

Clash of Perceptions: Quebec Viewed by Albertan Media (2003-2012)¹

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Abstract: This study examines the evolution of the perception of Quebec in Alberta through the analysis of four events: the 2003 Quebec provincial election of Jean Charest and the Liberal party, the Harper government's 2006 motion recognizing Quebec as a nation, the 2008 parliamentary prorogation and coalition attempt and, lastly, the 2012 Quebec provincial election of Pauline Marois and the Parti Québécois. In our qualitative analysis of 202 articles in Alberta's two principal dailies (the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*), we demonstrate the evolution of the representations of Quebec political life in the Alberta media. We bring to light the ways in which depictions of Quebec became more critical after the 2003 Charest victory. Notably, we reveal that many commentators developed a "hostage thesis" of Quebec; in other words, they affirmed that Quebec behaves as an abductor, holding Canada captive and extorting money from the federal government (and thus from Alberta) to finance its generous social services. We equally demonstrate that the majority of articles concerning Quebec are simply informative or indifferent news stories and that some authors defend or praise Quebec.

Keywords: Quebec, Alberta, media representations, media framing

Résumé: Cette étude examine l'évolution de la perception du Québec en Alberta à partir de quatre événements : l'élection du Parti libéral Jean Charest en 2003, la motion de reconnaissance du Québec comme nation par le gouvernement conservateur (2006), la prorogation et la tentative de gouvernement de coalition (2008) et, enfin, la dernière élection provinciale québécoise (2012). À partir d'une analyse qualitative de 202 articles de journaux provenant de deux grands quotidiens (*Edmonton Journal* et *Calgary Herald*), nous montrons l'évolution de la façon dont des événements concernant la vie politique québécoise ont été présentés en Alberta. Nous mettons en lumière que, après avoir bien accueilli l'élection de Jean Charest en 2003, on note une présentation plus critique par la suite. Nous identifions notamment le fait que plusieurs commentateurs développent l'idée selon laquelle le Québec se comporte comme un ravisseur qui extorque de l'argent du gouvernement fédéral (et donc de l'Alberta) pour se payer de généreux services sociaux, ce que nous appelons la *hostage thesis*. Cependant, nous montrons que beaucoup d'articles sont simplement indifférents ou informatifs et que quelques articles prennent parfois la défense du Québec.

Mots-clés: Québec, Alberta, représentations médiatiques, encadrement médiatique

In a recent *Edmonton Journal* article, Derek Fildebrandt of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation demanded that the Alberta government defend the province against the federal equalization program. According to Fildebrandt, the program disproportionately benefits Quebec to the detriment of Alberta (Fildebrandt 2013). This claim and others of differing veracity and severity are not uncommon in the Alberta media, where Quebec is frequently the object of criticism. Our research aims to understand how the representation of Quebec is structured in Alberta, a province that has steadily increased its influence in Canada. From both a political and intellectual point of view, we must learn to interpret this provincial perception of Quebec in Alberta in order to develop a better understanding of the relations between the two provinces. Offering new lines of reflection that elucidate the complex nature of the Quebec-Alberta relationship, this article seeks to either confirm or invalidate the perception that Quebec's image in Alberta has deteriorated.

Today, many observers speak of the line being drawn between the East and the West. Emphasizing the growing gap between the two solitudes, they conclude that we have entered a new "era of indifference" (Gagnon 2012). According to this view, it is not that any trace of bitterness against Quebec and its social programs has disappeared, but rather that Quebec's critics have adopted more polite language. However, if we speak of English Canada as a unified whole, we lose sight of the multitude of perceptions and views expressed within such a vast socio-political space. Through the lens of a particular case—specifically, the perception of Quebec in Alberta—we intend to unveil the evolution of interprovincial perceptions that occurred over the last decade (2003-2012).

Admittedly, it remains difficult to say exactly what the perception of Quebec in Alberta is, since existing research on Alberta politics by political scientists remains fairly

rare. On the one hand, Francophone political scientists have not shown much interest in Alberta politics, barring a few exceptions (Boily 2007, 2013; Bergeron 2007). On the other hand, Albertan political scientists have not necessarily been interested in the ways that other provinces, such as Quebec, are presented in their provincial media. Within this context it is necessary to more attentively examine the prevalent Albertan perceptions, notably in newspapers, about Quebec. To that end, it is clear that we are not studying the perceptions of the general public or of the intellectual class, but rather the media representation of Quebec in Alberta. Our research is limited to the major dailies and we acknowledge that a great deal of public dialogue now occurs elsewhere (particularly Twitter, which has become a political outlet unto itself). At present, we have chosen to limit our research to the daily centre-right newspapers that remain an important building block, albeit not the only one, in the structuring of public opinion.

In the first section, we present our methodological approach and establish some distinctions useful to our subject. In the second section, we offer a brief historical summary in order to illustrate the sometimes-difficult past between Quebec and Alberta. In the third section, we explain the results of our research in greater detail, focusing on four key political events between 2003 and 2012, in order to ascertain changes in the perception of Quebec. Finally, in the fourth section we deepen our analysis, showing that the perception of Quebec in Alberta oscillates between a mix of severe criticism and a desire to imitate Quebec's accomplishments in the Quiet Revolution.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The hypothesis of our research takes inspiration in spirit and organization from similar works by researchers concerned with media representations. With regard to representations, it is important to understand

that they act as “social images that serve as organizing frames of action, [and that they are] structuring images” (Gingras 2008: 15). The structuring images, for their part, can be defined as representations that carry or express a manner of perceiving a political object (such as a historical figure, a nation or a political party, etc.). These images eventually impose a way of understanding the *political reality*, which conceptualizes itself through supporting dichotomies (such as left-leaning Quebec and right-leaning Alberta).

Earlier research focused on the representation of Quebec in English Canada, such as that of the sociologist Sylvie Lacombe at Université Laval. She demonstrated that there had been a hardening of opinion vis-à-vis Quebec in *The Globe and Mail*, affirming that media coverage evolved from a state of annoyance (1995-2005) to one of greater intransigence after 2005. Lacombe concludes that a “new Canadian idealism, treating the federation as an ideal model, anchors itself in radical opposition to Québécois nationalism, which is interpreted as an unacceptable ethnic nationalist project” (Lacombe 2008: 37). However, there are no comparable studies with Alberta, except one analysing the relations between the Francophone community and Quebec. In that study, Claude Denis examines the existing ambivalent relationship between Quebec and Francophones outside of Quebec, specifically the position of the *Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta* (ACFA), which was particularly critical of the demands of the sovereignist movement (Denis 1999).

In the same vein as Lacombe, we formulate the following hypothesis: the perception of Quebec in Alberta evolved from a state of indifference to one of greater antagonism towards political questions that concern Quebec, reinforcing a negative perception of Quebec as a nation, government, and society. We are particularly interested in any changes in the tone of media representation, either negative or positive,

between the different events that created media waves. This also allows us to determine if there is any difference between the newspapers of Calgary and Edmonton because, since the latter is often perceived as more liberal than the former, one may expect that the stakes involving Quebec are presented differently in the Edmonton print media.

We began by identifying the events that served as catalysts to negative and positive reactions, emphasizing events that we believed would reveal the perception of Quebec in Alberta. There have been many occasions when Albertans could express themselves about Quebec, but we chose four events that made sufficient waves in the media to expose the nature and the evolution of the perception of Quebec over time. In an earlier paper (Boily 2013), we analyzed some of the events that we describe here, but, for the present article, we add a very important event: the most recent Quebec provincial election (September 4, 2012). In this way, the present article casts a new light on the perceptions between Alberta and Quebec. We chose four events that provoked judgements and demonstrated strong interest in Québécois provincial politics.

1. The election of Jean Charest (2003);
2. The motion recognizing the Québécois as a nation (2006);
3. Prorogation of Parliament and the attempt to build a Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition government (2008);
4. The election of Pauline Marois’s PQ minority government (2012).

Undeniably, the election of Jean Charest was noteworthy. It signified the Liberal Party of Quebec’s return to power after the 1995 referendum and the Harper government’s recognition of Quebec as a nation within a united Canada had incited lively reactions in Alberta. Despite Prime Minister Harper’s affirmed commitment to open federalism, coming from a government that was

purportedly hostile to Quebec, the act of recognition was surprising. As for prorogation and the coalition attempt, it engendered harsh criticisms in the West. Finally, the return of the Parti Québécois created some concern in English Canada, which we needed to examine more closely. Because of their importance, these events incited enough media commentary to permit us to grasp the perceptions of Quebec in some of the foremost provincial print media.

In our analysis, we focus on editorials, articles by political commentators, and letters to the editor. We do not differentiate between editorials, news stories, and letters to the editor because our objective is to present the general perception of each event. Some articles were excluded from our analysis, for example, an article about a serious car accident in Quebec (yet keeping in mind that a seemingly banal and politically irrelevant incident such as a car accident or bridge collapse could be used to denounce the poor state of roads or other infrastructure, as an example of poor government management). We primarily concern ourselves with journalistic discourses about political events by the people who have as their professional mission the interpretation and framing of news within a media world that finds itself in full transformation (Taras 2012). In fact, numerous debates persist on the evolution of the media and journalists' ongoing capacity to fulfill their professional interpretive mission without succumbing to partisanship. Notably, researchers have questioned whether economic imperatives and pressure to provide entertainment have impeded the media from ensuring the vitality of deliberative democracy (Pilon 2009: 5).

Within this context, we proceeded to examine media coverage in Alberta's two primary dailies, one from Edmonton (*Edmonton Journal*) and one from Calgary (*Calgary Herald*), in addition to the *Western Standard*, in order to offer a contrasting viewpoint on Quebec. We accessed and downloaded all of our *Edmonton Journal*,

Calgary Herald, and *Western Standard* sources from the Factiva database. Our analysis focuses primarily on quality and broadly distributed provincial print journalism (the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*).

