



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

# News Coverage of Donald Trump's First 100 Days

## Faculty Research Working Paper Series

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# Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy

in conjunction with Media Tenor

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## News Coverage of Donald Trump's First 100 Days

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on Media, Politics and Public Policy

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## Introduction and Methodology

“The press is your enemy,” said the president. “Enemies. Understand that? . . . Because they’re trying to stick the knife right in our groin.”

Donald Trump’s ongoing feud with the media is not the first time a president has felt wronged by the press. The opening words are those of Richard Nixon.<sup>1</sup> Virtually every president since Nixon has obsessed over what they’ve seen as unfair treatment by the press. In the first two years of his presidency, Bill Clinton persuaded Congress to enact a tax increase on upper incomes, a family leave program, NAFTA, deficit reduction, the Brady bill, a youth training program, and other initiatives, yet was mired in a slew of headlines about Travelgate, Whitewater, and other alleged wrongdoings. In a *Rolling Stone* interview, Clinton exploded at his treatment by the press: “I’ve fought more damn battles here than any president in 20 years with the possible exception of Reagan’s first budget and not gotten one damn bit of credit from the knee-jerk liberal press. I am damn sick and tired of it.”<sup>2</sup>

What’s different with President Trump is that he’s taken the fight to the press, openly and with relish. Nixon worked largely behind the scenes, threatening to take away broadcasters’ licenses if they didn’t shape up. Ronald Reagan created what amounted to a White House news service, feeding stories directly to local news outlets in order to bypass the national press. George W. Bush extended that strategy, adding video feeds to the mix. Clinton and Barack Obama relied on one-on-one interviews with reporters in an effort to get out their side of the story. During his presidency, Obama held more than a thousand such interviews.<sup>3</sup>

Trump’s dislike of the press was slow in coming. When he announced his presidential candidacy, journalists embraced him, and he returned the favor. Trump received far more coverage, and far more positive coverage, than did his Republican rivals.<sup>4</sup> Only after he had secured the Republican nomination did the press sharpen its scrutiny and, as his news coverage turned negative, Trump turned on the press.<sup>5</sup> Trump tweeted that the “election is being rigged by the media, in a coordinated effort with the Clinton campaign.”<sup>6</sup> It’s been a running battle ever since. On his 100<sup>th</sup> day in office, he became the first president in more than three decades to skip the White House Correspondents Dinner, choosing instead to go to Pennsylvania for a rally with supporters. Said Trump: “I could not possibly be more thrilled than to be more than 100 miles away from the Washington swamp spending my evening with all of you and with a much, much larger crowd and much better people.”

This paper examines Trump’s first 100 days in office, not through the lens of what he said about the news media, but what they reported about him. The research is based on news coverage in the print editions of three U.S. daily papers (*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*), the main newscasts of four U.S. television networks (CBS Evening News, CNN’s *The Situation Room*, Fox’s *Special Report*, and NBC *Nightly News*), and three European news outlets

(*Financial Times*, based in London; BBC, Britain's public service broadcaster; and ARD, Germany's oldest public service broadcaster). The president's role as a global leader, and Trump's pledge to redefine that role, prompted the inclusion of European news in the study.<sup>7</sup>

The newspaper analysis covers all sections except sports, obituaries, and letters to the editor. Op-eds and editorials are included, but letters from the public are not. For television, the analysis covers the full daily content of each network's major newscast. Network talk shows are not included. Except where individual news outlets are identified, the U.S. percentages presented in this paper are the combined averages for the seven U.S. news outlets whereas the European percentages are the combined averages for the three European news outlets.

The data for our studies are provided by Media Tenor, a firm that specializes in collecting and coding news content. Media Tenor's coding of print and television news stories is conducted by trained full-time employees who visually evaluate the content. Coding of individual actors (in this case, Trump) is done on a comprehensive basis, capturing all mentions of more than five lines (print) or five seconds (TV) of coverage. For each report, coders identify the source(s), topic(s), and tone.

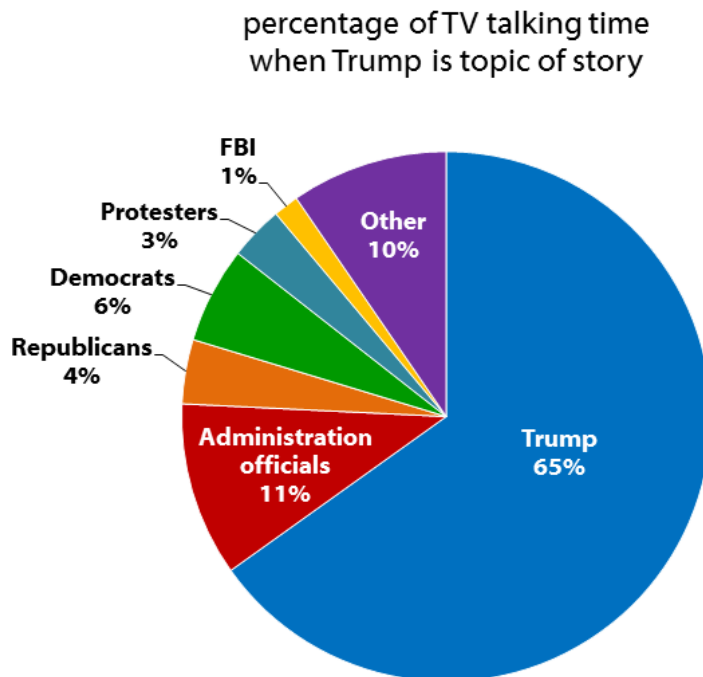
Tone is judged from the perspective of the actor. Negative stories include stories where the actor is criticized directly. An example is a headline story where Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer criticized Trump when the Labor Department's April economic report showed that fewer jobs were created than had been predicted. Schumer was quoted as saying, in part: "Eleven weeks into his administration, we have seen nothing from President Trump on infrastructure, on trade, or on any other serious job-creating initiative."<sup>8</sup> Negative stories also consist of stories where an event, trend, or development reflects unfavorably on the actor. Examples are the stories that appeared under the headlines "President Trump's approval rating hits a new low"<sup>9</sup> and "GOP withdraws embattled health care bill, handing major setback to Trump, Ryan."<sup>10</sup>

## **All Trump, All the Time**

Until the early 1960s, news coverage of national politics divided rather evenly between Congress and the president.<sup>11</sup> That situation began to shift in 1963, the year that the broadcast television networks expanded their evening newscasts to 30 minutes and hired the correspondents and camera crews needed to produce picture-driven news. With a national audience, the networks focused their coverage on the president who, in any case, was easier than Congress to capture on camera. Newspapers followed suit and, ever since, the president has received more coverage in the national press than all 535 members of Congress combined.<sup>12</sup> The White House's dominance has been such that, on national television, the president typically accounts for roughly one-eighth of all news coverage.<sup>13</sup>

Even by that standard, Trump’s first 100 days were a landmark.<sup>14</sup> On national television, Trump was the topic of 41 percent of all news stories—three times the usual amount.<sup>15</sup> It was also the case that Trump did most of the talking (see Figure 1). He was the featured speaker in nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of his coverage. Members of the administration, including his press secretary, accounted for 11 percent of the sound bites. Other Republicans, including Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan, accounted for 4 percent. Altogether, Republicans, inside and outside the administration, accounted for 80 percent of what newsmakers said about the Trump presidency.

