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**THE “ATTACK ON  
DEMOCRACY” IN THE  
USA: AN ANALYSIS  
OF THE FRONT PAGE  
PRESENTATION OF 21  
NEWSPAPERS IN SEVEN  
COUNTRIES**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes how the January 6, 2021, invasion of the U.S. Capitol was presented on the front pages of newspapers in seven countries. The demonstration, held by President Trump's supporters, aimed to prevent the proclamation of Joe Biden's victory, elected in November 2020. To understand how the event was reported by 21 newspapers, a hybrid methodology of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, which is considered a trend in communication research (FONSECA, 2005) and with methods proposed by Bardin (2002), applied by Sousa (2006) and Rosenthal (2014), is used. We analyze: space dedicated to the event, textual and visual elements. The newsworthiness of the fact is verified through the space dedicated on the front pages, the formatting of headlines with prominent letters, the use of photos that endorse the titles based on political speeches, and the unprecedented nature of the action, which reveals the fragility of democracy in the country.

**Keywords:** attack on democracy, content analysis, front pages, newspapers, journalism.

## INTRODUCTION

The news released by the media since the afternoon of January 6, 2021, portrayed the American "attack on democracy", with the demonstration of voters of the former Republican president, Donald Trump, who invaded the National Congress on that date. The businessman was considered a threat by local opponents, rulers of other nations, and much of the press during his tenure, which began in 2016, which is evidenced by the news stories that echoed his actions and statements as US President. On December 28 (DN, 2021), Trump had called his supporters to a protest in Washington on the date of the proclamation of Democrat Joe Biden's victory by the Congress, scheduled for that January afternoon. After a speech by the president

near the White House, in which he reinforced allegations of fraud in the November elections, the thousands of protesters marched to the Capitol, as the leader had suggested.

But has American democracy started its rupture at this moment? Al Gore (2007) and Noam Chomsky (2009) already denounced the crisis in the country more than a decade ago. Gore (2007) expresses in "The Attack on Reason" that George W. Bush's government, between 2001 and 2009, used the fear generated by the Iraq War to manipulate the population, hide the truth and favor partisans, causing damage to democracy. In the same stream, Chomsky (2009) notifies in "Estados Fracassados" ("Failed States" in english version), that the country has empty democratic promises, in a growing threat to the world population.

The Capitol invasion and its global repercussion reflect the fragility of democracy. Gutmann (1995) explains that the country has always been considered one of the most successful examples for meeting certain criteria of political development, such as universal suffrage, competitive elections, freedoms of speech, press, and association. This does not prevent disharmony from occurring in democracy,

[...] which has its root in the tension between living one's life as one thinks best, and the circumstance that, in order to live one's life as one thinks best, one must share political power with many other people, and therefore it may not be possible for everyone to live every portion of his or her own life as he or she thinks best (GUTMANN, 1995, p.14, our translation).

Thus, the fact that it is the first time in the history of the Capitol that an invasion by a mob made up of Americans, who did not accept the result of the election, has received a great deal of exposure in the global media. This was the fourth incident in the building that opened in 1800, but the previous events

were either solitary acts or acts by groups protesting the US involvement in wars. The image of a democratic nation, seen as a political and economic example in different countries (GUTMANN, 1995), suffering such an attack, exposed by the newspapers, shows how fragile and susceptible governmental systems are to such disruptions.

When thinking about the aptitude of the event to become news, from the Theories of News, the interest, importance, and impact that the event has on people's lives is evident (AMARAL, 1978; MARTINEZ ALBERTOS, 1977; PARADA, 2000). From a social-semiotic perspective, Alsina (1996, p.185, our translation) explains that the "news is a social representation of daily reality that is institutionally produced and manifests itself in the construction of a possible world." Thus, subjectively, it can be considered a discursive manifestation of an event, which allows its permanence in history through the presentation at the moment the fact occurs and through addressing its repercussion.

Regarding the subjectivity theme, it is also necessary to understand Darnton's approach (1995, p.92, our translation), which states that "news writing is strongly influenced by stereotypes and conceptions of what the story should be." Thus, the content chosen will be based "much more on the need for approval from one's own social group than on the needs of the typical receiver, the reader or listener of that medium" (WEBER, 2001, p.18, our translation). This understanding can also be observed in Herraiz (1966, p.19, our translation) when he notes that "the news is what journalists believe interests readers, therefore, the news is what interests journalists."

In addition to this reference, the social role of the journalist is observed in producing meaning, projecting and legitimizing the phenomena. Berger (1997, p.273) explains that

this condition comes not only from mediation, from being between the news and society or intermediating voices, but from selecting, emphasizing, interfering through words and images in the symbolic construction of events. A similar view is shared by Hall *et al.* (1993), who considers that there is a need for journalists, as re-presenters of events, to seek facts that can be identified and inserted in a given society, which makes it possible to make a divided reality of the world intelligible.

If journalists did not - even routinely - have such cultural 'maps' of the social world at their disposal, they could not 'make sense' of the unusual, unexpected and unpredictable events that constitute the basic content of what is 'newsworthy'. Things are newsworthy because they represent the fickleness, unpredictability, and conflicting nature of the world. But such events should not be allowed to remain in this limbo of 'disorder' - they should be brought to the horizons of the 'significant'. (HALL *et al.*, 1993, p.224, our translation)

Finally, we must consider Traquina's approach (1993, p.167) that also defends this function of the journalist as an active participant in the process of construction of reality. In this way, the news could not be seen as a reproduction of the event. From the journalist's production point of view, while the event creates the news, the news also creates the event.

