KAROLINA BURNO-KALISZUK

BREAKING NEWS WEBSITES' RESPONSES TO POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND POLAND

Abstract. The ways in which political assassinations are reported by the media can vary due to existing divisions in society, as well as factors such as the political prominence of the victim or the direct effect of the attack. In order to examine changes in such narratives, 703 articles on the assassination attempts on Donald Trump and Paweł Adamowicz from leading American and Polish news websites were analysed. The study established that the news media expose pre-existing political divisions and that the most important factor influencing the shape of the discourse is the global recognition of the victim.

Keywords: Adamowicz; assassination; mediatisation; polarisation; Trump

INTRODUCTION

Political assassinations, which have been steadily increasing in number since the 1970s (Perliger, 2015), are agenda-breaking events with wide media coverage. However, the ways in which such events are reported can vary and affect the emotional responses of audiences due to the increasing polarisation of public sentiment, as well as the operation of factors, for instance the political prominence of the victim or his/her death. In doing so, the media may characterise the attacks as the result of a pre-existing partisan between supporters and opponents of a given politician, and may strengthen or weaken this totalising opposition into the good Us and bad Others.

The aim of this article is to characterise local and foreign media coverage of political assassinations and to capture the differences between them. Unlike

Dr KAROLINA BURNO-KALISZUK – Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Institute of Social Communication and Media Science; correspondence address: ul. Głęboka 45, 20-612 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: karolina.burno@umcs.pl; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9471-210X.

previous research, however, two extreme examples were analysed – the assassination attempt of Donald Trump, which took place during an election rally in Pennsylvania (13 July 2024), and the assassination of Paweł Adamowicz (13 January 2019), who was killed during a charity concert of Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy [Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity] in Gdańsk (Poland). These two events differed by a number of variables, which could translate into the editorial routines used by the media in the process of constructing an initially polarised discourse (Eyerman, 2011). At the same time, the attacks were broadcast anomic (attempted) assassinations that took place in communities with clear political divisions.

Drawing on the breaking reports of the most popular Polish and American news websites, produced in a situation of limited access to information and social unrest, and using the tools of critical discourse analysis, the article reconstructs the ways in which the community of the audience is built, and the otherness of the assassins is simultaneously highlighted. In turn, these tendencies were read as a potential manifestation of the mediatisation of violence.

POLITICAL ASSASSINATION

According to a standard definition, political assassination is an act that, regardless of its form and effectiveness, involves the murder of a representative of the political elite by an individual who represents his/her beliefs alone (Marsden, and Schmid, 2011). Other conceptualisations point out that it is a form of violence carried out using deception (White, 2008), and it may lead to political gain (Crotty, 1998). Looking at this type of crime more broadly, it can also be argued that these are rare manifestations of complex processes with political, social, and economic underpinnings, the expression of which becomes a deeply shocking murder or its attempt (Iqbel, and Zorn, 2006, 2008; Yammarino et al., 2013). Such an act may also be identified as a form of alternative justice (Ben-Yehuda, 1997).

Political instability and the presence of social divisions are most often cited as the main factors favouring assassinations (Perliger, 2015; Serban et al., 2018; Yammarino et al., 2013). Consequently, the targets of successful political attacks tend to be socialised, ideological, and pragmatic leaders, while the targets of unsuccessful attacks are personalised, pragmatic, and ideological personas (Yammarino et al., 2013).

The existing studies, even when they juxtapose successful and unsuccessful assassination attempts (Jones, and Olken, 2009; Serban et al., 2018; Yammarino et al., 2013), do not include comparisons of extreme cases in which both the global recognition of the victim and consequences of the attack are different, even while these acts fall within the same definition.

ASSASSINATION AND MEDIATISATION

Political assassinations can be considered from the perspective of the mediatisation theory (Couldry, and Hepp, 2013). Given the preponderance of works on attacks that end in death, references to the mediatisation of death are particularly present (Akhther, and Tetteh, 2023; Sumiala, 2014). However – according to the definitions – unsuccessful attacks that do not fall within the scope of this theoretical approach can also be called political assassinations.

The literature on traumatising events targeting human life includes the poorly recognised concept of the mediatisation of violence, which has so far been used to analyse mass school shootings (Muschert, and Sumiala, 2012). According to this model, the media bring out the performative nature of violence and become a stage for public drama. School rampages, like political assaults, have a public character, express the borderline discontent of the assailant, presuppose the presence of extreme violence and symbolic victims, and are mostly experienced in a mediated form (cf. Muschert, 2013).

