



## A Filipino-American Contrastive Study on Newspaper Genre: A Response to Post Pandemic Period

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### Abstract

The study attempted to contrastively compare editorial headlines of two writing cultures, Filipino and American. The objectives of the study were identifying the types of editorial headlines employed in the Manila Bulletin (henceforth MB) and Washington Post (henceforth WP), determining the particular presupposition triggers evident in the two writing cultures, and providing pedagogical implications in light of the findings of the study. Sixty-two editorial headlines from MB and WP were utilized during the surge of the Omicron Variant, extracted from December 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022. The findings of the study revealed that American editorialists favored producing verbal headlines because of the low-culture attribution, directness and explicitness of American editorialists compared to its counterpart with its high-culture attribution, indirectness and implicitness of Filipino editorialists. As far as the usage of presupposition triggers are concerned in writing headlines, Filipino editorialists preferred to write existential presupposition triggers than what American editorialists did because Filipinos are perceived as reader-responsible, whereas Anglo-Americans are known as writer-responsible. Pedagogical implications and research directions were provided.

**Keywords:** Genre; Newspapers; Omicron; Editorial; Headlines

### 1. Introduction

The study of newspaper genre has become an important aspect of genre analysis. Newspaper as a media discourse serves as a living soul of a nation. One of its significant parts is the editorial section, for it serves the spoken minds of the current narrative of a country. Manu, Awuttey & Freita (2022) elaborated that headlines are linguistic items that summarize news reports and pertinently frame the key content of a story that persuades the readers to read. Moreover, Van Dijk (1988) elucidated that headlines of the editorials are the opening section of the relevant main text with different communicative functions. One of which is the summary of news reports. Arguably, Bell (1991) and Nir (1993) underscored "a distinction between headlines functioning as the abstract of the main event of the story and headlines as promoting one of the details of the story (p.2)."

In the same manner, newspapers are deemed as historical narratives of a country. They mirror important events and issues that constitute the wholeness of a nation. The readership of electronic versions of newspapers has become enormous in number due to the fact that readers' mobility has been affected by the rise of Global Health issue, Covid 19 Pandemic. Many of them may prefer to read at home rather than holding the physical newspaper that may contaminate their hands with the deadly virus. Newspapers as echoed by Reah, (2002 cited in Magtira & Bernardo, 2017) "have the most number of readers because of its accessibility and wide range of contents such as news, opinions, editorials, commentaries, entertainment features, and sport news. (p 1)."

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The genre of newspapers has been used as a significant research variable by many studies (e.g. Abhijit, 2012. Reah, 2002, Magtira & Bernardo, 2017, Weng, 1998). Editorials as one of the significant parts of the newspapers have received research attention by a number of researchers such as van Dijk's, (1985) opinion and ideology, Weng's (1998) analysis of the news text, and Taiwo's (2007) power relations, Dayag's (2008) metadiscourse, argumentation of editorials of Asian Englishes, and Firmstone's (2019) editorial Journalism to name a few.

Hinds (1987 cited in Morales, 2012) found that Asians, Japanese in particular, produce reader-responsible prose as opposed to Anglo-American writing that is writer-responsible. Japanese, according to Tsuda (1992 cited in Morales, 2012) have the tendency not to express whatever they want to scribble, for they leave to the readers the responsibility to understand what is not written. In relation to this linguistic assertion, Hall (1976) proposed two categorizations of cultures into high context versus low context cultures in order to understand their basic differences in communication style and cultural issues. This view is supported by Mujtaba and Balboas (2009) categorizing Japanese and Filipino as high-context cultures, thus making the two cultures and other Asian cultures less verbal in writing formal information. This is also supported by Goman (2011 cited in Madrunio & Martin, 2022) that Americans are direct and explicit interlocutors as opposed to Filipinos who are indirect and implicit interlocutors .

The present study adopted the frameworks of Quirk's et al (1985) Structural Classification of Headlines and Karttunen's (1983) Presupposition Triggers.

