Political Communication

ISSN: 1058-4609 (Print) 1091-7675 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upcp20

# Does the Political System Determine Media Visibility of Politicians? A Comparative Analysis of Political Functions in the News in Sixteen Countries

Debby Vos & Peter Van Aelst

**To cite this article:** Debby Vos & Peter Van Aelst (2018) Does the Political System Determine Media Visibility of Politicians? A Comparative Analysis of Political Functions in the News in Sixteen Countries, Political Communication, 35:3, 371-392, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2017.1383953

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1383953

Published online: 07 Nov 2017.

*Political Communication*, 35:371–392, 2018

ISSN: 1058-4609 print / 1091-7675 online
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1383953



# Does the Political System Determine Media Visibility of Politicians? A Comparative Analysis of Political Functions in the News in Sixteen Countries

DEBBY VOS and PETER VAN AELST

*News coverage of politicians is very unequally distributed: a few powerful politicians receive the bulk of media attention, while the large majority hardly gets into the news. However, case studies show that news outlets in some countries give more attention to ordinary politicians compared to other democracies. This study examines and explains the variation in media visibility of politicians with different institutional functions across Western democracies. We employ a large-scale content analysis of television news, newspapers and online news in sixteen countries to analyze whether a political system logic determines the distribution of political functions appearing in the news. This logic suggests that journalists follow the political hierarchy of the country when covering politicians. We also check for an additional media logic that would push journalists to focus on a limited number of high-standing politicians. The results confirm that both logics matter, but that mainly the structural characteristics of the political system have an impact on the distribution of news coverage of politicians. In countries where political power is more equally distributed across politicians, a broader range of (elite) politicians makes it into the news. Our results suggest that the media logic is nested in the broader political context and in some cases even strengthens the logic of the political system.*

**Keywords** Political news, media visibility, comparative politics, content analysis

News media connect political actors to citizens. Although politicians have a wide range of means to communicate with the public, appearing in the mass media still provides the best way for a politician to reach a large and diverse audience at once. Besides for the clear electoral advantages, politicians utilize news coverage to influencing peers during legislative processes, publicly damage politi.cal opponents, or enhance their position within the party (Meyer, 2002; Van Aelst, Shehata, & Van Dalen, 2010). Therefore political actors are eager to get their fair share of media attention. However, few things in life are so unequally distributed as media attention: a small amount of politicians gets the bulk of attention, while the large majority gets little or nothing. Political power is the driving force behind this inequality in news coverage. As a general rule, we can say that "political power can usually be translated into power over the news media" (Wolfsfeld, 2011, p. 9). High-

Debby Vos is a postdoctoral researcher and a member of the research group Media, Movements and Politics ($M^2P$) at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. Peter Van Aelst is a full professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp.

Address correspondence to Peter Van Aelst, Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp, Sint-Jacobsstraat 2, Antwerpen2000, Belgium. E-mail: peter.vanaelst@uantwerpen.be

standing officials have better media access and get plenty of news coverage, which then again confirms their position on the political ladder. This ultimately results in a self-perpetuating cycle of political influence and news coverage (Tresch, 2009).

The close relationship between political power and media access has been proven across Western democracies. Studies in the United States (e.g., Cook, 1986; Kuklinski & Sigelman, 1992; Schaffner & Sellers, 2003; Waismel-Manor & Tsfati, 2011), Israel (e.g., Sheafer, 2001; Wolfsfeld & Sheafer, 2006), Germany (Schoenbach, Ridder, & Lauf, 2001), Belgium (Van Aelst, Maddens, Noppe, & Fiers, 2008; Vos, 2013), Switzerland (Tresch, 2009), and Norway (Midtbø, 2011) all indicate that political journalists are guided by "the trail of power." However, political power is diverted differently within different countries. The country-specific power hierarchy results in an equivalent media hierarchy with certain political positions being more visible in the news media than others (Hopmann, De Vreese, & Albæk, 2011). For example, German news media focus mainly on the head of government whereas in the Netherlands cabinet members and party leaders also get a substantial amount of attention. The consensus culture in the Netherlands results in a more equal distribution of power within the political system and consequently a more equal access approach by the news media (Schoenbach et al., 2001). Also, other studies conclude that characteristics of the political system, the electoral system, and the corresponding power hierarchy in a country determine the media visibility of politicians (Boumans, Boomgaarden, & Vliegenthart, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 1984; Holtz-Bacha, Langer, & Merkle, 2014; Kriesi, 2012; Negrine, 1999; Schoenbach et al., 2001).

These comparative studies indicate the relevance of comparing media attention of politicians with various positions—each with their own political relevance in a country—across countries. However, all studies are two-country case studies—except for Kriesi (2012), who compared six Western democracies—that remain largely descriptive. They speculate about aspects of the political and the media system that can explain differences found between countries, but they do not test their expectations systematically. To actually explain the influence of system characteristics on news coverage it is necessary "to include a larger number of case studies, so enabling us to better isolate and test the different variables at play" (Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014, p. 168). This is exactly the goal of this study. First, we examine how news coverage is distributed among politicians with different political positions across many countries and, second, we investigate systematically how we can explain this cross-national variation in news coverage.

This study adds to previous comparative studies by analyzing the existing Network of European Political Communication Scholars (NEPOCS) data set of 16 countries—14 European countries as well as Israel and the United States (De Vreese, Esser, & Hopmann, 2017). We examine the news coverage of four groups of politicians according to their political position in a country: the head of government, cabinet members, party leaders, and "ordinary" politicians such as members of parliament and local/regional politicians. These four positions are apparent in all 16 democracies and thus allow for a thorough comparative analysis of their news coverage. We will contrast the attention for the large majority of ordinary politicians versus the attention for the three more powerful positions. In addition, we will discuss the relevant differences among cabinet members, party leaders, and the head of government. In short, this study compares and tries to explain media attention *between* different types of politicians across countries, but largely ignores variation within one similar group of politicians such as cabinet members (e.g., Boumans et al., 2013) or parliamentarians (e.g., Van Aelst et al., 2010).

Why do we believe it is important and relevant to study this division of news attention? First, because media coverage of politicians can influence peoples' perceptions of who matters in politics. In turn, these perceptions often legitimize certain political functions and confirm the

power balance. In some cases they can also alter the power balance. For instance, if ordinary politicians in a certain country get a larger share of media attention, that can strengthen their electoral position and support a more egalitarian distribution of political power. Second, political news coverage can also directly influence how political elites perceive the power hierarchy among politicians in a given country. By attaining media attention politicians can be seen as more influential and improve their position in policy debates (Cook, 2005, p. 143; Kunelius & Reunanen, 2012). In sum, news attention for politicians matters. The advantage of studying news coverage for politicians in comparative perspective is that we can learn to what extent this journalistic process is determined by characteristics of the political system and/or by features of the media's own logic. In the next section we further elaborate on the relationship between a political system logic and a media logic.

