

4.3. Results

Based on the content analysis data, this study investigated how the mass media in the German-speaking part of Switzerland present political decision-making processes. More precisely, the role of discord and references to procedural inefficiency were investigated. The analysis takes a comparative perspective over institutions, newspaper types, time, television vs. press, and nations. Based on the comparative approach, it was probed whether characteristics of the presentation of political processes are rather stable or invariant as regards time, media types, or nations. Section 4.3.1 describes findings on how the media present political decision-making processes. In Section 4.3.2, the relationship between the variables is investigated in order to derive characteristic patterns of media presentations of political processes.

4.3.1. Characteristics of the Media's Presentations of Political Processes

Because media information on political processes might differ with respect to the institutional affiliation of procedures, this study compares the media's presentation of political decision-making processes within the executive and the legislative branch. Overall, 62 percent of articles in the Swiss newspapers provide information about political decision-making procedures within the executive branch, whereas 38 percent of articles present processes taking place within the legislative branch. A comparison between the different newspaper types showed that the focus on governmental procedures is particularly strong in the Swiss tabloid: 82 percent of articles in the tabloid refer to decision-making procedures in the government. In contrast, 56 percent of articles in the broadsheet and 59 percent of articles in the regional newspaper refer to the executive. In television, 54 percent of all newscasts focus on the government compared to 55 percent of newscasts that present parliamentary processes. In line with this study's definition of political processes as day-to-day discussions of possible solutions to political problems and decision-making within the government, the parliament, or the political administration, the most dominant actor type in the media are elected officials. More precisely, 99 percent of articles about government and 93 percent of articles of articles about parliament included references to political actors, followed by non-elected political actors (20 and 25 percent respectively).

In order to investigate how the Swiss newspapers and television newscasts present political decision-making processes, media attention to several process aspects was analyzed. The findings showed that the presentation of political processes is partly contingent upon whether the articles refer to the executive or the legislative branch. Hence, Table 4.3 presents the percentage of articles referring to different aspects of political decision-making processes and compares press articles about the parliament with press articles about the government. The significance of the differences between the institutions was tested with the Chi-Square difference test. The

findings showed that, on the one hand, news articles about the parliament, more often than articles about the government, refer to political opponents' endeavors to reach an understanding and to find a political compromise, and to the role of collective actions. That does not imply, however, that political processes in the parliament are presented as especially consensus-oriented, because these articles contain more frequent references to power struggles than is the case for articles about the government. Interestingly, there is no difference in the presented inefficiency of decision-making processes: 15 percent of articles about the government and 10 percent of articles about the parliament depict political institutions or actors as incapable of finding solutions to political problems. In general, the data suggests that the news coverage of political processes within the legislative branch is more evaluative than the news coverage of political processes within the executive.

	Government	Parliament	Significance
	percent (n=165)	percent (n=102)	p-value
Compromise	29	40	0.04
Understanding	15	26	0.02
Power struggle	35	48	0.03
Accusation	15	12	0.28
Collective attribution	25	31	0.15
Collective actions	27	41	0.01
Inability	15	10	0.17
Failure	3	2	0.46
Winning and losing	7	9	0.34

Note. Significance of differences was tested based on the Chi-Square difference test. For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

Legend. 29% of press articles on the government and 40% of press articles on political processes within the parliament refer to the role of consensus-seeking endeavors or the search for political compromises ("compromise"). This difference is statistically significant ($p=0.04$).

Table 4.3. Presentation of Political Processes in Articles about Government and Parliament

The comparison between the three *newspaper types* (broadsheet, regional paper and tabloid) showed that references to the role of consensus-seeking endeavors (compromises, mutual understanding) and the collective aspect of decision-making procedures (collective attribution, collective action) are most frequent in the broadsheet and least frequent in the tabloid (see Table 4.4). The presentation of political processes with respect to consensus-seeking endeavors and collectivity in the regional newspaper lies somewhere between the other two newspaper types. The focus

on political discord (power struggles, accusations) is found to be characteristic of all three newspaper types, although in the broadsheet this aspect is less emphasized than in the regional paper and in the tabloid. References to the inefficiency of political decision-making (inability) are found in the regional paper in particular.

