the routine, but prefer to focus on crises, catastrophes and conflicts (see Oberhuber et al., 2005; Triandafyllidou et al., 2009). They rarely cover positive events and experiences, despite the new paradigm of *Peace Journalism* (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). Moreover, the media have, of course, been influential in focusing public attention on personalities instead of complex sociopolitical processes. Indeed, van Zoonen (2005: 3) argues rightly that:

> to set politics apart from the rest of culture is not a feasible option for the maintenance of citizenship: not only will it not survive the competition for spare time, but more importantly, it will also be separated, different, and distant from everyday life.

Simultaneously, these trends point to frustration, saturation and dissatisfaction with conventional news, which typically presents us with only the ritualized 'grand politics' *(frontstage)* or a restricted *backstage* consisting of 'sex and crime' or quasi-celebrity culture (see Marshall, 2006: 248ff.; Street, 2001: 185ff.). Such developments could also be regarded as a symptom of 'depoliticization' (Hay, 2007: 37), of an interest in fiction films or shows that produce and construct a different world of politics or try and convince viewers that the episodes are similar (or even the same) as 'real politics'. However, they can also be regarded as a consequence of 'glocalization'.

Analyzing political rhetoric: The discourse-historical approach

Developed in the field of discourse studies, DHA provides a vehicle for looking at latent power dynamics and the range of potentials in agents because it integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical intertextual sources and the background of the

social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded. Moreover, DHA distinguishes between the three dimensions that constitute textual meanings and structures: the *topics* that are spoken/written about (in our case, the content of the specific episode); the *discursive strategies* employed (both consciously and subconsciously; in our case, to convey the intended liberal values of this episode); and, the *linguistic means* that are drawn upon to realize both topics and strategies (e.g. argumentative strategies, *topoi*, presuppositions).

Systematic qualitative analysis in DHA takes *four layers of context* into account: (1) the *intertextual and interdiscursive relationships* between utterances, texts, genres and discourses (e.g. by drawing on other related films and fictional narratives such as *12 Angry Men*); (2) the extralinguistic social/sociological variables (e.g. the event referred to in our case, namely 9/11); (3) the *history and archaeology of texts and organizations* (e.g. the institutional circumstances of the TV production of the series *The West Wing*); and, (4) the institutional frames of the specific *context of a situation* (the specific episode under investigation). In this way, we are able to explore how discourses, genres and texts change due to sociopolitical contexts and with which effects (see Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001, 2008a).[8]

Furthermore, two concepts are salient for analyzing glocalization in this context. First, *intertextuality* refers to the linkage of all texts to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or to its main actors; through reference to the same events as the other texts; or through the reappearance of a text's main arguments in another text. The latter process is also labelled *recontextualization*. By taking an argument, a topic, a genre or a discursive practice out of context and restating/realizing it in a new context, we first observe the process of decontextualization and then, when the respective element is implemented in a new context, of recontextualization (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 2000). The element then acquires a new meaning because, as Wittgenstein (1967) demonstrated, meanings are formed in use. Hence, specific elements of *The West Wing*, such as particular values, arguments, protagonists and their functions, or salient social practices which characterize 'politics as usual' in the White House are recontextualized and thus glocalized elsewhere in a genre-appropriate way (e.g. in European media, see below).

Reisigl and Wodak (2001) define *topoi* as parts of argumentation that belong to the obligatory premises of an argument, whether explicit or tacit. *Topoi* are the content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules' that connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion or the central claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion: *topoi* are thus central to the analysis of seemingly convincing fallacious arguments which are widely adopted in all political discourses (Kienpointner, 1996: 562). As I illustrate below, the concept of *topoi* can also be adequately employed when analyzing fiction.[9]

Reisigl and Wodak (2001) also draw on van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992) when providing a list of common fallacies, which includes the following frequently employed argumentative devices: *argumentum ad baculum* (i.e. 'threatening with the stick'), thus trying to intimidate instead of using plausible arguments; the *argumentum ad hominem*, which can be defined as a verbal attack on the antagonist's personality and character instead of discussing the content of an argument; and, finally, the *fallacy of hasty generalization*

when making generalizations about characteristics attributed to a group without any evidence. Many of the listed fallacies and *topoi* are drawn upon in the intricate dialogues of *Isaac and Ishmael*.