## Theory

Political function is the main determinant when explaining the distribution of news coverage of politicians (see Vos, 2014, for overview). This results in a highly skewed distribution of news media coverage: politicians in higher positions—being mainly the head of government and the cabinet members—receive the bulk of attention whereas the large group of other politicians have to compete against one another to get covered in the news. Journalists' preference for covering high-standing officials can largely be explained by news value theory (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). Important news values such as "power elite," "relevance," and "impact on the country" raise the newsworthiness of political news sources. Journalists presume—correctly—that what politicians in leading positions say and do is more consequential for the country as a whole and often has a direct impact on citizens' daily life (Schoenbach et al., 2001; Van Dalen, 2012). Furthermore, powerful positions have more means to create (pseudo) events that fit the way journalists work. For instance, political journalists prefer to cover events, such as press conferences, that are planned well in advance and fit their daily working routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Tresch, 2009). As a result of shared journalistic values and routines, leading politicians have *habitual access* to the news media, while most ordinary politicians have to rely on *disruptive access* to the news media. They need to convince journalists of their newsworthiness by challenging those in power, doing something unexpected, or making extreme claims (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Wolfsfeld, 2011).

In short, from a news value and news routine perspective we expect that in all countries the media attention is focused on a few powerful politicians. However, looking in a comparative manner at news coverage of politicians indicates that media attention is more skewed in some countries than others (e.g., Boumans et al., 2013; Kriesi, 2012; Schoenbach et al., 2001). This indicates that there are structural differences in the political or media system that might explain for this variation. In line with the system approach of Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Helms (2008), we argue that institutional parameters to a large extent influence the types of politicians journalists give attention to. Or put from the perspective of politics: the variation in system characteristics determines the opportunities different politicians have to appear in the news. To test for the importance of these system characteristics, we employ the concepts of both media logic and political system logic. The literature on the mediatization of politics mostly presents both concepts as opposite to each other: the more the media will follow their own logic, the less they are bound by the traditional political logic (Esser, 2013; Meyer, 2002; Strömbäck, 2008). However, we rather

perceive both logics as complementary, with the media logic nested in the broader political system logic. The general expectation is that a political system logic guides journalists to follow the political hierarchy, in line with the institutional framework of a country. In particular in countries where political power is more equally distributed across multiple political actors, a broader range of politicians should be able to make it into the news. However, this political system logic is not the sole driver of journalist behavior. In addition, we hypothesize news coverage to be steered by a media logic that pushes journalists to focus more on a limited number of powerful politicians, such as the head of government, at the expense of the majority of ordinary politicians. This is a consequence of commercial pressure and because the focus on a few famous actors better fits the media format. Again, this commercial pressure might differ between countries depending on the degree of competition between types of media outlets within countries. Both media logic and political logic are rather broad concepts that have often been criticized for being vague and unspecified (Landerer, 2013). Therefore we will more narrowly define and operationalize these concepts in order to formulate concrete hypotheses.

### *Political System Logic*

There is a general consensus in the literature that the political world is governed by its own logic shaping the processes of distributing political power and decision making. According to Esser (2013), the concept of political logic can be broken down into three sub-dimensions: politics, policy, and polity. *Politics* primarily refers to the fact that politicians need to get public support to get (re)elected, while *policy* refers to the "production" side of politics such as legislative output and government decisions. Finally—and overarching both previous aspects—there are polity aspects: the institutional framework that molds policy and politics. Since we study the structural differences between political functions across countries, rather than the success of politician A or B, we limit our focus on this third element, which we label the political system logic.

The main argument from this logic is that since certain institutional rules contribute to a higher degree of power sharing across multiple actors and institutions, we expect media attention of politicians with different positions to be more equally divided as well. Power sharing is at the heart of Lijphart's (2012) seminal work on consensus democracies. The distribution of political power is the primary issue in his classification of majoritarian democracies and consensus democracies. Majoritarian democracies are characterized by a one-party cabinet, the dominance of the executive over the legislative, a plurality or majority electoral system, and a unitary state structure, which ultimately results in the concentration of power. In consensus democracies, on the other hand, power is more diffused due to the multiparty government, balance of power between the executive and legislative, a proportional representation (PR) electoral system, and a federal structure (Lijphart, 2012). To explain the distribution of media visibility of politicians across countries, we take into account three key indicators of consensus democracies: coalition cabinets, federalism, and proportional election systems.

Lijphart (2012) regards the difference between one-party majority governments and broad multiparty coalitions as the most typical variable in the majoritarian/consensus distinction. The distinction exemplifies the contrast between the majoritarian principle of concentrating power in the hands of the majority and the consensus principle of power sharing—put simply, fusion of powers versus separation of powers (Helms, 2008). Moreover, when several ideologically different parties are obliged to collaborate, the

necessity of compromise and the degree of pluralism increases (Schoenbach et al., 2001). The type of cabinet also impacts the power of the heads of governments, who are generally perceived as more powerful in countries with a majoritarian government (King, 1994; Lijphart, 2012). For this reason, we expect that the head of government will be highly visible in democracies with a majoritarian cabinet, such as the United States. On the contrary, in countries with large coalition governments such as Belgium and Switzerland, there will be less focus on the head of government, with other politicians, such as cabinet members, being more visible in the news media as well.

*H1:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in countries with large coalition governments.

Decentralization of a country is another typical method of dividing power, as it results in power sharing between various levels of government. In countries with a federal structure, separate districts or regions are included and granted a degree of autonomy. In multilingual countries like Switzerland and Belgium this segmental autonomy implies that each language community can organize its life and working according to their own principles (Deschouwer, 2009). In larger countries such as Germany and the United States the main goal of federalism is to guarantee autonomy and participation from different regions across the country. More practically, federalism implies that a substantial portion of power will be exercised at the regional level next to the national level (Lijphart, 2012). As the degree of federalism is a major indicator of power sharing in the political system, we expect that media attention will be more equally divided across several types of "ordinary" politicians and is not concentrated on the head of government and the government members.

*H2:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in countries with a higher degree of federalism.

The last indicator of power-sharing democracies relates to the distinction between majority or mixed electoral systems on the one hand and proportional representation systems on the other. Majority and plurality methods fit perfectly the majoritarian philosophy of power concentration: "the winner takes it all." On the contrary, the basic goal of proportional representation is to translate votes into seats proportionally to ensure that both majorities and minorities in society are sufficiently represented (Lijphart, 2012). The electoral system has also a clear impact on the number of parties, with proportional representation leading to overall more parties in parliament (Farrell, 2001). Again this could lead to more relevant political actors and a more equal, or at least more scattered, distribution of political power over different types of politicians.

*H3:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in countries with a proportional election system.

### *Media Logic*

Media logic is a central concept in the mediatization literature and dates back to the classical work of Altheide and Snow (1979). It can be seen as a hybrid concept that refers to the formal and informal rules that journalists use in their work (Strömback & Esser,

2014). Although there is no consensus on how media logic should exactly be defined, both technological aspects and commercial aspects appear in almost all conceptualizations. The former signifies the medium-specific technological conditions of the news media whereas the latter relates to their economic motivations.

The technological aspects relate to communication technologies that shape news production processes and the eventual news content. The physical nature of the information technology of print, television, and Internet media translates political reality into specific story formats. For example, television formats are more visual, more affective, and less cognitively complex (Esser, 2013), which is supposed to lead to a greater focus on political leaders. Moreover, newspapers generally have more political news than does television news as they have fewer constraints in terms of available space and production costs (De Vreese, Banducci, Semetko, & Boomgaarden, 2006). As a result, newspaper reporters are able to include a wide variety of political news sources in their articles, which ultimately benefits less powerful politicians. Television news is more limited in time and thus more restrictive. We also consider online news as a third type of media outlet. Audiences for newspapers and television news are on a downward trend as citizens are increasingly relying on the Internet for political news (Gurevitch, Coleman, & Blumler, 2009). Compared to traditional mass media, online news websites are thought to be less selective. The rise of different types of online news media is expected to result in a growing diversity in news reporting (Barnhurst, 2010; Humprecht & Büchel, 2013). We therefore assume that online news websites also will provide a public forum for ordinary politicians more than television broadcasts do.