	Tabloid		Broadsheet		Regional paper		Significance	
	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl
	percent (n=44)	percent (n=10)	percent (n=74)	percent (n=59)	percent (n=47)	percent (n=33)	p-value	p-value
Compromise	18	0	37	56	28	24	0.10	0.00
Understanding	5	0	24	39	9	9	0.01	0.00
Power struggle	27	70	30	41	51	55	0.03	0.15
Accusation	11	30	8	15	30	0	0.00	0.02
Collective attribution	9	37	21	0	39	27	0.00	0.04
Collective actions	16	10	37	51	21	33	0.03	0.03
Inability	11	0	8	10	28	12	0.01	0.52
Failure	7	10	1	2	2	0	0.22	0.13
Winning and losing	14	10	1	5	9	15	0.03	0.26

Note. Significance of differences was tested based on the Chi-Square difference test. For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

Legend. 18% of articles on the government in the tabloid and 37% of articles on the government in the broadsheet refer to the role of consensus-seeking endeavors or the search for political compromises ("compromise"). This difference is not statistically significant ($p=0.10$).

Table 4.4. Presentation of Political Processes in Different Newspaper Types

The comparison in a *time perspective* showed that references to certain aspects of political processes are characteristic of contemporary media coverage, whereas media references to other aspects appeared to be time-invariant (see Table 4.5). One characteristic of the news coverage during the period 2004/05 is that news articles refer to power struggles and present political actors as blaming each other more frequently than is the case for the previous time periods. Articles that refer to compromise-seeking endeavors, the role of collective actions and collective attributions are, in contrast, significantly less frequent in the press coverage in 2004/05 compared to 1964/56 and 1984/85. In general, this tendency is found for both articles about the government and articles about the parliament.

	1964/65		1984/85		2004/05		Significance	
	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl
	percent (n=28)	percent (n=15)	percent (n=31)	percent (n=22)	percent (n=106)	percent (n=65)	p-value	p-value
Compromise	39	80	32	64	26	23	0.33	0.00
Understanding	18	47	29	50	9	12	0.02	0.00
Power struggle	18	20	26	50	43	54	0.03	0.06
Accusation	4	13	13	27	19	6	0.12	0.03
Collective attribution	39	60	29	32	20	25	0.09	0.03
Collective actions	25	60	52	86	20	28	0.00	0.00
Inability	7	0	16	9	16	12	0.48	0.35
Failure	7	7	7	0	1	2	0.11	0.33
Winning and losing	4	0	7	14	8	9	0.75	0.35

Note. Significance of differences was tested based on the Chi-Square difference test. For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

Legend. 80% of articles on the parliament in 1964/65, 64% of articles on the parliament in 1984/85 and 23% of articles on the parliament in 2004/2005 refer to the role of consensus-seeking endeavors or the search for political compromises ("compromise"). This difference is statistically significant ($p=0.00$).

Table 4.5. Presentation of Political Processes at Different Points in Time

The presentation of political decision-making processes in Swiss *newspapers* was also compared to the presentation on Swiss *television* (see Table 4.6). Because the content analysis of television newscasts was restricted to the period 2004/2005, this analysis is based on articles from the current news coverage in both print and television for reasons of comparability. The results indicate that television newscasts focus more frequently than the press articles about the role of compromises, understanding, and collective actions. More precisely, 59 percent of all newscasts in television contain references to consensus-seeking endeavors, 34 percent refer to the role of understanding the other political side, and 63 percent refer to collective actions, compared to 23 percent, 12 percent, and 26 percent of press articles respectively. However, television news also contains more references to accusations voiced by political actors than the newspapers. Whereas 46 percent of all television newscasts on parliamentary processes referred to political accusations, this was the case in only 6 percent of press articles. Comparing the presentation of decision-making processes in the government, the results also indicate that television news contain more references to compromises (43 percent), understanding (25 percent), and collective actions (41 percent), than the press coverage of the government (26 percent, 9 percent, and 20 percent, respectively). More press articles about processes within the executive branch (16 percent) than television newscasts (4 percent) present political actors or institutions as incapable of solving political problems. Television newscasts presenting decision-making processes within the parliament, how-

ever, refer to the inefficiency of political processes: 10 percent of newscasts about parliamentary processes refer to the inability of political actors or institutions to solve political problems.

