

Protesting the Paradigm: A Comparative Study of News Coverage of Protests in Brazil, China, and India

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21(2) 143–164
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216631114
ijpp.sagepub.com



Saif Shahin¹, Pei Zheng¹,
Heloisa Aruth Sturm¹, and Deepa Fadnis¹

Abstract

This study assesses the scope and applicability of the “protest paradigm” in non-Western contexts by examining the news coverage of Brazilian, Chinese, and Indian protests in their domestic media. Two publications from each nation, one conservative and one progressive, are content analyzed for adherence to a series of marginalization devices that have often been used by the U.S. media to ridicule protest movements and portray them as violent. The Indian media emerge as the least likely to follow the protest paradigm, while Brazilian and Chinese media conform to it in moderate levels. Comparative analysis suggests the historical legitimacy of informal power negotiations in a political culture makes news media more willing to take protesters seriously and limits adherence to the protest paradigm. In contrast, a news organization’s ideological affiliation with the government of the day, rather than any ideology per se, makes it relatively more likely to conform to the protest paradigm. Marginalization devices such as circus, appearance, and eyewitness accounts are rarely used in any of these nations. But disparity of sources, (non)reference to protesters’ causes and violence, and violence blame appear to be abiding features of news coverage of protests everywhere.

Keywords

protest paradigm, comparative politics, content analysis, social movement, Hong Kong, Hazare, World Cup, Brazilian media, Chinese media, Indian media

¹The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

Corresponding Author:

Saif Shahin, School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin, 300 W. Dean Keeton A1000, Austin, TX 78712, USA.

Email: saif.shahin@utexas.edu

An unprecedented spate of political protests has irrupted across the atlas in recent years, inspired by the self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor who refused to endure harassment at the hands of local officials (Castells 2012). The geographical diversity of these protests offer political scientists and communication scholars an opportunity to study a well-established concept in political communication—the *protest paradigm*—in international contexts. Decades of research suggested that U.S. news media either ignored protest movements or represented them as cults of riotous radicals who were out of touch with public opinion and political reality (Gitlin 1980; Hertog and McLeod 1995). More recent studies have drawn attention to the role of protesters' issues, goals, tactics, and ideologies in shaping news coverage (Boyle et al. 2004; Weaver and Scacco 2013). Many scholars attribute the protest paradigm to the institutional and ideological affiliations of American news organizations—affiliations that obtain from the interlinks between U.S. media and political systems (Boykoff 2007; Shoemaker 1984). Comparative studies can now allow scholars to assess the extent to which the protest paradigm prevails in other parts of the world and identify particular aspects of media and political systems—and their interaction—that shape news coverage of protests.

But much of the recent political communication research on global protests elides this objective. Many scholars, for instance, are examining the role of information and communication technologies in facilitating contentious politics (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2012). Other scholars have investigated the coverage of protests taking place in one nation in the news media of other nations (Boyle et al. 2012; Harlow and Johnson 2011). Using the protest paradigm as a conceptual framework for such studies amounts to what Giovanni Sartori (1970) called “conceptual stretching”—applying concepts in contexts they were not intended for (p. 1036). The paradigm stems from relations of power that are immanent within a political system—it ought to be studied in domestic news coverage of protests as that is where those relations reside and operate.

A handful of studies have attempted to do that, but they have mostly been idiographic (Becker and Machado 2014; Ibrahim 2012; Suman 2011). Such research can, however, be conducted in a manner that also allows for meaningful cross-national comparisons and theory-building. That is the objective with which this study has been designed. We examine domestic news coverage of recent protests in Brazil, China, and India—three countries with very different political and media systems. Our analysis takes place at two levels: intra- and cross-national. We first look at the extent to which newspapers in each of these nations adhere to the protest paradigm, focusing especially on variations in coverage between progressive and conservative media. This allows us to develop a nuanced understanding of how the paradigm operates in each case. Next, we compare cross-national similarities and differences to identify those features of the paradigm—a composite of multiple “marginalization devices”—that may or may not be applicable outside the United States. We focus our inferences on identifying the conditions in which news media give favorable or unfavorable coverage to protests.

Theoretically, our paper (1) assesses the scope and applicability of the protest paradigm in three non-Western nations, and (2) identifies systemic characteristics that

influence news media's adherence to the paradigm in these nations. In doing so, we also answer the call to "de-Westernize" media research by looking at the relevance of ideas and concepts developed in the West in non-Western media systems as well as structural factors that are often neglected in the West but carry significant weight elsewhere (Curran and Park 2000; Waisbord and Mellado 2014). Methodologically, we adopt a systematic comparative approach that may serve as a guide for future research using the protest paradigm in international contexts.

Literature Review

The Protest Paradigm

News media tend to ignore social movements at the margins (Shoemaker 1982; Sobieraj 2011). When movements start to grow bigger or disruptive enough to engage media attention, the coverage they receive is often antagonistic—as a vast array of research spanning decades of media reporting of protest movements has established. Journalists have accorded hostile treatment to antiwar protests (Gitlin 1980), labor protests (Glasgow Media Group 1976), abortion law protests (Rohlinger 2014), anti-police demonstrations (McLeod and Hertog 1992), antinuclear movements (Entman and Rojecki 1993), and antiglobalization protests (Smith 2001), among others—often by ridiculing them or portraying them as violent.

Scholars have identified recurring elements that embody media hostility toward protest movements. These elements constitute the *protest paradigm* (Chan and Lee 1984), defined as a "routinized pattern or implicit template for the coverage of social protest" (McLeod and Hertog 1999: 310). Drawing on McLeod and Hertog (1999) and McFarlane and Hay (2003), Dardis (2006) developed a comprehensive typology of fourteen "marginalization devices" used in media coverage of protests. Nine of these are (1) *general lawlessness*, when news media focus on protesters engaging in violence, vandalism, blocking traffic, trespassing, and so on; (2) *police confrontation*, when they stress conflict between protesters and the police; (3) *freak show*, which "emphasizes physical oddities among the protesters, such as body piercings, long or strange hair, funny clothes, bare feet, and so on" (Dardis 2006: 120); (4) *Romper Room/idiots at large*, or highlighting protesters' "childlike" behavior, such as dancing in the streets, playing games, and so on; (5) *carnival*, or portraying protests as a spectacle or theatrical performance; (6) *public opinion polls*, or using surveys to suggest the protesters do have popular support; (7) *generalizations*, or making claims about public perceptions of the protesters without resorting to actual statistics; (8) *eyewitness accounts*, or quoting bystanders at protest events to underline the deviance of protesters' views and tactics; and (9) *official sources*, or relying on "government agents, police, business leaders, lobbyists, bureaucrats, and public relations managers" (Dardis 2006: 121) for opinion and information rather than the protesters themselves. In addition, Dardis (2006) identified five marginalization devices specific to the coverage of antiwar protests: protest as treason, as anarchy, and as antitroop, inclusion of counter-demonstrations, and historical comparisons.

Chan and Lee (1984) and Hertog and McLeod (1995) suggested that mainstream and right-leaning media favored the status quo while left-leaning/alternative media supported protesters. This view assumes that protesters themselves are typically left-leaning. But recent studies of media coverage of the right-wing Tea Party movement in the United States showed the left-leaning media as supportive of the status quo in this context, and right-leaning news organizations as being more sympathetic to the movement (Boykoff and Laschever 2011; Weaver and Scacco 2013)—indicating that the ideological tilt of a particular news organization is also a factor. Boyle et al. (2004) content analyzed protest stories published over four decades in local U.S. newspapers to find that protest issues (labor, social, police, and war protests) and their degree of deviance (supporting status quo, moderate reform, and radical reform) influenced how they were covered. News outlets treated protests aiming for radical or even moderate reforms with more hostility than pro-status quo protests (see also Shoemaker 1984). Boyle et al. (2012) argued that the more violent the protests, the more critical the news coverage.

These studies indicate that the protest paradigm is not quite as ubiquitous in the U.S. media as initial research suggested. Comparative analyses of American and European media coverage of social issues also support this view. Ferree et al. (2002) found that representatives of political parties and the institutionalized political process dominated the news about abortion a lot more in Germany than they did in the United States. Benson (2013) argued that French newspapers, although less dependent on advertising revenue, were no more critical of businesses than their U.S. counterparts in the immigration debate. The French media, however, did a better job of providing multiple perspectives on the issue and were also less likely than the U.S. media to present immigrants as a threat to public disorder.

Media and International Protests

Research on media coverage of international protests may be classified into three categories. The first comprises *transnational* studies that look at the coverage of protests in one nation in the news media of another nation—usually, although not always, the United States. Harlow and Johnson (2011) examined the coverage of Egyptian protests in the *New York Times* alongside the Twitter feed of *New York Times* journalist Nick Kristoff and the *Global Voices* citizen journalism blog. They found the newspaper adhered most closely to the protest paradigm by framing protests as a spectacle, quoting official sources, and delegitimizing protesters. But using the protest paradigm to explain the coverage of Egyptian protests in the U.S. media is an example of “conceptual stretching”—using concepts in contexts they were not intended for (Sartori 1970). Sartori warned that the expansion of international political research was leading scholars to use available theoretical concepts in ways that undermined their connotative precision. Harlow and Johnson, for instance, do not explain why the protest paradigm—an outcome of institutional and ideological linkages between a nation’s media and political systems—would be a valid framework to study protests in one nation in the news media of another. Some of their findings are ambiguous as a result. Quoting

officials is presented as evidence of the protest paradigm, but the authors do not clarify whether the officials being quoted are Egyptian or American. As the U.S. government eventually backed the demands of Egyptian protesters, news reports quoting U.S. officials would actually undermine the protest paradigm in this case.

A second category includes *comparative* studies that examine the coverage of protests in both domestic and international media. Ghobrial and Wilkins (2015) studied the reporting of Egyptian protests in Egyptian, Tunisian, Saudi Arabian, and U.S. newspapers. They found that while local and regional media prioritized Egyptian government sources, “U.S. news sources were instead more likely to begin their stories with quotes from American government officials” (Ghobrial and Wilkins 2015: 141). Such findings raise concerns about the use of the protest paradigm in the transnational category of studies, as noted above. Similarly, Boyle et al. (2012) examined protest stories from thirteen English-language newspapers in three regions—Asia, North America, and the Middle East. The authors found evidence of the protest paradigm across the range of newspapers they studied, concluding that “systemic biases in news coverage . . . are not limited to particular countries [or] regions” (Boyle et al. 2012: 139). Ferree et al.’s (2002) study of abortion-related news in the United States and Germany, and Benson’s (2013) research on news about immigrants in the United States and France, compared domestic media coverage of common issues in different nations. Although these studies focus on broader social concerns rather than social movements or protests, they underline the importance of comparative analysis to put things in context.

The third category comprises *idiographic* studies that focus on the coverage of local protests in the local media of a single nation. Ibrahim (2012), analyzing the coverage of Egyptian protests in two Egyptian newspapers, found that while government-affiliated *Al-Ahram* framed protesters as violent rioters, privately run *Al-Masry Al-Youm* portrayed them as the voice of the “people”—reflecting the significant impact of institutional and ideological affiliations on media coverage. Tenenboim-Weinblatt’s (2014) interviews with Israeli journalists covering Israeli protests demonstrate that journalists’ individual views vis-à-vis protests shape initial coverage, but “give way to professional values and owners’ pressures in the second stage” (p. 424). News values and news organizations’ ideological orientation remain influential all through.

The present study is designed to integrate the strengths of the second and third categories while avoiding their weaknesses. Like idiographic studies, it examines news coverage of protests in the domestic media—thus evading the problem of “conceptual stretching.” But rather than focus on one country, it takes a comparative look at the applicability of various dimensions of the protest paradigm in three very different nations—Brazil, China, and India.

Media and Protests in Brazil, China, and India

In Brazil, residents of Sao Paulo began marching on June 6, 2013, against a hike in bus ticket prices. In the following days and weeks, the protests spread to major cities and took on a broader character, spanning issues such as police violence, corruption,

quality of government services, and public funding of forthcoming sporting events such as the 2014 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. The center-left government of President Dilma Rousseff was in power. Social media played a vital role in helping protests grow (Moretzsohn 2013), while traditional media outlets became a target of the protesters (Santos 2014). Becker and Machado (2014) argued that mainstream media reported the protests without context, even as alternative media outlets engaged with protesters on the streets to provide richer coverage.

Protests in China began in September 2014 as sit-ins against proposed changes to Hong Kong's electoral system and remained limited to the region. Protesters said that so-called electoral reforms would give Beijing a say in who could contest elections in Hong Kong, undermining the democracy promised under its basic law. While the mainland Chinese press seldom reported these protests, they were covered extensively in newspapers circulated in Hong Kong. Academic studies on media coverage of these protests is yet to be published, but research on media and protest movements has a long history in China. Chan and Lee's (1984) classic study of news about protests in Hong Kong is counted among the pioneering works in protest paradigm research. Chan et al. (1992) found journalists in Hong Kong were critical about China on one hand while practicing self-censorship on the other (see also C-C. Lee et al. 2002).

In India, social activist Anna Hazare went on an indefinite hunger strike on April 5, 2011, demanding changes that would give more teeth to an anticorruption bill. The demand followed exposés of several corruption scandals while the center-left government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was in power, and caught the national imagination. Social media forums such as Facebook and Twitter helped the movement grow. Traditional media were initially hesitant to cover the protests but could not avoid them eventually (Suman 2011). Rodrigues (2014) argued that media coverage ranged from blind support of the movement to a skeptical view of its leaders (see also Ashutosh 2012).

While the protests in these countries were not identical, they had broadly similar characteristics. They all erupted in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. They all focused on issues of government reform, although the specific goals were somewhat different. In terms of tactics, they all began as peaceful sit-ins against specific government policies—bus ticket prices in Brazil, electoral law in China, and antigraft law in India. Eventually, violence broke out in all cases. Their scope did, however, differ: Protests in Brazil and India took on a national character while the Chinese protests remained limited to Hong Kong.

Comparing Media Systems

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) influential study classified the national media systems of North America and Europe into three models—the Polarized Pluralist Model of Southern Europe, the Democratic Corporatist Model of Northern and Central Europe, and the Liberal Model of Western Europe and North America. Non-Western media systems, with their unique histories and variegated markets embedded in starkly

different political cultures, are difficult to map on to these specific models (Nyamnjoh 2005; Zhao 2012). However, Hallin and Mancini (2004) also identified the dimensions for comparing national media systems: the historical development of mass media, links between news media and organized political interests, journalistic professionalism, and degree of state intervention. These parameters have helped scholars engage in comparative studies of media systems worldwide.

Brazilian media system. Until the 1950s, Brazilian news organizations were dependent on government investments and advertising from political groups for survival. Their coverage was thus closely tied to political interests (Albuquerque 2012; Waisbord 2000). But the 1964 to 1985 military regime weakened the competitive party system. The growth of market economy and investments from the military regime helped entrench the news business financially, leading media organizations to adopt a “market-driven, catch-all attitude” and “distance themselves from particular political groups” (Albuquerque 2012: 81). In an attempt to reduce communist journalists, the regime imposed a law that required every journalist to have a university degree. But as universities themselves became a hotbed of resistance to the regime, even more radical journalists joined the profession (Almeida and Weis 1998). While the readership of news organizations remains elite-oriented, journalists view themselves as playing an active role in the political process (de Lima 2004), characterized by a multiparty system and the prevalence of “informal political negotiating mechanisms” (Armijo et al. 2006).

Chinese media system. Historically, the Chinese Communist Party has rigidly controlled the national media through its propaganda department. Controlled commercialization since the 1990s has had two effects. First, it has helped interlock the state and capital into a system of “party-market corporatism” (C-C. Lee et al. 2007; see also Zhao 2000). The media have been transformed from command mouthpieces to profit-making propaganda units “wearing a socialist face with a capitalist body” (C-C. Lee 2003: 18, see also Pan 2000). At the same time, it has engendered admiration for “Western” professional norms and journalistic values (Wang and Lee 2014). Trained in the liberal arts tradition, young journalists in particular view themselves as “watchdogs” monitoring government misconduct. Investigative reporting also enjoys market success as audiences love to read stories portraying the government in a different light (Pan and Chan 2003). Hong Kong is a microcosm of both these trends in China’s media system. Owners of news organizations often have political and business ties with mainland China. Chinese officials also indirectly specify the norms of political correctness for Hong Kong media through warnings and criticisms, and many news organizations practice a high degree of self-censorship (Fung 2007; F. L. F. Lee and Chan 2008). Simultaneously, there is a “progressive” section of the media that is relatively independent in its operations and makes use of the absence of direct censorship to take an antigovernment stance (Tang and Lee 2014).

Indian media system. The news media in India are highly diverse, partly on account of the country’s sheer size—it is the world’s biggest newspaper market, more than double

the size of the U.S. market (Moro and Aikat 2010)—and partly because of the heterogeneous character of the country itself as well as its political and economic structures. Chakravarty and Roy (2013) underline the historical legitimacy of informal politics—power negotiations outside the domain of political parties, organized civil society, trade unions, and business associations—as an especially important structural peculiarity that shapes the nation’s media system. Newspapers have largely remained free from direct government control (Shrivastava 2008). Neoliberal reforms beginning in the early 1990s and increasing commercialization have turned the media’s focus away from the country’s rural masses to the growing urban middle class (Mudgal 2011). Chakravarty and Roy (2013) argue that the media “brings together and literally mediates between state and market forces, thus enabling and supporting the ‘state-market’ alliance in contemporary India” (p. 353). At the same time, the news media, once a part of the country’s freedom movement, “still continue to be prime movers of citizens’ pursuit of freedom, civil rights, and social justice” (Rao and Mudgal 2015: 617).

Brazil, China, and India, thus, have vastly different media systems interacting with dissimilar political structures: authoritarian rule in China, presidential democracy in Brazil, and parliamentary democracy in India. The evolutionary trajectories of these media systems have also varied greatly. In recent decades, capitalist restructuring and commercialization have spurred contradictory tendencies in each of them: links between news media and organized political interests, journalistic professionalism, and degree of state intervention. On one hand, these changes have made newspapers more elite-oriented and bolstered institutional linkages between media corporations and the state. On the other hand, the news media also view themselves as active participants in these nations’ political processes and agents shaping national destiny—whether on account of professionalization (Brazil), influence of “Western norms” (China), or their own historical role (India).

With this perspective in mind, the key objectives of the present study are to examine how—and how much—do the news media in Brazil, China, and India employ the protest paradigm, which marginalization devices are less or more relevant in each country, and how they compare with each other. To develop a richer understanding, we look at newspapers from either side of their political spectrums. Finally, we address how the characteristics of their respective media systems may account for the nature of their protest coverage.

Method

Our comparative analysis follows a “different systems” design (Przeworski and Teune 1970). We look for similarities in coverage across different media systems to discern structural factors that would account for how the protest paradigm is employed. We use content analysis to study media coverage, defined by Berelson (1952) as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). Making the methodology systematic was especially important for this study as it aimed to compare news texts from different countries and in different languages (Portuguese, Chinese, and English). To do so, we

(1) selected data samples from each country using similar keywords and random sampling procedures, (2) prepared a common codebook based on extant research, (3) discussed coding protocols with the coders, (4) checked for intercoder reliability, (5) coded the entire samples, and (6) conducted the statistical analysis to arrive at results.

Coding Scheme

Our coding scheme drew heavily upon Dardis (2006) and McLeod and Hertog (1999). But we tweaked our variables and coding protocols to (1) account for deviations from U.S.-based protest paradigm research that have already been reported in international research, and (2) keep our coding scheme open enough to account for further deviations from U.S. standards.

To code for *sources*, we compared the total number of official and protester sources used in a news story and reported it on a three-point scale: 1 = *only or more protester sources*, 2 = *equal number of protester and official sources*, and 3 = *only or more official sources*. “Official sources” were defined as belonging to the police, administration, or experts. *Eyewitness accounts* were coded as 1 = *positive*, 2 = *neutral*, and 3 = *negative*. “Eyewitnesses” were defined as neither officials nor protesters, but passersby or other “common people” affected by protests being quoted in a news story. *Public opinion* was defined as references in a news story to the general public’s evaluation of the protests, either based on formal surveys or in the form of generic statements not backed by empirical evidence. It was coded as 1 = *positive*, 2 = *neutral*, and 3 = *negative*.

Cause, defined as references to why protests were taking place or the goals of the protesters, was coded as 1 = *not mentioned*, and 2 = *mentioned*. While most U.S.-based research has assumed that the very mention of protesters’ causes contravenes the protest paradigm, we surmised that a negative evaluation of these causes would actually affirm the protest paradigm. Therefore, we used another variable, *cause evaluation*, measured as 1 = *positive*, 2 = *neutral*, and 3 = *negative*. *Circus* and *appearance* were coded as 1 = *not mentioned*, and 2 = *mentioned*. *Circus* was defined as the portrayal of protests as a spectacle, carnival, or generally odd or deviant. *Appearance* was defined as references to how the protesters looked and what they wore.

Peacefulness accounted for explicit references to the protests being peaceful, coded as 1 = *not mentioned*, and 2 = *mentioned*. *Violence* accounted for explicit references to the protests being violent, coded as 1 = *not mentioned*, and 2 = *mentioned*. We used both these variables as a story could mention the protests as starting peacefully but turning violent, or vice versa. We also coded for *violence blame*, or who the stories held responsible for the violence, as 1 = *on administration*, 2 = *balanced*, and 3 = *on protesters*. Two other variables—*protester evaluation* and *administration evaluation*—accounted for how a news story generally appraised the protesters and the administration (police and government officials), respectively. Both were coded as 1 = *positive*, 2 = *neutral*, and 3 = *negative*.

For most of these variables, higher scores represented an affirmation of the protest paradigm. The three exceptions—*cause*, *peacefulness*, and *administration evaluation*—

were recoded before the statistical analysis. In addition, we coded for *newspaper ideology* (1 = *progressive* and 2 = *conservative*).

Content Samples

Two newspapers each from Brazil, China, and India—one conservative and one progressive—provided the samples for the study. The distinctions between conservative and progressive news outlets are complex, multidimensional, and contingent upon every nation's unique political, social, and economic structures and history. For the purposes of this study, we defined conservative news organizations as traditionally supportive of the status quo and progressive news organizations as traditionally opposed to the status quo. But all the newspapers studied were mainstream publications with large circulations, rather than mouthpieces of interest groups or social movements.

From Brazil, we selected the conservative *O Globo* and the progressive *Folha de S. Paulo*, the two highest circulated Portuguese-language dailies in the country. The sampling covered a 30-day period beginning June 6, 2013, when the first of a series of marches took place. To draw the sample, all articles from the two newspapers containing the words “protesto” or “manifestante” or “manifestações” were retrieved from the Factiva database. The search yielded 951 from *O Globo* and 818 articles from *Folha de S. Paulo*. A systematic random sample of 120 articles was drawn, divided equally between the two publications.

From China, we selected the conservative *Wen Wei Po* and the progressive *Apple Daily*—both of which are Chinese-language dailies based in Hong Kong, where the protests were taking place. Sampling covered a 30-day period starting September 26, 2014, the first day of the protests, using the keywords “protest” or “Occupy Central” or “Umbrella revolution.” Keywords specific to the Chinese protests had to be used as the sample was otherwise yielding a large number of articles about protests outside China. The search yielded 436 articles from *Wen Wei Po* and 1,057 articles from *Apple Daily*. A systematic random sample of 120 articles was drawn, divided equally between the two publications.

From India, we selected the *Times of India*, a conservative newspaper, and *The Hindu*, a progressive newspaper, both of which are English-language dailies with large nationwide circulations. Unlike Brazil and China, where we chose local-language newspapers, English-language newspapers are the only ones with substantial nationwide circulation in India—the vernacular press is regional in scope. The sampling began on April 1, 2011, in the run-up to Anna Hazare's indefinite hunger strike four days later, and covered a 30-day period. The keywords “protest” or “protester” or “demonstration” or “demonstrator” and “Anna Hazare” were used. The last keyword was included to focus the sample on the domestic protests. The search yielded 149 articles from the *Times of India* and 158 from *The Hindu*. A systematic random sample of 120 articles was drawn, divided equally between the two publications. Of these, two articles were replicated and had to be discarded, leaving the study with a sample of 118 articles from India.

Table 1. Frequency Distributions of Marginalization Devices in Indian, Brazilian, and Chinese Coverage.

Variable	India	Brazil	China
Sources (only/mostly administrative)	26.4	48.1	54.9
Eyewitness account (positive)	81.8	25.0	50.0
Public opinion (positive)	97.2	57.1	16.7
Cause (mention)	85.6	71.7	34.5
Cause evaluation (positive)	91.8	29.4	66.7
Circus (mention)	20.3	5.8	5.9
Appearance (mention)	8.5	13.3	3.4
Peacefulness (mention)	1.7	32.5	16.8
Violence (mention)	9.3	63.3	37.0
Violence blame (on protesters)	81.8	49.2	40.5
Protester evaluation (positive)	84.4	14.0	32.6
Administration evaluation (positive)	21.4	67.3	76.5

Note. All figures are in percentages.

Intercoder Reliability and Data Analysis

Separate teams of two coders—familiar with Portuguese, Chinese, and English, respectively—recorded the data for each of the three samples. Intercoder reliability was calculated on the basis of 20 articles from each sample, or about 16.5 percent. The Cohen's *kappas* ranged from 0.65 to 1.0 for India, 0.81 to 1.0 for Brazil, and 0.74 to 1.0 for China. The only variable below the 0.7 threshold was administration evaluation in the Indian sample.

Results

Protest Paradigm in Brazil

The Brazilian news coverage of protests displayed four broad trends. First, the media followed the protest paradigm in some important ways. Overall, nearly half the stories used only or mostly administrative sources while about 29 percent relied only or mostly on protester sources (see Table 1). About two-thirds of the stories mentioned violence: of these, half blamed the protesters while less than a quarter blamed the administration. Second, despite their use of these marginalization devices, the Brazilian media covered the protests as a legitimate part of the political process. Nearly 72 percent of the stories mentioned protesters' causes. About 30 percent of these evaluated the causes positively compared with 21 percent that evaluated them negatively. The media also did not try to delegitimize the protesters: marginalization devices that ridicule protesters, such as circus (6%), appearance (13%), and eyewitness reports (13%), were used infrequently.

Third, the media exhibited independence and agency by remaining critical toward both the administration and the protesters. More stories evaluated the protesters

Table 2. Differences in Coverage between Brazil's *Folha de S. Paulo* (Progressive) and *O Globo* (Conservative) Newspapers.

Variable	Progressive	Conservative	χ^2
Sources (N = 106)	—	—	6.39*
Only/mostly protesters	38.9	81.8	—
Balanced	5.6	10.9	—
Only/mostly administrative	55.6	7.3	—
Peacefulness (N = 81)	74.1	96.7	4.60*
Protester evaluation (N = 43)	—	—	8.36*
Positive	65.2	92.6	—
Neutral	13.0	3.7	—
Negative	21.7	3.7	—

Note. Progressive and Conservative figures are in percentages.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

negatively (30%) than positively (14%). However, more stories also evaluated the administration negatively (33%) than positively (11%). Finally, statistically significant differences between the two outlets were found in the use of only three variables: use of sources, peacefulness, and protester evaluation (Table 2). On all these counts, however, the progressive *Folha de S. Paulo* was more likely to follow the protest paradigm while the conservative *O Globo* gave protesters relatively more positive coverage. A center-left government was in power in Brazil at the time of the protests—suggesting that ideological affinity with the government swayed news coverage in its favor.

Protest Paradigm in China

First, the Chinese news coverage of protests displayed several indications of “party-market corporatism.” Overall, more than half the stories had only or mostly administrative sources, compared with a third that had only or mostly protester sources (Table 1). Nearly two-thirds of the stories did not mention the cause of the protests. Second, the coverage had some paradoxical characteristics. For instance, while only a third of the stories mentioned the protesters’ cause—a trend that conformed to the protest paradigm—67 percent of these stories evaluated the cause positively, which was not in line with the paradigm. Most stories that mentioned violence, in consonance with the paradigm, also blamed the administration for the violence—contradicting the paradigm.

Third, these incongruities signaled a sharp divide in the coverage, which became clearer when we compared the coverage of the two newspapers. The progressive *Apple Daily* and the conservative *Wen Wei Po* differed significantly on almost all variables (see Table 3). *Apple Daily* was more likely to use protester sources while *Wen Wei Po* was more likely to use administrative sources. *Apple Daily* was more likely to mention the cause of the protest and to evaluate it positively. *Wen Wei Po* was more likely to use hostile eyewitness reports and suggest that public opinion was against the protesters. The ideological orientation of a

Table 3. Differences in Coverage between China’s *Apple Daily* (Progressive) and *Wen Wei Po* (Conservative) Newspapers.

Variable	Progressive	Conservative	χ^2
Sources (N = 56)	—	—	83.48***
Only/mostly protesters	71.4	0.0	—
Balanced	20.4	1.9	—
Only/mostly administrative	8.2	98.1	—
Cause mention (N = 78)	54.2	76.7	6.63*
Cause evaluation (N = 42)	—	—	42.00***
Positive	100.0	0.0	—
Neutral	0.0	0.0	—
Negative	0.0	100.0	—
Violence blame (N = 42)	—	—	42.00***
Only/mostly protesters	0.0	100.0	—
Balanced	4.0	0.0	—
Only/mostly administrative	96.0	0.0	—
Public opinion (N = 30)	—	—	24.64***
Positive	71.4	0.0	—
Neutral	14.3	0.0	—
Negative	14.3	100.0	—
Eyewitness (N = 46)	—	—	46.00***
Positive	88.5	0.0	—
Neutral	11.5	0.0	—
Negative	0.0	100.0	—
Protester evaluation (N = 92)	—	—	87.83***
Positive	85.7	0.0	—
Neutral	11.4	0.0	—
Negative	2.9	100.0	—
Administration evaluation (N = 68)	—	—	60.91***
Positive	0.0	55.2	—
Neutral	5.1	44.8	—
Negative	94.9	0.0	—

Note. Progressive and Conservative figures are in percentages.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

news organization thus substantially influenced its protest coverage. Finally, the conservative press was more likely to conform to the protest paradigm in China, suggesting that ideological affinity with the government led to more hostile coverage of protests.

Protest Paradigm in India

The Indian media largely refrained from using the protest paradigm. About two-thirds of the stories had only or mostly protester sources, compared with just over a quarter with only or mostly administrative sources (Table 1). Some 86 percent of stories mentioned the

Table 4. Differences in Coverage between India's *The Hindu* (Progressive) and the *Times of India* (Conservative) Newspapers.

Variable	Progressive	Conservative	χ^2
Sources (N = 91)	—	—	26.12***
Only/mostly protesters	38.9	81.8	—
Balanced	5.6	10.9	—
Only/mostly administrative	55.6	7.3	—
Cause mention (N = 118)	74.1	96.7	12.14***
Cause evaluation (N = 98)	—	—	12.63**
Positive	80.0	100.0	—
Neutral	17.5	0.0	—
Negative	2.5	0.0	—
Protester evaluation (N = 77)	—	—	9.37**
Positive	65.2	92.6	—
Neutral	13.0	3.7	—
Negative	21.7	3.7	—

Note. Progressive and Conservative figures are in percentages.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

protesters' cause, and 92 percent of these also evaluated the cause positively. Public opinion was mentioned in 30 percent of the stories—97 percent of them reported the public supported the protests. The only marginalization device used extensively was blaming the protesters for violence, noted in 82 percent of the stories that explicitly mentioned violence. But even this element of the coverage was mitigated by the fact that only 10 percent of stories reported violence in the first place. These numbers indicate that the news media, as a whole, viewed protests as a legitimate part of the political process.

Second, despite the diversity of the Indian media system, variations in coverage between the two newspapers studied were quite limited. The conservative *Times of India* and the progressive *Hindu* differed significantly on only four variables (Table 4). *Times of India* was more likely than *Hindu* to rely on protester sources and evaluate the protesters positively. It was also more likely to mention the cause of the protests and evaluate them positively. Thus, while the overall coverage was itself quite pro-protesters, the progressive newspaper was a little less likely to accord sympathetic treatment to the protests. As India was ruled by a center-left government at that time, we once again witness that ideological affinity with the government can tilt coverage in its favor.

Cross-National Comparison

Cross-national trends were examined on the basis of overall frequencies from each nation, using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's post hoc tests. Differences were statistically significant for all variables except eyewitness reports and

Table 5. Comparison of Mean Scores of Various Marginalization Devices in Indian, Brazilian, and Chinese Coverage.

Variable	India	Brazil	China	F value
Sources (only/mostly administrative)	1.62 (.88) ^a	2.19 (.86) ^b	2.21 (.93) ^b	13.53***
Eyewitness account (positive)	1.36 (.81)	2.25 (.86)	1.93 (.97)	2.99
Public opinion (positive)	1.06 (.33) ^a	1.86 (1.07) ^b	2.63 (.76) ^c	51.50***
Cause (mention)	1.14 (.35) ^a	1.28 (.45) ^b	1.66 (.48) ^c	44.64***
Cause evaluation (positive)	1.09 (.32) ^a	1.91 (.71) ^b	1.67 (.94) ^b	28.19***
Circus (mention)	1.20 (.40) ^a	1.06 (.23) ^b	1.06 (.24) ^b	9.08***
Appearance (mention)	1.08 (.28)	1.13 (.34) ^a	1.03 (.18) ^b	3.91*
Peacefulness (mention)	1.98 (.13) ^a	1.67 (.47) ^b	1.83 (.37) ^c	22.25***
Violence (mention)	1.09 (.29) ^a	1.63 (.48) ^b	1.37 (.48) ^c	46.85***
Violence blame (on protesters)	2.64 (.81) ^a	2.26 (.81) ^a	1.83 (.99) ^b	4.88**
Protester evaluation (positive)	1.25 (.61) ^a	2.16 (.65) ^b	2.30 (.93) ^b	42.29***
Administration evaluation (positive)	1.29 (.61)	1.79 (.64)	1.69 (.83)	2.54

Note. Higher means represent closer adherence to the protest paradigm. Standard deviations are noted in parentheses. Different superscripts (a, b, or c) indicate statistically significant differences in Tukey's post hoc tests. Differences in means with the same superscript are not statistically significant.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

administration evaluation (see Table 5). For each variable, higher means represent closer adherence to the protest paradigm. Three broad trends can be identified. First, the Indian media were the least likely to follow the protest paradigm. Their coverage recorded the lowest means on almost all significant variables except circus ($F = 9.08$, $p < .001$) and appearance ($F = 3.91$, $p < .05$), which were generally on the lower side for all three countries. This is likely a fallout of both the structural legitimacy of informal politics in the country as well as the media's historical participation in shaping national affairs.

Second, the Brazilian media coverage recorded lower means than the Chinese coverage on three variables—public opinion ($F = 51.50$, $p < .001$), cause mention ($F = 44.64$, $p < .001$), and peacefulness ($F = 22.25$, $p < .001$). This reflects the greater willingness of the media in Brazil—another nation where informal political negotiations are common—to accord legitimacy to protests than the media in China, where politics is highly formalized. Third, the Chinese coverage recorded lower means than the Brazilian coverage in terms of violence mention ($F = 46.85$, $p < .001$), and violence blame ($F = 4.88$, $p < .01$). This has two implications. Reporting political violence remains a taboo under an authoritarian regime such as China's. The very mention of violence would imply the administration's inability to control its detractors and could incite more trouble—the self-censoring press would, therefore, be reluctant to talk about it, bringing down the mean of the violence mention variable. By the same token, journalists who do report violence would be more likely to blame the administration for it.

Discussion

Brazil, China, and India have complex media systems. They not only differ from one another but each of them is fairly diverse itself. Our account of how news media in these nations covered recent protests is thus quite nuanced. We see the interplay of opposing tendencies in each context: the pressures of political linkage, sometimes exacerbated by commercialization, versus the demands of a broad readership, professionalization, and journalists and news organizations' view of their own role as social and political agents shaping their nation's destiny. Here, we outline five general conclusions we can draw from our findings.

The most significant implication of our comparative study is that the historical legitimacy of informal political negotiations in a nation reduces the likelihood of its news media adopting the protest paradigm. Hallin and Mancini (2004) identified the linkage between media and "organized" political interests as a key dimension for comparing media systems, but that is because politics in Europe and North America has long been organized and formal (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). That is not always the case in non-Western contexts, and this structural difference bears upon media coverage. Social movements typically exist outside any nation's formal political system; protests, rallies, and demonstrations are their way of negotiating with the system from without. In India and Brazil, where various forms of power negotiations beyond the domain of political parties and organized interest groups remain a part of the political culture (Armijo et al. 2006; Chakravartty and Roy 2013), news media made the least attempt to delegitimize protesters. Journalists reported the causes being espoused by protest groups and, more often than not, evaluated them positively. They rarely resorted to marginalization devices that ridiculed protesters. Perhaps, most importantly, this was true across the ideological divide in India and Brazil—but not in China, where politics is a lot more formal. This indicates that in the United States, too, news media's tendency to use the protest paradigm is partly the fallout of its highly formal political culture—where political demands are deemed legitimate only when they are channeled through the organized political system (Streeck and Kenworthy 2005). This finding is also in line with Shoemaker's (1982) early observation that hostile U.S. news coverage of protests was mainly an issue of political legitimacy.

Our second significant conclusion is that ideological affiliation with the government of the day, rather than any ideology per se, enhances the likelihood of a news organization conforming to the protest paradigm. Center-left governments were in power in both India and Brazil when the protests took place. In both nations, the progressive press was relatively more likely to follow the paradigm than the conservative press—although, as noted above, their media content overall was tilted against the paradigm. In China, however, the conservative press followed the paradigm more closely than the progressive press. This runs against the traditional view that the progressive media would as a rule be sympathetic toward protesters (Chan and Lee 1984; Hertog and McLeod 1995) but echoes more recent findings in the U.S. context (Boykoff and Laschever 2011; Weaver and Scacco 2013) that ideological affinity between a media organization and the protest group can lead to supportive coverage.

Third, some key features of the protest paradigm, especially disparity of sources, references to protesters' causes, violence, and violence blame, are relevant elements of media coverage of protests even outside the United States. Their direction of fit varies among nations, and among differently oriented newspapers within nations, but they appear to be abiding features of news about protests everywhere. This indicates that the protest paradigm, despite its limitations, can offer valuable insights for international research (see also Boyle et al. 2012). Many of its features may be viewed as parameters on which media content may be measured and analyzed rather than as "marginalization devices," especially given the differences in the direction of fit that we find. Future studies may, therefore, consider adapting the paradigm to local contexts rather than creating idiosyncratic frameworks for each nation, allowing for systematic accumulation of knowledge and theoretical development.

Fourth, we show that scholars also need to look at the evaluative dimension of several key features of the protest paradigm, including causes, eyewitness accounts, and public opinion, as well as who is being blamed in the media coverage for violence. Traditional studies have often assumed that the very mention of eyewitness accounts, public opinion, and violence indicates a pro-administrative stance, as does the absence of protesters' cause in media coverage. However, eyewitness accounts and public opinion could be pro-protesters, too; violence may be blamed on the administration rather than the protesters; and cause may be mentioned but evaluated negatively. Understanding valence thus makes protest paradigm research more fine-grained.

Finally, our study indicates that national media systems remain meaningful ontological entities even in the era of globalization. Scholarly debate on the relevance of media systems mapped over national boundaries has been brewing for years. Several authors have argued that the notion of nationally bound media systems is anachronistic when more people are consuming news through the Internet and social media, and national boundaries are themselves wearing thin (Couldry and Hepp 2012; Napoli 2011; Scolari 2012). But despite these strains, media systems around the world remain primarily "national" in both infrastructure and character (Flew and Waisbord 2015; Nossek 2004), and audiences continue to prefer "local" over "global" media content (Kraidy 2005; Straubhaar 1991). By finding substantial differences in the relevance of various features of the protest paradigm across nations, our study buttresses the latter view. This is also the reason why, despite the flurry of research on the role of information and communication technologies in enabling protest movements (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2012), it remains necessary to study the coverage of protests in traditional media worldwide.

Our examination of news coverage of protests thus helps clarify the scope and applicability of the protest paradigm in international contexts, especially non-Western media systems. Our comparative approach not only identifies those elements of the protest paradigm that are relevant in different media systems but also uncovers structural factors that previously were not accounted for, such as the legitimacy of informal power negotiations in a political culture. Our analysis lends support to the view that ideological affiliation with the government of the day, rather than the tenets of a particular ideology, makes news organizations more likely to follow the protest paradigm.

In addition, our account sheds more light on the news media in Brazil, China, and India, specifically on how structural factors and political affiliations shape news coverage in these systems.