*H4a:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in newspapers compared to television news.

*H4b:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in online news websites compared to television news.

Next to the technological aspects, commercial aspects are often (implicitly) considered as the driving force behind media logic (Landerer, 2013). Whereas Western media systems have become more detached from political authorities, they have lost autonomy to the market (Esser, 2013). Commercialization and competitive market pressures have several consequences for political news content (Strömback, 2008). One way of maximizing audiences and profits is to put greater focus on individual politicians and mostly on the limited number of powerful elite politicians. Commercial news media try to explain political institutions to their audience by concentrating on the central role of leading politicians. For the audience the news is more "familiar," more easy to relate to as it can be linked to politicians they already know (Karvonen, 2010), which is in particular relevant for citizens with a lower degree of political interest (Strömbäck, 2010).

Competitive market pressures are thus expected to narrow the range of political voices presented in the news. We analyze the effect of media competition on the (meso) level of media outlets, and on the (macro) level of media systems. First, the ownership structure of media outlets defines their degree of commercialization to a certain extent. Public broadcasts are thought to be less commercialized compared to private television broadcasts and newspapers, which are more steered by profit-making goals. Although public broadcasts operate in an increasingly competitive media market, they still have public service obligations of impartial, high-quality coverage (Aalberg & Curran, 2011). We expect

public broadcast services to focus less on political leaders solely, but to provide a broader public forum for ordinary politicians and oppositional voices as well to obtain balanced reporting.

Second, the overall degree of competition in the media system might influence which politicians appear in the news. We can expect that when media competition is more apparent in a country, all media outlets—both public and private—are inclined to cover even more top leaders to attract a larger audience within the highly competitive media market. Few studies have actually tested this, but some literature on the presidentialization of politics cites the emergence and proliferation of multiple television channels as a cause of the greater focus on political leaders (Poguntke & Webb, 2005).

*H5a:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in public broadcast services than in commercial media outlets.

*H5b:* The dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in less competitive media systems.

## Data and Method

Our analyses are based on an international data set provided by NEPOCS. This network worked closely together to study the content of national political news in 16 Western democracies. We now briefly explain the process of data gathering with a clear focus on the data on individual politicians that are central in this article. (For a more elaborate discussion on the data set, see Hopmann, Esser, and De Vreese, 2017).

### *Sampling*

NEPOCS conducted a large-scale news media content analysis in 16 Western democracies: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[1] For each of these countries, three newspapers and two television news broadcasters were sampled, together with their respective news websites. Regarding the newspapers, the two most popular broadsheet newspapers in each country were selected; one politically left-of-center and one politically right-of-center. Most European countries have a long tradition of broadsheets being connected to a specific political leaning, although this has diminished over recent decades. In addition, the main tabloid newspaper from each country was included. Regarding television news, from each country the most widely watched public service broadcaster and commercial news broadcaster were selected. Finally, also the online news sites of all these established newspapers and television broadcasters were sampled. This makes 10 media outlets for each of the countries, adding up to 160 sampled media outlets in total. See Table 1 for a detailed overview of the sampled media outlets.

The selected outlets were content analyzed during routine times and more specifically during a constructed period of 14 days in total, stretching from April 15, 2012, to July 15, 2012. This way, special events occurring in only one or a few countries do not distort the sample. There were three exceptions regarding the sampling period: France, Greece, and the Netherlands. In these three cases, elections were held in the

**Table 1**
News outlets included in the NEPOCS data set.

| | Newspaper | | | Television | | Websites | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Upmarket | | | | | Upmarket | | | | |
| Country | Left-of-center | Right-of-center | MassMarket | Public Service | Commercial | Left-of-center | Right-of-center | Mass Market | Public Service | Commercial |
| Austria | *Der Standard* | *Die Presse* | *Kronen Zeitung* | ORF1, *ZiB* | ATV, *Aktuell* | derstandard.at | diepress.com | krone.at | news.orf.at | kurier.at |
| Belgium | *De Morgen* | *De Standaard* | *Het Laatste Nieuws* | VRT, *Het Journaal* | VTM, *Het Nieuws* | demorgen.be | standaard.be | hln.be | deredactie.be | nieuws.vtm.be |
| Denmark | *Politiken* | *Jyllands-Posten* | *Ekstra Bladet* | DR, *TV-Avisen* | TV2, *Nyhederne* | politiken.dk | jp.dk | ekstrabladet.dk | dr.dk/nyhederne | nyhederne.tv2.dk |
| France | *Le Monde* | *Le Figaro* | *Le Parisien* | France 2, *Journal de 20h* | TF1, *Journal de 20h* | lemonde.fr | lefigaro.fr | leparisien.fr | info.france2.fr | lei.tf1.fr |
| Germany | *Süddeutsche Zeitung* | *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* | *Bild* | ARD, *Tagesschau* | RTL, *Aktuell* | sueddeutsche.de | faz.net | bild.de | tagesschau.de | rtl.de/rtlaktuell |
| Greece | *Ta Nea* | *Kathimerini* | *Espresso* | NET, *News* | Mega, *News* | tanea.gr | kathimerini.gr | espressonews.gr | ert.gr | megatv.vom |
| Israel | Haaretz | *Yediot Aharonot* | *Israel Hayom* | Channel 1, *Evening News* | Channel 2, *Evening News* | haaretz.co.il | Ydiot Aharonot | israelhayom.com | ynet.co.il | mako.co.il |
| Italy | *La Repubblica* | *Il Giornale* | *Altri Mondi* | RAI1, *TG1* | Canale5, *TG5* | repubblica.it | ilgiornale.it | quotidiano.net | tg1.rai.it | tgcom24.mediaset.it |
| Netherlands | *De Volkskrant* | *NRC Handelsblad* | *De Telegraaf* | NOS, *Journaal* | RTL, *Nieuws* | volkskrant.nl | nrc.nl | telegraaf.nl | nos.nl | rtlnieuws.nl |
| Norway | *Dagsavisen* | *Aftenposten* | *VG* | NRK, *Dagsrevyen* | TV2, *Nyhetene* | aftenposten.no | dagsavisen.no | vg.no | nrk.no | tv2.no/nyheter |
| Portugal | *Jornal de Notícias* | *Público* | *Correio da Manhã* | RTP1, *Telejornal* | TV2, *Jornal das Oito* | publico.pt | jo.pt | cmjornal.xl.pt | rtp.pt | tvi.iol.pt |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spain | *El País* | *El Mundo* | *20 Minutos* | *TVE, Telediario de la Noche* | *Tele5, Informativos* | elpais.com | elmundo.es | 20minutos.es | rtve.es/telediario | telecinco.es/informativos |
| Sweden | *Dagens Nyheter* | *Svenska Dagbladet* | *Aftonbladet* | SVT, *Rapport* | TV2, *Nyheterna* | dn.se | svd.se | aftonbladet.se | svt.se | tv2.se/nyheter |
| Switzerland | *Tages-Anzeiger* | *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* | *Blick* | SRF, *Tagesschau* | TeleZüri, *ZüriNews* | nzz.ch | tagesanzeiger.ch | blick.ch | tagesschau.sf.tv | radio24.ch |
| United Kingdom | *Guardian* | *Daily Telegraph* | *The Sun* | BBC, *News at Ten* | ITV, *News at Ten* | telegraph.co.uk | guardian.co.uk | thesun.co.uk | bbc.co.uk/news | itv.com/news |
| United States | *New York Times* | *Los Angeles Times* | *USA Today* | NBC, *Nightly News* | PBS, *News Hour* | nytimes.com | latimes.com | usatoday.com | msnbc.msn.com | npr.org |

*Note*. For more information on sampling of media outlets see Hopmann, Esser, and De Vreese (2017), p. 11–14.

aforementioned period and therefore, the sampling took place in the period of September 15, 2012, to December 15, 2012.

