

Agenda setting, priming, framing – TV news in Poland during election campaigns 2005 and 2007. Comparative analysis



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ABSTRACT: The goal of the study is to verify, based on empirical data, the agenda setting, framing and priming theoretical conclusions and to utilize them as interpretative narratives on the pre-election period of media discourse on Polish TV. Then the question was – how the media set the agenda, which frames they used to make news interpretation, and what was/were the most accessible real problems/issues, that conditioned party/candidate assessment (if at all) and at last – which (if at all) would have been the consequences of the mentioned above media reporting towards political process? The empirical base of investigation were TV news programs in Polish both public (TVP1 – “Wiadomości”) and commercial TV (TVN – “Fakty”).

KEYWORDS: agenda setting, framing, priming, media agenda, public agenda, political agenda



INTRODUCTION

The sound popularity career of agenda setting discourse within the mass communication theory is connected with the empirically grounded assertion that media, in fact, are not only successful in telling people what to think about (as Bernard Cohen said), but what to think at all – as well. Even most interesting is the interaction between media coverage about social, economic and political issues and the real condition of these issues. As we can observe in public opinion polls, media coverage not so much reflects the real social problems (for example, delinquency or drug addiction), but thanks to many reports about specific problems, often produces public interests in problems (for example, despite the declining level of delinquency).

The proposed study is comprised in the stream of the *Concept of Powerful Mass Media* research (started by the Hypodermic Needle Model, known as the Magic

Bullet perspective, or the Direct Effect Model and – to a certain degree – Agenda Setting Theory), but mainly it intends to draw attention to social and political consequences of interaction (and feedback effect) between public, media and political agenda, when deliberating and setting the most important public issues.

However, we do not intend to omit or disregard the output of the other models in explaining mass media effects, that is, for example, Limited Effects Model, Two-Step-Flow of Communication or Multilevel Flow of Communication Model, Strategic Model and Uses-and-Gratification Concept (compare: McQuail, 2006, p. vii; Iyengar, Simon, 2000, pp. 149–169; Michalczyk, 2008, pp. 364–404). It seems that the best way to solve the problem is to define the media as playing a key role within having influence on public issues, but at the same time to set this influence in the strongly competitive environment of politics.

Taking into account the Concept of Powerful Mass Media and making a proposition for a new research direction, we would like to indicate the need of profound investigation in the area of interaction between the media agenda and the political agenda and its consequences within the political processes.

AGENDA SETTING, NEWS FRAMING, PRIMING – THEORIES AND NOTIONS

The agenda setting theory is regarded at present as a key theory which explains mass communication effect and mass media influence in long term conditions. The main assumptions of the theory were formulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw studies (*The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*, 1972; *The Emergence of American Political Issues*, 1977; these presumptions were rooted in Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion*, 1922 and Paul Lazarfeld's team works). The goal of this work is not to present the agenda setting theory in detail (see widely: McCombs, 2008; Cohen, 1963, p. 4 and next; D. McLeod, Kosicki, J. McLeod, 2008, p. 230; Pharr, Krauss, 1996, p. 299 and next). We only have to indicate that we see setting the agenda as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon. The three dimensions within the agenda setting are connected with the three main political actors:

- media agenda,
- public (citizens') agenda,
- political agenda (for example, head of the state, government, political parties, pressure groups, lobbies, that is, people and groups that create policies of the country).

The relationships between these types of agenda reflect at once the relationships between the key public/political players. The dimension of political agenda, methodologically and empirically regarded as the most complicated, has been – to a minor degree – so far the subject of scientific exploration and investigation. For that reason we have devoted especially attention to this dimension. What is more, as we think, the most interesting is the second and third level of the agenda setting theory and research, where framing and priming concepts are applied (see: Reese, 2001,

pp. 7–33; McCombs, Ghanem, 2001, p. 67 and next; Entman, 2004, p. 164). In this study we understand framing as the interpretation of issue based on the assertion that the way (question) issue is (related) presented by media determines the way it is perceived by publicity (Kahneman, Tversky, 1979, 1984; Weaver, 2007, p. 143; compare Goffman's Frame Analysis, in: Baran, Davis, 2007, pp. 322–324; Chong, Druckman, 2007, p. 99).

