

The Russian – Ukrainian War: Persistence of Frames and the Media Issue-Cycles

*By Gennadiy Chernov**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine drew unprecedented media attention all over the world due to its dramatic character and significant consequences. Beside the heightened interest, the media coverage also reflects the nature of media systems in democratic and authoritarian societies. This paper aims at testing whether there are some common features between media systems such as issue-cycle regularities with the interest in the event waning over time. This study also explores how issue specific frames serve the goals of different media system. The American news outlet CNN and the Russian news source *gazeta.ru* were selected to account for media system differences. The time frame encompassed the first five days of the conflict, and the most recent five days for the study. The number of articles dedicated to the war significantly decreased over the half year period for both outlets. The number of key terms used for the war decreased over the same time at CNN, but not at *gazeta.ru*. Framing analysis demonstrated that the use of frames depended more on the goals of propaganda than on the actual events in the authoritarian media system. The use of frames at CNN was more consistent with the real situation on the ground underlying the fact that freedom of speech is more conducive to reporting the truth.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, war, framing

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine became a turning point in many spheres of public life: it jeopardized the European security, destroyed the balance in international relations, disrupted energy supplies in Europe, and led to the largest migration crisis since World War II. The invasion also had a great impact on the way social and mass media cover it, and the media itself became in part the propaganda element of the hybrid warfare. The word “aggression” is often used in the media accounts, and it was in line not only with the media reports’ language, but it was also based on the characterizations of the invasion by different international bodies. For example, the United Nations assembly adopted Resolution ES-11/1 on March 2, 2022 titled “Aggression against Ukraine”. The resolution passed with 141 countries voting in favour, 5 countries against it. However, the author chose the word ‘invasion’ as a more proper definition for academic writing.

Pavlik (2022) identified ten implications for the journalistic mass communication. Such cornerstone issues for journalism as pursuit of truth and freedom of speech and press, are among them. The general trend in the Western media was the condemnation of the invasion. For example, Papanikos (2022)

*Professor, School of Journalism, University of Regina, Canada.

established that the main newspapers in Greece expressing the whole political spectrum from the left to the right, all agreed in their denunciation of the Russian invasion.

The news media play a paramount role in informing the audience about the current events, and they shape to a large extent the opinions of the audience about these events. “The news media exert significant influence on our perceptions of what are the most salient issues of the day” (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009, p. 1). Considering the role of the news media in how the world is viewed, it is important to investigate the regularities that the media follows in their coverage. The problem addressed in this article is how framing and the media issue cycles serve as internal mechanisms of what and how they say it.

Freedom of speech in Russia became one of the first casualties of war. The use of the words “war” or “invasion” are prohibited in Russia, whether in print, on air, or online, on news sites or social media platforms (Tebor, 2022). Only descriptions of the conflict as a special military operation are permitted” (Pavlik, 2022, p. 2). Propaganda and disinformation also emerged as indispensable tools in this hybrid warfare. The victory in the war cannot be achieved solely on the battlefield, but it also requires media support to justify the war, persuade the population of the country which committed an invasion that it is justified. It also needs to influence the international community to accept the discourse of the events offered by the warring sides. McGuire (1986) states that this influence is sought by any society, but the nature of such influence differs. Democratic societies rely more on persuasion while authoritarian societies rely more on coercion. The USA is an example of the former. This is a democratic country whose government condemned the Russian invasion, and it expressed its support for Ukraine from the beginning. For the most part, American media enjoy freedom of expression. Russia is known for its suppression of the independent media outlets which were completely shut down in the first days of the war. Even mentioning the word ‘war’ could lead to long-term imprisonment (Pavlik, 2022). The Russian media became a channel of promoting the point of view of the Russian propaganda, but the course of events on the battlefield led to modifications of its coverage in line with the official interpretation of events. However, both coverages of the war in Russia and the USA might follow the regularities described in the media communication research. In this particular case, two approaches were selected: framing (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009) and the issue-attention cycle (Downs, 1972; Gupta and Jenkins-Smith, 2015). Framing is a broad and encompassing approach. “Nearly any explicitly expressed position on an issue, any argument or any rhetorical device used in a media message, can be called a frame” (Chernov & McCombs, 2019, p. 73). The most often cited definition by Entman (1993) underlines this property: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). However, this breadth allows for grasping devices and undertones in language use promoting a position on the issue in the media reports. The devices may include catch-phrases, metaphors, and other linguistic means to

make a frame memorable and persuasive. There is an additional classification of frames distinguishing between issue-specific and generic frames (Brüggemann & D'Angelo, 2018). This distinction allows for an in-depth analysis of a single topic with issue-specific frames, and it gives an opportunity to generalize the findings on a broader set of topics with generic frames.

