

Zone-Flooding as a Discursive Strategy of Czech Anti-System News Portals

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Abstract: The anti-system media (ANTS)—known for spreading disinformation—might seem to “flood [the media] zone” with a chaotic multitude of information: truths, untruths, and half-truths alike. The main goal of this study is to find evidence of systematicity in this seeming chaos: persistent and recurring narrative lines that run through the media class irrespective of the news topic. Two empirical methods (Keyword Analysis and Market Basket Analysis) are applied to large data from Czech online media (all articles, regardless of topic, from 40 ANTS web portals over three months in 2020). ANTS’ narratives are advanced by creating specific associations. The current approach is based on the idea that texts can be characterized with the help of conceptual associations, pursuing concepts which co-occur within the same text regardless of sentence or paragraph boundaries. This approach thus differs from the frequently-used strategy in discourse analysis of examining phenomena such as collocations, use of passive voice, or nominalization. The distinct properties of ANTS can be highlighted by contrasting it to the mainstream media class and to reader expectations in journalistic practice. The results, culled from servers including those not explicitly sponsored by the Kremlin, indicate that a schematic set of narrative lines permeate ANTS: a model of the world divided into the West (USA, NATO, and the EU) and Russia, in which the West has a negative image relative to that of Russia. These narrative lines lead to an argumentation for Czechia’s separation from the West (Czexit, leaving NATO) and for alignment with Russia.

1. Introduction*

This paper explores the discursive strategy of “flooding the [media] zone” in Czech anti-system media. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the primary meaning of the transitive verb *to flood* is “to inundate”, and “to cover or fill with water; to irrigate [...]; to deluge with water”. Zone-flooding thus

* The following abbreviations are used throughout this article: AA (associative array), ANTS (Anti-system media), ANTS-AA (Anti-system media associative array), KW (keyword), KWA (keyword analysis), MBA (Market Basket Analysis), MS (Mainstream media), MS-AA (mainstream media associative array), and RefC (reference corpus).

refers in its literal sense to the act of filling (and indeed overfilling) a zone with water. The word is used also figuratively in a cybersecurity context: using massive amounts of traffic to block access to servers or websites (York 2010). In this paper, zone-flooding is understood as a discourse practice or strategy. It refers to the dissemination of information within the media zone and subsequently the public discourse, whether true or not, in massive quantities, especially in internet articles by anti-system media; its aim is said to disorient the public (Illing 2020).

The study aims to provide an empirical account of zone-flooding based on a representative (“topic-blind”) sample of data (§2): more specifically, it attempts to demonstrate the **consistency** with which anti-system media ties together apparently disparate topics to weave a recurrent set of underlying narratives via discourse framing, an extension of conceptual framing introduced by Fillmore (1982) on the level of lexical semantics.

The approach used in this paper is distinct from what is often pursued in Critical Discourse Analysis, such as stylistic and semantic aspects of usage and obfuscation of agency—e.g., use of nominalization and passive voice (Fairclough 2003: 12–13, 145–50). It is also different from grammar-based quantitative approaches that probe the implicit creation of image of social actors (e.g., Keymorph analysis by Fidler and Cvrček 2018, Cvrček and Fidler 2019, and Janda et al. 2022). The goal of this paper is to identify a stable set of overarching narratives created by means of conceptual associations which are repeated over and over in a large number of texts (cf. §2).¹ Such associations are likely to have incremental cognitive effects on readers’ interpretation of not only current but also newly arising situations. As we try to capture recurrence of associations, neither an analysis of a sizable corpus on a single topic (e.g., migration, racism, or COVID-19), nor an analysis of a small number of texts would prove the presence of such a phenomenon. It was necessary to apply methods that were shown to facilitate conceptual framing extraction (Cvrček and Fidler 2022) from a large volume of data. Presentation of text samples therefore is used not as a proof, but as an illustration of what is suggested by the quantitative results.

Sections 2 and 3 introduce the data and methodology. The results are discussed in §4, followed by conclusions in §5. Due to the large number of results, the pertinent data and the code used are available in an OSF repository (<https://osf.io/mkbzg/>).

¹ These narratives are akin to what George Lakoff refers to as “strict father model” (2004), which is an underlying conceptual schema instantiated by various arguments and policies supported by the US Republican Party.

2. Data

The target of our research is a corpus of texts (articles, including news, op-eds, interviews, and other journalistic forms) published by media portals that present themselves as providing “alternative views” not covered (or deliberately omitted) by the mainstream media, and which can be clustered on the basis of the similarity of their audience.

2.1. ANTS and MS Media Classes

The data were drawn from the ONLINE1 corpus (Cvrček and Procházka 2020), a monitoring corpus of online Czech, which has been created within the Czech National Corpus project. Our focus is on the data which cover the period from 1 June to 1 September 2020. This time span was intentionally chosen (at the time the research was conducted in 2021) for its topic diversity: it is situated between the end of the first wave of COVID pandemics and the beginning of the second wave in Czechia, where coronavirus was present but was not the “only” topic.

As the focus of this study is the discursive practice of an entire media class (approximately 40 web portals), the target corpus includes texts on varying topics, e.g., the migration crisis in Europe, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, the Belarus protests, the Beirut port explosion, domestic news within Czechia (politics, train crashes, etc.) and news about the EU. This approach clearly differs from theme-based discourse studies, such as the focus of Baker and McEnery on the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press (Baker and McEnery 2005), of Islam and Muslims (Baker et al. 2013), of gay men (Baker 2005) or of genre-based discourse, such as the analysis of Czech presidential New Year’s addresses by Fidler and Cvrček (2019).

Not all texts were included in this study, but the only criteria for exclusion were formal: their size and the number of prominent units (keywords) within a text (cf. §3.1), since text length may affect the way in which we identify associations between prominent units (for details see §3). Texts of extraordinary length for an online newspaper article (short texts with less than 500 tokens and large texts with more than 5,000 tokens) were thus excluded from the dataset. Additionally, only texts with at least 15 different prominent units/topics were retained, as a smaller number of keywords indicates a thematically opaque text without enough surface area for the study of topic interrelation.

Our media type classification follows the ONLINE corpus annotation, which is based on Josef Šlerka’s audience-based typology of Czech news portals. Šlerka (2018) uses online reader behavior patterns, such as visits to websites (based on Alexa Rank; <https://www.alexa.com/>) and sharing and liking social media articles (based on the CrowdTangle service). Such information

allows for the creation of media site clusters irrespective of their linguistic characteristics, topic preferences, or political stance, based solely on a significant overlap in audience. The only part of the classification that is subject to researcher interpretation is the labeling of each cluster, which is derived from the features of a particular web portal that can be considered a cluster prototype.

The current study uses three of Šlerka's media clusters. Our target media class comprises the "Anti-system" cluster and a related cluster labeled "Political tabloid"; we will refer to this group as ANTS as both typically challenge the mainstream media and spread disinformation.² The third media class, used as the control dataset, is drawn from Šlerka's "Mainstream" media cluster; because of its disproportionally large size relative to the ANTS portals, the number of "Mainstream" portals was reduced by keeping only the 11 most important ones (in terms of the number of visitors and the number of texts)³; this group of portals is referred to as MS. The resulting corpus (i.e., both MS and ANTS) has the following parameters:

Table 1. Target corpus

Media class	Number of texts	Number of words	Average number of words in a text	Standard deviation
ANTS	4,352	5,219,362	1199	674
MS	10,841	9,552,895	881	474

3. Methods

In this paper, we use two quantitative methods for analyzing the MS and ANTS subcorpora accompanied by qualitative inspection of text samples: we first use keyword analysis (KWA) to identify the prominent units/concepts

² The list of analyzed ANTS servers consists of political tabloids (gloobal.cz, ireporter.cz, irucz.ru, necenzurujeme.cz, parlamentnilisty.cz) and antisystem servers (ac24.cz, aeronet.cz, blogspot.com, casopis-sifra.cz, casopisargument.cz, ceskoaktualne.cz, czech.cri.cn, Czechfree-press.cz, duchdoby.cz, e-republika.cz, eportal.cz, ers.blog.cz, euportal.cz, eurabia.cz, euserver.cz, infokuryr.cz, isstras.eu, leva.net, levaperspektiva.cz, necenzurujeme.cz, novaburzaoazie.com, novarepublika.cz, nwoo.org, orgo.net, pravyprostor.cz, protiproud.cz, rukojmi.cz, skrytapravda.cz, sputniknews.cz, stredoevropan.cz, svobodnenoviny.eu, vlasteneckenoviny.cz, zpravy.dt24.cz, zvedavec.org, and webnode.cz). Note that some of the URLs might not be accessible as a result of a decision taken by the Czech authorities in February 2022 to shut down some of the pro-Russian web portals after the start of Russian aggression on Ukraine. The texts are still available in the ONLINE corpus.

³ The list of major MS media consists of ceskenoviny.cz, denik.cz, idnes.cz, ihned.cz, impuls.cz, irozhlas.cz, lidovky.cz, nova.tn, novinky.cz, reflex.cz, respekt.cz.

in articles, and then investigate the co-occurrence of keywords within texts by Market Basket Analysis (MBA). Both methods are briefly described below.

