

# THE ANTI-MEDIA ADMINISTRATION

The Anti-Media Administration:

A case study on the role of the US news media under the Trump Administration

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of the news media in the contemporary US, through a case study on the Trump-Media relations. This study specifically focuses on a press gaggle on February 24 2017, in which some news organizations claimed they were barred from entering and that the exclusion happened under unfair circumstances. The primary aim was to examine this situation from both sides and how they each presented it to their audience. Derived from this, it was thus examined how they each viewed the role of the press and furthermore discussed if this had any ideological implications, which could be the cause of the conflict. To do so, the transcript of a speech held by President Trump and of the press gaggle itself, along with articles from two of the barred media outlets, CNN and The New York Times, were analyzed. This was done through a framing and Critical Discourse Analysis, with the additional inclusion of legitimation and securitization theory. For the discussion, previous studies on the role of the news media, along with theories on democracy, were included to enable an optimal, if fundamentally speculative, discussion. Given that the data collection and scope is fairly limited, the results of this paper are not applicable in a generalized sense, but are instead interpretations of how this is presented through the selected data, which can inform broader considerations on the subject. According to this, the Trump administration would seem to prefer a more passive and publically oriented news media, whereas the press seems to champion their more aggressive current position, in which they actively go after their stories and focus on the representatives in society, rather than just be an impartial mouthpiece for whichever message the government needs delivered. Furthermore, the ideological implications in the text and their effect on democracy, may also have had an impact on the situation, as Trump's populist tendencies in many ways clash with the news media's more representative and liberal view on democracy. However, there are also other possibilities as to why these two parties seemingly do not get along, one of which could be a more existential threat felt by the press when the President circumvents them via social media to communicate directly with his followers. There are thus many ways in which the media and the Trump administration have starkly different assumptions and opinions about their individual roles and relations.

## Brief Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the role of the press within the US through a case study on the Trump administration's media-relations, specifically within the press gaggle-episode on February 24 2017 and speech by Trump few hours before. Through a discursive analysis, it was determined that the Trump administration, represented by President Trump and Press Secretary Spicer, showed starkly different assumptions about the role of the media than two of the news organizations that were barred from the gaggle, namely CNN and The New York Times. The Trump and Spicer seemed to think that the press should be more passive and public oriented, whereas CNN and The New York Times implied a preference for a more active and deliberative journalism. Furthermore, the former's populist tendencies also have the potential to clash with the more liberal views on democracy of the latter, and may thus also be another point of contention.

*Keywords: news media, role, US, Donald Trump, democracy*

## Table of contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>METHOD</u>	<u>12</u>
RESEARCH DESIGN	12
ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY	13
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	14
FRAMING	14
DATA COLLECTION	16
DELIMITATIONS	17
<u>THEORY</u>	<u>18</u>
DEMOCRACY	18
DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION	21
<u>ANALYSIS</u>	<u>23</u>
THE FAKE MEDIA	23
THE GAGGLE	28
THE NEWS MEDIA	32
CONCLUSIVE REMARKS	38
<u>DISCUSSION</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>LIST OF REFERENCES</u>	<u>44</u>

## Introduction

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, newly appointed Press Secretary Sean Spicer held a press gaggle at the White House. While gatherings like these are not an unusual occurrence by far, also with previous administrations, this gaggle ended up being fuel on the fire for the ongoing disagreements between the Trump administration and certain news media outlets. Only selected reporters were allowed to be part of this gaggle, which caused protests from several news organizations, who questioned the administration's handling of the situation. As such, this event went from being a small dispute between the excluded outlets and the administration to a full-blown national debate about the state of US democracy and the role of the news media within it.

Working from the idea that this disagreement is inherently caused by a conflict of assumptions regarding the role of the news media in US society, selected data will be analyzed in terms of frames and what assumptions these imply. In order to examine the situation from both perspectives, statements from President Donald Trump and Press Secretary Sean Spicer, as well as news articles from two of the excluded news stations, CNN and The New York Times, will be analyzed in depth. Furthermore, their framing of each other will also be analyzed in terms of their use of securitization and legitimation strategies. Lastly, it will be discussed whether these frameworks stem from different ideas about democracy and the media's role within it.

## Literature Review

The role of the news media is a topic that has been contested and discussed throughout most of the press's existence. The news media has seen much change and opposition, and has, particularly throughout the last century, grown into being a powerful player in modern western society. Throughout this literature review, relevant research and ideas about this topic will be examined, primarily with a focus on US society, but also with a few texts with origin in other democratic societies like Denmark. While the press has different roles in different cultures, these texts are general enough that they will merely provide another perspective on the issue, rather than being incompatible with the remainder of it. This section will present some different notions of the role of the press, along with a brief detailing of the historical development of it. Furthermore, as there are also critiques of how the press is living up to these ideals, some of these will be included to provide a more well-rounded review.

The research on this subject tends to follow two overall streams, with either a focus on macro or micro-relations within the press. Macro-relations favor a broader approach to the topic, such as the

role of the press within an international context. Micro-relations, on the other hand, examines the role of the individual employee within their separate news agencies and has as such a much narrower focus on the topic. While some of the terms from the micro-level are utilized within this thesis, the overall focus will lie within the macro stream, as the purpose is a more ideological and overall analysis and discussion than the former would allow. Peter Bro (as quoted in Nyhedsmediernes funktion 2013) has created a model called ‘nyhedskompasset’ (the News Compass), which tries to place news media within a schema of four oppositions, as illustrated in Figure 1. Although Peter Bro is Danish, this normative model presents general theoretical thoughts on the subject and as such should also apply to many other democratic western societies.

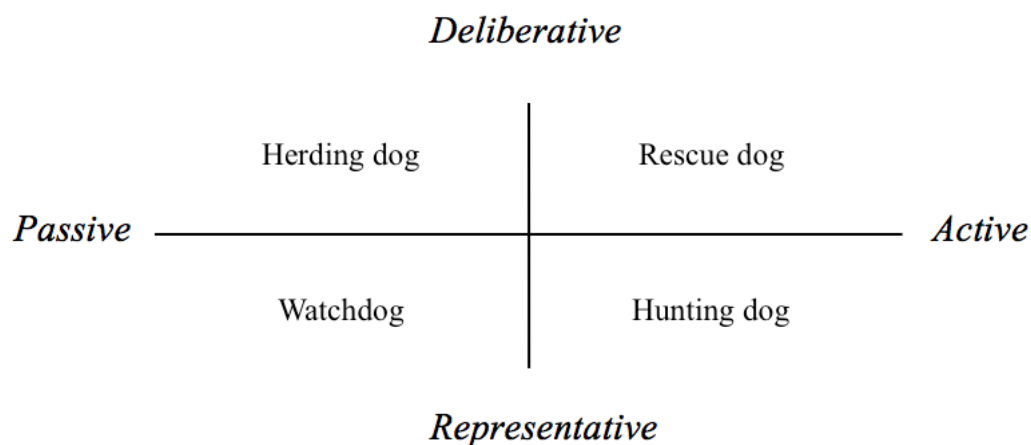


Figure 1: The News Compass (Translated from the original)

This figure represents a general contention within academia on the role of the media. In Bro's illustration, being passive means that the media's goal is to relate the news to the public as a metaphorical mouthpiece, whereas being active concerns taking a more involved approach. The next part is in relation to their focus. If the media focuses on decision makers that in some way represent the public it is representative, whereas if it seeks to involve citizens in its journalism it is labeled deliberative. This thus represents a rather simple division of the normative functions of the news media, whereas academics often have narrower definitions or focuses in their research. However, as an overall model, it works well as a tool to categorize opinions or actions after these criteria and can be utilized both to examine what an author thinks the press is and what it should be. The four resulting combinations have been metaphorically labeled as various roles for dogs, as a reference to the similarities between a watchdog and the fourth estate. The role of the fourth estate, as the press is often referred to, is traditionally to keep an eye on the official three powers – i.e. the legislative,

judicial, and executive – to safeguard the public against corruption, which places the press at an almost equal level as the previous ones. Initially, the fourth estate's role was believed to be passive and representative, i.e. reacting to the decision makers' statement and actions. However, lately, this has been combined with a more aggressive role, in which the news media tries to urge action and ensure that the decision makers will be held accountable for their actions, i.e. the more active role of the hunting dog.

Similarly, Champlin and Knoedler (2006) feature and discuss what they consider a very important debate from the 1920s about the role of the press in a democracy. This debate was between two prominent figures in US society, Walter Lippman and John Dewey, and was prompted by the behavior of the press during the first world war. Their exact topic was discussing whether the press should “serve as leaders or as teachers of the citizenry in the democracies they serve” (137). According to Lippman, the press ought to evaluate complex information and inform the public. He believed that modern society was much too complicated for the average citizen to understand easily enough to actually participate in a direct democracy-structure. He thus vouched for having an elite group, i.e. the press, which would “evaluate the policies of government and present well-informed conclusion about these key debates to the public” (138). Champlin and Knoedler further remark that part of this additionally was to serve in a ‘watchdog’ role for the public. The press should not challenge the information they received and gathered from the government, and should not “encourage direct participation [either] but [should] inform to protect against corruption and incompetence” (138). Dewey disagreed strongly with these sentiments. He believed that the press' role was to educate the people so that they would be able to participate in the democracy themselves, instead of having representatives do it for them. Furthermore, he argued that all members of a democracy have responsibilities, and for the citizens to be able to fulfill theirs, i.e. participating in the democracy, the press needed to fulfill theirs, i.e. educating the people.

James Carey (1993) argues that whilst the many roles of the contemporary press have been successful and even appreciated, i.e. “the press as watchdog; the independent press; a representative of the public; the unmasker of interest and privilege; the press that shines the hot glare of publicity into all dark corners of the republic; the seeker of expert knowledge among the welter of opinion; and the private citizens' informant” (18), it has also had its downsides and he thus believes that something should be done to salvage it. Originally, Carey argues, the press in the United States had a very different role and purpose as opposed to in contemporary society. One of the reasons for this, is the demise of the public sector, which used to exist in the space between the official and private sector.

It was usually in the form of a public house, in which merchants, traders, citizens, and political activists could meet and discuss politics and other aspects of social life. According to Carey, the role of the journalist back then was to record these conversations and to inform the public about relevant news, i.e. to “serve as its extended eyes and ears and to represent and protect its interest” (6). Because of this extraordinary function, the press’ privileges were rationalized in the name of the public and was thus a fairly protected entity. This function developed into what is known as the watchdog role, which was typical of the modern period. Here, the press started to become ideologically aligned with political parties and the birth of a national media meant that a large collectivity was initiated and that there now was an option to centralize the political power of the press. Facing critique from progressive movements meant that the press had to defend itself, e.g. justify its social position and power and legitimize its role. To counter this, journalists increasingly started to make it their purpose to unmask the corruption of people in power through propaganda analysis and muckraking, as well as to dedicate themselves to finding the truth of the matter at hand by acting as a group independent of all institutions in principle. This is what created the concept of the fourth estate and linked journalism with the notion of objectivity and a loyalty to the truth.

