

SEEN FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER

Press coverage of the 2016 US presidential election campaign in Canada

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SUMMARY

This report analyses how the press in Canada covered the 2016 US presidential election campaign. In addition, the results obtained in this work are compared with findings from a similar study which focused on three European countries, namely, Sweden, Italy and the UK.

The report is based on a quantitative content analysis of four newspapers which are *The Globe and mail*, *Toronto star*, *La Presse* and *Le Journal de Montréal*. The content analysis was carried out at the DEMICOM research centre, Mid Sweden University.

The findings show among others that the horse race and scandals frames largely dominated the Canadian press coverage of the 2016 US presidential election campaign. Furthermore, the results prove that the Republican party candidate, Donald Trump was given more attention in the Canadian media than his challenger from the Democratic party, Hilary Clinton. On this aspect of media attention, the results were similar in Canada, the UK, Italy and Sweden. However, contrarily to the UK and Italy, the Canadian press was more neutral in tone in its coverage of the candidates.

'AMERICAN' MEDIA IN CANADA

Presidential election campaigns in the United States are likely to attract considerable worldwide media attention for several reasons. First, the US is the world's first super power and has a great influence on the international scene. Undeniably, major international decisions, agreements and policies on strategic domains such as politics, economy, climate, defense and security are largely influenced by the US. That is why it is commonly said of the president of the US that he has the world's most powerful job.

In addition to that, the 2016 election campaign in particular was held in an unprecedented context, which probably contributed to increase the interest of the press. Actually, for the first time ever, a woman was presidential nominee for one of the two major American parties, while her main challenger, nominee for the other main party had no prior experience in the public service or the military.

Beside the above-mentioned reasons, we might also want to assume that geographical proximity and important relations with the US are two other factors, which aroused the concern of media in some particular countries. De facto, we expect that the media in countries sharing important relations with the US or which are geographically close to the US, would be interested in the candidates' policy positions and their eventual bilateral impacts. One such country, combining both features of proximity and strategic relations with the US is Canada, the great North American neighbour. Thus, Canada appears to be a meaningful case with regards to studies on the press coverage of the 2016 US election campaign.

Indeed, the relations between the US and Canada are exceptional in many aspects (Sparkes, 1978). Just to name a few, the two countries share 9000 km of border. It is the longest international border in the world. In addition, the US and Canada have a common cultural and linguistic heritage. Moreover, their bilateral trade volume in goods and services is worth more than 1.8 billion dollars a day. Again, about 400 thousand people cross between the US and Canada everyday by all modes of transport. Also, the two countries share highly strategic mutual defense commitments as part of the North American aerospace defense command (NORAD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Furthermore, the US and Canada share a peculiar relation in the domain of media. It is about the historical domination of Canadian media by American media productions (Skinner, Compton, & Gasher 2005; Kozolanka, Mapeza & Skinner 2012). Plainly, the Canadian media are overwhelmingly filled with American content. In the same vein, there is more coverage of the US in the Canadian newspapers than it is of Canada in the US newspapers (Robinson & Sparkes, 1976; Sparkes, 1978). That is why Vipond (2000) prefers to use the terminology 'media in Canada', rather than 'Canadian media' to emphasize the fact that the media are Canadian but the contents are American. In the same order

of ideas, Taras (2001) suggests that private Tv networks or ownership groups in Canada are by far more ‘rebroadcasters’ than broadcasters, purchasing American products ‘off the shelf’ in Hollywood and providing them to their audiences. This state of affairs is due to two main factors. First, Canadian private owned media import American contents to reduce expenditures and increase corporate profits (Vipond, 2000; Taras, 2001; Skinner, 2008; Kozolanka, Mapeza & Skinner, 2012). Second, the liberal individualism ideology in Canada limits the governments and regulators interventions for real diversity in the media contents (Vipond, 2000; Taras, 2001; Skinner, 2008). Interestingly enough it was the proximity with the US that shaped the early weak interventionist character of the Canadian government in the areas of media and culture and paved the way for the policies supporting the support media development in Canada (Kozolanka, Mapeza & Skinner 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the press coverage of the 2016 US presidential election campaign in Canada. Specifically, this work analyses the framing of the election campaign in the Canadian media. In reality, voters’ mobilization largely depends on the media framing of election campaigns (Gasher, 2007). In addition, this study examines the coverage of the two main candidates namely Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, in terms of tone, preeminence in the headlines and association with the main frames. Moreover, the results of this work will be discussed in relation to the press coverage of the same US election campaign in the UK, Italy and Sweden (Nord, Mancini & Gerli, 2017).