However, given practitioners' reservations about the lack of a single media logic regarding the reporting of traumatising events (Rees, 2012), the use of the mediatisation of violence as an operational framework for the study of political assaults requires a cross-national view.

MEDIA DISCOURSE ON ASSASSINATION

The media are one of the main sources of information for audiences who do not have their own experience or sufficient knowledge of criminal events (Baranauskas, and Drakulich, 2018; Kort-Butler, and Habecker, 2018). In the case of political assassinations, firstly, they confirm the authenticity of the attack, and secondly, they report almost in real time on its course and consequences (Mendelsohn, 1964). However, unlike media coverage of other violent crimes, which is presented according to the "if it bleeds, it leads" principle (Harris, and

Gruenewald, 2020), news stories about assassinations of political figures also play the role of a mediator (Zelizer, 1992a) and sometimes the role of an authoritative guide to the post-assault reality (Mendelsohn, 1964).

Although political assassinations occur rarely, the media may have routinised ways of telling stories about them (cf. Muschert, 2013), which result from previous attacks (Zelizer, 1992b), cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2011), or internal editorial processes (Rees, 2012). The clearest expression of these routines is media frames (Entman, 1993). Research devoted to them indicates that: (1) thematic frames dominate over episodic ones; (2) local media coverage may differ from global reports; (3) both the attacks and the accompanying reactions of citizens are framed; and (4) a prognostic frame is particularly prominent in coverage (Lee, 2018; Morin, 2016; Onyebadi, 2016; Umber, Latif, and Habiab, 2023).

The assassination also significantly changes the timing and order of news publication (Muschert, 2013). Immediately after the event, the media start operating in hyper-mode (Hoerl, Cloud, and Jarvis, 2009; Muschert, and Sumiala, 2012; Sumiala, 2014), while over time they de-escalate the sense of anxiety (Boomgaarden, and de Vreese, 2007) and shift into investigative journalism (O'Donovan, 2013). Therefore, the discourse dedicated to the attacks is conducted, especially over the first two days (Hoerl, Cloud, and Jarvis, 2009). The accompanying instant digital publishing, however, poses a number of challenges for news media, as such acts of political violence remain under-reported, opening up their narrative potential (Zelizer, 1992b).

In assessing the shape of the assassination discourse, two leading and related trends may also be noted. The first one is that the attack triggers a eulogy effect (Hajer, and Uitermark, 2008; Umber, Latif, and Habiab, 2023). The second one indicates that after an assassination attempt, the media become a space for dialogue building or even public catharsis (Goldzwig, and Sullivan, 1995). In both cases, media coverage of assaults can take a performative form and turn into media events themselves (cf. Katz, 1980).

A key element of the discourses surrounding political assaults is invariably the attribution of blame (Eyerman, 2011). The way in which the perpetrator is defined by the media, however, depends on the context and type of information circulation (White, 2008). The attacker is thus portrayed as 'an other,' 'a loner,' mentally ill or in need of help. The victims, on the other hand, are presented as vulnerable people and symbols of socially accepted values (Hoerl, Cloud, and Jarvis, 2009; Morin, 2016). At the same time, discussions of attacks sometimes invoke political divisions (Bosman, and d'Haenens, 2008).

The attempted assassinations of Donald Trump and Paweł Adamowicz, as previous research shows, draw attention to media bias (Rogoż, 2020), the

emergence of conspiracy theories (Ognyanova et al., 2024), and the belief in the possible increase in violence (Holliday, Lelkes, and Westwood, 2024). However, little is still known about the relevance of the victim's political status and his/her potential death to the strategies activated by the media.

In this light, the article aims to capture the differences present in the breaking media responses to political assassinations, which result from the victim's state of health and political status, as well as the context. It seems important to examine, firstly, how media coverage of assassinations supports or contradicts socio-political divisions, and, secondly, which factors related to the assassination can transform the media coverage in a way that will emphasise or minimise polarisation. Bearing in mind that digital media strategies extremely vary, and that audiences seek assassination's confirmation in institutional media, the most recognisable news websites were analysed. In turn, the obtained results show the dominant narrative trends within them.

METHODOLOGY

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach which focuses mainly on the inequality discourses (Wodak, and Meyer, 2015). The media, as a vehicle for mental models and ideologies, constitute one of its objects (van Dijk, 2018). CDA is a useful research strategy in the context of political assassinations, in particular because of its ability to reveal the power structures present in media messages.