3.1. Keyword Analysis of Texts

Keyword analysis (KWA), first coined by Mike Scott (Scott and Tribble 2006), is used by an increasing number of corpus-based discourse studies as a starting point of analysis (Baker 2006: 125). KWA compares the relative frequencies of words in the target text or corpus with the frequencies of the same words in the reference corpus (RefC), yielding keywords (KWs), i.e., words that have statistically significantly higher frequency (measured in our case by log-likelihood test) in the target text than would be expected against the background of their frequency in the RefC. As several studies have found that statistical significance itself is not an appropriate way to measure keyness (Gabrielatos and Marchi 2012; Hofland and Johansson 1982), KWA is now often accompanied by effect-size estimators, in our case DIN (Fidler and Cvrček 2015: 204). KWs can reflect genre/register differences between text and the RefC and are said to point to the major topics of the target text or what the text is about (Scott 2010: 43). KWs in this study were identified with the following settings, separately for each text in ANTS and MS target subcorpora:

- Harvested prominent units: lemmas (only tokens with Czech letters)
- RefC: “offline” journalistic texts from 2015–2018 from SYNv8 corpus (Křen et al. 2019), tabloids and broadsheets, i.e., text of the same register as target texts.⁴
- Minimal frequency of a word in a text: 3 occurrences
- Test statistics: log-likelihood with 0.001 significance level
- Minimal KW DIN value in a text: 70 (max. value is 100)

⁴ The main goal of this study is to explore the underlying narratives, which are expected to impact readers’ cognition in the long term. Our interest in the connection to cognition motivates the use of RefC from 2015–18 journalistic texts. As this RefC is expected to reflect the stable journalistic linguistic usage that readers view as a norm, the harvested KWs using this RefC are expected to reflect concepts (lemmas) that are striking to the readers (cf. Fidler and Cvrček 2015 for discussion of KWA and RefCs) and not, e.g., the register differences. This approach yields both KWs indicating what is new in 2020 (news topics), and how they are interconnected. The alternative use of MS texts to yield KWs in ANTS and vice versa may seem appropriate, i.e., use of one subcorpus against the background of the other. This approach would illustrate how a specific group of readers view the target texts but would not highlight what might impact a wider, general group of readers. Furthermore, this approach would not allow a comparison of KWs between ANTS and MS as it would lack the same point of reference.

The thresholds were set based on our previous experience with similar analyses of Czech texts (Cvrček and Fidler 2019, 2022; Fidler and Cvrček 2018) and represent a conservative setting, only slightly prioritizing KW recall over precision.

3.2. Market Basket Analysis

As has been mentioned in previous studies, KWs are “just pointers” for interpretation (Scott 2010). An adequate and sound interpretation of KWs requires the context where these words typically occur. Moreover, since our goal is to characterize the ANTS media class as a whole, we must move beyond inspection of the role that KWs play in a single text and seek repeated KW co-occurrence in a large number of texts to reveal how KWs are systematically framed. The present study of KWs therefore applies Market Basket Analysis (MBA); for the efficacy of MBA and its detailed description, see Cvrček and Fidler 2022.

MBA is a data-mining technique used originally in marketing (Han et al. 2011; Information Resources Management Association 2014) to identify possible associations between items in shopping carts (one of the results may be suggestions such as “customers who bought X often buy Y”). MBA sifts through transactions in quantity, examines all possible combinations of items, and looks for associations among them, calculating three variables which describe the scope and strength of the link, which help filter out the unimportant ones. MBA applied to KWs in texts (considering texts as shopping carts and KWs as merchandise) utilizes the following three measurements:

- **Support:** probability of a text containing both KWs participating in the link (helps avoid associations occurring only in a limited portion of texts)
- **Confidence:** proportion of texts where KW *B* is present when it also contains KW *A* (filters out accidental associations)
- **Lift:** the strength of association—how much our confidence has increased that KW *B* will be present in an association given that KW *A* is already present

The threshold levels for MBA were set in the following manner:

- Confidence > 0.4
- As the number of texts in MS and ANTS differs, we adjusted the threshold level of support proportionately: ANTS support > 0.003, MS support > 0.0019
- Lift > 2.7

The threshold values were set empirically, based on previous studies, to keep the number of associative links manageable (for more details on the method and its technical parameters see Cvrček and Fidler 2022).

We obtained associative links among KWs up to the size of 4, i.e., with a maximum of three words preceding the arrow and one following it, e.g., *migrant*, *žadatel* ‘applicant’, *země* ‘country’ → *azyl* ‘asylum’, which can be read as “texts containing the words *migrant*, *applicant* and *country* as keywords will most probably also contain the word *asylum* as a keyword”. We identified 35,435 associative links in ANTS and 108,922 in MS using these settings.

To examine the entire pool of associations connected to one KW, we further refined our method to look at the associative array (AA) of a word, i.e., the entire set of associated KWs extracted from all associative links in which a particular KW is included. An AA of a KW contains associated KWs that help our understanding of how the KW is framed: e.g., the AA for the KW *organizace* ‘organization’ in MS connects the KW in summer 2020 to domestic politics, specifically a scandal with a local organization of the leading political party ANO⁵ (*Babiš*,⁶ *Brno*, *kauza* ‘affair’, *předsednictvo* ‘chairmanship’, *Vokřál*⁷), whereas the anti-system AA for the same KW includes associated KWs *terorista* ‘terrorist’, *válka* ‘war’, *protest* ‘protest’, *proti* ‘against’, *globální* ‘global’, *nadace* ‘foundation’, *Soros*,⁸ *Amerika* ‘America’, *BLM* (Black Lives Matter), connecting ‘organization’ to the BLM protests in the US, terrorism, and global NGOs.

As illustrated above, the pattern of framing (represented by AA) differs between the media classes, as was suggested by our previous small pilot study focusing on the single KW *migrant* ‘migrant’ (Cvrček and Fidler 2022). The present study covers multiple KWs from the entire target corpus with the aim of revealing ANTS’ distinct associations that point to its unique narrative lines. These narratives when repeated may in turn lead to a pervasive argumentation, regardless of news topics.

3.3. Contrast to Highlight Notable Features of the ANTS Media Class

The entire process to uncover how associative KW framing occurs, involving corpus compilation, KWA, and MBA, is summarized in Figure 1. The important

⁵ ANO ‘YES’, an acronym of the Czech populist party which stands for *Akce nespokojených občanů* ‘Action of dissatisfied citizens’.

⁶ The Czech prime minister and leader of the political party ANO.

⁷ A local politician within the political party ANO.

⁸ The billionaire hedge fund manager and philanthropist George Soros.

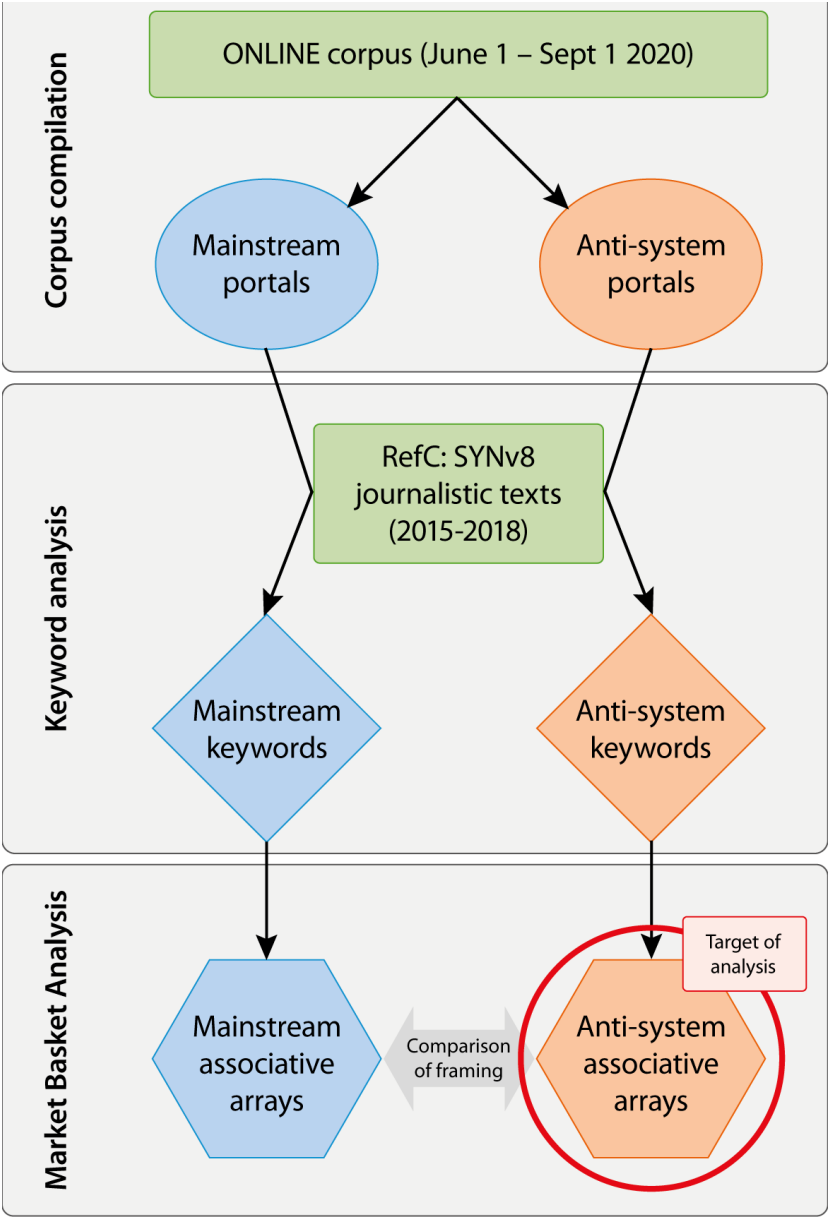


Figure 1. Progress of analysis

point here is that the unique features of the ANTS, the target of this study, are pursued in contrast to those of MS.⁹

In a nutshell, the approach in this study parallels the cognitive linguistic notions of frame and domain (Fillmore 1982) and “profile and base” (Langacker 1987: 147–82), which model our understanding of the meaning of a linguistic unit by using the notion of contrast.

3.4. Triangulation

Given the number of associations identified by MBA, too large to explore in its entirety, sampling was the only viable option. To increase the validity of our interpretations, we approached the data from three perspectives and triangulated the results. KWs and their associations were examined in three categories: media-class-dominant KWs, seasonal KWs, and shared KWs. They are not discrete groups and can overlap.