Our objective is to interpret the structure or structuring images that emanate from the representation of Quebec in Alberta. This qualitative analysis required a dual reading and dialogue between the two researchers, permitting us to correct any initial misinterpretation. We did not use a particular coding with key words and terms to count and tally because our objective was to determine whether or not each piece was critical of Quebec. This type of coding analysis can be fruitful to demonstrate long-term evolution of perceptions. However, with such a sample size (202 articles) we were able to not only read each article, but to put ourselves in the place of the reader and infer the meaning of each piece. More precisely, we conducted a critical interpretive analysis, identifying the direction as well as the intensity of judgements (positive or negative) concerning Quebec (Quivy and Van Campenhout 2006: 203). This kind of qualitative analysis consists of dissecting and digging deeper into the nature of the critique: is it a question of a monolithic, singular criticism; that is to say Quebec as a whole, or is it only what is perceived as an ethnic-nationalist project that the critics denounce? Is it perhaps the political project of a provincial government—judged insatiable in its demands—that attracts severe criticism? These distinctions are not only theoretical; in one case, it is Québécois nationalism that is attacked, while in the other case it is political decisions that are disparaged. Two criticisms of Quebec may not target the same object and criticisms are often intermingled. Journalists and other commentators easily confound the two dimensions. Of course, this is not always the case; for example, one may find the role of the state positive all the while decrying “separatist” nationalism. It is for this reason

that one may find judgements that are favourable to Quebec, notably with regard to Quebec's social safety net (subsidized day care centres, for example). For this reason, we have structured the table of analysis to encompass three analytical planes (Québécois national project/state/ society) in order to capture the nuances of those who either criticize or defend Quebec (see the tables of analysis in section three). Note that Table 3.3 on prorogation and the coalition attempt includes two additional categories of analysis ("prorogation" and "the coalition"), measuring public opinion on prorogation and the coalition itself in juxtaposition to the role of Quebec in each case.

In order to clarify our methodology, let us briefly summarize our framework of semantic interpretation. By positive, we mean an event that implies favourable judgements about Quebec; for example, an appreciation of Québécois culture, pride in the nation, support for Quebec's public policies (such as more generous social programs) or a greater commitment to poverty reduction, etc. By negative, we mean unfavourable judgements that present Québécois politics in a disparaging light; for instance, Québécois budgetary politics (judged fiscally irresponsible), or remarks denigrating the Québécois nationalist project, including crude historical analogies (notably with Nazism, etc.). As we stated previously, the criticism may target the Quebec government (judged to be too generous or not generous enough) or oppose Québécois nationalism (treating nationalists as illiberal radicals), yet withhold commentary on Quebec's society. The criticism can equally target Quebec as a unified whole, failing to differentiate between the government, nationalists, and society. The latter is essentially a blanket criticism.

Through this analysis, we are able to interpret the evolution of the perception of Quebec, and to verify whether and to what degree it declined in Alberta's media. This allows us to determine if we are witnessing

what has come to be called *Quebec bashing*. This genre of criticism attacks the actual people or the nation, treating them as inherently bad. We propose two criteria to recognize genuine *Quebec bashing*. One characteristic of this criticism is to make dubious historical analogies, such as with Nazism. A second characteristic is the absence of counter points or contrary evidence that would encourage rational debate. Finally, although media coverage is often critical, we demonstrate that positive and sympathetic judgements emerge. Furthermore, most articles are merely informative, which we classify as indifferent to the state, nation, or society of Quebec.

We begin with a historical detour in order to contextualise our study and see from where the perception of Quebec in Alberta has come. We include this summary merely to unveil the central axes of representation.

A Brief Glance at Quebec and Alberta

We often have stereotyped ways of perceiving one another between provinces. Misunderstandings of provincial realities are evaluated through a prism of prejudices that are no longer subjected to careful reflection. This point is brought to light in the work of the political scientist Nelson Wiseman, who conducts a detailed analysis of Canada's political cultures (Wiseman 2008). Those who research identity politics or the development of nation states have often emphasized these stereotyped images that were forged by political actors or intellectuals who took it upon themselves to reinvigorate their national or state identities (Thiesse 1999; Norman 2004). However, the process of identity construction is also a product of the view from outside; in other words, the viewpoint of actors looking in from other nations or provinces helps form our self-understanding.

Quebec and French Canadians do not always receive fair press coverage outside of Quebec. Certainly, some Western Canadian

authors are sympathetic to the Québécois cause, such as John F. Conway, a sociologist from Saskatchewan who encouraged his English-Canadian countrymen to “open their hearts and minds to Quebec” in order to save Canada in his work *Des comptes à rendre* (Conway 1995:23). However, these appeals are not the most frequent. Perhaps most aptly described by André Siegfried in the 1940s as a “*modus vivendi sans cordialité*”, relations between Francophones—from Quebec or other provinces—and Anglophones have often been strained (Underhill 2008: 180). In the 1960s, with the increase of Quebecers’ demands and the arrival of the Parti Québécois, bringing the sovereignty option on the political scene, the Quebec question became crucial. At the time of Meech Lake and Charlottetown, English Canada was unreceptive to Quebec’s demands.

The relationship between the two provinces has not always been cordial, even if many contemporary Quebecers continue to move to Alberta for work (BMO 2013). Without pretending to account for every expression of discontentment with Quebec, we can nonetheless broadly outline the critical side. For example, when the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau advanced Official Languages legislation in 1968, many Albertans reacted as if someone wanted to force French down their throats. At the time, the *Calgary Herald* (May 17, 1969) predicted that a small cohort of “bilingual technocrats” wanted to make themselves into “bilingual elites” to determine the country’s future (Marsh 2006: 668). This genre of sentiment about bilingualism is still common. Today, the columnist Lorne Gunter remains one of the strongest opponents of this policy, which he considers too costly, ineffective, and discriminatory against Anglophones.

In the last two decades, we should remember that Preston Manning’s Reform Party was not always warm to Quebec. In particular, in his work *The New Canada*, Manning conceptualizes his vision of a new

Canada, one that can no longer stand on national experience. In the introduction of this text, Manning affirms that Canada is at a crossroads unparalleled in its national experience since the nineteenth century. As Lord Durham perceived two struggling nations in 1840, the leader of the Reform Party saw two competing visions in the 1990s: “Like Lord Durham long ago, we take as our starting point the perception that Canada is composed of two nations warring in the bosom of a single state. The “two nations” we see, however, are not French Canada and English Canada, but an Old Canada that is dying and a New Canada that is struggling to be born” (Cited in Boily 2011: 132-133). Therefore, Manning rejected the idea of a founding pact between two nations. In Manning’s view, the “new” Canada was embattled with its own past. In this vision, the bi-national logic of the “old” Canada impeded the birth and full expression of the “new” Canada. For the Reform Party supporters, Quebec embodied this old national logic that refused to die. Other Alberta intellectuals were even harsher regarding Quebec.

Recently, in his hard-hitting book *It’s the Regime, Stupid!* Barry Cooper bitterly criticizes Quebec, most notably on the subject of Quebec nationalism and the Gomery Commission (Cooper 2009: 279). In Cooper’s view, this commission brought to light much more than the criminal actions of a handful of Liberal outlaws; it revealed the corruption of the political regime itself, a regime that had lost any sense of moderation and responsibility. As in his previous work, Cooper continues to advance his conceptualisation of the Québécois national question, characterizing the nationalism of Lionel Groulx as an “old political religion” (Cooper 2009: 81) and analyzing the tenets of renewed liberal federalism under the same light: “[T]he honeyed words of federalist nationalism lead not to a pluralistic and peaceful state ordered by the moderate virtues of civic constitutionalism and procedural liberalism, but the creation of a

new mystical body politic where individuals become constituent elements of an organic suprapersonal whole that the rest of us will be duty-bound to despise and reject, as we did with Meech Lake.” (Cooper 2009: 83). This Voegelian frame of analysis misleads readers to interpret the diverse manifestations of Quebec’s political dynamics as stemming from a singular basic tendency, one that desires politics to be a spiritual as opposed to an institutional reality.

One should not be left with the impression that all Albertan intellectual writing about Quebec has a negative tone. For example, the Canada West Foundation (CWF)—an important Alberta think tank where the President, Roger Gibbins, publishes and has become well known in the Quebec press—offers a less uniform and more nuanced analysis of Quebec politics. While few CWF pieces focus specifically on Quebec, the think tank is clearly not hostile to the province. Roger Gibbins has sometimes even advanced the idea that Western anxiety about Quebec has been replaced by a “fatalistic indifference” (Gibbins 2005a). He advanced this idea after the 2004 health accord, proposing asymmetrical federalism between the provinces and the federal government. Gibbins reminds us that some observers at the time suggested the possibility of Western outcry against Quebec, which never came to pass. According to Gibbins, the historical anxieties about Quebec were expressed in reaction to Quebec’s desire to obtain special recognition, which is integrated in the Constitution. For him, the 1982 repatriation of the constitution was a victory for the West because the constitution essentially treats all of the provinces equally. It was during the Charlottetown negotiations that Western opposition was most stringent because of opposition to a constitutional amendment that would have given special status to Quebec:

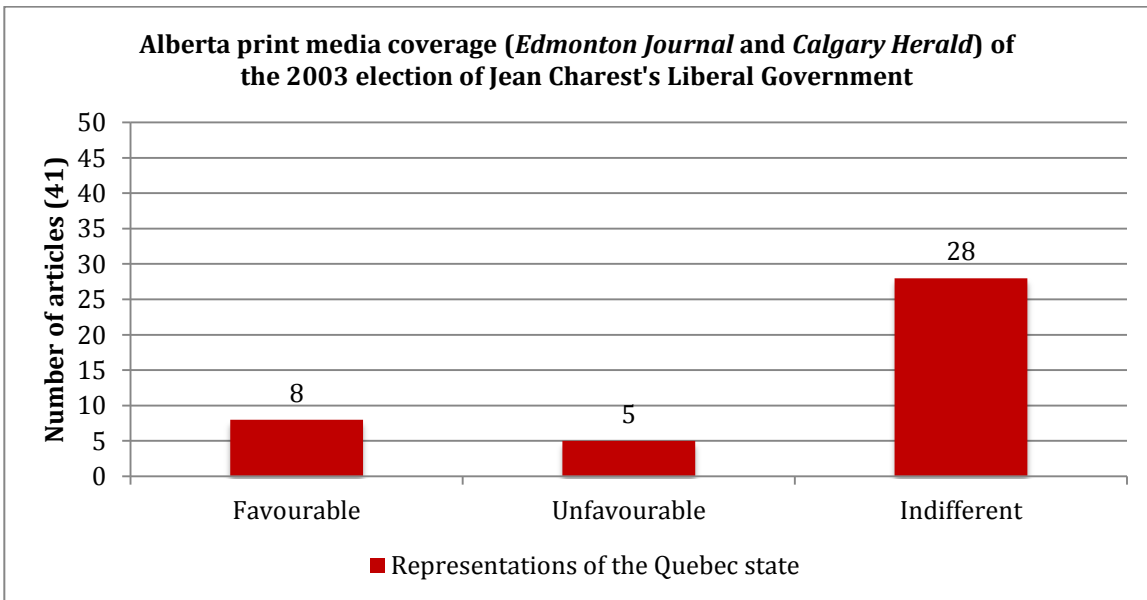
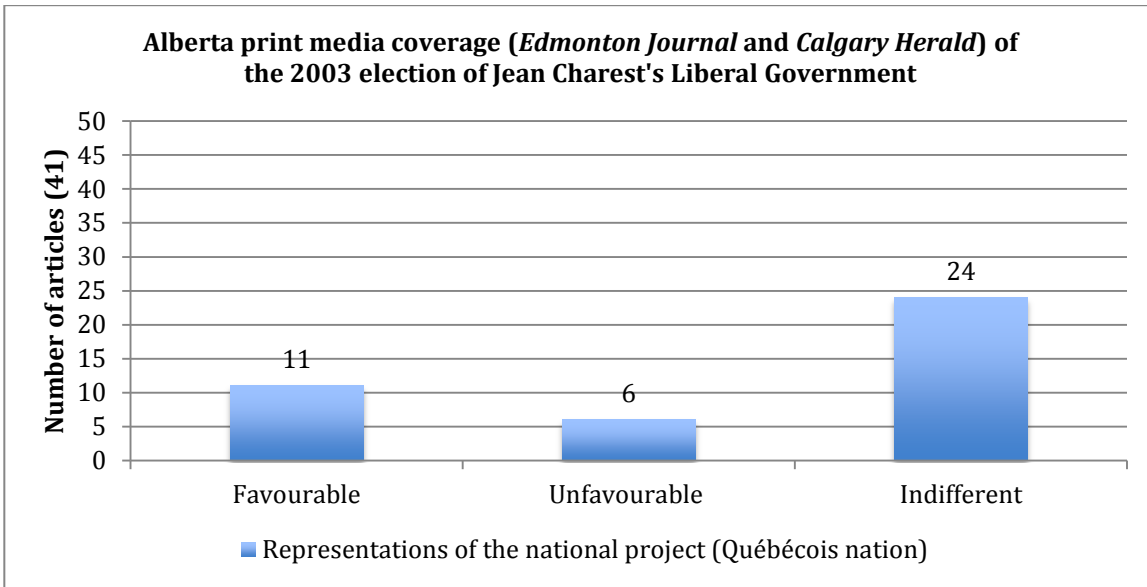
“On the symbolic playing field of constitutional politics, Western Canadians scored a clear win in 1982, one they were not prepared to abandon. Not surprisingly, Western Canadians rejected the Charlottetown Accord by a significant margin” (Gibbins 2005a). In his eyes, the palpable anxiety of the time ceded its place to an attitude that is not necessarily hostile to Quebec. Yet, we are far from certain that we have fallen into the “fatalistic indifference” that Gibbins describes. On the contrary, the events analyzed here demonstrate that the media are not indifferent with regards to Quebec.

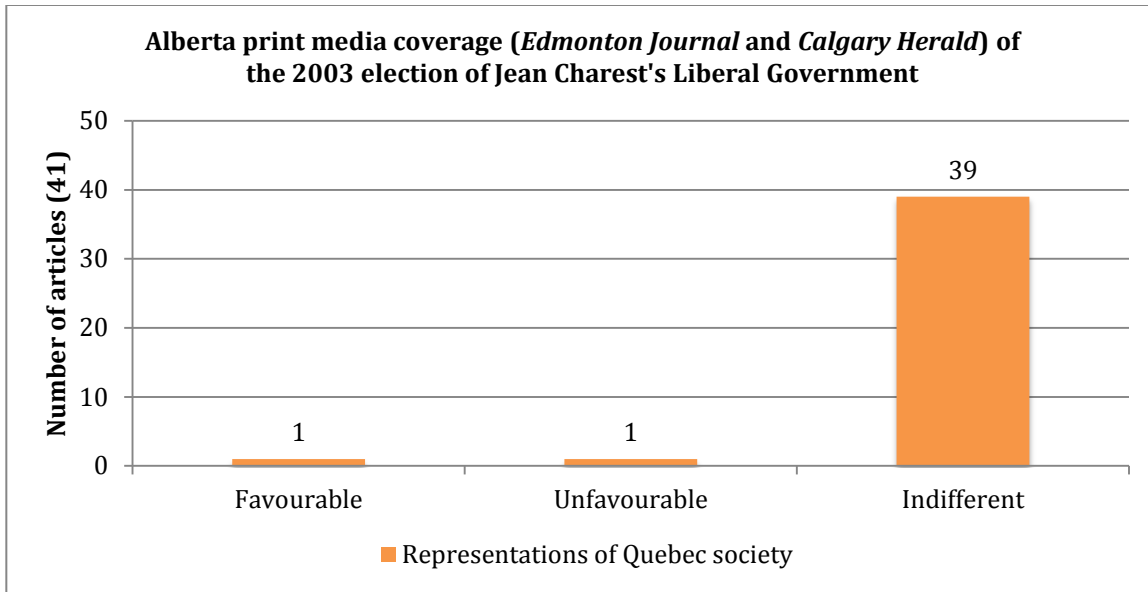
Presentation and Analysis of Results

What is the true perception of Quebec in the first decade of the twenty-first century? Are we still living in a state of “fatalistic indifference,” or has the perception of the Quebec question evolved? How are the three dimensions of Quebec’s identity (nation, state, and society) articulated in the minds of those who lead public opinion in Alberta? In response to these questions, we focus on four particular events in order to demonstrate the evolution of the perception of Quebec in Alberta. We show that the perception varies according to both time and the events that make the news. It is not monolithic; in other words, not merely negative and invariable.

A substantial majority of the articles appearing in the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* about the 2003 election were neutral or indifferent in content, amounting to basic informative pieces about the election. We found few critical articles about the Quebec government or the separatist movement. Granted, there were a few unfavourable pieces, but the positive articles were more numerous.

Theme 1: 2003 Election of Jean Charest





Generally speaking, the Liberal victory was well received by the principal polemicists who saw the possibility of positive change in Quebec's general attitude, less than ten years after the 1995 referendum. For example, we note ironically that the current leader of the Wildrose Party and of the official opposition in the Alberta legislature wrote, when she was still a writer at the *Calgary Herald*, that Quebec was a "natural ally for Alberta" (Smith 2003). While criticising the PQ, she added: "After nearly a decade of obfuscation, misinformation, and delusion under the PQ, the vision the Quebec Liberals lay out in the Pelletier report is notable for its clarity, honesty and realism" (Smith 2003). Preston Manning was equally optimistic on this point: "As long as Quebec had a separatist government, it was difficult for Western leaders to pursue this common interest without appearing to support separatism. But now that Quebec has a new provincial government whose leader, Jean Charest, has expressed an explicit interest in rebuilding links with the rest of the country, there is a new opportunity for the West and Quebec to make common cause to reform Canadian federalism" (Manning 2003). It appeared that Calgary breathed a sigh of relief.

Premier Ralph Klein added his voice to the choir of those who perceived the arrival of Jean Charest in the government as a positive event. According to Tom Olsen, writing in the *Edmonton Journal*, Klein described Charest as "a strong advocate for provincial rights, but also a strong federalist" (Olsen 2003). Echoing this view, an editorial originating in *The Gazette*, republished on April 15th in the *Edmonton Journal*, expressed relief at the arrival of a federalist Premier in Quebec: "this morning, Canada again boasts 10 premiers—and not just nine—who want to make Canada work." The nature of contemporary media conglomerates being what it is, an editorial from Quebec becomes a building block in perceptual construction elsewhere.