For the purposes of the study, Teun A. van Dijk's (2011) ideological square model was adapted. This framework divides the discourse into an exposition of the good and bad qualities of Us (the victim and/or the community whose values have been violated) and the good and bad qualities of Others (the assassin, the victim's opponents and/or other actors responsible for the attack), thus making it possible to identify processes of empathisation and de-empathisation, which can foster strengthening or weakening of bipolar oppositions. At the same time, only the immediate reactions of the media were analysed, as these, in a situation of limited access to information and social unrest, may favour more emotional and polarised discourses.

The examples that have been analysed included the American and Polish news devoted to the assassination attempts of Donald Trump (13 July 2024) and Paweł Adamowicz (13 January 2019). The choice of examples was deliberate since both events represent anomic (Crotty, 1998), live-streamed assassinations,

and they occurred in highly polarised communities (Mechkova et al., 2024). However, these events differ in a number of variables that can shape the media coverage (including the global recognition of the victim, their political position, the circumstances of the attack, and its consequences).

The corpus of the research consisted of 703 textual media messages that appeared in the American and Polish daily online press within the first two days after the incidents (precisely, taking into account the time difference – in the Trump case: 13-14 July 2024 for the American media and 14-15 July 2024 for the Polish media; in the Adamowicz case: 13-14 January 2019 for both the American and Polish media). The study included texts that were made available by the five largest press outlets from each country: in the US – *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* (Statista, 2024); in Poland – *Fakt Gazeta Codzienna*, *Super Express*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*,[1] *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2024). Video materials, photo galleries and podcasts, which have a non-textual context, as well as duplicate articles and those that did not relate to the analysed attacks, were excluded from the sample.

Data for the analysis was obtained manually, directly from publishers' websites, using online archives and internal search engines. Only articles marked with the keywords "Trump" or "Adamowicz" that contained any verbal references to the attack were considered in the search process.

Table 1. Sample design. Own elaboration.

News website / Victim	Donald Trump	Pawel Adamowicz
The Wall Street Journal [WSJ]	77	0*
The New York Times [NYT]	59	2
The New York Post [NYP]	95	1
The Washington Post [WP]	36	1
The USA Today [UT]	52	1
Fakt Gazeta Codzienna [F]	42	63
Super Express [SE]	33	20
Gazeta Wyborcza [GW]	17	16
Rzeczpospolita [R]	31	63
Dziennik Gazeta Prawna [DGP]	10	84
Sum (N)	452 (N US = 319; N PL = 133)	251 (N US = 5; N PL = 246)

* No article dedicated to Pawel Adamowicz could be found in the site archives from 2019/01/13-14.

---

[1] Only articles from the main, national edition were included.

TRUMP CASE

1. Good about Us

The media stress: (1) widespread condemnation of the violence combined with expressions of solidarity, (2) strengthening Trump's electoral position, and (3) highlighting his good health.

While negating the attack, the media emphasise the positive redundancy of the response (*outpouring* [NYP], *poured* [WSJ]) and their international (*the world was shaken* [SE], *Leaders across the United States and the world* [NYT]), cross-party character (*irrespective of political factions* [GW], *political leaders from both sides* [NYP]). This impression is reinforced by the numerous quotations of politicians' statements, which sometimes take the form of a juxtaposition in which the voices of Trump's supporters are separated from those of his rivals and enemies. The group of reactions cited also include those of Trump's family members, showing him as a husband or father as well.

When the media point to Trump as a presidential candidate, they highlight the increase in support for his candidacy or show his power. Using expressions with a high degree of probability, they indicate that the assassination attempt increases the Republican's chances in the election (*guarantees Trump's return* [NYP], *is likely to regain the presidency* [DGP]). Moreover, they show his massive support (*several dozens supporters* [UT], *having, after all, mass support* [R]) and strength (*triumphant masculinity* [GW], *courage stands out* [NYP]). Comparisons of Trump to other US presidents are also being made in the American media at this point (*compared Trump to Theodore Roosevelt* [WP], *likened the former president to Abraham Lincoln* [NYP]).

Unambiguous, objectifying statements (*described as good* [DGP], *is doing well* [WP]) were used to describe the politician's state of health after the attack, confirmed in some cases by reports of Trump's stay in hospital. At the same time, media responses from the US emphasised that such a state resulted from a happy coincidence (*supposed to be dead, a miracle* [NYP]).

In contrast, elements differentiating this aspect of the local media's characterisation are: the American media's coverage of Trump's willingness to moderate his speech at the upcoming Republican convention, the Republican's collection for the assassination victims, and increased security at subsequent election speeches; in Poland – the increase in profits of Trump's companies, and the political unity following the assassination of Paweł Adamowicz, which were highlighted as being in opposition to the US situation.