Whilst this may sound like a reasonable arrangement initially, it also had its consequences: “While independent journalism legitimized democratic politics of publicity and experts, it also confirmed the psychological incompetence of most people to participate in it. A political system of “democracy without citizens” evolved. A valuable role for the mass media was preserved, but the role of political parties and citizens diminished” (Carey 1993: 15). As a result of this, the people became less interested in politics and less trusting of the press, since it diminished them to observers of the political life and press rather than active participators. In order to counteract this, Carey suggests a return to a humbler journalism, a more informative rather than evaluative press, which works like a conversation with the public and should help with the recreation of a public sector and life. As such, in relation to Bro’s News Compass, he would prefer a media that functioned as a Herding dog, i.e. an entity that enables the citizens to participate in public debates on, e.g., the state of their democracy. This is, furthermore, also in line with Dewey’s notion about the media enabling the public in participating in their democracy. As Carey claims: “All journalism can do is preside over and within the public conversation: to stimulate and organize it, keep it moving and leave a record so that other conversations — history, art, science, religion — might have something off which to feed. The public will continue to reawaken when it is addressed as a conversational partner and encouraged to join the talk rather than sit passively as a spectator before a discussion conducted by



journalists and experts” (20). Carey’s focus is therefore mainly on how the press should interact with the public and the repercussions of this.

McChesney and Nichols (2004) also believe that there is an issue in regards to the role of the contemporary press, but have a slightly different view on this: “The debate [on media in the US] is about whether we are going to have regulation in the public interest serving informed, debated public values or whether we are going to have regulation purely in the service of private corporate interests, transacted behind closed doors” (367-8). They are mostly concerned with the shift in the press’ interest, as they believe it has moved on from focusing on the public and is now entirely self-centered. The media corporations, according to these scholars, only care about achieving a monopoly, rather than providing a service to the consumers of their broadcasts. If the news media corporations keep merging, yet fewer people will be able to decide the content and agenda of the news, which may result in biases and less variety. By stating that: “The public needs to sit at the table on that hotel roof and engage in debate. The public needs to throw these guys off the roof” (369), McChesney and Nichols urge the people to take action and stress that it is of utmost importance that they are educated in their rights, so that they can do something about the issues on a local basis; e.g. that they have a say in what content their local news stations provide and can thus complain if they do not get the service and content that they are supposed to. This way, McChesney and Nichols believe, the press structure in the US can be changed from the bottom to the top. They argue that to solve this issue, a balanced reform strategy is needed, which focuses on both content and policy, as renowned American journalist Bill Moyers noted: “We have to get our fellow citizens to understand that what they see, hear, and read is not only the taste of programmers and producers, but also a set of policy decisions made by the people we vote for” (as quoted in McChesney and Nichols 375). Jackson and Stanfield (2004) agree with this stance, as they believe that “there is a need to reinstitute the public purpose requirement for broadcast licensing” (475). They also think that “this should be conceptualized within a democratic criterion” (481), thus building on McChesney and Nichols point and further stressing a philosophical belief that the media is not fulfilling its original purpose and that the solution to this lies within the public. While it can be argued that these scholars urge the people to change the system from the bottom up, this does not necessarily mean that they want a revolutionized media to play the role of Bro’s Herding Dog or Dewey’s teacher. Their main complaint is that the media has grown too capitalistic and thus does not serve the public anymore, but they do not portray any other ideas about how it ought to function.

Bucy and Gregson (2001), on the hand, notes how “elite theories of democracy stress that

optimal civic conditions depend on a certain amount of citizen involvement but not too much so as to cause instability” (374) and thus somewhat agrees with Lippman’s initial claim. However, they go on to state that: “[the] Democractic ethos [...is] that all citizens have the option to participate, regardless of whether their participation is healthy for the system” (374). In connection to this, they reconsider civic involvement and empowerment through a less direct route, i.e. through participation in political media. They exemplify media participation as: “Public opinion formation, participating in civic discussions and agenda building, mediated interactions with candidates and other political actors, donating to political causes, and joining mobilizing efforts - each of which may contribute to the psychological feeling of being engaged with the political system” (357), and support the basis of this with the statement that a big part of political audiences think that certain new media formats are useful and important to civic life. Therefore, like the media can take an active and passive approach to their reporting, so can the audience to participating in their democracy. Bucy and Gregson thus distinguish between active and passive modes of participation and symbolic and material rewards/empowerment that the people receive as a result of this. According to him the passive mode is usually associated with the old media and the active with the new one. As newer technology enables citizens to both get more information, e.g. visual, audio, etc., it also allows them to interact and participate in the events without really being politically active, e.g. through phone calls, or the internet, which was never an option before. They thus state that even if civic engagement through the media is only symbolically empowering for the citizen it still “contributes substantially to legitimizing the political systems of mass democracies” (358). They thereby link the role of the media to the audience’s ability to participate in their democracy – i.e. that by having the media act as a channel or tool, the audience can directly and indirectly participate and be empowered.

Patterson (2016), in direct opposition with McChesney and Nichols, does not focus on the media monopoly and its consequences. According to him, the issue with the role of the press in contemporary society is not solely a reaction to the commercialization of the news media, but also a result of a trend within culture itself. He thinks that the press simply has gotten too negative, something that has long been an issue. In the mid-1990s, David Broder, a Washington Post journalist, noted that: “Cynicism is epidemic right now [...] It saps people’s confidence in politics and public officials, and it erodes both the standing and standards of journalism. If the assumption is that nothing is on the level, nothing is what it seems, then citizenship becomes a game for fools, and there is no point in trying to stay informed.” (as quoted in Patterson). Although a cynical press is not a new feature, Patterson further notes how “In the six presidential elections since Broder wrote those words,

negative coverage of the presidential nominees has increased by 19 percentage points from its average in the six preceding elections.” He argues that this is partly because of a focus on sensationalism - which in this case means that the news the press processes have to be interesting enough to sell well within their customer demographics, and as such, cannot be constructive or underwhelming, since that will not sell as well. As such, Patterson seems to refer to a function that is stuck between a Hunting dog and a businessman, i.e. that it wants to find the relevant information about the problem at hand and track down the person responsible for it, but at the same time also has to sell enough stories to make a profit. This means that it is both of fiscal and symbolic importance that the media gets scoops and attention, which thus encourages a more negative and aggressive approach to journalism. He furthermore also brings up the public’s lack of trust in politicians and journalists, which is at an all time low, and argues that this is because of the increased negativity within a business that focuses on incentives that “encourage journalists to engage in criticism and attack.” There is a danger for such trends to become embedded in a journalistic culture, as it “creates a seedbed of public anger, misperception, and anxiety— sitting there waiting to be tapped by those who have a stake in directing the public’s wrath at government. [...] Watchdog reporting can build confidence in the press, but when journalists condemn most everything they see, they set themselves up to be as credible as the boy who repeatedly cried “wolf.”” (Patterson 2016). Thus, if the news media abuse their position by being overly negative or sensationalist in their coverage of, e.g., the government, this is likely to backfire and also decrease the public’s trust in them as it diminishes their credibility. Going by this line of argumentation, to regain some of the public’s trust, the press would have to be more careful and investigative in who they condemn and how they do it.

Conclusively, many academics believe that the press ought to represent or service the public in some way and also agree that this is not what it is currently doing. Some contribute this to systemic changes and policies and the decrease in varied news outlets. Others believe that this is because journalism in itself has been corrupted and that constructive news has to make a comeback for the tide to turn in their favor. The variation of theories and thoughts on this topic will constitute the foundation for the examination of the conflict between the Trump administration and the news media in the United States.

## Method

### Research design

This thesis will examine the role of the press in contemporary US society, through a case study on the Trump administration's relations with the news media as seen in the controversy of the press gaggle-episode from the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2017, along with the President's speech from a few hours before. Case studies allow for much in-depth research and a greater focus on details and is thus fitting for examining a phenomenon within a certain timeframe, area, or sphere (Bryman 2012). In this case, the interactions between individual political players, if indeed the press can be considered as such, within US society and over the span of a few days. By choosing to limit the scope of the research, the analysis will allow much more thorough scrutiny and in extension create a denser foundation for the subsequent discussion. Furthermore, this attention to detail is compatible with the critical fields of discourse analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis and Framing, as well as legitimation and securitization. Along with the focus on in-depth analysis and CDA, the strategic measure of this thesis is qualitative. Unlike a quantitative strategy, it allows for detailed and in-depth analysis of heavy data collections, which in this case will be transcripts of speeches and articles, and which is particularly fitting for discursive and frame analyses. As such, the case study format allows for a comprehensive analysis, though it is somewhat limited in scope and as such cannot be generalized with certainty and instead works as an example of a broader trend. This particular focus was chosen, as the events transpiring within the time frame caused great uproar within the press and internationally, where it was claimed that the press secretary was hindering them in their work, while Trump disparaged this work. As such, it is an interesting case to consider, since both sides presented it in different ways and with different motives.

The topic of the role of the media has been heavily disputed and discussed, as is made clear in the literature review, and as such is much too big a field to have a complete comprehension of without years of studying. As such, the structure of this project will be mainly iterative, since this will allow the theory and empirical findings to influence each other and thus be less rigid than a deductive strategy, but more focused than the initial steps of an inductive one. In relation to this, the analytical approach is situated in grounded theory analysis, as it supports the previously mentioned aspects chosen for this project. It also grants more leeway and freedom in how to proceed with and structure the research and direction of this thesis throughout. As such, if the initial idea or structure is discovered to be extraneous according to the empirical sources, it can be altered and vice versa (Bryman 2012). In the case of this project, it has been necessary both to adjust the criteria for the data

collection, i.e. deciding to include the point of view of the media, and the angle of the problem formulation, e.g. in relation to making the discussion relevant and doable, as it became apparent that the initial ideas were flawed or difficult to execute.

### Ontology and Epistemology

The aim of this project is in broad terms to examine the realities shaped by the chosen actors within the case, through their use of discourse. As such, the ontology must reflect this, which is why it will be executed from a social constructionist perspective. This ontology dictates that there is not one true reality, but that it is shaped by interactions between social actors. This means that several versions of reality are promoted by members of the social setting and that these realities are dependent on the social context in which they occur (Bryman 2012). Furthermore, as a researcher there is no way to be entirely objective when conducting a study, as the interpretation of the data is based on a personal perspective and knowledge. In this case, as the researcher has previous knowledge of American culture and the press, it will affect the way the research is conducted and the interpretation of data. On the other hand, since the researcher is from a different culture than the one being examined, this also means that it will be from the perspective of someone with possible different values and norms than those expressed in the data. However, having an awareness of this before starting the research also means that it is possible to limit prejudices and biases to some extent through being self-reflective and critical of the structural and methodological choices made throughout. Furthermore, the findings are based on how the researcher understands and analyzes the gathered data, and can thus be very different depending on who is conducting the research.

