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Teaching European Managers to Understand the USA: Do Not Get Fooled by the American Dream, Prepare for the Naked Truth, As We Learned it from the Presidential Election 2000

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ABSTRACT

The procedures connected to the Presidential Election 2000 disturbed many Europeans, since it did by no means fit to their positive stereotypes of the USA. However, our job as European researchers is not to criticize, but to foster a broader understanding. Therefore we must analyze these events – similar to American researchers, who study cultures around the world. In doing so, this paper applies the three level methodology of Edgar Schein to what is commonly known as the "Florida Fiasco", but what really relates to the whole USA: We will analyze the "Supreme Court" as an artifact, the value "fairness" and the guiding belief "we are we". In doing so, the "Florida Fiasco" turns out to be a solid basis to challenge assumptions about the USA and to understand its culture – even though many Americans will object to this analysis. From the methodological point of view, the paper is based on documents, collected from the Internet basically during the 35 days of that "recount phase". The goal of this paper is, to help European managers to be better prepared for what is really the American way of doing business. In this sense, this election is a valuable case studies, European Business Schools could think of. A second motivation comes from the theme of the AOM-Conference 2001 "How Governments Matter" calls for a discussion of the last 6 weeks of the year 2000. We as academics cannot conduct a conference to that topic in Washington and spare the "Florida Fiasco".

Keywords:

Presidential Election 2000, Cultural Analysis, Teaching International Management

Teaching European Managers to Understand the USA: Do Not Get Fooled by the American Dream, Prepare for the Naked Truth, As We Learned it from the Presidential Election 2000

January 20 in the year 2001: Chief Justice William Rehnquist takes the oats of the new Republican president of the USA, whom he and those other judges put into office, who thank their office to Republican presidents.

Much has been said to the interesting presidential elections in the USA. The facts are on the table, also the official opinion in the USA, which sees the American constitutional system and the American people as the winner, and Al Gore as the single looser. The European opinion is a bit different. But we must be careful not to fall in the same trap as the USA, who played for decades the critical judge for democratic elections around the world and must now accept the cynical remarks of all these not-really-democratic countries.

It is not our job, to criticize the USA for the way they pick their president. As Churchill already put it: Every country has the level of democracy which it deserves. And we cannot blame the USA for behaving the way they do and not the way we expected them to do. If we project an illusionary value system into the USA and the people of the USA display a different set of values, we must accept this.

Also the purpose of this paper is neither to discuss the legal basis of this election nor the ethical aspects, since teaching business administration is not deciphering laws and not speculating about wishful thinking. And of course the paper is not about why Al Gore did not become president: It is evident by now, that he should have won easily, if he just would have carried home his home state (what most of the successful candidates do) and other normally strict Democratic states such as Arkansas and West Virginia.

On the other hand, we cannot just ignore these events, wrongfully labeled "Florida fiasco" – since it showed us much more than just some old voting machines. It showed us how the US-people think and act, what is important for them and about what does not matter for them. Using the critical incident method we definitely can say: We've got really a case!

In teaching Business students and preparing executives for doing international business, we, who are responsible for the international research and for curricular improvements, must observe these procedures at least from an anthropological point of view. In doing so, we must collect data, analyze them, and put them into a consistent frame. Consequences of this should be a deeper understanding of the USA-culture and by this a better preparation for dealing with the USA.

For all that, the presidential election 2000 seems to be one of the greatest case studies, European Business Schools could ever think of.

For the analysis, I will follow the classical suggestion of Schein (1985), who sees culture as being displayed on three levels, namely artifacts, values, and basic beliefs. For him, the artifacts signalize culture, since they reflect aspects and behaviors, accepted by the majority if the people. As research objects I will basically use documents provided by the internet, because they represent almost real-time the current developments and are an efficient way to do an anthropological research. Especially web-pages from CNN are a valuable resource, since CNN keeps their pages for a long time in the net, in contrast to journals such as the Wall Street Journal, where only a couple of days are accessible free of charge. The other reason for using these kinds of data is the lack of

additional resources, since it will take many years, until we will really have the academic analysis of this period of time.

In the following, it is assumed, that the timeline of this case is well known. Readers, not familiar with that case should look at the summary page of CNN (CNN, 2000b).

ARTIFACTS: THE SUPREME COURT IS DOWN FROM THE OLYMP (SINCE LONG) – AND NO ONE CARES!

Every culture has its artifacts. For the USA usually items such as the flag, the national anthem, or apple pie is mentioned. But even more important are artifacts, which really display culture and influence behavior.

The facts: The Supreme Court as central Institution

One most interesting artifact in dealing with the USA is the Supreme Court, since it has a huge impact and it reflects USA-culture. The majority of the American people belief in the Supreme Court and consider its acting rightful. According to a CNN-poll, taken before the Supreme Court decided upon the presidency, a total of 73% (with an error margin of +/-4%) stated that they accept the outcome of the U.S. Supreme Court as legitimate no matter which candidate it favors (CNN, 2000a).

And on December 13, when the race was decided, they still had a similar attitude:

CNN/USA TODAY/GALLUP POLL December 13 (Sampling error: +/-4% pts)

If George W. Bush is declared the winner and is inaugurated next January, would you accept him as the legitimate president, or not?

Yes 80% No 18%

Do you agree or disagree with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision?

Agree 52% Disagree 42%

Do you think the U.S. Supreme Court was fair or unfair in deciding this case?

Fair 54% Unfair 38%

Do you think the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court who voted to end the recount in Florida did so mostly based on the legal merits of the case or mostly based on their own desire to have Bush as the next president?