We selected for analysis, the four most important newspapers in Canada from the point of view of the average weekday circulation as from 2016. First is the *Globe and Mail*, the broadsheet newspaper printed in six cities across Canada, with weekday circulation of 323,133. Owned by the Woodbridge Company, the *Globe and Mail* adheres to a liberal political stance. Second is *Toronto Star*, the broadsheet newspaper printed in Toronto with a weekday circulation of 308,881. This newspaper is generally associated with the center – left political stance. Third is *La Presse*, which has now become digital except on Saturday. In 2016, the Montréal based newspaper had an average weekday circulation of 279,731. Fourth is *Le Journal de Montréal*, a daily tabloid newspaper published in Montréal, with an average weekday circulation about 231,069. This newspaper has a consistent liberal and Québec nationalist orientation. It is worth to note that the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* are published in English, while *La Presse* and *Le Journal de Montréal* are published in French. Moreover, these newspapers are politically independent. Though they have political leanings, they are not closely associated to any political party in Canada (Collins, Abelson, Pyman & Lavis, 2006).

TWO MEDIA SYSTEMS IN ONE

The analytical point of departure for this study is the three models of media systems (Hallin & Mancini 2004). In a nutshell, they are the liberal media system, the polarized pluralist media system and the democratic corporatist media system. Canada belongs to the liberal media system, which is characterized by a strong development of newspaper press, journalistic professionalism, very limited political parallelism and weak government intervention. More so, the political systems in liberal media systems are assumed to be moderate in pluralism even though being majoritarian. Furthermore, there is a solid culture of legal authority and weak level of clientelism in the context where the market plays a strong role (Hallin & Mancini 2004).

However, Kozolonga, Mapeza and Skinner (2012) argue that Canada operates on two different media systems, which are the result of the country's French and English historical heritage. In addition to the discrepancy between provincial and federal policies, the dissimilarity of the media systems in Canada expresses not only linguistic heterogeneity, but also political and cultural diversity (Kozolonga, Mapeza and Skinner 2012). In the same order of ideas, Kline (1979) stresses that the evolution journalistic traditions in the Canadian context is a reflection of cultural or historical processes, as well as larger institutional compromises on the news proceeding. Definitely, Canada is not an easy country to define, to govern or to imagine, because of its bicultural nature and a greatly decentralized federal system shaped by its early history (Vipond, 2000).

Hence, we expect that the media coverage of the 2016 US election campaign in Canada followed the principles of professional journalism. Likewise, we anticipate that the press in Canada did not portray partisanship or preference in favor of any of the candidate during the election campaign. Nonetheless, we predict some differences between the English-speaking and the French-speaking press coverage in respect to their endogenous and systemic dispositions (Kozolonga, Mapeza and Skinner, 2012).

This study uses as method a quantitative content analysis. The period of analysis includes the two last weeks of the campaign (23rd October – 7th November). The articles examined were retrieved from the archives in the web sites of the newspapers. All the articles concerning the election campaign and long of more than three paragraphs were selected for analysis. The articles we selected could not be distinguished in terms of the ones published in the printed versions and those published only on the web sites of the newspapers. In all, we analyzed 171 articles distributed as follows: The Globe and Mail, 46 articles; Toronto Star, 25 articles; La Presse, 54 articles and Le Journal de Montréal, 46 articles. A code book and code instructions were designed to guide the coding and the data were analyzed using the SPSS 24 program.

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN CANADIAN PRESS

The results of our analysis confirm that the Canadian newspapers actually paid considerable attention to the 2016 US election campaign. Within the two final weeks of the campaign, we counted 54 articles in *La Presse*, 46 articles in *The Globe and Mail*, 46 articles in *Le Journal de Montréal* and 25 articles in *Toronto Star*. Nevertheless, one important trend to note at this level is that number of articles in the newspapers increased tremendously in the final week of the campaign in comparison to the second to last week (Table 1). Thus, *The Globe and Mail* had 29 articles in the final week of the campaign, against 17 in the last but one week. For *Toronto Star*, the increase was from 7 to 18 news stories, while *La Presse* had an augmentation from 17 to 37. Last but not the least, the number of articles about the election campaign increased in *Le Journal de Montréal* from 14 in the second to last week of the campaign, to 32 articles in the final week.