The issue-attention cycle deals with the rise and fall of a certain issue in the media coverage. "Each of these problems suddenly leaps into prominence, remains there for a short time, and then- though still largely unresolved—gradually fades from the center of public attention" (Downs, 1972, p. 27). Downs determines five stages of this cycle.

- 1) The pre-problem stage.
- 2) Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm.
- 3) Realizing the cost of significant progress.
- 4) Gradual decline of intense public interest.
- 5) The post-problem stage.

We could state that the war in Ukraine witnessed the first four stages.

The pre-problem stage was expressed in covering a gradual build-up of the Russian armed forces on the Ukrainian border. The second stage manifested itself in the alarmed discovery on behalf of Ukraine, and euphoria in the Russian media which predicted that Russian forces will reach Kyiv in two days and Ukraine will fall in a week. The grinding progress of Russian advances with losses and occasional failures led to the media realization of the prospects of a prolonged war which constituted the third stage. And currently, we are witnessing a gradual decline in the public's interest in Russia as the war seems to be too far from the end. The Russian offensive grinding to a halt coupled with significant defeats and growing human and economic costs. The media in the world are paying attention to the war. This is a major event in Europe, after all, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the amount of coverage declined in comparison with the first months of this campaign. "The broadcasting frequency of the stories about the military conflict with Ukraine reported by the main TV channels has been gradually decreasing after their maximum broadcasting frequency in late February and in early March." (Alyukov et al., 2022, p. 3). This war is so prominent and dramatic that we cannot expect a complete decline of media interest in it before it ends. However, we may expect a relative decrease in the amount of coverage.

Based on the framing and issue-cycle of the news approaches, this paper aims at exploring whether the media coverage in Russia and the USA, the countries with different levels of freedom of speech, are similar in the fluctuations in levels of attention to the war. This study also tests whether the media in both countries have their coverage diminished over the course of half a year. Another questions explored in the paper is how the goals of the war were framed and to what extent they were modified with the changes on the battlefield.

Framing and Content Analysis as Methodological Tools

It was noticed at the early stages of the conflict that the Russian-Ukrainian war coverage could be explored by content analysis and framing (Vrba, 2022). Different typologies of frames were offered over the years. For example, De Vreese (2005) distinguished two types of frames. “Certain frames are pertinent only to specific topics or events. Such frames may be labelled issue-specific frames. Other frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some even over time and in different cultural contexts. These frames can be labelled generic frames” (p. 54). For example, this war was routinely characterised as “special military operation” (SMO). However, although this frame will play an important role in this study for content analysis, a deeper understanding of the goals in this operation could be framed differently, and the study aims at identifying them. The issue-specific frames are chosen because “An issue-specific approach to the study of news frames allows for a profound level of specificity and details relevant to the event or issue under investigation” (De Vreese, 2005, p. 55).

Whether issue-specific frames related to how the war and its goals are used became the focus of this paper. The euphemism SMO was broadly used at the beginning of the war, but the Russian media was constantly trying to justify it with fluctuating goals, which represents a broad range of terms from “protecting Russia” to “liberating Ukraine” to “defending Donbass”.

Methods

Content Analysis

Categories and Units of Analysis

“Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 24). The following logic of applying content analysis for the study is based on the Krippendorff’s (2018) design. The media universe related to the news is huge. Sampling of the outlets could become a complicated task. That is why a criterion was set to select outlets both in Russia and in the West that have prominence and cover the news constantly. Two outlets, Russian gazeta.ru and cnn.com online versions were used. Gazeta.ru is a news online outlet established in 1999. It gets in the top-10 of news outlets in Russia. Started as an independent publication, gazeta.ru became totally dependent on the government. Their selection was based on the fact that both outlets cover events 24 hours a day, and they give sufficient numbers of reports to sample.