**Figure 1. Who Does the Talking When Trump Is the Story?**



Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017. Excludes statements of news anchors and reporters. “Other” category includes, for example, experts, pundits, group spokespersons, and citizens.

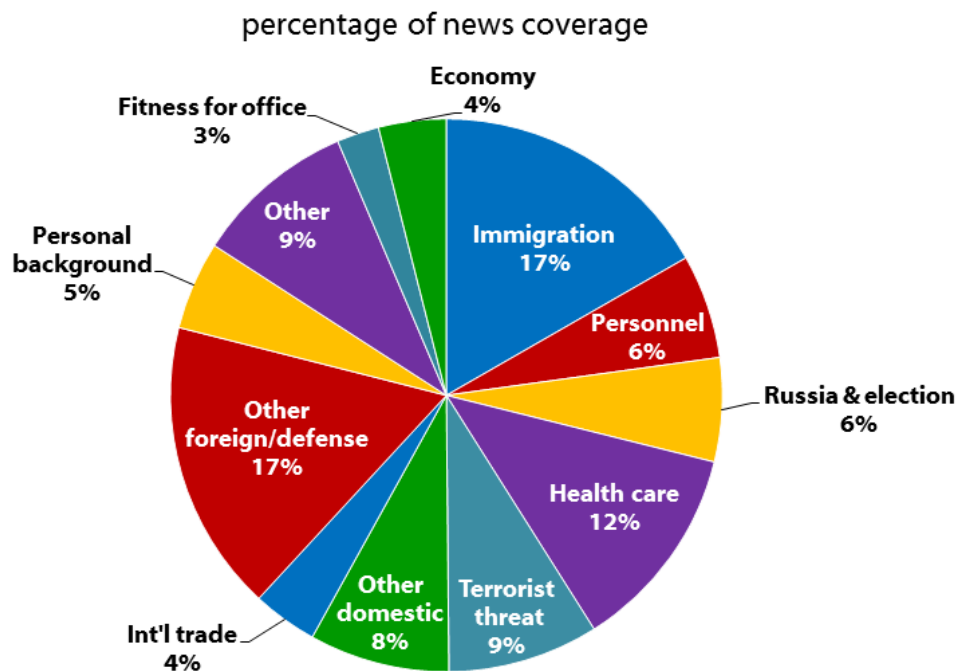
For their part, Democrats did not have a large voice in Trump’s coverage, accounting for only 6 percent of the sound bites. Participants in anti-Trump protests and demonstrations accounted for an additional 3 percent.

The media have been fascinated by Trump since the first days of his presidential candidacy. Our studies of 2016 presidential election coverage found that Trump received more news coverage than rival candidates during virtually every week of the campaign.<sup>16</sup> The reason is clear enough. Trump is a journalist’s dream. Reporters are tuned to what’s new and different, better yet if it’s laced with controversy. Trump delivers that type of material by the shovel full. Trump is also good for business.<sup>17</sup> News ratings were slumping until Trump entered the arena. Said one network executive, “[Trump] may not be good for America, but [he’s] damn good for [us].”<sup>18</sup>

## Immigration, Health Care, Russia, and the Rest

Given the number of tasks facing an incoming administration, it is no surprise that Trump's news coverage during his first 100 days in office touched on an array of topics (see Figure 2). Immigration was the most heavily covered topic, accounting for 17 percent of Trump's coverage.<sup>19</sup> Health care ranked second (12 percent), followed by the terrorism threat (9 percent), and Russia's involvement in the 2016 election (6 percent). Presidential appointments, global trade, Trump's family and personal life, and the economy were the other topics that received 4 percent or more of the coverage.

**Figure 2. Topics of Trump's U.S. Coverage**



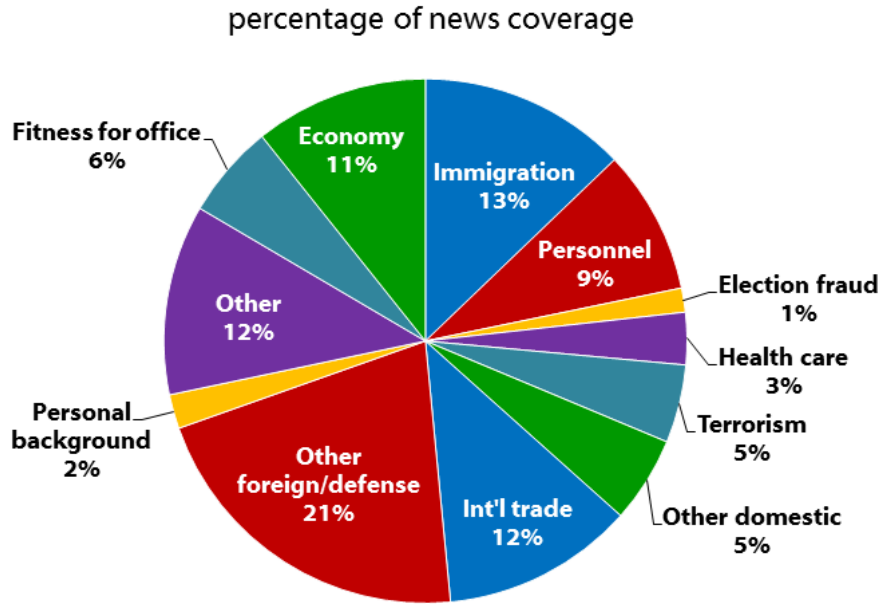
Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017

The seven U.S. news outlets in our study had similar agendas. Each of them devoted considerable attention to immigration, health care, and the terrorist threat. Nevertheless, there were some measurable differences. Our print outlets devoted proportionally more attention to the immigration issue and Trump appointees while the TV outlets devoted proportionally more attention to the health care issue. Fox News was an outlier on one topic—Russia's meddling in the U.S. election. Fox gave it less than half as much attention as it received on average from the other six U.S. outlets.