While our study focuses on structural and institutional factors behind the protest paradigm, the protests we looked at in the three countries were broadly similar. Future research can examine factors such as protest issues, protesters' tactics, and degree of deviance in international contexts in a comparative manner. Mapping the changes in news coverage as protests themselves organically evolve over a period of time is another important site of contextually sensitive comparative investigation. Methodologically, we suggest that while much of the protest paradigm literature is based on content analysis and experiments, newsroom ethnographies can be a very useful means of looking into how institutional and ideological influences make their way into news coverage of protests—in the United States and around the world.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Albuquerque, Alfonso de. 2012. "Of Models and Margins: Comparative Media Models Viewed from a Brazilian Perspective." In *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, ed. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, 72–95. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Almeida, Maria Herminia Tavares de, and Luiz Weis. 1998. "Carro-zero e pau-de-arara: O cotidiano da oposicao de classe media ao regime militar" [Brand New Car and Macaw's Perch: The Quotidian of the Middle Class Against Military Dictatorship]. In *Historia da Vida Privada no Brasil 4. Contrastes da Intimidade Contemporanea*, ed. Fernando A. Novais and Lilia Moritz. Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Armijo, Leslie Elliott, Philippe Faucher, and Magdalena Dembinska. 2006. "Compared to What? Assessing Brazil's Political Institutions." *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (6): 759–86. doi:10.1177/0010414006287895.
- Ashutosh. 2012. *Anna: 13 Days that Awakened India*. New Delhi: HarperCollins.
- Becker, Beatriz, and Monica Machado. 2014. "Brasil Entre as Telas e as Ruas: Produção e Consumo das Narrativas Jornalísticas Audiovisuais sobre os Protestos Nacionais de Junho de 2013" [Brazil Between the Screens and the Streets: Production and Consumption of Audiovisual Journalistic Narratives about the June 2013 National Protests]. *Discursos Fotográficos* 10 (17): 39–60.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. 2013. *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, Rodney. 2013. *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Berelson, Bernard. 1952. *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Free Press.
- Boykoff, Jules. 2007. "Limiting Dissent: The Mechanisms of State Repression in the USA." *Social Movement Studies* 6 (3): 281–310.
- Boykoff, Jules, and Eulalie Laschever. 2011. "The Tea Party Movement, Framing, and the US Media." *Social Movement Studies* 10 (4): 341–66.
- Boyle, Michael P., Michael R. McCluskey, Narayan Devanathan, Susan E. Stein, and Douglas McLeod. 2004. "The Influence of Level of Deviance and Protest Type on Coverage of Social Protest in Wisconsin from 1960 to 1999." *Mass Communication and Society* 7 (1): 43–60. doi:10.1207/s15327825mcs0701_4.
- Boyle, Michael P., Douglas M. McLeod, and Cory L. Armstrong. 2012. "Adherence to the Protest Paradigm: The Influence of Protest Goals and Tactics on News Coverage in U.S. and International Newspapers." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 17 (2): 127–44. doi:10.1177/1940161211433837.
- Castells, Manuel. 2012. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Chakravarty, Paula, and Srirupa Roy. 2013. "Media Pluralism Redux: Towards New Frameworks of Comparative Media Studies 'Beyond the West.'" *Political Communication* 30 (3): 349–70. doi:10.1080/10584609.2012.737429.
- Chan, Joseph M., and Chin-Chuan Lee. 1984. "The Journalistic Paradigm on Civil Protests: A Case Study of Hong Kong." In *The News Media in National and International Conflict*, ed. Andrew Arno and Wimal Dissanayake, 183–202. Boulder: Westview.
- Chan, Joseph M., Chin-Chuan Lee, and Paul S. N. Lee. 1992. "Fighting against the Odds: Hong Kong Journalists in Transition." *International Communication Gazette* 50 (1): 1–20.
- Couldry, Nick, and Andreas Hepp. 2012. "Media Cultures in a Global Age: A Transcultural Approach to an Expanded Spectrum." In *The Handbook of Global Media Research*, ed. Ingrid Volkmer, 1st Edition, 92–109. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Curran, James, and Myung-Jin Park. 2000. *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Dardis, Frank E. 2006. "Marginalization Devices in U.S. Press Coverage of Iraq War Protest: A Content Analysis." *Mass Communication and Society* 9 (2): 117–35. doi:10.1207/s15327825mcs0902_1.
- de Lima, Venicio A. 2004. "Sete Teses sobre Mídia e Política no Brasil" [Seven Theses about Media and Politics in Brazil]. *Revista USP* 61:48–57.
- Entman, Robert M., and Andrew Rojecki. 1993. "Freezing Out the Public: Elite and Media Framing of the U.S. Anti-nuclear Movement." *Political Communication* 10 (2): 155–73.
- Ferree, Myra M., William A. Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Deiter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Flew, Terry, and Silvio Waisbord. 2015. "The Ongoing Significance of National Media Systems in the Context of Media Globalization." *Media, Culture & Society* 37 (4): 620–636. doi:10.1177/0163443714566903.
- Fung, Anthony Y. H. 2007. "Political Economy of Hong Kong Media: Producing a Hegemonic Voice." *Asian Journal of Communication* 17 (2): 159–71.
- Ghobrial, Bahaa G., and Karin G. Wilkins. 2015. "The Politics of Political Communication: Competing News Discourses of the 2011 Egyptian Protests." *International Communication Gazette* 77 (2): 129–50.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1980. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glasgow Media Group. 1976. *Bad News*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.

- Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harlow, Summer, and Thomas J. Johnson. 2011. "Overthrowing the Protest Paradigm? How the *New York Times*, Global Voices and Twitter Covered the Egyptian Revolution." *International Journal of Communication* 5:1359–74.
- Hertog, James K., and Douglas M. McLeod. 1995. "Anarchists Wreak Havoc in Downtown Minneapolis: A Multi-level Study of Media Coverage of Radical Protest." *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs* 151:1–48.
- Ibrahim, Ekram. 2012. "Newspapers' Coverage of the Egyptian January 25 Revolution: A Framing Analysis." PhD diss., The American University in Cairo, Egypt.
- Kraidy, Marwan. 2005. *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lee, Chin-Chuan. 2003. *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. London: Routledge.
- Lee, Chin-Chuan, Zhou He, and Yu Huang. 2007. "Party-Market Corporatism, Clientelism, and Media in Shanghai." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 12 (3): 21–42.
- Lee, Chin-Chuan, Li Jinqun, Joseph M. Chan, Zhongdang Pan, and Clement Y. K. So. 2002. *Global Media Spectacle: News War over Hong Kong*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lee, Francis L. F., and Joseph M. Chan. 2008. "Making Sense of Participation: The Political Culture of Pro-democracy Demonstrators in Hong Kong." *The China Quarterly* 193:84–101.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1967. "Cleavage Structures, Party System, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction." In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 1–64. New York: Free Press.
- McFarlane, Thomas, and Iain Hay. 2003. "The Battle for Seattle: Protest and Popular Geopolitics in the Australian Newspaper." *Political Geography* 22 (2): 211–32.
- McLeod, Douglas M., and James K. Hertog. 1992. "The Manufacture of Public Opinion by Reporters: Informal Cues for Public Perceptions of Protest Groups." *Discourse & Society* 3 (3): 259–75.
- McLeod, Douglas M., and James K. Hertog. 1999. "Social Control, Social Change and the Mass Media's Role in the Regulation of Protest Groups." In *Mass Media, Social Control and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective*, ed. David Demers and Kasisomayajula Viswanath, 305–330. Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Moretzsohn, Sylvia D. 2013. "Redes Sociais, Boato e Jornalismo." [Social Media, Rumors and Journalism.] *Observatório da Imprensa* 751. <http://folhadiferenciada.blogspot.com/2013/06/redes-sociais-boatos-e-jornalismo.html>.
- Moro, Nikhil, and Debashis Aikat. 2010. "Chindia's Newspaper Boom: Identifying Sustainable Business Models." *Global Media and Communication* 6 (3): 357–67.
- Mudgal, Vipul. 2011. "Rural Coverage in the Hindi and English Dailies." *Economic & Political Weekly* 46:35. <http://www.epw.in/journal/2011/35/special-articles/rural-coverage-hindi-and-english-dailies.html>.
- Napoli, Philip M. 2011. "Exposure Diversity Reconsidered." *Journal of Information Policy* 1:246–59.
- Nossek, Hillel. 2004. "Our News and Their News: The Role of National Identity in the Coverage of Foreign News." *Journalism* 5 (3): 343–68.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2005. *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.

- Pan, Zhongdang. 2000. "Spatial Configuration in Institutional Change: A Case of China's Journalism Reforms." *Journalism* 1 (3): 253–81.
- Pan, Zhongdang, and Joseph Man Chan. 2003. "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms: How China's Journalists Assess 'Media Exemplars.'" *Communication Research* 30 (6): 649–82.
- Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger.
- Rao, Shakuntala, and Vipul Mudgal. 2015. "Introduction: Democracy, Civil Society and Journalism in India." *Journalism Studies* 16 (5): 615–23. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2015.1054135.
- Rodrigues, Usha M. 2014. "Social Media's Impact on Journalism: A Study of Media's Coverage of Anti-corruption Protests in India." *Global Media Journal: Australia Edition* 8 (2). <http://www.hca.uws.edu.au/gmjau/?p=802>.
- Rohlinger, Deana A. 2014. *Abortion Politics, Mass Media, and Social Movements in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Santos, Eduardo H. 2014. "Crise de Representação Política no Brasil e os Protestos de Junho de 2013" [Crisis of Political Representation in Brazil and the Protests of June 2013.] *Liinc em Revista* 10 (1): 86–95.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *The American Political Science Review* 64 (4): 1033–53.
- Scolari, Carlos A. 2012. "Media Ecology: Exploring the Metaphor to Expand the Theory." *Communication Theory* 22 (2): 204–25.
- Shoemaker, Pamela J. 1982. "The Perceived Legitimacy of Deviant Political Groups: Two Experiments on Media Effects." *Communication Research* 9 (2): 249–86.
- Shoemaker, Pamela J. 1984. "Media Treatment of Deviant Political Groups." *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (1): 66–75, 82.
- Shrivastava, K. M. 2008. "India: Media System." In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach, 2204–2208. Malden: Blackwell.
- Smith, Jackie. 2001. "Globalizing Resistance: The Battle of Seattle and the Future of Social Movements." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 6 (1): 1–19.
- Sobieraj, Sarah. 2011. *Soundbitten: The Perils of Media-Centered Political Activism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Straubhaar, Joseph. 1991. "Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8:29–38.
- Streeck, Wolfgang, and Lane Kenworthy. 2005. "Theories and Practices of Neocorporatism." In *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, ed. Thomas Janoski, Robert Alford, Alexander Hicks, and Mildred A. Schwartz, 1st Edition, 441–460. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Suman, Swarn. 2011. "Role of Social Media in Changing World Scenario." *Anusandhanika* 11 (2): 55–58.
- Tang, Gary, and Francis L. F. Lee. 2014. "Hong Kong Journalists' Attitude towards Social Protests: A Belief System Perspective." *Media Asia* 41 (1): 55–70.
- Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Keren. 2014. "Producing Protest News: An Inquiry into Journalists' Narratives." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (4): 410–29. doi:10.1177/1940161214540941.
- Waisbord, Silvio R. 2000. "Media in South America: Between the Rock of the State and the Hard Place of the Market." In *De-Westernizing Media Studies*, ed. James Curran and Myung-Jin Park, 50–62. London: Routledge.

- Waisbord, Silvio R., and Claudia Mellado. 2014. "De-Westernizing Communication Studies: A Reassessment." *Communication Theory* 24 (4): 361–72.
- Wang, Haiyan, and Francis L. F. Lee. 2014. "Research on Chinese Investigative Journalism 1978–2013: A Critical Review." *China Review* 14 (2): 215–51.
- Weaver, David, and Joshua M. Scacco. 2013. "Revisiting the Protest Paradigm: The Tea Party as Filtered through Prime-Time Cable News." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (1): 61–84. doi:10.1177/1940161212462872.
- Zhao, Yuezhi. 2000. "Media, Market and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line." *Journalism Studies* 1 (4): 695–702.
- Zhao, Yuezhi. 2012. "Understanding China's Media System in a World Historical Context." In *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, ed. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, 143–173. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Author Biographies

Saif Shahin is a doctoral candidate in the School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on the interaction between news and politics, comparative media studies, and digital humanities. His articles have been published in *Journalism*, *Journalism Practice*, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *Communication Methods and Measures*, and *Global Media and Communication*. He has also authored chapters in books on social media and international politics. He is the Chief Editor of *Sagar: A South Asia Research Journal* and earlier worked as a journalist in India, England, and the Middle East.

Pei Zheng is a doctoral candidate in the School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on political communication, new media and technology, and environmental issues. She has published articles in *Journal of Communication* and *Journal of Social Media Studies* and book chapters on social media engagement and the net generation. She also presents papers regularly at annual conference of the International Communication Association, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and National Communication Association.

Heloisa Aruth Sturm is a doctoral student in the School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include political communication, civic engagement, media sociology, and journalistic practices. She holds a master's degree in Luso-Brazilian Literature from the same university, as well as undergraduate degrees in Journalism and Law from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. She earlier worked as a reporter at *O Estado de Sao Paulo* and *Zero Hora* newspapers in Brazil.

Deepa Fadnis is a doctoral student in the School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include international gender studies, popular culture, cultural activism, and digitally supported social movements. She earlier worked as a journalist in India.

When the Fourth Estate Becomes a Fifth Column: The Effect of Media Freedom and Social Intolerance on Civil Conflict

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21(2) 165–187
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216632362
ijpp.sagepub.com



Marc L. Hutchison¹, Salvatore Schiano²,
and Jenifer Whitten-Woodring²

Abstract

Media freedom is typically viewed as crucial to democracy and development. The idea is that independent news media will facilitate free and fair elections and shine a spotlight on corruption—thereby serving as a fourth estate. Yet political leaders often justify restricting media freedom on the grounds that irresponsible news coverage will incite political violence—potentially undermining government and in effect acting as a fifth column. So is media freedom a force for democracy or a source of civil conflict? We hypothesize that the effect of media freedom on civil conflict is conditioned by a country's level of intolerance. Specifically, we predict when social intolerance is low, media freedom will discourage domestic conflict because the tone of the news coverage will reflect the level of tolerance and ameliorate any inflammatory coverage. In contrast, we predict that high levels of social intolerance will fuel and be fueled by inflammatory news coverage if the media are free, thereby promoting civil conflict. We test our hypotheses across countries and over time drawing from World Values and European Values Surveys and the Global Media Freedom Dataset and find that the combination of media freedom and high social intolerance is associated with increased civil conflict.

Keywords

freedom of the press, media effects, political conflict, peace, Asia, censorship

¹University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA

²University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Massachusetts Lowell, 883 Broadway Street, Lowell, MA 01854, USA.

Email: Jenifer_WhittenWoodring@uml.edu

Introduction

In April 2002, Venezuelan news media provided round-the-clock coverage of the general strike, protests, and political violence that led to the temporary ouster of President Hugo Chávez Frías. Yet these same news organizations failed to question the constitutionality of the short-lived coup and, for the most part, neglected to cover Chávez' return to power (Encarnación 2002). In fact, media coverage of the uprising was so favorable to the opposition that some characterized it as a "media coup" (Castillo 2003). The clashes between the pro-Chávez and anti-Chávez demonstrators left nearly two dozen people dead and hundreds more injured. Moreover, though at first glance the opposition appeared to be heterogeneous, in truth the divisions between the government's opposition and its supporters were largely driven by deep class divisions that have been present in Venezuelan society "around conceptualizations of civilization and barbarism, knowledge and ignorance and rich and poor since its inception" (Cannon 2004: 287). Questions remain about the alleged collusion of the oligarchy-owned media, right-wing military, and business leaders with the U.S. government. What is known, though, is that the news media played a crucial role in this attempt to undermine Venezuela's democratically elected government.

The actions of the Venezuelan media challenge the assumption shared by a wide range of international governmental and nongovernment organizations that free and independent news media will serve the public and promote democracy by acting as a fourth estate, providing a check on political and economic elites. In 2002, the Venezuelan news media conspired with the opposition (in this case economic elites) and functioned more like a fifth column than a fourth estate.¹ In fact, political leaders often accuse news media of acting as a fifth column, and these same leaders sometimes justify restricting media freedom on the grounds that irresponsible news coverage will incite political violence and promote civil conflict. Similar claims have echoed in Rwanda, Egypt, India and, more recently, in Hungary.

Contrary to their idealized role, news media are not always a force for good, and similarly, media freedom does not come with guarantees of high-quality news coverage or a diversity of opinions. In this study, we consider the conditions that might lead news media to function as a fifth column and instigate political violence. Specifically, we hypothesize that the effect of media on civil conflict depends on media freedom and is conditioned in part by a country's level of social intolerance, meaning a general prejudice against group differences (these could be differences in race, religion, spoken language, etc.). As the case of the Venezuela illustrates, independent news media can fan the flames of social intolerance. In 2002, there were sharp divisions in the country, with the government characterizing the opposition as "few in number and privileged" and the opposition (with the help of the media) describing Chávez and his supporters as "uncouth, unpolished, in effect uncivilised, poor, mixed race, without finesse, 'sin preparación'" (Cannon 2004: 298).

Thus, we predict that high levels of social intolerance will fuel and be fueled by inflammatory news coverage, especially if the news media are free and independent, and that this combination will serve to promote political violence and increase the

likelihood of civil conflict. Here, we conceptualize civil conflict as militarized conflict between organized groups within a country, one of which is typically the government, which can range from small insurgencies to large-scale civil wars (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015).² Under this scenario, the news media play a critical role, appealing to their intolerant audience with sensationalist coverage that raises the salience of various grievances within society, thereby presenting an opportunity to leaders of opposition groups and/or extremist movements to the point that these groups are able to overcome their coordination and collective action problems and mobilize against the government or against marginalized populations. In contrast, we predict that when social intolerance is low, media freedom will discourage political violence and thereby decrease the likelihood of civil conflict because the news media will seek to maintain and broaden their audience with a tone and pattern of coverage that provides a balance of views that will appeal to a diverse audience and ameliorate any inflammatory coverage. We test our hypotheses across countries and over time drawing from World Values and European Values Surveys and the Global Media Freedom Dataset (GMFD), and find support for our hypothesis that media freedom mitigates civil conflict when social intolerance is low, and that it instigates civil conflict when social intolerance is high.

We begin with a review of the literature on the origins of civil conflict. Then we discuss recent studies linking social intolerance to domestic conflict and consider how media freedom might encourage or discourage civil conflict. Next, we outline our research design, and provide our sample and variable descriptions, in particular how we aggregate individual survey data to generate a country-level measure of social intolerance. We present our results and then show how these observed dynamics correspond with the role of media and societal conflict within India. We conclude with a discussion about the implications of these findings for media policies and future research.

Origins of Civil Conflict

Civil conflict is one of the more lethal forms of political violence and represents one of the great challenges facing the international community. Fearon and Laitin (2003) observe that there were more than 127 civil wars between 1946 and 1999, and the World Bank estimates that nearly twenty million people have been killed in civil conflicts since 1945 (Flores and Nooruddin 2009). Furthermore, almost half of the civil wars experienced a recurrence of the conflict (Collier et al. 2003). This phenomenon, known as a “conflict trap,” is the situation in which states that experienced a civil conflict are more likely to experience a future conflict (Collier et al. 2003; Walter 2004), especially in the period shortly after the original conflict ended (Collier et al. 2003; Collier and Sambanis 2002; Elbadawi et al. 2008). Thus, it is not surprising that researchers devote significant attention to determining the causes and consequences of these events as well as offer numerous policy recommendations intended to reconstruct and reconcile the affected societies.

Civil conflict has been studied in depth, particularly over the last decade, but the causes remain relatively unclear due to a mixed empirical record that offers support for

multiple, competing theories. The two primary competing arguments are grievance-based theories (Gurr 1971; Muller and Seligson 1987) and greed-based theories (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004; de Soysa 2002; Lujala et al. 2005; Ross 2004), both of which describe individual and/or group motivations to violently rebel against the state. Although still lacking a definitive consensus, much of recent research on the civil conflict onset supports the idea “that the conditions that determine the feasibility of rebellion are more important than those that influence motivation” (Collier et al. 2008: 464). However, this emerging consensus may be partially attributable to the fact that many of the key factors espoused by the greed-based theories are more easily quantifiable and measured. Grievance-based theories, however, rely more on individual and group negative orientations toward their respective governments and other societal groups that are considerably more difficult to directly measure, particularly on a mass scale (see Gurr 1971; Horowitz 1985; Kalyvas 2006; Posen 1993; Saideman 1998). Thus, grievance-based theories are relatively unexplored, and the mechanisms through which such grievances can be spread have been largely unidentified. This is where we propose that the media play an important role.

In particular, the work on societal fractionalization, as often measured by various indicators of country-level demographic divisions and polarization along ethnic, religious, political, and linguistic dimensions, is strongly tied to the theoretical underpinning of grievance-based explanations of civil conflict. As Muller and Seligson (1987) point out, even if groups have legitimate grievances against government, they still need to overcome impediments to collective action to act. The critical question is how some groups are able to overcome this challenge and act while others lie dormant. This implies that grievances must also require other mechanisms to raise their relative salience to the point that collective problems are overcome and groups engage in civil conflict. We contend that free and independent news media can provide one such mechanism, and in addition to raising the salience of grievances, media can also be used to overcome coordination problems (Chwe 2001).

In the extensive literature linking ethnicity to civil conflict, the principal causes attributed to violence stem from environments of societal distrust, fear, bitterness, and intolerance divided along varied group distinctions that exacerbate societal divisions to the point of violence (Horowitz 1985; Kalyvas 2006; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Posen 1993; Saideman 1998). This strongly suggests that, as a reflection of societal divisions, the underlying societal attitudes on trust, perceived threat, and intolerance play a large role in either moving societies toward or away from conflict.

Despite the theoretical link between societal attitudes and conflict, empirical studies rarely use direct measures of attitudes to predict conflict onset. Sambanis (2004) criticizes this disconnect between theorizing and empirical testing in the previous research. He points out that testing essentially micro-level mechanisms of mobilization with macro-level proxies for societal attitudes in cross-national analyses is problematic. He advocates for more precise linkage between theorizing, measurement, and testing to appropriately evaluate societal based hypotheses of civil conflict. Of course, one factor previously inhibiting this approach was a lack of survey data with enough data points and geographic coverage to make meaningful inferences. We contend,

however, that the proliferation of new cross-national survey data over the last few decades now allows for this type of analysis.

Media, Tolerance, and Conflict

News media are generally theorized to play a positive role in society, providing information that is crucial to the democratic process, serving as a voice for the voiceless, and holding those in power (especially government) accountable.³ Based on this idealized role, there has been a call to spread media freedom throughout the world, because news media must be free and independent from government control to have these desired effects.⁴ Yet, though there are some indications that media freedom is associated with decreased corruption (Camaj 2013), there is little empirical evidence to support the assumption that free media will always be a force for good.

While studies have found that two countries with media freedom are less likely to engage in conflict with each other (Choi and James 2006; Van Belle 2002), we do not know the effect of media freedom on civil conflict. In fact, research on the role of media in protest and repression nexus suggests that under certain conditions media freedom may have an inflammatory effect rather than a pacifying effect, especially at the domestic level. Whitten-Woodring (2009) finds that in the absence of democracy, media freedom is associated with increased repression, probably in response to protest. Stein (2013: 8) proposes that “the mainstream media serve as opposition leaders’ *barometer* of government tolerance for public displays of dissent,” such that increased critical reporting of government signals an opportunity for protest movements. Of course, government crackdowns on journalists who engage in such critical reporting can also discourage protest (Whitten-Woodring and James 2012). Kim et al. (2015) find that if people believe government repression will ultimately fail, people will protest and news media will engage in watchdog reporting even in the absence of media freedom. Thus, there is evidence that watchdog reporting is associated with protest, and although watchdog reporting may sometimes occur in the absence of media freedom (in environments where criticizing the government is dangerous for journalists), we argue it is far more likely to occur when government either loosens or loses some control of media. In addition, news media may sometimes be directly associated with opposition movements, in which case the more free the news media are, the more likely opposition affiliated news media will facilitate mobilization against the government. Given that media freedom and watchdog reporting can facilitate protest, it follows that media freedom and shifts in media freedom may lead to other types of domestic conflict and political violence, in particular civil conflict.⁵

We posit that there are several ways in which free and independent news media can be used to increase the chances of civil conflict. First, inflammatory framing of news events can widen existing divisions in a society. Second, the use of language, especially derogatory labels and classifications of certain groups in the news, can have a dehumanizing effect, which in turn weakens established social norms against violence. Third, leaders can use media to mobilize and coordinate groups, letting them know when and where there will be opportunities for action. To be clear, we are not claiming

that it is necessarily journalists who are inciting the political violence; in many cases, it is their sources—usually political elites—who are using the news media to this end.

First and foremost, through framing, in particular focusing on the more sensational, frightening, or violent aspects of a group's grievance, media can exacerbate societal divisions by raising the relative salience of the grievance to a mass scale, thereby assisting groups in overcoming their collective action problems, a notion that converges well with earlier theorizing on grievances and civil conflict (see Muller and Seligson 1987). Although the previous research on ethnic and civil conflict suggests several different individual attitudes likely to influence the likelihood of conflict, we argue that social intolerance may have the most serious short- and long-term influence on the likelihood of civil conflict. Conceptualized here as an individual's degree of prejudice against various groups within society, social intolerance has long been associated with damaging social and political consequences, such as political violence and repression, that negatively affect transitional, postconflict societal relations (see Gibson and Gouws 2003).⁶ As Gibson (2007: 327) notes, "[t]o the extent that a political culture emphasizes conformity and penalizes those with contrarian ideas, little tolerance exists, and the likelihood of political repression is high." Under these conditions, grievances against the government by various targeted groups may deepen to the point of violent action, especially if the news media's frames amplify these grievances.

Intolerance can often serve as a partial manifestation of a society's level of fractionalization, particularly along social dimensions. Thus, mass intolerance can often result in the exclusion or diminishment of opposition groups from participating in the political system and targeted exclusionary policies (Gibson 2007, 2008). Furthermore, news media have the potential to reinforce these prejudices through the use of demeaning and dehumanizing language to describe groups, thereby rendering their marginalization more acceptable. Gibson (1998) argues that similar manifestations of intolerance may be a slippery slope leading to the suppression of minority rights, which would further strengthen grievances by those groups against the government.

All told, mass societal intolerance creates or exacerbates existing grievances of social and political groups against either the government or other relevant groups within society. As Gurr (1971) and others have observed, if these grievances are salient enough to overcome collective action problems,⁷ then groups are more likely to rebel and cause civil conflict within their respective countries. This contention is further supported by the studies on ethnic conflict, which demonstrate that these environments of intolerance and distrust can spur groups to act out violently within society and, in extreme cases, rebel (see Horowitz 1985; Kalyvas 2006; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Posen 1993; Saideman 1998). In a study on the former Yugoslavia, Dyrstad (2012) observes that attitudes of ethnic intolerance in 1989 were higher in those regions that would subsequently experience ethnic civil war during the country's dissolution than those that remained more peaceful.

Therefore, we expect that higher levels of societal intolerance to increase the likelihood of civil conflict within a country. Moreover, in a free media environment, media can be used to heighten and amplify social intolerance, and mass media and now social

media can be used to mobilize and coordinate protest and collective violence (Bailard 2015; Warren 2015). Thus, we expect the interaction of media freedom and social intolerance to increase the chances of political violence in general and civil conflict in particular.

One likely mechanism through which the interaction of media freedom with social intolerance could promote civil conflict is the formation of echo chambers. Jamieson and Cappella (2008: 76) describe the echo chamber effect in the context of the conservative movement in the United States stating that

the metaphor of an echo chamber captures the ways messages are amplified and reverberate through the conservative opinion media. We mean to suggest a bounded, enclosed media space that has the potential to both magnify the messages delivered within it and insulate them from rebuttal. (p. 76)

We posit that such echo chambers can form in any media system around any ideology that is strongly present in a given society, provided media organizations are free to publish or broadcast news and opinion. Moreover, we posit that echo chambers are more likely to form in scenarios where there is a high degree of social intolerance because there are likely to be commercial pressures on the media to produce news and opinion that cater to those who are intolerant. Independent news media compete for audiences and people tend to gravitate toward news sources that reflect their ideological views. Therefore, if there is a substantial group of people who share an ideology and an intolerance, then it follows that it might be profitable for some media outlets in each medium (including newspapers, radio, television, and online media) to cater to this group. Consequently, the availability of multiple sources of news media that reflect the same ideology, quote each other and cover news events with the same frames and dehumanizing language will reinforce the audience's intolerance, and at the same time block out alternative views. Thus, an echo chamber both attracts those who are intolerant and intensifies their intolerance. And once formed, an echo chamber can serve as a mobilizing device.

The 1994 Rwandan Genocide is perhaps the most dramatic example of the use of media to promote civil conflict. Although the media environment in Rwanda was not functionally free, in the early 1990s as the government took steps to move to a multi-party system, media restrictions were relaxed and there was a dramatic increase in privately owned newspapers, from twelve in 1990 to more than sixty in 1991, (U.S. Department of State 1992). Some of these papers were extremist and anti-Tutsi (Alexis and Mpambara 2003). Because of widespread illiteracy, most Rwandans relied on radio for news, information, and entertainment. In this case though, the culprit was not independent or opposition-controlled media, but rather state-controlled radio that turned Hutu against Tutsi. The radio stations used to mobilize the Hutu included the state-controlled station Radio Rwanda and Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), which was established as private enterprise, an alternative to Radio Rwanda, and was supposed to serve as a voice of the people but was in fact backed by the ruling elite (Des Forges 2007).

From late October (1993) on, RTLM repeatedly and forcefully underlined many of the themes developed for years by the extremist print media, including the inherent differences between Hutu and Tutsi, the foreign origin of Tutsi and, hence, their lack of rights to claim to be Rwandan, the disproportionate share of wealth and power held by Tutsi and the horrors of past Tutsi rule. It continually stressed the need to be alert to Tutsi plots and possible attacks and demanded that Hutu prepare to “defend” themselves against the Tutsi threat (Des Forges 2007: 45). In addition, radio announcers dehumanized the Tutsi through their use of derogatory language to describe them: the term *inyenzi* (meaning cockroach) was used repeatedly and interchangeably with “Tutsi” (Des Forges 2007). Ironically, in response to international criticism of the RTLM broadcasts, Rwandan President Habyarimana defended the station’s right to free speech (Des Forges 2007).

Again, the use of radio in the Rwanda was arguably a case of state-controlled media promoting genocide, but the tactics used in Rwanda could certainly be adopted by independent news media, seeking to appeal to (or even mobilize) an intolerant group. For example in 2010 in Uganda, the weekly tabloid *Rolling Stone* (no affiliation with the U.S. magazine) appealed to the country’s homophobic, running a front-page story on the alleged dangers posed by homosexuals, complete with pictures of hundred people it claimed were “Uganda’s Top Homos” and a banner reading “Hang Them.” Although gay rights activists successfully sued the editors of the newspaper, one of the activists, David Kato, whose picture appeared on the tabloid’s front page was murdered shortly after winning the court case. Although the *Rolling Stone* incident led to crime rather than civil conflict, this case does reveal the potential for media to instigate violence.

In sum, we predict that media are more likely to take on this instigating role when social intolerance is high. In contrast, if social intolerance is low, we expect media freedom will serve to mitigate conflict. In this scenario, there is little or no profit for news media in catering to an intolerant audience. As a result, news media will benefit commercially by appealing to a broad audience and presenting multiple points of view. Therefore, we propose that in a highly tolerant society, media will be unlikely to form echo chambers, and people will be exposed to multiple perspectives through news media:

Hypothesis 1: The effect of media freedom on civil conflict is conditional on the level of social tolerance such that (a) media freedom with low social tolerance increases the likelihood of civil conflict and (b) media freedom with high social tolerance decreases the likelihood of civil conflict.

Sample and Variable Descriptions

In this study, we are primarily interested in how social intolerance and media freedom influence the likelihood of civil conflict. The conventional empirical approach is to examine cross-national, cross-sectional data over time. Yet, those approaches have typically relied on imprecise proxies for societal intolerance due to data limitations.

Here, we generate a more theoretically and conceptually appropriate measure by aggregating individual attitudes of societal intolerance into country averages and include those in a standard cross-national model of civil conflict. To do so, we rely on cross-national survey data collected from multiple waves of the World Values and European Values Surveys that span from 1990 to 2008 (European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association 2011).⁸

By using a direct measure of individual social tolerance instead of country-level proxy variables, we greatly improve the precision of the empirical modeling of our proposed theoretical relationships. However, using direct measures of intolerance is not without tradeoffs and presents a different set of methodological challenges. Although the number of cross-national surveys has increased tremendously over the last two decades, there is still only limited survey coverage available across countries and, in particular, time. In addition, cross-national surveys often lack consistent questions across all countries or the question wording varies across surveys. Here, we ameliorate some of these problems by using the World Values Survey, which offers a global coverage of surveys and includes a series of social tolerance questions relatively consistent across countries within each wave of surveys and across multiple waves over time.

For our analyses below, our sample size is 207 country-years based on surveys of eighty different countries from 1981 to 2008.⁹ In Table 1, we list the countries and the survey years used in our sample. Of course, drawing a sample from a population of surveys carries an increased risk of bias in our analyses (for similar discussions, see Hutchison and Gibler 2007; Hutchison and Johnson 2011). Although the coverage of our surveys is global, the country sample selected for surveys is not truly representative even though it varies widely in level of development, political institutions, region, and ethnic diversity. Survey countries tend to be more populous, more democratic, more internally stable, and less prone to civil conflict than a truly representative sample. This is due to the increased difficulty of conducting nationally representative surveys in poorer or less internally stable countries as well as the greater danger posed to the interviewers. In short, this sample selection favors stability and internally peaceful countries. However, while we acknowledge this inherent sample bias, we are not as troubled by its implications for our results below. In fact, given the higher relatively level of stability within this sample, it is strongly biased *against* finding results linking social intolerance to civil conflict and, thus, represents a stronger test for our hypothesis.

Dependent Variable

Internal armed conflict. Our dependent variable is civil conflict. As we discuss above, civil conflicts are militarized conflicts within a country between the government and organized groups or, in some instances, between distinct substate organized groups. Civil conflicts can range from large-scale civil wars to low-level insurgency movements (Fearon and Laitin 2003). For our measure of civil conflict, we rely on the internal armed conflict indicator from the UCPD/PRIO Armed Conflict data

Table 1. Sample of Surveyed Countries and Years.

Country	Years	Country	Years
Albania	1998, 2002	Kyrgyz Republic	2003
Algeria	2002	Latvia	1996, 1999
Argentina	1984, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2006	Lithuania	1997, 1999
Armenia	1997	Macedonia	1998, 2001
Australia	1981, 1995, 2005	Malaysia	2006
Austria	1990, 1999	Mali	2007
Azerbaijan	1997	Mexico	1990, 1996, 2000, 2005
Bangladesh	1996, 2002	Moldova	1996, 2002, 2006
Belarus	1996, 2000	Morocco	2001, 2007
Belgium	1981, 1990, 1999	Netherlands	1981, 1990, 1999, 2006
Brazil	1991, 1997, 2006	New Zealand	1998, 2004
Bulgaria	1997, 1999, 2006	Nigeria	1990, 1995, 2000
Burkina Faso	2007	Norway	1982, 1990, 1996, 2008
Canada	1982, 1990, 2000, 2006	Peru	1996, 2001, 2008
Chile	1990, 1996, 2000, 2005	Philippines	1996, 2001
China	1990, 1995, 2001, 2007	Poland	1989, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2005
Colombia	1997, 1998, 2005	Portugal	1990, 1999
Croatia	1996	Romania	1993, 1998, 1999, 2005
Czech Republic	1998, 1999	Russia	1990, 1995, 1999, 2006
Denmark	1981, 1990, 1999	Rwanda	2007
Dominican Republic	1996	Serbia	2006
Egypt	2000, 2008	Slovak Republic	1998, 1999
El Salvador	1999	Slovenia	1992, 1995, 1999, 2005
Estonia	1996, 1999	South Africa	1990, 1996, 2001, 2007
Finland	1990, 1996, 2000, 2005	South Korea	1982, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2005
France	1981, 1990, 1999, 2006	Spain	1981, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2007
Georgia	2008	Sweden	1982, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2006
Germany	1990, 1997, 1999, 2006	Switzerland	1989, 1996, 2007
Ghana	2007	Tanzania	2001
Greece	1999	Thailand	2007
Guatemala	2005	Trinidad and Tobago	2006
Hungary	1998, 1999	Turkey	1990, 1996, 2001, 2007
India	1990, 1995, 2001, 2006	Uganda	2001
Indonesia	2001, 2006	Ukraine	1996, 1999, 2006
Iran	2000, 2007	The United Kingdom	1981, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2006
Ireland	1981, 1990, 1999	The United States	1982, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2006
Israel	2001	Uruguay	1996, 2006
Italy	1981, 1990, 1999, 2005	Venezuela	1996, 2000
Japan	1981, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005	Vietnam	2001, 2006
Jordan	2001, 2007	Zambia	2007

set, version 4-2015 (Gleditsch et al. 2002). This data set includes measures of lower intensity armed civil conflicts in addition to large-scale civil wars and is commonly used throughout the empirical literature on civil conflict (see Bartusevicius 2016).¹⁰ In this data set, an internal armed conflict is “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths” (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015: 1). In this study, our dichotomous civil conflict measure indicates whether that sample country experienced at least one civil conflict in the year following the survey. For instance, if a survey was conducted in 1995, this measure would indicate if that country experienced a civil conflict in 1996.

Independent Variables

Social intolerance. In this study, we measure societal intolerance using several indicators of individual prejudice. As Gibson (2007) notes, individual prejudice is a primary measure of social intolerance and distinct from political tolerance (also see Gibson 2013). The World Values and European Values Surveys use an extensive social tolerance battery that is relatively consistent both within and across the various waves of surveys. This battery presents respondents with a list of various groups of people and asks the respondent to indicate which of those groups they would not like to have as a neighbor.¹¹ Although the groups on this list can vary from country to country and wave to wave, we construct an additive intolerance index for each individual from several groups that consistently appear in almost every list of choices: people of a different race and immigrants. For each component, individuals were coded 1 if they indicated that they would not like that group as a neighbor and 0 if they did not. Thus, our social intolerance index ranges from 0 (*tolerant*) to 2 (*intolerant*). We then aggregate all of the responses to generate a mean for each survey to include in our civil conflict models. In our sample, the social intolerance index ranges from 0.03 (Argentina, 1984) to 1.39 (Bangladesh, 2002) with a mean of 0.32.¹²

Media freedom. To measure media freedom, we use the GMFD, an updated version of a definition-driven data set (Van Belle 1997; Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2014; Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2015). The definition is explicitly political. Media are free if media outlets are able to safely criticize government and other elites, and thereby serve as an arena for political competition. Although there are other measures of media freedom, only the GMFD offers a simple coding scheme that is consistent over time and across countries. The GMFD coding scheme is defined by thresholds and based on a clear and simple definition of media freedom. In comparison, the Freedom House and Reporters without Borders indices use coding schemes that have changed over time and are based primarily on identifying media restrictions rather than on a definition of media freedom. Both indices identify the status of the news media for each country-year, but these statuses are determined by cut-offs in the scale rather than by thresholds (Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2015).¹³

In the GMFD, the media environment for each country is placed in one of the following categories:

- Free: countries where criticism of government and officials is a common part of the political dialogue.
- Imperfectly free: countries where social, legal, or economic costs related to the criticism of government or officials limit public criticism, but investigative journalism and criticism of major policy failing can and does occur.
- Not free: countries where it is not possible to safely criticize the government or officials, and media are either indirectly controlled or directly controlled.

This is a categorical coding rather than interval scale; the difference between media coded *imperfectly free* and media coded *not free* is far more substantial than the differences between those coded *free* and those coded *imperfectly free*. Because of the bimodal nature of these data, we collapse categories *free* and *imperfectly free* to form *free media*.

Control Variables

In the analyses below, we rely on a relatively standard set of control variables for modeling the likelihood of civil conflict (see Fearon and Laitin 2003). The subsequent models include measures for *ethnic fractionalization*, *inequality* (GINI), *unemployment*, *youth population*, *rugged terrain*, *oil rents*, and *prior conflict*, all of which we expect to increase the probability of conflict. To account for factors shown to decrease the likelihood of civil conflict, we also include measures of *economic development* (gross domestic product–purchasing power parity), *democratic longevity*, and *executive constraints*. In the interest of conserving space, we include full descriptions (including specification and expectations) for these control variables in the online appendix.

Results

As our dependent variable is binary, we use logistic regression to estimate the effects of our explanatory variables in the analyses that follow. In Table 2, we present our six models to demonstrate the effects of social intolerance and media freedom on the likelihood of civil conflict. Recall our dependent variable indicates whether the country experiences a civil conflict in the year following the survey. In Model 1, we begin by estimating only the effects of our control variables on civil conflict. Not surprisingly, we find that rugged terrain is positively correlated with the onset of civil conflict, a finding that corresponds with Fearon and Laitin's (2003) seminal findings (also see Hendrix 2011). We also observe that ethnic fractionalization has a nonmonotonic effect on civil conflict,¹⁴ that is, the likelihood of conflict is lowest in countries with very low and very high levels of ethnic fractionalization. This curvilinear relationship is very much in line with previous predictions and findings (see Esteban and Ray

Table 2. The Likelihood of Civil Conflict One Year after Survey.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Ethnic fractionalization	10.519*** (3.246)	9.560** (3.434)	10.299** (3.295)	10.021** (3.630)	13.784* (5.743)	29.988* (11.869)
Ethnic fractionalization ²	-9.043*** (3.435)	-8.164* (3.790)	-8.857* (3.469)	-8.591* (3.876)	-12.811* (5.757)	-29.768** (10.971)
GDP-PPP (log)	-0.347 (0.339)	-0.142 (0.358)	-0.333 (0.336)	-0.131 (0.363)	-0.210 (0.516)	-0.510 (0.582)
GINI	0.041 (0.043)	0.026 (0.048)	0.044 (0.045)	0.020 (0.050)	-0.081 (0.080)	-0.137 (0.087)
Change in unemployment	-0.022 (0.024)	-0.031* (0.015)	-0.022 (0.013)	-0.030* (0.015)	-0.035* (0.017)	-0.048** (0.019)
Youth (%)	6.919 (5.957)	6.636 (5.883)	6.813 (6.010)	6.996 (6.231)	11.519 (7.480)	25.108** (9.543)
Continuous democracy	0.325 (0.232)	0.161 (0.258)	0.346 (0.237)	0.132 (0.262)	0.159 (0.383)	0.138 (0.331)
Executive constraints	0.065 (0.226)	0.174 (0.246)	0.090 (0.233)	0.143 (0.249)	-0.052 (0.321)	-0.012 (0.320)
Rugged terrain	0.021* (0.011)	0.021* (0.011)	0.020 (0.011)	0.023* (0.012)	0.008 (0.013)	0.020 (0.014)
Oil rents	0.025 (0.035)	0.024 (0.034)	0.023 (0.034)	0.027 (0.032)	0.013 (0.034)	0.060 (0.041)
Prior conflict					5.370*** (0.853)	5.688*** (1.130)
Social intolerance		2.336* (1.031)		2.617* (1.232)	1.225 (1.601)	-4.988 (3.194)
Media freedom			-0.303 (0.677)	0.430 (0.915)	-0.424 (1.176)	-6.103** (2.215)
Social intolerance x Media freedom						14.054** (5.063)
Constant	-6.166 (3.888)	-8.323 (4.303)	-6.251 (3.806)	-8.639 (4.540)	-5.257 (5.751)	-14.116* (6.956)
N	207	193	207	193	193	193

Note. Logistic regression predicting whether civil conflict will occur in the year following the survey. Robust standard errors are listed in parentheses.

GDP = gross domestic product; PPP = purchasing power parity.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

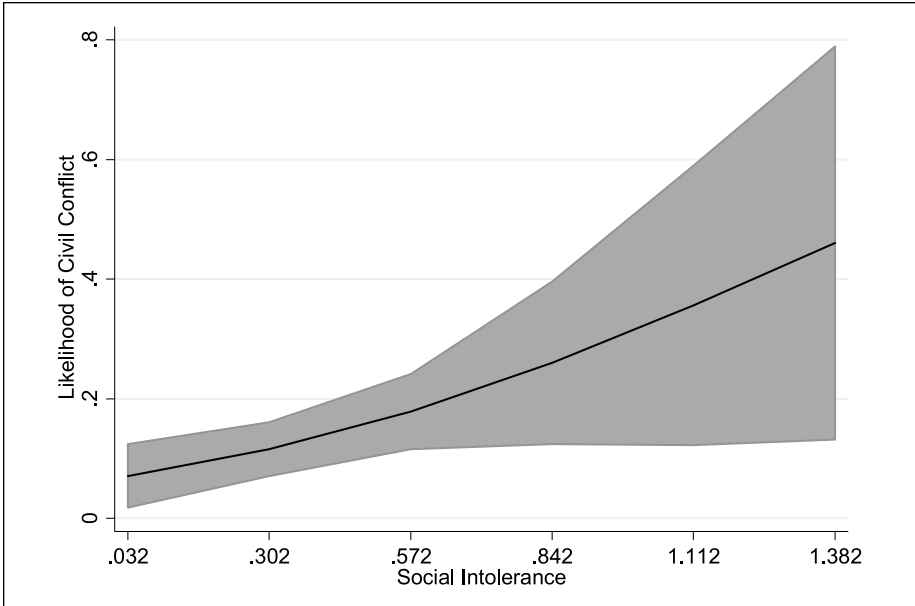


Figure 1. Unconditional effect of social intolerance on civil conflict.

