

A Comparison of Press Coverage in Canada and the United States of the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran Elections

WALTER C. SODERLUND *University of Windsor*

Introduction

There is a body of literature which suggests that the Western press is sensitive to government pressure and that consequently a convergence occurs between press reporting and government policy.¹ The framework of analysis in this article is based on one theoretical explanation of this convergence, the concept of the "demonstration election."² The study compares differences in press coverage of the same events, namely, elections held in El Salvador in 1982 and 1984, using a matched sample of leading newspapers in the United States and Canada.

In their analysis of demonstration elections, Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead charge the American media with being the virtual handmaidens of US foreign policy. "The subservience of the media to government political and propaganda aims is illustrated throughout the

1 See W. Lance Bennett, Lynne A. Gressett and William Hatton, "Repairing the News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985), 50-68; Martin Kriesberg, "Soviet News in the *New York Times*," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 10 (1946), 540-64; W. C. Soderlund and S. H. Surlin, "Press Images of Maurice Bishop, Prime Minister of Grenada: A Pre- and Post-Death Comparison," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 13 (1988), 50-62; Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek and Janet B. L. Chan, *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 172-258; and Catherine Cassara, "Presidential Initiative and Foreign News Coverage: The Carter Human Rights Policy's Effect on U.S. Coverage of Central and South America," paper presented at Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication meetings, Washington, D. C., (August 1989).

2 Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

Walter C. Soderlund, Department of Political Science, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4

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book, as the staged elections which we have examined have all been public relations triumphs and only by virtue of a level of media cooperation that amounts to propaganda service.³ In another publication, Herman observes "that the [American] media often treat similar events differently, depending on their political implications for U.S. interests," and suggests the appropriateness of a "propaganda framework" for analyzing US media coverage of international events.⁴ Whereas Herman compared US media coverage of two *similar* events, the design for this study is based on comparing American and Canadian press coverage of the *same* events, with Canadian coverage serving as a neutral control against which to assess American coverage. If Herman's characterization of American media institutions as propaganda outlets for US policy has substance, then there should be identifiable differences between American and Canadian reporting on these two "demonstration elections."

Herman and Brodhead identify the following specific characteristics of media coverage of demonstration elections: (1) "Massive publicity . . . carefully focussed on the right questions, while avoiding the wrong ones," on the basis of which we expect a greater volume of coverage of the elections in the American press, combined with an "issue agenda" for each election which is sympathetic to an American interpretation of events; (2) the portrayal of the election "as a dramatic confrontation between the forces of good and evil," on the basis of which we hypothesize a more positive portrayal of the US-supported party and candidate, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and José Napoleón Duarte, in the American newspapers, combined with a more negative portrayal of the party and candidate opposed by the US, Partido Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) and Roberto D'Aubuisson; and (3) a focus on "legitimizing" the election in the eyes of the domestic US audience by obtaining "credible sources," including foreign observers to praise the election, on the basis of which we predict that there will be more language legitimizing the elections in both the headlines and texts of American than Canadian material.⁵

Background

Unlike the situation in such countries as Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, United States involvement in the internal affairs of El Salvador is of relatively recent origin.⁶ While a long

3 Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections*, x.

4 Edward S. Herman, "Diversity of News: Marginalizing the Opposition," *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985), 136-37.

5 Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections*, ix.

6 Walter La Feber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 10, 69-74, 172-76, 242-56.

Abstract. This article investigates press coverage in Canada and the United States of the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran elections employing the concept of the "demonstration election," which posits that some elections occur not to select government and solve problems but rather to confer international legitimacy on the government holding the election. The press plays a vital role in creating this aura of legitimacy. There is some evidence that the American press played a legitimizing role in the elections. While the elections received twice as much coverage in the American press as they did in the Canadian press, with the exception of some differences in leader evaluation and emphasis on issues, Canadians received essentially the same media portrayal of the elections as did Americans.