There was some notable discord. In the *Edmonton Journal*, Adam Radwanski expressed concern, going so far as to say that Bernard "Landry's incompetence is preferable to Charest's strident nationalism" (Radwanski 2003). Other chroniclers were concerned about Charest's proposal for a Council of the Federation. Citing a piece in the *Edmonton Journal* (July 20), wherein the author believed that the proposed Council would lead to a parallel national government, the Council was described as "a bad idea if it turns into anything

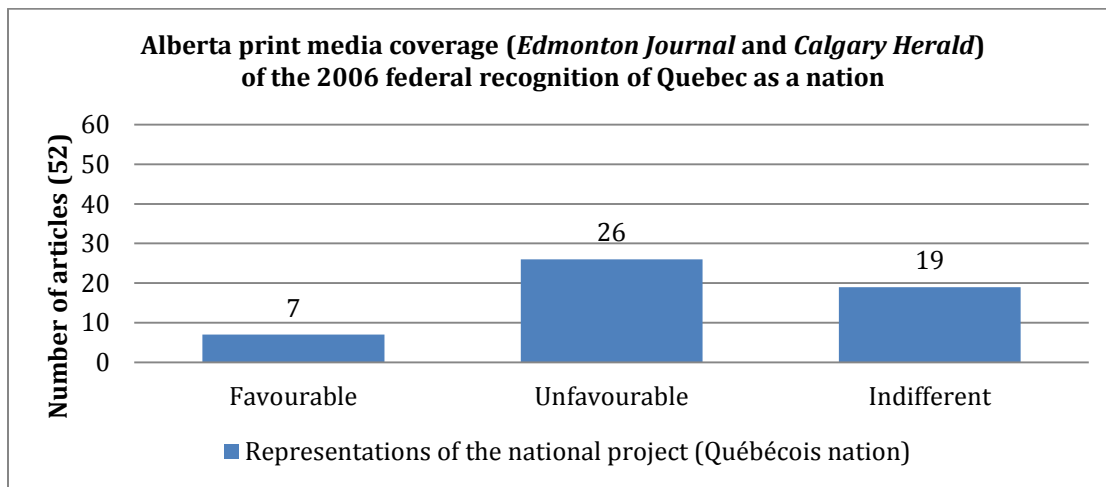
other than a forum for more provincial consensus-building on key national issues...Reading Pelletier's report, with its talk of economic union, internal trade secretariat, and a general secretary for the Council of the Federation, it sounds like a prescription for an alternative national government" (*Edmonton Journal*). Similarly, according to Don Martin, Charest was: "the godfather to something called the Council of the Federation. And nobody knows what it means...It could die ignored by the feds and forgotten by the public" (Martin 2003).

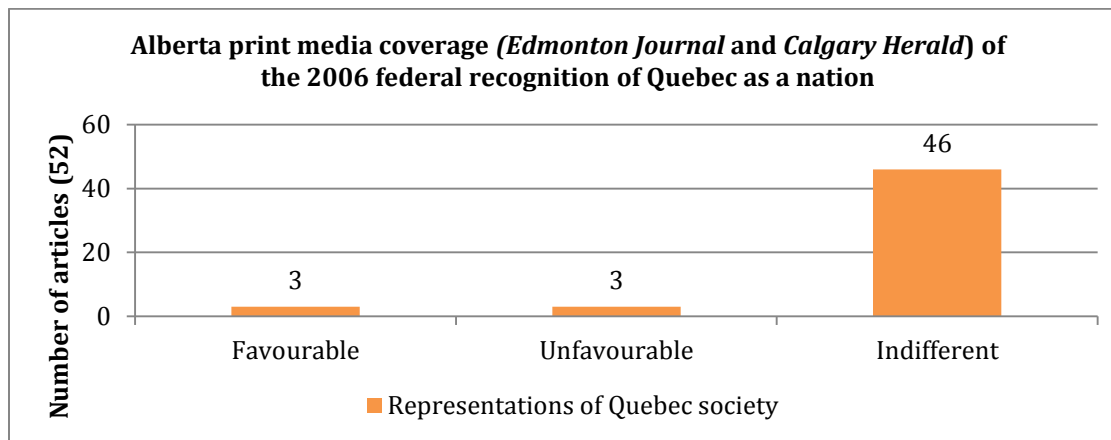
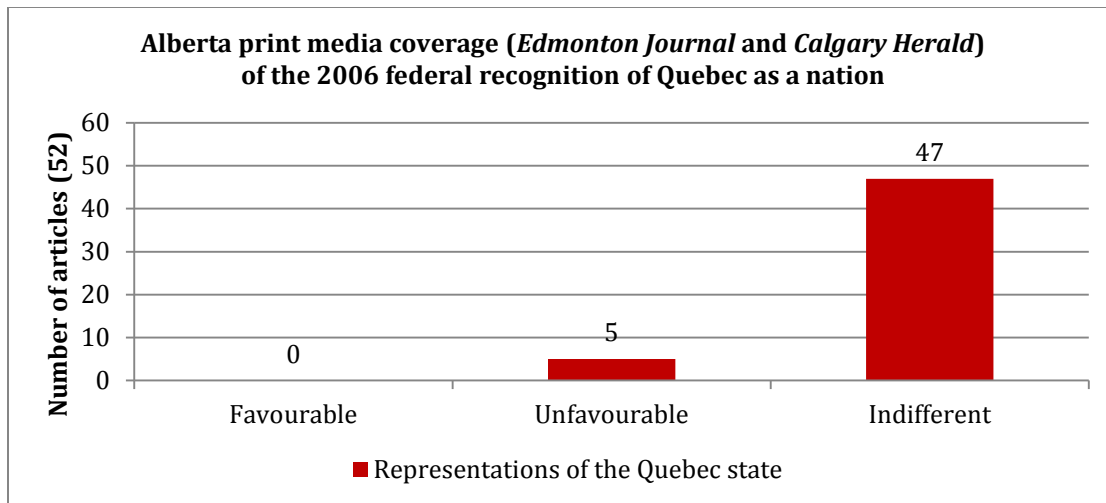
In general, media coverage concerning the Charest election oscillates between primarily descriptive articles, offering neither favourable nor unfavourable opinions, and favourable pieces that treated his arrival to power as good news for Canada, as expressed in the aforementioned *Gazette* editorial. Ten years after the referendum, in which Charest played an important role, the foremost Alberta

journalists and political commentators were happy with the election's outcome. On the other hand, and despite his role, Charest had his critics, notably over his proposal to establish a Council of the Federation. Some commentators rejected the idea and many asked what purpose such a council would serve. However, criticism was minimal (targeting Québécois nationalists) and does not reveal Quebec bashing. On the contrary, through this event, many commentators saw a new era on the horizon.

At first glance, one may think that the recognition of Quebec as a nation would have incited its share of criticism. As some of the following article extracts will demonstrate, that assumption is true, but the nature of these criticisms should be specified without forgetting those who supported Stephen Harper's manoeuvre. As for our analytical categories, the journalistic treatment of this question was largely indifferent with regard to the Quebec state and society.

Theme 2: The Recognition of Quebec as a Nation (2006)





There is some favourable commentary on Quebec society. For example, Jim Quig writes that this recognition is important for the Québécois and cites Stephen Harper's words in support of his own: "You know we should never forget...that it was French-speaking Canadians that founded Canada,' It was French-speaking Canadians who were the first people to call themselves Canadians, the first group of people who had a vision of a country from coast to coast. Those aren't going to sound like empty words to people on our street" (Quig 2006). The *Edmonton Journal* editorialist Todd Babiak, who is also a celebrated local novelist, defends Quebec as he has defended Francophones and the French fact on multiple occasions. Babiak notably spent a year in France with his family, where he wrote a series of articles relating his experience in the

Edmonton Journal: "Quebec, unlike other regions in Canada, has a genuine culture. Novels about Quebec, films and television shows about Quebec, songs about Quebec, plays about Quebec and visual art about Quebec are Quebec. It isn't necessarily white and French anymore, but it is distinct and powerful" (Babiak 2006). In the same daily, Marvin Blaeur affirms that the motion is "reasonable and timely" (Blauer 2006). These different authors demonstrate a defence of Québécois cultural identity.

Harper's recognition of the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada was sometimes praised a stroke of political brilliance. For example, one well-known representative of the intellectual right, Barry Cooper, broke ranks when he said that "Harper's Québécois gambit is brilliant" when

one understands that the Prime Minister is seeking to redesign the federation by devolving more powers to the provinces. According to Cooper, Harper had to start with the province that had demanded more influence the longest (Cooper 2006).

The observers and opinion makers were not always as polite and there were several unfavourable references to the Quebec state (5 articles) as well as a few targeting Quebec society. For example, Ted Byfield of the *Western Standard* (formerly the *Alberta Report*) described the recognition of Quebec as a nation as a measure ignoring the true nature of the problem. Byfield decries Quebec for unjustly profiting from the federal government, citing Lucien Bouchard: “In Quebec, it’s like being in a big plane. It’s warm and comfortable. But when you look out the pilot’s window, you see a big mountain, and it’s certain we’re going to crash into it” (Byfield 2006). Representing the Reformist wing, Byfield expresses a common view, often heard in Alberta, about the inevitable bankruptcy of the province of Quebec.

In our view, this idea that Quebec is holding English Canada hostage—what we refer to as the *hostage thesis*—is certainly one of the most frequent criticisms of Quebec today. Following this line of reasoning, the province that pays the ransom is Alberta. For example, writing in the *Edmonton Journal*, Lorne Gunter (now a journalist for the *Sun* chain of newspapers) blatantly advanced the hostage thesis, accusing Quebec of demanding the ransom from Alberta: “Alberta pays and Quebec spends, a difference that can’t be papered over...Quebec always wants to keep the money flowing in from Ottawa...Quebec doesn’t really want independence, it merely wants not to be told what to do with the billions Ottawa sends it” (Gunter 2006). Equally in the *Edmonton Journal*, one finds an article on the same subject by another author, Andrew Cohen, originally published in another newspaper, the *Ottawa Citizen*, owned by the

same media chain. Cohen writes: “The measure of success for leaders in Quebec is how many concessions you can wring from Ottawa—money, powers, tax points—to satisfy the appetite of a province that fancies itself a nation-state. Acting as demandeur is nothing new” (Cohen 2006). In the *Calgary Herald*, a number of pieces offer the same diagnosis, namely that Quebec is a nation that obtains what it wants by playing on, albeit hypocritically, the threat of secession. Thus, Don Martin affirmed to his readers in the *Calgary Herald* that Quebec is more or less a nation built on federal Liberal excesses: “Quebec will be a nation founded on Liberal disarray, separatist mischief and, ultimately, government desperation. Quebec: a let’s-pretend nation created by political expediency” (Martin 2006). Similarly, John Robson asserts that “Some Quebecers will blame *les maudits anglais* for their problems in life no matter what anyone does, while others will see the threat of separation as a good way to pry subsidies out of the federal government” (Robson 2006).