The first stage is to define relevant units. Initial coding categories were identified. Based on preliminary reading of a few articles about the subject in Russian and American selected media, the dominant terms describing the Russian-Ukrainian war were identified. Due to limits imposed by the Russian government

and the absence of the independent media, gazeta.ru stuck to the term ‘spetsial’naia voennaia operatsia’ (special military operation or SMO), and cnn.com more often than not used the terms ‘war’ and ‘invasion’ based on its interpretation of the conflict.

Sampling and Coding

Sampling procedure is dictated by the need to have sufficient numbers of reports to analyze, and the number of short articles for any given day may not be less than one article per day, especially in gazeta.ru representing one of the warring sides. The time frame applied to the analysis is the first five days when the shocking developments drew the highest level of attention from the world media, including countries under study with Russia potentially exceeding American coverage as the initiator of the war. However, cnn.com had extensive coverage as well. Another set was selected from September 14 to September 18, approximately half a year after the start of the war. The rationale is that over half a year supposed trends will take place. Then the coded instances were counted over the above-mentioned period and calculated.

There are two types of units used for analysis: special terms coded as the SMO for gazeta.ru and ‘invasion’ for cnn.com, and articles mentioning these terms as separate units to reflect the potential waning interest in the conflict over time. The number of articles about the war was huge at the beginning of the conflict. To focus on the most relevant aspects for the article, the stories about refugees, sanctions, and economic impact of the war were not selected as such. These themes were selected only if they were related to the actual events in the battle field. Mostly, the reports focusing on the war were left for analysis.

Frame Analysis

Measuring frames appears to be more elusive, and it comes from its combination of form, conducive to capturing its structure and content, and open to multiple interpretations. Nisbet et al. (2006) clearly demonstrated it in the following words: “frames...should not be confused with specific policy positions. Individuals can disagree on an issue but share the same interpretative frame.” (p. 11). Framing is a diverse field with a number of methodological approaches (D’angelo, 2018, Walter & Ophir, 2019). Making best of Entman’s (1993) definition, Matthes and Kohring (2008) posited that a frame can be measured as a cluster of frame elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. These elements could help to understand and describe “...issue-specific frames that provide details about the issue at hand.” (Kozman, 2017, p. 779). Such clusters have clear properties: “every frame is characterized by a specific pattern of variables. Conceived this way, frames are neither identified beforehand nor directly coded with a single variable.” (Matthes & Kohring, 2008, p. 264). When we deal with issue-specific frames, we do not necessarily find all these elements, but this approach allows us to not miss substantive features of frames under study. The affective side also did not escape

the attention of scholars. Boydston et al. (2013) distinguished positive, negative and neutral tones. This distinction helps identify the position expressed in the text and makes interpretations of frames more meaningful. Framing analysis can assist in both substantive understanding and valence of the issue-specific media coverage.

Preliminary analysis revealed two frames used across most of the reports - “demilitarization” and “de-nazification” of Ukraine. They started to be used by the Russian media in the weeks preceding the invasion. They depicted Ukraine as the country quickly militarized with the help from the West. The second frame was explained as the process during which Ukraine embraced the Nazi ideology.

If framing analysis represents a qualitative aspect of this study, content analysis will employ descriptive statistics to quantitatively measure and compare the number of key terms and articles related to the conflict.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The Russian – Ukrainian war is a recent and ongoing development. The current analysis is a snapshot of unfolding and unpredictable events, and is exploratory by its nature. Its goal is to establish certain trends which justify the use of not only hypotheses, but research questions as well.

To test the issue-attention cycle theory, the comparison between initial and the most recent coverage of the conflict will be made.

Hypothesis 1: The number of articles related to the coverage of the Russian – Ukrainian war in two selected media outlets will be higher at the initial period of the conflict as compared with 2nd period in Russia media.

The key words describing the war and serving as the terms for content analysis express certain intensity of the conflict. If the overall coverage of the war reduces, could this decrease also affect the use of certain marker words like “invasion” or the SMO decrease as well? If the issue cycle means certain fatigue with the issue, won’t it also affect the intensity of the coverage?

Research question 1: Will the number of mentions of the terms “invasion” and the SMO per article at the most recent stage decrease compared with the initial stage?