2008; Horowitz 1985). Overall, these results do not reveal any big surprises, and the direction of our coefficients largely corresponds with previous civil conflict studies despite our truncated sample. This similarity to previous findings on civil conflict adds confidence that our sample can yield inferences that are generalizable.¹⁵

We introduce our main explanatory variables, social intolerance and media freedom, separately in Models 2 and 3. In these models, we assess the unconditional effects of each variable on the likelihood of civil conflict. As expected, we find that higher levels of social intolerance increase the likelihood of civil conflict in Model 2, that is, countries with higher levels of social intolerance are more likely to experience civil conflict in the year following the survey than those countries with lower levels of social intolerance, a finding that is consistent with multiple causal pathways but also correspondent with the modal expectation on this relationship (see Hutchison 2014). To get a sense of the substantive impact of a country's average intolerance on the likelihood of civil conflict, we plot this unconditional effect in Figure 1. It reveals that a country's social intolerance has a strong substantive effect as the probability of civil conflict increases from a mere 7 percent at no intolerance to 46 percent at the highest level of intolerance found in our sample. Model 2 also reveals that change in unemployment actually reduces the likelihood of civil conflict, a finding that we observe in Models 4 to 6. Although this finding does not match our expectations, it is similar to previous empirical findings that show a similar effect (Benmelech et al. 2010; Berman et al. 2011).

In Model 3, we evaluate only the effect of media freedom on conflict. Here, we do not observe a statistically significant unconditional effect between media freedom and the likelihood of a civil conflict. This result does not support the normative expectation that, in general, media freedom would reduce the likelihood of civil conflict. Nevertheless, we argue that the effect of media freedom on civil conflict is likely to be more complex and conditional on other factors, particularly social intolerance.

In Model 4, we include both intolerance and media freedom in the same model. Once again, this specification evaluates their respective unconditional effects on civil conflict likelihood. Here, we show generally the same relationships that we observe in Models 2 and 3. We once again see that social intolerance increases the likelihood of civil conflict while media freedom has no statistically significant effect. Overall, this model supports our previous findings on the unconditional effects reported in Models 2 and 3.

Although prior conflict is one of the strongest predictors of civil conflict, we chose to omit this variable in our previous models due to concern that including a lag of the dependent variable on the right side of the regression model will likely mask the effects of the independent variables that are of great theoretical interest (Achen 2000). This is especially true for our analyses here because of our small sample size and brief time span. In Model 5, we include the prior conflict variable into model and find that some of our observed effects disappear, including social intolerance and rugged terrain. As expected, prior conflict is a strong predictor of civil conflict.

Our final test in Model 6 examines the conditional relationship involving intolerance and media freedom. Recall that we expect that intolerance combined with media freedom should actually serve to further exacerbate societal divisions and, thus, increase the likelihood of conflict. We find strong support for this hypothesis in the model after interacting intolerance and media freedom. In Model 6, the parameter estimate for the *Media freedom* \times *Social intolerance* interaction term is positive and statistically significant. Substantively, this result indicates that higher levels of social intolerance combined with media freedom increase the likelihood of civil conflict. We also find mixed results from the remaining component variables. The parameter estimate for the media freedom variable is negative and statistically significant. This result signifies that media freedom actually reduces the likelihood of civil conflict but only in more tolerant societies. This finding is in line with the more traditional depiction of media as a positive force for society. The parameter estimate for social intolerance, however, is not statistically significant. This suggests that societal intolerance does not exert a strong influence on the likelihood of civil conflict in a country with restricted media. Intuitively, this nonfinding makes sense as countries with restricted media tend to come from more repressive states. Effective state repression reflects a stronger capacity to ameliorate the ability of potential rebel groups to organize and mount effective campaigns against governments.

The interactive effects of media freedom and social intolerance are more easily interpreted graphically. Figure 2 depicts the effects of Free and Not Free Media on the

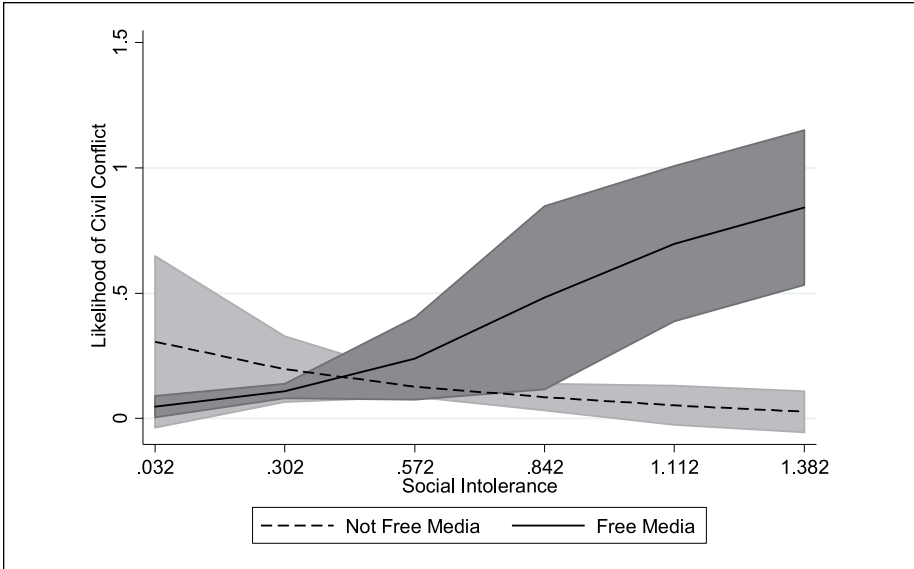


Figure 2. Conditional effect of social intolerance and media freedom on civil conflict.

probability of civil conflict as social intolerance increases. Once again, we find strong substantive effects relating to country-level intolerance, but now we can show the impact of free media in moderating this dynamic. Here, we can see that when media are free and intolerance is low, the probability of civil conflict is close to 5 percent, but as intolerance increases, the probability of civil conflict increases to about 84 percent. In contrast, when media are not free and intolerance is low, the probability of civil conflict is about 31 percent, but as intolerance increases, the probability of conflict decreases to about 3 percent.

Overall, our analysis offers compelling support for much of our argument. As anticipated, societal intolerance is generally linked to a higher probability of civil conflict. Furthermore, our results indicate that this relationship is moderated by the country's level of media freedom but that media freedom by itself does not have an independent effect on the likelihood of conflict. All in all, these findings are supportive of a more grievance-based approach to explaining civil conflict. Our results also offer more direct evidence that intolerant societies are more likely to experience civil conflict, particularly under conditions of media freedom. To put our statistical findings in context and to demonstrate the possible causal mechanisms, we provide a detailed case illustration of India in section 3 of our online appendix.¹⁶ In the case of the 2002 Hindu–Muslim violence, we find some evidence of an echo chamber within the Gujarat media, in which the two most popular newspapers used inflammatory frames and dehumanizing language, and the cable television stations carried speeches by local politicians that could have been perceived as a mobilizing call for retaliatory violence against the Muslim population.

Conclusion

We began this paper with the goal of examining the conditions that could lead free and independent news media to instigate political violence, in particular civil conflict. The answer—according to our findings here—is that the effect of media freedom on civil conflict depends on social tolerance. In the most tolerant societies, media freedom is associated with decreased probability of civil conflict, but in more intolerant societies, media freedom is linked with increased probability of civil conflict. The case of India provides some insight into how this can happen, through the media's use of inflammatory frames, dehumanizing language, and the formation of echo chambers. In addition, the case of the Hindu–Muslim violence in 2002 shows that politicians will sometimes use news media to inflame existing prejudices for political gain and incite violence against marginalized groups.

These findings suggest that foreign assistance aimed at establishing media freedom in nondemocratic and developing countries may not have the desired effect and could promote domestic conflict in countries with societal intolerance. Similarly, these findings also indicate that controlled media may decrease the chances of civil conflict in countries with high levels of social intolerance. It is not our intention to defend the decisions of certain governments to control media. Instead we posit that if the goal is to have a free and independent press that can serve as a fourth estate, then certain conditions need to be in place, in particular, a minimal level of social tolerance.

The problem of media freedom and social intolerance is similar to the “hen-and-egg” problem of democracy—democracy will not work unless certain conditions are in place and it is difficult to have those conditions in place in the absence of democracy. Although it is difficult to pinpoint which comes first, social intolerance or inflammatory media, we posit that it is mostly likely the case that news media are amplifying prejudices that are deeply ingrained in society. It is also true that biased media could emerge in highly polarized and socially intolerant countries (this could be a promising area for future research). Here, we have proposed that in an intolerant society, there are likely to be commercial and political incentives for independent media to provide news and information that caters to those who share a particular ideology, and this in turn might reinforce their intolerance and create an opportunity for leaders of opposition groups to mobilize. Yet this tactic is not limited to the opposition. The case of India demonstrates that mainstream political elites may also use independent news media to inflame intolerance. Thus, in highly intolerant societies, free and independent news media can reinforce intolerance and raise the salience of grievances, which in turn can be used by political leaders (opposition or mainstream) to provoke political violence.

Certainly there is a history of governments using the potential for media to instigate political violence as an excuse for controlling media. In present day Rwanda, journalists have been imprisoned on charges of inciting violence and defaming President Paul Kagame. In 2010, the Hungarian government adopted new media laws that established a Media Council (made up of members of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz party) to regulate content of broadcast, print, and online media. The Media Council has the

authority to punish media outlets “for ‘inciting hatred’ against individuals, nations, communities, minorities, or even majorities. The council is called to levy fines or suspend outlets for ‘unbalanced’ or ‘immoral’ reporting” (Freedom House 2012). Thus, there is evidence that governments perceive the potential for news media to play the role of a fifth column—supporting and facilitating the opposition or extremist groups existing within a country’s borders.

In an intolerant society, policies prohibiting hate speech and/or incitement of violence offer an alternative to controlled media. In Germany and France, there are policies against the use of symbols and language associated with the Nazi regime and anti-Semitism. Laws against hate speech and incitement of violence may well prevent news media from inflaming social intolerance, but limiting speech and media criticism can be a slippery slope. Many countries prohibit criticism of political leaders and/or ruling families, sometimes in the name of national security. A case in point, in September 2015, the printer of the international edition of the *New York Times* in Thailand refused to print the paper because the front page featured a story about the King’s declining health calling into question the future of the Thai Monarchy, a violation of Thailand’s *lèse-majesté* laws, which criminalize insulting the monarchy. Thailand is not alone; in recent years, the International Press Institute has campaigned against the *desacato* or “contempt of authority” laws in place in a number of Caribbean countries, claiming that these policies are a serious threat to media freedom (Griffen 2012). Thus, any policies prohibiting speech must be carefully tailored so that they prevent incitement while allowing news media to criticize government and other political and economic elites. In short, preventing the media from acting as a fifth column while allowing it to serve as a fourth estate is no simple task.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank Ken Rogerson as well as the *IJPP* editors and four anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

Authors’ Note

The authors’ names are listed alphabetically. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 2013 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, Illinois, and the 2014 annual meeting of the International Communication Association in Seattle, Washington. We are responsible for any errors that may remain.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Fifth column refers to a group that attempts to undermine larger group, usually a government, from within. It is also used to refer to sedition. The term dates back to the Spanish Civil War and is attributed to Nationalist General Emilio Mola Vidal, who called his supporters within Madrid his “fifth column” as his four army columns closed in on the city.
2. Note that this definition does not include one-sided repression. Please see our full definition and variable specification in our online appendix.
3. This idealized view is spread primarily by advocates for media freedom and is not always echoed by scholars. In recent years, there have been several works critiquing the failure of the news media to serve as a fourth estate, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. See, for example, Edwards and Cromwell (2009) and Bennett et al. (2007).
4. Following Van Belle (1997), we define media freedom as the ability of news media to criticize government. This conceptualization is distinct from other features of the media environment such as ownership, commercialization, and bias.
5. We are arguing that the interaction of media freedom and social intolerance increases the *likelihood* of civil conflict, but we do acknowledge that it probably has little or no influence on civil conflict that is driven by anticorruption movements (unless the dissenters are members of a marginalized group).
6. Although recent studies have shown that political polarization can lead to limitations on media freedom (see Kellam and Stein, 2016), we note that there is extensive public opinion literature indicating that social (in)tolerance is distinct from political tolerance and political polarization (see in particular Gibson 2013).
7. A collective action problem is basically a conflict between individual and group interests. In regard to protest or rebellion, individuals may stand to benefit from a group’s actions, whether they participate or not, but the group will not succeed if individuals seek to minimize their costs and maximize their benefits by refusing to join the group’s actions.
8. The World Values and European Values Surveys are global survey projects conducted over dozens of countries across regions and time. These data are publically available and can be accessed at www.worldvaluessurvey.org.
9. Due to missing data for some of our key variables, our sample size varies between 207 and 193 country-years depending on the model specification as indicated in Table 2.
10. Although this civil conflict indicator is more comprehensive compared with more traditional civil war indicators, it still underestimates the full extent of civil conflict throughout the world because many low-intensity insurgencies do not meet the twenty-five battle death threshold over the course of a year (Buhaug et al. 2009).
11. For these items, respondents are asked, “On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbors?”
12. Although we aggregate the individual-level index to generate an aggregate mean for each survey, the additive index has a Cronbach’s alpha score of .65. Furthermore, factor analysis reveals that both of the variables loaded on to the factor above 0.60. A factor score generated from this loading correlated with our index at 0.99. Thus, we are confident that our measure is tapping into a similar individual dynamic.
13. For more information comparing the various media freedom indices, see Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle (2014).
14. In the interest of conserving space, we display the predicted impact of ethnic fractionalization on the likelihood of civil conflict in Figure A1 of the online appendix.

15. As a further robustness check, we reestimated our models substituting our continuous democracy and executive constraints variables with a combined democracy/autocracy Polity score from the Polity IV dataset. This substitution did not change our substantive findings. These results can be found in Table A1 in our online appendix. It is worth noting that Polity IV does not explicitly incorporate media freedom in its coding (Choi and James 2006; Marshall and Jaggers 2012).
16. We selected India because we wanted to look at the effects of media freedom in a country with relatively high social intolerance.

References

- Achen, Christopher H. 2000. "Why Lagged Dependent Variables Can Suppress the Explanatory Power of Other Independent Variables." Presented at the annual meeting of the Political Methodology Society, July 2000, Los Angeles.
- Alexis, Monique, and Ines Mpambara. 2003. "IMS Assessment Mission: The Rwanda Media Experience from the Genocide." Copenhagen: International Media Support.
- Bailard, Catie Snow. 2015. "Ethnic Conflict Goes Mobile: Mobile Technology's Effect on the Opportunities and Motivations for Violent Collective Action." *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (3): 323–37.
- Bartusevicius, Henrikas. 2016. "Introducing the Categorically Disaggregated Conflict (CDC) Dataset." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 33 (1): 89–110.
- Benmelech, Efraim, Claude Berrebi, and Esteban Klor. 2010. "Counter-Suicide-Terrorism: Evidence from House Demolitions." NBER Working Paper 16493, October. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16493>.
- Bennett, W. Lance, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2007. *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berman, Eli, Michael Callen, Joseph H. Felter, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2011. "Do Working Men Rebel? Insurgency and Unemployment in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55 (4): 496–528.
- Buhaug, Halvard, Scott Gates, and Päivi Lujala. 2009. "Geography, Rebel Capacity, and the Duration of Civil Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (4): 544–69.
- Camaj, Lindita. 2013. "The Media's Role in Fighting Corruption: Media Effects on Governmental Accountability." *International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (1): 21–42.
- Cannon, Barry. 2004. "Venezuela, April 2002: Coup or Popular Rebellion? The Myth of a United Venezuela." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 23 (3): 285–302.
- Castillo, Antonio. 2003. "Breaking Democracy: Venezuela's Media Coup." *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy* 108 (August): 145–156.
- Choi, Seung-Whan, and Patrick James. 2006. "Media Openness, Democracy and Militarized Interstate Disputes: An Empirical Analysis." *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (1): 23–46.
- Chwe, Michael Suk-Young. 2001. *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Collier, Paul. 2000. "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44 (6): 839–53.
- Collier, Paul, Lani Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2003. *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. New York: The World Bank.

- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoefler. 1998. "On the Economic Causes of Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 50 (4): 563–73.
- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoefler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56:563–95.
- Collier, Paul, Anke Hoefler, and Mans Soderbom. 2008. "Post-Conflict Risks." *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (4): 461–78.
- Collier, Paul, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2002. "Understanding Civil War: A New Agenda." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 3–12.
- de Soysa, Indra. 2002. "Paradise Is a Bazaar? Greed, Creed, and Governance in Civil War, 1989–99." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (4): 395–416.
- Des Forges, Alison. 2007. "Call to Genocide: Radio in Rwanda, 1994." In *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson, 41–54. London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.
- Edwards, David, and David Cromwell. 2009. *Newspeak in the 21st Century*. London: Pluto Press.
- Dyrstad, Karin. 2012. "After Ethnic Civil War: Ethno-Nationalism in the Western Balkans." *Journal of Peace Research* 49 (6): 817–31.
- Elbadawi, Ibrahim, Havard Hegre, and Gary J. Milante. 2008. "The Aftermath of Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (4): 451–59.
- Encarnación, Omar G. 2002. "Venezuela's 'Civil Society Coup.'" *World Policy Journal* 19 (2): 38–48.
- Esteban, Joan, and Debraj Ray. 2008. "Polarization, Fractionalization, and Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2): 163–82.
- European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association. 2011. "European and World Values Surveys Four-Wave Integrated Data File, 1981–2004, v.20060423." Date file. www.worldvaluessurvey.org.
- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.
- Flores, Thomas Edward, and Irfan Nooruddin. 2009. "Democracy under the Gun: Understanding Postconflict Economic Recovery." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (1): 3–29.
- Freedom House. 2012. *Freedom of the Press 2012 Survey*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2012>.
- Gibson, James L. 1998. "A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (3): 819–50.
- Gibson, James L. 2007. "Political Intolerance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 323–41. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, James L. 2008. "Intolerance and Political Repression in the United States: A Half Century after McCarthyism." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 96–108.
- Gibson, James L. 2013. "Measuring Political Tolerance and General Support for Pro-Civil Liberties Policies: Notes, Evidence, and Cautions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77 (1): 45–68.
- Gibson, James L., and Amanda Gouws. 2003. *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand. 2002. "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (5): 615–37.
- Griffen, Scott. 2012. "Wave of Journalist Arrests in Cuba: Government Continues Arbitrary Prosecutions of Media." International Press Institute, November 12. Available at: <http://www.freemedia.at/newssview/article/wave-of-journalist-arrests-in-cuba.html>.

- Gurr, Ted Robert. 1971. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hendrix, Cullen S. 2011. "Head for the Hills? Rough Terrain, State Capacity, and Civil War Onset." *Civil Wars* 13 (4): 345–70.
- Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hutchison, Marc L. 2014. "Tolerating Threat? The Independent Effects of Civil Conflict on Domestic Political Tolerance." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58 (5): 797–825.
- Hutchison, Marc L., and Douglas M. Gibler. 2007. "Political Tolerance and Territorial Threat: A Cross-National Study." *Journal of Politics* 69 (1): 128–42.
- Hutchison, Marc L., and Kristin Johnson. 2011. "Capacity to Trust? Institutional Capacity, Conflict, and Political Trust in Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 48 (6): 737–52.
- Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Joseph N. Cappella. 2008. *Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment Echo Chamber*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kalyvas, Stathys. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kellam Marissa, and Elizabeth Stein. 2016. "Silencing Critics: When and How Presidents Restrict Media Freedom in Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 49(1): 36-77.
- Kim, HeeMin, Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, and Patrick James. 2015. "The Role of Media in the Repression-Protest Nexus: A Game-Theoretic Model." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (6): 1017–42.
- Lake, David, and Donald Rothchild. 1996. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security* 21 (2): 41–75.
- Lujala, Päivi, Nils Petter Gleditsch, and Elisabeth Gilmore. 2005. "A Diamond Curse? Civil War and a Lutable Resource." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (4): 538–62.
- Marshall, Monty G., and Keith Jagers. 2012. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2012*. Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR) Program. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.
- Muller, Edward N., and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1987. "Inequality and Insurgency." *American Political Science Review* 81:425–51.
- Pettersson, Therese, and Peter Wallensteen. 2015. "Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014." *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (4): 536–50.
- Posen, Barry R. 1993. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival* 35 (1): 27–47.
- Ross, Michael L. 2004. "What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 337–56.
- Saideman, Stephen M. 1998. "Is Pandora's Box Half-Empty or Half-Full?" In *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, Escalation*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, 127–50. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "Expanding Economic Models of Civil War Using Cases Studies." *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (2): 259–80.
- Stein, Elizabeth. 2013. *The Opposition's Barometer of Government Tolerance for Mass Public Dissent: Media-State Interactions and the Struggle against Authoritarian Rule*. Unpublished manuscript. University of New Orleans.
- U.S. Department of State. 1992. "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991." Available at: <https://archive.org/details/countryreportson1991unit>.
- Van Belle, Douglas A. 1997. "Press Freedom and the Democratic Peace." *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (4): 405–14.
- Van Belle, Douglas A. 2002. "Press Freedom and Peace: Theory and findings." In *Power and Conflict in the Age of Transparency*, ed. Bernard I. Finel and Kristin M. Lord. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 115-135.

- Walter, Barbara F. 2004. "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 371–89.
- Warren, T. Camber. 2015. "Explosive Connections? Mass Media, Social Media, and Geography of Collective Violence in African States." *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (3): 297–311.
- Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer. 2009. "Watchdog or Lapdog: Media Freedom, Regime Type and Government Respect for Human Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 53 (3): 595–625.
- Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer, and Patrick James. 2012. "Fourth Estate or Mouthpiece? A Formal Model of Media, Protest, and Government Repression." *Political Communication* 29 (2): 113–36.
- Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer, and Douglas Van Belle. 2014. *Historical Guide to World Media Freedom: A Country-by-Country Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer, and Douglas Van Belle. 2015. "The Correlates of Media Freedom: An Introduction of the Global Media Freedom Dataset." *Political Science Research and Methods*. Published electronically December 2. doi:10.1017/psrm.2015.68.

Author Biographies

Marc L. Hutchison is an associate professor of political science at the University of Rhode Island. His research focuses broadly on the causes and domestic consequences of international conflict and political violence. He has published articles in the *American Political Science Review*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Comparative Political Studies*.

Salvatore Schiano earned his BA in Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He is currently a research associate at Forrester Research, where he focuses on IT security and risk management. He is also a part-time graduate student at the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University.

Jenifer Whitten-Woodring is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Her research focuses on the causes and effects of media freedom and the role of media in repression and dissent. Her book, *Historical Guide to World Media Freedom* (CQ Press/SAGE 2014, with Douglas Van Belle), is a *Choice Outstanding Academic Title*. Her articles have been published in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Communication*, *Political Science Research and Methods*, and *The Journal of Human Rights*. She is the immediate past chair of the International Communication Section of the International Studies Association.

Controversial Cartoons in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Cries of Outrage and Dialogue of the Deaf

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21 (2) 188–208
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626565
ijpp.sagepub.com


Jerome Bourdon¹ and Sandrine Boudana¹

Abstract

This article analyzes the controversies triggered by sixteen cartoons about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, published in nine western countries between 2001 and 2014. For this, we use E.D. Hirsch's distinction between the *meaning* of a text—which refers to the author's intentions—and its *significance*—which emphasizes the contexts of production and reception. Critics focused mostly on *significance*, defenders on *meaning*. Using this distinction, we first examine the rhetoric of cartoons: stereotypes linked to antisemitism (accusations of deicide and blood libel), use of the Star of David as metonym of Israel, disputed historical analogies (between Israeli policy and Nazism or Apartheid). Second, we analyze four levels of contextual interpretations that have framed the debates: the cartoon as genre, the ethotic arguments about the cartoonist and/or newspaper's track record, the cartoons' historical and transnational intertextuality (especially with the Arab press), and the issue of audiences' sensitivities. We analyze the complex exchanges of arguments that led mostly to a dialogue of the deaf, but also, in some cases, to partial agreement on the offensive character of the cartoons. We conclude that this methodology can be applied to other controversies around popular political texts, which offer similar characteristics.

Keywords

political cartoons, Middle East, media audiences, journalism, freedom of the press, globalization

This article examines the controversies triggered by sixteen press cartoons covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, published in nine western countries between 2001 and 2014. Within the framework of a long-standing disagreement around well/deeply

¹Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

Corresponding Author:

Jerome Bourdon, Department of Communication, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 69978, Israel.
Email: jerombourdon@gmail.com

entrenched positions, these controversies predictably look much like a “dialogue of the deaf” (Angenot 2008). This type of dialogue about conflicts has been analyzed mostly as a competition of historical narratives between “righteous victims” (Morris 1999). However, political cartoons generate a different kind of controversy, with much diversity of arguments, which are linked to four characteristics of the cartoon genre: (1) It uses specific tropes that have long generated controversies in a Jewish/Israeli/Palestinian context; (2) it is a visual medium, and therefore more ambiguous than texts; (3) it is allowed exaggeration and distortion, and cannot be judged according to its adequacy with facts; and (4) as for journalistic material in general, who is ultimately responsible for the cartoon remains an open question, as beyond the cartoonist, the editor or the newspaper’s owner, if not the newspaper as a collective entity, can also be taken to task by critics. This might be considered true of journalistic material in general, but cartoonists have a special status among journalists: Their reputation often goes beyond the newspaper, through publications of books, or exhibits. This can be perceived in the way critics reacted to cartoons.

Our cartoons represent an opportunity to study “the politics of humour in an increasingly global arena” (Kuipers 2011: 64), of which the most famous and tragic example is the “Mohammed cartoons controversies” (from their publication in Denmark in 2006 to the 2015 Paris murders). This episode has confirmed the topicality of political cartoons in the contemporary globalized, multicultural political space (Müller et al. 2009).

After some background on the coverage of the conflict, we present our theoretical framework, based on Hirsch’s (1984) distinction between “meaning” and “significance,” which we also use as a methodological tool to analyze the ways actors (including authors) discuss the interpretation of cartoons. We then analyze the rhetoric of the cartoons, first those accused of resorting to antisemitic stereotypes, and then those blamed for using unacceptable historical metaphors and metonyms. Moving from text to context, we discuss four levels of contextualization: the cartoon as genre, its authorship, the (historical and geographic) intertextualities with other corpuses of cartoons, and the question of audiences. Finally, we sum up the pairs of opposing arguments in relation to the significance/meaning distinction, and discuss potential ethical guidelines for cartoonists and the wider implications of our research.

Background: The Coverage of Israel-Palestine and Controversial Political Cartoons

The coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict has long been of much interest to researchers, especially since the second Intifada (2000–2005; Bourdon 2009). The evaluation of bias and partisanship has been the focus of much controversy and research, with many authors assuming a transatlantic divide: While, overall, the American press seems more supportive of Israel (Zelizer et al. 2002: 287–90), European journalists would rather empathize with the Palestinians as they tend to apply a (de)colonization framing to the conflict (Goldfarb 2001; Bourdon 2009).

In the debate on partisanship, antisemitism is a contested point. Forms of hostility to Israel as a Jewish state, or of anti-Zionism, have been construed as a “new anti-Semitism,” a phrase first used in the 1970s and successfully revived in the wake of the second Intifada (Taguieff 2010). A major researcher of the history of antisemitism, Taguieff includes under “new antisemitism” the condemnation of Israel as a “racist state,” especially through analogies with the Third Reich or the Apartheid regime in South Africa (Bourdon 2015)—analogies that we found in some cartoons discussed here.

Cartoons have received the attention of public figures alerting the public about what they perceive as a renewal of the antisemitic discourse. In a 2004 conference, former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell (Agence France Presse [AFP] 2004a) and the then Israeli Minister Nathan Sharansky referred to antisemitism in European cartoons, especially those using Nazi symbols about Israel (AFP 2004b). With the second Intifada (2000–2005), cartoons became an object of interest in the discussion of media bias against Israel (Kotek 2009). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict thus offers an excellent case study for the analysis of controversial cartoons.

While press cartoons are highly popular and accessible, scholars have devoted little research to them—although the Mohammad cartoons have been changing this. Media and political science scholars have called for more research on editorial cartoons, as objects located at the intersection of news and entertainment, which can “supplement other sources of information and persuasion” (Conners 2005: 480). Cartoons can be considered a form of popular political culture, in a context where the boundaries between politics and pop culture have been increasingly blurred (Delli Carpini and Williams 2001). Pop culture now conveys crucial messages about identity and belonging, while politics has turned to pop culture to market itself (Corner and Pels 2003; Street 1997). Edelman’s (1985) analysis of the role of symbols in politics, especially the way visual artistic creations influence political perceptions, similarly broadens the spectrum of political communication research.

Theoretical Framework: Meaning and Significance. The Rhetoric of Cartoons

All along, our analysis resorts to the distinction between meaning and significance proposed by the literary critic E. D. Hirsch (1976, 1984). The meaning of a text refers to its author’s intentions and is “an affair of consciousness” (p. 223). Significance, however, depends on the contexts in which the symbol is used, regardless of the author’s intentions. Meaning “is a principle of stability in an interpretation,” while “significance embraces a principle of change” (Hirsch 1976: 80). We argue that meaning and significance represent two different, irreconcilable modes of interpretation, which lead to a dead end in controversies as parties fight on different battlegrounds.

Although Hirsch (1976) proposed his distinction about literature, he suggested that it could be used for the interpretation of any meaningful object in human societies, explaining that these concepts are “application to the theory of (literary) interpretation

of a quite general epistemological distinction” (p. 2). We argue that the confrontation of meaning and significance is operative both as a theoretical tool for understanding the controversies and as a methodological tool for their analysis.

In most cases, defenders of the cartoons referred to their meaning, based on the author’s intentions as an individual with a certain history and as a cartoonist working within the stable conventions of a genre, sometimes specific national ones. Meaning was also deduced from explicit statements by the authors, *sensu lato* (cartoonists or editors). In a way, meaning based on expressed intentions is clearer, whereas significance results from a process of interpretation. Yet, invoking intentions is slippery, because as long as cartoonists claimed that they did not mean it, they can escape all forms of criticism. Therefore, meaning cannot be based only on the self-reporting statements of cartoonists. Critics also claimed that a kind of knowledge about antisemitic representations could not have escaped the attention of authors, and was, therefore, “a matter of consciousness,” a question of stable meaning, even if they denied this: This is coherent with the statement that meaning includes what the authors could (logically) “have entertained at the time of composition” even if it was not actually “going on in their mind” (Hirsch 1984: 223).

However, apart from this point, critics of the cartoons referred mostly to significance, especially to the sensibility of specific audiences at a given historical time. On their side, the authors strongly denied any antisemitic meaning, while sometimes acknowledging there could have been antisemitic significance for certain audiences (as a kind of accident). In addition, both sides referred to meaning based on the track record of the cartoonist (sometimes in association with his paper), but they did not choose the same elements for this, leading to another dead end in the dialogue.

From a formal point of view, cartoonists used the major devices of the “cartoonist’s armory” (Gombrich 1963): the metaphor, the metonym, and the stereotype. These devices are the objects of multidisciplinary studies: Rhetoricians, linguists, and discourse analysts study metaphors and metonyms, while psychologists, sociologists, and communication scholars extensively examine stereotypes.

Stereotypes have much in common with metaphors/analogies.¹ Despite the tradition of criticizing stereotypes, especially regarding representations of “the other,” stereotypes have been associated with the universal way human beings (unavoidably?) use schematic categories (Pickering 1995) to turn their reality into something meaningful. Although the rhetorical tradition has confined them to a simple ornament, metaphors are now mostly regarded as a universal semantic phenomenon, a fundamental way of making sense of reality (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Ricoeur 1978).

In addition, stereotypes and metaphors have both been analyzed as a kind of “entrapment” (Mumby and Spitzack 1988: 166), a way to naturalize complex social realities, making them quickly and easily understandable. This is obvious in the case of stereotypes: In many cases, we cannot see a given reality but through stereotypes. In a subtler way, however, that is also true for metaphors. El Refaie (2003) contends that the repetition of particular metaphors “encourages the unconscious or semi-conscious acceptance of a particular metaphorical concept as the normal, natural way of seeing a particular area of experience” (p. 83).

This “naturalized entrapment” is all the more problematic for a political topic as charged as the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Debating mostly significance, opponents of the cartoons expressed concern about the entrapment of the public. Relating mostly to meaning, defenders insisted that they used, at specific historical junctures, rhetorical tools legitimate for cartoons, which may hurt, but not on purpose.

Method and Corpus

Our selection of cartoons is based on the fact that they triggered a controversy, expressed in readers’ letters and ombudsman’s, editors’, or cartoonists’ replies, and in op-eds, published in the incriminated newspapers or in others, including foreign ones, and on Web sites covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To find these controversial cartoons, we searched for the keywords “cartoons,” “Israel,” and “Palestin*,” and their French, Spanish, German, and Italian equivalents, on Lexis-Nexis. We selected items that criticized or defended cartoons and drew a list of the cartoons that were mentioned as raising a polemic in at least three different texts, to make sure that there was an exchange of arguments and not only an individual reaction. Once we had identified the cartoons, we did a search of relevant Web sites, especially media monitoring blogs, which confirmed the list and added additional sources (and arguments). We make no claim to exhaustiveness, as Lexis-Nexis does not include all newspapers, but we did try to analyze as wide a spectrum as possible of the arguments about such cartoons.

The corpus (Appendix A) consists of sixteen cartoons (see three examples in Appendix B) coming from nine western countries: France (four, including a Kenyan cartoon that triggered a controversy when reproduced in France), the United Kingdom (three), New Zealand (two), Italy (two), the United States (two), Australia (one), Germany (one), and Norway (one). What follows is a detailed discussion of the interplay of meaning and significance. We start with the rhetoric of the cartoon (stereotype, metonym, and metaphor), and then move to our four levels of contextualization.

Antisemitic Stereotypes? Deicides, Puppet Masters, and Blood Libel

Moving from the oldest to the most modern antisemitic stereotypes, the first category of controversial cartoons (three of them) is the one sending us back to the starting point of Christian antisemitism: the qualification of Jews as deicides. For most critics, the recycling of such antisemitic stereotypes is unacceptable because of the way they are read (significance). For their supporters, however, with two exceptions, the antisemitic interpretations do not correspond to the authors’ intentions (meaning). Israeli Ambassador in Paris Elie Barnavi’s letter to the newspaper *Libération* about cartoon 2, which depicted Ariel Sharon with hammer and nails, in front of a cross, about to crucify Arafat, is a case in point. After insisting that criticism of Israel is fair game, Barnavi (2001a) delineates the unacceptable: “But the cross, gentlemen, the cross!” With the collective (and quaint) address “gentlemen,” Barnavi suggests that the editors (and the cartoonist?) should have immediately, spontaneously, objected to the antisemitic stereotype

characterizing the Jews as a deicide people. This could not have escaped the attention of the cartoonist (and of the editor), and should therefore be interpreted as part of the intended meaning. While the mention of the cross (either in this cartoon or in cartoon 11) did not lead to an apology, cartoon 8, which depicts a baby Jesus threatened by Israeli soldiers, exclaiming “Do they want to finish me off again,” did elicit a full apology on the editor’s part (Sorge 2002). In that case, the link with the accusation of deicide is explicit and cannot be treated as an allusion. Even if he did not accept this was part of the intended meaning, the editor could not refute that the drawing had an anti-semitic significance.

The second category of antisemitic stereotypes that we have identified refers to the ancient allegation of Blood Libel: the canard that Jews kill non-Jewish children and use their blood to make bread. No cartoon directly mentioned such a practice, but the characterization of Israelis as bloodthirsty or killers of Palestinian children invariably triggered a debate about the blood libel theme. In cartoon 7, a huge, naked, and fat Sharon is devouring babies, while in the background, helicopters are attacking Gaza. In cartoon 14, Netanyahu builds a wall with bleeding Palestinian bodies between the bricks. Despite vocal claims that these cartoons were antisemitic, neither the editors nor the cartoonists acknowledged it. Fully supported by his editor (Frankel 2004), Dave Brown (cartoon 7) argued that the eating of children was an artistic reference (to Goya’s painting of Saturn Devouring His Son) and a political reference to the electoral practice of politicians kissing children during electoral campaigns (Sharon was a candidate in the forthcoming general elections). The cartoonist added that he carefully avoided any type of antisemitic representation (his Sharon-Saturn had “a small nose”) or allusion to Judaism (no Star of David). This argument recurred in the discussion of nearly all the cartoons (see especially our discussion of the interpretation of the “puppet master” metaphor). The British journalistic milieu stood with the cartoonist, who received the prize of best political cartoon for 2003. Finally, the Israeli Embassy lodged a complaint with the British Press Commission, which replied that “it accepted the newspaper’s explanation for the cartoon. . . . The Commission also had regard to the fact that there was no reference at all to Mr. Sharon’s religion in the cartoon” (Press Complaints Commission (UK) 2014).

Cartoon 14 poses a similar problem. Paradoxically, whereas the grounds for the accusation of antisemitism were more fragile than for other cartoons, it provoked one of the biggest controversies (nine articles involved, including in France, the United States, and Israel). The *Guardian* (2013) published a debate between Marc Gardner, communications director of a British charity fighting antisemitism, and Anshel Pfeffer, a British Israeli working for *Haaretz*, who, although critical of the cartoon, refused to characterize it as antisemitic. For Gardner, “the blood is so central to the image that it will, inevitably, bring many Jews (and non-Jews also) to think of the antisemitic Blood Libel.” Gardner’s main point is some readers’ perception of blood—what gives it its significance. Yet, for Pfeffer, blood in itself is not enough, as cartoonists abundantly use it in many other contexts. As a critic of the cartoon argues in the *Jewish Chronicle*, people may dislike the cartoon but should admit that “plenty of historic bloodshed has had nothing to do with Jews” (Lippman 2013). The deputy editor did not issue an

apology but a statement reminding readers of his newspaper's support for "Israel's security." This reply is a typical reference to intentions (meaning) at the expense of external interpretation (significance); it assumes that a newspaper supporting Israel (whatever this means) is incapable of publishing an antisemitic cartoon (Associated Press 2013).

The third, more modern category of cartoons possibly using antisemitic representations refers to Jews controlling the world. Our sample contains one case: the 2012 *Guardian* cartoon of Netanyahu as puppet master, and William Hague and Tony Blair as his puppets. A U.S. media monitoring Web site, the *Huffington Post UK*, the *Independent*, and a letter from the newspaper's editor have all explicitly blamed this cartoon for using the "puppet master" antisemitic stereotype. However, as the cartoonist's defenders objected, "puppet master" is also used as a political metaphor of manipulation and control in other contexts not involving Jews; therefore, no antisemitic meaning was intended. In addition, the defenders did not even acknowledge that there could be antisemitic significance (as for the deicide cartoon).

Problematic Metaphors and Metonyms

Besides antisemitic stereotypes, criticism of the cartoons focused on historical analogies judged unacceptable. The use of historical analogies to make sense of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has itself a history (Bourdon 2015). In particular, comparisons between Israeli policies vis-à-vis Palestinians and Nazi policies vis-à-vis Jews began to be made after 1967, and got their second wind with the second Intifada.

In seven cartoons, there was a juxtaposition between two characters/situations (Warsaw rubbles/Jenin 2002 rubbles, in cartoons 3 and 9), and/or a fusion of two characters/situations into one (Israeli soldier/leader as Nazi and/or Palestinian as Jew in World War II in cartoons 9, 10, and 12, or internment/death camps with Palestinians inside, as in cartoons 5 and 9).

The "Nazi cartoons" epitomize the sense of a dialogue of the deaf. In that case, it is significance that is at stake, but interpreted quite differently by both sides. Critics, judged them wholly unacceptable as they deny the uniqueness (in terms of number of victims and methods of killing) of the Holocaust, and propose a dramatic historical metamorphosis of the ultimate victims into the ultimate perpetrators. Defenders argued that such analogies have no special significance, especially as they have become quite trivial in contemporary culture.

Pulitzer-Prize winner Pat Oliphant's cartoon in the *New York Times* (NYT) provoked the most heated debate. Called "hideously antisemitic" by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the cartoon does not explicitly draw a comparison with Nazi policy, but uses "the Star of David in combination with Nazi-like imagery" (ADL Director, quoted by CNN.com 2009). It shows a child-carrying woman labeled "Gaza" fleeing a headless, jackbooted Nazi-like giant armed with a sword and pushing a Star of David that has jaws and teeth. Although many critics blamed the cartoon for mimicking Nazi propaganda, not all focused on the Star of David alone as the shocking part of the cartoon: It was rather the co-presence of the Nazi-like apparition and the Star of David that made the cartoon controversial.

One cartoon (Jenin/Warsaw, 3) provoked an expression of partial regret by the newspaper's ombudsman. It drew a visual parallel between the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto and the partial destruction of Jenin, the refugee camp invaded by the Israeli army at that time, with (uncorroborated) rumors of massacre. The caption "History has a tendency to repeat itself" strengthens the comparison. Published in Kenya's *The Nation*, it was reproduced by *Le Monde* in a press review. Without formally apologizing, the ombudsman expressed regret about the comparison, admitting that it had "an absurd character" and that the cartoon "should not have found its way" into the paper (Solé 2002). Interestingly, the ombudsman did not argue that absurd comparisons could be admitted for the cartoon genre. He acknowledged that in a given context (the events of spring 2002, which triggered many accusations that Israel had carried out a "massacre" in the refugee camp of Jenin), the editor should have thought of the cartoon's significance and refrained from publishing it. However, he denied any problematic meaning on the part of the newspaper.

In all the other cases, cartoonists and editors did not concede anything. The Norwegian editor was most vocal in his defense of the Olmert cartoon: "We haven't broken the law or something like that. We have broken some people's taste" (BBC Monitoring - Europe 2006; Weintraub 2006). In Italy, although admitting that a cartoon "comparing the Palestinians' living conditions to Nazi death camps" was "very polemic and pro-Palestinian" (after it provoked a heated debate in the Italian left), the editor maintained that publication of such cartoons was legitimate (AFP 2006). Defenders of the cartoon argued that it was meant to raise a debate rather than propose an actual historical comparison. More broadly, some objected to the prohibition of "Nazi comparisons" in the coverage of Israel, arguing they are much used in contemporary culture (with the now classic fallacy of "argumentum ad Hitlerum," to use Leo Strauss' phrase; Strauss 1953), and that one cannot claim they are used exclusively for depicting Jews or Israel (see Bourdon 2015 for this specific controversy).