The European media's coverage of Trump had a somewhat different focus (see Figure 3). Although, like their American counterparts, immigration was at the top of the agenda, they gave relatively more space to international trade, military, and

foreign policy issues, a reflection of the extent to which Europe is affected by U.S. policies in these areas. On the other hand, Russia’s interference in the U.S. election received considerably less attention in the European media than in the U.S. media.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3. Topics of Trump’s European Coverage**



Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017

European reporters stood out in another way as well. Compared with American journalists, they were more likely to question directly Trump’s fitness for office. For the most part, U.S. journalists worked around the edges of that issue, as when one of them reported that “Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) suggested Sunday that he thought President Trump was suffering from poor mental health and claimed some of his Republican colleagues felt the same way.”<sup>20</sup> Only 3 percent of Trump’s U.S. coverage explicitly explored the issue of Trump’s fitness for office. European journalists were less restrained with the exception of BBC journalists, who are governed by impartiality rules that prohibit such reporting.<sup>21</sup> Journalists at ARD, Germany’s main public broadcasting outlet, are not governed by the same rules, and Trump’s suitability for the presidency was ARD’s leading topic in January, accounting for a full fifth (20 percent) of its Trump coverage. ARD stayed on the issue in its February coverage, when it consumed 18 percent of its Trump coverage. In March and April, Trump’s fitness for office got less attention from ARD, but it nonetheless accounted for about 10 percent of ARD’s coverage. Even that reduced amount exceeded the level of any of our seven U.S. outlets in any month. And ARD’s journalists were

<sup>1</sup> Trump’s first 100 days were nearing their end when Russian meddling in the French presidential election was becoming a major issue. If the French election had come earlier, it’s conceivable that the European media would have given more coverage to Russia’s involvement in the U.S. election.

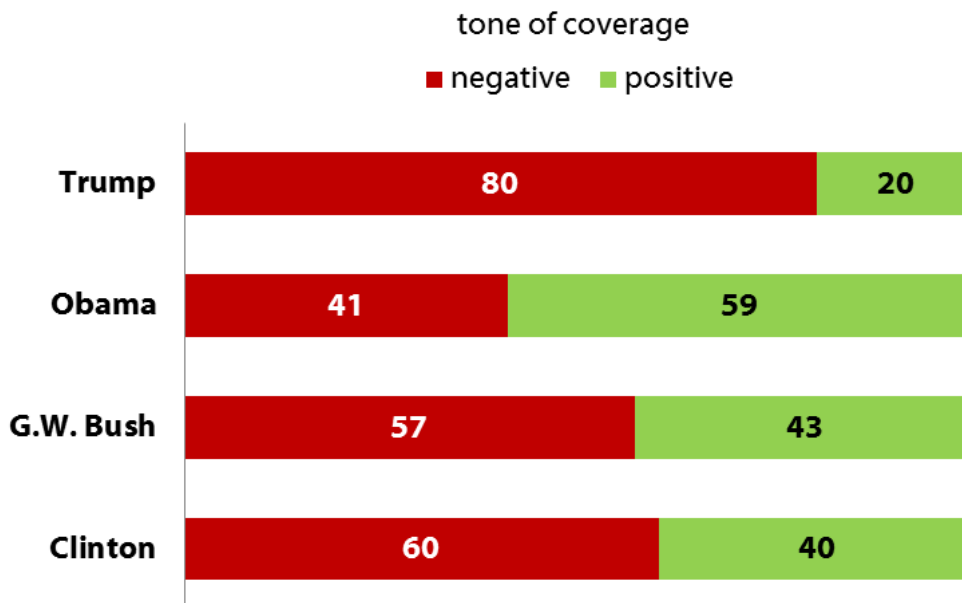


unequivocal in their judgment—98 percent of their evaluations of Trump’s fitness for office were negative, only 2 percent were positive.

## Bad News, Twice Over

Presidents are more than the main focus of U.S. reporters. Presidents are also their main target. Although journalists are accused of having a liberal bias, their real bias is a preference for the negative.<sup>22</sup> News reporting turned sour during the Vietnam and Watergate era and has stayed that way.<sup>23</sup> Journalists’ incentives, everything from getting their stories on the air to acquiring a reputation as a hard-hitting reporter, encourage journalists to focus on what’s wrong with politicians rather than what’s right.<sup>24</sup> Once upon a time, the “honeymoon” period for a newly inaugurated president included favorable press coverage.<sup>25</sup> That era is now decades in the past. Today’s presidents can expect rough treatment at the hands of the press, and Donald Trump is no exception (see Figure 4). Of the past four presidents, only Barack Obama received favorable coverage during his first 100 days, after which the press reverted to form. During his second 100 days, Obama’s coverage was 57 percent negative to 43 percent positive.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 4. Tone of President’s News Coverage during First 100 Days**