Politicizing fiction: The *Isaac and Ishmael* episode

After 9/11

The episode aired after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC on 11 September 2001 – with some delay – was different from all previous and following episodes. Episode 155, season 3, is entitled *Isaac and Ishmael* and was broadcast for the first time on 3 October 2001. Here we encounter an interface between fiction and reality in a much more explicit way than in the other episodes that have been directly influenced either by White House advisors, the Clinton government or utopian fantasies and plots that fulfil the projected desire for wise elderly statesmen and relatively simple solutions to complex political problems. The actors comment on 'real life' events at the very beginning of the episode:

Text 1:

Rob (i.e. Sam Seaborn, advisor):	We're eager to get back to our continuing storylines, but tonight we wanted to stop for a moment and do something different. (1.0)
Allison (i.e. C.J., press secretary):	You'll notice a few things different about the show tonight. For instance, in place of our usual main title sequence, we'll be putting phone numbers up on the screen where you can pledge ah donations to groups that are able to help with (1.0) victim assistance.
John (i.e. Leo McGarry, chief advisor):	By now, nobody needs to be convinced that that they named New York's Finest and New York Bravest, they knew what they were talking about (xxx)
Brad (i.e. Josh Lyman, advisor):	Now don't panic, we're in show business and we'll get back to tending our egos in short order, but tonight we offer a play. It's called *Isaac and Ishmael*. We suggest you don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out where this episode comes in the timeline of the series. It doesn't. (0.3) It's a storytelling aberration, if you'll allow. Uh.
Richard (i.e. Toby Ziegler, advisor):	Next week, we'll start our third season. (xxxx)
Martin (i.e. President Jed Bartlett):	That's all for us. Thank you for listening. And may God bless the United States of America.

Surprisingly the actors appear here with their real names rather than their character roles. This is an immediate response (albeit almost a month later) to 9/11. The framing of the whole episode rouses curiosity, as does the choice of title, *Isaac and Ishmael*, which clearly is an intertextual reference to the Old Testament and the story about Abraham. It is presupposed that at least some viewers will understand this reference, as Americans often receive a religious education. Moreover, Brad states explicitly that this episode will differ strongly in its storyline from the usual episodes, which are only vaguely linked to real life events; indeed, this episode illustrates an explicit intervention into viewers' expectations and possible understandings. In contrast to the rest of *The West Wing*, where we find storylines that illustrate the complexities of the *backstage of politics* and President Bartlett as a politician who attempts to save the world from the 'baddies', but who also demonstrates human fallibility and an inability to solve everything, this episode presents a *parable* intended to make people reflect on their beliefs and stereotypes about Muslims and 'others' who have become targets for aggression after 9/11, thus drawing on the educative and emancipative film genre mentioned above.[10]

As will be illustrated by the selection of extracts offered below, the roles of the White House staff are not as clear cut as in other episodes. They make salient mistakes and seemingly harbour similar prejudices to those that many other American citizens are believed to possess. We are therefore left with the questions: who are the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' in this episode; which are the salient values that are conveyed to the public in relationship to the overall experience of 9/11; and, how are these recontextualized elsewhere due to glocalization?

The immediate context

In *Isaac and Ishmael*,[11] the White House is 'crashed' due to a staff member having the same name, Raqim Ali, as a known alias of a person on a terrorist watch list. The lockdown leaves a group of students selected for Presidential Classroom (a scheme designed to educate school pupils about civil rights and citizenship) stuck in the mess hall with Josh, one of the most important advisors to the president, as well as other staff members. Josh is persuaded to debate current political affairs with the students. President Bartlett and the First Lady drop in to join the discussion about terrorism, the death penalty, counter attacks, resistance and so forth. One of the main issues of which Josh attempts to convince his young audience is that Muslim terrorists resemble the KKK (Ku Klux Klan); in other words, that they are not normal Muslim believers, but rather extremists.

Meanwhile, the main presidential advisor Leo and a special agent Ron confront what they believe to be a potential threat from within. Ali, a staff member, is found in a small room wanting to smoke a cigarette. Leo and Ron believe Ali to be a wanted terrorist because he 'looks different'; he looks like a Muslim Arab. It eventually turns out, after Ali is subjected to a very aggressive and uncomfortable interrogation, that he has in fact been wrongly suspected. In the final cut, Leo apologizes to Ali. Hence, the coda implies that: first, not all Muslims are terrorists; second, that one should beware of suspecting people who 'look different'; third, that everybody, even seemingly wise and knowledge-able people like the staff in the White House, have prejudices and are susceptible to false

beliefs; and, fourth, that Arabs currently have to cope with many uncomfortable situations in the USA. The episode thus tackles traditional issues of racism and intolerance in the immediate sociopolitical context of 9/11.

The episode's title stems from the story the First Lady tells at its end. It is the classic tale of Abraham in the book of Genesis and thus explains how the source of conflict between Arabic and Jewish descendants first appeared in the world. This confirms the function of this episode as a parable for the viewers from which they should draw conclusions about the current political situation, straight after 9/11 when many American citizens were in shock and looking for recrimination.