Framing analysis is not a single structured unified approach. Its qualitative aspect may differ across studies, and a few identified frames in this study are considered through the lens of the goals’ interpretations related to them. The goals are about what Russia wanted to achieve both politically and militarily. From the very beginning, the Russian side used certain terms to describe its invasion that downplayed the full-blown character of the war and put forward false pretexts for the invasion. It led to changes in the war’s character and the descriptions of its goals. Changes in the battlefield led to changes in the goals and interpretations of the war on the Russian side. The USA’s side used its own frames about what was going on during the course of the war.

Research question 2: Will the frames of war on the Russian side fluctuate more in their interpretations than on the American side due to the falsity of the Russian claims?

Results

Content Analysis

410 articles dealing with the developments in the Russian – Ukrainian war and using the coded terms were identified. 265 articles belonged to *cnn.com*, and 145 articles belonged to *gazeta.ru*. Hypothesis one states that the number of relevant articles in the initial stage (February, 24-28, 2022) will exceed the number of articles in the most recent period (September, 14-18). There were 108 articles related to the war at the initial period in *gazeta.ru*. The most recent period counted 37 such instances. A paired t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the number of articles at *gazeta.ru* at the initial stage of war were higher than at the most recent period. The results indicated that the mean for the initial period ($M=21.60$, $SD=6.50$) was significantly greater than the mean for the most recent one ($M=7.40$, $SD=2.70$), $t(4)=5.39$, $p=0.006$.

There were 203 articles related to the war at the initial period in *cnn.com*. The number of instances for the most recent period included 62 articles. A paired t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the number of articles at *gazeta.ru* at the initial stage of war were higher than at the most recent period. The results indicated that the mean for the initial period ($M=40.60$, $SD=6.38$) was significantly greater than the mean for the most recent one ($M=12.40$, $SD=5.98$), $t(4)=8.48$, $p=0.001$.

These results demonstrate that hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Another supplementary question explored in the study was whether the number of mentions of the terms “invasion” and the SMO per article at the most recent stage decreased compared with the initial stage. Every article on the war at *gazeta.ru* contained the reference to the SMO as the default. As a result, the term was used at least once in each article. The term was mentioned 237 times at the initial stage, and 77 times at the most recent stage. Altogether, the term was mentioned 314 times. At the initial period the SMO on average was mentioned 2.2 times per article, and 2.08 times during the most recent period. The average number of mentions per article was the result of dividing the number of all articles on the number of all mentions. The paired t test was conducted to evaluate whether the term SMO was mentioned more often at the initial stage than in the most recent stage. The results indicate that the mean for mentions for the initial period ($M=2.20$, $SD=1.59$) was not significantly greater than the mean for mentions at the most recent stage ($M=2.08$, $SD=.80$), $t(4)=1.75$, $p=0.154$.

Our research question sought to test whether there will be more mentions of the SMO at the initial period than in the most recent one, and it did not happen to be the case.

The key term “invasion” was used for content analysis of the war coverage at *cnn.com*. The term was mentioned 158 times at the initial stage, and 22 times at the most recent stage. Altogether, the term was mentioned 180 times. It looks like there was a significant difference even before testing. However, the number of articles also was smaller. At the initial period the “invasion” on average was mentioned 0.85 times per article, and 0.38 times per article during the most recent period. The paired t test was conducted to evaluate whether the term “invasion”

was mentioned more often at the initial stage than in the most recent stage. The results indicate that the mean for mentions for the initial period ($M=0.85$, $SD=0.33$) was significantly greater than the mean for mentions at the most recent stage ($M=0.38$, $SD=0.18$), $t(4)=3.16$, $p=0.034$.

Our research question sought to test whether there will be more mentions of the "invasion" term at the initial period than in the most recent one, and the test confirmed that this is the case.

