



# How American Allies React: Elite Sentiment and Foreign Policy Shifts in the Aftermath of US Presidential Elections (2000-2017)

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# Hypotheses

**H1:** Changes in the dominant tone of media coverage of US president in allied states are positively correlated with the changes in the public approval of US presidents in these states.

**H2:** Changes in the dominant tone of media coverage of US president in allied states are positively correlated with the changes in the prospects of cooperation with the US.

# A sample of 22,957 articles (2001-2017)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Leaning</b>
<i>The Age</i>	Australia	Left
<i>The Australian</i>	Australia	Right
<i>The Daily Telegraph (AUS)</i>	Australia	Right
<i>The Guardian</i>	United Kingdom	Left
<i>The Daily Telegraph (UK)</i>	United Kingdom	Right
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Canada	Left
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	Canada	Right

# Methodology

- Natural language processing of coverage in newspapers in traditionally allied and friendly states (N= 22,957; sentiment analysis using AFINN - a lexicon rated for valence with an integer between -5 and +5 for negative-positive)
- We extract only those sentences from these articles that mention the president in question, "US", "America", or "United States" and run a sentiment analysis over the words contained in these sentences in *R*, using the AFINN lexicon
- We then test possible associations between this sentiment and public opinion (attitudes towards US presidents and the US) as captured by Pew Research surveys.
- The relationship between elite sentiment (as measured through our analysis of newspaper coverage) and foreign policy behaviour is examined by comparing standardised average sentiment scores and each country's record of voting with the United States in the UNGA (which we also standardise), which we use as a proxy for foreign policy behaviour.

# Methodology

	<b>word</b>	<b>score</b>
1	abandon	-2
2	abandoned	-2
3	abandons	-2
4	abducted	-2
5	abduction	-2
6	abductions	-2
7	abhor	-3
8	abhorred	-3
9	abhorrent	-3
10	abhors	-3

# Results

<b>sentiment</b>	<b>publication</b>	<b>author</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>country</b>
0.23	Fairfax	Wright	2000	AUS
0.82	Fairfax	Wright	2000	AUS
-0.42	Fairfax	The Age	2000	AUS
-0.24	Fairfax	SMH ed	2000	AUS
0.17	Fairfax	Ritchie	2000	AUS
0.04	Fairfax	Riley	2000	AUS
-1.10	Fairfax	Ramsey	2000	AUS
1.12	Fairfax	Henderson	2000	AUS
0.63	Independent Merrick		2016	UK
-0.05	Independent Merrick		2016	UK
0.51	Independent Grice		2016	UK
0.05	Independent Dearden		2016	UK
0.12	Independent Chu		2016	UK

## Bush Better For Australia: Downer

Lincoln Wright

541 words

13 November 2000

[Canberra Times](#)