In two cartoons, comparisons between Israelis and Palestinians led to controversies. The most debated cartoon (1) juxtaposed a Palestinian suicide bomber and an Israeli settler (with a belt made of small houses labeled "colonies"—settlements). This time, unlike for the Shoah cartoon, critics and defenders actually discussed the relevance of the comparison (Solé 2002). In a letter to the editor, one reader, while condemning the settlements, objected to their being equated with suicide bombings or terrorism (he insisted on the word). In his letter to the newspaper, the Israeli Ambassador concurred (Barnavi 2001b).

The use of the Star of David made the ambiguity inherent in visual signs quite blatant, as it is both a symbol of Judaism and a national symbol of Israel, present on the Israeli flag (and flags often feature in cartoons as symbols of nations). Some cartoonists were aware of the sensitive character of this symbol. Cartoonist Dave Brown (cartoon 7) stated, "I was very aware not to use the Israeli flag because of the Star of David, or other Jewish symbols. I made it specifically Sharon and Likud" (Gross 2003). This precaution was all the more important as Brown had no qualms describing an Israeli (Jewish) leader as a monster devouring children.

Other cartoonists, however, affirmed being comfortable with the use of the Star of David. In New Zealand, Malcom Evans drew the ire of the Jewish community with two cartoons (4 and 6), for which he said he had been sacked—which his editor denied. The most contentious cartoon showed the word *apartheid* as graffiti on a wall of a ruined house (clearly a Palestinian one in the context), with the Star of David replacing the second letter A (Leibovich-Dar 2003). Tony Auth of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* drew a prison camp (cartoon 5), surrounded by barbed wire shaped as a Jewish star. Jewish groups publicly criticized the cartoon as deeply offensive to the State of Israel, although they did not use the word *antisemitism*. Both cartoonists stood their ground (Evans 2003). Tony Auth proposed his own interpretation: “The cartoon clearly says that the State of Israel is building a fence in such a way that it separates Palestinians and is an obstacle to peace. That’s all it says” (Schleider 2002). But does a cartoon say anything? Auth seems to refer to meaning here: He did not (intend to) say anything deeply offensive about Israel but only to offer a critique of Israeli policy. The drawing of a Star of David was less the object of controversy in Pat Oliphant’s NYT cartoon (12): Although extremely critical of this cartoon for using “Nazi-like” imagery, an Israeli professor and columnist (Rubin 2009) did not specifically mention the Star of David in his critique, implying that he accepted it as an ordinary metonym for Israel.

This example suggests that accusations of antisemitism are more frequently leveled at cartoonists who use “too many” symbols that could be considered critical of Israel or antisemitic. This is a recurring feature of the cartoon debate. For their defense, cartoonists often argue that if the single symbol that they use identifies the protagonist(s) as Jewish, it should not in itself be interpreted as having an antisemitic meaning (Press Complaints Commission (UK) 2014). Critics suggest that the “threshold” of antisemitism is reached more quickly, either through a certain “amount” (but what “amount” exactly?) of symbols, or through the single use of a specific antisemitic symbol (the prominent nose, especially, which seems to be an even greater taboo than the Star of David, probably because it is a racial stereotype).

Thus, the Australian cartoon (16) both accumulated problematic symbols and resorted to a “racial” stereotype. It used the Star of David as a metonym, the representation of a religious Jew with a skullcap, and the antisemitic “big nose” stereotype. This may explain why, apart from the “deicide” *La Stampa* cartoon (8), this was the only other instance that yielded a formal apology by the editor.

However, this should not be interpreted as full agreement between critics and defenders. Critics assumed that authors could not have missed the fact that they resorted to a well-known antisemitic repertoire, while defenders insisted this was a matter of (accidental) significance.

Interpreting the Cartoons at Different Levels of Contextualization

The debates on cartoons blamed for their antisemitic stereotypes or unacceptable analogies reveal the difficulty of resolving the problem of interpretation, especially when

arguments confront the meaning of the cartoon with its significance. In this confrontation, four major levels of contextualization of the cartoons were invoked and used to promote arguments by either party. First, the meaning of the cartoon as a genre was debated in two ways: as entitled to exaggeration and distortion, and as a cartoon/illustration “quoted,” or rather reproduced from another source. Second, we deal with the ethotic arguments about the track records and social standing of the various “authors” of the cartoon: cartoonists, editors, and the newspaper in which they appeared. The final two interrelated levels are tied to the significance of the cartoons for audiences, in a more multicultural and cosmopolitan (Kuipers 2011) context: the (mostly) transnational intertextualities of the cartoon and the question of the sensitivities of audiences.

Many defenders justified the cartoons by invoking specificities of the genre. As they argue, cartoons may use extreme figures or comparisons because the genre is, by definition, based on exaggeration to make a claim, rather than on any form of precise adequation with the real world. In essence, the cartoon is meant to be provocative and “savagely funny” (Oliphant, in Prince-Gibson 2005). Defenders claimed that the genre, as a stable set of conventions (a typical element of Hirsch’s meaning) allows for the use of extreme representations.

This line of defense was consistently found in the interventions of the press commissions in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The New Zealand Press Council used the genre argument in the 2003 Malcom Evans case, and even quoted itself: “The Council has said in a recent case, involving a Malcolm Evans cartoon which compared Israel’s policies towards Palestinians to apartheid, that cartoonists have the right to express their views, even if they provoke or upset” (New Zealand Press Council, cited by *The Press* (New Zealand) 2013).

While cartoons as a genre may enjoy special impunity regarding taboos that may restrict other genres, their definition as a visual genre is also an inherent weakness. The reader “reads” the cartoon quickly, before any accompanying text (which may include the fact that it is only a “quoted cartoon”), if he or she reads the accompanying text at all. Our point is that a cartoon (like any picture) is “reproduced” and that it cannot (or hardly) be perceived as “quoted.” Therefore, the newspaper is considered as endorsing the cartoons it chooses to publish, whether or not they are “quoted” from other sources. In other words, the meaning of the original cartoon is “transported” through its reproduction and cannot be refuted because it is “only a quote.”

Two cartoons raised the problem of this confusion about authorship. In both, the defense of the editor/ombudsman was along the lines that “the cartoon was not ours,” although they admitted that reproducing it was a mistake. The first case is the 2002 Kenyan cartoon (3: Jenin as Warsaw), quoted/reproduced by *Le Monde*. Although the paper’s ombudsman did express regret for its publication, he explained the decision to publish by the fact that the cartoon represented “the tonality of a certain press.”

The second case is more subtle. Cartoon 15 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2013) shows an ugly, fat, horned monster in bed, being served breakfast by an obedient character embodying Germany. The cartoon was meant to illustrate two book reviews: one by Peter Beinart, devoted to American Jews’ relationship with Israel, and the other about Israeli-German relations. The caption reads, “Germany is serving. For decades, Israel

has been given weaponry, sometimes for free. Israel's enemies see it as a voracious Moloch. Beinart deplors this situation" (our translation). The ensuing affair was widely covered in the German press (e.g., Bild 2013; Der Spiegel 2013). The cartoon may be treated as a "double quotation." The original drawing was not intended to represent Israel and Germany; it had been taken from a children's book. It is the caption that lent it a very different meaning. Both the author of the drawing and the author of the article expressed regret about the publication. In addition, as the caption was supposed to stress, and as the editor explained, the drawing was meant to show Israel as enemies of Israel see it, not as the newspaper saw it. Then again, the salience of the antisemitic stereotype made it impossible to consider its publication merely as a "quotation." In addition, the caption is ambiguous, as it starts with the words "Germany is serving" (and not "Germany is seen as serving"). It is difficult enough to use a drawing to illustrate a point of view that is not one's own—but it is even more difficult to quote a point of view that, as the caption suggests, is partially your own and partially not. For all the subtle explanations and expressions of regret, many English-language articles (e.g., Honest Reporting 2013) treated the drawing as the German newspaper's own representation of Israel, its intended meaning, and radically condemned its publication as antisemitic.

The second contextual level is the ethotic argument about the various authors of the cartoon: cartoonists, editors, newspapers. Again, this element was used very differently by critics and defenders.

A typical critical comment, related to contextual significance, could be formulated as follows: "Not only was an offensive image used, but it was given legitimacy because such a talented cartoonist drew it, or such a well-established newspaper published it." For example, the fact that Tony Auth and Malcom Evans were prize-winning cartoonists was held against them. Even when the social status of the cartoonist or newspaper is not explicitly pointed out, it is always implied if we consider that cartoons circulating in the Arab press or on the Internet (especially Web sites on the radical Left), which can be openly antisemitic, did not catch as much attention as did the western cartoons that we studied.

Thus, the "outrageous" character of the cartoon is always associated with the social standing of the cartoonist and/or newspaper. This question also appears when a major actor apologizes, as Rupert Murdoch did about the "Netanyahu-Wall with Palestinian bodies" (cartoon 14). Murdoch's use of the word "antisemitism" (Associated Press 2013) was taken up by critics, who used what Walton (1992) calls "the pedestal effect." For example, the blogger Elder of Zion (2013) argued that "even [emphasis added] owner Rupert Murdoch apologized" for the cartoon. What is interesting here is that the editor did not apologize, only expressed regret, while the cartoonist remained mute. The composite authorship leaves more room for the interpretation of authorial intentions than in the case of Hirsch's literary texts.

But cartoonists (and their newspapers) were also monitored about their relation with Israel. For example, Tony Auth supposedly "has a history of drawing antisemitic cartoons, and the Inquirer has a history of being anti-Israel and distorting the news" (Schleider 2002). The same was said of Steve Bell and the *Guardian* (e.g., Comment

Is Free Watch 2013). Some cartoonists were attacked for having offended other minority groups (e.g., Pat Oliphant in the *New Zealand Herald*, 2009)

Yet defenders of the cartoons had their own views of the status of cartoonists and newspapers, referring to their “impeccable” credentials regarding their treatment of Israel and/or the Jews. The most blatant example is provided by the *Times* editor’s intervention about the Netanyahu-Bloody Wall cartoon (14): “The paper has long written strongly in defense of Israel and its security concerns, as have I as a columnist” (Associated Press 2013). Tony Auth defended his record as free of antisemitism, and so did his editor (Schleider 2002). Evans (2003) also referred to his past work, although he admitted that he was critical of Israel (“anti-Zionist”).

Overall, however, the status of cartoonists and newspapers was not central in the discussion.

In terms of significance, the intertextuality of the various cartoons was used, in the vast majority of cases, to criticize the cartoons. From a historical point of view, critics of the German “Israel as monster” caricature (19) contended that this was part of the repertoire of the Nazi periodical *Der Stürmer* (e.g., Broder 2013).

The most frequent reference to intertextuality was about contemporary Arab cartoons. For example, in his discussion of the Pat Oliphant’s NYT “Nazi” cartoon (15), Rubin (2009) referred to the accumulation of aggressive signs: “The ‘over-kill’ puts it into the category of Arab propaganda cartoons.” The “Netanyahu building wall with Palestinian bodies” cartoon (17) was said to refer to “a kind of imagery more usually found in parts of the virulently antisemitic Arab press” (Associated Press 2013). This argument was also used against other British cartoons (7 and 16).

Yet some defenders of the cartoons specifically objected to the argument of international intertextuality, arguing instead that the national context had to be taken into account. In the *Washington Post*, Frankel (2004) singled out the specificity of British cartoons: “British political cartoons can be shocking to those used to tamer American drawings of donkeys and elephants slugging it out on Capitol Hill. Distorted features, blood, and excrement are commonplace,” including in the treatment of political leaders. This is an important point: If aggressiveness is a characteristic trait of the British cartoon culture, then there is no reason for pro-Israelis to complain. Then again, this is also about the meaning-significance divide. British cartoonists certainly mean to be aggressive in general, not especially regarding Israel, and this perceived aggressiveness became a question of significance, if not of misinterpreted significance, if comparisons are made with other, less well-known cartoons, from other regions, or other historical periods.

Finally, and quite centrally in the controversy, almost all critics referred to the sensitivities of, especially, Jewish audiences. This argument is simpler: Cartoonists should have taken into account the significance for audiences—mainly, hurting Jews or, marginally, inciting anti-Semites. Concerning the Italian “Palestinian death camp” cartoon, the Israeli ambassador sent a letter to *Liberazione*, which the paper published, to denounce “the contempt for the Holocaust and the terrible insult to the memory of the victims” (AFP 2006). More rarely, some accused the cartoon of inciting antisemitism, even helping to “set the stage for the Nazi genocide” (U.S. group quoted by CNN.com 2009).

At least one cartoonist suggested that there had been a manipulation of audience's feelings. Dan Brown (regarding his Sharon-as-monster cartoon) "contended that much of the public outrage was drummed up by the Israeli Embassy and its supporters," and talked of "manufactured outrage" (Frankel 2004). He thus undermined the very basis of the discussion about the audience's feelings, by dismissing out of hand most reactions (letters, emails), as the result of an organized campaign.

Timing was also discussed as influencing the interpretation of the cartoon, thus affecting its significance. For instance, all of the cartoon's critics, including the British Embassy in Israel, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the Speaker of the Israeli Parliament, mentioned the fact that cartoon 14 was published on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. One of the critics of Plantu's cartoon (parallel between Israeli settlers and Palestinian suicide bombers) mentioned that it was published right after a major suicide bombing (Solé 2001).

Here, we get closer to another partial agreement between critics and defenders. Even if they did not apologize for the cartoons, some editors and cartoonists expressed regret for having hurt (or, more cautiously, if they had hurt) the audience's feelings. More explicitly, *The Sunday Times*' editor said that insulting the memory of Holocaust victims or invoking blood libel was "the last thing [he] or anyone connected with the Sunday Times would countenance," adding that he "will of course bear them [the sensitivities of the public] very carefully in mind in the future" (Associated Press 2013).

Discussion

We may sum up the discussion as pairs of opposed arguments of critics and defenders invoking either the meaning or the significance of the cartoon.

We can see why it is difficult for our controversies to reach a real closure. The cartoonists (and editors) denied any antisemitic meaning, and admitted antisemitic significance only in cases they resorted to blatant element(s) of the antisemitic repertoires. They insisted they worked within a genre allowing certain forms of exaggeration, and this point was supported by professional/judicial bodies (press commissions). The arguments inevitably moved on to contextual interpretations, but these are always dependent on a selected framework (Whose interpretation? Do others share the same cultural and political knowledge enabling them to provide the same interpretation? Should significance be interpreted based on Jewish sensitivities, on timing of publication, on intertextuality?)

In particular, it is worth insisting that while agreeing about the need to condemn the cartoons, not all critics agreed among themselves on their characterization as antisemitic, although the type and quantity of stereotypes could be used as an indicator (see above). At some point, critics could insisted that the antisemitic meaning could not have escaped the attention of the cartoonist, or, at least, of editors. Regarding Holocaust comparisons, the term antisemitism was not always used (it was used mostly in reference to the Oliphant cartoon). Rubin (2009) suggested that labeling the cartoons antisemitic "[would] foreclose the thought as to why it is a loathsome cartoon." It seems that, for all its debated significance, a Holocaust comparison is not enough to establish any antisemitic meaning.

Table 1. Opposed Arguments of Critics and Defenders of Cartoons.

Accusation (mostly about significance)	Defense (mostly about meaning)
Unacceptable resemblance with antisemitic repertoire (deicide)	Defense: only specific Israeli leader targeted But: two formal apologies (antisemitic significance accepted)
Presence of antisemitic lexicon, for example, blood for blood libel	Coincidence, or genre conventions One apology, but by owner, not editor/cartoonist
Presence of Jewish symbols (Star of David)	Meant only as a national symbol of Israel
Unacceptable "Israelis as Nazis" comparison (significance of specific analogy)	Extreme rhetoric of cartoon (allowed meaning for cartoonists)
Meaning inferred from suspicious track record of cartoonist/newspaper	On the contrary, meaning inferred from impeccable record
Suspicious intertextuality with Nazi or Arab cartoons	No answer given, or national context provides a different meaning (e.g., British cartoons are more extreme than U.S. ones)
Hurting the feelings of Jewish audiences	Denial (manipulation by Jewish groups). Risk inherent in cartoons. Occasional expression of regret "if" someone had been hurt

Even if he cannot provide a litmus test, we see that Hirsch can be of help here. The ethical implications of his literary theory to present media are clear. He did claim that authors can be held "accountable" (Hirsch 1984: 23) for the intended meaning of their texts, which includes not only what they stated (especially, in our case, later claimed) to have had in mind, but what they could logically have entertained at the time of composition, considering a certain state of social knowledge (here, an available and well-known antisemitic repertoire). However, it might help not to blame authors for a meaning that cannot be proved but to draw their attention on the fact they may move from acceptable meaning to problematic significance without being conscious of this. Here, Hirsch's theory can be combined with the scholarship on disparagement humor (Ferguson and Ford 2008) and, particularly, with Kuipers' (2011) distinction between two kinds of humor: laughing downward at excluded minorities (such as immigrants), and laughing upward at the powerful. In the case of Israel, this criterion must be applied carefully. For critics, who locate the cartoon within an antisemitic context, the cartoons laugh downward at Jews, a historically victimized group. However, cartoonists argue that when they criticize Israel, they do not mean to target the Jews, but a powerful state seen as oppressing Palestinians, who are identified as the weaker side. This criterion could lead to a word of caution to the cartoonists who may mean laughing upward, while, at least at the level of significance, they laugh downward. Similarly, for the Muhammad cartoons, though cartoonists may mean to laugh "upwards," at powerful extremists, critics (as recently in France Todd 2015) may suggest they laughed "downward" at whole communities of believers. It is certainly hard to formulate clear-cut rules about the ethics of cartoons in a globalized, multicultural, competitive media world, but it is worth trying.

Conclusion

Our theoretical and methodological framework can be used beyond our case study. First, we can safely predict that provocative cartoons (and controversies around them) will reoccur beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially about minorities both “weak and threatening”: Muslims in Europe (Todd 2015), Arab-Americans (Shaheen et al. 2012), Chinese-Americans (Tchen and Yeats 2014), or migrants (El Refaie 2013). The genre affirms its enduring high relevance, as an entertaining, sharp, and easily understood form of expression, which has easily moved from the print press to the web. Cartoons now circulate globally, which raises new problems of intertextuality.

Second, besides cartoons, political communication has incorporated widely circulated elements of popular culture, which Street (1997) aptly calls “political pleasures” (p. 191), such as pop music (Street 1997), documentary films (Corner 1996), or popular TV shows (Delli Carpini and Williams 2001). Such “political pleasures” have not escaped controversies, for example, films (Christensen 1991) or stand-up comedy (Boudana 2015). Hirsch’s distinction between meaning and significance could be fruitfully exported from literary criticism to media studies, and used to illuminate the argumentative structure of controversies much beyond cartoons.

Appendix A

Cartoons Analyzed.

No.	Date	Paper, Country	Cartoonist	Description	Accusation	Consequences
1	June 2, 2001	<i>Le Monde</i> , France	Plantu	Kamikazes: Jewish settler with belt of “colonies” next to suicide bomber	Unacceptable comparison	Ombudsman defends cartoonist
2	December 26, 2001	<i>Libération</i> , France	Willem	Sharon about to crucify Arafat	Jews as a decide people	Letter of Israeli ambassador. The editors defend the cartoonist
3	May 1, 2002	<i>Le Monde</i> , France	Gado	Warsaw/Jenin	Unacceptable comparison	Semi-apology by ombudsman
4	June 13, 2003	<i>New Zealand Herald</i>	Malcom Evans	Word <i>apartheid</i> on refugee camp with Star of David instead of the letter A	Unacceptable comparison; use of Jewish Symbol	Cartoonist leaves newspaper (see cartoon 6); complaint rejected by Press Commission
5	July 31, 2003	<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> , USA	Tony Auth	Israeli internment camp shaped as Star of David	Jewish symbol linked to (Nazi) oppression	Editor/cartoonist justify cartoon
6	August 1, 2003	<i>New Zealand Herald</i>	Malcom Evans	Hand from sky, with tattooed number, pointing at an Israeli soldier	Unacceptable reference to Holocaust	Cartoonist leaves newspaper (see 4); complaint against cartoon rejected by Press Commission
7	December 5, 2003	<i>Independent</i> , UK	Dave Brown	Naked, monstrous Sharon, devouring Palestinian babies	Antisemitism (blood libel)	Editor/cartoonist justify cartoon; Best Cartoon of the Year Prize; Press Commission rejects Israeli Embassy’s complaint

(continued)

Appendix A (continued)

No.	Date	Paper, Country	Cartoonist	Description	Accusation	Consequences
8	April 20, 2004	<i>La Stampa</i> , Italy	Giorgio Forattini	Tanks with Jewish star threatening baby Jesus	Antisemitism Deicide	Editor's apology
9	May 12, 2006	<i>Liberazione</i> , Italy		Palestinian death camp	Unacceptable comparison	Letter of Israeli Ambassador; cartoon vindicated although termed <i>problematic</i>
10	July 10, 2006	<i>Dagbladet</i> , Norway		Olmert as Nazi Guard from Schindler's List	Unacceptable comparison	Cartoon vindicated by the editor
11	July 12, 2006	<i>Le Monde</i> , France	Serguei	Lebanese family crucified under the boot of an Israeli soldier	Antisemitism; Jews as deicides	No reaction from the newspaper
12	March 27, 2009	<i>New York Times</i>	Pat Oliphant	Nazi-like Israeli soldier. Jewish star as "fanged predator"	Unacceptable analogy	Mixed. No apology, but cartoon withdrawn from the Web site
13	November 15, 2012	<i>Guardian</i> , UK	Steven Bell	Netanyahu as Puppet Master, British PM and Foreign Affairs ministers as puppets	Antisemitism (Jews controlling the world)	Cartoon vindicated by cartoonist/editor
14	January 27, 2013	<i>Sunday Times</i> , UK	Scarfe	Netanyahu building wall with Palestinian blood/bodies	Blood libel on Holocaust Remembrance Day	Editor and cartoonist vindicated the cartoon; apology by paper owner Rupert Murdoch
15	July 2, 2013	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , Germany	Ernst Kahl	Israel as monster served by Germany	Antisemitism; Israel as monster/controlling world	The editor acknowledged a "mistake" but no apology
16	July 26, 2014	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , Australia	Glen Lelièvre	Figure with a big nose, skullcap, Star of David, bombing Gaza with remote control	Accumulation of antisemitic tropes/ Jewish symbols	"Serious error of judgment" (editor)

Appendix B

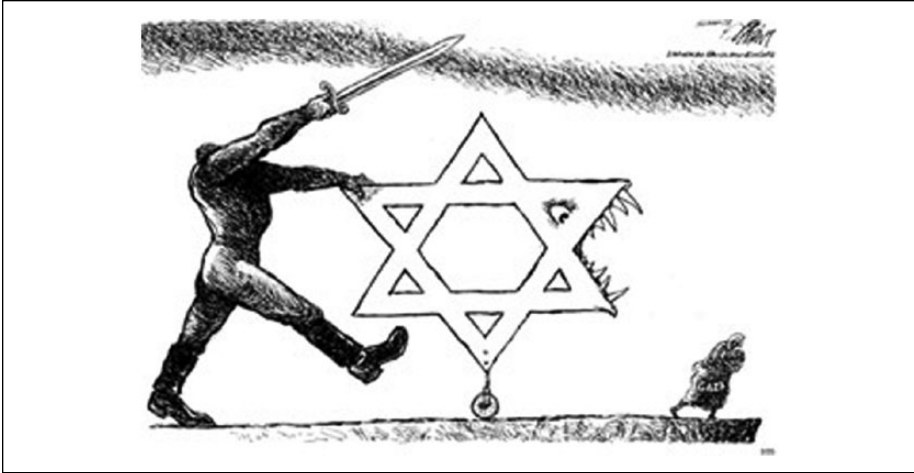
Examples of cartoons



Cartoon 1 (*Le Monde*, June 2, 2001).



Cartoon 7 (*The Independent*, December 5, 2003).



Cartoon 12 (*New York Times*, March 27, 2009).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. We use the term *metaphor* here because many of our participants in the controversies do so. Analogy, however, is more appropriate for cartoons: Unlike in a metaphor, the two terms of the comparison are present, sometimes in the form of a fusion (i.e., a Nazi-Israeli soldier).

References

- Agence France Presse*. 2004a. Antisémitisme: l'OSCE appelle le monde politique et civil à se mobiliser [Antisemitism: The OSCE Calls for a Mobilization of the Political World]. April 28.
- Agence France Presse*. 2004b. Charansky. L'histoire peut se répéter en tant que tragédie [History Can Repeat Itself as Tragedy]. February 19.
- Agence France Presse*. 2006. Italie: Une caricature divise la gauche et indigné l'ambassadeur d'Israël [Cartoon Divides the Left and Makes the Israeli Ambassador Indignant]. May 16.
- Angenot, Marc. 2008. *Dialogues de sourds. Traité de rhétorique antilogique* [Dialogues of the Deaf: Treatise of Anti-Logical Rhetoric]. Paris: Fayard.
- Associated Press*. 2013. "Murdoch Apologizes for Sunday Times Cartoon." January 28.
- Barnavi, Elie. 2001a. "Letter to Le Monde." *Le Monde*, June 1. http://harissa.com/D_forum/Israel/kamikazes.htm (accessed January 14, 2016).

- Barnavi, Elie. 2001b. "Letter to Libération." *Libération*, December 1.
- BBC Monitoring Europe. 2006. "Israel Complains Over Norwegian daily Olmert's Cartoon." July 25.
- Bild. 2013. "Böse Entgleisung! So beleidigt die 'Süddeutsche' Israel" [A Bad Faux Pas: How the Süddeutsche Zeitung Offends Israel]. July 4. <http://www.bild.de/politik/inland/antisemitismus/boese-entgleisung-sueddeutsche-zeitung-beleidigt-israel-31126690.bild.html> (accessed January 14, 2016).
- Boudana, Sandrine. 2015. "Not Just a Joke: The 'Quenelle' as a Running Gag Masking Anti-Semitic Communication". *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 1–18. DOI: 10.1177/1367549415603374.
- Bourdon, Jerome. 2009. *Le récit impossible. Le conflit israélo-palestinien et les médias* [The impossible narrative. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the media]. Paris: De Boeck.
- Bourdon, Jerome. 2015. "Outrageous, Inescapable? Debating Historical Analogies in the Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Discourse and Communication* 9(4): 407–22. DOI: 10.1177/1750481315576835.
- Broder, Henryk. 2013. "Eine fragwürdige Karikatur im Münchner Moloch" [A Questionable Cartoon in the Moloch of Munich]. *Die Welt*, July 2. <http://www.welt.de/kultur/article117655895/Eine-fragwuerdige-Karikatur-im-Muenchner-Moloch.html> (accessed January 14, 2016).
- Christensen, Johann. 1991. "Spike Lee, Corporate Populist." *Critical Inquiry* 17 (13): 582–95.
- CNN.com. 2009. "Top Jewish Groups Denounce Cartoon about Gaza." March 26. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/03/26/controversial.cartoon/index.html> (accessed January 16, 2016).
- Comment Is Free Watch. 2013. "Steve Bell Has Fun with Antisemitic Tropes." February 5. <http://ukmediawatch.org/2013/02/05/steve-bell-has-fun-with-antisemitic-tropes/> (accessed January 14, 2016).
- Conners, Joan J. 2005. "Visual Representations of the Political Cartoons and Popular Culture References." *American Behavioral Scientist* 49 (3): 479–87.
- Corner, John. 1996. *The Art of Record. A critical introduction to documentary*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cornel, John, and Dick Pels, eds. 2003. *Media and the Restyling of Politics*. London: Sage.
- Delli Carpini, Michael, and Bruce Williams. 2001. "Let Us Infotain You: Politics in the New Media Age." In *Mediated Politics*, ed. W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman, 160–81. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Der Spiegel. 2013. "Antisemitismus—Vorwurf wegen Karikatur. SZ bezeichnet Veröffentlichung als 'Fehler'" [Antisemitism—Because of a Cartoon. The Süddeutsche Zeitung Calls the Publication a 'Mistake']. July 3. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/antisemitismus-vorwurf-sueddeutsche-nennt-veroeffentlichung-fehler-a-909299.html> (accessed January 14, 2016).
- Edelman, Murray. 1985. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- El Refaie, Elisabeth. 2003. "Understanding Visual Metaphor: The Example of Newspaper Cartoon." *Visual Communication* 2 (1): 75–95.
- Elder of Zion. 2013. "Friday Links: Latma, Toameh, Terrorists in Hebron, PA Honors Terrorist, 'Tikkun Olam' Supports Anti-Semitic Cartoon." February 1. <http://elderofziyon.blogspot.co.il/2013/02/friday-links-latma-toameh-terrorists-in.html#.VQRh2WSUcYc> (accessed March 10, 2015).
- Evans, Malcom. 2003. "Not Antisemite, Just Anti-Zionist". *Haaretz*, September 4. <http://www.haaretz.com/not-anti-semite-just-anti-zionist-1.99164> (accessed January 14, 2016).
- Ferguson, Mark A., and Thomas Ford. 2008. "Disparagement Humour: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Psychoanalytic, Superiority, and Social Identity Theories." *International Journal of Humor Research* 21 (3): 283–312.

- Frankel, Glenn. 2004. "British Drawing Stirs Anti-Semitism Debate." *Washington Post*, February 15.
- Goldfarb, Michael. 2001. "All Journalism Is Local: Reporting on the Middle East: How the U.S. and European Media Cover the Same Events Differently." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 6 (3): 110–5.
- Gombrich, Ernst H. 1963. "The Cartoonist's Armoury." In *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, ed. Ernst H. Gombrich, 127–42. London: Phaidon.
- Gross, Max. 2003. "Anti-Sharon Political Cartoon Denounced." *The Jewish Forward*, December 15.
- Hirsch, Eric D. 1976. *The Aims of Interpretation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, Eric D. 1984. "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted." *Critical Inquiry* 11 (2): 202–25.
- Honest Reporting*. 2013. "Anti-Semitism in German Daily: Israel as a Ravenous Monster." July 3. <http://honestreporting.com/anti-semitism-in-german-daily-israel-as-a-ravenous-monster/> (accessed March 10, 2015).
- Kotek, Joel. 2009. "Cartoons and Extremism: Jews in the Arab and Western Media." Edgware, UK: Valentine Mitchell.
- Kuipers, Geraldine. 2011. "The Politics of Humour in the Public Sphere: Cartoons, Power and Modernity in the First Transnational Scandal." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14 (1): 63–80.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Leibovich-Dar, Sara. 2003. "Drawing the line." *Haaretz*, August 29.
- Lippman, Jennifer. 2013. "Our Writer and the Comment Editor for Jewish Chronicle . . . on the World Holocaust Day cartoon." *Independent*, January 13. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/scarfes-cartoon-for-the-sunday-times-may-have-been-unpleasant-but-was-it-really-anti-semitic-8472275.html> (accessed January 17, 2016).
- Morris, Benny. 1999. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1998*. New York: Knopf.
- Müller, Marion G., Esra Özcan, and Ognyan Seizov. 2009. "Dangerous Depictions: A Visual Case Study of Contemporary Cartoons Controversies." *Popular Communication* 7 (1): 28–39.
- Mumby, Dennis K., and Carole Spitzack. 1983. "Ideology and Television News: A Metaphoric Analysis of Political Stories." *Central States Speech Journal* 34:162–71.
- New Zealand Herald*. 2009. "Jewish Groups Angry Over Gaza Cartoons." March 27.
- Pickering, Michael. 1995. "The Politics and Psychology of Stereotyping." *Media, Culture & Society* 17:691–700.
- Press Complaints Commission (UK)*. 2014. "Mishcon de Reya, Solicitors on Behalf of the Embassy of Israel and Ariel Sharon." <http://www.pcc.org.uk/cases/adjudicated.html?article=MjA5OA==> (accessed January 16, 2016).
- Prince-Gibson, Elisabeth. 2005. "Disturbing the Peace with Humor." *Jerusalem Post*, November 8. <http://www.jpost.com/Arts-and-Culture/Arts/Disturbing-the-peace-with-humor> (accessed January 17, 2016).
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1978. *The Rule of Metaphor*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Rubin, Barry. 2009. "The Problem Is Political Misunderstanding, Not Hatred." March 27. <http://docstalk.blogspot.co.il/2009/03/cartoon-problem-is-political.html> (accessed December 25, 2014).

- Schleider, Andrea. 2002. "Political Cartoon Raises Ire in Philadelphia." *The Jewish Forward*, August 15.
- Shaheen, Jack, ed. 2012. *A Is for Arab: Archiving Stereotypes in US Popular Culture*. New York: New York University.
- Solé, Robert. 2001. "Coup de Crayon" ["A sharp pencil"]. *Le Monde*, June 11.
- Solé, Robert. 2002. "Vu de Nairobi" ["Seen from Nairobi"]. *Le Monde*, May 12.
- Sorge, M. 2002. "Il dovere di chiedere scusa" ["The duty to apologize"]. *La Stampa*, April 4.
- Strauss, Leo. 1953. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Street, John. 1997. *Politics & Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Taguieff, Pierre-André. 2010. *La nouvelle propagande antijuive* [The new antisemitic propaganda]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Tchen, John Kuo Wei, and Dylan Yeats. 2014. *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. London: Verso.
- Todd, Emmanuel. 2015. *Qui est Charlie? Sociologie d'une crise religieuse* [Who is Charlie? Sociology of a religious crisis]. Paris: Seuil.
- The Guardian*. 2013. "Is the Sunday Times Cartoon Antisemitic?" January 29. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/29/is-the-sunday-times-cartoon-antisemitic> (accessed January 17, 2016).
- The Press (New Zealand)*. 2013. "Nisbet Cartoon Row Misses the Point." May 31. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/opinion/perspective/8739701/Cartoon-row-misses-the-point> (accessed January 16, 2016).
- Walton, Douglas. 1992. *The Place of Emotions in Argument*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Weintraub, Benjamin. 2006. "Cartoon of Olmert as Nazi Guard Sets off Free Speech Debate." *New York Sun*, July 28. <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/cartoon-of-olmert-as-nazi-guard-sets-off-free/36887/> (accessed January 16, 2016).
- Zelizer, Barbie, David Park, and David Gudelunas. 2002. "How Bias Shapes the News: Challenging The New York Times' Status as a Newspaper of Record on the Middle East." *Journalism* 3 (3): 283–307.

Author Biographies

Jerome Bourdon is a professor in the Department of Communication at Tel Aviv University. He works on global television history, on collective memory and the media, and on the international coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recent books include *Television Audiences across the World. Deconstructing the Ratings Machine* (co-edited with Cécile Méadel, Palgrave, 2014), and *Du service public à la télé-réalité. Une histoire culturelle des télévisions européennes* (INA, 2011).

Sandrine Boudana is a lecturer in the Department of Communication at Tel Aviv University. Her research focuses on the cross-national comparison of journalistic norms and practices and on photojournalism in times of war and conflict. She has notably published in *Media, Culture & Society*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *The Communication Review*, and *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*.

Building Empirical Typologies with QCA: Toward a Classification of Media Systems

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21 (2) 209–232
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626567
ijpp.sagepub.com



Florin Büchel¹, Edda Humprecht¹,
Laia Castro-Herrero², Sven Engesser¹,
and Michael Brüggemann³

Abstract

Typologies are omnipresent both in everyday life as well as in the sciences. Epistemologically, there are several systematic ways to build typologies, such as qualitative, theory-based descriptions on one end and quantitative, exploratory statistical means on the other end of the spectrum. Both have their specific advantages and disadvantages, which can be bridged by applying set-theoretic methods, such as Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The contribution of this paper is substantial and methodological: First, we show how QCA can enhance our understanding of media systems by building a typology that draws on Hallin and Mancini's framework. The main improvement of QCA is the ability to identify ideal types as well as border cases. In our analysis, we move beyond the widely discussed case of Great Britain and take a closer look at further border cases such as Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Second, QCA has been scarcely applied to build typologies and if so, only in neighboring disciplines. Thus, we aim at familiarizing comparative political communication scholars with this method.

Keywords

media systems, typologies, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), methodology, journalism, international comparative research

¹University of Zurich, Zürich, Switzerland

²University of Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland

³University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

Corresponding Author:

Florin Büchel, International & Comparative Media Research, Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Andreasstrasse 15, CH-8050 Zürich, Switzerland.

Email: f.buechel@ipmz.uzh.ch

Typologies are an important way of organizing the complex relationships between social phenomena. They help to assign single cases to groups that share similar characteristics. According to McKinney (1969: 1), “types and typologies are ubiquitous, both in everyday social life and in the language of the social sciences. Everybody uses them, but almost no one pays any attention to the nature of their construction.” Consequently, establishing types and typologies has a long-standing tradition in the social sciences (Lazarsfeld [1937] 1993; Weber [1904] 1991). For comparative social science research, typologies are particularly useful. They help to structure the complex phenomenon of political communication in different contexts, organize the objects of study, and are useful to analyze, compare, and interpret the units of analysis. Recently, several scholars have dealt with the challenges of typology building (e.g., Collier et al. 2008; Goertz and Mahoney 2005).

One important example in political communications research is Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) media system typology. Their book *Comparing Media Systems* has inspired and guided research in this field but also gained criticism, especially because of its lack of standardized, empirical validation. Ten years after the original publication, a study by Brüggemann et al. (2014) revisited the theoretical framework and provided operationalization and standardized measurement. This study could validate most of Hallin and Mancini’s theoretical assumptions, but resulted in a typology with four models. However, although the study accounts for the major criticisms of *Comparing Media Systems*, the new typology lacks the differentiated discussion of single countries found in the initial book. Therefore, we aim to fill in this gap and advance the typology of Brüggemann et al. by combining their standardized measurement with a detailed, case-oriented analysis.

To do so, we introduce a systematic and transparent procedure of building typologies by using the method of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). We use the data collected by Brüggemann et al. (2014) and apply QCA to provide a more thorough account of the differences between the single media systems under study (please see the original study for the precise sources and operationalization: Brüggemann et al. 2014: 1046–51).

As Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) original framework, the scope of our study is limited to Western industrialized democracies. It appears plausible that other countries (e.g., authoritarian regimes, transitional economies, or emerging nations) may require additional dimensions, such as press freedom or further indicators regarding ownership structures. However, we are confident that our analysis constitutes an important step toward such a universal typology of media systems. As a starting point, we focus on the press market as the traditional pillar of the media system and deliberately rely on data that remain relatively constant over time. Further studies should also reflect the commercialization and digitalization of media systems by including more data on the countries’ economic situation, online market, and Internet use.

Building Typologies with QCA

There are different ways of building typologies, most commonly theoretical heuristics and empirical classifications (Bailey 1994; Fiss 2011). Both approaches have their

advantages and disadvantages: Theoretical heuristics focus on individual cases and in-depth explanations, while empirical, standardized approaches stress variables and general similarities. However, there are possibilities to combine the two. One way to elegantly use the “best of both worlds” is QCA.¹ It enables combining in-depth qualitative analysis with systematic cross-case comparisons. In this vein, we argue that QCA is particularly useful to identify different variants of a given phenomenon as it is done when building typologies.

QCA in the Social Sciences

In recent years, more and more studies in media and communication science used QCA to identify causal relationships between conditions and outcome (Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2013; Downey and Stanyer 2010; Humprecht and Büchel 2013; Stanyer 2012). QCA is based on set theory, meaning that “variables” (called “conditions”) constitute sets, whereas cases are either members or nonmembers of these sets. Consequentially, Boolean algebra is used to calculate set-theoretic relations. While linear algebra uses correlations to describe relations between variables, Boolean algebra describes relations of necessity and sufficiency between sets. The basic premise of QCA is that outcomes can be explained by combinations of conditions, using the so-called “truth table” that lists all possible combinations of conditions to identify combinations that are sufficient for an outcome.² QCA has been welcomed by many social scientists because it enables a constant dialogue between theory and evidence, between data and results, throughout the analytical process.

While QCA has been used in many studies within different social science disciplines to identify set relations between conditions and outcomes, its application to build typologies is less established. One such study by Fiss (2011) was published in a top-ranked management and business journal. Further studies by Kvist (2006, 2007) illustrated the approach by using examples of policy research and business analysis. In the paper at hand, we demonstrate how QCA is used to build empirical typologies with an example that is well known in media and communication science. We hope that this helps to spread the knowledge of this fruitful approach in comparative political communication research.

Key Concepts of QCA

As Doty and Glick (1994) point out, typologies are a unique form of theory building as they are complex theories that describe the causal relationships of contextual, structural, and strategic factors, thus offering configurations that can be used to predict an outcome of interest. Because typologies are by definition set-theoretical, QCA is particularly well suited for this kind of thinking. Set theory is not restricted to simple binary values (membership vs. nonmembership): Using so-called *fuzzy sets* can show how well a case is represented by a certain type. This is useful to identify both cases that belong to one distinct ideal type as well as border cases that show membership degrees in more than one type. Fuzzy sets consist of elements that can take membership scores

between 0 and 1, with 0.5 being the qualitative anchor that divides members and non-members of a set.

When building typologies with QCA, membership scores have to be calculated for each theoretical case. This is done by a procedure called *calibration*. During calibration, the researcher has to decide what the qualitative anchor-point of 0.5 corresponds to in the original scale. A logistic function is then used to transform original values into fuzzy sets (Schneider and Wagemann 2012: 32–41). Next, the data are arranged in a matrix, the so-called truth table (Schneider and Wagemann 2012: 91–116). One row in the truth table displays one set of cases that show the exact combination of conditions that the truth table row depicts. In the logic of typologies, we assume that each combination of conditions in the truth table stands for one set of cases, respectively, for a sufficient condition if a “traditional” outcome is analyzed.³ Next, Boolean minimization (see Schneider and Wagemann 2012: 104–16) reduces the number of original dimensions needed to describe each type, thus simplifying the overall formula found with the truth table. This step identifies similar patterns between single cases and groups them together.⁴ Subsequently, the solution terms that are produced by the analysis contain different cases and can be interpreted as types. For each case, a membership degree is provided that shows how well the case is reflected by the respective solution term (or “type”). And as the analysis is based on a systematic comparison of individual characteristics, it is possible that single cases appear in several types. Finally, a strict case-oriented interpretation can identify ideal cases, border cases, and typical cases of each type, thus combining the advantages of a quantitative, variable-oriented procedure and qualitative, case-oriented interpretation.