### *Content Analysis*

The unit of analysis for the content analysis is the news item. In newspapers each article is a separate news item. On news websites news items consist of text, text with a visual, or text with a video. For television, news items were distinguished based upon their topic: if the topic changes, a new item begins. However, when multiple news items deal with the same topic, a new item starts if the format changes (e.g., from an interview by the reporter to a studio debate). For each of these outlets, a news item was included for analysis when it contained at least one domestic political actor (also including political parties and political institutions). This means that international political news was only included if a domestic political actor was present. When more than five (three for websites) news items with a domestic political actor were identified in a specific outlet on a specific day, a random draw of five (three for websites) news items was chosen amongst all qualified news items. For each news item, up to five actors—including ordinary citizens, societal groups, etc.—were coded. In total, more than 7,500 news items were coded in which more than 28,000 sources appeared.

### *Inter-Coder Reliability*

As it is a major challenge to guarantee reliability in comparative research, in particular given the many different languages covered by this study, several steps have been taken to ensure inter-coder reliability. In a first step, the codebook was tested on English-language material to ensure a common understanding of how to apply the codebook across countries. Second, local coders were recruited and trained. The coders were native speakers, but mostly had sufficient English knowledge to use the codebook in English. In some countries the codebook was translated to the language of the country under study. To ensure a common understanding of concepts across countries, the coder training began with one English-language set of testing material used in all countries. In the subsequent third step, the local coders performed the coding of the sampled news items.[2] In a final step, we tested the inter-coder reliability based on English-language material after the country-specific coding had been completed. Using five news examples, this test was performed by the coders who had completed the country-specific content analyses. Overall, the inter-coder reliability is sufficient in each country with Fretwurst's lotus ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 and a country average of 0.81. The inter-coder reliability of the actor variable (type of politician present in the item) is 0.94 across countries.

### *Data*

For this study, we use the domestic individual politicians from all 28,000 coded actors. There were 10,022 individual politicians coded. These sources were categorized according to their political function. The first category contains the main political leader for each country. In 13 countries this is the prime minister. In France, Switzerland, and the United States, the president is considered as the head of government. The second category are national cabinet members, which includes all ministers and state secretaries except the head of government. In the Belgian case, we also included Flemish cabinet members in this category.[3] The third category comprises all party leaders in the 16 countries. Since

some party leaders hold a double mandate—they are also prime minister or cabinet member—and the data set only included names of party leaders without the function in which they appear, we categorized those party leaders according to their highest political function.[4] A consequence of this decision party leaders are slightly underrepresented. Yet, we argue that these politicians acquire their political relevance—and their newsworthiness—mainly from being the head of government or a cabinet member. For these three categories, all heads of government, cabinet members, and party leaders were listed by name before coding. All other domestic politicians appearing in the news are not coded by name, but rather in broad categories such as member of parliament, member of party X, local/regional politician, etc. Consequently, the fourth category of ordinary politicians is broader and more differentiated that the other three. We purposefully took this approach with the cross-country comparison in mind. Each country has its own political system with its own types and variety of political actors. However, all countries have a head of government, cabinet members, and party leaders, which we can compare against one another. This is the reason why we distillate those categories from the population of politicians. The dependent variable in the analysis consists of the proportion of news appearances of all politicians in each of the four categories, and this for each outlet. This means we consider these categories as a group of actors and ignore the large variation within each group.

Some of the independent variables need some further explanation. We operationalized the degree of media competition by the number of nationwide available television channels (from European Audiovisual Observatory, 2011) and by the number of paid national daily newspapers (from Leckner & Facht, 2010), both corrected for the amount of inhabitants. The type of government cabinet was operationalized by calculating a dummy variable based upon the amount of parties in the government: countries with one or two parties in government (seven countries) versus countries with three or more parties in government (nine countries). The degree of federalism in a country was measured by means of Lijphart's (2012) federalism index, ranging from low (1) to high degree of federalism (5). Finally, for the type of election system, we distinguish between majority or mixed electoral systems on the one hand and proportional electoral systems on the other.[5] The United States, the United Kingdom, France (majority systems), and Germany (mixed system) belong to the first category, whereas the remaining 12 countries reside in the second category of proportional systems (see Table 2 for descriptives of the dependent and independent variables).[6]

### *Analysis*

We first provide descriptive results showing media appearances by political function and country and then proceed to directly test the effect of media and political logic. Because of the multilayered structure of our data (politicians are nested within media outlets which are nested within countries) and a skewed dependent variable (range: 1.33–100; mean: 26.02; *SD*: 17.36), we employ multilevel mixed-effects Poisson regressions for estimating the latter model. The dependent variable is a count variable that represents the proportion of news appearances for a given group of political actors on the total of news appearances from any political actor in a given media outlet. With four groups of political actors (head of government, cabinet members, party leaders, and ordinary politicians) and 160 media outlets, this results in an *N* of 640. The log likelihood of the "empty" model and the "full" model are reported as well as the remaining variance on the level of media outlets and countries.

**Table 2**
Descriptive statistics of variables

| Variable | | Mean | *SD* | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dependent variable* | | | | | |
| Media visibility | | 26.02 | 17.36 | 1.33 | 100 |
| *Independent variables* | | | | | |
| Television competition | | 7.42 | 4.73 | 2.3 | 22.7 |
| Newspaper competition | | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.02 | 1.78 |
| Federalism | | 2.82 | 1.44 | 1 | 5 |
| Variable | Category | % | | | |
| Media outlet | Television news | 20 | | | |
| | Newspapers | 30 | | | |
| | News websites | 50 | | | |
| Type of broadcast | Public | 50 | | | |
| | Commercial | 50 | | | |
| Electoral system | Majority/Mixed | 25 | | | |
| | Proportional | 75 | | | |
| Type of government | Majority | 44 | | | |
| | Coalition | 56 | | | |

*Note*. Television competition includes the number of all nationwide available television channels; newspaper competition includes the number the number of paid-for nationally available daily newspapers. As there are far more nationwide television channels in a country compared to nationwide newspapers, the numbers for newspaper competition are much smaller.

## Results

In a first step, we compare cross-nationally how media visibility of politicians is distributed according to their political function (Figure 1). Here we only consider those politicians who appeared at least once in the news media (for an overview of cabinet members and party leaders getting no coverage at all, see Table 3).