The theory of framing established various types of frames (see, for example, Ken-ski, 1996, p. 74; Entman, 2004). However, the most empirically useful is the specification according to H.A. Semetko and P.M. Valkenburg who distinguished: frame of conflict, frame of person (focusing on the person), frame of economic consequences, frame of morality, frame of responsibility (Semetko, Valkenburg, 2000, pp. 93–99; Cwalina, Falkowski, 2005, p. 274; compare: Durham, 2001, p. 124). M. McCombs claims that the framing level can be even of the most political (meaningful) importance, because controlling the public debate perspective ('impersonate', personify) is the manifestation of political power – is essential for exercising political power (Mc-Combs, 2008, p. 93).

The priming level is relatively the most complicated function of agenda and has different meanings depending on scholars' preferences. Priming is the most often defined as setting (changing, shifting) standards when evaluating political life by publicity. Priming also determines the criteria which we use while perceiving and estimating politics and politicians.¹ Priming is devoted to public's focusing on particularly important problems, standardization of political communication and to mechanisms of creating prisms of perceiving and estimating politics.

In a slightly different approach, priming means giving events, politicians, parties and issues a special status.² According to this view media are ranking information in public agenda, thanks to public common conviction, that everything which is significant and essential in public life is reported by media (see also: Kozłowska, 2006, p. 75). However, in this study we use only this type of priming concept interpretation which suggests that viewers are interested only in real social or economic, or political problems (for example, the Polish government engagement in the Middle East conflict), which of course is some kind of simplification (we have omitted, for example,

¹ For example, television news coverage of the conflict in the Persian Gulf significantly affected Americans' political concerns and the criteria with which they evaluated George Bush. Prior to the crisis, Americans were preoccupied with economic problems and crime and they evaluated G. Bush through these problems. Following the Iraqi invasion on Kuwait – the Gulf crisis became public's paramount concern, and evaluations of George Bush became more dependent upon foreign policy considerations (Iyengar, Simon, 2007, p. 167).

² In this study, particularly in the part devoted to empirical analysis, we take the definition of priming as a level of agenda setting and in the context of priming we propose to take into account the place news is set in the hierarchy of news, the length of news and the context of news. The status attributed to news by the media conditions their perception in terms of key events. At the time it satisfies the viewers' needs of making hierarchy within information. The news presented as the first becomes more likely to be considered by the viewers as the most important.

psychological and cognitive mechanisms of priming process or attitude accessibility concept; Sears, 1993, p. 138), but this enables us to provide with only a short view on political campaign picture displayed by Polish dominant television stations.

PUBLIC AND MEDIA AGENDA

The correlations between media and public agenda are diverse and complex and this analysis has no ambitions to build or contribute to the general theory on a macro level. It seeks however to capture the structure and mechanisms of this relation in a concrete case study approached from a comparative perspective. Our study investigates only the agenda building process in TV broadcast,³ and does not search public opinions' reaction, but our goal is to increase a probability of agenda shifting salience between media and public and political agenda.

Therefore, it is more reasonable to focus on power and quality of media influence. As empirical data show, there is a significant correlation between public and media agenda, that is +0.60, as we look at countrywide television news and more than +0.70 for countrywide press. The reverse shifting of salience – from public to media agenda – amounts only to +0.22 (McCombs, 2008, p. 2).

The power of media agenda toward public agenda can be confirmed by the media's ability to evoke and spin a crisis, riots, revolts and spreading social disorders. As a classical example we can indicate the mass hysteria as an effect of the radio broadcast: *War of the Worlds* by Orson Wells in 1938. We can find other examples in Germany during fuel crisis in 1973 or in Spain in 2004, when we could observe mass reaction as an effect of the bomb attack in Madrid. A similar phenomenon is the still existing false conviction among the American public (due to American media) that Iraq possessed nuclear weapon (McCombs, 2008, p. 26; McQuail, 2007, pp. 477–478; Baran, Davis, 2007, p. 21).

Examples of this type media influence on the public opinion – often reflected in public opinion polls – can be found almost every day when making observations about the dynamics of the political life and political scene.⁴

³ In M. McCombs' opinion, to introduce the agenda building concept, an additional term should be regarded redundant, because agenda setting comprises agenda building ('This all it is agenda setting' – the statement of M. McCombs on the 23rd of November 2009, International conference held in Wrocław, 22–24th November 2009, *Development of Agenda-Setting Theory and Research. Between West and East*).