Advantages Compared with Linear Algebra

So how does this application of QCA differ from other, more established methods in linear algebra, such as cluster analysis? As the two approaches are based on different logics (belonging to sets in set theory vs. measures of proximity in cluster analysis), the proceeding and interpretation will vary. QCA is considered to be a combination of variable-oriented analysis and case-oriented interpretation, while “traditional” statistical methods such as cluster analysis are completely variable-oriented. Consequentially, the interpretation of a cluster analysis will focus on the variables (“dimensions”) and interpret them with regard to the clusters (“types”). This is made possible by calculating averages of all variables for the different types (“cluster centers”). The disadvantage of this method is that calculating averages always means losing important information about single cases. Outliers, extreme cases and border cases (that are close to several types) cannot be identified anymore. The cluster centers always describe the average, typical case. With QCA, in contrast, the interpretation will focus on single cases and the combinations of conditions they show, thus being able to identify and describe border and extreme cases. The types can be interpreted precisely as the solution paths show the exact combination of conditions that are contained in each type. Thus, it is also possible to calculate fuzzy set membership scores regarding

the different solutions (“types”) for each case, which facilitates the identification of border cases (that are represented by several types) and outliers as well as distinct cases (that strictly belong to one type only).

In short, the approach using linear algebra is variable-oriented, while QCA provides a case-oriented interpretation of a variable-oriented analysis, keeping more information about single cases intact. In addition, cluster analysis by definition produces results with maximum discriminatory power, while QCA allows cases to have multiple memberships. This is ideal for the identification of outliers, typical and border cases by inspecting the fuzzy set scores. QCA allows a finer-grained interpretation with a precise description of the peculiarities of each single case with regard to the typology. We will demonstrate the application and the heuristic value of QCA for building typologies in our analysis of media system typologies.

Typologies of Media Systems

To build a typology of media systems, we use the empirical dimensions provided by Brüggemann et al. (2014) that provided a valid account of the original framework. Their operationalization is based on Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) model and adapted for quantitative measurement. In the following, we briefly discuss the subindicators used by Brüggemann et al. to operationalize the four dimensions of their typology.⁵

Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) original media system typology is based on four dimensions of media systems: “Media market,” “journalistic professionalism,” “political parallelism,” and “role of the state.” Brüggemann et al. (2014) suggest relabeling the dimension of *media market* to *inclusiveness of the press market* as this label implies the question of whether the press only reaches out to the elites or to a broader mass audience. More specifically, they refer to the reach among women and men, or among different segments of society, such as the working class (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 22–26).

The dimension *political parallelism* measures to which extent journalism reflects ideological and party political lines in a given country. The concept was operationalized by drawing on indicators such as the extent to which media coverage is shaped by journalists’ political affiliations, the degree to which audiences consume media according to their political preferences, the separation between news and commentary, political bias in news reporting, and the public broadcasters’ dependence on the government (Brüggemann et al. 2014).

For the dimension *journalistic professionalism*, Brüggemann et al. (2014) used the following indicators: the degree of professional autonomy that journalists enjoy as a group, the development of distinct professional norms, and the extent to which journalists are oriented toward an ethic of serving the public interest.

Finally, Brüggemann et al. (2014) divided the dimension *role of the state* into three subdimensions that showed high levels of internal consistency and are relatively independent of each other. The three dimensions are the *strength of public broadcasting*, the amount of direct and indirect *press subsidies*, and the degree to which states regulate their media markets through *ownership regulation*.

For each dimension, sets of indicators were introduced drawing on different sources of data, such as the World Press Trends compilation, the European Election Study, the World Value Survey, and the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO). Brüggemann et al. (2014) used these indicators in a cluster analyses to validate and refine the typology by Hallin and Mancini (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Please also see Brüggemann et al. (2014: 1046-1051) for an extensive list of all data sources. They use cross-national studies to ensure comparability and provide reliability analyses to ensure the robustness of their indicators.

We argue that QCA is an adequate approach to complement and further advance this endeavor because the theoretical concepts behind the dimensions and models to be analyzed have a set-theoretic design. Therefore, we opt for a set-theoretic analysis strategy and turn to QCA.

Analytical Strategy

The analysis we applied to identify typologies of media systems consists of three steps. It is a variation on the “two-step approach” that Schneider and Wagemann (2006) introduced. The original “two-step approach” is based on the idea that macro-level (or “remote”) conditions are identified in a first step. The resulting solution paths (i.e., combinations of conditions that are sufficient for an outcome) will then be used again as conditions in a second analysis, combined with meso- and micro-level (or “proximate”) conditions. It is easy to calculate fuzzy set membership scores (see Schneider and Wagemann 2012: 47–51) for these “combined conditions” by applying the respective formulae for conjunctions (returns the minimum value on all conditions), disjunctions (returns the maximum value on all conditions), and negations (1 minus the value of the condition). This approach is useful not only for multilevel designs (“remote” and “proximate” conditions), but also for simply reducing the number of conditions in each step of the analysis—which is how we use it. This application of the “multistep approach” is very similar to classical construction of indices. We apply this approach for typology building by analyzing two different sets of conditions separately. In a final step, the resulting solution paths (i.e., typologies in our case) are combined to result in a typology. In the following, we discuss the *calibration* of all dimensions into fuzzy sets before turning to the main findings.

Calibration

For the application of Boolean algebra, the original scales have to be calibrated into fuzzy sets. The calibration is an important step because cases are assigned to being members or nonmembers of particular sets with this procedure. It is recommended to not simply rely on “statistical” measures for the calibration but base each decision on case knowledge by the researcher (Schneider and Wagemann 2010). For instance, it would be inappropriate to transform an interval scale into values between 0 and 1 while retaining the same distances between cases, or simply use the mean as threshold for membership, as this would defy the purpose of fuzzy sets and their membership

threshold (Schneider and Wagemann 2012). However, it is a fruitful strategy to identify big “gaps” in the data between specific cases, indicating that the respective two “groups” of cases are placed among different “ranges” of the respective variable. These “gaps” can thus be used as anchor-points for the calibration, but additional theoretical clarification is necessary in any case to justify the decisions. As the nature of calibration can be controversial and is intensively discussed in the methodological community, we provide a detailed account of this procedure in detail to allow for a transparent interpretation of the results. The values assigned to each case can be found in Table 1 (both the original z values by Brüggemann et al. 2014, and calibrated data).

High inclusiveness of the press market. At the extremes of the original z values, Greece has the lowest (GR⁶: -2.09) and Sweden the highest (SE: 1.61) value. There is a distinct “gap” in the data between Portugal and Germany, which shows that Germany, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries score relatively high (SE, FI, NO, CH, and to a lesser degree DE). This is in line with Hallin and Mancini’s theoretical typology stating that those countries belong to the “set” of cases with an inclusive press market. Portugal, Austria and Great Britain score lower, followed by the Netherlands and Italy. Because Italy has been found to have a comparatively weak press and limited newspaper circulation, this country is treated as a nonmember of the outcome set (Cornia 2013; Mazzoleni 1987, 2004). In contrast, Portugal, Austria, and Great Britain were more difficult to calibrate. However, the existing literature suggests that the Austrian press market is less inclusive, while Portugal can be considered to belong to the set of this outcome: According to Trappel et al. (2011), Austria’s press market generally resembles the one of Portugal with one important exception, namely, its low performance regarding the “equality and interest mediation” function. By “equality and interest mediation,” the authors mean the degree to which a media system offers external diversity of media outlets that reach out to a large amount of citizens and report about minority claims. Thus, this indicator can be considered being close to our dimension of an inclusive press market. Trappel et al. find in their ten country study that Austria scores lowest on this indicator, while Portugal scores average. Based on these findings, we decided that Austria should not be a member of the “inclusive press” set, while Portugal should belong to this set with a relatively low membership degree. Correspondingly, the three anchor- and threshold-points of 0.95, 0.5, and 0.05 are set to 1, 0, and -0.6 , respectively, resulting in a set with Austria being just out of the set and Portugal only just a member of the set.

High political parallelism. The original z values range from Finland (FI: -1.36) to Spain (ES: 2.1). Spain is followed by Italy (IT: 1.74), Greece (GR: 1.43), France (FR: 0.62), Austria (AT: 0.35), and the Netherlands (NL: 0.19). According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Mediterranean countries are characterized by high political parallelism. Austria is also considered to be a member of this set because Austrian daily newspapers usually have a strong political alignment (Anagnostou et al. 2012). Furthermore, Trappel et al. (2011) argue that Austria performs significantly lower on the indicators “rules and practices on internal pluralism” and “independence of the news media from

Table I. Original Z Values and Fuzzy Set Values of the Dimensions.

Case	High Inclusiveness of Press Market		High Political Parallelism		High Journalistic Professionalism		High Investments in Public Broadcasting		Strong Ownership Regulation		Press Subsidies	
	Z Values	Fuzzy Set	Z Values	Fuzzy Set	Z Values	Fuzzy Set	Z Values	Fuzzy Set	Z Values	Fuzzy Set	Z Values	Fuzzy Set
Austria	-0.09	0.39	0.35	0.52	-0.90	0.00	0.36	0.78	1.11	0.97	-0.29	0.74
Belgium	-0.74	0.02	-0.70	0.09	0.33	0.73	-0.42	0.25	0.06	0.20	0.39	0.89
Denmark	-0.50	0.08	-1.32	0.02	1.31	0.98	1.41	0.98	-0.99	0.05	0.28	0.87
Finland	1.40	0.99	-1.36	0.02	0.92	0.94	0.77	0.91	-2.04	0.01	0.22	0.86
France	-0.99	0.01	0.62	0.64	-0.45	0.06	-0.02	0.55	1.11	0.97	0.45	0.90
Germany	0.96	0.95	-0.56	0.12	0.21	0.65	1.37	0.98	1.11	0.97	-0.49	0.68
Great Britain	-0.17	0.30	-0.29	0.20	-0.49	0.05	0.89	0.94	1.11	0.97	0.20	0.86
Greece	-2.09	0.00	1.43	0.88	-1.35	0.00	-1.15	0.03	1.11	0.97	-0.24	0.76
Ireland	-0.62	0.04	-0.06	0.30	-0.27	0.17	-0.49	0.21	-0.99	0.05	-1.06	0.41
Italy	-0.33	0.16	1.74	0.93	-2.00	0.00	-0.29	0.35	0.06	0.20	0.75	0.93
Netherlands	-0.33	0.16	0.19	0.44	0.72	0.90	-0.30	0.34	-0.99	0.05	-0.39	0.71
Norway	1.28	0.98	-1.04	0.04	0.87	0.93	0.50	0.84	-0.46	0.10	1.26	0.97
Portugal	0.38	0.76	-0.08	0.30	-0.36	0.10	-0.60	0.16	0.06	0.20	-0.25	0.75
Spain	-0.62	0.04	2.10	0.96	-1.37	0.00	0.19	0.69	-0.99	0.05	-0.27	0.75
Sweden	1.61	0.99	-0.39	0.17	1.17	0.97	0.14	0.66	-0.46	0.10	1.48	0.98
Switzerland	1.21	0.97	-0.50	0.14	1.06	0.96	0.44	0.81	1.11	0.97	-0.39	0.71
The United States	-0.38	0.13	-0.12	0.28	0.60	0.86	-2.80	0.00	0.06	0.20	-1.66	0.02
Calibration Threshold (.95/.5/.05)	1/0/-0.6		2/0.3/-1		1/0/-0.5		1/-0.1/-1		1.1/1/1-1		1/-1/-1.5	

power holders” than, for instance, the Netherlands. Hence, the thresholds for direct calibration were set to 2, 0.3, and -1 , resulting in a set with Austria as a member and the Netherlands just out of the set.

High journalistic professionalism. Originally, the z values range from Italy (IT: -2.00) to Denmark (DK: 1.31). A qualitative assessment of the data reveals a remarkable gap between the cases of Ireland (IE: -0.27) and Germany (DE: 0.21). According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), Germany is a democratic-corporatist country and thus considered to have high journalistic professionalism. Ireland, in contrast, has been found to have lower levels of journalistic professionalism (Marron 1996). These findings, as well as the fact that there is a rather big “gap” between the two cases, support the decision to include Germany as a member of the set of countries with high journalistic professionalism and to exclude all countries with lower values. In line with these decisions, the anchor- and threshold-points are set to 1, 0, and -0.5 .

High investments in public broadcasting. The values for the strength of public broadcasting services (PBS) range from the United States (US: -2.80) to Denmark (DK: 1.41). This reflects the assumptions by Hallin and Mancini (2004) that democratic-corporatist countries strongly invest in PBS, while it is marginalized in the United States. The most significant gap is situated between France (FR: -0.02) and Italy (IT: -0.29). According to previous research, the French state spends nearly twice as much money on its PBS compared with Italy (Nielsen and Linnebank 2011). Hence, it is plausible to include France in the set and treat Italy as a nonmember and set the threshold for membership between France and Italy. Correspondingly, the anchor- and threshold-points were set to 1, -0.1 , and -1 .

Strong ownership regulation. This dimension consisted of an ordinal scale, which led to little variance in the data. Only five different values represented all cases in the sample: -2.04 (FI), -0.99 (DK, IE, NL, ES), -0.46 (NO, SE), 0.06 (BE, IT, PT, US), and 1.11 (AT, FR, DE, GB, GR, and CH). The dimension consisted of three indicators, namely, cross-media ownership regulation, television ownership regulation, and press ownership regulation. Therefore, we decided to only include the cases with all three forms of ownership. In other words, only cases with the highest value (1.11) were treated as members, while the remaining cases were considered as nonmembers of this set. Thus, the thresholds for the calibration are set to 1.1, 1, and -1 , respectively.

High press subsidies. The scale for the dimension press subsidies ranges from the United States (US: -1.66) to Sweden (SE: 1.48).⁷ The cases Norway (NO: 1.26) and Sweden (SE: 1.48) have the highest values and are distinct members of this set. These countries are followed by Italy (IT: 0.75) and France (FR: 0.34), two countries that are also linked to higher amounts of press support (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Likewise, the cases of the United States (US: -1.66) and Ireland (IE: -1.06) are distinct nonmembers of this set. Germany, with a value of -0.49 , also has little direct press support. However, the German state strongly subsidizes the press sector via indirect means, for example,

value-added tax (VAT) reduction (Nielsen and Linnebank 2011). Therefore, Germany was assigned to the set of press subsidies, even though it is rather at the lower end of the scale in this group of countries. This is reflected in the calibration that assigns fuzzy set values above 0.95 to Norway and Sweden while all other member cases lie between Germany (−0.49) and Italy (0.75). These cases, thus, have values between 0.5 and 0.95 on the scale. Moreover, a further anchor-point (for being “fully out” of the set of countries with some degree of press subsidies) is set between Ireland and the United States. Thus, the anchor- and threshold-points are 1, −1, and −1.5.

Findings

In the study at hand, the application of QCA for typology building consists of three steps. Each step offers valuable insights into the grouping of the single cases and shows how the typology is built. First, the dimensions press market, political parallelism, and journalistic professionalism are analyzed. Second, the dimensions drawn from Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) broader category “role of the state” are analyzed together. This “multistep approach” has several advantages: First, it helps to reduce the number of conditions in each step; second, it ensures an equal methodological treatment of the subdimensions and avoids an overevaluation of the dimension role of the state. This aspect is problematic in the cluster analysis by Brüggemann et al. (2014): Their cluster analysis treats all six single variables the same, regardless of the fact that half of them actually belong to the same original dimension as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). By dividing the conditions up into two “blocks”, the multistep approach to QCA thus helps to get a more even weighting of the single dimensions. The analysis is carried using the software fsQCA.⁸

First Step

In the first step, the three conditions “inclusiveness of the press market”, “journalistic professionalism”, and “political parallelism” are analyzed. A closer look at the truth table (Table 2) hints to a first result: With two small exceptions (Austria and Portugal; in line with the findings in Brüggemann et al. 2014), the cases belonging to Hallin and Mancini’s polarized-pluralist and democratic-corporatist models clearly group together. The Southern European countries and Austria (GR, ES, FR, IT, AT) are characterized by the combination of a “noninclusive press market”, “low professionalism”, but “political parallelism”—which is in line with the depiction of the polarized-pluralist model by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Furthermore, Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries (DE, CH, FI, SE, NO) form another type, showing an “inclusive press market”, “journalistic professionalism”, and a “lack of political parallelism”. This group is the antipode of the polarized-pluralist model, which is also consistent with Hallin and Mancini (2004).

By minimizing the truth table according to the rules of Boolean algebra, a solution with two solution paths results: First, the *absence of high political parallelism* leads to a group consisting of liberal and democratic-corporatist countries (FI, DK, NO, US, BE, DE, SE, GB, IE, PT, CH, NL). Second, the combination of a *noninclusive press market*

Table 2. Truth Table First Step.

Inclusiveness of Press Market	High Political Parallelism	High Journalistic Professionalism	N	Outcome	Cases
0	1	0	5	1	GR, ES, FR, IT, AT
1	0	1	5	1	DE, CH, FI, SE, NO
0	0	1	4	1	BE, US, DK, NL
0	0	0	2	1	IE, GB
1	0	0	1	1	PT
0	1	1	0	0	
1	1	0	0	0	
1	1	1	0	0	

Note. GR = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; IT = Italy; AT = Austria; DE = Germany; CH = Switzerland; FI = Finland; SE = Sweden; NO = Norway; BE = Belgium; US = United States; DK = Denmark; NL = Netherlands; IE = Ireland; GB = Great Britain; PT = Portugal.

and *low journalistic professionalism* describes Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Ireland, Great Britain, and Austria. This latter combination will be used again in the last step of the analysis. Therefore, we label this combination *weak press* for a better understanding.

Second Step

In the second step, we analyze the dimension “role of the state”, which has been found to consist of three independent subdimensions: “strength of public broadcasting”, “ownership regulation”, and “press subsidies”. The truth table in Table 3 shows that the Scandinavian countries (FI, SE, DK, NO) and Spain are grouped together. These countries are characterized by a “strong public broadcasting system”, “little ownership regulation”, and “higher amounts of press subsidies”. The second group of countries contains Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and France. These countries share the characteristics of a “strong PBS”, “high press subsidies”, and “ownership regulation”.

Next, minimizing the truth table by means of Boolean algebra leads to more parsimonious sets. The result consists of two solution paths: The first solution path describes countries with *high amounts of press subsidies* (SE, NO, IT, FR, BE, DK, FI, GB, GR, ES, PT, AT, NL, CH, DE). This solution contains democratic-corporatist and polarized-pluralist media systems. The second solution path is characterized by *low investments in the public broadcasting system* and *low degrees of ownership regulation*. This solution path features the United States, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy. This combination signifies a weak role of the state and, thus, we label it *deregulated media market*.

Third Step

Finally, all four new conditions are analyzed together. To do so, we include all four dimensions in the final analysis (i.e., all four conditions that resulted in the first and second step of the analysis). The truth table shows that the democratic-corporatist

Table 3. Truth Table Second Step.

High Investments in Public Broadcasting	Strong Ownership Regulation	High Press Subsidies	N	Outcome	Cases
1	0	1	5	1	ES, FI, SE, DK, NO
1	1	1	5	1	FR, GB, AT, DE, CH
0	0	1	4	1	IT, NL, BE, PT
0	0	0	2	1	US, IE
0	1	1	1	1	GR
0	1	0	0	0	
1	0	0	0	0	
1	1	0	0	0	

Note. GR = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; IT = Italy; AT = Austria; DE = Germany; CH = Switzerland; FI = Finland; SE = Sweden; NO = Norway; BE = Belgium; US = United States; DK = Denmark; NL = Netherlands; IE = Ireland; GB = Great Britain; PT = Portugal.

countries (DE, CH, FI, SE, DK, NO) share similar conditions, namely, “high degrees of press subsidies”, “regulated media markets”, and “low degrees of political parallelism” (Table 4). This means that journalistic professionalism and newspaper readership is also high in those countries, which is in line with Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, the polarized-pluralist countries (Greece, Spain, France, and Austria) have a “stricter regulated media market”, a “weak press”, “high political parallelism”, and “high press subsidies”.

Next, the truth table is minimized again using Boolean algebra. This procedure results in four solution paths that represent four types of media systems. Two paths show distinct features of Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) typology and represent the liberal and polarized-pluralist model. The democratic-corporatist model, however, is broken down into two new models in this analysis. We name these two new models the *press-oriented model* and the *corporatist model*. These models are both characterized by *low political parallelism* and *high press subsidies*. It is important to note that all countries have membership degrees in all models. However, they are calibrated and grouped relative to the other cases in the sample. Therefore, the presence or absence of single conditions has to be interpreted in comparison with all cases of the sample. The fuzzy set values are shown in Table 5.

The set of countries belonging to the *press-oriented model* includes Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, and Portugal. Norway shows the highest membership scores for this solution and can be considered typical, while the Netherlands shows the lowest membership score (see Table 5 and Figure 2). Regarding the conditions, this solution path is characterized by *low political parallelism*, *high press subsidies*, and has *no weak press* (i.e., high newspaper circulation and high journalistic professionalism).

The solution path for the corporatist model comprises Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, and Great Britain. Denmark, Finland, and Norway show the highest membership scores, while Sweden, Germany, and Switzerland show

Table 4. Truth Table Third Step.

Deregulated Media Market	Weak Press	High Political Parallelism	High Press Subsidies	N	Outcome	Cases
0	0	0	1	6	1	DE, CH, FI, SE, DK, NO
0	1	1	1	4	1	GR, ES, FR, AT
1	0	0	1	3	1	NL, BE, PT
1	0	0	0	1	1	US
0	1	0	1	1	1	GB
1	1	0	0	1	1	IE
1	1	1	1	1	1	IT
0	0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	1	0	0	0	
0	0	1	1	0	0	
1	0	1	0	0	0	
1	0	1	1	0	0	
0	1	0	0	0	0	
1	1	0	1	0	0	
0	1	1	0	0	0	
1	1	1	0	0	0	

Note. GR = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; IT = Italy; AT = Austria; DE = Germany; CH = Switzerland; FI = Finland; SE = Sweden; NO = Norway; BE = Belgium; US = United States; DK = Denmark; NL = Netherlands; IE = Ireland; GB = Great Britain; PT = Portugal.

the lowest membership scores (see Table 5 and Figure 2). This combination of conditions is similar to the press-oriented system. However, it features a *regulated press market* (instead of the *absence of weak press*). In brief, the corporatist system is characterized by *low political parallelism*, comparatively *high press subsidies*, and a *regulated media market*. Except for Great Britain, all cases in this second solution were present in the first solution paths as well. The theoretical implications of these two “related” models will be discussed later.

The solution path for the *liberal model* includes only two cases, namely, Ireland and the United States. In line with Hallin and Mancini (2004), the United States shows the highest membership score and can, thus, be considered typical for this media system. Regarding the conditions, it shares *low degrees of political parallelism* with the two democratic-corporatist systems, but combines this with *low press subsidies* and a *highly deregulated media market*.

Finally, the solution path for the *polarized-pluralist model* contains Italy, Greece, Spain, France, and Austria. Italy and Greece show the highest membership scores, which supports Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) claim that these two countries are the ideal types of this media system model. The solution path for the polarized-pluralist model is characterized by *high press subsidies*, *strong political parallelism*, and a *relatively weak press*.

Figure 1 visualizes the four solution paths discussed above. They can be interpreted as four models of media systems. These findings widely confirm

Table 5. Fuzzy Set Values of Models.

Case	Press-Oriented System	Corporatist System	Liberal System	Polarized-Pluralist System
Austria	0.39	0.48	0.03	0.52
Belgium	0.73	0.25	0.11	0.09
Denmark	0.87	0.87	0.02	0.02
Finland	0.86	0.86	0.09	0.01
France	0.06	0.36	0.03	0.64
Germany	0.68	0.68	0.02	0.05
Great Britain	0.30	0.80	0.03	0.20
Greece	0.00	0.12	0.03	0.76
Ireland	0.17	0.21	0.59	0.30
Italy	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.84
Netherlands	0.56	0.34	0.29	0.10
Norway	0.96	0.84	0.03	0.02
Portugal	0.70	0.20	0.25	0.24
Spain	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.75
Sweden	0.83	0.66	0.02	0.01
Switzerland	0.71	0.71	0.03	0.03
The United States	0.02	0.02	0.72	0.02

the theoretical assumption made by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Furthermore, QCA validates the results of the cluster analysis by Brüggemann et al. (2014). However, the empirical analysis in this study helps to eliminate some of the theoretical uncertainties.

Discussion

In our analysis, we find four models of media systems that widely confirm the theoretical assumptions. Moreover, a range of border cases are identified that deserve further explication. Our results show that the theoretical polarized-pluralist model and the liberal model are very well reflected in our typology, while the democratic-corporatist model can be described more precisely (see Figure 2).

The democratic-corporatist system is divided into two groups in our analysis. These two new models differ with respect to their media markets: The press-oriented model shows the relative absence of a weak press, while the corporatist model features a regulated media market instead (while keeping all other conditions the same). These models are not exclusive and consist partly of the same cases, namely, Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries (NO, FI, SE, DK, DE, CH). Those countries show characteristics of both models. Thus, their media system could also be described by combining our two labels: It is a *press-oriented corporatist model*. Set-theoretically speaking, they could be combined with a disjunction to create a type incorporating both of these aspects.

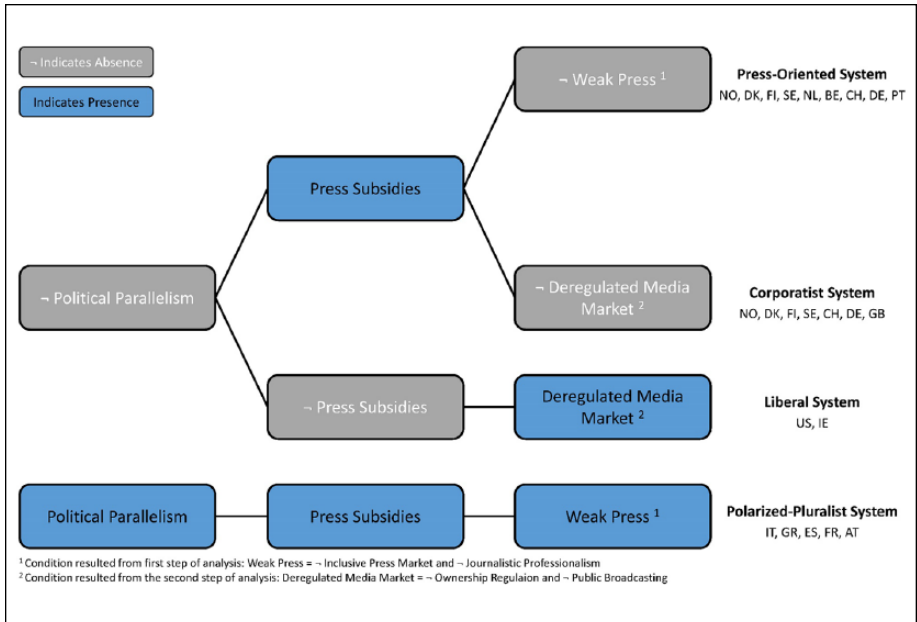


Figure 1. Solution paths.

Note. GR = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; IT = Italy; AT = Austria; DE = Germany; CH = Switzerland; FI = Finland; SE = Sweden; NO = Norway; BE = Belgium; US = the United States; DK = Denmark; NL = Netherlands; IE = Ireland; GB = Great Britain; PT = Portugal.

In contrast, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal are only included in the press-oriented model. These are countries that do not have a weak press but a highly deregulated media market. This finding suggests that the media markets of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal are more liberalized than those of Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries, which is in accordance with the findings of Brüggemann et al. (2014). Thus, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal can be considered *hybrid* media systems that show characteristics of several models. Belgium and the Netherlands mainly share characteristics of the press-oriented model. However, those countries spend less on PBS than corporatist countries (NL: 0.34; BE: 0.25) and have fewer press subsidies (NL: 0.71; BE: 0.89).

Portugal, in contrast, shares characteristics of the polarized-pluralist and the liberal model. However, Portugal has less political parallelism than countries of the polarized-pluralist model and more press subsidies than the liberal media system. Interestingly, Portugal is labeled “polarized-pluralist” by Hallin and Mancini (2004). However, this country has been argued to “diverge significantly” from the polarized-pluralist model and to “move away” from the political parallelism that characterizes Spain, Italy, and Greece (Hallin and Mancini 2012: 292). Our results confirm this observation and show that Portugal is nowadays closer to democratic-corporatist countries, mainly because of its higher values for “inclusiveness of the press market”.

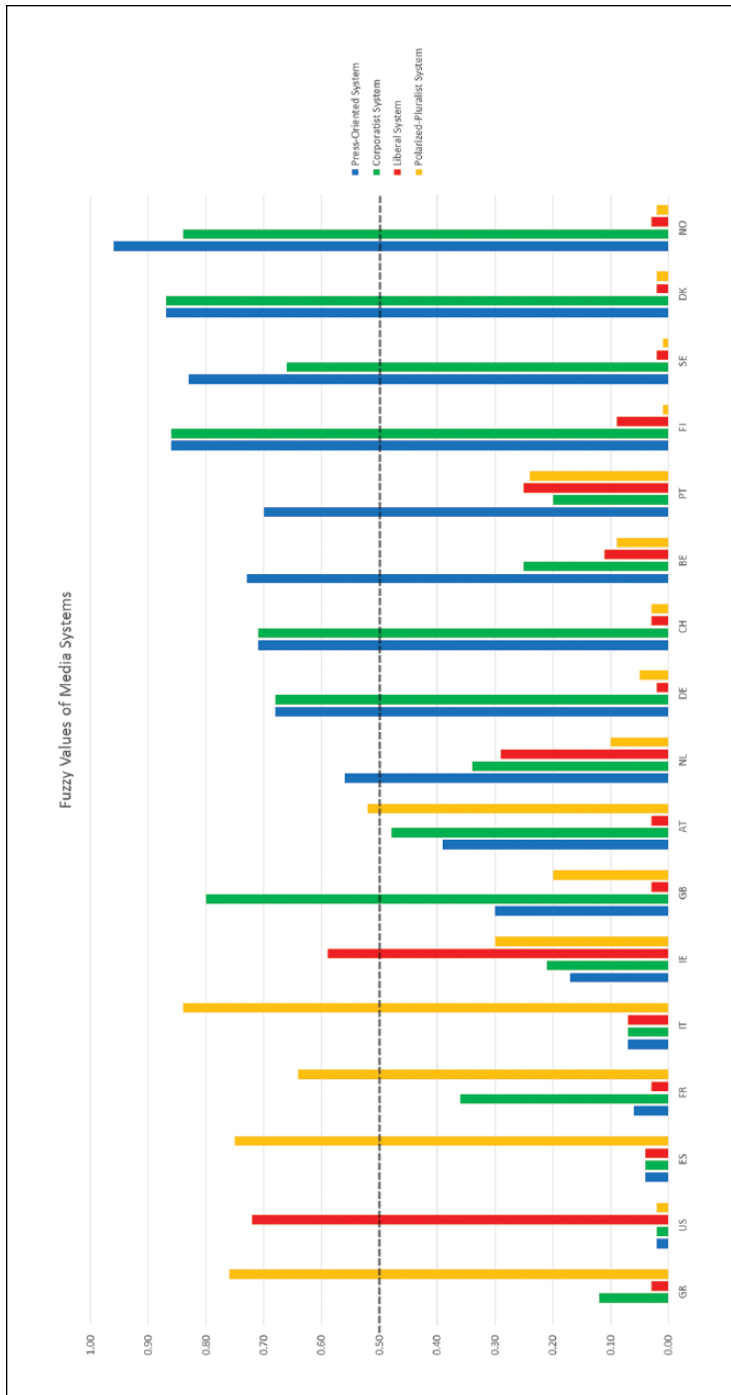


Figure 2. Bar chart of fuzzy values for models.
 Note. GR = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; IT = Italy; AT = Austria; DE = Germany; CH = Switzerland; FI = Finland; SE = Sweden; NO = Norway; BE = Belgium; US = United States; DK = Denmark; NL = Netherlands; IE = Ireland; GB = Great Britain; PT = Portugal.

Furthermore, Great Britain is included in the corporatist model. This country shares characteristics of democratic-corporatist (comparatively “low degrees of political parallelism”, higher “press subsidies”, and “regulated media market”), liberal (“no political parallelism”), and even polarized-pluralist models (a comparatively “weak press” and “low professionalism”). Hallin and Mancini (2004) assigned Great Britain to the “liberal” media systems. However, critics point out that Great Britain varies from the ideal type of this model. For instance, Humphreys (2012) and Norris (2009) argued that Great Britain is characterized by a strong PBS and has an ideologically polarized press, and thus does not fit the liberal model. Moreover, Nielsen and Linnebank (2011) find that Great Britain shows high amounts of indirect press subsidies, a feature that has been linked to polarized-pluralist or democratic-corporatist media system types. Indeed, our findings suggest that Great Britain shares characteristics of all three original models.

A possible ad hoc explanation regarding the two different democratic-corporatist systems is that they differ in two dimensions of media systems: The press-oriented system reflects the *journalistic* side of media systems (relative “absence of weak press”), while the corporatist system reflects the *role of the state* (“regulated media market”). Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries belong to both groups and include both the journalistic as well as the regulative aspects of media systems.

In the polarized-pluralist system, France and Austria are notable exceptions (see Figure 2). These countries clearly belong to this model, but also show high membership scores (below 0.5) in other media system models. France shares characteristics of the corporatist system. This is due to its comparatively low score of political parallelism (FR: 0.61), which is considerably lower than those of Spain (ES: 0.95), Italy (IT: 0.93), or Greece (GR: 0.89). France can, thus, be considered less polarized-pluralist than the other three Southern European countries.

Similarly, Austria also has a lower membership value in the set of political parallelism (AT: 0.51) and a higher nonmembership value in the corporatist model. The country differs from other polarized-pluralist countries regarding its higher value for the condition inclusive press market (AT: 0.39). Interestingly, Austria has been assigned to the democratic-corporatist countries by Hallin and Mancini (2004). However, previous research finds that Austria shows striking similarities to the Mediterranean countries, for example regarding journalistic professionalism (Karmasin et al. 2011). In other words, Austria can be considered a hybrid system combining democratic-corporatist elements (“inclusive press market”) as well as polarized-pluralist ones (“high degrees of political parallelism”, a “weak press”).

The liberal media system model consists of distinct cases, namely, the United States and Ireland. However, Ireland’s membership values for other models are slightly higher than those of the United States. This finding underlines the assumption that the United States is the ideal type of the liberal model.

A considerable amount of cases is reflected in several models, yet they share characteristics with different media systems that vary fundamentally from each other. In that sense, they can be considered *hybrid* media systems that incorporate different

Table 6. Comparison of Outliers Identified in the QCA versus the Cluster Analysis.

QCA	Cluster Analysis
Great Britain	Great Britain
Portugal	Portugal
Belgium	Belgium
Netherlands	Netherlands
Austria	
France	

Note. QCA = Qualitative Comparative Analysis.

elements from various media system models. The Netherlands and Belgium, for instance, have a “deregulated media market” but “no weak press”; Great Britain represents the exact opposite. They are, thus, also similar to Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries that tend to show both of these aspects. To round off the discussion, we will provide further insights into the advantages, challenges, limitations, and promising outlooks of the analysis at hand in the following conclusion.

Conclusion

Our study largely verifies the theoretical models of polarized-pluralist and liberal media systems as suggested by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Although there are some cases deviating from the classification of the original typology, the underlying combinations of conditions confirm the theoretical assumptions. The democratic-corporatist model, however, is divided into two specific groups of cases. This result hints at necessary qualifications in the original framework of Hallin and Mancini (2004). By applying the case-oriented approach of QCA for our study, we are able to identify both border and ideal cases and describe them in a precise manner. Table 6 provides a comparison of outliers identified in the cluster analysis (see Brüggemann et al. 2014). Besides being able to describe the border cases precisely, analyzing the data via QCA also identifies two further outliers that are drowned in the noise of the cluster analysis.

The application of QCA for typology building has some advantages over other methods, but it also implies several challenges. In the following, we discuss the advantages as well as challenges of this approach and finally point to possible limitations of this paper.

Advantages

As our analysis has shown, QCA has some striking advantages for the purpose of typology building. In our example, all four models require only three conditions to be characterized. This shows that QCA offers a *parsimonious and intuitive* way of building typologies. This is achieved by the minimization of conditions according to the rules of Boolean algebra. By minimizing, we can exclude conditions that logically do not add

to a significant typology. In contrast, using all four conditions to describe the cases (by simply writing down what combination of conditions each case shows) is what is shown in the actual truth table rows just before the minimization. In fact, the truth tables are very useful for a first idea of how cases group together and what combination of conditions they share. However, relying only on the truth table would result in complex and overspecified models that would, in some instances, create several single-case models. Similarly to cluster analysis, it is eventually a trade-off between many accurate, but complex models and a smaller number of less accurate, but parsimonious models. By reducing the number of conditions, the QCA approach to typology building enables the reduction of the number of models, which results in parsimonious typologies.

Furthermore, QCA differs from methods using linear algebra regarding its *cognitive interest*. While explorative approaches based on traditional, quantitative statistics focus their interpretation on the models with regard to original variables, explorative analyses based on set theory focus on the cases with regard to the models. In other words, both the description of single cases as well as the combinations of conditions are in the center of interest. Using QCA for typology building also sheds further light on the interactions between the conditions. The approach highlights the systematic similarities between the cases constituting the models. Insofar, QCA is suited as a third way between mere quantitative or qualitative approaches and is useful to bridge these different approaches — which is especially useful when building typologies. It is perfect for middle-*N* samples with too little cases for robust statistical calculations, but too much for in-depth qualitative case studies that we find so often in cross-country comparative research.

Finally, QCA allows for calculating fuzzy set scores for all cases, regardless of whether they are set members or nonmembers. These fuzzy set scores reflect the degree to which a case falls into or outside a set. As membership scores for combinations of conditions can be calculated easily, it is possible to have a gradual measure of membership and nonmembership. Thus, it is possible to *compare* fuzzy values of single cases for all models. This can be visualized by using bar charts that display the membership scores of each model for each case. By doing so, outliers, typical as well as border cases can easily be identified. In the analysis at hand, we show this visual strategy in Figure 2.⁹

Challenges

QCA is very sensitive regarding researcher decisions and it is, thus, necessary to pay close attention to the particular steps of the analysis (also see Schneider and Wagemann 2010). One challenge is the *calibration* of data. The calibration is crucial for determining the outcome of a QCA, because it decides on whether a case is a member or non-member of a set. Thus, it is important that this step is done with the necessary attention, and that all decisions are reported transparently. The accompanying justification regarding anchor-points and threshold-levels should refer to the theoretical knowledge to legitimize the decisions.

Furthermore, QCA benefits from clear and sparing *labels*. This is especially crucial in a multistep approach, because conditions are combined based on the outcomes in a first step and used again in later steps of the analysis. These new conditions have to be

labeled with caution to enable further theory building and avoid confusion. The labels should reflect the underlying assumptions, yet they should not be confused with other conditions. Moreover, labels should not simply describe the full solution path but synthesize the conditions in an intuitive way to create a better understanding of the respective step. The importance of labeling also refers to the types that result from the analysis. In sum, the researcher has to make sure that the labeling balances a parsimonious wording, discriminatory power, and distinctness of the concepts as well as transparency. This is, of course, a difficulty that is shared by QCA and cluster analysis.

Finally, *interpreting* the results can be challenging. Compared with quantitative methods based on linear algebra, QCA is more case-oriented in interpreting results. Therefore, only describing the solution paths that resulted from a QCA would be a variable-oriented interpretation that does neither meet the requirements of Boolean algebra, nor use its potential to the fullest. When using QCA for typology building, the researcher has to interpret the cases in the light of the resulting solution paths to identify and explain outliers as well as typical constellations of conditions. In that sense, it is not only an interchange between cases, conditions, and solutions, it similarly is a back and forth process between theory and practice, between “ideas and evidence” (Ragin 2000).

Limitations and Outlook

There are several limitations to the exercise we demonstrated in this study: First, the analysis relies on *secondary data* that were collected in the context of another project. Therefore, some calibration decisions were difficult because the data lacked sufficient variance. For example, the condition “ownership regulation” originally consists of three nominal variables and, thus, only had four values. We only appointed cases to set members that had high values on all the underlying scales. However, a less rigorous calibration would have had considerable impact on the results obtained.

A further limitation of this study is rooted in the *data distribution*. Our calibration led to skewed scales, for example, in the case of political parallelism (small number of members) or press subsidies (small number of nonmembers). However, we argue that this skewed distribution actually reflects the reality of our seventeen cases best. Fortunately, QCA is not nearly as sensitive to skewed distributions as approaches based on linear algebra.

Finally, the *scope* of the study is limited to some degree: The empirical sample only contains Western democracies and, as such, can mainly draw conclusions about Western, established, high-income democracies, limiting the generalizability of the study. It is likely that the framework by Hallin and Mancini (2004) needs to be complemented with further dimensions, such as press freedom (e.g., looking at emerging nations) or foreign media ownership (e.g., looking at Eastern Europe), to discriminate countries beyond the Western media systems. It is an open empirical question whether the addition of further dimensions would lead to new models additional to the “Western” ones, completely changed models, or further “hybrid” models of media systems.

Furthermore, just like the original typology by Hallin and Mancini, the study does not include data on the digital media environment, but remains mainly in the old, “analogue”

world of mass media. There are two main reasons for this: First, one important aim of the study is to empirically test and cross-validate the theoretical model of Hallin and Mancini (2004), who do not include online media in their study. Second, our data sources stem from 2008–2010, which would imply using distorted and outdated data on the volatile and ever-changing digital world. Third, there is hardly any variation for such data on the country level within the world of Western, established democracies: The so-called “digital divide” can mainly be found between socioeconomic classes within countries, as well as between the global North and the global South. To conclude, an update of the dimensions that establish media systems would need to encompass indicators regarding online media and Internet access, such as the Internet penetration, the amount of advertisement capital invested in the web (versus broadcast and print media), and the degree to which citizens source political information online. Expanding the empirical sample beyond the West and complementing the dimensions with indicators relating to press freedom, foreign ownership, and data on the online environment is a logical next step to further pursue the quest for a universal media system typology.

Regardless of these limitations and challenges of application, we feel that QCA is a very fruitful approach for typology building. The results of our example proved to enhance, diversify, and refine the original, theoretical media systems typology by Hallin and Mancini (2004). In addition to the analysis by Brüggemann et al. (2014), QCA proves to be a very useful approach to combine theoretical and empirical typologies and cross-validate unique claims and results by different approaches. There is much added value from the QCA with regard to the precise identification and description of typical cases, border cases, and outliers, thus bridging the gap between big- N quantitative, variable-based approaches and low- N qualitative, purely case-oriented techniques. Looking specifically at border cases, typical cases, and outliers is very rewarding for the researcher and, as we believe, the most interesting thing for the reader as well. The practice of typology building can, therefore, only benefit both conceptually and empirically from a set-theoretic, case-oriented orientation. Thus, we make a case for more research to extend this approach and further show its utility in developing empirical typologies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. For a general discussion of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), see Ragin (2000, 2008); Schneider and Wagemann (2012).
2. So-called INUS conditions: single sets are insufficient but necessary parts of a condition that is itself unnecessary but sufficient (Mackie 1965).