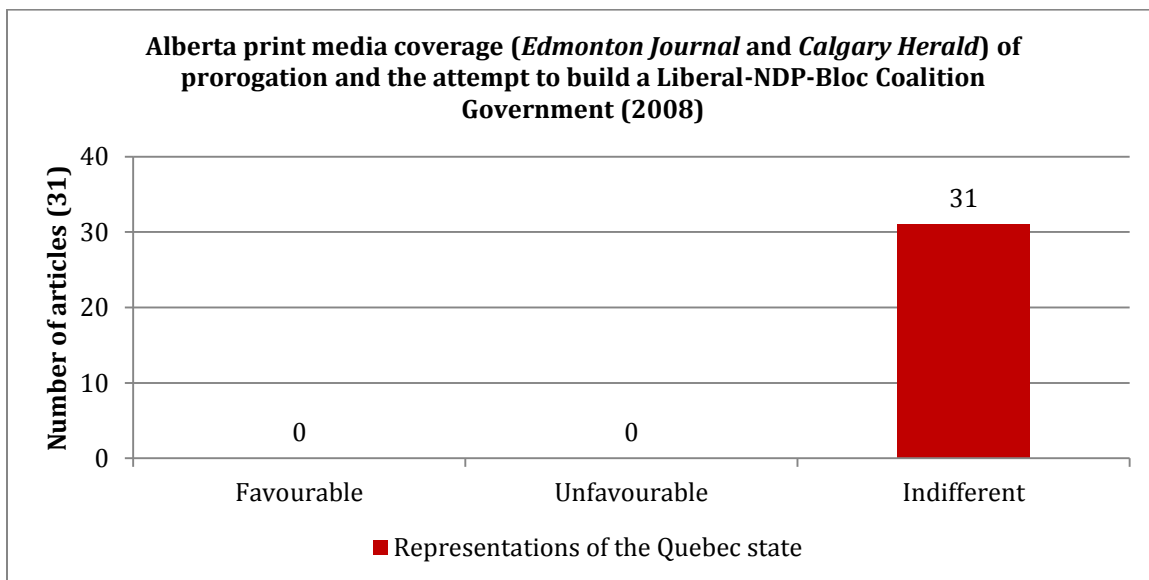
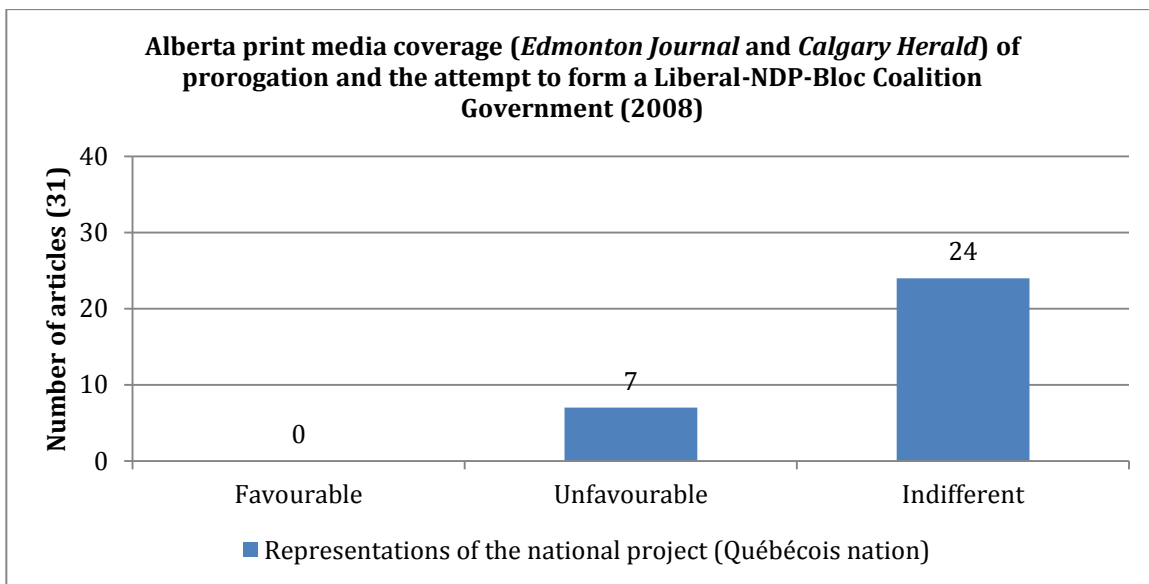
If it is true that Alberta receives less from the federal government than the other provinces, we should still not conclude that Quebec depends on the federal lifeline for its survival, at least not more than Ontario.² In this debate, one must navigate perceptions as much as the hard reality of figures and it is not always easy to see clearly. Half of the articles, exactly 26, portrayed the nationalist project unfavourably and only seven articles (13%) represented it favourably. The criticism can be quite virulent at times, especially when it entails a wholesale attack on Quebec’s government, national project, and the allegedly tribal character of Québécois society. Some were outright hostile and did not hesitate to advance risky and incorrect historical analogies. For example, in a letter to the editor, Lee Morrison, a former Reform Party MP, crudely reduces Québécois nationalism in an analogy with Nazism. According to Morrison,

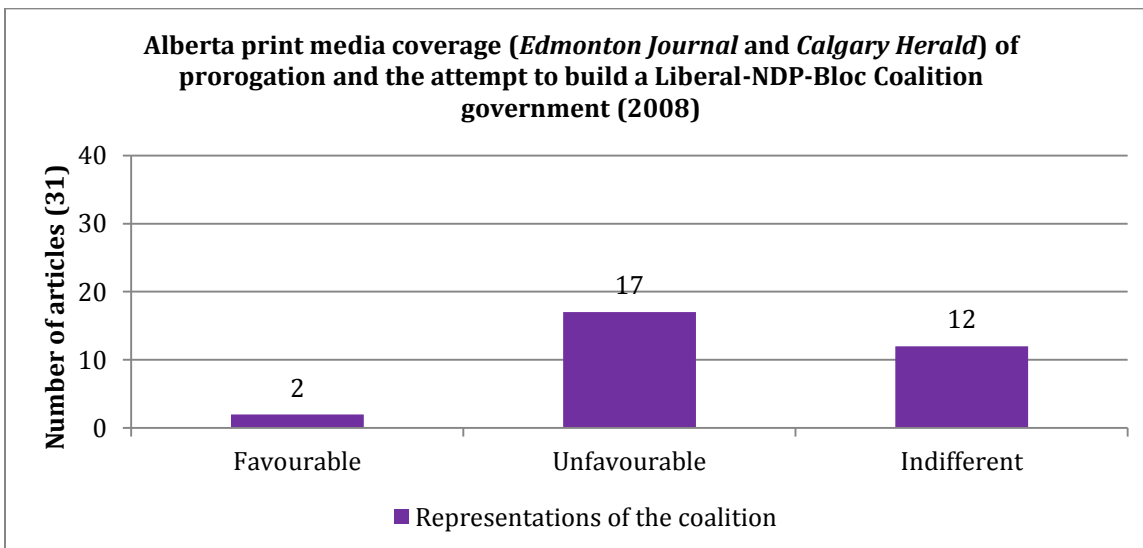
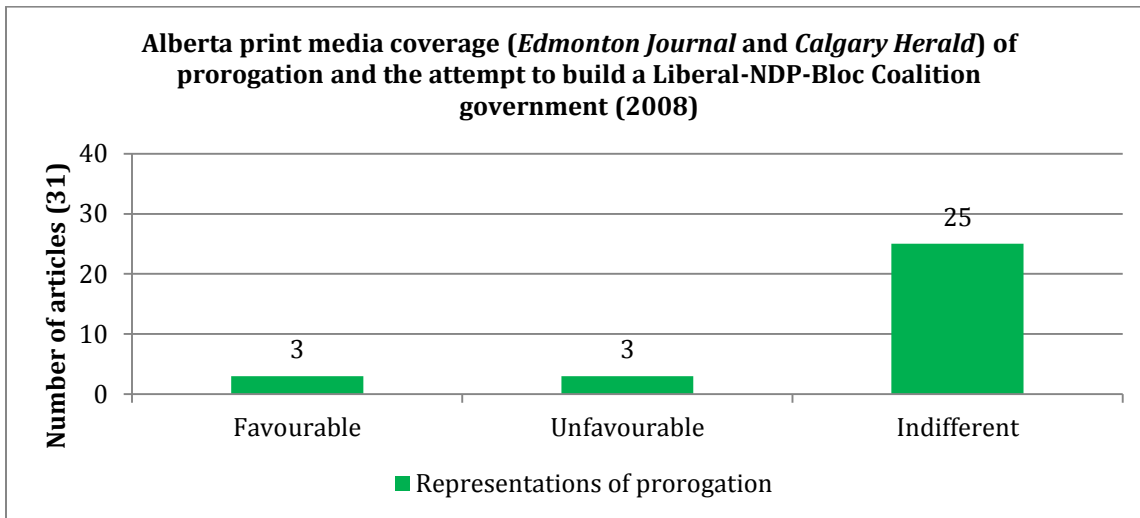
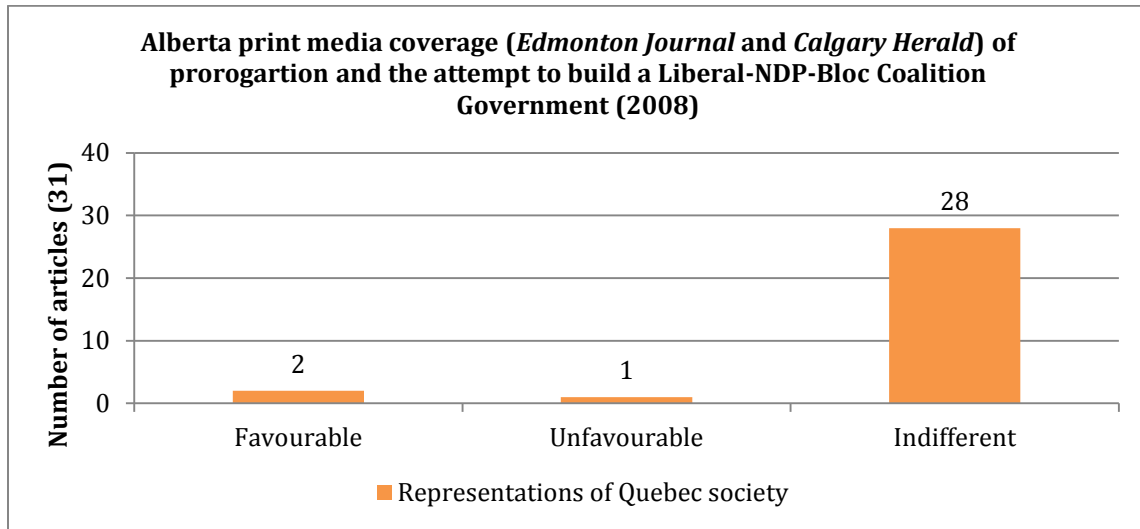
nationalism: “in the Québécois context...is rooted in the xenophobic ‘pure laine’ mantra, ‘la langue, la foi, la race,’ hardly descriptive of an inclusive, democratic society and evocative of another famous slogan: “Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer” (Morrison 2006).