ANTS-dominant KWs (cf. §4.1) point to concepts preferred by one media class. A KW is “ANTS-dominant” when it meets two conditions:

- (a) it appears in at least 1% of ANTS texts as a KW;
- (b) the proportion of ANTS texts in which it appears as a KW is minimally twice as large as the proportion of MS texts in which it is also a KW.

For example, the word *prohlášení* ‘statement’ appears as a KW in 91 texts in ANTS and 62 texts in MS (which is 2.1% and 0.57%, respectively, cf. Table 1). The word is therefore dominant for ANTS since $0.021/0.0057 = 3.68$. We have identified 334 ANTS-dominant and 176 MS-dominant KWs.

Seasonal KWs (cf. §4.2) are expected to reflect topics that receive **short-term media attention**. They are defined here by three conditions:

- (a) a word appears as a KW in at least 10 texts within the target period (1 June–1 September 2020)
- (b) the relative proportion of texts where the word is a KW in the target period is minimally twice as large as the analogous proportion in the three-month period preceding and following the target period
- (c) the conditions (a, b) for the same KW are met in both ANTS and MS.

For example, the word *výbuch* ‘explosion’ appears as a KW in 27 ANTS texts and 83 MS texts during the target period; considering the number of texts in both

⁹ This is an operational decision to delineate the properties of ANTS without any evaluative judgment that MS is the “perfect” media class.

segments, the relative number of texts where the word appears is 19.6 texts per thousand in ANTS and 23.4 per thousand in MS. Given that relative numbers in adjacent periods are 0.78 (March–May) and 2.5 (September–December) for ANTS and 0.56 and 1.65 for MS, ‘explosion’ meets all three conditions (a, b, c) for being seasonal.

Seasonal KWs can be further divided into two groups with respect to the distribution of their associated KWs. Seasonal KWs in (i), below, are expected to reflect shorter-term issues that engage primarily one media class. Seasonal KWs in (ii) are the shorter-term issues that ANTS and MS frame differently.

(i) **Seasonal KWs predominantly framed by a single media class**
(cf. §4.2.1)

These are KWs for which only one media class has its own set of associated KWs. The other media class may have no associated KWs¹⁰ or may share some associated KWs with the first media class but does not have its own set of (specific) associated KWs.

(ii) **Seasonal KWs distinctly framed by each media class** (cf. §4.2.2)

These are KWs for which each media class has its own set of associated KWs. The media classes may or may not share some associated KWs. Either way, each media class is presumed to create a distinct set of media-specific associations for the same KW.

Shared KWs (cf. §4.3) are those KWs that appear in both ANTS and MS texts. They point to topics that were in the spotlight for both media classes and thus they are likely to reveal differences in framing.

The complete lists of KWs (divided into the categories described in this section) and their AAs are available in the OSF repository at <https://osf.io/mkbzg/>.

4. Results and Interpretation

The results show that all three groups of KWs and their AAs lead to a limited set of narrative lines regardless of news topic. Observations are made first on the basis of KWs and their associated KWs, followed by illustrative text samples.¹¹

¹⁰ The fact that a word is a KW does not entail its involvement in associations to other KWs.

¹¹ The citations may not contain all the associated KWs, since they may occur quite far (several sentences or even paragraphs) apart from one another within the same text.

4.1. ANTS-Dominant KWs

ANTS-dominant KWs directly suggest which concepts especially engage ANTS. They, unlike their MS counterparts, point to a polarizing discourse, which presents a simplistic or exaggerated view of situations and hints at alternative views. The linguistic features of polarization (Van Dijk 2016: 73–74) are present among ANTS-dominant KWs: the pronouns *my* ‘we’, *náš* ‘our’, and *jejich* ‘their’ are prominent, as are distancing devices such as the modifier *tzv.* ‘so-called’ and words related to identity, e.g., *národ* ‘nation’ or *národní* ‘national’. Words used in categorical statements and hyperbole (“intensification” in Reisigl and Wodak 2016: 33) further suggest a sweeping argumentation: the modifiers *všechen* ‘all’ and *všecek* ‘any kind of’, the emphatic adverbs or boosters *prostě* ‘simply’, *naprosto* ‘completely’, and the negative pronoun and adverbials *nic* ‘nothing’, *nikdy* ‘never’, and *nikoli* ‘by no means’. Indefinite quantification that could be used to overgeneralize is seen in the KWs *mnoho* ‘many’ and *mnohý* ‘many [of]’. The particle *přece* ‘after all’ marks what the ANTS considers to be obvious to the reader. The adverb *možná* ‘maybe’ and the particle *no* ‘well’ indicate doubt and hesitation to imply the existence of alternative “correct” views.

Tendencies to provide opinions and/or the ANTS’ version of “what really happened” can be observed in the ANTS-dominant KWs: nouns like *debata* ‘debate’, *diskuse* ‘discussion’, *názor* ‘opinion’, *myšlenka* ‘thought’, *odpověď* ‘answer’, *otázka* ‘question’, *pravda* ‘truth’, *víra* ‘belief’, *skutečnost* ‘reality’, and *lež* ‘lie’; the adverb *údajně* and particle *prý*, near-equivalents to ‘allegedly’; and the verb *zveřejnit* ‘to make public’. The polarizing linguistic devices mentioned above are not found among MS-dominant KWs.

The AA of the possessive pronoun for 1st person plural *náš* ‘our’ includes associated KWs *soběstačnost* ‘self-sufficiency’, *potravina* ‘food’, *EU*, and the populist party *SPD*¹², which by themselves suggest a protectionist and potentially anti-EU stance. Below is an illustrative example. The underlined words in bold style are the ANTS-dominant KWs and words in bold style are KWs associated with them. AAs are presented in parenthesis where the seed KW is separated by a colon and the associated KWs are linked by hyphens. As many of the original URLs are now blocked, we cite the text IDs in ONLINE1 corpus.

¹² *Svoboda a přímá demokracie* ‘Freedom and Direct Democracy’, a right-wing populist and nationalist party.

- (1) Title: *Czexit není cíl, nýbrž prostředek k dosažení cíle*

Excerpt: [...] *Právě nedávno EU v odpovědi na **naši** snahu o obnovu **naší** potravinové **soběstačnosti** naopak zvýšila podíl **potravin** k dovozu do ČR na 85%. (náš: soběstačnost-potravina-EU-SPD) (id: 2020-08-21_31_77)*

'Title: Czexit is not the goal but the means to reach the goal

Excerpt: [...] Just recently, in response to **our** efforts to restore **our** food **self-sufficiency**, the **EU** on the contrary increased the share of **food** to be imported into the Czech Republic to 85%.' (our: self-sufficiency-food-EU-SPD)

Prý 'allegedly' (particle) is associated with *evropský* 'European' and *unie* 'Union', which points to a doubtful or directly Eurosceptic stance, which can be illustrated in the following article and the text fragment:

- (2) Title: *Potravinově soběstačné Slovensko? Ani náhodou. Brusel zaslal vládě varování kvůli pokusu zvýšit prodej domácích výrobků*

Excerpt: *Eurokomise tvrdí, že zákon je v rozporu s právem **Evropské unie**. Podle komise jsou tím diskriminováni ostatní výrobci z EU. Omezuje to **prý** svobodu podnikání maloobchodníků s potravinami. Zahraniční řetězce varování ze strany **Evropské unie** vítají a žádají novou vládu, aby tento zákon změnila. Vedení EU dalo Slovensku 3 měsíce na to, aby reagovalo na toto varování. (prý: evropský-unie) (id: 2020-08-21_31_77)*

'Title: Food self-sufficient Slovakia? No way. Brussels has sent warning to government over attempt to increase sales of domestic products

Excerpt: The European Commission claims that the law is in conflict with **European Union** law. According to the Commission, it discriminates against other EU producers. It **allegedly** restricts the freedom of small food retailers to do business. Foreign chains are welcoming the warnings from the **European Union** and are asking the new government to change the law. The EU leadership has given Slovakia 3 months to respond to this warning.' (allegedly: European (adj)-union)

Note that the associated KWs do not necessarily occur in direct context in (1). In fact, *SPD* is not in this text fragment, but it occurs in a much larger context. In (2), the associated keywords can occur not only in the direct vicinity of the KW *prý*, but also in other parts of the text including the article title.

The following section will focus on the AAs of top ANTS-dominant KWs.

4.1.1. ANTS KW Framing

The top 10 ANTS-dominant KWs and their AAs can be contrasted to their MS counterparts to highlight ANTS-specific interests (tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 shows that MS tracks the increase of the COVID-infected and deaths, and the government measures to fight COVID (cf. KWs 3–6 with a large number of associated KWs including *koronavirus* ‘coronavirus’, *zemřít* ‘to die’, *nakažený/infikovaný* ‘infected’, and *počet* ‘number’ in their AAs) drawn also from major western sources (Reuters). The news was also culled from the period when the annual graduation and entrance school exams take place (‘this year’ is associated with ‘test-exam’). MS is seen to cover sports (cf. KWs 1, 7, 9, and 10, and their AAs). Such KWs associated with exams and sports are absent in ANTS-dominant KWs. In MS, COVID is associated predominantly with fact-tracking.

The top 10 ANTS-dominant KWs in Table 3 suggest a totally different emphasis from MS (KWs that did not yield associated KWs were omitted: *kapitalismus* ‘capitalism’, *onen* ‘that’).

It is possible to identify quite a different priority in ANTS against the background of the MS-dominant KWs. The ANTS-AAs suggest how the topics are framed. The KW ‘self-sufficiency’, associated with (*náš-potravina-zemědělství* ‘our-food-agriculture’), e.g., confirm ANTS’s critical stance on the EU agricultural policy as a tool to break solidarity among the EU members, as was discussed in §4.1.