In this way, we have two main parallel storylines: on the one hand, the rational educative debate with the young students where racism, tolerance, terrorism, politics and revenge/punishment are discussed and liberal values emphasized; and, on the other hand, the second storyline provides an example of racist prejudice and intolerance which relates causally to the main message of Josh's teaching and, in this way, recontextualizes as *argumentum ad exemplum* (a typical rhetorical device) a theme that is only talked about in abstract ways. The two storylines are interwoven for the viewers, but not for the protagonists in the episode. Josh and the student group do not know about Ali and Leo and the suspected dangers; they only know of a vague undefined pending danger.

The narrative plot

In this episode, the narrative plot could thus be seen as an attempt to cope with 9/11, the threat of terrorism and the aggressive tenor of President George W. Bush's responses in a different way (albeit by means of a story with the function of a parable). Accordingly, the plot is more complicated than in most episodes of *The West Wing*. We have one clear-cut good guy, Josh, who manages the difficult situation and teaches the students 'real' liberal values, and several others who exemplify moral and political confusion. In this respect, it is clearly significant that President Bartlett himself performs a background role, as he only appears briefly and then leaves again. However, he provides the definitive evaluation of 'terrorists'. Leo, meanwhile, is exposed as a prejudiced aggressive person who falsely assumes that all Muslims must be terrorists. He is ultimately made to apologize. Raqim Ali, who is first depicted as a potential terrorist, turns out to be a democratic and patriotic citizen – albeit one who is endangered – and is given the opportunity to narrate the many hardships that Muslims and 'others' encounter in the US and the wider world. Hence, the discursive strategy of 'victim-perpetrator reversal' is employed throughout.

Moreover, there is an interesting and paradoxical play with knowledge in this episode in contrast with conventional storylines. This time, viewers do not know who the good guys and the bad guys are, although many indicators trigger presuppositions that Leo is interrogating the wrong person. On the other hand, Josh knows the right values and, in an abstract way, the right way in which Leo should have proceeded. But Josh is not part of the second storyline.

In this way, it is clear that we are dealing with 'abstract knowledge' about ethics and values; concrete events where this knowledge is lacking (a 'knowledge deficit'); and, finally, with prejudice, which is 'assumed knowledge' comprising event and context models

about 'bad' others. Moreover, in the final dénouement of this episode's complex play with knowledge(s) and the obvious intention to teach the public the right values, this assumed knowledge (prejudice) is finally proven wrong, thereby acquiring the status of false knowledge. In sum, one could argue that this episode provides a perfect example of knowledge transfer and emancipative anti-racist education.

Good American values

During the debate with the students, the following conversation takes place:

Text 2:

Girl 3:   So why is everybody trying ah ah to kill us?
Josh: It is not everybody. (0.2)
Girl 3:   It seems like everybody.
Boy 3:   It's just the the Arabs.
Boy 2:   Saying the Arabs is uh too general. (xxx)
Josh: (1.0) Okay, wait, wait, wait. uh uh This is crucial, this is more important than the fish thing. (1.0) It's not Arabs and Islamics. Don't leave this room without knowing this. It's not Arabs. It's not Islamics. [To Donna] They're ah ah juniors and seniors?
Donna: Yes.
Josh: You're juniors and seniors. In honour of the SATs you're about to take answer the following question: Islamic Extremist is to Islamic as 'blank' is to Christianity. Islamic Extremist is to Islamic as 'blank' to Christianity.
Boy 3:   Christian Fundamentalist.
Josh: No. (1.0)
Boy 4:   Jehovah's Witnesses?
Josh: No. Guys. The Christian Right may not be your cup of tea but they don't blow up things. Uh Islamic Extremist is to Islamic as 'blank' is to Christianity. [And then Josh writes the answer on the board, KKK]
Josh: That's what we are talking about. It's the Klan. Gone medieval and global. It could not have less to do with Islamic men of faith of whom (xxx) there are millions upon millions. Muslims defend this country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, National Guard and Police and Fire Departments. So ah ah let's ask this question again. [to Girl 2]
Girl 2:   Why are Islamic Extremists fighting with us?
Josh: That is a reasonable question if I ever heard one. Why are we targets of war?
Boy 3:   Because we're ah (0.1) Americans.
Josh: That's it?
Girl 4:   It's our freedom. (1.0)
Josh: No other reasons?
Boy 4:   Freedom and Democracy.
Josh: I'll tell you, right or wrong, and I think they are wrong; it's probably a good idea to acknowledge that they do have uh uh specific complaints. (xxx)