On the whole, the head of government occupies more than 15% of the total coverage of individual politicians. This means that 16 persons—one head of government for each country—accounted for no less than 1,500 out of the approximately 10,000 media appearances by national politicians. However, the media visibility of the head of government differs greatly across countries. While the president in Switzerland (3%), the chancellor of Austria (7%), and the prime ministers of Belgium (6%) and Sweden (9%) appear not that often in the news media, the prime ministers in the United Kingdom (23%) and Israel (23%) and in particular the U.S. president (33%) are very prominent actors in the news (see also Van Aelst, Sheafer, Hubé, & Papathanassopoulos, 2016).

Figure 1 shows that cabinet members also gain plenty of coverage: almost one out of three (31%) political news sources is a cabinet member. Here as well, there is a wide variation across countries. In the United States, cabinet members take up "merely" 10% of the news appearances of politicians. In Italy it is slightly higher, with 15%. In Spain, on the other hand, cabinet members dominate the news, with more than six out of 10 (63%) politicians in the news being a member of the government. Also, in Portugal (47%),

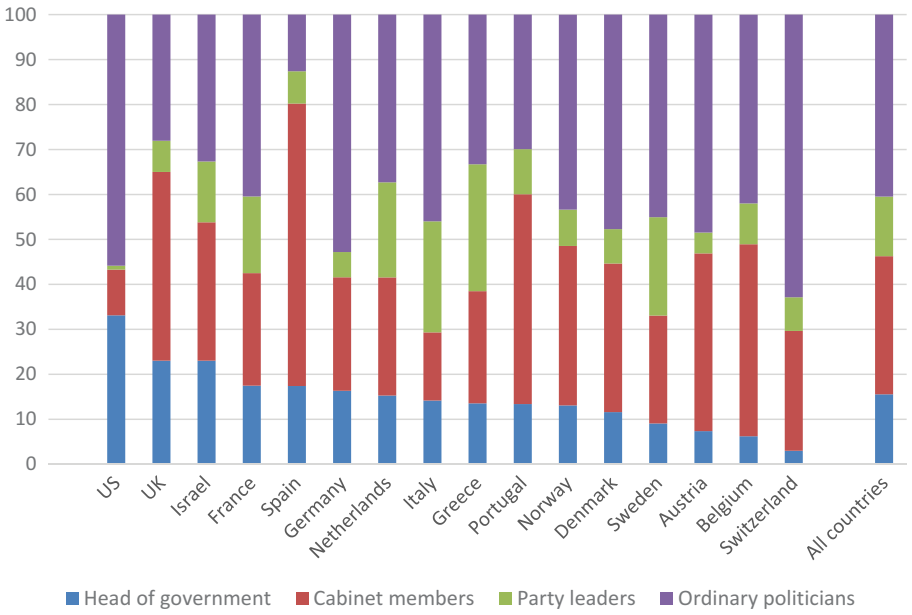


**Figure 1.** Media visibility of politicians by function and country (in %).

Belgium (43%), and the United Kingdom (42%), cabinet members turn out to be strong news sources.

Next, we see that party leaders occupy 13% of all mentions of politicians, which is fairly high given that this is on average a group of around eight politicians for each country. Party leaders are most prominent in Greece (28%) and Italy (25%) and clearly the least prominent in the United States (1%), where the party leaders of Democrats and Republicans only seldom appear as a news source. Also, in Austria (5%) and Germany (6%), party leaders are less visible compared to their counterparts in other Western countries.[7] The remaining group of "ordinary" politicians, mainly parliamentarians and local executives, makes up 40% of all politicians mentioned in the news. This large share should of course be related to the size of this group. Put differently: the government leader and the cabinet members together (46%) appear more often in the news than all ordinary politicians (40%), which includes a much larger group of politicians. Ordinary politicians are least visible in Spain (13%) whereas Swiss media show ordinary politicians most often (63%), which fits with Switzerland still being a prototype of a strong consensus democracy (Vatter & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2013). Ordinary politicians are also highly visible in the United States (56%). Because of the country's two-party system, U.S. media balance their coverage between the president and government on the one hand and their opposition in Congress and the Senate on the other (Hopmann, Van Aelst, & Legnante, 2011). Because of lower party cohesion and weaker party discipline, U.S. Congress members also have more freedom and opportunities to block government policy than most of the European parliamentarians (Owens, 2003).

Overall, Figure 1 indicates that each country has its own specific media hierarchy with certain positions being more prominent than others. To come to a more systematic explanation of these differences in the media prominence of politicians, we take into

**Table 3**
Overview of politicians without media visibility

| | Cabinet Members | | | Party Leaders | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* | % No Coverage | | *N* | % No Coverage |
| Austria | 14 | 0 | Denmark | 8 | 0 |
| Denmark | 22 | 0 | Germany | 6 | 0 |
| Germany | 15 | 0 | Norway | 7 | 0 |
| Greece | 20 | 0 | Greece | 7 | 0 |
| Spain | 22 | 0 | France | 7 | 0 |
| Norway | 20 | 5 | Sweden | 8 | 0 |
| Italy | 13 | 8 | Austria | 5 | 0 |
| Belgium | 24 | 8 | Israel | 12 | 8 |
| Netherlands | 22 | 9 | Belgium | 11 | 9 |
| Switzerland | 10 | 10 | Netherlands | 10 | 10 |
| Sweden | 22 | 18 | Portugal | 5 | 20 |
| Israel | 27 | 19 | Italy | 9 | 22 |
| United Kingdom | 26 | 27 | Spain | 7 | 29 |
| France | 40 | 28 | Switzerland | 10 | 30 |
| United States | 19 | 47 | United States | 2 | 50 |
| Portugal | 48 | 77 | United Kingdom | 10 | 60 |
| Mean | 23 | 16 | Mean | 8 | 15 |

*Note*. The table shows the share of cabinet members (including junior ministers) and party leaders (only those from parties in parliament) who get no coverage at all during the period under study.

account several indicators of media and political logic. Table 4 shows the results of the multilevel Poisson regression. To compare the effect of various variables, we display the incidence-rate ratios (IRR), which indicate a negative effect when below 1 and a positive effect when above 1. The model includes both direct effects (on top of the table) and interaction effects. We will focus on the interaction effects between the independent variables which allow us to test our hypotheses.