Résumé. Le présent article examine la façon dont la presse aux États-Unis et au Canada a rendu compte des élections tenues en 1982 et 1984 au Salvador. Pour ce faire l'auteur utilise le concept de « l'élection de démonstration », selon lequel certains élections ont lieu, non pour élire des gouvernements et pour résoudre des problèmes, mais plutôt pour conférer une légitimité internationale au gouvernement qui tient l'élection. La presse joue un rôle essentiel dans la création de cette apparence de légitimité. Et, il y a lieu de croire que la presse américaine a aidé à légitimer ces élections. Et bien que la presse américaine ait consacré deux fois plus de place à ces élections que la presse canadienne, et malgré quelques différences dans l'évaluation des chefs et dans le choix des questions soulignées, au fond les Canadiens ont reçu de leurs médias le même tableau des élections que celui qu'ont eu les Américains des leurs.

history of foreign intervention is absent in El Salvador, events since 1979 (including the success of the revolution in neighbouring Nicaragua and civil war in El Salvador) have drawn the United States deeply into Salvadoran politics.⁷

El Salvador provides a textbook case of the paradoxes and pitfalls of American foreign policy in the age of "international civil war." As has been often the case, domestic oligarchies linked economically and ideologically to the United States are challenged by the "have nots" of their own country, backed by or linked to international leftist movements. Both the motivations for and implications of various insurgency movements are thus blurred.⁸ Whenever this situation has occurred in the postwar era, the United States has had to decide which side to support. In the case of El Salvador, it chose to support forces representing the status quo or "moderate reform," in opposition to radical or revolutionary movements.

An important part of this support package involved "democratizing" the governments in power in these states in the eyes of the American public. In El Salvador this consisted of legitimizing, through electoral respectability, the remnants of the junta which had assumed power in October 1979. The first major step in this process occurred in 1982, when elections for the Constituent Assembly were

7 Liisa North, *Bitter Grounds: Roots of Revolt in El Salvador* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1981), 73-97, Appendix 1.

8 Walter C. Soderlund, "An Analysis of the Guerrilla Insurgency and *Comp d'Etat* as Techniques of Indirect Aggression," *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (1970), 335-60.

held.⁹ These 1982 elections are considered here as a case study of Herman and Brodhead's concept of the "demonstration election."

Demonstration elections are characterized by Herman and Brodhead as "propagandistic and public relations (PR) instruments," or media events, used by the United States as techniques to control Third World countries: "Most notably, 'free elections' have been used to reassure the U.S. home population, defuse domestic opposition, and, in effect, ratify ongoing U.S. interventionary strategies."¹⁰ With respect to El Salvador, Herman and Brodhead view the 1982 elections as "intended to consolidate the power of the ruling unelected military junta,"¹¹ and thus "head off the threat that Congress, responding to public opinion, would curtail military aid to El Salvador."¹²

While the 1982 elections did not result in a consolidation of power by the US-supported PDC, they did lead to the drafting of a constitution and plans for March 1984 presidential elections.¹³ The civil war, however, continued unabated, so that approximately 40,000 Salvadoreans had been killed by the time the 1984 election took place. The Reagan administration at the time was encountering significant congressional opposition to further appropriation of money to maintain the Salvadoran government in power. Thus, in 1984 as well as 1982, the demonstration election scenario fits the Salvadoran situation.

There are of course political reasons why the United States government would have wanted elections to be held in El Salvador and would have wanted these elections to be widely respected in the United States. Elections are a major component of the American concept of democracy, and governments in disfavour with the United States, such as Cuba, are castigated for not holding them.¹⁴ The American preoccupation with elections leads directly to the phenomenon of the "demonstration election," where the main purpose is not to select an indigenous ruling elite but rather to give the US-backed ruling elite a veneer of international legitimacy.¹⁵

Although many news reports from American wire services appear in Canadian newspapers,¹⁶ Canadian reporters, editors and owners are

9 Enrique A. Baloyra, *El Salvador in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). For background and evaluation of the election, see especially Chapter 8, "Illusion and Reality," 167-84.