This kind of didactic dialogue is similar to *12 Angry Men* and other 'liberal' dramas about American political life mentioned above.[12] In this brief conversation, Josh teaches the girls and boys to avoid generalizations (i.e. the fallacy of hasty generalization), which lead to prejudicial remarks, and to focus more on specific questions to which clear answers are possible. The typical first (very general) question is formulated with a Manichean division into good and bad (people/nations/groups) and as 'straw man fallacy' ('why is everybody trying to kill us?), which presupposes that everybody is really trying to kill the generic group 'us'. This is challenged by a protest at the generalization of a particular people or groups to 'everybody'. This then leads to a discussion employing the '*topos* of definition': who is thus trying to kill American citizens? Several answers that construct various groups of 'others' are offered ('the Arabs', 'the Islamics', and so on), all of which factually presuppose that all Muslims are trying to kill all Americans. Again, Josh intervenes by emphasizing that these nominations are wrong and by putting forward a further question formulated as a mathematical analogy, in the form of a test question ('*topos* of comparison'): 'Islamic Extremist is to Islamic as "blank" is to Christianity'? This rhetorical move suggests that, first, there are also 'bad guys' in the in-group of Christians and also, second, in American society. Through this argumentative move, Josh conveys the message that specificity is necessary. More guesses appear which point to other out-groups that are attributed, via implicature, negative characteristics and even the wish 'to kill everybody'. Josh replies by redefining the Christian Right and then finally, in keeping with the didactic mode, provides the 'right' answer: the Ku Klux Klan, which he defines in an interesting way, as both medieval and, by way of another *topos* of comparison, as global. Medieval because they are racist and violent; global because they are similar to the 'terrorists' who, Josh implies, form a large group spread over the country and perhaps beyond US borders. This could, of course, also be interpreted as a fallacy of hasty generalization, given that when this episode was aired, little was yet established as factual knowledge about terrorists. A second reading could also mean that while the KKK is defined as 'medieval', the terrorists, on top of being fundamentalist, are also acting on a global scale. It is impossible to decide which reading would be the right one at this stage, and, of course, there might be even more interesting readings. However, the second one makes more sense in the context of this conversation.

Josh's next move consists of providing evidence for this argumentative claim. He characterizes most Muslims (Islamic men) as good democratic and patriotic citizens (*topos* of definition). After having led the young audience through this argumentative chain, Josh repeats the first question, to which he now receives the 'right' answer. This, however, is not the end of this 'teaching unit': Josh would like to know 'why we are targets of war'. This leads to further simplified general answers and fallacies of hasty generalization: 'Because we are Americans' and 'It's our freedom', which presupposes that all Americans are targets of terrorism because they endorse a vague and undefined notion of freedom and also presupposes that 'freedom' would be an exclusive characteristic attributed to Americans (something which would possibly alienate European viewers, but which only an in-depth reception analysis would be able to test). Again, Josh challenges these general answers and asks for more specific reasons, which he provides himself in a complex argument ('yes, but'), obviously there are valid reasons for massive

dissatisfaction in the Middle East, and so forth. However, Josh maintains, these are not sufficient reasons to want to kill. In sum, this sequence illustrates how this particular episode of *The West Wing* challenges current widespread prejudicial beliefs and offers other, more specific factual answers, with some appropriate evidence. The salient point to be remembered seems to be: 'avoid generalizations' and general negative attributions to generic groups!

During this episode, more discussions take place about terrorism and its functions, different terrorist events in the past (in Russia, India, Israel, Ireland), and so forth. Suddenly President Bartlett appears with the First Lady, Abbey. He is quickly informed about the debate, but does not want to participate. He leaves the room with the following statement:

Text 3:

A martyr would rather suffer death at the <u>hands</u> of an oppressor than renounce their beliefs. Killing yourself and innocent people to make a point is sick, twisted, brutal dumb ass murder. uh uh And let me leave you with this thought before I go searching for the apples which were rightfully <u>mine</u>. (0.2) We don't need martyrs right now. We need heroes. A hero would die for his country, but he'd much rather live for it. It was good meeting you all.

Leaving the group with a clear definition of what counts as good or bad and thus providing a new Manichean division into good and bad people, the president, using a *topos* of authority, has made an important point: he constructs a contrast between ('wrong') martyrs and heroes. This implies that some wrongly claim to be martyrs (they, thus, state that they are sacrificing themselves for the good of their country) who are, rather, evil, even 'sick'. This means that they do not act in a responsible, rational, justifiable way. In this way, he constructs various distinct groups: real martyrs (for example, the fire fighters and the victims of 9/11, as the presupposed and implied referents), 'false martyrs' and heroes (who might also be 'real martyrs'). Heroes, however, are rational. They would certainly die for their country, but this is not their ultimate goal and they would not, of course, kill 'innocent people'. This new definition, in the long term, might imply and resonate with legitimacy and justification for Americans defending their country when at war (for example, in Afghanistan). Moreover, we might question the authority for these definitions; who determines what is 'real' and 'wrong' in specific contexts? In fact, no criteria are explicitly given. Through this statement, Bartlett closes the whole discussion, leaves no more space for other questions and further reinforces his characteristic identity as the wise and rational politician and, thus, as charismatic leader.[13]