CANBTZ

2

English

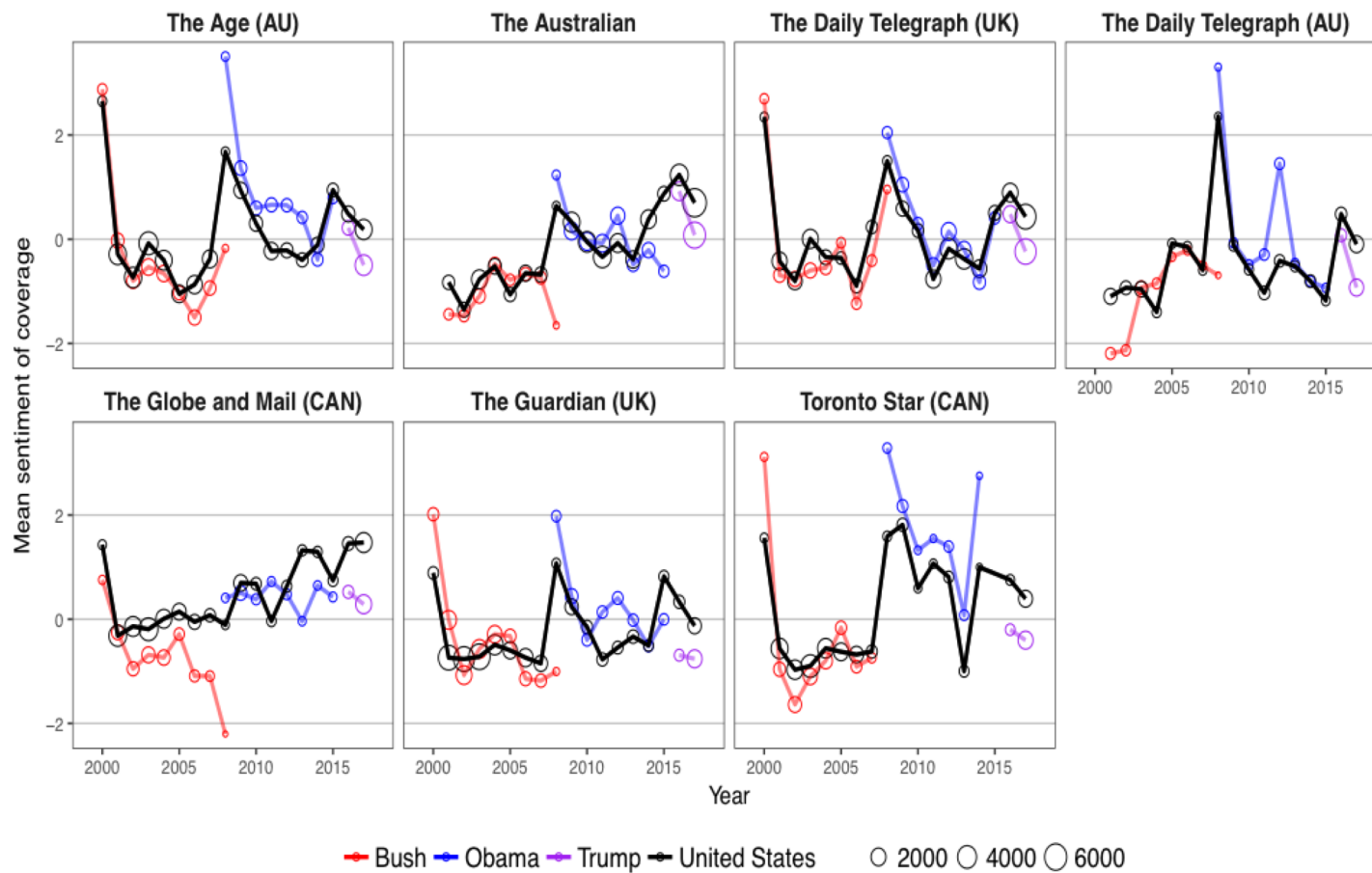
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The **Howard** Government was not fussy about who would be the next United States president, but Republican George W. **Bush**'s stance on trade might be more conducive to Australia's interests than Democrat Vice-President's Al Gore's, according to Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer.

Mr **Bush** may have showed a 'more strident' commitment to free trade, but Mr Gore also had a 'very good' record in that regard as well, even though he had been associated with protectionist elements in the **US**, Mr Downer said yesterday.