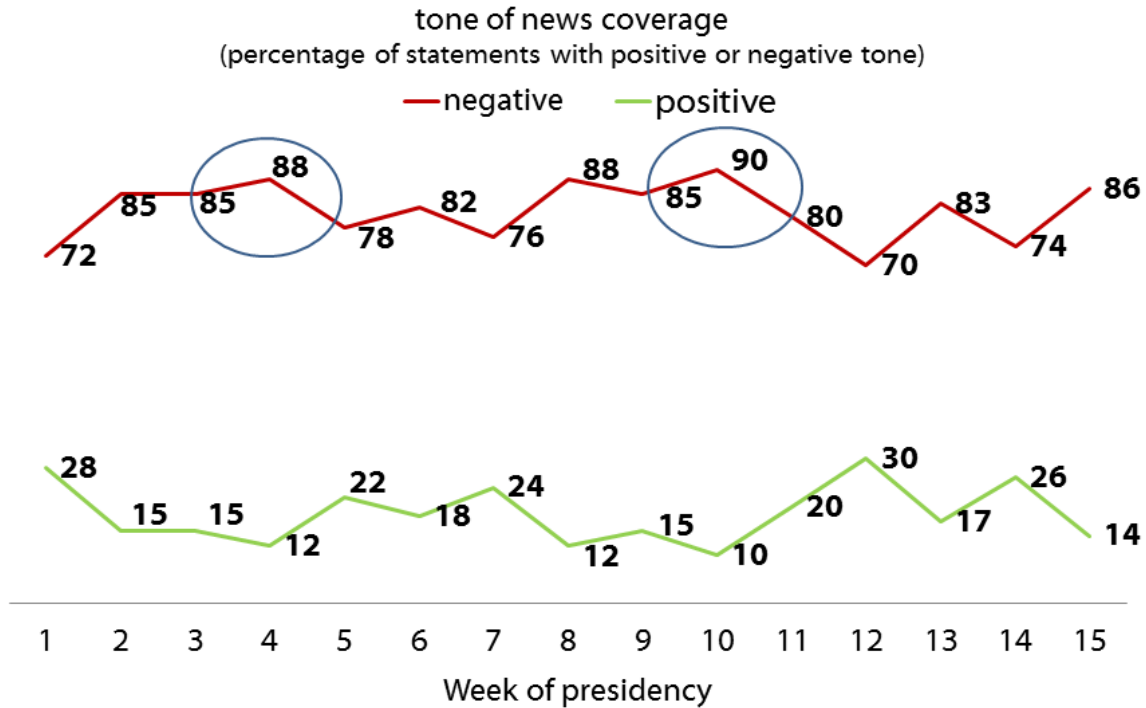


Sources: Stephen J. Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter, *The Mediated President* (2006), p. 37 for Clinton and Bush; Center for Media & Public Affairs for Obama; Media Tenor for Trump. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

Trump’s coverage during his first 100 days set a new standard for negativity. Of news reports with a clear tone, negative reports outpaced positive ones by 80 percent to 20 percent. Trump’s coverage was unsparing. In no week did the coverage drop below 70 percent negative and it reached 90 percent negative at its peak (see Figure 5). The best period for Trump was week 12 of his presidency, when

he ordered a cruise missile strike on a Syrian airbase in retaliation for the Assad regime’s use of nerve gas on civilians. That week, his coverage divided 70 percent negative to 30 percent positive. Trump’s worst periods were weeks 3 and 4 (a combined 87 percent negative) when federal judges struck down his first executive order banning Muslim immigrants, and weeks 9 and 10 (a combined 88 percent negative) when the House of Representatives was struggling without success to muster the votes to pass a “repeal and replace” health care bill.

**Figure 5. Weekly Tone of Trump’s Coverage**

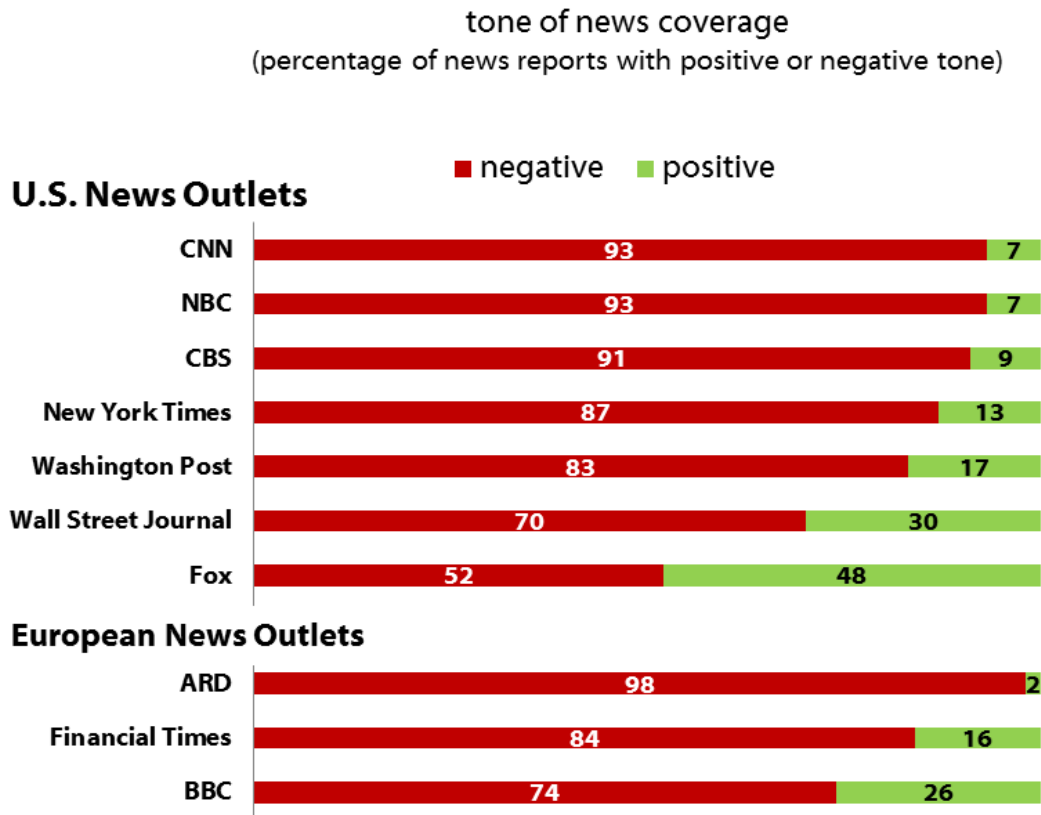


Source: Media Tenor. Sunday through Saturday was the coding period for each week. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

## In Unison, Almost

Trump’s attacks on the press have been aimed at what he calls the “mainstream media.” Six of the seven U.S. outlets in our study—CBS, CNN, NBC, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*—are among those he’s attacked by name. All six portrayed Trump’s first 100 days in highly unfavorable terms (see Figure 6). CNN and NBC’s coverage was the most unrelenting—negative stories about Trump outpaced positive ones by 13-to-1 on the two networks. Trump’s coverage on CBS also exceeded the 90 percent mark. Trump’s coverage exceeded the 80 percent level in *The New York Times* (87 percent negative) and *The Washington Post* (83 percent negative). *The Wall Street Journal* came in below that level (70 percent negative), a difference largely attributable to the *Journal*’s more frequent and more favorable economic coverage.