2. Bad about Us

The most prominent topics, which can be perceived as negating Us, are repeated statements about the high polarisation of the community and its growing acceptance of political violence. These take the form of emphatic (*in a deeply polarised US* [R], *divided nation* [UT]) or graded statements (*political tension intensifying* [WP]), metaphors (*they sit locked in their armoured bubbles* [R], *red state patois, blue state dialect* [WP]) and utterances leaving room for one's own interpretation of appeals (*this is our wake-up call* [UT], *a sobering reminder* [NYT]), information about the prevalence of political assassinations (*we have such a series* [R], *a chain of recent violent events* [WP]), and references to the country's history of political violence (*part of U.S. history* [UT], *political violence in the US has been building up for almost two decades* [DGP]). There are also conjectures in some news on the possible escalation of threats arising from the diagnosed divide, including a highly emotive reference to civil war (*Was that the first shot in the second civil war?* [NYP]).

The same media provide equally frequent opinions that highlight the lack of skills of citizens and politicians (including Republicans) to behave on social media, resulting in the spread of disinformation and hate speech (*trolls took to social media* [NYP], *the Internet in the US caught fire* [SE]).

The last common theme, nevertheless, is the negative opinions about Trump, who, through the use of negative adjectives and implications, is characterised as unsympathetic, not upholding the standards of public debate and sometimes even posing a threat to American democracy.

It is also noteworthy that the Polish news emphasised the long-term effects of the attacks and pointed to statements by politicians from the Polish political party Law and Justice (PiS) that included warnings against hatred in public life, despite the fact that the people uttering them had previously been accused of using hate speech.

3. Good about Them

The news media in both countries organised content primarily around two axes: (1) they emphasised the swift response of the security services (*immediately took the stage* [WSJ], *immediately moved* [SE]), and (2) characterised the assassin as a good student (*capable but quiet student* [R], *intelligent student* [NYT]), employee (*performed his job without concerns* [NYP]), and person with no criminal record (*no past record* [GW], *not have a criminal record* [UT]). In both the US and Poland, it was also pointed out, in a perfunctory way and

based on a statement whose veracity was confirmed by the speaking agents, that President Biden had a good conversation with Donald Trump.

The way in which Biden's political situation is portrayed, however, varies between those two countries. Polish news cites an argument that accents possible improvement in the Democrat's political image, while in America, his conciliatory statements are rather pointed to.

4. Bad about Them

As with the description of good qualities, the media expose responsibility for the attack using a two-pronged strategy while referring to the national security system and political opponents.

When the media talk about the security services, they underline negligence by the Secret Service (*gaps in defence* [DGP], *serious security issues* [NYT]) and emphasise how witnesses' safety signals were ignored (*minutes before the attack, some rally participants pointed out the bomber* [GW], *desperately tried to warn police* [NYP]). News reports also cite opinions about the need for the head of presidential security to resign (*in Secret Service 'heads will roll'* [F], *called on the head of the Secret Service to resign* [WSJ]), or less emphatic, but still clearly negative, expressions indicating surprise at the behaviour of the security (*it was surprising* [SE]) and the wave of criticism the unit faces (*Secret Service in the doghouse* [R], *Secret Service under scrutiny* [WP]). In contrast, responsibility for negligence is very rarely attributed to the police and the FBI.

In portraying the culpability of political opponents, broadcasters cite Republican voices that indisputably point to either Biden's (*the President 'gave the order' to kill* [SE], *Blame Biden* [WSJ]) or Democrats' responsibility (*Republicans accuse Democrats* [GW], *Democrats identified the target* [NYP]). Biden is additionally portrayed through the prism of potential dementia (*he twisted some words and phrases* [R], *concerns about his mental acuity* [UT]), and in the US, he is also accused of responding slowly. Moreover, in the American media, there was far more exposure of statements purporting to affirm the Democrats' fault in polarising and brutalising political life, including negative social media posts (*Leftist hate rules social media* [NYP]).

Instead, there was little mention of the assassin's negative qualities. Reports about him boiled down to rare references to his awkward but understated comments and poor shooting skills (in the US) or his lack of acceptance of Trump's presidential candidacy (in Poland). Broadcasters from both countries, however, highlighted the fact that the assailant had used a 'mass shootings'

type of weapon and was wearing a T-shirt of a popular online militaria channel – information that may correspond with the ongoing discussion in the US about the access to firearms.