In relation to this, the epistemology which would make the best fit for the project is constructivism. Like social constructionism, it is of the belief that knowledge is not objective or exists in a vacuum, but that this is continually created by people through either interactions or cognitive processes. It is always interpreted and constructed by actors, and that researchers as such cannot objectively work with or define this in their research, as they too are actors and as such cannot examine society from without but will base findings on their own interpretations and constructions (Hein 1991). This means that while it is possible to analyze the interpretations of social actors, even this will not be entirely objective. When discussing the role of the press, this subjectivity will be even clearer, as there are various ideas about what this ought to be. Thus, the question of whether the media is hindered in its work will be just as relative.

### Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field, which contains a variety of different branches, but overall seeks to examine how “ideologies and power relations are expressed through language” (Baker & Ellece 2011). It views language as a social practice and wishes to examine the connections between the use of language and the social or political contexts it happens in. Furthermore, this field is of the belief that discourse not only shapes society but that society also shapes the discourse within it (Paltridge 2006). The primary aim of CDA practitioners is to emphasize and problematize societal issues – in particular the ones relating to power, inequality, exclusion, and subordination (Wodak & Meyer 2012). Fairclough, one of the initial minds behind CDA, furthermore argues that ideologies, which are aspects of the world or assumptions that make up society, can be seen through language and thus identified through an analysis of this (2001). He developed a three-step model for examining this effectively, which consists of description, interpretation, and explanation. In the first step, the data is gathered from the text and described in terms of linguistic characteristics such as grammatical structures, metaphors and word choice (also known as lexicalization) (Baker & Ellece 2011). In the second step, the researcher examines the relationship between the text and the interactions, i.e. considers what the collected data means, for example by interpreting a metaphor. Lastly, the relationship between the interaction and social context is analyzed, completing the analysis. However, as the analysis requires the inclusion of the researcher’s own values, it is of utmost importance to be self-reflective during the entire process, as personal biases may otherwise interfere with the work. At the same time, Fairclough also believes that it is important for these biases to be drawn upon by the researcher as this helps to understand how the creators of the data have used theirs in-text (Fairclough 2001). Furthermore, CDA also seeks to, when relevant, examine the use of intertextuality within texts. This refers to how texts either refer or incorporate parts of other texts, such as through quotations, parodies, or retellings. Baker and Ellece argue that it is often “only possible to make sense of a text by fully understanding how it refers to other texts” (2011: 64), and since this also is a prevalent phenomenon in the chosen data for this project, it will be considered along with the other tools.

### Framing

Framing will be applied to this project, as many of its inherent qualities will help to examine the role of the press and how it is portrayed by the media and politicians and provides a methodological approach for analyzing how language, institutions, actors, and power interplay (Fletcher 2009).

William Gamson defines framing as “a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (as quoted in Kuypers 2009: 190). Robert Entman furthermore agrees with this and states that the main feature of framing is its focus on structures since they are what makes up the patterns of the social world (1993). As such, frames are generated through social and cultural processes and serve as problem-solving structures that helps to determine how reality is perceived and interpreted. A frame consists of what Barker and Ellece (2011) call 'labelled slots'. An example of this is the normative war frame. Within this, there would traditionally be, e.g., an enemy, weapon, battle, victory, and loss slot. As such, by referencing one of these slots, the others will simultaneously be activated through association. This is mainly because the brain operates through patterns to not get overwhelmed and be able to predict the outcomes of situations. This means that the use of frames showcases how the speaker views the world, and furthermore can manipulate the audience into following this viewpoint. In connection with a constructionist ontology, it means that by using frames, an actor can fundamentally create or structure how the audience views the world, as this happens subjectively.

Framing occurs through the utilization of linguistic devices such as lexicalization, grammatical choices, intertextuality, and coherence. How the audience receives and interprets the frame depends on what schemata they possess, schemata being the knowledge and memories of the individual, which are shaped by society (Tannen 1993). Another aspect of framing is through what Robert Entman (1993) calls selection and salience, which in short is how highlighting certain aspects of a situation and excluding others can change the perception of it. As such, he defines framing as “select[ing] the aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (52). Salience is emphasizing a piece of information and thus making it more prominent and notable to the audience while simultaneously taking the focus away from other aspects of the situation.

Conclusively, in the words of Jim A. Kuypers, framing is “the process whereby communicators act—consciously or not—to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner. [...] frames act to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. They are located in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture at large.” (2009: 182). Frames are thus discursive elements that have many varied uses and can be found anywhere in the social world, which makes them particularly interesting for discursive analyses.

## Data Collection

President Donald Trump's speech, which is officially called 'remarks' and can be found as Appendix A, preceded the gaggle by about three hours and as such does not directly comment on the events, but instead addresses the President's general stance on the media dispute and his previous statements. As such, it is still relevant to include as it provides the administration's, or at the very least the President's side of the conflict and thus the foundation of any acts they commit in relation to this. It was held at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC for short), which is a gathering of republicans that has been hosted since the 1970s by the American Conservative Union. It is a prestigious event, which often has high standing politicians invited as speakers, for example the President and Vice President at this year's convention. The appendix is an excerpt of the speech held by President Trump, with everything irrelevant to his media-relations cut out. As it took place amongst many like-minded individuals, Trump had freer reigns in his depictions and was less forced by decorum to compromise his opinion. While a president is supposed to represent his administration and their general policies, there have been instances (e.g. Borchers 2017) where Trump's statements have been inconsistent with those of his administration, and as such his statements are foremost personal and not always representational of the entire government. However, as the President his views are still relevant to a case like this, as he has the power to act on them.

A gaggle is by definition "An informal briefing by the White House press secretary that is on the record, but video recording is not allowed. It can occur anywhere [...] but it often describes the informal interactions between the press and the press secretary that occur before a formal White House briefing" (Press Gaggle 2017), and as such is supposed to be an informal gathering between the media pool and the Press Secretary. Press Secretary Sean Spicer held a press gaggle (Appendix B) in the afternoon of the 24th of February, a few hours after Trump's Speech at CPAC17. As the White House's official connection to the press, his words are supposed to be representational of the current administration's views, despite the small discrepancies mentioned above, and is thus a credible source for the government's side of the media conflict. As a press gaggle functions much like a news conference, his exact wordings are not planned out in advance and will thus consist of more subconscious patterns and frames expressed in the moment. This, however, also leads to a messier and at times incoherent text, which has to be considered throughout the analysis. Both the speech and the press gaggle were found on the official website of the White House and copied into a word document for editing, and are thus the official transcripts of both occurrences.



The news articles by CNN (Appendix C) and The New York Times (Appendix D) were both published online after the press gaggle on the 24th of February 2017. The two media outlets were both excluded from the gaggle and thus relevant for gauging the banned media's side of this conflict, especially since they at least in this episode are put on the opposing side by the administration. It should be noted, that the relationship between the Trump administration and CNN/The New York Times does not represent this government's relationship with all news media organizations, but is meant as a case study in a contentious government-media situation. In 2013, The New York Times was estimated to be very left-leaning (Democrat) and the CNN slightly more right-leaning (Republican) by the University of Berkeley, and though this may have changed since then, it provides a less partisan view on the conflict than choosing solely democrat or republican sources (Harbold 2013). Utilizing only one article from each source limits the causality of the analysis, and is, in general, a very narrow focus for a topic of this size. Thus, the findings are not definitive, but speculative and representative of a broader context as they are relevant for how these two news organizations perceive and present both the episode but also their relationship with the Trump administration.

While the perspective of a pro-Trump news outlet could have been included for a broader selection of opinions along with more members of the Trump administration, the chosen ones were deemed most relevant and thus also sufficient to get an in-depth analysis from both sides of the conflict. The data was collected from the span of a single day (the 24th of February 2017) as this was the day where the press gaggle was held and thus also the initial aftermath of its controversy. While it could be beneficial to expand the focus further, there was not enough time for a broader analysis to be executed satisfactorily.

### Delimitations

Because of external constraints and unforeseen events, certain limitations have had to be made in connection with this project. One is the scope; it has been kept purposefully narrow to both enable a deep analysis and to stay within the time limit. The role of the media is a large topic, which could easily have warranted several years of research and preparation. Another is the choice to focus on strictly American sources - if there had been sufficient time and means, a comparative study could have been executed, in which the role of the media could be compared across nations.

Another limitation is the choice to significantly limit the data collection. One way this is done is to only focus on one event, rather than multiple. The inclusion of more could have created the

foundation for a comparative study and made the research slightly more generalized. Another way is to include more actors than those chosen, for example, other media outlets or different political entities. Public statements could also have been included to allow another point of view on the case.

Additional theoretical concepts could have been applied to the analysis in order to include more angles to examine the data from. This could illuminate more aspects of the case and thus create a more well-rounded result. An example of this could be to employ more rhetorical theories to the speeches, to analyze how they are designed to persuade the audience.

While these options are viable for a larger project or scope, the chosen ones will make it easier to execute a structured and focused project, with only the necessary and essential elements to steer the research forward and allow for a more in-depth consideration of the data and research questions.

## Theory

In this section, different ways of defining and measuring democracy will be mentioned, as it is important to realize that this term does not mean the same in all situations and to all people. Thus, relevant theories of this will be considered, in an attempt to build a foundation upon which further research in this thesis can be built.

### Democracy

In David Campbell's paper concerning various empirical manners in which democracy can be measured, he begins by stating that there are several theories and models of democracy in academia, which makes it a hard concept to properly define. One definition he uses is that of Michael Sodaro: "The essential idea of democracy is that the people have the right to determine who governs them. In most cases, they elect the principal governing officials and hold them accountable for their actions. Democracies also impose legal limits on the government's authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedoms to their citizens" (2008: 5). There is thus a heavy emphasis on a popular government, either directly controlled by the people or controlled by officials elected by the people. Another interesting point he makes a note of is that the definition and meaning of democracy may change depending on cultures: e.g. that going by the definitions of a European and North American it could seem like the former values equality as the most important part of democracy and the latter freedom.

