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Book Review

Global Media Perceptions of the United States. The Trump Effect

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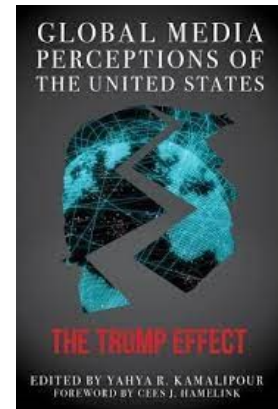
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Much has been written about the effects of Donald Trump's presidency on the media. While a large part of this discourse was centered on domestic communication within the United States, "The Trump Effect", edited by Yahya R. Kamalipour, takes a different perspective by focusing on "Global Media Perceptions of the United States". The book takes its readers on a journey around the world, analyzing media coverage and sometimes public opinion of Donald Trump's presidency and the United States in 17 countries on all populated continents.



The book starts with an introduction and a section on the American context with three chapters, followed by 16 country sections with one text each – the only exception being the United Kingdom with two texts under the slightly unprecise section label "England".

The section on the USA is opened by Noam Chomsky, whose text is based on a speech held in 2018 that points out the historical dimension of existential challenges the world is facing during the Trump presidency. The second chapter, by John Pavlik, collects results from survey research on world views held by American citizens, both regarding key political challenges and different world regions. While largely unsurprising – culturally close countries are generally regarded higher, with some differences depending on political preferences – these results are valuable for comparison to the different countries' perspectives presented later in the volume. Finally, in the third chapter on the USA, Lee Artz argues that the phenomenon now labelled as 'Trumpism' is actually older than the political figure of Donald Trump. His part on controversial and sometimes outright illegal policies of some of Trumps' predecessors is probably the most important element in the US section: It highlights a long-term development many readers outside the USA may not be aware of.

The international country chapters of the volume appear in strictly alphabetical order, but may be discussed as groups based on geographical, methodological or political background. Following the latter option, the Australian, German and both British contributions describe rather distanced and sometimes outright sarcastic media perceptions of the United States by some of their closest allies. The two texts on the United Kingdom use examples from both British and US media, showing the direct connections between both English-language media publics in a globalized world. Graham Murdock relates Donald Trump's and the British Brexit campaign's communication styles and their representation in the media, and Jane Stokes adds a specific view on satirical representations of Donald Trump. The chapter on Germany by Regina Cazzamatta and Kai Hafez builds on a well-described systematic content analysis of coverage of the news magazine *Der Spiegel* and gives a critical outlook on the possible effects of a highly skeptical, but also very intense coverage of populist right-wing statements on the media agenda.

Tomasz Płudowski stresses Poland's historical connection to the United States and finds that under Trump, a separation of the evaluation of the president and the country is becoming more frequent. At the same time, Polish domestic political conflict between the governing PiS party arguing along similar nationalist and anti-elite lines as Trump and more liberal voices lead to a situation in which the author describes both countries as mirrors of each other. While Hyelim Lee, Seulgi Jang and Kadir Jun Ayhan in their chapter on South Korea find coverage on Donald Trump in national media coverage to be more extensive and more focused on negotiations and social media use than previous reports on Trump's predecessors Obama and Bush Jr., the researchers are cautious to evaluate this coverage in terms of political assessments of the consecutive presidencies. This is different in the contribution on Turkey, where Banu Akdenizli, Burak Özçetin and Nazlı Çetin Gündoğdu see increasingly critical coverage of strategic relations across newspapers with different political stances, although with a decisive difference between criticism of the USA as such in more religiously oriented outlets and of specific American actions in other media.

The chapters on Russia and China show the perspectives of two of the main rivals of the United States in global politics. Juliana Rovinskaya and Nadezhda Greydina describe a change in published opinion in Russia during the Trump presidency, from approval of the new American president towards strong criticism. A part of the Russian discourse was reduced to a personal duel between the American and Russian presidents, in which even small gestures like handshakes were analyzed, mostly with a result in favor of Vladimir Putin. The Chinese perspective by Lizhou Sun and Fei Song describes the Trump coverage of People's Daily as "comprehensive and balanced" (p. 69). This evaluation is based on a quantitative content analysis, although the examples given might imply that positive articles describe US-Chinese relations and common activities, while negative ones are more centered on unilateral and personal actions by Trump and his administration.