In framing the KW *BLM*, ANTS connects the anti-racist demonstrations in the US not only to the KW ‘black’, but also to the KW ‘white’, an associated KW not found in the MS-dominant AAs. ANTS also connects ‘elite’ to the US and Trump. The AAs for these two KWs both point to and emphasize the division in race and power in the US. The examples, (3–4), in fact both claim an impending crisis or revolution in a US that is said to be severely divided.

- (3) Title: *Rasová karta v amerických volbách, a ještě falešná? [...] Proč je barva rasy najednou v USA tak důležitá? [...] Na podzim dojde v USA k pokusu o neo-marxistickou listopadovou revoluci!*

Excerpt: *Bílá rasa je v procesu likvidace. Černoch zastřelil 5-letého bílého chlapce, v podezření je rasový **BLM** motiv a nenávisť k bělochům vyvolaná v televizi (BLM: bílý) (id: 2020-08-14_34_177240)*

‘Title: The racial card in the American elections, and moreover (a) false (one)? Why is the color of race suddenly so important in the USA? [...] In the fall, it will result in an attempt at a neo-Marxist November Revolution in the USA!

Excerpt: The **white** race is in the process of liquidation. A black man shot a five-year old **white** boy, a racist **BLM** motive and hatred towards whites triggered by TV are suspected’ (BLM: white (adj))

Table 2. Top 10 MS-dominant KWs and their AAs (complete list is available in the OSF repository).

MS-dominant KWs	Associated KWs in the AA (selection)
<i>sezona</i> 'season'	<i>liga-ligový-klub</i> 'league (noun)-league (adj)-club'
<i>letos</i> 'this year'	<i>test-zkouška</i> 'test-exam'
<i>potorzený</i> 'confirmed (adj)'	<i>agentura-celkem-člověk-denní-evidovat-infikovaný-koronavirus-milion-ministerstvo-mrtvý-nárůst-než-nově-o</i> <i>patření-oznámít-patient-pandemie-počet-případ-Reuters-zdravotnictví-země-zemřít</i> 'agency-in total-person-daily-epidemic-to record-infected (adj)-coronavirus-million-ministry-dead (adj)-increase-than-newly-measure(s)-patient-pandemic-number-case-Reuters-healthcare-country-to die'
<i>Reuters</i>	<i>člověk-denní-infikovaný-informovat-koronavirus-milion-mrtvý-nákaza-pandemie-počet-potorzený-přibýt-</i> <i>případ-více-zaznamenat-země-zemřít</i> 'person-daily-infected (adj)-to inform-coronavirus-million-dead (adj)-infection-pandemic-num- ber-confirmed (adj)-to increase-case-more-to record-to die'
<i>Brazílie</i> 'Brazil'	<i>celkový-člověk-den-epidemie-koronavirus-milion-ministerstvo-mrtvý-nakažený-nárůst-než-počet-Reu-</i> <i>ters-více-zdravotnictví-zemřít</i> 'total (adj)-person-day-epidemic-coronavirus-million-ministry-dead-infected (adj)-in- crease-than-number-Reuters-more-healthcare-to die'

MS-dominant KWs	Associated KWs in the AA (selection)
<i>přibýt</i> 'to increase'	<i>agentura-celkem-člověk-evidovat-koronavirus-ministerstvo-nakažený-nárůst-než-ohnis-ko-opatření-počet-případ-rekordní-Reuters-rouška-test-více-dřavořinictví-zemřít</i> 'agency-in total-person-to record-coronavirus-ministry-infected-increase-than-epicenter-measure(s)-number-case-record (adj)-Reuters-mask-test-more-healthcare-to die'
<i>zápas</i> 'game'	<i>gól-minuta-off-střela</i> 'goal-minute-off-shot'
Ostrava	<i>ostravský</i> 'Ostrava (adj)'
<i>liga</i> 'league'	<i>klub-ligový-mistr-sezona-utkání</i> 'club-league (adj)-champion-season-match'
<i>minuta</i> 'minute'	<i>gól-míč-poločas-šance-střela-trenér-zápas</i> 'goal-ball-halftime-chance-shot-coach-game'

Table 3. Top 10 ANTS-dominant KWs and their AAs (complete list is available in the OSF repository).

ANTS-dominant KW	AAs
BLM	<i>Antifa-bílý-černoch-policie-rasismus-USA-všecek</i> 'Antifa-white (adj)-black (n)-police-racism-USA-all sorts of'
<i>Xaver</i> ¹	<i>ČT-moderátor-pořad-rada-Rada-radní-Šarapatka</i> ² <i>-televize-Veselý</i> 'ČT [Czech TV]-moderator-[TV] show-[ČT] council-council member-Veselý'
<i>Donbas</i>	<i>armáda-Bělorusko-informovat-koronavirus-Krym-luganský-Lukašenko-prohlásit-Putin-ruský-Trump-Ukrajina-USA-voják-Zelenský-zvěřit</i> 'army-Belarus-to inform-coronavirus-Crimea-luhansk-Lukashenka-to state-Putin-Russian (adj)-Trump-Ukraine-USA-soldier-Zelenskyy-to make public'
<i>Sputnik</i>	<i>Rusko-ruský</i> 'Russia-Russian'
SSSR 'USSR'	<i>Rusko-ruský-sovětský-USA-válka-vojenský</i> 'Russia-Russian-Soviet-USA-war-military'
<i>Kyjev</i> 'Kyiv'	<i>armáda-Donbas-informovat-koronavirus-Putin-ruský-ukrajinský-USA-voják</i> 'army-Donbas-to inform-coronavirus-Putin-Russian-Ukrainian (adj)-USA-soldier'

ANTS-dominant KW	AA's
Železný ³	ČT, moderátor-Svoboda ⁴ -televize 'ČT-moderator-Svoboda-television'
elita 'elite'	americký-Trump-USA 'American (adj)-Trump-USA'
ČT 'Czech TV'	český-člen-generální-médium-moderátor-názor-novinář-odtolání-politický-poplatek-pořad-poslanec- prezident-rada-radní-ředitel-Šarapatka-slovo-sněmovna-stížnost-Svoboda-věřejnoprávní-Veselý-vol- ba-zákon-Železný 'Czech-member-general (top level)-media-moderator-opinion-journalist-removal (laying off)-political-fee-program-parliamentarian-president-council member-director-Šara- patka-word-parliament-complaint-Svoboda-law-public (TV) (adj)-Veselý-election-law-Železný'
soběstačnost 'self-sufficiency'	EU-komodita-náš-potravina-zemědělec-zemědělství 'EU-commodity-our-food-farmer-agriculture'

1. Luboš Xaver Veselý is a controversial moderator and journalist and a then-member of the ČT council. He openly supported the Trikolóra movement, which is known to be a staunchly Eurosceptic and national-conservative party.

2. Zdeněk Šarapatka was a member of the Czech TV council who fought against attempts by certain Czech political parties and Russian propaganda to influence the TV station.

3. Jakub Železný, a moderator and journalist. He is known to have criticized China openly in the Czech TV news commentaries.

4. Ludvík Svoboda was a Czech general who served in WWI and WWII on the Eastern front and was the socialist president during and after the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion.

- (4) Title: [...] *Zvyšují pogromy Trumpovy šance na zvolení? Bezmezná nenávisť tzv. Demokratů. Příkopky dělicí společnost se mění v propasti. Kdo zradí? Občanská válka nejpозději v zimě?*

Excerpt: **Trump** se stal prezidentem v roce 2016 právě proto, že země již byla v hluboké krizi, do níž ji zavedly právě **elity** z obou parlamentních stran zapouzdřené do **amerického** establishmentu. (elita: americký-Trump-USA) (id: 2020-06-11_35_106667)

'Title: [...] Do pogroms increase **Trump's** chances of being elected? The so-called Democrats' boundless hatred. The trenches dividing the society are turning into abysses. Who will betray? A civil war no later than winter?

Excerpt: Trump became president in 2016 precisely because the country was already in a deep crisis, one that was led by **elites** from both parliamentary parties rooted in the **American** establishment.' (elite: American (adj)-Trump-USA)

The focus on a Cold-War-like competition between Russia and the US (not only involving Ukraine and Belarus, but also in relation to the pandemic) can be observed in the AAs for KWs *Donbas*, *SSSR* 'USSR', and *Kyjev* 'Kyiv', whose AAs contain both the US, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and coronavirus. The examples below illustrate a confrontation between the US and Russia into which Ukraine and Belarus are drawn.

- (5) *Operace tajných služeb USA a Ukrajiny, shrnul Putin události kolem zadržení Rusů v Bělorusku. (Donbas: Bělorusko-voják-vojenský-armáda-Ukrajina-USA) (id: 2020-08-29_28_170534)*

'US and Ukraine intelligence operations—Putin summarizes events surrounding the detention of Russians in **Belarus**.' (Donbas: Belarus-soldier-military (adj)-army-Ukraine-USA)

- (6) Title: *Američané začali na ukrajinských vojákách testovat vakcíny na Covid-19 jako na laboratorních krysách, ale dopadlo to špatně, v Charkově na tyto vakcíny již zemřelo 5 ukrajinských vojáků! (Kyjev: USA) (id: 2020-07-22_34_53080)*

'Americans began testing vaccines for Covid-19 on Ukrainian soldiers as well as on lab rats, but it went badly; in Kharkiv, 5 Ukrainian soldiers already died from these vaccines!' (Kyiv: USA)

ČT, the Czech mainstream public TV, as part of the West-oriented institution, is presented as being divided and chaotic. The AAs for KWs, [Luboš] *Xaver* [Veselý] and [Jakub] *Železný*, are moderators representing different worldviews. It is also noteworthy that the KW ČT is associated with 'complaint'.