This study likewise adopted the categories of textual analysis employed by Bonyadi and Samuel (2013) and patterned after Bernardo and Magtira (2017). According to Van Dijk (1988 cited in Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013), headlines and leads serve "as the summary of the news reports" (p.1). Furthermore, as an opening section to relevant main text, they perform multiple functions. Bell (1991) and Nir (1993) determined that headlines also serve as "the abstract of the main story and promote one of the details of the story" (p.1) (cited in Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013,). There are two types of headlines such as verbal headlines and nonverbal headlines. In the study of Bernardo and Magtira (2017), they claimed that headlines possess verbal clause as corroborated by Quirk et al's (1985 as cited in Bernardo & Magtira, 2017) structural types of clauses finite clause, non-finite clause, and verbless clause. Finite clause is a kind of clause that possesses a subject and a predicate that may function as a noun, an adverb, and an adjective, whereas a non-finite clause does not carry a tense and is considered verbals. Thus, absence of a verb is prevalent in a verbless clause. On the one hand, finite clauses are categorized into three categories such as noun clauses, adverbial clauses, and adjectival clauses. On the other hand, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) went on to explain that non-finite clauses are deemed as verbals namely participial, infinitives, and gerunds. Also, these verbals could be in forms of phrases.

### 1.1. Types of verbal headlines

A finite verb, as echoed by Durga (2018), usually serves as the main verb of a clause or a sentence. The following sample headlines were extracted from MB and WP.

- PH **confirms** first cases of Omicron coronavirus variant (December 15, 2021, MB)
- California **unveils** plan to treat coronavirus as manageable risk, marking new phase in pandemic response (February 18, 2022, WP)
- Omicron **spreads** faster and **weakens** jabs: WHO (December 13, 2021, MB)

A non-finite clause, however, is accentuated as an infinitive, participles (present or past), and a gerund (Gu, 2020, p. 1). Below are some sample non-finite verbal headlines found in MB and WP.

- PH has 'overcome' Omicron variant, prepares to shift to Alert Level 1- DOH (February 19, 2022, MB).
- Denied birth certificates, thousands of children in the UAE go without schooling and healthcare. (February 20, 2022, WP).
- Understanding the rhetorical fight 'spying' over Donald Trump (February 15, 2022, WP).

### 1.2. Types of nonverbal headlines

Gu (2020) explicated that a noun or a noun phrase (NP) can be modified by any grammatical elements, which can be placed before or after a noun or a NP. If a modifier represents a grammatical structure that is placed before a noun or an NP, it is called Premodifier, whereas if it is placed after a modifier, it is deemed as Postmodifier. However, if modifiers are placed before and after them, they serve as Pre and Post modifiers. Below are several samples of nonverbal headlines extracted from MB and WP.

- Sample of premodifier
- Expanding face-to-face classes crucial in averting a learning crisis. (February 4, 2022, MB) (expanding face-to-face classes = face-to-face classes which/that are expanding)
- Sample of postmodifier
- Assistance needed for sick workers on home quarantine (January 27, 2022, MB) ('needed for sick workers on home quarantine' serves as modifying elements after the noun, assistance.)
- Sample of Pre and Post modifiers
- Amended PSA: An investment game changer for the Philippines (February 10, 2022, MB)
- (The determiner An serves as a premodifier, while for the Philippines serve as postmodifiers for the noun phrase investment game changer)

### 1.3. Karttunen's (1983) Presupposition Triggers

Yule (1996 cite in Al- Zubeiry, 2020) explicated that presupposition triggers as “something that the speakers assume to be the case prior to making an utterance;” therefore, presupposition is “an assumption concerning particular background understanding which is related to a given utterance whose truth is hypothesized or taken for granted in the concerned discourse” (p1). Thus, presupposition is an element both in written and spoken language in which the writer or speaker is assuming that the target audience knows the context of the written or spoken topics.

#### 1.3.1. Types of presupposition triggers

##### Existential

- It is defined as a possessive construction that provides assumption or state of existence (Magtira & Bernardo, 2017)  
***Erring on the side of caution*** (December 1, 2021, MB)  
Where does erring exist? on the side of caution  
***A tragic police shooting ends in a guilty verdict, for once*** (December 28, 2021, WP)  
*Where does police shooting end? in a guilty verdict*

##### Lexical

- Lexical presupposition is defined as the use of words in both written and spoken language characterized with meanings other than the literal meanings of the words provided (Murillo & Yeh, 2021).  
MMFF movies back to theaters (December 19, 2021, MB)  
Because of Pandemic movies in theaters were restricted.  
Pelosi said it's fine for lawmakers to trade stocks. She's wrong. (December 21, 2021, WP)  
Pandemic compelled lawmakers to make laws in favor of trade stocks.

##### Structural

- It is an assumption that the use of certain words and phrases is factual and true-to- life (Siagian, Pangaribuan, & Toruan, 2017)  
Vote buying and vote selling undermine people's sovereign will (December 18, 2021, MB)  
Vote buying and vote selling still exist in some countries.  
Flying blind is no way to survive the pandemic. We need a powerful virus radar (December 30, 2021, WP)  
People should be vigilant of the danger inflicted by the fatal virus.