In turn, what distinguishes the American coverage is the negative views of the media, in the light of which mass broadcasters are responsible for maintaining political divisions in the US on a par with Trump's other opponents (*for years, liberal media have portrayed Trump as a fascist* [SE], *media kept bias* [NYP]).

ADAMOWICZ CASE

1. Good about Us

The news accented the presence of mass reactions after the attack – marches expressing solidarity with the victim and opposition to violence, and blood donation campaigns. These mentions include references to the scale of the actions undertaken (*in many cities* [SE], *throughout Poland* [F]) and the number of participants (*tens of thousands* [NYT], *crowds* [DGP]). Sometimes, the quantifiers used in the news also express the solidarity of local communities (*Gdańsk citizens donate blood* [F], *Warsaw plunged in grief pays tribute* [GW]).

Furthermore, the messages expose the image of the victim as a former oppositionist, democrat, and a person fighting for human rights. When describing Adamowicz, the media apply clear labels (*a man of Solidarity and freedom* [DGP], *a democratic reformist* [NYP]) or descriptively recall the actions he undertook (*he quickly became involved in underground activity* [R], *preached the value of tolerance* [NYT]). Polish news reports also emphasise that the victim was a good president, which is confirmed by information on his significant time in public office (*one of the longest in office* [R], *he was among the record-holders in this respect* [DGP]).

In contrast, themes that are exclusively present in Poland are: (1) the frequently described expressions of solidarity with the victim, which come from all over the country and abroad (*the whole of Poland is in shock* [SE], *foreign politicians send support* [GW]), from citizens and public figures (*Polish politicians and ordinary people wish* [F]), and across political divides (*politicians try to show unity at this difficult moment* [R]); (2) the exceptional commitment of the doctors trying to save Adamowicz's life.

2. Bad about Us

The only common topic exposed by the media is the diagnosis of the polarisation of society. Terms reflecting the scale of this phenomenon appear in the news (*deeply divided* [WP], *we are reaping the harvest of divisions* [GW]), which also draws attention to the hateful comments (*there were hateful posts* [R], *awful reaction* [SE]) and the detention of other potential assassins (*this is another person who was detained today* [R], *he threatened to kill the president* [F]). On the other hand, appealing opinions about the need to change attitudes (*we must do everything to prevent tragedies from repeating themselves* [DGP], *it's time to stop this madness of hatred* [F]) and the possible further negative development of events also appear, as highlighted in one opinion (*street fights await us* [R]).

Some Polish media also used metaphor in post-mortem profiles of the victim to point to Adamowicz's legal and political problems (*shadowed by his problems with the law* [R], *the political burden on the former mayor of Gdańsk* [DGP]).

3. Good about Them

The American reports focus exclusively on the government's quick reaction, which, despite ideological differences with the victim, condemned the attack and supported his family (*moved quickly to support* [WP], *quick to condemn* [NYT]).

In the Polish media, we do not find many references to the good qualities of the attacker and the opponents. Broadcasters most often cite opinions stating that the security services reacted correctly (*the police reacted as they should* [DGP]) and quickly (*the reaction of the uniformed was immediate* [F]). Similar arguments are made in reporting on the ongoing investigation – the prosecutor's office began it immediately after the attack, and there were many dedicated investigators involved.

In contrast, when portraying the attacker, the senders limit themselves to a single, neutral mention of his state of sobriety (*he was sober* [F]) and invoking a brief online recollection by a friend of the knifeman, according to whom he was 'a normal guy'.

4. Bad about Them

The news expose a relatively consistent picture of the assassin. On the one hand, they quote or paraphrase his statement about the political motivation of the attack (*Civic Platform tortured me* [F], *wrongly imprisoned under a previous national government* [NYT]), and on the other hand, they emphasise his

criminal history with unambiguous epithets or labels (*recently released from prison* [NYP], *convicted of violent robbery* [R], *young criminal* [F]). Local reports also highlight information or assumptions about the attacker's mental illnesses and his refusal to admit guilt, which can stir up negative emotions.

In the analysed news stories, one can find voices blaming the ruling party and its subordinate state bodies. The media cite opinions which indicate that the authorities ignored potential threats related to hate speech (*the government has been too passive about threats* [WP], *investigators did not share its concerns* [F]), and – in the case of Polish-language reports – to its propagation (*Law and Justice incites a spiral of violence* [F]), including the particular use of the public media (*they consciously and deliberately joined the political attack on the enemies of Law and Justice* [GW]). The presence of criticism towards the leader of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity foundation also remains a peripheral but clearly visible thread.