These associated KWs indirectly question the reliability of the mainstream news station. Example (7) is consistent with what AAs suggest:

- (7) *Tady hrozí ČT obrovský průšvih. Pustili to živě, ale s chybou. A dnes to má řešit Rada ČT (ČT: stížnost) (id: 2020-07-24_248_146339)*

‘Here, **ČT** is in huge trouble. They broadcast it live, but with a mistake. And today, the Czech TV Council must deal with it.’ (ČT [Czech TV]: complaint)

The negative image of the conniving US and the mainstream media can be contrasted with the implicitly positive image of Russia. *Sputnik*, referring to the vaccine, appears only in ANTS as a KW. Moreover, the persistent co-occurrence with KWs ‘Russia’ and ‘Russian (adj)’ suggests that the Sputnik V vaccine receives a special spotlight by virtue of being a **Russian** product (rather than from any other country)¹³; *Sputnik* is not associated with KWs referring to administering or testing the vaccine (e.g., government measures, patients). ANTS’ positive stance on Sputnik V can be exemplified below:

- (8) Title: *Zájem o ruskou protikoronavirovou vakcínu se rozšiřují [sic] o další země Evropy a Asie (Sputnik: ruský) (id: 2020-08-14_41_177142)*

‘Interest in the **Russian** anti-coronavirus vaccine is spread [sic] to include other countries in Europe and Asia’ (Sputnik: Russian (adj))

ANTS-dominant KWs and their AAs clearly point to a set of narratives: an anti-EU stance, a cold-war narrative where the US is presented negatively and Russia more positively, and a questionable role played by the mainstream media.

4.2. Seasonal KWs

Seasonal KWs are expected to reflect short-term topics. Those clustering in one media are expected to reflect that media’s preference towards certain topics, while those occurring in both media are expected to show differing ways of framing the same KWs. Again, the aim of this comparison is to highlight how ANTS differs from MS. Seasonal KWs with AAs containing 15 or more associated KWs are discussed below (the threshold was set arbitrarily, due to space limitations, in order to discuss only the most connected KWs). The AAs of these seasonal KWs are not only consistent with the observations made

¹³ Note that this word is both prominent (overused) and measured for strength in association. The associated KW is therefore significant although it may seem natural for it to appear in the context of Sputnik.

in §4.1, but reveal in more detail how current events are treated by ANTS in contrast to MS.

4.2.1. Seasonal KWs Predominantly Framed by a Single Media Class

Seasonal KWs framed predominantly by MS point to domestic issues (e.g., accidents and crime): e.g., *nehoda* ‘accident’, *železnice* ‘railway’, and *vězení* ‘imprisonment’. KWs such as *Chorvatsko* ‘Croatia’, *Slovinsko* ‘Slovenia’, *červenec* ‘July’, and *srpen* ‘August’ suggest news on popular vacation destinations for Czechs. KWs such as *Agrofert*, *střet* ‘conflict [of interest]’, and *zájem* ‘interest’ suggest the abuse of EU subsidy by the conglomerate Agrofert, with ties to prime minister Babiš. The accident in Beirut was covered mainly by MS (*libanonský* ‘Lebanese’, *přístav* ‘port’, *výbuch* ‘explosion’). Below is an example with the KW ‘Agrofert’ and its AA (*střet-zájem-dotace-zákon*, ‘conflict-interest-subsidy-law’).

- (9) *Do ČR dorazily dvě předběžné zprávy EK, které se týkaly Babišova možného střetu zájmů. V první komise dospěla k závěru, že Babiš má dál vliv na Agrofert a současně jako premiér ovlivňuje použití peněz z EU. Druhá zpráva se týkala zemědělských dotací. České úřady následně zaslaly do Bruselu své reakce. (Agrofert: střet-zájem-dotace-zákon) (id: 2020-06-19_2_208198)*

‘Two preliminary reports from the EC [European Commission] concerning Babiš’s possible **conflict** of **interest** have reached the Czech Republic. The first commission concluded that Babiš continued to have influence on **Agrofert** and at the same time, as Prime Minister, influenced the use of EU money. The second report concerned agricultural **subsidies**. The Czech authorities subsequently sent their reactions to Brussels.’ (Agrofert: conflict-interest-subsidy-law).

Unlike its MS counterpart, seasonal KWs clustering in ANTS suggest topics that could polarize the public. They imply conflict (e.g., *rasistický* ‘racist’, *obvinění* ‘accusation’, *bomba* ‘bomb’, *násilí* ‘violence’, *nepokoj* ‘unrest’, *Black, Lives, Matter*) and social actors who stirred public discord (*Okamura*, *Kalousek*, *Jakeš*, and *Milada Horáková*).

The ANTS’ choice of the social actors may seem to be random, but on closer inspection, it is driven by overarching narratives against the West. Among the social actors, the AA for [Tomio] *Okamura* is most straightforward (*EU-SPD*). Okamura is known for his right-wing anti-immigration populist stance and is the leader of the populist SPD Party (Freedom and Direct Democracy). The associated KWs referring to the EU and SPD point to texts about Czechs exiting the EU, as seen, e.g., in (10):

- (10) *Pokud jde o Evropskou unii, SPD zastává názor, že je nereformovatelná, a pokud z ní nevystoupíme, tak nás zničí* (Okamura: EU-SPD) (id: 2020-07-06_31_131495)

‘As for the European Union, the **SPD** is of the opinion that it is unreformable, and if we do not leave it, it will destroy us’ (Okamura: EU-SPD)

[Miroslav] Kalousek’s actions can also be seen as an indirect link to the narrative against Czechia’s EU membership. Kalousek introduced strict austerity measures while acting as finance minister. He has often stirred controversy and public demonstrations have been organized against him. The associated KWs (*vláda* ‘government’-*Babiš-Andrej*) point to the ex-finance minister Kalousek’s critical stance on Andrej Babiš’s government and the growing state debt. Babiš is also associated with the misuse of EU subsidies (example 9). Coverage of Kalousek indirectly casts a negative light on the government, which works with the EU and so incurs economic difficulties.

- (11) *Exministr finance [Kalousek] následně konstatoval, z čeho pramení jeho přesvědčení, že Andrej Babiš je mafián. Skupina kolem premiéra prý kompletně “pohltila stát” a teď si sama nastavuje i vykládá pravidla hry a kdo to nevidí, je alibista.* (Kalousek: *vláda-Babiš-Andrej*) (id: 2020-06-17_22_204483)

‘The ex-finance minister [Kalousek] then stated the source of his belief that **Andrej Babiš** is a mafioso. The group around the prime minister is said to have completely “devoured the state” and now it sets and interprets the rules of the game all by itself; and whoever doesn’t see this is avoiding their responsibility.’ (Kalousek: *government-Babiš-Andrej*)

[Milada] Horáková and [Miloš] Jakeš are historical personalities from the communist period. Horáková is the only female western-oriented politician who was executed by the Communist government in the show trials in the 1950s and is a cultural icon of resistance against totalitarianism. The anniversary of her death stirred strong emotions and controversial debates. Jakeš is best known as the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. His unprepared speech on 17 July 1989 is often viewed as exposing both his own intellectual incompetence and also the desperation of the communist regime.

Horáková is unsurprisingly associated with the KW *komunista* ‘communist’, reflecting the slogan ‘Executed by communists’, which was hung on many university buildings to commemorate the 70th anniversary of her death. In the text below, Horáková’s (alleged by ANTS) actions lead to an underlying

narrative: the unreasonable aggressiveness of Czech TV (represented by the TV moderator Jakub Železný) and the “fascination” over Horáková among the pro-EU and pro-NATO Prague liberals (pejoratively referred to as *Pražská havlérka* ‘Prague Havelites’).

- (12) *Jakub Železný začal na ČT vyhrožovat, že vyhodí ze studia kohokoliv, kdo se dotkne **Milady Horákové!** Česká televize už je zprivatizované médium, něco nám uniklo? A kdo doopravdy byla **Horáková**? Socialistka, poslankyně za ČSNS, hlasovala v jedné linii s **komunisty** Klementa Gottwalda, založila Svaz přátel SSSR, stala se místopředsedkyní svazu, v roce 1946 v Moskvě v hotelu National utajeně jednala s členy Nejvyššího politbyra ÚV KSSS a chtěla být ministryní zahraničí místo Jana Masaryka! Proč je Pražská havlérka tak fascinována ženou, která obdivovala národní socialismus a měla úzké vazby se Stalinovým politbyrem? (Horáková: komunista-Milada) (id: 2020-06-28_35_134693)*

‘Jakub Železný started threatening to kick out of the studio anyone who touches **Milada Horáková!** Is Czech TV already a privatized medium or did we miss something? And who was **Horáková** really? A socialist, an MP for the CSNS [Czech National Social Party]¹⁴, she voted in line with the **communists** of Klement Gottwald, founded the Union of Friends of the USSR, became vice-president of the union, in 1946 in Moscow at the Hotel National secretly negotiated with members of the Supreme Politburo of the Central Committee of the Soviet CP, and wanted to be foreign minister in place of Jan Masaryk! Why are the Prague Havelites so fascinated by a woman who admired National Socialism and had close ties with Stalin’s Politburo?’ (Horáková: communist-Milada)

Miloš Jakeš died in July 2020. As anticipated, Jakeš is linked to KSČ (The Czech Communist Party). The associated KW indicates not only Jakeš’s affiliation with communism, but his anti-West stance as well. The example below (a eulogy for him, as it were) elevates Jakeš to the status of a capable politician who “prophesied” that Czechia would be dictated to by the West (because of “Zionism sliding into Central and East Europe”).