Despite such unfortunate examples, as we demonstrated, it is the allegedly voracious appetite for blackmail on the part of a provincial government (and a nation)—using

the threat of separatism to siphon off money through federal equalization payments—that attracted the most criticism from Alberta’s political right. Hardline critics of Quebec never miss an opportunity to belittle the province in the media, but they were not the dominant group even in this case. Nonetheless, it is clear that criticism of Quebec was strong in this period, despite the detractors who wrote in its defence.

Theme 3: Prorogation and the Attempt to Form a Liberal-NDP-Bloc Coalition Government (2008)





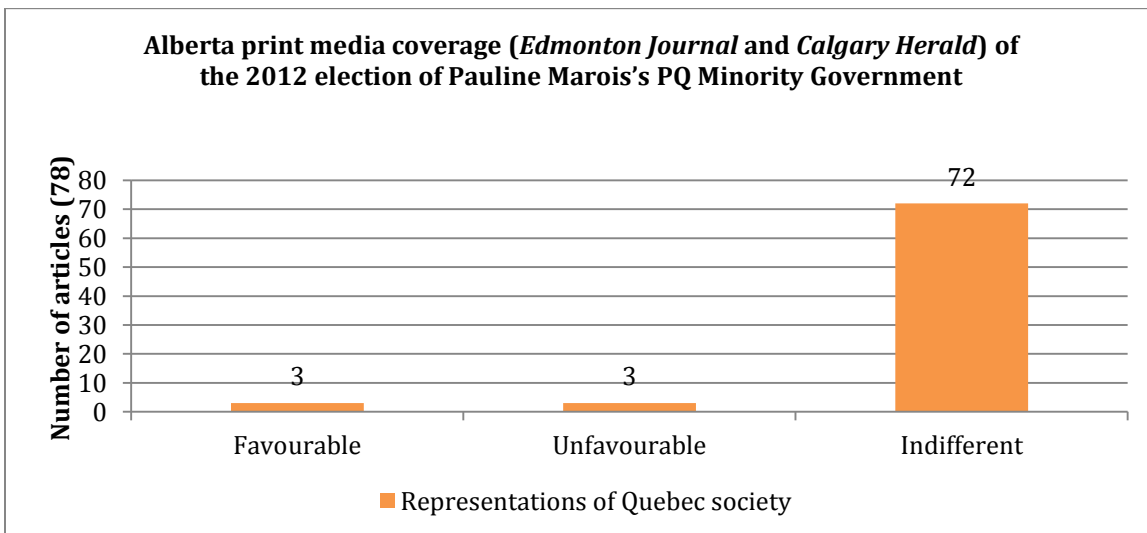
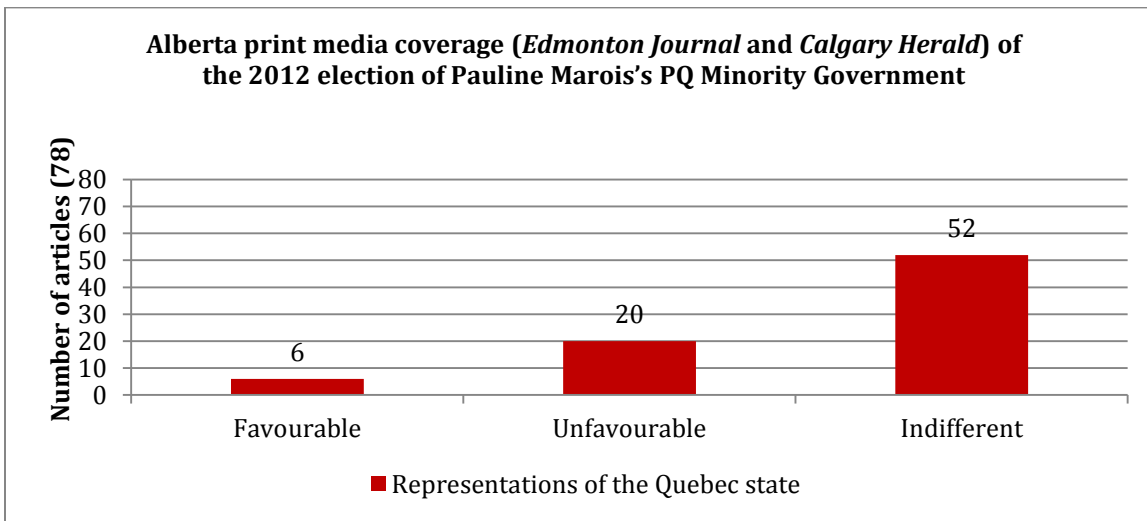
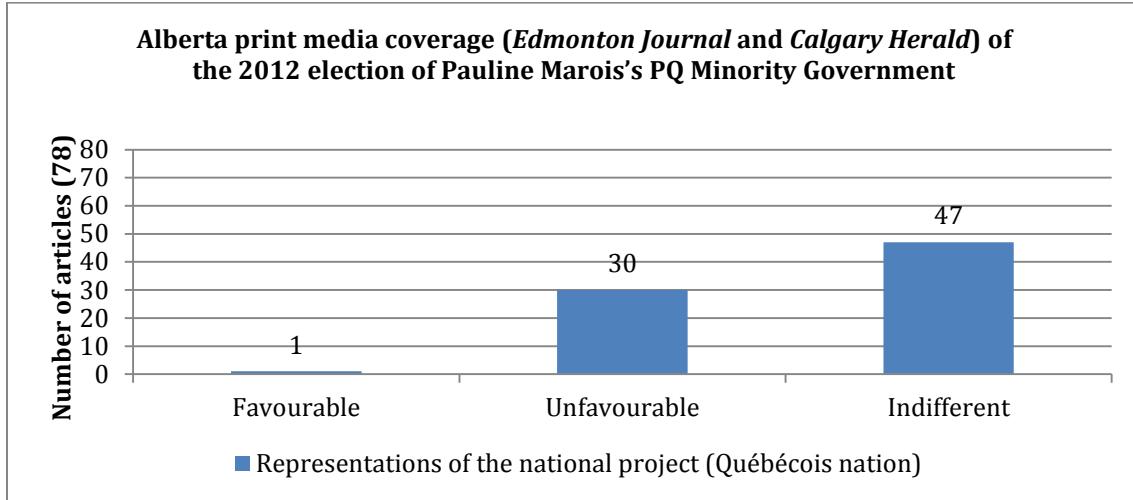
The tables above demonstrate that the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald's* coverage of the 2008 parliamentary prorogation and the attempt to build a Liberal-NDP-Bloc Québécois coalition was largely indifferent vis-à-vis the project of the Quebec state, the national aims of Quebecers, and Quebec society. However, there are a few notable exceptions concerning both the national project (7 unfavourable pieces) and Quebec society (1 unfavourable and 2 favourable examples). We interpreted articles about the coalition as oppositional to Quebec's national project if they criticized the coalition because of the inclusion of the Bloc Québécois. In each case, this criticism consisted of passing remarks within articles or letters that opposed the attempted coalition as generally undemocratic. No articles focused entirely or even primarily on the support of the Bloc to buttress the failed coalition.

Although far less frequent, positive or negative remarks about Quebec society in the context of the coalition or prorogation were more direct. On the negative side, Gary Lamphier of the *Edmonton Journal* writes: "The CEO of one large Edmonton firm is so thrilled with the prospect of a Liberal-NDP, Bloc-supported coalition seizing power from the Tories in Ottawa, he's already mulling over an Alberta separation campaign. Unlike those devious Quebecers, who only seem to employ such talk as a bargaining tool to extract more wealth from the rest of us, he actually sounds like he means it" (Lamphier 2008). On the positive side, Philippe Labonte writes in the *Calgary Herald*: "As long as the words "separatist" and Québécois are interchangeable in the English Canadian lexicon, and anti-French sentiment underlies the fear of many of

those against the coalition parties, we will continue to see problems with unity. It is not just the Quebec separatists' attitudes that need to change, but also many in English Canada, including those of people living here" (Labonte 2008). In an attempt to break the habit of journalists and laypeople using 'separatist' and 'Québécois' as synonyms and to paint a more realistic picture of separatism in Canadian politics, Todd Babiak writes in the *Edmonton Journal*: "Separatism is dying in Quebec. At the moment, it's a baby boomer disease. More than anything, it explains Gilles Duceppe's agreement to support the Liberal and NDP coalition for 18 months. However, thanks to the irresponsible rhetoric of leaders in Ottawa, it's roaring back to life in Alberta" (Babiak 2008).