Table 1
Press Coverage Across the Two Final Weeks

	Last but one week	Last week	Total
The Globe and Mail	17	29	46
Toronto Star	7	18	25
La Presse	17	37	54
Le Journal de Montréal	14	32	46

Note: N= 171

Furthermore, the results of our study reveal that 87 % of the articles about the election campaign were basic news stories. So, the Canadian press largely covered the campaign in the form of factual and event reporting (Table 2). There was very little space for editorials (1 %) and opinion columns (12 %). Notwithstanding, the results point out that the English-speaking press had more opinion columns articles (16) than the French-speaking press (4), while the French-speaking press had more basic news stories (97) than the English-speaking press (54).

Table 2
Type of Articles

	Basic news story	Editorial	Opinion column	Other	Total
The Globe and Mail	32	1	13	0	46
Toronto Star	22	0	3	0	25
La Presse	53	0	0	1	54
Le Journal de Montréal	42	0	4	0	46

Note: N= 171

Again, the data prove that Trump was more in the headlines of press articles in Canada than Clinton. Overall, Trump made the headlines of 36% of the articles, while Clinton made the headlines of the 30 % of the articles. In the last but one week of the campaign, Trump made the headlines in 20 news stories, against 21 for Clinton. Whereas in the last week of the campaign, Trump made the headlines in 40 articles, against 30 for Clinton (Table 3). Still, Trump occurred in 40 headlines in the French-speaking press, while Clinton occurred in 32 headlines. For the English-speaking press, Trump occurred in 20 headlines, while Clinton occurred in 19 headlines. Yet, Clinton featured in the headlines mostly after the then FBI director James Comey announced on the 28th of October 2016, that federal bureau was investigating more emails as part of a probe into her use of a private email system.

Table 3
Stories with Candidates' Names in the Headlines

		No candidate	Clinton	Trump	Clinton and Trump	Other
Last but one week	The Globe and Mail	5	8	4	0	0
	Toronto Star	1	1	3	2	0
	La Presse	0	4	11	1	1
	Le Journal de Montréal	2	8	2	2	0
	The Globe and Mail	11	8	8	2	0
Last week	Toronto Star	8	2	5	2	1
	La Presse	5	9	17	6	0
	Le Journal de Montréal	5	11	10	6	0
	The Globe and Mail	11	8	8	2	0

Note: N=171

Apropos of the tone of the press coverage with regard to Clinton, the results prove that 59 % of the news stories were neutral, 23 % were positive and 18, 13 % were negative. More specifically, between the 23rd and the 27th October, we counted 11 articles with a positive tone, 29 with a neutral tone and 15 with a negative. But, there was a tremendous increase in the number of articles with main focus on Clinton in the final week of the campaign, as a result of the FBI announcement. Then, the number of articles with a neutral in tone with respect to Clinton shifted significantly to 72. Also, the positive articles increased to 28. Only, the number of negative articles remained relatively low at 16 (Table 4).

Table 4
Press Assessment of Clinton

		Positive	Neutral	Negative
Last but one week	The Globe and Mail	4	7	6
	Toronto Star	1	6	0
	La Presse	1	11	5
	Le Journal de Montréal	5	5	4
Last week	The Globe and Mail	8	19	2
	Toronto Star	2	13	3
	La Presse	10	23	4
	Le Journal de Montréal	8	17	7

Note: N= 171

Concerning the press assessment of Trump, the outcome of our study indicate that 60 % of the news stories were neutral in tone, while 23, 39 % were negative and 16,96 % were positive. Yet, it is important to note that stories with a neutral tone about Trump increased significantly in number from 34 in the last but one week of the campaign, to 68 in the last week (Table 5). This is hardly surprising as the press attention mainly focused on Clinton because of the FBI announcement towards the mid of the two final weeks of the campaign. Most of articles published in the final week of the campaign had not much to point about Trump, thus remaining neutral in tone. But, after the FBI cleared Clinton just 48 hours to the election day, the number of stories with negative one for Trump rised from 11 to 29. Similarly, the number of positive articles in the coverage of Trump campaign also increased from 10 to 19.