⁴ For example, on the 7th October 2009 there was public opinion poll about the public support for presidential election 2010' candidates presented in Polish TVN24. The results of survey conducted at the time by media was strongly interested in so-called 'gambling scandal' – which engaged members of Tusk's cabinet – indicated that citizens' support for prime minister Donald Tusk (in the context of mentioned election) has declined by 10 percent in relation to surveys carried out before 'gambling scandal' exploded. In this case the variability of public opinion evaluation can be considered as media agenda influence on public agenda, when we take into account repeatability and intensity of broadcast – focused since few days on chosen, dominating issue.

MEDIA AGENDA AND POLITICAL AGENDA

As we have mentioned, there is still only a small interest among scholars in undertaking examinations and making analyses about the shifting salience between media agenda and political agenda, particularly when we think about the media influence on political behavior and decisions (compare: Kepplinger, 2007). However, we can find the theoretical and methodological backgrounds in this area, for example, in the studies of Ralph M. Negrine (1994, pp. 124–138). This author is conceptualizing the model of political communication by focusing on the relationship between media and politicians. Negrine claims that the role of publicity in political life actually is passive and very limited – citizens and viewers, with their needs and preferences, are the object of marketing, especially targeting strategy of media and political organizations. He takes into account two things – the efficiency of lobbies (pressure groups), who are striving toward significant social/political status through managing their media visibility and positive presence and, on the other hand, media influence realized within political process.

The mentioned influence is visible the most effectively during election campaigns. Firstly, media form the attitudes and affect behavior of citizens, although we still do not know everything about the range and power of this phenomenon. Secondly, what is even most significant – media's political impact is realized by structuring political communication and, consequently, political rivalry. Thirdly, the specifics of media broadcast as the main and often the only source of information about politics (especially TV news) appoint the media as a natural participant in political processes.

Some scholars behold media effects on political life as even broader and deeper, for example those, who are studying *The CNN effect* (Robinson, 2002, p. 21). According to this idea, media broadcast can directly influence political events and decisions (let us indicate, for example: military intervention in Somalia 1991–1992, Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003 and the course of the Persian Gulf War 1990–1991).

Summing up considerations about the influence of media (agenda) on political agenda, we propose to distinguish two types of this impact:

- Case 1 – an event would not have taken place, if it was not probable or even known in advance that event's coverage would appear in the media; sometimes events are created because of the media broadcast, and their course is oriented towards media report. For example, in Poland the so-called 'Sawicka affair' was arranged toward media relation on the last days of the election campaign in 2007; 'Blida case' in April 2007 – making an arrest (by the Central Anticorruption Office – Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne) of Polish former minister Barbara Blida prosecuted for corruption – the act of arresting was recorded in order to present on TV the Kaczyński's cabinet success in overcoming corruption problems; during this arrest B. Blida committed suicide.

- Case 2 – the direct consequence of media reporting is undertaking some political action or operation or holding back this action by political entities, groups or institutions; in the international context some scholars see even the danger of media created foreign policy (Robinson, 2002, p. 10). As examples we can indicate numerous TV or Radio ‘of intervention broadcasts’ and press ‘of intervention campaigns’. What is more – in results we can sometimes get the impression that the most popular media genre is evoking or producing public rebels.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The goal of the presented empirical analysis is to verify, based on empirical data, the agenda setting, framing and priming theoretical conclusions and to utilize them as interpretative narratives on the pre-election period of media discourse on Polish TV. Then the question was – how the media set the agenda, which frames they used to make news interpretation, and what was/were the most accessible real problems/issues, that conditioned party/candidate assessment (if at all) and at last which (if at all) would have been the consequences of the mentioned above media reporting towards political process?

The objects of investigation were TV news programs in Polish both public (TVP1 – the title of news program is “Wiadomości”), and commercial TV (TVN – the title of news program is “Fakty”). These programs belong to the most popular (the highest level of ratings) TV news programs in Poland.⁵ The subject of the analysis were 4 sets of TV news broadcast:

- 1) 10 news broadcast from the period of presidential and parliamentary election in 2005 – broadcast by TVP1 – 14–23 September 2005,
- 2) the major part of 10 news broadcast by TVN at the same time in 2005,
- 3) 10 news broadcast from the period of 10–19 October 2007 – that is, from an earlier parliamentary election in 2007 – broadcast by TVP1,
- 4) 10 news broadcast of TVN from the same period of 2007.