Articles about prorogation were mostly indifferent, with an equal number of articles in favour of and against the decision. In contrast, coverage of the attempted Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition was largely critical. Derogatory descriptions like "seize the federal government" (Robinson 2008), "three-headed monster" (Martin 2008), and "the coalition of the whining" (Martin 2008) demonstrate the cold reception of the idea in the mainstream Alberta print media. We do not believe that this event should be interpreted to mean that Quebec was the sole target of negative remarks. The idea of the coalition becomes a critical category unto itself, one in which anger against the Bloc Québécois and Quebec nationalism (Quebec bashing), the Liberal party (Liberal bashing), and incomprehension of the legal and political legitimacy of a parliamentary coalition all merge and encourage each other. The multidimensional character of this episode makes it unique and difficult to compare to preceding events.

Theme 4: Quebec Election of Pauline Marois's PQ Minority Government (2012)



Nearly a decade earlier, many Alberta commentators welcomed Jean Charest's 2003 election, hoping the Quebec Liberals would stifle the separatist movement and act as natural ally for Alberta against Ottawa. Thus, one would have expected a strong outcry against Pauline Marois and the narrow Parti Québécois 2012 victory in the Alberta media. Without surprise, unfavourable opinions substantially surpassed favourable ones and criticism primarily targeted Québécois nationalism, followed by negative assumptions about the policy direction of the new PQ government. Nonetheless, as in the three earlier events, media coverage was primarily descriptive and indifferent. One of the most interesting aspects of Alberta media coverage of the 2012 Quebec elections is that the number of unfavourable articles in the *Calgary Herald* significantly exceeded the number in the *Edmonton Journal*, where coverage was largely indifferent.

With regard to Quebec nationalism in the context of the provincial election, common themes in the unfavourable articles included allegations of intolerance against the PQ and Quebec society in general. Some Alberta commentators were unabashed in their support of the Charest Liberals and disdain for Marois and the PQ, fearing that the PQ's nationalist separatism would weaken the country or lead to a new referendum. For example, Licia Corbella writes in the *Calgary Herald*: "he's [Charest] asking the silent (non-pot-banging, hardworking Quebecers) to be heard by voting against the destabilizing PQ, and for his tarnished but stable Liberal government. Here's hoping his approach is golden and he wins the election for Quebec and Canada" (Corbella 2012). Also in the *Calgary Herald*, Michael Den Tandt goes as far as to insinuate that the PQ is partly responsible for the shooting at the party's own victory party because of its "jingoistic" and "tribal" politics that undermine "civil discourse" (Den Tandt 2012). Some letters to the editor also presented Quebec as an

unpleasant place for Anglophones to live because of the PQ and the strength of Québécois national identity. For example, Irene Leigh writes in the *Calgary Herald*: "The English minority in Montreal has been treated as second-class citizens since the Parti-Québécois won in the 1970s, and all the big companies moved to Toronto. I am an English-speaking Quebecer living in Alberta for a reason" (Leigh 2012). This event made it clear that fears and distrust of the PQ have endured in Alberta.

Not all responses to the PQ victory were inflammatory and fearful of a new sovereignty debate. For example, writing in the *Edmonton Journal*, René Benoit asserts: "Quebec voters are not stupid...the threat of Quebec voters being assimilated into a largely English-speaking North America, the original motive for seeking independence, has subsided through our Official Languages Act" (Benoit 2012). Without data, it is impossible to determine if there is a generational or regional difference in Alberta in terms of perceptions of the PQ. Nonetheless, there are some contrasting opinions on the subject, demonstrating that not all Albertans see the PQ as a significant contemporary threat to national unity.

As for assumptions about the Parti Québécois' likely policy priorities besides sovereignty, concerning matters like language laws and public displays of religious symbols, writing in the *Edmonton Journal*, Andrew Coyne (a journalist not based in Alberta) goes as far as to deride Marois and the PQ platform as "the most frankly discriminatory platform of any party leader in this country's recent history" (Coyne 2012). Also in the *Edmonton Journal*, in response to the PQ policy on the French language, Don MacPherson (a journalist for The Gazette in Montreal) proclaims: "It's official. By its own written admission, Pauline Marois's Parti Québécois is xenophobic" (MacPherson 2012). Writing in the *Calgary Herald*, Naomi Lakritz refers to PQ policy on

the French language as “insular and narrow-minded silliness,” while Dalal Daoud condemns the proposal to restrict religious symbols in public as “appalling” and “devoid of all justice” (Lakritz 2012; Daoud 2012). Also writing in the *Calgary Herald*, Licia Corbella decries such PQ policy proposals as mandatory French language fluency for civil servants and new restrictions on religious symbols in public as “bigoted,” “racist” and “repugnant,” while Stephen Maher chastises the PQ platform as “insane,” “worrying” and “harsh” (Corbella 2012, Maher 2012). Unfavourable articles on the PQ policy platform surpassed favourable ones on a nearly four to one margin.

However, the PQ policy platform had some defenders. In the *Calgary Herald*, Bernard Taylor refers to the PQ as “a centre-left party with progressive policies that would appeal to many Canadians,” crediting the PQ with affordable daycare, a commitment to fighting corruption and keeping university tuition low, promoting clean energy, and maintaining a reasonable stance on the French language in light of Quebec’s officially unilingual status (Taylor 2012). Similarly, Alexandre Theriault-Marois affirms in the *Calgary Herald*: “the rights of the Anglophone community have always been protected...what Quebec has at stake clearly explains its agenda to protect and promote its language and culture. The misunderstanding of Quebec’s and the PQ’s agendas cannot lead to accusations of bigotry, racism and chauvinism” (Theriault-Marois 2012). Similarly, writing in the *Edmonton Journal*, Andrew Potter reminds readers that policy proposals concerning religious symbols in Quebec are not a sign of bigotry; instead, “there is a more charitable interpretation of Marois’ charter [on religious symbols in public], which sees it as expressing a legitimate approach to the question of the proper relationship between state and church” (Potter 2012). Thus, with regards to PQ policy proposals outside of the sovereignty debates,

Alberta commentators demonstrated diversity of opinion and healthy debate.

As one might expect, five articles also repeated the hostage thesis, accusing the Quebec government of using the sovereignty question as a ruse to hold Canada hostage and collect a ransom from Alberta. For example, writing in the *Calgary Herald*, Licia Corbella affirms: “without the rest of Canada, Quebec’s culture of entitlement and welfare state would collapse eventually for lack of money...we all know that in Quebec, equalization transfers are used to make their social programs more equal than others” (Corbella 2012). Also writing in the *Calgary Herald*, Mark Milke declares: “Canadians, especially in provinces where taxpayers are net contributors to federal coffers, should pay close attention to the Quebec election. After all, they’ll be paying for a chunk of any expensive promises eventually delivered to Quebec’s voters” (Milke 2012). Larry Comeau affirms in the *Calgary Herald* that Quebecers: “owe their rich entitlement programs, i.e. \$7 dollar-a-day daycare, healthcare, cheapest university tuition in Canada, etc. to handouts in the form of transfer payments. Much of this money is coming from Canada’s economic engine, the Alberta oilsands, which Quebec politicians continue to badmouth” (Comeau 2012). These pieces demonstrate that the hostage thesis persists in the Alberta media and that the arguments used to support it did not evolve substantially from 2003 to 2012. Therefore, even though some articles were favourable to the Parti Québécois election and most articles were indifferent news stories, a negative and critical view pervades media coverage of this event.

Discussion of the Perception of this Phenomenon

The analysis of these four events allows us to draw the following conclusions. First, in a brief time period, there was a marked evolution. Albertan journalists and

commentators favourably received the news of Charest's election as a sign of political renewal. Sure, some grumbled about the Council of the Federation (there was some complaining in Quebec too!), but nothing substantial. With the arrival of a new Premier in Quebec perceived as a committed federalist, many Albertans seemed to believe that a new era was on the horizon.

In contrast, the Harper government's recognition of the Québécois as a nation, reanimated the hostage thesis (or, as Léon Dion described it, the knife to the throat theory). Numerous negative critiques emerged at the time, especially against Québécois nationalism. During this event, criticism of Quebec grew substantially, as the number of articles demonstrates. Some Quebec bashing was apparent in this period. Of course, from one event to another, Quebec bashing occurs to a greater or lesser extent, but it is never the dominant voice. The chorus of Reformer Party supporters, such as Lee Morrison, could incite us to misinterpret the perception of Quebec (Morrison 2012). Many articles regarding Quebec are indifferent and purely informative. Other pieces express support for Quebec, such as those in favour of the Harper government's motion recognizing the Québécois as a nation. These sympathetic voices are primarily found in the *Edmonton Journal*, where the Francophone cause and Quebec find the most support. Therefore, there is not a unique or monolithic structuring image emanating from this event. In this respect, one should not draw conclusions solely based on the number of articles, which can be deceptive.

As one might expect, in the case of the 2008 prorogation and coalition attempt, fewer articles targeted Quebec as a nation, state or society. However, it is interesting to note that some commentators blamed Quebec for the coalition attempt, or at least saw the occasion as an opportunity to deride all of their adversaries—the purportedly elitist Liberals, the allegedly socialist NDP, and the separatist

Bloc Québécois—all at once. The coalition attempt seemed to stir up old antagonisms, provoking criticism of Quebec, Ontario, and Easterners writ large. For some die-hard Quebec bashers, no opportunity to criticize the province is missed, but their voice was less present than it had been in the coverage of the recognition of the Québécois as a nation.

Finally, the 2012 PQ provincial election victory provoked the most negative coverage yet. While the majority of articles remained indifferent, 25.6% of the commentators made unfavourable references to the policy platform of the new PQ government and 38.4% criticized Quebec nationalism, often portraying it as an exclusionary ethnic nationalist project. Media coverage of this event not only demonstrated that the hostage thesis persisted, but it seemed to reopen old wounds and provoke new fears. Editorials and letters to the editor repeatedly alleged discrimination against Anglophones and immigrants in Quebec under earlier PQ governments, presenting the province as more xenophobic and intolerant than the other provinces in Canada. It seems that coverage of the 2012 elections frequently presented a caricature of Quebec, reproducing a representation closer to the Western conservative imagination than the complex provincial reality. Still, even in this case, Quebec bashers were far from the majority and media coverage demonstrated nuance and diversity of opinion.