Legal merits of case 54%

Desire to see Bush win 35%. (CNN, 2000a)

Even though some Americans seem to disagree with the court's decision and do not believe that the court acted based upon the legal merits of the case, they still see George W. Bush as a legitimate president. And this, even though, the whole procedure clearly does not comply with the mythical correctness of this institution. Under the headline "In, but illegitimate" the British newspaper THE GUARDIAN, described this process, on Thursday December 14, 2000 in the following way:

The fix is in, Al Gore is out and it is a bad day for American democracy. In the end, the supreme court was decisive. The majority's ruling was transparently political. Questions of timeframe and standards in Florida's recounts could have been resolved with goodwill and impartiality. Both were lacking. By its action, the antithesis of jurisprudence, the court is in contempt of the electorate. It may not, in this generation's lifetime, recover its reputation. And American political discourse may never be the same again.

The fix was long in preparation. It included the pre-poll manipulation of Florida's electoral rolls by Governor Jeb Bush, George W. Bush's brother; and the intimidation and exclusion of Democrat-inclined minority voters on election day. That was followed by extraordinary incompetence and possible fraud

during the count. Then came the Bush lawyers, using every trick and ruse in the law books to waste time and block accurate tallies. Mr Gore won Florida and thus the national election. Jesse Jackson's vow to recount all the state's votes independently will confirm that outcome, although much too late. But Florida was a set-up from start to finish and in that disgraceful charade, the supreme court has foolishly yet definitively connived.

All this leaves a very bad taste. (Guardian, 2000)

But a bad taste for whom? The people in the USA know the facts and they accept the result. They know that four judges have been appointed by Reagan, two by George W. Bush's father, one by Ford and only two by Clinton.

With this in mind, it was obvious, that the Supreme Court had no other political choice but to decide to vote for George W. Bush – or to be precise, to stop the recount in Florida, even though this decision for the presidency was extremely close:

... the court's four center-left justices, spearheaded by 80-year-old Justice John Paul Stevens, publicly dissented from the five-member center-right majority's decision to grant Texas Gov. George W. Bush's request to halt the recounts and to hear his case against them. Justice Antonin Scalia, the court's most dynamic conservative, fired back with an opinion defending the majority's decision.

It is barely precedented for justices to express themselves at such a preliminary phase of a case; the writings yesterday not only broke that unwritten rule of the court but also left no doubt that members of the court disagree passionately about the merits of the underlying issues in the election dispute, now officially docketed at the high court as Bush v. Gore.

... Stevens, joined by Justices Stephen G. Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and David H. Souter, argued that it was the majority that had acted "unwisely," and "cast a cloud on the legitimacy of the election."

Since blocking the recounts so close to the Dec. 12 deadline for completing them makes it all but impossible for Gore to take advantage of the Florida Supreme Court's order issued Friday, the dissenters argued, the majority's action was "tantamount" to a decision for Bush on the case itself.

Then the dissenters telegraphed what their own conclusion would be: "As a more fundamental matter," Stevens wrote, "the Florida court's ruling reflects the basic principle, inherent in our Constitution and our democracy, that every legal vote should be counted."

- ... constitutional scholars expressed astonishment at the forcefulness with which the court's majority intervened in the case, and at the unmistakably angry way in which the minority objected.
- ... "They've come down off Mount Olympus," said professor Akhil Amar of Yale Law School. (Grimaldi & Suro, 2000)

However, the last sentence in this quote is a rare one, since even though from an objective point of view a phrase such as "they are down from Mount Olympus since long", the American people believe and trust in this institution in a surprising intense way. And this, even though the key figures in that case have extremely strong ties to the Republican party, which go beyond the fact, that they have been put into office by republican presidents:

Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia both have family connections to George W. Bush's side. -- but ethics experts say neither justice has a conflict of interest.

Here are the facts:

Clarence Thomas' wife Virginia recently sent an e-mail to 194 House and Senate aides suggesting they submit resumes "for transition purposes" to the conservative Heritage Foundation, where she is a senior fellow specializing in government studies. Tuesday, however, a federal appeals court judge in Tennessee said he thought Thomas should step aside and not take part in the case.

Two of Justice Scalia's sons are connected with law firms representing Bush.

- Eugene Scalia, 37, is a partner in the Washington office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, where Bush lawyer Theodore Olson also is a partner.
- John Scalia, 35, has accepted a job offer with the Washington office of Greenberg Traurig. Another Bush lawyer, Barry S. Richard, is a partner in that firm's Tallahassee office.

Legal ethics expert Stephen Gillers of New York University's law school says Scalia isn't required to step aside. "It's not a basis for disqualification, so long as neither child is involved in the case," Gillers said. Lanny Davis, a former White House counsel, told CNN he sees a problem of "perception" and believed Scalia should have mentioned his sons' employment to the Gore legal team. Davis said. He stopped short of saying Scalia should step aside from the case. (Jackson, 2000)

In most European countries – with the exception of Russia and some parts of the former Yugoslavia – neither the opponent lawyers, nor jurisdictional system or the public would permit this constellation. That fact,

that Al Gore did not object to these judges does not imply that there is no conflict of interest, it is rather due to the fact, that there is hardly anyone above the Supreme Court, where he really would have a chance to object to.

Other journals, such as the VillageVoice from New York, put it into an even more drastic way, as it suggests – between others – that George W. Bush will promote Scalia as the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, when William Rehnquist will retire:

Antonin Scalia, with two sons on the GOP tab and a chief judgeship in sight, and Clarence Thomas, the GOP's "Invisible Man," whose wife was a Bush headhunter, set the tone for a court that stopped the recount clock a few minutes after a heavily Republican Atlanta Appeals Court refused to by an 8 to 4 vote.