Table 5
Press Assessment of Trump

		Positi ve	Neutral	Negati ve
Last but one week	The Globe and Mail	1	14	2
	Toronto Star	0	6	1
	La Presse	6	7	4
	Le Journal de Montréal	3	7	4
Last week	The Globe and Mail	1	19	9
	Toronto Star	2	11	5
	La Presse	7	21	9
	Le Journal de Montréal	9	17	6

Note: N= 171

Moreover, it emanates from the data that the French speaking press framed the election campaign as a horse race, more than the English-speaking press. Literally, La Presse had 17 horse race articles; Le Journal de Montréal, 15; The Globe and Mail, 4 and Toronto Star, 3. Explicitly, the horse race frame was particularly vibrant within the last week of the campaign. As a matter of fact, the number of horse race articles increased from 12 in the second to last week of the campaign to 27 in the last week. Howbeit, the global results prove that the horse race frame was used in 23 % of the news stories. Equally, the scandal frame was used in 23 % of the articles (Fig. 1). Per contra, this is not extraordinary as the two final weeks of the campaign were dominated by the emails issue of Clinton and the subsequent ascension of Trump in vote intentions. Consequently, policy positions represented just 9 % of the campaign coverage main frames, in spite of a remarkable augmentation of the number of policy issues articles from 2 in the last but one week of the campaign to 13 in the final week. But altogether, 43 % of the news stories could not be associated to any main frame. These stories were

basic news reports and factual coverage of campaign events such as concerts and rallies.

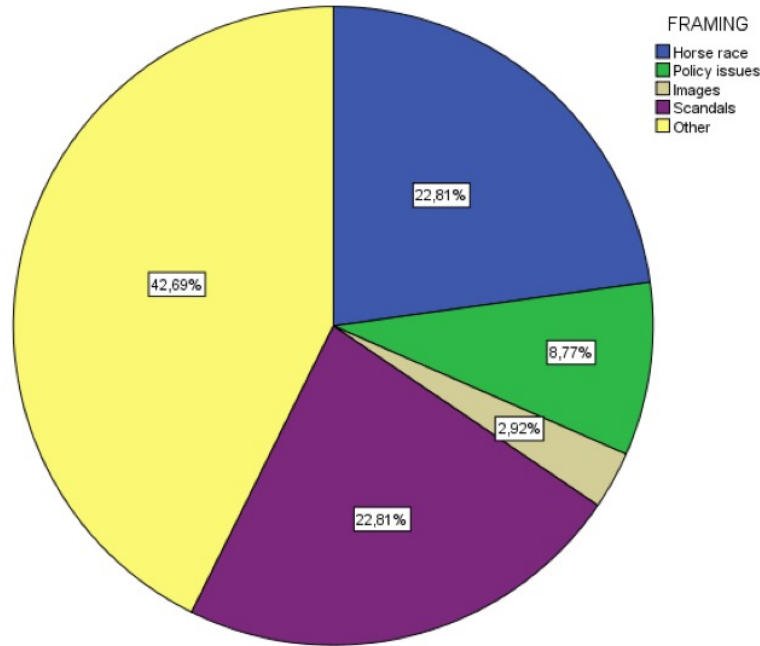


Figure shows the distribution of main frames in the overall campaign coverage

Figure 1. Framing of Campaign Coverage (%)

Regarding candidates association with scandals, the statistics demonstrate that generally, Clinton was most linked to scandals. In fact, about 20% of the articles covering the campaign connected Clinton to what was referred in the press as the ‘e-mail scandal’. The association of Clinton to scandal in the press was at its topmost after the FBI’s announcement. Within that period, the amount of articles associating Trump to scandals was tremendously low at 5 % . Clearly, the results confirm that the French speaking press associated more Clinton to scandals than the English speaking press. With the same total number of articles (46) in The Globe and Mail and Le Journal de Montréal, the former associated Clinton to scandals in 9 articles while the latter associated Clinton to scandals in 15 articles. Similarly, Toronto Star associated Clinton to scandals in 3 articles , while La Presse did so in 7 articles (Table 6) . In total, 74 % of the articles published in the Canadian press within the final two weeks of the campaign did not associate any candidate to any scandal.