**Figure 6. Tone of Trump's Coverage by News Outlet**



Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

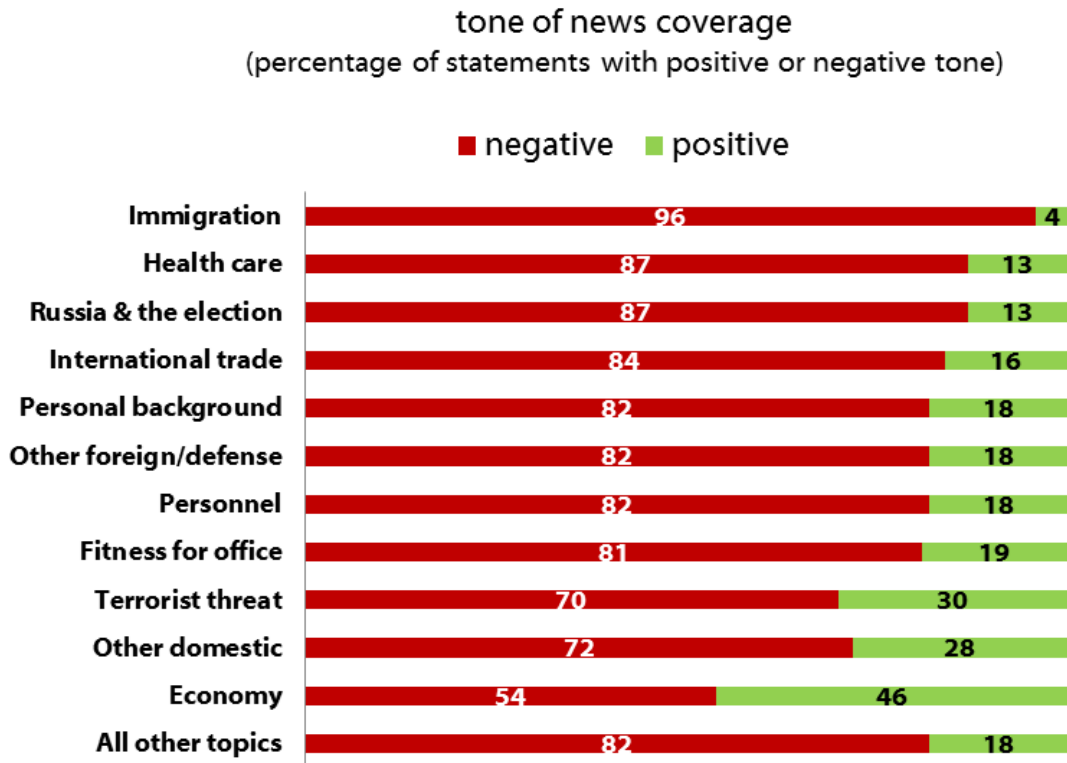
Fox was the only outlet where Trump's overall coverage nearly crept into positive territory—52 percent of Fox's reports with a clear tone were negative, while 48 percent were positive. Fox's coverage was 34 percentage points less negative than the average for the other six outlets.

Trump's news coverage in the three European news outlets tilted strongly in the negative direction. Of the three, the BBC provided Trump with his best coverage, though only in relative terms. BBC's coverage ran 3-to-1 negative over positive. The *Financial Times'* reporting was roughly 6-to-1 negative over positive. Germany's ARD portrayed Trump in deeply unfavorable terms—98 percent of its Trump-based stories with a clear tone were negative.

## Negative on All Counts

Trump's coverage during his first 100 days was not merely negative in overall terms. It was unfavorable on every dimension. There was not a single major topic where Trump's coverage was more positive than negative (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Tone of Trump’s U.S. Coverage by Topic**



Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

Immigration was, at once, both the most heavily covered topic in U.S. news outlets and the topic that drew the most negative coverage. The proportion of negative news reports to positive ones exceeded 30-to-1. Health care reform and Russia’s election involvement were also subject to starkly negative coverage—in each case, the breakdown was 87 percent negative to 13 percent positive. International trade, Trump’s personal background, foreign and defense issues, Trump’s appointees, and Trump’s fitness for office were the other topics where the coverage was at least 80 percent negative.

The economy provided Trump with his most favorable coverage. Sources of positive stories were upward trends in economic growth, employment, and the stock market, as were Trump’s negotiations with firms threatening to relocate abroad. Nevertheless, when the full range of news about the economy is taken into account, the balance of coverage was slightly unfavorable—54 percent of reports were negative, while 46 percent were positive.

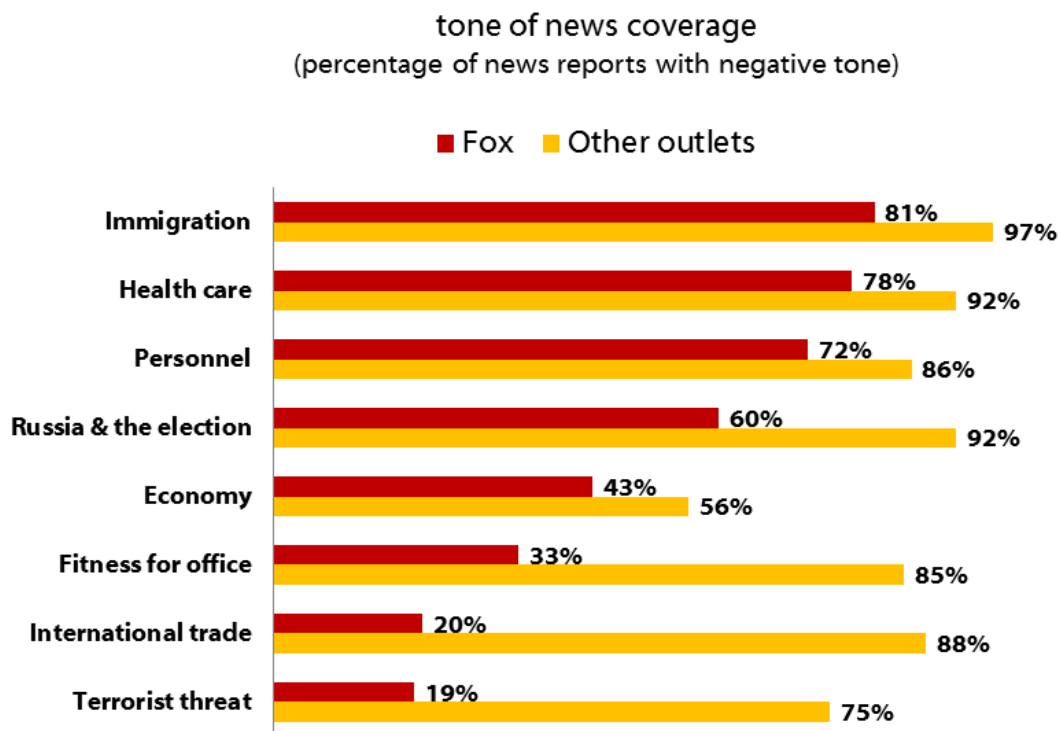
When Trump’s category-by-category coverage was examined for each of the seven U.S. news outlets in our study, a consistent pattern emerged. The sources of Trump’s

most and least negative coverage were similar for every outlet, except for Fox News, as will be described in the next section.<sup>2</sup>