3. In the “normal” application, the researcher checks whether an outcome is consistent among the cases in each truth table row. If all cases that show the same combinations of conditions also share an outcome, this whole combination is a sufficient (but not necessary) condition for said outcome.
4. In set-theoretic terms: The minimized formula is always a superset of the original, more complex formula. The idea is similar to an aggregation of several of the original solutions.
5. A full outline of the operationalization can be found in Brüggemann et al. (2014), Tables 3–6, 1046–51.
6. For country abbreviations, we use ISO-3166-1 ALPHA-2 codes.
7. The operationalization of press subsidies slightly differs from Brüggemann et al. (2014). Instead of using the absolute percentage points of value-added tax (VAT) reduction, we calculated the reduction in percentages. This is due to the fact that the VAT levels strongly vary between the cases. Using the absolute percentage points in VAT reduction means that countries with higher VAT have a greater margin for reductions than countries with lower VAT. Calculating a percentage of the total VAT reduction is a standardized approach that considers the differences in total VAT levels. This calculation would not affect the results of Brüggemann et al. as all cases would cluster together the same, regardless of the small differences in operationalizing press subsidies.
8. The software was constructed by Charles Ragin and can be downloaded here: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cragin/fsQCA/software.shtml>.
9. In quantitative explorative analyses such as cluster analysis, the closest equivalent would be distances of each case to the various cluster centers. However, researchers rarely use that value for additional analyses or interpretations, because standard statistical programs do not calculate the distances for all clusters. Furthermore, these distances are still linear scales compared with the sets that clearly divide between members and nonmembers.

References

- Anagnostou, Dia, Ioana Avădani, Rachael Craufurd Smith, Pierre-François Docquir, Christoph Gusy, Halliki Harro-Loit, Heikki Kuutti, Epp Lauk, Urmas Loit, Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez, Sebastian Müller, Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Daniel Smilov, Yolande Stolte, Andrej Školkay, and Bart Van Besien. 2012. “Media Freedom and Independence in 14 European Countries: A Comparative Perspective.” <http://www.mediadem.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/D3.1.pdf>.
- Bailey, Kenneth D. 1994. *Typologies and Taxonomies: An Introduction to Classification Techniques*. London: Sage.
- Brüggemann, Michael, Sven Engesser, Florin Büchel, Edda Humprecht, and Laia Castro. 2014. “Hallin and Mancini Revisited: Four Empirical Types of Western Media Systems.” *Journal of Communication* 64 (6): 1037–65. doi:10.1111/jcom.12127.
- Brüggemann, Michael, and Katharina Kleinen-von Königsłow. 2013. “Explaining Cosmopolitan Coverage.” *European Journal of Communication* 28 (4): 361–78. doi:10.1177/0267323113484607.
- Collier, David, Jody La Porte, and Jason Seawright. 2008. “Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, 152–73. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cornia, Alessio. 2013. “Will Italian Political Journalism Ever Change?” In *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Raymond Kuhn and Rasmus K. Nielsen, 47–72. London: I.B. Tauris.

- Doty, D. Harold, and William H. Glick. 1994. "Typologies as a Unique Form of Theory Building: Toward Improved Understanding and Modeling." *Academy of Management Review* 19 (2): 230–51.
- Downey, John, and James Stanyer. 2010. "Comparative Media Analysis: Why Some Fuzzy Thinking Might Help. Applying Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis to the Personalization of Mediated Political Communication." *European Journal of Communication* 25 (4): 331–47. doi:10.1177/02673231110384256.
- Fiss, Peer C. 2011. "Building Better Causal Theories: A Fuzzy Set Approach to Typologies in Organization Research." *Academy of Management Journal* 54 (2): 393–420. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2011.60263120.
- Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2005. "Two-Level Theories and Fuzzy-Set Analysis." *Sociological Methods & Research* 33 (4): 497–538. doi:10.1177/0049124104266128.
- Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Humphreys, Peter. 2012. "A Political Scientist's Contribution to the Comparative Study of Media Systems in Europe: A Response to Hallin and Mancini." In *Trends in Communication Policy Research: New Theories, Methods and Subjects*, ed. Natascha Just and Manuel Puppis, 157–176. Bristol: Intellect.
- Humprecht Edda, and Florin Büchel. 2013. More of the Same or Marketplace of Opinions? A Cross-National Comparison of Diversity in Online News Reporting. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (4): 436–61. doi:10.1177/1940161213497595.
- Karmasin, Matthias, Daniela Kraus, Andy Kaltenbrunner, and Klaus Bichler. 2011. "Austria: A Border-Crosser." In *Mapping Media Accountability—In Europe and beyond*, ed. Tobias Eberwein, Susanne Fengler, Epp Lauk, and Tanja Leppik-Bork, 22–35. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag.
- Kvist, Jon. 2006. "Diversity, Ideal Types and Fuzzy Sets in Comparative Welfare State Research." In *Innovative Comparative Methods for Policy Analysis: Beyond the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide*, ed. Benoît Rihoux and Heike Grimm, 167–84. New York: Springer.
- Kvist, Jon. 2007. "Fuzzy Set Ideal Type Analysis." *Journal of Business Research* 60 (5): 474–81. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.01.005.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F. (1937) 1993. *On Social Research and Its Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mackie, John L. 1965. "Causes and Conditions." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (4): 245–64.
- Marron, Maria B. 1996. "Levels of Professionalism and Professional Efficacy among Journalists in Ireland." *International Communication Gazette* 56 (1): 37–57. doi:10.1177/001654929605600103.
- Mazzoleni, Gianpietro. 1987. "Media Logic and Party Logic in Campaign Coverage: The Italian General Election of 1983." *European Journal of Communication* 2 (1): 81–103. doi:10.1177/0267323187002001005.
- Mazzoleni, Gianpietro. 2004. "Italy." In *The Media in Europe*, ed. Mary Kelly, Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Denis McQuail, 126–38. London: Sage.
- McKinney, John C. 1969. "Typification, Typologies, and Sociological Theory." *Social Forces* 48 (1): 1–12. doi:10.1093/sf/48.1.1.
- Nielsen, Rasmus K., and Geert Linnebank. 2011. *Public Support for the Media: A Six-Country Overview of Direct and Indirect Subsidies*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Public%20support%20for%20Media_0.pdf.

- Norris, Pippa. 2009. "Comparative Political Communications: Common Frameworks or Babelian Confusion?" *Government and Opposition* 44 (3): 321–40. doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.2009.01290.x.
- Ragin, Charles C. 2000. *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ragin, Charles C. 2008. *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and beyond*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schneider, Carsten Q., and Claudius Wagemann. 2006. "Reducing Complexity in Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): Remote and Proximate Factors and the Consolidation of Democracy." *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (5): 751–86. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00635.x.
- Schneider, Carsten Q., and Claudius Wagemann. 2010. "Standards of Good Practice in Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy-Sets." *Comparative Sociology* 9 (3): 397–418. doi:10.1163/156913210X12493538729793.
- Schneider, Carsten Q., and Claudius Wagemann. 2012. *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences: A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanyer, James. 2012. *Intimate Politics: Publicity, Privacy and the Personal Lives of Politicians in Media-Saturated Democracies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Trappel, Josef, Hannu Nieminen, and Lars W. Nord. 2011. *The Media for Democracy Monitor: A Cross National Study of Leading News Media*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Weber, Max. (1904) 1991. "Die Objektivität Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis [The Objectivity of Social-Scientific and Socio-Political Knowledge]." In *Schriften zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Max Weber, 21–101. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Author Biographies

Florin Büchel is research and teaching assistant at the Institute for Media and Communication Research, University of Zurich. He is currently writing his PhD about journalistic reporting styles in election campaigns compared across several countries. Additionally, he is interested in various aspects of social scientific methodology, media sociology, political communication and normative media theory.

Edda Humprecht is a senior research and teaching associate in Institute for Media and Communication Research, University of Zurich. She holds a PhD from the University of Zurich and is member of the Department of International and Comparative Media Research. Her research focuses on news performance of digital news media, comparative political communication, and theories of the public sphere.

Laija Castro-Herrero is research and teaching assistant at the Department of Communication and Media Research at the University of Fribourg and a PhD candidate at the National Centre of Competence in Research – Democracy in Switzerland.

Sven Engesser is a senior research and teaching associate at the Institute for Media and Communication Research, University of Zurich. He is interested in research about journalism, political communication, science and environmental communication as well as media systems.

Michael Brüggemann is a professor for climate and science communication at the Institute of Journalism and Communication Research, University of Hamburg. In his research, he focuses on journalism, especially science journalism, and internationally comparative aspects of media research.

Media Effects on Politicians: An Individual-Level Political Agenda-Setting Experiment

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21 (2) 233–252
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215627461
ijpp.sagepub.com


Luzia Helfer¹

Abstract

Media attention is a crucial factor determining what issues make it onto the political agenda. However, studies have also shown that this political agenda-setting effect is not automatic. The present study conceptualizes the media's influence on politics as a function of the media message and the background of politicians and focuses on the moment a member of parliament (MP) learns about an issue through a news report. What aspects of a news report make politicians take action? And are some politicians more likely to take action than others? It introduces an innovative factorial survey experiment to isolate media effects by asking Swiss politicians ($N = 50$) to evaluate fictional news reports. Analyses show that news reports on an issue their party owns covering a negative development published in a quality newspaper are more likely to lead to action. However, negative news mainly affects junior MPs. In contrast to previous studies, issue specialization of the MP does not have a significant effect. Findings are discussed in light of the role of the political system and the power of the media in politics.

Keywords

political agenda-setting, media effects, parliament

Politicians always face a multitude of issues that compete for their attention, only some of which can make it onto the political agenda (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). This study focuses on the role of the media in how the political agenda is formed. Scholars refer to the effect of media on political agendas as the political or policy agenda-setting effect; when an issue receives more attention by the media, politics will

¹Leiden University, The Netherlands

Corresponding Author:

Luzia Helfer, Department of Political Science, Leiden University, P.O. Box 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, The Netherlands.

Email: l.helfer@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

follow. Studies show that this transfer of attention does not work automatically but depends on factors such as the type of coverage, the political agendas, and the (election) period studied (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). At the same time, studies show that not all politicians are likely to be influenced by media in the same way. The current study uses an experimental design to investigate how media coverage can influence political actions by *individual* members of parliament (MPs). To date, political agenda-setting studies have mainly focused on the aggregate-level transfer of issue attention (e.g., Van der Pas 2014). However, in the past years, the contingency of the media's effects and the role of the background of the politicians have started to receive more and more attention by scholars. The present study contributes to the existing literature on political agenda-setting by simultaneously studying the influence of media content and politician and party characteristics in one research design. What is the influence of specific media content such as negativity on politicians' behavior? And is there a systematic variation between MPs in their reaction to media coverage?

A vast number of studies have looked at perceptive measures of influence via surveys, oftentimes combining data from journalists and politicians to investigate the "mediatization" of politics (e.g., Brants et al. 2010; Maurer and Pfetsch 2014; Van Aelst et al. 2008; Van Aelst et al. 2010). By contrast, few researchers explored the association between individual-level characteristics of MPs beyond the party and their behavior in parliament (for an exception, see Cohen et al. 2008). Although survey studies asking MPs about *general* media influence tend to conclude that the media have massive influence on politics, time series analyses attribute less influence to the media (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2011). This makes it particularly relevant to further investigate the media's influence on politics beyond perceptive measures. Yet a number of factors make studying the media's influence on individual politicians particularly challenging and perceptive measures of media influence not suitable for establishing a causal link between media reporting and politicians' behavior. First, political actors use many information sources in addition to the media, which are often confounded with the effects of media coverage. Some aggregate-level studies have included the influence of real-world developments to isolate the media's influence on politics from these developments (e.g., Wanta and Foote 1994). But they have mainly remained on the aggregate (party) level and thus provide only limited insight into the mechanisms of influence of specific media content beyond issues and parties. Second, MPs are embedded within a party structure and a specific institutional context. Deliberations within a party or in informal settings in the hallways of parliament that are oftentimes not accessible to researchers may influence their political decisions (Davis 2007). A politician who intends to take political action based on information from a news report may reverse his or her decision because of a change in the political setting. In such cases, research focusing on behavioral outcome will conclude, erroneously, that media reporting had no influence, simply because it was insufficient to overcome other factors. Yet politicians had been influenced by the coverage. The present study thus complements studies of political agenda setting that have thus far mostly focused on the party organizational level. Across the board, party specialists emphasize the heterogeneity of parliamentary party groups and the fact that instead of parties

and organizations, research should also investigate their individual members (Sieberer 2006). The factorial survey design this study applies shows that there are experimental designs particularly applicable to small elite populations to uncover the factors that drive their behavior. It allows zooming in on how specific media content and the individual politician affect whether issues from the media make it onto the political agenda.

Building on Kepplinger (2007) and Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), this study investigates direct effects of media reporting on political behavior in an experiment. The controlled settings allow a much more stringent test of the causal relationship between media coverage and politicians' actions than studies to date have been able to provide. I conceptualize reactions to media coverage as a function of both the characteristics of the report itself (the message) and the background of the politician who is influenced and takes action (the receiver). With this conceptualization, the study lends from the sender, message, receiver distinction by Shannon and Weaver (1949) which is popular among media effects scholars. In a survey, members of the Lower House of Switzerland ($N = 50$) were shown news reports that had been systematically manipulated on a number of news values and asked whether they would take political action based on the report. This study thus zooms in on the crucial selection moment when politicians decide whether or not to pursue an issue that is brought to their attention through a media report. As actors with scarce resources exposed to a stream of information, politicians have to make these kinds of decisions constantly. Knowing more about the factors that influence whether an MP will pursue an issue after exposure to a media report is key for researchers and policymakers alike.

Findings show that there are considerable differences between MPs in how much importance they attribute to the media for their parliamentary work. Although one third considers media a crucial influence, another third rates the influence of the media on their work rather low in relation to other sources of influence. Results of the experimental study point to the importance of party issue ownership and a politician's political experience in explaining whether media affect politicians' actions. There are however stronger effects of message characteristics. Politicians are more likely to react to negative news published in quality outlets.

Influence of Outlet and News Report Characteristics

Media report according to a strict logic. Scholars often use the theory of news values (Galtung and Ruge 1965) to explain both which events journalists cover and how (Helfer and Van Aelst 2015; Shoemaker and Vos 2009). As a consequence, media reports often share common characteristics even when different events are covered. This study zooms in on a number of news values most pertinent to political media coverage and which previous studies have identified as key factors in the transfer of attention from the media to politics. Those relate to both the media outlet and the content of the report.

First, not all kinds of media outlets have the same influence on politics (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). Newspapers are a central player, both because they can influence

other media outlets (Gans 1979) and because they have been found to affect the political agenda more than television in the European context (Walgrave et al. 2008). However, not all newspapers exert the same influence on politics. Politicians value prestigious broadsheet papers and rely more on them (Kepplinger 2007). Reliable and respected news outlets have also been found to be more influential in the United States (Bartels 1993). Thus, politicians are expected to be more likely to take action based on a report published in a quality newspaper than in a popular one (Hypothesis 1 [H1]).

Next to the outlet publishing the report, the experimental nature of the study allows to study effects of more specific media content. One of the most important aspects of reporting is exogenous negativity, that is, the media portraying a negative development coming from outside the media (Lengauer et al. 2012). Negativity is one of the most important news values that determine journalists' selection of topics (Harcup and O'Neill 2001). There is vast evidence that news consumers process negative information differently from positive one (e.g., Meffert et al. 2006; Soroka 2006). Politicians are no exception. They are expected to be even more responsive to negative news because "political actors must consider that they might be held responsible for their actions or inactions—or how these are played out in the media" (Strömbäck 2009: 239; see also Yanovitzky 2002). This suggests politicians are more likely to say that they would take political action based on news reports covering negative developments (Hypothesis 2 [H2]).

However, reactions on negativity might depend on who is made responsible. Content analyses identified responsibility as one of the most important frames in political coverage (Gerhards et al. 2009; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). A recent study by Thesen (2012) showed that parties react strategically to media coverage depending on the framing (see also Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2009). Opposition parties react more if there are negative developments because it allows them to point out how government parties are not doing well. Government parties, in contrast, tend to lay low if there is negative news. A similar rationale likely applies to politicians. In cases where the media explicitly make parliament responsible, they will want to lay low in the hopes that the story will die. If the news is positive, however, they might be more inclined to draw additional attention and react to the coverage (Hypothesis 3 [H3]).

Influence of Party and Politician Characteristics

In election periods, where influence of the media and politics have often been studied, parties and politicians are responsive to news to gain more votes (Brandenburg 2002; Kleinnijhuis and de Nooy 2011). However, politicians and policymakers adjust their behavior to account for changes in public opinion also between elections (Stimson et al. 1995). Although political scientists assume reelection is the strongest driver of MP behavior, structural factors can also influence their actions (Kingdon 1977). The experimental setting of this study isolates the influence of a number of crucial party and politician characteristics that have been found to moderate the media's political agenda-setting effects.

First, the parliamentary party group provides MPs with a social system within which their action takes place and which can limit their actions. Studies have investigated the effects of the size of the parliament on politicians' media access and found that MPs from bigger parliaments have less contact with journalists than those in small ones (Van Aelst et al. 2010). The effect of parliament size on the influence of media reports on politicians' actions are, however, not as clear. A recent comparative study of European countries did not find an effect of parliament size on self-reported parliamentary behavior (Midtbø et al. 2014). MPs from bigger parliaments were neither more nor less likely to say that media coverage had inspired their actions in the past year. However, it seems likely that a different mechanism affects the parliamentary party group as a whole. For one thing, the size of the party group will influence behavior as each MP in a smaller party group addresses a wider range of issues so that the party can present a broad agenda. Bigger groups typically have a more stringent division of labor among MPs (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010) leading to more specialist MPs. Also, MPs in bigger groups will avoid intervening with issues other members of their party own because such intrusion will threaten their position within the party if they are sanctioned, as there are many others ready to take their place. This suggests MPs from bigger groups will be less likely to take action based on media reports (Hypothesis 4 [H4]).

Another important aspect related to the party is issue ownership. Media oftentimes link parties and politicians with specific issues in their coverage (Walgrave et al. 2009). Scholars often refer to party issue ownership (Petrocik 1996) to explain why a party reacts to some issues covered in the media and not others (Green-Pedersen 2010; Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2011). These effects likely transfer to the individual politician. Reacting on a party's core issue allows MPs to capitalize on existing party profiles (Strøm 1998). Moreover, MPs within a party normally have a shared position on the party's core issue (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010; Owens 2003). Therefore, it is expected that politicians are more likely to take parliamentary action based on a news report that covers an issue their party owns than one their party does not own (Hypothesis 5 [H5]). However, politicians and parties of course not only react to "their" issues but have to take position on a wider range of issues. As mentioned, most parties have specialists who act as representatives of their party in parliamentary committees and often also as the spokesperson on that same issue. MPs considering fostering a personal vote and gaining publicity for themselves (Carey and Shugart 1995) will be reacting to media coverage on "their" issue. Besides providing a starting point for gaining additional media coverage on the issue, such media coverage can be a stepping stone for them to influence the broader political process on that same issue (Davis 2007). Overall, politicians are more likely to take parliamentary action based on a news report covering an issue in which they specialize (Hypothesis 6 [H6]).

Zooming in further on the individual level, media coverage can provide MPs with an opportunity to build their (public) profile and show voters that they are active (Landerer 2014). To increase chances of reelection, they will want to get covered, and reacting to existing media coverage often pays off (Van Santen et al. 2015). Whereas senior MPs often have a solid voter base and are known among the public, new MPs

have to work to gain such a profile leading them to be more inclined to react to media coverage (Cohen et al. 2008). The Swiss proportional open-list system, which provides incumbents, and among them even more the senior MPs, with an advantage in elections through name recognition (Hix 2004: 198), might magnify this effect. Consequentially, junior politicians are expected to be more likely to take parliamentary action based on news reports than senior politicians (Hypothesis 7 [H7]).

To date, studies have mainly either investigated what kind of issues were more likely to make it onto the political agenda or which actors were more likely to react to media coverage. As both have been found to affect the agenda-setting power of the media, the logical next step is to investigate whether those two interact; do some issues or media content effects depend on the politicians' background? In fact, junior MPs' reactions to media content might be accentuated by some media content. Specifically, it would be logical for these MPs to focus on the media content they know plays into journalists' existing news values and increases their chance of getting into the news. As mentioned, negativity is one of the most important news values in journalistic selection. As a consequence, junior MPs are expected to be more likely to take parliamentary action based on a media report covering a negative development than more senior MPs (Hypothesis 8 [H8]). While these junior MPs will jump to the possibility to take action, more senior MPs will be less influenced.

The Swiss Case

As a multiparty system with a tradition as a consensus democracy and a strong welfare state, Switzerland falls within the democratic corporatist model of West European countries (Hallin and Mancini 2004). The formerly historical ties between media and politics have loosened, and Swiss outlets cannot be attributed a specific political orientation anymore (Blum and Donges 2005; Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011). Political reporting is based on criteria of newsworthiness comparable with pragmatic journalistic cultures of countries like Denmark or Germany (Van Dalen 2012). The media content variables tested in this study are in fact a feature of political reporting in countries beyond the one studied due to news values journalists share across the world (Harcup and O'Neill 2001). They always cover a specific issue and often mention a negative development for instance. The effects of these shared media content variables are thus expected to be applicable beyond the Swiss context.

Generalizability of effects of the background of politicians is likely to be more limited as the political system plays a more central role. Party specialists have long emphasized that the structural context provides MPs different motivational structures (e.g., Hix 2004), and there is evidence that the political culture affects the politics–media relationship (Tan and Weaver 2007). Although the Swiss political system can generally be understood as a typical West European multiparty system with independent political parties competing over political power, it does have a few peculiarities. In contrast to other multiparty systems, Swiss MPs show low party discipline (Lanfranchi and Lüthi 1999), and its open-list proportional voting system provides MPs with an incentive to foster a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). This might

accentuate effects of MPs' issue specialization. Another particularity of the Swiss case is that the major parties across the political spectrum are represented in government, and "coalitions" are formed on the spot, depending on the issue at stake (Linder et al. 2006). Studies have already shown that opposition MPs are more likely to react to media coverage than those from government parties (e.g., Midtbø et al. 2014; Thesen 2012; Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2011). Yet low party discipline and the fact that parties are not that central a player in the Swiss system might have some advantages for the present experimental study. They allow to focus on disentangling the influence of more fine-grained individual-level variables on politicians' reactions to media reports. By testing the effects of a number crucial political agenda-setting variables on a more fine-grained level than the mere transfer of issue attention and on the political-party level, the study can provide important insights of the complex political agenda-setting mechanisms on individual MPs beyond the Swiss case.

Method

Politicians consume a vast amount of media content every day, reading multiple newspapers to keep up-to-date with the current developments both inside and outside of politics (Davis 2007). Hence, it seems likely that media influence politics. However, isolating this influence is complicated and calls for an experimental approach. Few studies have done so, however (for exceptions, see Clinton and Enamorado 2014; Protesse et al. 1987). The present study uses the factorial survey design from sociology (see Wallander 2009), a variant of a conjoint design (Hainmueller et al. 2014). It samples experimental conditions based on criteria of statistical efficiency and uses a mixture of within- and between-respondent design by presenting several stimuli to each respondent.

Experimental Design of Media Reports

This study aims to measure the media's influence on political actions by individual politicians. Most substantive parliamentary actions such as motions require the support of other politicians. However, to give politicians a realistic case, a general formulation referring to a symbolic action they themselves can take was chosen. After having read the fictional news reports to members, respondents answered the following question: "Would you take parliamentary action (e.g., ask a parliamentary question) based on this news report?"¹ Responses for each news report respondents received were collected on a slider scale ranging from 1 to 7, with the starting position at 4. Within reports, five content variables were systematically manipulated. Table 1 gives an overview of the variables and their values.

All the variables included in the experiment were carefully operationalized. First, the outlet publishing the report was manipulated. It was either the popular newspaper *Der Blick* or the broadsheet newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Those two outlets have the highest circulation numbers among the paid daily press in Switzerland with 179,000 and 115,000 readers, respectively (WEMF AG für Werbemedienforschung

Table 1. Overview of News Values Associated with Experimentally Manipulated Variables and Their Operationalization.

Variable	Values
Development	Positive–negative (2)
Responsibility attribution	National parliament–not (2) ^a
Issue ownership	Owned–not owned (2) ^b
Media outlet	Broadsheet–popular (2)
Information source	Generally available–investigated (2)

a. Four values were included for this variable. National parliament was contrasted with responsibility to real-world developments, the European Union, and no responsibility attribution.

b. A total of five issues were included. See Table 2 for an overview.

**Figure 1.** Example of a news report presented to respondents (translated).

2013). Like other daily newspapers, neither has a clear partisan leaning (Tresch 2009). A picture of the logo of the media outlet that had published the news report was included (see Figure 1).

The operationalization of negativity was closely connected to the issue of the news report, and therefore valence issues (Stokes 1963) were chosen where possible. These are issues on which parties prefer the same outcome. For instance, decreasing unemployment or preventing the rise of abortion rates. No party would actively advocate higher unemployment numbers or abortion rates.² Although a party-level variable, party issue ownership was included as an experimental manipulation to ensure a balanced research design. To determine issue ownership, a measure of associative party issue ownership (Walgrave et al. 2009) was used based on data from a voter survey of the most recent Swiss election (Lachat 2014). The researcher defined one owned issue for each party MPs approached for the survey belonged to (see following section). Table 2 gives an overview of the owned issues by party and the corresponding positive/negative development formulation.

The effect of causal responsibility attribution was manipulated by including an actor that was made responsible for the described positive or negative development. This variable had four values including an empty reference category. It was either

Table 2. Operationalization of Issue Ownership and Development.

Issue Owner (Party)	Positive Development	Negative Development
Liberals (FDP)	The financial deficit is smaller than predicted	The financial deficit is bigger than predicted
Social democrats (SPS)	Fewer people are unemployed	More people are unemployed
Rightwing (SVP)	Fewer immigrants with the family reunion program	More immigrants with the family reunion program
Greens (GPS)	Air pollution has decreased since previous year	Air pollution has increased since previous year
Christian democrats (CVP)	Fewer women between ages 25 and 35 have had an abortion	More women between ages 25 and 35 have had an abortion

Note. Parties are Liberal Party (FDP), Swiss Social Democratic Party (SPS), Swiss People’s Party (SVP), Swiss Green Party (GPS), Christian Democratic Party (CVP).

ascribed to decisions by the national parliament, decisions by the European Union, or real-world developments (e.g., financial deficit increased due to worldwide economic development). These four were collapsed into two categories for analyses, causal attribution to decisions by the parliament or to another actor.

The five variables with two and four values (Table 1) resulted in 64 possible combinations of experimental stimuli. Of these, a half fraction factorial sample of 32 conditions was drawn using SAS. Sampling of experimental conditions is a key characteristic of the factorial survey approach. Because the sample is drawn systematically and the conditions in a half fraction factorial sample are orthogonal and balanced, all main effects, as well as two-level interaction effects, can be estimated. If all experimental conditions were included, all possible interaction effects could be estimated. Only some of these interaction effects are theoretically interesting, however, based on previous research. In essence, this sampling of experimental conditions leads to a more efficient estimation of effects (for a detailed account, see Dülmer 2007). In this study, once experimental conditions were sampled, the thirty-two conditions, in this case, news reports, were distributed into eight decks of four news reports. Within each deck, the experimental conditions were again balanced, and each respondent was presented with only one of these decks within which media reports were presented in randomized order. Several respondents evaluated each deck to discern message from respondent effects. Overall, MPs judged the media reports as fairly realistic with a mean score of 4.4 (*SD* = 1.47) on a 7-point scale.

Data Collection and Respondents

Data were collected during June 2014 when the Swiss parliament was in session. German-speaking members of the Lower House of parliament (two hundred seats) were targeted. Previous elections had been held in 2011, the next ones were scheduled for October 2015, and campaigns had not started. The researcher approached respondents

by two methods: personally in parliamentary buildings with a tablet computer ($n = 20$) and via e-mail containing a link to the online survey. MPs were informed that the study conducted by Leiden University investigated what made news reporting politically relevant.³ This led to an overall response rate of 47 percent, or sixty-one MPs.⁴ Some MPs had not filled in the complete survey, resulting in an N of fifty for all analyses presented. This equals 39 percent of contacted MPs and 31 percent of the Swiss Lower House's membership. Both in terms of parliamentary experience ($M = 7.48$ years, $SD = 5.84$) and number of female respondents (32 percent), respondents reflected the population of the Swiss Lower House at the time (experience $M = 7.6$ years, 31 percent female).

Information on party and politician characteristics were mostly obtained from parliament records. Issue specialization was coded as a dummy variable based on parliamentary committee membership. Parliamentary experience, which was coded in years, as well as gender, age, and the size of the parliamentary party group were obtained from official records too. Models control for issue importance to control for the momentary political relevance of an issue and isolate effects of party issue ownership and issue specialization. After they had evaluated the fictional news reports, in a survey, respondents were asked to indicate how politically important a specific issue was at the moment on a 7-point scale. These matched the issues used in the fictional news reports.

Statistical Models

Every respondent evaluated four news reports. This resulted in 198 observations from fifty respondents from five different political parties. To account for the clustering of observations, multilevel models were used, which are clustered at the respondent level. Because the model includes only one party-level variable, the size of the parliamentary party group, there was no need to define an additional party level.⁵ The dependent variable showed a right-skewed distribution as politicians were more likely to not react to a media report than to do so. Because ordinal logit models produced similar results as linear models with random intercepts using maximum likelihood estimation, the latter were chosen for reasons of parsimony. When interaction effects are included, the according slopes were freed. The `xtmixed` command in Stata 13.0 was used. Visual inspection and the Shapiro-Francia W' test ($p = .26$) show that the residuals of the full model (Table 3 Model 2) are normally distributed. Correlations between explanatory variables are usually low, for instance, with issue importance and specialization ($r = .11, p = .113$).

Results

Media content plays an important role when it comes to the media's influence on politicians. The empty random effects model (Table 3, Model 0) shows that differences in the media reports drive approximately 80 percent of the variance in taking political action which is to be expected due to the experimental design. Yet not all aspects of a media message are equally likely to trigger politicians to take political action.

Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Regression Models of News Report and Politician Characteristics' Influence on Parliamentary Actions Taken by Swiss MPs.

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a	Model 3b
Fixed effects					
Constant	2.52*** (0.15)	-0.04 (0.58)	-2.68* (1.13)	-1.43 (1.12)	-1.97† (1.11)
Experimentally manipulated message characteristics (Level 1)					
Quality newspaper (popular)		0.38* (0.19)	0.41* (0.19)	0.40* (0.18)	0.49* (0.19)
Negative development (positive)		0.99*** (0.20)	1.02*** (0.19)	1.00*** (0.23)	1.55*** (0.30)
Responsibility politicians (other)		0.04 (0.22)	0.12 (0.22)	0.10 (0.27)	0.08 (0.21)
Newspaper source (government)		-0.16 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.19)	-0.19 (0.18)	-0.17 (0.19)
Party owned issue (not owned) ^a		0.50** (0.19)	0.43* (0.19)	0.43* (0.18)	0.39* (0.19)
Politician characteristics (Level 2)					
Specialization (not specialized)			0.37 (0.36)	0.53 (0.34)	0.35 (0.36)
Parliamentary experience in years			-0.09** (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)
Issue importance (scale 1-7)			0.14* (0.06)	0.14* (0.06)	0.14* (0.06)
Gender (male)			0.46 (0.29)	0.39 (0.30)	0.46 (0.29)
Age in years			0.04* (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
Party characteristics					
Parliamentary party group size			0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Interaction effects					
Negative development × Responsibility politicians				0.11 (0.45)	
Negative development × Parliamentary experience					-0.075* (0.03)
Random effects					
Residual variance					
Message (Level 1)	2.24	1.75	1.31	1.20	1.28
Politician (Level 2)	0.51	0.63	0.64	0.00	0.65
Development (freed slope)				0.53	
Parliamentary experience (freed slope)					0.01
Likelihood ratio test					
χ^2		36	16	13	5
Probability		.000	.012	.000	.069

Note. N = 198 from fifty politicians. Answers to question "Would you take political action based on this news report (e.g., ask a parliamentary question)?" 7-point scale. MP = member of parliament. Reference categories for dummy variables in brackets. a. This party characteristic was manipulated on the respondent level to ensure a balanced experimental design. †p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The first hypothesis focuses on the media outlet and expects that news reports published in a quality newspaper would be more likely to make MPs react than reports from popular newspapers (H1). Indeed, in line with previous research, reports published in more credible quality newspapers are more likely picked up by politicians than reports published in a tabloid one ($b = .41, p = .033$, Table 3, Model 2). Next, we look at how the specific content of a media report might affect politicians. As expected (H2), negative developments are more likely to trigger a political reaction than positive ones ($b = 1.02, p < .001$). For instance, rising unemployment numbers prompt more action than falling ones. These findings show that politicians do care about the slant of the report. However, as strategic actors, they might not always be inclined to react to such reports of negative development. Particularly, when they are made responsible for the negative development, they might choose to lay low not to attract any additional attention (H3). An interaction effect was included (Table 3, Model 3a) to test whether such an effect is present. Results are, however, not significant ($b = .11, p = .811$), suggesting indifference to whether the report suggests parliament is responsible. Also, the main effect of responsibility attribution does not have a significant effect ($b = .10, p = .811$). This finding may reflect the general formulation of responsibility, as more direct mentions of the party or even the politician's own name might produce different results.

Media messages themselves of course do not have effects on politics; politicians must react to them. The low mean value of the dependent variable indicates that on average, politicians do not often react to media coverage ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.66$). When the Swiss politicians participating in this study were asked to rank sources of influence apart from the media, they however showed considerable variation.⁶ Although on average politicians placed the media on the second last and last rank out of five, a quarter (26 percent) said media were their most important or second most important inspiration for their parliamentary work. Results of the experimental study confirm that there is considerable variation between politicians. Adding politician characteristics improves model fit significantly, $\chi^2(5) = 16, p = .012$. We first look at effects of party-level variables before we turn to individual politician characteristics.

The size of the parliamentary party group does not affect individual MPs' propensity to react to media reporting ($b = .00, p = .850$).⁷ They are not influenced by the size of their faction (H4). Party issue ownership, in contrast, is a party-level variable that does exert considerable influence as expected (H5). Swiss politicians are significantly more likely to react to media reports covering an issue their party owns ($b = .43, p = .024$). This finding is consistent across all models, even when respondent characteristics are added.

Controlling for these party-level characteristics and considering the low party discipline usually associated with Swiss politicians, the background of the MP might exert considerable influence compared with the party. However, MPs do not react significantly differently to news reports covering an issue in which they specialized than others (H6, $b = .37, p = .313$). Individual issue specialization also does not change the effect of party issue ownership (Table 3, Models 2 and 3). This indicates that, at least in the Swiss case, for MPs, party considerations might be of more importance

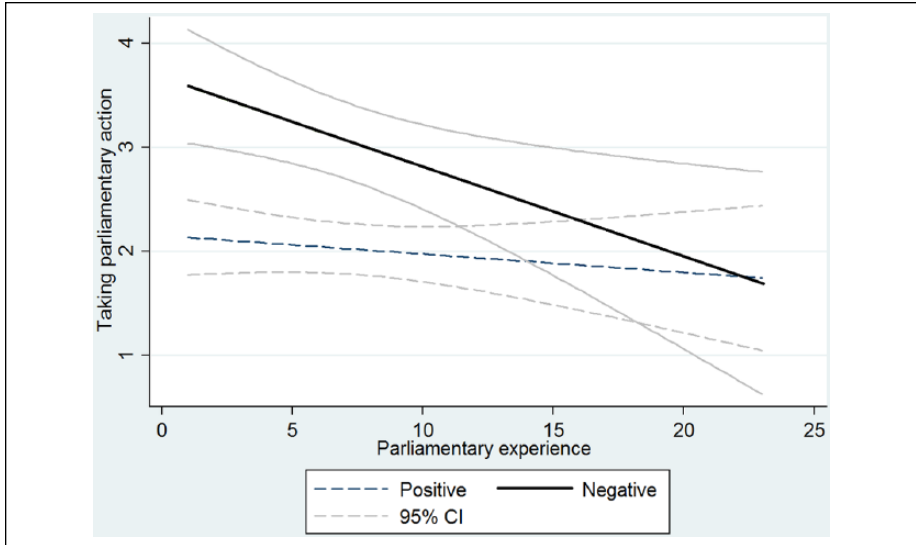


Figure 2. Influence of parliamentary experience on MP reaction to reports covering positive/negative developments.
 Note. MP = member of parliament; CI = confidence interval.

than their own personal specialization. Issue importance, which was included as a control variable to be able to isolate effects of party issue ownership and individual issue specialization, shows a consistent significant effect (Model 2, $b = .13, p = .036$). How politically important an issue is at that moment is crucial, the individual issue specialization of the MP less so.

Finally, as expected, junior MPs are more likely to react to media reports (H7), or, put differently, seniority does have a negative effect. Results show a significant negative effect for every additional year of parliamentary experience ($b = -.09, p = .002$) when controlling for age. Although substantially small, with only a shift of half a point on the 7-point scale for every ten years of parliamentary experience, this finding may have important implications for the composition of parliaments and limitations of tenure. The fact that media have less influence with more senior MPs might provide an argument against limiting tenure for some.

The conditionality of the media’s agenda-setting influence was expected to be dependent on both the tenure and whether negativity was included in the media coverage. Junior MPs are expected to react more to negative media coverage than their senior colleagues (H8). The analysis shows a significant interaction effect ($b = -.08, p = .020$). Junior MPs are more likely to take action based on a negative news report than more senior MPs (Figure 2). In fact, for senior MPs, it does not seem to matter whether the news report covers a positive or negative development. They do not care so much whether unemployment numbers are rising or declining, at least not when the information is disclosed in a media report. They may have learned that there are other sources

of information that are more important to them than the media, which makes other aspects of a report more important. Although the effects of negativity vary across MPs depending on their seniority, other aspects of the message have a consistent influence on MPs with differing levels of parliamentary experience. Interaction effects with other message characteristics were not significant (results not in tables).

Conclusion

This study focused on immediate individual-level reactions to media content by politicians when they first learn about an issue through the media. Operationalizing the influence of the media on politics as a combination of both the message and the background of the politician receiving the message, it provided insight into the interplay of factors in those two realms and into how the effects of one might be influenced by the other. Using an innovative experimental design with politicians in the Swiss Lower House, it showed that the media's influence on politics is conditional. News reports covering issues an MP's party owns (H5) and covering a negative development (H2) were more likely to trigger politicians to take political action. This finding underlines the reciprocity of the relationship between politicians and journalists. Media are more likely to report messages on negative developments (O'Neill and Harcup 2009). At the same time, political response may be feeding a problematic spiral of negativity in political reporting because the mutual focus on negative news eventually affects both voters (e.g., Levi and Stoker 2000) and journalists (e.g., Brants et al. 2010). However, results also show that not all MPs react the same. Junior MPs were much more likely to react to negative coverage than positive, whereas senior MPs showed no systematic bias toward negative coverage (H8). These findings may have important implications for discussions on the limitation of tenure of MPs, but determining those implications rests on determining whether or not media responsiveness suggests responsiveness to the interests of voters. Seniority had a negative effect overall on the influence of media (H7), which is contrary to other studies. In a large survey study, more senior MPs reported that they were more likely to be inspired by media coverage in their work while there was a negative effect of age (Midtbø et al. 2014). Although results of a comparative study based on surveys with politicians are not directly comparable with the present single-country experimental approach, these diverging findings underline that more research is needed to establish whether there is a possible cohort effect in politicians' reactions to media coverage.

Because this study was limited to a single country, relating its findings to those of others only allows for speculation about the role of the political context. For instance, not finding an effect of the parliamentary party group (H4) could be explained by the weak role of the political party in the Swiss system. Due to low levels of party discipline and the fact that all major parties are represented in government, differences between party groups are smaller than those between individual politicians. Considering the weak role of the party, it might be surprising that individual issue specialization (H6) did not have a significant effect. Instead, when it comes to the issue, results show that the party suddenly matters. In light of the reelection goal of politicians and the

small Swiss voting districts, this is, however, not surprising. Politicians mostly compete with opponents from other parties instead of fellow party members. Capitalizing on existing party issue ownership profiles is thus advantageous for their reelection in their respective district.

The study for instance points to the centrality of the issue in the media's effects on politics. How would these findings translate to other political systems? It is plausible that in less federalized political systems with higher party discipline, individual issue specialization might play a more prominent role; politicians would not be influenced by their party's issue ownership but by their own role within the party as specialist on a particular issue. Those findings have implications for the ongoing discussion of the power of the media over politics and politicians. In line with other recent studies, the results here point to the central role of strategic considerations in politicians' reactions to media coverage (Melenhorst 2015). Only when the framing is right and an issue fits with their interest will media coverage have an influence on politics.

With these insights, the study provides a stepping stone to further investigate the role of political systems in political agenda setting. The factorial survey design is particularly suitable to flush out cross-national differences in media influence on politics. The extensive control over the stimuli means high levels of internal validity, and replicating this study in different political systems could provide important insights. In fact, such an avenue of research would have to truly combine theories of political behavior and the content of (political) reporting. The study furthermore shows that studying small elite populations experimentally is in fact possible, although not without its challenges as others have noted (e.g., Kepplinger 2007).

Of course, experimental approaches also have their limitations. The media reports respondents evaluated were brief. Besides naming a development and mentioning a responsible actor, they did not elaborate on possible solutions to the (negative) development. Because MPs are strategic actors, the additional information that real news reports often provide might significantly influence MPs' reactions and lead them to react to responsibility attributions (H3). Future studies might focus on effects of negative reports and variations thereof. Although there was significant variation between respondents, politicians were only asked a hypothetical question with no actual cost of taking action. The fact that even in this setting on average they were more likely *not* to react to media coverage shows that the media's influence on individual politicians might be rather limited. At the same time, the centrality of the issue of the report shows that each media report likely affects different politicians. Although the cumulative aggregate level of media on politics might be substantial, different politicians and parties use the media to further their goals each time, leading to more limited effects on the individual level.

Finally, this study focuses on the moment when an MP learns about an issue and decides to (maybe) take action. However, even if an MP has the intention to take action, others might influence the politician to refrain from doing so, and observational data would not be able to detect an effect. The albeit hypothetical experimental approach allows to do so. In addition, measures of actual behavior will not capture if an MP brings an issue up at a parliamentary party group meeting or when

an MP talks to fellow politicians, which are, however, important aspects of the media's influence (Kepplinger 2007). Knowing what triggers a politician's interest is therefore key if we want to gain a more in-depth understanding of the process of political agenda setting. This study has allowed to take a closer look at what happens when politicians first consume media reports and think about taking political action.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, the editor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen and Peter Van Aelst, Rudy Andeweg, and Lotte Melenhorst for their inspirational and helpful comments.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was supported by the Dutch Scientific Organization [452-10-016] and by the University of Antwerp [29081].