Based on this theoretical reflection, we develop an analysis of how a group of major newspapers from Brazil, Spain, USA, France, Italy, Portugal and the UK presented the invasion of the Capitol on their front pages of the January 7 edition. The main objective of this article is to present the emphasis given to the fact in the front pages of these newspapers and interpret how meaning is produced through their headlines, titles and photos. As specific objectives, the space dedicated to the event in detriment of other themes will be

quantitatively identified; the narratives used in the titles to characterize the episode will be qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed; and the way the images contribute to the presentation of the news will be verified.

Such objectives lead to some hypotheses. One can observe that actions like this, which lead to instability in the country, affect other nations directly and deserve to be highlighted in the international media. Another hypothesis concerns the need for harmony between the language and photos used to present the gravity of the event. And finally, it is understood that, with common assumptions of newsworthiness in the journalistic community and pointed out by the authors presented, there is a similarity in the approach attributed to the fact. Thus, we seek to answer the research questions that arise with the observation of the listed newspapers. How was the fact presented on the cover of the analyzed newspapers? What is the hierarchy of the news compared to other facts? What relevance was given to the event? How do the textual and visual components used on the covers project, produce meaning and legitimize the act?

In order to meet these objectives and answer the research questions, content analysis is used. Initially, the relevance of the fact is observed quantitatively through the space dedicated to the news, either as a highlight or as secondary content, in comparison to the other events of the day. The approach used in the headlines, titles, supporting texts, and photos has a qualitative perspective, as explained in detail later.

## **PRE-EVENT SCENARIO**

The US presidential elections took place on November 3, 2020. The Republican Party had President Donald Trump as a candidate for reelection, having as a competitor, for the Democratic Party, Joe Biden, former vice president of the USA in Barack Obama's

administration, between the years 2009 and 2017. Four days after the vote, the Democrat's victory was announced (PÚBLICO, 2020). A legal battle began with the then president, who never acknowledged his opponent's victory and used social media to publicize his opinions, as he did with his other positions throughout his term. On December 14, the delegates representing the states in the Electoral College confirmed the result (FOLHA, 2021). And on December 29, Trump made a social media appeal to his supporters to head to Washington on certification day to pressure lawmakers to reverse his defeat in the election polls (DN, 2021).

What actually happened on January 6? Around 1 pm, the president held a rally near the White House where he encouraged his supporters to march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. After his speech ended, Trump returned to the executive headquarters as thousands of protesters made their way to the Congress. As CNN (2021) reported, suspicious packages, which could be bombs, were found in the section where the Library of Congress is located, and police were alerted to evacuate the building.

Around 2:30 pm, the protesters began the invasion after climbing the Capitol wall and breaking windows. At this point, reinforced security was requested and the removal of the legislators gathered in the plenary began. The offices, Senate and other parts of the building were accessed, and windows, doors and documents were damaged. The mayor of Washington decreed a curfew in the city from 6 pm.

Between 3pm and 3:30pm, the president used social media to ask protesters to respect the law. The message was forwarded by his daughter, who called the supporters American Patriots. During this same period, a woman was shot dead by police as she tried to storm the plenary with other people. Only an hour

after the invasion began, the Senate began to be evacuated and the National Guard moved in to assist in the police action.

Biden spoke at 4:15 p.m. to request that the president ask supporters to leave the premises. He declared that “right now, our democracy is under unprecedented assault, unlike anything we have seen in modern times, an assault on the citadel of liberty: the Capitol itself” (CNN, 2021). Two minutes later a video was shown on social media where Trump asked protesters to go home. In the aftermath, the president’s Twitter account was blocked.

Four hours after the invasion, the building was deemed safe by the police. The results certification session was resumed by lawmakers on the same Thursday night, proclaiming Biden’s victory (SAPO, 2021b). Five people died (PÚBLICO, 2021a).

The account of these facts published by the various means of communication helps to understand how the news was presented textually and visually on the front pages of the following day’s newspapers. In addition, it is important to explain the global moment in which the action occurred. Ten months earlier, the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared a pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, specifically on March 11, 2020 (KAMPS & HOFFMANN, 2021, pp.407-418). The coronavirus initially broke out in China in November 2019, spreading to the rest of the world’s nations. By January 30, 2021, as a result of the disease, more than 101 million people had been infected in 223 countries or territories and the death toll reached the sum of 2.2 million (WHO, 2021). Thus, on the date on which the analyzed event occurred, data about the effects of the pandemic were also presented on the front pages of the newspapers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The option for content analysis of

newspaper front pages allows us to verify the prominence received by the event in the selected newspapers and the meaning produced through the space dedicated to the topic and the texts and images used. This methodology, as explained by Fonseca Jr (2005, pp.286-289), results from the contribution of several authors. The elementary text by Berelson and Lazarsfeld dates from 1948, and several revisions have been made over the following decades.

We highlight Bardin’s approach (2002, p.31, our translation), which states:

Content analysis is a set of techniques for analyzing communications.

It is not a single instrument, but a range of tools; or, more accurately, it would be a single instrument, but marked by a great disparity of forms and adaptable to a very wide field of application: communications.

The researcher starts from the different ways and objects of analysis to define the procedures that will be used, initially systematizing the set to be researched, classifying and describing it in an analytical way, which enables a “deep reading” of these elements (BARDIN, 2002, our translation).