The Scalia Gang blamed the Florida court for delays in a count that the Gang had brought to a screeching halt itself—for fear that the undervote would put the Wrong Man ahead. Its purported concern for the equal protection of all voters was used to justify the disenfranchising of thousands whose intent was yet to be determined. A deadline in state law became more sacrosanct than the Constitution's most fundamental guarantee. (Barrett, 2000)

Even though it is absolutely obvious and perceived by most USA-journalists, that the Supreme Court acts in a strict partisan way according to their respective party-affiliation, is part of the American culture, that the myth of the Supreme Court is not challenged. The best example for this attitude is expressed by one of the supreme judges:

Thomas says legal battle over presidency shows 'strength' of democracy: Speaking to local high school students in an interview aired on C-SPAN, Thomas -- one of the most conservative justices -- offered rare public insight into the highly secretive court and spoke less than 24 hours after it issued a fractured opinion that effectively squashed Democrat Al Gore's presidential bid.

"I plead with you that whatever you do, don't try to apply the rules of the political world to this institution. They do not apply. Now you can criticize, and there are bases for disagreeing, but it's not the model that you use across the street," Thomas said, referring to the Capitol. "They're entirely different worlds."

... Thomas said the court cannot be compared to Congress, where passions on the five-week old battle ran high.

"They don't try to influence us and they don't," he said. "We happen to be in the same city, but we may as well be on entirely different planets."

Thomas, at 52 the youngest member of the court, was nominated to the bench in 1991 by President Bush -- the father of the Texas governor. He voted with the majority in Bush v. Gore -- a move that cleared the way for George W. Bush's elevation to the White House. (CNN, 2000e)

The Analysis: Supreme Court as Cultural Hero

To use an analogy from sport: Even though it is clear to almost all Americans, that in many cases drugs and anabolic pills are used, Americans still keep up the fiction of the "clean" sport and celebrate these stars as role models.

In cultural analysis, it is usually a good idea, to look for pieces of information, that surprise – like Sherlock Holmes dog which did not bark. Therefore it is not so relevant, that Al Gore gives a sad but noble good-by-speech (CNN, 2000f) to this presidential ambitions and to his whole career. Rather two aspects surprise: (a) Why did the Supreme Court decide in its rather partisan way 5:4 vote over the presidency, and (b) Why did the American people accept that decision and applauded?

The answer to (a) is not to complicated. First of all, it seems, that the 5 judges had a very good feeling, that the American people would accept any decision – maybe the judges also believe in the CNN-polls. Second, they simply had the power to do so:

In an interview for Tuesday's ``60 Minutes II" program, the outgoing president was surprisingly frank in discussing the 5-4 decision by the high court that effectively ended Vice President Al Gore's contest for the presidency.

On the core ruling halting the recount at the urging of lawyers for Republican George W. Bush, the court was split along strict ideological lines, with the narrow conservative majority prevailing.

"I think most lawyers, or a lot of them, were surprised they took the case," Clinton said. "Even those (who) were surprised they took the case were shocked when the vote count was stopped."

But Clinton, an attorney and veteran of many partisan battles during his two terms in office, said he was not shocked, though he stopped short of saying outright he felt the decision was politically driven.

``No, not after eight years in Washington, I wasn't," he said. ``They had the power to do it and they did it. And it's done and we should accept it." (Reuters, 2000)

This leaves us with the much more complicated question (b). To answer it, we know already from Hofstede (1980), Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) or Hammond and Morrison (1996) that the USA is high on individualism. For the USA, this means, basically each person believes in himself/herself. This fragmented process calls for order. Therefore on one hand, we have the separating forces, striving for individualism. On the other hand, we have integrative institutions. For them it is not important, what they say – it is important, who says it. There are basically three of these institutions, American People trust, namely the President, the Supreme Court, and the Military. "Trust" might be the wrong word – basically they accept the authority almost without challenge. The Vietnam War is a good example for this, where a whole nation followed these three institutions. It is understandable, that a country such as the USA needs these accepted authorities. As we know already from organization theory (e.g., Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), each decentralization required mechanisms of centralization, to go with it.

This mechanism was obvious immediately after the Signaled Court signaled its decision, and everybody went back to work. Regardless how George W. Bush became President, now he is the President, as two excerpts from CNN-chats show:

Question from Catherine: How do you expect Gore to assist in helping the Bush administration reconcile with the Democrats?

Bill Schneider: At some point, Gore has to send a message that Bush will become President. He is President of the entire country, Gore's president, your president, our president, and Americans must accept that. He can start sending that message tonight.

Chat Moderator: Now that we finally have a president-elect, are Americans in a conciliatory mood? Does it appear that we, as a nation, are ready to move forward in a positive way?

Frank Newport: Yes. In fact our data has shown all along, since Election Day, that the public was going to be fine with whatever happened. We've never seen signs that this was perceived as a real crisis.

Americans have viewed this, in my opinion, more as an extension of the election, and as is true with most elections, I think the public is willing to accept the outcome and move forward. In other words, even though Americans may have strongly supported Gore, those Gore voters now, for the most part, seem willing to say he lost and that's that. (Schneider, 2000; Newport, 2000)

This concept of the leading institutions differs in two ways sharply from the concept of the patron in France (e.g., Bassan, 1969:250; Hall & Hall, 1989), which is also an accepted leader. (a) In France, the centralist function is clearly communicated and visible, while in the USA the myth of independent and "free" units is promoted. (b) In France, the patron is in a positive way connected to ideas of "patriarchal caring", while in the USA the concept of individualistic self interested dominates. To put it in an extreme way: That the Republican judge Antonin Scalia, with two sons connected to the GOP and the chief judgeship in sight, does not only work for George W. Bush, but also for himself, is for the US-people perfectly okay. This behavior calls for admiration and for criticism.