Finally, the Polish media exposed statements escalating the negligence of the security services. They did so by underlining the length of time until the attacker was apprehended (*he was walking on the stage the whole time* [DGP], *he was walking on the stage for several tens of seconds* [R]), the slow reaction of the services (*tardy reaction of security guards* [SE]) or expert assessments (*negligence is indisputable* [F]).

CONCLUSIONS

Political assassinations are the focus of media attention, which can simultaneously provide confirmation of the attack, build a community of those experiencing it, and reinforce the typical divisions between Us and Others. However, depending on the characteristics of the victim and the society they represent, media messages may differ. The research presented in this article concentrates specifically on analysing this kind of discrepancy and provides several conclusions that confirm or expand previous findings.

When reporting on attacks, the media, in line with previous analyses (Bosman, and d'Haenens, 2008), evoke existing political divisions. In doing so, they simultaneously highlight the division between the victim and the perpetrator as well as between supporters and political opponents. The search for the offender's identity (Eyerman, 2011) is carried out, but the assassin is not always characterised by loneliness or mental illness (Hoerl, Cloud, and Jarvis, 2009; Morin, 2016). Also present in the messages are threads about his past, which

arise directly from the context of the mediated event. The bias of individual media within the representations created on this basis was not the aim of this article and requires separate research.

The tendency to build a public dialogue (Goldzwig, and Sullivan, 1995), which is visible in other studies, was not evident in the news items analysed – there were, for example, calls for an end to violence, but in the immediate reactions, they were juxtaposed without any extended commentary from the sender. The eulogy effect was also not fully present (Hajer, and Uitermark, 2008; Umber, Latif, and Habiab, 2023) – the media highlighted the positive qualities of the attacked leaders but also drew attention to their flaws.

Besides, the extreme nature of the cases analysed did not translate into a change in reporting. The only significant, albeit foreseeable, trend in this respect is the increased interest of the Polish media in the attack on Donald Trump, which would attest to increased coverage of attacks on globally recognisable politicians. Nonetheless, this thesis needs to be confirmed in studies that will analyse a larger number of cases, including countries from other political and socio-cultural backgrounds. Contrary to the view that there is no single logic to media coverage of attacks (Rees, 2012), it can instead be argued that regardless of the type of leader, the effect of the assassination and the media system represented, two narrative practices become apparent in the news: (1) exposing the negative characteristics of both Us and Others; and (2) simultaneously pointing to the positive and negative aspects of political violence and the response of the security services.

Finally, in answering the questions posed, it should be stated that the media expose pre-existing political divisions primarily by taking advantage of the openness of the narrative of the attacks and the possibility of juxtaposing extreme, yet unambiguous, opinions that sometimes concern the same objects or phenomena. On the other hand, the factor that most strongly influences the construction of the messages is not the effect of the assassination but the political visibility of its victim. What also draws attention is the conceptual vagueness of We–Them. Various subjects may be hiding behind the categories indicated in this opposition, which makes it possible to ideologically condition the media discourse and value the representations of the attackers, victims and society present in it.

The main limitations of the analysis carried out include: (1) the selection of a small number of extreme cases; (2) the limitation of the sample due to the type of media (news websites only) and their country of origin (two democratic countries); and (3) the analysis of only the textual layer of the discourse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akhther N., and Tetteh D. A. (2023), *Global Mediatized Death and Emotion: Parasocial Grieving—Mourning #stephenhawking on Twitter*, OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying 87, no. 1, pp. 126-145, https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228211014775.

Baranauskas A. J., and Drakulich K. M. (2018), *Media Construction of Crime Revisited: Media Types, Consumer Contexts, and Frames of Crime and Justice*, Criminology 56, no. 4, pp. 679-714, https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12189.

Ben-Yehuda N. (1997), *Political Assassination Events as a Cross-Cultural Form of Alternative Justice*, International Journal of Comparative Sociology 38, no. 1-2, pp. 25-47.

Boomgaarden H. G., and de Vreese C. H. (2007), *Dramatic Real-World Events and Public Opinion Dynamics: Media Coverage and Its Impact on Public Reactions to an Assassination*, International Journal of Public Opinion Research 19, no. 3, pp. 354-366, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edm012.

Bosman J., and d'Haenens L. (2008), *News Reporting on Pim Fortuyn: Framing in Two Dutch Newspapers*, Media, Culture & Society 30, no. 5, pp. 735-748, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443708094018.

Couldry N., and Hepp A. (2013), *Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments*, Communication Theory 23, no. 3, pp. 191-202, https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12019.