10 Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections*, 3.

11 *Ibid.*, 10.

12 *Ibid.*, 116.

13 Baloyra, *El Salvador in Transition*, 180-82.

14 Howard H. Frederick, "Communication, Ideology, and Democracy in Cuba, Nicaragua and the United States," in W. C. Soderlund and S. H. Surlin (eds.), *Media in Latin America and the Caribbean: Domestic and International Perspectives* (Windsor: OCLACS, 1985), 42-53.

15 Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections*, ix-x.

16 See Canada, Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *The Uncertain Mirror*:

far less sensitive than their US counterparts to pressures to adopt positions congruent with American foreign policy objectives. Exactly how closely Canadian foreign policy toward Central America parallels American policy is the subject of considerable debate. While there are many shades of opinion, the consensus appears to be that Canadian policy is closest to American with respect to El Salvador and most different with respect to Nicaragua. Even in the case of El Salvador, however, differences do exist, specifically on understanding the origins of the conflict (East-West American versus North-South Canadian interpretations), the use of force as opposed to diplomacy, and the relationship between foreign aid and respect for human rights.¹⁷ In fact, between 1981 and 1986, Canada suspended foreign aid to El Salvador on the basis of human rights abuses. It is reasonable to assume that these differences in policy should be reflected, at least to some extent, in newspaper content.

Thus, in framing this study based on the "demonstration election" concept, we assume that (1) the Reagan administration promoted elections in order to "legitimize" the Salvadoran government and minimize its own problems with congressional reluctance to continue aiding El Salvador, and (2) the American press would be a major channel for the US government to communicate its position at home and to the world.¹⁸ If both assumptions are correct, then American newspapers will be found to have presented their readers with substantially more information about and more favourable portrayals of the 1982 and 1984 elections than did Canadian papers.

Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 229-35, and Carman Cuming, Mario Cardinal and Peter Johanson, *Canadian News Services*, Research Studies on the Newspaper Industry (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1981), 37.

17 Major contributions to the debate include Stephen Baranyi, "Canadian Foreign Policy Toward Central America, 1980-1984: Independence, Limited Public Influence and State Leadership," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 10 (1985), 23-37; Cecilio Morales, "A Canadian Role in Central America," *International Perspectives* (January-February 1985): 12-15; Jonathan Lemco, "Canada and Central America: A Review of Current Issues," *Behind the Headlines* 44 (1986), 1-19; David G. Haglund, "How is Canada Doing in Central America?" *International Perspectives* (September/October 1987), 5-8; David G. Haglund, "The Missing Link: Canada's Security Interests and the Central American Crisis," *International Journal* 42 (1987), 789-820; James Rochlin, "Aspects of Canadian Foreign Policy Towards Central America," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 22 (1987-88), 5-26; and James Rochlin, "The Political Economy of Canada's Relations with Central America," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 12 (1988), 45-70.

18 In the absence of alternative channels of information, the image of the Salvadoran election held by a majority of Americans and Canadians would be largely furnished by the press. See Anthony Smith, *The Geopolitics of Information: How Western Culture Dominates the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 24. See also Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process* (3rd ed.: New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), chap. 9.

Methods

In order to determine the extent to which American reporting of these elections was congruent with what one would expect to find in a demonstration election, press coverage was studied using a matched sample of Canadian and American newspapers: first, national newspapers, namely, *The Globe and Mail* and *The New York Times*; second, capital newspapers, *The Citizen* (Ottawa) and *The Washington Post*; third, elite newspapers, *Le Devoir* (Montreal) and *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston); fourth, eastern regional newspapers, *The Chronicle-Herald* (Halifax) and *The Atlanta Constitution*; fifth, interior newspapers, *The Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Chicago Tribune*; and, finally, western regional newspapers, *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