The consequences: Look for centralist institutions and their networks

It is a common misconception for Europeans, that football and basketball stand for team activities, just because several players are involved. Football has specialists, but it has also a strict hierarchy. Deep in their heart

the Americans believe in a centralist system and they believe strongly in the central institutions. For Europeans it is a dangerous assumption, that talking means doing. "Read my lips" – as a famous US-president used to say –, does not stand for believing and for doing. George W. Bush always pointed out, that the state level is for him the dominant and most important level of authority, and that he will try to increase the political weight of the states – until the point, where he (for the first time in the US-history) saw a chance, that a Washington Institution could decide in a centralist way the presidency.

Lesson #1 for European managers:

Always look for the central institution and the central leader – and never ever get confused by the myth of a "team-culture".

For companies in Germany, the board ("Vorstand") is to be considered as a team institution, with basically all members having similar power – and not even the "Vorstandsvorsitzende" has much more power. This contrasts to the USA, where the CEO basically has all the power. Back to the Supreme Court: The unofficial leader Antonin Scalia did not even really bother to find an unanimous solution. He had the power and he used it.

But can we really compare courts, companies and government? In the year 2001 the Academy of Management will held a conference with the title "Government" and the explicit notion, that it is really totally different from companies. And as we heard from Supreme Judge Thomas, government and court also are totally different. But is this really the case? In this paper, we will and can not resolve this issue. However, it is striking for Europeans, that there are really many similarities between these systems, and at the same time, everybody points out "they are totally different".

At the Academy of Management 1997 in Boston the author of this paper got into a heavy argument over an empirical evidence, that the USA ranks high on the scale "bureaucracy". Even though the measurement was quite solid and related clearly only to the private sector, several people in the audience emphasized their opinion, that in the USA the government has a high bureaucracy, while the private sector is rather free of bureaucracy.

More than in Germany, but similar to France and Great Britain, it is rather easy in the USA, to move between the public and the private sector. Therefore it is understandable, that these systems run according to similar rules and are strongly connected. There is nothing wrong with this fact – at least in the perception of Europeans. However, the people in the USA try to keep up the myth of independent and different systems. And it is dangerous for European managers to belief this fairy tale. Still, Europeans should not challenge it in public, but understand the rules of the game.

Lesson #2 for European managers

Government-Companies-Courts are parts of a strongly interconnected system.

Therefore, for instance, the US-Courts by a hidden agenda to a large degree depend upon political and other pressure groups.

This is an extremely important finding, for instance, for Daimler-Chrysler. The German CEO Schrempp of this company played very well, when he talked about "merger between equal". Even though everyone knew, it was a perfect takeover, he used the right words, keeping everyone happy. Up to this point, he showed his knowledge of the US-culture. But all this changed drastically, when he mentioned, that he had planned a

takeover from the beginning and that he simply bought Chrysler. That the German Daimler company bought the US-Chrysler company is not the real problem. Here the story runs similar to Great Britain, where many people were unhappy, that BMW bought Rover (and later sold it). But the real difference is that in the USA the task of the court is to reestablish the national pride. And therefore now Schrempp gets in conflict with the courts who will try to reestablish the US-pride. Even though Schrempp might have been right in what he said, it was counterproductive that he has said it. And it seems dangerous to belief, that courts in the USA are independent – a lesson Al Gore has learned the hard way.

VALUES: THE IDEA OF FAIRNESS AS A DANGEROUS MISCONCEPTION

For Europeans it is rather interesting, how often in speeches by representatives of companies as well as of political parties, there is a referral to "our" values, to the values of the nation, the values of the company or the family values. Therefore it is interesting to see, what this presidential election tells us about values – not so much the articulated values, but more regarding the "real" values, which guide behavior.

The Facts: Fair or not fair, that is the question

In its orientation to sport, fairness is a widespread theme in the American society. We do not even need an academic definition of fairness (e.g., Rawls, 1958; Beugré, 1998) – everybody relates to that concept. A tennis play, who sees the ball on the line, gives this information to the referee. A soccer player kicks the ball purposely put of the field, to give an injured opponent the chance to get treated – and later the other team kicks the ball back to them. In baseball, when the batter misses the ball totally, players of the team do not laugh or make fun out of it. In gymnastics, the trainer of one team hands the ice pack (for injuries) to the other team, if they do not have theirs at hand. This list could be extended almost indefinitely and young kids – especially in the USA – learn from the very beginning, that it is important to be fair.

But the fact, that there is a lot of talking about "fairness" does not necessarily mean, that the US people are more "fair" than people in other countries. It could also mean, that fairness is not a real value, since if it would be, not so much talking about it would be necessary. Therefore let's move again to the presidential election and its degree of fairness.

To begin the voting process itself, many observers saw difficulties created especially for the African-Americans, the lesser educated people, as well as for the infrequent voters; all of these groups are said to be over represented within the supporters of Al Gore.

As many as one in every six ballots cast in the Nov. 7 U.S. presidential election was declared void in many black precincts in Chicago, while almost every vote was counted in some of the city's outer suburbs, the Washington Post reported in Wednesday's editions.

Citing its own analysis, the Post said Illinois had the "most pronounced pattern" of nullifying votes in predominantly black areas compared with mainly white precincts. "Moreover, the GOP-led state Senate prevented Cook County from using a device on its machines that notifies voters of some mistakes and gives them a second chance to cast valid ballots," the Post reported.