	Newspaper		Television		Significance	
	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl	Gov	Parl
	percent (n=106)	percent (n=65)	percent (n=49)	percent (n=41)	p-value	p-value
Compromise	26	23	43	59	0.03	0.00
Understanding	9	12	25	34	0.01	0.01
Power struggle	43	54	33	66	0.17	0.15
Accusation	19	6	22	46	0.37	0.00
Collective attribution	20	25	20	29	0.53	0.38
Collective actions	20	28	41	63	0.01	0.00
Inability	16	12	4	10	0.03	0.47
Failure	1	2	2	7	0.53	0.16
Winning and losing	8	9	4	17	0.34	0.19

Note. Significance of differences was tested based on the Chi-Square difference test. For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

Legend. 26% of articles about the government in the newspapers and 43% of articles about the government in television refer to the role of consensus-seeking endeavors or the search for political compromises ("compromise"). This difference is statistically significant ($p=0.03$).

Table 4.6. Presentation of Political Processes in Television and Press

The comparison of press coverage in *Germany and Switzerland* shows that the characteristics of the presentation of political decision-making processes already described for the Swiss newspapers appear to be representative for the German press as well. In fact, the tendency to emphasize power struggles is even stronger in Germany. More precisely, 45 percent of all articles about the government in Germany (35 percent of articles in Switzerland) refer to power struggles and conflicts. In 21 percent of all articles about the government in Germany (15 percent of articles in Switzerland), political actors blame each other. Looking at the news coverage of the parliament, the differences are even more obvious: 60 percent of all articles about the parliament in Germany (48 percent of articles in Switzerland) refer to power struggles and conflicts. In 27 percent of all articles about the parliament in Germany (12 percent of articles in Switzerland), political actors blame each other.

4.3.2. Identifying Presentation Patterns

A correlation analysis was conducted in order to gain more information about typical patterns of media presentations of political decision-making processes. The results for the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.7. Based on the correlation analysis, two distinct patterns of presenting political processes could be identified. The first pattern can be described as presenting political processes as consensus-oriented endeavors. This pattern encompasses the following variables: collective attribution, collective actions, compromises, and the role of understanding-seeking endeavors. These variables are positively correlated. The pattern, hence, is characterized by a focus on consensus-seeking endeavors and the role of collective actions and interests. The second pattern can be described as presenting political processes as shaped by power struggles. This pattern encompasses the following variables: power struggles, accusation, and winning and losing. The pattern, hence, is characterized by a focus on power struggles and the competitiveness of political processes (references to winners and losers of political decision-making processes). These variables are positively correlated. The two patterns are negatively linked: The items representing the power struggle focus are negatively associated with collective actions, collective attribution and compromise-seeking behavior and vice versa.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Compromise	1								
2 Understanding	.56 **	1							
3 Power struggle	-.17 **	-.12	1						
4 Accusation	.04	-.05	.47 **	1					
5 Collective attribution	.39 **	.33 **	-.31 **	-.17 **	1				
6 Collective actions	.36 **	.45 **	-.17 **	-.11	.28 **	1			
7 Inability	-.06	-.13 *	.24 **	.17 **	-.13 *	-.19 **	1		
8 Failure	.03	-.08	.10	.07	-.05	-.11	.08	1	
9 Winning and losing	-.08	-.10	.23 **	.17 **	-.11	-.04	.10	.13 *	1

Note. Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients (r). For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 (two-sided test of significance)

Table 4.7. Correlation between Variables Measuring the Media's Presentation of Processes

Items of both patterns consensus-orientation and power struggles are linked to references regarding the inefficiency of political processes. The power struggle pattern goes along with references to the inability of finding a solution to political problems (failure). In contrast, aspects of the consensus pattern are negatively related with the aspect of inability. This indicates that when political processes are presented by focusing on the role of consensus, articles are less likely to refer to the inability to solve political problems. In contrast, when political processes are pre-