## A Ray of Sunshine

Fox was the only news outlet in our study that came close to giving Trump positive coverage overall—the split was 52 percent negative to 48 percent positive. But Fox’s coverage varied widely by topic, ranging from highly negative to highly positive (Figure 8).<sup>27</sup> As was true at the other outlets, Fox’s reporters found few good things to say about the public and judicial response to Trump’s executive orders banning Muslim immigrants or the collapse of the House of Representatives’ first attempt to repeal and replace Obamacare. Fox’s reporting on Trump’s appointees and Russian involvement in the election was also negative in tone.

**Figure 8. Tone of Trump’s Coverage on Fox News**



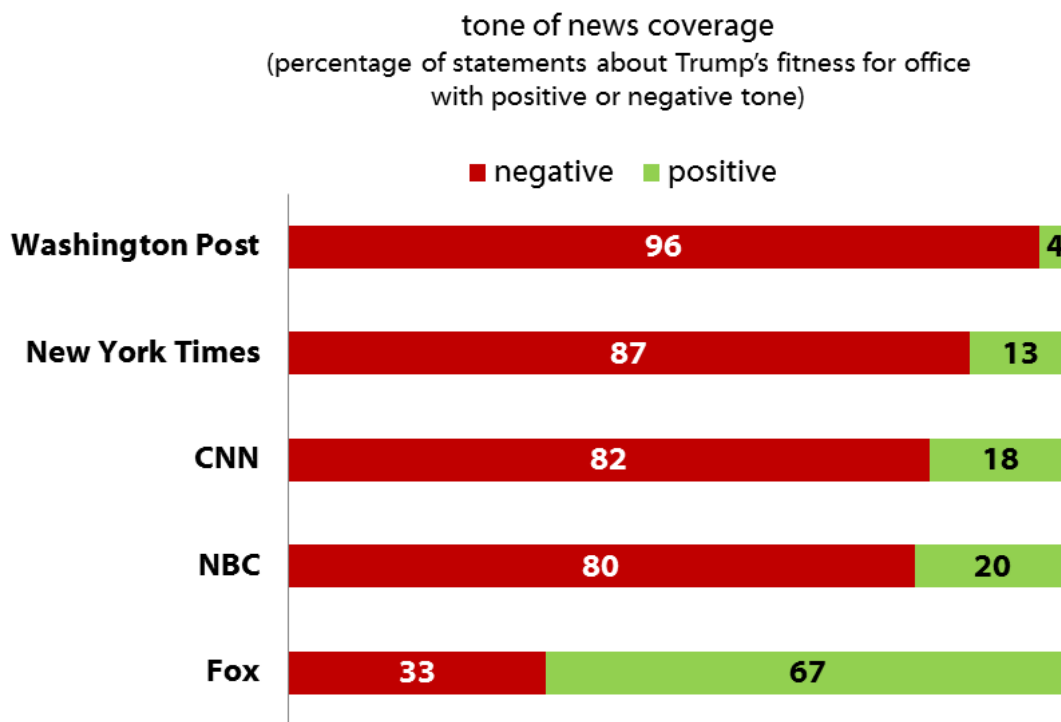
Source: Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

<sup>2</sup> *The Wall Street Journal’s* coverage less closely resembled Fox’s coverage than it did that of the other news outlets in our study. The main difference between their coverage and the *Journal’s* was on the issue of the economy. The *Journal* gave it more coverage, which, on balance, was more positive than negative. It was the only news category in which the *Journal’s* coverage was in positive territory. In the case of the other outlets, except Fox, no category had a positive balance of coverage.

On the other hand, trade and terrorism were news categories where Fox’s coverage was starkly different from that of the other outlets. Whereas their coverage in these areas tipped strongly in the negative direction, Fox’s coverage tipped strongly positive.

Trump’s suitability for the presidency was also a topic where Fox News was at odds with what the other outlets were reporting (see Figure 9). Fox was the only U.S. outlet where news reports that spoke directly to Trump’s fitness for office were positive on balance. The ratio on Fox was 2-to-1 favorable. The other outlets averaged 6-to-1 unfavorable, with the range varying from 24-to-1 unfavorable to 4-to-1 unfavorable.

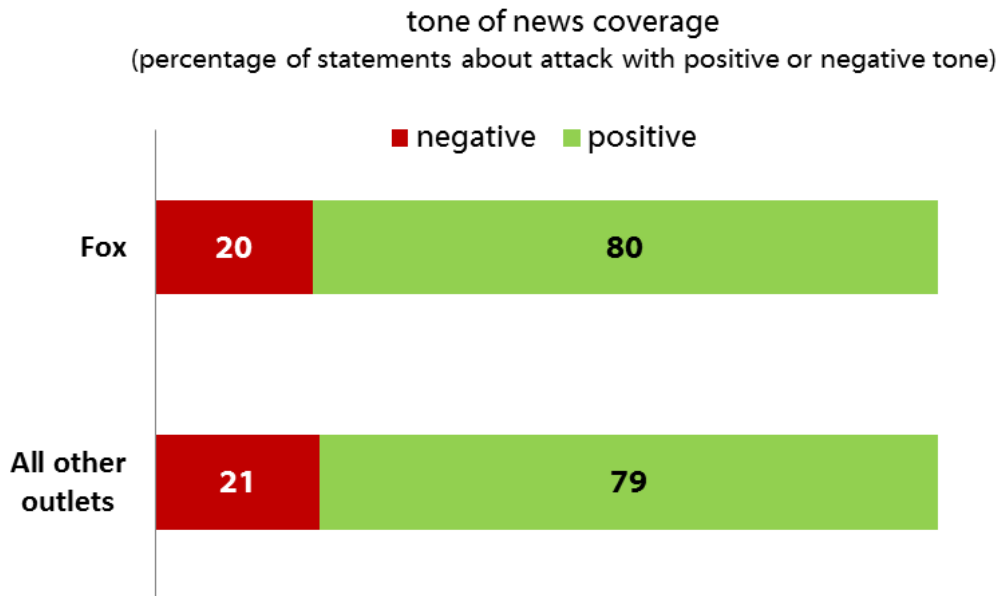
**Figure 9. Trump’s “Fitness for Office” Coverage by Outlet**



Source: Media Tenor. CBS, Financial Times, and BBC were not included because they had too few stories on Trump’s fitness for office to calculate reliable percentages. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

Trump had a few moments during his first 100 days when all the news outlets in our study gave him positive press, none more so than when he launched cruise missile strikes on a Syrian airbase. Although some critics questioned Trump’s larger objective in ordering the strikes, his action was widely praised in the policy community, including many top Democrats (see Figure 10).<sup>28</sup> In this instance, the tone of the other news outlets aligned with Fox’s—in each case, positive stories outnumbered negative ones by 4-1 (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Tone of Coverage on Cruise Missile Attack on Syria**



Source: Media Tenor, April 7-13, 2017. Percentages exclude news reports that were neutral in tone, which accounted for about a third of the reports.