Election experts say new and infrequent voters are the most likely to be affected by these kinds of balloting problems, the report said. The Post said ballots were thrown out, or "spoiled," for a number of reasons, including mistakes in voting, and the possibility that some people choose not to vote because they do not like the candidates. But it quoted voting experts as saying they doubted this explained why more

black ballots than white went uncounted. The Post said its analysis suggested Democrats had lost votes, and possibly elections, in Cook County for years, because large numbers of ballots cast by blacks were not counted. (CNN, 2000d)

Therefore it does not surprise, that these groups claim to have experienced unfair treatment at this presidential election, preventing them from executing their legal rights.

Protest groups said on Thursday they plan demonstrations at the inauguration of President-elect George W. Bush in Washington on Jan. 20.

The main aim this time is to protest the Supreme Court's decision on Tuesday not to allow a recount of Florida's votes, which effectively gave Bush his victory over Gore in the most rancorous, divisive U.S. election in recent memory.

"Bush's election is a result of the lynching of the black vote in Florida," Becker's group said in a statement to announce the protests. "Governor does not have a mandate to push his pro-rich, anti-poor, racist policies," said the statement.

Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson has also threatened mass protests across America against Bush and said on Wednesday these would coincide with Martin Luther King Day on Jan. 15 or on Inauguration Day. Jackson and other civil rights leaders are protesting what they say was the disenfranchisement of many black voters. (Pleming, 2000)

Back to the sports analogy, which helps to decipher the US-culture. Even though in football and in the public opinion, the superball ends with a missed fieldgoal, wrong score keeping is another issue. Like in golf, it is considered unfair to produce wrong figures. At the last election, there seems to be evidences, that at least in some parts of Florida some officials did not prevent wrong score keeping:

Not all Florida counties obeyed order to do recount!

When election night results left George W. Bush and Al Gore less than one-half of 1 percent apart in Florida, state officials ordered an automatic machine recount of all votes the next day.

At least five counties, and perhaps as many as 18, did not carry out the recount following the closest presidential race in the state's history -- and did not notify elections officials in Tallahassee of that fact. (Long & de Vise, 2000)

Another issue, usually related to the term "fair" is the media coverage. It is supposed to be fair, in the sense that is is neutral and objective. Meanwhile it is evident, that the media played a rather strange role, beginning with declaring George W. Bush as a winner in a situation, where many voters did not cast there votes (and then did not care to do it) up to the coverage of the "Florida Fiasco". Even though it is understandable, that George W. Bush is for the media a much more interesting person, the question of a "fair" coverage can be asked. Even Bernard Shaw from CNN admits (to a very small degree), the "Election Night Mistakes by CNN and other networks). Others see much more severe problems of fairness and seriosity.

TV Journalism and the Wrongful Coronation of an American President:

What are the implications of filling hundreds of millions of TV screens around the world with the bold, unqualified statement, "BUSH WINS PRESIDENCY," or simply, "BUSH WINS." How much were the subsequent actions and decisions of George Bush and his supporters, including the establishment of a transitional team for a Bush presidency, based on the expectations and psychology manufactured by the TV networks' wrongful call?

The individual most responsible for starting the TV networks' stampede to coronate George W. Bush as president was none other than his cousin, John Ellis. Ellis manned the Fox network's Election Night Decision Desk. The stunning professional negligence on the part of Rupert Murdoch's network in placing not only a partisan ally, but an actual blood relative of George Bush in this job, is almost beyond description. The fact that the other networks all took their lead from such a tainted source exposes the hard reality that there are no real journalistic standards left in those divisions of the info-tainment industry that pass themselves off as disinterested news agencies. (Hall 2000)

Again it is revealing to go back to the sport analogy. Much about what happened, relates to the time factor, in this case, to the game clock. The point here is, that delay of game is unfair and therefore negative:

Pace not fast enough to aid Gore: Bush team hit every ball back!

It was Saturday Dec. 9, and Miami-Dade's recount was clicking. But then the U.S. Supreme Court issued a shut-down. Suddenly, a Republican lawyer dashed in: ``I'm with the Bush-Cheney team, and I'm here to stop the count."

To reach the White House, Al Gore needed speed. To stop him, George W. Bush needed delay. In the end, though the historic legal fight moved apace, it didn't travel swiftly enough for the vice president.

``It was going to be in their interest to try to run the clock out, and they did," said lawyer Cheryl Cronin, who was not involved in the case but previously represented Democratic officials in Massachusetts. ``Time did make all the difference. They certainly did run the clock out, but at the same time, you would expect them to have done so." In and out of court, Democratic lawyers said their Republican counterparts plotted a plan to stall the recounting of ballots from South Florida, rich in support for Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman. ``It was all a question of delay," Steve Zack, a Gore-Lieberman lawyer, said Wednesday. ``We started saying that shortly after the election." (Greene, 2000)

But: If no one has the right to rule on that "delay of game"? Moving further in the sport analogy, it is also important, who is in control of the game clock:

From the start, the clock was on Bush's side – as were those who controlled the time. As several Florida counties scrambled to conduct their manual recounts, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris announced that she would strictly enforce a Nov. 14 deadline for the submission of revised vote tallies. Convinced that the recounts in four heavily Democratic counties would show Gore the winner, the Democrats decided to fight Harris. Eventually, Gore won when the Florida Supreme Court extended the deadline to Nov. 26. However, only two counties met the extended deadline. Miami-Dade gave up without even trying, saying time was too short. Palm Beach County, having taken a break on Thanksgiving Day, missed the mark by a few hours. By then the Gore team had expended almost two precious weeks on the recounts and came up short. Bush was still ahead – though by only 537 votes – in the revised tally. (Lane,

The analysis: Fair? Not really

2000)

For the analysis of the value "fairness", I will clarify the point to be made by another example, namely by the cultural value "humor". It is a common misconception, that humor is an important ingredient of the US business life. Some managers from Europe, familiar with shows from David Letterman and Jay Leno, start out in the USA by telling jokes. But unfortunately the wrong jokes: Even though humor is said to be important, topics such as women, Afro-Americans, as well as any kind of minority have to be spared out. This leaves only sport and politics, the former a dangerous ground – since you are about to make fun out of the wrong team -, the later a very dangerous ground since the new presidency, which is for the European connected to lots of unwilling and natural humor, while it appears totally normal for the people in the USA.