Confronting racism

The second subplot intersects with the one discussed above. Ali has gone to a dark room to light a cigarette. Suddenly seven secret servicemen kick the door open with their guns

drawn. Ali is scared and shaking. Butterfield shouts, 'Stay calm. I'm special agent Ron Butterfield of the United States Secret Service. Keep your hands in the air and step away from the window, we're gonna ask you some questions.' This opening sets the frame for a quasi-trial. Leo joins in and starts the interrogation by going through the employment history of Ali, his background, his father's history, and so forth, without telling Ali of what he is suspected. Finally Ali asks: 'Why are you looking at me?' Leo does not reply. This question proves salient because later on Ali makes a second attempt to find out what he is accused of, while employing – hedged and mitigated – a *topos* of threat: 'Mr McGarry, I understand uh uh the need for these questions and I hope you've noticed that I am (0.1) cooperating, but if you drag my father into this pitiful exercise, I'm afraid I'm going to get angry.' Presumably this kind of interrogation is intended to frighten Ali and make him talk because the factual presupposition is clear: Ali is guilty and is hiding information. However, Ali challenges Leo and answers: 'I don't think you do [know].' This answer implies that Ali knows something that Leo does not know and that Ali infers that he is right and Leo wrong. Hence, Ali resists and challenges Leo and his prejudiced beliefs.

The interrogation culminates in the following sequence:

Text 4:

Ali: It is not uncommon for Arab-Americans to be uh uh the first suspected when that kind of thing [terrorist threat] happens.
Leo: I can't imagine why.
Ali: Look.
Leo: No, I'm trying to figure out why anytime there's terrorist activity people always assume it's Arabs, I'm racking my brain. (xx)
Ali: Well, I don't know the answer to that, Mr McGarry, but I can tell you it's horrible.
Leo: Well that's the price you pay.
Ali: Excuse me?
       [Leo looks away. There is a long silence; 1.0]
Ali: The price I pay for what?
Leo: Continue the questions.
       [Leo looks at the agents]
Ali: The price I pay for what?

In this sequence, Leo is using irony and sarcasm when answering (and deliberately not answering) Ali's questions. Ali is trying to convey the general experience of Arab Americans inasmuch as they are usually among the first suspects when terrorist threats appear. Leo blames the victim in *shifting the blame* onto Ali (and Arab Americans – a typical fallacy). This phenomenon is related, he believes, to the fact that they are Arabs and the fact that they look 'different'. This latter point is inferred, since Leo does not say this explicitly at this point (fallacy of hasty generalization). The evidence for this presupposition is given later on when, after Ali is cleared and proved innocent, Leo returns to Ali's desk and answers the question that has been left unanswered:

Text 5:

Leo: That's the price you pay – for having the same physical features as ah ah criminals,
         that's what I was gonna say.
Ali: No kidding.
Leo: I am sorry about that (xxx) uh uh I think if you talked to people who know me
         they'd tell you that was unlike me.
         [Ali says nothing]
Leo: You know, we're obviously all under a a greater than usual amount of, you know …
         [Ali keeps silent]
Leo: Yeah, all right. That's ah all …
Leo: 'Way to be back at your desk'. [Episode ends]

Leo concedes that he acted upon the prejudice that everybody who looks like an Arab is
dangerous. He simultaneously attempts to mitigate his apology and his false accusation by
justifying himself, claiming that this is out of character for him and using the general shock
and pressure after 9/11 as an excuse (in this way, he employs the *topos* of verecundiam by
referring to his status and authority, and the *topos* of history, by referring to people's past
experience). Ali does not let him off the hook. He keeps silent, which, as is typical in such
situations, forces Leo to continue with his defence; he did not really mean what he said and
he shifts the blame onto the immediate context (Wodak, 2008b, c). Then he changes his
style (and the frame) into collegial praise. Ali, however, stays silent and does not forgive
Leo in any explicit way. The audience is left with the clear message that Leo has made a
terrible mistake and that Leo's prejudiced behaviour is an example of the (fallacy of hasty)
generalizations, which, as Josh has emphasized in subplot one, should be avoided.
     In sum, the viewers are left with contradictory messages, whereby Ali and Josh emerge as
victims and heroes, respectively. Of course, there is no way to fully assess the impact of this
episode, although we can glean some insights from certain comments on websites. For
example, dvdverdict.com[14] contains a range of responses to this episode, stating that it was
'rushed', 'too well meaning', 'the audience [was] not ready', and so forth, from which we can
deduce that it was not the sort of 'entertainment' to which viewers of the series had become
used. In considering the objectives of the programme makers, however, it is important to
remember that this is the only episode in the series where such a salient real world event is
dealt with (see Riegert, 2007: 216). This has the consequence, I would suggest, of making the
USA look (for once) like a small cog in a big wheel. The deployment of a hybrid genre (as
discussed above), together with the focus on the response and reaction to 9/11, presented in a
manifestly didactic mode, suggest that the directors were 'thinking glocally'. The assumption
is that racist prejudice transcends history and culture and can appear anywhere, as the vast
amount of research on the manifold forms of everyday racism suggests (Delanty et al., 2008).

