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Title:

When Mass-Media Hegemony is not Enough. Foreign Affairs Think-Tankers, New Media and the Spanish Framing of the Ukrainian Crisis

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Abstract:

In Spain, in the political establishment debate on the Ukrainian crisis has been identified (Lasheras, 2014) four main groups associated to distinct foreign policy choices. Indeed, they are supporters of alternative frames to define both the conflict's character and the key internal and external actors. These four foreign policy caucuses were baptized as the "understanders" (understanding Russia's claims), the "equidistants", the "pro-Maydams", and the "Cold Warrior Atlanticists". As frame builders, each faction doesn't have the same opportunities to spread their frames and translate their efforts in the frame-building process into a successful frame-setting process. All the four most influential foreign policy think tanks based in Spain (Real Instituto Elcano, FRIDE, CIDOB and the ECFR) have bolstered "pro-Maydams" positions, which also has been the editorial line of the top traditional mass-media. However, the self-perception of think tanks senior researchers is that all their contributions to mass-media, new media and organizations of public events or closed meetings within the geopolitical Spanish establishment have not been enough to conclude a favorable "pro-Maydan" frame-setting in none of the three main deliberative arenas: the one within the political establishment, the public opinion and the online public opinion. Even when the narratives which are dominant in mass-media are quite similar to their own narratives. How is it possible that being the "pro-Maydan" frame almost hegemonic in traditional mass-media, think tankers could perceive they sustain a minority frame when the frame-setting process is coming to the end? This paper aims to answer this question, firstly by distinguishing the public and the establishment areas of frame-building and frame setting, and secondly by focusing on two ways by which the new media and the social media are having an impact on frame-building and frame-setting processes in Foreign Affairs and key individuals perceptions as well.

The fieldwork for this research includes analysis of content (mass-media, new media and social media) and seven semi-structured and in-depth interviews to think tank senior researchers of the four main foreign affairs think tanks based in Spain (Real Instituto Elcano, FRIDE, CIDOB and the ECFR).

Keywords: Ukraine, Framing-processes, Media, New Media