Crotty W. S. (1998), *Presidential Assassinations*, Society 35, no. 2, pp. 99-107, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02838133.

Entman R. M. (1993), *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*, Journal of Communication 43, no. 4, pp. 51-58, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

Eyerman R. (2011), *The Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination. From MLK and RFK to Fortuyn and Van Gogh*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goldzwig S. R., and Sullivan P. A. (1995), *Post-Assassination Newspaper Editorial Eulogies: Analysis and Assessment*, Western Journal of Communication 59, no. 2, pp. 126-150, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319509374512.

Hajer M., and Uitermark J. (2008), *Performing Authority: Discursive Politics After the Assassination of Theo van Gogh*, Public Administration 86, no. 1, pp. 5-19, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2007.00701.x.

Harris C. T., and Gruenewald J. (2020), *News Media Trends in the Framing of Immigration and Crime, 1990–2013*, Social Problems 67, no. 3, pp. 452-470, https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spz024.

Hoerl K. E., Cloud D. L., and Jarvis S. E. (2009), *Deranged Loners and Demented Outsiders? Therapeutic News Frames of Presidential Assassination Attempts, 1973-2001*, Communication, Culture and Critique 2, no. 1, pp. 83-109, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2008.01030.x.

Holliday D. E., Lelkes Y., and Westwood S. J. (2024), *The July 2024 Trump Assassination Attempt Was Followed by Lower In-Group Support for Partisan Violence and Increased Group Unity*, PNAS 121, no. 49, e2414689121, https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2414689121.

Iqbal Z., and Zorn C. (2006), *Sic Semper Tyrannis? Power, Repression, and Assassination Since the Second World War*, The Journal of Politics 68, no. 3, pp. 489-501, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00440.x.

Iqbal Z., and Zorn C. (2008), *The Political Consequences of Assassination*, Journal of Conflict Resolution 52, no. 3, pp. 385-400, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002707310855.

Jones B. F., and Olken B. A. (2009), *Hit or Miss? The Effect of Assassinations on Institutions and War*, American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics 1, no. 2, pp. 55-87, https://doi.org/10.1257/mac.1.2.55.

Katz E. (1980), *Media Events: The Sense of Occasion*, Studies in Visual Communication 6, no. 3, pp. 84-89.

Kort-Butler L., and Habecker P. (2018), *Framing and Cultivating the Story of Crime: The Effects of Media Use, Victimization, and Social Networks on Attitudes About Crime*, Criminal Justice Review 43, no. 2, pp. 127-146, https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016817710696.

Lee E. J. (2018), *The Political Assassination of Kim Jong Nam: A Comparative Analysis of US and South Korean News Coverage*, Southwestern Mass Communication Journal 33, no. 2, https://doi.org/10.58997/smc.v33i2.36.

Marsden S. V., and Schmid A. P. (2011), *Typologies of Terrorism and Political Violence*, [in:] A. P. Schmid (ed.), *Handbook of Terrorism Research: Research, Theories and Concepts*, London–New York: Routledge–Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 158-200.

Mechkova V., Pemstein D., Seim B., and Wilson S. (2024), *Digital Society Project Dataset v6*, https://digitalsocietyproject.org/data/ [accessed: 12.12.2024].

Mendelsohn H. (1964), *Broadcast vs. Personal Sources of Information in Emergent Public Crises: The Presidential Assassination*, Journal of Broadcasting 8, no. 2, pp. 147-156, https://doi.org/10.1080/08838156409386098.

Morin A. (2016), *Framing Terror: The Strategies Newspapers Use to Frame an Act as Terror or Crime*, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 93, no. 4, pp. 986-1005, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699016660720.

Muschert G. W. (2013), *School Shootings as Mediatized Violence*, [in:] N. Böckler, T. Seeger, P. Sitzer, and W. Heitmeyer (eds.), *School Shootings: International Research, Case Studies, and Concepts for Prevention*, New York: Springer, pp. 265-281.

Muschert G. W, and Sumiala J. (2012), *Introduction: School Shootings as Mediatized Violence*, [in:] G. W. Muschert, and J. Sumiala (eds.), *School Shootings: Mediatized Violence in a Global Age* (Studies in Media and Communications 7), Leeds: Emerald Group Publishing, pp. xv-xxx.

O'Donovan C. (2013), *Wrong Narratives May Outweigh Wrong Facts, but Reporting With Respect Means Getting Both Right*, Nieman Journalism Lab, 24 April, https://www.niemanlab.org/2013/04/wrong-narratives-may-outweigh-wrong-facts-but-reporting-with-respect-means-getting-both-right/ [accessed: 12.12.2024].