In this article, the hybrid technique of quantitative and qualitative analysis is used, considering the trend in studies related to communication (FONSECA JR, 2005). Thus, after the choice of the analyzed universe and the definition of objectives and hypotheses, the following methods (SOUSA, 2006) are adopted: the quantification of the space destined to the theme on the newspaper covers in detriment of other news; the framing determined for the event through the meaning presented in the headlines and titles; the use of interpretations of certain protagonists of the action in the journalistic discourse; the association of images to stress the importance of the text.

The state of the question presented in the introduction about the problematic

regarding North American democracy, the theoretical framework with the approach of the aptitude for the fact to become news, and the context in which it is inserted allow us to relate the discourse to the reality that it seeks to evidence. As such, the analysis occurs with established criteria, subject to validation of the results by other researchers. From an initial fragmented presentation of each selected document, the framings, crossings, and diversities of meanings proposed by the media are identified (ROSENTHAL, 2014).

As objects of study, we chose the covers of newspapers that, in addition to their status and history in the countries, are available in digital media, either through specific websites that reproduce their front pages daily (SAPO, 2021a; DIRE, 2021) or the pages of the news companies themselves. Table 1 specifies the newspapers analyzed, with daily and printed circulation. Thus, documents of the same nature and genre obtained on the same date are presented. Newspapers from Brazil, Spain, USA, France, Italy, Portugal and the UK were chosen due to the use of languages that allow the interpretation by the author and the representativeness of these nations.

The space used for the fact on the front pages in comparison to the other news, the graphic configuration adopted, and the use of colors and capital letters in the titles are presented in the first topic of the discussion,

aiming to verify if there was emphasis on the importance of the headlines. In order to achieve the percentage, we opted for the measurement of pixels, transformed into percentage, due to the fact that this is digital material, obtained from the mentioned websites, and due to the impossibility of counting centimeters, as would be the case in printed editions. It is understood that there is an analogy in the results, in order to validate the examination.

From the choice of the most used terms for the presentation of the fact (such as invasion) we seek, in the second part of the discussion, to understand the framing determined for the event through the meaning observed in the headlines and titles. The use of interpretations of the protagonists of the action in the journalistic discourse is also analyzed.

The role of the images is analyzed in a third moment in order to understand their purpose as one more element to inform and/or emphasize the meaning of the text or vice-versa. The use of similar or identical pictures in different newspapers is also analyzed.

It is worth mentioning that this research does not aim to analyze the sources used by the newspapers in the production of news. Although it is a tempting theme for investigation, at this point, we seek to evaluate the content cited in the methodology.

Countries	Newspapers
Brazil	O Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo
Spain	El País, La Razón, La Vanguardia
USA	The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Washington Times
France	Le Figaro, Le Monde, Libération
Italy	Corriere Della Sera, La Repubblica, La Stampa
Portugal	Diário de Notícias, Jornal de Notícias, Público
UK	Daily Mail, The Guardian, Metro

Figure 1 - Chart of Newspapers Analyzed

Source - Author (2021)

## ANALYZED ELEMENTS

Before starting the discussion of the data, the table below shows how the headlines and decks were written. It is possible to see that there are some cases, where two or more headlines are displayed on the covers, where we opted not to include the other topics, as they are not the object of analysis. In order to ensure the reproduction of the emphases through fonts and colors, the original formatting applied by the newspapers was maintained in the list of headlines.

The use of a kicker is observed, as in the cases of O Globo, El País, La Vanguardia and Corriere della Sera. The headline followed by a subheading is also observed, as, for example, in North American newspapers. The conjunction of these elements allows for the contextualization of the information, as well as for making the headline more attractive (SOUSA, 2005). The kickers used in European newspapers have this first function of contextualization, contrary to the one in O Globo, which intends to make the information more relevant. On the other hand, the headlines followed by subheadings cover details that would be impossible with short headlines, as is the case in both French newspapers Libération and Le Figaro and in the British Daily Mail. The use of quotation marks can also be identified in five newspapers, which does not prevent other titles from having opinions or statements of characters involved in the action as a reference for their writing.

Below is the presentation of the newspaper covers.