Several chapters contribute perspectives from countries with stronger levels of dependence from the United States. Jesus Arroyave has added focus group discussions to his analysis of media content, showing a deeply disappointed published and public opinion and a very direct result of the Trump presidency on Colombians' personal lives. Instead of hoping for a better life in the United States, many Colombians started to look for Europe as a dream destination or focused on success in their own country: "Trump managed to quickly turn the American dream into a nightmare." (p. 86) The Mexican perspective, analyzed by José Carlos Lozano and Francisco Javier Martínez-Garza is more focused on trade and tariffs than on migration, and the media – although sometimes very critical of their own government – tend to side with their president when it comes to relations to Trump's USA. The Nigerian account by Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan and Topic Peremobowe Ajoje shows a more ambivalent picture of an intrusive and disrespectful president Trump who risks the "death of democracy" (p. 221) in his own country and, consequently, the end of American global hegemony. These mainly critical accounts are contrasted by the

Egyptian perspective analyzed by Rasha Allam: After years of political conflict with the Obama administration, Egyptian media report an improvement of bilateral relations, and criticism of Donald Trump remains relatively silent.

The Malaysian and Iranian chapters show different developments in media environments with a reportedly predominant Anti-American discourse. Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan and Mohd Nizam Osman describe a rather common alignment of different language and ethnic groups' media in Malaysia, concentrating on "Asian" in contrast to "Western" values and a trend towards closer relations to China. In contrast to this, the chapter on Iran by Saeedeh Moradifar, Ali Omid and Kouros Ziabari points to a division in the Iranian press: While more conservative ("principalist") newspapers with a negative opinion of the United States as such could interpret Donald Trump's actions as a confirmation of their position, reformist newspapers struggled to uphold their support for international negotiations and specifically the JCPOA (the so-called Iran nuclear deal) in view of Trump's confrontational politics.

The volume is not aimed at supplying a common comparative approach to media representations of Donald Trump's United States around the world. In his introduction, Kamalipour states that writing styles of such a diverse collection of texts necessarily vary considerably – but beyond style we also find different levels of empirical effort, methods applied, and time frames analyzed. Some chapters are based on rather anecdotal evidence, some rely on qualitative or quantitative content analysis of different time frames, survey results or even the combination of content analysis and focus group discussions. This also means that every chapter discusses conceptual and methodological issues separately, with the result of more common concepts and methods being described repetitively – in the case of the Malaysian and Nigerian texts, both co-authored by Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan, some paragraphs are in fact identical.

One chapter has not been mentioned above, because it lacks even anecdotal reference to media coverage and appears misplaced in the context of the volume: The perspective from Pakistan by Ejaz Akram and Ayesha Khan claims to "look at the Pakistani society as a whole" (p. 227), although liberal positions are described as "bought-out" (p. 238) by foreign interests and thus not representing the large majority of the population. This alleged mainstream position, as described by the authors, seems to be based largely on conspiracy theories (the USA are described as controlled by "global Zionism", p. 228), inappropriate labelling of the political opponent (America's "fascist mindset", p. 228; the West's "wars of fascism in the Muslim world", p. 240) and an odd understanding of political history ("... parliamentary democracy, which has never worked satisfactorily anywhere outside Britain", p. 240).

Overall, the vast majority of the contributions provide a unique insight into the multifaceted perception of the USA during Donald Trump's presidency in mass media

around the world. Even with the aforementioned methodological and stylistic differences, a concluding chapter that puts the different approaches into perspective could have been an auspicious addition. Knowing the result of the last presidential election, readers might also hope for a sequel a few years into Joe Biden's presidency, analyzing in how far a different person can change – in some cases heal – what the 'Trump Effect' has done to the perception of the United States in the world.