Ognyanova K., Druckman J. N., Schulman J., Baum M. A., Perlis R. H., and Lazer D. (2024), *Social Media Spread Conspiracy Theories After Trump Assassination Attempt, but Believing Them Was Linked to Interpersonal Discussions*, preprint, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/hfbeu.

Onyebadi U. (2016), *Framing From the Inside: An Examination of Pakistani Newspapers' House Editorials on Osama bin Laden's Targeted Assassination*, The Journal of International Communication 22, no. 1, pp. 108-125, https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2015.1123169.

Perliger A. (2015), *The Rationale of Political Assassinations*, New York: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CTC_The-Rationale-Of-Political-Assassinations-February20151.pdf [accessed: 19.10.2024].

Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa (2024), *Raport AUDYT PBC (dawniej ZKDP). Rozpowszechnianie Tytułów Prasowych w I kw. 2024 r.*, https://www.pbc.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport_Audyt_PBC_2024_I_Kwartal.pdf [accessed: 11.12.2024].

Rees G. (2012), *Afterword: Is Mediatization a Useful Concept for Informing Practice in Journalism?*, [in:] G. W. Muschert, and J. Sumiala (eds.), *School Shootings: Mediatized Violence in a Global Age* (Studies in Media and Communications 7), Leeds: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 333-341.

Rogoż M. (2020), *Morderstwo prezydenta Gdańska Pawła Adamowicza w świetle dzienników ogólno-polskich*, Rocznik Historii Prasy Polskiej 23, no. 1, pp. 115-134, https://doi.org/10.24425/rhpp.2020.133420.

Serban A., Yammarino F. J., Sotak K. L. et al. (2018), *Assassination of Political Leaders: The Role of Social Conflict*, The Leadership Quarterly 29, no. 4, pp. 457-475, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.01.003.

Statista (2024), *Largest Daily Newspapers in the United States in the Six Months to September 2023, by Average Print Circulation*, https://www.statista.com/statistics/272790/circulation-of-the-biggest-daily-newspapers-in-the-us/ [accessed: 11.12.2024].

Sumiala J. (2014), *Mediatization of Public Death*, [in:] K. Lundby (ed.), *Mediatization of Communication*, Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 681-702.

Umber S., Latif M. A., and Habiab A. (2023), *Media Discourse on Benazir Assassination and Sympathetic Voting Pattern in Pakistan*, Pakistan Journal of Social Research 5, no. 2, pp. 572-583.

van Dijk T. A. (2011), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

van Dijk T. A. (2018), *Discourse and Migration*, [in:] R. Zapata-Barrero, and E. Yalaz (eds.), *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies*, Cham: Springer, pp. 227-245.

White R. F. (2008), *Assassination Discourse and Political Power: The Death of Alexander Litvinenko*, Assassination Research 5, no. 2, pp. 1-8.

Wodak R. and Meyer M. (2015), *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 3rd edition, Los Angeles–London–New Delhi–Singapore–Washington, DC: SAGE Publications.

Yammarino F. J., Mumford M. D., Serban A., and Shirreffs K. (2013), *Assassination and Leadership: Traditional Approaches and Historiometric Methods*, The Leadership Quarterly 24, no. 6, pp. 822-841, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.08.004.

Zelizer B. (1992a), *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*, Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press.

Zelizer B. (1992b), *The Kennedy Assassination Through a Popular Eye: Toward a Politics of Remembering*, Journal of Communication Inquiry 16, no. 2, pp. 21-36.

NATYCHMIASTOWE REAKCJE PORTALI INFORMACYJNYCH NA ZAMACHY POLITYCZNE W STANACH ZJEDNOCZONYCH I POLSCE

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Sposoby relacjonowania zamachów politycznych przez media mogą się różnić ze względu na istniejące podziały społeczeństwa, ale też czynniki takie jak ranga polityczna atakowanej osoby czy bezpośredni skutek ataku. Aby sprawdzić, jak zmieniają się tego rodzaju narracje, poddano krytycznej analizie dyskursu 703 artykuły z wiodących amerykańskich i polskich portali informacyjnych dotyczące zamachów na Donalda Trumpa i Pawła Adamowicza. W jej wyniku ustalono, że media eksponują istniejące podziały polityczne oraz że najważniejszym czynnikiem oddziałującym na ukształtowanie dyskursu jest globalna rozpoznawalność ofiary.

Słowa kluczowe: Adamowicz; mediatyzacja; polaryzacja; Trump; zamach