Newspapers	Headlines
O Estado de São Paulo	<b>ATAQUE À DEMOCRACIA</b> Insuflados por Trump, extremistas invadem Congresso americano e interrompem sessão da confirmação da eleição de Joe Biden Uma mulher, baleada dentro da sede do legislativo, morre Ao cobrar Trump, Biden fala em insurreição
Folha de São Paulo	<b>Insuflada por Trump, multidão invade e vandaliza Congresso</b> Democracia dos EUA sofre ataque inédito; sessão para ratificar vitória de Biden é suspensa, e mulher morre baleada
O Globo	<b>À BEIRA DO ABISMO</b> <b>Trump incita ataque à democracia, e turba invade Congresso dos EUA</b> Em rede nacional, Biden cita agressão 'sem precedentes' e exige fim do cerco
El País	<b>ASALTO AL CAPITOLIO DE ESTADOS UNIDOS</b> <b>Trump instiga una revuelta contra la confirmación de Biden</b> Partidarios del presidente irrumpen en las Cámaras y llegan a las salas del pleno Pence, que fue evacuado, se niega a obstruir la ratificación del ganador Joe Biden: "Esto no es una protesta; es una insurrección" El triunfo en Georgia asegura a los demócratas el control del Senado
La Razón	<b>Insurrección en EE.UU</b> Los seguidores de Trump asaltan el Capitolio para boicotear la nominación de Biden El presidente podría ser cesado por incitar los disturbios Una mujer muere por una herida de bala en los enfrentamientos <b>El Partido Demócrata logra el control del Senado</b> Los congresistas reanudaron la sesión horas después
La Vanguardia	<b>INTENTO DE GOLPE DE MANO EN EE.UU</b> <b>Las huestes de Trump asaltan el Capitolio cuando votaba a Biden</b> Una mujer muerta y varios tras la irrupción en el interior de las cámaras Biden habla de ataques sin precedentes a la democracia y Trump sigue mentiendo Dos escaños ganados en Georgia dejan el Senado en manos de los demócratas
The New York Times	<b>TRUMP INCITES MOB RAMPAGE IN CAPITOL FORCES EVACUATIONS; IT'S 'PART OF HIS LEGACY,' A REPUBLICAN SAYS</b>
The Washington Post	<b>Trump Mob Storms Capitol</b> PRESIDENT INCITES CROWD TO ACTS OF INSURRECTION, VIOLENCE. DEMOCRATS WIN GA. RUNOFFS - AND CONTROL OF U.S. SENATE.
The Washington Times	<b>ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY</b> <b>Violent demonstrators storm Capitol, bring Congress to standstill</b>
Le Figaro	<b>Démocratie fracturée</b>
Le Monde	Não aborda a notícia
Libération	<b>TRUMP</b> <b>La stratégie du chaos</b>
Corriere Della Sera	<b>VIOLENZA E CHOC A WASHINGTON</b> <b>Furia di Trump, assalto al Congresso</b>
La Repubblica	<b>ASSALTO AL CONGRESSO</b> <b>USA, un giorni da golpe</b> Biden: "È una insurrezione contro la democrazia, va fermata ora"
La Stampa	<b>C'era una volta l'America</b>
Diário de Notícias	Não aborda a notícia
Jornal de Notícias	<b>ASSALTO AO CAPITÓLIO</b> Apoiadores de Trump armados provocam caos Mulher morre baleada durante os tumultos Democratas voltam a liderar o Senado



Público	Invasão do Congresso EUA assistiram a um “assalto sem precedentes” à sua democracia
Daily Mail	Trump’s hate mob storms the Capitol After mail pressure on chaotic rollout...
The Guardian	Chaos as pro-Trump mob storms US Capitol
Metro	ANARCHY IN THE US

Figure 2 - Chart of themes presented on the front pages of newspapers  
Source - Author based on the covers of the analyzed newspapers (2021)



Figure 3 - Newspapers from Brazil  
Source - VerCapas (2021).



Figure 4 - Newspapers from Spain  
Source - Portada (2021)



Figure 5 - Newspapers from the USA

Source - THE NEW YORK TIMES (2021); THE WASHINGTON POST (2021); THE WASHINGTON TIMES ( 2021)



Figure 6 - Newspapers from France

Source - SAPO (2021c)



Figure 7 - Newspapers from Italy  
Source - DIRE (2021)



Figure 8 - Newspapers from Portugal  
Source - SAPO (2021a)



Figura 9 - Newspapers from the UK  
 Source - BuzzFeedNews.com (2021)

## LOCATION OF HEADLINES AND SPACE DEDICATED TO THE TOPIC

All newspapers that feature the fact, a total of 19 out of the 21 listed, show it as a headline and use the top center of their front pages to display images of the invasion. The US publications, naturally, devote almost the entire front page space to the occupation and the elections in the country, as does the English edition of Metro. In the other newspapers, the headline usually takes up between 80% and

40% of the front page, as will be shown.

Only the Portuguese *Diário de Notícias* and the French *Le Monde* do not register the action on their front pages. While the former emphasizes the headline *SNS Perto da Linha Vermelha*, where it addresses how hospitals in Portugal were at their capacity limit due to the number of people infected with Covid, the race against the spread of the variant of the virus occupied the spotlight in *Le Monde*, *Covid: course contre la propagation du variant*. The newspaper further highlighted the Democrats'

expectation and hope with the election of two of the party's senators in the US state of Georgia. Other secondary headlines were used, but unrelated to the topic. In both there was emphasis on the invasion of the Capitol on January 8, with highlighted photos, which allows us to raise the hypothesis that their editions were already finished at the time of the fact, keeping in mind that there is a difference of five more hours in the official time in Portugal and six hours in the case of France.

Regarding the space used for the presentation of the protest, all newspapers display text and images. In the cases of *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *Público*, and *Daily Mail*, one can see the use of mainly photos, with a small headline. In the French *Le Figaro*, the headline is *TRUMP La stratégie du chaos*, where the president's name is written in capital letters and is given even greater prominence because it is printed in red. The use of emphasis is also observed in *Corriere Della Sera* with the use of red and capital letters in *VIOLENZA E CHOC A WASHINGTON - Furia di Trump, assalto al Congresso*. *El País* features it in blue in *ASALTO AL CAPITOLIO DE ESTADOS UNIDOS - Trump instiga una revuelta contra la confirmación de Biden*. *Público* presents *Invasion of Congress* in orange lettering and follows it with the rest of the sentence, *Estados Unidos assistiram a um 'assalto sem precedentes' à sua democracia*, in white, in order to contrast with the photo illustrating the headline. Although color is used on five of the 21 front pages, only four do not use all capital letters to emphasize headlines: *Folha de São Paulo*, *La Razón*, *Público*, and *The Guardian*.