There are some criteria of the democratic model that are considered necessary. The governmentally funded NGO Freedom House produce an annual report in which they rate countries' level of democracy. They base democracy on freedom, which is based on the amount and quality of

political rights and civil liberties in a given country: “The political rights checklist is made up of the following sub-categories: “Electoral Process”; “Political Pluralism and Participation”; “Functioning of Government”; “Additional Discretionary Political Rights Questions”. The civil liberties checklist consists of the sub-categories: “Freedom of Expression and Belief”; “Associational and Organizational Rights”; “Rule of Law”; “Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights”” (Campbell 11). Campbell argues that going by the framework Freedom House utilizes, every liberal democracy is an electoral democracy, but not every electoral democracy has to be a liberal democracy, meaning that the latter “goes beyond the minimum standards of an electoral democracy” and as such “represents a higher manifestation form of democracy” (18).

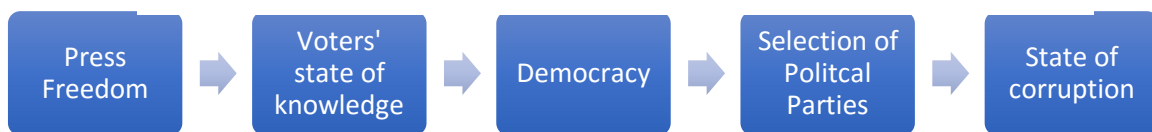
The Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy has an entirely different way of measuring democracy; rather than focusing on the freedom aspects it utilizes the concepts of “competition” and “participation,” as the creator argues that these are the “two basic indicators of democratization” (14). He defines competition as “the percentage share of the smaller parties and independents of the votes cast in parliamentary elections, or of the seats in parliament,” where the “smaller parties’ share was calculated by subtracting the largest party’s share from 100 per cent” (as quoted in Campbell 14). Participation is defined as the percentage of adult citizens voting in elections and, according to Vanhanen, a country needs at least 30% competition and 10% participation to qualify as a democracy.

Both the Freedom House and Vanhanen’s Index consider the electoral process an important aspect of a democracy and have criteria that need to be filled for it to be deemed as such, however, Freedom House also ascertains that the electoral aspect is not sufficient, but that civil liberties are equally necessary for a (liberal) democracy. For this paper, the focus will lie mainly on civil liberties, i.e. freedom of speech and the press, and the ability to participate in democracy, which is indubitably influenced by the former clauses. As a constitutional democracy, the US derives its official definition of democracy from its constitution. An important part of this is the First Amendment, which for one contains the free speech and freedom of the press clauses. Along with other clauses, these are meant to protect the public from governmental restrictions and persecutions as a result of having expressed themselves, unless it falls within the amendment’s few exceptions, such as defamation. Another aspect of this is that the government “may not restrict mass communication” (First Amendment 2017). This amendment is under much debate in contemporary America – often in connection with the media dispute with the Trump administration.

Another important aspect of the freedom of the press clause in relation to democracy is the notion that it helps keep corruption at bay, which is closely connected to the fourth estate role of the

media and the idea of them as a watchdog. Chowdhury conducted a study in 2004, in which he attempted to measure the impact of press freedom and democracy on corruption. Referencing previous studies, he ascertains that the results have been mixed and thus inconclusive, but instead proposes that: “The presence of press freedom brings public corruption cases to the voters while voters in a democracy in turn punish corrupt politicians by ousting them from public offices. Hence, elected politicians react to the voters by reducing corruption” (93) as a process to base his research on, and summarizes it in a simple model:

*Figure 2: Correlation between press freedom and the state of corruption (Chowdhury 2004: 94)*



As such, while causation cannot be proved, there is some level of correlation between these, as he proposes that: “democracy and press freedom have a significant impact on the observed corruption and the presence of democracy and press freedom can reduce the level of corruption significantly” (95). While a free press may not necessarily mean that it will function as a watchdog, it still serves an important role in a democratic society: informing the public, so that it can participate in its democracy and thus ensure a more just formation of government.

Politically, there are several ideologies of governance. One that is prevalent in most of the democratic world, is liberal democracy. This can be defined as “a system of government in which people consent to their rulers, and rulers, in turn, are constitutionally constrained to respect individual rights” (Liberal Democracy 2006). While there are different ideas about what this entails – e.g. what consent and individual rights mean in this context – there are some minimum characteristics of this brand of democracy: “1. Widespread political participation by adult citizens, including members of minority groups [...]; 2. Secret ballots and frequent regular elections; 3. Broad freedom of individuals to form and support political parties, with each party free to present its views and form a government; 4. Governments that can alter interpret, and enforce laws to suit (within limits) the majority's preferences; 5. Effective guarantees of individual and minority rights, especially in areas such as freedom of speech, press, conscience, religion, assembly, and equal treatment before the law; and 6. Limited governmental powers, which are kept in check by constitutional guarantees including separation of powers (so that all executive, legislative, and judicial powers are not, in effect, exercised by the same person or institution)” (2006).

On the other hand, there is also populism, which can both be a democratic and authoritarian ideology and movement (Populism 2015). Populism often has many aspects in common with democratic traditions and is thus a feature of most democratic political systems (Populism 2008). The main aim of populism is to champion the ordinary person, often by favorably comparing them to an elite. Populism seeks to establish systemic changes through reforms rather than revolutions, in its most democratic form. It is “typically critical of political representation and anything that mediates the relation between the people and their leader or government” (Populism 2015). In the US the populist People’s Party advocated a more direct democracy than there was at the end of the 1800s. In contemporary society, however, populism is often understood to have more authoritarian meaning: “Populist politics, following this definition, revolves around a charismatic leader who appeals to and claims to embody the will of the people in order to consolidate his own power. In this personalized form of politics, political parties lose their importance, and elections serve to confirm the leader’s authority rather than to reflect the different allegiances of the people” (2015). As such, the term can have slightly different connotations depending on the context and the individual’s understanding of it. An example of this could be that a populist economic plan can “signify either a platform that promotes the interest of common citizens and the country as a whole or a platform that seeks to redistribute wealth to gain popularity, without regard to the consequences for the country such as inflation or debt” (2015).

All in all, there are different definitions of and criteria for democracy and there are different ideas behind the citizen’s relations with the government in the form of these. Furthermore, the notion of a free press is a fundamental right, which is guaranteed in the US Constitution and, while a free press does not equal a watchdog role for the media, it is realistic that it helps to decrease corruption.

### Discursive Legitimation

Legitimation is an extension of the framing dimension of discourse analysis, as this field examines how specific structures can be used to legitimize the message being spread. Discursive legitimation strategies can be utilized to legitimize the message an actor is trying to communicate; however, it can also be used for the opposite purpose: for de-legitimation or critique. While there are many modes through which legitimation can occur, this paper will focus on speech and written legitimation and will thus not need to examine the different implications of different mediums as much. According to Theo Van Leeuwen, there are four major categories of legitimation within discourse: Authorization,

Moral evaluation, Rationalization, and Mythopoesis. As the first two are primarily relevant for this thesis, they will be detailed below.

Authorization is “legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested” (Leeuwan 2007: 92). That sort of legitimation thus has its origin and power in the status of the person wielding it. This can further be divided into personal, expert, role model, impersonal, traditional, and conformity authorization. Person authority is mainly derived from the status of the individual, with an example being a parent or a teacher to a child. These derive their legitimation from their status to the child and do not have to provide further legitimization – e.g. when asking the child to do something, they need no other explanation as to why except ‘because I say so’. Experts derive their legitimation from their expertise, and can from this advice others without the need to explain what this is based on. Role model authority builds on the individual's qualities and makes people want to behave like them. Furthermore, this power also works in reverse: if the role model has performed a certain act, their followers are free to do the same without any moral repercussions. This is because the act was legitimized by the role model doing it first. Impersonal authority is expressed through impersonal channels such as laws, rules and regulations. Authority traditionally lies within the reasoning that ‘since this is the way it has always been done, why change it?’, whereas authority in conformity is that ‘everyone is doing this, so you should as well’ (94-7).

Moral evaluation is “legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems” (92). Whilst it can sometimes happen through very direct evaluations of subjects, i.e. by calling them ‘good’ or ‘bad’, it often happens through discourse assigned a specific moral value. This type of legitimation for one includes the subsections of Evaluation, which is using adjectives that evaluate the action or object in question. Leeuwen furthermore notes that many adjectives are both ‘designative’ and ‘attributive’, which means that they both speak of “concrete qualities of actions or objects and commend them in terms of some domain of values” (98). Another subsection is Abstraction, which is when the actor refers to things in abstract ways that link them to socially approved moral values. Lastly, he mentions Analogies, which is when the actor compares the action in question with something morally right or wrong.

Another strategy that is often used to legitimize actions is securitization. This field claims that there are no objective threats, but that various issues can be transformed into a security threat through, e.g., discourse (Trombetta 2008). This can happen through a political speech by making what Hayes and Knox-Hayes (2014) call a ‘securitization move’, which occurs when “a securitizing actor (an

individual with sufficient socio-political credibility) makes the claim that a referent object (intersubjectively agreed to be worth preserving) faces an existential threat” (84). If the target audience is sufficiently persuaded that the threat is real and that the object in question is something they want to protect, political power will be centralized to ensure a response to the threat and all regular debate minimized. Political actors are thus allowed to breach the usual boundaries of what they are authorized to do, and thus allow actions that would not normally be tolerated. While this seems like an effective means to an end, Hayes and Knox-Hayes add that “Relying on securitization, with its logic of imminent threat and immediate response, to generate action may result in short-term policies that lack long-term public support” (85-6). As such, while it may produce the desired immediate results, it may fail to work over a longer span of time. This is, in other words, a very ‘decisionist’ attitude, i.e., which favors reactive measures. Furthermore, according to the Copenhagen School of thought, this reactionary pattern allows politicians to circumvent traditional rules and standards, in part undermining the democratic decision-making process (Trombetta 2008).

## Analysis

This section will analyze the chosen texts in order to ascertain the actors’ framings of each other as well as the conflict exemplified in the press gaggle occurring on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2017. This will be done in two main parts, the first of which focuses on the point of view of the Trump administration, exemplified in the statements of President Donald Trump (Appendix A) and Press Secretary Sean Spicer (Appendix B), and the second part presents the point of view of the ‘fake’ media, exemplified in the articles by CNN (Appendix C) and The New York Times (Appendix D). Lastly, a short comparative conclusion will be done.

### The Fake Media

President Trump held a speech on the morning of the 24th of February 2017, at the Conservative Political Action Conference, in which he covered a variety of issues, one of them his relations with the press. This section will, therefore, outline how Trump frames the press and himself by examining his use of lexicalization and framing. From these findings, it will hereafter be discussed how he views the role of the media.