- (13) *Jenže, v tomto známém projevu zazněly daleko důležitější informace a prorocké výroky, které tehdy v roce 1989 asi nikomu v hlavě nerezonovaly, ale při pohledu zpětně do doby před 31 lety je nyní hrozné zjištění, že generální tajemník ÚV KSČ už v červenci 1989 uměl popsat procesy nasunování*

¹⁴ The party should not be confused with the National Socialist Party led by Hitler. The article author apparently conflates this party with Horáková’s Czech National Social Party (social liberals).

sionismu do zemí Střední a Východní Evropy. **Miloš Jakeš** během projevu [sic] A tím hlavním procesem bylo zadlužování socialistických států takovým způsobem, aby jejich lidové vlády začaly dělat takovou politiku, jakou nadiktuje Západ. (Jakeš: Miloš-KSČ) (id: 2020-07-15_35_540)

‘But, in this well-known speech, there was much more important information and prophetic statements, which probably didn’t resonate in anyone’s head back in 1989, but looking back 31 years ago, we come to the terrible discovery that the general secretary of the Central Committee of **the KSČ** knew how to describe the processes of Zionism infiltrating the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as early as in July 1989. **Miloš Jakeš** during the speech [sic] And the main process was the socialist states falling into debt in such a way that their people’s governments begin to make the policies dictated by the West.’ (Jakeš: Miloš-KSČ)

Clearly, the four politicians above, even though they seem disparate, are used to further a goal of weaving the same line of narratives: narratives against the mainstream media, the Czech EU membership, i.e., essentially against the country’s western orientation. This underlying goal can be gleaned though by general knowledge of the individuals and their AAs, and has been illustrated by the text samples.

ANTS-AAs also suggest the racial polarization of the US society and problematizes protests against racism. While MS associates BLM-related KWs with very few, if any, concepts, the ANTS counterparts are consistently connected with not only *černý* ‘black’, but also *bílý* ‘white’. As seen in §4.1 with the KW *BLM*, the association array of *násilí* ‘violence’, e.g., leads to texts about the disadvantaged white population (14):

- (14) *Kdyby policista byl černý a pachatel bílý, řešil by to někdo? Záleží na bílém životě? (násilí: bílý-proti-černoch)* (id: 2020-08-02_38_101369)

‘If the policeman had been black and the offender **white**, would anyone care? Do **white** lives matter?’ (violence: white (adj)-against-black (n))

ANTS-KWs are connected to shorter-term events related to Russia, e.g., the AA for the KW (*díplomat: Rusko-BIS-vyhoštění* ‘diplomat: Russia-BIS [Czech Security Intelligence Service]-expulsion’). These associated KWs suggest news about the expulsion of Russian diplomats from Czechia, an action that is seen as unfair and victimizing Russia (cf. Fidler and Cvrček 2018: 217 and Cvrček and Fidler 2019: 105). The KW *ústava* ‘constitution’ is linked to the referendum on Russian constitutional changes; noteworthy is the somewhat unexpected inclusion of the KWs *USA* ‘USA’ and *americký* ‘American’ in the AA (*ústava:*

americký-Putin-Rusko-změna-ruský-USA ‘constitution: American (adj)-Putin-Russia-change-Russian (adj)-USA’). This AA indicates that the constitutional changes in Russia are important in relation to the US. The following example clarifies why the US is included: the old constitution is framed as “dictated by the US”, in line with the negative image observed in §4.1:

- (15) *Při nejmenším do doby, kdy se **ruští** občané rozhodnou nahradit v nouzi zavedenou ústavu diktovanou **USA** novou, vlastní. Ta bude, dojde-li k výměně ústavy, [...], definovat **Ruskou** federaci jako civilizační jednotku. **Rusko** jako civilizační jednotka je zcela něco jiného než století trvající chápání **Ruska** Západem. Taková **změna** nedovolí pokračovat v současném typu chování Západu vůči prezidentovi a **Ruské** federaci. (ústava: americký-Putin-Rusko-ruský (adj)-USA-změna) (id: 2020-06-30_61_48943)*

‘At least until such a time as **Russian** citizens decide to replace the constitution dictated by the **US** out of necessity with a new one, of their own. It will exist, if it results in replacement of the constitution, [...], [it will] define the **Russian** Federation as a unit of civilization. **Russia** as a unit of civilization is quite different from the West’s centuries-long understanding of **Russia**. Such a **change** will not allow the current type of behavior by the West toward the president and the **Russian** Federation to continue.’ (constitution: American (adj)-Putin-Russia-Russian (adj)-USA-change)

4.2.2. Seasonal KWs with Distinct Framing in Both Media Classes

Table 4 shows seasonal KWs in category (ii) with the number of associated KWs that are media-specific, and those in the intersection and the union of the two media classes. The KWs point mainly to the Belarus protests against presidential election results, the BLM movement in the US, and the EU summit. Since BLM has already been covered in the previous sections (§4.1 and §4.2.1), we will focus on the KWs and their AAs concerning Belarus and the EU here.

The MS-specific associations for the elections in Belarus, e.g., *Bělorusko: Cichanouská-agentura-výsledek* ‘Belarus: Tsikhanovskaya-[press] agency-result’, suggest that the mainstream media makes explicit references to the source of information (press agency) and focuses on the election results. It is also worth noting that one of the MS-specific associated KWs refers to the opposition leader and the presidential candidate against Lukashenko by name (‘Tsikhanovskaya’), unlike ANTS. The personal name humanizes the opposition and the protests, as can be also seen in the following example:

Table 4. Seasonal KWs for which each media class has its own set of associated KWs

KWs (gloss)	ANTS-specific associated KWs	MS-specific associated KWs	Intersection	Union
<i>Bělorusko</i> ‘Belarus’	47	3	23	73
<i>protest</i>	36	4	32	72
<i>Lukašenko</i> ‘Lukashenka’	45	4	20	69
<i>běloruský</i> ‘Belarusian (adj)’	39	5	21	65
<i>policie</i> ‘police’	22	5	9	36
<i>dotace</i> ‘subsidy’	11	16	5	32
<i>policista</i> ‘police officer’	10	5	12	27
<i>obnova</i> ‘recovery’	11	4	11	26
<i>Minsk</i>	9	6	10	25
<i>policejní</i> ‘police (adj)’	7	9	8	24
<i>demonstrant</i> ‘demonstrator’	6	8	9	23
<i>Floyd</i>	9	4	10	23
<i>summit</i>	4	2	9	15
<i>Washington</i>	8	2	4	14
<i>rezoluce</i> ‘resolution’	1	4	7	12

- (16) *Světů není dění v **Bělorusku** lhostejné. Některé země volají po nových volbách, jiné požadují sankce [...] Zároveň nabádala úřady, aby přistoupily na dialog, a vyzvala starosty, aby ve svých městech o víkendů zorganizovali poklidná masová shromáždění. **Cichanouská** také ohlásila záměr vytvořit koordinační radu pro předání moci. (Bělorusko: Cichanouská-agentura; id: 2020-08-14_7_8839)*

‘The world is not indifferent to what is happening in **Belarus**. Some countries are calling for new elections, others are demanding sanctions [...] At the same time, she [Tikhanovskaya] has

urged the authorities to engage in dialogue and has called on mayors to organize peaceful mass rallies in their cities over the weekend. **Tikhanovskaya** has also announced her intention to create a coordination council for the transfer of power.’ (Belarus: Tikhanovskaya-agency)

In contrast to MS, ANTS-specific KWs are disproportionately numerous (cf. the numbers of ANTS-specific KWs for the Belarus-related KWs ‘Belarus’, ‘Lukashenka’, ‘Belarusian’, ‘Minsk’). These associations, however, are not randomly chosen. While both ANTS-AAs and MS-AAs include KWs referring to Russia (*Rusko* ‘Russia’, *Putin*), ANTS-specific KWs connect Belarus-related KWs to:

- the West, e.g., *západ* ‘West (n)’, *západní* ‘western’, *EU*, *NATO*, *USA*
- military- and security-related KWs, e.g., *bezpečnost* ‘security’, *voják* ‘soldier’, *vojenský* ‘military (adj)’, *armáda* ‘army’, *tajný* ‘secret [service]’.

ANTS is thus distinct from MS in pointing to the Cold War model—Russia vs. the West—to cover the current situation in Belarus. ANTS characterizes this relationship as “different shackles”, as shown in (17).

- (17) *Médiím v otázce **Běloruska** nelze věřit. Velice ohraný scénář. Co je VIP poukázkou na Majdan? Chtějí Bělorusové do jiných okovů? Kdo to asi všechno řídí? Zkušenosti máme habaděj* (Bělorusko: západ-západní) (id: 2020-08-14_248_42686)

‘The media cannot be trusted on the **Belarus** question. An out-of-date script. What’s a VIP voucher for the Maidan? Do the Belarusians want to get themselves into different shackles? Who’s likely to be masterminding it all? We have heaps of experience.’ (Belarus: west (n)-western)

ANTS also connects Belarus to NATO, Poland, and the EU, drawing special attention to the interaction between Belarus and the West, especially Poland as a NATO member sharing a state border with Belarus. This image of Belarus as a state that might be pulled towards the West and away from Russia by force has been observed also in §4.1.1 as well as in the example below. Russia is presented as a helper, reassuring Belarus it will send an army at the latter’s request.

- (18) *Andrej Babiš vyzval **EU** k podpoře státního převratu v **Bělorusku** podle modelu z Československa v roce 1989, běloruský prezident na to zareagoval hrozbou aktivace článku smlouvy o kolektivní bezpečnosti s Ruskou federací,*

Vladimir Putin potvrdil, že vyšle ruskou armádu do **Běloruska** po přijetí žádosti z Minsku! Na polské straně hranice se formují a hromadí tanky a vojska **NATO** v rámci cvičení Defender 2020, ale jako cvičení to nevypadá, běloruská vojenská rozvědka má obavy, že by mohlo dojít k pozvání vojsk do **Běloruska** ze strany běloruské opozice, kterou by předtím Brusel uznal za legitimní vládu v čele se samozvanou prezidentkou! (Bělorusko: Polsko-NATO-EU) (id: 2020-08-16_33_169750)

‘Andrej Babiš has called on the **EU** to support a revolution in **Belarus** modelled on Czechoslovakia in 1989, the Belarusian president responded with a threat to activate an article of a collective security agreement with the Russian Federation, and Vladimir Putin confirmed that he would send the Russian army to **Belarus** after accepting a request from Minsk! On the Polish side of the border, **NATO** tanks and troops are forming and massing as part of the Defender 2020 exercise, (but it doesn’t look like an exercise!), and Belarusian military intelligence is concerned that there may be an invitation of troops into **Belarus** by the Belarus opposition, which Brussels would acknowledge in advance as the legitimate government headed by a self-proclaimed president!’ (Belarus: Poland-NATO-EU)

The sense of concern about the West’s encroachment on Belarus can be observed via the AA that connects the Belarus protest with Ukraine, the locus of Euromaidan (*protest: Ukrajina* ‘protest: Ukraine’), an event that could trigger confrontation between the West and Russia.