As Sousa (2006, p.371, our translation) puts it, both the use of capital letters and differentiated color in titles are "ways to increase or decrease the importance of a story or parts of it in a newspaper". In addition to

attracting the reader's interest, the content is classified based on the proposed layout. The location at the top of the page and its centrality makes it "acquire symbolic weight" (SOUSA, 2006, p.371, our translation), especially when on the front page, where the most important topics covered by that edition are presented. One can also observe the use of a large number of pictures in America. Newspapers in European countries, in general, opted for the use of a single photo to occupy a large space on the covers and to highlight the severity of the fact.

Also in terms of space occupied, it can be observed that only four newspapers did not use at least 50% of their covers for the topic. The newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Corriere della Sera* place the matter as central but highlight several topics around the Capitol photos. *Jornal de Notícias* features a prominent photo, followed by three subheadings, but also tries to focus on Covid-related issues in Portugal. While the *Daily Mail* only does not reach such a percentage because part of the front page has advertising. Figure 8 shows the relevance given to the topic in each newspaper.

Among the newspapers analyzed, only five of the 19 that highlighted the invasion used other headlines with such emphasis. *La Vanguardia* displays, in more than 20% of the remaining 40% of its cover space, the headline *El Rey insta los militares a cumplir con su deber constitucional* illustrated with a photo of King Felipe VI. In the case of the French *Libération*, half of the remaining 50% is occupied by the headline *HONG KONG: LA GRANDE PURGE EN AVANT*, with the name of the territory now incorporated into China highlighted in red and all words capitalized.

In Portugal, both *Público* and *Jornal de Notícias* also address the pandemic in their headlines. It was a time of concern with the increase in the number of Covid-19 infections, which pointed to a record number

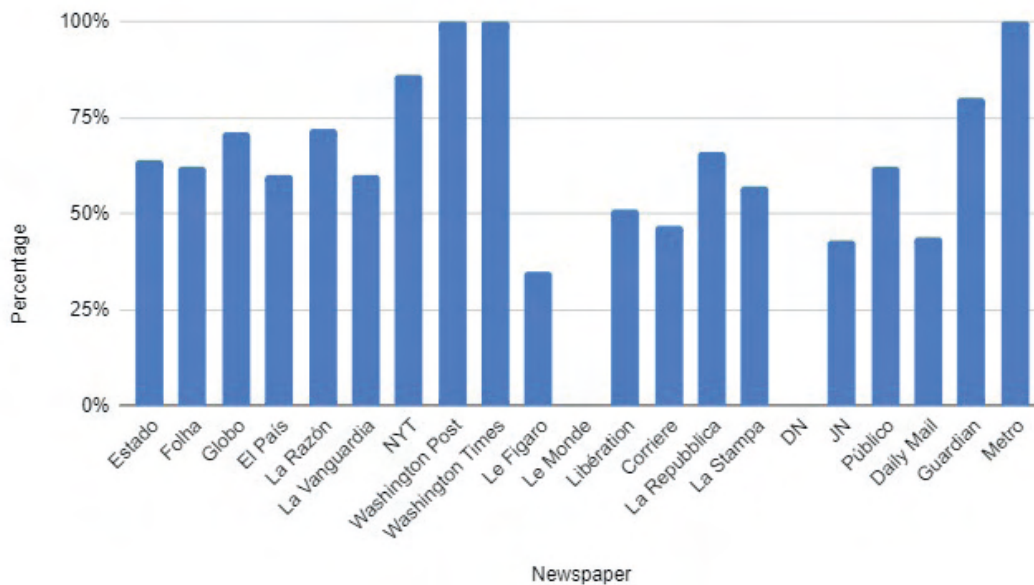


Figure 10 - Percentage of space taken up by the topic on the front pages of the newspapers

Source - Author (2021)

of new cases at the time and a possibility of the adoption of more restrictive measures in the state of emergency (RTP, 2021). Jornal de Notícias uses at least 30% of the front page with the headline *Milhares de cirurgias bloqueadas pela pandemia*. It also inserts a box in red with colored letters and text markings to inform data of those infected, the possibility of closing schools, and the pressure suffered by the health system. Público displays the headline *Especialistas admitem mais restrições e um novo confinamento*, which occupies the entire width of the page, at approximately 20% of the rest of the cover. It reports on how the effects of Christmas explain the rise in the number of cases, the renewal of the state of emergency in the country, and the limit on admissions to hospitals in Lisbon.

The same pandemic theme takes up 40% of the Daily Mail's front page. The headline *AT LAST! A TURBO BOOSTER FOR JABS* mentions the start of vaccination in the UK. Capital letters take up half this space, 20%, in a newspaper article that is credited as exclusive. It should be added that this use of large fonts

can be observed in the English publications and in the French Libération in the analysis conducted.

Still on the global health issue, it is observed that, with the exception of The Washington Post, The Washington Times, Libération, and Metro, the other 17 have details of the epidemic on their front pages. Five of them devote major space to their approach on the pandemic, while smaller headlines can be seen in another 12. Among the topics on the Covid pandemic, the beginning of worldwide vaccination, the situation of hospitals and necessary equipment, the outbreak of new variants of the virus, and the restrictive measures to prevent the spread of the disease are addressed.

The pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong that led to the arrest of demonstrators by the Chinese police also earned attention in four newspapers: Folha de São Paulo, Le Monde, Libération with at least 30% of the cover, and The New York Times. With the exception of the two newspapers that have only the analyzed topic on their front page, the two

from Washington and the British Metro, and the ones that share it only with information about the pandemic, all the other newspapers cover local news in a secondary place.

## ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL ELEMENTS

Observing the textual elements of the newspapers in a quantitative way, it is possible to verify a repetition of certain expressions: invasion (11 times), democracy (9 times), assault and attack (6 times each), insurrection and chaos (5 times each), incitement (4 times). The same happens with the names of the two protagonists of the election: Biden (11 times) and Trump (18 times).

Initially, it is important to identify the meanings and senses of these words in the headlines. The verb to invade, synonymous with to assault, notoriously identifies a hostile entry into a certain place, being associated with the National Congress or the Capitol. When referring to democracy, the newspapers list the words attack and assault, in the sense of aggression that aims to promote harm to society and an offensive action to the nation. The term insurrection is presented as opposition to order, a revolt against the democratic state of the United States. Finally, incitement defines Trump's actions when encouraging chaos and anarchy from his supporters.

The journalistic reading of the fact presented in the printed press, as stated by Hall *et al.* (1993), allows a re-presentation of the events and makes intelligible the so-called chaos, the lack of control of the presented situation. However, there are matters of context that are essential to the understanding of how a quick interpretation and systematization of the information on the newspaper covers was carried out.

The sense of the events, observed in the analysis of the textual content of the newspaper headlines, is based on the speeches of the

participants involved in the fact. The terms that are repeated in the headlines appear, in the afternoon and evening of January 6, in speeches by former presidents and the president-elect of the USA, congressmen and political leaders from other countries.

Among the former presidents, Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama used the expressions inflame, stimulate, and incite supporters and the disturbances that occurred. This understanding is also held by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel, where the president "did nothing to de-escalate that whole situation ... Words of provocation are completely wrong." In terms of the assault or attack on democracy, Republican Congressman Adam Kinzinger's statement to describe the protests as "an attempted coup" stands out. Former Democrat President Bill Clinton referred to the act as an "unprecedented assault" on the Congress, considering that for four years a "match was lit by Donald Trump." And, returning to Republican George W. Bush, he characterized the images of the action as "scenes of chaos" and an insurrection.

The statement released on Twitter, over eight minutes long, by President-elect Joe Biden was considered to have the greatest influence on the analyzed print media headlines. Among the various statements (our translation), the following stand out:

- "the words of a President matter. [They] can inspire. At their worst, they can incite. [...] Therefore, I call on President Trump to go on national television now to [...] demand an end to this siege." (VEJA, 2021, our translation)
- "[...] is not protest, it's insurrection" (VEJA, 2021, our translation)
- "it's a disorder. It's chaos. [...] And it must end" (PÚBLICO, 2021b, our translation)
- "under unprecedented assault [democracy]" (PÚBLICO, 2021b, our translation)

translation)

- “[on the invasion of the Capitol] an assault on democracy, on the people’s representatives and on the rule of law, unlike anything we’ve seen in modern times” (CNN, 2021).

At least 16 headlines present senses similar to the speeches of Biden and the other mentioned politicians. Biden is also mentioned eleven times on the front page of the newspapers.

In contrast, Trump is mentioned 18 times, but his speech in an indirect or literal way is presented only in two newspapers. The Spanish El País uses the speech made by the president indirectly with the sentence *Trump instiga una revuelta contra la confirmación de Biden*, in a call to his supporters initiated when the votes were counted in December and reaffirmed throughout the speech that took place before the demonstration in Washington. In the case of The Guardian, it says *President belatedly calls for peace but tells followers ‘we love you’*, referring to a post on Twitter after the beginning of the violence in

the Capitol.

Table 3 shows the repetition of the terms used in the political speeches to characterize the action, as well as the mentions of opponents Biden and Trump, in the respective newspapers.

The analysis of terms referenced by the former US presidents and Biden shows the use, in most of the newspapers analyzed, of expressions that refer to the violence of the action: incite, instigate, assault and/or invade. Meanwhile, the characterization of the episode as chaotic and anarchic occurs in the U.S. and U.K. newspapers, as well as in the French Libération. The French newspapers, with the exception of Le Monde, use prominent photos; short titles, not linked to the speeches made by the mentioned politicians; and without detailing the fact on their front pages, presenting only the headlines: *Démocratie Fracturée* (Le Figaro) and *Trump: la stratégie du chaos* (Libération). The Italian La Stampa also presents a differentiated headline, *C’era una volta l’America*, which refers to the 1984 movie directed by Sergio Leone, which tells

Words	Newspapers
Incite/Instigate	Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, El País, La Razón, The New York Times, The Washington Post
Attack/Assault	Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, El País, La Vanguardia, The Washington Times, Corriere Della Sera, La Repubblica, Jornal de Notícias, Público
Invade	Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, El País, La Vanguardia, The Washington Post, Daily Mail, The Guardian
Insurrection	Estado de São Paulo, El País, La Razón, The Washington Post, La Repubblica
Chaos/Anarchy	The New York Times, The Washington Post, Libération, La Repubblica, Jornal de Notícias, Daily Mail, The Guardian, Metro
Biden	Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, El País, La Razón, La Vanguardia, The New York Times, La Repubblica, La Stampa
Trump	Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, El País, La Razón, La Vanguardia, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Washington Times, Libération, Corriere Della Sera, La Stampa, Jornal de Notícias, Daily Mail, The Guardian, Metro

Figure 2 - Chart: Most Used Terms X Headlines of the Newspapers Analyzed

Source - Author (2021)



the story of the crimes committed by young people linked to organized groups in New York. The newspaper uses the speeches of the various political actors previously placed in secondary texts.