Conclusions

On 22 December 2008, the liberal leftwing Austrian weekly *Profil* claimed that politicians
are regaining prestige and power ('Obama und Co.: Werden Sie uns retten?' ['Obama and
Co.: Will They Save Us?'] 2008: 108–9) due to the global market's loss of power during

the so-called 'credit crunch'. Politicians are thus mandated to take important and difficult decisions again, while controlling and regulating (even nationalizing) the market. Moreover, *Profil* states that this is an age in which certain types of successful politicians will flourish. Those who are charismatic and energetic and have gained celebrity status (like Nicolas Sarkozy in France or Barack Obama in the US) or wise (financial) experts (like Gordon Brown in the UK). Hence, the comeback of active (and not only symbolic) politics (Edelman, 1967; Goffman, 1959) may be seen to mark the beginning of a new era. Indeed, it is clear that certain politicians have created their own brand and are promoting this via traditional and new media:

> [t]he traditional diplomacy of yesteryear is disappearing. To do their jobs well in the future, politicians will have to train themselves in brand asset management. Their tasks will include finding a brand niche for their state, engaging in competitive marketing, assuring customer satisfaction, and most of all, creating brand loyalty. (van Ham, 2001: 251)

Running up to the US election of 4 November 2008, the Viennese leftwing weekly *Der Falter* interviewed Martin Sheen, who plays President Jed Bartlett in *The West Wing* and is known to have been a progressive political activist for years. In a second commentary printed in the very same issue, a journalist draws an analogy between Barack Obama's campaign for American president and *The West Wing*. Bartlett is described as a kind of 'ideal super president' *(idealer Überpräsident)* and is contrasted with the former American president, George W. Bush. Indeed, the commentary also quotes *Isaac and Ishmael* as an example that conveyed a strong moral message of tolerance and respect for others, illustrating the recontextualization of liberal American values as embodied in this episode and provided by the model of President Bartlett. Thus, the author presupposes that the strong endorsement of Barack Obama by many liberal voters might stem from a general wish that this man were similar to the fictive President Bartlett.

In the *Guardian* (5 July 2009), a long report describes Tory leader David Cameron's ideas about his possible role as prime minister should the Labour Party lose the next election. I quote this in some detail here, as it illustrates how many aspects of the TV series are recontextualized in the British context and how *The West Wing* serves as global knowledge brand and context model for the 'ideal politician' and 'politics as usual':

> Now it is the Tories who dream of replacing Downing Street as Pennsylvania Avenue. Several headlines have talked of 'David Cameron's West Wing'. When I recently visited the corridor of offices occupied by the Tory leader and his senior team, they looked exactly as they had the week before: an unglamorous suite of rooms with club-land furniture, situated in an undistinguished office block on the edges of the parliamentary estate many hundreds of miles from the Potomac. On that occasion, members of the shadow cabinet and their staff were rushing around in a lather induced by one of the expenses scandals.

> When the political editor of the *Spectator* visited the same corridor, he found himself transported across the Atlantic: 'To visit Norman Shaw South is to see a political machine whirring beautifully,' writes Fraser Nelson in the most recent edition of the magazine. 'It is like a British version of *The West Wing*: the key players walking in and out of their rooms and having 45-second impromptu meetings in the corridor.'

In similar vein, a report in Friday's *Independent* talks about 'a cast of advisers, tacticians, policy wonks and spin doctors that would not look out of place walking the corridors of President Bartlett's West Wing'. On the same day, the *Guardian* predicted that 'a West Wing would be created in Downing Street' when Mr Cameron moves in. What the *Spectator*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian* accurately reflect is the Camerons' ambitions for themselves. These accounts draw on research by Conservative Intelligence, a new group set up by Tim Montgomerie, founder of Conservative Home. His report is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the power grid in the Cameron Tory party. It even comes with a handy wall chart that is entitled – this you may have guessed – 'David Cameron's West Wing'.[15]

It is quite remarkable that this popular American drama series is quoted so frequently in the European media.[16] In this way, journalists draw on specific values and context models (van Dijk, 2008) constructed and represented thereby for global generalizations – a typical example of '*glocalization*': on the one hand, specific liberal values are recontextualized; on the other, specific protagonists serve as models (spin-doctors, advisors, president) for 'real' politicians. The routines (discursive and material practices) of 'politics as usual' in the White House are conveniently transferred into other national contexts.