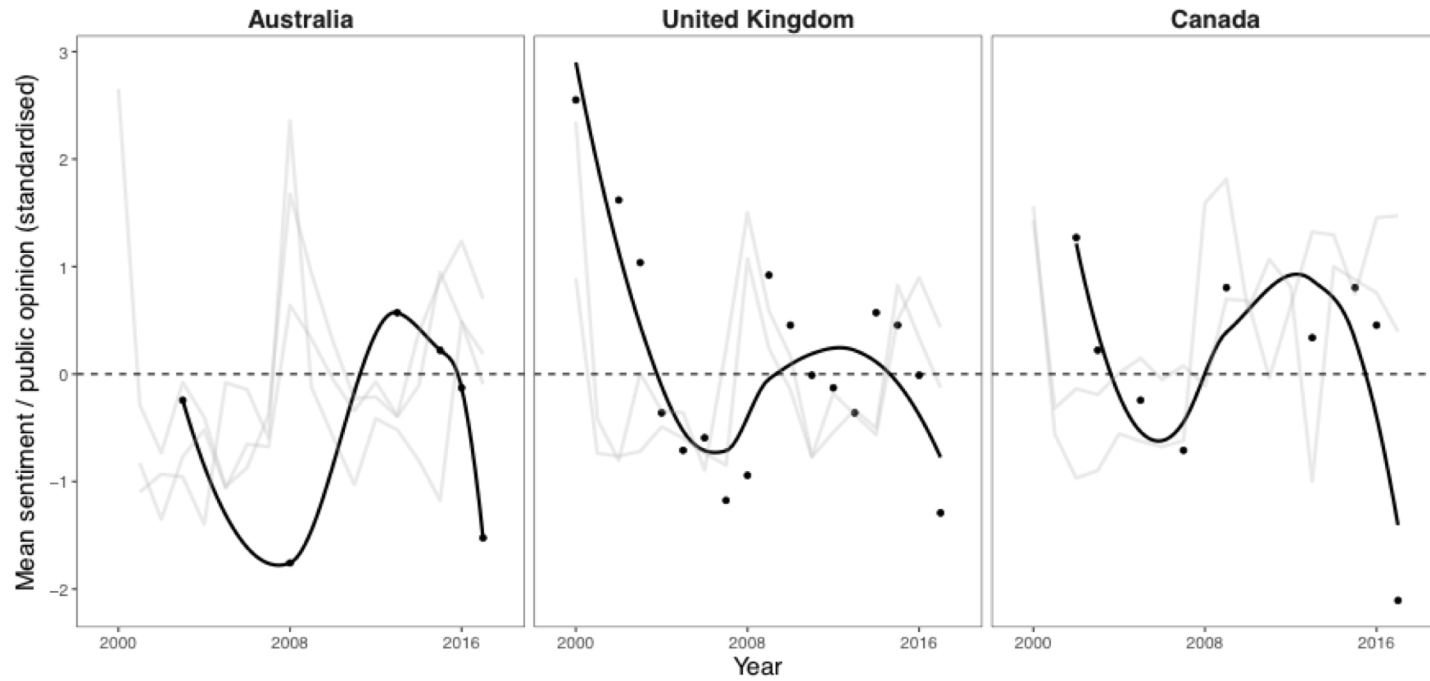
'This means, though, very little in terms of foreign policy, for the reason that there aren't great differences between the position of both **Bush** and Gore on foreign policy,' he said. If there were 'nuanced' differences between the two candidates, Mr Downer said, they lay more in the area of trade and Mr **Bush**'s greater commitment to the World Trade Organisation and the Asia-Pacific. 'The problem with Al Gore is that he's been very dependent on, as they say in America, labour,' Mr Downer said.