First, we look at the influence of the political system logic, and more in particular to the effect of the institutional framework. We expect that when features of the political system lead to a more equal distribution of power within a democracy, this will be reflected in the distribution of media visibility of politicians. As such, we analyze three key features of consensus democracies. A first indicator is related to the type of government, where we distinguish between small cabinets consisting of one or two parties and large coalition cabinets composed of three or more parties. Our expectation (H1) that the dispersion of media visibility over different types of politicians is higher in countries with a larger number of government parties is partly confirmed. It is indeed the case that the news media focus less on the head of government and cabinet members in the advantage of ordinary politicians. However, party leaders get more attention compared to ordinary

**Table 4**
Explaining media visibility of politicians across countries

| | IRR | SE |
|---|---|---|
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician)* | | |
| Head of government | 0.55*** | 0.05 |
| Cabinet member | 0.97 | 0.07 |
| Party leader | 0.57*** | 0.05 |
| *Coalition cabinet* | 1.15*** | 0.04 |
| *Federalism* | 1.11*** | 0.01 |
| *Proportional system* | 0.87** | 0.04 |
| *Media outlet (Ref.: Newspaper)* | | |
| Television | 0.90* | 0.05 |
| News website | 1.02 | 0.04 |
| *Public broadcast* | 0.96 | 0.04 |
| *Television competition* | 0.99 | 0.00 |
| *Newspaper competition* | 1.16*** | 0.05 |
| POLITICAL SYSTEM LOGIC | | |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Coalition cabinet* | | |
| Head of government | 0.84*** | 0.04 |
| Cabinet member | 0.71*** | 0.03 |
| Party leader | 1.13* | 0.06 |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Federalism* | | |
| Head of government | 0.94*** | 0.02 |
| Cabinet member | 0.90*** | 0.01 |
| Party leader | 0.78*** | 0.01 |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Proportional system* | | |
| Head of government | 0.82*** | 0.05 |
| Cabinet member | 1.55*** | 0.08 |
| Party leader | 1.76*** | 0.12 |
| MEDIA LOGIC | | |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Media outlet (Ref.: newspaper)* | | |
| Head of government * Television | 1.25** | 0.09 |
| Head of government * News website | 1.11 | 0.06 |
| Cabinet member * Television | 1.10 | 0.07 |
| Cabinet member * News website | 0.95 | 0.04 |
| Party leader * Television | 1.43*** | 0.11 |
| Party leader * News website | 1.15* | 0.07 |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Public broadcast* | | |
| Head of government | 0.91 | 0.06 |
| Cabinet member | 1.15** | 0.06 |
| Party leader | 0.99 | 0.07 |
| *Function (Ref.: Ordinary politician) * Television competition* | | |
| Head of government | 1.03*** | 0.01 |
| Cabinet member | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Party leader | 1.01 | 0.01 |
| *Function * Newspaper competition (Ref.: Ordinary politician)* | | |

(*Continued*)

**Table 4**
(*Continued*)

| | IRR | SE |
|---|---|---|
| Head of government | 0.71*** | 0.05 |
| Cabinet member | 0.95 | 0.04 |
| Party leader | 0.42*** | 0.03 |
| *Constant* | | |
| Log likelihood (empty model: –5014.66) | –3113.37 | |
| Variance | | |
| Country level (empty model: 0.00) | 0.00 | |
| Outlet level (empty model: 0.02) | 0.01 | |

*Notes*. IRR = incidence-rate ratios; SE = standard error. Multilevel mixed-effects Poisson regression of relative media visibility per media outlet and per function. *N* (media outlets) = 160; *N* (countries) = 16. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

leaders. This probably is due to the important role party leaders play in maintaining the coherence of larger coalition governments. A second feature characterizing consensus democracies is the degree of federalism and decentralization. The results are consistent with H2: ordinary politicians are indeed more visible in the news media in federalized countries compared to the head of government, cabinet members, and party leaders. This means that media visibility is more equally distributed in highly federalized countries, as expected. H3 stated that media visibility is more dispersed in countries with proportional election systems, but evidence for this hypothesis is rather mixed. The head of government gets less coverage in countries with proportional election systems compared to those with majoritarian systems, which benefit ordinary politicians, but it is mainly cabinet members and party leaders that are more visible in countries with proportional election systems. In an additional analysis dealing with within-group variation (see Table 3), we find that in the majoritarian countries there are more cabinet members that get no coverage at all. For instance, in the United States almost half of members of government were not mentioned once and in the United Kingdom and France one out of four cabinet members remained out of the news. In contrast, in most proportional systems almost all cabinet members get at least some news coverage.

Next, we hypothesized that two indicators of media logic would influence the distribution of media visibility among different political functions: the type of media outlet and the degree of media competition. Our hypothesis concerning the type of media outlet is confirmed: television news focuses significantly more on the head of government, and to a lesser extent also on party leaders, which leaves little space for a broad range of ordinary politicians. Newspapers (H4a) and news websites (H4b), on the other hand, show a broader range of different political functions compared to television news. Finally, the results only partly support our fifth expectation concerning the degree of commercialization of news outlets and the degree of competition in the media system. When it comes to the distinction between public broadcasts and privately owned media outlets (H5a), the effect does not go in the expected direction. Whereas it was hypothesized that public broadcast services would focus less on top political leaders such as the head of government and cabinet members and thereby grant more space to ordinary politicians, this is not confirmed in the analysis. What's more, they cover cabinet members

even more frequently than other media outlets do. In the discussion we elaborate on this unexpected finding. Hypothesis 5b is only partly confirmed. As expected, the news media in countries with a more competitive TV landscape focus more on the government leader. Countries with a more competitive newspaper market, however, show the opposite effect: the more competition among newspapers, the broader the range of types of politicians that are visible in the news media.

We conducted a jackknife test to see whether the results found are robust and not driven by certain outliers. To this end, we repeated the analyses and removed country samples one by one. For all countries except one, all effects go in the same direction with only significance levels changing slightly. When removing Israel, the head of government gets significantly less media visibility instead of more when it concerns television competition. Also, cabinet members get significantly less media visibility when television competition increases whereas party leaders get significantly less media visibility. It thus appears that Israel is an outlier when it comes to television news competition (Israel has clearly the highest score [22.71] on television news competition of all 16 countries) and this influences the results. Consequently, we must be careful when interpreting the effect of television competition on media visibility.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The starting point of this study is that journalists across modern democracies all apply the universal news value of political power when selecting political news sources, which ultimately results in a highly unequal distribution of media visibility. However, two-country comparisons have shown that news outlets in some democracies have a more equal access approach when covering politicians compared to other countries. In this study, we employ a large-scale content analysis of television news, newspapers, and news websites to map and explain the variation in media visibility of politicians with different institutional functions across 16 Western democracies. We investigated to what extent journalists are guided by features of the political system and their own media logic. Our results confirm that both logics matter in explaining variation in the news attention for different political functions.

We included three key political system characteristics in our analysis to distinguish between "power sharing" versus "power concentration." As expected, federal systems lead to a more equally distributed media visibility with more attention for ordinary politicians at the expense of the head of government, cabinet members, and party leaders. In that sense decentralization of political power leads to a broader range of politicians in the news. This might be partly explained by the attention for regional politicians, like governors in the United States, who play an important role in federal systems. In proportional election systems and larger coalition cabinets, on the other hand, the focus is less on the head of government, which benefits the visibility of ordinary politicians. However, the gains in visibility go mostly to cabinet members and in particular party leaders. The latter might be related to the prominent role party leaders play in making agreements to establish and maintain multiparty cabinets (Strøm & Müller, 1999). In majoritarian systems the situation is much more straightforward, with an outspoken focus on the prime minister or president, leaving little room for other prominent politicians. In sum, in "power-sharing" systems a broader range of elite political actors are visible in the news, while most ordinary politicians are as invisible as they are in power-concentrated systems.

Next to features of the political system, some aspects related to the logic of the media also matter. Related to the type of news medium, as expected, newspapers and online news websites offer more space to ordinary politicians compared to television news. Because these types of media are less restricted in space, they can show a greater variety of news sources, which benefits less powerful political actors. Second, the media dominance of the president or prime minister seems to be more outspoken in countries with a highly competitive television market, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel. However, this result is not very robust and mainly influenced by the Israeli case.[9]. Furthermore, the competiveness of the newspaper market had rather the opposite effect with relative more attention for ordinary politicians. This seems to suggest that competitive newspaper markets have different effects on political coverage than competitive television markets.