While a number of investigations on the types of editorial headlines culled from different writing cultures have been explored, less attention has been paid to conduct a study on editorial headlines written by Filipino editorialists contrastively compared with the American editorialists. It would seem, therefore, that further investigations are needed in order to fully contrast the two writing cultures in this study in terms of types of editorial headlines and presupposition triggers employed particularly during the surge of the Omicron Virus and produced by the two leading newspapers in the Philippines and the United States of America. Specifically, the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What types of editorial headlines are employed in the Manila Bulletin and Washington Post?
- (2) What particular presupposition triggers are evident in Manila Bulletin and Washington Post?
- (3) What pedagogical implications can be gleaned from the findings of the study.

## 2. Methodology

The editorial headlines were culled from two newspapers—The Manila Bulletin (MB) and the Washington Post (WP). On the one hand, MB is the largest broadsheet newspaper by circulation in the Philippines according to Silliman University, 2017; Diaz, 2021 and WP, on the other hand, is a morning daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C., the dominant newspaper in the United States capital and considered as one of the greatest newspapers in the USA according to the University of the Philippines-Diliman Library, 2022.

The 31 editorial headlines from MB and the 31 editorial headlines from WP were selected during the surge of the Omicron Variants in the span of two months specifically from December 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022 (see Appendix) to find out how editorials were impacted by the current pandemic situation. The researchers decided to analyze all the data (complete enumeration) to exhaust the examination of the data. Three intercoders were asked to validate the analyses of the data. These encoders are doctorate students of English Language Studies and Applied Linguistics from reputable universities in the Philippines. The said intercoders were provided with a copy of the research assumptions and were provided inputs as regards the analyses of the data. They were given two weeks (14 days) to finish the validation. The validation agreement among the intercoders was 90%. The researchers and the three intercoders met to critically compare the validated data. The preliminary validation agreement was 93% but reached 100% after listening to several justifications and settling some of the disagreements as regards the validated data specifically written by American editorial writers under study. Also, the textual analysis has been carried out using presuppositions triggers by Karttunen (1983) and types of headlines by Quirk et al (1985).

## 3. Results and discussion

**Table 1** Types of headlines employed by Manila Bulletin and Washington Post

Types of headlines		BMF	%	WPF	%
Verbal headlines	Finite	21	33.87	55	88.71
	Non Finite	2	3.23	1	1.61
Non Verbal Headlines	Pre-modified	3	4.84	0	
	Post-modified	17	27.42	3	4.84
	Pre and post modified	19	30.64	3	4.84
	Non modified	0	0	0	0
Total		62	100	62	100

Table 1 exhibited the kinds of headlines preferred to produce by the two writing cultures. As can be seen from the data, American editorialists produced more verbal headlines with less than 89% than what Filipino editorial writers did with less than 34%. This finding may reveal that American editorialists favored writing more finite clauses because they are more confident in using their native language (Kachru, 1987). Specifically, this finding may support the claim of Goman (2010 cited in Madrunio & Martin, 2022) that Americans belong to low-context culture in which they are explicit and direct interlocutors, whereas Filipinos belong to high-context culture in which they are implicit and indirect interlocutors. In addition, Filipino editorial writers preferred to write pre-modified non-verbal headlines than its counterpart. Noticeably, Filipino editorialists favored producing pre and post modifier non-verbal headlines with more than 30% than American editorial writers did with less than 5%. This may imply that Filipino editorialists are aware of the ESL writing conventions and their probable ESL linguistic capacity building they had. This may support Kachru's (1987) claim that non-native English users may show a level of confidence using the target language if they are confidently aware of the writing conventions of the target language. Both writing cultures find no favor in writing non-modified non-verbal headlines.