Throughout the speech, Trump expresses that the job of the press is “to report honestly” (A l. 93) and fairly, which means not going after people who do not deserve it, as implied in his statements

“I don’t mind bad stories if I deserve them,” (A l. 48) and in his praising of someone for having written a ‘fair’ story about him (A l. 55-6). Furthermore, it seems that he is of the opinion that the media should be upfront about their sources, as it otherwise means they can get away with embellishing stories and details with no consequences (A l. 51-3). By establishing this standard, he can emphasize how much the press fails to reach it and thus has something to hold them up to throughout his speech and ‘fake’ discourse. Having a standard to measure them against essentially allows Trump to pass a judgment and thereby give them a failing grade. The President’s primary judgment is thus the falsity and dishonesty of the ‘fake’ media, as he brands it. In just a span of 3 pages of text, he utilizes the word ‘fake’ 13 times and ‘dishonest’ 7 times, making it clear what kind of frame he is chiefly drawing upon. ‘Dishonest’ is defined by Merriam-Webster as being “characterized by lack of truth, honesty or trustworthiness” (dishonest def 2 2017), whereas ‘fake’ is synonymous with “counterfeit” and “sham” (fake def 3 2017), and as such both words have negative denotations. The use of these both implies that the ‘fake’ media is not to be trusted, which thus aligns with qualities of an untrustworthiness frame. He, for one, uses repetition to stress this message, which is additionally obvious by the repeated mention of adjectives that make the ‘fake’ media seem untrustworthy, including ‘phony’ (A l. 36), ‘false’ (A l. 84), and ‘the worst’ (A l. 5).

Other than these descriptive and evaluative words, however, he also draws upon action themed slots of an untrustworthiness frame. He repeatedly states that the ‘fake’ media ‘make up stories’ (A l. 51) and ‘make up sources’ (A l. 43) when they are confronted with their claims. As such they are lying to the consumers of their reports, and thus not reliably doing their jobs, but can be claimed to abuse their position instead. If the assumption then goes that their job is to serve the US democracy, Trump is insinuating that they have failed it instead. Even without this aspect, they are simply defying the code of ethics connected to their jobs, which, if he decided to frame it in such a way, could be a reason to strip them of some of their political privileges, as happened at the press gaggle. Furthermore, Trump also mentions that the ‘fake’ media also “dropped off the word ‘fake’” (A l. 45) from their citations of Trump and are thus shown to be deliberately misleading and manipulating the public, which goes against any of the functions in Bro’s News Compass (Nyhedsmediernes funktion 2013). However, it does slightly echo some of the critiques put forward by Champlin and Knoedler in their paper from 2006. Here, they examined cases in which the media had either omitted important stories or not been thorough enough in their research, which lead to skewed narratives. This deliberative aspect is also important to the frame, as it creates an association with a certain level of deceit and wickedness. Being untruthful is not necessarily something that is



done on purpose, however by insinuating and directly stating that it is deliberate, Trump removes this relativity and thus makes them completely accountable for their actions. Whilst declaring that the 'fake' media is not fit to do its job, Trump also furthers the deliberative aspect by stating that the reporters themselves are "very cunning" and "very dishonest," (A l. 81-2), meaning that they are, as people, corrupt, and not only in the function of their work as reporters. He thus hints at a much deeper wickedness at play, and that these reporters do not simply do bad things, they are also bad people. This way he is both drawing upon an untrustworthiness frame, and also directly stating that the media is untrustworthy, and thusly labeling exactly what he wants his audience to think when he uses this frame. There is nothing subtle about it, and that does not seem to be the purpose of it either way. He is creating an association with his listeners, so that they will believe and also follow his framing of the 'fake' media, and instinctively make the connection that the media is 'bad'.

Trump is thus using this frame and these negative adjectives to legitimize his feud with these 'fake' media outlets. By utilizing evaluative words ('cunning', 'dishonest') in connection with them, he draws upon moral legitimation to justify his words and actions towards them. They are inherently bad, and as such he is justified in criticizing and taking action against them. Furthermore, it also establishes the media outlets as an 'other' to both himself and his audience, someone they are against. By framing them in a negative light, he does not even have to state outright that he is the opposite - this is made obvious both through his clear opposition towards them as well as through his repeated creation of 'us' and 'them' distinctions, which also serves to create two opposing groups, e.g. when he states that: "They say that we can't criticize their dishonest coverage because of the First Amendment [...] But the First Amendment gives all of us -- it gives it to me, it gives it to you, it gives all Americans -- the right to speak our minds freely. It gives you the right and me the right to criticize fake news and criticize it strongly" (A l. 84-90). Here there is a very clear distinction between 'them' (the fake media) and 'us' (the audience as well as the American people). He creates a binary, where on one side there is the corrupt, fake media and on the other is him, and the American citizens, or perhaps more specifically his supporters, and the roles of the two sides are clearly presented. Although the media may use a patriotic constitutional argument, Trump notes, they are in the wrong, and the First Amendment is in fact on his own and his supporters side, not the media's. This is also an effective means to create both inclusiveness and exclusiveness, as he is implying that the media is against the citizens, so people should be on his side in the feud because he is on theirs. This binary opposition can also be seen in Trump's use of a war frame, where he repeatedly brands the 'fake' media as the 'enemy of the people', and says that he will 'fight' for the people. By including these

war-related words, he is trying to draw upon the audience's cognitive associations with these, and thus create another association between 'war' and the fake media. Since the 'fake' media is the enemy, this is thereby also likely to be associated with slots such as 'danger' and 'threat', which, along with the implicit understanding that Trump needs to 'fight for' the people, because they are somehow threatened or at risk, further establishes an unsafe environment.

Following Hayes and Knox-Hayes' notion of securitization, it can, therefore, be said that Trump is attempting to make a securitization move. He does not need to convince his audience that what is at stake is important, as he claims that it is themselves and their values that are at risk. Nevertheless, as the securitizing actor, he also needs to persuade them that the threat is real and imminent to succeed in his securitization. As can be seen from the untrustworthiness framing and war frames, he primarily seeks to do so through othering and by painting specific media outlets as being enemies. He furthers this by directly stating that the 'fake' media has "[its] own agenda, and it's not your agenda, and it's not the country's agenda," (A l. 91-2) and that "it doesn't represent the people. It never will represent the people," (A l. 95). His emphasis on how the press does not represent the people seems to imply that he thinks it ought to. Furthermore, while he does not specify what the overall plan for the media's agenda is, it may be an implication that the press is more concerned with making sales than serving democracy. This would thus be much like the trend of sensationalism within the news world, which focuses on selling stories rather than informing the readers about crucial events, and as such may exaggerate or omit certain stories (Champlin & Knoedler 2006). Furthermore, he adds, these organizations create false narratives that may harm the public and confuse them in regards to what they should believe (A l. 78-80). Trump mentions the example that they tried to sabotage his election by making it seem like there was no point in voting as he would lose no matter what. As such he paints the 'fake' media as being incredibly powerful in manipulating the people and thus indirectly influence US policy-making, which thus is the threat he is up against. If the securitization works, Trump both gathers more broad and cohesive support amongst the people, which both unites them in his cause against the media, but it would also allow him to use more extreme measures against them with relatively full public support.

Trump both directly and indirectly defines his role within this conflict. For one, as mentioned above, he swears to keep fighting for the people. While insinuating that he thus cares about the people's well-being, it can also be understood as him taking on the role of a protector of the people, a role he arguably already is filling through his presidency. Furthermore, by drawing on the previously mentioned binary, he frames himself as being the opposite of the enemy he is fighting,

and thus good and honest and trustworthy. He, furthermore, frames himself as reliable by revealing and contradicting the stories of the 'fake' news. An example of this is when he states that: "And I said, give me a break. Because I know the people. I know who they talked to. There were no nine people" (A l. 40-1). He mentions a story that he knows is false since he knows the people mentioned in it and thus tries to establish himself as a reliable source of knowledge. Thusly, he seeks to utilize a certain level of person authority to legitimize his statements, both from a personal angle but also deriving from his position as President.

While Trump makes a securitization move to convince the public there is a real danger in the 'fake' media, he also brings them a game-plan for what can be done about it. As noted above, the answer to the conflict lies within the First Amendment, which he urges the audience to utilize to criticize the fake news and speak their 'minds freely' (A l. 88), as the Amendment allows them to do. While this could be drawing on his person authority, it may also be drawing on a role model legitimation, as he is urging people to do follow his example and this way legitimizes their hypothetical critique of the media. This is even more likely judging by his framing of himself - when he is made out to be a protector or hero-like persona, this presents an ideal to everyone else and gives them something to strive towards. Thus, by presenting them with his actions, they know what to do to be like him, to stand up to the 'fake' media. This is also fairly connected with moral evaluation, as this is the ethical reason why they should follow his lead, rather than a power-related one. Furthermore, by drawing on a part of the US constitution he is also employing impersonal authority, and insinuating that this is the law and as such, it is the right thing to do.

Trump spends most of his speech drawing upon and adding to untrustworthiness frames in relation to the media, citing that it is because they are deceitful and do not do their job. He uses this distinction to further other the fake media and attempts a secularization move, in which he wishes to convince the audience that they are in danger from the fake news. This means that in a moral legitimation, his actions and words are legitimized, and makes him out to be a hero or protector of the people as he swears to keep fighting for them. Furthermore, he draws on other aspects of the legitimation scheme to further support his case and gain support from his followers, such as through, person, impersonal and role model authority, and this way supports the dichotomous binary that the fake media is bad and he and the people on his side are good. While setting up a discourse that both legitimizes his part of the conflict and enhances it, he at the same time shows a very specific set of assumptions about the role of the press and how they should interact with his administration.

From this, it can be derived that Trump has a certain idea about how the media ought to be and assumptions about how it is they already operate. He mentions that he thinks the media should be honest, which is also apparent from his negative framing of their dishonesty. Furthermore, he states that media does not serve the people, which implies that he is under the assumption that they ought to. The media is supposed to be fair, or at least write fair stories, and not go after people who do not deserve it. His distaste and distrust in the media's sourcing ethics also imply that if they have to write something incriminating, they have to be upfront about where they gathered this information. However, by making a distinction between a right kind of media and a wrong kind, he also implies that he, at least to some extent, does not support diversity within the media. Instead, it seems, he thinks media should follow his sense of fairness, either ideologically or perhaps by behaving as an informer rather than an evaluator. His general emphasis on the people being active thus seems to imply that his model idea about the media's function would be a passive, deliberative one, which places it on the 'herding dog' aspect of the News Compass. This furthermore is much like Carey's ideal, which is a more informative and humble press, that seeks to have a conversation with the public, rather than being an elite function. This is also very similar to Dewey's standpoint that the media should be a teacher to the people and allow them to participate in their democracy. Furthermore, while Trump is critical of the media, from his statements about fairness, it could also be derived that he wishes it would be less negative, echoing the statements by Patterson.