Still on the headlines, subheadings and side texts, the use of quotation marks is observed for the literal quotations of Joe Biden's statement. In *O Globo*, *Em rede nacional*, *Biden cita agressão 'sem precedentes' e exige fim do cerco* is highlighted. The expression "unprecedented" also appears in *Público*. This emphasis occurs in the placement of the president-elect for the unparalleled aggression against the Congress. In *El País*, there is the full statement "*Esto no es una protesta; es una insurrección*". Still on insurrection, *La Repubblica* also brings Biden's speech: "*È una insurrezione contro la democrazia, va fermata ora*".

In *The New York Times*, the headline emphasizes the speech of a congressman *TRUMP INCITES MOB: RAMPAGE IN CAPITOL FORCES EVACUATIONS; IT'S 'PART OF HIS LEGACY,' A REPUBLICAN SAYS*; while in the subheading the fear reported by members of the Congress is presented *House Was Breached, a Fear 'We'd Have to Fight' to Get Out*. *The Guardian* picks Trump's quote to his followers in the message sent on social media after the start of the protest on the Capitol, where he apparently aimed to call for the end of violence: *President belatedly calls for peace but tells followers 'we love you'*.

Thus, the newspapers organize the alleged chaos of the Capitol invasion and present its meaning through the different speeches of the political protagonists involved in the fact, therefore intensifying and dramatizing it beyond the action, based on political and ideological positions. Using this positioning, a "meaningful horizon" is presented, removing it from the "limbo of 'disorder'" (HALL *et al.*,

1993, p.224, our translation). It can also be seen in the speeches that not only are politics and political adversities highlighted, but also, and mainly, the fragility that the democracy of the United States of America was going through at that moment.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEXT**

The photos used by the newspapers refer to the headlines, confirming the statement expressed in the textual elements. Ten out of 19 newspapers that reported on the theme, printed the photo in which Capitol guards blocked the door and pointed their guns at the protesters who tried to invade the plenary. It was at this location, in the hallway outside the door, that a woman was shot and killed by the police.

The images were taken by photojournalists associated with the news agencies France Press, Reuters, Associated Press and the Washington Post newspaper, who were in the upper gallery of the House of Representatives on both sides during the invasion. *Metro* (headline *ANARCHY IN THE US*) and *Público* (headline *Invasão do Congresso: EUA assistiram a um "assalto sem precedentes" à sua democracia*) highlight the photo in at least 60% of their front page, besides being the only image on the front page of *La Repubblica* (headline *USA, un giorni da golpe*). In *Estado de São Paulo*, this prominence can also be observed. The three Brazilian newspapers analyzed opted for this image, with the headlines *Ataque à Democracia* (*Estado*), *Insuflada por Trump, multidão invade e vandaliza Congresso* (*Folha*) and *À Beira do Abismo: Trump incita ataque à democracia, e turba invade Congresso dos EUA* (*Globo*), with the first two making explicit, in their subheadings and supporting lines, the death of the demonstrator on the spot.

This image is also seen in the Spanish *El*

Pais (headline *ASALTO AL CAPITOLIO DE ESTADOS UNIDOS: Trump instiga una revuelta contra la confirmación de Biden*); and in the three newspapers in the United States (*TRUMP INCITES MOB: RAMPAGE IN CAPITOL FORCES EVACUATIONS; IT'S 'PART OF HIS LEGACY,' A REPUBLICAN SAYS* - The New York Times; *Trump Mob Storms Capitol: President incites crowds to acts of insurrection, violence* - The Washington Post; *Assault on Democracy: Violent protesters storm Capitol, paralyze Congress* - The Washington Times).

In these cases, the texts refer to the violence of the action and the images are selected in order to assist in the symbolic construction of the events (BERGER, 1997) and make them intelligible (HALL *et al.*, 1993).

The second most observed scene on the newspaper covers shows the protesters outside the Capitol. Folha de São Paulo displayed a prominent photo of the front of the building, where protests were being held by thousands of people. The image highlights what is exposed in the headline. Similar and prominent pictures are used by La Vanguardia, which defines the action as an assault on the Capitol; The New York Times, which uses the term *rampage*; The Washington Times, which talks about demonstrators storming in; Le Figaro, which considers democracy fractured; and the Daily Mail, which refers to the chaos and hatred of the protesters. The scene also appears in the other Brazilian newspapers, The Washington Post and Metro, but does not receive the same emphasis.

Among the external images of the demonstration that are worth highlighting, Jornal de Notícias chooses to show the face of one of Trump's supporters in anger, to the detriment of the mob that stormed the building. The headline highlights the assault on the Capitol and the chaos generated by it. Despite the photo outlining the consternation

of the protester, there is no reference to hate, as in the case of the Daily Mail.

The demonstration inside the building is presented as the main photo on the front pages of La Razón, Corriere della Sera, and The Guardian. The first one addresses the insurrection, while the others talk about the fury of the protesters and the chaos generated. Two internal images are also exposed in a secondary way in Folha de São Paulo.