Implications

We offer some explanatory paths to help interpret the data presented thus far. First, it is important to situate this perception within the particular English-Canadian framework. In one of the Massey Lectures, the historian Frank Underhill commented to his English Canadian countrymen that their perception of Francophones' demands was hindered by their understanding of Canada as essentially English-speaking and British, leaving the French fact as

a blind spot in their interpretation of Canadian national identity. In 1963, Underhill believed that the country needed a new Laurier to remind English Canadians that their country did not have a unicultural and unilingual Anglophone identity (Underhill 2008: 181). More recently, along similar lines, the political scientist Kenneth McRoberts affirmed essentially the same thing, that Anglo-Canadians often struggled to accept the Francophone point of view, one according to which the Québécois constitute a distinct people (McRoberts 1994 :107).³ There is much to be said for this idea of an English Canada that, ignorant of its dual French nature and consequently its true self, would be incapable of understanding the Québécois and Francophone distinction. For many, this remains a blind spot in interpreting the nature of the federation.

However, we must also add to this explanation in the sense that it omits the demographically heterogeneous character of the West, which dissimulates the French fact. In reality, British conformity does not exist in the West, especially not in Alberta. Albertan society was composed of diverse populations at the turn of the twentieth century, including Americans, Eastern Europeans, and Germans. According to Roger Gibbins: “The waves of immigration that settled the province brought Ukrainians, Russians, Swedes and Poles, who spoke neither English nor French and who arrived without any pre-existing identification with Canadian political parties or British parliamentary traditions” (Gibbins 2005b: 3). And even this account excludes First Nations and Métis who are present in Alberta’s political space and have increased their pressure on the Alberta government. In this context, it is difficult for the French fact (Québec and Franco-Albertans) to carve out its own legitimate political space. In our view, beyond Anglo conformity, there is an ethno-cultural diversity that weakens the status of French in Alberta; consequently, the influence of Quebec

diminishes. In itself, this diversity is of course positive, but it has the strange consequence of minimizing Francophone demands and contributing to a cold reception—sometimes frankly hostile—to Québécois and Francophone demands.

Finally, on the fringes of the Alberta right, one often finds criticisms of Quebec intertwined with a sort of desire to reproduce Quebec’s accomplishments since the Quiet Revolution. On this subject, historian David Bercuson remarked a particular jealousy directed against Quebec: “Realistically, a lot of Western alienation has been not simply from Central Canada, but from Quebec, rightly or wrongly. There is a lot of jealousy of Quebec, much of it totally misplaced, but it is there anyway” (Nash 1991: 140). Further to this point and to more clearly demonstrate the ambiguous relationship between Alberta and Quebec, we can cite the famous Firewall Letter (published in the *National Post* in January, 2001). Many commentators have cited Stephen Harper’s letter after the 2000 federal elections entitled *The Alberta Agenda*—more commonly called the *Firewall Letter*—because of its declarations against the federal government, but the letter’s Quebec inspiration is often overlooked. The signatories of the letter wanted to diminish the federal government’s influence on Alberta; for example, they proposed replacing the Canada Pension Plan with a provincial pension plan, reclaiming tax authority, replacing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with a provincial police force, reclaiming exclusive jurisdiction in health policy, and, finally, forcing Senate reform. Although fewer commentators mentioned it, as we stated above, the signatories to the letter had reforms in mind quite similar to Quebec’s demands since the Quiet Revolution, excluding Senate reform.

One of the letter’s signatories, the political scientist and former Alberta Minister of Energy Frederick L. (Ted) Morton, went even farther in suggesting that Alberta simply

adopt its own constitution. A Minister in the former Stelmach government, Morton lamented the fact that, contrary to most federations, Canadian provinces did not have their own constitutions. Morton affirmed that both Alberta and Quebec should have one (Morton 2004). In his eyes, the adoption of an Alberta constitution would permit the province to assume its rightful place in the Canadian federation: "It would manifest a confidence in Alberta's right and ability to be self-governing" (Morton 2003). According to Morton, an Albertan constitution would help ensure that policies unique to the province would be sheltered from changes in government. Above all, Alberta's laws would be sheltered from the authority of Canadian Supreme Court Justices, judges named by the federal government who, in Morton's eyes, put too much emphasis on group and minority rights. Therefore, the adoption of an Alberta constitution would counter one of the great evils of Canadian democracy, the alleged judicialization of politics (Boisvert 2007). Barry Cooper makes a related argument in justifying his own conceptualisation of federalism, invoking the Tremblay Commission (1955), affirming that federalism served to defend distinct provincial identities (Cooper 2009: 237).

Following the 2003 Charest election, an editorial along similar lines appeared in the *Calgary Herald*, reminding readers that the Klein government had given a cool reception to the Firewall Letter and suggesting that the government change its position because of the vague desire of some Albertans to defend the province. The piece further reminded Klein that Alberta should seek what Quebec had obtained, equally affirming that the recent changing of the guard in Quebec could open the door to establishing a unified position between the two provinces (« Alberta's Agenda » *Calgary Herald*, April 17, 2003, p. A22.). It requires further investigation, but we have the impression that this desire of imitation and partnership (and concurrent repulsion) with

Quebec has no real equivalent among the other provinces.

Furthermore, it is important to consider recent relations between the two provinces. For example, Quebec Minister of the Economy, Raymond Bachand, met his Albertan counterpart, Ted Morton, in September 2010, just as the Premier-elect, Alison Redford traveled to Quebec, in January 2012, to promote her vision of energy policy to her counterpart, Jean Charest (Séguin 2012). That does not even take into account the two provinces' common opposition to the Flaherty securities commission project (Lévesque 2010). Already, certain milieus of the Québécois right sought reconciliation with Alberta; for example, Danielle Smith, as the new leader of the Wildrose Party, was invited to speak at the April 2011 conference of the *Réseau Liberté Québec* in Montreal (Marquis 2011). Everything since the April 2012 Alberta provincial election leads us to believe that Alberta will return to the Canadian political scene as a major player, which was not the case under the leadership of former Premier Ed Stelmach. Alberta's increased participation will inevitably reinvigorate interprovincial dialogues, but could this restart the old constitutional debates? It is unlikely since the new generation of Westerners (especially in Alberta and Saskatchewan) shows little interest in the matter. Furthermore, a recent poll indicates that pessimism reigns, on both the Quebec and Canada sides, regarding the chances of success of a new round of constitutional negotiations (Rocher 2012).

Following in Quebec's footsteps after the 1960s Quiet Revolution, some Western intellectuals want Alberta to reclaim its place within the Canadian federation. Still, as demonstrated in the preceding analysis, there are those who never miss an opportunity to denigrate Quebec. The perception of Quebec is formed and transformed between these two conflicting tendencies, shifting with the winds of political change that shake the federation.

For Alberta elites, to speak of Quebec is to speak of the way that Canada should function, just as it says how Alberta should be, according to its political nature. To represent Quebec is to speak of oneself; that is to say, to speak of Alberta, of its political culture as well as its place in the Canadian federation.

In summary, we believe that the analysis of these events supports our hypothesis. If there has been a change in tone, it has been in a negative direction. First, when Jean Charest brought the Liberal Party of Quebec back to power in 2003, the media perception was very positive, interpreting a fresh start for a harmonious relationship with Quebec. Yet the reverse occurred when Pauline Marois brought the Parti Québécois back to power in 2012. Clearly, the sovereigntist option disturbs some Albertan sensibilities, notably the

idea that Quebec continues to seek concessions from English Canada. However, this surpasses mere dislike for the sovereigntist movement, as newspaper media coverage of the coalition attempt, including federal Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, demonstrates. In a previous article, we established that Jean Charest's tax cuts—during the 2007 election campaign that followed the fiscal imbalance resolution—were poorly received (Boily 2013). Lastly, it should nonetheless be noted that positive perceptions break through certain texts, especially letters to the editor, reminding us of diversity of opinion. It is within this light that we must evaluate the clash of perceptions; that is to say, as a collection of different views of Quebec that intersect and collide in the Alberta media.

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Endnotes:

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² Citing the economic journalist in *La Presse*, Claude Picher: "Le gouvernement fédéral dépense, dans tout le Canada, \$6,164 par habitant (tous les chiffres qui suivent sont exprimés sur une base par habitant). Cette somme comprend le total des dépenses courantes, moins les intérêts sur la dette publique. Au Québec, les dépenses fédérales se situent à \$6,062, à quelques poussières près en plein dans la moyenne canadienne. Comme on s'en doute, les dépenses sont moins élevées dans les provinces riches qui reçoivent pas ou peu de péréquation (\$5217 en Ontario, \$4,334 en Alberta), mais dépassent largement celle du Québec ailleurs (\$8,881 au Manitoba, \$11,368 en moyenne dans les Maritimes). Encore ici, on ne peut certainement pas prétendre que le Québec fait particulièrement figure d'enfant gâté." Claude Picher, "Le mythe des quêtoux (suites)", 21 juin 2011, <http://www.vigile.net/Le-mythe-des-queteux-suite>, consulté le 8 mai 2012.

³ « Historiquement, les Canadiens anglais n'ont jamais voulu regarder en face la conception que les Canadiens français se font d'eux-mêmes comme peuple et du Canada, et l'ont encore moins reconnue ou acceptée. Peu de Canadiens anglais ont accepté d'envisager l'idée que les Canadiens français constituent un peuple distinct, encore moins une nation. Et ils sont tout aussi rares à accepter la croyance canadienne-française selon laquelle la Confédération représenterait une sorte de pacte ou d'arrangement entre deux peuples fondateurs. »