Notes

1. Exact question wording: "Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen parlamentarischen Vorstoss machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?" In addition, respondents were asked to indicate for each news report whether they would bring it up if a parliamentary party meeting were held today. Responses to this question are not discussed here. Question order was randomized.
2. Although only the Christian Democrats strictly oppose abortion in Switzerland, no party would actively advocate for rising abortion numbers.
3. The low mean value of the dependent variable (see results section) shows that most likely the framing of the study did not lead to an overrepresentation of MPs who think media are particularly influential.
4. The survey was administered in German to the 129 German speaking MPs (65 percent of two hundred MPs in the Lower House) affiliated with the five biggest parties occupying more than 85 percent of the seats (for a list see Table 2). Response rate was between 47 percent and 65 percent for each party, except for one party (28 percent).
5. Although operationalized at the party level, party issue ownership was manipulated on the news report level to ensure a balanced experimental design and is therefore reported accordingly in the results tables.
6. The survey question following the experimental part of the study asked politicians to rank a number of factors that had inspired their parliamentary work in the past year based on importance. Those were personal experiences, their party, their constituents, interest groups, and the media. For a similar question, see, for example, Walgrave et al. (2008).
7. Also, when party dummies were included in the models, there was no significant and systematic variation between parties (results not in tables).

References

- Andeweg, Rudy, and Jacques Thomassen. 2010. "Pathways to Party Unity: Sanctions, Loyalty, Homogeneity and Division of Labour in the Dutch Parliament." *Party Politics* 17 (5): 655–72.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1993. "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure." *American Political Science Review* 87 (2): 267–85.
- Blum, Roger, and Patrick Donges. 2005. *Politischer Journalismus in der Schweiz* [Political journalism in Switzerland]. Berne: Haupt Verlag.
- Brandenburg, Heinz. 2002. "Who Follows Whom? The Impact of Parties on Media Agenda Formation in the 1997 British General Election Campaign." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 7 (3): 34–54.
- Brants, Kees, Claes de Vreese, Judith Möller, and Philip van Praag. 2010. "The Real Spiral of Cynicism? Symbiosis and Mistrust between Politicians and Journalists." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 15 (1): 25–40.
- Carey, John M., and Matthew S. Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas." *Electoral Studies* 14:417–40.
- Clinton, Joshua D., and Ted Enamorado. 2014. "The National News Media's Effect on Congress: How Fox News Affected Elites in Congress." *The Journal of Politics* 76 (4): 928–43.
- Cohen, Jonathan, Yariv Tsfati, and Tamir Sheaffer. 2008. "The Influence of Presumed Media Influence in Politics Do Politicians' Perceptions of Media Power Matter?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72 (2): 331–44.
- Davis, Aeron. 2007. "Investigating Journalist Influences on Political Issue Agendas at Westminster." *Political Communication* 24 (2): 181–99.
- Dülmer, Heinz. 2007. "Experimental Plans in Factorial Surveys: Random or Quota Design?" *Sociological Methods & Research* 35 (3): 382–409.
- Galtung, Johan, and Marie Holmboe Ruge. 1965. "The Structure of Foreign News." *Journal of Peace Research* 2 (1): 64–90.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1979. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press
- Gerhards, Jürgen, Anke Offerhaus, and Jochen Roose. 2009. "Wer ist verantwortlich? die europäische union, ihre nationalstaaten und die massenmediale attribution von verantwortung für erfolge und misserfolge" [Who Is Responsible? The European Union, Her National States and the Attribution of Responsibility for Success and Failure through Mass Media]. In *Politik in der Mediendemokratie* [Politics in the Media Democracy], ed. Frank Marcinkowski and Barbara Pfetsch, 529–58. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer. 2010. "Bringing Parties into Parliament: The Development of Parliamentary of Activities in Western Europe." *Party Politics* 16 (3): 347–69.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, and Peter B. Mortensen. 2009. "Who Sets the Agenda and Who Responds to It in the Danish Parliament? A New Model of Issue Competition and Agenda-Setting." *European Journal of Political Research* 49 (2): 257–81.
- Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. "Causal Inference in Conjoing Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments." *Political Analysis* 22 (1): 1–30.
- Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanitzsch, Thomas, and Claudia Mellado. 2011. "What Shapes the News around the World? How Journalists in Eighteen Countries Perceive Influences on Their Work." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16 (3): 404–26.

- Harcup, Tony, and Deirdre O'Neill. 2001. "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited." *Journalism Studies* 2 (2): 261–80.
- Helfer, Luzia, and Peter Van Aelst. 2015. "What Makes Party Messages Fit for Reporting? An Experimental Study of Journalistic News Selection." *Political Communication* 33 (1): 59–77.
- Hix, Simon. 2004. "Electoral Institutions and Legislative Behavior: Explaining Voting Defection in the European Parliament." *World Politics* 56 (2): 194–223.
- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kepplinger, Hans Mathias. 2007. "Reciprocal Effects: Toward a Theory of Mass Media Effects on Decision Makers." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 12 (2): 3–23.
- Kingdon, John W. 1977. "Models of Legislative Voting." *The Journal of Politics* 39 (3): 563–95.
- Kleinnijenhuis, Jan, and Wouter de Nooy. 2011. "Adjustment of Issue Positions Based on Network Strategies in an Election Campaign: A Two-Mode Network Autoregression Model with Cross-Nested Random Effects." *Social Networks* 35 (2): 168–77.
- Lachat, Romain. 2014. "Issue Ownership and the Vote: The Effects of Associative and Competence Ownership on Issue Voting." *Swiss Political Science Review* 20 (4): 727–40.
- Landerer, Nino. 2014. "Opposing the Government but Governing the Audience? Exploring the Differential Mediatization of Parliamentary Actors in Switzerland." *Journalism Studies* 15 (3): 304–20.
- Lanfranchi, Prisca, and Ruth Lüthi. 1999. "Cohesion of Party Groups and Interparty Conflict in the Swiss Parliament: Roll Call Voting in the National Council." In *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*, ed. Shaun Bowler, David M. Farrel and Richard S. Katz, 99–120. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Lengauer, Günther, Frank Esser, and Rosa Berganza. 2012. "Negativity in Political News: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings." *Journalism* 13 (2): 179–202.
- Levi, Margaret, and Laura Stoker. 2000. "Political Trust and Trustworthiness." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3:475–507.
- Linder Wolf, Yannis Papadopoulos, Hanspeter Kriesi, Peter Knoepfel, Ulrich Kloeti, and Pascal Scarini, eds. 2006. *Handbuch der Schweizer Politik* [Handbook of Swiss politics]. 4th Edition. Zurich, Switzerland. NZZ Libro.
- Maurer, Peter, and Barbara Pfetsch. 2014. "News Coverage of Politics and Conflict Levels." *Journalism Studies* 15 (3): 339–55.
- Meffert, Michael F., Sungeun Chung, Amber J. Joiner, Leah Waks, and Jennifer Garst. 2006. "The Effects of Negativity and Motivated Information Processing during a Political Campaign." *Journal of Communication* 56 (1): 27–51.
- Melenhorst, Lotte. 2015. "The Media's Role in Lawmaking: A Case Study Analysis." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 20 (3): 297–316.
- Midtbø, Tor, Stefaan Walgrave, Peter Van Aelst, and Dag Arne Christensen. 2014. "Do the Media Set the Agenda of Parliament or Is It the Other Way around? Agenda Interactions between MPs and Mass Media." In *Representing the People: A Survey among Members of Statewide and Substate Parliaments*, ed. Kris Deschouwer and Sam Depauw, 188–200. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Neill, Deirdre, and Tony Harcup. 2009. "News values and Selectivity." In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, 161–74. New York: Routledge.
- Owens, John E. 2003. "Part 1: Cohesion: Explaining Party Cohesion and Discipline in Democratic Legislatures: Purposiveness and Contexts." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 9 (4): 12–40.

- Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (3): 825–50.
- Protest, David L., Fay Lomax Cook, Thomas R. Curtin, Margaret T. Gordon, Donna R. Leff, Maxwell E. McCombs, and Peter Miller. 1987. "The Impact of Investigative Reporting on Public Opinion and Policymaking Targeting Toxic Waste." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 (2): 166–85.
- Semetko, Holli A., and Patti M. Valkenburg. 2000. "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News." *Journal of Communication* 50 (2): 93–109.
- Shannon, Claude, and Warren Weaver. 1949. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Shoemaker, Pamela J., and Tim P. Vos. 2009. "Media Gatekeeping." In *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Don W. Stacks and Michael B. Salwen, 2nd Edition, 75–89. New York: Routledge.
- Sieberer, Ulrich. 2006. "Party Unity in Parliamentary Democracies: A Comparative Analysis." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 12 (2): 150–78.
- Soroka, Stuart N. 2006. "Good News and Bad News: Asymmetric Responses to Economic Information." *The Journal of Politics* 68 (2): 372–85.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89 (3): 543–65.
- Stokes, Donald E. 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57 (2): 368–77.
- Strøm, Kaare. 1998. "Parliamentary Committees in European Democracies." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 4 (1): 21–59.
- Strömbäck, Jesper. 2009. "In Search of a Standard: Four Models of Democracy and Their Normative Implications for Journalism." *Political Communication* 6 (3): 331–45.
- Tan, Yue, and David H. Weaver. 2007. "Agenda-Setting Effects among the Media, the Public, and Congress, 1946–2004." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (4): 729–44.
- Thesen, Gunnar. 2012. "When Good News Is Scarce and Bad News Is Good: Government Responsibilities and Opposition Possibilities in Political Agenda-Setting." *European Journal of Political Research* 52 (3): 364–89.
- Tresch, Anke. 2009. "Politicians in the Media: Determinants of Legislators' Presence and Prominence in Swiss Newspapers." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 14 (1): 67–90.
- Van Aelst, Peter, Kees Brants, Philipp van Praag, Claes de Vreese, Michiel Nuytemans, and Arjen van Dalen. 2008. "The Fourth Estate as Superpower? An Empirical Study on Perceptions of Media Power in Belgium and the Netherlands." *Journalism Studies* 9 (4): 494–511.
- Van Aelst, Peter, Adam Shehata, and Arjen van Dalen. 2010. "Members of Parliament: Equal Competitors for Media Attention? An Analysis of Personal Contacts between MPs and Political Journalists in Five European Countries." *Political Communication* 27 (3): 310–25.
- Van Aelst, Peter, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2011. "Minimal or Massive? The Political Agenda-Setting Power of the Mass Media According to Different Methods." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16 (3): 295–313.
- Van Dalen, Arjen. 2012. "The People behind the Political Headlines. A Comparison of Political Journalists in Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain." *International Communication Gazette* 74 (5): 464–83.
- Van der Pas, Daphne. 2014. "Making Hay While the Sun Shines: Do Parties Only Respond to Media Attention When the Framing Is Right?" *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (1): 42–65.


- Van Santen, Rosa, Luzia Helfer, and Peter Van Aelst. 2015. "When Politics Becomes News: An Analysis of Parliamentary Questions and Press Coverage in Three West-European Countries." *Acta Politica* 40 (1): 45–63.
- Vliegenthart, Rens, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2011. "Content Matters. The Dynamics of Parliamentary Questioning in Belgium and Denmark." *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (8): 1031–59.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Jonas Lefevere, and Michiel Nuytemans. 2009. "Issue Ownership Stability and Change: How Political Parties Claim and Maintain Issues through Media Appearances." *Political Communication* 26 (2): 153–72.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, and Peter Van Aelst. 2006. "The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory." *Journal of Communication* 56 (1): 88–109.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Stuart Soroka, and Michiel Nuytemans. 2008. "The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power." *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (6): 814–36.
- Wallander, Lisa. 2009. "25 Years of Factorial Surveys in Sociology: A Review." *Social Science Research* 38 (3): 505–20.
- Wanta, Wayne, and Joe Foote. 1994. "The President-News Media Relationship: A Time Series Analysis of Agenda-Setting." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 38 (4): 437–48.
- WEMF AG für Werbemedienforschung. 2013. "WEMF Auflagebulletin 2013." <http://www.wemf.ch/pdf/de/auflagen/20131030BulletinD.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2014).
- Yanovitzky, Itzhak. 2002. "Effects of News Coverage on Policy Attention and Actions: A Closer Look into the Media-Policy Connection." *Communication Research* 29 (4): 422–51.

Author Biography

Luzia Helfer is a PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science, Leiden University, the Netherlands.

Negative Campaigning and the Logic of Retaliation in Multiparty Competition

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21 (2) 253–272

© The Author(s) 2016 

Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626566
ijpp.sagepub.com



**Martin Dolezal¹, Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik¹,
and Wolfgang C. Müller¹**

Abstract

The extant literature has demonstrated that the *logic of retaliation* is a core feature of negative campaigning. Attacks by one side induce counterattacks by the other. Yet most research on the interactive nature of negative campaigning is limited to two-party competition and provides little theoretical justification for why political actors should respond to attacks with counterattacks. The present paper addresses these research gaps. We argue that the negativity bias in human information processing and the zero-sum nature of elections make retaliation a rational strategy. Importantly, these arguments also imply that retaliation may not be the only plausible response to attacks in multiparty systems. Rather, parties may prefer to react to attacks from one competitor by attacking another. To grasp empirically how being attacked and attacking are related, we conduct a highly disaggregated time series analysis of such instances while controlling for other factors that may influence actor behavior. Our analyses draw on several thousand party press releases issued during three national election campaigns in Austria, a typical European multiparty system. They show that retaliation is an important strategy also in multiparty politics. Yet in such context, parties do not exclusively follow a tit-for-tat approach but rather display more complex patterns of attack behavior.

Keywords

negative campaigning, political communication, multiparty competition, Austria

Introduction

Extant research has identified retaliation as one important driver of negative campaigning (e.g., Damore 2002; Druckman et al. 2010; Lau and Pomper 2004). Candidates

¹University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Corresponding Author:

Wolfgang C. Müller, Department of Government, University of Vienna, Rooseveltplatz 3/1/126b,
1090 Vienna, Austria.

Email: wolfgang.mueller@univie.ac.at

who are attacked by their opponents often respond in kind—not least as this is what political practitioners canonically recommend (Theilmann and Wilhite 1998; Trent et al. 2011). Yet the study of the *logic of retaliation* remains incomplete in several respects: First, it lacks a clear theoretical argument as to why retaliation is preferable to ignoring attacks or responding with positive messages about oneself. Second, empirical analyses of retaliation often rely on aggregate data at the level of campaigns and thus find it difficult to demonstrate or at least approach causality. Third, it is not clear to what extent the insights from the best-researched elections, those in the United States, travel to systems with multiparty competition, proportional electoral systems, and coalition governments.

The contribution of this article is to address these three shortcomings. Theoretically, we build on the evidence of negativity bias in human information processing (Ito et al. 1998; Rozin and Royzman 2001). We argue that in combination with the logic of elections as zero-sum games, negativity bias makes retaliation a dominant strategy in two-party, winner-takes-all competition. Yet we also show that this argument may not necessarily generalize to other contexts. This discussion results in two hypotheses that capture specific aspects of the logic of retaliation, both in general terms and with respect to the context of multiparty competition. Empirically, we improve on existing research designs by conducting the most high-resolution time series analysis of attacks and counterattacks to date. As regards the political context, our analysis covers three national elections in Austria (2002, 2006, and 2008), a typical European multiparty system with proportional representation (PR) and coalition governments. Our study thus also contributes to the emerging field of research in negative campaigning in multiparty systems (Nai and Walter 2015).

Our main finding is that although multiparty competition allows for alternative strategies, the logic of retaliation is empirically strong. Once attacked, parties are likely to pay back the attacker in kind. Yet we also find evidence for more complex interactions, with the targets not turning against the sender but against parties not originally involved in the attack. This finding lends further support to the notion that multiparty competition and PR are crucial context factors that analyses of negative campaigning need to take into account.

The Logic of Retaliation in Negative Campaigning

Scholars have amassed a huge wealth of research on negative campaigning. Explanations of its causes have largely focused on structural and performance-related factors. Incumbency, ideology, partisanship, campaign resources, performance in the polls, closeness of a race, and candidate gender, among others, have all been hypothesized to affect the tendency to “go negative” (Lau and Pomper 2004; Lau and Rovner 2009). Although numerous studies find these factors to have an impact on parties’ and candidates’ strategies, they tend to take a very aggregated and static view of campaigns. In a more disaggregated and dynamic perspective, campaigns might be conceived of as a stream of interaction where parties and candidates continuously respond to various stimuli and do so in strategically differentiated ways.

Retaliation in the Extant Literature

How do parties react to attacks? Parties may simply neglect or repudiate them by defending the issue position or the candidate under attack without directly confronting the opponent. But they may also resort to a counterattack, as political consultants typically recommend (Trent et al. 2011). This seems to be intuitive: “If we had to choose one hypothesis [to explain negative campaigning] that we were most certain would be supported by the data, this would be our bet” (Lau and Pomper 2004: 33). The only exception to this rule might be attacks by weak candidates, which may safely be neglected (Theilmann and Wilhite 1998; Trent et al. 2011).

Although they are typically recommended as responses to attacks, counterattacks might also backfire. Experimental research indicates that both target and attacker incur substantial favorability losses. However, while respondents overtly condemn attacks, they also show higher levels of spontaneous conformity with a candidate who punches back (Carraro et al. 2012; see also Roddy and Garramone 1988). Furthermore, counterattacks can restore electoral support for the target to almost preattack levels (Craig et al. 2014). These results thus provide a rational foundation for counterattacks.

Empirical evidence based on observational research is rather thin. Only a small number of nonexperimental studies have examined whether the amount of attacks deployed by one party is dependent on how much it is attacked by its opponents. Some results are unambiguous and show a strong effect of previous attacks (Damore 2002; de Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis 2013; Druckman et al. 2010; Haynes and Rhine 1998; Lau and Pomper 2001, 2004). Other studies report mixed findings (Ridout and Holland 2010). Kahn and Kenney (1999), by contrast, did not find the expected association at all.

Why Retaliate? Zero-Sum Elections and Negativity Bias

With respect to the theoretical foundation, the logic of retaliation appears to be so intuitive that its plausibility does not seem to require a great amount of justification. Researchers often refer to common wisdom, the advice of political consultants (Lau et al. 1999), or do not explain the rationale at all. If they do, two closely linked arguments are typically presented: First, a candidate who does not counterattack “create[s] the image that he [is] ineffectual and indecisive” (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995: 117). Second, while negative campaigning is indeed often disliked,¹ mass media and voters are more likely to regard counterattacks as legitimate (Krupnikov and Bauer 2014).

To provide a more solid theoretical foundation, our argument builds on two premises. First, elections are zero-sum games. All gains and losses in vote shares sum to zero. It is therefore the *relative popularity* of parties that counts. Second, negative messages weigh heavier in human information processing than positive ones. If attacks are believed to have a negative net effect on the target, the loss in relative popularity can only be made up for by retaliating against the attacker.

The zero-sum logic obviously applies to two-party competition but is true even in multiparty systems. Here, one party’s loss is not automatically a win for any specific

opponent, but it is certainly a gain for *some* competitor. What matters is thus not how voters evaluate parties in absolute terms but how parties stack up against each other. The vote-seeking imperative therefore dictates that parties try to maximize their support in the electorate *relative to that of others*.

With respect to our second premise, many (if not all) politicians and strategists believe that negative messages have an effect on voter evaluations, which is disadvantageous for the target even though the direct evidence that negative campaigning yields a net benefit for the attacker is rather thin (Lau and Pomper 2004; Lau et al. 1999; Lau et al. 2007). However, even if political operatives believe that attacks are harmful for the target, why should they choose to respond in kind instead of compensating the assumed losses with positive messaging about their own party? We argue that the prime obstacle to choosing a positive response over retaliation lies in the asymmetric impact that negative and positive messages have on evaluative processes—a phenomenon denoted as *negativity bias* (Rozin and Royzman 2001). As Ito et al. (1998) show, negativity bias is already present at very early stages of the evaluative process. Furthermore, negative messages are more influential than positive ones as they are more likely to be believed (Hilbig 2009). Thus, in many dimensions, “[b]ad is stronger than good” (Baumeister et al. 2001).

Negativity bias also applies to political messaging (Meffert et al. 2006).² The most important implication in this regard is that negativity increases the news value of political messages (Groeling 2010; Lengauer et al. 2011). Given that the empirical material in our analysis comes from press releases, it is crucial to consider not only how voters will be influenced by party messages but also how the media may respond to campaign communication.

All else being equal, attacks and conflict frames are more newsworthy than non-controversy (Harcup and O’Neill 2001; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). In competing for the attention of journalists, parties therefore have incentives to respond to negative messages about themselves with negative messages about their competitors. Otherwise, their message may not attract as much media attention as the opponents’ initial attack.

The increasing importance of direct communication through social media notwithstanding, most campaign communication is still delivered through traditional media channels. Political actors thus do not only have to consider voter responses when drafting messages, but they also have to anticipate the process of journalistic news selection and adapt their behavior to the media logic.

This suggests that parties and candidates who are attacked may not find themselves able to reverse the negative effect of that attack by focusing on positive messages about themselves. As *bad* weighs heavier than *good* in the minds of voters and journalists, the damage resulting from an attack can only be compensated by responding in kind. Thus, targets of negative campaigning may be able to make up *relative* losses by retaliating and thus lowering the electorate’s perception of their opponent. The most straightforward way to offset the damage is to inflict a similar cost on the political opponent. Responding to an attack with a counterattack thus emerges as the dominant strategy. This is our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): An attack from party A on party B raises the probability of a counterattack from party B on party A.

A counterattack is defined as an attack by the original attack's target shortly after having been hit and directed against the attacker. This logic of retaliation is perfectly suited for two-party races and elections following a winner-takes-all logic. Multiparty races with PR, by contrast, might follow a different logic. Here, our understanding of negative campaigning remains limited as the existing studies focus mostly on the United States. Notwithstanding the importance of U.S. campaign style as international model generator, these studies also reflect the specifics of this country's political system. This clearly applies to studies dealing with retaliation in two-party races such as elections to the U.S. presidency and congress (Damore 2002; Druckman et al. 2010; Kahn and Kenney 1999; Lau and Pomper 2001, 2004). However, even analyses covering multicandidate races such as nomination campaigns or primaries (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Ridout and Holland 2010) are not mirror pictures of PR systems due to the electoral system's winner-takes-all logic.

Moving to Multiparty Competition

Research on negative campaigning in (European) multiparty competition has so far not addressed the dynamics of campaign interactions. The only exception is the study of de Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis (2013) who find no evidence that Dutch politicians directly respond to attacks with counterattacks. Rather, political actors attack the allies of their attackers, but this result may in part be due to the fact that the study does not aggregate individuals into parties.

As argued above, the zero-sum logic also applies to multiparty competition, and the logic of retaliation (H1) might be dominant even in such races. Yet there are several important reasons why direct retaliation against the sender may not always be the most preferred option for the targeted party in multiparty systems.

First, there is often a stark asymmetry in size between sender and target. Larger parties have incentives to ignore smaller ones and instead focus on rivals within their "weight category," simply because the electoral impact of attacking a smaller party is likely to be limited (Skaperdas and Grofman 1995; Walter 2014). Also, large mainstream parties may want to define the campaign's center of gravity and not let it be captured by niche parties and niche issues (Meyer and Wagner 2013). Rather than merely absorbing the hits from smaller parties, larger parties may choose to react by attacking their main rivals to compensate the relative losses that they have incurred from being attacked.

Second, elections typically produce minority situations that necessitate the formation of a coalition government. Parties therefore need to be strategic about which of their competitors to attack, given that they may need partners after the election (Elmelund-Præstekær 2008; Walter and van der Brug 2013; Walter et al. 2014). A party's goal then may not simply be to maximize its vote share but rather to maximize its bargaining power in postelection negotiations and therefore to maximize the number of potential viable coalition governments that it is part of. For example, if one

right-wing party attacks another, retaliation may produce some intra-bloc voter exchange without expanding the overall prospects of a right-wing majority. The better strategy may be to react to attacks by attacking those rivals from which voters need to be drawn to produce the preferred coalition.

Third, a party may react to attacks by targeting whichever party it sees as its main competitor based on current poll ratings. Skaperdas and Grofman (1995), for instance, predict that parties in three-way competition never attack the weaker of their two opponents—this formal model assumes single-member districts, though. Still, even in multiparty PR systems, it may be rational for the runner-up to always attack the leading party (e.g., when finishing first confers an advantage in the government formation process). However, similar reasoning applies to smaller parties, as coming in just ahead of a competitor may make a significant difference in terms of postelection bargaining power.

A specific characteristic of multiparty competition is heightened competition for media attention. Given time and space constraints, it is more difficult to cover the policy statements and campaign messages of seven parties than of two. In instances where—for whatever reason—direct retaliation is not the preferred option, this makes reacting to attacks with positive issue or valence messages an unattractive option, as such messages are even less likely to prevail than they would be under two-party competition. The best reaction in such cases is then to attack a third party, as such a message will be of higher news value.

These arguments illustrate that attacks need not always trigger retaliation but can sometimes lead the targeted party to direct negative messages toward a third actor. Attacks by one party against another may simply lead the attacked party to reinforce its strategy of attacking whichever competitor they have singled out as their preferred target anyway. While one may object that it is difficult to ascertain in such instances whether it was the first attack that caused the second, we rely on extremely close temporal sequence and thousands of observations to examine whether the correlations in attack patterns conform to our assumptions.

To illustrate our theorizing more clearly, consider a party system with five parties A to E. Direct retaliation (H1) looks like this (arrows denote temporal sequence):

B attacks A → A attacks B

However, as it becomes clear from the examples above, other forms of interaction are also possible. These interactions involve more than two parties:

[C or D or E] attacks A → A attacks B

B attacks A → A attacks [C or D or E]

Here, party A chooses to attack a party other than the original instigator. Assume, for instance, that it may have been A's strategy to attack B all along and that, for reasons such as those outlined above, the party would prefer not to be dragged into conflicts with other parties. So the way in which A reacts to an attack by C, D, or E is to

reinforce its attacks on B. This type of interaction is captured by the two hypotheses below. H2a outlines the scenario in which party A always prefers to attack B and therefore reacts to attacks by other parties by targeting B. Under H2b, party A prefers to ignore attacks from B and reacts by attacking some other party.³

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): An attack on party A by *parties other than B* increases the probability of an attack of A on B.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): An attack on party A by party B increases the probability of an attack of A on *parties other than B*.

Empirical Strategy

Case Selection

This study focuses on Austria, a typical West European parliamentary democracy with a PR electoral system, multiparty politics, coalition governments, and a democratic-corporatist media system (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Plasser and Lengauer 2010). While negative campaigning has been an important feature of elections throughout the postwar period, systematic studies are mostly missing (see Dolezal et al. 2015a).

In the present paper, we analyze three of the most recent general elections (2002, 2006, and 2008). In this period, the party system has included the two parties dominating postwar politics, the Social Democrats (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs [SPÖ]) and the Christian democratic People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei [ÖVP]), the Greens (Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative), and the populist radical right Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs [FPÖ]) plus its breakaway, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich [BZÖ]).

In terms of government formation, the by far most frequent coalition type in postwar Austria has been a grand coalition of the SPÖ and ÖVP. Yet in the elections studied, three different governments were in office, ÖVP-FPÖ (2002), ÖVP-BZÖ (2006), and SPÖ-ÖVP (2008), the first and the last of which were terminated in conflict and resulted in early elections. As a general pattern, Austrian parties act very cohesively and do not make public their coalition preferences before the election but sometimes commit *not* to form particular coalitions (e.g., the SPÖ has ruled out the FPÖ as a coalition partner since 1986).

Data Source

Analyzing negative campaigning with a special focus on parties' dynamic interaction requires data that capture not only which parties use these strategies and whom they attack. We also need the exact timing of party messages to infer patterns of attacks and counterattacks empirically—information not all sources provide. Our analysis is based on parties' press releases. While common as a data source in agenda-setting studies (Brandenburg 2002; Tedesco 2005), press releases have hardly been used to analyze negative campaigning.⁴ This is a missed opportunity as they are a great source for

observing parties' campaign behavior and addressing our specific research question for two main reasons:

First, press releases are under the direct control of the sender. This is an obvious but important advantage compared with other modes of communication used by scholars so far. The analysis of media reports, for instance, does not capture party behavior directly but observes what journalists write about it (Elmelund-Praestekaer and Molgaard-Svensson 2014; Hansen and Pedersen 2008). Journalists may interpret actions by parties in a way that was actually not intended. Patterns of attack and retaliation, for example, might therefore not always be reported accurately.

Second, press releases are issued frequently and continuously during the campaign. Among all traditional means of political communication, this one allows for the quickest responses. The fact that every press release is traceable to an exact date and time also allows for precise sequencing. We can therefore analyze whether parties respond immediately to relevant stimuli such as attacks.

Contrary to media reports and televised debates, advertisements are also under the full control of parties and—in some contexts—occur at a high frequency. Especially TV spots that have become almost synonymous with political advertising, but also ads in newspapers and party posters have been widely used to study negative campaigning (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Elmelund-Præstekær 2008, 2010; Geer 2006; Hansen and Pedersen 2008; vanHeerde-Hudson 2011; Walter 2014; Walter and Vliegenthart 2010). In Austria, however, TV spots are not relevant as legal provisions prevent parties from buying airtime in the ORF, the still dominant public broadcast station (Plasser and Plasser 2002). By contrast, ads and posters are highly relevant, but they do not allow for a dynamic analysis as parties typically use the same design for several days or even weeks.

To be sure, there are some caveats about using press releases. The most relevant for the present purpose stems from the fact that they are a tool actors use to attract media attention. Parties may therefore adapt their message to journalistic selection criteria giving more weight to conflict and attacks. The overall level of negativity displayed by press releases should therefore not necessarily be considered representative of other campaign communication. However, we expect no bias in favor of our hypothesis from this fact, as heightened negativity should be present equally across parties.

Our study is based on all press releases sent by parties and candidates within the final six weeks of each campaign. We obtained them from the Austrian Press Agency's (APA) Web site www.ots.at. We discard releases by low-ranking politicians (e.g., local representatives) as we are only interested in the national parties' strategies. However, all candidates on party lists are regarded as relevant actors.

The remaining 6,750 press releases are coded using a relational method of content analysis that links actors to issues and/or other actors. A variable called *predicate* connects them and records whether their relation is positive (1), negative (−1), or neutral (0). This method goes back to the work of Kleinnijenhuis and his collaborators (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings 2001) and was also used by Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012). The Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) has further developed this approach and employs it for the analysis of various kinds of political text (see Dolezal et al. 2014; Dolezal et al. 2015b).

Table 1. Press Releases: Total Numbers Coded and Shares of Attack Releases.

Year	SPÖ	ÖVP	FPÖ	BZÖ	Greens	Total
Total number						
2002	1,063	672	123	— ^a	190	2,048
2006	1,049	477	261	297	167	2,251
2008	834	695	397	303	222	2,451
Attack releases						
2002	44.0%	33.7%	41.5%	— ^a	43.7%	40.7%
2006	41.6%	50.1%	55.9%	47.8%	55.1%	50.1%
2008	28.9%	45.3%	38.3%	45.9%	43.2%	40.3%

Source. AUTNES, only parties with representation in parliament included.

SPÖ = Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, social democrats; ÖVP = Österreichische Volkspartei, Christian democrats/conservatives; FPÖ = Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, populist radical right; BZÖ = Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, populist radical right; Greens = Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative. a. The BZÖ was founded in 2005.

Following the standard approach in the literature (e.g., Geer 2006: 23), we define negative campaigning as any statement that is critically directed at a competitor. In our data, this refers to every actor–actor relation with a negative predicate whenever the actor addressed is a competing party or a representative of such a party. Table 1 shows the overall number of press releases and the share of attacks. As the BZÖ (an FPÖ split-off) only dates from 2005, there are fewer parties in 2002.

As mentioned above, counterattacks refer to the original actor–actor relation and are identified by sequence and extreme temporal closeness: Responses have to occur within the next one-hour interval after the original attack. Naturally, even an immediate response does not necessarily include a reference to the issue or candidate attribute the attacker referred to as we focus on the actors at the level of parties. Our identification strategy thus is in line with advice by political consultants who often argue that an attacked candidate should not address the issue mentioned by the opponent but rather seek to change the topic. Moreover, also using the level of parties is in line with parties' actual behavior. A high-ranking politician, for instance, a cabinet minister, under attack from, let's say, an MP is not likely to respond in person as this would enhance the status of the attacker.

Data Structure

To capture the interactions posited in the hypotheses, we structure our data such that each observation represents one directed party dyad at a specific point in time during the campaign. Each directed party dyad consists of a sender and a target. In addition, we create a dichotomous indicator that records whether there was an attack by the sender on the target in each hour between 8 A.M. and 12 P.M. in the six weeks prior to the day of the election.⁵ This will be the dependent variable in the statistical models. We use the same information to create lagged indicators of attacks from the target on

the sender as our central independent variables. Although it is still possible that interactions between parties occur at an even faster pace and thus escape our analysis (e.g., an attack sent out at 11.15 and a response at 11.40), using hours as the units of observation allows for many of the crucial interactions to be picked up.⁶

The data structure requires the use of binary time-series–cross-section (BTSCS) models. To capture time dependency in the data, we employ the technique proposed by Beck et al. (1998). In addition, we include four substantive control variables:

First, we include predictors for TV debates, which, in Austria, feature all possible pairs of party leaders. We assume that the televised confrontations raise the level of negativity between the two parties involved in the debate.

Second, we account for the ideological distance between sender and target (using data from the Chapel Hill expert surveys, see Bakker et al. 2015). In this regard, the literature generates expectations in two directions (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Ridout and Holland 2010; Walter 2014): Proximity makes parties likely partners—which should dampen negative campaigning—but at the same time, these parties should also compete for the same pool of voters—which should make negative campaigning more likely.

Third, we account for a core feature of multiparty systems: the need to form coalitions. Notwithstanding the vagueness in stated party coalition preferences in Austria, the number of potential coalitions is actually quite limited. Drawing on coalition theory, we assume ideological distance (de Swaan 1973; Martin and Stevenson 2001) and cabinet incumbency (Franklin and Mackie 1983; Golder et al. 2012) to be useful predictors of politicians' expectations for the postelection period. In addition to ideological distance, we therefore also include a dummy variable for party dyads comprised of two government parties.

Fourth, we account for the size ratio between sender and target, as we expect larger parties to be targeted more frequently, while smaller ones will often be ignored. Finally, random effects pick up unobserved heterogeneity at the party-dyad level (fixed effects models are shown in the online appendix).

Descriptive statistics of all independent variables are shown in the online appendix. There, we also explain how we address the time structure in the data. The number of observations in our data is a function of the number of directed party dyads (twenty in 2008 and 2006, twelve in 2002) and the number of hours and days in the campaign (six weeks = forty-two days, 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. = sixteen hours). In addition, the use of lagged variables reduces the number of observations in the analysis.

Analysis

Table 2 presents the BTSCS regressions modeling dyadic attack and response patterns in the three campaigns. The dependent variable is dichotomous and records whether there was an attack from the first party in the dyad (the sender) specifically directed at the other party in the dyad (the target).

There is strong support for H1 in the three models. All three coefficients are positive and highly significant. Transforming them into odds ratios suggests that an attack from A on B increases the odds of a subsequent attack from B on A by somewhere between

Table 2. Explaining Attacks on Target within Dyad (Direct Retaliation).

	Hypothesis	2002	2006	2008
Attack from other party in dyad (t - 1)	H1	0.588*** (0.134)	0.387** (0.126)	0.424*** (0.123)
Attack from any party outside dyad (t - 1)	H2a	0.039 (0.137)	0.162 (0.117)	0.189† (0.111)
TV debate		0.696*** (0.172)	0.146 (0.139)	0.726*** (0.119)
Left-right distance (sender-target)		0.104 (0.195)	-0.147 (0.106)	-0.045 (0.067)
Coalition parties		-0.670 (0.889)	-0.666 (0.843)	2.044*** (0.450)
Size ratio (sender-target)		0.097 (0.254)	-0.140† (0.074)	-0.447*** (0.110)
Hour		9.587*** (0.831)	7.386*** (0.638)	7.784*** (0.607)
Hour (squared)		-0.634*** (0.055)	-0.497*** (0.043)	-0.518*** (0.040)
Hour (cubed)		0.013*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	0.011*** (0.001)
Day		0.005 (0.004)	0.008* (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)
Spells		-0.004 (0.010)	0.001 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.008)
Spline 1		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Spline 2		-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Spline 3		0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Constant		-48.021*** (4.127)	-35.764*** (3.113)	-38.627*** (2.981)
ρ		.220	.203	.092
N		7,560	12,600	12,600
Log likelihood		-1,333.3	-1,996.0	-2,153.4

Note. Entries are coefficients and standard errors from random-effects binary time-series-cross-section (BTSCS) models, with presence/absence of an attack from a specific sender on a specific target as the dependent variable. The number of observations is the number of party dyads × days × hours (one hour drops because of the lagged variables). There are twelve dyads (four parties) in 2002 and twenty dyads (five parties) in 2006 and 2008.

†p < .1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

47 and 80 percent. This implies that direct retaliation is a substantively important driver of the campaign behavior of political parties also in a multiparty PR system.

By contrast, no significant effect is found for H2a. Attacks against a specific party are no more likely if the sender has come under attack from any other party. Whereas all the coefficients are positive, the statistical significance is too low to give us much confidence that the effects are not due to chance. Therefore, we cannot confirm the first expectation derived from our second hypothesis.

Next, we use the same data set to run three models that specify the presence of an attack by the first party in each directed party dyad on *any party but the second party* as the dependent variable (Table 3). This allows us to examine H2b, that is, whether attacks by a specific party will make it more likely that the targeted party attacks any other party except the attacker. As it is plausible that parties' attack behavior is driven by attacks from other parties than the first party in the dyad, we control for the influence of these attacks.

The models give some support for the second implication of H2. At least in the 2002 and 2008 campaigns, attacks from A on B had an effect on the likelihood of B attacking parties other than A. Both coefficients are positive and significant. The odds ratios are 1.38 (2002) and 1.34 (2008), respectively, suggesting that an attack by a specific party increased the odds of the target attacking any other party by more than a third.

The coefficient for the 2006 campaign is considerably smaller (a value of 0.17 translates into an odds ratio of 1.18) and comes with a *p* value of 0.13. While we can thus be relatively confident that some of the patterns implied by H2 were present in 2002 and 2008, the evidence is less conclusive for 2006.

In five out of six models in Tables 2 and 3, TV debates have a strong impact on the probability of parties attacking each other. The coefficients of around 0.7 or 0.8 (in 2002 and 2008) translate into odds ratios of around 2 or larger, suggesting that the odds of an attack on a party at least double on days when TV debates featuring that party's leader take place (the effects are smaller for the 2006 campaign).

The dyad-specific control variables in Tables 2 and 3 yield some further insights. First, the left–right distance between sender and target is not statistically significant in any of the models. This may have to do with the absence of preelectoral coalitions in Austria where parties typically fight elections on their own.

The predictor for the incumbent coalition, by contrast, is significant in several specifications. Remember that in 2002 and 2006, the sitting government was of the center–right (ÖVP-FPÖ and ÖVP-BZÖ, respectively), whereas a grand coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP was in place in 2008. The results from both sets of models suggest that the back and forth between these two parties was the dominant line of conflict during all campaigns, no matter the composition of the incumbent government. With regard to direct retaliation (Table 2), the coalition predictor is significant only for the 2008 grand coalition. The overall level of negativity was thus considerably higher in the SPÖ–ÖVP and ÖVP–SPÖ dyads. In Table 3, the predictors are positive and significant in 2002 and 2006 (when the SPÖ was in opposition), meaning that attacks from the coalition partner increased the probability of an *attack on another party*, thus suggesting that the main line of conflict coincided with the government–opposition divide. Again, the dyads comprised of the two traditional major parties are the most negative in those two campaigns.

Table 3. Explaining Attacks on Targets Outside Dyad.

	Hypothesis	2002	2006	2008
Attack from other party within dyad (t - 1)	H2b	0.325* (0.133)	0.172 (0.114)	0.291** (0.109)
Attack from any party outside dyad (t - 1)	control	-0.067 (0.194)	-0.177 (0.150)	0.045 (0.139)
TV debate		0.654*** (0.138)	0.313** (0.099)	0.824*** (0.093)
Left-right distance (sender-target)		-0.057 (0.102)	-0.029 (0.079)	-0.077 (0.072)
Coalition parties		1.052* (0.468)	1.342* (0.602)	0.353 (0.504)
Size ratio (sender-target)		-0.521*** (0.140)	-0.154** (0.053)	-0.576*** (0.112)
Hour		9.910*** (0.621)	8.240*** (0.449)	7.259*** (0.417)
Hour (squared)		-0.655*** (0.041)	-0.554*** (0.030)	-0.489*** (0.027)
Hour (cubed)		0.013*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)
Day		0.005 (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)
Spells		-0.074 (0.110)	-0.412*** (0.081)	-0.259*** (0.070)
Spline 1		-0.002 (0.003)	-0.012*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)
Spline 2		0.001 (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)
Spline 3		-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Constant		-47.278*** (3.041)	-38.912*** (2.205)	-33.656*** (2.066)
ρ		.075	.131	.117
N		7,560	12,600	12,600
Log likelihood		-2,137.2	-3,528.3	-3,723.6

Note. Entries are coefficients and standard errors from random-effects binary time-series-cross-section (BTSCS) models, with presence/absence of an attack from a specific party on any party as the dependent variable. The number of observations is the number of party dyads × days × hours (one hour drops because of the lagged variables). There are twelve dyads (four parties) in 2002 and twenty dyads (five parties) in 2006 and 2008.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Finally, the size ratio (the ratio of sender size to target size) is negative and significant in several model specifications, indicating that there is a tendency for larger

parties to ignore their smaller competitors (and for smaller ones to focus on larger competitors). This effect is weaker (or nonexistent) for direct retaliation in 2002 and 2006 (Table 2)—the two campaigns when a small party participated in government (FPÖ and BZÖ, respectively).

Even a cursory look at the time effects in the six models suggests that attacks strongly follow a daily cycle (see the online appendix). The hour variables we use to model this dynamic are highly significant and thus capture the attack interactions that occur by mere temporal coincidence (even though some of them may have been genuine sequences of attacks and counterattacks). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that it is the inclusion of the hour variables that renders the spells and splines covariates insignificant in Table 2. Most of the time dependency picked up by these predictors thus relates to the daily increase and decrease in communication activity rather than to macro-trends over the course of the campaign.