**Figure 1** Mean sentiment scores from the seven papers we studied

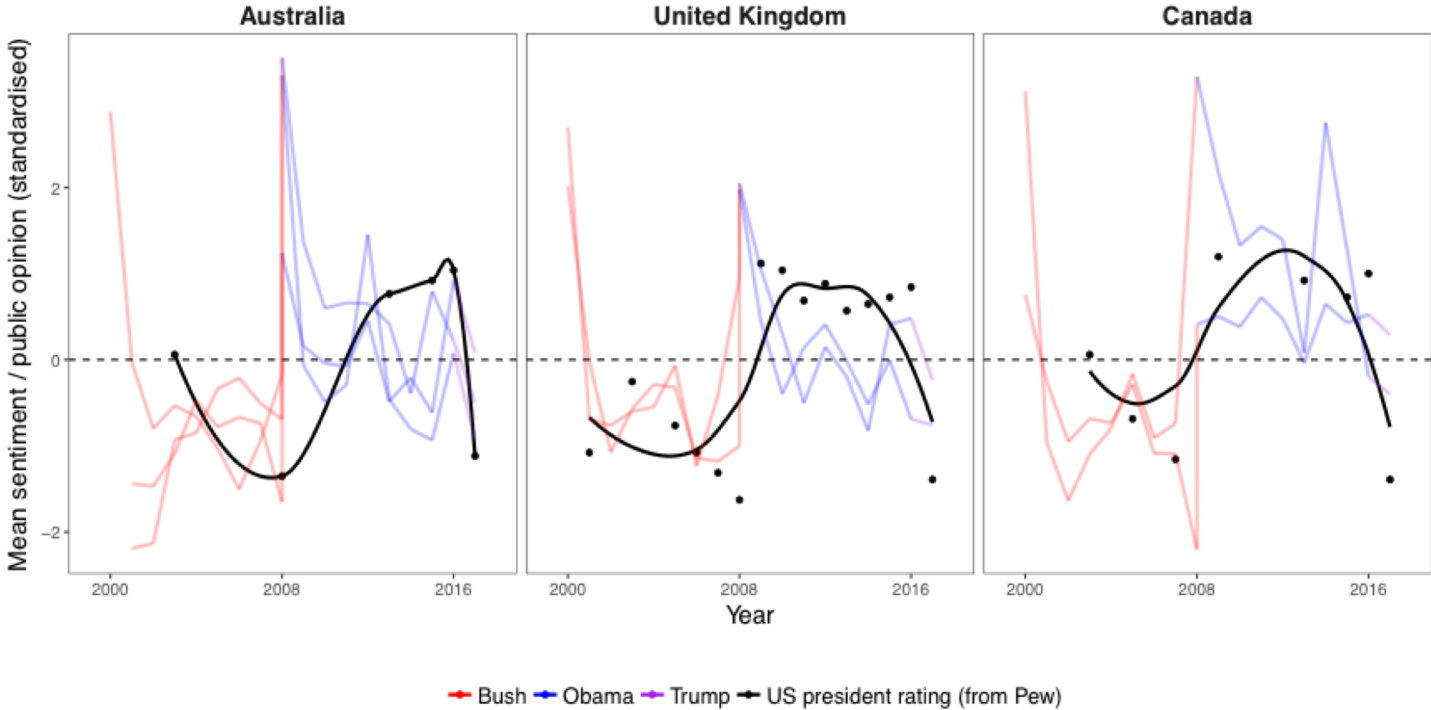




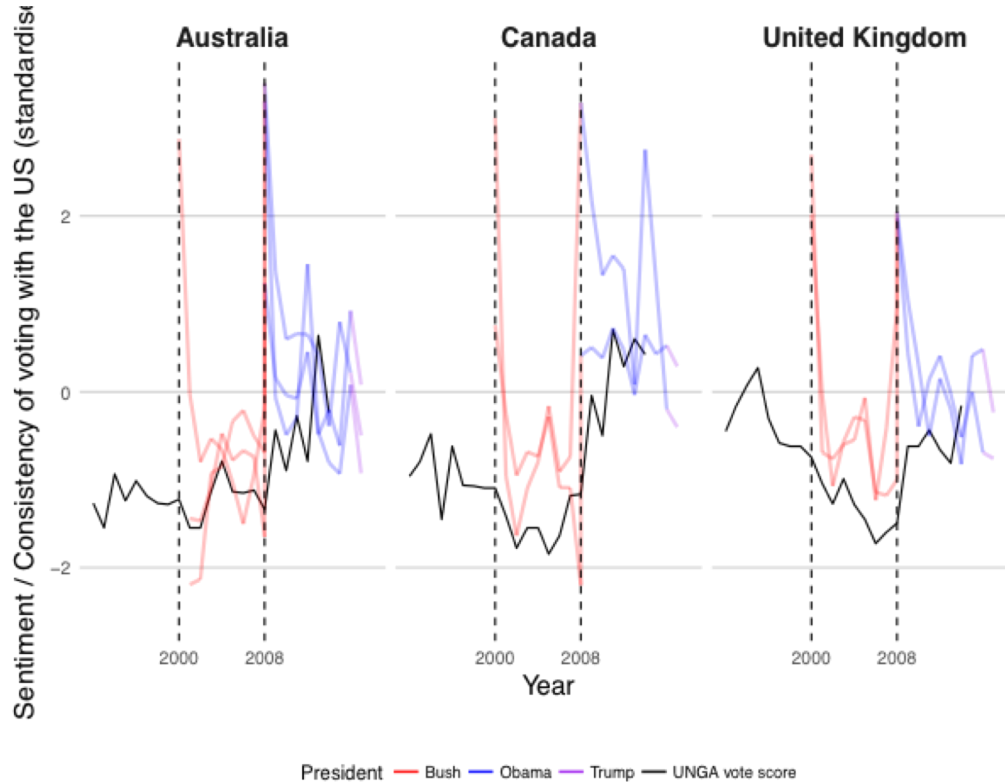
**Figure 2** Standardised sentiment scores from sentences discussing the United States (grey curves) compared with public favourability towards the US, as measured by Pew Research (the dark points)