Here, I refer to Mitsikopolou's definition of 'glocalization' (2009: 1):

The investigation of the negotiation between the global and the local involves, among others, looking at effects of globalizing tendencies in local contexts (e.g. tensions and conflicts in discursive practices); appropriation of global discourses, strategies, and techniques; recontextualization of global discourses and emergence of new discursive practices; legitimation practices in the process of localizing the global as well as 'globalizing the local'.

In broadcasting *The West Wing* across the globe, we encounter both *recontextualizing as well as colonizing strategies* for specific values related to American politics, politicians and their branding practices.

Van Zoonen (2005: 112) states that *The West Wing* marries notions such as 'rationality, progress and destiny' with a focus on relationships, emotions, sensation and fallibility. In sum, all these components 'are integrated into a coherent and persuasive picture of the "best possible" political practice'. Riegert (2007: 220–1), however, maintains that the messages conveyed by *The West Wing* are unrealistic and thus undermine the progressive politics which the characters represent. I believe that both opinions and assessments are right in some aspects and that there is no need to choose between either interpretation. However, I would also claim that there are more salient meanings inherent in *The West Wing* apart from the specific educative message conveyed in *Isaac and Ishmael*. This popular drama series seems to fulfil many wishes of American viewers for better and different politics, in contrast to the former Bush government. Simultaneously, many contradictions become apparent between good ideals and values and everyday 'chaos' and compromise. Precisely what Riegert (2007) defines as 'chaos' is (following my extensive ethnographic work in the European Parliament [Wodak, 2009a]) part and parcel of 'politics as usual'.

In the series, politics becomes manageable in space and time and can be divided into temporal sequences and units/episodes, like projects that continue to be managed amidst anxiety, panic, danger, imminent disaster, intrigue, illness, love affairs or other typical themes

and plots. Problems are frequently solved and there is always a moral/coda to the story. In this specific episode, good values triumph, while empirical research on the everyday life of politicians illustrates that their lives are not organized into stories with clearcut beginnings and ends, isolated units and plots. They are very hectic, full of repetitive routines, on the one hand, and, simultaneously, of decision making and urgent affairs, on the other. Themes, agendas and topics continue; there seems to be no explicit temporal order as to when and how agendas are finalized and implemented. Many very different agendas are pursued at the same time and disturbances can occur at any time.

The *fictionalization of politics*, therefore, serves several functions: creating a world that is still manageable through the traditional routines of politics, through diplomacy, press conferences, speeches and negotiations; a world where good (American) values win (as defined by the series and represented by Bartlett and his team); a world where educational goals are conveyed through media in the hope that the audience might be socialized into these good values and into an appreciation of politics. In the specific episode analyzed in this article, moreover, we encounter the explicit rejection of racist beliefs and stereotypes which emerged *globally* after 9/11. In this way, a myth is created, possibly in contrast to the public's actual experiences of politics, drawing on cognitive and emotional schemata that have a long tradition in the USA in the genre of specific emancipative films as well as in the genre of the Western, as illustrated elsewhere (Wodak, 2009a, b). As *The West Wing* is also translated and aired worldwide, the myth is recontextualized into other countries and cultures, hence a typical example of glocalization.[17]

Obviously, the wish for charismatic politicians who know what is right and wrong has pervaded audiences across the globe and has thus influenced images, beliefs and opinions about politics on a large scale – locally, regionally, nationally and beyond – while transforming them into context-dependent needs in dialectic ways (Amin, 1997; Wodak and Fairclough, 2009). The glocal impact of *The West Wing* becomes even more apparent if one considers that not only are American values recontextualized globally, but ancient religious themes and their structures as parables are also recontextualized globally (and in the USA) as well.

The detailed analysis of one specific episode via DHA exposes the hybridization of genres in *The West Wing* as well as the specific values and norms conveyed via argumentative and rhetorical means: in particular, the traditional didactic-dialogic mode used to 'teach the public' the right liberal values of anti-racism is drawn upon and recontextualized in this popular drama series. These values are then, in a further step, recontextualized worldwide. In this way, approaches from discourse studies can be usefully applied to the analysis of fictional texts. The current blurring of boundaries between politics, media and fiction as both a figure and a feature of glocalization becomes apparent.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1.   See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_Angry_Men (accessed 15 August 2009) for details of the plot and the reception of the film. It was remade for television in 1997. This film became the

archetype for many other American films and TV series that attempt to educate the public on liberal western values and ideals.