To present our main findings more intuitively, Figure 1 reports the predicted probabilities associated with H1. For the calculation of these quantities, the random part of the model capturing variation in the level of negative campaigning between party dyads (u_i) was assumed to be zero.

In 2002, the increase in the probability of a targeted counterattack is from 4.4 to 7.8 percent, in 2006, it is from 3.9 to 5.4 percent, and in 2008, it is from 4.9 to 6.9 percent. While these may appear to be small numbers, bear in mind that most parties do not attack all other parties at every hour during the campaign. While the back and forth of attacks and counterattacks between specific parties at certain times can be quite intense, most parties choose to ignore some of their competitors much of the time and only attack them when they feel pressured to do so.

Figure 2 plots the effects for the second part of H2. Here, we find that the baseline probabilities are somewhat higher. This is not surprising as the dependent variable now includes all attacks by a party, irrespective of who the target is. The effect sizes themselves, however, are rather modest, with increases in the predicted probabilities from around 12.5 to around 15 percent.

Conclusion

The growing literature on negative campaigning outside the United States (Nai and Walter 2015) demonstrates that attacks are a central campaign strategy also in multiparty systems with PR, even though the incentives that guide party behavior in such systems are very different. In what constitutes (with the possible exception of de Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis 2013) the first dynamic study of the logic of retaliation in a multiparty system, we report not only evidence for the commonalities but also the differences in attack behavior between two-party, winner-takes-all competition and multiparty PR systems. In both systems, actors who have been attacked display a tendency to retaliate against the perpetrator of the attack. In addition, we find that in multiparty systems, negative messages against one party are, in some cases, also reactions to attacks from a different competitor.

Our analysis uses press releases as a data source, thus being able to observe campaign communication at very short time intervals. Yet it is important to consider that

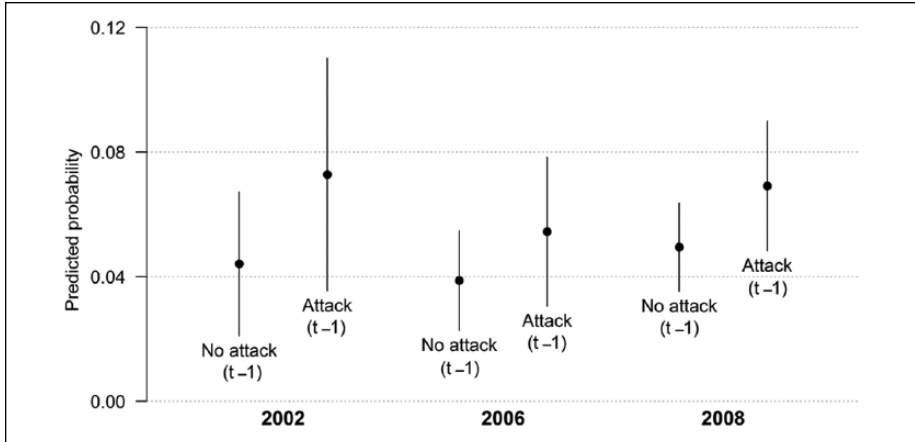


Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of attacks on target within dyad (direct retaliation, H1). Note. Calculation of predicted probabilities based on models reported in Table 2, assuming $u_i = 0$. All other covariates kept at their means (continuous variables) or modes (categorical variables).

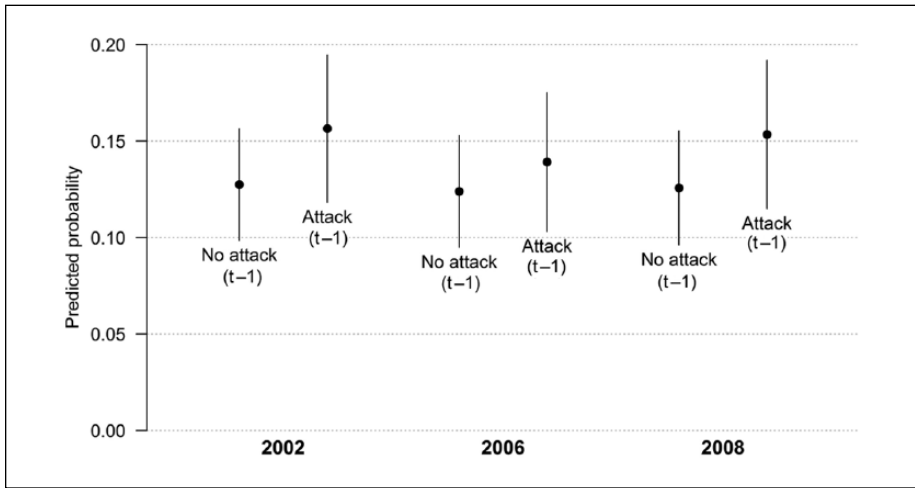


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of attack on targets outside dyad (H2b). Note. Calculation of predicted probabilities based on models reported in Table 3, assuming $u_i = 0$. All other covariates kept at their means (continuous variables) or modes (categorical variables).

party communication via press releases must conform to the logic of journalistic news selection to reach the voters. This caveat notwithstanding, our study makes three contributions:

First, drawing on the literature on negativity bias in information processing, we provide a more solid theoretical argument than previous research for why attacks by

one political actor often elicit counterattacks. In the light of this research, responding in kind is indeed a rational strategy: The zero-sum nature of elections means that relative losses in support can only be compensated by attacking a competitor.

Second, the zero-sum argument has different implications for two-party and multiparty competition. Whereas retaliation is the only plausible response strategy in two-party systems, multiparty systems allow for more complex patterns of interactions between parties.

Third, we draw the most high-definition picture of the use of negative messages during election campaigns to date. By observing attacks and counterattacks at hourly intervals, we not only leverage a rich data source. The close temporal proximity between individual messages (and different statistical controls) also gives us greater confidence that the responses we observe are, in fact, caused by the attacks immediately preceding them.

Substantively, our results show that retaliation is a strong empirical phenomenon in multiparty elections. Yet the analyses also indicate that party interactions do not exclusively follow the logic of retaliation. Parties also react to attacks by targeting other parties than those striking first. To be sure, the evidence for the tit-for-tat strategy is more robust than that for the more complex reaction patterns involving more than two parties. The latter empirical phenomenon must therefore be considered secondary in importance. We suggest that our findings may be driven by asymmetries in party size or strategic considerations related to postelectoral bargaining. Identifying the precise conditions under which parties attack each other in multiparty competition is thus one of the foremost tasks for future research on negative campaigning.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Research for this article was conducted under the auspices of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES), a National Research Network (NFN) sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF; S10903-G11).

Notes

1. Lau et al. (2007) report that thirty-three out of forty studies examining the impact of negative messages on the attacker find such a *backlash effect*.
2. Note that we do not aim to test the presence of negativity bias in political communication. Rather, negativity bias is part of the argument that portrays retaliation as a rational strategy.
3. In terms of substance, these two hypotheses mean similar things. Yet we separate them here because they demand two different empirical strategies.
4. The only exception we are aware of is Benoit's *functional analysis* of campaign communication, which also considers negative references to other candidates or parties (e.g., Cho and Benoit 2006).
5. Excluding the hours between midnight and 8 A.M. eliminates only a tiny number of attacks from our sample (five in 2002, seven in 2006, and three in 2008).

6. We have also run our models with two-hour and three-hour lags. The substantive results remain unchanged. The significant effects, however, are mostly present for the covariates lagged by one hour.

References

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative. How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bakker, Ryan, Catherine De Vries, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2015. "Measuring Party Positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999–2010." *Party Politics* 21 (1): 143–52.
- Baumeister, Roy F., Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen D. Vohs. 2001. "Bad Is Stronger than Good." *Review of General Psychology* 5 (4): 323–70.
- Beck, Nathaniel, Jonathan N. Katz, and Richard Tucker. 1998. "Taking Time Seriously: Time-Series-Cross-Section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (4): 1260–88.
- Brandenburg, Heinz. 2002. "Who Follows Whom? The Impact of Parties on Media Agenda Formation in the 1997 British General Election Campaign." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 7 (3): 34–54.
- Carraro, Luciana, Luigi Castelli, Ioana Breazu, Giulia Campomizzi, Antonella Cerruto, Massimiliano Mariani, and Ivano Toto. 2012. "Just Ignore or Counterattack? On the Effects of Different Strategies for Dealing with Political Attacks." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 42 (6): 789–97.
- Cho, Sooyoung, and William Benoit. 2006. "2004 Presidential Campaign Messages: A Functional Analysis of Press Releases from President Bush and Senator Kerry." *Public Relations Review* 32 (1): 47–52.
- Craig, Stephen C., Paulina S Rippere, and Marissa Silber Grayson. 2014. "Attack and Response in Political Campaigns: An Experimental Study in Two Parts." *Political Communication* 31 (4): 647–74.
- Damore, David F. 2002. "Candidate Strategy and the Decision to Go Negative." *Political Research Quarterly* 55 (3): 669–85.
- de Nooy, Wouter, and Jan Kleinnijenhuis. 2013. "Polarization in the Media during an Election Campaign: A Dynamic Network Model Predicting Support and Attack among Political Actors." *Political Communication* 30 (1): 117–38.
- de Swaan, Abram. 1973. *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formations: A Study of Formal Theories of Coalition Formation Applied to Nine European Parliaments after 1918*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Dolezal, Martin, Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik, and Wolfgang C. Müller. 2015a. "When Do Parties Attack their Competitors? Negative Campaigning in Austria, 2002–2008." In *New Perspectives on Negative Campaigning: Why Attack Politics Matters*, ed. Alessandro Nai and Annemarie Walter, 163–79. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Dolezal, Martin, Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik, Wolfgang C. Müller, and Anna Katharina Winkler. 2014. "How Parties Compete for Votes: A Test of Saliency Theory." *European Journal of Political Research* 53 (1): 57–76.
- Dolezal, Martin, Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik, Wolfgang C. Müller, and Anna Katharina Winkler. 2015b. "Analyzing Manifestos in Their Electoral Context: A New Approach Applied to Austria, 2002–2008." *Political Science Research and Methods*. Published electronically August 26. doi:10.1017/psrm.2015.38.

- Druckman, James N., Martin J. Kifer, and Michael Parkin. 2010. "Timeless Strategy Meets New Medium: Going Negative on Congressional Campaign Web Sites, 2002–2006." *Political Communication* 27 (1): 88–103.
- Elmelund-Præstekær, Christian. 2008. "Negative Campaigning in a Multiparty System." *Representation* 44 (1): 27–39.
- Elmelund-Præstekær, Christian. 2010. "Beyond American Negativity: Toward a General Understanding of the Determinants of Negative Campaigning." *European Political Science Review* 2 (1): 137–56.
- Elmelund-Præstekær, Christian, and Helle Molgaard-Svensson. 2014. "Negative and Personalized Campaign Rhetoric: Party Communication and Media Coverage of Danish Parliamentary Elections 1994–2011." *World Political Science Review* 10 (2): 365–84.
- Franklin, Mark N., and Thomas T. Mackie. 1983. "Familiarity and Inertia in the Formation of Governing Coalitions in Parliamentary Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 13 (3): 275–98.
- Geer, John G. 2006. *In Defense of Negativity. Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Golder, Matt, Sona N. Golder, and David A. Siegel. 2012. "Modeling the Institutional Foundation of Parliamentary Government Formation." *Journal of Politics* 74 (2): 427–45.
- Groeling, Tim. 2010. *When Politicians Attack: Party Cohesion in the Media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hansen, Kasper M., and Rasmus Tue Pedersen. 2008. "Negative Campaigning in a Multiparty System." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 31 (4): 408–27.
- Harcup, Tony, and Deirdre O'Neill. 2001. "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited." *Journalism Studies* 2 (2): 261–80.
- Haynes, Audrey A., and Staci L. Rhine. 1998. "Attack Politics in Presidential Nomination Campaigns: An Examination of the Frequency and Determinants of Intermediated Negative Messages against Opponents." *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (3): 691–721.
- Hilbig, Benjamin E. 2009. "Sad, Thus True: Negativity Bias in Judgments of Truth." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45 (4): 983–86.
- Ito, Tiffany A., Jeff T. Larsen, N. Kyle Smith, and John T. Cacioppo. 1998. "Negative Information Weighs More Heavily on the Brain: The Negativity Bias in Evaluative Categorizations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75 (4): 887–900.
- Kahn, Kim Fridkin, and Patrick J. Kenney. 1999. *The Spectacle of U.S. Senate Campaigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kleinnijenhuis, Jan, and Paul Pennings. 2001. "Measurement of Party Positions on the Basis of Party Programmes, Media Coverage and Voter Perceptions." In *Estimating the Policy Positions of Political Actors*, ed. M. Laver, 162–82. London: Routledge.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Martin Dolezal, Marc Helbling, Swen Hutter, Dominic Höglinger, and Bruno Wüest. 2012. *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschieer, and Timotheos Frey. 2006. "Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries Compared." *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (6): 921–56.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschieer, and Timotheos Frey. 2008. *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Krupnikov, Yanna, and Nichole M. Bauer. 2014. "The Relationship between Campaign Negativity, Gender and Campaign Context." *Political Behavior* 36 (1): 167–88.
- Lau, Richard R., and Gerald M. Pomper. 2001. "Negative Campaigning by US Senate Candidates." *Party Politics* 7 (1): 69–87.
- Lau, Richard R., and Gerald M. Pomper. 2004. *Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of U.S. Senate Elections*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lau, Richard R., and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2009. "Negative Campaigning." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:285–306.
- Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman, Caroline Heldman, and Paul Babbitt. 1999. "The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-analytic Assessment." *American Political Science Review* 93 (4): 851–75.
- Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman, and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2007. "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-analytic Reassessment." *Journal of Politics* 69 (4): 1176–1209.
- Lengauer, Günther, Frank Esser, and Rosa Berganza. 2011. "Negativity in Political News: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings." *Journalism* 13 (2): 1–24.
- Martin, Lanny W., and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2001. "Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (1): 33–50.
- Meffert, Michael F., Sungeun Chung, Amber J. Joiner, Leah Waks, and Jennifer Garst. 2006. "The Effects of Negativity and Motivated Information Processing during a Political Campaign." *Journal of Communication* 56 (1): 27–51.
- Meyer, Thomas M., and Markus Wagner. 2013. "Mainstream or Niche? Vote-Seeking Incentives and the Programmatic Strategies of Political Parties." *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (10): 1246–72.
- Nai, Alessandro, and Annemarie S. Walter, eds. 2015. *New Perspectives on Negative Campaigning: Why Attack Politics Matters*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Plasser, Fritz, and Günther Lengauer. 2010. "Die österreichische Medienarena: Besonderheiten des politischen Kommunikationssystems." [The Austrian Mass Media Arena: Peculiarities of the Political Communication System] In *Politik in der Medienarena. Praxis politischer Kommunikation in Österreich* [Politics in the Mass Media Arena. The Practice of Political Communication in Austria], ed. F. Plasser, 19–52. Vienna: Facultas.
- Plasser, Fritz, and Gunda Plasser. 2002. *Global Political Campaigning: A Worldwide Analysis of Campaign Professionals and Their Practices*. Westport: Praeger.
- Ridout, Travis N., and Jenny L. Holland. 2010. "Candidate Strategies in the Presidential Nomination Campaign." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40 (4): 611–30.
- Roddy, Brian L., and Gina M. Garramone. 1988. "Appeals and Strategies of Negative Political Advertising." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 32 (4): 415–27.
- Rozin, Paul, and Edward B. Royzman. 2001. "Negativity Bias, Negativity Dominance, and Contagion." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 5 (4): 296–320.
- Semetko, Holli A., and Patti M. Valkenburg. 2000. "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News." *Journal of Communication* 50 (2): 93–109.
- Skaperdas, Stergios, and Bernard Grofman. 1995. "Modeling Negative Campaigning." *American Political Science Review* 89 (1): 49–61.
- Tedesco, John C. 2005. "Issue and Strategy Agenda Setting in the 2004 Presidential Election: Exploring the Candidate–Journalist Relationship." *Journalism Studies* 6 (2): 187–201.
- Theilmann, John, and Allen Wilhite. 1998. "Campaign Tactics and the Decision to Attack." *Journal of Politics* 60 (4): 1050–62.
- Trent, Judith S., Robert V. Friedenberg, and Robert E. Denton Jr. 2011. *Political Campaign Communication: Principles & Practices*. 2nd Edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

- vanHeerde-Hudson, Jennifer. 2011. "The Americanization of British Party Advertising? Negativity in Party Election Broadcasts, 1964–2005." *British Politics* 6 (1): 52–77.
- Walter, Annemarie S. 2014. "Choosing the Enemy: Attack Behaviour in a Multiparty System." *Party Politics* 20 (3): 311–23.
- Walter, Annemarie S., and Wouter van der Brug. 2013. "When the Gloves Come Off: Interparty Variation in Negative Campaigning in Dutch Elections, 1981–2010." *Acta Politica* 48 (4): 367–88.
- Walter, Annemarie S., Wouter van der Brug, and Philip van Praag. 2014. "When the Stakes Are High: Party Competition and Negative Campaigning." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (4): 550–73.
- Walter, Annemarie S., and Rens Vliegthart. 2010. "Negative Campaigning across Different Communication Channels: Different Ball Games?" *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 15 (4): 441–61.

Author Biographies

Martin Dolezal is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Vienna's Department of Government. His research focuses on parties, elections, and "unconventional" forms of political participation.

Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik is an Assistant Professor at the University of Vienna's Department of Government. His research focuses on parties, elections, coalitions, and bureaucracy. He has published in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *West European Politics*, *Party Politics*, and *Political Studies*.

Wolfgang C. Müller is Professor of Democratic Governance, University of Vienna, Department of Government. He works on political parties, political competition, and coalition politics.

Book Reviews

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2016, Vol. 21 (2) 273–280
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
ijpp.sagepub.com



Caroline Lee

Do-It-Yourself Democracy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015;
292 pp. ISBN: 0199987262

Reviewed by: David Karpf, *George Washington University, DC, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626949

Deliberative democracy is an ideal. And a process. And a movement. And an industry.

Deliberation as ideal and as process has received ample attention from the research community. There are robust research traditions within political theory, political communication, and political sociology that each explore the value of deliberative processes, or propose revitalized public participation as a solution to the current decline of social trust and social capital, or measure their effects (in the lab or in the field) of participatory processes on the participants themselves. Deliberation is held to be the north star guiding us to civility, to social trust, to political moderation, and to well-functioning governance. It is an easy ideal to embrace.

But how does the *practice* of deliberation—particularly the large-scale, meticulously managed events that bring citizens for a fixed time period with a clear agenda—compare with our rosy deliberative ideals? This is the central question that Caroline Lee addresses with *Do-It-Yourself Democracy*. Lee’s book is a thoughtful, well-rounded examination of the “public engagement industry,” based on years of careful ethnographic work. The book is sharply written, provocative, and engaging, a must-read for anyone who spends time thinking about the promise and potential of mass citizen engagement processes.

Much of Lee’s research occurs across conferences and meetings held for public engagement professionals. She also draws upon archival Listserv postings from the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, interviews public engagement professionals, and conducts a survey of the professional field. Some of the strongest and most evocative material in the book comes from her nuanced reconstruction of three major public deliberation events—the Community Congress III deliberative meeting on New Orleans redevelopment and recovery; the Our Budget, Our Economy national deliberative meeting, which invited citizens to discuss strategies for confronting the national budget deficit; and the National Performing Arts Convention, which tried to develop a common vision and agenda for performing artists in America. Through these events, Lee invites the reader to understand the sophistication and skill of public engagement professionals, and also to witness the political formulations and hard conversations that these events manage to carefully avoid.

This is a not only critical book but also a balanced book. It is fair to its research subjects and allows them to speak in their own words. As Lee puts it on page 6,

I propose that, instead of celebrating that these issues are up for public debate, we should ask a larger set of questions about the time, energy, and resources being devoted to participatory decision-making in America at this particular moment. This means thinking of public engagement not as a sacred political act, but in the context of broader questions social scientists ask about related changes in social and economic life. . . . Who benefits from all this participation?

The payoff of Lee's argument is that,

public deliberation like that in "Our Budget, Our Economy," far from revolutionizing decision-making, burdens everyday people with new responsibilities without much empowerment and frames elites and industries as saviors of social change even while they don't accomplish much—despite lots of talk of transparency and accountability. . . . [citizens] are learning lessons that are not the lessons in civic pride deliberative democrats intend to teach. Instead, citizens are quietly reassessing the capacity of leaders and governments to make change and finding them wanting. (p. 7)

She continues, "The difference deliberation makes' on actual policy or power structures is, unfortunately, not very much—and this is generally assumed to be because the larger political context is hostile to the empowering, destabilizing, progressive bent of deliberative solutions" (pp. 199-200).

This book is an important contribution to a developing literature that is inviting researchers to think harder about the actual experience of citizen engagement. It pairs well with two other recent titles: Stephen Coleman's *How Voters Feel* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Edward Walker's *Grassroots for Hire* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Coleman's book observes the great democratic ritual of voting from the voter's-eye perspective, while Walker looks at the industrial production of citizen advocacy. Between these three books, we can perhaps identify a trend in the literature toward embracing the messy realities of political life—especially those parts of political life that too often receive a rose-colored treatment.

Lee's book also stands as a testament to the power of strong ethnographic work. It would have been easy to treat this book's subject matter as a set of simple case studies that celebrate the public engagement industry. It would likewise have been easy to write it as a series of sharp-elbowed op-eds or blog posts that accuse the industry of reinforcing the ills of the current power structure. Neither a purely celebratory nor a purely critical book would be accurate or appropriate, though. There is indeed much that the public engagement industry is doing right, and also much in the industry that demands critical reflection. As Lee tells us, these are well-meaning, talented professionals who view themselves as part of a movement to reinvigorate democracy. But, as Fligstein and McAdam (Oxford University Press, 2015) would surely remind us, this professional field interacts with other professional fields. It occupies a niche within the broader political system. And the outputs of large-scale public engagement events do more to reassure participants that "the process is working" than they do to empower participants to genuinely struggle and choose battles

worth fighting. It is only through the careful ethnographic scenes that Lee portrays that the reader can experience these tensions and consider them for himself or herself.

Caroline Lee has written a book that is both provocative and engaging. It is a worthy contribution to the literature that should push scholars and practitioners alike to think harder about the appropriate goals and context of public engagement exercises. It should be read both deeply and widely for years to come.

Aeron Davis

Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding. Cambridge: Polity, 2013, 216 pp. ISBN: 9780745639833

Reviewed by: Dominic Wring, *Loughborough University, UK*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626948

This is an impressive book on various levels. First, it is a highly accessible account that will engage general readers as well as more knowledgeable subject specialists. Further to this, *Promotional Cultures* covers a wide range of topics and debates in ways that introduce and relate the points before going on to provide greater analytical and empirical depth without becoming mired in too much detail. This is no mean feat given the proliferation of obscure jargon, flowery language, and colorful metaphors that characterize some of the burgeoning writings on both marketing promotion and culture over the last three decades. Page after page of this book is full of useful information and is testimony to the insightful and thorough way this account has been put together. Aeron Davis's considered synthesizing of the literature also takes careful account of contributions from management as well as media and cultural studies' perspectives not to mention those in both fields who might be characterized as mainstream or critical observers. The latter have been particular to the fore in recent years given a renaissance in the questioning of the prevailing neo-liberal political economic orthodoxy and the New Right ascendancy behind it. The catalyst for much of this re-evaluation is a 2008 crisis that provides a timely backdrop and frames Davis's thoughtfully conceived and well-executed book. Fittingly, it also includes a chapter on the money markets written by an author who can distinguish fact from fiction having earlier completed a study that had brought him into contact with many of those working in high end PR at the dawn of the millennium. Several of these worked on behalf of elite financiers, the very people who precipitated the subsequent crash.

If nothing else the catastrophic events of 2008 should have marked a downturn in the fortunes of Tony Robbins, Oprah Winfrey, and other proselytizers of the cult of individualism and its pervasive you can be anything you want to be philosophy of "personal branding". This phenomenon grew in the slipstream of the New Right's forging of a free market consensus that begat the "New" Democrat and Labour eras whose celebration of dynamism and change was much vacuous rhetoric. Clinton and Blair presided over economies that endorsed the trajectories established by Reagan and Thatcher, their immediate predecessors but one. Central to this was an elevation of the service sector and within this an unprecedented burgeoning of the advertising, PR,

worth fighting. It is only through the careful ethnographic scenes that Lee portrays that the reader can experience these tensions and consider them for himself or herself.

Caroline Lee has written a book that is both provocative and engaging. It is a worthy contribution to the literature that should push scholars and practitioners alike to think harder about the appropriate goals and context of public engagement exercises. It should be read both deeply and widely for years to come.

Aeron Davis

Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding. Cambridge: Polity, 2013, 216 pp. ISBN: 9780745639833

Reviewed by: Dominic Wring, Loughborough University, UK

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626948

This is an impressive book on various levels. First, it is a highly accessible account that will engage general readers as well as more knowledgeable subject specialists. Further to this, *Promotional Cultures* covers a wide range of topics and debates in ways that introduce and relate the points before going on to provide greater analytical and empirical depth without becoming mired in too much detail. This is no mean feat given the proliferation of obscure jargon, flowery language, and colorful metaphors that characterize some of the burgeoning writings on both marketing promotion and culture over the last three decades. Page after page of this book is full of useful information and is testimony to the insightful and thorough way this account has been put together. Aeron Davis's considered synthesizing of the literature also takes careful account of contributions from management as well as media and cultural studies' perspectives not to mention those in both fields who might be characterized as mainstream or critical observers. The latter have been particular to the fore in recent years given a renaissance in the questioning of the prevailing neo-liberal political economic orthodoxy and the New Right ascendancy behind it. The catalyst for much of this re-evaluation is a 2008 crisis that provides a timely backdrop and frames Davis's thoughtfully conceived and well-executed book. Fittingly, it also includes a chapter on the money markets written by an author who can distinguish fact from fiction having earlier completed a study that had brought him into contact with many of those working in high end PR at the dawn of the millennium. Several of these worked on behalf of elite financiers, the very people who precipitated the subsequent crash.

If nothing else the catastrophic events of 2008 should have marked a downturn in the fortunes of Tony Robbins, Oprah Winfrey, and other proselytizers of the cult of individualism and its pervasive you can be anything you want to be philosophy of "personal branding". This phenomenon grew in the slipstream of the New Right's forging of a free market consensus that begat the "New" Democrat and Labour eras whose celebration of dynamism and change was much vacuous rhetoric. Clinton and Blair presided over economies that endorsed the trajectories established by Reagan and Thatcher, their immediate predecessors but one. Central to this was an elevation of the service sector and within this an unprecedented burgeoning of the advertising, PR,

and market research industries. It was appraisal of these developments that informed Andrew Wernick's 1991 *Promotional Culture*, the title and theme which inspires this book. As Davis explains, the earlier contribution was important for asserting that "there is 'an alteration in the very relations between culture and economy,' characterized by the hegemony of 'pan-promotionalism' over the 'economic base'" (p. 67). Wernick examined this by exploring how higher education, politics, and even commercial discourses themselves were being transformed by rapacious ideological force.

Wernick's account remains influential but was in need of revisiting and updating which is what in part Davis's work amply provides, among many other things, with a tour of theoretical works as well as judicious case studies looking at various subjects including celebrity and politics of both the formal and informal varieties. This in the context of a crisis of capitalism that has, among some public intellectuals at least, led to concerted re-examination of social, political, and economic consequences of the marketization of society, state, and economy during the 1980s and its condoning within the decade that followed. Aeron Davis's book then follows in the tradition of other major re-assessments, notably those by cultural critics such as Tom Frank and Naomi Klein. But what is telling about Davis's account is that, despite exploring concerns about the relationship between rising promotional activity and the fostering of inequality, this is interspersed with pithy summaries of the advertisers and PR consultants' own rationales for their social and economic significance. Here Davis approvingly quotes Don Slater's observation: "Marketing is not only about competition within markets, within given structures. It is a competition over the structures of markets and market relations themselves. Every firm wants to redefine the boundaries of markets by reframing goods" (p. 82). This focus re-emphasizes the importance of considering how marketers are cultural and media producers who shape and reshape the environment quite apart from the market specific promotional activities in which they engage. Davis thereby revisits the earlier work of Ewen among others who have forensically documented the rise of a consumerist ideology only to be dismissed as characterizing the public as gullible dupes. What *Promotional Cultures* captures so well is how marketing "effects" should not be so narrowly construed and rather be more concerned with systemic rather than narrower definitions of impact and influence. Much contemporary promotional cultural activity is, after all, more concerned with protecting existing interests rather than necessarily expanding business in markets that are best characterized as oligopolies or even virtual monopolies.

Taylor Owen

Disruptive Power: The Crisis of the State in the Digital Age. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 264 pp. ISBN: 9780199363865

Reviewed by: Steven Livingston, *George Washington University, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626552

On January 6, 2011, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) police arrested a well-known social technologist named Aaron Swartz after finding him in a Internet

and market research industries. It was appraisal of these developments that informed Andrew Wernick's 1991 *Promotional Culture*, the title and theme which inspires this book. As Davis explains, the earlier contribution was important for asserting that "there is 'an alteration in the very relations between culture and economy,' characterized by the hegemony of 'pan-promotionalism' over the 'economic base'" (p. 67). Wernick examined this by exploring how higher education, politics, and even commercial discourses themselves were being transformed by rapacious ideological force.

Wernick's account remains influential but was in need of revisiting and updating which is what in part Davis's work amply provides, among many other things, with a tour of theoretical works as well as judicious case studies looking at various subjects including celebrity and politics of both the formal and informal varieties. This in the context of a crisis of capitalism that has, among some public intellectuals at least, led to concerted re-examination of social, political, and economic consequences of the marketization of society, state, and economy during the 1980s and its condoning within the decade that followed. Aeron Davis's book then follows in the tradition of other major re-assessments, notably those by cultural critics such as Tom Frank and Naomi Klein. But what is telling about Davis's account is that, despite exploring concerns about the relationship between rising promotional activity and the fostering of inequality, this is interspersed with pithy summaries of the advertisers and PR consultants' own rationales for their social and economic significance. Here Davis approvingly quotes Don Slater's observation: "Marketing is not only about competition within markets, within given structures. It is a competition over the structures of markets and market relations themselves. Every firm wants to redefine the boundaries of markets by reframing goods" (p. 82). This focus re-emphasizes the importance of considering how marketers are cultural and media producers who shape and reshape the environment quite apart from the market specific promotional activities in which they engage. Davis thereby revisits the earlier work of Ewen among others who have forensically documented the rise of a consumerist ideology only to be dismissed as characterizing the public as gullible dupes. What *Promotional Cultures* captures so well is how marketing "effects" should not be so narrowly construed and rather be more concerned with systemic rather than narrower definitions of impact and influence. Much contemporary promotional cultural activity is, after all, more concerned with protecting existing interests rather than necessarily expanding business in markets that are best characterized as oligopolies or even virtual monopolies.

Taylor Owen

Disruptive Power: The Crisis of the State in the Digital Age. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 264 pp. ISBN: 9780199363865

Reviewed by: Steven Livingston, *George Washington University, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626552

On January 6, 2011, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) police arrested a well-known social technologist named Aaron Swartz after finding him in a Internet

technology utility closet connecting his laptop computer to the university's network. He planned to download thousands of academic journal articles from JSTOR, the online digital archive of academic publications, and make them available at no cost. In his view, the pay wall that JSTOR used to charge users for access to articles, undermined the social benefit of scientific research.

U.S. attorney for the District of Massachusetts, Carmen Ortiz, and Assistant U.S. attorney, Stephen Heymann, saw it differently and charged him with a variety of criminal charges that carried a cumulative maximum penalty of US\$1 million in fines and thirty-five years in federal prison. In the aftermath of WikiLeaks' release of the Manning documents, the Obama administration wanted to make an example of Swartz. On January 11, 2013, two days after Ortiz and Heymann rejected the terms of a plea agreement that would have kept him out of prison, Swartz killed himself in his Brooklyn apartment.

Swartz's case illustrates the central point of Taylor Owen's timely and interesting book. The state, whether it is a western liberal republic like the United States or an authoritarian one-party state like China, believes it is losing control and is hitting back on sources of perceived threat. Owen wants to explain the dispute between different types of governance systems: states on one hand and nonhierarchical, digitally enabled collective action on the other. As Owen (2015: 9) puts it,

For now, the challenge posed by disruptive innovation does not mean the end of the state, but it does suggest that the state is in decline, exposing laws, ethics, norms of behavior, and hierarchical structures that emerged amid an older set of technologies as constraints. Put another way, the state is losing its status as the pre-eminent mechanism for collective action.

Rather than Weberian hierarchical bureaucracies, digital technologies allow large numbers of people to pursue common goals at a much-reduced cost and without shared territorial or temporal space. Just as Napster and BitTorrent, not to mention Amazon, iTunes, and Netflix, disrupted older media distribution systems, large-scale, digitally enabled collective action networks disrupt the system of states that were founded in an era of information scarcity. This is of course well-trodden theoretical ground. What Owen does is lay out the argument in clear terms and with compelling examples.

Owen says that he first intended to write about points of *collaboration* between state institutions and digital initiatives. Yet Owen's attention shifted in the process of writing the book. "What I didn't know," he remarks, "is that in the wake of September 11, Western democratic governments were so concerned about the capabilities of the digitally empowered that they became willing to subvert these digital powers and reassert their control over communications" (p. 15). Edward Snowden's leaked documents underscored the point. What is more, the technologies that empowered people are also empowering the state to conduct surveillance in ways that would have never been possible in an analog era.

The rest of the book is devoted to different facets of the tensions between the state and digitally enabled collective action. One of the most interesting and informative chapters (chapter three) offers a review of the alternative power centers to the state.

Owen describes various hacker communities in compelling detail. Telecomix, for example, is a digital network of mostly western hackers and activists that supported opponents of Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt. Telecomix does not "fit comfortably in our traditional categories of participants in international affairs. It is not a nation-state, a formal institution, or a rogue individual. It has a collective identity and its loose, decentralized structure makes it difficult to control" (p. 53). In this effort, it partnered with French Data Network, a hacker-friendly Internet service provider and Pirate Bay, the file-sharing Web site. Telecomix also built essential digital tools for the Egyptian activists, including secure instant messaging software and links to Telecomix's Internet Relay Chat (IRC)—online, open forums where users meet to chat. Digital assemblages such as these make it difficult to speak of origins and organizational boundaries. Other groups of interest to Owen are of course Anonymous and WikiLeaks.

Other chapters look at Bitcoin, the cryptocurrency (chapter four), and the emergence of hybrid media initiatives, such as WikiLeaks partnering with the *Guardian* or the role of the blogger Glenn Greenwald in the Snowden leaks (chapter five). Chapter six looks at crisis response platforms such as Ushahidi and other geospatial platforms.

Owen does a superb job introducing what is likely to be unorthodox ideas to many international relations scholars and observers. He does so in a readable, friendly manner. The book is not intended to carve out the nuances of international relations theory building. As a result, he tends to treat statehood in a rather monolithic fashion, relying mostly on examples that involve the United States and other large, powerful consolidated states. Yet some of the most interesting work in international relations scholarship look at statehood as being variable. Thomas Risse's notion of areas of limited statehood and "alternative governance modalities," for example, opens up the possibility that governance in much of the world is done by nonstate actors, many of whom take advantage of the affordances created by digital platforms. If that is the case, the confrontation between the state and digitally enabled collective endeavors is the exception rather than the rule around the world. In most places, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups must rely on initiatives organized on digital platforms because the state is too weak to meet the needs of its own citizens. Yet within the context of consolidated statehood, *Disruptive Power* does a terrific job introducing the new student or lay reader to a fascinating field of inquiry.

Sarah Oates

Revolution Stalled: The Political Limits of the Internet in the Post-Soviet Sphere. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; 225pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-973595-2.

Reviewed by: Jonathan Becker, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, USA

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626951

At the heart of Sarah Oates's informative book, *Revolution Stalled: The Political Limits of the Internet in the Post-Soviet Sphere*, is a paradox. Since the turn of the

Owen describes various hacker communities in compelling detail. Telecomix, for example, is a digital network of mostly western hackers and activists that supported opponents of Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt. Telecomix does not "fit comfortably in our traditional categories of participants in international affairs. It is not a nation-state, a formal institution, or a rogue individual. It has a collective identity and its loose, decentralized structure makes it difficult to control" (p. 53). In this effort, it partnered with French Data Network, a hacker-friendly Internet service provider and Pirate Bay, the file-sharing Web site. Telecomix also built essential digital tools for the Egyptian activists, including secure instant messaging software and links to Telecomix's Internet Relay Chat (IRC)—online, open forums where users meet to chat. Digital assemblages such as these make it difficult to speak of origins and organizational boundaries. Other groups of interest to Owen are of course Anonymous and WikiLeaks.

Other chapters look at Bitcoin, the cryptocurrency (chapter four), and the emergence of hybrid media initiatives, such as WikiLeaks partnering with the *Guardian* or the role of the blogger Glenn Greenwald in the Snowden leaks (chapter five). Chapter six looks at crisis response platforms such as Ushahidi and other geospatial platforms.

Owen does a superb job introducing what is likely to be unorthodox ideas to many international relations scholars and observers. He does so in a readable, friendly manner. The book is not intended to carve out the nuances of international relations theory building. As a result, he tends to treat statehood in a rather monolithic fashion, relying mostly on examples that involve the United States and other large, powerful consolidated states. Yet some of the most interesting work in international relations scholarship look at statehood as being variable. Thomas Risse's notion of areas of limited statehood and "alternative governance modalities," for example, opens up the possibility that governance in much of the world is done by nonstate actors, many of whom take advantage of the affordances created by digital platforms. If that is the case, the confrontation between the state and digitally enabled collective endeavors is the exception rather than the rule around the world. In most places, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups must rely on initiatives organized on digital platforms because the state is too weak to meet the needs of its own citizens. Yet within the context of consolidated statehood, *Disruptive Power* does a terrific job introducing the new student or lay reader to a fascinating field of inquiry.

Sarah Oates

Revolution Stalled: The Political Limits of the Internet in the Post-Soviet Sphere. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; 225pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-973595-2.

Reviewed by: Jonathan Becker, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, USA

DOI: 10.1177/1940161215626951

At the heart of Sarah Oates's informative book, *Revolution Stalled: The Political Limits of the Internet in the Post-Soviet Sphere*, is a paradox. Since the turn of the

century, Russian Internet growth has been torrid, outstripping the rate in most European countries, giving it the most online users in Europe, including the vast majority of those under forty-five. Yet, in spite of this growth in users, Russia's Internet environment is severely constrained, and it is becoming less, not more, free. Russia may not quite have the "Great Firewall of China," but the Internet has failed to serve in the transformative role that "internet optimists" long-ago predicted: It has neither set nor fostered open political communication, let alone competition, nor has it helped forge a civic fabric that permits citizens to regularly and meaningfully engage with political leaders.

Oates's book creatively stitches together a variety of methodologies—research of search engines, web link analysis, and coding—to present a wide-ranging and in-depth picture of how the Internet has developed in Russia. Her analysis lends some credence to the views of Internet optimists, demonstrating that under the right circumstances, the Internet can facilitate the aggregation of interests that allows segments of the Russian population to influence the government. She illustrates this primarily through two detailed case studies of health-related issues in which parents were fighting for support and treatment of their children: Down syndrome and mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS). More significantly, she looks to the protests that took place during Russia's "Winter of Discontent" in 2011, which emerged after rigged parliamentary elections spurred mass protests that, for the first time, appeared to challenge the Putin regime. Here she sees the Internet as "a meaningful factor amongst a range of elements in motivating people to demonstrate" (p. 175).

However, she also finds significant limits. In the two case studies on health, she believes that parents were partly successful because the topics were "under the radar" and not of primary concern of the state, and because the issues also gained traction in the traditional mass media. However, this is where Oates sees trouble emerging in terms of the broader potential impact of the Internet, because the mainstream media, in Russia, upon which the Internet depends for broader impact, are very much tightly controlled by the regime in what she describes as a "neo-Soviet" model. While the Internet might be able to serve as a catalyst under the right conditions for some form of collective action, those circumstances are limited. As she puts it, the question is not whether you can have an Alexander Navalny, who was a blogger extraordinaire and a leader in the protest movement, but "whether there can be dozens, hundreds, or even tens of thousands of such people in Russia who will come to view it as politics as usual to share information via the online sphere" (p. 52). Here the answer is a decided no. Indeed, the unfortunate truth is that Russian leaders have taken the lessons of the 2011 protests and realized that they can no longer largely ignore the Internet. Since 2012, the Putin regime has taken several steps to tighten Internet control as it has mass media, including implementing a series of laws and regulations that can be selectively enforced and that prohibit a range of activities from slandering the president to encouraging participation in unsanctioned events. More than ten thousand websites have been banned, and bloggers with audiences of more than three thousand daily viewers need to register with the state and face the same complex and expensive rules as mass media outlets. Navalny himself has been arrested and banned from using the Internet,

and the CEO of vKontakte, Russia's answer to Facebook, claims to have been fired and forced to flee to Central Europe. Even more worrisome, the state has also co-opted the Internet and is using it increasingly in the same way as television: to celebrate the regime and discredit opponents.

One important element of Oates's approach is that she unabashedly embraces the notion that national media systems, and more specifically the Internet-enabling environment, vary greatly from country to country and that particular circumstances in individual countries, including their histories, matter. In the case of Russia, she wisely draws on Soviet history of control over the system of mass communication, particularly the way in which it fosters self-censorship, although she might have offered more by way of differences between the current Russian environment and that of the Soviet period. More broadly, the book could have profited from a more systematic comparative analysis: The other states in the "post Soviet sphere" of the book's title receive relatively scant attention. The examples from the "Arab Spring" and, to a lesser extent, China are instructive, but might have been better developed, not to dismiss the specificities of the Russian case but to clarify and enlighten and to allow the reader to draw a better understanding of the rising threat and reality of "net authoritarianism" and the mutual learning that is taking place among authoritarian regimes.

One of the challenges that Oates clearly faced was keeping up with the fast changing environment that shapes our understanding of the Internet and its impact on global events. Over the course of the writing of the book, the Arab Spring and Russia's Winter of Discontent exploded, lending great credence to the so-called "internet optimists" about the overwhelming power of the Internet and social media platforms to produce change. These events have clearly influenced Oates but not changed her essential view: While, as suggested in the book's title, she sees revolution as "stalled" and she asserts that information and networking via the online sphere "could yet present a serious challenge to the Russian status quo," she ultimately suggests that this seems unlikely. Although there are a few signs for optimism, if there is one message in Oates's work, and in the even darker reality that has emerged since its publication, it is that Russia remains civically impaired and that the Internet is unlikely to be the magic bullet that regularly allows "netizens" to mobilize and aggregate interests. Indeed, if anything, the Internet is increasingly becoming another tool to strengthen state power.