Every item on the Salvadoran elections generated by newspaper sources for 41 days beginning 30 days prior to each election and continuing 10 days after the elections was included in the study.¹⁹ Using content analysis, eight dimensions of press coverage were examined: total volume of press coverage, source of content, geographical origin or dateline of news items, type of content, relative salience of issues in the campaign, evaluation of political parties and leaders, whether headlines or language in the text of the story appeared to legitimize or delegitimize the event,²⁰ and the extent to which Cold War language was used in election reporting.²¹ The actual coding for the study was done primarily by the author with two assistants.²² Inter-coder reliability was .85.²³

19 Letters to the editor were not coded.

20 "Legitimization" is operationalized as any statement made either by the newspaper, or by another source and reported by the newspaper, which enhances the image of the election as democratic or as a step likely to help solve the country's problems. Conversely, "delegitimization" is operationalized as any statement made by the newspaper, or by another source and reported by the newspaper, which detracts from the image of the election as democratic by casting doubts as to its integrity or by questioning its efficacy in helping to solve the country's problems.

21 "Cold War language" is operationalized as words or phrases likely to cause the reader to interpret the political events surrounding the election in the context of East-West conflict. Such words and phrases include: communist, communist-backed, Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, Cuban-backed, leftist and left-wing.

22 The author wishes to thank Jana Truka and Mark Restoulle for their assistance in coding, Robert Burge for assistance in computer-related aspects of the study, the Department of Employment and Immigration and the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security for grants which made the research possible. Thanks go also to the Canadian Studies Center at Duke University and the School of Journalism and the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for assisting the author during a sabbatical leave.

23 Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 140.

Findings

During the two periods of study a total of 852 newspaper items appeared: 478 addressed the 1982 election and 374 dealt with the 1984 election. For each election, approximately one-third of the press coverage appeared in the sample of Canadian newspapers while two-thirds appeared in the American sample. While both elections had greater salience in the American press, it was the 1982 election that elicited most interest in newspapers in both countries. The two-thirds/one-third ratio of American to Canadian coverage is consistent with other findings regarding press coverage of Central America²⁴ and is also consistent with the pattern found in the 1984 Nicaraguan election.²⁵ Roughly 60 per cent of total coverage appeared prior to the elections, with minor differences between Canadian and American news on this dimension.

Overall, about 60 per cent of news stories originated from El Salvador during both elections, with no difference between Canadian and American percentages. In both 1982 and 1984, approximately 25 per cent of American reporting carried a Washington dateline, while about 12 per cent of Canadian reporting originated in the US capital. No other dateline was significant.

Clearly, information on the elections flowed into Canada and the United States from different sources. The American newspapers relied most heavily on their local staff members and special correspondents (77% in 1982 and 76% in 1984), followed by American wire services (16% and 19%). The Canadian pattern is quite different, with the American wire services providing nearly one-third of the material on the 1982 election and nearly one-half on the 1984 election. The total material supplied by Canadian sources is 41 per cent in 1982 and 31 per cent in 1984. However, these figures may be somewhat inflated due to the reliance of Canadian Press (CP) on the Associated Press (AP) for material. For both elections more than 85 per cent of content was "hard news," defined as day-to-day coverage of events, and twice as much of this material appeared on the front page of American as opposed to

24 For example, see Carmen Schmitt and Walter C. Soderlund, "Television and Newspaper Coverage of Latin American and Caribbean News: A Canadian-American Comparison," *Canadian Journal of Latin American Studies* 7 (1982), 57-74; Walter C. Soderlund, "Press Reporting of El Salvador and Nicaragua in Leading Canadian and American Newspapers," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 11 (1985), 353-68; Walter C. Soderlund, "El Salvador: A Comparative Study of Canadian and American Press Coverage, 1981-1983," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 10 (1985), 15-26; and Walter C. Soderlund and Carmen Schmitt, "El Salvador's Civil War as seen in North and South American Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 63 (1986), 268-74.