Whereas commercialization and competitiveness of the television market raise the dominance of media logic, this does not apply at the level of media outlet. Public broadcasts, in general less guided by commercial goals, do not show a broader spectrum of politicians compared to private media outlets and even cover more often cabinet members compared to those private outlets. Two explanations might account for this finding. First, some studies indicate a growing convergence between public and private broadcasts. To maintain their market share, public broadcasts adapt to the market pressures and thus cover well-known politicians the audience can relate to (Hopmann et al., 2011; Schoenbach et al., 2001). Second, it appears that public broadcasts do still differ from commercial outlets in one respect; news coverage of cabinet members. It could be that public broadcast services in some countries are still less autonomous from government, which leads to additional coverage of government members. This could, for instance, explain the large attention for ministers in the Spanish press (Semetko & Canel, 1997). This issue deserves further attention in future studies.

This study has several limitations. Among others, we only looked at a snapshot in time. It would be valuable for future research to analyze longitudinal trends cross-nationally and clarify changes over time. Moreover, we might draw other conclusions if we would analyze election periods instead of routine times. During election campaigns the news media devote more attention to politics, thereby potentially offering more opportunities for politicians that challenge those in power (Van Aelst & De Swert, 2009). However, other features of the political system, such as the electoral rules, might restrict or rather broaden the opportunities for ordinary politicians to become more visible in the media arena. More in general, future research should try to integrate more fine-grained measures of the political system and the media system to the study of political news. Another important limitation is that we focused on the power relations between political functions, and not so much on the differences between politicians with the same function. Therefore, this study does not tell us much on how country characteristics influence the spread of media attention within one group. Table 3, showing that in majoritarian systems such as the United States and United Kingdom a large percentage of party leaders and cabinet members gett no attention at all, suggests the dynamic might go at least partly in the same direction: systems with more power sharing create more equal dispersion of media attention *within* a group of politicians with the same position. However, more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis. A comparison of similar politicians might also better fit to test for the effect of other factors on media attention, more related to the media logic, such as the communication skills or charisma (Sheafer, 2001) of a politician.

The mediatization of politics literature often suggests the gradual takeover of media logic as the guiding principle in political communication at the expense of political logic (Esser,

2013; Meyer, 2002). This study shows that a political system logic still guides journalists and editors in their selection of politicians and explains why in some countries the news media focus more on a select group of politicians than in others. In general, the specific political power hierarchy of a country is still largely reflected in its media hierarchy. Our study also suggests that the media logic does not so much contradict the political logic, but rather complements, and in some cases even strengthens, the influence of the political system. For instance, the focus of the press in the United States and the United Kingdom on the government leader can be seen as a direct consequence of their majoritarian political system, but is further reinforced by the highly competitive media market in both countries. The consequences of this narrow focus on one single politician go beyond this study, but suggest, at least potentially, a substantial influence on how citizens and elite actors perceive political power in these countries. This finding should remind us that it is difficult to understand and explain political news without incorporating the political context in which it takes place.

## Notes

1. For Belgium, only Flemish parties and news outlets are included in the analyses. Similarly, for Switzerland only German-language media outlets are included.

2. The content analyses of the U.S. data was conducted by native English speakers residing in the United Kingdom.

3. Belgium is a strongly federalized state with large competencies at the regional level such as education, environment, and foreign trade. The regions manage more than half of the total government's budget and the Flemish parliament deals with more than half of the Belgian population (Deschouwer, 2009; Swenden, Brans, & De Winter, 2006). Flemish cabinet members are thus very relevant actors who also appear frequently in Flemish news media that are analyzed in this study.

4. In several countries this applied to only one or two party leaders (Austria, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands), while in the Nordic countries and Israel three or four party leaders were also simultaneously cabinet members. In the Netherlands, the leader of the parliamentary party group was coded as the leader of the party as (s)he is considered as the executive leader of the party rather than the administrative chair of the party.

5. Electoral systems have an impact on the number of parties in parliament ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.00$), which in turn might have an influence on which political actors appear in the news. However, we use the electoral system as independent variable as it reflects Lijphart's notion of consensus democracies. Countries with proportional representation are thought to have a political culture of power sharing and consensus across many actors, which can be reflected in a greater dispersion of actors in the media as well. To be sure, we included the number of parties in the analysis instead of electoral system and the majority of the effects remain similar. The effect of number of parties differs slightly from that of electoral system but our main conclusions remain.

6. Because Germany is situated between a proportional and a majoritarian election system, we checked whether the results would be robust if we include Germany in the category of proportional systems and this appears to be the case.

7. Note that in Germany Angela Merkel is also party leader of the CDU, but that she was always coded in her higher function of prime minister.

## References

Aalberg, T., & Curran, J. (2011). *How media inform democracy: A comparative approach*. London, UK: Routledge.

Altheide, D. L., & Snow, R. P. (1979). *Media logic*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Barnhurst, K. G. (2010). The form of reports on U.S. newspaper Internet sites: An update. *Journalism Studies*, *11*(4), 555–566. doi:10.1080/14616701003638426

Boumans, J. W., Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2013). Media personalisation in context: A cross-national comparison between the UK and the Netherlands, 1992–2007. *Political Studies*, *61*(S1), 198–216. doi:10.1111/1467-9248.12013

Cook, T. (1986). House members as newsmakers: The effects of televising congress. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *11*(2), 203–226. doi:10.2307/439876

Cook, T. E. (2005). *Governing with the news: The news media as a political institution* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

De Vreese, C. H., Esser, F., & Hopmann, D. N. (Eds.). (2017). *Comparing political journalism*. London, UK: Routledge.

De Vreese, C., Banducci, S., Semetko, H., & Boomgaarden, H. (2006). The news coverage of 2004 European parliamentary election campaign in 25 countries. *European Union Politics*, *7*(4), 477–504. doi:10.1177/1465116506069440

Deschouwer, K. (2009). *The politics of Belgium: Governing a divided society*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Esser, F. (2013). Mediatization as a challenge: Media logic versus political logic. In H. Kriesi, S. Lavenex, F. Esser, J. Matthes, M. Bühlman, & D. Bochsler (Eds.), *Democracy in the age of globalization and mediatization* (pp. 155–176). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

European Audiovisual Observatory. (2011). *Yearbook television, cinema, video and on demand audiovisual services in Europe, vols. 1 and 2*. Strasbourg, France: Author.