The analytical unit was a ‘newsflash’ (compare: Boyd, 2006, p. 183) – on average 2–5 minutes long recording, forming a coherent structure. Consequently, we investigated a set of 316 ‘newsflashes’ – which creates a representative sample of TV news for above mentioned pre-elections’ periods (149 of 2005; 167 of 2007).

What is especially worth mentioning, we cannot say in Poland that media is thoroughly independent – public TV is commonly controlled by this party which holds political majority in a special supervisory council – Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji. The most often it is a governing party – in 2005 it was Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – Democratic Left Alliance, and in 2007 Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – Law & Justice. On the contrary, commercial TV like TVN is politically as a rule

⁵ Ratings totally: 12–18.09.2005 – TVP1 23.3%; Polsat 17.1%; TVN 15.6%; 15–21.10.2007 – TVP1 21.2%; TVN 17.2%; Polsat 15.1%, http://www.tvn.pl/324417_onas.html; 11.04.2008.

independent but we can say without doubt that there usually exist political and economic (financial) connections, which cause specific subordinations of journalist and TV board or sometimes there are simply ideological or axiological journalistic commitments, which determine the direction of political interpretation.

PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN 2005

1) Agenda setting and priming analysis – public TV – “Wiadomości”

Table 1. Agenda setting and priming – campaign topics – “Wiadomości” 2005

Position	Topic	Points (total 1+2)	1. Position in topics hierarchy points*	2. Time dedicated points**
1	Civic Platform (CP) – Law & Justice (L&J) conflict	64	24	40
2	Electoral campaign	58	22	36
3	Cimoszewicz's resignation	39	15	24
4	Communist past	32	15	17
5	Election in Germany	26	11	15
6	Opinion polls	23	10	13
7	Hurricanes Rita and Catrina in the USA	16	5	11
8	UN summit	13	4	9
9	Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) campaign	12	5	7
10	Support of Solidarity movement for Lech Kaczyński	7	3	4

* The amount of points depends on the position of the news in the hierarchy of topics and on how many times the news was emitted; score: 1 position – 5 points, 2 position – 3 points, 3 position – 2 points, every next position – 1 point.

** Time dedicated designates the length of news – record, which is creating structured integrity; usually the length of news dedicated to politics spread out between 2 and 7 minutes (3 minutes on average); ‘political news’ was the longest and the highest positioned in hierarchy of topics; the amount of points depends on the minutes the news was lasting taking into account the following limitation: 5 minutes and more – 5 points; 4 minutes – 4 points; 3 minutes – 3 points; 2 minutes – 2 points; 1 minute and fewer – 1 point.

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs – TVP1 “Wiadomości” from the period of 14–23 September 2005 (103 newsflashes).

As we can see from this set of news – electoral campaign news and the conflict between Civic Platform (in Polish PO – Platforma Obywatelska) and L & J (in Polish PiS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) have strongly dominated media agenda in 2005 – and as a result we could observe intensive political priming – that is, electoral ‘horse race’ as priming or even (we can say) the lack of priming.

2) Framing analysis – public TV – “Wiadomości”

Table 2. News framing – “Wiadomości” 2005

		Personal frame*	Morality frame	Conflict frame	Economic consequences frame
1	How many times applied**	19	7	14	1
2	Positive towards CP	–	–	–	–
3	Positive towards L&J	5	2	4	–
4	Positive towards DLA	6	–	–	–
5	Negative towards CP	–	2	1	1
6	Negative towards L&J	–	–	–	–
7	Negative towards DLA	–	3	1	–

* The four commonly used frames were applied in order to analyze the content of TV news in Polish commercial and public TV stations: conflict frame; morality frame; economic consequences frame; personal frame (however, morality frame comprises moral and political responsibility and consequences of political action). Apart from reflecting the framing structure of the public discourse in that period, the operationalisation includes also the positive vs. negative ways of framing the facts by the journalists' comments – positive/negative towards political parties running in the parliamentary elections supporting candidates in presidential elections.

** The number of use (application) of the frames is not the same as the number of positive/negative dimension frames (interpretation [41]), because of neutrality of some frames (62).

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs – TVP1 “Wiadomości” from the period of 14–23 September 2005 (103 newflashes).

Framing analysis indicates that in public TV personal frame was dominant as well as conflict frame (the interpretation was concentrated on CP and L&J electoral conflict). What is very important – there were any framings – positive interpretation with the advantage for CP, but many positive framings for L&J.