Table 6
Share of Stories Associating Candidates with Scandals

		None	Clinton	Trump	Clinton and Trump
Last but one week	The Globe and Mail	8	7	1	1
	Toronto Star	6	1	0	0
	La Presse	13	4	0	0
	Le Journal de Montréal	7	6	1	0
Last week	The Globe and Mail	26	2	0	1
	Toronto Star	15	2	1	0
	La Presse	31	3	3	0
	Le Journal de Montréal	21	9	2	0

N= 171

Again, the results show that the news stories largely did not pay attention to the policy positions of the candidates (Fig. 2). In sum, about 88 % of the articles analysed did not focus on the candidates' policy stands. Hitherto, Trump's stances on immigration, economy, trade, health care and tax reform represented about 5% of the overall press coverage. Also, approximately 5% of the articles focussed on both Clinton and Trump policy stands to a more or less equal extent. As shown in Table 7, two newspapers did not associate Clinton to any policy position. Overall, just around 1 % of the news stories mainly focussed Clinton's policy viewpoints.

Table 7
Share of Articles Associating Candidates with Policy Positions

	No one	Clinton	Trump	Clinton and Trump	Other
The Globe and Mail	35	1	3	6	1
Toronto Star	21	0	2	2	0
La Presse	50	0	4	0	0
Le Journal de Montréal	44	1	0	1	0

Note: N= 171

Lastly, the denouement of our analysis uncovers that the French speaking press did not associate Clinton to image frame (Table 8). Despite the fact that La Presse and Le Journal de Montréal extensively covered the emails scandal, these newspapers did not connect Clinton to any image. Yet, the English-speaking press indicated in 7 articles, that the honesty and trustworthiness of Clinton has been a consistent problem in her political career. However, Le Journal de Montréal and La Presse together associated Trump to image in 11 articles, while The Globe and Mail and Toronto Star associated Trump to image in 9 articles. More, The Globe and Mail in particular evenly associated the two candidates to image, with 5 articles for Trump and 5 articles for Clinton. In total, 82 % of the news stories in the Canadian press did not associate any candidate to image. Nevertheless, Trump was associated to image in 12 % of the news stories, whereas Clinton was associated in 4 % of the press articles. The frequent images associated to Trump were that of a racist, misogynist, Islam hater and mocker of the disables. As for Clinton, she was predominantly depicted as a dishonest and unreliable person

Table 8
Share of Articles Associating Candidates with Image Frame

	None	Clinton	Trump	Clinton and Trump
The Globe and Mail	34	5	5	2
Toronto Star	18	2	4	1
La Presse	48	0	6	0
Le Journal de Montréal	41	0	5	0

Note: N= 171

THE TRIUMPH OF THE NEWSWORTHY CANDIDATE

This study demonstrated that the main frames, which dominated the Canadian press coverage of the 2016 US presidential election campaign were horse race and scandals, embedded in more descriptive than interpretative news stories. Consequently, policy positions were largely ignored. In spite of the proximity of Canada with the US and their important relations, the Canadian press focused to a very limited extent on the eventual bilateral impacts of the candidates' policy positions. This paucity of policy issues in the press coverage of the campaign is not a Canadian exclusivity. This was also the case in Italy, Sweden and the UK (Nord, Mancini & Gerli, 2017). Drawing from Skewes (2007) and Strömbäck & Kaid (2008), Nord, Mancini & Gerli (2017) argue that the moribund importance granted to policy positions in media election campaign coverage is a non-surprising trend. In a broader approach, Cappella and Jamieson (1996) point out that the media have the tendency of in mainly using conflict-oriented frames in political news reporting.

Furthermore, this work proved that Trump was predominant in the main aspects of the Canadian press coverage of the election campaign. As a whole, Trump was the candidate making the news. He overshadowed Clinton in the news headlines and was de facto more the focus of the press coverage. All this in addition to the fact that Trump was more associated with frames than Clinton. Though the FBI's announcement brought Clinton on the spotlight towards the middle of the two last weeks of the campaign, Trump in the final count was a more newsworthy candidate than Clinton. This trend was also observed with the British and Italian press (Nord, Mancini & Gerli (2017). But, contrarily to the UK and Italy where Trump was largely covered with a negative tone, the Canadian press was widely neutral. And on this particular aspect, the Canadian press attitude was very much similar to the Swedish press. As a matter of fact, the Swedish press has a consistent tendency to remain neutral in the treatment of information related to election campaign candidates, as a result of a high degree of professional journalism free from partisan polarization (Nord, Mancini & Gerli, 2017).

With respect to the English-speaking press and the French-speaking press, we observe that the four newspapers followed similar patterns on almost all aspects of the election coverage. Nevertheless, we noted an important difference in the framing of the election. Absolutely, the French-speaking press abundantly framed the campaign as a horse race as compared to the English-speaking press. Per contra, the English-speaking press paid more attention to policy issues than the French-speaking press.

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