**Table 2** Presupposition Triggers employed in Manila Bulletin and Washington Post

Presupposition Triggers		MBF	%	WPF	%
	Existential	40	64.52	32	51.61
	Lexical	13	20.96	6	9.68
	Structural	9	14.52	24	38.71
	No presupposition	0	0	0	0
		62	100	62	100

Table 2 shows the presupposition triggers employed in MB and WP. As seen from the data in table 2, Filipino editorialists preferred to employ the existential presupposition triggers with less than 65% than American editorialists did with less than 52%. This finding provides support to Hinds (1987). According to him, he found that Asians, Filipino in particular, produce reader-responsible prose as opposed to Anglo-American writing that is writer-responsible. In the same manner, Filipinos, according to Tsuda (1992) have the tendency not to express whatever they want to scribble, for they leave to the readers the responsibility to understand what is not written. Another interesting finding revealed that Filipino editorialists favored using lexical presupposition triggers with less than 21% compared with American editorialists with less than 10%. This finding is consistent with Magtira and Bernardo's (2017) study claiming that Filipino editorialists frequently produce lexical presupposition as opposed to Americans. This finding may be influenced by the idea that the Philippines belongs to a high-context culture in which the message that Filipinos convey is construed by their interlocutors in relation to the context embedded in the message (Madrugno & Martin, 2022)

On the other hand, American editorial writers preferred employing structural presupposition triggers with less than 39% than Filipino editorial writers with less than 15%. This finding supported the study of Djonda (2022) underscoring that American editorialists are monotopical, whereas Asians, Filipino in particular, are multitopical; therefore, monotopical attributes to Americans' structuralism, for they assume truism to the headlines they wanted to put across to the readers, thus giving the readers more prerogative to assume that they know somehow the context of the editorial. Surprisingly, these findings may be inconsistent with the findings of Magtira and Bernardo (2017). They claimed that American and Filipino editorialists hardly employ structural presupposition triggers in writing headlines. This linguistic phenomenon is attributed to the principle of brevity in writing editorial headlines. Both writing cultures had no preference in employing headlines with no presupposition triggers.

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#### 4. Conclusion

There are two types of headlines employed by Filipino and American editorialists such as verbal and non-verbal headlines. Two types of verbal headlines were identified these types are finite and non-finite. Moreover, three specific types were under non-finite headlines namely: post modified, pre and post modified, and non-modified.

The findings of the current study revealed that American editorialists produce more verbal headlines than what Filipino editorialists did. Specifically, employing finite headlines were preferred by American editorialists than Filipino did, whereas Filipino editorialists favored writing non-finite headlines with less significant numbers than American editorialists did. Additionally, employing non-finite headlines was preferred by Filipino editorialists than American did. Apparently, post and pre and post modified non-finite headlines were favored by Filipino editorialists more than their counterpart. This finding may support studies that mentioned that Americans belong to low-context culture, while Filipinos belong to high-context culture

As far as the kind of presupposition triggers are concerned, three types were identified namely: existential, lexical, and structural. On the one hand, this study revealed that Filipino editorialists favored writing existential and lexical presupposition triggers than what American editorialists did; on the other hand, American editorialists favored writing structural presupposition triggers. This finding supported the previous study stating that Americans focus on mono topicality in writing headlines, whereas Filipinos focus on multi topicality. Surprisingly, these findings may be inconsistent to the findings of the previous studies. They claimed that American and Filipino editorialists hardly employ structural presupposition triggers in writing headlines. This linguistic phenomenon is attributed to the principle of brevity in writing editorial headlines.

ESL (English as Second Language) teachers play important roles in shaping the communicative competence of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. Editorial writing may be an effective communicative activity, thus helping ESL learners to develop their communicative competence. ESL teachers may provide journalistic writing exercises as they are asked to write editorials utilizing socio-political issues like traffic, graft and corruption, environmental issues and what not. Likewise, ESL teachers may ask the learners to interpret the editorial cartooning of the day. In addition, ESL learners may be asked to provide their own editorial headline utilizing the editorial cartooning. Moreover, ESL teachers may give instructions on rhetorical structures in writing an editorial article and may provide the discourse features of an editorial article. Finally, ESL teachers may explicitly provide the types of presupposition triggers and the types of headlines including the sub-types. Writing exercises using presupposition triggers and the types and subtypes of headlines may be provided.

Fore research directions, researchers may use the same research variables and linguistic framework using other parts of the newspaper genre and genre of broadcasting. Additionally, some researchers may use the frameworks of the following studies referring to opinion and ideology, analysis of the news text, power relations, metadiscourse, argumentation of editorials of Asian Englishes, editorial journalism, and newspaper editorial headlines. A number of researchers may contrastively compare editorial headlines using other writing cultures from the inner, outer, and expanding circles.