3) Framing analysis – commercial TV – “Fakty”⁶

Table 3. News framing – “Fakty” 2005

		Personal frame	Morality frame	Conflict frame	Economic consequences frame
1	How many times applied *	6	6	16	3
2	Positive towards CP	1	–	5	–
3	Positive towards L&J	–	–	–	–
4	Positive towards DLA	2	–	–	–

⁶ Because of the limitation of the TVN news programs' availability as regards 2005 elections campaign, we have conducted only frame analyses; according to information of TVN Commercial Office they form archives and make accessible for public and research purposes only the parts of “Fakty” broadcast of 2005.

Tab. 3 – cont.

5	Negative towards CP	–	1	1	–
6	Negative towards L&J	1	–	–	–
7	Negative towards DLA	1	2	1	1

* The number of use (application) of the frames is not the same as the number of positive/negative dimension frames (interpretation [31]), because of neutrality of some frames (15).

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs (partly available) – “Fakty” from the period of 14–23 September 2005 (46 newsflashes).

In commercial TV we can observe rather conflict frame domination (but personal frame is often present as well), but there is inverse trend in positive/negative interpretation in comparison with public TV – there were any framings – positive interpretation with the advantage for L&J, but many positive framings for CP.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN 2007

1) Agenda setting and priming analysis – public TV – “Wiadomości” broadcast

Table 4. Agenda setting and priming – campaign topics – “Wiadomości” 2007

Position	Topic	1. Points (total 2+3)*	2. Hierarchy of topics – position points	3. Time dedicated (amount) points
1	Election campaign	113	53	60
2	Sawicka case	25	11	14
3	Religion and Church	21	8	13
4	Crime overcoming	20	9	11
5	Betanki Order siege	15	7	8
6	A. Kwaśniewski’s diseases (alcohol problems)	14	7	7
7	Energy bridge – Poland–Lithuania	7	4	3
8	Russia–Germany relationship	7	2	5
9	Polish coal mafia case	6	3	3

* The number of points – the same principles as for Tab. 1.

Source: Own study based on the set of TV news programs – TVP1 “Wiadomości” from the period of 10–19 October 2007 (78 newsflashes).

The main topic of public TV from pre-election time of 2007 is the same as in 2005 – it means that the main topic of campaign was campaign itself and the problem with priming – or the lack of priming – has been continued. The next topics – religion and Church, crime overcoming and especially Sawicka affair (and former

president Aleksander Kwaśniewski case or Polish coal mafia case as well) – completed the picture of Polish political life, which was far more favorable for L & J and its electorate than for other parties.

2) Agenda setting and priming analysis – commercial TV – “Fakty” broadcast

Table 5. Agenda setting and priming – campaign topics – “Fakty” 2007

Position	Topic	Points (total 1+2)	1. Position in topics hierarchy points*	2. Time dedicated – (amount) points
1	Election campaign	121	49	72
2	B. Sawicka affair	38	17	21
3	A. Kwaśniewski's disease (alcohol problem)	22	9	12
4	CP-L&J conflict	27	11	16
5	Betanki Order siege	22	8	14
6	Health service problems	20	6	15
7	Army and defences	16	4	12
8	Polish engagement in the Middle East conflict	15	8	7
9	Foreign affairs	14	5	9

* The number of points – the same principles as for Tab. 1.

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs – “Fakty” from the period of 10–19 October 2007 (89 newsflashes).

The agenda of “Fakty” broadcast was very similar to “Wiadomości” agenda of 2007, however it only means that the viewers of “Fakty” were thinking about the same issues as the viewers of “Wiadomości,” but not in the same way. The events of election campaign were interpreted and assessed critically for both main parties CP and L & J, but finally the picture of leaders and their actions was significantly more profitable for CP than for L & J. In “Fakty” broadcast there were not perceptible social, economic, international or any public problems which could be regarded as priming for other issues.⁷

⁷ See G.S. Lenz's empirical study about priming, in which it is proved that: “I reanalyze four cases of alleged priming, using panel data to test priming effects against these alternatives. Across these four cases, I find little evidence of priming effects. Instead, campaign and media attention to an issue creates the appearance of priming through a two-part process: Exposing individuals to campaign and media messages on an issue (1) informs some of them about the parties' or candidates' positions on that issue. Once informed, (2) these individuals often adopt their preferred party's or candidate's position as their own” (Lenz, 2009, p. 821).