### The Gaggle

Press Secretary Sean Spicer held a press gaggle on the 24th of February 2017, only a few hours after the President's speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference. Although press gaggles are often used in the White House, in this situation, there were several disagreements about how it was executed. Certain media outlets felt persecuted in their exclusion and thus became much larger than this. During the gaggle, Spicer fields questions in relation to this but also in relation to some of the issues that are said to be connected to the gaggle. In this section, his framing of the situation and discourse surrounding his own and the press' role in this will be examined.

Spicer is not as explicit in his framings as the President; however, he does utilize the method in some connections. One of these is in relation to the press, and their use of unnamed sources. Here he states that the Trump administration is willing to deny the allegations brought forth by the reporters on record, and as such the sources should do the same. Furthermore, he puts emphasis on the "serious nature" of the allegations (B l. 82), and that when the accusations are so severe, it should not be

acceptable to refuse to reveal the sources or leaks and put them on record. As such he is insinuating a certain degree of distrust in the press. A further example of this is when he states that: “in many cases, when I push against reporters, I'll say, look, there were four people in that meeting -- here are the four people. Can you confirm any of them? "Well, no they were people who heard from them." So I've literally gone back to people and said, there is a room that occurred with four, five, six people in it, and this didn't happen because I was in the room. And they'll say, yeah, but people who were briefed by those people” (A l. 88-92). Here the discourse he builds is that no matter how he attempts to figure out the reason or source for this information, the reporters refuse to cooperate. They are not only refusing to let him defuse the situation, but they are also engaging in suspicious behavior, as implied from Spicer's general discourse, he thinks that they would only refuse to reveal their sources if they had something to hide. Be it a high profile leak or simply them manufacturing sources, either option is not acceptable. Both options suggest dishonesty, and a certain level of ruthlessness in targeting the administration with the allegations, which are, according to Spicer, unfounded. Spicer furthermore ends by stating that this evasion undermines the credibility of the reporters' work, which thus creates a discourse which follows along the lines of the president's, of how the media is untrustworthy and set on incriminating the administration in any way possible.

While this framing helps the president frame himself as a protector or hero, for Spicer it has a different effect. As press secretary, he instead draws upon a discourse that frames them as being wronged by the media: “As though we did something wrong or nefarious” (B l. 23), “it's insulting” (B l. 171), and “I find a lot of this offensive” (B l. 162). By using the phrase ‘as though’ he is clarifying that they did not do anything wrong, but that the media is treating the administration as if they did. As such, he is making them out to be innocent of doing any wrong in this case, but instead, a victim of the media being the offender. The motive for this offense is presented when he questions whether the media “ever ask[ed] the Obama administration the same question” (B l. 186). By asking a reporter whether they had asked the Obama administration the same kinds of questions during its time, Spicer is not only suggesting that the media has a partisan and thus heavily biased behavior but in extension of this also implies that they are incompetent at their jobs and judgements of the Trump administration. Whereas the press has an inherent bias that makes them unreliable, Spicer emphasizes how the Trump administration has done their utmost to satisfy the press: “We've been pretty open to saying, sure we'll put those statements on [record]” (B l. 71-72) and “we've actually gone above and beyond” (B l. 237). This way, the media is made out to be unreasonable and set on attacking the staff and president, which is further emphasized by Spicer's focus on their own agreeableness and fairness.

However, he also reinforces the president's philosophy on how to deal with an unreliable press: "We're going to aggressively push back. We're not going to sit back and let false narratives, false stories, inaccurate facts get out there" (B l. 220-1), which is 'aggressively.' As such, they will not take 'false news' lying down but are going to counter it, and perhaps even actively try to stop it going by the active implication of the word 'aggressively.' Spicer further emphasizes this philosophy by mentioning that he has tried to push back against anonymous sources and track them down along with his comment that he will check out whether the CBS asked the Obama administration as equally incriminating questions during its run (B l. 204-5). Thereby, they take an aggressive stance on this issue, just like Trump inferred in his promise to keep fighting for the people. Spicer, however, focusses more on the moral violation, than the effect on the people. As such he also relies on moral evaluation, for example by employing words such as "insulting" and "offensive" when describing the media's actions towards the administration. This is done to legitimize his words and actions, and he, thereby, also proceeds to designate the media as unreliable and themselves as victims in this feud, which is why they must retaliate. Spicer much like the president presents a discourse of the media being wrong and the administration is right or even the victims in this scenario.

Overall, Spicer seeks to present himself and the administration as being as supportive of the press as possible and completely transparent in their governance. His discourse is however not fully supported by his actions during this press gaggle. When directly asked why they decided to exclude some media outlets, he dodges the question with a joke (B l. 231). When they ask again, he does not give an extensive reply (B l. 234-9). Furthermore, as in the case of one of the first paragraphs in the appendix (B l. 19-24), he occasionally is borderline incoherent in his responses, which means that it may be hard to follow the discussion. He ends the queries into the exclusion of specific networks and outlets by saying that: "I think we've gone above and beyond when it comes to accessibility and openness and getting folks to -- our officials, our team. And so, respectfully, I disagree with the premise of the question" (B l. 251-3), and thus shuts down the line of questioning. As such there is a subtle difference in the way he presents their actions, and what actually happens in the gaggle. This gap may not be entirely intentional, though there is no way to verify this. However, it does mean that his perception of the government and one of the so-called 'fake media' may be significantly different as a result.

It would seem that, according to Spicer, the news media ought to be more open with their work, and that the conditions for them should be the same as for the government, e.g. in relation to their accountability when making public statements. Furthermore, it can be speculated that he

believes that the media should be less aggressive in their reporting, and maybe even revert into a mouthpiece and not evaluate their information. He does not seem to project any particular notions about what the media ought to be or do, only that he is frustrated with their ethics of how sources are handled, as this allows them to fabricate sources to support their claims - if need be. Additionally, by questioning their partisan bias, he presents the assumption that media should be as objective as possible and treat stories the same way, no matter their personal political beliefs. While this, therefore, is not the same as what President Trump advocates for in his speech earlier that day, the two are not necessarily incompatible. Questioning media bias and stating that they are deliberately lying to people could rather be seen as different points on the same scale, with Spicer's discourse being more compromising than Trump's. Indeed, the circumstances of delivery have also had an impact on the lexicality and framing used in the two texts. The occasions of the texts are very different, as Spicer is answering questions and not presenting a speech in the same way Trump is. Trump is, thus, more able to control the situation. Furthermore, while the president generally represents his administration in his speeches, this is not necessarily always the case with Trump, as seen in previous statements where he directly contradicts statements made by other members of the administration, e.g. in relation to the circumstances of the firing of FBI Director Comey (Borchers 2017). Therefore, there might be a certain level of discrepancy in their representations of the situation, as was illustrated by the publically-oriented focus of Trump and the more morally focused one Spicer employs. Furthermore, Trump is not always consistent in his statements (Lambro 2017), which provides another challenge in getting a full picture of his philosophies. Another aspect that set the texts apart was the audiences. Trump was freer to be directly critical of the media because of his position but also because of his audience, whereas Spicer by default has to have as good relations as possible with the press because of his function as Press Secretary. Whereas Trump was in a situation where he was, in part, motivating the audience and trying to assert his opinion, Spicer was instead in a position of lesser power. He could not simply state something, as Trump could, without it opening up for questions by the listening journalists.

All in all, while they present different degrees of distrust towards the press, both Trump and Spicer maintain this discourse and emphasize it both by employing moral evaluation, but also by attempting a securitization move. They both imply that they want the media to change its ways and that this involves them being less aggressive and evaluative in their news stories. Therefore, they seem to wish more power in the delivery of news, and thus more control of the following public discourse.

### The News Media

Two of the excluded media outlets, CNN and The New York Times, both published articles concerning this episode later the same day. As is to be expected these sources have some different perspectives on what went on than the ones from the Trump administration. Both CNN and The New York Times draw on a schema that frames their exclusion from the press gaggle as a deliberate slight against the media.

In CNN's article, they use words such as "hand-picked" (C l. 3) for those who were "allowed in" (C l. 21) and "was kept out" (C l. 20) and "unfairly exclude" (C l. 33) for those who were "blocked" (C l. 19). These suggest that there was preferential treatment when it was decided which outlets were allowed entrance and which were not. By framing it as selective and deliberative, as opposed to Spicer who framed the deed as magnanimous, as he decided to expand the pool (B l. 211), CNN thus makes it seem as though the particular news media were selected with ulterior motives. By expanding the pool, it became less about who were let in than who were not, and thus seemed more like deliberate exclusions than if it had only been the press pool. The ones that were "allowed in", the lexicalization suggesting some degree of restriction, were "hand-picked" by someone from the administration, while the others were "blocked" from entering the room, and thus actively kept out. The use of "unfairly exclude" also suggests that this decision is not perceived as following the rules and that there was a certain expectation from the media that for some outlets were not met. They, therefore, frame it in terms of fairness and draw on a moral evaluation to justify it. The New York Times also utilizes lexicalization to do this, with words similar to this, such as "barred" (D l. 13) and "exclude" (D l. 85), although not to the same extent as CNN. Furthermore, it can suggest that tradition is being broken, which thus is linked to authority in tradition legitimation - that is, that tradition should be followed, and the fact it is broken is a valid reason to criticize the perpetrator or at the very least a moral evaluation that what was done is not considered 'right'. As mentioned, the contrast between "invited" and "was kept out" also strongly suggests some degree of agency in this decision; that it was made deliberately, and the excluded outlets were not randomly selected. Therefore, those allowed in were judged by some sort of criteria that apparently neither CNN or The New York Times met.

In relation to this discourse, both news media outlets present their suppositions as to why they were among the excluded organizations. The New York Times comments on what these criteria might be, noting that many of the networks that were admitted were "with conservative leanings" (D l. 42-3), which may be the reason some of the more liberal ones were excluded. Thus, contrary to Spicer's



accusation that the media is being partisan in their behavior towards him, The New York Times here claim the opposite; that it is not the media being partisan, but the government. Following this line of argumentation, the government is thus trying to control the information they are releasing and the following discourse by catering to a specific audience that will, supposedly, ask questions more in line with the administration's strategies and the following discourse by barring the outlets they do not agree with ideologically. The CNN argues that this is why they were barred and that it thus is a deliberate attack on them by the Trump administration: "Apparently this is how they retaliate when you report facts they don't like. We'll keep reporting regardless" (C l. 23-4) and The New York Times that representatives of the barred organizations have stated that the "actions were punitive" (D l. 112-3). CNN furthermore employs intertextuality, e.g., as it quotes BuzzFeed editor-in-chief Ben Smith as having said that the Trump administration is "punish[ing] news outlets whose coverage it does not like" (C l. 54). They thus include other media outlets to showcase that it is a general issue, not just for the CNN and The New York Times. The focus on punishment and retaliation mean that these journalists believe that their exclusion is because of an act of theirs, which the White House did not approve of. The action in question is, according to them, their critical reporting of the Trump administration. Thus, they employ a discourse in which the government is punishing the people critiquing it, which then suggests that it is less democratic and unconstitutional than it should be according to the freedom of expression clause in the First Amendment. In this scenario, the administration is the perpetrator and CNN and The New York Times are the victims, specifically barred from entering the meeting because they criticized President Trump. The CNN, furthermore, cements its defiance against this episode by stating that it will keep reporting, likely negative, stories regardless of the Administration's measures to the opposite. While the exact lexicalization in these articles is not always directly chosen by their authors, but are from quotes of other people, the inclusion of them still make an impact on the reader and draws on the overall frame introduced through the other text, and as such are still relevant for the interpretation of the text, as per Baker and Ellece's argument for intertextuality within discourse analysis (2011).