Framing

There were two frames that dominated the Russian source - protecting Russian speakers in the Donbas region from genocide, and "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine. Although both were deceptive and were not supported by any evidence, these two issue-specific frames did not refer to how Russia is planning to do it, and what will follow after the hypothesized occupation of part or the whole of Ukraine. There should be certain goals that represent the stages of the unfolding of this war. Russian dictator, Putin, broadened the interpretation of the "self-defence" frame to protecting the whole country, not being specific about threats to Russia (gazeta.ru, Putin announced the special military operation to defend Donbass). President's Press Secretary, Peskov, reiterated "denazification and demilitarization" and "self-defence" frames, but he didn't define them. Moreover, he refused to set any time limits for the operation, and although he denied that Russia aims at the occupation of Ukraine, but he refused to explain at what point of territorial gains the aggressor was planning to stop. (gazeta.ru, "Free Ukraine, clean it from Nazi"). The Foreign Minister of Russia, Lavrov, described the SMO as an act of liberating Ukrainian from the "fascist" regime. Again, he didn't indicate whether Russia aimed to occupy the whole country, and whether the aggressors would install its puppet to rule Ukraine. (gazeta.ru, Lavrov announced nobody plans to occupy Ukraine).

Maria Zakharova, Spokeswoman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation claimed that Kyiv should be held accountable for the crimes against its population. The claim matched the "denazification" frame, but again was not supported by any evidence. (gazeta.ru, Zakharova named the goals of the special operation).

During the very first days of war, the leading Russian politicians and propagandists formulated the goals for the invasion and what may constitute the frames "denazification" and "demilitarization".

Special Russian representative, Chizhov, insisted that Russia would not stay in Ukraine after the end of the SMO which proved to be a lie later. (gazeta.ru, Russian representative at the EU declared that Russia is not planning to stay).

In another report, Chizhov was quoted as saying that creating the new government in Ukraine is probable, and that the government could establish peace with the Donbass region. This claim obviously indicated Russian plans for a regime change (gazeta.ru, Russian representative at the EU foresees the new government).

A Russian representative at the UN, Nebenzia, used the frames “denazification” and “demilitarization” not only for justification of the Russian invasion, but he also asserted that the SMO will be quick as “denazification” relates to a limited number of mythical nationalists who are the only ones to resist (gazeta.ru. Nebenzia predicts a quick completion of the operation).

However, the September sample articles did not contain a single reference to the “denazification” and “demilitarization” frames. The only reference to goals that could relate to the frames was a statement by Putin that Russia started the SMO to prevent the creation of an Anti-Russian enclave in Ukraine. The absence of these frames indicates that these false and unclear terms did not find any positive response after 6 months of the SMO anymore.

CNN coverage rarely referred to the invasion as the SMO. It happened only as a reference or as quotes from Russian officials. Aside from “invasion”, Russian actions were also framed as “military aggression”. These frames allow for detecting the cluster of terms related to the goals of this aggression. The frame “aggression”’s meaning was defined early in the military assault as follows: “they have every intention of basically decapitating the government and installing their own method of governance, which would explain these early moves towards Kyiv” (CNN: Attacks on Ukraine part of “initial phase” of a “large-scale” Russian invasion). The Western leaders, such as the UK Defence Secretary Wallace, characterised the Russian actions through using the frame “invasion”, and he specified that Russia wanted to invade all of Ukraine. (CNN: UK Defense Secretary: “Our view is that Russia intends to invade the whole of Ukraine”) The Russian invasion could also encompass the occupation of the East and South of Ukraine; creating a puppet pro-Russian government in Central Ukraine; and leaving a real Ukraine within the Galician region with the capital Lviv. (CNN: Here are some possibilities Putin may be planning for Ukraine). Overall, the invasion was recognized as a war like it was in the Turkey announcement (CNN: Turkish foreign minister: Turkey recognizes the Russian invasion to Ukraine as “war”). These ten frames were the clearest manifestations of dominant interpretations of events on behalf of two media outlets. These interpretations are qualitative by their nature, as their specific linguistic form may change due to changes in the dominant discourse. “In current framing studies, the interpretation and presentation of news language...is in short supply” (Lule, 2019, p. 18).

The above-mentioned instances of describing the frames “invasion” and “aggression” through its goals dominated the discourse at the beginning of the war.

It is interesting that in the second September sample the coverage didn’t include any references to the SMO goals. It may mean that the frames interpretation has not changed over the course of the war.