3) Framing analysis – public TV – “Wiadomości”

Table 6. Framing – “Wiadomości” 2007

		Personal frame	Morality frame	Conflict frame	Economic consequences frame
1	How many times applied *	10	16	15	8
2	Positive towards CP	–	–	–	–
3	Positive towards L&J	2	8	1	3
4	Positive towards DLA	–	–	–	–
5	Negative towards CP	–	4	2	1
6	Negative towards L&J	–	–	–	–
7	Negative towards DLA	–	2	–	–

* The number of use (application) of the frames is not the same as the number of positive/negative dimension frames (interpretation [49]), because of neutrality of some frames (29).

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs – TVP1 “Wiadomości” from the period of 10–19 October 2007 (78 newsflashes).

The framing analysis of “Wiadomości” from 2007 has confirmed political bias of this program – none of the news was provided by positive frame – interpretation towards CP, but many for L&J. Personal and morality frames were most commonly used because of displaying political life in which many persons were engaged in fighting for and against ‘moral revolution.’

4) Framing analysis – commercial TV – “Fakty”

Table 7. Framing – “Fakty” 2007

		Personal frame	Morality frame	Conflict frame	Economic consequences frame
1	How many times applied *	13	23	12	3
2	Positive towards CP	1	3	7	–
3	Positive towards L&J	–	1	–	1
4	Positive towards DLA	1	–	–	–
5	Negative towards CP	–	–	–	–
6	Negative towards L&J	3	8	2	1
7	Negative towards DLA	2	2	2	–

* The number of use (application) of the frames is not the same as the number of positive/negative dimension frames (interpretation [51]), because of neutrality of some frames (48).

Source: Own study based on the set of 10 TV news programs – “Fakty” from the period of 10–19 October 2007 (89 newsflashes).

The framing analysis of “Fakty” from 2007 shows the same trend as in 2005 – only one news could be regarded as positive for L & J and many news were provided by positive interpretation in favor towards CP. Personal and morality frames were dominating, conflict frames was strongly present as well.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the results from analyses presented above, as regards setting the agenda, framing and priming and possible influences and affecting between media and public and political agenda as well, we can indicate settlements as follows (with-in public and commercial TV in 2005 and 2007 pre-election campaigns).

Agenda Setting and Priming

- The events of election campaigns in 2005 and in 2007 (in various contexts and interpretations) were the most popular topics of TV news during the last two weeks before the ballot day – news about campaign was presented most commonly as the first or second news of broadcast and was often the longest news of program – the picture of campaign and political competition was displayed as political ‘horse race,’ strongly personalized and deprived of real public problems.

- Intensive political priming was the consequence of displaying public life before ballots as ‘horse race’ – public life at that time was seen through electoral competition, by continuous comparing candidates and their electoral chances; however, we might as well certify lack of priming in presidential-parliamentary campaign in Poland 2005 because of absence of real, serious social or economic or global problems, which could or even should structure political competition (assessing politics through politics itself, and absence of issue voting as regards the parliamentary elections – both in 2005 and 2007).

- Conflict between the two leading parties dominated most of political news presented by “Wiadomości” and “Fakty” especially in 2005.⁸ On the one hand, it could be regarded as natural, due to its TV attractiveness, but on the other hand, the results were very significant for the picture of politics during pre-election time and for political process too – the electoral conflict between Civic Platform and Law & Justice became so strong that the assumed alliance did not put into effect. What is even most important – a further effect of this electoral conflict was political defeat of the governing party Law and Justice in 2007 and the early election as well. Of course, the conflict was not only the result of media presentation but sociopolitical cleavages – Liberal Poland *versus* Solidary Poland as well. However, we must be

⁸ This picture of campaign is CP localised in the Center of the political spectrum and absorbing the voters both from the left as well as from the right, so both DLA's and L & J's interest was to attack the central party in order to gravitate its electorate.

conscious of the role of spin doctors and media public relation in creating, spreading and making political and social divisions among the public.