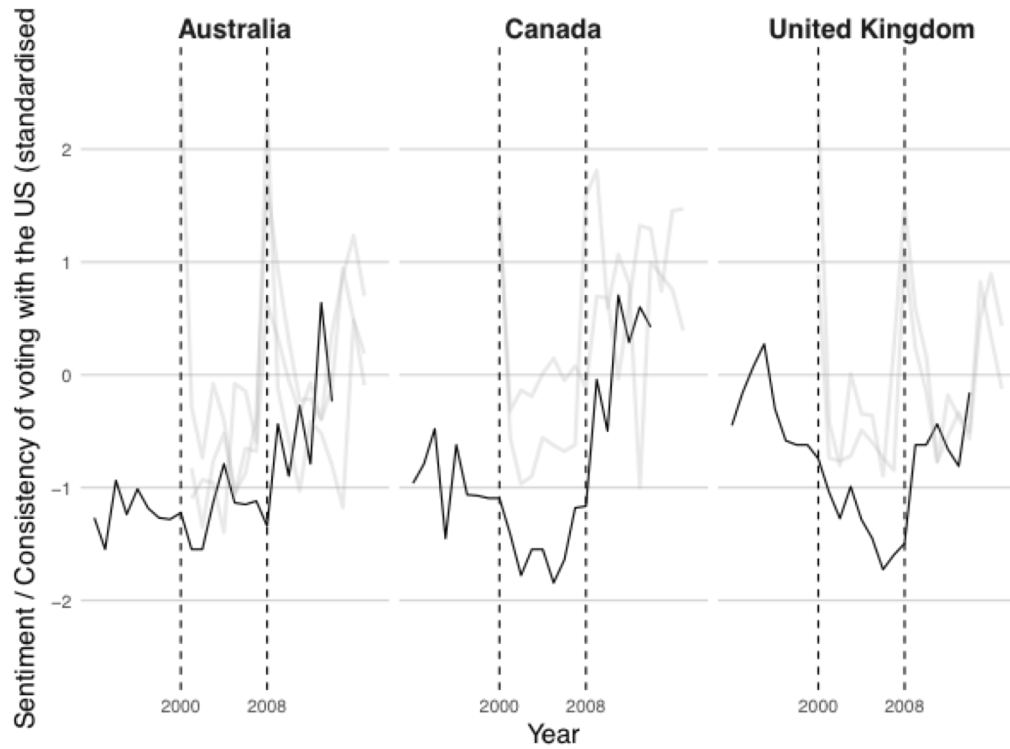
**Figure 3** Standardised sentiment scores from sentences discussing each president (coloured curves, with each curve of the same colour representing the sentiment of a different media outlet covering the same president) compared with public confidence in the president of the United State to do the right thing, as measured by Pew Research (the dark points)



**Figure 4** Standardised sentiment scores from sentences discussing each president (coloured curves, with each curve of the same colour representing the sentiment of a different media outlet covering the same president) compared with each country's consistency of voting with the US in the UN general assembly (the dark curves)



**Figure 5** Standardised sentiment scores from sentences discussing the United States (grey curves) compared with each country's consistency of voting with the US in the UN general assembly (the dark curves)



# Findings

- Support for H1 in both results that refer to the overall favourability of the United States, as well as the results that relate to the confidence in US president
- Some support for H2 as for each of these three countries there is some association between the sentiment expressed in these newspaper articles and whether each country voted with the US in the UNGA