## Thoughts on Trump's Coverage

Trump's coverage during his first 100 days was negative even by the standards of today's hyper-critical press. Studies of earlier presidents found nothing comparable to the level of unfavorable coverage afforded Trump. Should it continue, it would exceed even that received by Bill Clinton. There was not a single quarter during any year of Clinton's presidency where his positive coverage exceeded his negative coverage, a dubious record no president before or since has matched.<sup>29</sup> Trump can't top that string of bad news but he could take it to a new level. During his first 100 days, Clinton's coverage was 3-to-2 negative over positive.<sup>30</sup> Trump's first 100 days were 4-to-1 negative over positive.

Have the mainstream media covered Trump in a fair and balanced way? That question cannot be answered definitively in the absence of an agreed-upon version of "reality" against which to compare Trump's coverage. Any such assessment would also have to weigh the news media's preference for the negative, a tendency in place long before Trump became president. Given that tendency, the fact that Trump has received more negative coverage than his predecessor is hardly surprising. The early days of his presidency have been marked by far more missteps and miss-hits, often self-inflicted, than any presidency in memory, perhaps ever.

What's truly atypical about Trump's coverage is that it's sharply negative despite the fact that he's the source of nearly two-thirds of the sound bites surrounding his coverage. Typically, newsmakers and groups complain that their media narrative is negative because they're not given a chance to speak for themselves. Over the past

decade, U.S. coverage of Muslims has been more than 75 percent negative. And Muslims have had little chance to tell their side of the story. Muslims account for less than 5 percent of the voices heard in news reports about Islam.<sup>31</sup> So why is Trump's coverage so negative even though he does most of the talking? The fact is, he's been on the defensive during most of his 100 days in office, trying to put the best face possible on executive orders, legislative initiatives, appointments, and other undertakings that have gone bad. Even Fox has not been able to save him from what analyst David Gergen called the "worst 100 days we've ever seen."<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the sheer level of negative coverage gives weight to Trump's contention, one shared by his core constituency, that the media are hell bent on destroying his presidency. As he tweeted a month after taking office, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"

That tweet made headlines, as have many of Trump's attacks on the press.<sup>33</sup> It's understandable why journalists would report and respond to such attacks, but it could be counterproductive. A long-running battle in which Trump accuses the press of trafficking in fake news while journalists reply that their news is anything but fake would probably, fairly or not, weaken the public's confidence in the press. Research has found that familiarity with a claim increases the likelihood people will believe it, whether it's true or not. The more they hear of something, the more likely they are to believe it.<sup>34</sup>

If a mud fight with Trump will not serve the media's interests, neither will a soft peddling of his coverage. Never in the nation's history has the country had a president with so little fidelity to the facts, so little appreciation for the dignity of the presidential office, and so little understanding of the underpinnings of democracy. The media's credibility today is at low ebb, but the Trump presidency is not the time for the press to pull back. The news media gave Trump a boost when he entered presidential politics. But a head-on collision at some point was inevitable. It's happened, it isn't pretty, and it isn't over.

At the same time, the news media need to give Trump credit when his actions warrant it. The public's low level of confidence in the press is the result of several factors, one of which is a belief that journalists are biased. That perception weakens the press's watchdog role. One of the more remarkable features of news coverage of Trump's first 100 days is that it has changed few minds about the president, for better or worse. The nation's watchdog has lost much of its bite and won't regain it until the public perceives it as an impartial broker, applying the same reporting standards to both parties. The news media's exemplary coverage of Trump's cruise missile strike on Syria illustrates the type of even-handedness that needs to be consistently and rigorously applied.

How might the press better navigate the days ahead? For starters, journalists need to keep their eye on the ball. We live in a fast-paced media era, as journalists rush to be at the crest of breaking news. Through his tweets and actions, Trump exploits



this habit, enabling him to change the subject when it suits his needs. During the presidential campaign, that tactic enabled him to shed a number of damaging revelations before many voters had a chance to hear about them, much less think about them.

The press should also start doing what it hasn't done well for a long time—focus on policy effects. Journalists' focus on the Washington power game—who's up and who's down, who's getting the better of whom—can be a fascinating story but at the end of the day, it's food for political junkies. It's remote enough from the lives of most Americans to convince them that the political system doesn't speak for them, or to them.

A broadening of the scope of political coverage would require journalists to spend less time peering at the White House. Our analysis of news coverage of Trump's first 100 days found that, except for his court-challenged immigration orders, the press paid only minimal attention to Trump's executive orders. He issued a large number of them, covering everything from financial regulation to climate change. Collectively, these orders, immigration aside, accounted for less than 1 percent of Trump's coverage, and rarely did a news report track an executive order into the agencies to see how it was being handled.

Journalists would also do well to spend less time in Washington and more time in places where policy intersects with people's lives. If they had done so during the presidential campaign, they would not have missed the story that keyed Trump's victory—the fading of the American Dream for millions of ordinary people. Nor do all such narratives have to be a tale of woe. America at the moment is a divided society in some respects, but it's not a broken society and the divisions in Washington are deeper than those beyond the Beltway.