- Some of the next topics in media agenda in 2005 and 2007 can be recognized as fateful for public and political agenda too. For example, the opinion polls often presented as news and provided with journalist's and expert's opinion not only strengthen the position of some parties on political market (particularly L&J), but wind up the spiral of science and put smaller parties (for example with 5 or lower level of foreseeing electoral support) at a disadvantage. What is more, taking into account the proportion in which all the parties (their leaders and campaign) of political scene were presented in TV news, we have to assume that the so-called second league parties were in fact overwhelmed by the first league parties (there were only a few very short reports about Samoobrona – Self-Defense, Liga Polskich Rodzin – League of Polish Families, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – Polish Peasant Party – although in 2005 more than in 2007; compare: Kolczyński, Mazur, 2009, p. 109).

Framing

- Both public and commercial TV applied similar framing strategies – in 2005 mainly conflict and personal frames and in 2007 more often morality frame. Personal frame was, among others, a consequence of overlapping presidential and parliamentary elections and using conflict frame was connected with its media attractiveness for viewers, but of course not only with such a publicity need. The parliamentary election was illustrated in the media mainly through the conflict between the two opposing political parties, which is also an effect of Polish political culture – being very little consensual and deliberative, but rather confrontational and abrasive. The result of conflict frame domination was in 2005, as it was mentioned, the failure of CP and L&J governmental alliance and in 2007 – delegitimization of L&J as a governing party.

- When we combine agenda setting and framing analyses we can assume that the same topic of agenda and the same type of framing can be applied by the various media TV stations in a completely different way, for example – agenda setting analysis of public news from 2007 shows that the most frequently exploited topic was B. Sawicka affair-scandal (Beata Sawicka was a CP deputy during the parliamentary term 2005–2007) which reached a high position in the hierarchy of the news due to its emotional aspect and moral judgments accompanying. The public media news – “Wiadomości” spinned this topic as an opportunity to show a success of J. Kaczyński's government in fighting corruption. “Wiadomości” used morality frame when interpreting Sawicka affair to exposé business-corruption connection of deputy B. Sawicka. An obvious corruption act by one of the CP deputies was interpreted as L&J media campaign – together with a political advertisement emitted at that time. Interestingly enough, commercial TV used the same morality

frame to judge negatively L & J cabinet, arguing that deputy Sawicka was unfair and groundlessly suspected and accused.

- Presented above composition of news agenda, ordered according to the frame applied, shows very clearly that public TV in main broadcast most commonly employed personal frame – at the time, we can confirm the high level of personalization with reference to media coverage and campaign itself. The consequence of this phenomenon for public agenda is that parliamentary campaign in 2005 was dominated by the presidential campaign (paradoxically – due to the fact that Poland is a cabinet system and the political power is mainly concentrated in the prime minister's office).

- The next proposition is that positive/negative dimension framing of the public news TVP1 was applied in favor to Law and Justice and Democratic Left Alliance – none of the news in its interpretative frame was positive for Civic Platform! (in 2005 and in 2007 as well). It is connected with judging the Liberal-Solidary Poland conflict in favor of Law & Justice – Solidary Poland. Seeing the analyzed material through the interpretative frames reveals that the favored party was L&J. The Liberal vs. Solidary Poland scheme of public discourse forced by L&J was recycled by the journalists, invited experts and legitimized such a structure of the electoral market.

- Morality frame often applied by public TV was also advantageous to L & J (in 2005 and 2007) – by political program engaged and ideologically devoted to fighting corruption; consequently, the application of morality frame by public TV provided Law and Justice with electoral profits.

To summarize the relationship between media, public and political agenda within the context of Polish presidential and parliamentary campaigns and taking into account the results from empirical investigation presented above we can assume the following:

- The main observation about Polish media agenda during election campaigns is that – electoral-partisan conflicts gain dominant position within political process and the hierarchy of news; there is no issue voting (as voting behavior model) and there is no priming – or we can observe priming politics by politics itself.

- There is a very visible influence of media agenda on public agenda. The shifting salience can be observed in the results of opinion polls, the course of campaign and, as a consequence, in the results of the elections. Watching news in television matters not only as gaining information to understand social and political environment, but when decision making about life and politics, by citizens and by politicians as well. As we know, people got their information about the world mainly from TV (Woodall, Davis, Sahin, 2007, p. 401).

- As we can suppose there is a strong effect of media agenda on political agenda as well – many (or even the majority) campaign events would not have happened if there were no probability and possibility the media to report them. However, to prove this effect, among others the CNN effect in the Polish election context, it is necessary to work out and apply effective methodology when making empirical analysis. This task was not the aim of this study, but as we can presume, it could be essential or even strategic for agenda setting future studies.

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