25 Walter C. Soderlund, "Canadian and American Press Coverage of the 1984 Nicaraguan Election," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 13 (1988), 87-102.

Canadian papers. The percentage of editorial and feature material did not differ markedly between the two countries for either election.

TABLE 1

MAJOR ISSUES IN 1982 SALVADORAN ELECTION.
BY COUNTRY (in percentages)^a

Issues (in order of frequency of mention)	United States		Phi
	Canada	Total	
1. Comment/activity of the US	50	54	.07
2. Discussion of the implications of the election	43	41	.03
3. Discussion of FMLN activity	27	31	.06
4. Discussion of US aid	28	28	.00
5. Background discussion of history/political parties	32	24	.15 ^b
6. Discussion of boycott by left opposition	21	23	.03
7. Discussion of foreign observers	25	22	.07
8. Discussion of human rights abuses	21	20	.03
9. Discussion of campaign violence	32	19	.25 ^c
10. Reporting of election results	22	17	.10 ^b
(N)	(178)	(300)	(478)

a Column totals do not equal 100 due to multiple coding.

b $p \leq .05$.

c $p \leq .001$.

Data in Tables 1 and 2 examine the substantive treatment of the election. The issues included in Table 1, taken as a whole, constitute what Herman and Brodhead refer to as the 1982 "press agenda." This agenda, they maintain, is manipulated to highlight issues favourable to the US interpretation of the election and to downplay concerns which undermine the US view.²⁶ When this agenda is examined item by item, we find only three issues on which Canada-US differences are statistically significant: background discussion of Salvadoran history and political parties, discussion of campaign violence and reporting of election results. The US pattern of coverage of the first and third areas seems consistent with the demonstration election scenario. Herman and Brodhead specifically mention "the background and context of the election" as an "off-the-agenda item" and, since the results of the 1982 election were not what the US had desired, we might expect American newspapers to be less interested in reporting these results than their Canadian counterparts. Alternatively, one could argue that since results

26 Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections*, 163-73.

of the vote were among the 10 leading issues covered in the election, they cannot be said to have been omitted from American coverage. The discussion of campaign violence, in the sense that it was among the 10 leading issues, seems to run counter to the demonstration election hypothesis. However, it did receive significantly more coverage in Canadian than American papers. Discussion of an election boycott by political parties of the left and of human rights abuses by the Salvadoran government appear incongruent with the demonstration election hypothesis, while the relatively prominent coverage given to attempts by the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) to disrupt the election seem congruent with what Herman and Brodhead would expect to be "on the agenda."

TABLE 2

MAJOR ISSUES IN 1984 SALVADORAN ELECTION.
BY COUNTRY (in percentages)^a

Issues (in order of frequency of mention)	United States		Phi
	Canada	Total	
1. Comment/activity of US	49	60	.10
2. Discussion of US aid	31	44	.12 ^b
3. Discussion of FMLN activity	34	43	.09
4. Discussion of run-off election	44	29	.15 ^c
5. Background discussion of history/political parties	48	21	.28 ^d
6. Background discussion of leaders	32	24	.08
7. Discussion of human rights abuses	23	27	.04
8. Discussion of implications of election	32	19	.14 ^c
9. Discussion of foreign observers	39	13	.30 ^d
10. Discussion of campaign strategy	25	16	.19
(N)	(122)	(252)	(374)

a Column totals do not equal 100 due to multiple coding.

b $p \leq .05$.

c $p \leq .01$.

d $p \leq .001$.