But back to the issue of fairness. Was this whole timeline of voting, counting, and contesting a fair process? Was it "fair" when George W. Bush went for recounts in New Mexico and at the same time objected to them in Florida?

Looking at the evidences, at least to some degree the behavior of both candidates was not too much guided by the core value "fairness" but more by the desire to win under all circumstances. And here comes another US-value, which could similar important. This was obvious during the 35 days of Florida: For some voters, Al Gore lost points in the "court of public opinion", basically because he did not accept his defeat immediately in a sportsman manner. For others, he gained points, since he displayed a strive for winning.

But did anybody really care about fairness? Not really. What counted was cleverness and the proclamation of fairness. Going back to the examples taken from sport in the beginning: Why do the soccer player and the baseball player really behave this way: Maybe just, because they do not want a wooing crowd. And the tennis players: They usually do not tell the referee about such a case – understandable, since neither the crowd nor the referee nor the opponent has a chance to object. Finally to the "delay of game". Basically it is unfair. But it is common practice to wait, and become only a problem, if you reach the time limit. Or to phrase it differently: "Delay of game" becomes an unfair act in that moment, when the referee throws the yellow flag.

The consequence: Fair? Of course, but

Fairness is a myth which is a typical theme in Hollywood movies. Just image, how the fight over the presidency would have ended in a Hollywood movie: Harrison Ford and Tom Cruise would agree to a complete manual recount of the huge pile of uncounted votes, since this reflects the US principle "each vote must be counted". And then each would have gotten the same number of votes. This leaves it up to the congress, to adjust the constitution to the possibility of having two persons at the same time as president ... and they acted successfully and made the country even greater. At the end, of course, a son of George W. Bush would marry a daughter of Al Gore.

And even if they would go to court, we still have Perry Mason. Well, David Boies as one of the lawyers of Al Gore's legal team comes somehow close to Perry Mason: He fought against Microsoft and defended Napster against the music industry (Okrent 2000). However, he still did not win against Microsoft (and with the new presidency he will have not even a real chance to continue), and Napster is history. And of course, he lost his Bush vs. Gore case. But, ironically enough, David Boies became the "Person of the Year" runner up for Time Magazine, George W. Bush became the "Person of the Year".

Lesson #3 for European managers:

In the USA, keep on talking about fairness, but do not believe in it and do not practice it. Only prevent from appearing to be unfair.

This is similar as business ethics: As long as it can be used as a selling argument, it is okay. But if it costs real money, do the opposite and forget about it. But we can even go further, taking into account what we learned from the last presidential election.

Lesson #4 for European managers:
Use verbal aspects of fairness in order to play unfair.

This advice might sound drastically, even though it is not meant this way. The former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky used to give the following advice: If being nice to animals is an important value and you still would like to kill a fish, take it gently out of the water and pet it nicely – until it dies. Even though this procedure is much more cruel to the fish than striking its head on the pole, it appears very human.

In the last presidential election, the George W. Bush campaign together with the Supreme Court did not kill fishes, but they used similar techniques. They talked successfully about being fair, and by this created the opposite effect:

Nick Baldick, a senior adviser to the Gore campaign, noted the irony of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that there was no time for a proper recount. If the high court hadn't halted the counting Saturday, he said, the contested ballots could have been counted.

"We knew we won, so we wanted to count the votes," he said. "They [the Bush team] knew we won so they didn't want to count the votes.

"They ran out the clock. That's what this is all about." (Athans, 2000a)

Another example of this strategy can be derived from an article in the Washington Post, entitled "Risky Bush Legal Strategy Paid Off" (Lane, 2000). Even though the strategy to rely on the Supreme Court is far from being risky (with a majority of supporters in that court) it was risky because of the extreme double standard of

his main argument, namely the equal-protection claim: He objected successfully against the manual recount in some counties, since it could not be ensured, that these recounts would be done with the same standards. However, the procedures in Florida had such a variety from the beginning, that the whole voting procedure conflicted with the equal-protection goal: The variation within the counties was therefore less than the variation across the states. This means, the argument by itself was risky (because not logical), but not risky due to the constellation in the Supreme Court.

It is not surprising, that the Democrats are now rather angry about that (but just in private), but will give the new President a hard time:

Frank Sesno: I will tell you that while most political leaders are publicly talking about cooperation and reaching across the aisle, Democrats privately remain very angry with the U.S. Supreme Court and resentful at the way Bush and the Republicans played the legal system and, in the Democrats' view, played out the clock.(CNN, 2000c)

Finally, we can learn a lot about what Americans do with those, who loose in the competition:

Lesson #5 for European managers:

When you loose, you cannot expect any kind of respect or fairness. When the game is over and you are out, it does not matter, how hard you fought or how close you win. You are simply history!

First, it is likely, that they make fun out of him. The whole tension of the competition, has to be released. And the loosing group needs a scapegoat. The way the political opponent treated Al Gore could easily be seen by looking at the remarks, the Republican House Speaker in Florida made with respect to Al Gore's concession speech.