This discourse furthermore paints them as a rebel against a corrupt government, thus creating a binary, much like the President and Spicer did. Accordingly, there seems to be a tendency from both sides to create a division between the good and the bad side in this conflict. Furthermore, this negative discourse about the government implies that it is taking on totalitarian or regime-like qualities, which thus is a threat not only to CNN and The New York Times but to all journalism and to US democracy itself. The New York Times supports this by quoting Marty Baron, the editor of the

Washington Post, who points out that by “restricting the public’s access to information”, the administration is going down an undemocratic path (D l. 55-6). By including this quote, among others, The New York Times also seemingly is trying to support its claims by showing that many others agree, which also has ties to conformity authority legitimation. It goes on to say that Trump is “eager to use the prerogatives of the presidency to undercut those who scrutinize him, dismissing negative stories as lies and confining press access at the White House to a few chosen news organizations considered friendly” (D l. 19-22). These lexicalizations (i.e. Punish, retaliate, undercut) are being used in relation to particular news organizations as being singled out and thus draw upon a political persecution frame for the audience, as it suggests that agencies and people against the government will be punished. The way CNN describes the episode illustrates this persecution-like perspective: “As they walked with a large group of fellow journalists from the White House briefing room toward Spicer's office, an administration official turned them around, informing them CNN wasn't on the list of attendees” (C l. 12-3). The fact that specific journalists, largely those whom the President had pre-standing conflicts with, were sorted from the rest and afterward barred entrance, suggests that they were sorted specifically based on these conflicts and were thus being punished for going against the government. The New York Times follows this discourse by emphasizing the “singling out [of] The Times and CNN” on the President’s Twitter (D l. 17-8). This creates a scenario in which the government specifically singles out the problematic entities from the unproblematic ones and deals with them. The journalists reporting favorably about the administration are allowed access, but those who are critical - or perhaps even just objective - will be excluded and thus, in theory, unable to do their jobs. The mentioning of the reporters being in a big group further signifies this since it means the individuals were actively singled out and separated from the other ‘good’ journalists. Furthermore, this also implies that they were not told in advance that the circumstances had changed, which adds to the framing of a sudden political move to punish an enemy. The fact that this punishment is also extended to leakers, according to The New York Times (D l. 22), also suggests that the administration has something to hide and thus is trying to eliminate those who possess the knowledge or position to reveal this unwanted information. Thus, CNN and The New York Times both imply some level of persecution but also frame the government as possibly corrupt, in the sense that outlets the administration deem ‘good’ get rewarded and the ones deemed ‘bad’, are punished. This hints at increasingly totalitarian methods to circumvent the First Amendment.

In relation to Trump and Spicer calling for an abandonment of unnamed sources, this frame adds a new dimension to the discussion on anonymous sources. The New York Times frames this as

the administration seeking to make it much easier to track the leakers down and thus stopping them, as can be seen in their promise to “hunt for leakers” (D l. 10-1), which The New York Times frame as a form of cover-up. The New York Times also intertextually highlights a statement by Joel Simon, the Committee to Protect Journalists’ executive director, as a way to cement the serious nature of the episode: “It is not the job of political leaders to determine how journalists should conduct their work, and sets a terrible example for the rest of the world [...] The U.S. should be promoting press freedom and access to information” (D l. 71-3). The administration, according to him, is greatly overstepping their boundaries and creating a negative reputation on the international scene, which makes the episode an issue in more than one aspect. The selection and salience of this statement thus further illustrates the framework within the article - it is not, as the administration portrayed, an issue of an unfair press, but an issue of journalistic freedom.

While these news media organizations have solidified that their exclusion from the press gaggle were attacks on them by the Trump administration, and draw upon persecution-like discourse to further stress the injustice of it, they go on to draw on a war framework to emphasize the seriousness of this exclusion by utilizing combat frames. As well as echoing Trump’s “enemy of the people”-statement, the CNN opens their article by utilizing words such as “raising alarm” (C l. 3), “veteran” (C l. 5), “escalated tensions” (C l. 6), and talk of a “fraught relationship” (C l. 6), and thus likens the conflict to a war-like situation. However, they frame this situation not as a mid-battle attack, but as leading up to a war. Their relationship with the government is ‘fraught’ and the tensions are ‘escalating,’ which ‘raises alarm’, meaning that, even though it is not a full-blown conflict, it is not dissimilar to the political landscape before one. Therefore, it is reminiscent of a Cold War discourse, since this was primarily a series of actions and reactions that escalated the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, but never erupted into an actual ‘warm’ war. Many parallels can be drawn between the two situations, since the President and certain parts of the media, while vocally opposing each other, have not yet, so to speak, fired the first shot. The New York Times, on the other hand, uses more active slots from a war framework to send its message: “escalating his attacks” (D l. 5), “barrage” (D l. 16), “attack on the news media” (D l. 74). As such, they draw upon a more immediate sense of danger than the escalation before it, and thusly also creates a different urgency for action for the audience. It is interesting to note that The New York Times furthermore includes much of the Trump administration’s war discourse, such as “enemy of the people” (D l. 79-80), “nation at risk” (D l. 6), “a great danger to our country” (D l. 18), “relentlessly counter” (D l. 34) in their article, which, along with their other citations, thus are clear examples of intertextuality. While

creating a clear division of the two groups, it also heavily recreates and emphasizes the warlike circumstances that Trump uses to frame the conflict, and also provide them with some degree of justification for retaliating to this framing. It also legitimizes their use of the frame and gives examples of how the administration supposedly has ‘attacked’ them so far. This can be argued to be a securitization move from CNN and The New York Times. Whereas the Trump administration framed the media to be a dishonest entity that was trying to incriminate a democratically elected government through defamation, the media portrays the administration to be deceptive and vengeful and not tolerant of any criticisms directed towards it. Similarly, to Trump and Spicer’s framing, these outlets also frame the other party to be a threat to the American people. They imply that the government’s actions towards the media are dangerous and that this is hazardous to the public, both because it is, if not a violation, then an infringement on their interpretation of the First Amendment, and because they are keeping the reporters from covering it equitably and variedly. They thus try to persuade their audience that their liberty is at stake and that the government poses a real danger to it. If the public is sufficiently convinced - both that their freedom is in jeopardy and that the government is the perpetrator in this situation - the media outlets not only have their support to keep up an aggressive journalism, but also the permission to go even further, echoing a perhaps even more aggressive hunting dog function. However, while this is the dominant discourse through the articles, there is also a certain element of derision to their portrayals of the administration. This is, for example, noticeable in CNN’s intertextual use of statements using words such as “antics” (C l. 54) and “mocked and disparaged” (C l. 64) in relation to the President’s actions. As opposed to the securitization framing, this implies a distaste towards his actions. While this works to frame Trump as a mere child acting out, it also implies that that is all his actions are and thus not dangerous after all. These two discourses are at odds within the text, though the former is more prevalent and thus the primary one. The latter seems to be a defamation of the president’s professional demeanor, rather than an attempt at mitigating the previous framing, which also implies that he is not fit for his position. The addition of this could imply that the media outlets do not take him seriously as a figure of power, or be just another retaliation in a mud-racking contest between the two. Nonetheless, this portrayal is likely an attempt at undermining the president and his office.

Since both the US government and media has steadily lost faith from the public for the past few decades, as previously noted (Patterson 2016), this may in reality also be a fight to regain it. Furthermore, in war discourse, there is usually a definite distinction between an ‘us’, who are the good guys, and a ‘them’, who are the bad guys and thus the enemies. By painting the other party as

worse than themselves, the media outlets thus in comparison are made out to be the heroes of this story, much like the Trump administration did for themselves as well. In this scenario, however, the media is less focused on protecting the people directly, and more on the indirect protection of unveiling misuse of power and corruption. The situation is, furthermore, portrayed in the media's favor by stating that this episode was a "breach of relations" (D l. 15) by the administration, which puts the blame solely on them, and implies that the media had no part of the instigation. This is also backed up by the mentioning of other media outlets refusing to attend the gaggle "in protest" (D l. 45-7) of this decision.

Although the Trump and Spicer texts heavily featured the subject of anonymous sources, in the two news pieces any defense or treatment of the issue is notably absent. The CNN article barely mentions it, whereas The New York Times has a small section on it, which nevertheless mostly revolves the Trump administration's statements about it (D l. 8, 75, 83). While it could simply be that the issue had been touched upon at a previous time, the prominence placed on the issue by the administration would seemingly have invited expansion on the issue. By choosing to not engage with the administration's discourse, it could mean that these outlets do not deem the topic to be up for conversation or in need of justifications. Perhaps it is non-negotiable for them to utilize anonymous sources, as it likely is a big part of their daily work and possibly also the condition for some of these sources to even give them a statement. Perhaps it is a discussion that they do not wish to start because they do not have reason to believe they would win. A full consideration of this is outside the scope of this thesis' data, but the one-sided discussion gives the impression of a bull ramming against a wall, and thus portrays the reporters as confident in their case, whereas the Trump administration is undermined. This salience, particularly from the CNN, furthermore also ensures a focus on the case they are pursuing, which is their exclusion from the press gaggle in February and its repercussions.

The media generally frames itself in terms of a playing an important role in American society. By suggesting that their exclusion from the press gaggle "rais[es] alarm among media organizations and First Amendment watchdogs" (C l. 3-4), they imply that their job is important in terms of the constitution. The exclusion from the press gaggle, they argue, was an attempt to stop them from doing their jobs, which to them is reporting on the White House in a fair but vigorous manner. Drawing upon the concept 'watchdog' can further create an association between the media and this function with the reader, thus cementing their importance even further. Furthermore, drawing upon the aforementioned exclusions frame, by blocking them from doing their work, the reporters are not able to report as easily on the government, which finally means that, going by the watchdog model, it is

harder for them to protect US democracy. Both The New York Times and CNN quote other media personas as saying that the public should have as much access to information about what happens in the government as possible (C l. 56-7, D l. 55-6, 51-2). This, furthermore, implies that the media organizations are serving the public, and thus helping democracy. They thus seem to follow the idea that a free press contributes to holding down corruption in governments, by bringing information to the public that assists them in making educated decisions about their part of the democracy.

