Why European tv news matters: a cross-nationally comparative analysis of tv news about the European Union and its effects

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Citation for published version (APA):

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Part II

... and its effects

Our reasoning about media coverage occasionally implies presumptions about media effects and sometimes our reasoning about media effects implies presumptions about media coverage. The first is the case when findings of content analyses serve as base to infer media effects. The latter is the case when scholars try to establish media effects by relying, in survey-based research, only on media exposure measures. This book tries to avoid such problems by linking properties of the EU coverage established in the two preceding chapters to people's opinions and fears about the EU. This will be done at the individual level of analysis. Thereby, this book fulfils three of the requirements that should be met when investigating the impact of media coverage on opinions and fears about the EU as outlined in Chapter 1. Also in Chapter 1, a fourth requirement of such investigations, the cross-nationally comparative perspective, has been found to be justified if country characteristics are used as additional explanations. In section 1.3, I have given a rationale why treating country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns may be an appropriate strategy – as a consequence both of recent trends in research and the peculiarities of the topic, i.e., media effects on opinions and fears about the EU. Much of the reasoning there had to be kept general because the interplay of country characteristics and effect patterns can only be specified with respect to the particular research question. The analyses in this second part try to apply the general strategy outlined in section 1.3 to specific research issues.

The following four chapters are linked to the two preceding ones in a simple way. Chapters 4 and 5 study the effects of features of the Election campaign coverage (see Chapter 2). More specifically, Chapter 4 starts with a simple formal characteristic of coverage, its amount, and deals with its effects on importance perceptions of the EU. Chapter 5 turns to more substantive properties of the European election campaign coverage, the tone towards and visibility of EU representatives and their impact on EU citizens' support for further integration. Chapters 6 and 7 investigate the impact of a part of the non-election coverage described in Chapter 3. More specifically, Chapter 6 studies to what extent the depicted performance of the EU influences support for the EU and European integration. Chapter 7 investigates whether performance depictions of the EU and the tone towards the EU augment or diminish fears and concerns about European integration. Chapters 4 to 6, then, focus on opinions about the EU, Chapter 7 centers upon fears of European integration.