Farrell, D. (2001). *Electoral systems. A comparative introduction*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of International Peace Research*, *2* (1), 64–91. doi:10.1177/002234336500200104

Gurevitch, M., Coleman, S., & Blumler, J. G. (2009). Political communication: Old and new media relationships. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *625*, 164–181. doi:10.1177/0002716209339345

Hallin, D., & Mancini, P. (1984). Speaking of the president: Political structure and representational form in U.S. and Italian television news. *Theory and Society*, *13*(6), 829–850. doi:10.1007/BF00209215

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems. Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, *2* (2), 261–280. doi:10.1080/14616700118449

Helms, L. (2008). Governing in the media age: The impact of the mass media on executive leadership in contemporary democracies. *Government and Opposition*, *43*(1), 26–54. doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00242.x

Holtz-Bacha, C., Langer, A. I., & Merkle, S. (2014). The personalization of politics in comparative perspective: Campaign coverage in Germany and the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Communication*, *29*(2), 153–170. doi:10.1177/0267323113516727

Hopmann, D. N., De Vreese, C., & Albæk, E. (2011). Incumbency bonus in election news coverage explained: The logics of political power and the media market. *Journal of Communication*, *61* (2), 264–282. doi:10.1111/jcom.2011.61.issue-2

Hopmann, D. N., Esser, F., & De Vreese, C. (2017). How we did it: Approach and methods. In C. De Vreese, F. Esser, & D. N. Hopmann (Eds.), *Comparing political journalism* (pp. 10–21). London, UK: Routledge.

Hopmann, D. N., Van Aelst, P., & Legnante, G. (2011). Political balance in the news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, *13*(2), 240–257. doi:10.1177/1464884911427804

Humprecht, E., & Büchel, F. (2013). More of the same or marketplace of opinions? A cross-national comparison of diversity in online news reporting. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *18*(4), 436–461. doi:10.1177/1940161213497595

Karvonen, L. (2010). *The personalisation of politics: A study of parliamentary democracies*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

King, A. (1994). Chief executives in Western Europe. In I. Budge & D. Mckay (Eds.), *Developing democracy* (pp. 150–163). London, UK: Sage.

Kriesi, H. (2012). Personalization of national election campaigns. *Party Politics*, *18*(6), 825–844. doi:10.1177/1354068810389643

Kuklinski, J., & Sigelman, L. (1992). When objectivity is not objective: Network television news coverage of U.S. senators and the "paradox of objectivity." *The Journal of Politics*, *54*(3), 810–833. doi:10.2307/2132313

Kunelius, R., & Reunanen, E. (2012). Media in political power: A Parsonian view on the differentiated mediatization of Finnish decision makers. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *17*, 68–76. doi:10.1177/1940161211424207

Landerer, N. (2013). Rethinking the logics: A conceptual framework for the mediatization of politics. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 239–258. doi:10.1111/comt.12013

Leckner, S., & Facht, U. (2010). *A sampler of international media and communication statistics 2010*. Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom.

Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Meyer, T. (2002). *Media democracy: How the media colonize politics*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Midtbø, T. (2011). Explaining media attention for Norwegian MPs: A new modelling approach. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *34*(3), 226–249. doi:10.1111/scps.2011.34.issue-3

Molotch, H. L., & Lester, M. (1974). News as purposive behavior: On the strategic use of routine events, accidents, and scandals. *American Sociological Review*, *39*, 101–112. doi:10.2307/2094279

Negrine, R. (1999). Parliaments and the media: A changing relationship? *European Journal of Communication*, *14*(3), 325–352. doi:10.1177/0267323199014003002

Owens, J. E. (2003). Part 1: Cohesion. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *9*(4), 12–40. doi:10.1080/1357233042000306236

Poguntke, T., & Webb, P. (2005). *The presidentialisation of politics. A comparative study of modern democracies*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Schaffner, B. F., & Sellers, P. J. (2003). The structural determinants of local congressional news coverage. *Political Communication*, *20*(1), 41–57. doi:10.1080/105846003901365

Schoenbach, K., Ridder, J. D., & Lauf, E. (2001). Politicians on TV news: Getting attention in Dutch and German election campaigns. *European Journal of Political Research*, *39*(4), 519–531. doi:10.1111/ejpr.2001.39.issue-4

Semetko, H., & Canel, M. J. (1997). Agenda-senders versus agenda-setters: Television in Spain's 1996 election campaign. *Political Communication*, *14*(4), 459–479. doi:10.1080/105846097199263

Sheafer, T. (2001). Charismatic skill and media legitimacy. An actor-centered approach to understanding the political communication competition. *Communication Research*, *28*(6), 711–736. doi:10.1177/009365001028006001

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1991). Mediating the message. *Theories of influences on mass media content*. New York, NY: Longman.

Strøm, K., & Müller, W. C. (1999). The keys to togetherness: Coalition agreements in parliamentary democracies. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *5*(3–4), 255–282. doi:10.1080/13572339908420604

Strömback, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *13*(3), 228–246. doi:10.1177/1940161208319097

Strömbäck, J. (2010). Media malaise or a virtuous circle? Exploring the causal relationships between news media exposure, political news attention and political interest. *European Journal of Political Research*, *49*(5), 575. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01913.x

Strömback, J., & Esser, F. (2014). Mediatization of politics: Towards a theoretical framework. In J. Strömback & F. Esser (Eds.), *Mediatization of politics: Understanding the transformation of Western democracies* (pp. 3–30). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Swenden, W., Brans, M., & De Winter, L. (2006). The politics of Belgium: Institutions and policy under bipolar and centrifugal federalism. *West European Politics*, *29*(5), 863–873. doi:10.1080/01402380600968729

Tresch, A. (2009). Politicians in the media: Determinants of legislators' presence and prominence in Swiss newspapers. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *14*(1), 67–90. doi:10.1177/1940161208323266

Van Aelst, P., & De Swert, K. (2009). Politics in the news: Do campaigns matter? A comparison of political news during election periods and routine periods in Flanders (Belgium). *Communications*, *34*(2), 149–168. doi:10.1515/COMM.2009.011

Van Aelst, P., Maddens, B., Noppe, J., & Fiers, S. (2008). Politicians in the news: Media or party logic? Media attention and electoral success in the Belgian election campaign of 2003. *European Journal of Communication*, *23*(2), 193–210. doi:10.1177/0267323108089222

Van Aelst, P., Sheafer, T., Hubé, N., & Papathanassopoulos, S. (2016). Personalization. In C. H. De Vreese, F. Esser, & D. Hopmann (Eds.), *Where's the good news? Comparing political journalism in 16 countries* (pp. 112–130). London, UK: Routledge.

Van Aelst, P., Shehata, A., & Van Dalen, A. (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), 310–325. doi:10.1080/10584609.2010.496711

Van Dalen, A. (2012). Structural bias in cross-national perspective: How political systems and journalism cultures influence government dominance in the news. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *17*(1), 32–55. doi:10.1177/1940161211411087

Vatter, A., & Stadelmann-Steffen, I. (2013). Subnational patterns of democracy in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. *West European Politics*, *36*(1), 71–96. doi:10.1080/01402382.2013.742737

Vos, D. (2013). The vertical glass ceiling: Explaining female politicians' underrepresentation in television news. *Communications - The European Journal of Communication Research*, *38*(4), 389–410.

Vos, D. (2014). Which politicians pass the news gates and why? Explaining inconsistencies in research on news coverage of individual politicians. *International Journal of Communication*, *8*, 2438–2461.

Waismel-Manor, I., & Tsfati, Y. (2011). Why do better-looking members of congress receive more television coverage? *Political Communication*, *28*(4), 440–463. doi:10.1080/10584609.2011.617719

Wolfsfeld, G. (2011). *Making sense of media and politics: Five principles in political communication*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wolfsfeld, G., & Sheafer, T. (2006). Competing actors and the construction of political news: The contest over waves in Israel. *Political Communication*, *23*(3), 333–354. doi:10.1080/10584600600808927