Overall, they both frame the administration negatively and the exclusion-episode as a violation of both the media's rights secured by the First Amendment, as well as being a part of a bigger conflict between the two. To emphasize the danger of this, they also attempted a securitization move, though with differing degrees of urgency. The two outlets seem to generally support their current function in society, and believe that they should continue reporting fairly and aggressively.

### Conclusive Remarks

While Trump does not directly state how he wants the media to behave, his emphasis on the people and his claim that the press does not currently serve them implies that he thinks they should. Spicer, additionally, expresses that the media is too aggressive in their reporting, which suggests he would want a more passive news media. Thus, placing them in Bro's News Compass, they seem to lean towards the media fulfilling a Herding Dog function, in which its job is to bring about public debate. On the other hand, while the two articles by CNN and The New York Times do not specifically define their assumptions about their role in society, it seems they support an unveiling of power-function, and debatably an aggressive and fair journalism. Throughout, they seem to imply that unveiling abuse of power and corruption is a primary role for them. This is only furthered by the defiant statement that they will keep reporting regardless of what the government does. They at the very least expect that it is all right for them to write critical pieces about anything, including the government, and that they have equal access to the distributed information. As such, they seem to fall into the category of the Hunting Dog in Bro's model, where besides exposing abuse of power, they also confront the perpetrators and try to bring them to justice. Following the assumption that Trump and Spicer would want a Herding Dog function for the media, the Hunting Dog one is much too aggressive and evaluative for them to be comfortable with it. Theirs would mean as little interference as possible, whereas the media's is at the highest level of this. The press' notion of an ideal function thus symbolizes a status quo, whereas the Trump administration's thoughts are reformative. It can thus be

concluded that while this may not be the sole reason why the two sides have clashed, there is at the very least a considerable difference in the way the view the media and its ideal function in a democratic society.

## Discussion

In this section, the findings from the analysis will be discussed in relation to theories of democracy and the role of the press, as was presented in the literature review, in an attempt to determine whether the difference of opinion between the Trump Administration and the selected news outlets may have roots in an ideological disagreement about how they define democracy. This is mostly speculative, taking the narrow data collection into consideration, but will allow for considerations on the implications of the media's role in a democracy.

The above analysis illustrates a point of contention between the actors' frameworks of the interactions between the press and the administration, as well as illustrating several implications for their individual notions of the role of the press. For one, both parties believe that they are in the right and the other is doing something wrong. The press thinks it is doing its job, unveiling abuse of power, whereas the Trump administration believes that the media is being too aggressive and inhibiting democracy by spreading falsities and by serving themselves instead of the people. Thus, any action taken by Trump against the media will seem like an attack by them, and any press investigation of the administration will be perceived as the press actively trying to create mistrust in the government. However, while this has the potential to create both misunderstandings, as well as highlight fundamental differences between the two, it may also imply a deeper-set disagreement is at play. Judging by the analysis, the main issue both the media and Trump has with each other seems to be that each side somehow is said to obstruct democracy. Trump implies that the media is harming democracy by spreading falsehoods and by only serving themselves. The selected media outlets suggest that Trump is harming democracy by blocking them from the press gaggle and thus not letting them get the information the other news media received. While this may be the result of differing views on the press' place in society, could there be more to it than that? Two parties are insinuating that what the other is doing is harmful to democracy, so either they are choosing to ignore their own infractions, or maybe it is because they do not define democracy in the same way?

While Trump draws on populist tendencies and aspects of democracy, the press relies on a more liberal perspective and this can explain their contention between what is harmful to the American democracy. The Press defines itself as a cultural and political elite in its rights and

functions, which is something populism is generally against, while Trump focuses on being a representative of the people and has an apparent distaste for having the media interpret his messages. In many ways, this is relatable to the oppositional views of Lippman and Dewey, with the news media forming an elite that interprets the information before delivering it to the public, and Trump championing that they should just function as a mouthpiece and let people decide for themselves how they want to interpret it. On the other hand, the press instead sees such an approach in an almost authoritarian light, and they put salience on the freedoms Trump is taking away from them by treating them in such a way. They also imply that it is their role to unveil his abuse of power, and as such put themselves in a political function of much import and as a key actor in ensuring public participation. However, the different ideological notions of democracy also lead to a conflict of assumptions in regard to the participational aspect of it. It is the democratic ethos that everyone has the right to participate in democracy. However, there is much debate about whether it is plausible to have everyone participate and thus have a more direct democracy. The liberal definition views a representative solution as the better option, as this lets the public choose who they want to govern them, while these are held accountable by a table of laws and regulations. This again aligns with Lippman's suggestion: that the media should interpret their news before delivering them to the public, so that people would not have to possess too much specific knowledge about it and as such goes against Trump's distaste for an interpretive media. In Lippman's view, the public still directly participates in the democracy, but mainly by choosing others to do the rest of it for them. For a populist, this is however not an ideal scenario. They would want more direct participation by the public, for example by creating more local institutions, which thus can help them participate more directly than simply electing people to do it for them. It is also this direct participation by the citizens that Trump is asking for when he asks his followers to stand up to what he sees as fake news. This active participation would thus have the potential to limit the power of representatives, which would make the democracy more populist and possibly less liberal. However, as long as it still qualifies as an electoral democracy, going by his criteria of 30% competition and 10% participation to make a system democratic, Vanhanen would argue that the country would not become less democratic this way, just different. There are many definitions of democracy, as illustrated in the theory section, and just because the media perhaps defines it in line with Freedom House through a liberal perspective, it does not mean that an electoral definition is any less a democracy, except perhaps for those who define it more ideologically than systemically. The liberal definition is more ideological and less systematically oriented, and thus also includes civil liberties. This means that, even if Trump were to



argue for a populist democracy, it would not be any less democratic than a liberal democracy, only different in its definitions and values. If the administration or the press, therefore, imply that the other is a threat to democracy, it is as such a relative claim and wholly dependent on their definition of what democracy is - e.g. if it is based on freedoms or on the governmental structure.

Another interesting aspect of participation in politics through media is that the media so far has presented the public not only with information about their society but also increasingly with more ways to passively participate in democracy. As technology has evolved, more interactive mediums have appeared, through which people can at least get the feeling that they are participating in their democracy, and thus feel good about themselves. The development of social media, while not being mentioned by Bucy and Gregson (2001) in his paper because of its date of publication, can be argued to be a game changer, as it enables, even more, interactivity than previously. In the context of the conflict between President Trump and certain media outlets, it has the ability, to some degree, to make traditional media obsolete. President Trump is known for his vigorous use of the social media platform Twitter, both in an official capacity (@POTUS) and via his own handle (@realDonaldTrump). This presents him with the ability to communicate directly with his followers and the general public, without having his statements be mediated or interpreted by middle men first, and thus fits a possible populist mindset. In this sense, he thus negates the need of a mouthpiece to communicate his messages, as he fulfills that position himself, and thus takes away one of the most fundamental roles of the traditional media. Thus, the press may feel threatened by his presidency in more than one way, which could add more fuel to their ongoing rather rocky relationship. As such, Trump may be trying to revolutionize the communication between the government and the people, whereas the media is trying to prove its worth to maintain a sort of status quo, and being allowed to keep its freedoms and various functions. On the other hand, the high jacking of the official narrative, while positive for the government in terms of not being misrepresented, could also result in increased censorship from their side and thus end up with less information being delivered to the public. As such, though contested, the press in any of its forms still plays a major role in the political landscape of the United States, as it - just by existing - creates a political balance between the people and the government.

Thus, while there is a very real chance that some of the more fundamental differences between the two parties are the result of ideological difference, there may be other explanations that are just as, if not more, legit, for example, the development of media in an age of digitalization. Nevertheless,

though the function of the media is contested, the special allowances it has been given historically provides it with the unique ability to represent the people and be a tunnel for information between the public and the government. Whether this is what it is actually doing is another topic being heavily debated. However, this does not diminish the symbolical significance of the media's role in a democracy as the fourth estate - an actor who holds those in power accountable and keeps the public informed.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Trump administration and the selected news organizations seem to have different assumptions - both about the role of the press, as well as about how the press gaggle is framed. President Trump mainly frames the 'fake' media as dishonest and an enemy of the people, which both relies on legitimation techniques and securitization strategies to solidify the validity of his statements. His focus on what the 'fake' media does not do, makes it clear what he thinks it ought to do, which is to serve the people, be fair, and be upfront about their sources. Press Secretary Spicer mainly follows the same discourse, but less brazenly. He focuses more on the unfair behavior of the media and, by applying evaluative words, morally delegitimizes it. Spicer does not frame the gaggle as an injustice, but turns it around to suggest that the journalists are being unfair by implying that it is one. Thus, collectively Trump and Spicer seem to propose a less aggressive news media, which serves the people by delivering them fact-checked information without 'over' analyzing it, although it is debatable the degree to which they want fact checking or analyzing. The CNN and The New York Times, on the other hand, both frame the press gaggle as an attack on them for reporting negatively about the Trump administration. They both utilize securitization strategies as well as some legitimation techniques to persuade their readers about the dangerous implications of such a move. They imply that the government has totalitarian tendencies by framing their exclusion from the gaggle as some sort of persecution by the government, which implies a violation of the First Amendment and thus an important part of the American liberal definition of their democracy. They seem to support their current position of reporting fairly and aggressively on the important things in US society, and thus echo the Hunting Dog function from Bro's News Compass, as opposed to the more passive one the Trump administration champions. The latter seems to be leaning more towards a Herding Dog function, which would mean that the news media would remain relatively passive in their reporting and have the primary aim of enabling public discussions, whereas the Hunting Dog is more active in

its reporting and seeks to not only get to the bottom of social and political issues but also hold the perpetrators of them accountable. It is thus very likely that this difference in assumptions has a negative impact on the two parties' relationship. Furthermore, since President Trump shows some populist tendencies in his discourse, it is also plausible that this influences his view on the press, as they traditionally hold a position as a cultural elite, which by principal is something populism is against. Furthermore, the liberal idea of representation may do the same, as the news media argues it should interpret the messages of the government to the people, whereas populism prefers a more direct approach for communicating with the public. Therefore, these ideas about how democracy should work may also have an effect on the conflict between Trump and the news media. On the other hand, Trump's circumvention of traditional media by using Twitter to communicate with his followers, may also prove a more existential threat to the press, which may also have an influence on the conflict. There are thus many different ways of approaching this complex topic and case, only a few of which are utilized within this project. However, whilst it is not possible to conclude anything definite, this has been an interesting example of the rather tumultuous relationship a government can have with the press; something which has only gotten more apparent ever since President Trump's inauguration in January 2017.

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