- (19) *Běloruská tajná služba zachytila telefonické hovory z České republiky, které měly organizovat **protesty** v běloruských ulicích po zvolení Alexandra Lukašenka! Podle zdrojů běloruské tiskové agentury BelTA mělo jít o zaměstnance “státního média” a pracovníky české mezinárodní neziskové organizace bez uvedení konkrétních jmen nebo názvů! [...] V Bělorusku se schyluje k Majdanu, na ulicích v Minsku vyrůstají barikády, ale běloruský prezident varuje, že nepokoje v zemi organizují síly nejen ze Západu, ale i z Moskvy! (protest: Ukrajina-Rusko) (id: 2020-08-11_32_326)*

‘The Belarusian secret service has intercepted phone calls from the Czech Republic that they [telephone calls] are going to organize **protests** in the streets of Belarus after the election of Alexander Lukashenka! According to the Belarusian news agency BelTA, this was supposed to relate to employees of the [Czech] “state media” and workers of a Czech international NGO without mentioning specific [personal] names or [NGO] names! [...] Maidan is brewing in Belarus, barricades are being erected on the streets of Minsk, but the Belarusian president warns that unrest in the country is being

organized by forces not only from the West, but also from Moscow!’
(protest: Ukraine-Russia)

ANTS also diverges from MS with regards to the EU. The KWs *dotace* ‘subsidy’ and *obnova* ‘[EU COVID] recovery [plan]’ indicate that both media classes engage in covering EU economic policies as current topics. The ANTS-AA for the KW *obnova* ‘recovery’, however, includes associated KWs suggesting a burden on the member states (*dluh-krize-půjčka* ‘debt-crisis-loan’), unlike the MS-AA, which includes words expected in reports on EU negotiations (*dohoda-jednání-grant* ‘agreement-negotiation-grant’). The following ANTS example amplifies the state debt until it is comparable to the medieval plague:

- (20) *Občany, kteří by si na svých mobilech a tabletech něco četli na internetu, by Brusel zkasíroval novou digitální daní. Tohle není cesta z krize. Tohle je cesta do největší ekonomické krize od dob, kdy ve středověku třetina Evropanů zemřela na mor. (obnova: dluh-krize-půjčka) (id: 2020-06-01_43_57)*

‘Brussels would cash in on citizens browsing the Internet on their mobiles and tablets with a new digital tax. This is no way out of the **crisis**. This is the way into the biggest economic **crisis** since a third of Europeans died of the plague in the Middle Ages.’ (debt-crisis-loan)

4.2.3. Seasonal KWs: Summary

Seasonal KWs connected with current events show how ANTS advances its narrative of “Russia vs. the West” (the EU, NATO, USA, and pro-West mainstream media and NGOs). The KW framing in ANTS suggests repeated tendencies to look for multiple points of discord and dispute in the West, thereby placing an emphasis on the problematic aspects of the West.

4.3. Shared KWs (Non-Seasonal)

Shared KWs are perhaps the most informative in terms of ANTS’ distinct framing of the same KWs, in contrast to MS. The degree of overlap was measured by the Dice coefficient, which is calculated as the number of associated KWs in the overlap between media classes divided by their union. KWs with the lowest values (between 0 and 0.1), i.e., those which share no or a very small portion of associations, are listed below.

Dice = 0: *kauza* 'affair', *ředitel* 'director', *oběť* 'victim', *Praha* 'Prague', *banka* 'bank', *organizace* 'organization', *TOP* [09]¹⁵, *milion* 'million', *bezpečnostní* 'of security', *člen* 'member', *dluh* 'debt', *plán* 'plan', *finanční* 'financial', *pomoc* 'help'

Dice < 0.1: *Turecko* 'Turkey', *turecký* 'Turkish', *Amerika* 'America', *kraj* 'region', *agentura* 'agency', *demokracie* 'democracy', *ministerstvo* 'ministry', *Řecko* 'Greece', *informovat* 'to inform', *nákaza* 'infection', *hranice* 'border', *vlak* 'train', *Německo* 'Germany', *případ* 'case', *armáda* 'army', *řecký* 'Greek' (adj), *počet* 'number', *nehoda* 'accident', *útok* 'attack', *unie* 'union', *německý* 'German' (adj), *test* 'test', *návrh* 'proposal', *doprava* 'transportation', *nakažený* 'infected', *USA*, *služba* 'service', *hnutí* 'movement', *karanténa* 'quarantine', *Rusko* 'Russia', *rouška* 'mask'

Below we will focus on the country names that have large AAs: *Amerika* 'America' (*Amerika* was chosen instead of *USA* because the former's lower Dice value), *Německo* 'Germany', *unie* '[European] Union', *Turecko* 'Turkey', *Řecko* 'Greece', and *Rusko* 'Russia'.

4.3.1. *Amerika* 'America'

The ANTS-AAs for this KW are commensurate with the earlier observation about the US. ANTS links *USA* with violence and racial division (*Amerika: nepokoj-válka-černý-bílý-rasismus* 'America: unrest-war-black-white-racism'), while MS links it with the North and South Americas and COVID (*Brazílie-latinský-koronavirus-nákaza-úmrť* 'Brazil-Latin [America]-coronavirus-infection-death'). This link to pandemics can be found also in ANTS, but in addition ANTS-AA includes *flu*, a KW not found in the MS-AA. This associated KW suggests a representation of COVID-19 as "just a [strain of] flu".

- (21) *Jak je to možné? Jednoduše: koronavirová **chřipka** prostě neexistuje. Odbyla si svoje, jako jedna ze tří chřipek, které se letos objevily na scéně a svůj vrchol měla v květnu. (Amerika: chřipka) (id: 2020-08-30_28_165134)*

'How is that possible? Simple: Coronavirus **flu** just doesn't exist. It's done its bit, like one of three strains of flu that appeared on the scene this year and had its peak in May.' (America: flu)

4.3.2. *Německo* 'Germany'

The AAs of the shared KWs also reveal ANTS' underlying narrative about the West. Unlike the MS-AA, the ANTS-AA includes *Soviet*, *Hitler*, and *war*. These

¹⁵ A Czech liberal-conservative political party (*Tradice Odpovědnost Prosperita*, 'Tradition Responsibility Prosperity').

associated KWs juxtapose and implicitly conflate Nazi Germany's past dominance with the current German dominance in the EU. In the example below, the Czech Republic is said to be "choking with anti-Russian rhetoric" and is turning into a "protectorate" of the "Germany-dominated EU":

- (22) *Tehdejší strach z **Německa** nás přivedl ke komunismu a ke čtyřiceti letům vazalství **Sovětskému** svazu, dnes se pro změnu zalykáme protiruskou rétorikou a nevíme si toho, že se postupně znovu měníme v protektorát **Německem** dominované Evropské unie. (Německo: Hitler-sovětský-válka) (id: 2020-06-04_32_34927)*

'The fear of **Germany** at that time led us to communism and to forty years of vassalage to the **Soviet** Union; today we are choking with anti-Russian rhetoric for a change and are not aware that we are gradually turning again into a protectorate of the **German**-dominated European Union.' (Germany: Hitler-Soviet (adj)-war)

ANTS also criticizes "rewriting" the history of the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi Germany:

- (23) *Oslavujeme Američany, vlasovce, nalháváme si, že jsme se osvobodili sami. Káci se pomník **sovětskému** vojevůdci a sundávají pamětní desky (Německo: Hitler-sovětský-válka) (id: 2020-06-04_32_34927)*

'We celebrate the Americans, the Vlasov¹⁶ army, deluding ourselves that we liberated ourselves. A monument to the **Soviet** military commander is being toppled' (Germany: Hitler-Soviet (adj)-war)

On the surface, (22) and (23) seem contradictory as the former presents the USSR differently: as a communist country that subjugated Czechoslovakia (22) and a country that liberated Czechoslovakia (23). What these texts have in common, however, is an indirect negative image of the West—the EU where Germany turns the Czech Republic into its vassal again and criticism of Czechia's pro-West inclinations and its disregard of the accomplishments of the USSR.

4.3.3. *Unie* '[European] Union'

The ANTS-AA of *unie* 'union', as in 'Germany', points to ANTS' critical narrative about the West. The associated KWs for 'union' in MS point to EU-Czechia interaction, policymaking, and negotiations (represented by prime minister

¹⁶ Andrei Vlasov, a Soviet Red Army general, collaborated with Nazi-Germany but helped Czechs during the Prague uprising at the end of WWII.

Babiš and his government): e.g., (*premier-Babiš-Česko-vláda-evropský* ‘prime minister-Babiš-Czechia-government-European’ (adj)). In contrast, ‘union’ in ANTS co-occurs with references to the Eurosceptic populist parties and to debt: (*trikolóra-SPD-dluh-půjčka* ‘Tricolor-SPD-debt-loan’) (see example 2). In addition, ‘union’ is associated with (*USA-NATO-Rusko-Ukrajina-Bělorusko* ‘USA-NATO-Russia-Ukraine-Belarus’), placing the EU among the geopolitical players involving Ukraine and Belarus. These KWs, as seen above, recur with many KWs in ANTS but are completely absent in the MS counterpart.