Feeney's true feelings came out at a victory party with fellow Republicans Wednesday night, when he was heard deriding the vice president. "What a loser," Feeney said as he watched Gore's concession speech, which he called "an evil speech." Feeney didn't know that an uninvited guest in the room was a reporter from the South Florida Sun-Sentinel. (Athans, 2000b)

Second, it will be discussed in public, that you really do not have another chance and must retire. "They never come back". And as we can already read in the press: "Gore career may be at an end". Even more dramatic, immediately after his concession speech he vanished completely out of the media. He is gone. Maybe forever – and would be president, if a few hundred votes would be counted sooner or differently.

[Al Gore] has put himself in that company of failed Democratic nominees who, in effect, vanished from party counsels without a trace once the votes were counted: George S. McGovern in 1972, Jimmy Carter in 1980, Walter F. Mondale in 1984 and Michael S. Dukakis in 1988.

Even as the recount drama was playing itself out in Florida over the last five weeks, Democratic leaders were reaching an informal but pervasive consensus among themselves that Al Gore has no political future. Leading Democrats are reluctant to speak publicly of their harsh judgment of their party's standard-bearer, but privately they are blunt.

A prominent former official of the Clinton administration who raised large amounts of money for Gore says, for example, that "nobody's going to lift a finger for Al" if he tries to run again. Asked if he would raise money again, this Democrat replies, "Not a penny." (Germond, 2000)

Third, it will be discussed in public, how hard it is psychologically for you to deal with this situation – just to make sure, that you are really history. Even though the Chicago Tribune gives under the headline "like Gore, many have felt agony of defeat" the subtitle "Losers often turn setbacks into opportunities", the presented examples for the losers are rather drastically.

More often, they are masters in their own universes suddenly confronted with publicly dealing with the private pain of dashed hopes and shattered dreams. And a few, like Al Gore, already out of a job and out of a home, must also struggle with the peculiar torture of never knowing if they really won or lost.

"As for what I'll do next, I don't know the answer to that one yet," said Gore during his concession speech. After 24 years in public service with an eye relentlessly trained upon the Oval Office, Gore's slim defeat at the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court raises the question of how anyone copes with such monumental disappointment.

Some unexpectedly discover salvation through the crucible of defeat.

For others, failure can be unbearable. Giving up a fateful home run in the 1986 American League Championship Series against the Boston Red Sox has been considered a factor in the suicide of California Angels pitcher Donnie Moore 3 years after the pitch. "He never was himself again," Dave Pinter, Moore's agent of 12 years, said at the time. "He blamed himself for the Angels not going to the World Series. ... He couldn't get over it. That home run killed him."(Anderson & Long, 2000)

BASIC UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION: WE ARE WE - WHO CARES ABOUT THE OTHERS?

Deep down in any culture are the basic underlying assumptions (e.g., Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961): They "have been taken for granted that one finds little variation within a cultural unit ... basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable" (Schein 1985: 18-19). Digging down into this cultural level, is the most complicated task in any cultural analysis. Therefore at this point, only to a small portion it is possible to accomplish this task. Further research is necessary and currently underway. In order to show the potential of this presidential election with respect to cultural analysis, I will briefly sketch out one dimension, namely the relation to the external environment, in this case to other countries.

The facts: Just a Fiasco for Florida?

Up to that incident, the USA saw itself as a role-model for democracy, technological advancement and organizational management skill. And to a large degree there have been sound reasons for this belief. But this chanced drastically.

International image damaged by vote dispute!

With a mixture of relief and apprehension, the world turned Thursday from the spectacle of a flawed American election to the prospect of a new president.

Even among the world leaders who issued ritual congratulations to the new president, there were signs of the unusual nature of this election. From Berlin to Beijing, leaders hailed the nation's 43rd president. But French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin told reporters: "The popular vote favored Mr. (Al) Gore by some 300,000 votes. There was no recount in Florida, so there will always be an uncertainty."

Indeed, five weeks as the butt of global one-liners clearly took its toll on the USA's international image. One possible consequence: Washington will find it more difficult to lecture smaller nations about democracy now that its "own leader has been installed in a courtroom fix," says columnist Jonathan Freedland of London's *Guardian*. Both conservative and liberal newspapers here highlighted questions over the legitimacy of George W. Bush's victory. And Hugo Young, one of Britain's most respected political writers, called the election "a calamity without precedent" in the more liberal *Guardian*. "Democracy, quite simply, was poisoned to put George W. Bush in the White House," Young wrote. (Lynch, 2000)

The TV-station "Channel One" put the result of this election into a sharp phrase: "The US-Supreme Court simply refused the US-voters the right that their votes count". Again, in this analysis it is of no importance, if the USA really lost the character of a potential role model. Important are basically two facts: The first is, that this kind of impression exists in the international field, and even some USA-media start to recognize it.

America, the role model of democracy, the country that sends observers to other nations to ensure that their balloting functions legally and smoothly, suddenly finds itself looking in the mirror, confronting its own inadequacies.

"The protracted battle has made America look bad to other countries," said Max Duna, manager of Ann Sather's Restaurant on Chicago's far North Side. "I think we look incompetent." (Kemper & Grossman, 2000)

The second aspect is even more important, namely the fact, that the USA does not really recognize the degree in which this unmasking took place. One example: The quote stated above comes from the Chicago Tribune and is taken out of an article, with the headline "Confusion, Frustration but also pride and hope" (Kemper & Grossman, 2000). It comes to a conclusion, which is totally strange to Europeans: The people of the USA feel pride over how they created and handled the "Florida Fiasco".

Yet in interviews Wednesday, scores of politicians, historians, activists and ordinary citizens all around the country, while expressing rage, confusion or frustration, also articulated a sense of pride and hope.

Some scholars suggest that to think that America is in a crisis is to overlook the basic fact of our history: Unlike the static societies of Europe, America is an ever-evolving nation. (Kemper & Grossman, 2000)

The Analysis: Do they know and do they care?