Donald Trump is only mentioned on three of the front pages analyzed: in O Globo, Daily Mail and Metro. The photo highlighted by O Globo is notably of the moment of the rally held by Trump in the afternoon, which culminated in the action of his supporters, as the background allows one to see. The caption says *Na mesma tecla: Em discurso para apoiadores em frente à Casa Branca, Trump voltar a falar de fraude na eleição*. In the British newspapers, it is not possible to verify their location from the image alone, as they are profile pictures of the politician. While the Daily Mail has no caption and uses the headline to describe it in some way, Metro states *First of fury: Trump's salute to supporters at rally in Washington*, which makes it possible to locate the moment when the photo was taken. None of the newspapers have photos of Joe Biden or the other politicians whose speeches were used in the headlines.

The fear of the people who were inside the Capitol is represented in three newspapers. In Libération, half of the cover is dedicated to the photo featuring two people fleeing the main gallery of the House of Representatives. The NYT uses this same image referring to fear in the headline *As House Was Breached, a Fear 'We'd Have to Fight' to Get Out*. In another photo people appear lying down, between the benches in the gallery of the House, in order to protect themselves from possible cross-fire between police and protesters. The image of apparent House employees with their hands

up, during police action in one of the Capitol rooms, is on the cover of The Washington Post.

Eight newspapers refer in their headlines to the demonstrator shot and killed during the demonstration: Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, La Razón, La Vanguardia, La Stampa, Jornal de Notícias, The Guardian and Metro. However, only Metro features the photo of the woman shot in a Capitol hallway on its front page. Placed at the top right corner, the image takes up a corner of the cover and has the description *Bomb found in grounds of Capitol and woman 'critical' after being shot*.

Finally, let us analyze the organization of the images in O Globo. The newspaper uses a sequence of photos according to the temporality of the facts, as a narrative. Initially there is the image of Trump making a speech near the White House, located at the top left and occupying half the width of the page. Next to him, at the top right, of the same size so as to use the rest of the width of the page, is the picture of the crowd outside Congress, climbing the wall that surrounds it. The image of the policemen inside the gallery, pointing their guns at the protesters, is highlighted below, larger than the others and inserted below the headline.

It is possible to see that there is a variation in the images chosen by the newspapers and an association between textual elements and images. In the cases of newspapers that opt for the use of highlighted photos and more objective headlines, such as Libération, Jornal de Notícias, Público and Metro, the images are what make it possible to re-present the fact, in a dramatic way, with the characteristics of novelty addressed in the Theories of News.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this analysis was to point out the emphasis given to the invasion of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, on the front

pages of 21 newspapers from seven different countries. It was verified that the news was highlighted in more than 50% of the total space of the front pages in 15 of them. Only two did not cover the topic, and the remaining four devoted between 35% and 47%. All of them used the top of their front pages and in the cases of The Washington Post, The Washington Times and Metro it was their only topic. The headlines were also inserted at the top, using the entire width of the front cover in 12 cases. Differentiated letter formatting is observed in the French and Portuguese newspapers, La Razón, La Stampa, Daily Mail, and The Guardian.

The approaches of the French Le Figaro and Libération are different from the other publications. They opt for short headlines, without specific descriptions of the facts on their front pages. A similar approach is observed in the Portuguese newspapers Jornal de Notícias and Público, as well as in the British Daily Mail. In these five newspapers, the highlighted photos are used in order to express the severity of the fact and its novelty.

Regarding the construction of the headlines, we conclude that only two newspapers do not use the speeches made by politicians that afternoon as a basis. Le Figaro talks only about *Démocratie Fracturée*, while La Stampa designates *C'era una volta l'America*, later bringing other details of the news in subheadings and headlines. In the others, the inscriptions used bring directly or indirectly the speeches of the politicians, especially Joe Biden, although his picture is not shown on any of the front covers. Thus, the evaluations made by former presidents, congressmen, and Biden structure the narratives based on the terms analyzed. However, there is no official statement released from the still president Donald Trump, whose participation in the fact is exposed through the eyes of third parties, usually opponents.

The photos interact with the discursive narrative and give credibility to the text. They portray the actions of the protesters, the action of the police, the fear of people who were working inside the Capitol, the crowd outside the building, and the invasion inside. These elements can be seen in the text, but the disorder becomes even more significant and dramatic with image presentation. The photographic resource makes the unusualness of the demonstration even clearer. Simultaneously, the use of different photos by Brazilian and North American newspapers, as well as Metro, make it possible to understand and visualize the news on the cover, even without a careful reading of the text.

Finally, answering the research questions, the event receives relevance by showing the fragility of democracy in the country. The newspapers dedicate this space to the demonstration in their issues because it is unexpected and because of the symbolic value of the Capitol and the American democracy before the global community. From the journalistic point of view, the action has the characteristics of newsworthiness pointed out by the various authors cited. In addition, there is an interest in the news that comes from the journalists themselves. The fact happens after years of Trump administration, in which there was also an “attack” on the media in several situations, causing conflict between professionals and the president, who preferred social networks to the media to make his pronouncements, thus avoiding answering questions and making clarifications requested by reporters.

The demonstration referred to as the Assault or Invasion on the Capitol reinforces the idea presented by Gutmann (1995, p. 16, our translation) that there is a fragility in Democracy. The action was a response to the inability to share political power and the impossibility of “living every portion of one’s

life the way one thinks best.” The USA is seen by the world as a role model of political and economic development, affects other nations directly, and deserves to be highlighted in the international media. The repercussions of the invasion of one of its greatest symbols of freedom can be disturbing to other countries, many of which have “Estados Fracassados” (CHOMSKY, 2009). The newspapers sought to appropriate the political discourse to organize the chaos and legitimize the perception of the country as a democratic nation. Thus, these unique events became historical pages for journalism.

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