ANTS also differs from MS in terms of the number of associations with these KWs. Although these KWs are shared by both ANTS and MS, it is possible to state that the former “floods” the media space with much larger AAs. ANTS connects ‘union’ with 87 KWs and MS with 7. Similarly, ANTS connects *EU* with 155 KWs and MS with 20.

4.3.4. *Řecko* ‘Greece’ and *Turecko* ‘Turkey’

The ANTS-AAs for KWs ‘Greece’ and ‘Turkey’ suggest that they provide another opportunity for ANTS to bring up its persistent narrative regarding Russia. Associated KWs are again more numerous in ANTS than in MS: 50 KWs in ANTS and 9 in MS connected to ‘Greece’, and 59 KWs in ANTS and 1 KW in MS connected to ‘Turkey’. The MS-AA for ‘Greece’ points to summer vacation travel under COVID: (*cestovní-koronavirus-nákaza-srpen-test-turista* ‘travel-coronavirus-infection-August-test-tourist’). The ANTS-AA point to geopolitical conflicts: e.g., *NATO-EU-sankce-armáda-krize-Sýrie-Kypr-Rusko* ‘NATO-EU-sanctions-army-crisis-Syria-Cyprus-Russia’). Similarly, ANTS-AAs for ‘Turkey’ contain associated KWs referring to countries in conflict (*Sýrie-Kypr-Libye* ‘Syria-Cyprus-Libya’), social actors that are involved (*EU-NATO-Rusko*), contract and sanctions (*smlouva* ‘contract’, *sankce* ‘sanctions’), and military-related terms (*vojenský* ‘military’ (adj)). MS has only (*turecký* ‘Turkish’) in its AA. The following two examples are informative in terms of the role played by Russia. They contrast the EU’s incompetence and Russia’s important role in international conflict resolution.

- (24) Title: *Řecká vláda požádala Rusko o pomoc proti Turecku* (Řecko: *Turecko-Rusko-NATO-EU*) (id: 2020-07-23_32_179535)

‘The Greek government has asked **Russia** for help against **Turkey**’
(Greece: Turkey-Russia-NATO-EU)

- (25) *V březnu oznámilo Turecko úmysl již poněkolkáté vyslat do kyperských pobřežních vod těžební loď Yavuz, aby tam nelegálně těžila plyn. Kyperská vláda požádala o pomoc EU, která se však dodnes nedohodla na uvalení jakýchkoli účinných sankcí proti Turecku. Vláda neutrální kyperské*

republiky proto v nouzi požádala o pomoc Rusko (Turecko: Rusko-NATO-EU-Kypr) (id: 2020-08-23_27_89053)

‘In March, **Turkey** announced its intention to send the mining vessel Yavuz for the umpteenth time to Cypriot coastal waters for illegal gas drilling there. The Cypriot government has requested help from the EU, which, however, has not yet agreed to impose any effective sanctions against **Turkey** to this day. The government of the neutral Republic of Cyprus therefore out of necessity requested help from **Russia**.’ (Turkey: Russia-NATO-EU-Cyprus)

4.3.5. *Rusko* ‘Russia’

The ANTS-AA for ‘Russia’ shows the persistent narratives that place Russia center stage even more visibly. While MS connects *Rusko* ‘Russia’ to the country’s struggle with the pandemic (*úmrtí-nakažený-nákaza-počet-případ-koronavirus-pandemie* ‘death-infected (adj)-infection-number-case-coronavirus-pandemic’), ANTS associates ‘Russia’ minimally with COVID: *koronavirus* is the only one out of 152 associated KWs.

Instead, ‘Russia’, co-occurring with (*EU-NATO-Čína-Německo-USA-OSN*, ‘EU-NATO-China-Germany-USA-UN’), is covered by ANTS as a major international player. It is also associated with the former Soviet satellites, states in former Soviet spheres of influence and with the USSR (*sovětský-Ukrajina-Bělorusko-ČR-Polsko* ‘Soviet (adj)-Ukraine-Belarus-Czechia-Poland’). We have seen in §4.3.4 that ‘Russia’ occurs in contexts of dispute and conflict. The AA for ‘Russia’ is consistent with this observation; here ‘Russia’ occurs not only in conjunction with Turkey and Greece, but also in other contexts of conflict and war (*Sýrie-Turecko-Řecko-Kypr-Donbas-Krym* ‘Syria-Turkey-Greece-Cyprus-Donbas-Crimea’). It is noteworthy that its MS counterpart is associated with only three countries—Belarus, Brazil, and the US. Connections to military actions and security are numerous: (e.g., *válka-voják-vojenský-základna-vojsko-raketa-obrana-bojový-tajný-bezpečnost* ‘war-soldier-military (adj)-[military] base-army unit-missile-defense-combat (adj)-security’); the MS counterpart lists none of these associated KWs. The associated KWs in the ANTS-AA, which are loosely connected to the concept of power and influence in the international arena, are unique to ANTS.

- (26) *Putinem navrhnutý Summit pěti zemí—stálých členů Rady bezpečnosti OSN (Rusko, Čína, USA, Francie, Velká Británie) bude hrát důležitou roli při hledání společných odpovědí na moderní výzvy a hrozby a prokáže společný závazek duchu aliance...* (Rusko: bezpečnost-OSN) (id: 2020-06-21_61_188)

'A summit of five countries proposed by Putin—the permanent members of the **UN Security Council** (**Russia**, China, the US, France, the UK) will play an important role in finding common answers to modern challenges and threats and will demonstrate a shared commitment to the spirit of the alliance...’ (Russia: security-UN)

There are other ANTS-specific associated KWs for 'Russia'. These are KWs that reflect the West's confrontation with Russia: economic and diplomatic penalties (*sankce-vyhoštění-západní* 'sanctions-expulsion [of diplomats]-western'), the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader Navalny (*Navalný*), and the possible plan to poison three Czech politicians with ricin. These associations and the text samples below are consistent with the observations above that ANTS produces a persistent narrative of confrontation between the West and Russia. Example (27) concerns a journalist (Ondřej Kundra) who reported that Russian secret agents disguised as diplomats brought a suitcase with ricin and were planning to assassinate three Czech politicians. The Russian embassy denied the authenticity of this story and made Kundra a laughingstock. Example (28) reports the US attempt to obstruct the German-Russian natural gas pipeline project with new sanctions. The expression "events with Navalny" obfuscates what happened to Navalny, thereby not presenting the suspicion that Navalny was poisoned by Russia; the expression "through the lens" also suppresses the cause-effect relationship, i.e., poisoning of Navalny as a reason for the sanctions.

- (27) Title: *Kundra je terčem posměchu kvůli falešné kauze ricin. Od bojovníka proti fake news k dezinformátorovi stačil jeden kufřík* (Rusko: vyhoštění) (id: 2020-06-06_39_55525)

'Kundra is a target of ridicule for his fake ricin case. From fake news fighter to disinformers, one briefcase was enough' (Russia: expulsion)

- (28) *USA se pokoušejí dívat se na "Severní proud" optikou Navalného případu. USA mohou využít událostí s Navalným a zavést nové sankce proti projektu "Severní proud".* (Rusko: Navalný-sankce) (id: 2020-08-31_29_232949)

'The US is trying to look at the "Nord Stream" through the lens of the Navalny case. The US may take advantage of the events with Navalny to initiate new **sanctions** against the "Nord Stream" project.' (Russia: Navalny-sanction)

4.3.6. Shared KWs: Summary

Shared KWs are informative when it comes to obtaining evidence for ANTS-unique narratives. Although the KWs are shared by both media classes, ANTS

frame them very differently from MS. The former tends to “flood” the KWs with a much larger number of associated KWs than MS. These large AAs, however, are not arbitrary. Many of the associated KWs recur and weave together a consistent set of narratives: confrontation between the West (USA, EU, Czech Republic as part of EU) and Russia; tendencies to accentuate the negative image of the West in contrast to a positive image of Russia were also observed.

5. Conclusions

This study has explored the discourse properties of the Czech anti-system media and its strategy to “flood the media zone” with various associations. The ANTS texts contained numerous news topics, including the migration crisis in Europe, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Belarus protests, the EU policies, the Czech mainstream public TV, and international conflicts. In ANTS most of them were framed by associations to support specific ideological narratives.

Methodologically, the present analysis was driven by two cognitive principles: contrast and conceptual framing. Prominent words were harvested with Keyword Analysis against the background of a large corpus of journalistic texts; the choice of this reference corpus allowed us to identify features of ANTS that are unusual in the general journalistic register. Market Basket Analysis helped us assess the number and the strength of association among keywords and helped us understand the nature of such associations (represented by keywords) in ANTS, especially when contrasted with MS. Our method is different from both analyses of a few hand-picked texts and analyses of multiple texts on one delimited topic. Individual text samples facilitate our understanding of the nature of associations, but the *spread* of the associations in a large number of texts can only be demonstrated quantitatively.

The results of our investigation have revealed several important features of ANTS discourse. Although ANTS is relatively smaller in size than MS, the ANTS-KWs tend to be associated with relatively more KWs, an indication of “flooding” the media space. These associated KWs, however, hardly occur randomly. Instead, ANTS, using these associations, consistently and repeatedly weaves a small set of recurring narratives, and it does so regardless of what it covers as a news topic: a Cold-War model dividing the world into the West and Russia, consistently focusing on the negative aspects (while being silent about the positive aspects) of the West, thereby implicitly elevating the role of Russia in the international arena. By incrementally connecting different topics to these narratives, ANTS texts create a tacit argumentation for CZexit- and NATO-exit and for reorientation of Czechia towards Russia. These narrative lines are found within the entire ANTS media class in Czech—on both Russia-sponsored and domestic servers.

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