When we examine in Table 2 the issue agenda for the 1984 election, five issues appear on which differences in press coverage are statistically significant: US aid to El Salvador, a possible run-off election, background discussion of Salvadoran history and political parties, implications of the election and foreign observers of the election. The first and last of these can be explained by the fact that each constituted a particular political issue for the country in which they received primary coverage: US aid in American papers, and the official Canadian

observer team in Canadian papers. As was the case with the 1982 election, treatments of history and political parties and the implications of the election were consistent with demonstration election press behaviour. It is notable, on the one hand, that reporting of the boycott of the 1984 elections by leftist opposition parties was 14 per cent less than in 1982 coverage. On the other hand, coverage of FMLN actions designed to disrupt the election increased by 9 per cent. Levels of coverage of US aid to the Salvadoran government remained relatively stable over the two elections, while coverage of human rights abuses by the Salvadoran government increased by 5 per cent.

TABLE 3
NEWSPAPER ITEMS ON MAJOR SALVADORAN PARTIES
AND REFERENCES TO MAJOR PARTY LEADERS,
BY COUNTRY AND ELECTION (in percentages)

	1982			1984		
	Canada	United States	Total	Canada	United States	Total
<i>Newspaper items on major Salvadoran parties</i>						
Pro-PDC	10	15	13	5	10	8
Anti-PDC	5	3	3	4	1	2
Pro-ARENA	0	1	1	1	0.5	0.5
Anti-ARENA	9	12	11	19	22	20
(N)	(178)	(300)	(478)	(122)	(252)	(375)
<i>References to major party leaders</i>						
Duarte	57	60	59	63	72	70
Favourable	43	40	41	37	28	30
Unfavourable	(21)	(43)	(64)	(32)	(98)	(130)
(N)						
D'Aubuisson	37	30	32	16	18	17
Favourable	63	70	68	84	82	83
Unfavourable	(49)	(124)	(173)	(50)	(152)	(202)
(N)						

Beginning with data in Table 3, we move from an examination of the "information-supplying" role of the press to its "image-supplying" role. In 1982, the North American press did favour the Christian Democrats over ARENA. Overall, 13 per cent of items reflected favourably on the Christian Democrats (10% for Canadian and 15% for American newspapers) while 11 per cent reflected unfavourably on ARENA (with

marginal differences between Canadian and American portrayals). There was little negative commentary on the Christian Democratic party and little positive reporting on ARENA in either Canadian or American newspapers. In 1984, only 8 per cent of items reflected favourably on the Christian Democrats (5% for Canadian and 10% for American newspapers) while 20 per cent of items reflected unfavourably on ARENA (again with marginal differences between Canadian and American portrayals).

Data presented in Table 3 further support the conclusion that both American and Canadian newspapers played a legitimizing role in the 1982 and 1984 elections through their treatment of the major party leaders, José Napoleón Duarte and Roberto D'Aubuisson. These data are derived from recoding, as positive or negative, key words and phrases used to describe these leaders. These descriptors were coded either positive or negative based on a US perspective. Those descriptors which were either neutral or ambiguous were omitted from the analysis.²⁷

These data indicate that D'Aubuisson attracted by far the most attention in the 1982 election and, furthermore, that impressions of D'Aubuisson were highly negative in both countries. Duarte received nearly identical treatment in Canada and the United States, with the balance tipped toward positive descriptors. Two years later in the 1984 election, Duarte's percentage of positive descriptors had increased by 10 per cent (to 70%), while D'Aubuisson's percentage of negative descriptors had increased by 15 per cent (to 83%). The "forces of light" versus "forces of darkness" scenario, which Herman and Brodhead suggest would be characteristic of press coverage of demonstration elections, was only somewhat evident in 1982 and did not fully emerge until 1984.