Hardly any country or any statesman has received a similar negative media coverage, as it has been the case with the presidential election 2000.

``Of course the government will deal with him as usual because he is president and has that authority," said Japanese international affairs analyst Tsutomu Ono.

"But in peoples' hearts, the question will be 'Is he the real president?' And this is unlikely to be easily erased."

Berndt Ostendorf, a political scientist at the University of Munich, said he expected European leaders like German Chancellor Schroeder and French President Jacques Chirac to be cracking jokes about Bush's election for years to come.

"But it will not affect the professional relationships... Once the advisers and professionals behind the stage have been established, there will not be a loss of legitimacy but rather a mood of business as usual."

But Britain's mass circulation Mirror tabloid lampooned Bush for alleged ignorance of world affairs, notoriously displayed when he could not give the names of some foreign leaders in a surprise quiz during a television interview last year.

``Bush, who's been abroad only twice -- both times to Mexico, is now the most powerful man in the world," said the Mirror.

Splashed on the front page was a picture of a section of the earth from space with an arrow pointing to Britain and the headline: "Congrats on becoming the president... P.S.: We are here." (Tostevin, 2000)

Most Americans do not know, what the rest of the world thinks about this election. And those few who know, begin to argue, that George W. Bush went to a few more countries – basically during the presidency of this father -, and that he does have a passport. The European media coverage, the really bad and sarcastic cartoons, they all did not make it to the USA. The guiding belief of the people in the USA seems to be "We are we! Who is the rest of the world!"

Until now, the USA would have strongly opposed such an election process, if it would took place anywhere else in the world and would send former presidents as observers to ensure the US-type of democracy. This version of the "big stick policy" is history: The USA will not be accepted in the near future in the rest of the world as a symbol of a democratic society.

But again back to the message of this paper, which is not to discuss, whether the USA is a "real" democracy. The question is rather: Giving (a) this developments, (b) the low degree of international knowledge and (c) the fact, that the USA does not care at all about the world opinion, what is the logic behind it. The answer is simple: Even in a global world the USA feels increasingly strictly ethnocentric.

The consequences: Do not try to convince them! In the USA Play the American style!

In a global economy, Europeans as well as people from Asia are rather well educated with respect to the USA. Business schools in these countries usually take the advantage of at least some professors from the USA and students have to read at least some of the USA text books. All this does not hold true the other way around.

Lesson #6 for European Managers:

Even in a global economy, the American people do not know much about the rest of the world.

This lesson #6 is at the same time risk and opportunity, but it has to be taken into account. At the long range, European Managers might do rather well in dealing with the USA: They have the advantage of knowing more from the US-opponents as it is the case vice versa. Regardless of certain fallbacks, companies such as German Telekom, Daimler-Benz, Deutsche Post, SAP and Bertelsmann are doing nicely, taking into account that Germany is about the size of Texas. The same holds true for the other countries in Europe.

Lesson #7 for European Managers:

Even in a global economy, the American people do not care about the opinion of the rest of the world.

Certainly, that the next president is strongly connected with the death penalty, appeals to certain groups in Europe. But not to the majority and not to the human standards in the EU. This means, that the USA would not even be permitted to be part of the EU. Similar arguments can be made with respect to the environmental protection. Still, and this is the lesson European managers must learn, the USA does not care – and the next presidency even less. Foreign policy and world economics was no real topic in the presidential debate, and the fact, that Al Gore had more experience in these fields did not count at all.

Transferring lesson #7 for European Companies into action, this calls for deletion of phrases such as "our Paris headquarter", "the German newspaper FAZ", "the British Parliament", "the Finish people" from the external communication agenda. Much more important are CNN, The Chicago Tribune, and the people of Orange County. However, the USA has a very positive emotional relation to Europe, especially to its long tradition and culture, as well as to specific attributes of certain countries: e.g., design from Italy, engineering from Germany, food from France, theater from Great Britain. Connected to lesson #6, this creates huge opportunities for European companies, who know their roots but understand the USA.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATION

This research has four limitations:

First: The paper relates to a very recent event, which has not been analyzed broadly in the academic community. It therefore misses a broad and accepted knowledge basis. However, especially a conference to the

topic "How Governments Matter" definitely calls for a discussion of the last 6 weeks of the year 2000. We as academics cannot conduct a conference to that topic in Washington and spare out the so called "Florida Fiasco".

Second: The paper relates to a single incident and tries a cultural analysis based upon it. However, from a research point of view, this "Florida Fiasco" is a critical incident, which really tells us something about culture – especially when one considers the fact, that a few hours after the concession speech of Al Gore, the whole topic disappeared from the media (in the USA).

Third: The paper is written from an outside perspective and anyone in the USA will argue, that "they don't know". Or as an American professor told me:

It seems to me that though many [Europeans]speak English perfectly, have lived in the U.S., traveled to the U.S., and keep current on news events in the U.S., that despite all this, there is not a deep understanding of the values/ideas/philosophies that undergird American culture. Such an understanding would aid in understanding why most Americans have no problem with the Supreme Court essentially picking the president, etc.

However, (a) from an anthropological point of view, especially the outside perspectives help us to understand a culture, and (b) the author knows the USA at least to some degree – starting with courses such as American History and AVC ("Americanism vs. Communism") during his process of getting a high school graduation ... from a school in Florida.

Forth: The paper might sound Anti-American, since it might not follow the auto-stereotypes of the American people. However, (a) the purpose of research is to challenge stereotypes and (b) it is simply not meant to be Anti-American. It is rather driven by the desire of Europeans to understand the underlying principles of the US-culture – even if this paper is just a small step towards this goal and basically is intended as a basis for a dialectical discussion, which hopefully will emerge.

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