Discussion

The Russian-Ukrainian war has become the most important and potentially dangerous for the world peace since the World War II both in its scope and

implications. Unsurprisingly, this conflict drew an unprecedented attention on behalf of the international media. The media's interest to the war is strong across the board, but the media differ in how they cover it. Countries that stifled independent media and freedom of speech like Russia follow the government's interpretation of events no matter how far this interpretation is from reality. The media of democratic countries have sufficient independence to cover the events in accordance with how they unfold. Media in democratic countries offer their interpretations of events not always free from certain biases as well. However, the independent media are able to accept the changes and contradictions indispensable of such a complex phenomenon as a war.

There are also regularities in how the media handle the events of utmost importance. The issue cycle theory detected one such regularity- gradual decrease of attention to an issue irrespective of whether the issue is getting resolved or not.

This study addressed both what is common for the media with different levels of independence, and what distinguishes them. The issue-cycle theory was tested to see whether media coverage of an issue decreases regardless of how free the media of certain countries are. The hypothesis was supported. The number of articles in September dedicated to the war events compared with the number of articles at the beginning of war in February diminished significantly. It was true for *gazeta.ru*, the Russian government –controlled outlet, despite the fact that Russia is engaged in this war, and that fact could lead to keeping the same attention in the media. It worked for *cnn.com* as well, the company that continued to keep the constantly updated news flow about the conflict.

The issue-cycle theory found additional support in this study, and it may be another indication that there are regularities in the way the media operate having certain universal properties. This conclusion is important because the social world to which the media belong is known for its changeability and resistance to any rigid schemes and predictability.

This paper also explored a separate question about whether the key terms linked to the issue are also used less with the time passed. These terms are like key triggers, focal embodiments of an issue coverage, the articles about the issue. The idea behind this question is that it is not only number of reports on the issue which decrease over time – it is also the number of mentions of the key terms inside a smaller number of articles that diminishes as well. Content analysis revealed two such terms” the SMO for *gazeta.ru*, and “the invasion” for *cnn.com*. In the former case, there were no indications that the number of mentions of the key term “SMO” decreased over time. There may be a probable explanation which deals with the fact that *gazeta.ru* uses this word at least once per article as default reducing variability. However, in the case with *cnn.com* the use of the key term “invasion” did significantly decrease over time. This discrepancy may mean that the independent media follow in general the logic of the issue-cycle theory both for the number of the articles as well as for the number of the key term mentions. However, the number of mentions becomes an outcome of interplay of additional factors in the media of authoritarian states.

Media, in general, operate in such a way that their coverage follow certain patterns. They also use certain tools to present the facts and events in certain

interpretative forms called frames. The issue-specific frames suggest certain meaning and solutions and the same events may be described in contradictory frames. Frames such as “defence of Donbass people” and “demilitarization” and “denazification” of Ukraine. These frames aimed at shedding a favorable light on the war, and they were not chosen by the media themselves. They had to use the frames given to them by the government. These frames reflected a false reality and were rigid meaning that no matter whether the situation on the ground contradicts to them or not, the media had to stick to them. This led to both difficulty and variability in supporting these frames with evidence. The problems became transparent with the causes of the war that had to match these frames. The real cause- the effort to occupy Ukraine and install pro-Russian government there, did not surface directly. It comes through the causes ranging from protection of Russia from NATO to “liberation” of Ukrainian people. The Western media, in our example *cnn.com*, defined the war with the frames “aggression” and “invasion” and the evidence supported these frames through both sampled time periods. In a free society, the media have such a luxury, to reflect on the events as they are and stick with the interpretations that find support in the field.

Conclusion

The current study confirmed that the media coverage of even the most dramatic and consequential events as the Russian-Ukrainian war, follow a pattern of waning attention on behalf of the news outlets matter whether the media system relies on influence or coercion. It is less known whether the key terms associated with the issue description and the mentions of these terms fall as well. The evidence from the current study is mixed. Another intriguing process of media effects is issue-specific framing which gives the media an opportunity to suggest certain interpretations and causal attributions if placed in a proper context. However, some correspondence with the real-life indicators is needed, otherwise the rigid frames may become too variable and vague, potentially reducing its persuasiveness. It could be also interesting to explore whether the decrease of the specific terms are replaced with other similar terms which may mean not simply waning attention, but a change in defining an issue. The current study hints at such a development, but future studies could clarify this possibility further.

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