Data in Table 4 summarize the use of language which would either legitimize or delegitimize the elections.²⁸ In both 1982 and 1984,

27 The specific words and phrases used to describe Duarte and D'Aubuisson are available from the author on request.

28 Following are examples of textual language coded as legitimizing and delegitimizing: (1) *legitimizing*—"It is clear the people of El Salvador want peace and feel the ballot box is the best way to achieve it" (*The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1982); "These elections are a major achievement in the development of democracy in El Salvador" (*The New York Times*, March 30, 1982); "It was a tremendous victory for the electoral process" (*The Washington Post*, March 30, 1982); "... the Salvadoran people have clearly repudiated violence and voiced their commitment to a democratic future" (*The Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1982); "[the election is] a major step forward in the democratic process" (*The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1984); "On balance the vote had more than its share of encouraging aspects—undaunted determination of Salvadoran citizens, the absence of post-election recriminations between leading contenders, the strictly neutral stance of Salvadoran armed forces—all attested to by a corps of genuinely impressed observers from Washington

delegitimizing language is used more frequently in Canadian than American newspapers. These findings are only partly consistent with the demonstration election hypothesis, however, as we find equal percentages of legitimizing and delegitimizing language in the American press. In short, while Canadian newspapers projected a more negative image of the elections, the American press cannot be said to have been especially positive.

TABLE 4

USE OF LEGITIMIZING AND DELEGITIMIZING LANGUAGE AND HEADLINES, BY COUNTRY AND ELECTION (in percentages)

Language	1982						1984					
	Canada		United States		Phi		Canada		United States		Phi	
	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States
Legitimizing	16	14	.02	6	10	.07						
Delegitimizing	25	14	.14*	21	13	.10						
	Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total	
Headlines	United States		Canada		United States		Canada		United States		Canada	
Legitimizing	3	7	5	3	2	2						
Neutral	88	87	87	82	90	87						
Delegitimizing	8	6	7	15	8	10						
(N)	(178)	(300)	(478)	(122)	(252)	(374)						

a $p \leq .05$.

Headlines above election stories were also coded as legitimizing, neutral or delegitimizing.²⁹ While differences are not statistically

and elsewhere" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, April 2, 1984); and (2) *delegitimizing*—"... the only result of this election will be to augment violence afterward" (author's translation) (*Le Devoir*, February 26, 1982); "The elections will be a dubious measure of popular sentiment since the leftists are boycotting" (*The Chicago Tribune*, March 4, 1982); "... the election is unlikely to bring political stability or peace" (*The Washington Post*, March 4, 1984); "To many people outside of El Salvador the election lacks legitimacy because the political left is not involved" (*The Vancouver Sun*, March 26, 1984); "The real winners of Sunday's elections may well turn out to be the guerrillas" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, March 26, 1984); "In El Salvador... there is an absence of even the most basic conditions necessary for the exercise of effectual electoral politics" (*The Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1984). Following are examples of headlines coded legitimizing and delegitimizing: (1) *legitimizing*—"Birth of a New Democracy" (*The Washington Post*, March 21, 1982); "Salvador Voters Jam Polls" (*The Chronicle-Herald*, March 29, 1982); "A Vote for Peace" (*The Vancouver Sun*, March 30, 1982); "Salvadorans Show Courage" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, March 30, 1982); "Democracy Served

significant and more than 85 per cent of the headlines in both years were neutral, more delegitimizing than legitimizing headlines appeared in Canadian newspapers for both elections, and in American newspapers in the 1984 election (see Table 4).

As expected, American newspapers were more apt than Canadian ones to use Cold War language, 43 per cent compared to 31 per cent in 1982, and 38 per cent versus 33 per cent in 1984. In the case of 1982 the difference is statistically significant, $p \leq .05$.

Conclusions

Having reviewed Canadian and American press coverage of the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran elections, what conclusions can be reached regarding congruence between American reporting and US foreign policy towards El Salvador? First, with respect to volume, the 1982 election generated the most impressive amount of press coverage, more than 100 items greater than the 1984 election. Moreover, the 1984 Salvadoran election generated 171 items more than the Nicaraguan election of the same year. Comparatively, the level of press interest in both elections, especially in the United States, is certainly compatible with the demonstration election scenario.