The lesson of the 2016 election has been taken to heart by many journalists. Since Trump's inauguration, the press has been paying more attention to Main Street. But judging from the extent to which Trump's voice has dominated coverage of his presidency, the balance is still off. More voices need to be aired. Trump might be good for ratings but he's not the only voice worth hearing. Never have journalists fixated on a single newsmaker for as long as they have on Trump. If he sees journalists as his main opponents, one reason is that between Trump and themselves there's not much air time for everyone else. Journalists need to resist even the smallest temptation to see themselves as opponents of government. It's the competition between the party in power and the opposing party, and not between government and the press, that's at the core of the democratic process.<sup>35</sup> When spokespersons for the opposing party get a mere 6 percent of the airtime, something's amiss.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Benac, “Remember Nixon: There’s History Behind Trump’s Attacks on the Press,” *Associated Press*, February 17, 2017. The quote was originally reported by the *Washington Post*’s Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

<https://apnews.com/8b29195631f44033ad94d8b2b74048c0/remember-nixon-theres-history-behind-trumps-press-attacks>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Martha Joynt Kumar, “Obama Meets the Press -- on His Terms,” *Real Clear Politics*, August 29, 2015.

[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/08/29/obama\\_meets\\_the\\_press\\_-\\_on\\_his\\_terms\\_127907.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/08/29/obama_meets_the_press_-_on_his_terms_127907.html)

<sup>4</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, “Pre-Primary News Coverage of the 2016 Presidential Race: Trump’s Rise, Sanders’ Emergence, Clinton’s Struggle,” Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, June 13, 2016. <http://shorensteincenter.org/pre-primary-news-coverage-2016-trump-clinton-sanders/>

<sup>5</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, “News Coverage of the 2016 Presidential Primaries: Horse Race Reporting Has Consequences,” Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, July 11, 2016.

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<sup>6</sup> Trump tweet, October 16, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> See Stephen J. Farnsworth, S. Robert Lichter, and Roland Schatz, *The Global President: International Media and the US Government* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Allan Smith, “Schumer rips Trump after underwhelming jobs report: He’s ‘failed to deliver’ on his economic promises,” *Business Insider*, April 7, 2016.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/schumer-rips-trump-march-jobs-report-2017-4>

<sup>9</sup> Jessica Estepa, “President Trump’s approval rating hits a new low,” *USA Today*, March 20, 2017.

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<sup>10</sup> Katie Leslie and Jamie Lovegrove, “GOP withdraws embattled health care bill, handing major setback to Trump, Ryan,” *Dallas News*, March 24, 2017.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2017/03/24/gop-health-care-bill-vote-peril-ryan-heads-white-house-debrief-trump>

<sup>11</sup> Richard Davis, “News Coverage of National Political Institutions,” Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1986, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Stephen J. Farnsworth and Robert S. Lichter, *The Mediated Presidency: Television News and Presidential Governance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 29-58.

<sup>13</sup> Estimated from data in Jeffrey E. Cohen, *The Presidency in the Era of 24-Hour News* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>14</sup> One indicator of Trump’s dominance is MediaQuant’s analysis. It records the number of times a newsmaker’s name is mentioned and then compares the relative

amount of attention each of them receives. In January, 2017, Trump broke MediaQuant's record for the most news attention afforded a newsmaker. Excluding outgoing President Barack Obama, Trump got more coverage than the next 1000 most heavily covered newsmakers combined.

<sup>15</sup> Media Tenor, January 20-April 29, 2017. Based on combined average for CBS, CNN, Fox, and NBC.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, "News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters," Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, December 7, 2016.

<https://shorensteincenter.org/news-coverage-2016-general-election/>

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, John Koblinian, "Trump's First Days in White House Keep Cable News Ratings Strong," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2017.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/business/media/trumps-first-days-in-white-house-keep-cable-news-ratings-strong.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/business/media/trumps-first-days-in-white-house-keep-cable-news-ratings-strong.html?_r=0)

<sup>18</sup> CBS CEO Les Moonves, February 29, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Media Tenor has several hundred topic categories that are applied to news reports. The graphs and percentages reported in this paper are based on all categories that received more than 0.5 percent of the coverage.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Edelman, "Sen. Al Franken admits some Senate Republicans have concerns about President Trump's mental health," *New York Daily News*, April 12, 2017.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/sen-al-franken-admits-concerns-trump-mental-health-article-1.2970427>

<sup>21</sup> Helen Boaden, draft paper, untitled, comparing U.S. and BBC journalism norms, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, May 6, 2017. Expected publication date of summer, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Patricia Moy and Michael Pfau, *With Malice Toward All?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, *The Vanishing Voter* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 70.

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 215; Joe Klein, quoted in Peter Hamby, "Did Twitter Kill the Boys on the Bus?" Shorenstein Center on the Media, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA., September 2013, p. 93.

<http://shorensteincenter.org/d80-hamby/>

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, *The Presidency in the Era of 24-Hour News*, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Center for Media and Public Affairs, George Mason University, as reported in Nikki Schwab, "Media Coverage of Obama Grows More Negative," *US News*, September 14, 2009. <https://www.usnews.com/news/washington-whispers/articles/2009/09/14/media-coverage-of-obama-grows-more-negative>

<sup>27</sup> There were a few marginal differences of note in the amount of attention Fox gave to various issues. Fox gave somewhat more news attention to health care and presidential appointments and somewhat less attention to immigration than did the other news outlets.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Feliz Solomon, “What to Know About the U.S. Missile Attack on Syria,” *Time*, April 7, 2017. <http://time.com/4730231/us-missile-airstrike-attack-syria-donald-trump-bashar-assad/>

<sup>29</sup> Center for Media and Public Affairs, *Media Monitor*, various dates.

<sup>30</sup> Farnsworth and Lichter, *The Mediated Presidency*, p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> The content and data for the Muslim example, as well as the suggestion to compare it to Trump, were provided to the author in an email on May 15, 2017 from Roland Schatz, CEO of Media Tenor. The data cited are those of Media Tenor.

<sup>32</sup> Gergen spoke those words on CNN, March 24, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Examples: Michael M. Grynbaum, “Trump Calls the News Media the ‘Enemy of the American People,’” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2017; Jenna Johnson and Matea Gold, “Trump calls the news media ‘the enemy of the American People,’” *Chicago Tribune*, February 17, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> In forming their opinions, rather than through careful study, people typically rely on heuristics, as when they adopt an opinion because a trusted friend holds it. As it turns out, “familiarity” is a heuristic for many people, which is why a claim that is heard repeatedly is more likely to be believed than one that people find unfamiliar. The extent to which this is true was documented in research presented by Gordon Pennycook’s presentation at the Fake News Conference held at Harvard University on February 17, 2017. <https://shorensteincenter.org/combating-fake-news-agenda-for-research/>

<sup>35</sup> The classic analysis of the role of political parties in democratic government is E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Rinehart, 1942), p. 1.