2. There are, of course, many US films that come to mind when referring to anti-racist, liberal western values, such as, to name but a few, *A Time to Kill* (1996, based on a novel by John Grisham, 1987; http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Time_to_Kill [accessed 15 August 2009]) or *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (1962, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Harper Lee, 1960; http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking [accessed 15 August 2009]). In all these films, issues of racism and anti-racism are thematized, usually in large courtroom scenes and in the deliberations of the jury members. These films typically have a didactic function, teaching the audience that the deeply internalized racist beliefs and prejudices (against African Americans) are wrong and violate norms of justice and human rights. In this way, *The West Wing* continues and draws (as will be illustrated below) on an important tradition of employing a didactic mode in US film and TV productions. Due to reasons of space, I cannot, of course, elaborate this historical dimension in detail.

3. I am very grateful to Greg Myers for pointing me in this direction.

4. See Corner and Pels (2003), Wodak (2006, 2009a, b) and Holly (2008).

5. See: http://www.yes-minister.com/ (accessed 15 August 2009), which serves as satire rather than as popular drama.

6. See, for example: http://www.zeit.de/2005/27/Kanzleramt_27 (accessed 15 August 2009). *Im Kanzleramt* is based largely on *The West Wing*, while combining this with the genre of crime series of the famous ZDF weekly *Tatort*.

7. See: http://www.tv4.se/2.5344; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-ko4hYq6bU&feature and http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0386233/ (accessed 15 August 2009).

8. In this article, I focus mainly on the *topoi*, fallacies and intertextual references employed in the particular episode. Elsewhere (Wodak, 2009a, b) I have presented a narrative analysis of several episodes that are regarded as more typical of *The West Wing*, following Will Wright's seminal analysis of the genre of Wild West films (1967). It could be illustrated how the intricacies of 'politics as usual' are construed in fiction and how President Bartlett serves as an ideal president who is able to solve complex problems, contrary to real life experiences where the interdependencies of inter alia politics, economics and media are much more complex. Of course, as much research on *The West Wing* has been able to show, Bartlett does not always succeed in coping with big challenges in a successful way; moreover, themes sometimes continue over several episodes and are not restricted (as in the example analyzed in this article) to one episode (see below).

9. *Topoi* have so far been investigated in a number of studies on election campaigns (Pelinka and Wodak, 2002), on parliamentary debates (Wodak and van Dijk, 2000), on policy papers (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001), on 'voices of migrants' (Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2009), on visual argumentation in election posters and slogans (Richardson and Wodak, 2009) and on media reporting (Baker et al., 2008). Moreover, most of them are applied to justify and legitimize positions by providing 'commonplaces' instead of substantial evidence.

10. See, for example, Abramson (2000) and Burnett and Graham (2002) for critical discussions of the democratic impact of the American jury system.

11. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_and_Ishmael&action; http://www.westwing epguide.com/S3/Episodes/45_IAI.html; and http://www.tv.com/the-west-wing/isaac-and-ishmael/ episode/77672/summary.html for more information (all accessed 26 July 2008). I have transcribed (in a standardized way) some of the text examples from the DVDs with the episodes, orienting

myself simultaneously towards the written scripts published in Sorkin (2003). The script does not entirely comply, however, with the televised version, thus transcription proved necessary.

12. I quote a brief sequence of the *12 Angry Men* here to illustrate the similarity in didactic mode employed by Josh. Juror 8 is trying to convince juror 3 that he is prejudiced, in a famous and frequently quoted piece of dialogue:

It's always difficult to keep personal prejudice out of a thing like this. And wherever you run into it, prejudice always obscures the truth. I don't really know what the truth is. I don't suppose anybody will ever really know. Nine of us now seem to feel that the defendant is innocent, but we're just gambling on probabilities; we may be wrong. We may be trying to let a guilty man go free, I don't know. Nobody really can. But we have a reasonable doubt, and that's something that's very valuable in our system. No jury can declare a man guilty unless it's *sure*. We nine can't understand how you three are still so sure. Maybe you can tell us. (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0050083/quotes; accessed 8 July 2009)

13. See Wodak (2009a, b) for more details on the construction of President Bartlett as charismatic politician and hero.

14. See: http://www.dvdverdict.com/reviews/westwingseason3.php (accessed 15 August 2009).

15. See: http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/05/david-cameron-west-wing (accessed 8 July 2009).

16. In the *Independent Extra* (30 January 2008), Richard Schiff, an American actor well known for depicting Toby (one of the chief advisors to the president in *The West Wing*), describes how he decided to get involved in the election campaign (caucus) for US senator Joe Biden in December 2007 in Iowa.

17. See dictionaries created specifically to generate an automatic translation of *The West Wing* into German: http://www.dict.cc/english-german/west+wing.html; or Russian: http://www.babylon.com/definition/Access%20(The%20West%20Wing)/Russian (accessed 30 July 2008).

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