However, when we examine other dimensions of press coverage in light of demonstration election characteristics, the evidence is less convincing. The issue agendas present us with mixed conclusions. Some items appeared on the agendas as predicted by the demonstration election concept, including the focus on the US role in the election and leftist attempts at disruption. However, non-participation in the elections by leftist electoral forces opposed to the government which received reasonable attention in 1982 fell sharply in 1984. Human rights abuses on the part of the Salvadoran government received moderate attention in 1982 and more coverage in 1984. Overall, we conclude that issues both favourable and unfavourable to an American interpretation of the election appeared on press agendas in Canada and the United States in roughly equal proportions.

The evaluation of political parties and their leaders generally confirms a demonstration election stance, but does not indicate great Canadian-American differences. The Christian Democratic party

Canadian Team Says" (*The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1984); "El Salvador's Hope for Democracy Returns" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, March 27, 1984); and (2) *delegitimizing*—"Violence and Cynicism Mar Campaign for Next Month's Vote in El Salvador" (*The New York Times*, February 27, 1982); "Salvador: Le grand electeur a toujours été l'armée" (*Le Devoir*, February 27, 1982); "El Salvador Vote Dismissed as a 'Travesty'" (*The Winnipeg Free Press*, March 30, 1982); "Canada Should Shun El Salvador Vote" (*The Citizen*, March 6, 1984); "Chicago's Bad Old Days Look Good to This Election" (*The Chicago Tribune*, March 28, 1984); "Chaos of Salvador Vote Submerges Democracy" (*The Globe and Mail*, March 29, 1984).

received favourable coverage while ARENA did not in either American or Canadian papers. The pattern is even clearer when we examine coverage of the party leaders. Roberto D'Aubuisson was the recipient of negative coverage (the virtual incarnation of "evil" in 1984), while Duarte enjoyed favourable coverage in both Canada and the United States.

Evidence confirming the demonstration election hypothesis with respect to the use of legitimizing and delegitimizing language in both text and headlines tends to be weaker. American newspapers employed roughly equal percentages of legitimizing and delegitimizing language, while Canadian newspapers used delegitimizing language more frequently.

Finally, on the basis of the press coverage of the elections in Canadian and American newspapers, would the respective mass publics in the two countries come away with similar or different perspectives regarding their conduct and outcome? While clearly both elections had a higher visibility to American readers, differences in interpretation were relatively subtle and they were confined largely to the prominence of certain issues in the campaign, leader evaluation and the use of legitimizing language in the text.

Roberto D'Aubuisson and José Napoleón Duarte emerge as the "bad guy" and "good guy," respectively. The issue agenda and pattern of legitimizing and delegitimizing language in Canadian and American newspapers point to problems both in the way the elections were conducted and in their long-term effectiveness as solutions to El Salvador's vexing problems, although these problems are highlighted to a greater extent in Canadian reporting. Conversely, American readers are more likely to have assimilated a Cold War perspective in interpreting the elections, especially that of 1982.

Field Analysis / Orientations de la science politique

Aboriginal Governments in Canada: An Emerging Field of Study*

FRANK CASSIDY *University of Victoria /
Institute for Research on Public Policy*

Introduction

For the past several years aboriginal governments in Canada have been the focus of greatly increased attention by the press, the academic community and governments. Despite considerable interest, research about aboriginal government has yet to emerge in a defined, bounded and self-generating manner. This has not been an entirely unfortunate state of affairs. The lack of definition has enabled various researchers and commentators to respond to the quick pace of change, as constitutional matters, government policies and the institutions of aboriginal government have all taken, in varying degrees, paths of development different from those which might have been foreseen. At the same time, a new body of work has set the stage for a progression of knowledge and insight in a more co-ordinated and interrelated manner. It may be possible to foresee the emergence of an identifiable field of study and to speculate in a disciplined manner about some of its key research tasks.

This article attempts to bring together many of the diverse strands which should be joined if Canadians—aboriginal and non-aboriginal—are to understand aboriginal government as a comprehensive and developing phenomenon. Fourteen areas needing study are cited

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Frank Cassidy, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia V8W 2Y2

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