The findings of the current study may provide limited linguistic assumptions and conclusions; therefore, further studies using the same research variables are still needed to be investigated in the future.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Appendix

- **Manila Bulletin (MB) Headlines**

1. MB 1 : 1st Filipina CEO of Shell Philippines brings 'learner's mindset' to job  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/01/1st-filipina-ceo-of-shell-philippines-brings-learners-mindset-to-job/>
2. MB 2: Erring on the side of caution  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/02/erring-on-the-side-of-caution/>
3. MB 3: 4 priority concerns the next administration needs to address  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/03/4-priority-concerns-the-next-administration-needs-to-address/>
4. MB 4: No read, no write

- <https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/04/no-read-no-write/>
5. MB 5 : Lessons learned from Delta useful in tackling Omicron  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/05/lessons-learned-from-delta-useful-in-tackling-omicron/>
  6. MB 6 : More resilient educational system as more schools open for pilot in-person classes  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/06/more-resilient-educational-system-as-more-schools-open-for-pilot-in-person-classes/>
  7. MB 7 : PH leading provider of maritime manpower for global trade  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/07/ph-leading-provider-of-maritime-manpower-for-global-trade/>
  8. MB 8 : More efficient contact tracing needed at this crucial time  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/09/more-efficient-contact-tracing-needed-at-this-crucial-time/>
  9. MB 9 : The fall and rise of the Met  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/10/the-fall-and-rise-of-the-met/>
  10. MB 10 : PH reaffirms commitment to democracy in US summit  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/11/ph-reaffirms-commitment-to-democracy-in-us-summit/>
  11. MB 11: Auspicious developments bolster hopes for stronger growth  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/12/auspicious-developments-bolster-hopes-for-stronger-growth/>
  12. MB 12: Responsible communication and accurate reporting during election campaign  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/13/responsible-communication-and-accurate-reporting-during-election-campaign/>
  13. MB 13: A call for caution on political motorcades and caravans  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/14/a-call-for-caution-on-political-motorcades-and-caravans/>
  14. MB 14: Simbang Gabi unites all Filipinos around the world  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/16/simbang-gabi-unites-all-filipinos-around-the-world/>
  15. MB 15: Omicron in our country: Cause of concern or a call for caution?  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/17/omicron-in-our-country-cause-of-concern-or-a-call-for-caution/>
  16. MB 16: Vote buying and vote selling undermine people’s sovereign will  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/18/vote-buying-and-vote-selling-undermine-peoples-sovereign-will/>
  17. MB 17: MMFF movies back to theaters  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/19/mmff-movies-back-to-theaters/>
  18. MB 18: Protecting our biodiversity: A right step in the battle vs climate change  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/20/protecting-our-biodiversity-a-right-step-in-the-battle-vs-climate-change/>
  19. MB 19: Volunteerism: The good that happens after a natural disaster  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/21/volunteerism-the-good-that-happens-after-a-natural-disaster/>
  20. MB 20: Harnessing the power of prayer  
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  21. MB 21: Grown up Christmas wish  
<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/25/grown-up-christmas-wish/>
  22. MB 22: Be grateful, count your blessings  
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25. MB 25: Citizens' discipline enhances effectiveness of COVID-19 mitigation measures  
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26. MB 26: 2022: We are looking forward with much hope and optimism  
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27. MB 27: What do we value as a nation? Family, education, and faith  
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1. WP 1: China's assault on press freedom silences another independent voice in Hong Kong  
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3. WP 3: Testing the limits of morality with Haitian deportees  
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4. WP 4: Flying blind is no way to survive the pandemic. We need a powerful virus radar.  
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5. WP 5 : Harry Reid was defined by what he fought for  
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6. WP 6: As the tide of war in Ethiopia turns, a chance for peace talks opens  
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8. WP 8: Putin wants to shut down Russia's Memorial, but he can't erase the past  
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9. WP 9: A tragic police shooting ends in a guilty verdict, for once  
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10. WP 10: In Egypt, new signs that the regime's human rights strategy is to violate them

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/12/27/egypt-human-rights-president-sissi/>
11. WP 11: Tenemos todos los medios para protegernos del COVID-19. Úsalos.  
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  12. WP 12: Mayor Bowser’s vaccine mandate is right for D.C. It’s just not enough.  
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  13. WP 13: The bad guys on social media are learning new tricks  
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  14. WP 14: A new generation of vaccines could turn covid-19 from a pandemic to just a problem  
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  15. WP 15: Pelosi said it’s fine for lawmakers to trade stocks. She’s wrong.  
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  19. WP 19: Omicron could be milder — or a disaster. Don’t wait to find out.  
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  25. WP 25: The United States still has promises to keep in Afghanistan  
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  26. WP 26: We have the tools to fight back omicron — if we use them  
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  27. WP 27: At a moment of peril, the world’s democracies needed Biden’s pep rally

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